

Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife, because she was barren. Hashem allowed Himself to be entreated by him. (25:21)

Rashi explains that Hashem listened to Yitzchak's plea over that of Rivkah, because there is no comparison between the effect of the prayer offered by a *tzaddik ben tzaddik*, righteous person who is the son of a righteous person, to that of a *tzaddik ben rasha*, righteous person whose father was evil. *Rashi's* explanation is well-known, and it sets the standard for *tefillah*: A person's righteous lineage makes a difference. This obviously presents a question to the rational mind: Is the efficacy of the prayers of someone whose roots are murky intrinsically limited? One would assume that the *tefillos* of the person who has been able to overcome the spiritual adversity presented by his forebears, and aspire to a life of religious observance on the *tzaddik* level, would soar above and beyond, faster and with greater intensity than those of his counterpart who had forebears who taught him and positively influenced his thought process and way of life. *Rashi*, however, teaches us differently. Why?

The **Alter, zl, m'Kelm**, illuminates this quandary with a penetrating insight. Each of the Avos, Patriarchs, was a *tzaddik* in his own right. This means that he forged his own unique, individual path towards serving the Almighty. The *avodah* of Yitzchak *Avinu* was not exactly the same *avodah* as that of his father, Avraham *Avinu*. Likewise, the approach of Yaakov *Avinu* differed from the approach towards the same objective as his forbears; the means for achieving this goal was different. Avraham employed *chesed*, acts of loving kindness. Yitzchak established his own imprimatur.

Thus, being the son of Yitzchak made it much more difficult to institute a novel approach towards serving Hashem. In order to achieve such a groundbreaking feat, he had to dig deep, plumb the depths of the inner workings of *avodas* Hashem, so that he would be *mechanech*, innovate, a novel, yet untried, approach to serving Hashem.

The son of the *rasha* does not have it so hard. To supersede his forebears does not take very much effort. Hence, his achievements, although fraught with challenge every step of the way, are not as groundbreaking and do not require as much work as innovation. His prayer is laudable, but not to the extent of the *tzaddik ben tzaddik*.

Horav Mordechai Weinberg, zl, applies this thought to explain a difficulty presented by an earlier *pasuk*, which focuses on the relationship between Sheis and his father, Adam *HaRishon*. The Torah writes, "When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he begot [a son] in his likeness and in his image, and he named him Sheis" (*Bereishis* 5:3). The commentators explain that Hashem gave Adam the capacity for producing offspring who were also in his noble likeness. Sheis was not Adam's first child. What about Kayin and Hevel? Were they not created in Adam's likeness? Simply, their seed perished, leaving no remembrance of their creation. As a result, the

Torah did not prolong their description.

Based on the *Alter's chiddush*, novel exposition, *Horav* Weinberg explains that only Sheis followed in the righteous path of his father, Adam. As Adam's profound knowledge of the esoteric workings of the world allowed him to grow spiritually, as he delved deeper and deeper in the profundities of Creation, so, too, did Sheis. As Adam was righteous, so was Sheis. Kayin and Hevel did not achieve such distinction. They followed in their father's footsteps, but, unlike Sheis, they did not build and dig deeper to set their own standard of *avodas Hashem*. Following is important, but, at some point, one must take the lead.