

A strange cryptic event happens in this week's parsha. Jacob is fleeing from his brother Esav and heads to his out-of-town family for protection and to take a bride from his relatives, just as his father did. Immediately upon arrival he comes across his cousin Rachel, and he "lifted up his voice, and wept." Commentators are puzzled why did he start crying. A rabbinical midrash explains that he cried because he had nothing to offer her. All his possessions were gone. This was a result of having to flee from his home because he tricked Esav out of his blessings and for that Esav wanted to kill him.

This trickery starts a whole chain reaction that transforms Jacob's easy life of "one who dwells in tents" to a destitute person on the lam. What seems clear from the text is that while it might have been justified to take the Esav's blessing there still are consequences when dealing in deceit. In fact it is the same language used when Esav discovers that he was tricked by Jacob — "he lifted up his voice, and wept."

We are being taught what goes around comes around. Jacob "steals" Esau's blessing by deceiving his father, Isaac. Jacob will now spend years of his life toiling, trying to "obtain" the elusive Rachel from his Uncle Laban. Jacob's subsequent poverty is taken advantage of by Laban who will in turn cheat Jacob with wages and ultimately trick him into marrying the wrong wife. When Jacob confronts Laban the following day for switching Leah instead of Rachel, Laban replies, "we don't do that in **our** place; to give the younger before the elder." The implication being: maybe in **your** place you do that. Laban's words hark back to the original deception of Esav by Jacob. Whether good or bad, right or wrong, Jacob cannot escape the effects of that action. The tears that Jacob caused his brother to shed when he replaced the older with the younger son will be repaid with the tears that Jacob sheds when Laban replaces his younger daughter with the older daughter.

There may be many times in our lives that we feel warranted to deal in deception. The Torah is trying to warn us that a price must always be paid when dealing in deceit. Every effort must be made to deal in truth and honesty in all our efforts and dealings. Good Shabbos.