

Hashem allowed Himself to be entreated by him, and his wife, Rivkah, conceived. (25:21)

Yitzchak *Avinu* and Rivkah *Imeinu* both prayed for a child. Hashem replied affirmatively to Yitzchak's prayer – rather than to Rivkah's. *Rashi* explains: "There is no comparison between the prayer of a *tzaddik ben tzaddik*, the righteous child of a righteous person, to that of a *tzaddik ben rasha*, a righteous person, the child of a wicked person." The question is well-known; the answer is also well-known; the "why" however, is not. One would think that after all that Rivkah endured in the home of her youth, she would achieve greater recognition. She achieved *tzaddeikes* status, despite being the daughter of Besuel, the sister of Lavan, and having been raised in an immoral, pagan culture. One would think that having successfully navigated the obstacles placed before her by her ignoble family, her prayer would achieve even more attention than that of her husband, who, for all intents and purposes, benefited from a spiritually correct and inspiring upbringing.

The simple answer is that the *tzaddik ben tzaddik* has much more to live up to. Having hailed from such a wonderful family background, he has a more difficult and demanding legacy to which to adhere. Failure on his part is not countenanced. The anxiety that accompanied him as he climbed to the top was palpable. The *tzaddik ben rasha* has it much easier. For him, whatever he achieves is an accomplishment beyond anything that has been expected of him. To be slightly better than his murky background does not take much effort, nor does it involve disgrace if he fails. After all, he descends from *reshaim*. Whatever he observes is for him a great achievement and does not involve much stress.

Horav Mordechai Mann, Shlita, offers a powerful insight. It may be compared to two professional archers, the best of the best, who were competing to see who can bag a deer first. They both have the best archery implements; both are at the top of their game; both sight the deer at the same time; and both let their arrows loose at the same time. Yet, one's arrow achieves its goal mere seconds before his competition. What happened? Apparently, one archer was standing 500 yards away, while the other one (whose arrow took down the deer) was standing 100 yards away. He was closer to the target; thus, his arrow reached it a few seconds earlier.

A similar idea applies to the dichotomy between the *tzaddik ben tzaddik* and *tzaddik ben rasha*. The one whose father was a *tzaddik* is closer. He is not praying from as far as his colleague, who must overcome family obstacles and peer pressure to achieve his goal.

Perhaps I am treading on sacred ground, but, instead of giving an answer to the question, I would like to ask a question. The *tzaddik ben rasha*'s father is referred to by a derogatory – almost ignominious – term. Why? When he sees his son or daughter embrace an observant lifestyle, how can a decent, self-respecting parent ignore, and even go to such lengths as take him to task, and even prevent him from adhering to his new lifestyle? Quite possibly, the problem is with the parent, who sees his own lifestyle disrespected. Alternatively, it might be that the son/daughter is so smug

and arrogant about his/her choice that the parent feels inadequate and demeaned. It is just a question, but one worthy of discussion. A *tzaddik* whose parent is still labeled a *rasha* might be doing something wrong – or, at least, not right.

When a person prays to Hashem, he is speaking directly to the Almighty. As such, it should be reflected in his appearance and demeanor – not only during the prayer, but also after he has concluded his supplication! *Horav Tzvi Eliach, Shlita*, asks a question concerning one of the *tefillos* recited on *Yom Kippur* at the end of the *avodas Yom HaKippurim*, which recounts the sacred service in the *Bais Hamikdash*. One of the beautiful *tefillos* (*Mareh Kohen*) relates the *Kohen Gadol's* leaving the *Kodesh HaKodoshim*, Holy of Holies, and how impressive and awe-inspiring it was as the scene unfolded: *Emes mah nehedar hayah Kohen Gadol b'tzeitso mibeis Kodshei HaKodoshim b'shalom b'li fega*; “How majestic does the *Kohen Gadol* appear when he leaves the Holy of Holies in peace without blemish.” Why is the emphasis on when he leaves? The attention should be upon his entering and remaining in the Holy of Holies. Is anything more awe-inspiring than being inside the holiest place on earth? He explains that to cohere the glory and majesty associated with being within the environs of the Holy of Holies does not require *Kehunah Gedolah*. Anyone who is not cognitively impaired would tremble and shudder with awe at being empowered to bask in the sacredness of this unparalleled experience. Being inside does not reflect the transformation of the individual's spiritual persona. It is when one exits the chamber and senses the fiery countenance and transformed demeanor manifested by the *Kohen Gadol* that he perceives true glory and majesty. Owing to the *Kohen Gadol's* unparalleled spiritual refinement, he is better equipped to grasp and connect with the sanctity that permeates the chamber. The *Kohen Gadol* who enters within and exits is a new, spiritually-enhanced person.

This very same transformation should occur when one offers up his *tefillah* to Hashem. Regardless whether the *tefillah* is a personal supplication, or an expression of adulation, the petitioner's appearance, mood and demeanor should reflect that he had just spoken with Hashem. This spiritual encounter should catalyze a personal reconfiguration. Otherwise, it is just rhetoric.

Perhaps we might extend this idea further. The Torah refers to Yaakov *Avinu* as *ish tam yosheiv ohalim*; “a wholesome man abiding in tents,” which is a reference to the tents of Torah. In other words, Yaakov was always learning. Eisav *ha'rasha* is called an *ish tzayid, ish sadeh*, a hunter, a man of the field. He was not simply an outdoorsman. His life was the field, the hunt. It was all about plunder and killing. Why does the Torah add the word *ish*, man, when it could simply have said that he learned Torah/he hunted game? I think the Torah is alluding to what defined each brother. The Torah defines Yaakov as one who studied, to the point that wherever he might be – even in the field, the market place -- it was obvious that he was a man of Torah. Likewise, Eisav manifested his hunter/man of the field status wherever he was. Even if Eisav were to step foot into the *bais hamedrash*, it was obvious from his appearance and uncouth demeanor that he was just “visiting.” He did not belong.