

"Facial Expressions"

Our *Parsha* begins with, "And these are the offspring of Isaac the son of Abraham; Abraham begot Isaac," and Rashi explains: "'Abraham begot Isaac': Since Scripture wrote, 'Isaac the son of Abraham,' it had to say, 'Abraham begot Isaac,' because the scornors of the generation were saying that Sarah had conceived from Abimelech (for she had lived with Abraham for many years and had not conceived from him). What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He shaped the features of Isaac's face to resemble Abraham's, and everyone attested that Abraham had begotten Isaac. This is the meaning of what is written here, 'Isaac, the son of Abraham,' for there is testimony that 'Abraham begot Isaac.'"

By the unusual language of this teaching of our sages being in a "Question and Answer" form of, "What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He shaped the...", it is apparent that we are being told that there is something unique about, "He shaped the features of Isaac's face to resemble Abraham's." Hence, we need to understand what is so unique, when it is actually quite natural for a son to look like his father?!

We can glean insight into this "uniqueness" by connecting it with yet another statement of our sages (-Pesachim 118a. Sotah 2a. Zohar Vol I 207b and Vol II 170a), of a uniqueness concerning certain actions of G-d: *Is as difficult as the splitting of the Sea of Reeds*. What is the meaning of "difficult" concerning the splitting of the Sea of Reeds -- which Tanya (-Part 2, Chapter 2) explains to be a far inferior wonder to that of the creation of Heaven and Earth? The explanation is that the "difficulty" of the splitting of the Sea of Reeds lays in its being the coexistence of antithetical concepts (-Isaiah 19:22), "And G-d shall plague Egypt, plaguing and healing," (-Zohar Vol II 36a) "(at the very moment of) plaguing to the Egyptians (with it truly there was) Healing to Israel." For, if there would have not been the splitting, then the Egyptians would not have entered, and at that moment the Attribute of Judgement, complained, "In what way are these different than these! These (the Egyptians) are idol-worshippers and these (Israel) are idol-worshippers...", and therefore (-Zohar Vol II 170b), "It was difficult before Him to override the ways of Judgement¹."

Abraham and Isaac too, were antithetical, in Abraham's being (-Isaiah 41:8), "Abraham, who loved Me," and Isaac's being (-Genesis 31:42), "The awe of Isaac," meaning that Abraham was a, "Chariot to the Supernal Attribute of Kindness," which is why Abraham's primary service to G-d was one of acts of kindness, shining upon all benevolence from 'Above to Below'. While Isaac was a, "Chariot to the Supernal Attribute of Strength (Justice; Strictness)," which is why Isaac's primary service to G-d was well-digging, uncovering the coverings, and revealing the *Living Waters* coming forth from 'Below to Above'.

This is also the reason as to why the, "came forth from him," meaning, "a nurturing for the Husk, Impurity," of Abraham and of Isaac were different, in which from Abraham came forth Ishmael, Kindness of Impurity, while from Isaac came forth Esau, Strictness of Impurity.

This is one of the reasons as to why the verse had to testify that, "Isaac the son of Abraham," and that, "Abraham begot Isaac." For seemingly: (a) Being that it is only, "Since Scripture wrote, 'Isaac the son of Abraham,' it had to say, 'Abraham begot Isaac,'" then why say, "Isaac the son of Abraham," at all, when we already know this from previous Torah-portions?! (b) Why is the Torah dealing with, "the scornors of the generation were saying," here, and not in the portion in which we are told of the birth of Isaac?!

However, now we understand that when our verse states, "And these are the offspring of Isaac," it means that this is coming in connection with the previous portion's telling us of Ishmael. Therefore, being that Ishmael is also an offspring of Abraham, and even more so, seemingly Ishmael is more connected to Abraham, being that Ishmael is a life of Kindness (albeit of impurity being that Ishmael was but, "came forth from him (Abraham)," but of kindness nonetheless), while Isaac was of Strictness, the antithesis of Kindness! Therefore, the Torah has to testify that, "Isaac the son of Abraham," and even more than this, that it was, "Abraham begot Isaac," that it is Isaac who is the primary continuance of Abraham (-Genesis 21:12), "For in Isaac will be called your seed."

This also explains as to why the Torah deals with the, "the scornors of the generation were saying," only here in our Torah-portion. For it is only once we are learning that the, "came forth from him," of Isaac is Esau, Strictness of Impurity, and we learn that the primary service of Isaac is well-digging, drawing forth the *From Below to Above*, that we now have that which, "the scornors of the generation were saying," gaining momentum, and thus, has to be dealt with.

Thus, we can understand the "difficulty" of, "He shaped the features of Isaac's face to resemble Abraham's." That which it is natural for a son's appearance to resemble that of his father is because he is of his father's genetics and father's soul, hence, the son, in body and in temperament, is similar to his father. However, being that Abraham's and Isaac's temperaments were opposites, and hence, their minds and paradigms were opposites, thus, their faces should have been opposites, in which Abraham's face would be one of a shining countenance of benevolence, and Isaac's face being stern! Thus, the 'question' of, "What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do?," being that "naturally" their faces should have been different! Nevertheless, being that

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1. Which is why by the *Plague of the Firstborns*, where the was the "*Plagu*ing (of the Egyptians) and the *Heal*ing (of Israel)," the plague had to be performed by the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself. Nevertheless, through Israel performing the commandment of placing the blood of the *Pascal Offering* (slaughtering the Egyptian idol: *sheep*) on the door, there became a *difference* between, "these and these," hence, we don't find the terminology "difficult" by the *Plague of the Firstborns*.

"the scorers of the generation were saying," therefore, "the Holy One, blessed be He (*contrary* to the ways of nature) ... shaped the features of Isaac's face to resemble Abraham's," to end the scorers' from saying.

Spiritually speaking --which is the source and reason for their physical resemblance, the resemblance is due to Isaac's *Strength* being the continuance and outcome of Abraham's *Kindness*, "And Abraham begot Isaac." And here it is more than just *Kindness* being the cause for the *Strictness*, being that *Kindness* wants to be digestible and constructive for its recipient, and this is possible only through the power of *Strictness* and *Contraction*. --For example, with rain, the ground receiving water is an act of *Kindness*. However, without the act of *Strictness*, in which the waters are contracted into tiny droplets, the rain waters would be overbearing and destructive. Hence, *Kindness* demands that it be processed through *Strictness*, in order that it end up being an act of *Kindness*. Rather, even more than this, with Isaac, we are speaking of the *Strength* itself being of *Revealed Kindness*. Meaning, that it is Isaac's *Strength* that brings about the *Kindness* be in a flow of abundance², such as the terminology (-Taanis, Mishna 1:1), "might of the rains," and as to why it is specifically by Isaac that it is stated (-Joshua 24:3), "and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac."

Our sages, use the language here of, "And everyone testified," and then repeated by Rashi again, "because there is testimony," instead of just, "and everyone knew," that, "Abraham begot Isaac"? The reason is because *Testimony* is not needed for neither that which is already revealed, nor for that which stands to be revealed. *Testimony* is only for that which is hidden, and hence needs to be testified upon. Spiritually speaking, this refers to G-d's *Essence Infinite Light*, which transcends beyond the *Order of Evolution's Linear Finite Light* ("is revealed"), or even *Circular Infinite Light* ("stands to be revealed"). Therefore, being that we are speaking here of the *unique*, and difficult, act of G-d in unifying antithetical attributes of *Kindness* and *Strictness*, --which within the *Lights of the Order of Evolutions* is not possible, as they stand diametrically opposite of each other,-- and henceforth, demand the *Essence Infinite Light*, which needs to be *Testified* upon, thus, the wording of the teaching is, "testified; testimony".

Lesson #1: Being that Abraham and Isaac are both of our three forefathers, called so, because they have each inherited upon each and every Jew their dynamics and form of service to G-d, including that of, "the features of Isaac's face to resemble Abraham's," thus, it is within the capacity of each and every one to serve G-d in this fashion of, "unifying antithetical attributes of *Kindness* and *Strictness*." Meaning, that while this is not possible in any other area of our life --which are confined within the ways of nature, it is possible for us in our service to G-d. This is the service of (-Tanya, Chapter 34, quoting the Zohar, Vol II 255a), "Weeping is lodged in one side of my heart, and joy is lodged in the other," in which one has both, a Love and a Fear of G-d. However, within this service of, "Weeping is lodged in one side of my heart, and joy is lodged in the other," itself, there are two forms: (a) Thursday night one has the, "Weeping is lodged in one side," over the exile of his soul, of G-d, and of Israel, and then on Shabbat one has the, "joy is lodged in the other." (b) The more "difficult" form of feeling the *bitterness* and the *joy* both simultaneously together. And being an offspring of our forefathers, we can perform the "difficult" latter form of service to G-d, as well.

Lesson #2: G-d could have had Abraham's appearance to be all along (from Abraham's birth) aligned to Isaac's, appearance (of *Strictness*). Yet, G-d had Isaac's appearance align with Abraham's appearance (of *Kindness*). The lesson is that whenever there arises a doubt whether we should engage in the service of G-d in the form of *Kindness* or of *Strictness*, we are to choose the path of *Kindness*. As we are taught in Tanya (-Chapter 32), "Even those who are far from G-d's Torah and His service... even those, one must attract with strong cords of love. Perhaps thereby one will be able, after all, to draw them close to the Torah and the service of G-d. And even if one fails in this, he has not forfeited the merit of the mitzvah of neighborly love."

In Chassidus: Our Torah-portion is always read either on the Shabbat of Rosh Chodesh Kislev, or the Shabbat in which we bless the month of Kislev, and is therefore, connected with the *Redemptive Month of Kislev*, in which the founder of Chabad, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the *Alter Rebbe* (-[Link](#)) was liberated from the Czar's prison on the 19th day of Kislev (-[Link](#)). On this day, the work of, "When your (Baal Shem Tov -[Link](#)) wellsprings (teachings of Chassidus) will spread forth to the 'outside'," began. Thus, we find the correlation of the *parsha's* response of, "*Essence Infinite Light*, which needs to be *Testified* upon," overriding the *laws of nature*, in order to silence, "the scorers of the generation were saying," with the 19th of Kislev's, "When your wellsprings will spread forth to the 'outside'." Within Torah there are the *Revealed Torah* and the *Hidden of Torah* that needs to be *Testified* upon. The *Alter Rebbe* brought the teachings of the *Hidden Torah* into our *Intellectual Grasp*, to the point that Rabbi Yoseph Yitzchok of Lubavitch (-[Link](#)) explains that one is to study *Chassidus* (*Hidden Torah*) in the same manner with which he studies the *Talmud* (*Revealed Torah*)! And together with this, we are to *spread forth* these *wellsprings* to the *outside*, to the farthest point of any spiritual *outside* that there is!

Even concerning spreading the Revealed Torah to the *outside* (-Psalms 50:16), "But to the wicked man G-d said, 'For what reason do you recount My statutes, and bring up My covenant on your mouth?'" How much more so of the *Hidden Torah*, which is Isaac's realm of *Strictness* and *concealment*!? Nevertheless, we have the lesson to transform the *Face of Isaac* to be in the appearance of Abraham --*Kindness; revelation*. Far more than this, when it comes to saving a Jew, who's soul is sourced in G-d's *Essence*, the *Alter Rebbe* directs us with a parable of a prince (every Jew) falling sick ('outside') who can be saved only by grinding up and spoon-feeding ('spreading forth') him the *central-gem* (*Chassidus, Hidden Teachings*) of the *King's* (G-d's) *crown* (Torah). To which the King (G-d) agrees, even when there is doubt whether the prince is capable of swallowing any of it (*farthest point of 'outside'*)! And by doing so ('spreading forth the teachings of Chassidus'), we shall have, "*Master* (*Moshiach* -[Link](#)) *is coming*," immediately in our days, now!

2. This is why (-Siddur, end of Shaarei Tekias) the primary and the source of all the blessings to our world is specifically through Isaac.