

And it happened after these things that Hashem tested Avraham. (22:1)

Our Patriarch, Avraham *Avinu*, had been tested ten times by Hashem as a means of confirming his commitment and as a vehicle for proclaiming to the world his abiding devotion to Hashem. Hashem was now asking him to sacrifice his only son, whom he loved with a love that went beyond words. Actually, Avraham had already proven his commitment to Hashem, when he relinquished his life as he was prepared to die in the fiery cauldron of Uhr Kasdim. How often did Avraham have to prove his willingness to sacrifice on behalf of Hashem? *Mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, is a spiritual staple which is the barometer of Jewish commitment. It appears that our Patriarch could not prove his commitment in one trial. He required ten trials. Why is this?

Horav Yaakov Yitzchak HaLevi Ruderman, zl, explains that the test of the *Akeidah*, Binding of Yitzchak, did not only concern *mesiras nefesh*. It was a greater test than even relinquishing one's life. The test of the *Akeidah* determined how far Avraham would go to give up his love (son). He waited for one hundred years to hold his Yitzchak, his son, heir, successor. Finally, he was blessed with a child, not just any child, but Yitzchak. One can only imagine the overreaching love that Avraham had for Yitzchak. There could be no love stronger, deeper, more powerful and all-encompassing than Avraham manifested for Yitzchak. Hashem tested Avraham to see if the love he had for Hashem superseded the love he had for Yitzchak. Hashem was teaching Avraham that there can be no love in the world that competes with the love one must have for Hashem. The *Akeidas Yitzchak* demanded of Avraham to demonstrate to the world that the love he had for Hashem transcended even the love he had for Yitzchak. *Ahavas Hashem*, love of the Almighty, must be the paradigm of unsurpassed love.