

Passing Life's Tests: Spiritual Reflections on The Trial of
Abraham, The Binding of Isaac by Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson.
Jewish Lights Publishing 2013.

Brad Shavit Artson's latest book is a study of one of the most loved and feared stories in the Torah, the Binding of Isaac, which is read in synagogues throughout the world on Rosh Hashanah. It is a story that raises countless questions for an educated and enquiring mind, and deciding on whether its positives outweigh its negatives will likely be a highly subjective choice.

In his preface and introduction, Rabbi Shavit Artson encourages the reader to engage with the intellectual and spiritual task that is Jewish study, and the opportunities it offers not just to gain a greater understanding of an ancient text but to enhance our understanding of ourselves.

Passing Life's Tests is then divided into two parts: Exploring the Depths, which contains the author's own translation and commentary on the biblical text, and Deepening Our Encounters, containing no less than thirteen reflections on Life's tests as refracted through the prism of the Binding of Isaac story.

This is a rich text, full of wisdom, learning and life experience, and I for one will always be grateful to Jewish Lights for publishing this book in advance of the task of sermon writing for this year's Days of Awe!

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh