

G-d tested Avraham. (22:1)

Avraham *Avinu* and his son, Yitzchak (*Avinu*), merited to achieve the highest level of serving Hashem: *Kiddush Shem Shomayim*, sanctifying Hashem's Name, with their preparedness to slaughter and be slaughtered for the sake of Hashem. In the end, Hashem dispatched a heavenly angel to instruct Avraham to desist. Heaven neither requires, nor encourages, human sacrifice. It is far better (and probably more difficult) to live a life of *Kiddush Hashem*, sanctifying Hashem, in our every demeanor, our every action, than to die for him.

The *Baal HaTanya* writes that in order to sanctify Hashem's Name, it is not necessary to give up one's life. Rather, living an exalted life of *Kiddush Shem Shomayim* is far more acceptable. We were sent down to this world to live, to glorify Hashem's Name. If circumstances demand – as they have throughout our tumultuous history – then, if necessary, we give up our lives for Him. The *Bais HaLevi* uses this idea (*kiddush ha'chaim*, sanctifying life) to explain why the *Akeidah*, Binding of Yitzchak, is considered Avraham *Avinu's nisayon*, trial, rather than Yitzchak's. It was Yitzchak who stretched out his neck to be slaughtered. He was the one who was prepared to die. He had a whole life ahead of him. He was not yet married and able to establish his legacy. To give it all up requires superhuman courage and devotion. Yet, his *nisayon* is viewed as secondary to that of Avraham.

The *Bais HaLevi* explains that while Yitzchak was willing to give up his life, it was a one-time test. Once he passed the test, it was over, because his life would be over. Avraham, on the other hand, was relegated to live with his decision to sacrifice Yitzchak. The pain and suffering that he would endure was beyond belief. In addition, he would have to return home and explain to Sarah *Imeinu* what he did and why. He would have to face the community, his many students who probably could not understand his actions, and would look at him askance. Actually, by remaining alive under such conditions, Avraham would be dying a thousand times.

The survivors that were spared from the Nazis' Final Solution sanctified Hashem's Name in this manner. They returned to what was left of their towns and villages. In some communities, only a handful returned; in some, it was only one; and, in some, no one returned. After sustaining such a *potch*, "slap", from Hashem, after experiencing the most inhuman atrocities, it was a wonder that they returned sane. They went one step further. They returned fully committed, with their faith in Hashem intact and their determination to rebuild the Jewish People stronger than ever. This is *kiddush ha'chaim*. We are tested every day and with every step that we take. We do not know what the next moment will bring. Yet, we go about our lives with deeply rooted devotion to Hashem. *Kiddush ha'chaim*.