מפרשים

Classical Commentaries

RAMBAN

Why did Rivkah wish she had never been born?

Genesis 25:22

Ibn Ezra reads Rivkah's cry as a question about whether she should have been born at all, since the struggle in her womb is so severe that she wishes she had never existed. Drawing on Rashi, Ramban rejects the reading that she was regretting her prayer for a child, and he also rejects Ibn Ezra's view that she asked other women whether their pregnancies were similar, arguing that this reading leaves the verse incomplete. Instead, Ramban holds that her cry expresses a wish for non-existence, and he connects it to the verse "I should have been as though I had not been," while also explaining that her inquiry of G-d was a request for prayer, drawing on other verses that use the same verb. AI SUMMARY

“But the children struggled in her womb, and she said, “If so, why do I exist?” She went to inquire of the LORD,”

AND SHE SAID: IF IT BE SO, — ‘LAMAH ZEH ANOCHI?’”If the pain of pregnancy is so great, lamah zeh anochi (why did I) pray for and aspire to pregnancy?” Thus Rashi. But it is not correct. Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra says that she asked the women if they had experienced such pains, and they said, “No,” whereupon she said, “If the matter and custom of pregnancy be as they said, lamah zeh anochi, why am I beset with an unusual pregnancy?” Now according to this exposition, the verse is missing and not complete. The correct interpretation in my opinion is that she said, “If it shall be so with me, lamah zeh anochi, [why am I in the world]? Would that I did not exist, that I should die or never have come into existence.” This is similar to the verse, I should have been as though I had not been.

AND SHE WENT — ‘LIDROSH’ (TO INQUIRE) OF THE ETERNAL. Rashi comments: “To tell what her outcome will be.” Now I have not discovered the word drishah [lidrosh, to inquire] in relation to G-d except in the context of prayer, as in the verses: I sought (‘darashti’) the Eternal and He answered me; seek ye Me, (‘dirshuni’) and live; As I live, saith G-d the Eternal, I will not be inquired of (‘edareish’) by you.

IBN EZRA, WHO READS IT DIFFERENTLY

AND THE CHILDREN STRUGGLED TOGETHER. — Va-yitrotzatzu (and they struggled) comes from the word that means running. The tzadi is doubled. Its parallel is found in They run to and fro (yerotzetzu) like the lightnings (Nahum 2:5). The Bible refers to the fetuses as children because that is what they ultimately became. And stripped the naked of their clothing (Job 22:6) is similar. Rebekah asked women who had children if they had had a similar experience. They responded that they did not.

Rebekah then said, if it, namely, the manner and custom of pregnancy, be so as they said, wherefore do I undergo such an abnormal pregnancy.