

Master copy. Do not remove. (numbers out by 1 from l. 115).

TOWNELEY CYCLE 5a & b: Isaac and Jacob

Final Draft

ISAAC: Almighty God, maker most high,  
Lord, hear me when to thee I cry!  
Thy servant, Isaac, Lord I am:  
The son and heir of Abraham.  
Long have I sojourned in this land, 5  
With blessing bounteous from thy hand;  
Here, as thou bade, my corn was sown,  
And yielded so when it was grown,  
That of my grain I did behold  
Thou had blessed me one hundredfold. 10  
And here thou did me bless also  
With sons, that my seed forth might go  
And multiply by thy great plan,  
Just as thou promised Abraham.  
Thus, in my seed, as thou thought best, 15  
Shall every nation now be blessed.  
But I wax old; my sons are grown;  
Mine eyes grow dim; I sit alone.  
Esau, my son; come by me stand!  
(Esau enters)

ESAU: Father, I come at your command, 20  
To ask what is your will of me.

ISAAC: Mine eyes are dim, they scarcely see;  
But this I wish, ere I depart:  
As thou art dearest to my heart,  
Take both thy quiver and thy bow 25  
And from this house abroad now go.  
With thy broad bow, kill thou some thing,  
And, when thou hast done with hunting,  
Then of it dress for me good meat,  
That I may savour, and may eat. 30  
And while I eat, stand thou me by,  
And I shall bless thee ere I die  
My first born son, as thy birthright,  
I shall do this, in God's own sight.

ESAU:                   Father, this shall I do for thee,                   35  
 And then return most speedily!  
(Esau exits and Jacob enters to his mother in another part  
of the place)

REBECCA:               Jacob, my son, draw near to me  
 And hear what I shall say to thee:  
 Thy father, Isaac, hence did send  
 Esau thy brother, forth to wend                   40  
 To kill and bring him back good meat;  
 And when thy father once should eat --  
 Be it of hare or venison --  
 He would bestow his benison  
 On Esau. Now, therefore, my son,                   45  
 Listen to me: let this be done:  
 To thy flock make thou thy way,  
 And bring with all the speed ye may  
 Two kid goats, which I shall prepare  
 For thy father, with all care.                   50  
 This meat to him shall thou present;  
 He shall with thee be well-content,  
 And all the blessing to thee give  
 Which else should with your brother live.

JACOB:                   But what if he should ask my name?                   55

REBECCA:               Son, thou must say: "Esau, the same."

JACOB:                   Alas, mother, this may not be!  
 For though my face he may not see,  
 Yet will he touch my hand or arm,  
 And all this business come to harm;                   60  
 For lo! my skin is smooth and fair,  
 And Esau's rough, and thick with hair.  
 Then shall my father's anger rise,  
 And he shall curse me to the skies!

REBECCA: Nay, my sweet son, say thou not so,  
But fast to do my bidding go!

65

(Jacob and Rebecca exit separately)

ISAAC: Two sons have I, Lord, this thou know,  
Who in the womb did struggle so  
That to their mother thou did bring  
This word: that from her womb should spring  
Two nations; and did say also  
One should the other overthrow.  
Though both my sons thou would preserve,  
The elder should the younger serve.  
Mysterious, Lord are all thy ways,  
Yet these thy works we still should praise!

70

75

(Jacob and Rebecca re-enter together, Rebecca carrying a dish  
and animal skins, also a garment of Esau's)

REBECCA: Son, to thy father take this meat  
And bid him savour it, and eat.  
But bind these skins on neck and hand,  
And when thy father shall command  
Thee to come near, to touch thee there,  
Then shall he feel nought but this hair.  
These garments of thy brother, also,  
Put on: then shall thy father know  
That Esau thou must surely be.  
Do this, my son, for love of me.

80

85

JACOB: Mother, I shall; but bless me here,  
For truly I am faint with fear!

REBECCA: Nay, if he curse thee when thou come,  
Upon me be this curse, my son!

90

(Jacob goes to Isaac)

JACOB: Father!

ISAAC: Art thou Esau, my son?

JACOB: The very same: thy firstborn one.  
I have done as thou did command:  
Arise, and eat here of my hand,  
For I have brought thee venison, 95  
And now would ask thy benison.

ISAAC: How have ye come, son, with such speed?

JACOB: Father, it was God's will, indeed.

ISAAC: Come hither, son, that I may feel  
Thy hands, and prove as true as steel 100  
Thou art indeed Esau, my son.

JACOB: At thy will, father, it shall be done.

ISAAC: (Takes Jacob's hands)  
Thy voice, son, I had taken now  
For that of Jacob, this I vow;  
Yet by these hands I truly tell 105  
Thou art Esau, and all is well.  
To me, my son, now shalt thou bring  
The venison of thy hunting.

(Isaac takes the meat)  
Now with my hands I shall thee bless --  
But son, come near and do me kiss! 110  
Come near, son, and kiss me,  
That I may smell the scent of thee.  
The smell of my son is as  
A field of flowers or fragrant grass.  
Where art thou, Esau my son? 115

JACOB: Here, father, and ask your benison.





Until Esau, mine other son,  
Forget, and all his wrath be dead.

JACOB: I will do, father, as you have said.

ISAAC: Yea, son, do as thy mother says;  
Come, kiss us both, and wend thy ways.  
(And they kiss)

175

JACOB: Have good day, my sire and dame!

ISAAC: God shield thee, son, from sin and shame!

REBECCA: And give thee grace a good man to be,  
And send me glad tidings of thee.

(Here ends Isaac)

JACOB: Help me, oh Lord, Adonai,  
 And hold me now in the right way  
 To Mesopotameam,  
 For I came never where now I am:  
 I was never before in this country. 5  
 Lord of heaven, now help me!  
 For I have gained upon these stones  
 Sore feet and aching bones.  
 The sun is down: now what is best?  
 Here purpose I all night to rest. 10  
 Under my head this stone shall lie;  
 A good night's rest here take will I.

GOD: Jacob! Jacob! Thy God I am,  
 Of thy forefather, Abraham,  
 And of thy father, Isaac; 15  
 I shall thee bless here for their sake:  
 This land that thou sleepest in,  
 I give to thee and to thy kin;  
 And I shall thy seed multiply  
 As thick as dust on the earth may lie. 20  
 Thy progeny, they shall spread wide,  
 From east to west on every side;  
 From the south unto the north.  
 All that I say, I shall bring forth!  
 And all that from thy seed shall spring 25  
 They shall be blessed of thy blessing.  
 Jacob, have thou no dread, indeed:  
 I shall thee clothe; I shall thee feed.  
 Safe now shall I make thy gate;  
 I shall thee help, early and late, 30  
 And in all safety shall bring thee  
 Home again to thy country.  
 I shall not fail -- as truth this hold --  
 But I shall do as I have told.

(Here let him waken)



Ah, Lord! What may this mean? 35  
 What have I heard in sleep, and seen?  
 That God did from a ladder lean  
 And spoke to me as in a dream.  
 And now in this place, I am sure,  
 Is none but God's house and heaven's door. 40  
 Lord, how awesome is this stead --  
 This place where I lay down my head.  
 For love of God I raise this stone,  
 And oil will I put thereupon.  
 Lord of heaven, that all does know, 45  
 Here to thee I make a vow:  
 If thou will me truly feed,  
 And clothe me to my body's need;  
 And bring me home to kith and kin  
 By the way that I walk in, 50  
 Unscathed and safe in every part.  
 I promise thee, with steadfast heart  
 As thou art Lord and God most high,  
 And Jacob, thy true servant, I,  
 This stone I raise in sign today 55  
 Shall I hold as Holy Church for aye.  
 And of all that comes to me  
 A just tithes shall I give to thee.

(Here Jacob leaves Aran for the country of his birth)

Ah, my father, heaven's king,  
 Who told me, when I was dwelling 60  
 In Aran, I should not remain  
 In that place, but return again  
 Unto my own, my native land,  
 This, Lord, thou promised of thy hand  
 As I went towards Aran 65  
 With my staff, and passed Jordan.  
 Now to my kin I come again,  
 And with me are two hosts of men.

Thou vowed, Lord, to do well with me  
To sow my seed as sand of the sea; 70  
Oh save me, Lord, by thy just law,  
From the vengeance of Esau,  
That he slay not for grievance old  
These mothers, with their bairns untold.

RACHEL: Our anguish, sir, is manifold 75  
Since our messenger to us told  
That Esau would you slay  
With his army here today.

JACOB: Rachel, in truth I have him sent  
Gifts diverse: beasts did I present, 80  
And hope that he our gifts will take  
And by that means his wrath will slake.  
Where are our things – are they past Jordan?

LEAH: Go and look sir, as ye can.  
Here he searches out a place to lie down and the  
angel wrestles with him.

GOD: The day dawns; now let me go. 85

JACOB: Nay, nay, I will not so.  
Before thou go thou shall bless me –  
If thou do not, I shall hold thee!

GOD: In token that thou speakest with me  
Upon thy thigh I shall touch thee, 90  
That lame thou shall be evermore  
Though thou shall feel no sore  
What is thy name, now me tell?

JACOB: Jacob.

GOD: Nay, now "Israel"!  
Since thou to me such strength did show, 95  
All men on earth thy strength shall know.

JACOB:                   What is thy name?

GOD:   Why askest thou?  
 "Wonderful", I tell thee now.

JACOB:                   Ah, bless me, Lord !

GOD:   I shall thee bless,  
 And to thee be propitious.   100  
 Forever here now I bless you:  
 As Lord, and he that all may do,  
 I shall grace thy ways  
 And order well thy days;  
 When thou art fearful, think on me   105  
 And truly blessed thou shall then be.  
 Look thou trust my teachings well;  
 The day is dawning – now, farewell!

JACOB:                   Now have I a new name, "Israel".  
 This place I shall call Faniel,   110  
 For I have seen in this place  
 God of heaven, face to face.

RACHEL:                   Jacob, we have tidings here  
 That Esau now is very near.  
Here he divides his troops into three parts

JACOB:                   Rachel, in the last host stand thou,   115  
 For I would have thee saved, I vow.  
 Call Benjamin and Joseph too,  
 And let them not depart from you.  
 If Esau, as it well may be,  
 Cuts down the foremost company   120  
 Ye that are here at the last  
 May all be saved if ye flee fast.  
And Jacob goes to kiss Esau; Jacob comes and bends  
 his knees, calling upon God and rises; Esau meets him  
 in an embrace.

JACOB: I pray, Lord, as thou promised me,  
Thou save me and my progeny!

ESAU: Welcome, brother, to kin and kith, 125  
Children and wife that ye come with.  
What fortune did those far lands bring? -  
Tell me now some good tiding.

JACOB: Brother Esau, I have no alarm,  
If thy men here do me no harm. 130  
He speaks to his servants

ESAU: Fellows all! Now hold your hands  
Ye see that he and I are friends.  
And friendship here will we fulfill,  
Since that it is God's own will.

JACOB: God bless thee, brother, that so it is 135  
That thou thy servant would now kiss.

ESAU: Nay Jacob, my dear brother  
The story is quite other:  
Thou art my lord, through destiny!  
Together brother, now go we 140  
To my father and his wife,  
Who love thee, brother, as their life.

Here ends Jacob