

ברוך אתה יהוה
אלהינו מלך העולם
אשר קדשנו במצוותיו
וצונו לעסוק
בדברי תורה.

Barukh Atah Adonai
Eloheinu melekh ha-olam
asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav
v'tzivanu la'asok
b'divrei Torah.

Blessed are You, YHVH,
our God, eternal sovereign, who
sanctifies us in God's connecting
command to busy ourselves
in words of Torah.

Genesis 28:10-17

serendipity, or already holy,
or made holy by his experience

Backstory -
Yaakov left home
after the whole
Eisav thing and
layers of deception

ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע וילך חרנה: ויפגע
במקום וילן שם כי-בא השמש ויחך
מאבני המקום וישם מראשותיו וישכב
במקום ההוא:

Why a ladder?

emotional /
spiritual opening
to ... something
• vulnerability
• urgency
• desperation

ויחלם והנה סלם מצב ארצה וראשו
מגיע השמימה והנה מלאכי אלהים
עלים וירדים בו: והנה יהוה נצב עליו
ויאמר אני יהוה אלהי אברהם אביך
ואלהי יצחק הארץ אשר אתה שכב
עליה לך אתננה ולזרעך:

10-11 Yaakov went out from Be'ersheva and went
toward Haran. He happened onto a place and
lodged night there, for the sun had come. He
took one of the stones of the place and set it
[under] his head. He laid down in that place.

12-13. He dreamed. Behold, a ladder was stood
on the ground, its top reaching to heaven. Behold,
angels of God were ascending and descending on
it. Behold, YHVH stood above it, and said: "I am
YHVH, God of Avraham your father, and God of
Yitzhak. The land on which you lie, to you and
your descendants will I give it.

AWAKENING
WHAT'S NEEDED
TO TRANSFORM?

והיה זרעך כעפר הארץ ופרצת ימה
וקדמה וצפנה ונגבה ונברכו בך כל-
משפחות האדמה וברעך: והנה אנכי עמך
וישמרתך בכל אשר-תלך והשבתיך
אל-האדמה הזאת כי לא אעזבך עד
אשר אם-עשיתי את אשר-דברתי לך:

Repeated
pattern of
God reaching
out – has to
start the relationship:
what if it's God's
way always but
we don't pay
attention

ויקץ יעקב משנתו ויאמר אכן יש יהוה
במקום הזה ואנכי לא ידעתי: ויירא
ויאמר מה-נורא המקום הזה אין זה כי
אם-בית אלהים וזה שער השמים:

14-15. "Behold, your descendants will be as dust
of the earth: you will spread toward the sea, and
to the east, and to the north, and to the Negev.
All the world's families will be blessed through
you and your descendants. Behold, I am with
you, and will keep you in all places you go, and
bring you back to this land – for I will not leave
you until I have done what I spoke to you."

16-17. Yaakov woke from his sleep, saying,
"Surely YHVH is in this place and I, I did not
know." He had awe, saying, "How awesome is
this place! This is none other than the house of
God, and this is the gate of heaven!" YOM KIPPUR

<u>P</u>	Pshat (פשוט)	Literal (surface • plain)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place names then and now – Negev, Beth El Ascending first, then descending The sun “came”?! Sunset Why the “I, I did not know” duplication.
<u>R</u>	Remez (רמז)	Implication (pointer • hint)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Angels started out on earth / near Yaakov Yaakov wasn't *looking* for it - he “happened onto” Does God need a ladder? —> rungs
<u>D</u>	Drash (דרש)	Description (inquire)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dust as evocative of death, coming back to the land Notion of ongoing return Are the angels recycled or switched out? When is this happening – day or night
<u>S</u>	Sod (סוד)	Mystical (secret)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> God as the One who does not leave God as in this place, whether or not we know Yaakov's spiritual crisis occasions *something* God atop // as above, so below

• Yaakov isn't off the
teshuvah reservation

THE LADDER

Rashi, Gen. 28:12

עולים וירדים. עולים תחלה ואחר כך יורדים? מלאכים שלוחו בארץ אין יוצאים חוצה לארץ, ועלו לרקיע וירדו מלאכי חוצה לארץ ללוותו:

Ascending and descending – First ascending and then descending? Angels who accompanied [Yaakov] to the Land could not leave the Land, so they ascended to heaven and angels for outside the Land descended to accompany Yaakov [out].

Angels as prayer life? Journey / process.

Prayer as holy, carrier wave, direct, angelic

Ibn Ezra, Gen. 28:12

עולים תחילה ואחר כך יורדים? טעם סולם שעלתה בו תפלתו וירדה ישועתו מן השמים.

First ascending and then descending? The reason for the ladder is that [Yaakov's] prayer ascended it and his salvation descended from heaven.

Ramban (Nahmanides), Gen. 28:12

הראהו בחלום הנבואה כי כל הנעשה בארץ נעשה על ידי המלאכים והכל בגזרת עליון עליהם כי מלאכי אלהים אשר שלח ה' להתהלך בארץ לא יעשו קטנה או גדולה עד שובם להתיצב על אדון כל הארץ לאמר לפניו התהלכנו בארץ והנה יושבת בשלוח או מלאה חרב ודם והוא יצוה עליהם לשוב לרדת בארץ ולעשות דברו והראהו כי הוא יתברך נצב על הסלם ומבטיחו ליעקב בהבטחה גדולה להודיע שהוא לא יהיה ביד המלאכים אבל יהיה חלק ה' ויהיה עמו תמיד כמו.

[God] showed him by prophetic dream that all is done on earth by angels per supernal decree on them. Angels of God sent to walk the earth do nothing small or large until they ascend, stand at the Master of All the Earth and say, "We walked the earth and behold she sits in equanimity" or "she steeps in sword and blood"; God then commands them to return, descend to earth and do God's will. God further showed [Yaakov] that Blessed God stands atop the ladder, promising Yaakov with supreme assurance that [Yaakov] will not be under the power of angels but God [directly], who will be with him always.

Rambam, Guide for the Perplexed 3:45

אמונת מציאות המלאכים נמשכת אחר אמונת מציאות האלוה ובה תתכן הנבואה והתורה. ולחזוק אמונת זאת הפינה צוה האלוה ית' לעשות על הארון צורת שני מלאכים לקיים מציאות המלאכים באמונת ההמון, אשר הוא דעת אמיתי שני לאמונת מציאות האלוה והוא התחלה לנבואה ולתורה ומבטל ע"ז כמו שבארנו. ואילו היתה צורה אחת - רצוני לומר: כרוב אחד - היה בו הטעאה שהיו חושבים שהיא - צורת האל הנעבד, כמו שהיו עושים עובדי ע"ז או שהמלאך הוא איש אחד גם כן, והיה זה מביא לקצת שניות; וכאשר עשה 'שני כרובים' עם באור "ה' אלהינו ה' אחד" התבאר קיום הדעת במציאות המלאכים ושהם רבים, והיה הענין בטוח מתעות בהם בני אדם שיחשבו שהם אלוה - אחר שהאלוה אחד והוא ברא אלו הרבים.

Belief in the reality of angels is linked with belief in the reality of God; belief in God and angels leads to belief in prophecy and truth. Inculcating this creed, God commanded to make on the Ark the form of two angels. Belief in the reality of angels is thus inculcated in the people, and this belief is next in importance to belief in God; it leads us to believe in Prophecy and truth, and to oppose idolatry. Had there been just one angelic figure, people would be misled and mistake it for God's image to be worshipped – like heathen; or assume that the angel was a deity, thus adopting a dualism. By making two angels and clarifying "YHVH our God, YHVH is One," Moses clearly proclaimed the reality of a number of angels, leaving no room for error in thinking them as deities, since God is One in number and created the angels, who are more than one.

Ba'al Shem Tov, Gen. 28:13

אני יהו"ה אלהי אברהם אביך ואלהי יצחק. ... דלכך אנו אומרים אלהי אברהם ואלהי יצחק [ואלהי יעקב] ואין אנו אומרים אלהי אברהם יצחק [ויעקב] להורות שאל יסמוך האדם על חקירת ועבודת אביו, וכן יצחק ויעקב לא סמכו עצמם על חקירת ועבודת אברהם אבינו, רק חקרו בעצמם אחדות הבורא ועבודתו לכן אנו אומרים אלהי בכל אחד ואחד:

I am YHVH, God of Avraham your father, and God of Yitzhak – [The Amidah] says "God of Avraham, God of Yitzhak [and God of Yaakov]," and not "God of Avraham, Yitzhak [and Yaakov]" to show that one should not rely on [theological] inquiries and prayers of one's parent. Yitzhak and Yaakov did not rely on the inquiries and prayers of Avraham, but rather on their own to discern the unity of the Creator and one's own service. Thus, we say the God of each and every one of them.

THE CONSCIOUSNESS JOURNEY OF YAAKOV

Genesis 28:16

וייקץ יעקב משנתו ויאמר אֵכֶן יֵשׁ יְהוָה בְּמָקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאֲנִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי:

Yaakov woke from his sleep, he said, "Surely YHVH is in this place and I, I did not know."

this place

מוחין דקטנות
מוחין דגדלות

Mohin d'katnut
Mohin d'gadlut

Mind of littleness
Mind of greatness

Constricted consciousness
Expansive consciousness

Genesis 28:18-22

וישכם יעקב בבקר ויקח את-האבן אשר-שם מראשתי וישם אותה מצבה ויצק שמן על-ראשה:

18. Yaakov woke in the morning, took the stone that he put under his head, and set it as a pillar, and poured oil on its top.

ויקרא את-שם-המקום ההוא בית-אל ואולם לוי שם-העיר לראשנה:

19. He called the name of that place *Beth El*; but the name of that city was called Luz at first.

וידר יעקב נדר לאמר אם-יהיה אלהים עמדי ושמרני בדרך הזה אשר אנכי הולך ונתן-לי לחם לאכל ובגד ללבש:

20. Yaakov vowed a vow, saying: "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I go, and give me bread to eat, and clothes to wear,

ושבתי בשלום אל-בית אבי והיה יהוה לי לאלהים:

21. "And if I return in peace to my father's house; then YHVH will be my God,

והאבן הזאת אשר-שמתי מצבה יהיה בית אלהים וכל אשר נתן-לי עשיר אעשרנו לך:

22. "And this stone, which I set as a pillar, will be God's house; and of all You give me I will give a tenth to You."

<u>P</u>	Pshat (פשט)	Literal (<i>surface • plain</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beth El - house of God • Became transactional
<u>R</u>	Remez (רמז)	Implication (<i>pointer • hint</i>)	
<u>D</u>	Drash (דרש)	Description (<i>inquire</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yaakov looking for proof, perfection • Finding doesn't mean the search is over
<u>S</u>	Sod (סוד)	Mystical (<i>secret</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awe / spiritual communion isn't necessarily permanent • We live IN THIS WORLD

Sforno, Gen. 28:20

אם יהיה אלהים עמדי להסיר מעלי כל מעיק ומונע המעביר את האדם על דעתו וע"ד קונו כאז"ל ג' מעבירין את האדם על דעתו ועל דעת קונו גוים ורוח רעה ודקדוקי עניות:

If God wil be with me – To remove from me all the pressures I am under, pressures preventing one from giving full attention to matters worthy of attention – that is, God and what God expects of humanity. What troubled Yaakov was much as the rabbis said [in Talmud, Eruvin 41b]: these cause one to lose one's knowing and knowledge of one's Creator: other peoples, natural disasters and abject suffering.

ושמרני מן רעי גוים המתקוממים ומכריחים:

And keep me [in this way that I go] – From evil peoples who'd force him to alter his lifestyle.

ונתן לי לחם לאכול. שלא יכריחני העניות לעבור על דעתי ועל דעת קוני:

And give me bread to eat – So that I will not be forced to suffer violating my own knowing and my knowing of my Creator.

Shefa Gold, Torah Journeys, Vayeitzei

JACOB'S JOURNEY IS BLESSED at its outset with a dream and with a moment of awakening. In the dream God shows Jacob the stairway that connects the realms of Heaven and Earth and then gives him a promise. Through this blessing we ourselves become that stairway, that connection, with our feet planted in the foundation of Earth and our crowns open to the expanse of Heaven. Through us the Divine flow pours down into the earthly realms. Through us the pleasures and miseries of earthly experience are offered up to The Divine Expanse.

When I become available to this flow, I am awakened to the most awesome and transformative truth. God was here all along and I didn't know it. THIS is none other than the House of God. THIS is the Gate of Heaven. This very moment and this place here where I stand is at once God's home and the doorway to all realms.

Our journey brings us the blessing of *zeh* – "This." In becoming fully present to this moment – Here and Now – the Presence of God is revealed.

IN THE STORY OF VAYETZE, Jacob tries to negotiate with God. Perhaps he misunderstands the promise that was given to him in the dream. Perhaps he has forgotten the moment of awakening and become frightened. He wants assurance that the right food, clothing and peace will be available to him on the journey.

We would like to have the blessing of life given to us in the way we want it. Caught in our fears and desires we miss the true promise: I will give you HAMAKOM, "the place," the land of your life – to possess, to know, to inhabit, cultivate, refine. The awesome place that I give you is none other than the House of God – I live there at the heart of every molecule and I will shine out through the windows of your own eyes when they are open to this truth. And this awesome place is the Gate of Heaven – connecting all realms and dimensions, Heavens and Hells – connecting you with your wildest dreams.... I am with you.

I do not promise that it will be comfortable or that you will not suffer. I do not promise that you'll never be hungry or feel despair. I do not promise that your heart will never be broken. My promise is simply that I am with you – in your suffering, your hunger, your despair, through your wandering, your stumbling, your confusion. I am with you even when you feel abandoned.