Toldot 5787

R. Shimshon Raphael Hirsch on Genesis 26:15

They were envious of the alien from the house of Avraham. Immediately after Avraham's death – even before Yitzchak lived among them – they stopped up the wells out of pure maliciousness, in spite of the fact that wells, wherever they are found, are a blessing to the public. This קנאה sets into motion a train of events that marks a new phase in Jewish history, beginning with Yitzchak. Avraham – with all his wealth, and despite being, like Yitzchak, a stranger in the midst of the nations – had gained such respect through the force of his personality that he was able to walk among the nations as a אלקים נשיא, without provoking envy. Only on one occasion was Avraham victimized by a hostile act similar to the one committed against Yitzchak, but that act was promptly disavowed by the king (above, 21:26). With Yitzchak begins the גלות ;the prophecy זרעך יהיה גר כי) above, 15:13) begins to be fulfilled. Yitzchak's serenity is marred by envy and by hostile acts of jealousy. Ya'akov already has to endure a state of complete servitude.

Rashi on Genesis 26:15

Because they said [the wells] are a problem for us, because of the armies that come upon us.

HaKtav v'haKabbalah on Genesis 26:18

Perhaps the naming of the wells was like the other namings, which memorialized Hashem's kindnesses and deeds, like, "And Avraham named that place 'Hashem will see'"… naming them in Hashem's Name. And because Avraham's way was to try with all of his strength to bring many back from sin, to teach them knowledge of Hashem and to teach them that there was no substance in the idols they were tricked into serving, and to create a spiritual reality for those who denied Hashem, he developed a marvelous strategy via which to bring the deluded people beneath the wings of the Shechinah. He named each well with a name pointing to the truth of Hashem's existence… And so he accustomed it in the mouths of people who came to draw water from the wells, saying, "We'll go draw water from the well named X"… Therefore they sealed the wells, and when the well was gone then their names were gone. And the text informs that Yitzchak emulated his father Avraham's deeds…

Rabbeinu Bechayye on Genesis 26:15

Some have explained that these wells hint to the gerim who converted in Avraham's days, for they were quick to accept faith, like wells which are quick to accept water… And therefore it said regarding the kinah, "the Philistines sealed them," meaning they sealed their hearts and sent them back to their straying, as in, "And they filled them with dirt."…

Shem miShemuel on Parshat Toldot 5671

My father said that this was a symbolic act, removing obstruction of the heart, like dirt covering water in the belly of the earth… And this is the hint of the digging the wells, for the water is in the world, but they need a plan to dig and remove the dirt covering them. Avraham created that plan, digging wells as a symbolic act to remove the material forces. But he was not entirely successful, due to the force of the material which overcame the intellect, like dirt covering water. And this is the fact that all of the wells his father's servants dug in Avraham's time, the Philistines sealed…

Ramban on Genesis 26:20

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*.

Ramban on Genesis 26:32

AND ISAAC's SERVANTS CAME AND TOLD HIM CONCERNING THE WELL WHICH THEY HAD DIGGED. This is the same well mentioned above in the verse, *And there Isaac's servants digged a well*. They had begun to dig it, and Abimelech came to him during that period, and on the day of the making of the covenant, when Abimelech and his retinue had left, Isaac's servants brought him the tidings that they had found water.

It appears feasible to me that this is the same well which Abraham dug, in connection with which he gave Abimelech seven lambs as a witness [to his ownership of the well]. The Philistines, however, stopped it together with the other wells, whereupon Isaac dug it again and called it by the same name which his father had called it. It is for this reason that the name of the city is Beer-sheba: on account of the well (*be'er*) which both the father and the son called by that name *because there they swore both of them*.

S,Y. Agnon, Timol Shilshom (Only Yesterday)

"Like the rest of our brethren, the bearers of our redemption, the members of the Second Aliyah, Isaac Kumer left his country, his homeland, and his city, and ascended to the Land of Israel to rebuild it from its ruins and to be rebuilt by it."