

Session 24

Chayei Sara – the Balance Between Faith and Effort

15 November 2020

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71Je6oE-Oyw&t=1s>

I'm so happy, I'm so happy to start my week together with you. It's such a beautiful thing that's emerging into the world. It's raining outside in Israel, that's a sign of blessing. The winter is upon us. It's getting cold outside and I just want to take this opportunity to kick off our fellowship with a tefilla, with a prayer that can, for the first time that I know of, really cover the world. And if you're listening to this fellowship as a recording, stop for a moment. You can join our prayer right now and be a part of this moment of global unity in prayer. And that is a taste of what is to come.

Hashem, Master of the Universe, Avinu Shabashamiyim, Our Father in heaven, thank you for bringing us all together and for allowing us to live out the vision you have for Israel and for Your people. As one people with one heart from many nations, we thank You for the love and support and Torah that has been created through this fellowship. Thank You for helping us continue to build the Arugot Farm against all logic and in the midst of all that is happening as a testimony and witness for the world to see. Your vision of a House of Prayer for all the Nations. And a Judean Torah center for the world, built by a fellowship of believers around the world. Help us walk in Your light. Thank you for faithfully giving me and Tehila and Ari a clear and pure message every gathering. It's just miraculous. Thank You. We come together every week with this purpose, to invite You and Your providence into our lives, to invite Your blessing into our lives. May Your words be our guiding light. And in these times when we can't see that far ahead. Bless the families of this fellowship and shine Your light upon all of us. Amen.

All right. So here we are today. It's a new week. It's a new life. Every day is such a gift. And I want to start off today with a story. It's a parable of what I think is happening in this fellowship. People from all over Israel have heard about our fellowship and are astounded at the reality of it all. How it continues to grow, where it emerged from, how it came to be in the world. It's something on the edge of miraculous that's happening. It's something that's happening for all of Israel, but because our fellowship is rooted at the edge of Judea, like at the edge of the Jewish return to the Land of Israel, we're like the cutting edge. We are physically and spiritually the tip of the spear, so it can be seen most clearly with our fellowship. But really, it's something that's happening all over Israel now.

You know, there was a story that goes as follows. There was once a master pianist. His fingers, his mind, his soul, the keys of the piano, they all worked together to make the most beautiful music. And he played for hours on end. It was like the delight of his life. And one day, his piano was taken away from him and he was placed with his family in a prison in a camp with his whole village. And day after day he dreamed about his piano, but he couldn't play anymore. So

one day, he found a thin piece of wood and he drew piano keys on a thin board and he began to play the piano in his mind and in his heart and as he tapped on the keys, he made believe that there was music coming out of that board. And he continued to practice and make music in his mind on his board. He loved the piano so much. And when his son was born, in this prison camp, he taught him how to play on the makeshift board with the fake keys of the piano.

And for years the child would go over the scales and hear the music his father taught him in his mind as he would sing along. And the boy would continue to practice, day after day, on the wooden board. And finally, the young boy grew up and had a child of his own. And in his father's tradition, he taught his son how to play on the wooden board that looked like piano keys. Years passed and all of the family were playing on these wooden boards. And one day the camp was freed and all the inmates, released into the world. The grandfather, the father and the son, for the first time, they see a piano. And all three of them start playing music together. And in a triumphant symphony of harmonies and melodies coming together, the piano is like blasting with music, soul, that are heard from all around.

And you think about that, for 2,000 years, the Jewish people had to keep Judaism alive. We had to keep the Torah alive. And our commitment and our loyalty to our tradition. It's like nothing the world has ever seen. Our Jewish religion based on the Torah that was practiced for centuries after centuries, like painted keys on a wooden board, it might have been dry, like the dry bones of Ezekiel. But now a new spirit has returned into the Land. And in the Land, the music is finally starting to be heard again. The experience of God's Presence can be sensed in a way you just can't sense it outside of the Land. The harmony of life, the Torah and prayer can be lived and fully experienced. The reality that the prophets spoke of, that one day Israel would return as a nation to her Land and broadcast the Torah to the world is real now. We don't have to think about it, we don't have to imagine it, we don't have to play it on wood, it is the living reality of prophecy manifest.

And so, for anyone who the Torah and the Bible are dear to their lives, learning the Torah without a connection to Israel is like reading the notes of a symphony. Living the reality of the Bible, living by the Torah in the context of Israel, in the Land of Israel is like going to the orchestra. And so, the main event in Israel hasn't even happened yet. It's like what's happening in Israel now, it's just the opening act, but it feels like the main event is about to start friends. It's like the tremors in Israel. I just have never felt like this before. I just see that things are happening around the world. Israel is going to stand alone, lifted up above the other nations. Something marvelous is like, we're at the very edge of something unbelievable this year. We can just see it. We can feel it in Israel.

And so my hopes are to take this feeling, this living spirit of the Land, channel it through the words of Scripture and give people renewed strength. Give people a deeper understanding, a more holistic reality of how to live as believers in the world. And more than anything, to align

us with the destiny of Israel. That's really the heart of this fellowship. That beyond religion, man, there's a destiny that's unfolding for all believers around the world. Here we are, all coming together, aligning ourselves with that destiny. You can't separate the realities around Israel from the Torah itself. It's like the separation of church and state, that's an impossibility in Israel. It's like, how can you separate something that emerged out of Scripture. It's like the ideas encoded in the Torah are the blueprints, plans. And in Israel when you open your eyes, now more than ever, you see the prophetic power of Scripture. And how it's shaping our world today.

And so, I know that Ari wants to share specifically on that note. So this was just an introduction to bring Ari on board. And so, Ari, please, share some light about how the Torah is manifesting a new reality in the world today.

Ari

Shalom my friends. I'm recording this message to you from inside my house because the winter is here and the winds are blowing and thank God, the rains are falling. So I just want to share this with you because this is a pretty profound idea and with all the focus on the elections in America, I think we're finding ourselves distracted from what otherwise would be an overwhelmingly massive and unimaginable tectonic shift that's happening in the world, really shifts. Shifts that are quite literally Biblical in their magnitude.

And what am I talking about? That peace is breaking out between Israel and Arab country after Arab country in the Middle East. And when I say, Biblical, I mean Biblical. And this week's Torah portion contains the spiritual blueprint for everything we see unfolding before our eyes today. Because from the Jewish perspective, or at least this Jew's perspective, the Arab/Israeli conflict is tragic. Because we're cousins, we're family, we're both children of Abraham. And while obviously I believe with my whole heart that God gave the Land of Israel to the nation of Israel, on an even deeper level and an even truer level, I believe that we belong to the Land. And that means that our Arab cousins can belong to the Land as well. And if they wanted to live here with us, honoring and respecting each other, that would be wonderful. And I'm not talking about just tolerating each other as in a cease-fire. But actually seeking the happiness and welfare of the other.

That's what I yearn for and that's really what the Jewish people feel. And you know, we live out here in the deepest settlement on the frontier of southeastern Judea, and I work with Arabs every day. And we have deep and respectful relationships with them, friendships with them. For many years. I'm even a medical clown. They call me, Dr. Shmendrick Flotstinstine. If you are an Israeli, you would understand why that is funny. And my job is to bring laughter and smiles to people who are sick and suffering. And I don't care if it's little Muhammed or little Moshe. I love them all and I want to bring them joy no matter who they are.

But at the same time, if there are Arabs who are seeking to terrorize or kill us, to seek our harm and destruction, well they don't belong here. And if there is a war and they're seeking to murder Jews, you better believe that I will fight them until the very end. Yet even though Jeremy and I have fought in wars together, our prayers are not to defeat them, our prayers are to reconcile with them, to live in peace with them. And this hope, this deep desire for friendship and peace on a national level, we're beginning to see this blossom and unfold before our eyes at this very moment. And it isn't rooted in some sort of fluffy liberalism, or land for peace paradigms, but we see it in the Torah. In this week's Torah portion of the Bible.

Now before I share this with you, I want to take this opportunity to tell you why this is particularly emotional for me. This past week, one of the great spiritual leaders, luminaries of our generation, who had a tremendous influence on me personally, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, he passed away. It was just a couple of weeks since he announced his sickness and he left the world. And this is really very painful for me and really for the Jewish people because Rabbi Sacks was such an expansive soul. And was very influential in my spiritual growth and development. And so, it's hard for me to believe that I'm quoting him today. That's he's no longer with us in this world, in his physical body. But he's still with us, he still lives within us. And every time we quote him, our sages tell us that his words are emerging from our lips. That for a moment, we're actually channeling the beautiful soul of this holy man.

So, as Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, may his memory be for a blessing, he taught that the Torah never shares irrelevant details. And there are details in this Torah portion that we must pay attention to that will bring an entirely new level of depth to this story. Now in the first verse, I want to bring to your attention, we hear the beautiful story of divine orchestration as Abraham sends his servant, Eliazer on a mission to find a fitting wife for his son, Isaac. In a miraculous fashion, he finds Rivka, Rebeka, the destined wife for Isaac and he brings her back to marry Yitzchak. And as Rebeka is approaching on the camel's back, she sees Isaac in the distance. And in chapter 24:62, it says, now Isaac came back from returning from B'har Lachi L'roi. What is this place, B'har Lachi L'roi? And why does the Torah mention that Isaac is returning from there. Nothing is mentioned without a cause. No detail is without a purpose.

Well, the first time we hear about B'har Lachi L'roi, was from one of Abraham's greatest tests. Abraham was the prototype of compassion and loving kindness. And he's told by Sarah and then directly by God to banish his wife Hagar and his son Ishmael into the wilderness to potential death. The Torah even tells us in chapter 21 that this was very grievous in Abraham's sight. Something that was not even said about the binding of Isaac. This was an action so traumatic that its consequences echoed throughout history. And I've always felt that this action is the true root of the hatred of the animosity and on the deepest level, the jealousy that the Arab world has for the Jewish people. And the rest of history has been them trying to outdo the descendants of Isaac in every way to prove themselves worthy, both for their father, Abraham and worthy in the eyes of God, Himself.

And, indeed it was a trauma. Hagar thought her son was dying of thirst and she couldn't bear to watch and she put him at a distance and it was right then that she prophesied. God spoke to her and revealed to her a well of water. And said that her son would indeed live. And that he would become a great nation. That he would be a wild man. His hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him and over all his brothers shall he dwell. So not only would he survive this, but he would thrive and become a great nation. And after this prophecy, Hagar named the place, B'har Lachi L'roi. The same place that Isaac was returning from when Rebeka arrived. That was where our sages say that Ishmael and his mother Hagar stayed and made their home.

So what was Yitzchak doing there in B'har Lachi L'roi? Well, one opinion says he was there to bring back Hagar to remarry his father, Abraham, who was now going to be a lonely widower. Another opinion says that he was there making peace directly with his brother, Ishmael. Perhaps they're both true. The bottom line is, that he was there to heal the painful rift and bring the family back together. And we see the fruits of this goodwill at the very end of this week's Torah portion when we learn of Abraham's death. And Abraham expired. And died in a good old age, aged and satisfied and was gathered unto his people. And he was buried by Yitzchak and Ishmael, his sons, at the cave of Machpelah, at the field of Ephron, son of Tzor, the Hittite, which is before Mamre.

The great rabbi, Mishachokma (sp?) he explains that Ishmael did tshuva and came back together in brotherhood and friendship with his brother, Isaac. And as another example of ma'ase avot, siman l'banim, the acts of the fathers are signs for the children. And just as Isaac and Ishmael came together, in the beginning, their children, the Jews and the Arabs would come together in the end. You see since the establishment of the state of Israel, Western powers have been involving themselves in the Arab/Israeli conflict. And the more they've done so, the worse it's gotten. And that's because there is no solution to the Arab/Israeli conflict. It will not be solved. It can only be transcended. We can only rise above it. When we recognize that it is not a political conflict. And it's not about land. It's an ancient conflict. It's a spiritual conflict.

And only when we're able to address this foundational wound and heal it, will we be able to come together as brothers in true peace. Only when we both recognize the truth, that our father, Abraham loved us both. That we don't need to compete, or to prove anything. Only then can we come together, for the Torah even tells us in chapter 21 that sending Ishmael was a very grievous thing in Abraham's sight. Again, it doesn't even say that about the binding of Isaac. That's how painful it was for Abraham. Even as God commanded Abraham to offer up his son as a sacrifice, God says, take your son, your only son, the son who you love, Isaac. It's a strange phraseology. And Rashi points out that when God said, take your son, Abraham said, but I have two sons. God said, your only son and Abraham said, this one is the only one of his

mother, and this one is the only one of his mother. God said, whom you love. And Abraham said, I love both of them. And then God said to him, Isaac.

Abraham loved us both. There's no reason for us to compete for His love. There's no reason for us to hate each other. There's only reason for us to love each other. And that, my friend, brings us to today's headlines, to today's realities. As was prophesied thousands of years ago, just as Ishmael and Isaac came together as brothers at the end, at the funeral of their father, Abraham, we're beginning to come together at the end as well. And not through land for peace or two-state solutions or territorial concessions as the West has been forcing upon us. The accord's we are signing with each other, is named after our father, Abraham. They're called the Abraham Accords. It is so beautiful. Sometimes I want to cry when I say these words because I feel that our father Abraham is looking from above with joy and pride that his two beloved sons are coming together, not only as friends and allies, but as brothers.

Hashem, there has been so much pain. There has been so much hatred. So much blood. Please, Hashem, continue to bring healing to the world. The peace you are starting to bring to Abraham's children, Isaac and Ishmael, please bring that healing to all of your children, to all of mankind. And we're not talking about truces or cease-fires, but true peace. The peace that King David spoke of in Psalm 122 when he said, for my brothers and my companions sake I will now say, peace be within you. Because of the house of the Lord, I will seek your good. It is only through You, Hashem, that true peace will come into the world. A peace which we will not only beat our swords into plowshares, and end all wars, but a peace in which we proactively are consumed with how we can seek good for each other. To seek to be a blessing for each other. May it be soon and in our days. Amen.

Now my friends, I just want to say that as I was writing this, it came to me that for many of you, the approaches that we take to the Torah may seem different then what you're used to, may seem strange or even confusing. And I want to encourage you to reach out to me, to all of us in the fellowship. Don't hold back with questions, with challenges, with anything. We want you to turn to us because in the end of the day, we're not only here together as friends, but we're here together as family. So reach out to me, I would love to hear from you.

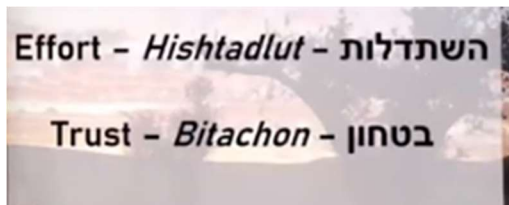
[ari@thelandofisrael.com](mailto:ari@thelandofisrael.com). Shalom, back to you, Jeremy.

Jeremy

Thank you, Ari. Beautifully said, as always. What I wanted to say was as a kid growing up in Atlanta, the stories in the Bible were like legends to me. They were like fairytales. Like, King David, and I don't know, but realizing that Abraham was promised to be a father of many nations, which he is today, the father of many nations. And that through him, all families of the earth would be blessed. And now, through the power of our father, Abraham, it's like his name that is bringing these peace deals together. And the last promise that the children of Isaac and Jacob, the children would inherit the Land of Israel as an everlasting possession. It's like here,

the legends of Abraham, they're not fairytales, but the very thing the world is made of. Like a living word, a living God.

And that's what I want to talk about today. How to live in a living, dynamic relationship in faith. I want to talk today about two inner forces that combined, make for living a guided life. And these two forces are essential parts of life, but in some ways, they're contradicting forces. If you live with an imbalance of either, you'll immediately feel it in your life.



The first is effort – hishtadlut. Effort is hishtadlut. And the second is bitachon, which is trust. The forces our inner effort, when we're trying to do something or we're working hard to make it happen and bitachon is our trust in God. Now these two inner postures towards life, they're actually movements in opposite directions. It's like on the one hand, you have effort to our actions. Work hard, delay gratification, put in the work, work those 10,000 hours to become an expert in your field, and that will give you what you need to just succeed in what you need to overcome the challenges of life. And I really identify with that. I was learning about Elon Musk, the founder of Tesla and space stuff, a really unique individual. About what he does differently in his life that has allowed him to become one of the greatest entrepreneurs of our time. And he said something simple, and powerful that stuck with me.

He said, the average person works 40 hours a week. If you work 80 hours a week, you will accomplish in two weeks what it takes a regular person to accomplish in a month. If you work harder, you will achieve more. That's pretty simple and powerful if you think about it. Man, hard work pays off. It's ten percent inspiration and 90% perspiration, says Thomas Edison. It's like, work hard, alright I'm in. Let's build Jerusalem. I like that, I'm game. That makes sense to me.

But...on the other hand, there are a lot of things that are out of our control, you can try and try and try, but the doors are just not opening. So, a believer has another mode of being. It's the opposite of pushing forward. It's letting go. It's like, you need to trust in God. He has everything under control. Let go of the reins. You don't need to worry, you don't need to be stressed. He's got it all worked out. Everything you need will be provided for you. And everything that happens is for the good. Tehila says this to me a lot, let go and let God. And it seems like too much effort, doesn't leave much room for trusting in God because I'm so busy working. But at the same time if I'm so convinced that God is going to provide all my needs, that's going to take out a little bit of my motivation now to push forward.

And so, that's real fundamental postures of a believer and the real question is, how are we supposed to balance those efforts in our life? And I think that's the reason why this is one of the last stories that Abraham gives over to us in his lifetime. And it's really the story of the finding of Rivka, this finding of Rebeka. This inner balance, it's already laid out in the first stories of our mothers and fathers in the book of Genesis. Abraham, if you think about it, he was ready to go to war...full on effort to save Lot. And at the same time, Isaac was ready to submit absolutely to the will of God as he was being called to give up his life as a sacrifice.

Abraham lived with full on action and Isaac acted out the ultimate surrender. And so, a lot of people in this fellowship, a lot of my friends, and I consider all of you my friends and my family, they're writing and they're sharing with me that they're feeling much more stressed than usual. They feel out of balance, it's like not an easy time, especially for marriages. A lot of time, you have a partner. When one partner is down, the other one can be strong, someone they can rely on or lean on. But in this corona chaos and the politics and the uncertainty of it all, a lot of times, both partners are equally stressed and there's just not enough bandwidth to go around.

And so, in these days, before we approach the redemption, we're going to be called to faith. We're going to have to live with emunah and learn the right balance of faith and effort in our own lives. Because only when those two are properly balanced, can we live a balanced life. And imbalance in the spirit and the mind will lead to an imbalance in life. It's key. And so, what I'm going to do now, is I'm going to pass it over to Tehila. She's going to lay the foundations for today's session in a way that only she knows how to do, and then we're going to take it from there. So, Tehila, take it away.

Tehila

Hi guys, so this week we read about the servant of Avraham finding Yitzchak's wife, Rivka at the well. Something interesting to notice is that there are a bunch of great love stories in the Torah that seem to happen at the well. People find their soul mates at the well. We have it here. We have it with Rachel and Jacob. We have it in Exodus when Moshe meets Tziporah at the well. Even in this week's portion, when the servant brings Rivka back to meet Yitzchak, where was he? He was also at the well. So, it seems like there are a lot of stories happening at the well. So you could say, I mean, not so interesting...I mean there were no bars, no cafes. No online dating websites...where are you going to catch a date? Right? So, it's not surprising that people met at the well. That's where you got some water. But interestingly, wells aren't the only source of drinking water in the Land of Israel in the Biblical times. There are three main sources of drinking water.

First you have streams and rivers which are just a natural occurrence. It just happens. It's like a miracle. You're walking in the desert, wow, Hashem, you put water here. A second type of water source you have in Israel is called a bor. That's kind of like a cistern that you dig. It's really a feat of human effort because as soon as there's any rain and there's always some rain,



even in drought years, right? The water will pour into your pit that you built and there it is. You have water.

Then there's the well. A well is kind of an interesting concept. It's sort of mysterious. It's kind of like a pit in the sense that you're digging, but you're not digging to catch water that you know is going to come, you're actually trying to hit water that's already underground. All that digging might turn out to be digging for nothing if you're digging in the wrong place. So, there's like this miraculous element of there needing to be preexisting water down below, but you need to work to try to get there. So, if the spring is just a miracle of Hashem, and the bor, the pit is just our own human effort, the well symbolizes that meeting place of our effort and Hashem's providence put together. Like you put your best effort, but you know that walking out in faith is only going to work if Hashem put the water, so to speak, underground there all along.

So, these water sources that we have in Israel are kind of symbolic of different types of relationships that you can have with Hashem. You can have the attitude of just saying, I'm just going to sit here and wait for Hashem to make things happen for me or an attitude of thinking, it's my strength that does things. I'm just going to work hard and things are going to work out for me by the sheer power of my effort. And then there's the well kind of model which is, I'm going to put in my best effort, but I know it's not going to be successful unless Hashem blesses that and is there with me.

And so, I don't think it's coincidence that these things happen at the well, and Jeremy had a great question from one of you guys, about a week or two ago. It was about Jewish marriage from the Torah perspective. One of our members asked, is Jewish marriage more like Fiddler on the Roof? You know the part where Tevye says, for twenty-five years I've washed your clothes and I've cooked for you and I've done all this and that for you, so if that's not love, what is? So is that the Jewish marriage? Or is the Jewish marriage kind of like the Hollywood type where you just say, I fell in love, right? You have this romantic magic that happens and whoops, you are in love and it doesn't matter who you are. Things will work out. Love will conquer all.

So there's a lot to talk about here. I think it really deserves a session of its own. When you think about it, that Fiddler on the Roof model, it's really kind of like the pit, you know, if you work hard enough and put in enough effort, eventually the marriage will work out. There will eventually be some sort of love by the sheer power of your invested energy.

Then you have, the Hollywood model which is kind of like the spring. Just this miracle, this magical feeling that strikes you out of nowhere and you don't have to do anything. It's like you stumble upon a spring in the desert, and there it is. Somebody just falls madly in love, you stumble upon a person and you're in this magical feeling until the magical feeling finishes and then you can just walk away.

So, I think the Torah model, is really the model of the well. The Torah marriage is really a combination of these two things because you put in a ton of hard work, that's the basis of any marriage. When the going gets tough, you work even harder. And at the same time, you know it's not really up to you. It's not like you can put in a certain amount of energy and have this recipe and you know that it will work out. You have to have the element of emunah, of faith, knowing that you can work, but in the end, it's really up to Hashem to put that spark of water, that spark of love deep inside and to know that if you work enough, that you have to have just faith that Hashem will put that passion and love there. Right?

So, I don't think it's a coincidence that these love stories happen at the well. And you see this actually in the story itself. Like Avraham says, take a woman for my son from Mesopotamia and Eleazer says, what if she won't come with me? I mean imagine like somebody shows up at your door and says, hey I'm a servant of your second cousin in some far away land. Could I have your daughter for his son? It's a tough sell, right? So Avraham says, if you do all that and she won't come, I absolve you of your oath. Meaning, you have to put in the effort, but if Hashem doesn't meet you halfway, I forgive you. It's a long shot, I know what you're doing, but I have faith that Hashem is going to meet you and put it there.

And then you see that Eleazer goes to Haran and he doesn't just say, hey Hashem, give me a sign who the right girl is going to be. Like if a black cat crosses the road and there's a shooting star exactly at the right moment, she's going to be the one. He puts in his best effort to identify the right girl for Yitzchak. He wants her to offer him water and offer water to his camels. It sounds like not such a big idea, right? Just like bring him some water, but there are three really big traits that he could identify through these tests.

First of all, it's kind, right? Second of all, it's pretty courageous to go talk to a stranger. And third, even if it doesn't sound at first rate to be such a big deal to bring water to camels, do you know how much water camels can drink after a journey? I was actually curious about this so I googled it. A camel can drink between 30 and 50 gallons of water at a time. Now the Bible said he had ten camels. So if she's offering to bring water to camels, you're talking about minimally 300 gallons of water. I don't know if she was able to finish that, but the fact that she was even willing to, that's a serious work ethic.

So, Eleazer is really working within the reasoning of this world, right? The way things work, being very logical, setting up a test. But at the same time, he's not just doing this as a science experiment, he knows that its only with the help of Hashem that it has any chance of working out. And what's so amazing is as he's saying this test to Hashem, please show me the girl through this test, the Torah takes pains to tell us that Hashem had already sent Rivka out before he even finished his prayer. It's like so "well" like. Because he's putting in his effort, but Hashem has already put that miracle in the ground before he even started working at it, right?

So I think this is why the great love stories of the Torah happen at the well. This should be a guiding light for us in our marriages and in our relationships in general. And, on our journeys with Hashem, knowing that when we step out in faith and when we work our hardest, we always need to have in mind that it's really just a well that we're digging, but we're only going to be successful with Hashem's help, with Hashem putting that water in the ground for us.

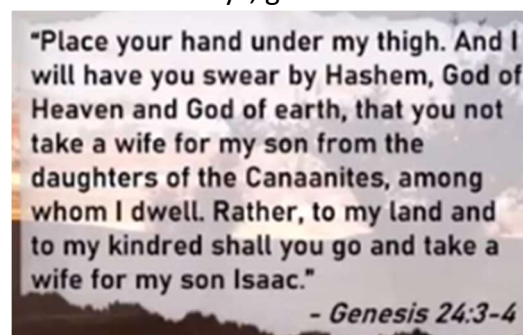
So, I wish all of you guys a good week on your journey of serving Hashem with a consciousness of the be'ar, the well. I wish you guys a great week.

Jeremy

Oh, she's so good. Guys, you're so lucky, we're all so lucky that we get to be with Tehila. She's just amazing, her insights and her ability to make it so real. It's like the symbolism of the well, I love that. The ability to live with the fusion of our actions and His providence. That's like one of the best feelings in the world. And when you see that happen, you know you're on the right path. It's like feeling like the universe is aligning itself up to help you accomplish your goal. And that's exactly what we're learning here in the story of Rivka with Isaac. You know, it's the longest story in the book of Genesis and it's told over twice. It's like the entire chapter 24, it's like 50 some odd verses, it's just like out of this world, it's such a long story. Wait a minute, this is really a long story.

First, we read how it unfolded, when Eleazer meets Rivka, then when he meets her family, he tells it over again, almost the same exact thing with just a few little details. It's like there's nothing like it anywhere in Genesis. There's actually nothing like that anywhere else in the Torah. It's like the Torah is telling us, stop, pay attention. I'm giving over a secret to living. Do not pass go, do not collect \$200. Wait right here. Read this story. Read it again. Pay attention. In this story is the secret, a great secret for living a guided life.

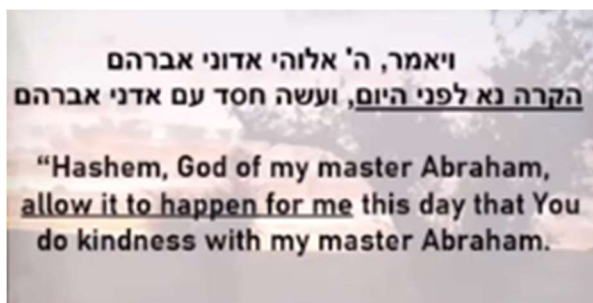
And so, I want to unpack the story now and see what we find. I think Tehila gave us a beautiful foundation and I think that the story as we sort of like uncover more and more elements to it, we'll get greater and greater clarity about what is the balance of our effort versus our faith. How far do we dig until we say, alright, maybe it's not there? So, let's check it out. This is Genesis 24:3-4. Abraham's loyal servant, Eleazer is sent off on a mission to find a wife for Isaac and Abraham says, get over here....



So this is important. You're going out into the world. Eleazer goes out on his mission with a renewed covenant. That's a theme that repeats itself over and over again in the Tanakh. There's like another altar erected, another altar erected, another time we're renewing our covenant. Biblical faith in its core, in its root is not a one-time event, it's not a confession or a proclamation. It's a relationship and like all relationships, it needs to be strengthened, it needs to be renewed. You're about to take on a project, take on a move, take on a responsibility. The best thing you can do is take time and really pray into the move. Align yourself with your highest ideals once again. Remind yourself, step out into the world with confidence that you're not acting alone, but you are doing your best to call your best self forward and you're calling on God to straighten your path.

It's like in the Biblical tradition, you should realign, pray, meditate, renew your covenant literally every day and it's not that God needs our worship, but it's through our prayers every day that we strengthen our minds, resolve and renew our spirit. And so Eleazer, before he goes out, he's like renewing the covenant that he has with God, his covenant with Abraham, and he's going out on a mission, so he says, alright. I'm going to experience providence because I know that I'm aligned with God's providence.

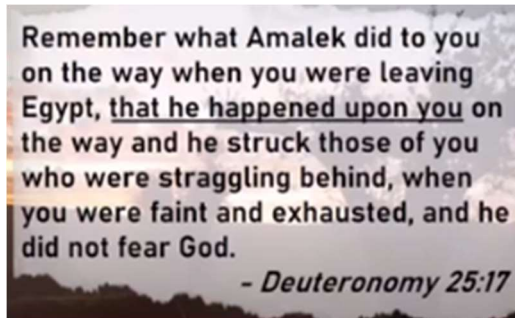
So Eleazer goes out with ten camels, a bit of an entourage. Scripture says that he goes to the edge of the city where the well was and that's the place that symbolizes the meeting place of our efforts and God's providence. That's just exactly what Tehila said. And he begins to pray. Now I have yet to find an English translation anywhere that gets this sentence right. Here's what it says in English.



Hakarena, it's like, it's really unusual language. It literally means make it happen, allow it to happen for me today. It's a language that's not really used and if you get the translation wrong, you miss the whole point. Usually it's translated as grant me success on this day. That's not what it says. May you arrange it for me, may it happen upon me, may you allow it to happen. That's a really loaded word, hakarena, that word brings us back to Amalek. That's the eternal enemy of faith and the eternal enemy of Israel. It's like the Bible, when you read it, it's a multi-layer text. It's written with like ancient hyper-links that reference other places to create more

and more layers and depths and each layer, and every link adds another layer of understanding to every story.

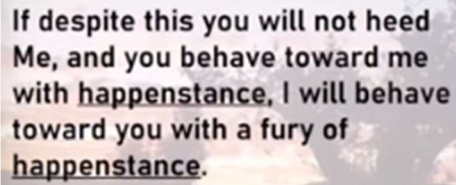
So, let's open up to Deuteronomy 25:17 and go back to that root to "just happen upon you":



So, it's like, wait a minute, Eleazer's talking about like happenstance here. That's like bringing up, like the chaos of the world. It's like, what's going on here? It's like bringing us to this awareness, there are like two ways to see the world. Either there is order and guidance in the world, or there is chaos and happenstance in the world. The people of Israel, the believers, we live a life saying there is order in the world. There is a hidden hand guiding our lives. If you live according to His will, you will discover harmony, blessing, and providence in your life. Your actions will create a reaction.

And if you miss the mark, watch out, that will create another kind of reaction. Things are not random at all. To every action, there is a reaction. Even in the world of spirit, maybe even especially in the world of spirit. The world of Amalek is the exact opposite. The world of Amalek just says listen. It's a world of nihilism, chaos, meaninglessness, nothing matters, this world somehow just happened into being. It's all here by chance. Everything is a chance, everything is happenstance. Everything is just a random coincidence. If you can steal and get away with it, why not? No one's looking. There's no right or wrong. If you can break into Best Buy and steal all their phones because riots are breaking out all across the city, and the police can't possibly arrest everyone, just go in and steal. I mean, that is the spirit of Amalek. Why not destroy? There's no reason not to. It's all just chance, anyway.

But here's one of the most profound ideas in the Torah. And of course, it points us back to that same root word that Eleazer as he's trying to balance faith and action, brings us to. Leviticus 26:27-28:



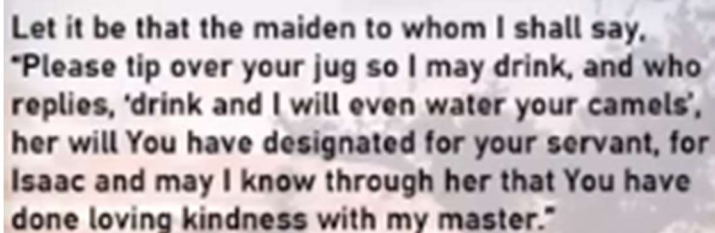
**If despite this you will not heed Me, and you behave toward me with happenstance, I will behave toward you with a fury of happenstance.**

*- Leviticus 26:27-28*

It's like, ok, Israel. I've chosen you to teach the world that there is meaning. I've told you to teach the world that there is guidance and you can have a relationship with God. If you behave toward me with chance, oh boy, you want to see meaninglessness, you want to chance, you want to see happenstance, randomness and coincidence? The world will respond around you in chaos and there's nothing you can do about it. In reality, your perception will create your reality. God will respond to you as you choose to see Him, or not see Him. How you view the world will create your own inner world. If you want to see connectivity, it's there. If you want to see chaos, He'll show you absolute chaos that can be.

Eleazer, leaving Abraham's house, he's facing the world alone. He's leaving his mentor. He's immersing himself into the world of idols and chaos. He's peering into the unknown, and he says to God, in the midst of this chaos around me, please make order. Show me chesed, show me lovingkindness. Show me that the world around me is for my good. Show me a way to know that Your Hand is at work. And Eleazer says, it will happen before me in the chaos of the potentialities of this world, but show me Your lovingkindness behind.

He continues to pray in verses 14-15.



**Let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say, "Please tip over your jug so I may drink, and who replies, 'drink and I will even water your camels', her will You have designated for your servant, for Isaac and may I know through her that You have done loving kindness with my master."**

**And it was when he had not yet finished speaking that suddenly Rebecca was coming out..."**

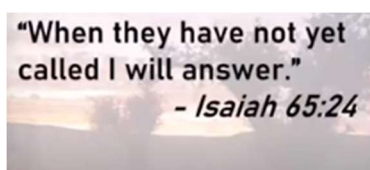
*- Genesis 24:14-15*

So, you think about that story and it's not just that God answered Eleazer's prayers immediately. I mean, ask and you shall receive. He didn't even get to finish asking and Rivka automatically appeared...like in the middle of his words. But it's even deeper than that. It's much deeper than that. He was at the edge of the city. That means that Rivka had to leave her

home on the way to get to the edge of the city where the well was, before Eleazer even started talking. Everything was unfolding according to plan.

Eleazer wasn't asking God to answer his prayers. We're being taught the most amazing lesson in Biblical prayer in this story. He wasn't asking for his prayer to be answered. He was asking for something much deeper. He was asking that God's plan unfold. Eleazer was asking to see reality as it is, to see and understand his place in God's plan and align himself with that plan. In the chaos of the world, to see chesed, to see loving kindness. I mean, we're taught something so deep here. It's not healthy to see God as our cosmic-bellboy. Our genie in heaven and He's here to grant all of our wishes. That turns us into beggars and God into Amazon in the sky. God has a plan for our lives and a plan for the world. And our primary purpose in prayer and in life is to find our place within His plan, within the happenstance, within what seems to be chaos, to find His guidance for us in our lives. To trust in His plan, to do what we can to align ourselves with Him.

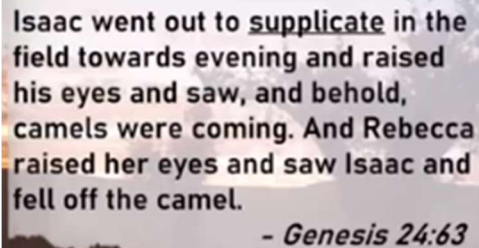
That's why being connected to Israel is so important. That's why we pray for Jerusalem. That's why we break a glass at every Jewish wedding. We remember our eternal capital at the height of our joy. Because God's plan is unfolding in America now, but His ultimate plan will unfold in Israel. Whatever happens in America is going to serve His purpose and His purpose will be done through Trump through Cyrus, through Biden or through Nebuchadnezzar. On a personal level, we can ask for this business deal to come through or for this pandemic to end, but here in this story, the Torah is guiding us to a much deeper understanding. Rivka was already on her way to the well because Eleazer didn't...he didn't even need to open his mouth. But in his humble prayer, he opened the door for that spice cart to enter. Isaiah the prophet articulates God's ways so beautifully in chapter 65:



It's like, what is meant to be will be. Before we ask the question, God is already giving us an answer. What will be is for the good. We live our life in a linear line, going from place A to place B. But God's view of the world, the end is in sight at the beginning of time. There is no linear way. And so, we live like within a certain context and if we align ourselves, or try our very best to align ourselves and to open ourselves up to His providence, that is the final message in Abraham's last mission to bring Isaac his wife.

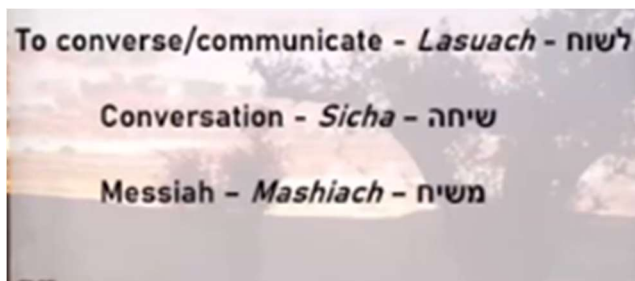
And so, let's see what happens here. You see the same exact pattern happens again to Isaac, right in the midst of this story. He's in the middle of his prayer and he gets answered as he's talking. Genesis 24:63:





Isaac went out to supplicate in the field towards evening and raised his eyes and saw, and behold, camels were coming. And Rebecca raised her eyes and saw Isaac and fell off the camel.  
- Genesis 24:63

That's my favorite verse in the Torah. That's just so funny that Rebecca saw Isaac and is so stunned at this man. What an aura that he must have had that she just falls off of the camel. I love that. But here's the deal about this verse. The English just doesn't get it right. You know it says that Isaac went up to supplicate in the field. That's a terrible translation. Supplicate means to beg.



To converse/communicate - *Lasuach* - לשוח  
Conversation - *Sicha* - שיחה  
Messiah - *Mashiach* - משיח

I've yet to find a translation that does the Hebrew justice, so thank God we have this fellowship because the word is the root word for sicha which means conversation. So the word mean to converse, to communicate. So Isaac was conversing, communicating with God. A sicha is a conversation. So, Isaac was in some sort of communion, some sort of conversation with God and here of course we see, Mashiach. It's the same word. It's the same word. Isaac is doing something so holy here and in the middle of that conversation, his prayer is answered. Rivka has already been chosen for him. You don't need to, I mean, what is the messianic era? When we return to a simple conversation with God. We put religion aside, we put theology aside, we stop arguing about things we don't understand anyway. And we just enter into a conversation, into a relationship. We talk, He responds, He speaks, our hearts are open and we're able to listen.

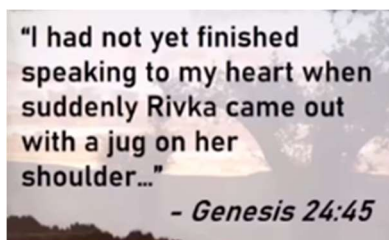
Yitzchak was in the middle of the field, he's experiencing the ultimate version of prayer. The ultimate, like the point we're trying to arrive. All believers are just trying to get to that simple place of conversation. He was alone in the field and having a one-on-one conversation with God. I imagine that conversation was about his future. His wife to be. Isaac knows that Eleazer has been sent on this mission to find him a wife. Is he going to find her, is she going to agree to come, what's it going to be? He's in the field talking to God, and in the midst of his talking, Rivka appears. He's not done praying and God has already answered. It's like the same pattern



happens twice in this Torah portion. The Torah speaks in patterns, patterns of existence. If we are aligned, His will will manifest before our eyes, before our words are even spoken.

Our goal isn't for God to answer our prayers, but that we live our lives as a prayer to God. And that kind of life, our prayers are already answered. We're already in a conversation, we don't need to say it out loud, because our life is that conversation so we can be answered before we even open our mouths. He answers us before we're even done talking. But at the same time, Eleazer goes out with ten camels, gold and servants, he went out with a plan into the unknown. He didn't go out and just go to sleep and just hope that Rivka would appear out of nowhere. He acted on his journey, he looked for guidance, he prayed for providence and was open to what Hashem had in store for him. Open to what Hashem had in store for him. I think that's the right way to look at it. You can be open and you can be closed.

When Eleazer retells the story to Rivka's family, there's one part of the story that he changes and I think that that's really important to notice. It's another key that unlocks this mystery. And in that change, it's like we're given the equation, how to live this guided life. He tells the story that he's by the well and he asks God to show him a girl that's kind enough to offer water to him, but also to offer to his camels. And then he says like this, Genesis 24:45, let's open it up:



Speaking to my heart? I don't remember Eleazer speaking to his heart. I remember Eleazer speaking to God. In the original story, he told over, that Eleazer was talking directly to God. He said, God, Master of my master Abraham, allow it to happen for me. He's not talking to his heart, he's talking to God. But here we have the deepest secret. It's like how are we able to balance our efforts in the world and our trust in God? There are obviously different modes of operation, there's different people in the world. There are different tendencies. On one hand, we want to work hard, on one hand we want to push ourselves. We are called to choose life, to put our best effort forward.

But on the other hand, we want to trust in God that He has a plan for our lives and for the world. And the answer lies in every person's heart. Their heart and emotions are the ways of our soul. They are the GPS system of our soul. Every person, every soul has a different disposition, a different relationship with the world around him, a different relationship with

God. There are some people that feel called to work hard. There are some people that feel called to pray and allow the world to unfold before them.

I feel like in my relationship with Ari, it's like a perfect reflection of these two soul dispositions and dynamics. Ari is a big believer. I'm really oriented toward action. And both approaches have pluses and minuses and how each one of us have to know the right balance in our own lives. And this is the equation that Ari taught me, years ago. And I live by this equation almost every day of my life. He says that the answer lies in the words of Eleazer. In speaking to our heart. In saying, where is my heart right now? Each person should try, each person's work, each person should put in as much effort as they can. Go off with ten camels, into the Land, focused on your mission, work hard to the point where you start to feel anxious. You start to feel uneasy in your heart. You're working until there is actually stress. Wait a minute. You're causing stress, anxiety and discomfort. Once you start feeling that pressure closing in, it means you're pushing too hard, slow down, let go of the reins a little bit, surrender a little bit, because what that does, is that stress and anxiety closes your heart. We have to be with an open heart if we want to listen.

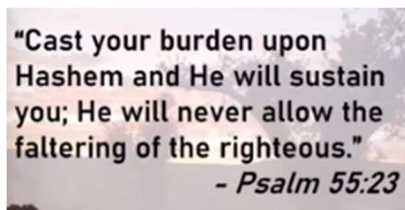
When you start feeling anxiety, frustration, fear, you feel a restriction, your heart closes up, there's no room for communication, there's no room for alignment if our hearts are closed. And so, what's happening here? The ancient teachings teach us you can only achieve prophecy, you can only receive divine inspiration in a state of happiness. It's telling us, you can only make divinely inspired decisions from a place of confidence and joy.

But I know this in my own life. I get so focused on my work. I'm on my mission, my task at hand, I'll get swallowed up by my passion, by my mission, by my task. I'll lose the joy. And when I start to feel anxious, it's like a red flag, a red flag, Jeremy, let go and let God. Jeremy, let go and let God. I'm pushing too hard, I've slipped into the arrogance that I know how things are supposed to go. Give it up to Him. He'll find the right way. Maybe that's the secret behind, hakarna, allow it to happen today. I've come here with camels, I've come here prepared. Allow it to happen. I'm open to the endless possibilities of who Isaac's wife could potentially be. In some way, he's come all the way to his destination, to the edge of the city, but now he's calling on God to help him cross the finish line. He's in touch with his heart. Is my heart open? Do I feel like I'm in the flow? If I'm closed and nervous, I need to take all of those feelings and give them up to God. Sacrifice them on the altar of faith. You need to burn off the negative feelings that are holding you down and that are keeping you awake at night and closing you up. All of that. That's like, time to let go. It's like literally offering up a sacrifice.

In days like these, when global movements surround us, are so radically out of our hands. We can't really push against the current of reality, but one way or another, His will will be done. This is the time for emunah. To have faith through humility, knowing that we just don't know how it's going to unfold. But don't put your happiness and your joy and your confidence on

hold until corona comes to an end, until that deal comes through, or until they finish counting the ballots in Arizona or Pennsylvania. Friends, today is a gift. Faith is believing that everything will be ok. Trust is living as if it's ok right now. If we're pushing too hard and that pushing is causing us anxiety, let go and let God. The greatest gift of faith is that it allows you to enjoy life now, enjoy your family now. Rejoice in the love you have in your life today. God has already called Rivka out of her house before we even know what to pray for.

In our efforts to live our best life, we have to learn the art of being happy where we are before God takes us to where we need to be. And those times, when you're working, you're praying, and you look around and you don't see a way forward. Sometimes it feels like we carry the weight of the world on our shoulders. Take that baggage, take that burden and give it up to God. Let Him carry it for a while. That's another form of sacrifice. A sacrifice of the heart. It's taking a piece inside you and surrendering it, letting it go. King David taught us in Psalm 55:



Stay faithful. Cast your burden upon Hashem and He will sustain you. The motion of surrender, it's a form of rest. It's a form of relaxation. In the story of Jonah and the whale, Jonah is a prophet, running away from God. He finds himself in the middle of the storm and chaos that's about to destroy everything and everyone. Jonah, naturally, goes down to the belly of the boat, he goes to sleep. In his prophetic practice, in times of chaos, in times when things are out of his control, he knows how to surrender, how to rest, into God.

And I think a lot of my friends, a lot of my friends in life. Friends in our fellowship, who are living through difficult times. I'm always asking myself, how can I raise their spirits? How can I bring a little bit of light into their lives? What I've found is that as I give out love, I get filled with love. It's magic. It's like if you're not feeling strong today, you're not feeling good today, there's a medicine for that. Rivka grew up in a difficult home, Laban was her brother. She was a believer, and like Sara, she had to make aliyah, she had to leave her father's home, she had to go forth to the Land that God was showing her. She had to walk over to the well and she sees a stranger, reaches out to him in love. And in compassion, offers him water, works even harder and offers his livestock water. She opens her heart for the good and God opens the doors for her to enter into the destiny of Israel.

So right now, friends, we are training for the days ahead and we've been blessed with this ark called the Land of Israel fellowship. But unlike Noah, we have to reach out to the people around us. Who do you know that needs a hand now? Who needs a hug? Who can you invite

over for Friday night or for Shabbat afternoon? Help bring some light into their lives and I promise you that as you share the light, it will be reflected back on you. If you don't feel good, the best medicine you can do is to reach out to others.

And as the evil, selfish forces of man are doing everything they can to divide us, we're being called now to be a force of unity in the world. And as the world is turning to hate, we have to bring the love. And in the midst of what looks like chaos and happenstance, we can call the Hand of God into our lives to restore order and to guide our steps. The world is headed toward a fixing and the son of King David is coming to rebuild Jerusalem. All of our events, all of the events happening around us are for that end. And every event in our life is currently guiding us to where we are meant to be. The believers will find refuge in Zion because other countries may lose their direction, other countries may have access to the Bible, but they might lose the living Spirit of God that speaks from Jerusalem, the city of truth. So, work hard, trust in God. That is the balanced life of a believer. To keep your eyes toward Jerusalem and your hearts open toward heaven and your destiny will be aligned with the destiny of Israel.

And so, I want to thank every one of you. We are stronger in Judea because of your support. We are stronger together. Our fellowship is stronger because of every one of you and as you can see, it's growing every week. And so, may you be blessed with strength and courage as we enter into these unprecedented times.

Aaron blessing

Shalom my friends. Thank you so much. See you again soon. Can't wait to hear from you on WhatsApp and emails. Shalom.