

NAMING THE UNIMAGINABLE

A mortal wound and a miraculous recovery

וְנָטַל אֶת הַסָּכִין כְּדֵי לְשַׁחֵטוֹ עַד שֶׁיֵּצֵא מִמֶּנּוּ רְבִיעִית דָּמוֹ.

He [Abraham] applied the knife to begin slaughtering him until it drew a quarter of his [Isaac's] blood.

(Tanhuma VaYera 23)

נִטְמָן יִצְחָק בְּגֵן עֵדֶן שְׁתֵּי שָׁנִים כְּדֵי לְרַפְּאוֹ מִן הַחֲתָךְ שֶׁחָתַךְ אָבִיו כְּשֶׁהִתְחִיל לְשַׁחֵטוֹ.

Isaac was hidden in the garden of Eden for two years in order to heal him from the wound inflicted by his father as he began the slaughtering.

(Hadar Zekenim 10b)

A near-death trauma

רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אוֹמֵר כִּי כִּיּוֹן שֶׁהִגִּיעָה חֶרֶב עַל צְוֹארוֹ שֶׁלִּיצְחָק פָּרְחָה נִשְׁמָתוֹ וַיִּצָּאָהּ. וְכִשְׁהִשְׁמִיעַ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא קוֹלוֹ מִבֵּין שְׁנֵי הַכְּרוּבִים וְאָמַר אֵל תִּשְׁלַח יָדְךָ אֶל הַנֶּעַר וְאַל תַּעַשׂ לוֹ מְאוּמָה חֲזָרָה נִפְשׁוֹ לְגוֹפּוֹ וְהִתִּירוֹ וְעָמַד עַל רַגְלָיו וַיִּדַע שֶׁכֶּךָ הַמֵּתִים עֲתִידִין לְחַיּוֹת וּפְתַח וְאָמַר: "בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'... מְחַיֶּה הַמֵּתִים."

Rabbi Eliezer says that when the sword touched Isaac's throat, his soul fluttered and fled. But when God raised his voice from between the wings of the two cherubim and said, *Do not set your hand against the lad, nor harm him in any way*. Then Isaac's life returned to his body. His father freed him, he stood on his own two feet and knew that in the future, this is how the dead would come to life and he said: Blessed are you, Adonai... who revives the dead.

(Midrash HaGadol: VaYera on Genesis 22:12)

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A resurrection

כְּשֶׁנֶעְקַד יִצְחָק אָבִינוּ עַל גְּבֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְנִעְשָׂה דָשָׁן וְהָיָה אֶפְרוֹ מוֹשְׁלָח עַל הַר
הַמִּזְבֵּיחַ מִיַּד הַבֵּיא עָלָיו הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא טַל וְהִחְיָה אוֹתוֹ. לְפִי כֵן אָמַר
דָּוִד: "כְּטַל הַרְמוֹן שֶׁיֵּרֵד עַל הַרְרֵי צִיּוֹן כִּי שָׁם צָנָה ה' אֶת הַבְּרָכָה חַיִּים
עַדְהָעוֹלָם" (תהילים קלג:ג). כְּטַל שֶׁהִחְיָה בּוֹ יִצְחָק אָבִינוּ. מִיַּד פְּתַחוּ מִלְאָכֵי
הַשָּׁרַת וְאָמְרוּ: "בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'... מְחִיֵּה הַמֵּתִים."

When Isaac bound to the altar became ash, and his dust scattered on Mount Moriah, the blessed Holy One quickly brought dew and revived him. That is what David had in mind when he said: *It is like the dew of Hermon that falls upon the mountains of Zion; the place where the Lord ordained blessing and everlasting life* (Psalm 133:3). Just so, the dew that revived father Isaac. Immediately, the ministering angels declared: "Blessed are you, Adonai... who revives the dead."

(Shibbole HaLeket 9a-b)

A pet sheep

"וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה אֵיל" (בראשית ככ:יג). רֹאשׁ צֹאנוֹ
שֶׁלְאַבְרָהָם הָיָה וַיִּצְחָק שְׁמוֹ וְלֹא הִכִּירוֹ. אָמַר הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא יְבוֹא יִצְחָק
תַּחַת יִצְחָק .

Abraham look up and saw that there was a ram (Genesis 22:13). The sheep was the bellwether of Abraham's flock and its name was Isaac, but Abraham did not recognize it. Said the blessed Holy One: Let Isaac come instead of Isaac.

(Midrash HaGadol on Genesis 22:13).