

## The Hebrew Corner

God interacts with people in unusual ways. Sometimes he appears to us in dreams, as this is a way he can speak to us directly, without the interruption of events that occur in our daily lives. An example of this is given in Genesis, describing an encounter that Jacob had with God (Genesis 28:10-12):

“And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.”

One item from the above account that might catch the eye of the reader is the use by Jacob of stones for pillows. This is a loose translation of the Hebrew word m'raashot (מראשות, muh-rah-ah-SHOHT), which literally means place at the head, or head-place. Not implied here is that Jacob put the stones under his head for support, only that he placed the stones near his head where he slept (perhaps as weapons to fend off wild animals). Contained within this Hebrew word is the word rosh (ראש, ROHSH), which means head, from which rosh hashana (head of the year) is derived. The Hebrew word translated as dream is halom (חלום, chah-LOHM), used in other passages of the Tanach. However the Hebrew word translated as ladder appears only once in the entire Tanach. This is the word sullam (סלם, sool-LAHM). God is clearly sending a message

here to Jacob, that his angels were active in the affairs of the world, and that they were in intimate contact with people, bridging the gulf between heaven and earth. Angel in Hebrew is malak (מלאך, mahl-AHCH), which also means messenger.

Continuing in the passage, God appears to Jacob in the dream (Genesis 28:13-17):

“And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

God promises that Jacob's descendants would be abundant, similar to the dust of the earth. The translation “dust of the earth” is from the Hebrew phrase apha haaretz (עפר הארץ, ah-FAHR hah-ah-REHTS). Jacob then states that this place is “none other than the house of God.” In Hebrew, house of God is bet elohim (בית אלהים, bayt eh-loh-HEEM), the shortened version being the name that Jacob gave to this place, Bethel.

God kept the promise that he gave to Jacob, as his descendants did become a multitude. Although they were scattered throughout the

earth, they have since returned and now reside in the land in which this encounter with God took place. The promises that God has made to you, you can trust that he will keep them also. May you have a blessed month in the loving presence of God.