



# KINDER TORAH

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PARASHAS VAYERA

## THE FIRST TO FOLLOW

**A**keidas Yitzchak was a monumental event in Jewish history. It brings merit to the Jewish people for all generations. It was a test for both Avraham and his son Yitzchak. Rav Mattisyahu Solomon, in his sefer, "With Hearts Full of Faith," focuses on Yitzchak Avinu. He is the forefather whose deeds are hardly mentioned in the Torah. Who was he, and what was his role in the building of Klal Yisrael?

**L**et us begin by discussing his father. Avraham Avinu was a pioneer. He introduced the world to the revolutionary new idea of serving Hashem. He was the first in everything that he did, for he did not have a father to follow. Yitzchak Avinu was the opposite. He had a father to follow; therefore, he did not have to break any new ground. Yitzchak became the first follower of the tradition passed down to him from his father. This was his legacy that he passed on to future generations: that we should always follow our fathers.

**W**hat was Yitzchak's test at the Akeida? The Chasam Sofer has a brilliant insight, analyzing the prophesy of Avraham. There was only one prophet in history – Moshe Rabbeinu – who received his prophetic messages from Hashem with clarity. All of the other prophets, including Avraham Avinu, received their prophecies less clearly. They were required to decipher the message and interpret it in order to comprehend Hashem's Divine Will. Avraham, not Yitzchak, received the prophecy about the Akeida. Yitzchak was totally dependent upon his father's interpretation of Hashem's instructions. One could not blame him if he questioned. "Father, are you sure that you interpreted the prophesy correctly? Could it have meant something different that does not require my death?" Yitzchak did not do this. He accepted his father's direction with absolute trust, faith, and confidence. This was Yitzchak's life work, establishing the precedent for unquestioning acceptance of tradition and guidance of the sages. The Akeida was his finest hour. On that day, he reached the ultimate in acceptance. In doing so, he earned merit for all generations.

*Kinderlach . . .*

*Avraham Avinu is the father of our nation. He established the basis of our tradition. Yitzchak followed him. In doing so, he established the tradition of following. Yaakov and his sons, continued following Avraham and Yitzchak. The entire generation in Mitzrayim merited redemption because they followed their fathers and did not change their names, clothing, or language. Hashem the revealed His Will to them at Har Sinai. Each subsequent generation has followed the previous one, keeping Hashem's 613 mitzvos. Kinderlach, we are the current link in that chain. It is our job to keep the tradition going. How? By listening to our fathers, teachers, and sages. By learning from them, doing what they say, and teaching it to our children, when we become older. This is the tradition of following that we received from our forefather Yitzchak. He was the first to follow.*



## GO FOR THE GLORY

**"** / s the load secure?"

"Just a minute. I'll check the ropes again. Yes, everything seems to be tied tightly. Start the motor."

*The man pressed the button, and the electric motor on the roof of the building whirred to life. It slowly tugged on the long rope. Attached to the rope was a load of cinder blocks sitting on the ground. The winch tugged and the rope tightened.*

"Is this rope strong enough for these blocks?"

"Yesterday it lifted a load of fifty cinder blocks. Today I put fifty-one on the pal-

ate. I am testing the strength of the rope."

*The motor whined, the rope strained, and the blocks slowly lifted off the ground. Would the rope hold? Higher and higher the palate rose. Until it reached the roof of the building.*

"Wonderful. The rope passed the test."

"Yes. It is tougher than we thought. The test revealed its strength to us."

**"** / t happened after these things that Hashem tested Avraham" (Bereshis 22:1). Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch zt"l points out that the word "tested" in Hebrew is "nissah". It is similar to the word "nossah" (to travel), "nossach" (to remove), and "nassa" (to carry away). The common denominator of all three words is a description of elevation to a new place. Similarly, a test elevates a person to a new level. It brings out strengths in the person that were previously unknown. By pushing himself to pass the test, he strengthens himself and comes to a new *madrayga* (spiritual level). Rav Hirsch's parable of the rope describes a test, which revealed the hidden strength of the rope.

**T**he Medrash Rabba describes the glory of passing a test with the verse, "To those who fear you, you gave a banner to be raised high" (Tehillim 60:6). The word "nes" (banner) is similar to the word "nossah" (test). Avraham Avinu passed test after test, rising higher and higher in *madrayga*, like a banner flying high over a ship. And so, his glory was revealed to the world.

*Kinderlach . . .*

*How do we react to difficult situations? "Oy vey! What am I going to do? I can't deal with this." That is a negative reaction. "This is a test. Let's come up with a plan and make a real push to carry it out." That is the correct way to view a challenging situation. A test is a wonderful thing. It forces us to push ourselves, and brings out hidden strengths and talents. We then rise to a higher madrayga, which brings glory to ourselves, and to Hashem. Kinderlach, pass the test and grab the glory.*

Parasha Questions:

- Why did Avraham refer to himself as dust and ash? (Rashi 18:27)
- Why did Lot tell the malachim to first stay for the night, and then wash their feet? (Rashi 19:2)
- Why did Hashem stand while Avraham sat? (Rashi 18:1)

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