

Reflections of Redemption

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,
Based on the talks of the
Lubavitcher Rebbe,
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Toldot, 5781
(Vol. 6)



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IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** עי"ה
ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shagalov

Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** עי"ה
Ekman

Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** עי"ה
Marenburg

Passed away on the second day
of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766

Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** עי"ה

Ekman (Santiago, Chile)

Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769

ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF

Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתחיל
Shagalov

DEDICATED BY

Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y.** and **Gittel Rochel** שיחי
Shagalov

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602 North Orange Drive.

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Tel.: (323) 934-7095 * Fax: (323) 934-7092

<http://www.torah4blind.org>

e-mail: yys@torah4blind.org

Rabbi Yosef Y. Shagalov,
Executive Director

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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Toldos

ISAAC'S WELLS – AN INTERNAL SANCTUARY

The wells of Isaac are metaphors for the three Temples. The uniqueness of a well, and the Temple, is that the structure is man-made, but the content comes from Heaven. The third well is a precursor to the Third Temple. The service of Isaac is specifically and uniquely connected to making a Sanctuary, a dwelling place for G-d, internally and externally.

This week's Torah reading, *Toldos*, contains the curious incident of the three wells of Isaac. The first two wells that Isaac digs are stopped up by the Philistines, but the third one is left alone and its waters remain accessible. It is well known that, as the Sages express it, "the actions of the fathers are a sign for the children." The events in the lives of the Patriarchs indicate the spiritual activity their descendants, the Jewish people, should pursue. Further, since the Rebbe has prophesied that "the time of your Redemption has arrived," the lesson we learn from a particular incident must focus on how we are to prepare the world for Moshiach.

Nachmanides notes that since there doesn't seem to be any reason for the story on the literal level, nor does it reflect any great honor on Isaac, the lengthy exposition of Isaac's excavations must allude to future events. By analyzing the components of what Isaac was digging, namely, a well of living waters, Nachmanides concludes that the three wells imply the three Temples. His analysis runs as follows: a well is a gathering place for water; its purpose is to make the waters accessible. In a sense, it's where the water dwells. Further, well water is described as "living waters," indicating movement, vitality and purity. The prophet Jeremiah

uses this metaphor for the life-force G-d continuously infuses into all existence, describing G-d as the source of living waters. Therefore, explains Nachmanides, just as a well is the 'house,' so to speak, of the living waters, from which they flow, so too the Temple is the house of G-d, from which the spiritual vitality flows. That is, the wells of Isaac serve as a hint for the Temples which Isaac's descendants would build. The name of the first well, *Esek*, meaning "contention," alludes to the First Temple; the name of the second well, *Sitnah*, meaning "hatred," alludes to the Second Temple; and the name of the third well, *Rechovot*, refers to the Third Temple, which will be built in the future, speedily in our days. The name *Rechovot* means to expand or increase. The first two Temples were involved in controversy and strife. The Third Temple will be built without contention or opposition; then G-d will increase our borders and the Jewish people will multiply.

Nachmanides's explanation, that Isaac's three efforts to dig a well of "living waters" alludes to the three Temples, still leaves some questions unanswered. For one thing, what is the specific connection of the wells, and by allusion the Temples, to Isaac? The other Patriarchs, Abraham and Jacob, are also said to have foreseen the construction and destruction of the Temples. Furthermore, we may ask why the wells must be read as a metaphor for the Temples and not something else. Clearly there must be a deeper meaning, an inner connection between a well and the Temple. And since the Torah is precise, of what significance are the names of the wells? Finally, what is the lesson – the sign for the children – of Isaac's actions? How does it affect our Divine service, our efforts to prepare the world for Moshiach?

Let's begin by looking more deeply into the connection between the Temples and the digging of the wells. A well is formed through the efforts and exertion of man. Nevertheless, the water flowing

into the well doesn't come through man's labor. Rather, all man does is remove the dirt covering the water; by digging, he enables the water that is already there to be found. Thus, the unique feature of a well is that its structure is man-made but its contents come from a source beyond man's reach.

This is also true of the Temples. G-d instructs the Jewish people, "Make Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in them." On the one hand, G-d's Presence, which is beyond man's comprehension, will dwell within the Jewish people; on the other, there is a command to build a sanctuary, to create a structure to house that Presence. Just as man must dig a well, shaping its walls, before the water can gather into it, so too the actions of the Jewish people, the construction of the sanctuary, must precede the indwelling of the Divine Presence. Further, the construction of a well is not simply a preparation, but is an integral part of its existence. The making of a well causes the water to become accessible and useable. The same is true of the Temple. The making of the Temple is not secondary to the existence of the Temple, and the consequent indwelling of the Divine Presence. Rather, our actions create the Sanctuary. The fulfillment of the commandment to build is a goal in and of itself. The very act of building is the vehicle for the revelation of the Divine Presence.

We may say therefore that what makes the Temple a "House of G-d" is not that G-d chose to dwell in it, but that the Jewish people made the building and assigned it that purpose. What makes the edifice a Sanctuary is the labor and effort to find a suitable location, and build an appropriate structure. Just as we must search for the site of a well and exert ourselves in digging and removing the obstacles, so too we must seek and strive for the Temple to exist as a Divine dwelling place. True, the Divine Presence dwells there, but it does not come into being as a gift from heaven. We must work to reveal it.

We can now understand why the wells – and by extension the building of the Temples – are connected specifically with Isaac. It is well known that, as it says in the Talmud, there are three pillars of the world, Acts of Lovingkindness, prayer and Torah. It is also well known that each of the Patriarchs embodies one of these three pillars, Abraham being Acts of Lovingkindness, Isaac being prayer and Jacob being Torah.

Now, one Hebrew word for prayer is *avodah* – service. And indeed prayer is called the service of the heart. Hence, the service of the heart “substitutes” for the service in the Temple. To serve G-d properly requires effort, exertion – a working on and building of one’s self. One has to dig deep, so to speak, to create a place where the source of living waters, the Divine life-force of the soul, can be revealed and accessible. This working with and digging into one’s self parallels Isaac’s struggle to dig the wells.

The first two Temples were destroyed, since they were built through the efforts of man, and everything that is born must wither. The Third Temple, is being built in heaven and therefore will be eternal. How is it being built? Through the striving, the searching, the “digging” of the Jewish people. During the long exile, the self-sacrifice – *mesirus nefesh* – of the Jewish people has served as the building material, so to speak, for the third, heavenly Temple. This self-sacrifice occurs in the simple sense in times of oppression; but the dedication to G-d’s commandments also occurs in times of physical well-being, when the obstacles to observance take a different form, such as material temptation and the mockery of others.

When an individual does not think of himself, but focuses totally on the task of creating a well, so to speak, of making a dwelling place for the Divine Presence, that is the true Divine service, the true *Avodah*. The Jew becomes a servant of G-d and a vehicle for

the revelation of G-dliness. In this way, we not only build the Third Temple in Heaven, we bring it down into physical reality, where we can again offer sacrifices with the coming of Moshiach.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 30, pp. 116-124)

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