THE TRIBE WEEKLY
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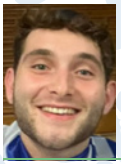
THE ROLE OF YITZCHAK



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Compared to the other two forefathers, Yitzchak (Isaac) appears to be the least prominent, yet there is a great amount to say about him. Whilst his father Avraham was a pioneer, and his son Yaakov (Jacob) a fighter, Yitzchak seems to have been passive in contrast to them. At the *Akedah*, the Binding of Yitzchak, the verse states, "God tested Avraham" (*Bereishit* 22:1) and not Yitzchak. Additionally, his name was not changed like those of the other two forefathers. Nevertheless, Yitzchak's role was equally important in a number of ways.

Yitzchak was a good follower of Avraham. His contribution to our forefathers was *gevurah* – strong commitment to the service of God - up to the very limit of being prepared to surrender his life at the *Akedah*.

Avraham's special distinction was *chesed*, kindness, but *chesed* needs *gevurah* to control it. For example: refusing a child's request to play with a sharp knife. Here the *gevurah* restrains the *chesed*, as the loving act of kindness is balanced by the necessary strength and boundaries of *gevurah* to prevent damage. Thus, *chesed* without *gevurah* leads to trouble and harm. Yitzchak builds on the work of Avraham. Moreover, Yitzchak is an excellent example of perseverance.

The ownership of his first two wells, which were dug by Yitzchak's servants, were disputed, and became objects of conflict. Only the third one, the one he built himself, remained his possession. Even if Yitzchak was unsuccessful the first two times, he dug another well and succeeded. Obstacles are there to be overcome. It is true we need leaders, but followers are equally important, especially those who portray great perseverance. Yitzchak plays a vital role in highlighting the importance of being a good follower. His actions exemplify why one should always persevere when faced with a challenge.

Parasha Word Scramble

Unscramble these words from the *parasha*:

A. EGRTNASIOEN

B. GANRPNEYC

C. ITGHRBITTR

D. ELHE

E. BRISTNORF

Answers: A. Generations B. Pregnancy C. Birthright D. Heel E. Firstborn