Congregation Beth Israel
Of The Berkshires

CONGREGATION
Shir Ami

SoulSpa 3.6 • P. Vayeitzei
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Blessing Before Learning

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יהו״ה
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ
לַעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה׃

Barukh Atah Adonai
eloheinu melekh ha'olam
asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu
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.

HOW DYSFUNCTIONAL IS ALL OF THIS? AND, THIS HAS TO HAPPEN IN ORDER…

DIVINE GUIDANCE, AND KNOWING IT?

Genesis 29:5-18

shepherds who needed water for sheep

"white," "brilliant" (yet also, later, a deceiver)

וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הֲיְדַעְתֶּם אֶת־לָבָן
בֶּן־נָחוֹר וַיֹּאמְרוּ יָדָעְנוּ...וְהִנֵּה רָחֵל
בִּתּוֹ בָּאָה עִם־הַצֹּאן׃ וַיֹּאמֶר הֵן עוֹד
הַיּוֹם גָּדוֹל לֹא־עֵת הֵאָסֵף הַמִּקְנֶה
הַשְׁקוּ הַצֹּאן וּלְכוּ רְעוּ׃ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא
נוּכַל עַד אֲשֶׁר יֵאָסְפוּ כָּל־הָעֲדָרִים
וְגָלְלוּ אֶת־הָאֶבֶן מֵעַל פִּי הַבְּאֵר
וְהִשְׁקִינוּ הַצֹּאן׃

5-8. [Ya'akov] said to them, "Do you know Lavan, son of Nahor?" And they said, "We know him… and there is his daughter Raheil, coming with the flock." He said, "It is yet daylight, too early to gather the animals. Water the flock and take them to pasture." But they said, "We cannot, until all the flocks are rounded up, the stone is rolled off the mouth of the well and we water the sheep."

There's an internal order to all of this… or out of order?

A flow to what is evolving, generativity

we've had well stories before: connections? fertility

ENCOUNTERS: Avraham… Yitzhak… Moshe…

Unusual: gendered role reversal?

עוֹדֶנּוּ מְדַבֵּר עִמָּם וְרָחֵל בָּאָה עִם־
הַצֹּאן אֲשֶׁר לְאָבִיהָ כִּי רֹעָה הִוא׃
וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר רָאָה יַעֲקֹב אֶת־רָחֵל
בַּת־לָבָן אֲחִי אִמּוֹ וְאֶת־צֹאן לָבָן
אֲחִי אִמּוֹ וַיִּגַּשׁ יַעֲקֹב וַיָּגֶל אֶת־הָאֶבֶן
מֵעַל פִּי הַבְּאֵר וַיַּשְׁקְ אֶת־צֹאן לָבָן
אֲחִי אִמּוֹ׃ וַיִּשַּׁק יַעֲקֹב לְרָחֵל וַיִּשָּׂא
אֶת־קֹלוֹ וַיֵּבְךְּ׃ וַיַּגֶּד יַעֲקֹב לְרָחֵל כִּי
אֲחִי אָבִיהָ הוּא וְכִי בֶן־רִבְקָה הוּא
וַתָּרָץ וַתַּגֶּד לְאָבִיהָ׃

9-12. While he was still speaking with them, Raheil came with her father's flock, for she was its shepherd. When Ya'akov saw Raheil, daughter of his uncle Lavan, with the flock of his uncle Lavan, Ya'akov went and rolled the stone off the mouth of the well, and watered the flock of his uncle Lavan. Then Ya'akov kissed Raheil, raised his voice and cried.* Ya'akov told Raheil that he was her father's kinsman and he was Rivkah's son – and she ran and told her father.

Ya'akov makes it happen, BUT how does he know Raheil?

right from the start, before HELLO? recognition? what kind of kiss is this?

WHAT ARE THE WOMEN FEELING… NOT ON THE PAGE!

gender: the guy is crying? WHY: comfort, preordained…?

וַיְהִי כִּשְׁמֹעַ לָבָן אֶת־שֵׁמַע יַעֲקֹב
בֶּן־אֲחֹתוֹ וַיָּרָץ לִקְרָאתוֹ וַיְחַבֵּק־לוֹ
וַיְנַשֶּׁק־לוֹ וַיְבִיאֵהוּ אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ וַיְסַפֵּר
לְלָבָן אֵת כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
וּבְשָׂרִי אָתָּה וַיֵּשֶׁב עִמּוֹ חֹדֶשׁ יָמִים׃
וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן לְיַעֲקֹב הֲכִי־אָחִי אַתָּה
וַעֲבַדְתַּנִי חִנָּם הַגִּידָה לִּי מַה־
מַּשְׂכֻּרְתֶּךָ׃

13-15. On hearing of Ya'akov, his sister's son, Lavan ran to greet him, embraced him, kissed him and took him into his house. [Ya'akov] told Lavan all that happened, and Lavan said to him, "You are truly my bone and flesh." When [Ya'akov] stayed with [Lavan] a month's time, Lavan said to Ya'akov, "Just because you are kin, should you serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?"

Adam and Eve?

servitude versus laborer? – for Raheil? pre-cog for Egyptian bondage?

soft eyes: crying? soulful? vulnerable? disabled?

וּלְלָבָן שְׁתֵּי בָנוֹת שֵׁם הַגְּדֹלָה לֵאָה
וְשֵׁם הַקְּטַנָּה רָחֵל׃ וְעֵינֵי לֵאָה רַכּוֹת
וְרָחֵל הָיְתָה יְפַת־תֹּאַר וִיפַת מַרְאֶה׃
וַיֶּאֱהַב יַעֲקֹב אֶת־רָחֵל וַיֹּאמֶר
אֶעֱבָדְךָ שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים בְּרָחֵל בִּתְּךָ
הַקְּטַנָּה׃

16-18. Lavan had two daughters; the name of the older one was Leah, and the name of the younger was Raheil. Leah had soft eyes; Raheil was shapely and beautiful in sight. Ya'akov loved Raheil and said to [Lavan], "I will serve you seven years for Raheil, your younger daughter."

What about dowry: why does HE serve here?

why wait seven years to marry Raheil?

… this isn't going to go so well: primogeniture, so Leah will marry first. Numerous Torah reversals of primogeniture (Yitzhak > Yishmael, Ya'akov > Eisav…)

Symbolism of seven – days of creation, lower sefirot

Rashi, Gen. 29:11

Tears = kaleidoscope of emotions

וַיִּבְךְּ. לְפִי שֶׁצָּפָה בְּרוּחַ הַקּוֹדֶשׁ שֶׁאֵינָהּ נִכְנֶסֶת עִמּוֹ לִקְבוּרָה. דָּ"אַ לְפִי שֶׁבָּא בְּיָדַיִם רֵקָנִיּוֹת; אָמַר, אֱלִיעֶזֶר עֶבֶד אַבָּי אַבָּא הָיוּ בְיָדָיו נְזָמִים וּצְמִידִים וּמְגְדָּנוֹת וַאֲנִי אֵין בְּיָדִי כְּלוּם.

[Ya'akov] wept - For he foresaw by the Holy Spirit that [Raḥeil] would not enter the grave with him. Another matter: he wept because he came with empty hands. He thought: Eliezer, my father's servant, had with him rings, bracelets and necklaces … while I have nothing with me.

Prophesy

Guilt

Projection

Bereishit Rabbah 70:12

וַיִּשַּׁק יַעֲקֹב לְרָחֵל... לָמָּה בָּכָה, אָמַר, אֱלִיעֶזֶר בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁהָלַךְ לְהָבִיא אֶת רִבְקָה מַה כְּתִיב בֵּיהּ: וַיִּקַּח הָעֶבֶד עֲשָׂרָה גְּמַלִּים וְגוֹ', וַאֲנִי לֹא נֶזֶם אֶחָד וְלֹא צָמִיד אֶחָד.

Ya'akov kissed Raḥeil, raised his voice, and wept" – … Why did he weep?: 'Eliezer, when he went to bring Rivkah, what is written of him (Gen. 24:10), "The servant took ten camels from the camels of his master" – but I do not have even one nose-ring or one bracelet.

דָּבָר אַחֵר, לָמָּה בָּכָה, שֶׁרָאָה שֶׁאֵינָהּ נִכְנֶסֶת עִמּוֹ לַקִּבּוּרָה, הֲדָא הִיא דְּהִיא אָמְרָה לָהּ: לָכֵן יִשְׁכַּב עִמָּךְ הַלַּיְלָה, אָמְרָה לָהּ עִמָּךְ הוּא דָּמֵיךְ, עִמִּי לֵית הוּא דָּמֵיךְ.

Another matter, why did he weep? [Because] he saw that she would not gather into the grave with him. That is what she [Raḥeil] said to [Leah] (Gen. 30:15): "That is why he will lie with you tonight" – he will lie with you, not with me.

דָּבָר אַחֵר, לָמָּה בָּכָה, שֶׁרָאָה הָאֻמּוֹת מְלַחֲשִׁים אֵלּוּ לְאֵלּוּ מִפְּנֵי שֶׁנִּשָּׁקָהּ, מַה בָּא זֶה לְחַדֵּשׁ לָנוּ דְּבַר עֶרְוָה. שֶׁמִּשָּׁעָה שֶׁלָּקָה הָעוֹלָם בְּדוֹר הַמַּבּוּל עָמְדוּ אֻמּוֹת הָעוֹלָם וְנָדְרוּ עַצְמָן מִן הָעֶרְוָה.

Another matter, why did he weep? [Because] he saw people whispering to each other because he kissed her, [saying]: 'Did this one come to renew lewdness among us?' For since the time that the world was stricken in the Flood generation, the nations of the world stood and distanced from lewdness.

Shame?
Disapprobation?

Sforno, Gen. 29:11

וַיִּבְךְּ. עַל שֶׁלֹּא זָכָה לָשֵׂאת אוֹתָהּ בִּנְעוּרָיו, וְהָיוּ לוֹ לְעֵת כָּזֹאת בָּנִים נְעוּרִים.

[Ya'akov] wept - Because he did not merit to marry [=raise] her in his youth, that by now he would have grandchildren.

Lament / relief

R. David Kimhi, Gen. 29:11

ויבך. זו היא בכיה של שמחה ומרוב אהבה המית הלב:

[Ya'akov] wept - Tears of joy from great love from the heart.

Great love

Rabbeinu Bahyah, Gen. 29:11

וישק יעקב לרחל ... ויבך. קטנה היתה שלא היתה עדיין ראויה להיבעל ועל כן מסר לבן הצאן בידה ולא מסרן ביד לאה הגדולה ממנה כי היתה ראויה לאיש ויושבת בבית. או נאמר שהנשיקה הזאת היתה נשיקת הראש או הכתף, כי לא אמר הכתוב בפי רחל.

Yaakov kissed Raḥeil … and wept. [Torah refers to Raḥeil as] קטנה – [younger and] "small": she was a minor and not yet suitable to a husband, so Lavan was unworried to give his flocks to her instead of his adult [daughter] Leah already suitable to a man [who might molest her]. It might also be said that this kiss was a kiss on her head or shoulder, for it was not written that it was on her mouth [and thus not sexual].

paternalistic?

Ellen Frankel, The Five Books of Miriam

OUR DAUGHTERS ASK: Both Eliezer and Jacob meet brides at a well. How do their meetings compare?

OUR MOTHERS ANSWER: When Abraham's servant Eliezer devises a test to identify the right wife for Isaac, he's looking for the following qualities: kindness to strangers and to animals, beauty, modesty, and loyalty to family. He finds them all in Rebecca. But when Jacob comes to the same well years later, he finds himself replaying *Rebecca's* script, not Eliezer's: so instead of waiting for a young woman to approach him, he comes forward to meet her; instead of *her* watering his animals, he waters hers. When he reveals himself to her, it's not Rachel but he who weeps. Yet the very qualities that made Rebecca the perfect wife for Isaac turn out to be liabilities to Rachel's husband-to-be: Jacob's generosity, friendliness, and family feeling make him easy prey for Laban's shrewdness.

character and gender reversal

WILY REBECCA EXPLAINS: By keeping Jacob home by my side, schooling him in the traditional ways of women, I raised my smooth-skinned, sweet-smelling boy as my *daughter*, shielding him from the harsher ways of men. In this way, I set Jacob up to play the woman's role in the family drama.

gender bending?

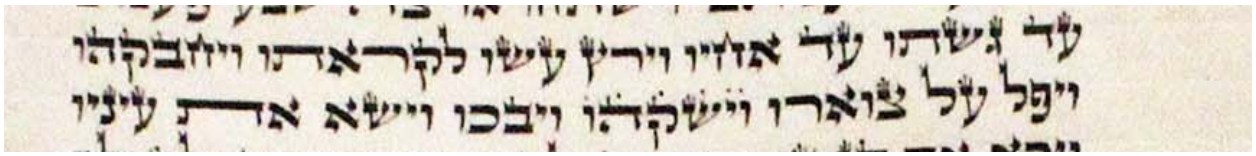
patriarchy exploits – Jacob now to get a taste of it.

LEAH AND RACHEL RETORT: And how Laban exploited your fantasy!

Zohar 2:124b

וַיִּשַּׁק יַעֲקֹב לְרָחֵל ... וַיִּבְךְּ, אֲמַאי קָא בָכָה. אֶלָּא בְּאִתְדַּבְּקוּתָא דְּרוּחָא בָּהּ, לָא יָכִיל לְבָא לְמִסְבַּל, וּבָכָה. וְאִי תֵּימָא, ה״כ וַיִּשָּׁקֵהוּ וַיִּבְכּוּ. תָּנֵינָן, אֲמַאי נָקוּד וַיִּשָּׁקֵהוּ, אֶלָּא דְּלָא אִתְדַּבַּק בֵּיהּ רוּחָא כְּלָל, וְעַל דָּא כְּתִיב וְנַעְתָּרוֹת נְשִׁיקוֹת שׂוֹנֵא אֶלָּא מַאן דְּנָשִׁיק בַּחֲבִיבוּתָא מִתְדַּבַּק רוּחֵיהּ בְּדִבֵּיקוּתָא דַּחֲבִיבוּתָא וּמַאן דְּלָא נָשִׁיק בַּחֲבִיבוּתָא, לָאו בְּדִבֵּיקוּתָא הוּא. וּבְגִינֵי כַּךְ כְּת׳ יִשָּׁקֵנִי מִנְּשִׁיקוֹת פִּיהוּ דְּהוּא דְּבֵקוּתָא רוּחָא בְּרוּחָא.

Yaakov kissed Raheil … and wept. Why did he weep? Because the intensity of his attachment to her overpowered him, and he found relief in tears. While it is written (Gen. 34:4) "[Eisav] kissed [Ya'akov] and they wept," there the word וַיִּשָּׁקֵהוּ [="ke kissed him"] is dotted, because their spirits did not attach to each other, as in (Prov. 27:6), "Abundant are an enemy's kisses." Kisses of true love connect spirit to spirit, but not kisses of not true love, which are merely spiritless wind. So it is written (Songs 1:2), "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth," which attaches spirit to Spirit.



Zohar 2:146b-147a

כֵּיוָן דְּאָעִיל לְגַבֵּי הֵיכָל אַהֲבָה, אִתְעַר רְחִימוּ דְּנָשִׁיקִין עִלָּאִין, דִּכְתִּיב וַיִּשַּׁק יַעֲקֹב לְרָחֵל, לְמֶהֱוֵי נְשִׁיקִין דְּרְחִימוּ עִלָּאָה כְּדְקָא יְאוֹת, וְאִינּוּן נְשִׁיקִין שְׁירוּתָא דְּאִתְעָרוּ דְּכָל רְחִימוּ, וְאִתְדַּבְּקוּתָא וְקִשׁוּרָא דִּלְעֵילָּא. וּבְגִין כָּךְ שְׁירוּתָא דְּתוּשְׁבַּחְתָּא דְּשִׁירָתָא דָּא אִיהוּ יִשָּׁקֵנִי.

When this spirit of love enters the palace of love, yearning for the supernal kisses is aroused – of which it is written (Gen. 29:11), "Yaa'kov kissed Raheil." Thus are kisses of supernal love duly brought forth: they are the start of the awakening of all supernal love, attachment and union. For this reason, Song of Songs begins with the words: "Let Him kiss me [with the kisses of His mouth]."

Ein Sof = infinitude, inter-being

מַאן יִשָּׁקֵנִי. הַהוּא דְּסָתִים גּוֹ סְתִימוּ עִלָּאָה. וְאִי תֵּימָא, סְתִימָא דְּכָל סְתִימִין בֵּיהּ תַּלְיָין נְשִׁיקִין וְנָשִׁיק לְתַתָּא. תָּא חֲזֵי, סְתִימָא דְּכָל סְתִימִין, לֵית מַאן דְּיָדַע לֵיהּ, וְאִיהוּ גַּלֵּי מְנֵיהּ נְהִירוּ חַד דָּקִיק סָתִים, דְּלָא אִתְגְּלֵי בַּר בְּחַד שְׁבִיל דָּקִיק דְּאִתְפָּשַׁט מִגַּוֵּיהּ, וְאִיהוּ נְהִירוּ דְּנָהִיר לְכֹלָּא. וְדָא אִתְעָרוּ דְּכָל רָזִין עִלָּאִין. וְאִיהוּ סָתִים. לְזִמְנִין סָתִים, לְזִמְנִין אִתְגַּלְיָא. וְאַף עַל גַּב דְּלָא אִתְגַּלְיָא כְּלָל. וְאִתְעָרוּ דְּסִלְּיקוּ דְּנְשִׁיקִין בֵּיהּ תַּלְיָין. וּמִגּוֹ דְּאִיהוּ סָתִים, שִׁירוּתָא דְּתוּשְׁבַּחְתָּא בְּאֹרַח סָתִים אִיהוּ.

Who is "He" who kisses? "He" is who is hidden within the supernal concealment. Can, then, the most recondite [=abstruse, least known] be the fount of kisses, and kiss that which is below? See now: the most recondite is beyond cognition but reveals of Himself a tenuous and veiled brightness shining only along a narrow path which extends from Him, and this is the brightness that irradiates all. This is the starting-point of all esoteric mysteries, "Itself" being unknowable. "It" is sometimes indiscoverable, sometimes discoverable, but even were It wholly indiscoverable the impulse to the ascending of kisses still depends on It. And because He is veiled, the Song of Songs also begins veiled: "Let Him kiss me" – the Him who is veiled above.

CREATION

Burning Bush

וְאִי בֵּיהּ תַּלְיָין מַה בָּעֵי יַעֲקֹב הָכָא, דְּהָא בֵּיהּ תַּלְיָין נְשִׁיקִין. אֶלָּא וַדַּאי הָכִי הוּא. יִשָּׁקֵנִי, הַהוּא דְּסָתִים לְעֵילָּא.

And if so, as much depends on these kisses, what is Ya'akov doing here? Surely this: "Let Him kiss me," "He" who is hidden above.

וּבְמָה. בְּהַהוּא רְתִיכָא עִלָּאָה, דְּכָל גַּוְונִין תַּלְיָין וּמִתְחַבְּרָן בֵּיהּ. וְהַאי אִיהוּ יַעֲקֹב. כְּמָה דְּאַמְרִינָן, דְּבֵיקוּתָא לְאִתְדַּבְּקָא בְּמַלְכָּא בִּבְרָא דִּילֵיהּ הוּא. וְעַל דָּא כְּתִיב מִנְּשִׁיקוֹת פִּיהוּ כִּי טוֹבִים דּוֹדֶיךָ אַהֲדָר לְגַבֵּי שְׁמְשָׁא דְּאַנְהִיר לָהּ לְסִיהֲרָא, מִגּוֹ נְהִירוּ דְּאִינּוּן בּוּצִינִין עִלָּאִין, וְאִיהוּ נָטִיל נְהוֹרָא דִּכְלְהוּ, וְאַנְהִיר לְסִיהֲרָא. וְאִינּוּן בּוּצִינִין עִלָּאִין, וְאִיהוּ נָטִיל נְהוֹרָא דִּכְלְהוּ, וְאַנְהִיר לְסִיהֲרָא וְאִינּוּן בּוּצִינִין דְּמִזְדַּוְּוגִין בֵּיהּ, מֵאָן אַתָּר נַהֲרִין. הָדָר וְאָמַר מִיָּין, מֵהַהוּא יַיִן דְּמִנְטָרָא, מֵהַהוּא יַיִן דְּאִיהוּ חֶדְוָה דְּכָל חֶדְוָון... דָּא אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים, יַיִן, דְּיָהִיב חַיִּין וְחֶדְוָה לְכֹלָּא.

How? By the [flow] of that upper light, to which all colors connect and join in it. Such is Ya'akov, as we said that [Ya'akov's] cleaving did cleave to the King creating all. Thus it is written (Song of Songs 2:1), "With the kisses of His mouth, for Your love is better [than wine]." This is for the Sun [=male God] illuminating the Moon [=female God] by the radiance of those supernal lights as kisses, which He gathers and passes to the Moon by uniting in Her. And from where comes that light? From the " wine" [=spiritually intoxicating supernal flow] which is the joy of all joys. This is *Elohim Hayyim* (Living God), which by this "wine" gives life and joy to all. [*Ed.* – This is Torah's first kiss other than between parent and child, and one on which the rest of Torah depends because through Raheil comes Yosef….]

Maimonides, 3 Guide for the Perplexed 51:15

The philosophers have already explained how one's bodily forces in youth prevent the development of moral principles. In a greater measure this is the case as regards the purity of [spirituality] which a person attains through the perfection of those ideas that lead the person to an intense love of God. One can by no means attain this so long as one's bodily humors run hot. The more the forces of one's body are weakened, and the fire of passion quenched, in the same measure does one's intellect increase in strength and light; one's knowledge becomes purer, and one is happy with one's knowledge.

When this perfect person is stricken in age and is near death, their knowledge mightily increases, their joy in that knowledge grows greater, and their love for the object of their knowledge more intense, and it is in this great delight that the soul separates from the body. To this state our Sages referred, when in reference to the death of Moshe, Aharon and Miriam, they said that death was in these three cases nothing but a kiss. They say thus: We learn from the words (Deut. 34:5), "And Moshe, servant of YHVH, died there in the land of Moav by the mouth of YHVH," that his death was a kiss. The same expression is used for Aharon (Num. 33:38): "And Aharon the Kohein went up into Mount Hor . . . by the mouth of YHVH, and died there." Our Sages said that the same was the case with Miriam; but the phrase "by the mouth of YHVH" is not employed only because it was not considered appropriate to use these words in the description of her death as she was a woman.

The meaning of this saying is that these three died in the midst of the pleasure derived from the knowledge of God and their great love for Him. When our Sages figuratively call the knowledge of God united with intense love for Him a "kiss," they follow the well-known poetical diction (Song of Songs 1:2), "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." This kind of death, which in truth is deliverance from death, has been ascribed by our Sages to none but Moshe, Aharon and Miriam. The other prophets and pious men are beneath that degree – but their knowledge of God is strengthened when death approaches. Of them Scripture says (Isaiah 58:8), "Thy righteousness shall go before you; the glory of YHVH will be your reward."

The intellect of these people remains then constantly in the same condition, since the obstacle is removed that at times has intervened between the intellect and the object of its action: it continues forever in that great delight, which is not like bodily pleasure.