מפרשים

Classical Commentaries

IBN EZRA

Why Isaac took a detour before meeting Rivkah

Genesis 24:63

Ibn Ezra reads "la-su'ach" simply as a philological note, explaining that it means walking among the trees, and treats "li-fenot erev" as a time marker meaning close to sunset, promising a fuller discussion later in Parashat Ki Tetze. Sforno, by contrast, sees Yitzchak's walk as a deliberate detour from his usual path so that he could pray privately without being interrupted by travelers, even though his prayer at Be'er Lachay Ro'i had already been answered, citing Daniel 10:12. Sforno further explains the geography of the camels' approach to account for why Rivkah, coming from the east, would see Yitzchak walking toward her. AI SUMMARY

"And Isaac went out walking in the field toward evening and, looking up, he saw camels approaching."

AND ISAAC WENT OUT TO MEDITATE. — The word la-su'ach (to meditate) means to walk among the trees.

AT THE EVENTIDE. — Close to sunset. The opposite of li-fenot erev (at the eventide) is lifnot boker (before the dawning of the day). I will give a full explanation of these terms in the Torah portion Ki Tetze.

SFORNO, WHO READS IT DIFFERENTLY

ויצא יצחק לשוח — he had detoured from his regular path to the field in order to pour out his heart to G'd in prayer. He did not want to be interrupted in his devotion by passing travelers whom he would have to greet. This was in spite of the fact that he had already prayed in Beer lachay Ro-i. His prayer had been answered already, in accordance with Daniel 10,12 מן היום אשר נתת את לבך להבין ולהענות...נשמעו דבריך, "for from the first day you set your mind to get understanding, practicing abstinence before your G'd, your prayer was heard and I have come because of your prayer."

והנה גמלים באים — when he had gone out to pray, the camels were already headed in his direction. This is what Rivkah referred to when she asked about the man walking "toward us?" (verse 65) This is because when Yitzchok returned from Beer lachay Ro-i to his house he was walking from the north to the south. People coming from Charan (Aram Naharaym) headed for Avraham's house would be traveling from the east to the west. This is why after having deviated from his route which would have taken him from north to south, and walking in an easterly direction instead, Yitzchok would be walking in the direction from which the camels were approaching, from the land known also as ארץ בני קדם the land belonging to the people of the East. He had reason to believe that Rivkah would come from that direction.

