מדרש

Midrash

ON GENESIS 24:63

Why camels carried Rebecca and why Isaac prayed alone

Bereshit Rabbah 60:14

The camels carrying Rebecca are read as a sign that she would bring forth both a righteous child and a wicked one, while her riding behind the servant rather than walking beside him teaches proper modesty between men and women. Isaac's journey to Be'er Lachai Ro'i is understood as an errand to bring Hagar back to Abraham, and his "sichah" in the field is identified as prayer, establishing a biblical source for the practice of set, daily prayer, specifically Minchah (the afternoon prayer). AI SUMMARY

“Rebecca and her maids rose, and rode upon the camels, and followed the man. The servant took Rebecca and went” (Genesis 24:61). “Rebecca and her maids rose, [and rode upon the camels]...” [Why did they ride on camels?] Rabbi Levi said: It is the nature of camels that they grow in the East. The Rabbis say: [Camels were used for a symbolic reason.] Just as a camel has one sign of purity and one sign of impurity, so Rebecca produced one righteous person and one wicked person. “And followed the man” – as it is unbefitting for a man to walk behind a woman.

“Isaac came from going to Be’er Laḥai Ro’i and he was living in the land of the south” (Genesis 24:62). “Isaac came from going [ba mibo]” – he was coming [ba] back from bringing something. And where had he gone? To Be’er Laḥai Ro’i. He had gone to bring Hagar back [to Abraham], she being the one who had sat by the well [be’er], and who had said to the One who lives [laḥai] forever: ‘See [re’eh] my misery.’

“Isaac went out to have some words in the field toward evening, and he lifted his eyes, and behold, he saw camels coming” (Genesis 24:63). “Isaac went out to have some words [lasuaḥ] in the field toward evening” – siḥa is nothing other than prayer, as it is stated: “The prayer of a poor man, when he feels overwhelmed and pours out his prayer [siḥo] before the Lord” (Psalms 102:1). Likewise it says: “Evening and morning and noon, I pray [asiḥa]...” (Psalms 55:18).