The Apple Doesn’t Fall Far From the Tree: A Study of אבריהם and יצחק

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Everyone expects a son to be similar to his father. This, which includes the narratives about אברים and יצחק, points to marked similarities between the life of the father and son. Both went to רד and confronted the prospect of their wives being taken; they each had similar conversations with אבימל. Both negotiated the ownership of wells, and both made a ברית with אבימל at באר שבע. The text goes out of its way to link יצחק to אברים so that no one could doubt who the real father was. Furthermore, in פרק כו, the only chapter solely dedicated to the actions of יצחק, the name of אברים is mentioned six times. When אברים found wells, “…” and אברים “…” even the ברית that אברים gave to his father, and seem to be given to him in אברים’s merit: “…יסנ…” This evidence may lead us to the conclusion that יצחק lived in אברים’s shadow and did not develop a character of his own. This article will argue that their similarities serve to highlight their very important differences.

At the beginning of יצחק’s saga in גו, the ספוקים say: “…伝え לאבל…” (ב:ב). Why does the ספוק link this famine to אברים’s time? Does the ספוק think that we will confuse the two famines? Perhaps the repetition focuses our attention on the similarities between the two events, as well as the markedly different outcomes. אברים told אברים not to leave אברים nor to go to Egypt like his father. אברים commanded him several times to stay and dwell in the land. This contrasts with the מילות מנחות (repetitive words) in the course of the אברים narratives: “…ל…” and “…ל…” אברים was constantly on the move. It takes two whole פרקים before אברים settled in one place: (ב:ג).
These incidents point to wider differences in the roles and lives of these אבות. בְּרַקְעָה, הָלַכְתָּם, בָּאֲנוּ נָפְלָה כְּתַפּוֹן הַיָּמָה. He left his land, came to אֲבָרֶךְ, and left it again, all before he finally returned for a second time. הָלַכְתָּם walked on paths that no one had traveled before, thereby conquering the land for his descendents. אֲבָרֶךְ was an initiator. He found God on his own. הָלַכְתָּם established a new בְּרִית between אֲבָרֶךְ and his descendents, on the other hand, stayed in place. He was born in אֲבָרֶךְ and was told not to leave. If אֲבָרֶךְ conquered the land by traveling, then הָלַכְתָּם maintained that ownership by remaining there. Rather than initiate, הָלַכְתָּם had to continue. הָלַכְתָּם inherited the knowledge of God from his father. His essence was ישיבת וְשָׁמַרְתָּ, and therefore the בְּרִית given to him were replicas of those given to his father.

יצחק's life was similar to his father's because הָלַכְתָּם was responsible for firming up what אֲבָרֶךְ had initiated. הָלַכְתָּם did not do anything very different from אֲבָרֶךְ. His role was to uphold that which his father had established. Compare their respective relationships with אֵבִים and אֲבָרֶךְ. In כָּב:כָּא, אֵבִים came to visit אֲבָרֶךְ and made a request to establish a בְּרִית between them. The terms of the covenant stipulated that their respective descendents would deal kindly with one other. In addition, אֲבָרֶךְ gave אֵבִים seven sheep, as a witness to the fact that the local well belonged to him. After this, אֵבִים and his officer returned to their land. Five chapters later, אֵבִים seemed to break the terms of the treaty. הָלַכְתָּם hid the identity of his wife because he was afraid that members of אֵבִים' community would kill him. Additionally, the shepherds of רַע וּרְעָה fought over possession of the well. “וַיַּחְפֹּק רַע וּרְעָה עֲרֵבוּ עַל הָרָע, וַיָּקָא הַנַּעַמְתִּים עַל הָרָע.” Shortly thereafter, אֵבִים visited הָלַכְתָּם, who was upset at the fact that אֵבִים had violated the בְּרִית. הָלַכְתָּם replied that he wanted to renew the terms. Immediately thereafter, הָלַכְתָּם's servants found a well, hinting to us that הָלַכְתָּם had emerged from the battle successful. הָלַכְתָּם reinstated what had been established in his father's day.

The differences between father and son may hint at two different styles of people who serve ה'. Some initiate. They create חידושי or travel to influence those with whom they come in contact. Others maintain the connection, implement the חידושי of others, and continue on a path that was started for them. Neither model is better than the other; both are necessary. Some need to be leaders and initiators; others need to be followers and strengtheners. What use is a leader if there is no one to follow? What use is a follower if there is no one to lead?

The chapters dealing with the lives of הָלַכְתָּם and אֲבָרֶךְ shed light on another facet of their lives. We know little of הָלַכְתָּם's life, while the narratives regarding אֲבָרֶךְ are lengthy and detailed. אֲבָרֶךְ traveled
around the land of Israel, interacted with many people, and spoke a great deal more than אברחא ציוק was very outspoken when he argued with ‘ה about destroying שדומ. He was friendly and confident when he spread the name of ‘ה to the places he visited and the people he met. His interaction with the בני חת indicates the ease with which he dealt with strangers, as does his enthusiasm in inviting people to his tent for a meal.

יצחק, in contrast, appears passive. He did not speak until age 37, he went willingly and quietly to the altar, and he was passive when others went to find him a spouse. The מפורשים describe just before he met רבקה. The struggle to understand the word לשוח, which appears very infrequently in the תורה. The מפורשים bases his interpretation on "וכל שיח השדה" (ה:ב, בראשית), explaining that was in the field viewing trees and plants. י’רש and ספורנו derive the meaning from "שיחי" (א:תהלי). was praying in the field where no one would bother him. Both these explanations paint a picture of ציוק as an introverted character who finds solace in a quiet and pastoral atmosphere.

This background can help us understand אברחא and שרה’s relationships with their respective wives.ooled together to convert the people around them to the truth. and had numerous conversations with each other: planning to prevent from being captured, speaking about their lack of children, and preparing a meal for the three guests who arrived at their home. On the other hand, ציוק and רבקה exchanged no more than seventeen words. This is particularly significant in light of the fact that had relayed the prophecy about her sons to her husband, it is possible that the saga of the ברכות may have been avoided. explain that the silence derived from their first meeting: "ותתכס... ותשא רבקה את עיניה ותרא את יצחק ותפל מעל הגמל ותקח הצעי" (סד:כד). explains that was immediately awed by her future husband. This awe and fear remained with her for the rest of her life, which made communication difficult.

Rav Dessler - in an elaborate interpretation of a a related /memfinal בבראשית רבהNECT1 connects the נudent ליעקב חסד לאברחא nunfinal תת, with "ופחד יצחק היה לי" (מב:בראשית לא, כ:מיכה ז). Rav Dessler uses these sources as the basis for a theory of character development. חסד means using one’s social talents to help other human beings. The fear of God is the force where one turns inward to perfect oneself. Truth is the power

which clarifies the right path for a person in his or her 'הワークת. Each one of these qualities can help to guide a person to attain the other two. Someone involved in ' SetProperty will move from loving people to loving God. One who fears God will realize that ' SetProperty is important too, and will understand that he is failing his obligations if he is not completely truthful. The person committed to truth will perceive that it is unfair not to give to others, and that one must stand in awe of 'ה. Rav Dessler explains that each person has a dominant character trait. Each person must find his or her own dominant character trait, and use it as a jump off point to achieving success in these and other traits as well. Each of the אבות was dominated by one of these character traits.

By studying the narrative in greater detail we will see that this theory is grounded in ':Set Property. אברח was constantly involved in ' SetProperty, from the “/نفس אשר עש וה Deborah, SetProperty, to the altars that אברח built throughout the land of Israel, which according to ' SetProperty, were places for people to gather to learn about the Master of the world (활ות עבדיה יד א ה). Having reached such a high level of SetProperty, אברח was challenged to face tests of ':Set Property as well. He had to leave his home and birthplace and he had to battle with the four kings to save his nephew. ברי מילל challenged him to separate from the rest of mankind. Later the trials became more difficult as he had to drive his first born son, SetProperty, from his house. The Torah records the pain that אברח felt in response to this demand from 'רבקה: "וירע הדבר /Memfinal והבר את אברח. ("יא:כא). Despite this, אברח worked hard to strengthen his ':Set Property, as he got up early in the morning to send SetProperty and SetProperty away. The hardest challenge though, came with the command to offer his son, an action that completely opposed his instinctive ' SetProperty. ' SetProperty's success in the story proves that he had perfected the quality of '(Set Property, in conflict with his inborn trait of SetProperty. Subsequent to this achievement, he is proclaimed as a "ירא אלוקי ("יב:כב).

יצחק's passivity reflects an introverted character who strove for internal perfection, and whose basic character was fear of God, the " страх ייצחק”. His willingness to follow his father to the עקדה reflects a character who could block out all concerns other than the will of God. Similarly, יצחק's prayers in the field and on behalf of 'רבקה for a child ("הכ:כה) indicates an intense personal relationship with 'ה. In contrast to ' SetProperty, we do not find that ייצחק interacted with people, traveled to spread the name of God, or even built altars. He traveled only as result of famine. In the course of his travels, he was forced to interact with people, but these experiences were often quite unpleasant. He protected his wife from a kindnapping and fought with ' Set Property over wells which actually belonged to him. It should not surprise us that ייצחק preferred to avoid