Congregation Beth Israel
Of The Berkshires

CONGREGATION
Shir Ami

SoulSpa 3.5 • P. Hayyei Sarah
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Blessing Before Learning

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יהו״ה	*Barukh Atah Adonai*
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	*eloheinu melekh ha'olam*
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ	*asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu*
לַעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה׃	*la'asok b'divrei Torah.*

Blessed are You, YHVH our God, sovereign of the world, who made us holy in connecting-command, and commanded us to busy ourselves in words of Torah.

Genesis 24:55-67

וַיֹּאמֶר אָחִיהָ וְאִמָּהּ תֵּשֶׁב הַנַּעֲרָ
אִתָּנוּ יָמִים אוֹ עָשׂוֹר אַחַר תֵּלֵךְ׃
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אַל־תְּאַחֲרוּ אֹתִי
וַיהוָ֣ה הִצְלִיחַ דַּרְכִּי שַׁלְּחוּנִי
וְאֵלְכָה לַאדֹנִי׃ וַיֹּאמְרוּ נִקְרָא לַנַּעֲרָ
וְנִשְׁאֲלָה אֶת־פִּיהָ׃

55-57. Her brother and mother said, "Let the maiden remain with us days or 10 months, then she can go." [Avraham's servant] said to them, "Do not delay me: YHVH made my way successful. Give me leave to go to my master." They said, "We'll call the girl and ask her mouth."

HUH?
oracle? prophetic?

וַיִּקְרְאוּ לְרִבְקָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶיהָ
הֲתֵלְכִי עִם־הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה וַתֹּאמֶר
אֵלֵךְ׃וַיְשַׁלְּחוּ אֶת־רִבְקָה אֲחֹתָם
וְאֶת־מֵנִקְתָּהּ וְאֶת־עֶבֶד אַבְרָהָם
וְאֶת־אֲנָשָׁיו׃

58-59. They called to Rivkah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" – and she said, "I will go." So they sent off their sister Rivkah and her maid with Avraham's servant and his entourage.

LEKH LEKHA?
"like the stars of the sky?"
Is there a backstory? — Midrash.
why is she "just going"?

prophesy?
וַיְבָרְכוּ אֶת־רִבְקָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָהּ
אֲחֹתֵנוּ אַתְּ הֲיִי לְאַלְפֵי רְבָבָה וְיִירַשׁ
זַרְעֵךְ אֵת שַׁעַר שֹׂנְאָיו׃ וַתָּקָם רִבְקָה
וְנַעֲרֹתֶיהָ וַתִּרְכַּבְנָה עַל־הַגְּמַלִּים
וַתֵּלַכְנָה אַחֲרֵי הָאִישׁ וַיִּקַּח הָעֶבֶד
אֶת־רִבְקָה וַיֵּלַךְ׃

60-61. They blessed Rivkah and said to her, "Sister! May you grow into thousands of myriads! May your descendants inherit the gates of their foes." Rivkah and her maids arose, mounted the camels, and followed the man; the servant took Rivkah and went.

not easily translatable: hapax legomenon
meditation? grief? hot mess? hitbodedut?
walk with God? pray? communion?

וְיִצְחָק בָּא מִבּוֹא בְּאֵר לַחַי רֹאִי
וְהוּא יוֹשֵׁב בְּאֶרֶץ הַנֶּגֶב׃ וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק
לָשׂוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה לִפְנוֹת עֶרֶב וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו
וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה גְמַלִּים בָּאִים׃

62-63. Yitzhak came from going [from] Be'er-l'hai-roi, as he had settled in the Negev region. Isaac went out *la-suah* in the field toward the turn of evening. He lifted his eyes and saw, and behold: camels approached.

Yitzhak
why did Yitzhak go out THEN?
did he have a [spiritual] hint?

וַתִּשָּׂא רִבְקָה אֶת־עֵינֶיהָ וַתֵּרֶא אֶת־
יִצְחָק וַתִּפֹּל מֵעַל הַגָּמָל׃ וַתֹּאמֶר
אֶל־הָעֶבֶד מִי־הָאִישׁ הַלָּזֶה הַהֹלֵךְ
בַּשָּׂדֶה לִקְרָאתֵנוּ וַיֹּאמֶר הָעֶבֶד הוּא
אֲדֹנִי וַתִּקַּח הַצָּעִיף וַתִּתְכָּס׃

64-65. Rivkah lifted her eyes and saw Yitzhak. She got off the camel and said to the servant, "Who is that man walking in the field toward us?" And the servant said, "That is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself.

The eye-throwback of Avraham
why?
shame, sacred fear, modesty
pre-saging wedding veil? cultural norm?

DESCENT FOR THE SAKE FOR ASCENT?

וַיְסַפֵּר הָעֶבֶד לְיִצְחָק אֵת כָּל־
הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה׃ וַיְבִאֶהָ יִצְחָק
הָאֹהֱלָה שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־רִבְקָה
וַתְּהִי־לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וַיֶּאֱהָבֶהָ וַיִּנָּחֵם
יִצְחָק אַחֲרֵי אִמּוֹ׃

66-67. The servant told Yitzhak all the things that he had done [to get Rivkah]. Yitzhak brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he took Rivkah as his wife. Yitzhak loved [Rivkah], and found comfort after his mother['s death].

mourn - transform *with* his new wife

take time for system to integrate
"necessity of shyness" - LIMINALITY

WILL YOU STAY OR WILL YOU GO?

Genesis 24:58

וַיִּקְרְאוּ לְרִבְקָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶיהָ הֲתֵלְכִי עִם־הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלֵךְ׃

[Avraham's kin] called to Rivkah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" – and she said, "I will go." why oracular, prophetic

Rashi, Gen. 24:58

ותאמר אלך. מֵעַצְמִי, וְאַף אִם אֵינְכֶם רוֹצִים׃

And she said, I will go – Of my own accord, even if you do not agree (Gen. Rabbah 60:12). RASHI giving her agency? Progenitor of Naomi-Ruth?

Gen. Rabbah 60:12

וַיֹּאמֶר אָחִיהָ וְאִמָּהּ תֵּשֶׁב הַנַּעֲרָ אִתָּנוּ וּבְתוּאֵל הֵיכָן הוּא, בְּקֵשׁ לְעַכֵּב וְנִגַּף בַּלַּיְלָה. תֵּשֶׁב הַנַּעֲרָ אִתָּנוּ יָמִים, אֵלּוּ שִׁבְעַת יְמֵי אֵבֶל. אוֹ עָשׂוֹר, אֵלּוּ י״ב חֹדֶשׁ שֶׁנּוֹתְנִין לִבְתוּלָה לְפָרְנֵס אֶת עַצְמָהּ׃

Her brother and mother said, "Let the maiden remain with us days or 10 months, then she can go" (Gen. 24:55). Where was [her father] Betuel? He tried to restrain [Rivkah's betrothal] and was plagued overnight… "Let the maiden remain with us days" – for the seven days of mourning for [Betuel]. "Or ten months" – for the time a virgin is given to secure her needs for herself (M. Ketubot 5:2). "Violate" for a higher purpose? God clears the way? *** Inversion of cultural custom

Rashbam, Gen. 24:58

R. Shimon ben Meir (1085-1158)

ויקראו לרבקה - דרך ארץ הוא כן כלומר: אף על פי שהקב"ה חפץ בזיווג זה, אעפ"כ אמרו לה: התלכי עם האיש הזה או עם אדם אחר לאחר ימים או עשור, שמנהג הוא כמו ששנינו נותנים לבתולה שנים עשר חדש לפרנס את עצמה. ותאמר אלך - איני חושש להתעכב בשביל קישוט עצמי.

They called to Rivkah – A common courtesy. Even though the Holy Blessed One already desired [and manifested] this pairing, nevertheless they asked her. AGENCY

Will you go with this man – Or with someone else after 10 months or a year, as the custom was to give a bride 12 months to prepare herself.

I will go – I do not need to delay preparing my trousseau.

Torah: A Women's Commentary

I will go – Rivkah's decision to leave her homeland and her family, go to a new place, and live with a man unknown to her, is reminiscent of Avraham, who left everything behind him in order to fulfill a divine command (Gen. 12:1). Women's contribution to the fulfillment of national destiny finds its expression not only in their role as childbearers but also in their ability to take bold and vital action at critical moments. Rivkah's actions will later find an echo in Ruth's leaving her father, mother and land of her own accord. When Ruth joins her fate with that of her mother-in-law, Naomi, and subsequently marries Naomi's kinsman Boaz, Ruth too contributes to fulfilling the national destiny, in that King David would be the future offspring of that union.

WHAT WAS YITZHAK DOING?

Genesis 24:63

וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לָשׂוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה לִפְנוֹת עָרֶב וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא

Yitzhak went out *la-suah* in the field toward the turn of evening; he lifted his eyes and saw…

Hizkuni, Gen. 24:63

Hezekiah ben Manoah (1200s)

ויצא יצחק מהיכן יצא מגן עדן שהיה שם משעת העקידה עד עכשיו שלוש שנים.

Yitzhak went out – [As Torah does not specify from where], he left the Garden of Eden, for he was there from the time of the *Akeidah* until now, three years later.

Midrash: Yitzhak's soul fled from the Akeidah
… to Gan Eden?
… to heal?

Gen. Rabbah 60:14 [Rashi, Gen. 24:63]

וְיִצְחָק בָּא מִבּוֹא, אֲתָא מִמֵּיתָא, וּלְהֵיכָן הָלַךְ: בְּאֵר לַחַי רֹאִי, הָלַךְ לְהָבִיא אֶת הָגָר, אוֹתָהּ שֶׁיָּשְׁבָה עַל הַבְּאֵר וְאָמְרָה לְחַי הָעוֹלָמִים רְאֵה בְּעֶלְבּוֹנִי. וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לָשׂוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה לִפְנוֹת עָרֶב, אֵין שִׂיחָה אֶלָּא תְּפִלָּה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: תְּפִלָּה לְעָנִי כִּי יַעֲטֹף וְלִפְנֵי ה' יִשְׁפֹּךְ שִׂיחוֹ.

Yitzhak came from going – He came back from death. He came from *Be'er l'hai ro'i*. He went to bring Hagar back [to Avraham] as she sat by the well [Be'er] and said to the One who enlivens [=*l'hai*] the worlds, "See me [*ro'i*] in my misery"

THIS IS DEEEEEEEEEEP – REDEMPTIVE, TIKKUN / REPAIR

Yitzhak went out la-suah at the turn of evening. This is prayer, as in (Ps. 102:1), "The prayer of the poor, who feeling overwhelmed pour out their prayer before God.

Ibn Ezra, Gen. 24:63

ולשוח. ללכת בין השיחים׃

La-suah. To walk among the bushes.

NATURE
BUSHWACKING
YITZHAK AS LOST SOUL
Dark night of the soul?
Hearing God's voice
= burning bush

Hizkuni, Gen. 24:63

לשוח בשדה לשון שיח השדה תחת אחד השיחים כלומר לנטוע אילנות ולראות ענין פועליו. ד"א לשון שיחה לדבר לאיש הצורך לדבר עמו.

La-suah in the field. Like vegetating in the field (Gen. 2:5), like (Gen 21:15), "[Hagar put Yishmael] under one of the bushes" to see the essence of God's actualization. Another thing: it is like conversation, to one who needs to converse with [God].

Reb Nahman of Breslov

הֲלוֹא כְּשֶׁהַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ עוֹזֵר בְּהִתְבּוֹדְדוּת, אֲזַי הַהִתְבּוֹדְדוּת הוּא כַּאֲשֶׁר יְדַבֵּר אִישׁ אֶל רֵעֵהוּ׃

When the Blessed One aids one's *hitbodedut*, then *hitbodedut* is like speaking to a friend (Likutei Moharan II:99:1).

שֶׁטּוֹב יוֹתֵר שֶׁהַהִתְבּוֹדְדוּת יִהְיֶה מִחוּץ לָעִיר, בִּמְקוֹם עֲשָׂבִים, כִּי הָעֲשָׂבִים גּוֹרְמִים שֶׁיִּתְעוֹרֵר הַלֵּב.

The best place to go to seclude yourself and meditate is in the meadows outside the city. Go to a grassy field, for the grass will awaken your heart (Sihot HaRan 227).

רִבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, הַנְחֵנִי לִהְיוֹת לְבַדִּי שֶׁיְּהֵא דַּרְכִּי לָצֵאת בַּשָּׂדֶה, בֵּין הָעֵצִים וּבֵין הַדְּשָׁאִים וְשָׁם אֶהְיֶה לְבַדִּי, וְאֶכָּנֵס לְהִתְפַּלָּה לְדַבֵּר עִם הַמְיֻחָד הַמְיֻחָד שֶׁלִּי וְאֶכְתֹּב שָׁם אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר בִּלְבָבִי וְכָל רִבּוּאֵי הַשָּׂדֶה, כָּל הַדְּשָׁאִים, הָעֵצִים וְהָרְכָנִים יָעִירוּ לִכְבוֹדִי בְּבָאִי וַיַּכְנִיסוּ אֶת כֹּחַ חַיֵּיהֶם בִּדְבָרַי שֶׁלִּי כְּדֵי שֶׁתִּתְפַּלָּתִי וּדְבָרִי יַעֲמִידוּ עַצְמָם בְּלֵב אֶחָד עִם כֹּחַ וְרוּחַ הַכֹּל הַצּוֹמֵחַ הַכֹּל הַמְקֻדָּשׁ שֶׁלִּי אֲנִי שׁוֹפֵךְ אֶת דְּבָרִי לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ כַּמַּיִם, יהו״ה.

Master of the World, teach me to be alone. Let it be my custom to go outdoors each day among the trees and grass, among all growing things. And there may I be alone and enter into prayer, to talk with the One to whom I belong. May I express there everything in my heart, and may all the foliage of the field – all grasses, trees, and plants – awake at my coming, to send the powers of their life into the words of my prayer so that my prayer and speech are made whole through the life and spirit of all growing things, which are made as one by their transcendent Source. May I then pour out the words of my heart before You like water, YHVH!

Elul = "the king is in the field" (nearby, not far away)

WELL • TO ENLIVEN • SEES ME

RIVKAH SAW…

Genesis 24:64-65

וַתִּשָּׂא רִבְקָה אֶת־עֵינֶיהָ וַתֵּרֶא אֶת־יִצְחָק וַתִּפֹּל מֵעַל הַגָּמָל: וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל־הָעֶבֶד מִי־הָאִישׁ הַלָּזֶה הַהֹלֵךְ בַּשָּׂדֶה לִקְרָאתֵנוּ וַיֹּאמֶר הָעֶבֶד הוּא אֲדֹנִי וַתִּקַּח הַצָּעִיף וַתִּתְכָּס:

Rivkah lifted her eyes and saw Yitzhak. She got off the camel and said to the servant, "Who is that man walking in the field toward us?" And the servant said, "That is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself.

Ramban, Gen. 24:65

וַתִּקַּח הַצָּעִיף וַתִּתְכָּס: וּלְדַעְתִּי בִּרְאוֹת רִבְקָה אִישׁ הוֹלֵךְ לִקְרָאתָהּ בַּשָּׂדֶה, שָׂיְרָט הַדֶּרֶךְ וְהַלַּךְ בַּשָּׂדֶה לְעֻמָּתָם, יָדְעָה כִּי הוּא בָּא לִרְאוֹתָם וְלִקְרֹא לְשָׁלוֹם אוֹ לְהַכְנִיסָם אֶל בֵּיתוֹ לָלוּן, עָשְׂתָה כְּדֶרֶךְ מוּסַר הַנָּשִׁים לַעֲמֹד בְּהֶצְנֵעַ:

[S]he took her veil and covered herself. In my view, in Rivkah seeing someone walking in the field to greet her, hastening on the road and walking in the field towards them, she knew that he was coming to see them and greet them – or to bring them into his house for lodging – so she did as was ethically proper for women and she stood modestly.

RIVKAH IS REINCARNATION OF SARAH / CONSERVATION OF SOUL —> COMFORT??

literally, or "inner child"?

Hizkuni, Gen. 24:65

ותרא את יצחק ותפל מעל הגמל ראתה אותו הדור ובעל קומה ופרצוף מהלך לעבר השדות בלא דרך כי בושה והיא היתה קטנה בת שלש שנים כסבורה אנס או לסטים הוא ונתבהלה ונפלה.

[Rivkah] saw Yitzhak. She got off the camel – She saw him handsome, tall and well countenanced, powerfully walking across unwalked fields. She felt ashamed. She was small, just three years old, and believed him to be a rapist or armed robber. She became terrified and *fell* [off her camel].

ד״א ותפל מעל הגמל מסורס הוא אחר ותאמר אל העבד וכן הפי׳ ותרא את יצחק ותאמר אל העבד מי האיש הלזה ההלך בשדה לקראתנו ויאמר העבד הוא אדני ואחר כך ותפל מעל הגמל ותקח הצעיף ותתכס, מרוב צניעות הפילה עצמה מרצונה כמו ויפול על פניו.

Another view of ***She got off the camel*** – This is distorted [*i.e.* Why would she get off the camel] before [knowing who he is?], which is why she asked the servant the man's identity on seeing Yitzhak, asking, "Who is that man walking in the field toward us?" When the servant said, "He is my master," *then* she got off the camel and covered her face with a veil, from modesty. Thus her descent from the camel was *voluntary*, like someone prostrate in prayer.

Sforno, Gen. 24:65

ותתכס. כי יראה מהביט על דרך ויסתר משה פניו׃

And covered herself – For she was afraid to gaze, much like (Ex. 3:6), "Moshe hid his face."

R. Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin, Gen. 24:65 (d. 1893)

ותשא רבקה וגו׳ ותרא את יצחק. בעודו עומד ומתפלל והי׳ אז כמלאך אלהים נורא מאד.

Rivkah raised her eyes … and saw Yitzhak – While he was standing and praying, he was like an angel of God, great in awe.

Hagit Rappel, Dirshuni (2022)

"And she took the veil and covered up" (Gen. 24:65)

She dropped to the ground, took her veil, and covered her face, partitioning her from her husband, so that none of *her waves and breakers can surge* (Ps. 42:8) toward him, and whatever flaw she may have, he wouldn't accept. Rebecca did as all women do: a candle burned in the tent from one Sabbath eve to the next; there was blessing to be found in her dough; and a cloud rested atop the tent as it was in Sarah's days. Rebecca comforts Isaac on the death of his mother, but there is no comfort for her.

Ellen Frankel, The Five Books of Miriam (1996)

WILY REBECCA RECOUNTS: What an awful journey it was! After an endless camel trek to reach a home and a husband I'd never seen, I finally caught a glimpse of my husband-to-be, *"walking in the field toward evening."* What immediately struck me was how much *older* he was than I'd imagined and how bent over, as if he'd been carrying a heavy load all his life. Out of respect for him I hurried to dismount from my camel, but I was sick at heart.

THE RABBIS OFFER THEIR VERSION: Rebecca is so overcome by fatigue, frayed nerves, and erotic excitement that she falls off her camel. As it is written, "*she alighted from her camel."* Indeed, the Hebrew word *vatipol* literally means "to fall down."

REBECCA FIRES BACK: Why don't you try spending a few days riding a camel? Anyway, once I'd made sure that this stranger was Isaac, I veiled myself.

OUR MOTHERS COMMENT: As in the earlier scene at the well, Rebecca acts spontaneously, responding to her own heart. For although she is otherwise spirited and bold, here she restrains herself and behaves with modesty, covering herself before her future husband.

BUT REBECCA DEMURS: Just as I asserted my own will in agreeing to the marriage, so here I asserted myself in meeting Isaac eye-to-eye. That's why Eliezer identified Isaac as *his* master, not mine. Because in me, Isaac had more than met his match.

Rebecca veils

You walked among the trees
cloaked in contemplation
singing softly, lit from within.
I wrapped myself in a veil
to reach inward, to find
my own godspark
and as I inhaled
God's breath lifted
the flames within me
helping my light grow
to meet yours, to be your match.

– *R. Barenblat* (2025)