

## And it happened after these things that G-d tested Avraham. (22:1)

The *Akeidah*, Binding of Yitzchak, is considered the seminal *nisayon*, trial, with which Hashem challenged Avraham *Avinu*. The question is obvious: All one has to do is peruse Jewish history to see that *mesiras nefesh*, for a Jew to sacrifice his life, has almost been a way of life, a culture with which we have been inculcated. Veritably, all instances of *mesiras nefesh* nurture their strength from *Akeidas Yitzchak*, but still, our ancestry did not always have *Neviim*, prophets, and Torah leaders who inspired and guided them concerning relinquishing their lives *al Kiddush Hashem*. Avraham *Avinu* received his mission from Hashem. Clearly, hearing the Almighty instruct you with such a test, it becomes much more fathomable. If so, what makes this test more formidable than the acts of sanctifying Hashem's Name which have accompanied us throughout our history?

*Horav Elchonan Wasserman, zl* (*Kovetz Maamarim* 1:45), posits that, when thinking about it, *mesiras nefesh al Kiddush Hashem* is not really that exceptional. After all, one is exchanging life on this temporal world for a world of eternity. (Obviously, this idea does not apply to everyone, but Avraham *Avinu* certainly understood the difference. Thus, for him, relinquishing life to sanctify Hashem's Name and be rewarded with *nitzchiyus*, eternity, was not much of a decision.) Avraham's decision to surrender this world and simultaneously lose his *Olam Habba*, all for *Kiddush Hashem*, would indeed be a *nisayon* of major proportion. Furthermore, if something was dearer to Avraham than even *Olam Habba*, and, rendering his life to sanctify Hashem's Name meant giving this up, too, then indeed the *nisayon* would be unparalleled.

Now, let us analyze Avraham's values to see what was truly important to him. When Hashem told Avraham, *Anochi magein lach*, "I will be a shield for you, your reward will be great" (*Bereishis* 15:1), Avraham countered, "What can you give me, for I am childless?" This means that, for Avraham, the *Olam Habba* which Hashem promised him was worthless if he left this world without offspring. The commentators explain that our Patriarch served Hashem *mei'ahavah*, out of abiding love, not to garner reward. He served because he wanted to serve. His sole purpose in living was to propagate Hashem's Name throughout the world. This is why he prayed for a child, so that someone could carry on his noble work. If he were to die childless, then his world would come to an abrupt end, and his life's work would be for naught. Not to have anyone to succeed him was worse than giving up *Olam Habba*. Therefore, the *nisayon* of the *Akeidah* for Avraham was more difficult than the subsequent sacrifices that would be offered by his offspring.

*Horav Yosef Nechemiah Kornitzer, zl*, has a practical approach towards understanding Avraham's sacrifice. A person who, by nature, is kind and benevolent will not receive the identical accolades when he gives *tzedakah* as will one who has great difficulty separating himself from his money. Likewise, one who is by nature indolent and allows his laziness to prevail throughout his daily endeavors will not be faulted when he lacks alacrity in his *mitzvah* observance. He is just simply adhering to his nature. Likewise, one who becomes excited and passionate about mundane

matters will have to “answer” for his dispassionate service to Hashem.

A *maaseh tov*, good action, will receive its greatest accolade when the person acts counterintuitive to his nature. One whose life revolves around kindness to others, whose devotion to *chesed* is boundless, will surely find it most difficult to carry out an act of cruelty. Avraham *Avinu* was the *amud ha'chesed*, the pillar of lovingkindness. For him to slaughter his son, committing to that which on the surface appears to be the direct opposite of everything he lived for, was truly a *nisayon* of epic proportion. Avraham's generosity and kindheartedness were so profound and common that they became his natural proclivity. Every fiber of his being screamed out “No!” when he went to slaughter Yitzchak. Nonetheless, Avraham went against his nature because Hashem had commanded him to do so. This is why it is considered to be Avraham's *nisayon*.