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, 5787

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ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי״ד
Shagalov
Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** ע״ה
Ekman
Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

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And in honor of
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Dedicated by
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by
Rabbi Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann, Ph.D

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 constructivon 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)

BESURAS HAGEULO
The Announcement Of The Redemption

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The essential point in the life of every Jew and that of the Jewish people as a whole throughout all the generations has been: "**All the days of your life to bring about the days of Moshiach**."[1] This requires extra emphasis in this generation and in our times, as mentioned frequently of late, that all aspects have been completed and we need only **greet** our righteous Moshiach in actuality.

…"All the days of your life" means every moment of a person's life, day or night, awake or asleep, for he is still alive then through his breathing ("All that breathes praises G-d," and "with each and every breath a person breathes..."[2]), which is necessary every moment (unlike eating and drinking). And "all the days of your life to bring about the days of Moshiach" means that his life (every instant of it) is bringing the days of Moshiach. That is, a Jew does not limit himself only to those times when he thinks or speaks or does something to bring Moshiach. Rather the essence of his life ("your life") is to bring the days of Moshiach.

…In more detail:

The concept of "All the days of your life to bring about the days of Moshiach" expresses that immediately when the essence of the soul awakens (thus revealing the essence, and only the essence, of its existence), it feels in the very air it **breathes** the concept of Moshiach, **the air of Moshiach**, or in the words of our Sages of blessed memory, "**the spirit** of King Moshiach."[3]

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1. *Brochos* 12, end of second side - in the Mishneh.
2. *Tehillim* at the end. *Bereishis Rabba* chapter 14:9. *Devarim Rabba* chapter 2:37.
3. *Bereishis Rabba* chapter 2:4. Chapter 8:1.

It can be suggested that the "air (spirit) of Moshiach" is even higher than "the light[4] of Moshiach," because **the light** of Moshiach indicates **the revelation** of Moshiach through **his actions** (such as "he will fight the wars of G-d" until "he is victorious,"[5] etc.). However **the air** of Moshiach indicates the essence (the very life) of Moshiach. That is, [this refers to] the revelation of **his existence** (from his earlier status as a leader[6]) as the King Moshiach. And after the revelation of **his existence** (air that is incomparable to the light of Moshiach) begins the revelation that all can see through **his activity** (light of Moshiach).

Accordingly, it can be understood that the main innovation in the coming of Moshiach is the revelation of **his existence** ("**I found** Dovid my servant"[7]), because all the details that follow (his public revelation through his activities to redeem Israel, and everything concerned with the days of Moshiach) come **as a consequence** of the revelation of his existence, **and are included in it**.

…In terms of the practical relevance - "Action is the main thing"[8] - is that every Jew needs to increase with additional strength and vigor the concept that "all the days of your life to bring about the days of Moshiach." His entire existence, immediately upon awakening from his sleep, is penetrated with the life of Moshiach (for this is the essence of the existence of every Jew, the Moshiach within him).

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4. *Zohar* section 3 34:b. Explained in *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak* on the *Zohar*, section 3, p. 219 ff.

5. *Rambam, Hilchos Melachim*, end of chapter 11.

6. "From those that come from the descendants of Dovid and still have rulership in exile... for example Rabbeinu HaKodesh" *(Chiddushei Aggados of the Maharsha to Sanhedrin 98:b).*

7. *Tehillim* 89:21. *[The Hebrew word for existence - metziyus - and that for found - matzah - have the same three letter root (Mem, Tzadik, Aleph) and are thus etymologically related. Translator's note.]*

8. Avos, chapter 1, Mishneh 17.

…And may it be G-d's Will and this is main thing - that at the beginning of the month of Kislev, the month of Redemption, there should come in reality and visibly the true and complete Redemption, the beginning of Redemption and its completion, through our righteous Moshiach. "A king from the house of Dovid will arise..." until "He will perfect the world to serve G-d in unity, as it says[9] 'then I will turn to the nations, etc., to serve Him together.'"[10]

This is also alluded to in the conclusion of the Haftarah of the past week... the Haftarah of the past week concluded with the pronouncement, "**Let my lord King Dovid live forever**."[11] This refers to the eternality of the kingship of Dovid that was continued through the kingship of Shlomo and which will be completed by the king Moshiach who is "from the House of Dovid and the seed of Shlomo."[12] - The content of that declaration is the revelation of **the existence** of the king Moshiach.

And through this and after this comes his revelation to the eyes of everyone through his activities, etc.

(From the talk of Wednesday night, Parshas Toldos, First Day of Rosh Chodesh Kislev, and Shabbos Parshas Toldos, 2 Kislev 5752)

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9. Zephaniah 3:9.

10. Rambam, Hilchos Melachim, end of chapter 11.

11. Melachim Aleph (I Kings) 1:31.

12. *Sefer HaMitzvos* of the Rambam, negative commandment 362. Rambam's *Commentary on the Mishneh Sanhedrin*, beginning of Perek Chelek, principle 12. Iggeres Teiman.

In loving memory of our dear mother in law & mother
Mrs. **Rivkah (Rozanne)** bas Reb **Chaim** ע"ה **Stekler**
Passed away on 13 Kislev, 5786
ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.
*
Dedicated by her son-in-law and daughter
Mr. & Mrs. **Yehuda (Jerry)** and **Avigail (Allison)** שיחיו **Elfassy**

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