

# A FATHER'S LOVE

*by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch*

One of the later - and, therefore, more difficult - tests given to Avraham Avinu (our forefather Abraham) was banishing his older son, Yishmael (Ishmael). "Sarah saw [Yishmael] the son of Hagar the Egyptian whom she had born to Avraham, mocking [i.e. involved in the three cardinal sins]. So [Sarah] said to Avraham, 'Drive out this slave woman with her son, for the son of that slave woman shall not inherit with my son, with Yitzchak (Isaac).' The matter [of Yishmael's straying to a wayward path] greatly distressed Avraham, regarding his son." (Beraishis/Genesis 21:9-11) Interestingly, the Torah does not contemplate the potential for Yishmael's improvement by remaining in the company of Avraham and Yitzchak.

The Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaKohen Kagan of Radin; 1838-1933; author of basic works in Jewish law, philosophy and ethics and renowned for his saintly qualities) comments that G-d's instruction to Avraham to heed Sarah, as she was the greater prophet, indicates Divine concurrence with her concern. Rabbi Kagan emphasizes that Sarah's safeguarding her son is a lesson for the generations: when one child threatens the spiritual well-being of another we must give priority to the threatened child. Obviously, we must provide all we can for the troublesome child, but we cannot let that concern for his success jeopardize the health of his innocent compatriot.

The Chofetz Chaim continues that despite the great challenge Avraham faced in expelling his own flesh and blood, the Torah indicates that he performed with alacrity. "So Avraham awoke early the next morning..." (21:14) As personally distasteful as he found the command, he knew that G-d's way is always perfect and righteous, so he zealously responded by waking early the next day to prepare the provisions for their trip.

A father teaching his child to walk stands the child up, lets go, moves a few feet away, and announces, "Come to Daddy!" An alien would question the cruelty of the barbaric parent, positioning his charge in a situation doomed to failure. But the child tries, and struggles, and falls, and gets back up to try again. Ah, the exquisite joy shared by parent and child when those first steps are taken! We often find ourselves wondering why we have been commanded to perform certain mitzvos (Divine commands) or why we are forced to confront certain trials, our limited human understanding attempting to make sense of the Divine plan. As we strive to grow in our "G-d consciousness", we take comfort and find security knowing that these mitzvos ARE the key to our growth, and these challenges are uniquely designed to strengthen our spirit as we overcome them. And if we tune our soul into G-d's frequency, we can hear Him saying, "Come to Daddy!"

Have a Good Shabbos!

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Kol HaKollel is a publication of the Milwaukee Kollel Center for Jewish Studies 5007 West Keefe Avenue; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; 414-447-7999