

Avrohom Avinu was commanded with a supreme test, and one of the greatest challenges ever presented to man: “Take your son, your only son, the son that you love...”

One has the right to ask, “What was so great about this act?” Even today we witness people who are willing to slaughter themselves – or their children – in the name of their beliefs, and we certainly don’t consider them great! Why is this act considered one of the ultimate accomplishments of man?

The answer to this question lies in understanding not so much what Avrohom did, but *how* he did it.

► THE FATHER OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Avrohom lived to serve HASHEM. His every waking moment was devoted to spreading HASHEM’s name and bringing others to recognize their Creator. However, he knew that only through a distinct and separate people could the name of HASHEM be brought to its glory. His destiny and ultimate aspiration was to be the father of the Jewish nation.

Yet for many, many years that dream didn’t come true.

Avrohom was 100 years old when he had Yitzchak. He waited month after month, year after year, begging, beseeching, and imploring HASHEM for this son – but to no avail. Finally, in a most miraculous manner, at an age when both he and his wife couldn’t possibly parent a child, the Molochim told him the news: “Your greatest single ambition, to be the father of the Klal Yisroel, will come true through this child Yitzchak.”

► AVROHOM’S RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS SON

From the moment that Yitzchak was born, he was the *perfect* child. Not only was he nearly identical to Avrohom in look and in nature, from the moment that he came to understanding, he went in the ways of his father. Avrohom had many students, but there was only one who was truly devoted to knowing and understanding the ways of his teacher. That was Yitzchak.

An Act that Echoes Though Time

“And Avrohom awoke in the morning, hitched his donkey, and took his two lads, and Yitzchak with him. He split wood for the sacrifice and went to the place that HASHEM had commanded him to.”

— Bereishis 22:3 —

The bond of love and devotion that Avrohom felt towards his “only” son is hard to imagine. The nature of a *Tzadik* is to be kindly, compassionate, and giving. When a *Tzadik* connects to an almost equally perfect *Tzadik*, the bond of love and devotion between them is extremely powerful. For years, this relationship grew. It wasn’t until Yitzchak was 37 years old, in the prime of his life, that HASHEM tested Avrohom.

Avrohom wasn’t asked to kill his child; he was asked to bring him as an *Olah*, to perform all of the details that are done to a sacrifice in the *Bais Hamikdash*. Many a person has difficulty learning the particulars of bringing a *Korbon* when it is done to a sheep or a goat, but this wasn’t an animal. This was his son.

This refined, caring, loving *Tzadik* was asked to slaughter and then prepare his most beloved child and *talmid* as a sacrifice – not to sit by and allow it, not to witness it, but to do it with his own hands.

You would imagine that if such a person could actually muster the self-mastery to do this, it would be with a bitter and heavy heart.

Yet that isn’t how the Torah describes the events.

“And Avrohom got up early in the morning, hitched up his donkey,” and set off on his journey.

Rashi quotes the *Medrash* that explains that this was out of character. Avrohom was an

extremely wealthy and honored individual. He had hundreds of loyal students, and many, many slaves. *Hitching up his donkey* was not something that he normally did. It was done for him by a servant. Yet this time was different because “*love blinds.*” Avrohom was so enraptured with this great act, so caught up in the moment, that he got carried away and did something that he never would have done himself. He hitched up his own donkey.

► THE CRESCENDO

With a calm demeanor and joy in his heart, Avrohom set out on a three-day expedition to accomplish this great *Mitzvah*. Along the way, Yitzchak discovered that he was to be the sacrifice. He said to his father, “Please bind me so that I don’t twitch and spoil the sacrifice.” A *Korbon* must be slaughtered in a particular manner. Any deviation and the sacrifice is invalid. Yitzchak was afraid that he might inadvertently move and spoil the process. Therefore he said, “Please bind me.” (Hence, the term “Akeidas Yitzchak,” the binding of Yitzchak.)

Avrohom did just that. He tied Yitzchak’s arms and legs behind him, put him on the *Mizbeach*, and raised up the knife to kill his son.

The *Medrash* tells us that Avrohom stood over Yitzchak, “With tears in his eyes and great joy in his heart.” The tears in his eyes were the tears of a father parting with his most beloved son, but there was joy in his heart because of the fantastic opportunity to show HASHEM that nothing, not even his most beloved son, was more precious to him than serving his Creator.

► THE ACT IN PERSPECTIVE

And now the question becomes: how is it possible for a man to make the ultimate sacrifice in a manner that seems to transcend every emotional limitation?

Akeidas Yitzchak was a singular event that actualized the years and years of extraordinary perfection that represented Avraham Avinu’s life. Because he lived in this world, he felt real love for his child, but even that love was something he harnessed to show his greater love of HASHEM – the perfect balance of a man in complete control.