"Open Up A Window"
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Philosopher Carlye Marney makes the following observation about the human intellect, "A window stuck open is as useless as a window stuck closed." She continues, "Our own failures to pursue an understanding of why we believe what we believe, may be traced for some to a window stuck open that hides our ignorance, or a window stuck closed that stifles our curiosity. Our own good sense, our reason is the window and a window locked in one position only serves half its purpose.

Questions about God, searching for God are the lubrication, the WD-40 for the stuck window of our soul, those are my words not Dr. Marney. I think a guiding principal of Judaism is that we must not run from what we don't understand, but confront it, explore it, reason with it, find a way to incorporate it into our lives.

And so we come to one of the most troubling and gut wrenching passages in our Torah, the binding of Isaac by his father Abraham. Countless times in my life I have read this story, its facts never change yet each time I read it new questions arise, new insights and challenges are presented by the unchanging text. This morning I wonder, "How could a man of reason such as Abraham, a man whose whole conception of God was born out of intellectual reasoning; set aside reasoning and allow faith in God to blindly lead him to conclude that God wanted him to sacrifice his son? It was faith in God led Abraham from his tent with his son Isaac; it was faith in God that guided him on his three day walk to Mt. Moriah. And it was faith in God that caused him to bind his son and place him on the alter, but then faith gave way to reason, and reason stayed his hand, reason prevented the knife from reaching his son. The Torah declares, that an angel of the Lord called to

Abraham, "Abraham, Abraham" He answered "He'naini, here I am" And then the angel of the Lord said to him, וַיֹּאמֶר אַל־תִּשְׁלַח יָדְךָ אֶל־הַנַּעַר וְאַל־תַּעַשׂ לוֹ מְאוּמָה

"Lay not your hand upon the boy, nor do anything to him" The angel's voice came from inside of Abraham; it came from his reason, his conscience. Abraham realized, concluded, reasoned that the God he believed in would not want him to kill his son, would not want the blade to reach its mark. Reason stayed Abraham's hand. Abraham had come so close to God in his journey, that he knew to get any closer would be to loose perspective, almost like when we get right up to something and we loose our peripheral vision. We can see the detail but not the context. Abraham took one step back from God, one step away from a literal view of everything the Torah commands, and that one step allowed him to see the whole world with clarity, neither blinded by the overwhelming brilliance of a literal view of God, nor senseless and confused from a view of the world without God. For Abraham faith and reason were not incompatible, but needed to be placed in balance with one another.

Thus can it be for us on this Rosh Hashanah, where for some Teshuvah, not only means a returning to examine the deeds of the past, but also a returning and re-examining of our goals for the future. Our goal need not be absolute faith, nor the converse, our goal for this New Year, in deed for all the New Years yet to come can not so simply be to understand, to apply reason everyday in our life. To make our decisions out of wisdom not ignorance, blinded by neither love nor hate. Let us find God as Abraham eventually did, somewhere in between, keeping the window to our soul neither stuck open nor stuck closed.