

TRUTH UNTO ETERNITY

Parshas Vayairo

By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach

When Abraham is promised Sarah will bear him a son, after he already had a son Yishmoel, through Hagar, Hashem tells him "AVOL (however) your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you shall call him Yitzchok, and I will fulfill My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him" (Beraishis 17:19). Targum Unkeles interprets the word AVOL "b'KUSHTA", Aramaic for "in truth". It is obvious, accordingly, that Yitzchok and his offspring are the foundation of truth. It signifies that from Yitzchok will emerge the nation of Torah, the Zenith, the culmination, the heart of truth. "Emes" refers to Torah (Brochos 5a).

"The Torah of Hashem is perfect... The testimony of Hashem is trustworthy... the judgments of Hashem are true..." (Tehilim 19:8-10).

The Bracha, after reading a Parsha (b'Tzibur) emphasizes the everlastingness of the truth, "Toras Emes, V'Chayai Olom".

The Divrei Yechezkel, of Shiniva, elaborates on the Targum's translation "B'Kushta" (in truth). The emphasis on Kushta in connection with the birth of Yitzchok is a sequence to the mention, in the preceding sentence, of Yishmoel, who, in contrast, was lacking the character of Kushta.

The Shiniver maintains this thesis in Parshas Vayairo, in the Akaida. The portion of the Akaida begins "and it happened after these things that Hashem tested Abraham..." (with Akeidas Yitzchok). "After these things..." What things? Rashi quotes the Midrash that it refers to the contention between Yishmoel and Yitzchok, in which Yishmoel claimed supremacy because he was circumcised at the age of thirteen and could have refused but did not. To this Yitzchok responded "I would even give my whole life to Hashem." This resulted in the Akaida. Yishmoel's claim, says the Shiniver, was not true, because in fact he was forced.

One proof is the sentence "On that very day was Abraham circumcised ("NIMOL" in the singular) and Yishmoel his son" (17:26). Referring to two people, it should have said "NIMOLU" in the plural. However, only Abraham was with Rotzon (intentional), Yishmoel was not.

The Akaida, which occurred as a result of the "these words" between Yishmoel and Yitzchok, was thus an expression of truth, the highest level of truth, which remains forever. We conclude the blessing on Rosh Hashanah "And Your word is true and endures forever." As a symbol of truth, everlasting truth, the Akaida remains a great merit to Israel forever. On Rosh Hashanah in Zichronos we conclude with the supplication "May You mercifully remember TODAY the Akaida of Yitzchok for the sake of his offspring".

The Book of Micha concludes (7:20) "Grant truth to Yaakov, kindness to Abraham..." Yaakov, in Jewish tradition, is the symbol of truth, and Abraham the symbol of Chesed (kindness). What about Yitzchok? Does Micha ignore him? In fact, however, Yaakov is "granted" truth, whereas Yitzchok initiated truth from birth, as the Targum (above) says about him B'Kushta. It is from Yitzchok that Yaakov inherited the principle.

So why is Yaakov, and not Yitzchok, mentioned in connection with Emes? The answer is Truth, means lastingness, which is proven by the tenacious adherence of the principle by the son. The greatest compliment regarding truth is showered upon Yitzchok, by demonstrating the principle kept by his son, and continues forever.

The very Shema Yisroel was recited originally by the children of Yaakov, Yaakov responding Boruch Shaim... (Psochim 56a). Teaching children Torah is one of the basics mentioned in the portion of Shema. The word "Emes" is thus appropriately attached at the conclusion of Shema, for Emes means eternal truth.

