

And these are the offspring of Yitzchak ben Avraham, Avraham begot Yitzchak. (25:19)

The opening *pasuk* of the *parsha* seems redundant. If Yitzchak was Avraham's son, then obviously Avraham was his biological father. *Rashi* explains that the redundancy is deliberate, to attest that Yitzchak was unmistakably Avraham *Avinu*'s son both biologically and spiritually. Apparently, the *leitzanim*, cynics, were spreading the lie that Sarah had conceived through relations with Avimelech when she was in Gerar. They claimed that, at his advanced age, Avraham could no longer have children. [They ignored Yishmael's birth.] In order to set the record straight, Hashem formed Yitzchak's countenance to be exactly the same as that of Avraham. No question remained concerning Yitzchak's paternity.

We might suggest an alternative explanation. Yitzchak *Avinu* achieved unparalleled spiritual status. As the *olah temimah*, perfect sacrifice, he infused his descendants' spiritual DNA with such dedication to Hashem that self-sacrifice for their faith in Hashem became the hallmark of their Jewish identity. What made Yitzchak so special? What can we learn from him to incorporate in our own lives, so that we, too, can benefit and catalyze our spiritual growth?

Yitzchak's distinction was in the fact that he constantly identified himself as Yitzchak *ben Avraham*. He never omitted his father's name. One might think that was due to his pride in his ancestry. No! Yitzchak consciously wanted to connect his life with his father's. Yitzchak continued Avraham's mission in life. He understood that, one who loses his spiritual lineage, loses his moral compass. This should apply in a physical sense as well. The Torah commands us to honor our parents. What greater manifestation of honor can exist than incorporating one's parents and their lives into our lives? This does not mean helping them when they become infirm. It means recognizing and acknowledging who they are, understanding the challenges they have experienced in life and paying tribute to them. Likewise, every Jew descends from a rich and noble legacy of faith, Torah and *mesiras nefesh*.

Avraham *Avinu* set the standards for his son to live by and the principles for which he would sojourn forth to establish his own *derekh*, approach, to *avodas hakodesh*. Sadly, many in our generation venerate the pleasures of this world, forgetting our extraordinary past legacy. Jewish life is not only about a new path, but it is also about holding onto and strengthening our ties to the legacy of the past.

I have found that this idea has especially been underscored in the manner of family life of German Jewry – especially with regard to rabbinical descendants of noble ancestry. I will mention only one family of which I had the distinct privilege to meet a scion, who also authored a brilliant biography of his father. *Horav Shlomo Carlebach, zl*, survived the horrors of the Holocaust, which decimated much of German Jewry. His father, *Horav Yosef Tzvi, zl*, Rav of Hamburg, was a victim of this decimation.

The grandparents, Rabbi Solomon and Esther Carlebach had twelve children, most of whom entered the rabbinate or whose husbands were *rabbonim*. *Rav Shlomo* was the *Rav* of Lubeck, Germany. To raise such an illustrious family is not easy. Obviously, his *Rebbetzin* and partner in life was an extraordinary woman. Yet, one sentence in the book encapsulates the relationship which led to such *nachas*, “Joseph’s father was both a teacher and a comrade to all his children.” The father taught his sons Talmud and ethics, and they venerated him as the ideal of all that a leader in Israel should be. Here you have it: Father is both mentor and friend to his son, and the son, in turn, reveres his father, considering him to be the paragon of everything a *Rav* and father should be.

When *Rav Yosef Tzvi* ascended the pulpit of Hamburg his installation sermon included his heartfelt tribute to his father, “If, at this solemn hour, I recall the initial impressions of my childhood, when the rabbinical personality of my sainted father became my ideal, I see before me the image of a simple man, good and pure, whose heart was receptive to the needs of all. He knew of no distinction between the exalted and the lowly; to him, the welfare of the prisoner behind bars was every bit as important as the honor and satisfaction of the prominent men in his congregation. His benevolent eye opened every heart, imbuing all who knew him with trust and with a thirst for knowledge and education.”

These opening words of the *Rav*’s address demonstrate the love and awe he manifested toward his father, a love borne of reverence and comradeship. *Yitzchak ben Avraham*.