

Jerry: Hey, Adi. How are you? It's good to see you again.

Adi: Good to see you, Jerry. So happy to be here today.

Jerry: Yeah, yeah. Um, why don't we start, um, by uh, you just taking a minute and introduce yourself. And, uh, I'm not even gonna attempt to pronounce your last name. So-

Adi: No (laughs). Mashiach, um, it means Messiah actually.

Jerry: I thought it did. I thought it did.

Adi: Thank you. Um, I'm a husband to Mira and a father to Maya. Uh, I'm an entrepreneur for over 12 years now. I, I went to computer science and mathematics when I was 16. And when I graduated I realized that, you know, I rather change people's lives. So I went to med school when I was 19. And after graduating I realized that I'm, you know, helping one person at a time. And I wanted to scale up, so I became an entrepreneur. I did two medical device companies. Uh, they were successful companies. I exited both of them. And I wanted to scale up again. I didn't wanna do one company at a time. I wanted to do several companies.

So together with, um, with my partner in life in the business, I co-founded Mesia Ventures. Uh, Mesia is a VC that actively launches health care companies. We're focused on solving big challenges by creatively combining diverse building blocks. So we're bringing together technologies and people to create a portfolio of impactful companies.

Adi: Uh, we moved to the States just six months ago.

Adi: From Israel.

Jerry: So I'm gonna jump in and, uh, first, allow me to say what a slacker you are.

Adi: Thank you.

Jerry: Right? And entrepreneur at 16. Um, med school at 19, two successful exits. So why

are you here? Maybe we can start with there's this moment, and I'll take you back to, what, what ... Was it January or February? February.

Adi: February, February.

Jerry: Uh, I was at the MIT VC Conference. I was ... I took my shoes off, as is my wand. And I gave a talk. And I think it was a little bit of a different talk. And as I recall, uh, as is often the case after someone leaves a stage at a conference, um, just a little crowd of people standing around and, uh, talking, you know, wanting, wanted to talk to the speaker. And the introvert in me is always like, "Whoa," right? Like, "Where are the exits," right?

Adi: Yeah.

Jerry: But then there's this tall fellow, with glasses who says to me, "I wanna make a difference in in the world." And in m- in that moment, for me, the kind of, um, the room went away, and you and I were there. Do you remember that moment?

Adi: Yeah. Yeah. I didn't feel pressure at the time conveying a message or one of that type.

Jerry: Yeah, yeah.

Jerry: And, and I remember there was a, there was this moment where, uh, you, you were not trying to pitch me, you know? I often talk about, uh, remember those, those 12-inch dolls that we had as kids where you'd pull the string on the back and then they would say the thing?

Adi: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: And I can't stand that. And you just went right to it. And, and tell me again what it was that you were asking about.

Adi: Um, um, first of all, I was not thinking at all at that moment. It was one of those rare moments that your heart speaks and not your brain. Um, when I told you, you were talking ... You, you gave us the story about, uh, the Chinese pottery maker, um, that went into the fire and became the glaze. A- and I told you I, I went to do the fire twice and I became the glaze. And I don't wanna be the glaze anymore. I don't wanna be ... Uh, I don't want, uh, anybody else be a glaze for me. I wanna help others make exquisite glaze but not going into the fire.

Um, and I wanna make a, I wanna ... I wanna change the world. You know, it's ... I realized in the process of many years and only recently, I guess, weeks before we met, I admitted to myself this is, this is who I am, this is what I can do, this is my strength, this is my passion. I, I wanna touch as many lives as I can and help them.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative). And you wanna do that as a VC?

Adi: I wanna do that as a VC. I actually ... I didn't think o- I didn't wake up one morning and say I wanna do a VC. All I said, "I wanna do all of things at the same time." And it's a bit unusual. And you know, people try to fit you into boxes. And, and I want to, to make things easier for them. Uh, whether that was a good decision or, I don't know. We can talk about it today, but I want to make it easier for them, the easiest structure that, um, people understand, that can do something like creating several companies at the same time. It's a VC, and they get that, you know?

Jerry: So I just wanna pause and just [inaudible 00:06:55] that. And, and, uh, there's a ... I'm starting to get a sense of a theme in your life, uh, and I've got a whole bunch of curious questions I'm holding right now. But I'm gonna actually hold on to them and actually ... And ask what would be helpful for you in this moment to discuss?

Adi: Um, well, it's not easy, um, moving into a different ... It's ... To a new country and breaking in, into, uh, a new circle, the VC. Um, and that resonates to challenges I had over the years. Uh, it's otherness and sense of belonging. Um, recognizing that I'm different, uh, my strength make me ... My strength m- makes me different. Um, and, and this urge of, of belonging and feeling belonging to, to be ... To, to belong to, to others to, to be a part of, I don't know, group. Um, in, in a way, letting go of that. In order to realize your true strength, you, you need to really let go of that, at the same time people try to fit you into boxes. And I don't, I don't skip. And whether I ... I have to make a choice. You know, I'm a, I'm a lot p- I'm a lot of ... I have a lot of faces. I'm the interpreter, I'm the CEO, investor, inventor, strategist, what not.

Jerry: Husband, father.

Adi: Husband, father.

Jerry: Son.

Adi: Son, god bless.

Jerry: God bless.

Adi: Um, you know, and, and they ... And, and I, I don't know whether I should fit myself into a box, so I will be understood. Not everybody gets me the way you got in, you

know? I don't have these conversations so often. People try to fit me into box, they also not always understand, you know, the concept of the business. They want ... They want fit that into a box as well.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Adi: And it makes it harder to break into, you know, the VC circle and so on.

Jerry: So can we go there?

Adi: Yeah.

Jerry: So let's just slow down even further.

Adi: Yeah, yeah.

Jerry: One of the beautiful things about just pausing and taking that breath is that we allow our body to reset itself and just sort of settling. And so what I'm hearing and what I want to reflect back is, um, there's a young boy I know who wants to fit in, who always wanted to fit in, didn't he?

Adi: Yeah.

Jerry: And he used his ability to study, his ability to understand the world in a particular way to achieve, to create a sense of identity, didn't he? So I'm 19 and I'm in middle school, and yet there's a sense of otherness that kind of hangs over him. And he ... And he strives for a kind of success. And he meets a woman that he falls in love with and then create a family. And he remembers his parents, God bless, and he holds onto them. And one day, he finds himself into kind of the belly of one of the beasts, Cambridge, Massachusetts, right?

Adi: Yeah.

Jerry: And he's at a VC conference, and he says to himself before he signs up for the VC conference, "I'm gonna go there and I'm gonna learn how to belong to that tribe." That seems so closed and unavailable to him.

Adi: Yes.

Jerry: Am I naming it?

Adi: Yeah, nailing it.

Jerry: Yeah. And I just wanna note that there's a kind of beautiful flushness to your face right now.

Adi: Yeah.

Jerry: And wishes to be seen, but he worries about whether ... What happens if he is, in fact, seen. He wants to belong, but he worries about whether or not he will belong. And he wants to use this 'cause he knows that there's something powerful in here. He wants to use this to, On the one hand, create a means by which others can realize their dreams of changing the world, of helping the world, but also to create a sense of belonging for them. Any yet the fears rise up. And then he meets this crazy Italian-American from Brooklyn who's walking around without shoes, cursing up the storm, driving the people at MIT crazy, who looks him in the eyes and says, "How are you?"

Adi: And listens.

Jerry: And listens. Am I seeing you now?

Adi: Crystal clear.

Jerry: Yeah.

Adi: Yeah.

Jerry: So, um, I'm gonna read a poem to you.

Adi: Okay.

Jerry: And then we'll talk about your issue. This is by the recently departed Derek Walcott. The poem is called Love After Love.

Love After Love. The time will come when, with elation, you will greet yourself arriving at your own door, in your own mirror and each will smile at the other's welcome and say, "Sit here. Eat." You will love again the stranger who was your self. You will love again the stranger who was your self. Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart to itself, to the stranger who has loved you all your life, whom you ignored for another, who knows you by heart. Take down the love letters from the bookshelf, the photographs, the desperate notes, peel your own image from the mirror. Sit. Feast on your life. Love After Love by Derek Walcott.

Adi: Thank you, Jerry.

Jerry: You are welcome, my friend. That poem occurred to me because behind everything is a wish for you to belong and to love the stranger who's loved you all your life. Does that resonate with you?

Adi: Yeah. It's, uh, it took, it took me a lot of years to recognize that there is a stranger and, and letting that stranger love you, and you love that stranger back. At some point, you know, you wanna feel belong and you wanna feel like everybody else, so you shut down, you shut off, you turned off parts of you, the powerful parts of you, though that make you unique in order to sit. And, and you were not, you know, you're not being true to yourself, you have to peel yourself off the mirror.

Jerry: That's right. That's right. And the irony is that in doing that, and you said it so well. In doing that, you access a power of identity that is deep than what our intellect has driven us. So, this, in some ways, is the curse of the high achievers. You know what I'm talking about?

Adi: Yeah.

Jerry: Right? We learned early on that if we were clever enough, we could think our way out of any problem.

Jerry: Figure it out, figure it out, figure it out.

Jerry: And fast. And if we figured it out faster than the competition, whomever that is, whether it's our siblings, our fellow students, the boys down the street who wanna kick our asses, if we figure out, we will feel safe, we'll feel loved, we'll feel belonging.

Jerry: Everything will be all right. It's the curse of the high achiever because then there's this funny phenomena, which is we start to experience success and there's an emptiness that comes with it because we haven't peeled our own image from the mirror. We haven't welcomed again the stranger who's loved us all of our lives. (17:55)

Adi: Yeah. You're trying to dodge that process and you don't wanna face-

Jerry: Yeah.

Adi: Who is under that peel.

Jerry: Yeah.

Adi: And you will never be true to yourself, and you'll never be happy and you'll never

feel the way you want to feel.

Jerry: Yeah.

Adi: At peace.

Jerry: At peace, at peace. So, uh, you know I feel like I'm talking to somebody who's come to, at least, two of our boot camps already (laughs).

Adi: Thank you.

Jerry: So connect us back to this wish to, to, to create this new kind of enterprise for you. It's called Mesia.

Adi: Mesia.

Jerry: Mesia Ventures.

Adi: Mesia, yeah. It's actually ... You know, it's me and my, my ... Uh, we are co-founders, my wife and I.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Adi: Uh, my wife is from Romania and we're in ... We came back from Japan and we're thinking about how to call this. And I was into Japanese culture stuff. She said, "No. We ... You should be true to yourself." And we took my last name Meshiach in Hebrew, and we translated it Romanian Messiah, Mesia. And the, the correct conversation in, in Romania is Mesia. We have the Mesia Ventures with a messianic mission to change the world.

Jerry: Yeah. And there's no, and there's no narcissistic complex here (laughs).

Adi: Actually, actually not. You know, one, one of the things I t- um, I started mentoring the three start-ups. And one of the things I'm telling them, uh, know to put your ego next to you, not in front of you, not behind you. Don't say you don't have it. Put it next to you. It's ... It deserves its place, but it shouldn't be in the driver's seat.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I like that. I'm gonna steal that line. I like that.

Adi: You bet.

Jerry: Yeah. So, so given where it is and given you've come from, what would be helpful as you, as you undertake this process? My, my sense is, uh, uh, concerned not to end up in the fire again, uh, concerned about sort of leading from this peaceful place of loving again the stranger.

Adi: I- it's, it's both, uh, will for, for sure not going to the fire again. Um, um, but I'll expand a little bit about the second thing you said. Um, I just met myself, and I don't want to lose that. I just realized who I am, and what's my strength and what's my passion. A lot o- a lot of it is thanks to meeting the love of my life. I heard you said in one of the podcasts, I f- my wife felt ... Let me feel belong,, safe and loved.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Adi: And from that, from that place, I was able to look into myself to peel a layer on the mirror and, and see who I am and be able to say my passion is to change the world. But now I have to sell myself to build the business in a new country. Um, do I lose myself again? Do I make myself ... Describe myself as the glaze they wanna buy and the- lost that stranger, lose who I am now? How do I do that? How do I communicate who I am, my difference, my otherness? How do I make others see this as an advantage enough for them to say, "You know, I'm gonna back this guy?"

Jerry: Okay. So, uh, what a beautiful, extraordinary question. And um, I'm gonna point out something that you just said, which was put your ego to the side, not behind you. What do you mean by that putting your ego to the side?

Adi: For me, it means that you don't let, you know, your, uh, narcissist feelings get over you.

Jerry: Right.

Adi: It's-

Jerry: Put something ... Why not just wipe them out all together?

Adi: 'Cause you need it. It's part of you.

Jerry: Ahhh, so you mean this negative thing, like negative is a funny term, this negative thing you advise start-up CEOs and founders, this negative thing, which their, the politically correct impulse would be put it behind you. You say put it to your side because it's a fundamental part of you? Am I seeing that right?

Adi: You're seeing that correctly, yes.

Jerry: All right. Now, let's hold that in this for a moment, and let's go back to your question. How do I fundraise? How do I sell myself? How do I sell this vision? When part and parcel of who I am, these are my words not yours, but part and parcel of who I am is a fear of not belonging.

Adi: That's the question, Jerry. I don't have the answer.

Jerry: Right. But actually you do, my friend. Because the part of you, there's a part of you that worries about not belonging. And I started to go down this path before, and you kind of got little startled when I recalled that little boy who felt that he didn't belong. Do you remember that boy?

Adi: Yeah.

Jerry: How old is he?

Adi: Eight, seven, eight.

Jerry: Okay. And how do-

Adi: Third grade.

Jerry: Third grade. Tell me the story.

Adi: Third grade. Um, moved from a different city, you know, group of kids. You know, they test that, you know, they did some, you know, test. They wanna single out the potentials, the bright ones.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Adi: And, and you're singled out. So you're the new kids from another town, and there is also a test, but that should, you know, p- It's, it's a gift and people should be, um, you know, people are h- happy to get [inaudible 00:24:41] and be all whatever, but use some of the, the new kid that they think about. And you just wanna have, you know, you have-

Jerry: You just wanna blend in.

Adi: Yeah.

Jerry: You don't wanna stand out. Even though mom and dad are super proud that you that you test at the high end of the score, right?

Adi: A- actually they didn't care. They-

Jerry: They didn't care, even better.

Adi: We love you. We love-

Jerry: We love you anyway.

Adi: Anyway. You do whatever you want with you life.

Jerry: But the school singles you out and you are now different.

Adi: Yeah. And, uh, and [crosstalk 00:25:18].

Jerry: It's ... And what was the fear then? What was the fear then?

Adi: That they, that they won't understand me. That I have expectations that I need to meet, and I made that, you know, little ... Step by step, not overachieving, not underachieving, just doing, you know, the ... What I'm expected at the level I am. Um, but it was also, you know, never thought about it, there was also a fear of losing that singled-out status, right?

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I don't want ... I don't wanna be too special 'cause then I won't fit in, but I also don't wanna lose my special status.

Adi: That's right.

Jerry: Both feelings.

Adi: I forgot about that.

Jerry: Yeah.

Adi: I totally forgot about it.

Jerry: Yes, stay with us. Stay with this stranger who has loved you all of his life, who's looked up to you and said, "Adi, don't forget about me. Don't forget me. As you go out into the market and to the world and you try to sell your specialness as you struggle with whether or not they will see you and understand you, and understand that you're trying to do something different with this venture firm."

Adi: Yeah.

Jerry: "I want to belong to this clubby world of American VC, but I don't want to lose ... I want to fit in, but I don't wanna lose my specialness." Do you hear that little boy again?

Adi: Yeah. And what do I do? How do I balance between these two?

Jerry: Right, right. Now, go back. How do I balance between these two? What do I do? What do I do with the little boy, let's call him.

Jerry: So, do I put him in front or do I put him in back? Where do we put this seven-year-old boy?

Adi: Next to me.

Jerry: Ahhh.

Adi: It wants to be next to me.

Jerry: Right next to you.

Adi: Yeah.

Jerry: Just as you advise young startup executives, that their drive, their ambition, which negatively can be expressed or it can be expressed negatively as a kind of narcissistic impulse and lead one to lose oneself into the fire, if it of itself is not a bad thing, that little boy is not bad, that little boy is just a little boy who wants love safety and belonging. And part of feeling loved is understanding his unique specialness, not pushing it too far forward, not throwing into the back into the shadow of your own existence where ... Do you know what he's gonna do, my friend? He's gonna stand behind you and kick your ass until you pay attention to him.

Adi: Yeah.

Jerry: He's gonna say he's gonna get madder and angrier and angrier, and he's gonna say it to you, "What about me?"

Adi: Oh, yeah. Yeah. One ... At one point, I, you know, you said that, and I was thinking my first company, it was so, it was so behind me. I set a chain-smoking, I smoked two and a half packs a day. I rarely [inaudible 00:29:57]. And now I realized it's, it's that, boy, right, I'm kicking my ass. I, I'm here.

Jerry: Hey, I'm here. Don't forget me.

Adi: Yeah.

Jerry: Do you hear the irony of the doctor chain-smoking, building medical devices to save other people?

Adi: Yes (laughs).

Jerry: Whose life do you need to save, but, but if not that little boy?

Adi: You have it. That little boy will save others and he will belong.

Jerry: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. That little boy is the source of your creativity, your generosity, your frustration, your joy, your capacity to love. It is not the prodigious intellect, no matter how fucking smart you are. It's that little boy.

Adi: That little boy likes to help others. He has a big heart.

Jerry: Oh, he is. Yes, he does.

Adi: He has a big heart. And he wants to help others. And he just wants to do that all day long and as m- and help as much as you can.

Jerry: Yeah. Yeah. I think it was that little boy that I encountered at the MIT VC Conference.

Adi: Could be, I don't know. Maybe it's, it, it wasn't the little guy that thinks and prepares in advance. And reads your bio and thinks about, uh, what will be the best pitch, you know, I forgot e- everything that I, I read about you, you know? I ... It was just that person that went on stage and spoke words that went like arrows, straight. And-

Jerry: Hmm. You know who that person was? That was little my boy. That was my true self. I'm not gonna lie and said that I always occupying my trueself. I struggle with that. It's a daily practice. But I, you know, I'm remembering a funny moment that happened to me this past summer. Brad Feld and I were doing the talk in Denver on, uh, depression in entrepreneurship and the struggles, and that sort of thing. And I was, uh, I showed up there and I, uh, uh, you know, I was struggling with the fact that everybody knows Brad, right? So even, Jerry, I have my ego, and nobody's paying attention to me, you know?

And, uh, um, I'm walking around and I'm inline for iced tea or something, and, uh, I'm wearing a nametag, my name. And uh, this guy in front of me, helping himself with some tea and I said, "What the hell I'm gonna play?" So I leaned over and I say "Hey, who's this guy, Jerry Colonna? I hear his ... Kind of weird, he just makes me cry and all the shit." And he looks up, and he turns to engage me, and then he sees my name tag and he just starts laughing. And he said ... And ... So then he paused and he started laughing and he says, "You know, you're just like that guy on a podcast." I said, "That's funny 'cause I am that guy in the podcast (laughs)."

And that's what I strive to be, just that guy, that mess of a guy, that guy who, you know, when I was in seventh grade and I change schools, and I showed up in a new school from one part of Brooklyn to another part of Brooklyn, and I was scared 'cause I wanted to fit in. And I found out later from the guys who ended up being really close friends of mine, that the teachers had made a big deal out of me

showing up because I had straight As except for one failing grade in second grade with a bad marking and penmanship. And they had planned to kick my ass because I was so smart, they wanted to beat me up. And apparently within two days, they had stopped trying to beat me up because they liked me, and I never knew that until after the fact. And when you're telling your story, I remember that boy. And I brought him forward and I sat him next to me.

I have no doubt that you will figure out how to complete the fundraising and how to create a pitch and how to answer all the questions that you're holding about this new fund. And I have no doubt that you're gonna be a great investor. My advice is to make sure that, that little boy is right by your side.

Adi: How do you make sure he behaves? When he was behind me, he was kicking.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Adi: When he was in front, he was running.

Jerry: How old are your children?

Adi: Uh, I have one daughter, a year and a half.

Jerry: Okay. So you're asking, in effect, a parenting question.

Adi: Yeah.

Jerry: You know how you help children behave? You love them. You love the shit out of them. You don't accept all behavior, you create conditions in which they can feel safe by giving them structure and limitations, but you love a crap out of them. So you do that for your daughter, you do that for the little boy.

Adi: She, she just listens. You know, I, I ... I'm, I'm crazy about her. I'm-

Jerry: Yeah, I know, you are.

Adi: I'm super crazy about her.

Jerry: Oh, there she, she is gorgeous beautiful.

Adi: Yeah, I know. And she knows how to play daddy.

Jerry: Oh, she will for the rest of her life.

Adi: Yeah.

Jerry: Yeah.

Adi: Um, but she just listens, you know? And maybe that, that little boy will listen, too.

Jerry: Well, and, and I'll give you a very tactical piece of advice.

Adi: Please.

Jerry: You have a, uh, life partner in your wife, who is your business partner as well. One of the gorgeous gifts you can give to, to each other is to, uh, allow the other to reflect to you what they see. And so if you have a conversation with her after this and you say to her something like, "Hey, listen, I just wanna bring your attention and by the way, could you kick my butt so he doesn't have to?"

Adi: That's a good idea.

Jerry: Right. What if, what if our relationships weren't merely about this sort of external thing, but what if we come together in relationship to help each other grow, to help each other through that passage? That's the Buddhist perspective of relationship, that we come together so that we have the other with whom we can work.

Adi: Well, I, I strongly believe that the two of us aren't together not by chance.

Jerry: Right.

Adi: I say to her we're one in six billion. It, it ... We, we got married in our late 30s. Um, and we both say it's, it's because we wandered around the world, and this is the match, and it's there so we will grow up together.

Jerry: Yeah. So well articulated. Give you two each other as a gift. Yeah.

I wanna thank you for coming on the show and showing up with your big heart. It's a really big, beautiful heart. And I am super excited to have you in my life, um, to know that, uh, you're out there and you're approaching this process of being an investor from this place of your own brokenness, your own beautiful brokenness. Um, as I said before, I have no doubt about you as an investor.

Adi: Thank you. And, Jerry, thank you for, for showing me myself-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Adi: And reminding me who I forgot that I was.

Jerry: Oh, that's a beautiful thing. Thank you.

Adi:

Thank you, Jerry.