



BASED ON THE MALBIM

The Unbinding of Yitzchok

An angel of Hashem called him from Heaven and said, "Avraham! Avraham!"

He said, "Here I am."

[The angel] said, "Don't send your hand against the boy, don't do anything to him—for now I know that you are a G-d-fearing man, since you haven't withheld your son, your only one, from Me."

Avraham lifted his eyes and saw—behold!—a ram... He offered it as a sacrifice in lieu of his son. Avraham called the name of that place "*Hashem Yir'eh*," as it's said today, "On this mountain, Hashem will be seen."

The angel of Hashem called out to him a second time... (22:11–15)

Some Questions

AS WE READ THE BREATHTAKING ACCOUNT of Avraham's and Yitzchok's self-sacrifice during *Akeidas Yitzchok* (the Binding of Yitzchok, also called simply "the *Akeida*"), we see a description of Yitzchok's salvation literally seconds before he is sacrificed. A quick perusal of these verses leaves us scratching our heads, with a number of questions:

Why did the angel need to call twice? Couldn't he give Avraham the same message by speaking to him once, and combining Hashem's commandment and blessing in one long statement?

Where was Hashem in all of this? It was Hashem who told Avraham to bind Yitzchok, so why did an angel tell Avraham to stop? Why didn't Hashem tell Avraham Himself?

Come to mention it, how could Avraham even listen to the angel, who was countermanding a direct order

from Hashem? One would think that if Hashem gave such a drastic order, then only Hashem could rescind it!

Furthermore: "Don't send your hand against the boy, don't do anything to him." Wasn't the angel overemphasizing this point? Wouldn't just one of those expressions suffice?

Rashi explains this apparent redundancy by quoting the Midrash:

"Don't send [your hand]"—to slaughter [him]. [Avraham] said to [the angel], "If so, then I have come here for nothing! Let me at least wound him and draw a little blood! [The angel] replied, "Don't do *me'umah*, anything, to him"—[meaning] "Don't inflict a wound (*moom* in Hebrew) in him."

That just makes things worse! Avraham comes off looking no different than the bloodthirsty idolaters of his time, against whom he spent his life arguing! How could this exemplar of kindness beg to draw just a little blood?

Finally, some grammatical nitpicking: Why did Avraham call this place *Hashem Yir'eh* ("Hashem Will See")? Wouldn't it have been more appropriate to call it *Hashem Ra'ah* ("Hashem Saw")—i.e., what I did here today was awesome, and Hashem has seen and acknowledged it?

An Existential Crisis

Our Sages tell us that every mitzvah creates a good angel, who bestows goodness, powered by the mitzvah's merit; every sin creates a bad angel, who wreaks destruction, powered by the devastation sown by the sin. (Hence Avos 4:2, "The reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah...")

Certainly many angels were created

by that which Avraham did wholeheartedly, for the sake of Heaven. His acceptance of the command, traveling, building the altar, arranging the pyre, binding his son—each of these mitzvos created angels.

However, all these mitzvos could have easily been transformed into sins, in an instant. If Avraham had actually gone through with the sacrifice, he would have committed murder! Hashem had never intended that Avraham would actually sacrifice Yitzchok; He merely tested Avraham to see if he would be willing, theoretically, to do so. But to actually do it would have transformed one of the biggest mitzvos that was ever done—a mitzvah on whose merit we still ride, to this very day—into the ultimate sin.

The angels Avraham had just created now cried out to him. Their very existence depended on sustaining these acts as mitzvos! If Avraham were to murder Yitzchok, the nourishment upon which their existence fed would disappear, and them with it. Each angel cried out—shrieked—"Avraham! Avraham!"

The End Justifies the Means

One could say the main test Avraham faced wasn't whether or not to follow Hashem's command. If Hashem came to you with a direct command, would you dare to disobey?

The question was, however: Would Avraham follow Hashem's command solely because Hashem had told him to, or would there be any ulterior motives and emotions mixed in?

This clearly was *not* something that could be tested when Hashem commanded Avraham to offer Yitzchok as a sacrifice. If someone is going to kill his beloved, only son—who, he has been promised, would carry on his mission, and upon whom he would build a na-

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At the Kollel

KEY: 🖐️ Beginners 🖐️🖐️ Intermediate 🖐️🖐️🖐️ Advanced 🚺🚻 for men and women

Looking for a chavrusa? See Coordinator Rabbi Chaim Heinemann!
Chavrusos are available noon–1 PM on weekdays, and 8–9:45 PM Sun.–Thurs.

Sunday *Free brunch!*

🖐️🖐️ **America Runs on Torah**
(Jewish Law & Parasha)
Rabbis Dani Schon
and Yisroel Kaufman.....10 AM
Grand Deluxe breakfast served

Tuesday

🚺🚻 **Partners in Torah**
at the Mayerson JCC
Rabbi Binyamin Teitelbaum.....8 PM

Wednesday

🚺🚻 **Torah Treasures for**
Seniors at the Mayerson JCC
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....10:30–11:15 AM

🚺🚻 **Downtown Lunch-n-Learn**
at Strauss & Troy
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....12–1 PM

Thursday

🖐️🖐️ **Halacha** (based on the parasha)
Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....9:10–10 PM
Homemade refreshments served.

Minyanim Daylight Time

Shacharis
Sunday.....8:15 AM
Monday–Friday.....7:20 AM
Shabbos.....N/A

Mincha
Sunday.....5:45 PM
Monday–Thursday.....5:45 PM
Shabbos.....2:45 PM

Ma'ariv
In the Beis Midrash:
Sunday–Wednesday.....9:45 PM
Thursday.....10 PM
Shabbos.....N/A

Every Day

🖐️ **“Dirshu” Gemara Shiur**
(Maseches B’choros)
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....
Sunday 7:15–8:15 AM
Monday–Friday 5:50–6:45 AM

🖐️🖐️ **Kollel Yisgaber K’ari**
(amud-a-day of Mishnah B’rurah)
Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....
Monday–Friday 6:55–7:20 AM

🖐️🖐️ **Kitzur Shuchan Aruch**
Live video conference!
Rabbi Dani Schon.....
Monday–Friday 12:05–12:20 PM

🖐️ **Daf Yomi**
Rabbi Meir Minster.....
Sunday–Thursday 8–8:45 PM
Shabbos (at CZE) 1:00 pre-mincha

🖐️🖐️ **Nightly Halacha Chabura**
Rabbis Dani Schon
& Binyamin Teitelbaum.....
Monday–Thursday 9–9:45 PM

Chavrusa Learning
(private & small groups).....times vary

The Unbinding... CONTINUED
tion—then he is unquestionably doing so only and exclusively because Hashem has commanded him to, and his actions have no ulterior or self-serving motives.

However, when Avraham received the order to remove his son from the altar, to continue life with his only and beloved son by his side, carrying on his mission—well, one could hardly blame Avraham if he would have felt joy and happiness, certainly more than he had felt when he tried to sacrifice him!

So when Avraham performed the *second* mitzvah—that of taking Yitzchok off of the altar, of saving him from being sacrificed—with the same objectivity and absence of emotion that he had shown with the initial mitzvah, that proved something! “Now—after I saw you perform the second mitzvah, removing Yitzchok from the altar with the same objectivity you had before—now I know

that you are a G-d-fearing man...” And the angel blessed him...

The “Binding” of Avraham

Avraham wasn’t convinced that he shouldn’t sacrifice his son. After all, an angel didn’t have the authority to rescind Hashem’s orders—especially if the angels had “skin in the game,” as we explained above. The Midrash tells us that after Avraham expressed his doubts, Hashem Himself followed up and affirmed the angel’s counter-command.

But from the time that the angel commanded him to take Yitzchok down till Hashem confirmed that this was indeed His will, Avraham was in a bind, so to speak. To whom should he listen?

Meanwhile, “Avraham lifted his eyes and saw—behold!—a ram... He offered it as a sacrifice in lieu of (in Hebrew, *tachas*) his son.”

The Hebrew *tachas* has another

translation—literally, it means “under.” The verse can be read to say: “He offered it as a sacrifice *under* his son,” meaning that while he waited for clarification, Avraham placed the ram under Yitzchok, so that both the ram and Yitzchok were on the altar, until Hashem explained that the ram alone should be sacrificed.

Avraham named that place *Hashem Yir’eh*, “Hashem Will See,” implying that he was waiting for Hashem, Himself, to tell him whom or what he should sacrifice. Avraham did not take the angel at its word. He waited only for Hashem. And he infused that spot with a special trait. The place where the Temples would eventually be built would be unique in that Hashem, and only Hashem—not an angel or any other emissary—would watch over the Temples, as they say even today: “On this mountain, Hashem will be seen.” 🕊