

## **Popular Description**

### **1. The Purpose of the Project**

*The Binding of Isaac* (in Hebrew: *Aqedat Yitzhak*), also known as the *Sacrifice of Isaac*, is one of the most powerful and yet horrifying narratives described in the Hebrew Bible, at Genesis 22 (1-19): the aged patriarch Abraham was ordered by God to sacrifice his only, long-awaited and beloved son, Isaac, on Mount Moriah. Obedient to this command, Abraham took Isaac to the place of sacrifice and bound him to the altar. At the last moment, God prevented Abraham from slaughtering his son by sending an angel who told Abraham to sacrifice a ram instead. It is important to note that the sacrifice was ultimately not performed and that Isaac was not slaughtered. Therefore an appropriate term for describing the event should be not "the sacrifice" but "the near sacrifice". The Aqedah narrative is of foremost importance in the three monotheistic religions. In particular in the Middle Ages, at the time of the Crusades, many Jews "following Aqedah" chose death rather than conversion to Christianity and willingly sacrificed themselves and their children in order to prove their faith and loyalty to God. Thus, despite the Aqedah describing "a near sacrifice", it became symbolic of actual sacrifice. This reinterpretation can already be found in the pre-medieval Jewish Rabbinic literature. In Jewish art, literature and theology, the *actual sacrifice* motif became prominent as a consequence of the Holocaust. This important phenomenon in Jewish culture has never been properly explored, especially not in visual arts.

### **2. Subject of Research**

The subject of research is the analysis of the *actual sacrifice* in works of art and literature created primarily during and after the Holocaust, both in the Diaspora and in Israel in the period from 1939 to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In particular, we will examine the diverse representations of the *actual sacrifice* in the works of Mordechai Ardon, Menashe Kadishman, Naftali Bezem, Samuel Bak and Marc Chagall. Employing this six-decade period will enable us to highlight the significant increase in the number of renderings of this theme in diverse and fascinating approaches. The project also discusses the sources of the *actual sacrifice* in the Rabbinic literature and Medieval Jewish literature. It searches for the source of the visual representations of the *actual sacrifice* in pre-Holocaust Jewish art, such in Abel Pann's art.

### **3. The Reasons for taken up such project**

The research will introduce, for the first time, the significance of the *actual sacrifice* into international scholarly debates on the Aqedah among Bible scholars, art historians, literary scholars, theologians, and researchers in Jewish and cultural studies. The interdisciplinary examination of the *actual sacrifice* in post-Holocaust-related art created both in the Diaspora and in Israel will allow us to trace the diverse approaches to the *actual sacrifice* in modern Jewish culture, reinforced by theological, intellectual and literary discourses. The project will also reveal the complex relation of the *actual sacrifice* to the *near sacrifice Aqedah* in modern Jewish culture. These themes go far beyond the initial Jewish experience, as unfortunately victimization and genocide continue in the world of today. One result of this study will be to see how the *actual sacrifice* has influenced the reactions to such widespread problems.