מפרשים

Classical Commentaries

RAMBAN

Why does the Torah dwell on Yitzchak's three wells?

Genesis 26:20

Ramban reads the three wells of Yitzchak as a prophecy about the three Temples, with the names Esek (Contention) and Sitnah (Enmity) pointing to the First and Second Houses, each marked by hostility from the surrounding nations, and Rechovot (Spacious) pointing to a future Temple built without strife. He grounds his reading in other verses, such as "A fountain of living waters," and in a prophecy of the future Temple's breadth, rather than in the plain sense of the narrative, which he notes would otherwise seem to offer little benefit to Yitzchak. AI SUMMARY

“the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac’s herdsmen, saying, “The water is ours.” He named that well Esek, because they contended with him.”

AND HE CALLED THE NAME OF THE WELL ESEK. — Scripture gives a lengthy account of the matter of the wells when in the literal interpretation of the story there would seem to be no benefit nor any great honor to Isaac in that he and his father did the identical thing.

However, there is a hidden matter involved here since Scripture’s purpose is to make known a future matter. A well of living water alludes to the House of G-d which the children of Isaac will build. This is why Scripture mentions a well of living waters, even as it says, A fountain of living waters, the Eternal.

He called the first well Esek (Contention), which is an allusion to the First House, concerning which the nations contended with us and instigated quarrels and wars with us until they destroyed it. The second well he called Sitnah (Enmity), a name harsher than the first. This alludes to the Second House, which has indeed been referred to by this very name, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote ‘sitnah’ against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. And during its entire existence they were a source of enmity unto us until they destroyed it and drove us from it into bitter exile.

The third well he called Rechovoth (Spacious). This is a reference to the Future House, which will be speedily built in our days, and it will be done without quarrel and feud, and G-d will enlarge our borders, even as it says, And if the Eternal thy G-d enlarge thy border, as He hath sworn, etc., which refers to the future. And concerning the Third House of the future it is written, Broader and winding about higher and higher.

[The concluding statement in the present narrative, concerning the naming of the third well], And we shall be fruitful in the land, signifies that all peoples will come to worship G-d with one consent.

