

"And Yitzchak and Yishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpeilah." (25:9)

Rashi states that from this *pasuk* we derive the idea that Yishmael repented and permitted Yitzchak to precede him in their father's funeral procession. This statement is puzzling. Why did the *Torah* wait until the end of Avraham's life to confirm that Yishmael repented? We know that thirty-eight years prior to Avraham's demise, Yishmael was one of the "young men" who accompanied Avraham and Yitzchak to the *akeidah*. Why is it imperative to acknowledge Yishmael's *teshuvah* once again?

Horav Shimon Schwab, z.l., offers a profound insight into the *teshuvah* process which applies to this situation. Perhaps Yishmael initially repented only in order to make his old father "feel good," but immediately upon Avraham's death he was planning to revert to his old lifestyle. After all, this practice is not unusual, even today. It is for this reason that Yishmael is "featured" at Avraham's funeral, permitting his younger brother to precede him. Even after Avraham's death, Yishmael continued in his newly chosen lifestyle.

Horav Schwab offers a second explanation. There are numerous reasons for turning to *teshuvah*. Regrettably, all are not necessarily as sincere as they should be. *Teshuvah* should bring one closer to a more profound sense of reality, rather than offering an escape from that same reality. The rituals, ceremonies and various observances of Judaism become trite indulgences in the hands of one who is overanxious, insecure, or disoriented. An individual's need to overemphasize his religious observance and reflect an elitist attitude, only indicates that a severe abnormality has provoked this *teshuvah* process.

Judaism requires a balance between active and passive observance. It represents indomitable courage, enthusiastic observance, and resolute, unwavering commitment. It also connotes solace and content, security and promise, joy and repose. Judaism gives one an uplifting sense of pride. In addition, it teaches one to respect and revere those who are more spiritually proficient, not to seek ways in which to denigrate those who haven't yet "made it", or whose manner of religious expression differs from his own.

Yishmael demonstrated the authenticity of his *teshuvah* when he humbly permitted Yitzchak to precede him. Unpretentiousness and modesty, not arrogance and disdain, are the hallmarks of the penitent.