

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob . . . and Nathanael

Parashat *Vayetzei* [Vayetze]
([B'reishit/Genesis 28:10-32:3](#)) 5783 B"H

*How does Jacob's life and story relate to Nathanael in [John 1](#)?
Find out in today's Bible study!*

A Dysfunctional Family

Yaakov (Jacob) wasn't the most honest guy in the Bible.

But he also wasn't from the most "righteous" immediate family. In fact, we could describe his family (like so many) as quite dysfunctional.

You do know that our families of origin do have some influence on our behaviors as much as we wish that weren't the case!

Now, we are not going to "excuse" Yaacov in this study.

Regardless of our upbringing, every single one of us must acknowledge our sinful behaviors and turn from those evil ways in repentance.

Yaacov's behavior was not righteous nor godly, yet we will discover that despite his failings, God chose to use him.

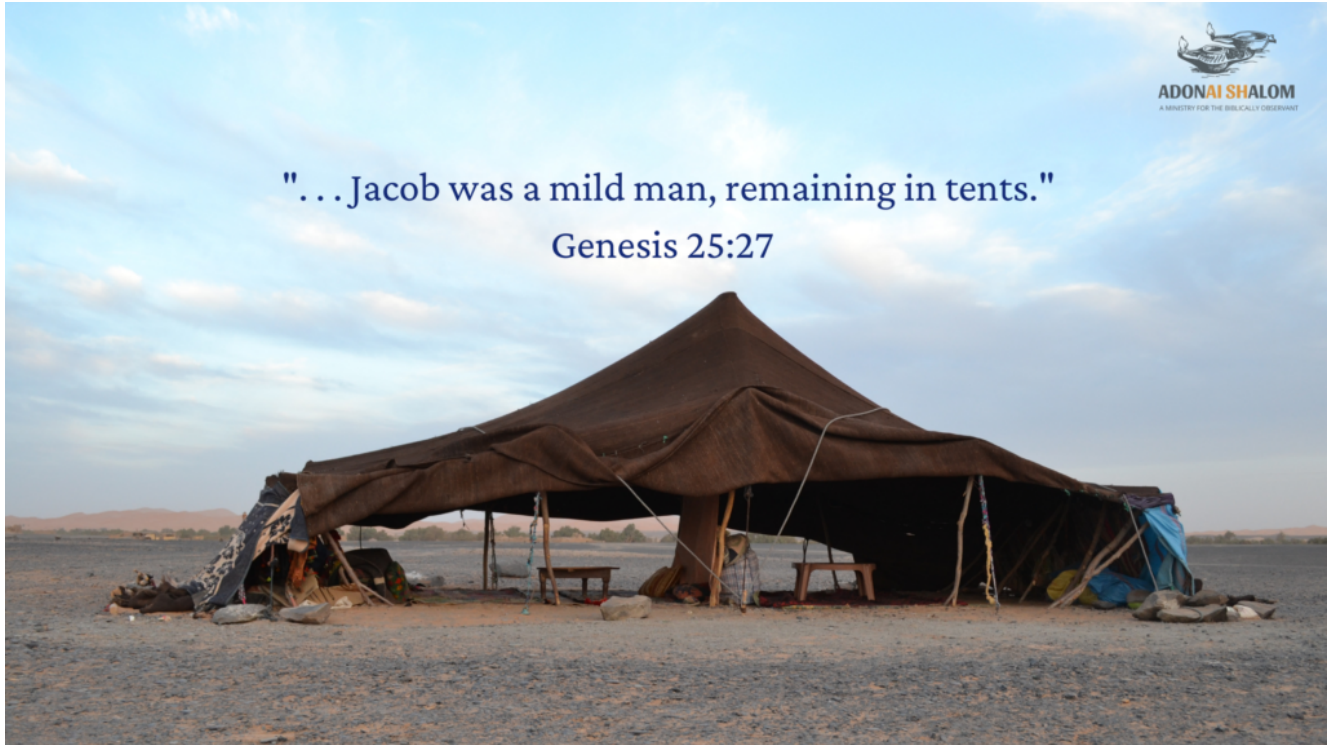
So, just know this – no matter what, God can use you, too, my friend.

Twins with little to nothing in common

The Bible describes Yaakov (Jacob) as a "mild man," who "remain[ed] in tents." ([Genesis 25:27](#)).

In modern language, we'd say Yaakov was a "homebody."

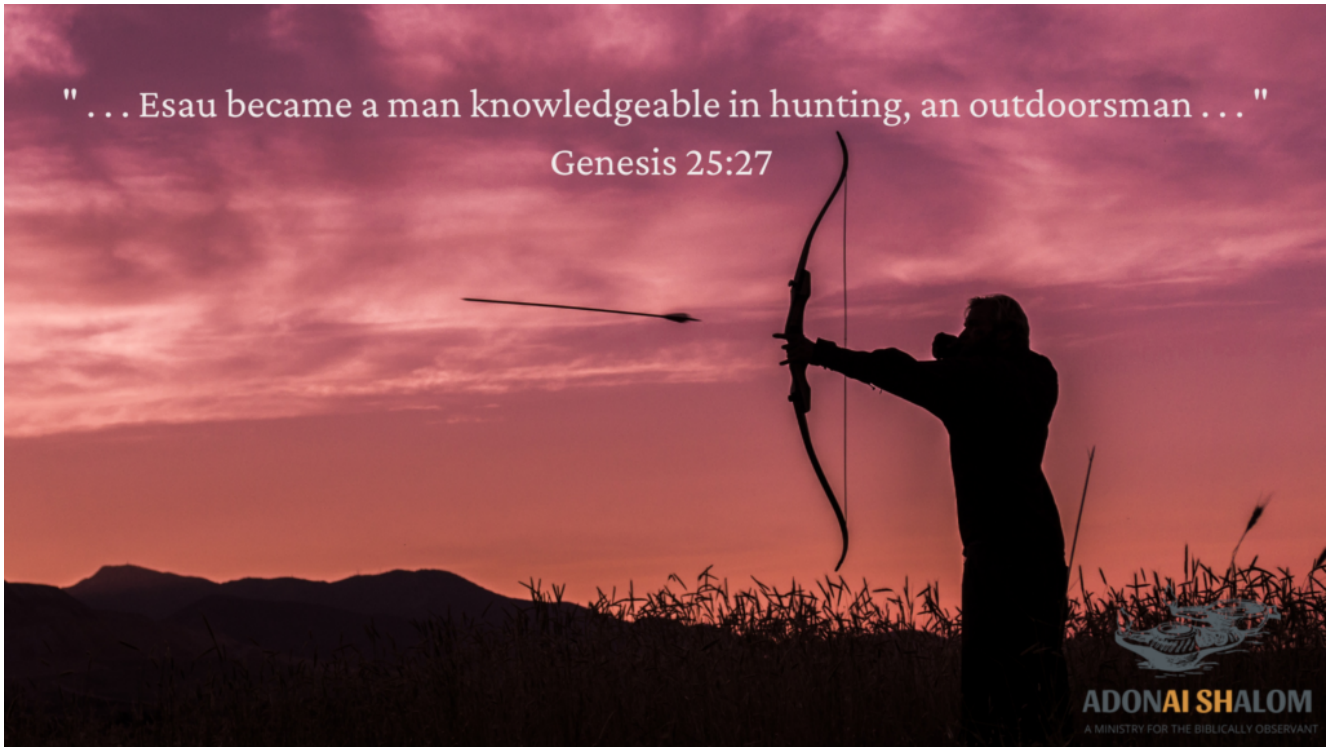
Yaakov (Jacob) was a quiet guy who preferred the comforts and quiet of home much more than heading out looking to kill the night's dinner.



His twin brother, Esav (Esau) on the other hand, was a total outdoorsman. He was "a man knowledgeable in hunting" ([Genesis 25:27](#)) so he was far more adventurous than Yaakov.

"... Esau became a man knowledgeable in hunting, an outdoorsman ..."

Genesis 25:27



Did these brothers talk much?

Was there communication between these two seemingly polar opposites?

Esav would go out for long hours and I imagine Yaakov would spend quite a bit of time with their mother, Rivkah (Rebekah) because he stayed around the home.

Poor parenting

This is the same Rivkah (Rebekah) who married Yitzhak (Isaac) when she was very young. In fact, she showed some signs of youthful immaturity based on her very quick acceptance of the marriage proposal and [her falling off her camel when she saw Yitzhak for the first time!](#) Yes, the culture was different so perhaps her eagerness to marry was perfectly normal, and yes, Yitzhak might've been just that good-looking to cause her to fall off her camel, but it is fairly safe to assume Rivkah was quite young.

[*Falling in love: Rivkah's tumble off a camel, head-over-heels for Yitzhak \[Rebekah & Isaac\]*](#)

Indeed, some scholars believe the “young woman” Rivkah ([Genesis 24:57](#)) would have been younger than about 13 years old at the time of their engagement.

One clue:

She still had a *nanny*! ([Genesis 24:59](#))

So if we wanted to give Rivkah a benefit of the doubt, we could posit that she herself had not been parented long enough to know how to appropriately raise Esav and Yaacov (Esau and Jacob) in a godly manner.

We could **assume** Yitzhak (Isaac) and Rivkah (Rebekah) must’ve gotten married too young.

But if we are careful to study the Bible, we will realize this is **not the case**, at least not for Yitzhak (Isaac)!

[Genesis 25:20](#) says Yitzhak (Isaac) was **40** years old when he finally took Rebekah to be his wife!

Now, we do not know the age of Rebekah at this point. It wouldn’t have been uncommon in the Middle Eastern culture for Yitzhak to have been quite a bit older than Rebekah, but nonetheless, it would seem that even Rebekah would have had had enough time to observe motherhood and learn how to be a faithful wife and mother.

But Rivkah (Rebekah) played favorites and schemed not only against her oldest son, but ultimately against her dying husband!

Favoritism

Now, lest we let Yitzhak (Isaac) off the hook, the Bible reports that *both* of these parents showed favoritism.

[“Now Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for wild game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.” Genesis 25:28](#)

It was a recipe for disaster.

Yaacov (Jacob) and his mother plotted a scheme to trick Yitzhak (Isaac) into blessing Yaacov.

Foolishness

Scripture says Esav came back exhausted one day from being out in the field ([Genesis 25:29](#)). Exhaustion coupled with hunger must've contributed to Esav not thinking straight.

Esav wasn't savvy enough to realize how valuable his birthright was so he agreed to pledge it to Yaacov.

The red-haired twin agreed to give up his *birthright* in exchange for a bowl of red lentil soup.

Just a bowl of soup!

The man was hungry, but here is an extreme case of foolishness for giving into the stomach's demands. He reasoned that he would die soon ([Genesis 25:32](#)) so the birthright would be useless to him.

Yaacov (Jacob) the Deceiver

Yaacov (Jacob) earned himself the reputation of "deceiver." Some would like to soften this up a little and say he was merely a good negotiator or an astute businessman, but there is no denying that Yaacov acted with ***deception***.

How is it then, that Yaacov is the one we remember?

How can it be that we talk about the God of Abraham, Isaac, and *Jacob*?

Why did God grant Yaacov (Jacob) a dream of a stairway to heaven? ([Genesis 28:10ff](#))

Because God is merciful.

And He also honors words of blessing.

Yaacov had been blessed by Yitzhak, and there was no annulment.

Yaacov's trip to Charan and encounter with the One True God

If you have been studying *B'rieshit*/Genesis with us, you will recall that [Abraham's father, Terah, had reached a place named "Charan"](#) and stayed there. It was a place of rest.

[*Led by the One True God: Abram & his father, Terah*](#)

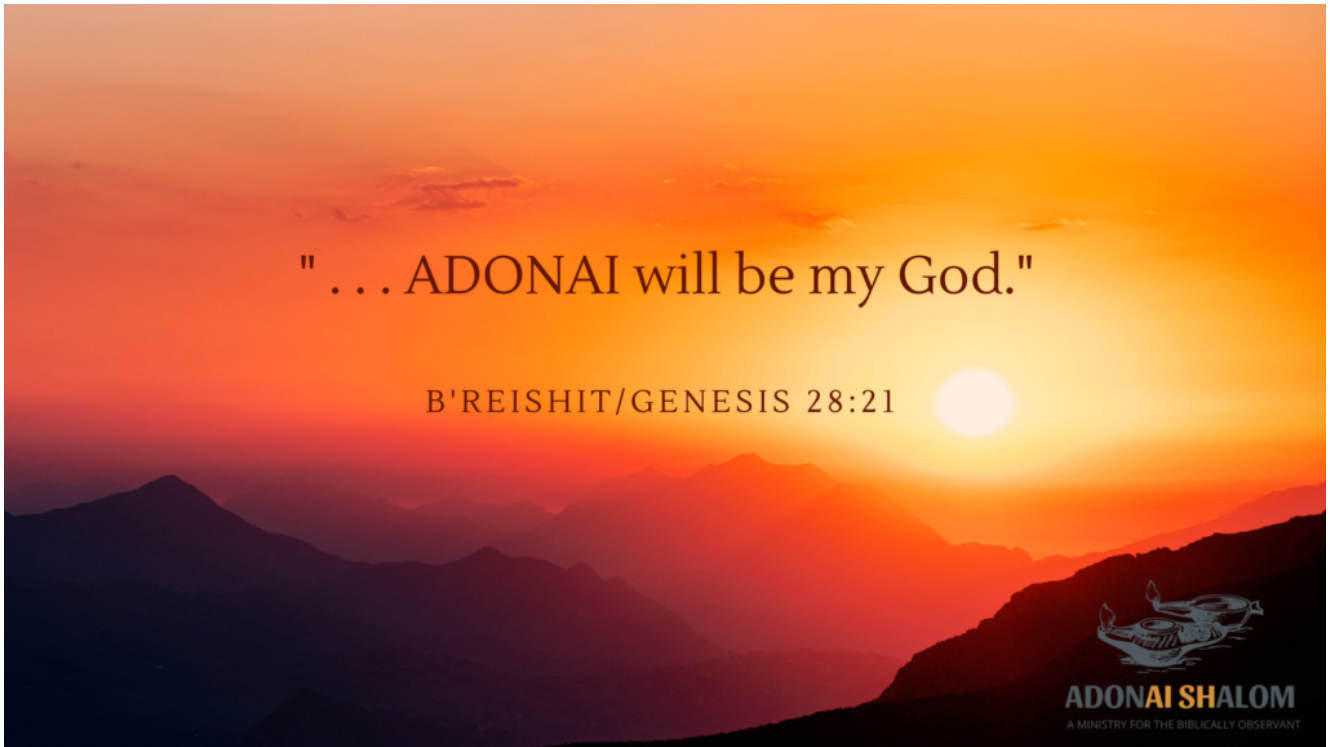
It was the same place where later Abram would hear the voice of God.

Now, it would be the **same place** Yaacov (Jacob) would dream of the stairway to heaven.

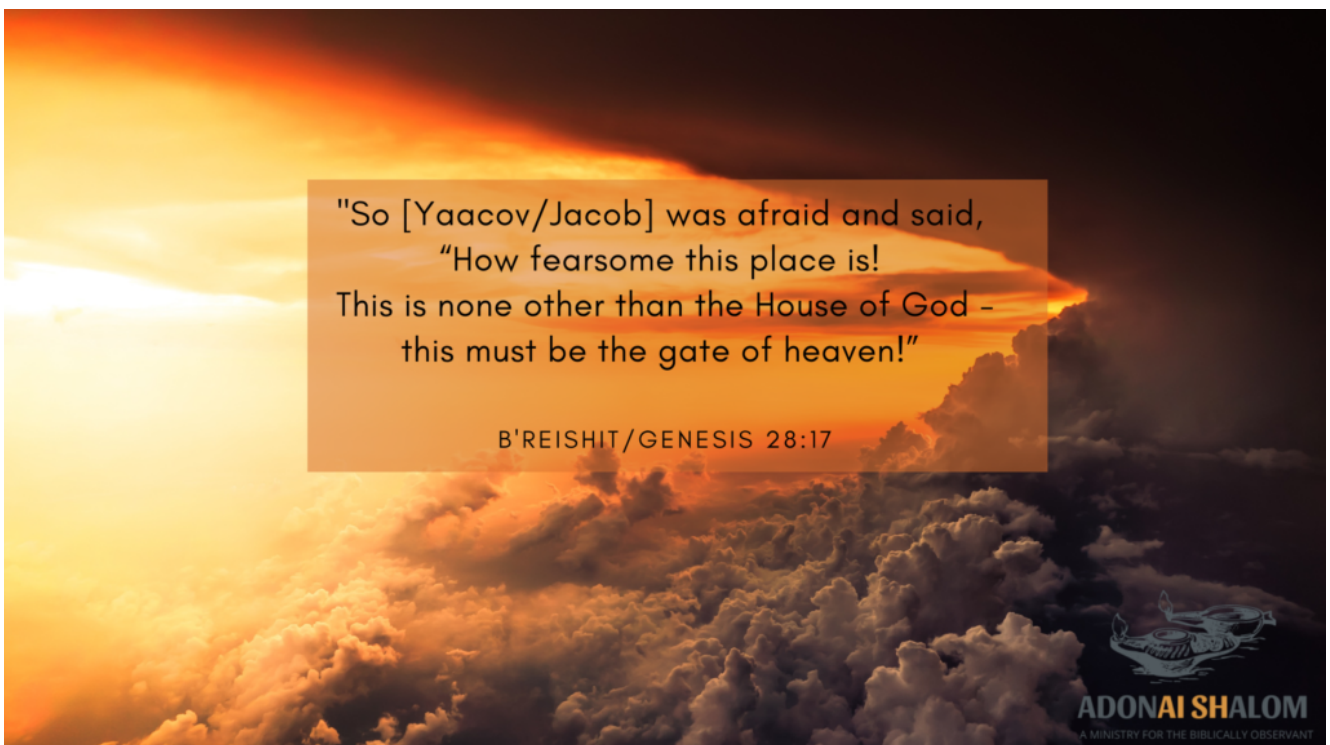
When the Bible talks about what is often translated as a "stairway" or "ladder," think about it like a ziggurat. It was probably a multi-leveled tower common in that region at that time that was described by translators as a stairway.

In the dream, Yaacov (Jacob) saw angels going up and down and ADONAI, the One True God, standing on the top of the structure. The LORD spoke to him and promised to bless him.

Perhaps it was here that Yaacov genuinely converted? Maybe he repented of all his deceptiveness? We know that he confessed that ADONAI would be his God ([Genesis 28:21](#)).



Yaacov (Jacob) recognized that he was in the Presence of the Almighty and he felt he had seen the “gate of heaven.” ([Genesis 28:17](#))



[“So he was afraid and said, “How fearsome this place is! This is none other than the House of God–this must be the gate of heaven!” Genesis 28:17](#)

In [Genesis 35](#), God appeared to Jacob and told him he would

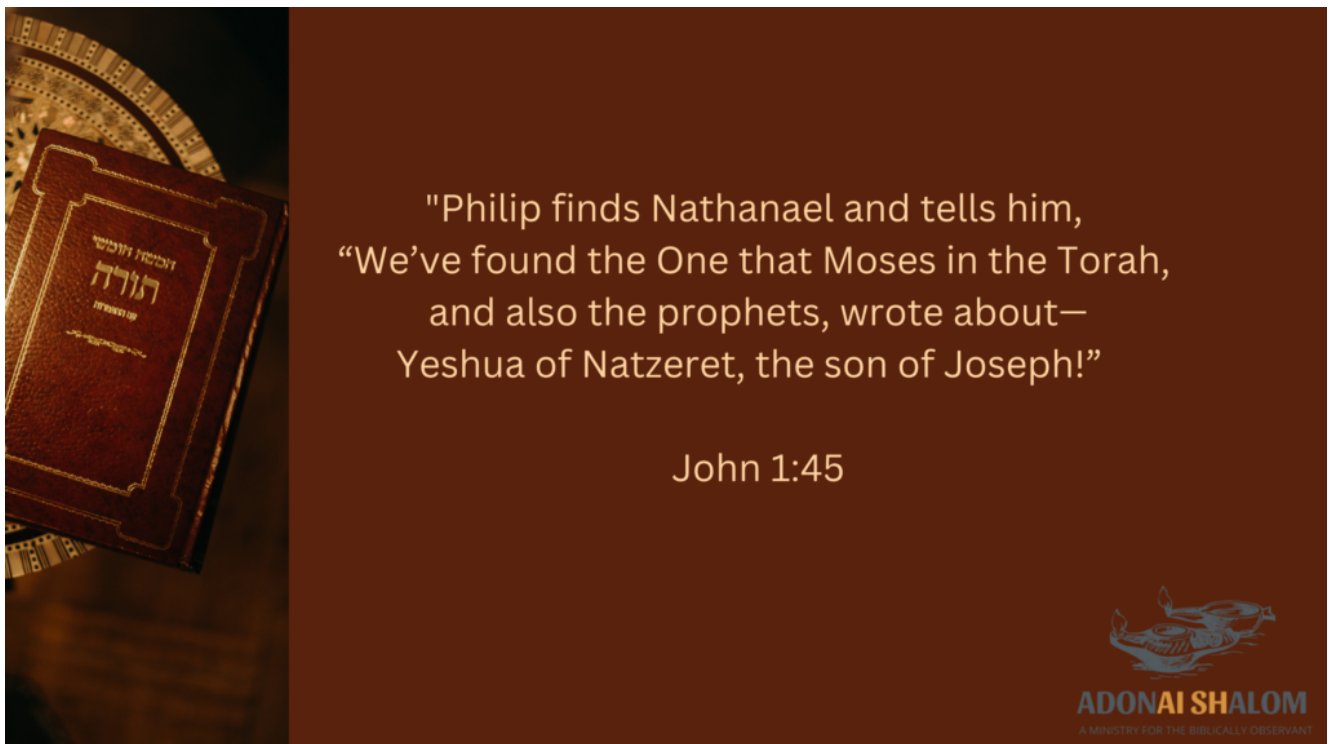
have a new name: Israel.

An Israelite in whom there is no deceit

When God sent His Son, Messiah Yeshua (Jesus Christ) to minister on the earth, those who first realized that they had encountered the Messiah were filled with joy and enthusiasm.

Read what happened right after Yeshua (Jesus) called Philip to be a disciple:

[“Philip finds Nathanael and tells him, “We’ve found the One that Moses in the Torah, and also the prophets, wrote about—Yeshua of Natzeret, the son of Joseph!” John 1:45, emphasis added](#)

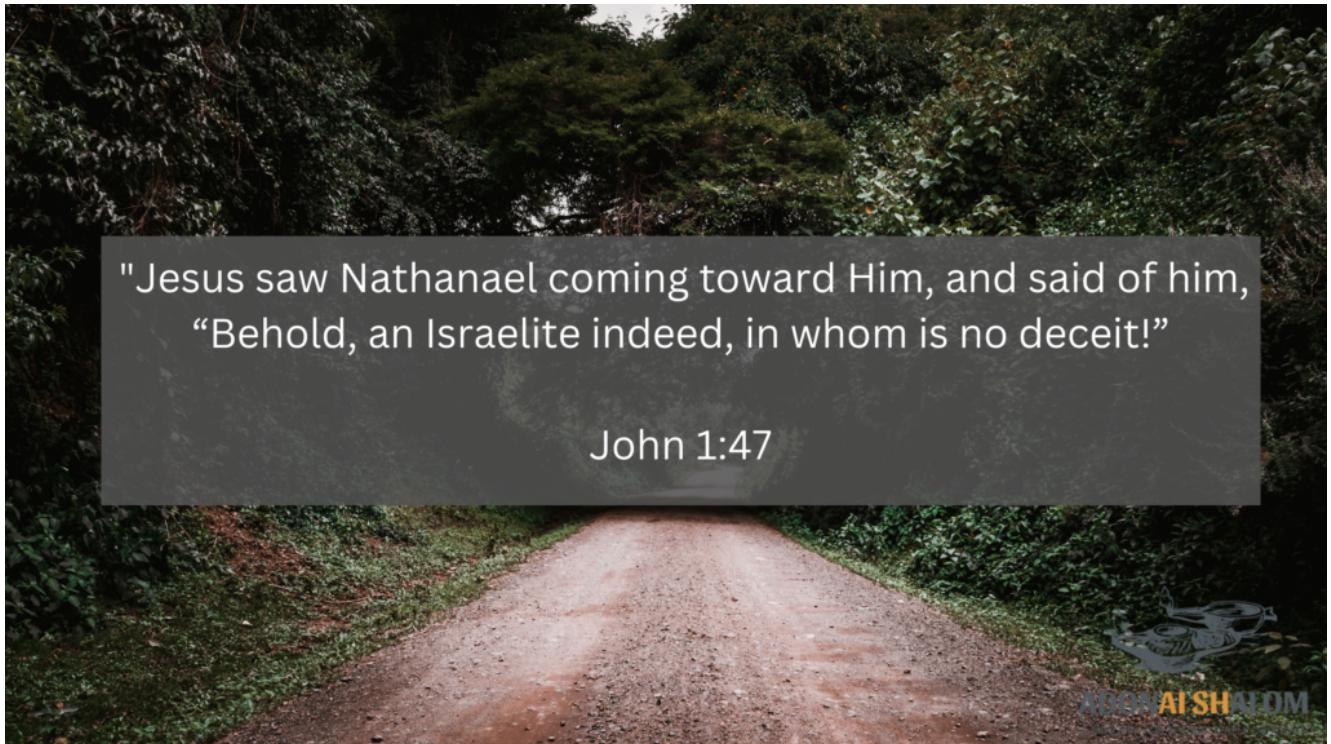


Philip convinced Nathanael to come and see and Yeshua (Jesus) makes a very interesting comment:

[“Yeshua saw Nathanael coming toward Him. He said, “Look, a true Israelite! There’s nothing false in him.” John 1:47, TLV, emphasis added](#)

I think the *New King James Version* will help us connect this a bit more easily:

"Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, **Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!**" John 1:47 NKJV, *emphasis added*



Do you see that our Savior was making a reference here to *Yaacov (Jacob)*?

Nathanael was being compared to Jacob, who had been renamed as Israel: here Nathanael is called a true *Israelite* – not a *Yaacov (Jacob)* who practices falsehoods.

Quite appropriately, Nathanael was surprised by what Yeshua (Jesus) said and asked Him, how did He know him? This is when Yeshua told him that he saw him under the fig tree even before Philip had gone to get him. ([John 1:48](#))

What was Nathanael doing under the fig tree?

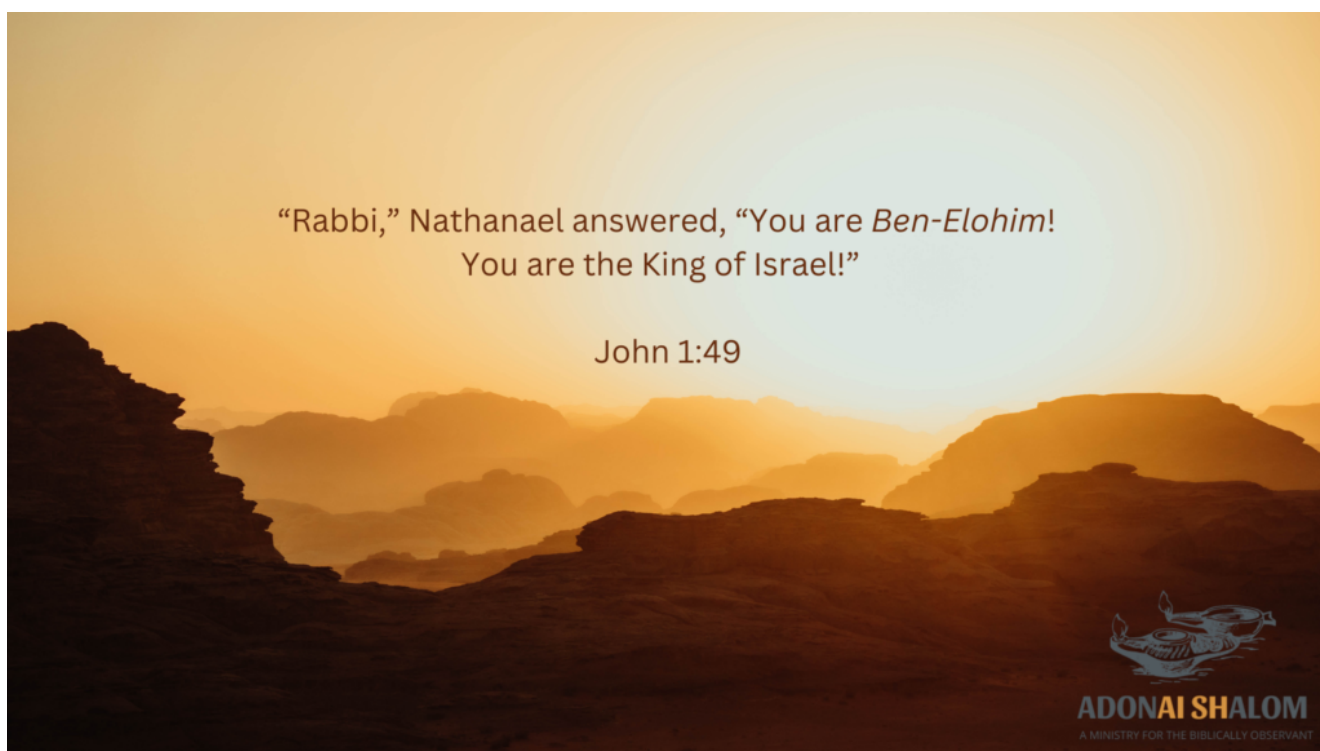
While it became more common *after* the destruction of the [Second Temple](#), young Rabbinical students used to sit and study

Torah under fig or olive trees. Nathanael may have simply been resting there, or he may have been studying the Word of God. Imagine if he had been reading about Yaacov just moments before Messiah makes the comparison between them!

Regardless of Nathanael's reason for being under the fig tree, **his heart was in the right place and his Messiah knew it.** Nathanael believed just because Yeshua told him he saw him under the fig tree ([John 1:50](#)).

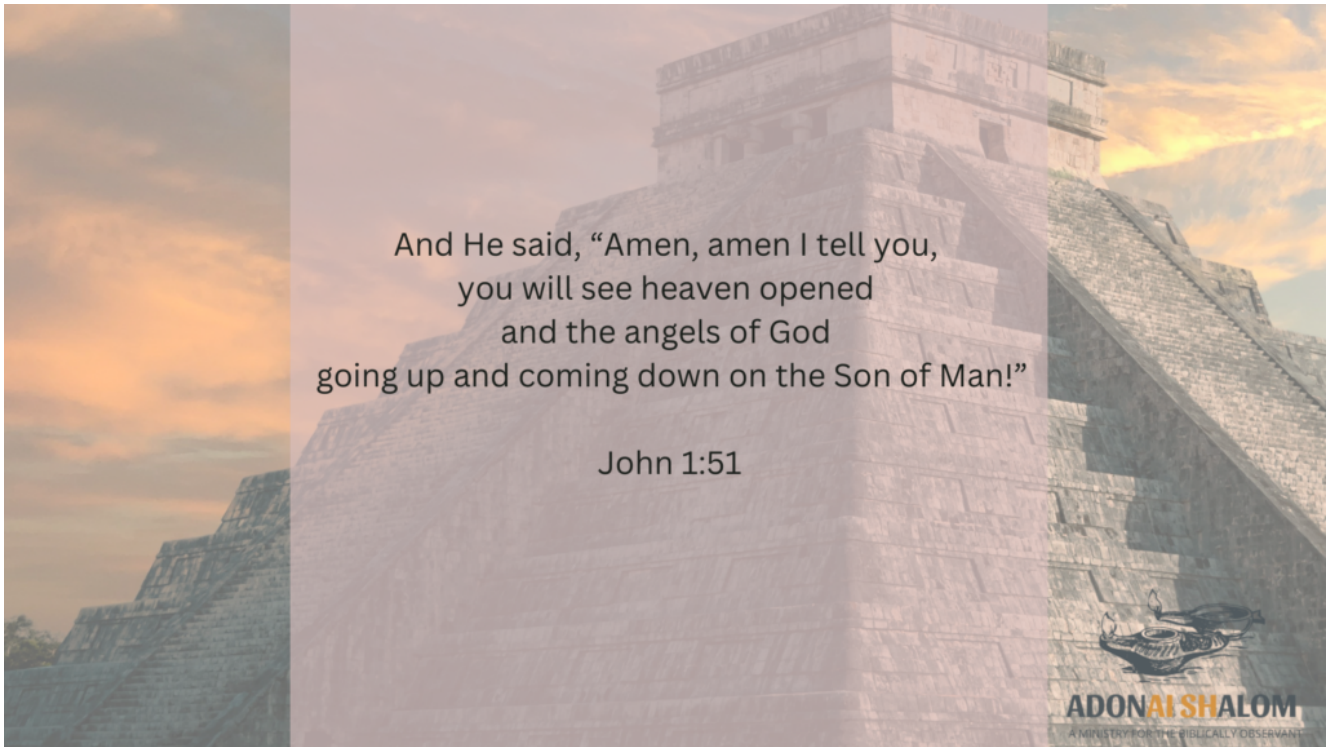
Nathanael immediately recognized that he was encountering the very Son of God.

[““Rabbi,” Nathanael answered, “You are *Ben-Elohim* \[the Son of God\]! You are the King of Israel!” John 1:49](#)



As though that is not enough, Yeshua (Jesus) promised that even more would be revealed to Nathanael. ([John 1:50](#))

Yeshua (Jesus) made another allusion to Yaacov (Jacob): “And He said, “Amen, amen I tell you, **you will see heaven opened and the angels of God going up and coming down on the Son of Man!**” ([John 1:51](#), emphasis added).




And He said, "Amen, amen I tell you,
you will see heaven opened
and the angels of God
going up and coming down on the Son of Man!"

John 1:51

The promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would be fulfilled. Nathanael would take part in God's revelation to humanity that a Son had been given:


"For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of His government and peace
There will be no end,
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice
From that time forward, even forever.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

Isaiah 9:6-9



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ISAIAH 9:6-7



Search the Scriptures

There is a divine continuity in the Scriptures. Just as Nathanael knew to search the Scriptures and to put His faith in the King of Israel, so, too, we must do the same. When we recognize that what the Bible says is true, and we study and learn who God is and who is His Son, we see that His faithfulness has lasted throughout every generation, and we are now living in the last days. Our Messiah will soon return, and we must be ready to recognize Him and delight in Him! Philip and Nathanael exhibited such great enthusiasm and excitement because the Messiah was standing before them. Now, we have the Spirit of the Living God dwelling *in* us!

[“Now because you are sons, God sent the *Ruach* \[Spirit\] of His Son into our hearts, who cries out, “Abba! Father!” Galatians 4:6](#)

I encourage you today to seek the One who came to rescue and save the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Allow your eyes to be opened to the Scriptures and to the Messiah of whom the Scriptures speak. The King of all kings, Messiah Yeshua, Jesus

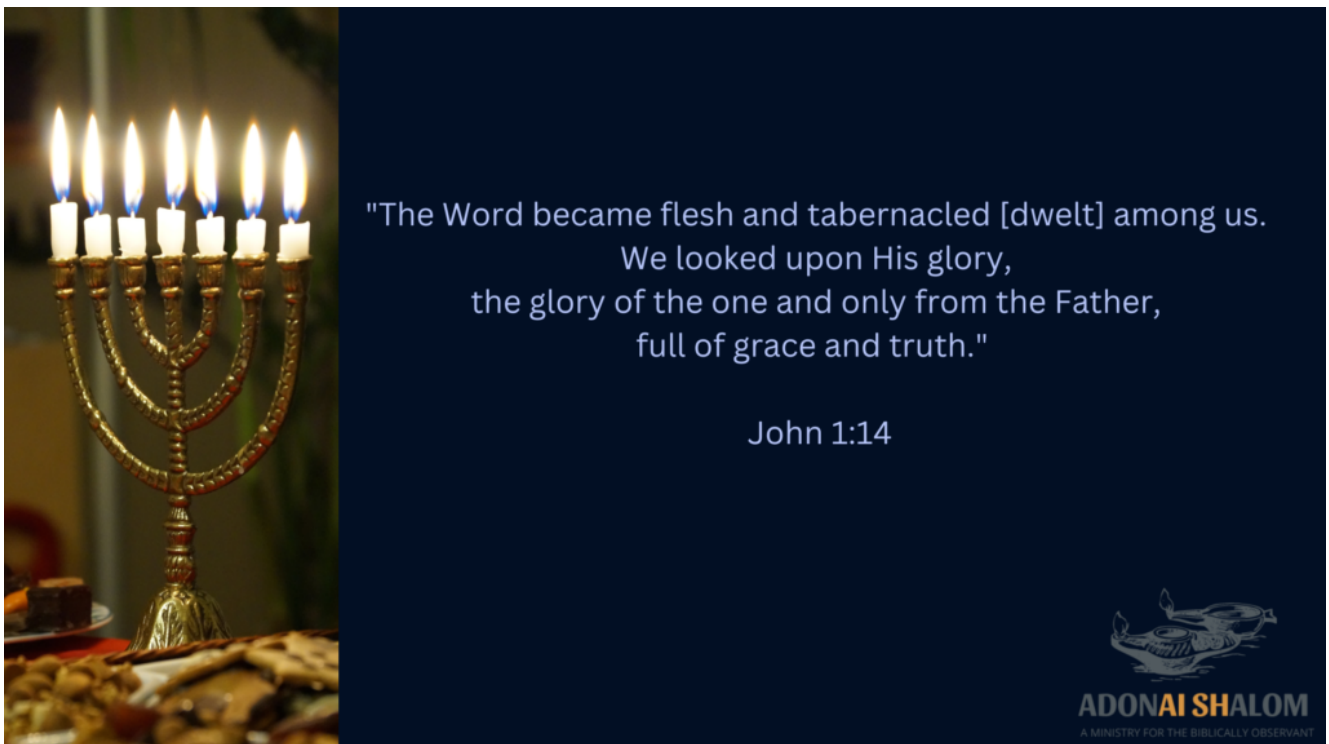
the Christ, the Son of God has come. He has demonstrated His authority, His omniscience, and His omnipotence.

Will you be like Nathanael who so eagerly followed the LORD?

Will you reject the spirit of deception and choose honesty as a true member of the household of God?

Will you live in the promises given to the descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

John testified that ["The Word became flesh and tabernacled \[dwelt\] among us. We looked upon His glory, the glory of the one and only from the Father, full of grace and truth."](#) [John 1:14](#)



Have you encountered this Savior? Have you looked upon His glory?

Perhaps you didn't grow up in the most faith-filled or loving family. Don't let that be a deterrent. God sees you where you are, whether you spend time under oak, pine, or fig trees;

whether you live in the desert, the jungle, a large urban center or a farm; He is omnipresent – He is with you and He sent His Son to be Emmanuel – God with us.

Put your trust in Him today, and please, let us know about your decision! We love comments and would love to hear from you so we can pray for you. May the LORD use you, that all the nations would know that salvation has come!

Falling in love: Rivkah's tumble off a camel, head-over-heels for Yitzhak [Rebekah & Isaac]

Parashat Chayei Sarah ([B'reishit/Genesis 23-25:18](#)) 5783 B"H

Love at first sight: a personal story

A Language Barrier

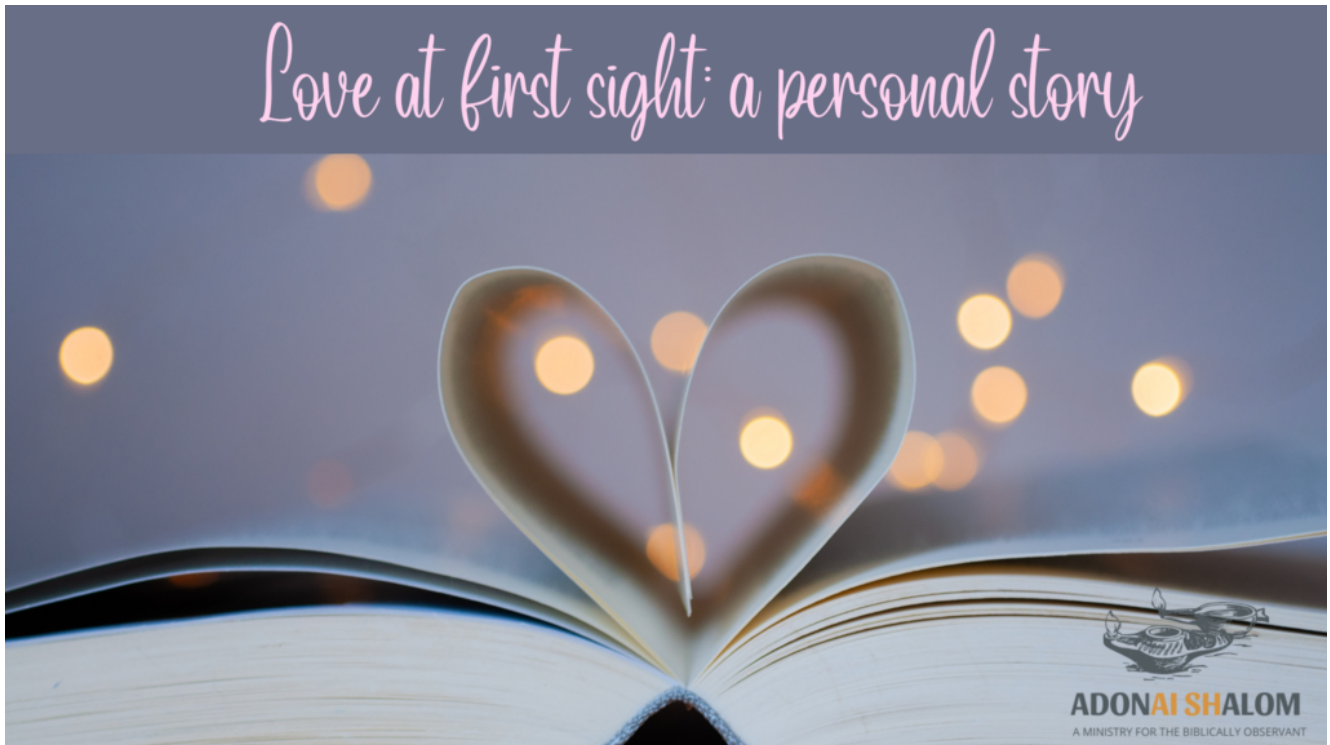
When I first met my husband, we didn't even speak the same language!

We met at church, but I was part of the English-speaking ministry, and he, the Spanish-speaking. I would attend the Spanish language services from time to time to support the work they were doing, but I honestly did not understand much of anything.

I *could* decipher a few words here and there because I had studied French. (I had traveled to France and become quite fluent. I even minored in French in college.)

Yes, I did all of that work to marry a man who speaks ***Spanish***.

I guess I missed the mark on hearing from God when we were selecting a foreign language to learn in the seventh grade. ☐



A man of God

Some of the sisters and brothers at the church had told me there was a young man in the Spanish congregation who was praying for me. They told me this guy would be my “prince.”

I told them they were crazy. It was sounding like an arranged marriage! I insisted that I didn’t speak Spanish, and that they should tell the poor fellow to find someone else!

Well, little did I know, this very good-looking young man really *was* praying for me.

He spent **6 months** praying and fasting to seek God about whether or not I was to be his *wife*.

Wife?!

For those 6 months, I didn't even know who he was! Apparently, he had seen me in a worship service and decided I was the one for him. (*aww!*)

He and several of the brothers in the church had agreed in prayer that if I was indeed to be his wife, the confirmation would be that I would begin to speak Spanish. *I didn't know about any of these plans about me until many months later.*

So one day, these “godly conspirators” introduced me to my now-husband.

Though I could not speak his language, I *could* see the anointing of the LORD in his eyes, and I knew I was going to marry that handsome man.

Through interpreters, he asked me to go out to eat with him at a local Mexican restaurant.

An interpreter from the church accompanied us on all our first dates!

So we were very well-chaperoned!

I prayed and asked the Holy Spirit (*Ruach haKodesh*) to teach me the Spanish language. I had learned French without much difficulty, and I spoke the heavenly language given to me by the Spirit, so I knew I was not asking too much.

Within two weeks, I was forming sentences in Spanish, and by 3 months, I was completely fluent in the language.

Love is a great motivator! ☐

We were married that year and this year we celebrated 15 years of marriage!

Rivkah & Yitzhak's Love

Are you married?

When you met your future spouse, was it love at first sight?

Did you have the deer-in-the-headlights look going on?

Did you develop two left feet and trip every time your honey glanced in your direction?

Rivkah (Rebekah) sure did.

When Rivkah (Rebekah) saw Yitzhak (Isaac) for the first time, it was love at first sight.

She fell so head-over-heels in love with him that she fell right off her camel!

In fact, if you are looking for a **sweet romantic comedy**, you really need look no further than this love story in [Genesis 24](#).

The Bible often gets a bad rap! Antagonistic people falsely characterize believers as uptight and rigid, lacking in humor. Having not read the Bible for themselves, these types of people ignorantly assume that the Bible is boring and irrelevant. But the Bible isn't boring at all!

Abraham sent his servant to find a young maiden for his [precious son, Yitzhak \(Isaac\)](#) to love and marry. This servant managed Abraham's wealth and was the oldest of the household, so he would have known Abraham's preferences very well. Abraham obligated his servant to promise, by oath, that he would not find him a Canaanite woman ([Genesis 24:3](#)).

The servant wisely sought the LORD about the matter ([Genesis 24:12-14](#)) and requested a sign as confirmation that the young woman was the one for Yitzhak (Isaac): the young woman would draw water and grant a drink to the servant as well as to his

camels.

A Sign as Confirmation

Before the servant had even finished his prayer of supplication, Rivkah (Rebekah) appeared with her water jar and proceeded to fulfill that which was proposed as a confirmation.

Long story short, the servant speaks with Rivkah's (Rebekah's) family about marrying Yitzhak (Isaac).

It is worth noting (especially because the culture was very patriarchal) that Rivkah's family told the servant that they wanted to ask Rivkah's opinion ([Genesis 24:57-58](#)). She was not forced into an arranged marriage. She freely elected to go despite her young age. Her family blessed her with their love and also Abraham's servants before they departed ([Genesis 24:60](#)).

The Power of Prayer

Prayer is key in this passage. Abraham had demonstrated great faith, his servant was a praying man, Rivkah's family prayed and blessed them, and then we find Yitzhak (Isaac) praying in meditation when the caravan arrived ([Genesis 24:63](#)).

The Bible says that Yitzhak lifted his eyes and saw the camels coming.

And at the same time, Rivkah lifted up her eyes . . . saw Yitzhak . . . and yes, fell off her camel ([Genesis 24:64](#)).

"Rebekah also lifted up her eyes and saw Isaac.

Then she fell off her camel."

Genesis 24:64



How embarrassing, no?

She scrambled to fix her veil and make herself presentable as Abraham's servant informed Yitzhak that this young woman was to be his wife ([Genesis 24:65c-66](#))! The Word says that Yitzhak (Isaac) loved Rivkah (Rebekah) and she became his wife ([Genesis 24:67](#)).

The [Promise to Abraham](#) would be fulfilled, beginning with the love story of Yitzhak and Rivkah

The LORD had promised Abraham that he would make his descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand by the seashore. ([Genesis 22:17](#)) That promise began its fulfillment with the marriage of Yitzhak and Rivkah.

Abraham lived to be 175 years old and he "[died at a good old age, old and satisfied](#)" ([Genesis 25:8](#)).

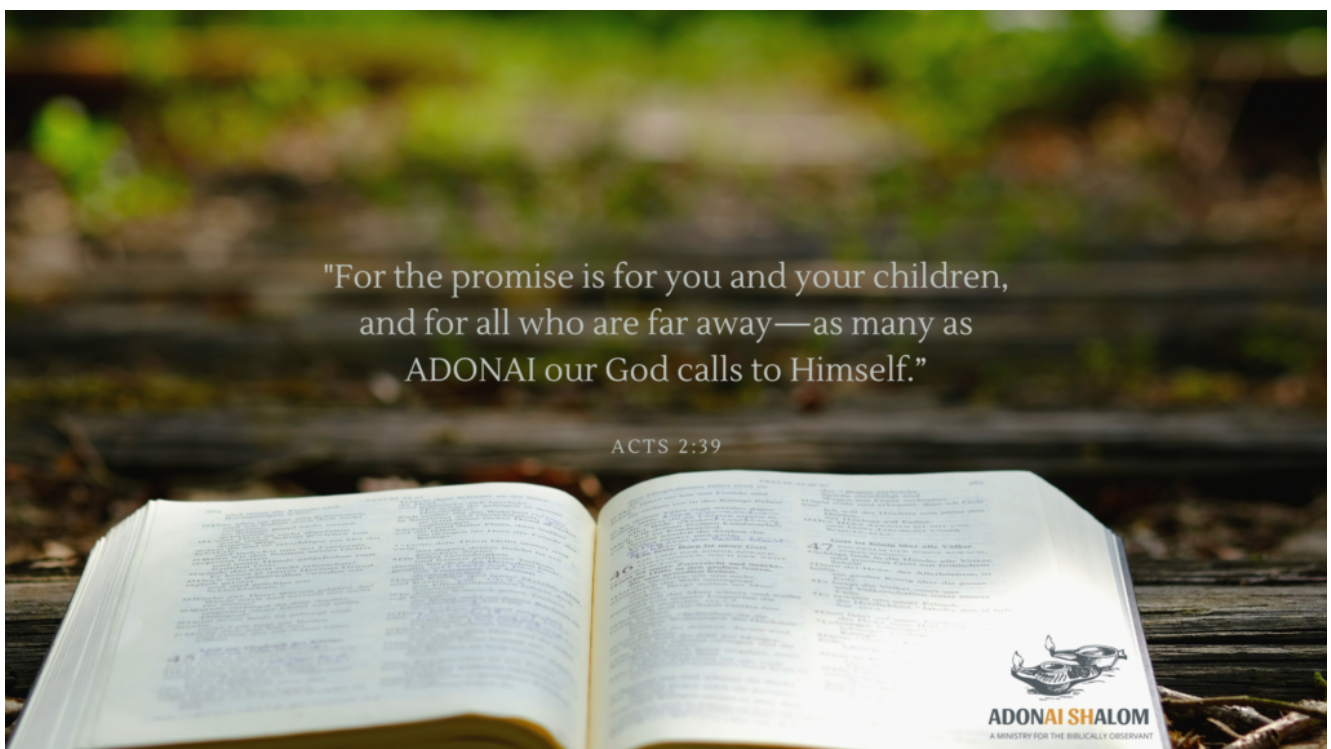
What has the LORD promised to you?

The Bible contains promises that apply to your life, too!

When you seek the LORD and love Him with all your heart, He will speak to you and reveal those promises to you.

Repent, believe in Messiah Yeshua (Jesus Christ our LORD), be baptized, and be filled with the Ruach haKodesh (the Holy Spirit)! As a child of God, by the mercy of our Savior, you are humbly entitled to the richness of His promises:

["For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far away—as many as ADONAI our God calls to Himself." Acts 2:39](#)



Would you like to share what God has spoken into your life? What promise of God particularly blesses and encourages you? Please leave a comment below!