

Parshat Toldot  
Isaac, Lover and Devoted Husband by Maggidah Ayala Zonnenschein

At forty Yitzhak finds love with Rebecca, a wife who was chosen for him. It was a real love story. We're told that Rivkah fell off her camel when she laid eyes on Yitzhak, and it is written...and he loved her.

Now we learn that Rebecca, like Sarah, is also unable to have a child. And here, at the opening of Toldot, we read...

וַיַּעֲבֹר יִצְחָק לְיַהֲוָה לְנִזְכָּח אִשְׁתּוֹ כִּי עֲקָרָה הִוא וַיַּעֲבֹר לוֹ יְהוָה וַתֵּהָר וַתֵּהָר רִבְקָה  
אִשְׁתּוֹ:

*Isaac entreated Hashem opposite his wife, because she was barren. Hashem allowed himself to be entreated by him, and his wife Rebecca conceived.*

That is one interpretation. However, in the Hebrew we learn much more about who Isaac is. The word that is translated as entreated is ע-ת-ר "atar" which means he prayed, supplicated, entreated, but the same root also means "abundance." This implies to me that he prayed abundantly, so I imagine that Yitzhak poured all of himself into that prayer asking Gd to bless Rivkah, his love, with a child. Not only that, but it then says "opposite his wife." That doesn't tell me much, but again when I unpack the Hebrew there the root נ-כ-ח can mean opposite, but it also means "presence" as in to be present. So Yitzhak didn't just pray opposite his wife, he prayed abundantly, with all his heart, while being deeply present with his wife...and with HaShem. This tells me so much about who this man is. He's praying with her, not talking to Gd about her. This really opens my heart to Yitzhak.

Yitzhak is 62 years old when Rivkah gives birth to twins, so we know that they've been together for twenty years before she has children...and he never takes another wife, a practice that was common back then. He is loyal to his love relationship! This give me some insight into why Yitzhak was chosen to carry on the Abrahamic covenant. After all, what is more important than learning to love and be loved deeply. May we all be blessed to love more in the merit of our father, Yitzhak.