

THE LAST LAUGH OF HISTORY

by Rabbi Label Lam

And these are the generations of Yitzchok the son of Avraham; Avraham begot Yizchok. (Breishis 25:19)

This is the segment in the Torah where Yitzchok Avinu is most on display. Yet he is still the most invisible of the three Patriarchs. His words are sparse and sparing, and the record of his activities is minimal. Why is it so? It is very easy to explain. Avraham discovered in HASHEM's world and modeled his life on a paradigm of ultra-kindliness. That was his vehicle for relating to HASHEM and the world around. Sefer Orah writes, "Then Yitzchok came, and he added by making known the attribute of fear. That if one does not serve Him, one will be punished like a servant who rebels against his master. He placed terror and awe upon people, and entered them under the wings of the Shechina."

While Chessed inspires action, Yira arouses a sense of restraint! Both are necessary. There are 248 activity Commandments (248 is the numerical value of the name Avraham) and there are 365 Commandments to refrain. Now Avraham's work in the world is noticeable. He was feeding and reaching and teaching the world. Yira- restraint is not something can be seen. When one holds back a juicy tidbit of Loshon Hora, what is the sound it makes? How is it tangibly recognizable?! Of course Yitzchok is not nearly as visible as Avraham.

Here is another mystery about Yitzchok: His name! Before he was born, HASHEM had already designated a name, but the Torah records Sara's reaction as a prophetic fulfillment. And Sara said, "G-d has made (Tzchok) joy for me; whoever hears will rejoice (Yitzchok) over me." (Breishis 21:6) The name of the man of fear and awe is laughter!

It's not just plain fear we are talking about either. As the verse explains, "Had not the G-d of my father, the G-d of Avraham and the Fear (PACHAD) of Yitzchok been for me, you would now have sent me away empty handed...(Breishis 31:42) Yizchok is associated with PACHAD! The Chofetz Chaim explains that PACHAD, also translated as fear, means a fright that is nearby, hovering close. Eima- would connote a fear far away. How is the man of PACHAD the man of LAUGHTER?

Let us try a few approaches! Yitzchok excelled in drawing himself into greater proximity of HASHEM. A student opens the door of the class and tries to tempt his classmates to cut the next the period. He doesn't see that the teacher is standing quietly behind the door. The other students see it. He pleads with them and uses all his charm of seduction but to no avail. When he leaves, the class erupts in laughter. How foolish he makes himself to be talking that way with the image of the Rebbe

towering over him in the background.

Yitzchok had such clarity on the imminence of HASHEM that any offer by the Yetzer Hora was laughable. He stood on a lofty perch where he could observe the folly of a world tempted by and terrorized by trivialities and remain unimpressed.

The father in law of the previous Lubavicher Rebbe was in jail in Russia for sedition- that is helping Jewish communities settling in Israel. He was being pistol whipped by an overzealous guard who wanted to strike fear in him. He is reputed to have told the man with the gun, "Put away that toy! It can only scare a man who believes in one world and many gods. I believe in two worlds and One G-d!"

The Talmud Brachos 31a tells us: It is forbidden for a person to fill his mouth with laughter in this world, as it says, "Then He will fill our mouths with laughter." A similar sentiment is found in Sefer Tehillim, speaking about the end of times, "He Who dwells in Heaven will laugh; my Master mocks them." (Tehillim 2:4) Yitzchok's name really means, "Will Laugh". While the world satirizes the Nation of Israel and rejects HASHEM, He and we- Yitzchok's children are promised the best and **the last laugh of history**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.