

"And Avram said... what will your give me, seeing that I go childless and he that will be the possessor of my house is Eliezer of Damascus." (15:2)

Avraham *Avinu* entreated Hashem for a son, lest his servant Eliezer be the one to inherit his wealth. *Chazal* interpret the word *veanu* using the principle of *notaricon*, as a modified form denoting Eliezer's deeds. He would be *ohrjt k ucr ,ru,n veanu vkus*. He [Eliezer], *ks*, "drew" up his master's teachings and "gave of them to drink". He, *vean*, imparted [his master's teachings] to others." Avraham's request seems strange. He obviously had a student whose exemplary characteristic was his ability to impart all of his rebbe's teachings to others. Why did he need a son to do what his faithful servant had already effectively been accomplishing?

The *Shiniavor Rav z.l.*, offered the following observation. There are students who attempt to attain their teacher's level of *avodas Hashem* merely by parroting their actions. They copy the rebbe's external behavior. This sterile form of *mitzvah* observance is meaningless.

Avraham said to Hashem, "True, I have a wonderful servant who is faithful to everything I do. When he sees me performing a *mitzvah*, he responds by performing that *mitzvah* in the exact same manner. To what avail is all of this if he is merely copying me, if he does not add any of his own spirit and essence to the act? If there is no innovation of his own, it shows that he has not "acquired" my method of observance and "digested" it. He is merely going through the motions, pantomiming my actions without demonstrating that he has captured the essence of the *mitzvah*."

The fact that a *tzaddik* performs a *mitzvah* in a specific manner does not mandate that everyone should observe it in the exact same manner. One must adjust the method to suit his own level and needs. Otherwise, this attitude would only breed a *mitzvah* observance which is essentially complacent and insipid.

The *Shiniavor Rav z.l.*, applies this idea to explain the *Mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos 2:1*: "What is the straight path for a person to choose? The one that brings glory to its doer and glory to humanity." Why does the *Mishnah* use the word "choose" which means select, rather than the word "follow"? He responds that man should not merely "follow" a path, rather he should "choose," select, define and integrate a novel approach to his *avodas Hashem*, service of Hashem. He should not mindlessly copy his master without grasping the spirit and motivation behind his actions.

One's manner of worship should reflect his own personal character and proficiency. He should intellectually sift through the various methods and find the one best suited for his personality and level of spiritual attainment. To put on an external show merely to "follow the master" or to impress others can lead to a dangerous outcome.

Hashem responded to Avraham, "Do not worry; this one (Eliezer) will not inherit you. Rather your

future offspring will." The author of the *Me'or Va'shemesh*, addressing our original question in a similar vein, says that Avraham was still anxious concerning his progeny; will they observe *mitzvos* complacently or will they be original in their observance? Hashem reassured Avraham by taking him outside. He told him to look up at the sky and to attempt to count the stars. Hashem compared Avraham's descendants to the number of stars in the sky.

What is the distinction of stars? The *Me'or Va'shemesh* responds that stars are referred to as "*maskilim*," those who understand profoundly. This means that stars do not simply receive light from each other; they each emanate their own individual light. Every star is different, hence, every light is different. Like those stars who distinguish themselves each with its own brilliance, so, too, will we be availed the opportunity to pick and choose, delve and probe, and develop for ourselves the correct manner for serving the Divine. We may add that every new path must be consistent with the *Torah* and its disseminators.