

Toldos - 5774
The Wells of Avraham and Yitzchak
By Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

In Bereishis Chapter 26 we read of Yitzchak's life spent in the land of Gerar. In verses 15-33 we read of the conflicts that Yitzchak had with the Plishtim over the wells that were originally dug by his father Avraham. Yitzchak felt a need to ensure that these wells remained intact while the Philistines wanted the wells filled in. In addition much significance seems to be attached to the names of these wells? What is the importance of these wells and their names?

To begin with, we must remember that in ancient times wells, as well as other natural sources of water, were very important. After all, running water and indoor plumbing are modern-day conveniences. So everyone had to rely on natural bodies of water or dig wells for a water supply. For this reason, cities were always built near water.

Rashi tells us on verse 15 that the Plishtim claimed that the wells that Avraham originally dug were a problem for them because it may encourage invasions or those invading for other reasons would use the wells for their water supply. The Sifsai Chachamim clarifies that the real reason for filling up the wells was the jealousy of Yitzchak. The fear of invading armies was just a cover story. Avimelech hoped that by filling up these wells Yitzchak would leave on his own. But when he saw Yitzchak would not leave so quickly, he then ordered him to leave.

Rashi also writes that the wells dug in verse 18 are the same wells referred to in verse 15 that were dug by Avraham. Ramban notes this citation by Rashi but believes that each verse is referring to different sets of wells. After all, how could Yitzchak immediately dig the same wells that he was told were a predicament for the Plishtim? So the Ramban states that there were two sets of wells. One set was in Gerar itself where Yitzchak was living and these were filled out of envy. The other set of wells, referred to in verse 18, was in a place called Nachal Gerar which was a distinct place from Gerar itself. The wells in Nachal Gerar were not filled up in Avraham's lifetime because of the deep respect that they had for Avraham. At Avraham's demise, they were filled in but not out of envy. They felt that since Avraham and his family were no longer living there, there was no need to keep them. So When Yitzchak came to dig the wells in Nachal Gerar it was a different series of quarrels. But the basis was not the jealousy over Yitzchak that existed in Gerar.

The Ramban writes further that the Torah devoting space to the names of the wells that Yitzchak fought with the shepherds of Nachal Gerar over is actually a hint to our future. The fountain of waters refers to the Bais Hamikdash. The name of the first well was *Esek*, meaning battle which refers to the battles and wars fought in the days of the first Bais Hamikdash. The second well was called *Sitnah*, meaning hate which refers to the animosity of Achashverosh and other world leaders after him who felt a strong sense of hate for our Bais Hamikdash. The third well was called *Rechovos* which means expansion. This refers to the third Bais Hamikdash which will be built without any battle or quarreling and in the time that Hashem will expand our borders.

The Kli Yakar cites the Ramban and builds on it. According to the Kli yakar, *Esek* refers to the fights and strife over the kingship that we had much of in the days of the first Bais Hamikdash. It also refers to the split of Eretz Yisroel into two kingdoms, Yisroel and Yehudah. *Sitna* refers to the baseless hatred that characterized the days of the second Bais Hamikdash and led to its destruction. The root of the word *Sitna* is Satan who causes unnecessary fights. *Rechovos* means enough. In times of peace and plenty there is a feeling of everyone being satisfied and having enough and there is far less conflict when people feel that they have enough. May we be zoche to see these times speedily in our days, Amen.