



# ROOTS ARE MEANT TO FLOWER

## THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF FOSTER CARE

Second Nurture Enrichment for Jewish Volunteer Programs



# You are already active on justice issues.

The foster system is the largest feeder into these social plights. When you are preparing for this work, share information on foster care. In the case where you are working with staff from a partner organization, prepare questions for them about the percentage of their target population who spent time in foster care. When working in direct service, find out if there are clients who would be comfortable talking about their childhoods and ask about any foster care experiences they may have had. Afterward, in discussion among your group, talk about the ways in which not having a loving family undermines a person's capacity to **thrive in the world**.

**80%** of trafficking victims were in foster care

**85%** of prisoners were in foster care

**50%** of homeless people were in foster care

## Genesis 27:1

וְהָיָה כִּי־זָקֵן יִצְחָק וְתַכְהִיֵּן עֵינָיו מִרְאֵת וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־עֵשָׂו | בְּנֵן הַגְּדֹל וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בְּנִי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנְנִי:

When Isaac was old and his eyes were dimmed from seeing, he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." He answered, "Here I am."



## Bereishit Rabbah 65:10

The biblical verse above is a mirror image of an earlier verse (Genesis 22: 7), which took place as Isaac was walking with his father toward the top of Mt Moriah, where Abraham would bind him on the altar.

וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל־אֲבִרְהָם אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי בְנִי

Then Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he answered, "Yes, my son"

"From seeing"—from the strength of that vision, when Abraham bound Isaac his son to the altar

מִרְאֵת, מִכֹּחַ אוֹתָהּ רָאִיהָ, שְׁבִשְׁעָה שְׁעָקֵד אֲבִרְהָם אָבִינוּ אֶת בְּנוֹ עַל גְּבִי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ



We read that in his old age, Isaac's eyes grew weak "from seeing".

Hineini harkens us back to the Akeida the traumatic source of Isaac's blindness.

How do these verses shed light on each other?

How did the Akeida cause this blindness?

How might this be mirrored in the experience of kids in or from foster care?

The Kotzker Rebbe asks his students, "What was the most difficult part of the Akeidah for Abraham?" Climbing the mountain?" suggested one student. "Building the altar," said another. "Raising the knife," offered a third. "No," said the Rebbe. "The hardest part was walking back down the mountain."

Why might the reverberations that follow a trauma be harder than the event itself?  
How might this play out for those who live, or have lived, in foster care?