Parshas Toldot · 5780

GETTING THE JOB DONE - WHEN I AM NOT THE ONE

A JOKE TO BEGIN WITH

There was the man who went to the doctor and complained, “I'm suffering from a split personality!”

The doctor asked, “Are you really suffering from a split personality?”

To which the patient responded, “Who, me? Absolutely not!

DIGGING FOR THE TRUTH

This week, we read parshas Toldos in which we meet Yaakov, the bechir ha'avos, and his older brother and adversary Esav, for the first time. We read the story of the sale of the birthright, the deceptive receiving of the blessings, Yaakov's escape to Lavan, and more. But before we begin to deal with Yaakov's life and activities (and Esav's), let us stop for a moment and contemplate what the Torah relates about Yitzchok Avinu.

Yitzchok, the anonymous one among the Avos, known for … digging wells. The parsha teaches us about repeated digging of well after well and about the quarrels and difficulties that ensue.

True, water is very important (we cannot exist without it) and in the ancient world (and even nowadays, unfortunately) bloody wars were conducted over water sources, but still, is that all the Torah has to tell us about Yitzchok? Does Yitzchok's yichus consist solely of being the first owner and founder of the local waterworks company?

The Ramban (26:20) explains that (just like an actual well), there is much that lies beneath the surface in the story of well-digging. “But there is a hidden matter in it, for it comes to tell us about the future.” A well symbolizes the House of G-d, the Beis Ha'Mikdash that will be built by the descendants of Yitzchok. Just like an actual well has water that comes forth from it, which is a source of life, so too, the Beis Ha'Mikdah and the G-dly revelation that was channeled through it, represents the source of life of the Jewish people and, through us, the entire world!

Yitzchok named the first well “Esek,” for the quarreling of the nations of the world with us until they brought the churban upon us. The second well, Sitna, was named for the letters of hatred that were written by the nations against the building of a second Beis Ha'Mikdash, which led, many years later, to another churban.

However, the third well, Rechovos, was named for the third Beis Ha'Mikdash, for in the future, Hashem will expand the borders of Eretz Yisrael and we will be able to dwell securely and in peace, “a man under his vine and a man under his fig tree,” serving Hashem in unity.

The rule is that every lesson in Torah has a unique component that is not found elsewhere. We can find allusions to the Battei Mikdash in many stories and events with the Avos. The various Medrashim teach us repeatedly that the Avos saw visions of the galus and the Geula, the construction and the destruction.

For example, Avohom Avinu saw the exiles that were decreed on the Jewish people at the Bris bein Ha'Besarim; next week, we will read about Yaakov's ladder, the dream in which he saw the Beis Ha'Mikdash “built and destroyed, built and destroyed ...” We don't lack for allusions and gematriyos, acronyms and sofei teivos about the Beis Ha'Mikdash.

What is special about well-digging? What is unique about the Battei Mikdash as alluded to by Yitzchok? And what message is there for us, here and now, on the eve of the true and complete Geula?

ALL YOU CAN DO IS DIG

In the Rebbe's teachings, we find a fabulous idea hidden within this story, an idea with a powerful message that is relevant to us. While the Avos (only) saw the Battei Mikdash (an abstract, spiritual vision), Yitzchok “dug” them! Furthermore, Yitzchok did not “build” the Mikdash/well; he dug it!

What is special about digging?

Digging wells represents an idea in man's service, a fundamental principle that needs to guide his awareness. A well is dug by man with hard work, unlike a spring which is entirely made by G-d. Man has to put effort and time, energy and determination into digging in order to achieve the goal.

After all that, even after hours, days (maybe weeks) of hard labor, the flow of water does not come from his work; the water flows of itself. By removing mounds of earth, the water bursts

forth from under the ground and pours into the well which man dug.

So too, with the Beis Ha'Mikdash, the Torah commands us “and make Me a sanctuary.” We are not allowed to sit with folded hands and wait. A person has to take action, to dig and toil in order to reveal the holiness (and the Geula …) that lies hidden within the world. At the same time, he needs to know that the holiness … comes from Above! True, he is paving the way and preparing the place but then, he needs to wait and hope for the coming and bursting forth of … the water (the Geula!).

The three Avos symbolize the three pillars on which the world stands. Avrohom is the pillar of chessed, Yaakov is Torah, and what about Yitzchok? Yitzchok is the pillar of avoda!

Yitzchok and the digging of wells teaches us that a person needs to work! When you work, when you are are devoted and determined to make a dwelling for G-d in this lower world, “there is a reward for your efforts,” and the G-dly waters, the infusion of holiness in the Beis Ha'Mikdash bursts forth through the curtain and darkness and brings the Geula with it.

NEVER STOP DIGGING

All is good and well, seemingly, when speaking about the first and second Battei Mikdash which the Jewish people built. But doesn't it say in the sources that the third bayis will come down “built and perfected” from heaven? Doesn't it say in the Zohar that the third bayis is called “G-d's construction?” Isn't it explained that the Battei Mikdash built by finite beings were destroyed since human beings (and their handiwork) are not eternal, whereas the third bayis, which will be built by G-d, will be eternal like G-d who built it? Seemingly, there is no need nor value to man's actions in connection with the third Mikdash.

Explains the Rebbe that the opposite is true. The eternal quality of the third Beis Ha'Mikdash is a result of the actions of the Jewish people throughout the galus; it is the loftiest level of perfection, since throughout this very long galus, the Jewish people were purified and refined, purification after purification and refinement after refinement. This was by standing strong and with self sacrifice for all the values of Torah and Judaism, to the point that … a Jew is not considered an independent existence. He reveals how all his deeds and actions are actually the handiwork of G-d!

He is not (only) a son who works for his father; he is not a separate entity; his entire being is “G-d's handiwork,” and therefore, his deeds are G-d's deeds and his accomplishments are G-d's accomplishments!

This is the amazing chiddush of the third bayis over its predecessors. Indeed, work and effort were involved for the first and second Beis Ha'Mikdash. Then too, the Jewish people exerted themselves to serve Hashem. Still, it was an avoda in which the involvement on the part of the person derived from his own personal existence (his intellect, emotions, and actions).

It is specifically during galus, when the main service of Hashem is done with total kabbolas ol, from a place of deep and essential self-nullification, when the “work of our hands” becomes the “work of the hands of G-d!” It's all, actually, not us …

TO CONCLUDE WITH A STORY

After the terror attack in the Vocational School in Kfar Chabad, the Rebbe sent a group of students/shluchim to Eretz Yisroel. The goal of the mission was to lift the morale of the Chassidim, who were broken and shattered. When the shluchim returned to 770, on 7 Elul 5716/1956, the Rebbe held a special farbrengen in their honor. At the farbrengen, the Rebbe asked them to sing a song that they had learned in the Holy Land. The following account of what transpired was recorded by Reb Sholom Feldman:

The Rebbe waited until one of the shluchim began to sing “HaRebbe Shelanu” (Our Rebbe), a children's song that they would sing in the Chabad schools in Eretz Yisrael at that time.

The Rebbe turned white, and moments later he burst into tears with his holy head resting on the table...

Immediately afterward, the Rebbe began a sicha in which he spoke about the importance and necessity of doing the avoda out of a sense of self-nullification in the manner of “and may my soul be like dust to all.”

Based on a sicha of the Rebbe in Likutei Sichos vol. 30