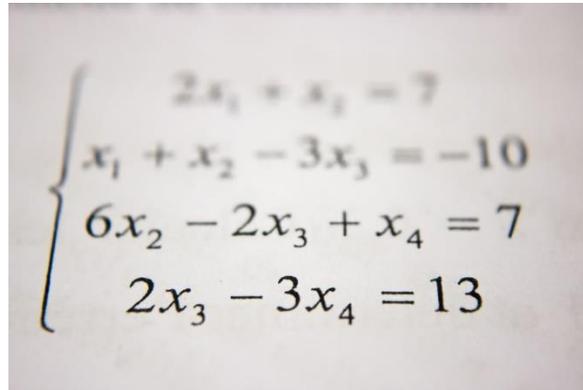


Tests in Torah and Tests in Life
Text compiled by Rabbi Judy Schindler
Rosh Hashanah 5781

“The Torah lesson emphasizes the cardinal truth that all of life is a test, and that each of us is being tested daily.” Rabbi Saul I. Teplitz, *Life is of Living*



Akeidat Yitzhak – The Binding of Isaac - What was the test?

בראשית כ"ב:א'-י"ט

(א) ויהי אחר הדברים האלה והאלהים נסה את-אברהם ויאמר אליו אברהם ויאמר הגנני: (ב) ויאמר קח-נא את-בנך את-יחידך אשר-אהבת את-יחוק וקח-לך אל-ארץ המרגה והעלהו שם לעלה על אחד ההרים אשר אמר אליך: (ג) וישכם אברהם בבקר ויחבל את-חמורו וישח את-שני נעריו אתו ואת יצחק בנו ויבקע עצי עלה ויקם וילך אל-המקום אשר-אמר-לו האלהים: (ד) ביום השלישי וישא אברהם את-עיניו וירא את-המקום מרחק: (ה) ויאמר אברהם אל-נעריו שבו-לכם פה עם-חמור ואני והזער גלגה עד-פה ונשפתנה ונשובה אליכם: (ו) וישח אברהם את-עצי העלה וישם על-יצחק בנו ויקח בידו את-המאכלת וילכו שניהם יחדו: (ז) ויאמר יצחק אל-אברהם אביו ויאמר אבי ויאמר הגנני בני ויאמר הגה האש והעצים ואיה הששה לעלה: (ח) ויאמר אברהם אלהים יראה-לו הששה לעלה בני וילכו שניהם יחדו: (ט) ויבאו אל-המקום אשר-אמר-לו האלהים ויבן שם אברהם את-המזבח ויערף את-העצים ויעקד את-יצחק בנו וישם אתו על-המזבח ממעל לעצים: (י) וישלח אברהם את-ידו וישח את-המאכלת לשחט את-בנו: (יא) ויקרא אליו מלאך יהוה מן-השמים ויאמר אברהם ויאמר הגנני: (יב) ויאמר אל-תשלח ידך אל-הנער ואל-תעש לו מאומה כי אעתה ידעתי כי-ירא אלהים אתה ולא חשכת את-בנך את-יחידך ממני: (יג) וישא אברהם את-עיניו וירא והנה-איל אחר נאטו בסבך בקרניו וילך אברהם וישח את-האיל ויעלהו לעלה תחת בנו: (יד) ויקרא אברהם שם-המקום ההוא יהוה יראה אשר היום בהר יהוה יראה: (טו) ויקרא מלאך יהוה אל-אברהם שגית מן-השמים: (טז) ויאמר כי נשבעתי נאם-יהוה כי יען אשר עשית את-הדבר הזה ולא חשכת את-בנך את-יחידך: (יז) כי כרד אברכה והרפה ארבה את-נרעך כוכבי השמים וכחול אשר על-שפת הים וירש ורעך את שער איביו: (יח) והתברכו בנרעך כל גויי הארץ לעבדך אשר שמעת בקלי: (יט) וישב אברהם אל-נעריו ויקמו וילכו יחדו אל-באר שבע וישב אברהם בבאר שבע: (פ)

Genesis 22:1-19

(1) Some time afterward, God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, "Abraham," and he answered, "Here I am." (2) And He said, "Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you." (3) So early next morning, Abraham saddled his ass and took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the burnt offering, and he set out for the place of which God had told him. (4) On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place from afar. (5) Then Abraham said to his servants, "You stay here with the ass. The boy and I will go up there; we will worship and we will return to you." (6) Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and put it on his son Isaac. He himself took the firestone and the knife; and the two walked off together. (7) Then Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he answered, "Yes, my son." And he said, "Here are the firestone and the wood; but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?" (8) And Abraham said, "God will see to the sheep for His burnt offering, my son." And the two of them walked on together. (9) They arrived at the place of which God had told him. Abraham built an altar there; he laid out the wood; he bound his son Isaac; he laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. (10) And Abraham picked up the knife to slay his son. (11) Then an angel of the LORD called to him from heaven: "Abraham! Abraham!" And he answered, "Here I am." (12) And he said, "Do not raise your hand against the boy, or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me." (13) When Abraham looked up, his eye fell upon a ram, caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son. (14) And Abraham named that site Adonai-yireh, whence the present saying, "On the mount of the LORD there is vision." (15) The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, (16) and said, "By Myself I swear, the LORD declares: Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your favored one, (17) I will bestow My blessing upon you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands on the seashore; and your descendants shall seize the gates of their foes. (18) All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants, because you have obeyed My command." (19) Abraham then returned to his servants, and they departed together for Beer-sheba; and Abraham stayed in Beer-sheba.

Marc Chagall (1887-1985)



in school
we learn the lessons
before we take the test
in life
we take the test before
before we learn the lesson

asdfghjkllove.tumblr.com

Pirkei Avot 5:3

משנה אבות ה':ג'

(3) With ten trials was Abraham, our father (may he rest in peace), tried, and he withstood them all; to make known how great was the love of Abraham, our father (peace be upon him).

(ג) עֲשָׂרָה נִסְיוֹנוֹת נִתְּנָה אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ עָלָיו
הַשְּׁלוֹם וְעָמַד בְּבָלָם, לְהוֹדִיעַ כְּמֵה חֲבָתוֹ שֶׁל
אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ עָלָיו הַשְּׁלוֹם:

Abraham's Ten Tests

1. Being thrown into a furnace because of his belief in a single G-d;
2. Leaving his birthplace, his country and his father's house,
3. Famine in the land of Canaan and being forced to leave it;
4. The oppression of Pharaoh by taking Sarah away from Abraham,
5. The oppression of Avimelech by taking Sarah away from Abraham,
6. The war against the militarily superior 4 kings to save Lot (his nephew),
7. Taking Hagar in the hope of generating a son,
8. Circumcision in a very old age of 99,
9. Expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael that was bad in the eyes of Abraham,
10. Akeidat [binding of] Yitzchak to be scarified on mount Moriah.

Menachem Feldman

The Hebrew word *nes*, the root of the word *nisayon*, the Hebrew word for “test.” *Nes* also means a banner, as in the verse, “I will raise my banner.” Isaiah 49:22. A test, then, includes more than measuring the qualities of the subject of the test. A test is also “raising a banner,” displaying and showing the world the amazing qualities of the one being tested. Thus, G-d tested Abraham in order to display to all the world Abraham’s great commitment to G-d.

There are two words for “test” in Hebrew: *bechinah* and *nisayon*. *Bechinah* is used for tests such as those offered in school, where the test is designed to determine how much the student knows. A *bechinah*, then, gives insight into the ability of the student. The purpose of a *nisayon*, on the other hand, is not to determine the ability of the person being tested, but rather to see if the test itself, the obstacle and struggle, could propel the person to grow beyond his or her natural ability. The test offers an opportunity for the person to perform a miracle, to achieve the impossible and to grow into something greater.

Breakout Rooms
What are the tests of COVID?

Rabbi Sidney Greenberg, *Say Yes to Life*

Our sages correctly observed: "There is no creature who God does not test. We are all tested. We are always tested. Whether we are aware of it, life constantly springs little quizzes on us. Every day is examination day..."

The doctor confronting his patient is having his dedication tested. A lawyer consulting with his client is having his integrity tested. The preacher preparing his sermon is having his honesty tested. The teacher preparing her lesson is having her devotion tested. The businessman on the telephone, the Carpenter building his shed, the mechanic into the car, the painter on the scaffold -- each is having his character tested.

When a neighbor has been bruised, our kindness is tested. When he has been blessed, our generosity is tested. When we have been hurt, or forgiveness is tested. When we have hurt, our humility is tested. Trouble tests are courage. Temptation tests are strength. Friendship tests are loyalty. Failure tests are perseverance.

To look upon life as a series of tests means to bring to it at every time the finest of which we are capable; to keep ourselves always in top moral conditions; to realize the enormous possibilities for good and for ill inherent in each situation, regardless of how unspectacular or humdrum it may appear.

Matthias Stom
(1600-1652)- Baroque



Jewish Travel 5 - Yehuda Amichai

Every year our father Abraham would take his sons to Mount Moriah

The way I take my children to the Negev hills where I once had a war.

Abraham hiked around with his sons.

“This is where I left the servants behind, that’s where I tied the donkey to a tree

At the foot of the mountain, and here, right here, Isaac my son, you asked:

Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?

Then, up a little further, you asked for the second time.”

When they reached the mountaintop, they rested a bit, ate and drank,

And he showed them the thicket where the ram was caught by its horns.

After Abraham died, Isaac started taking his sons to the same place.

“Here I lifted the wood, this is where I got out of breath,

here I asked, and my father answered: God will see to the lamb for the offering.

Over there, I already knew it was me.”

And when Isaac’s eyes were dim with age, his children

Led him to that same spot on Mount Moriah, and recounted for him

All that had come to pass, all that he might have forgotten

The Parable Of The Old Man And The Young (1916)

by Wilfred Owen

So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,

And took the fire with him, and a knife.

And as they sojourned both of them together,

Isaac the first-born spake and said,

My Father, Behold the preparations, fire and iron,

But where the lamb for this burnt-offering?

Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,

And builded parapets and trenches there,

And stretchèd forth the knife to slay his son.

When lo! an Angel called him out of heaven,

Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,

Neither do anything to him, thy son.

Behold! Caught in a thicket by its horns,

A Ram. Offer the Ram of Pride instead.

But the old man would not so, but slew his son,

And half the seed of Europe, one by one.

Heritage - Haim Gouri

The ram came last of all.
And Abraham did not know that it came to answer the boy's question –
first of his strength when his day was on the wane.

The old man raised his head.
Seeing that it was no dream and that the angel stood there –
the knife slipped from his hand.

The boy, released from his bonds,
saw his father's back.
Isaac, as the story goes, was not sacrificed.
He lived for many years, saw what pleasure had to offer,
until his eyesight dimmed.

But he bequeathed that hour to his offspring.
They are born with a knife in their hearts.