

starts off with the story of כלל ישראל over their 40-year sojourn. Right at the very beginning משה רבינו tells the הקודש ברוך הוא that he has to choose people from each and every שבט to accompany him in his עבודה, whether it was the census or in doing that which was required to manage and to lead כלל ישראל. The pasuk says וְאַתֶּם יִהְיוּ אִישׁ אִישׁ לְמִשָּׁה, which would be a fine way to conclude. But the pasuk continues: אִישׁ רֹאשׁ לְבֵית אֲבֹתָיו הוּא. The קשיא is: who is this person who is considered the head of the family? Is it the בכור? Is it someone with יחס? Is it someone more accomplished in learning? So if יחס is, in fact, an important factor, there's a fascinating שאלה about יחס specifically. The sefer The Short Vort brings the following point:

Everybody is born into circumstances that can shape and support the development of their unique relationship with הקודש ברוך הוא. One who is not born with any particular יחס has to build that relationship from scratch. And even someone who does have יחס must still work on that relationship himself.

יצחק is this: when יצחק and רבקה were davening to Hashem, רש"י tells us that Hashem listened to יצחק first. Why? Because the תפילות of a צדיק בן צדיק are given precedence over those of a רשע בן רשע. That's very שווער to understand. One would think the opposite - that someone like רבקה, who pulled herself out of an environment and upbringing steeped in רשעות, and made herself into a צדקה, should be on an even higher מדרגה. And in fact, we know the famous gemara (ברכות ל"ד ע"ב) עוֹמְדִין צְדִיקִים (בְּרִכּוֹת ל"ד ע"ב) - a place where a בעל תשובה can get to, even a complete צדיק is unable to stand there. Why, in fact, were יצחק's תפילות accepted prior to those of רבקה?

The answer is that Hashem preferred יצחק's תפילות not simply because he was a צדיק בן צדיק, but because he didn't merely copy his father's דרך in עבודת השם. That would have been easy. Instead, he forged his own דרך. We know that each of the אבות had his own unique method, his own form of עבודה, in his relationship with הקודש ברוך הוא. That's why each one is referred to as an עבודה, because each individually crafted a unique path in serving Hashem. And that is a lesson for all of us. Each one of us, whether we have יחס or not, has the opportunity, the responsibility, and the challenge to forge a path in עבודת השם that is unique to himself. Each and every Yid is a star of his own. Each Yid has his own דרך in עבודת השם. And that's what the pasuk is teaching us: get to work on your own דרך. Develop it. Build it. Serve Hashem in your own way, based on the מסורה of your forebears, but do the work yourself. And if you do it yourself, you can succeed.

The sefer brings a story, the famous joke about the not-so-religious fellow who came over to the rabbi of the shul and said, "I'd like to duchen." The rav replies, "Duchaning is only for כהנים." The man responds, "No, no, I want to duchen. I'll give \$1,000 to the shul." "No." "I'll give \$5,000 to the shul." "No." "I'll give \$100,000 to the shul." Still, the rabbi says no. Finally, the rabbi asks him, "Why are you so interested in duchaning? You barely show up to shul, you never come to davening, and when you do, you're not particularly involved." The man replies, "Well, my father duchaned, and his father duchaned, and my grandfather duchaned. So I'd like to duchen too."

The point is clear: we all have to find our own way to serve Hashem. We can't just rely on our יחס. We have to develop our own personal עבודת השם.

