

OUR AKEIDAS YITZCHOK

by Rabbi Label Lam

And it came to pass after these things, that G-d tested Avraham, and He said to him, "Avraham," and he said, "Here I am." And He said, "Please take your son, your only one, whom you love, Yitzchok, and go away to the land of Moriah and bring him up there for a burnt offering on one of the mountains, of which I will tell you." (Breishis 22:1-2)

Is it too irreverent to ask about the current and daily relevance of Akeidas Yitzchok? There it is in our Siddur to be read every day. What is it telling the "you" and "me" of the world? Sure Avraham Avinu, without question, passed the supreme test of history. That was the height of the heights and yet we find ourselves now as amateur climbers at the base of a tall mountain, gazing with awe in search of a peak at the peak which is shrouded in mysterious cloud cover. How does that loftiest of all accomplishments translate to our ordinary struggles?

A fellow I was learning with, Larry, once told me that he feared that if he didn't do something dramatic his boys, Jonathan and David, would graduate in a few years from his house without his having ever known them. Until now when he would try to ask them about school they would answer in the shortest way "OK" or "AHA" and he felt he had only the smallest window into their world. What happened to him at work was even less important to them. They would only speak to him sincerely if they were asking for 5\$ or a ride. He felt more like a banker or a cabby than a parent.

I strongly suggested he turn Friday night into Shabbos, even though he was not yet a complete Shomer Shabbos- a keeper of the Shabbos. Buy the boys' favorite foods. Get some grape juice and some fluffy raisin Challoos. Arrange your schedule to be home from work on time and have your wife light a couple of candles. Bless the boys in a formal way and require that everyone attend.

Prepare with your wife some stories or lessons that deal with issues or ideals you wish to address. Read from a book each week and play games with them. The hardest and steepest challenge will be not to answer the holy telephone. Let the message machine do its job.

Within a few months Larry was already glowing with joy. The boys were eating up not just the tasty food but the quality of family time and relationship they were building during this time. A while later one of the boys asked if he could go on an overnight Friday night to a friend. The mother rightly told him "no" because this is their special family time.

The next week Larry came home excited with hockey tickets for a Stanley Cup play-off final that somebody in the office had given him. It was for Friday night. His wife looked at him and said, "If you

go there on our Friday Night then I will never be able to say "no" to the boys when they might make a similar request."

With the courage of Avraham at Akeidas Yitzchok, Larry courageously and wisely obeyed his wife and "sending forth his hand" -forfeited those treasured tickets. He missed the Stanley Cup Play-Off Game that year but he kept his family together over many years. He reports to me how close they have grown as a family unit because of their tenacious loyalty to that sacred appointment.

A 7th grade boy was begging me last week to find out how he could get a custom filter fitted for his Smart Phone. On his own he went to a designated location where some volunteer tech guys could adjust his phone and remove temptation from his reach. It was heroic and perhaps on his level not less than Avraham Avinu giving up his beloved son.

Taking a bold step in the right direction, curbing a debilitating habit, giving up on what we love for something greater is a not just a mini-replica, it's **our Akeidas Yitzchok!**