

Do not stretch out your hand against the lad... for now I know that you are a G-d-fearing man. (22:12)

What was so special about “now”? What did Avraham *Avinu* do “now” that made such a strong impression, that so underscored his fear of G-d? The *Malbim* explains that actually Avraham had been tested twice. The primary objective of the *nisayon*, test, of *Akeidas Yitzchak* was to see whether Avraham would carry out the *mitzvah* purely for the sake of Hashem: Would this *mitzvah* be the execution of the will of the Almighty – or would Avraham perform the *Akeidah* for ulterior (regardless of how minute and insignificant) motives? Would the Patriarch have a personal agenda included in his act for G-d, or would it be a pristine, unsullied act of glorifying Hashem’s Name?

Avraham was commanded twice to carry out the will of G-d. First, he was told to place Yitzchak on the Altar and prepare for the sacrifice – which he did. Second, he was instructed to desist, to refrain from carrying out the first *mitzvah*. He was not to slaughter Yitzchak. The fact that Avraham carried out the first *mitzvah l’shem Shomayim*, purely for the sake of Heaven, is nothing novel. Clearly, there could be no personal interest in sacrificing his only son. It was undoubtedly for Hashem. Avraham would not benefit in any way by slaughtering Yitzchak. Thus, this *mitzvah* does not yet indicate where Avraham *Avinu*’s heart would lie.

The second *mitzvah* was much more difficult to execute *l’shem Shomayim*. When Avraham was instructed to refrain from killing *Yitzchak*, he must have been awash with joy: “*Baruch Hashem*, now Yitzchak will live; my legacy is preserved; the future of the Jewish nation is ensured. I can go home to Sarah (*Imeinu*) and tell her the good news: she did not lose her only child.” This second *mitzvah* was replete with compelling reasons for Avraham to be focused on himself – not solely on the Almighty.

Hashem, Who knows what courses through the inner workings of a person’s heart/emotions, knew for certain that everything that Avraham did – taking back his hand and desisting from killing Yitzchak – was not diminished in any way by any vestige of personal interest. Everything that Avraham did was *l’shem Shomayim*. It was this second *nisayon* that demonstrated that Avraham’s true commitment was solely for the sake of glorifying Hashem’s Name. Thus, Hashem said, “for now” – after this second test, you have proven your devotion in acting *Mimeni* – “for Me.”