

The Daily Portion

- Sivan Rahav Meir

Why is this happening to me?

Translated by Janine Muller Sherr

After many years of waiting, our mother Rivka is finally pregnant. Thus begins our parasha this week.

But then Rivka begins to experience an unsettling feeling, “And the children struggled in her womb.” Something inside her was amiss. Her twins were moving about and struggling.

One might think that the most appropriate approach in this situation would be to go to a gynecologist and request an ultrasound. But Rivka also asks an existential question: “Why is this happening to me?”, and turns to God for an explanation. As the verse says: “She went to inquire of God.”

Our sages explain that every event that occurs in our world has a spiritual source, a deeper meaning that what is immediately apparent. Rivka wants to find out what this struggle in her womb means for her – in other words, she wants to know what is expected from her in this situation.

And she receives an answer. She has two sons, Yaakov and Eisav, who are

completely different from one another and are already struggling in utero. Each one of them will establish his own nation, and this struggle in her womb represents the greater struggle that will develop between two nations, two cultures, and two world views. Rivka is charged with a mission: to ensure that the way of Yaakov, her younger son, would prevail.

Rivka’s approach is one that we need to embrace today too. When facing struggles in our marriages, our parenting, or at work; when confronting challenges both on the private and national level, Rivka teaches us to ask ourselves in every situation: “Why is this happening to me?” Our job is to try to grasp the deeper meaning of what we are experiencing and to discover the role God wants us to take in this story.

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