

Drash
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Rosh Hashanah
9-17-23

Genesis 22:1-19
Binding of Isaac

Shanah tovah!

On Rosh Hashanah morning, forty-one years ago, in 1982, my father called me from Los Angeles. It seemed unusual that he was calling because I had just spoken to my parents on the previous day to wish them *shana tova*. His voice was subdued. I could barely hear him as he told me that my nine-year-old niece had been on her bicycle the previous afternoon, on the street, where my brother and sister-in-law live in L.A. A speeding car came through the neighborhood and hit her. She had died at the hospital, late in the night. The loss of a child is an incalculable horror. Any family who has experienced it knows the shattering suffering that it brings.

Yet, it is this horrific possibility that God asks of Abraham in the Akedah. It's a chilling and perplexing narrative that we visit each Rosh Hashanah.

Historians and archaeologists tell us that the purpose of the story was probably to negate the necessity for child sacrifice which was prevalent in the ancient world. But do we need **this** story since the condemnation of this ritual is seen both in the Torah and the Prophets? Twice in Leviticus (Lev. 18:21) God says, "Do not allow any of your offspring to be offered...do not profane the name of the Lord. I will set my face against that one who gives up his offspring..." (Lev. 20:3) Jeremiah quotes God "They burn their sons and daughters in fire...which I never commanded, which never came to my mind."

