בני זמננו

# Modern Commentaries

THE NETZIV

## Why Yitzchak and Rivkah loved their sons differently

Ha'amek Davar on Genesis 25:28

Yitzchak's love for Esav was reciprocal and tied to the moment: Esav served his father, and Yitzchak enjoyed that service, while Yaakov sat in the tent and did little serving. Rivkah's love for Yaakov, by contrast, rested on his merit and his ultimate purpose, which is why the verse uses the present tense, and it deepened over time. The Netziv's reading of the love's grammar ("et" for love rooted in heart and thought, "le" for love expressed in fulfilling the beloved's wishes) draws on the Torah's own usage in Devarim 6:5, and the claim that Yaakov's love grew day by day draws on the Talmud's statement in Avodah Zarah 3b about Torah study bringing a thread of kindness by day. AI SUMMARY

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

AND YITZCHAK LOVED ESAV. — It does not say "le-Esav" ("to Esav"), as in "ve'ahavta le-re'acha" ("you shall love your neighbor as yourself"). As will be explained in Devarim 6:5, love whose essence lies in thought and in the heart is written with the word "et." Love whose essence is the fulfillment of the beloved's wishes, by contrast, is written with the prefix "le."

BECAUSE GAME WAS IN HIS MOUTH. — The verse makes clear that Yitzchak and Rivkah were not divided in their opinions. Both of them knew who the essential seed was, of whom it is said, "For through Yitzchak shall your seed be called" (Genesis 21:12): "through Yitzchak," but not all of Yitzchak. That one is Yaakov, who dwells in the tent of Avraham, in Torah. Yitzchak's love for Esav was only a reciprocal love, for Esav served him like a servant, and Yitzchak greatly enjoyed his service. Yaakov, by contrast, sat in the tent and did not serve much. See further below, 26:34.

AND RIVKAH. — For she did not need to make use of her sons' service.

LOVED YAAKOV. — She looked only at his merit and his ultimate purpose. Therefore the verse uses the present tense. With Yitzchak it is not written that "Yitzchak was loving," because Yitzchak's love was only incidental, dependent on the circumstances of the moment. Indeed, at the end of his days the love was reversed. See what I wrote at the end of this parashah. Rivkah's love, by contrast, stemmed from the very nature of the matter. It also grew day by day, as they said in Avodah Zarah 3b: "Whoever studies Torah at night, a thread of kindness is drawn over him by day."