

A few scholarly thoughts on the situation in Genesis 27

Character relationships

"In Genesis 27, the interaction between the four characters is presented in dialogue form - and always between only two of the four characters. The reader alone is privy to all the dialogue and therefore knows more than the any of the characters." (O'Kane 2001, 62)

Abraham/Isaac transition

in contrast with the final days (years) of Abraham which sets up the generational transition (24:1ff), Isaac's description here "turns out to be prologue to a very different tale." "To protect his successor, Abraham sent away all his other offspring; while Isaac has brought things to such a pass that the heir must run for dear life, bound for a land that his grandfather rejected out of hand as a dwelling for his son." (Sternberg, *Poetics* 350, *emph in orig*)

re: Rebekah's motivation:

"The old narrative presupposes an understanding of the right of the firstborn ... But in the case of twins the exclusive right of the firstborn is acutely incomprehensible ... The mother objects to this exclusive prerogative of the one son. Revolt against a 'social' injustice lies behind her plan. She resists with all means at her disposal a privilege of the 'great' which excludes the 'small.'" (Westermann 438)

Primogeniture itself

"The conflict of Jacob is a conflict not with 'spiritual' realities, but with the ways in which human life has been institutionalized. Primogeniture ... is the linchpin of an entire social and legal system ... a way of destining some to advantage and others to disadvantage. ... This narrative, then, is a radically revolutionary announcement. It dares to call into question a conventional settlement of power." (Breuggemann 209)

accord, Hugh White 213: "The birth of twin sons, one born only seconds before the other, highlights the arbitrariness of the law."

SPJeansonne 166 contra both Westermann and Breuggemann: "One cannot impugn that she is having strained marital relations with Isaac, that she is fighting a perceived injustice, or that the narrator has given no clues to understand her behavior." Rather, "Isaac has not been told God's plan for the sons; that has been the privilege of Rebekah."

Further, "And if Isaac can lie about her identity to Abimelech, why can't her son Jacob give Isaac a taste of his own medicine?" (LTurner 117)

"the story appears to have two motivating systems which have little to do with each other. If one takes the oracle as dominant then a case can be made for Rebekah's sainthood due to the sacrifices she makes in order to implement it. If one takes her favoritism for Jacob and manipulation of her husband as the fundamental forces in this plot, then the harsh charges of betrayal and deceit which have been leveled at her in many commentaries become justified. But it is the friction between ... that the narrative will retain a degree of semantic openness, and it is in this openness that the narrative preserves its symbolic character." (Hugh White 208)