

Here I Am: The Akeida and the Families of Israel

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On Shabbat, 31 October 2026, we read the Akeida. Every year it is hard to read. Since 7 October 2023 it is hard in a new way, because many families in Israel have lived parts of it.

"Take your son"

G-d does not say it all at once. Rashi on 22:2 lays out the dialogue the Gemara hears in the verse. "Your son." I have two sons. "Your only one." Each is the only one of his mother. "Whom you love." I love them both. "Yitzchak." Why not say it at first? "שְׁלֹא לַעֲרֹבְבוּ פְתָאוֹם", so as not to shake him all at once, and to give him reward for every word.

Rashi also reads "קח נא" as a plea: "בְּבִקְשָׁה מִמֶּנִּי, עֲמֵד לִי בְּזֶה הַנִּסְיוֹן", I ask you, stand with Me in this trial.

Parents who have sent sons and daughters to the front know that each word lands separately: your son, your only one, the one you love.

Early in the morning

"(22:3) וַיִּשְׁכֶּם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר". Avraham got up early, saddled his donkey and split the wood himself. Since 7 October 2023, mothers and fathers have packed bags, driven to bases before dawn and come home to an empty room. They did what had to be done, and they did it early.

"And the two of them went together"

Yitzchak asks one question: "(22:7) הֲנִיָּה הָאֵשׁ וְהָעֵצִים וְאַיִּהּ הַשֶּׁה לַעֲלֹה. Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb? Avraham answers, "(22:8) אֲלֵקִים יִרְאֶה לֹךְ הַשֶּׁה לַעֲלֹה בְנִי".

Rashi reads that answer with two meanings. G-d will choose the lamb, and if there is no lamb, then "my son" is the offering. Yitzchak understood, and yet "וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו", the two of them walked on together, and Rashi says "בְּלֵב שֶׁוָּה", with one heart.

That phrase belongs to the sons and daughters who went knowing, and to the parents who walked with them as far as they were allowed to go.

"We will come back to you"

At the foot of the mountain Avraham tells his young men, "(22:5) וְנִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וְנָשׁוּבָה אֲלֵיכֶם". We will bow down, and we will come back to you. Plural. Avraham says "we" before he knows how the day will end.

There are families who have waited, sometimes for a very long time, for a son or a daughter held in captivity to come home. They lived inside that word "וְנִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה", we will come back, with no way of knowing. Some saw it fulfilled, and the whole country cried with them. For some it ended in grief, and the whole country cried with them too.

The angel calls twice

"(22:11) אַבְרָהָם אַבְרָהָם. The angel calls his name twice, and Avraham answers the same word he said at the start: "הֵנָּכִי", here I am. Rashi on 22:1 calls that word "עֲנָנָה לְשׁוֹךְ חֲסִידִים, לְשׁוֹךְ עֲנָנָה", the answer of the devout, a word of humility and readiness.

Not every family got the second call. The Torah does not pretend that every story ends with a ram in the thicket. But it teaches that "הֵנָּכִי" said in faith is never wasted. ה' swears (22:16) "וְעַתָּה יָדָעְתָּ אֲשֶׁר" because you did this thing, blessing follows.

What we owe them

This paper takes no political side. It asks one thing of every reader: to see these families the way the Torah sees Avraham on the road. They are not symbols or arguments. They are fathers and mothers who got up early, sons and daughters who went with one heart, and families who said "we will come back" and meant it.

Avraham named the place "ה' יִרְאֶה" (22:14), ה' will see. May He see every one of them, comfort those who mourn, and bring home everyone still waiting to come home.

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Sources (fetched from Sefaria 30 October 2026): Genesis 22:1–19; Rashi on Genesis 22:1, 22:2, 22:8. Not checked in the original: Sanhedrin 89b and Bereishit Rabbah 55–56 (quoted via Rashi). Rashi's comment on "הֵנָּכִי" is on 22:1 in Sefaria's text.

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