



# ADVOCATING *Life*

**A**vraham's 10th and final trial was the binding of Yitzchak. In his first one – "G-d said to Avraham, 'Go from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house, to the Land that I will show you...'" – Avraham is told to divorce himself from his past.

His final trial is even more difficult though. This time, he is told to renounce his future. His entire life's work is being put to the test.

At the age of three, Avraham came to the conclusion that the world had a Creator, smashed his father's idols, and later threw himself into the fire at Ur Casdim in sanctification of G-d's name.

When he was miraculously saved from death, he began to "make souls," i.e., gather a following to whom he would teach that the world has a Creator.

Avraham took in guests, and when they thanked him, he told them the world has a Host and there is no need to thank him. He also exemplified the obligation of ransoming captives when he saved his nephew Lot.

Through the relationship between man and his fellow man, he brought

his people to an awareness of the relationship between man and G-d.

Positive action is not enough though.

One must also fight evil.

For example, Avraham fought against the worship of the fire-god Molech, which involved child sacrifice. This was an idolatry which embodied the transgression of the *mitzvot* between human beings and those between man and G-d.

Hence, during those three days on which he journeyed to Mount Moriah to sacrifice his son, we can but imagine what was going through Avraham's mind.

Upon coming down from the mountain, he would have to tell everybody that he had sacrificed his son as a burnt-offering to G-d. This would undermine everything he had worked for, everything he had built and totally confuse the following he had attracted.

Nevertheless, "the two of them walked together." Both Avraham and Yitzchak are committed to carrying out G-d's command.

Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Peshischa asks the following question: we blow a ram's horn on the Day of Judgment to arouse the merit of the Binding of Yitzchak.

But surely the ram's horn recalls the fact that Yitzchak was not actually sacrificed? If the goal was to recall the binding, it would be more appropriate to hold up a slaughtering knife and proclaim that Avraham was ready to sacrifice his son with a similar knife.

The answer is that the blowing of the ram's horn recalls the Almighty's words, "Do not harm the lad, and do not do a thing to him." We 'remind' the Almighty that He is opposed to human sacrifice.

We eagerly anticipate the fulfillment of the eternal promise, "Do not harm the lad." We say, "Enough!" to death and indiscriminate killing and abuse. And we pray that the sacrifices cease and the Almighty will grant us life and a speedy and complete redemption.

*Adapted from an article that originally appeared on yeshiva.co*

**Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau** is the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv and served as the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel from 1993 to 2003.

