

Mussar HaTorah

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Parashas Vaeira

“AND AVRAHAM CALLED THE NAME OF THAT PLACE ‘HASHEM WILL SEE.’” (BEREISHIS 22:14)

People were waiting to see what would happen on the mountaintop

THE *akeidah* – the binding of Yitzchak as a sacrifice – was completed. Avraham had passed the ultimate test in accordance with Hashem’s command. Avraham sacrificed a ram in place of his son and then called the place where he built the altar, “Hashem will see.” The Chizkuni and the Baalei Tosfos, both explain the meaning of that name: Avraham was saying that, “Hashem will see and will testify that I was willing to offer my son as an offering to Hashem.” It was apparently known to people that father and son had been Divinely commanded to make this superhuman effort, and Avraham knew that people were waiting to see what would happen on the mountaintop. Would Avraham follow through on the word of Hashem and sacrifice his beloved son? Avraham was concerned that people would think that he failed his test and did not discharge his duty to Hashem. The name, “Hashem will see” was in essence a prayer that Hashem not allow a *chillul Hashem*. If onlookers were to think that the greatest servant of the Creator refused to obey His command, Hashem’s Name would be disgraced, and Avraham was pleading with Hashem to prevent such an outcome.

You should be rejoicing!

Imagine you are Avraham Avinu. You have been tested with ten trials, each one proving your loyalty, faith and dedication to Hashem. This last test required your complete submission to His will, and you passed with flying colors. In fact, the merit of your achievement will be recalled every year by all your descendants on Rosh Hashana, as they stand in judgment for their lives. Every step of the way, you followed Hashem’s instructions. Now you been told not to carry out the offering, and you pour forth all your love and zeal in the sacrifice of a ram instead. You should be rejoicing! You performed perfectly as commanded. What will people think? If they ask, you can explain what happened. Apparently, they either won’t ask or won’t believe you. If so, is it your problem? You had no choice in the matter and there is nothing you can do about it – it’s out of your hands. Hashem created this situation and surely He knows how to deal with the problem of “public opinion.” Why should you have to worry about it?

He had one option open to him: he could pray

A true servant of Hashem is never content just to do his “job,” fulfill the *mitzvos* and perform as commanded. He is consumed with a burning love for Hashem and looks for opportunities to bring others to feel that love. Conversely, he is constantly searching in every action he takes to prevent any stain to Hashem’s honor. Avraham could not rest on his laurels, knowing that he did his best in every step of the way. He was tormented by the thought that people might misunderstand and lower their respect for Hashem. Even though there was nothing he could do in a practical sense, he had one option open to him: he could pray. Let Hashem see and testify, to implant the truth in everyone’s heart about what really transpired, and thereby prevent a *chillul Hashem*.

As we go about our daily lives and try to serve Hashem in all our actions, let us remember to scan ahead down the road and anticipate people’s reactions. Even if what we are doing is correct, we must still be concerned that no one misinterprets our deeds and motivations. Let us work on increasing our love for Hashem, through the study of mussar and recognition of His unceasing kindness to us. This fiery love will inspire us to avoid any negative perceptions in the eyes of our fellow man and constantly seek to create *kiddush Hashem*.