

And these are the generations of Yitzchak, the son of Avraham, Avraham begot Yitzchak. (25:19)

The opening *pasuk* of this *Parshah* is seemingly redundant. We are about to detail the story of the offspring of Yitzchak *Avinu*, **son of Avraham Avinu**, but first the Torah

repeats the fact that Avraham begot Yitzchak. One would assume that we have already been informed of Yitzchak's pedigree when it was related that he was the son of Avraham. *Rashi* quotes the *Midrash* which informs us that the *leitzanei ha'dor*, scoffers of that generation, individuals who had really nothing else to do but slander and denigrate, claimed that Yitzchak's real father was Avimelech. After all, Sarah had spent some time with Avimelech when she was taken captive by him. To prove them wrong, Hashem formed Yitzchak's features, his countenance, to resemble that of his father, Avraham. To attest to this fact, the Torah repeats itself, "and Avraham begot Yitzchak."

Who really cares what the scoffers were saying? Was it necessary to "prove" them wrong? Clearly, Yitzchak's spiritual eminence over Yishmael was a non-issue. In *Parashas Vayeira*, Sarah *Imeinu* tells Avraham, "The son of that maidservant [Yishmael] will not inherit with my son, with Yitzchak" (*Bereishis* 21:10). The double language – "my son, Yitzchak" – emphasizes his spiritual superiority, regardless of his lineage. He was Yitzchak – Sarah's son. What is the significance of the scoffers' claim?

The *Sefas Emes* explains that actually this equation means more than meets the eye. It is more than a clarification of Yitzchak's DNA. It goes to the very core of the foundations upon which the future *Klal Yisrael* was to be built.

Avraham and Yitzchak had divergent approaches to their *avodas*, service, to Hashem. Avraham had boundless love for the Almighty that literally overflowed from him. This love catalyzed him to become a *baal chesed*, directing him outward through acts of lovingkindness. He taught monotheism to the masses, imbued them with the ethics of the Torah and planted an *eishel*, which was either an inn or an orchard, as a means of educating travelers when they stopped to rest. His acts of *chesed* did not cease, even when he was recuperating from his *Bris Milah*. He sat at the door of his tent waiting, yearning to reach out to any passersby.

Yitzchak's *avodah* was not love-based; rather, the second Patriarch's fear of Hashem, concretized during the *Akeidas Yitzchak*, made him draw inward, meticulously introspecting each action before executing it, in order to determine that the consequences of his action would befit a servant of Hashem. These two paths – love versus fear – are, under normal circumstances, mutually exclusive. In Judaism, however, they have the opportunity to achieve unity. True *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, is to be in awe of the Almighty. This is a byproduct of a deep sense of love that one has for Hashem. This applies vice versa, with each emotion – fear and love; love and fear –

completing the other.

Another form of fear, however, is inconsistent with love – fear of punishment, which is essentially a self-centered fear. This is the type of fear prevalent in the nations of the world. In his encounter with Avraham, Avimelech exhibited this type of fear. Thus, when the scoffers claimed that Yitzchak was the progeny of Avimelech, they were intimating that his fear was none other than fear of punishment. When the Torah attests to Avraham's fathering Yitzchak, it is saying that Yitzchak was the product of the attribute of love. Yitzchak's pure fear of Hashem was the result of – and rooted in – his intense love for, and awe of, the Creator.

The *Sefas Emes* takes this thesis to the next level. While Yitzchak's fear of Hashem had its source in his love of Hashem, he still lacked the perfect synthesis of these two traits. Hashem's blessing to Yitzchak's seed required the merit of Avraham. This is to be derived from the following *pesukim*: "I will multiply your seed like the stars of the sky... since Avraham listened/obeyed to My voice" (*Bereishis* 26:4-5); "I will bless you and multiply your seed for the sake of Avraham, My servant" (*Ibid.* 26:24). Clearly, Avraham is a primary component in the blessing of Yitzchak's offspring.

This is to be understood in the following manner: *Chazal* teach that Hashem originally sought to create the world through *Middas HaDin*, the Attribute of Strict Justice, but He saw that unless it was tempered with Divine Mercy, the world had no chance of survival. The foundation of *Klal Yisrael* also calls for an alliance between these two attributes. Love can become tainted. For this, Avraham needed Yitzchak's pure fear to maintain its pristine essence. Yitzchak's *Din* required bolstering from the merit of Avraham to give it continued existence among future generations. The two *middos* working in tandem formed the perfect base upon which to build an enduring Jewish nation.

The *Sefas Emes* now explains how these contrasting traits play a significant role and add a new dimension to the episode in which Yaakov *Avinu* "appropriated" the blessings that were originally designated for Eisav.

Now, Yaakov did not just take the blessings. He was guided and encouraged by his mother, Rivkah *Imeinu*. It was actually through her personal intervention that he was able to "liberate" the *brachos*, blessings, for himself. The Torah states this clearly as it relates that following Rivkah's discovery that Yitzchak was about to give the blessings to Eisav, she convinced Yaakov to delude his father and take the blessings. Obviously, Rivkah felt justified in her advice, having been Divinely inspired to do this. Why would Hashem want Yaakov to receive the blessings in such an ambiguous manner?

The *Sefas Emes* explains that we understand it all wrong. Yitzchak was, indeed, destined to bless Yaakov, but Hashem did not want the blessing to flow solely through Yitzchak's Attribute of *Din*. This would have created an endurance problem. Rivkah was a *baalas chesed* par excellence. Thus, she was used as the medium for transferring *brachah* from Yitzchak to Yaakov. *Din*,

operating in conjunction with *chesed*, results in *emes*, absolute truth. This is the *middah* of Yaakov: a symbiosis of *Chesed* and *Din*, love and fear. Rivkah's involvement in the "blessings" ameliorated *Din*. Yaakov reflected the combined traits of his father and mother. He was the *b'chir ha'Avos*, the chosen one of the Patriarchs, representing truth in its most pristine form.