חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

IZBICA · TOLDOT, MEI HASHILOACH

Why did Yitzchak go back to digging his father's wells?

Mei HaShiloach

Reading the verse from Tehilim 147 alongside Yitzchak's return to dig the wells, Mei HaShiloach teaches that after Avimelech told him to leave, Yitzchak recognized his own deficiency in the attribute of love, meaning longing for Torah, and a new desire for Torah arose in him. He compares this to Shlomo, drawing on the Gemara in Sanhedrin 21b and the verses in Divrei HaYamim and Melachim, where silver is valued as nothing before Shlomo's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter and is treated like stones afterward, a deficiency that the author reads as awakening a new longing. AI SUMMARY

“And Yitzchak returned and digged the wells of water ....” (Bereshit, 26:18) It is written (Tehilim, 147:17), “He sends His ice like crumbs ... He causes the wind to blow and the waters to flow.” “He sends His ice like crumbs,” meaning that God gives the nations the power to rule over Israel. “He causes the wind to blow,” that is to say that afterwards the Holy One, blessed be He, is reconciled with Israel, for “blows” is a term denoting meshivat nefesh, “restoring the soul.” Then sweetened waters will flow. “He speaks His word to Yaakov,” meaning that He tells them the sin and deficiency that exists within them, by means of which the nations have the power to rule over them, and then they immediately return in teshuva. “He did not do this to every nation,” for He does not reveal His intention to them at all.

And so it was here, when Yitzchak saw that Avimelech said to him, “go away from us,” since he thought that Yitzchak was feeling superior over them. Truly, Yitzchak’s feelings of superiority over Avimelech was not at all considered a deficiency, for it was as if a man felt superior to an animal, and it is simply the order of creation that man is greater than the animal. Therefore Avimelech’s response was very evil in his eyes, since he was the son of Avraham Avinu, who was a king in the world, as it was said (Bereshit, 23:6), “a prince of E-lohim.” Avraham’s prestige was widespread, and his nature well known, so why did they have to antagonize his son until he had to be banished from Gerar?

Once he had regained composure, he realized that certainly he was blemished and lacking in the way of service of his father, meaning the attribute of love, which is desire and longing for words of Torah. Avimelech was but an instrument to insure that Yitzchak would take this to heart. Avimelech himself did not at all understand how God was conducting affairs through him, for (Tehilim, 147), “they have not known His judgments.” Once Yitzchak understood this, it says immediately (Bereshit, 26:18), “and Yitzchak returned to dig the wells of water that the servants of his father had dug.” That is to say, by means of this he arrived at the attribute of love, seeing the deficiency in himself, and then of itself a new desire for words of Torah came to him (water and wells are often a symbol for Torah).

We find this concerning Shlomo haMelech. It is written in the Gemara (Sanhedrin, 21b), “silver was considered as nothing in the days of Shlomo” (Divrei HaYamim 2, 9:20), and it is written, “Shlomo gave

out his silver in Jerusalem like stones" (Kings 1, 10:27). But there is a difference. The first verse refers to before he married Pharaoh's daughter (and then silver was as having no value); the second is after he married Pharaoh's daughter (and had the value of a stone, i.e., "shave pruta." Rashi).

At first, when he had great influence in Torah, then therefore he had less desire for words of Torah, which is called cessef, "silver." Cessef, silver, is related to Cisuf, longing. Then after he married Pharaoh's daughter, which was considered a deficiency, then of itself a new desire materialized within him. This is why after he married Pharaoh's daughter it does not say, "considered as nothing," regarding money (i.e., longing), for afterwards the desire had taken hold within him.

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