

For I know that you are a G-d-fearing man. (22:12)

This was the tenth test, following after nine tests which all had successful outcomes. Yet, only now, after the *Akeidas Yitzchak*, did Hashem ratify Avraham *Avinu's* commitment as a *yarei Shomayim*, G-d-fearing. If this is the case, what is the meaning of *yerei Elokim*, G-d-fearing? Does committing to the *Akeidah* manifest a greater sense of fearing G-d than walking into a fiery cauldron?

Horav Nachum Breslover, zl, teaches that one who does not possess an *azus d'kedushah*, a sense of resolute holiness, who is undaunted by those who stand in the way of his observance, who can transcend the taunts that they hurl at him and the obstacles they place before him, will slowly defer to the taunts and begin to relax his commitment to Hashem. Thus, one who lacks *azus d'kedusha* will not learn the way he is supposed to respond. Without learning, he will not possess *chochmah*, wisdom, and a man without wisdom has no *yiraas Elokim*, as Dovid *HaMelech* writes: *Reishis chochmah yiraas Hashem*, "The beginning of wisdom is fear of G-d" (*Tehillim* 111:10).

In his gloss to the first *halachah* of *Shulchan Aruch*, the **Rema** writes: "He should not be ashamed of those who seek to degrade him." *Azus d'kedusha* is the key to *avodas Hashem*, serving the Almighty. One who fears what people will say, who trembles when others poke fun at him, who takes to heart those who would do everything to prevent him from achieving success in his *avodas ha'kodesh*, actually does not have a chance for success; he has already capitulated.

The *Akeidah* was an incredibly difficult trial, but what made it stand out more than the previous nine was the fact that after the deed was done, Avraham would have to return home and "face the music." The people would complain about the inconsistency of his teachings. He rejected human sacrifice; yet, he was prepared to slaughter his only son because G-d had commanded him to do so. He promoted marital harmony and respect; yet, he ignored his wife's pain and was prepared to slaughter his son. He declared that G-d was compassionate and loving; yet, this same loving, compassionate G-d had instructed Avraham to commit a brutal act. These are but some of the questions that would be posed to him by the people.

Avraham, however, did not care. His decision was based upon one factor: Hashem. Whatever the Almighty commanded him to do, he was prepared to carry out, regardless of what the critics would say. Some people live for the purpose of maligning others. They seek every opportunity to attack and revile what others do. Avraham *Avinu* was on a holy mission. What people said did not matter to him.