

תולדות

יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת יִצְחָק בֶּן אַבְרָהָם הַיְיִשָּׁרִי
 יִצְחָק: כִּי וַיְהִי יִצְחָק בֶּן אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בְּקַחְתּוֹ אֶת רֵבְקָה
 אֵת אַבְרָהָם אֹלֶיֶד יִתְּצָחֵק: כִּי וַהְיֶה יִצְחָק בֶּן אַבְרָהָם
 אֵת וְאֵלֶּיךָ תּוֹלְדֹת יִצְחָק בֶּן אַבְרָהָם

(יט) ואלה תולדות יצחק. יעקב ועשו האמורים צפרשה: אברהם הוליד את יצחק. (ס"א לאחר שקרא הקדוש צנוך הוא שמו אזרהס אחר כך הוליד את יצחק. דצר אחר, על ידי שכתב הכחוצ יצחק בן אזרהס הווקק לומר אזרהס הוליד את יצחק, לפי שהיו ליצני הדור אומרים מאצמלך נתעצרה שרה, שהרי כמה שנים שהתה עם אזרהס ולא נתעצרה הימנו, מה עשה הקדוש צנוך הוא, זר קלסתר פניו של יצחק דומה לאזרהס והעידו הכל אזרהס הוליד את יצחק. וזהו שכתב כאן יצחק בן אזרהס (היה), שהרי עדות יש שאזרהס הוליד את יצחק: (כ) בן ארבעים שנה. שהרי כשצא אזרהס מהר המוריה נתצצר שנולדה רבקה, ויצחק היה בן ל"ו שנה שהרי צו צפרק מתה שרה, ומשנולד יצחק עד העקידה שמתה שרה ל"ו שנה, כי צת ז' היתה כשנולד יצחק וצת קכ"ז כשמתה, שנאמר (לעיל כג, א) וַיְהִי כִּי שָׂרָה וגו', הרי ליצחק ל"ו שנים

Abraham begot Isaac. We should note the difference between the language that the Torah uses regarding Isaac and the language used for Ishmael. This substantial difference sheds light on two different educational and moral approaches to raising children. Here, the Torah tells us, *These are the generations of Isaac son of Abraham: Abraham begot, Isaac.* However, in regard to Ishmael, we read, *these are the generations of Ishmael the son of Abraham, whom Hagar the Egyptian, the maidservant of Sarah, יָלְדָה, bore (25:12).* The formulation is almost identical, but there is a difference in the terms הוליד versus יָלְדָה.

The progeny of Ishmael multiply exponentially, occupy large swaths of territory, and are dispersed geographically. It appears that they accomplished their growth and territorial expansion by military might. There are no *Akeidos* in the lifetime of Ishmael. He grows freely, unencumbered by tension, struggles, or internecine quarrels.

The story of Isaac's family is quite the opposite. Isaac and Rebecca had only two children, whose births were complicated and painful. Their lives were riddled with conflict. Jacob was compelled to leave his paternal home to wander from place to place and was never able to establish himself in any one location for long. The covenantal community must pay a steep price for its accomplishments.

Sarah is often criticized for her banishment of Ishmael from the household, as it seems to demonstrate a lack of kindness. In reality Sarah was making a critical assertion about membership in the covenantal community. She prevented Ishmael from becoming part of the history of the covenant because his nature would not have allowed him to live the sacrificial life that the people of the covenant must live.

Abraham suggested that Ishmael be included in the covenant: *"Abraham said to God, 'O that Ishmael might live before You!'" (17:18)* But God Himself sanctioned Sarah's decision. Ishmael is not ready to live a life of heroism and self-sacrifice, which includes readiness for possible martyrdom. He cannot be part of the covenantal community.

All this is embedded in the two contrasting verbal forms for giving birth. The Hebrew word יָלְדָה, as applied to Ishmael, denotes a biological process of continuity. The Hebrew word הוליד, as applied to Isaac, implies a multi-generational educational process with an eternal effect. The plural form for the word הוליד is found on the verse in Genesis 50:23: *Joseph saw children of a third generation [born] to Ephraim; also the sons of Machir the son of Manasseh יָלְדוּ, were born, on Joseph's knees.* While יָלְדוּ is generally translated as born, according to Ibn Ezra, this term suggests raising and educating children.

TOLDOS

19 And these are the generations of Isaac the son of Abraham; Abraham begot Isaac.*

20 And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebecca* the daughter of Bethuel



The word הוליד includes the letter *heh*. What additional dimension does the letter *heh* indicate, and why is it connected to Abraham becoming the father of Isaac?

On the verse (15:5) *And He took him outside, and He said, "Please look heavenward and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So will be your seed,"* Rashi comments: *Abandon your astrology, through which you have seen in the signs of the zodiac that you are not destined to bear a son. Abram will not father a son, but Abraham will.* Before the addition of the letter *heh*, fatherhood and motherhood were natural institutions, impelled entirely by biological, mechanical drives which are common to the animal kingdom as well. The addition of the letter *heh* caused a dramatic change, introducing an element of teaching to fatherhood. This spiritual revolution was so novel that the Sages said of it, *One who teaches Torah to his friend's child is considered as having given birth to him (Sanhedrin 19a).*

The Torah considers children as gifts that God bestows out of grace. However, the strongest *kinyan* (legal hold of an object) applies to an item that is purchased, rather than given as a gift. Abraham refused to accept the Cave of Machpelah as a gift and paid the full price for it. King David bought the plot of land upon which the Temple was built. The city of Shechem was also purchased. All three sites play a pivotal role in Jewish history. Our ownership of them must be beyond all legal question.

So too, in a manner of speaking, parents must carry out a *kinyan*, a process of acquisition, in order to "reacquire" the child whom God gave to them as a gift. Abraham placed his son Isaac on the altar, displaying the ultimate in *mesirus nefesh*, so he could reacquire his child. As we educate, shape and guide our children, we, too, reacquire them.

The Sages derived this idea exegetically from 2:4: *These are the generations of the heavens and the earth בְּהִבְרָאָם, when they were created.* The exegesis is בְּהִבְרָאָם, *He created them with the letter heh.* A rearrangement of the letters results in the name Abraham (בְּאַבְרָהָם). God's message is that Abraham can become a creator by teaching, and then be transformed into the father of all mankind. Thus, according to Jewish law, Abraham, as *the father of a multitude of nations* (17:4), is also considered the father of all prospective converts.

Abraham הוליד, begot, Isaac demonstrates that this was much more than a mere biological link. The new and radical philosophy of parenthood that Abraham espoused was essential for the creation of the covenantal community. (*Darosh Darash Yosef*, pp. 70-71)

וַיְהִי יְצַחֵק בֶּן אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בְּקַחְתּוֹ אֶת רֵבֶקָה - *And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebecca.* *Gevurah* connotes retreat or withdrawal into one's private world. It is a joining with the Almighty. *Kedushah*, holiness, is also characterized by privacy and solitude. The verse at the end of *Parashas Bamidbar* states, *They shall not come in to see when the holy [vessels] are being wrapped up, lest they die (Num. 4:20).* The *aron hakodesh*, as the symbol of holiness, may not be exposed. It must be covered by a curtain. This is also inherent in the idea of the curtain that separates the outer sanctuary from the inner sanctuary, or Holy of Holies.

Isaac is the personification of the qualities of *gevurah* and *kedushah*. In contrast, marriage reflects expansion and extension of oneself to another. Prior to the *Akeidah*, therefore, Isaac had no