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Yeshivat Netzach Yisrael, Jerusalem

Isaac: Laughter and Metamorphosis

Monthly English Broadcast

לע"נ אלטע נעכע בת ר' חיים נוטע ור' אלימלך בן משה

Last month, we studied and and contemplated on Abraham, the first father, who was also called "the father of many nations." He spread the faith in God to the whole world, in order to bring Moshiach. After many years of marriage and anguish, when his wife Sarah was ninety years old and Avraham was a hundred years old, they had their only son, Yitzchak Avinu. The spiritual difference between the first two patriarchs, Abraham and Isaac, is that Abraham began to illuminate a straight light, a revelation from Above, while Isaac represents recurring light, the spiritual response to the light of his father's straight light. Unlike his father's revelation of light, Isaac evokes a spiritual awakening that does not come from a revelation - not light from the outside - a spontaneous awakening, something that happens inside my heart and causes me to seek God and ascend to Him. This is why Isaac in his lifetime digs wells, where the living water rises from the abyss, from the bottom up, as the heart is aroused from the bottom up. Abraham is a "straight light" and Isaac is a "returning light", they complement each other, father and son.

If we look for a parallel in the months of the year, Abraham and Isaac parallel the first two months, Nissan and Iyar: The month of Nissan is a new revelation and illumination from Above, when even without doing something that justifies or entitles us, God redeems us. Our present month, Iyar, is a month of working, of correcting the emotive attributes of our hearts. This is the service of counting the omer. Each day we count the omer and correct one particular trait of the seven emotive attributes that are **inteincluded**. Each of the 7 weeks is all inclusive of all the seven, **seven times seven, forty-nine days**. This is the work of the rectification of the heart. It is especially representative of Isaac's Divine service.

In Kabbalah, the heart is corrected through contemplation. Every month in Kabbalah has its own sense. In *Sefer Yetzirah*, the Book of Formation, the sense of the month of Iyar – the month during which, from beginning to end, we count the omer - is the sense of contemplation or deep thought, the sense of study. Deep contemplation is not a revelation of light that comes from outside but is the process of delving deeply into myself, delving into my heart to reveal and rectify its unconscious depths. The tool for this work, the sense of this month, is contemplation. The difference between Abraham

and Isaac is that Abraham is the right brain, the illumination of light from above, the brilliant lightning, the new revelation, while Isaac is the left brain, contemplation and study. Through this observation, day after day, one discovers the good qualities of the heart and rectifies the attributes of the heart.

This is just a simple introduction. Today we will devote ourselves to the image and personality of the soul of our father Isaac, the second patriarch, as we did in the previous month regarding Avraham Avinu, the first of the patriarchs.

As always, we will go through the different levels of the soul, which correspond to the supernal channels of light through which God created the world, the Sefirot from Keter, Crown, down to Malchut, Kingdom, and see how they are reflected in the soul of Isaac according to the Torah, with the good help of the classical commentators, especially Kabbalah.

Keter - Crown

The crown, the super-rational level of a Jewish soul, is the power of self-sacrifice - to give the actual soul to God. It is very clear where the sacrifice of the soul appears in the life of Yitzchak Avinu, because he agreed to give his life literally. He knew that his father was going to bring him as a sacrifice and agreed to this, extending his neck to be slaughtered, to be a whole offering to God. We know that in the end, the Torah says that God did not want Abraham to slaughter him. But this was the greatest trial for both father and son. In the Torah, this story is called "Akedat Yitzchak" the Binding of Isaac. Although this is the tenth, final and most difficult trial for Avraham Avinu, it is named after Yitzchak - "Akedat Yitzchak". This trial required more self-sacrifice from Yitzchak than from his father. Abraham received the commandment directly from God - he heard it from God - whereas his son Isaac had to believe in his father's prophecy to the point of willingness to give up his life because his father said that this was God's directive.

There are two expressions referring to God in the prayers of the High Holy Days. One is *Av Harachaman*, "the merciful father," but in the higher prayers of Mussaf and Neilah, we do not say "the merciful father" but rather, *Av Harachamim*, "the father of mercy." What is the difference between "the merciful father" and "the father of mercy"? In Kabbalah and Chassidut it is written that "the merciful father" is the level of *Abba*, Father - Father is Wisdom. The origin of mercy is from the crown above wisdom. But the mercy flows from the crown to wisdom and is expressed and manifest thru the father. It is the nature of the father to be merciful to his son. If I call God the merciful father, this means that God is infinitely more than a physical father, but nevertheless, through the father mercy flows from an even higher source.

But if we say the "Father of Mercy," it does not mean that the mercy is drawn to him and

flows through him like a father, but that he is the father of mercy, the source of mercy. He is above mercy, another level of Father, above the mercy in the Crown itself . Therefore, in the higher prayers like Neilah, we say "the Father of Mercy".

Why are we saying this now? Because Abraham is the "merciful father," but the faith and attachment of Isaac to his father in the Akeida, "the Binding of Isaac" – is such that when his father says, or even hints, that God wants to sacrifice him, He wants his self-sacrifice, that is enough for him to extend his neck for the slaughter, so that his father could bring him up to God, this is the level of the "Father of Mercy", *Av Harachamim*. Yitzchak relates to his father as the source of mercy, not just as a Merciful Father.

Later we will see that Isaac is the first example in the Torah of a child who at first is more emotionally close to his mother than to his father, a mommy's boy – he is the first example of this in the Torah. This was true until the Akeida. For Yitzchak, the trial of the Akeida was to identify with his father so deeply that the high degree of "Father of Mercy," the father above father – manifests through him.

Not only is Isaac a mommy's boy, but it is written that he actually possessed a feminine soul - he was a girl in the body of a male. As long as he was a girl in the body of a male he could not marry and have children. In order for him to be able to marry and have children, he had to undergo a spiritual metamorphosis, which took place at the moment of the Akeida. The soul of the girl ascended upward and he received the soul of a male, as we shall explain later on.

This comes to strengthen what we are taught in Kabbalah and Chassidut, that the secret of the binding of Isaac is the interinclusion of the traits of Abraham and Isaac, each of whom reveals the root of the other. Abraham is love and Isaac is fear. In order to be willing to give up his life for God, Isaac had to manifest the opposite emotive attribute - absolute love of God. After God tells Abraham that he did not really intend for him to kill his son, it was all just a trial, and the intent was to bring him up to the mountain and the altar and bring him down, Abraham's trial was to assume the attribute of his son - fear. Yitzchak's trial was to assume the attribute of his father - love.

In the counting of the Omer, we contemplate on the interinclusion of all the attributes of the heart with one another, with the power of the brain above the brain. The first week begins with the interinclusion of fear in love and the second week with the interinclusion of love in fear. But here we are dealing with the interinclusion not from the brain, but from the super-conscious. The power of the interinclusion referred to here is "*Achlifu Duchtayhu*" - if you are in one spiritual place, in one attribute, the power to reach the opposite place comes from the Crown, from the super-conscious.

This is the Crown of the soul of Isaac - his absolute self-sacrifice, above and beyond reason and knowledge, which was revealed in the Binding of Isaac. Isaac did not hear the directive from God Himself, and this commandment is very opposed to the spirit of

God's commandments.

Chochmah - Wisdom:

Now let us move on to the wisdom of Yitzchak - the first conscious power of the soul. We recently celebrated Pesach, where the Haggadah of the Seder night talks of the four sons. This is an immediate hint to Yitzchak: four times *ben*, son (52) equals the Gematria of Yitzchak (208) - the average value of each of the four letters of Yitzchak's name is *ben*, 52, son. Yitzchak is the ultimate son, including all four sons - Ben-Ben-Ben-Ben.

There is a famous Torah of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov - whose special day in the Omer count was yesterday, on Shabbat, Netzach shebanetzach, which in gematria equals Nachman shebaNachman. He says in one of his Torahs that the father of the Seder is Avraham and the four sons are his two sons and two grandsons - a very beautiful explanation. He says that the wise son is Isaac, the wicked son is Esav, the simple son is Yaakov, since the Torah says explicitly *Yaakov ish tam*, "Jacob is a simple man ", and perhaps the most surprising of all, the son who does not know how to ask is Ishmael. This is a very beautiful Torah of Rabbi Nachman. So even though Isaac is four times a son, including all the sons, he is in particular the wise son.

Where does the expression "wise son " *ben chacham*, appear in the Bible? It is repeated three times: the other three phrases - "wicked son", "simple son", "son who does not know to ask" - are not explicit expressions in the Bible. "Wise son" *ben chacham*, appears three times, all of them in Proverbs, twice the identical expression – *Ben chacham yisamach av*, "a wise son will make a father happy." The word *Yisamach* is also a permutation of *Mashiach*, as we know. Twice it is written, "A wise son will make a father happy" and once it is written, *Ben chacham musar av*, "The wise son receives chastisement from his father." He willingly accepts chastisement from his father, learns from it and implements it. In another verse in Proverb, it is written, *Shema bni mussar avicha*, "Hear my son the ethical chastisement of your father" - chastisement is the spiritual ethics that the father teaches his son. Who is a wise son? He who take this ethical chastisement well, as it says, "The wise son receives chastisement from his father."

If so, all the verses of "the wise son" explicitly hint to Isaac. The four sons also correspond to the four letters of God's Name. "Wise son" corresponds to the letter *yud*. The all-inclusive letter is the *yud*. So the wise son is the all-inclusive letter and son. The wise son makes his father happy. If he is Isaac, the father is Abraham. Isaac makes Abraham happy. Isaac loves Esau, and "Rebecca loves Jacob." Esau is the wicked son, and many ask why in the Haggadah the wicked son is closest to the wise son. According

to their spiritual levels, the wicked son is the lowest, the farthest from the wise son. But for a certain reason, the Haggadah puts the wise son and immediately after him, the evil son. This is how the children are seated at the Seder. One of the most famous explanations in Chassidut is that the wicked son is placed next to the wise son so that the wise son can influence him to repent and return to God. But now, according to Rabbi Nachman, we have a deeper explanation: Isaac makes his father happy, but he loves Esav. The wise son loves the evil son. It is not enough to have wisdom to influence someone to do teshuvah - you really have to love him. The evil son is the choice son in Yitzhak's eyes. and then there is a real chance that he will succeed in influencing him to return to God. Even if in the past years he has not succeeded, maybe this year he will succeed - to influence Esau to repent.

Isaac has wisdom. In Kabbalah, Isaac is called the might of the inner dimension of the Crown – *the mocha stima'a*, concealed mind of the crown, from which the lightening flashes of wisdom come. The super-conscious is dark, from where do the flashes of insight come? The source of the lightning flashes from the crown to the conscious is the root of the soul of Isaac, *gevurah d'atik* en clothed in the concealed wisdom (of [Arich](#)). In Kabbalah this is the root of the soul of Isaac, concealed wisdom. Isaac is might and Abraham is love. The inner soul of concealed wisdom is the level of might from the foundation of the pleasure in the soul. The outer crown is will, volition, but the inner crown is pleasure, the pleasure of life. The might of the pleasure en clothes itself in the wisdom of the will. Atik is the pleasure of life, the superconscious pleasure. In it are all the *sefirot*. The might of this pleasure is the soul of the concealed wisdom in the Crown that radiates the flashes of lightning. This is something to think about in this month of contemplation. In any case, in the terminology of Kabbalah, this is the true root of Yitzchak, and this is the reason that he is a truly wise person - he reveals the hidden wisdom of the Crown of the soul.

Binah: Understanding

What does the name Yitzchak mean? Laughter. When Avraham heard that he and Sarah would have a son, he laughed and so did Sarah. The parents laughed and they called their son Yitzchak, laughter. A very special name. If in English someone would call a child "laugh", they would laugh at him when he grew up. He was a big laugh. This is the meaning of the name Isaac.

Where does this name belong in Kabbalah? Mochin D'Ima, the mother principle, which is the next sefirah, Binah. Of Binah it says in Psalms, *Em habanim smeicha*, "The mother of the sons is happy." Abraham laughed and then Sarah laughed too. Who laughed more? Sarah. To become a mother, especially at ninety-years-old, a pleasure that one can not imagine, can not contain, and this such a joy, a pleasure that cannot be fathomed. Its expression is a great, endless laugh. The fact that Isaac's name means

laughter is the mother source, the binah, in his soul. It is his essence more than anything else.

Each of his parents laughed, and when he was called Isaac, his mother said, "God made me laugh" - if God made me laugh, I will call the child a laugh.

When Yitzhak married - it was also a miracle, because as we said before he was born with a female soul and needed to metamorphose to a male to get married. The verb to describe Yitzchak's union with his wife, Rivkah, is laughter. *Yitzchak metzachek et Rivkah ishto*, Isaac laughed, so to speak, together with his wife. There are only two verbs used for marital unions in the Torah for different couples. For the first couple, Adam and Eve, the verb used for their union is knowledge, "and Adam knew Eve". There is only one other place in the Bible that a marital union is described as knowledge; in the beginning of the book of Samuel, regarding Elkanah and Chana, the parents of Shmuel, whose union is also described as *yada*, Elkanah knew his wife Chana. The only other verb used is the term in reference to Isaac and Rivkah, to laugh, *Yitzchak metzachek et Rivkah ishto*. That is even his name. That means there was something very special about their union.

There is something about laughter that has to do with *daat*, knowledge. The marital union has to do with *daat*. The inner experience of *daat* is *yichud*, union. So it is no surprise that marital union is described as knowing, but it is surprising that it is termed laughter. That surprise relates to Yitzchak and Rivkah. The union of Yitzchak and Rivkah is special for several reasons. They are the only couple of the Patriarchs about whom it says that they are of equal stature, as it will be in the time of Mashiach, when the man and the woman will be equal.

There is a famous gematria that Yitzchak-Rivkah in Gematria is 515, prayer. Therefore there is a special hint emphasized in the *machzor*, in the prayers of the High Holidays, that there are four words with the prominent letters Yitzchak and four words with the prominent letters Rivkah. because Their union is the essence of the service of prayer. In the three pillars of the world, the pillar of the Torah is Jacob, the pillar of lovingkindness is Abraham and the pillar of prayer is Isaac. One of the gematriot that reflect this is that Yitzchak and Rivkah equal prayer. One of the meanings of prayer is union with God. The union with God is reflected in the union of Isaac and Rivkah. This is the unique level of *daat*, knowledge that Yitzhak possesses as reflected in the unique term, laughter, actually his own name, for the union with his wife.

Da'at and Binah depend on each other - "If there is no knowledge, there is no understanding, if there is no understanding, there is no knowledge." The fact that his name means laughter is at the level of Binah. The fact that the union with his wife is also called laughter is in da'at.

There is something special about Isaac, unlike Abraham and Jacob. . Not only were he and his wife equal, but he had just one wife. No other woman. Isaac is the only patriarch for whom there is only one woman in his life. That is not to be taken lightly. It is a very important, essential thing about Isaac.

There is something in Isaac that is "one." Even though his father Abraham was called "one," "*one was Abraham,*" but in the soul of Isaac there is something very special that is "singular," one and only one. The simple thing we said now is that he is married to one woman, there is only one woman in his life. But there is another 'singular' thing in his life, which belongs to both *daat* and *malchut*, Kingdom: There is only one land in his life. Something is very special about the fact that he lived in the Chosen Land all his life. All the other patriarchs and most great souls of the Bible, even though there is something very special about the Chosen Land, all these great biblical figures had to for some period be outside the Land of Israel. There is something special about Isaac, the Sages say, that because he was a complete pure sacrifice to God, an *olah temimah*, anywhere outside of Israel is unworthy of him. *Gur ba'aretz*, live in the Land. For him there is only one place to be and only one woman to marry. Those are related.

When we say *Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad*, "God is One", we use the word "one". It is written in Chasidut that there is even a higher level, *yachid*, "single," "one and only one." This is the level of the faith of Isaac. The first one to teach the world monotheism is Abraham, but the one to make it clear that there is one and only one God is Yitzchak. He has one and only one wife, Land and God. This is actually an attribute of *chochmah*, because in the Tanya, the Ba'al Hatanya, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi says in the name of his master, the Maggid of Mezeritch that the ultimate one, called the only one, *yachid*, reveals and manifests only in the *sefirah* of wisdom. That is part of Isaac being the wise son. Now we understand why the wise son makes his father Abraham happy. Abraham says I was only able to teach the world one, but you (who married only one woman) are in a certain sense even wiser than me, you teach and bring to the world one and only one, *yachid*.

Now after the first four levels of the soul, the crown and three faculties of mind, we turn to the attributes of the heart:

Chesed - Love:

The first attribute of the heart is love. We said that from birth, Isaac naturally manifested the opposite attribute, fear, the left of the heart. Love is the right of the heart. During the Akeida he assumed love, but what besides that in his day to day life? The ability for fear to manifest as love is in the Crown, depending on his self-sacrifice. But does Yitzchak have innate love? Is he a naturally loving person? Does he just love things? Amazingly, although he is associated with fear, we find a greater spectrum of

loving in Yitzchak than in anyone else. The Torah tells of three different things that he loves. Yitzchak is the first to love his wife, as it says in the Torah. Obviously Abraham loved Sarah, but it doesn't say so explicitly. Perhaps it doesn't have to say. The first appearance of a letter, word or idea in the Torah determines its meaning. The first time that the Torah tells us that someone loved his wife is regarding Yitzchak. Afterwards, we find that Jacob also loved his wife very much. His father taught him by example. Yitzchak also loves his son; not only his good son, but his bad son. It is no great innovation to love your good son. But loving your evil son is real love, to be full of love. He knows he's a bad son and he loves him.

He also loves good food, delicacies. Yitzchak says to his son Esau: *Aseh li matamim kaasher ahavti*. "Prepare for me delicacies that I love." Why does he love good food? On the next level, fear, we will explain that Yitzchak is the element of fire. Abraham is the element of water and Jacob is the element of air. But Isaac is fire, fire consumes, the word to consume in Hebrew means to eat. Since he is fire, he loves consuming - but only delicacies.

Everything about Isaac is surprising because you are supposed to laugh when you think about him. He is the most natural loving person in the Bible. We do not find anyone else in the Bible who loves three different things. His wife, his bad son and food. A real lover.

[Addition: It is written in the Arizal that Yitzchak has so much love because he is the son of Abraham, "These are the generations of Isaac, the son of Abraham, Abraham begot Isaac." Even though the son is different than his father, he is still his father's son.]

Gevurah: Fear

It is clear how Yitzchak relates to gevurah, fear. The three things that Yitzchak loves, as above, are not God. How does Yitzchak relate to God naturally? At the moment of the binding, he related to God with absolute and infinite love. But in general in his life, Yitzchak serves God with fear - so much so that in relation to him, God is referred to as *Pachad Yitzchak*, the "fear of Yitzchak," which is even more than *yirah*. Yitzchak served God with fear and trembling. When he thinks that he made a mistake by blessing Yaakov instead of Esau, it is written that he trembled. He had an affinity for trembling. We are familiar with the Baal Shem Tov as a great lover of God and Israel. But he feared God so much that a glass of water at the other end of the room would tremble from his trembling. That trembling and fear, fear of God, is the simple manifestation of fear in the soul of Isaac.

Gevurah is also called *midat hadin*, judgement, as it represents severe judgement, the spiritual service of the first day of Rosh Hashanah. The entire month of Iyar is the

month of Isaac. But the special holiday that corresponds to Isaac is Rosh Hashanah. The shofar that we blow is from the ram sacrificed in place of Isaac. The first day of Rosh Hashanah - in the Torah there is only one day - is *gevurah*, *dina kashya*, "severe judgment", Isaac. Of the three holidays of the year, Isaac corresponds to Shavuot, the culmination of sefirat haomer. He has two holidays, Rosh Hashanah and Shavuot. Rosh Hashanah is the Day of Judgement, *dina kashya*, severe judgment, is relevant to it - *gevurah*.

The phrase for Isaac's level of severe judgment, *dina kashya*, equals Beit Din, a Jewish court. In the Torah, the name for the attribute of judgment is Elokim. Jewish judges are also called Elokim, just like God. Elokim is called *midat hadin*, the attribute of judgement, the level of Yitzchak. That is why when he was born his mother said *tzchok asa li Elokim*, "Elokim gave me the laughter" of this son that I am now calling laughter.

There were three angels who came to bear the tidings of Yitzchak's birth to his parents in the following year. After that, they arose and went to destroy Sodom as messengers of God. Sodom was the most wicked of civilizations. The Arizal says that because they gave the tidings of the birth of Yitzchak to Abraham and Sarah, that is why the next move was to destroy Sodom, because Yitzchak is judgement. Just giving the tidings of his birth was enough to motivate the angels to destroy the city of Sodom. These are all examples of the *gevurah* of Yitzchak.

Tiferet - Mercy

What about Yitzchak's attribute of mercy? Abraham, his father, is *Av Harachamaim*. What about Yitzchak's own mercy? He wanted to bless the bad son, Esau, but in the end, Jacob and his mother, Rivkah, - of course as part of God's plan - took action so that Jacob received Yitzchak's blessing. When he realized that he had blessed the wrong son - so he thought - he began to tremble. Immediately, though, Yitzchak acknowledged that Jacob was blessed through him and said, "And he will be blessed." I blessed him unwittingly, I thought he was my other son, but he is blessed. Then Esau starts to cry, "Dear father, do you only have one blessing? Bless me also." At that moment, Yitzchak's mercy was aroused. Crying arouses mercy. Innately, he loved Esau, but at this moment that he had to consciously acknowledge that his blessing did go to Jacob, his mercy was awakened. Esau was able to arouse his mercy. That is the reason that he also blesses Esau. He himself has mercy. There is an expression that mercy redeems love. It restores Yitzchak's love for Esau.

The essence of mercy is Jacob himself. That is his attribute, *tiferet*, mercy. The origin of mercy is the crown, where there is no knowledge of whom I blessed. By unwittingly blessing Jacob, Isaac realized that the one that I blessed is the essence of mercy, my son, for from might (Isaac) comes mercy (Jacob). That is the order of the sefirot. Also, when he wanted to bless Esau, it stemmed less from love and more from

mercy – he hoped that this would be the way to influence him to do teshuvah. Yitzchak's thought to bless the bad son, as explained in Kabbalah and Chassidut, is that even though he is bad, my blessing is so potent that it will arouse him to return. That very thought is a mercy-level thought. Having mercy on his soul. Yitzchak loved Esau because he saw through his *ruach hakodesh*, prophetic spirit, the great sparks of holiness in Esau. Rebbe Akiva, Rabbi Meir and other very great souls to be mentioned below. He had mercy on those souls. But in the end he saw that God wanted him to bless Jacob and not Esau, for Jacob is the essence of mercy and deserves the mercy, and not Esau. It is written that Rivkah realized that even Yitzchak's potent blessing would not be sufficient to influence Esau to repent as he had hoped. But after having blessed Jacob and acknowledging it, his mercy is awakened once more on Esau. When he cried it touched him to the depths of his heart and he blessed him as well (a blessing that was fit for him after the greater blessings had reached Jacob).

Netzach - Victory

Next is *netzach*, victory or eternity. The ultimate victory is the victory over the angel of death. That is the relation between victory and eternity, eternal life. The soul in the Torah who explicitly lives a full life is Isaac. According to the Sages there were people who lived longer than Isaac, but the Jewish person with the longest lifespan in the Bible is Yitzchak. Abraham should have lived to 180, but in order not to see Esau go bad, God took five years from his life. Jacob lived 147 years. But Yitzchak lived a full life, 180 = 10 times *chai*. Life is *chai*. Like when you give charity, you give multiples of 18. Full life is multiples of *chai*. Yitzchak lived the most complete life, ten times *chai* is completion, indicating that each one of the ten levels of the soul is completely alive. Ten times *chai*, 180 years of Yitzchak. Relative to all other souls in the Bible, Yitzchak is the eternal soul with his 180 years.

Hod – Acknowledgement

Hod, the next level, also relates to Yitzchak's state of completion. He is called "a completer offering" to God. As above, it is for that reason that he is not allowed to leave Israel, *Gur ba'aretz*, "Live in the Promised Land". The relation between *Netzach* and *Hod* is a male female relation and also a time space relation. Relatively, time and space are male and female in the Torah. Yitzchak is complete in time - his complete lifespan of 180. He is also complete in space, in his total identity more than any other figure in the Bible with the Land of Israel.

This also relates to the month of Iyar, which in our modern times has to do with the return to the Land of Israel. We learn from Yitzchak to totally identify with the Land - that the Land and I are one and only one. It is written that the four letters of the name Yitzchak, *יצחק*, allude to the four names of the Land of Israel. The first letter, *yud*, is Eretz Yisrael, the Land of Israel. The second letter, *tzaddik*, is Eretz Tzvi, the Land of the Deer. The third letter, *chet*, is Eretz Chaim, the Land of Life and the fourth is *kuf*, Eretz Kodesh, the Holy Land. The four letters of Yitzchak's name are the four different names of the Land of Israel, with which he totally identifies and acknowledges. This is holy space identity.

Yesod - Foundation

The next level is yesod. Isaac is the first soul to be circumcised as God commanded Abraham, on the eighth day. Circumcision is the holy covenant with God, relating to *Yesod*, Foundation in the soul. The first person to have that mitzvah performed on him completely is Yitzchak.

The Zohar says that the permutation of the name Yitzchak divides into two words: *יצח-קץ* *Keitz Chai*, the living end. *Keitz chai*, the end of living, coincide with the fact that Yitzchak lived for 10 times 18, *chai*, years. The Arizal says that *keitz chai* has to do with Yitzchak's total rectification of his Yesod. In any organism, at the end of the organic process there are dead cells. Dead cells at the end are superfluous matter. If there is something superfluous, it creates vulnerability to external forces that can suck from it. For example, if a person does a good deed or has a spiritual experience, if at the end of a spiritual process a person receives self-gratification, just a little bit of arrogance or pride in himself, this is something dead at the end of the experience that gives energy to evil. This is the blemish of foundation. *Keitz chai* means that the very end is alive just like the beginning and the continuum. Simply put: At the end of a spiritual experience, there can be some dead cells, which gives rise to wasting energy. Yitzchak is *keitz chai*, alive from beginning to end. This has to be contemplated very deeply. His end is still alive. If your end is still alive, you will never die, it goes back to Netzach. The Arizal says Yitzchak's characteristic of *keitz chai* is Yesod.

Malchut - Kingdom

Finally, Malchut, corresponds to the union of Yitzchak and Rivkah, as above. Together, Yitzchak and Rivkah equal prayer. They pray. Prayer is the Malchut principle (malchut possesses nothing of its own, it has to beseech God for everything it needs). There are special prayers of Yitzchak in the Torah. He goes out to the field to prayer. A field also corresponds to Malchut. "And Isaac went out to converse in the field as

evening approached". He went out to the field to converse with God, a special type of prayer, spontaneously conversing with God in the field. What was he praying for? For a wife. Yitzchak was praying to receive a male soul so that he would be worthy of marrying. After he married at the age of forty, and when they were married for 20 years and didn't yet have children, it says that Yitzchak supplicated God together with his wife for children. He prayed to God together with his wife. Each one looked at the other. The special prayer of Isaac for marriage and children is relevant to everybody – if you need to be married or you need to have children, you must pray to God. Those two special prayers are prayers of Yitzchak. Prayer is Malchut.

All righteous converts are an expression of kingdom. We generally think that righteous converts have to do with Abraham, who was himself a convert as was his wife. Abraham and Sarah devoted themselves to convert men and women respectively. Our Sages teach that all the Forefathers converted people, each in his own way. Abraham was the first to teach monotheism to the world. Yitzchak taught the uniqueness, the singularity of monotheism, the *yachid* that is more than the *echad*. This is also a type of conversion.

The Hebrew word for conversion, *giur*, is relevant to Yitzchak. *Ger*, a convert, is the same as *gur*, to live. God commanded Yitzchak to live (*gur*) in the Land of Israel and the Torah says that Jacob lived in the land of his father's *megurim*, the place where his father Isaac lived.

The first place Yitzchak lived was called Gar. Not only did he live, but the very place he lived was Gar, which also means "to tow". Yitzchak was towing in a multitude of converts in his lifetime and after.

One of the greatest converts in the history of the Jewish People was Onkelus, who translated the Torah into Aramaic. It is such a holy translation that we read it every week when we learn the portion of the week. Onkelos is a reincarnation of the grandson of Isaac, Esau's son Elifaz who grew up in Isaac's home. This is also an example of mercy. Esau sent Elifaz to kill Jacob, but because he grew up in Isaac's home and had some affinity to him, he had mercy on his uncle Jacob and did not kill him. Afterwards he became one of the three friends of Job, Elifaz. He reincarnated as Onkelus. That is his rectification. The power of this conversion is the power to write a holy translation of the Torah for the sake of people who are not fluent in the original Hebrew, is obviously very important in our times. It is the power to translate the Torah, the word of God. Onkelus had an amazing ability to convert people. He was the nephew of the emperor of Rome, and the Romans sent bands of soldiers to arrest him. Onkelus had tremendous charisma to teach Torah to the soldiers coming to arrest him and he converted them, three groups, one after the other. Try to think how that could happen today. The power to teach Torah to the police who come to arrest you and you convert them. Three times. This power is pertinent to the soul of Onkelus. It comes from the soul of Isaac.

In general, conversion and translation are malchut. Just like Isaac is prayer, he is also translation. Isaac was a mommy's boy, so how should a person spontaneously converse with God in the field? In his mother tongue. That is a malchut realization. Above Malchut one should pray in Hebrew, but at the level of Malchut we speak spontaneously with God in our mother tongue. This is malchut, the power of Onkelus the convert.

Let us end with a Paradox: Yitzchak is totally one and only one. The One and Only God, Land and wife. At the same time, he translates Torah and prayer into whatever language is good for you and for whatever is pertinent to the generation.

[Addition: We didn't have time to talk about the wells. The Arizal says that it is the Gevurot of Imma (Mother), which are the root of Yitzchak in "Ani Binah", that dig the well in Malchut, as in the verse *be'er chafaruha sarim*, (Numbers 21:18) "The well that the princes dug". In essence, Yitzchak's digging of wells extends from Imma until Malchut, from the upper *hei* to the lower *hei*. It is written that the numerical value of Yitzchak, himself, is בור *bor*, pit. *Vehabor reik ein bo mayim* (Genesis 37:24) "And the pit was empty, there was no water in it," – alluding to Yitzchak of the opposing forces, which has snakes and scorpions. Yitzchak is a pit that contains water, but there is a pit that has no water: one of the four *Avot Nezikin*, Main Categories of Damages, corresponding to the Inanimate realm – dust. In order to turn a pit (*bor*=208) into a well (*be'er* = 203) we have to subtract 5, *hei*, from *bor* and then it turns into a *be'er*. When God added the *hei* to Abraham, He took *hei* (5), from the *yud* in Sarai and gave it to Abraham. We see that He specifically subtracted *hei* from the *nukba*, the female figure. As Yitzchak is an aspect of *nukba*, *hei* must be subtracted from *bor* and then it turns into a *be'er*.

The names of the well that Yitzchak dug are also a progression of Malchut. There are many explanations about the wells, but according to the simple understanding, there are many *dinim* (judgements) of Malchut, as in the saying *Dina d'malchuta dina*, "the law (judgement) of the kingdom (malchut) is the law". Malchut has both severe judgement, *dina kashya*, and light judgement, *dina rafya*. The well Esek is relatively severe judgement and the well Sitna is relatively lighter judgement. The ultimate goal is the well Rehovot, the source of the digging of the well by reaching Imma, an aspect of Rehovot, which will also shine in Malchut as is, without judgements.]

Questions and Answers:

There is a stereotype of Jewish mamma's boys. Does the Torah prefer mamma's boys or papa's boys? How did Yitzchak transform from a female soul to a male soul and how can I do that?

The Arizal says that Yitzchak was a feminine soul. Was he a special feminine soul or just a general feminine soul? The Arizal says Yitzchak was not only a feminine soul, but he was *the* reincarnation of Eve, the very first woman. That already sounds very interesting, that Isaac is Eve. Eve is called the mother of all life, *em kol chai*. This is connected with Yitzchak's mother affinity principle and where we placed Yitzchak's laughter principle. To become a male, Yitzchak had to assume or be given the soul of Eve's second son, Abel. Adam and Eve also had a good and bad son just like Yitzchak and Rivkah, the bad son was really bad and killed the good son (just like Esau wanted to do to Jacob). All souls come from one of these two sons. Cain or Abel. There is a very special numerical relation between **Eve** (Chava) 19, and **Hevel** (Abel) 37. Eve 19 is the midpoint of Hevel 37. We talked about a mommy's boy and a daddy's boy. Cain is closer to Adam. **Adam's** name letters multiplied equals exactly 160, the value of **Cain**. But the mother is the midpoint of Hevel. Later after Hevel was killed by Cain, Eve gave birth to a baby boy called Seth (שֵׁט), "for from him the world was founded (הוֹשַׁתָּה)". The Torah says that Seth is a replacement for Hevel, "instead of Hevel, because Cain killed him". This is *the* verse in the Torah that almost explicitly says reincarnation. It says that Seth was born in place of Hevel.

The Arizal says that at the moment that Abraham reveals to Isaac that he is the lamb to be sacrificed, *haseh leolah bni*, the first letters of that phrase letters spell Hevel. At that moment, Yitzchak began to receive the soul of Hevel.

The Arizal says that if a male is born with a feminine soul, in order to marry, there is no other alternative but to identify with his body. If he is born with a male body, he has to be a male and marry. The Arizal says whoever is born with a male body but a feminine soul he will at a certain point in his lifetime be placed in great danger. There will be some moment in his life that he will be in such danger, something so traumatic that he will die at a certain level, from the trauma. He will experience a death experience and at that moment, he will be reborn with a male element. It doesn't mean that his feminine affinity will be dissolved, but he will receive a masculine ability to marry and give birth.

(The real expression is a mamma's boy or a daddy's girl. In Chassidic tradition there are daddy's girls. It is not so simple to find a daddy's girl in the Torah, but there are such in Chassidic tradition.)

The other examples of mamma's boy according to the Arizal are three other great souls in the Bible. These are souls referred to as sons of their mother and not of the father. Samuel the Prophet, Shmuel Hanavi, is such a soul. He is like Moshe and Aharon together.

In the Bible he is referred to as the son of his mother, Chana. He belonged to Chana, he was just around his father, but whatever his mother says, that's what goes according to this child. His mother, when she weaned him gave him to the Temple, but nonetheless he is his mother's son. The near-death experience of Isaac is the binding. Each of these mamma's boys had an almost death experience. At a very early age Shmuel said a law in the presence of his mentor, Eli Hakohen that when one brings a sacrifice to the Temple, it doesn't have to be slaughtered by a priest. Afterwards, the priest has to perform all the other services, but the slaughtering can be done by any Jew, not just a priest. This was a very special, novel law in the Torah. Shmuel was a child and said it in the presence of his mentor, Eli Hakohen. Eli wanted to kill him, as per the law, "Whoever says a new law in the presence of his mentor deserves death." If not for Shmuel's mother who came and begged for his life, Shmuel would have been killed. Shmuel experienced that. He went through a death experience.

The second is the prophet Jonah, the son of his mother, the Tzorfit. He actually did die, and the prophet Elijah resurrected him. We see here again that he is called the son of his mother, not of his father.

The third is the prophet Havakuk, he also died as a child and was resurrected by Elisha. He is referred to as the son of his mother, the Shunamit. Jonah's second death experience was being thrown into the sea and swallowed by a fish. He had two death experiences. First he died and was resurrected and then he had another death experience. These three figures – Shmuel, Jonah and Havakuk - come from the soul root of Isaac.

As history proceeds, God makes things easier. Still there has to be a small traumatic event in the life of a female soul in a male body. But through overcoming that, one can merit to do God's will, God wants you to overcome your first nature and assume your second nature, which is your truth. Everyone – even those who do not have to turn from feminine to masculine - is born with a first nature, but that is not his true essence. His true essence requires work and service to assume a second nature. The numerical value of *teva sheni*, second nature, is the same as *emet*, truth. It is your true self. Everyone has to go through this passage from first nature to second nature. The first nature is *tohu*, chaos, the second nature is rectification. The truth is the rectification, the second nature.

What about the opposite? The male soul in the female body?

That is what we said, there is a mommy's boy and a daddy's girl. In a certain sense, this is even more common in our culture. I am not using the psychological terminology for this, everybody know it. All of these concepts come from the Torah. To find an example of a girl so connected to her father that she almost doesn't need a mate – who needs a boyfriend when you have your father? That phenomenon exists, but it is not so simple to find an example in the Torah. With regard to Dinah, it is written that she is the daughter of her mother. In Chassidic tradition, the Baal Hatanya had two such daughters. One is the

famous Devorah Leah, the mother of the Tzemach Tzedek, who literally gave up her life to save her father. She just asked that her father would raise her son, who became the third Rebbe. That is one daughter, with absolute self-sacrifice to save her father. The second daughter, Fraidah, did not sacrifice her life, but she was so wise that much of the deep discourses of Chassidut, her father taught her. There are other examples of great sages who taught their daughters. There is the Or Hachaim (but he did not have sons). But the Alter Rebbe had a son, who was to be his successor. Nevertheless, he taught some of the deepest concepts to his daughter. Of all the children of the Alter Rebbe, only one merited to be buried next to him: This is an entire story. Beside the fact that generally the woman buried next to a man is his wife, Fraidah, to whom he gave over his deepest wisdom is buried next to her father, the Alter Rebbe. Both are not buried in their native place, but in a far-away place, Haditch. These are two examples of daughters totally devoted to their father.

Before we mentioned converts. Every convert also goes through a total metamorphosis, like a new born soul. Throughout Jewish history we find that perhaps the majority of converts are women. There are certainly examples of great converts who were male, Rabbi Akiva, Rebbe Meir, Shmaya and Avtalyon, Onkelus, Avraham ben Avraham who gave up his life to sanctify God's Name. Nevertheless, the deep secret of conversion is female. King Solomon thought that by converting and marrying 1000 princesses of other nations, he would convert the whole world. The princess is the essence of a nation. By marrying them, he thought he would rectify and convert the entire world. But it wasn't according to the Torah. The Torah says that a king should not take many wives. Solomon should have learned from Isaac, who married only one wife.

Every woman who desires to convert to Judaism is in a sense a male soul in a female body. Why? The Rebbe was asked what is the difference between a Jew and non-Jew, he answered that a Jew is a giver, the male principle, and a non-Jew is a receiver, female. So any non-Jew who wishes to become a Jew, a giver, the male principle, is like a male soul in a female body. This means that there is originally a male element in this woman, which motivates her to convert.

What about a Jewish girl born with a male element? Perhaps she wants to become a Torah scholar? That is fine, that is why we have Torah schools for girls. This is one of the foundations of the Chassidic tradition: that there were women who knew Torah better than the rabbis of their communities. There is nothing wrong with this. If a girl wants to become a great Torah scholar and righteous person, she should go right ahead. The whole concept of conversion is a male soul in a female body. There are thirteen famous women converts – this is a separate topic.

How can we cause ourselves to laugh if it is difficult? Why is laughter the best medicine?

mission, you may be influenced. But if you are on a true mission, the good son will influence the bad son. If you are a Chassid, you have the power of the Rebbe who sent you behind you.

How can a woman affect the rectification of Eve in her psyche? What is the blade of the turning sword in the psyche and how can she overcome it to re-enter the Garden of Eden and reach the tree of life in her soul?

This is a hard question. Not only women have to get to the Tree of Life – everybody does. God set the turning sword to prevent everyone from entering the Garden of Eden. We have to overcome that sword. There are many interpretations for what that means. One interpretation is that it means a state of doubt in the soul. Something turning over and over is a psychological lack of confidence in the soul, doubt about one's ability, mission or faith. The psyche is turning over and is unclear. God is certain. His Name is certain. The archenemy of the Jews is **Amalek**, who equals doubt, *safek*. The Rebbe said, "Mashiach now". What prevents the redemption now is that every person has a point of negative skepticism: Can Mashiach really come now? Is the world really ready for him? I go outside, read the newspaper, can Mashiach come at this moment? That is the blade of the turning sword that prevents us – both men and women - from entering the Garden of Eden.

We are approaching Pesach Sheni. We all need a blessing for a second opportunity. Afterwards is Lag Baomer, we need a blessing to connect to the inner dimension of the Torah.

Isaac is called the element of fire, connected to the fire of Lag Baomer. It is written that in this world, people are afraid, particularly of fire. Yitzchak fears God, but in this world, people are afraid of fear, they have a special fear of fire. In this time, the element of fire cannot lead the Jewish People. Leadership pertains to this month. One of the phenomena of Mashiach and redemption is that the leadership will be fire. It says in Chassidut that the revealed dimension of the Torah is likened to water and people are drawn to water. The inner dimension of the Torah is likened to fire, but people flee fire. Chassidut brings the fire of the inner dimension of the Torah and brings it to the face of each and every person. This fire has to be brought personally to each person. They are afraid and you have to show them it does not burn, not only that - but it is the most blissful experience imaginable. This is also bringing the fire of Yitzchak. In Kabbalah it is written that the fire of Yitzchak is the leadership of the future. In the desert God led us with a pillar of fire and this experience of the pillar of fire will be this Motzai Shabbat. Every Motzai Shabbat we make Havdalah on a fire, a candle. But this Motzai Shabbat is Lag Baomer, a big Yitzchak experience.