

THE CHaBAd WEEKLY

Vol 4, Num 6

Three Torah sections--Lech-Lecha, Vayeira and Chayei-Sarah--chronicle the life and deeds of Abraham. An even greater number are devoted to the life of Jacob. Isaac is the central figure in only one--the Parshah of Toldot. We read of the "Binding of Isaac" in Vayeira, but there the story is told wholly from Abraham's perspective. Similarly, the greater part of Chayei Sarah is about how a wife is found for Isaac, but Isaac himself is not at all involved in the process. Eliezer doesn't even mention him by name when he proposes the match--he's simply "the son of my master." This scarcity of information about Isaac is even more striking in light of the fact that he was the most long-lived of the three Patriarchs (Isaac lived 180 years, as opposed to Abraham's 175 and Jacob's 147).

Even in Toldot, we are hard-pressed to find some clues to Isaac's identity and personality. The first part of Toldot relates the birth and early years of Jacob and Esau. The latter part is about how the aged and blind Isaac has his plans to bless his elder son Esau foiled by Rebecca and Jacob. It is only in the middle part of Toldot (Genesis, ch 26) that we encounter an active Isaac. We read how he relocates to Gerar, how he farms the land (the only one of the Patriarchs to do so) and how he digs wells.

In fact, the one activity of Isaac's on which the Torah elaborates at some length is his well-digging. We are told how he reopened the wells originally dug by Abraham, and are given a detailed account of a series of wells of his own which he dug--the names he gave them, and his struggles to retain control over them.

But it is precisely this lack of notoriety which defines the essence of Isaac. The Kabbalists equate Abraham with the sefirah (Divine attribute) of Chessed, "lovingkindness", and Isaac with the sefirah of Gevurah, restraint. Abraham was the very embodiment of kindness, generosity and concern for one's fellow. He was the ultimate extrovert--constantly giving of himself, constantly extending himself to G-d, to his fellow man, to the world. Isaac was his father's diametric opposite: he was awe to Abraham's love, restraint to Abraham's expansiveness, self-effacement to Abraham's self-assertion.

From Abraham we inherited the charitableness and social commitment that is the hallmark of our people. Isaac bequeathed to us the fear of Heaven in the heart of the Jew--his self-censoring discipline, his silent sacrifice, his humble awe before the majesty of his Creator.

Abraham's love of G-d and humanity took him on a journey from the self outward--a journey etched in the roads of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Canaan. Isaac never left the boundaries of his homeland. For his was an inward journey, a journey into the depths of self to the essence within.

Thus Isaac is portrayed as a farmer and a welldigger. Isaac was a farmer, one who has learned the profound secret of the seed: that growth and profit come only when one allows oneself to disintegrate and become one with the soil from which one has come. Isaac was a digger of wells, boring through the stratum of emotion and experience in search of the quintessential waters of the soul. Boring deeper than feeling, deeper than desire, deeper than achievement, to the selflessness at the core of self - chabadonline.com

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Isaac the son of Abraham; Abraham fathered Isaac (25:19) jThe cynics of that generation were saying that Sarah had become pregnant from Avimelech, since she had failed to conceive in all the years she was with Abraham. What did G-d do? He formed the countenance of Isaac to resemble that of Abraham, so that all might attest that Abraham had fathered Isaac. This is the meaning of the repetitious wording of the verse: "Isaac (is certainly) the son of Abraham (since there is proof that) Abraham fathered Isaac."(Rashi)

There are children who are embarrassed of their parents, and there are parents who are embarrassed by their children. With Abraham and Isaac it wasn't like that: Isaac prided himself in that he was "Isaac the son of Abraham," and Abraham prided himself in that "Abraham fathered Isaac."(Midrash Tanchuma; Midrash HaGadol) - chabadonline.com

Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebecca to wife (25:20) For three years, from the Binding of Isaac at age 37 to his marriage at age 40, Isaac was in the Garden of Eden. (Asarah Maamarot)

Marriage is a time of increased enmeshment in the material. It is a time when one begins to engage in the most physical of human drives; it is also a time when one is forced to begin, in earnest, the business of earning a livelihood, often at the expense of loftier and more idealistic pursuits. Thus the Zohar refers to marriage as a person's second birth: first, the soul enters into the body and assumes a physical existence, then, at a later point in life, it further "descends" into the physical state by marrying.

Therein lies the lesson to be derived from the fact that, prior to his marriage, Isaac spent three years in the Garden of Eden, abandoning the physical state for a wholly spiritual existence. In order to ensure the success of the most physical phase of a person's life, it must be prefaced a period of spiritual preparation. Although the primary objective of our mission in life is the development and sanctification of the physical world, one must enter that world well equipped with the spiritual vision of the divine purpose and with the spiritual fortitude to carry it out.(The Lubavitcher Rebbe) - *Ibid*

Isaac dug again the wells of water ... and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them (26:18) Behold the humility of Isaac. A person acquires a house and gives it a name; then his son comes, adds a new part to it, and calls it by a different name. Not so Isaac: all the wells which Abraham dug and named, although they were entirely stopped by the Philistines, when Isaac redug them a second time he did not give them new names, but reinstated the names given them by his father.

And what reward did he receive for this? The other Patriarchs had their names changed: Abraham was first called Abram and later Abraham; Jacob was initially called Jacob and subsequently given the name Israel. Isaac, however, was given the name "Isaac" from G-d even before his birth, and his name was not changed for all generations.(Midrash HaGadol) - *Ibid*

Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man (27:11) Two men, one possessing a thick head of hair and the other bald-headed, stood near a threshing-floor. When the chaff flew into the locks of the former, it became entangled in his hair; but when it flew on to the head of the bald man, he passed his hand over his head and removed it.

By the same token, the wicked Esau is polluted by sin throughout the year and has no way to achieve atonement; whereas Jacob is defiled by sin throughout the year, but has the Day of Atonement through which to procure forgiveness. (Midrash Rabbah) - *Ibid*

The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau (27:22) "The voice is the voice of Jacob"--no prayer is effective unless the seed of Jacob has a part in it. "The hands are the hands of Esau"--no war is successful unless the seed of Esau has a share in it. (The Talmud)- *Ibid*

"A LADDER WAS STANDING ON THE GROUND." (1). PRAYER IS THE LADDER THAT CONNECTS SOULS AND G-DHOOD. AND ALTHOUGH IT STANDS "...ON THE GROUND," THE START OF DAVENING BEING NO MORE THAN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, YET "IT'S TOP (2) REACHES THE HEAVENS" (3) - A STATE OF TOTAL BITUL, SELF-NULLIFICATION. BUT ONE REACHES THIS LEVEL THROUGH THE PRIOR ATTAINMENT OF COMPREHENSION AND UNDERSTANDING (4) INHERENT IN P'SUKEI D'ZIMRA, (5) IN THE B'RACHOT OF SH'MA AND IN SH'MA PROPER. (FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM, KISLEV 5).

Do not give Charity. Giving charity means being nice and giving away your money. But who says its is your money to begin with? It is money put in your trust, to be disbursed for good things and for others when they will need it. Change your attitude. Instead of doing what is nice, do what is right. Put the money where it belongs.

-Bringing Heaven Down to Earth