

# *Rosh Hashona*

## *Fear Not for G-d Has Heard*

**I**t seems to me that one of the reasons, perhaps the main reason, that brings all of us to *shul* on *Rosh Hashona* is the unpredictability of life. We do not know what is in store for us. We are not even sure what will happen tomorrow. We think that we can spot trends, but we are never certain.

If, for instance, in 1990 I would have told you that Communism would be banned in Russia, I am sure you would have thought I was crazy: if I would have told you that Russia was going to be divided into 15 different republics, you would have looked at me and said that I was working too hard and that I needed a rest; if I would have told you that 330,000 Jews would leave Russia within 18 months for Israel, you would have told me to stop dreaming. Yet, three years later, Russia is a divided country, heading for democracy, and witnessing a Jewish exodus.

I remember visiting Seattle, my hometown, a few years ago and going into the *kosher* bakery there. Behind the counter was a woman I recognized as coming from one of the richest families in the city. She had even attended finishing school in Switzerland. But her family had lost their money, and she had suffered a bad marriage and was left with children to support. So she was working behind the counter in a bakery. How many people in Houston have lost everything? How many people in this country who had fine jobs less than a year ago are now living off their savings and unemployment compensation? How true is the adage that we are here today and gone tomorrow? As the Jewish writer, Arthur Schnitzler, put it: "Our life is wrought of dreams and waking, fused of truth and lies. There is no certitude."

What then are we to do? Hannah gives us the answer: We must have faith. We should never lose hope. As she points out in the *Haphtorah* read this morning: "Men once sated must hire out for bread, men once hungry hunger no more. The Lord makes poor and makes rich; He casts down, He also lifts high. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts up the needy from the dunghill." (*I Samuel 2:5-8.*)

The same point was made in the *Torah* portion of this morning. Sarah felt that Ishmael was a bad influence on her son Isaac, so she had Abraham

eject Ishmael and his mother Hagar from the house. Hagar lost her way in the wilderness and when the water was gone, she left Ishmael under one of the bushes and sat down and cried. What else could she do? She thought death was inevitable. But then she heard an angel calling: "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not...lift up the boy." (*Genesis 21:17*.) Then G-d opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. A person must have faith to continue; she or he must never give up.

Indeed, the basic message of Holy Days, the possibility and the need for repentance, points up the fact that regardless of the magnitude of our moral lapses, we can always change for the better. Our future is never set in stone. The currents that have carried us downward can be neutralized by our determination to row upward. The unpredictability of life should serve for us not as a ground for fear, but as the source of hope. What seems impossible today may become doable tomorrow.

The *Unetane Tokef* prayer, which stresses the indeterminacy of life and the many opportunities for dying, concludes in an upbeat note: Repentance (*teshuva*), prayer (*tefila*), and *tsedaka* will avert the severe decree. The opportunity for change that repentance offers, the spiritual faith that prayer engenders, and the satisfactions that deeds of charity bring can strengthen us to overcome the blows and reverses that invariably come our way. Let us therefore seek during the coming days to examine our weaknesses and repent, pray with devotion and attention, and share our blessings with others. Then in deed are we likely to enjoy a new year, filled with happiness, peace, and accomplishment.

### *Do Not Separate Yourself from the Community*

**W**hat is it that allows a minority culture to continue? How can it be transmitted to future generations? These questions have recently taken center stage on the American Jewish agenda. Today we are witnessing the disintegration of the American Jewish community. According to a recent study, a Jew today is more likely to marry a non-Jew than a fellow Jew. While the Jewish partner usually does not convert, the children of an intermarried couple are, as a rule, lost to the Jewish people. American Jewry is self-destructing before our very eyes. Why is

the Jewish community falling apart in this country?

The answer may, in part, lie in the basic thought pattern of most American Jews. They adhere to a strong set of priorities. First come I and my spouse, then our children and, last of all, our community. Secularized, assimilated Jews will, by and large, seldom think of the Jewishness of their children, let alone of the needs of the local Jewish organizations. Jews who are still attuned to Judaism but not to full Jewish practice will worry about the Jewishness of their children, but in many instances, their concern will not include the Jewish community. Even many fully observant Jews share this attitude. Only a minority of Jews are active in their synagogue or local federation. They are the ones who understand that only a strong community will offer the families, and especially the children, the support systems they need to remain Jews and to confront all of life's problems with the light of Jewish tradition.

That community needs may even take precedence over a child's good is one of the lessons taught by Hannah, the mother of the Prophet Samuel, the story of whose birth is the subject of the *Haphtorah* on the first day of *Rosh Hashona*. A barren woman for a long time, Hannah finally conceives and gives birth to Samuel. When her son is weaned, she brings him to Eli, the High Priest, and leaves him to serve in the House of G-d, in fulfillment of a vow she originally made. Instead of realizing the joys of motherhood, Hannah gives her child to her people.

A somewhat similar lesson is taught by the *akeda*, the binding of Isaac, the subject of the *Torah* reading on the second day of *Rosh Hashona*. If G-d did not really want Isaac sacrificed, why did he put Abraham through the ordeal? And since Abraham probably abhorred human sacrifice, why didn't he protest the Lord's decision as he did in the case of Sodom? One simple answer is that if Abraham could not trust his G-d's command, then Isaac was not likely to believe in that G-d. To assure that Isaac will trust Abraham's G-d, Abraham had to show Isaac the depth of his own faith. To have Jewish children, there must be a Jewish home, and a Jew can function only with difficulty without a strong Jewish infrastructure. Again, the Jewish community deserves first call on Jewish concerns.

To summarize, Judaism cannot exist without a strong, Jewishly vibrant community. Many people leave Judaism or drop out of the Jewish

community because all they care about is themselves. They have bought “hook, line, and sinker” the idea of rampant individualism. Others damage and destroy Judaism by trying to make Judaism into anything they think their children think it should be. “We do not want to lose our children, so we have to change this and change that,” they continually say. Unfortunately they end up losing their children anyway, because their children do not respect something that can be modified to suit every whim, but in the process, the parents help to destroy the Jewish community. Judaism can only survive if we remember that the original shofar blowing occurred at Sinai, and it was done in the present of all of Israel. The *Ten Comandments* were given, not to individuals, but to a people. “*Al tifrosh min hatzibur,*” “Do not separate yourself from the community,” Hillel’s advice in *Mishna Avot 1:5*, is as valid today in America as it was in Israel almost two thousand years ago.

### ***G-d, Connectiveness, Spirituality, and Sin***

**W**e all need spirituality. We all need to be connected to others and to G-d. If we sin, we destroy our links with G-d and with others, and we become miserable. We feel alienated. That is what we learn from the story of Adam and Eve. *Rosh Hashona* celebrates Adam and Eve’s creation on *Rosh Hashona*. Adam and Eve, also, sinned, the rabbis teach us, and Adam and Eve were ultimately forgiven on this day, too.

What happened, though, after they sinned? They immediately felt ashamed. They hid. They felt they were no longer worthy of G-d’s love and care and protection. As the *Torah* tells us, “And they heard the voice of G-d walking in the Garden, and Adam and his wife hid before G-d in the midst of the trees of the Garden. And G-d called out to man and He said, ‘Where are you?’ ‘I heard Your voice in the Garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid’.” The rabbis explain that this sentence does not mean only that Adam was literally naked. It, also, means that he was naked of self-respect. He had, by sinning, destroyed his self-respect. He no longer could look, so to speak, G-d in the eye and, therefore, he had to hide. He had to sever his connections with G-d, and when G-d asked him,

“Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” Adam did what all mankind has done from time immemorial. Instead of taking responsibility for his sin, he blamed somebody else. He said, “The woman that You gave me, she gave me from the tree and I ate. It is not my fault that I sinned, G-d, it is Your fault because You gave me this woman. Besides, if anybody is at fault, it is she.” G-d asked the woman “What is this that you did?” She claimed, too, that it was not her fault but the snake’s fault. When we sin, when we do things that are beneath human dignity, we immediately alienate ourselves. We destroy our sense of spirituality.

We all need to be connected to others and connected to G-d. Unfortunately, after we have sinned, it is much harder to connect with others and with G-d. G-d still calls out to us. That’s why in the *13 Midot* prayer we always mention *Adoshem* twice, “*Adoshem Adoshem*.” G-d is our G-d before we sin and G-d is still our G-d even after we have sinned. We know that we have to have a link to Him. Unless we have a link to Him, we are not going to be able to make it in the world. It is no good to live a life based on rationalizations. Rationalization fools no one, not even ourselves. I am reminded of the story they tell about a man who was supposed to get a paycheck of \$250 a week but one week he got \$500. At the end of the next week he got only \$180. He was very angry and went to his boss. He said, “I am supposed to get \$250 a week. How come I only got \$180?” The boss said, “What are you complaining about? Last week you got \$500. Why didn’t you come and complain then?” The man looked at him and said, “Well, one mistake I can forgive, but not two.” We all know that this is nothing more than a rationalization, a self-deception. The problem is when you rationalize and deceive yourself, what you do is cut yourself off from G-d and from your fellow man. Everyone knows that you’re trying to fool them, and they’ll keep their distance.

We all need to stand in G-d’s presence and that is what the High Holidays are about. G-d is close to us and He is extending, so to speak, His hand to us. He is asking us to come and feel close to Him, to reestablish once again our link with Him. If we fail to do this, we are going to eventually turn on each other, just like Adam and Eve did. After Adam and Eve did *teshuvah* and were reconciled to G-d, they were able once again to rec-

oncile to each other. Adam called his wife, Chava, the mother of all life. And later we learn, however, Eve became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "Because I have acquired man with G-d." In other words, she knew that now she had a husband even though he wasn't perfect. She knew that she could forgive her husband his faults because she also had faults and he was sorry for what he did. We all know that if we demand that our spouse be perfect, then we should be perfect, but we all know that we are not perfect. Therefore, since we can forgive ourselves, we should be able to forgive others also. We also have to realize that as long as a person is trying to establish his link with G-d by admitting his error, then that person is worthy of our forgiveness, too. This is what *Rosh Hashona* is all about. We say in our prayers from the *Psalms*, "From my depths I called out to You, G-d." G-d, I want to reestablish a relationship with You even though I've sinned and that is what Judaism is all about. Judaism is about linking man to G-d. Many people forget that the purpose of Judaism is for man to get close to G-d. For so long in our community we have failed to speak about G-d. This failure to speak about G-d spans the gamut from the far left all the way to the far right. We know, of course, that Judaism says that you first have to be moral before you can reach out to G-d. G-d will not heed your prayers and will not want to establish a relationship with you if you act immorally. But once we have recognized that we must be moral, G-d reaches out to us and says, "Feel close to me." We need to establish our link with G-d. We all have this spiritual need. *Mitzvahs* are the avenues of spirituality. *Mitzvahs* are what link us to G-d.

Unfortunately, many people do not realize this. Of course, it is possible to do *mitzvahs* without thinking of them as avenues to G-d, but then they lose their meaning and the vibrancy and become mechanical. When they become mechanical, most people will not observe them. If Jews do not see any spirituality in *mitzvahs*, they will cease keeping them. If Jews do not see any spirituality in *Shabbos*, if they do not realize that these observances are avenues to G-d, then they will think that they are at best silly and, at worst, just plain superstition. The *mitzvahs* not only refine us and make us better people, but they also allow us to develop our spiritual nature. They allow us to connect with man and connect with G-d. That is the purpose of *mitzvahs*. In fact, one of the meanings in Hebrew for the

word “*mitzvah*” is “to be attached.” We all know that when we do *mitzvahs* between man and man, for example, giving charity, it does not make any difference on a practical level what our intentions are. We could be doing it for the sake of the *mitzvah* or to get our name in the paper. After all, the poor are still being helped so it makes no difference on a practical level. However, when we want to get close to G-d, we really have to have the proper intent; otherwise, it is just a sham and a fake, and we will never be able to achieve what our goal is, to get close to G-d.

On this holiday of *Rosh Hashona* we say that G-d moves from the seat of mercy to the seat of judgment when He hears the blowing of the *shofar*. Why should that be? After all, the *shofar* is usually an instrument of punishment. In the *Talmud* we learn that one of the tools that a Beis Din had to have was a *shofar* because when they used to excommunicate people, which was really more like shunning, they would blow the *shofar* against them. The *shofar* is usually a sign of judgment, not mercy. When Joshua blew the *shofar* before the Walls of Jericho, it was a sign of judgment. When Deborah had the *shofar* blown against the Tribe of Reuben because they did not come to aid her in fighting the Canaanites, it was a sign of judgment. How come then when we blow the *shofar* on *Rosh Hashona* it is considered a sign of mercy and not a sign of judgment? The answer is that it depends upon who is blowing the *shofar*. If the *shofar* is being blown against us, then it is a sign of judgment, but if we are blowing the *shofar* against ourselves, then it is a sign of mercy. If we are calling out from the depths of our hearts to G-d, if we are telling G-d, “Listen, we are sorry for anything that we have done wrong that has sullied our relationship with You and we are going to make up with the people we have wronged,” then G-d works from the seat of judgment and the seat of mercy. Then the call of the *shofar* is a cry from us how we are going to try to reestablish relationships with those we have wronged and with G-d.

We all need to be connected to G-d now. That is why we all come to shul on *Rosh Hashona*. After all, why couldn't we pray at home? But it is not the same when we pray at home. We are not elevated. We all know that when we come to shul, we feel connected to G-d and we feel connected to our friends and neighbors and the Jewish people. Feeling connected to G-d and to the Jewish people and to others gives us a certain wholeness

and elevation which allow us to continue to grow and feel G-d's meaning in life.

It is important on this day of *Rosh Hashona* that we realize that what Judaism is about is getting close to G-d. We all need to feel close to G-d and we all need G-d's help. We all have to make so many decisions in life. It is so hard to know if we are making the right decisions. We all need G-d's help to make the best decisions. We also need to be needed. We need to feel part of something of value other than ourselves. We need to feel that we are partners with G-d in creation. We need to have a spiritual direction in our lives. *Mitzvahs* are an avenue to spirituality. *Mitzvahs* are our way of getting close to G-d and Jewish learning is one of the most important for *mitzvahs*. The rabbis say that if we will learn *Torah* we will get close to G-d and to man. When we learn *Torah*, we learn the many reasons for the *mitzvahs* and see how they all tie up together to bring us closer to G-d. We will then be drawn closer to man, too.

May we all during the coming year do more *mitzvahs* and do more *mitzvahs* with the intention of getting closer to G-d and to man. May we all have richer spiritual lives so that we will feel whole, so that we will feel more connected to G-d and to man. And may we also during the coming year feel that we are needed and know that we can have a closer relationship with G-d, knowing that we count because He is counting on us. May we all have this wonderful relationship with G-d so the *Mashiach* will come quickly in our day. Amen.

### *Spiritual Maturity, Learning, Sacrifice, and Failure*

**W**e all know that *Rosh Hashona* does not come in the first month of the Jewish calendar but in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar. This indeed seems strange. Why should it be that *Rosh Hashona*, which is generally assumed to celebrate the creation of the world, comes in the 7th month? *Rosh Hashona*, though, does not celebrate the creation of the world. It celebrates the creation of man as we know him. The *Kabala* says that the world is billions of years old, and even if we would want to interpret the *Bible* later, we would still have to conclude that the world was created on the 25th day of the month of *Elul*.



six days before and not on the first of *Tishri*. Why, though, does this holiday occur in the 7th month? In the *Talmud* there is an argument between Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Eliezer. Rabbi Yehoshua says the world was created on the first of *Nisan*, the first month, while Rabbi Eliezer says, no, the world was created in the 7th month.

We all know that "7" in Judaism is a holy number. We have the 7th day of the week, which is the Sabbath, the 7th year, which is the Sabbatical Year, we have 7 times 7 Sabbatical Years leads to the 50th year, the Jubilee Year. Why should "7" be a holy number in Judaism? Some rabbis say because it is a combination of the minimum number for a Jewish family, a man and a woman and a boy and a girl, plus the 3-part *Torah*, which is composed of the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Writings. Other rabbis give another reason. They say that we all live in 7 dimensions. We live in 6 physical dimensions. We live north, east, south, west, up, and down, but we also live in a seventh dimension, a spiritual dimension. Also, if we look at the *Torah* carefully, we will note that Adam was not created as a baby Adam was created as a mature human being. All the rest of us were created first as a little baby and then we grew to be mature human beings. *Rosh Hashona* being the celebration of Adam's creation as a mature being doesn't begin at what would be our beginning, but at a time comparable to when we would be mature, the 7th month. Adam was also the first being who also had a spiritual side to him. That's why the *Torah* says that G-d blew into his nostrils the breath of life. The rabbis say that there were 974 generations of man before Adam. They were creatures but not man as we know him. These were creatures who did not have this spirituality. Man without spirituality quickly degenerates. He becomes bored with everything. Things no longer have any meaning for him, and a man without spirituality is easy prey to alcohol and drugs and even suicide. We know today that the third main cause of death for young adults is suicide right after automobile accidents and murder. Many young people, especially, when they come across problems which they feel they cannot handle because there is too much pain involved give up and commit suicide. They do not have the inner spiritual strength to overcome life's problems. G-d has never promised us that if we are religious people, we will not have problems. He has only promised us that if we are religious people, we will

have the strength to overcome our problems. We need spiritual strength in order to overcome the inevitable problems of life. When a child grows up, a child naturally believes. A child believes in his parents, and he feels that everything they tell him is true. But when the child becomes a teenager, he realizes that life is not always the way his parents had told him so many situations can be interpreted in so many different ways, especially when his hormones begin to work. Teenagers especially do not know their position in life. Life is filled with so much psychological pain and suffering. This pain and suffering, especially rejection by their peers or by their first love, can be so excruciating that they feel that they have to take their own lives. They do not have the spiritual strength in order to deal with life's inevitable pain.

We all know that we need each other, too, in order to overcome life's problems. Adam, when he was first created, according to the rabbis was hermaphrodite. He was both man and woman, androgynous, but he was lonely. The rabbis ask, why was man lonely? He could talk to the angels. The angels would give him everything that he needed, but they did not need anything from him. He had nobody to give to. Therefore, he was lonely and G-d divided man in two. In Hebrew the word "*Tzelah*" does not just mean "rib," it can also mean "side." Eve was created so he could give to her and she could give to him. Marriage according to Judaism is such a wonderful institution because we have an opportunity to give each day to each other and it is through giving that we develop our spiritual side. Marriage allows us to develop our spirituality.

The rabbis ask what is the reason that *Rosh Hashona* comes in the 7th month? The answer because we cannot become mature human beings until we have first gone through a *Pesach*, a *Shavuot*, and a *Tisha B'Av*. *Pesach* teaches us that we can succeed. G-d has given each of us freedom. G-d Himself, intervened in the world to give us freedom to act. We did not have to fight for our freedom when we left Egypt. G-d, Himself, gave us our freedom to teach us all that we are dependent only upon Him for inner freedom. We need a belief in G-d, a belief in something beyond ourselves to give us the strength to fight against our persecutors, those who would take our freedom from us. Without this inner strength, we will lose our freedom to solve our problems or to help others. We also have to be will-

ing to defend our freedom by action. G-d made us fight for our freedom against Amalek and when we went up to the land of Israel, we had to fight for the right to live in the land. But it isn't just physically that we have to fight. We have to know that we can overcome our problems and that we can achieve our goals. Our strength comes from knowing that G-d is counting upon us and G-d needs us and that He will give us all the inner spiritual strength we need to overcome all of life's problems.

Second of all, we must always know that in trying to overcome life's problems there are certain things we cannot do in order to succeed. G-d demands that we not only live lives filled with inner freedom, which allows us to sacrifice, but also lives based on the *Ten Commandments*. That is what *Shavuot* teaches us. It teaches us that the willingness to sacrifice, which is necessary to retain our freedom is not necessarily good if it is not based on the *Ten Commandments*. After all, the Nazi stormtroopers were willing to sacrifice for Hitler, but that did not make their cause right. The Hamas suicide bombers today who are willing to commit suicide in order to kill as many civilians as possible in order to destroy Israel are not good people. Sacrificing even your life does not make a cause right. In order to be spiritually mature, we must, besides the willingness to sacrifice, be willing to base what we do on the morality of the *Ten Commandments*.

Thirdly, we also have to go through a *Tisha B'Av*. We also have to know how to fail. Unfortunately, people feel that if they are defeated, they are a failure, but that is not true. We are never a total failure. Life is going to defeat every single one of us eventually. We are all going to be beset by different problems and come up second best. We are not always going to be the strongest or the best, but we do not always have to be. All we have to do is to try to do our best. We can never be a total failure unless we want to be. That is what *Tisha B'Av* teaches us. We can always start over again. We can always get up out of the ashes. Even if we have done things in life that we are not always proud of, we can always start again. Look at our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Abraham was known as a man of great kindness but, yet, as we are going to read today in the *Akedah*, he misinterpreted G-d's command and thought that he was to sacrifice his son. Yitzchak was a man of great faith, but he was fooled by his son Esau whom he thought was a righteous man. He could not recognize that Esau

did not have great faith. Yaacov was known as a man of great truth and, yet Yaacov tricked his father Yitzchak in order to obtain his brother Esau's blessing. Even if we have failed, we can still come back. We do not have to remain defeated. We are never a total failure. That is what *Tisha B'Av* teaches us.

Unfortunately, there are many people who feel that if they have lost their business or if their marriage has soured or if they have failed in other areas of life, that they can never come back and they become terribly depressed. They do have to examine what they did wrong, but they can come back. G-d said you can come back. The essence of a spiritual life is to make sure that you know how to come back from every particular defeat, to make sure that no defeat is a total defeat. Nobody can be totally a failure unless they want to be one. When G-d called to Abraham and said, "Take your son, your only son, the one whom you love and lift him up," Abraham thought that that meant that he was to sacrifice Yitzchak, but G-d meant for Abraham to elevate him. When Abraham was about ready to sacrifice his son, an angel called out to Abraham and told him to stay his hand. The angel continued by saying "Now I know that you are G-d-fearing as you did not withhold your son, your only one, from me." The angel, though, did not say "whom you love" as G-d had said originally. Why should that be? The rabbis continue because it is important that we love our children, and it is important that we shower them with affection, but it is also important that we make demands upon them. It is not just enough to love our children without making any demands upon them. Abraham and Yitzchak had gone together. Yitzchak had responded. If we do not make demands upon our children, then they are going to grow up to be people who can never have a spirituality because they will not have any sense of responsibility. They will not feel that they can accomplish things. They will not know that they have the wherewithal to make their mark on the world.

We are called upon to love our children and make them grow up to be spiritual beings. That is why the *Torah* tells us that Abraham and Yitzchak went together to the place which G-d had said. What is the best way that you can go together with your children? The best way is to teach *Torah* to your children, to go to the place that G-d said. One of the problems that we

have today is that children are not following in the footsteps of their parents. They are rejecting the ideals of their parents. The reason why these children are rejecting the ideals of their parents is because many times their parents do not live their ideals. They may mouth their ideals, but they do not live their ideals. If a person is puffing away while telling his child to stop smoking, the child is not going to stop smoking. In Jewish life, sacrifice is always required, and we have to teach our children that they have to sacrifice, too. Later, Abraham sacrifices a ram. Why should he have had to have sacrificed a ram? G-d, it is true, does not want us to sacrifice our children but He does require us to teach our children that they have to make sacrifices. He requires us to teach them that they have to live honest and decent lives, even though this will require sacrifice. He requires us to teach our children to sacrifice by marrying within our faith. He requires us to teach our children to sacrifice by giving charity and by not going to places and by not participating in activities where they could not practice our religion. Yes, it does require sacrifice to be a Jew.

Judaism requires that the father and the son and the mother and daughter go together. The best way for that to happen is for the father and the son and mother and daughter to talk together to learn *Torah* together. It is only through the learning of *Torah* that we can enhance our Jewish spirituality. It is not enough just to support Jewish religious institutions. We also have to study Jewish texts. Unless we study Jewish texts, we will not know that that we have the inner freedom to overcome our problems and that our solutions must always be based on morality and the *Ten Commandments* and that we can never totally fail. It is very important that a father and a son or a mother and a daughter study *Torah* and see how it can be applied to their own lives. That is why it says in the *Torah* that Abraham and Yitzchak went together, not just once, but twice. Once when it says how Abraham took the wood and the fire, etc. for the sacrifice. And the second time after Abraham told Yitzchak that G-d would show him the lamb for the sacrifice. After Abraham sacrificed a ram in place of Yitzchak, the *Torah* says that Abraham called the name of that place "G-d will be seen." What does it mean G-d will be seen? This means, the rabbis say, that now Abraham is sure that the Jewish people will continue. G-d will still be seen after I am gone, Abraham is saying. Judaism will continue because my son

is willing to sacrifice for it. I have succeeded in transmitting my values to my son because my son and I have studied together. We have studied and worked together to implement Jewish values in our home. I have given him the best education that it is possible to give him.

People complain to me and say Jewish education costs so much, how can I afford to send my children to a day school? I answer them by saying, "Listen, if your son would have a terrible disease, wouldn't you want to get the best doctor for him to try to cure his disease? Don't you give your children shots to prevent them from getting all sorts of terrible diseases like diphtheria, polio, etc.? If your son or daughter has a spiritual disease, wouldn't you want to get them the best possible remedy possible in order that they would not suffer from this spiritual disease? Wouldn't you want to prevent your children from getting spiritual diseases? If people suffer from spiritual disease, they are easily lured into alcoholism and drug abuse and immorality. They will not feel life's meaning. They will be empty and bored. They will not be able to lead Jewish lives." It is very important in order for our youngsters to lead spiritual lives that they see spirituality at home, too, that there be Jewish learning in addition to Jewish practices in the home. In a *Chumash* when you see one *Yud* above another, you find a stop on G-d but if you have two *Yiddin*, one Jew right next to another, studying together, learning together there you have the name of G-d. The name of G-d will be sanctified in Israel if the generations study together, if they learn together. If the best Jewish education possible is given to a child and if parents not only have Jewish practices in their home but also Jewish learning, then you can rest assured that G-d will be seen not only in this generation but in the next generation as well.

It is important that we give our children a sense of spirituality. It is important that we give them a sense of being close to G-d because, unless they have this sense of spirituality, they will never become mature and never be able to make it *vis a vis* the world because they will not have the inner strength which is necessary to overcome life's problems. They will also not have the strength to base their life on morality and realize that they can never be total failures. The holy mountain in Judaism is not Mount Sinai upon which we received the *Torah*, but Mount Moriah where one Jew from one generation was willing to sacrifice for another Jew in an-

other generation. Where there are two Jews who are willing to sacrifice to preserve Judaism, when there are two generations which are willing to go together and make the necessary sacrifices so that Judaism can survive, then rest assured Judaism will survive. Let us all hope and pray that Judaism will survive and our children will become spiritual Jews so that the *Mashiach* will come quickly in our day. Amen.