

Yitzchok Avinu

**Our Second Father:
His Name & Fame**

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## **Preface**

- Avraham, our first Father lived for 175 years. His name means the Father of a multitude of nations, Breishis 17:5.
- Yitzchok, our second Father lived for 180 years. His name means 'he will laugh,' with the joy of success in many ways – prosperity, overcoming obstacles, happiness in this world and the World to Come.
- Yaakov, our third Father lived 147 years. His name means 'he will win at the end.' All of the messages in the name of Yitzchok are included in this name.

The name Yitzchok is unique in that Hashem instructed them to call their son by this name, Breishis 17:19.

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Thus the name Yitzchok is loaded with many insights, including to know how significant it is for a person to always practice joy and laughter.

1. Laughing

Why is laughing so important that it is the name of one of our three Avos?

We know that the three Avos represent:

Avrohom - Chesed,

Yitzchok - Avoda, and

Yaakov - Torah.

Why is it that Yitzchok is the one who has the name for joy?

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Another question is why in Pirkei Avos 1:2 where we list the three Pillars of the world we say: Torah, Avoda and Chesed. Why is Avoda used to include service of prayer (Torah study and kindness are also forms of serving Hashem)?

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One answer is that prayer is the greatest form of interaction with Hashem when we can speak directly to Hashem. Thus, we apply the verse of Tehilim 100 – “Serve Hashem with joy, come before Him with song.”

2. Singing

“Whoever sings to Hashem in this world will be rewarded to continue on in the World to Come,” as we say in Ashrei from Tehilim 84:5 -

- “Happy and fortunate are those who dwell in Your house (and sing Your praises), they shall continue to praise You forever,” Sanhedrin 91b.

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“This would be the place to prepare for the eternal rewards of the World to Come,” Avos 4:16.

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Why is it that Hashem spends about three parshios on Avrohom, about six on Yaakov and only part of one on Yitzchok?

One answer is that Yitzchok specialized in Avoda b'simcha which is Tefilah. Avraham did more kiruv work as Chesed. He was involved with people and more activity. Yaakov was busy bringing truth to the world.

Yitzchok, however, specialized more in private prayer to Hashem. Thus, his activities were more secluded.

3. A Unique Well

There was a well called 'The place of Hashem Who always sees me,' Breishis 16:14. Avrohom also called it so in 22:14. Yitzchok also came there in 24:62 because that is where Hashem had sent an angel to appear to Hagar. Later on, Yitzchok even went to live there in 25:11.

This becomes a distinctive landmark which would help people come close to Hashem. Yitzchok also went to speak to Hashem in the field towards evening... 24:63. Our Sages explain that this is when he composed the daily Mincha Prayer.

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The word 'Suach,' 'to speak,' is used also in

- "Speak of Hashem's wonders," Tehilim 105:2,

- "Speak of your world," Tehilim 119:148.

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"Yitzchok also went to redig the wells that his Father had dug and he renamed them..." 26:18.

4. Meaningful Names

Avrohom had used names of wells to teach that Hashem is the Master and Provider of all. People would ask for a good water supply and they were told to go to that well of the 'Seeing G-d' or to 'the Well of the Supreme Master.'

Thus people began to become aware and were fluent with Hashem in their everyday speech. Thus when Yitzchok reinstated the wells, he brought back the great lessons about Hashem.

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Metaphorically, we learn in Bava Kama 17a that, "Water is a metaphor for Torah Study. Thus we connect also digging wells with digging deep into ourselves to refine our character to reach greatness.

1- According to the efforts and toil, we can reach pure water within ourselves,

2- The inner soul is in us... we need to delve into it and access our greatness, and

3- We have free will to choose to toil and gain greatness.

## 5. Deep Waters

Mishlei 20:5 describes:

“Deep waters of counsel are within one’s heart... a person can draw it up with understanding.”

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The Gemara Brochos 6b teaches one opinion that praying Mincha is the most powerful of the three prayers of the day. The Tur in Orach Chaim 232 explains why. Shacharis and Maariv are easier before one starts with other things and after the day ends, respectively. But Mincha is in the middle of the day, which can make it more challenging. Thus we should be careful to focus and pray sincerely, and Hashem will listen to Mincha more readily.

“According to the challenge the rewards are greater,” Avos 5:23.

True joy comes from releasing your inner treasures!

6. Secrets of his Name

Rashi in Breishis 17:19 explains why his name is Yitzchok -

1- Because of the laughing,

2- Each of the 4 Hebrew letters has a meaning -

- Yud - the 10 tests of his Father that produced him,
- Tzadi - the age of 90 of his mother when Yitzchak was born,
- Cheis - the eighth day when he had his Bris to connect him to his Creator, and
- Kuf – Avrohom's age at Yitzchok's birth... 100 years of greatness.

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There is a connection between the first insight and the second one - one joke can change a person's life!

There was a great Sage who asked Eliyahu Hanavi to show him some individuals who were destined to great levels in the World to Come. He pointed at two people who were jokers... they would use their talent to make people happy! Taanis 22a.

## 7. The Akeida

“The two of them went to together,” Breishis 22:6 and 22:8.

Even when Yitzchok figured out that he was the intended offering for Hashem, he did not hesitate. He trusted his Father’s word that it was a mitzvah from Hashem.

He lived completely to serve Hashem in every way possible. He knew his Father was a Prophet and he followed him with complete love and devotion.

On Rosh Hashanah we pray that Hashem remember this unique, once-in-history event with mercy for us always.

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This shows the highest level of fear and awareness of Hashem, Breishis 22:12. We learn in Brochos 6b that, “One who fears Hashem, his words will be appreciated by others.” This is explained, measure for measure, that when we listen to Hashem, He arranges it that others will listen to us. This explains why the Gemara also says, “When we pray Mincha, Hashem will surely listen to our prayers.”

8. Surprise!

In Yitzchok's life, we learn to defy so-called expectations, such as his miraculous birth when his parents were 100/90 years of age, and his survival through amazing challenges.

Laughter is a reaction we have to something unusual, surprising or mystifying. So too, when one experiences salvation from a seemingly hopeless situation.

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Thus we live with the hopes and prayers each day that will help merit speedily the time when "Our mouths will be filled with laughter," Tehilim 123:2.

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Thus the name Yitzchok reminds us-

1- to be thankful and grateful that we know we can expect soon the greatest laughter ever,

2- we need to thank Hashem daily also for the ongoing assistance and miracles that Hashem provides daily...

9. Three Requests

When the Gemara asks:

1- What can we do to become wise?

The answer is

- a) To study and
- b) To pray to the Master of all wisdom.

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2- How to become wealthy?

- a) Do business honestly and
- b) Pray to the Master of all wealth.

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3- For children...

- a) Marry the right one, and
- b) Pray to the Master of all children...

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These three requests parallel the prayer times instituted by the Avos:

Avrohom – Avrohom instituted Shacharis – prayer for wisdom, the source of all else. Chochom is equal in gematria to Chaim, 68=68. Wealth and children are explained below.

#### 10. Yitzchok = Wealth

The Torah teaches us how he prospered in Breishis 26:13. This unusual verse says three times that he became very great. The Rambam 9:1, says how he was the first to give 'Maaser'... We know from Taanis 9a that giving Maaser is the key to becoming wealthy.

Yitzchok instituted Mincha to continue and maintain ourselves throughout the day. This matches the blessing of wealth to help one continue to serve Hashem more and more.

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Yaakov has the most children... His prayer of Maariv matches that great Blessing...

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