

**March 26 - April 2, 2017 - Gen. 26:12-35 - The Well of Rehoboth
(Two Weeks)**

Torah Readings: Gen. 26:12-35 - The Well of Rehoboth

Psalm 20

Haftorah - Isaiah 62:8 – 63:7

Genesis 26:13 - "And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great."

In Hebrew the word "great" is used three times here to describe Jacob, the only time in the Bible such repetition is used.

Genesis 26:15 - "For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth."

Why stop up wells, which are vital in a desert country?

Abraham had named the wells using God's name, as a way of dispelling belief in idolatry. i.e. "The Lord will see," "the Lord is my banner" and "The well of him that liveth and seeth."

A midrash also explained the seven wells dug by Abraham represented the seven laws of Noah given to the Gentiles: prohibiting murder, idolatry, immorality, blasphemy, theft, meat cut from a living animal, and the necessity of courts of justice.

By stopping up the wells, the Philistines could erase the memory of these names of God. Jacob unstopped them, and restored the names.

John 4:10-26 - Jesus and the Samaritan Woman linked to Jacob and the traveling wells

<https://www3.nd.edu/~jneyrey1/jacob-trad.html>

This is very interesting, but a little complicated. Jesus was referencing the Jewish tradition of a well that followed Israel in the wilderness when he spoke with the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well in Shechem.

The trend of some traditions was not to associate Jacob with any particular well, but to link him with the traveling well tradition (see **1 Cor 10:4**): "Jacob was seventy-seven years old when he went forth from his father's house, and the well went with him." [Pirque R. E1.35] And this same source also tells us that at one point Jacob left this traveling well at Bethel: "there he left the well." The legend of the traveling well should, of course, be linked primarily with Miriam's well in **Num 21:17-18**. But as the targums on Numbers 21 indicate, Miriam's well was itself simply the old patriarchal well which had been lost and was only then rediscovered:

"And from thence was given them the living well, the well concerning which the Lord said to Moses, assemble the people and give them water. Then, behold, Israel sang the thanksgiving of this song, at the time that the well which had been hidden was restored to them through the spirit of Miriam: Spring up, O well, spring up, O well! sang they to it, and it sprang up: the well which the fathers of the world, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, digged; the princes who were of old digged it, the chiefs of the people, Moses and Aaron, the scribes of Israel, found it with their rods; and from the desert it was given to them for a gift." [Tg. Yer. I Num 21:17-18.]

It is presumably this very well which was said to have been one of the ten things created before the world's founding. [Tg. Yer. I Num 23:31; see Pirqe Abot 5:9, Num. Rab. 19.25.]

Hence, while there is nothing in the legends to suggest why Jacob specifically should be associated with a given well at Bethel or Shechem, he is linked to the general well tradition. The well in John 4: 12 might be called Jacob's well simply because it lies in Jacob country, at Shechem.

Jesus remarked that the woman should ask him for water (4:10), to which she replied, "You don't have a bucket and the well is deep; how do you get this living water?" (v 11). In the legends about Jacob mention is made of a miracle whereby water would automatically surge to the top of Jacob's well and overflow, a phenomenon well-attested in the targums of Genesis 28 and in other midrashic accounts: "Five miracles were wrought for our father Jacob at the time that he went forth from Beersheba ... The fourth sign: the well overflowed, and the water rose to the edge of it, and continued to overflow all the time he was in Haran." [gs. Yer. I, II and Neof. Gen 28:10. The targums to Gen 29:10 and 12 actually describe the miracle happening at Laban's well when Jacob meets Rachel there and waters her flocks; on this miracle, see Pirqe R. E1. 36 (Friedlander, 268); Midr. Pss. 91,7. This Jacob legend was noted by J. R. Diaz, "Palestinian Targum and the New Testament," 76-77]

The woman's remarks to Jesus that he has no bucket and that the well is deep set the stage to ask how Jesus expects to draw water from the well. Without a bucket, the only alternate way to get the water would be to perform a miracle like Jacob's. Jacob's miraculous drawing of water, therefore, seems to be presupposed in the dialogue in 4:11.

A third item in the discourse that might allude to Jacob material is the remark by Jesus in 4:10. If only the woman knew "the gift of God and who it is that speaks to you," then she would ask and he would "give you living water." Jacob is known as a crafty person who stealthily achieved his designs, but the pertinent allusion may lie in the interpretation of the well itself as "gift."

The text of Num 21:16 indicates that when the Israelites arrived at Beer, God promised Moses, "I will give them water." After finding a well in this place, the Israelites traveled on to Mattanah, Nahaliel, Bamoth, and Moab (21: 18-20). The point is that the place

name, Mattanah, is interpreted in targumic expansions according to its perceived root (ntn) as "gift." The interpretation, of course, would logically be understood in the light of Num 21:16c ("I will give them water"). Whereas the MT on Num 21:18c reads "And from the wilderness they went on to Mattanah," it was changed in the LXX to *kai apo phreatos eis Manthanain*; and finally in the targums to Num 21:18, "Mattanah" is read, not as a place name, but as "gift."

(Tg. Neof And from the wilderness it was given to them as a gift Tg. Yer. I And from the desert it was given to them Tg. Yer. II And from the desert it was given to them as a gift)

This reading is also found in a midrash on this passage as well: "And from the Wilderness at Mattanah. This implies that it was given (nittena) to them in the wilderness to serve their needs." [Num. Rab. 19.26]

The midrashic interpretation of the place name as "gift" is still more evident in the targumic reworkings of Numbers 21:19. Whereas the MT reads only place names ("from Mattanah to Nahaliel and from Nahaliel to Bamoth ..."), all of the targums expand on the gift quality of the well: Tg. Neofiti and after the well had been given to them as a gift. .. Tg. Onq. and from thence it was given to them. .. Tg. Yer. I and from thence it was given to them at Mattanah

Thus the miraculous well was interpreted as "gift of God."

Now when Jesus told the woman, "if only you knew the gift of God," on one level the "gift" might be the general recognition of the true well of Israel's history which God gave the people (see Num 21:16). But Jesus qualifies the statement so that the allusion is not simply to the well but to himself: "If only you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you 'Give me a drink.' " Thus the person of Jesus is equated with the true "gift of God," the true well of Israel. Jesus' giving of special waters is developed later in the gospel (see 7:37-39; 19:34).

The response of Jesus in **John 4: 13-14** claims that he is not just a latter-day Jacob or even that Jacob was a type of Christ. A more radical claim is made: Jesus supplants/ replaces Jacob. The woman's question in 4:12 seems to contain a pun, implying that Jesus is supplanting Jacob, the Supplanter, thus doing to Jacob what he did to Esau.

Palestinian Targum on Miriam's Well:

"It is the well which the princes of the world, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, dug from the beginning; the intelligent ones of the people perfected it, the seventy sages who were distinguished; the scribes of Israel, Moses and Aaron measured it with their rods; from the wilderness it was given them (as) a gift. And after the well had been given to them as a gift, it went on to become for them swelling torrents; and after it had become swelling torrents, it went on to go up with them to the tops of the mountains and to go down with them to the deep valleys; and after it had gone up with them to the tops of the high mountains and had gone down with them to the deep valleys, it was hidden from them in the valley which is the boundaries of the Moabites, the top of the height

which looks out opposite Beth Jeshimon.”

The ‘Well’ was water from the “Rock” - Tosephta Sukka 3.114 -

“And so the well which was with the Israelites in the wilderness was a rock, the size of a large round vessel, surging and gurgling upward, as from the mouth of its little flask, rising with them up onto the mountains, and going down with them into the valleys. Wherever the Israelites would encamp, it made camp with them, on a high place, opposite the entry of the Tent of Meeting. The princes of Israel come and surround it with their staffs, and they sing a song concerning it: Spring up, O Well! Sing to it; [the well which the princes dug, which the nobles of the people delved with the scepter and with their staves]” (Num 21:17-18)

An almost identical story is in Onkelos Targum.

It’s also mentioned in the first-century “Biblical Antiquities” of Pseudo-Philo:

“But as for his own people, he led them forth into the wilderness: Forty years did he rain bread from heaven for them, and he brought them quails from the sea, and a well of water following them” (10.7)

Other manuscripts say “The Lord” followed them, identifying God as the source.

Explaining Exodus 14-17 in the light of **Psalm 78:14-20** (e.g., “he splits the rocks . . . and gave them abundant drink . . . he struck the rock so that waters gushed out”) and 78:35 (“God was their rock”), the latter of which appears to identify God with the “rock” of Ps. 78:15-16, 20.

Psalm 78:35 - “And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer.”

Elsewhere in the Tosephta, the tradition is related as follows:

“It was likewise with the well that was with the children of Israel in the wilderness, it [the well] was like a rock that was full of holes like a sieve from which water trickled and arose as from the opening of a flask. It [the rock-well] ascended with them to the top of the hills and descended with them into the valleys; wherever Israel tarried there it tarried over against the entrance to the tabernacle”

God as a “Rock”

Matthew 16:18 - “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock [i.e. his testimony that ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.’] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”