

THE TENTH TEST VALIDATED THE FIRST NINE

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Vayera

The Tenth Test Validated The First Nine

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 699, Zichrona L'vracha, Sh'lita and Neru - For Whom? Good Shabbos!

The parsha of the Akeida is well known. Not only does it appear prominently at the end of this week's parsha, and is part of the Torah reading on Rosh Hashana, some people have the custom to recite it daily.

Avraham is told "Kach Nah es bincha es yechidcha asher ahavta es Yitzchak" - please take your son, your only son, whom you love -- Yitzchak. The Gemara [Sanhedin 89b] comments on the expression "nah" [please]: This is comparable to a king who had to fight many wars to protect his kingdom. He had a mighty warrior in charge of his battles who was always successful in his military efforts. Apparently, this mighty warrior got older, peace reigned for many years and the warrior was in semi-retirement. Then another war loomed on the horizon. The king went back to his trusted warrior and asked "please do me a personal favor, come back and fight one more war for me, so people will not say 'the first battles mean nothing'. If you cannot win this last war for me, my whole reputation will be destroyed."

So too, G-d comes to Avraham and tells him "I have tested you with many tests and you have withstood all of them. But I need you to undergo just one more test so that it not be said that the first tests were insignificant."

How could anyone say after the 9 tests that Avraham already underwent that "the first tests were insignificant?"

Rav Yosef Grossman quotes Rav Schwab as giving the following answer to this question: People would say "Avraham, no matter how great you are and no matter how much you achieved in your lifetime, if you are not successful in passing the tradition over to your children then what came before is insignificant." Now G-d was giving a test to Avraham that would be a test not only of his

own dedication, but also of the dedication of his 37-year-old son, Yitzchak. If Yitzchak would tell his father "Dad, I am not buying into this; this is not for me; this is your religion, not mine" then in effect, Avraham's valiant success in passing all his other spiritual tests would have been insignificant.

Avraham Avinu is not only about personal perfection. Avraham Avinu is about creating a legacy that he passes on to his children and his children's children. Avraham Avinu was not only successful in creating a religion but in passing it on to his offspring. Had he been unsuccessful in this last test, the value of his success in passing all of the previous test could indeed be questioned.

Rashi in Lech Lecha cites the idea that each letter in Yitzchak's name was symbolic. The Tzadee alludes to the fact that his mother was 90 years old when she bore him. The Ches refers to the fact that he was circumcised on the 8th day of his life. The Kuf symbolizes the fact that his father was 100 years old when he was born. Finally, the Yud symbolizes the fact that his father Avraham withstood ten tests.

Rav Yosef Grossman asks how the Yud referring to the ten tests of Avraham relates to Yitzchak. It seems to relate to Avraham, rather than to Yitzchak.

The answer is that Yitzchak validated all ten tests. If not for Yitzchak cooperating willingly at the Akeida, others could rightfully consider the first nine tests insignificant. Therefore, the Yud is an appropriate part of Yitzchak's name. He had a crucial role in confirming the validity of all of the previous tests that his father withstood.

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Vayera are provided below:

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