

Returning to Our Children



AFTER THE AKEDAH, the binding of Isaac, the Torah tells us, "Abraham returned to the youths" (Genesis 22:19). The Kotzker rebbe says this verse illustrates Abraham's newfound recognition of the importance of maintaining contact with young people. He realized that influencing them was critical to his mission. For he saw that Isaac, because of his youth, was willing to be sacrificed. The Kotzker says that Abraham knew there was tremendous power in the devotion of young people and that it had to be properly harnessed.

Every civilization has realized this truth. Young people are the ones who go to battle. For all the assertions about the egocentrism of youth, it is the young people, not their parents, who willingly sacrifice themselves in war.

The Kotzker is urging on religious leaders and teachers a great truth. In our young people are the dynamism and passion that Judaism desperately needs. Youth is indifferent only when indifferently taught, indifferently led. Moses reinforces this lesson when he proclaims before Pharaoh, "We will go with our young and with our old" (Exodus 10:9). Why the young first? As the rebbe of Ponovezh comments on this verse, "A child is an orphan when he has no parents. A nation is an orphan when it has no children."

It is time to return to our children so that they can return to our ancestors.

