

## “Coming Down the Mountain”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

What was the most difficult part of the binding of Isaac for Abraham? (Gen. Ch. 22) When the Kotzker Rebbe asked his students, they gave the expected answers: first hearing the command; walking with his son knowing what would happen; actually binding Isaac to the altar on Mt. Moriah. As Rabbi Simcha Weinberg pointed out to me, the Kotzker's answer was characteristically brilliant: The hardest part, he said, was coming down the mountain. Then Abraham understood that he had to live forever with the consequences of his choice.

The hardest part of Yom Kippur is not having to fast. The hardest part of Yom Kippur is six months later. Sitting in synagogue we examine our souls and make resolutions. Six months later we must live up to them or fail to realize our ideals. Not the choices themselves but their consequences are what truly test us and determine the quality of our lives.

Do we have moral stamina? Can we sustain the promises we make to God, to ourselves? These are the questions of the season; too often we believe that a test is passed and over. Abraham learned that in life a test is passed and begun. The days of awe are the top of the mountain but most of life is lived in the foothills. May the inspiration of the peak accompany us throughout the year.