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FOR NEXT CHAG HASEMIKHAH

The Three Fathers of our people are paradigmatic for their descendants forever after.

Consider this: each of them emerged wounded from his life's most significant encounter. Jacob limped after his wrestling with a stranger, the guardian angel of Esau. Isaac was blinded by his experience at the Akedah. Abraham too suffered a lasting deficit in his life. When the Almighty commanded to take this son to the Akedah, he referred to him as "your son, your only son, whom you love -- Isaac." When his hand was stayed, the Almighty praised him for not sparing "your son, your only son -- Isaac." There is no mention of "whom you love." That paternal love was smothered when he had to assert his love of God over his love of family. That sacrifice, that emotional trauma, was probably worse than the blindness of Isaac or the lameness of Jacob.

As rabbis, we have to struggle not with physical handicaps -- that is an individual manner -- but with a wound that is endemic and peculiar to our vocation: the titanic struggle in our minds and hearts between our love for Torah and our love for Israel, our passion for learning and our commitment to serving; our nostalgia for the days when we were totally immersed in Torah and the crush of responsibilities laid upon us to leading a *kehillah*.

There are no easy solutions to this dilemma. Here: the story of Rabbi Hayyim Ozer (author of *Achiezer*) on a visit to Rabbi Meisels the Great Rabbi of Lodz. He asked the older rabbi: Why have you never published a *sefer*? The Lodzer Rav answered: "Look at my waiting room -- widows, orphans, people trouble by illness, men who have no prospects of supporting their families, women who are abandoned by their husbands -- that is my *sefer*, and that is what will accompany me when I rise before the Bet Din in Heaven..."

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