מפרשים

Classical Commentaries

SFORNO

Why Yitzchak favored Esav but Rivkah favored Yaakov

Genesis 25:28

Sforno holds that Yitzchak loved Esav not merely as an afterthought to his love for Yaakov, and that Yitzchak's affection was rooted in Esav's venison and his father's own aging and shrinking world, while Radak's account turns on Rivkah, who alone loved Yaakov because she recognized Esav's wickedness. Drawing on the Midrash, the Radak's contrast between the two parents' motives shows that Rivkah's love is spiritual and exclusive, while Yitzchak's is tied to the physical provision Esav brought him. AI SUMMARY

"Isaac favored Esau because he had a taste for game; but Rebekah favored Jacob."

ויאהב יצחק את עשו — also Esau, not only Yaakov, even though he must have been aware that Esau was far less perfect than Yaakov.

RADAK, WHO READS IT DIFFERENTLY

ורבקה אוהבת את יעקב — she only loved Yaakov, recognising the wickedness of Esau.

ויאהב — there was no need to mention that Yitzchok loved Yaakov; clearly his love for Yaakov was constantly on the increase seeing that Yaakov was righteous, etc. Esau's claim to his father's love was due only to the venison he brought his father from his hunting expeditions.

בפיו — This meat was especially tasty. Moreover Yitzchok was already aged, being more than seventy years old, Clearly, unless Esau had been at least 12 years old at the time he would not have known how to hunt with bow and arrow.

ורבקה אוהבת את יעקב — exclusively; the reason was that Yaakov pursued a lifestyle that would lead to eternal life, whereas Esau did the opposite. Not only did he not lead a life leading to eternal life after death, but he actively forfeited even life on earth, exposing himself to needless dangers. Seeing that Yitzchok was aging and sitting at home most of the time, he was not aware of Esau's doings and was easily led to believe that Esau led a virtuous life, basing his belief on the daily supply of venison his son provided for him. The story unfolds at a time when Yitzchok was already incapable of seeing well with his physical eyes. The story of the sale of the birthright is told primarily to illustrate the disdain with which Esau looked upon spiritual values as a valuable acquisition, something guaranteeing a person life beyond death.

