

אַ שטיקל תורה A LITTLE SLICE OF TORAH

פון פרשת דער וואָך FROM THE WEEKLY PORTION

November 21, 2026

"Fostering diverse modes of attention to textual details cultivates correlative forms of attention to the world and divine reality"

Michael Fishbane (1943-), *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לַעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה׃

"Tachometer Torah"



...read down to the red line

Parashat-haShavu'a Stats

Weekly Portion: *vaYeitzei*

Consists of: Genesis 28:10-32:3



Sequence—

in Genesis: 7th of 12

in annual Torah cycle: 7th of 54

A Salient Selection from the Portion -

Genesis 28:10-29:1

Context: *Genesis, first of the Five Books of the Torah, is an outline of the Creation of the physical universe; a description of the origin of the human family by their respective nations; and an account of Abraham's and Sarah's lineage through their grandson Jacob as the foundation of the Israelite people.*

Content: *Having seized the horns of destiny, by stepping in before his older twin brother to take possession of first-born status, Jacob leaves Canaan to find a bride in The Old Country (so that he can begin engendering children to populate the Promised Land— of which he is now the heir-apparent). But in departing his homeland; fearing the prospect of pursuit by his vindictive brother; and unsure about what lies before him, the next-Patriarch-in-line is distracted by anxiety, and needs a little assurance.*

וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּאֵר שָׁבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ חָרָנָה
וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיָּלֶן שָׁם כִּי בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ

וַיִּקַּח מֵאַבְנֵי הַמָּקוֹם וַיָּשֶׂם מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא
וַיַּחֲלֹם וְהִנֵּה סֻלָּם מֻצָּב אַרְצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מַגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמָיְמָה וְהִנֵּה
מַלְאֲכֵי אֱלֹהִים עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים בּוֹ

וְהִנֵּה יְהוָה נִצָּב עָלָיו וַיֹּאמַר אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אָבִיךָ וֵאלֹהֵי יִצְחָק

28:10] - Departing Be'er-sheva, Jacob set out for Haran. [28:11a] - **Happening upon a certain place**, he lodged there— **for the sun had set** [and it would soon be dark].

28:11b] - Taking one of the stones of that place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. [28:12] - Then he dreamed, and beheld a stairway set on the ground— its top reaching into the sky— with angels of God going up and down by means of it.

28:13a] - Then he beheld The Eternal One poised over him, Who said: "I am The Eternal One— the God of your forebear Abraham, and the God of [your father] Isaac.

- more over

28:13b] - "The land on which you lie, I have given to you and your progeny. [28:14] - Your descendants shall be as numerous as the dust of the earth; you shall spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you and your descendants.

הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה שֹׁכֵב עָלֶיהָ לְךָ אֶתְּנֶנָּה וּלְזַרְעֶךָ׃ וְהָיָה זַרְעֲךָ כַּעֲפַר הָאָרֶץ וּפָרַצְתָּ יָמָּה וָקֵדְמָה וְצָפֹנָה וָנֶגְבָּה וְנִבְרְכוּ בְךָ כֹּל מִשְׁפְּחֹת הָאֲדָמָה וּבְזַרְעֶךָ׃

28:15] - "See, now, that I am with you to safeguard you, wherever you go. Moreover, I will return you to this soil. Indeed, I will never forsake you before I have done all that I have promised you."

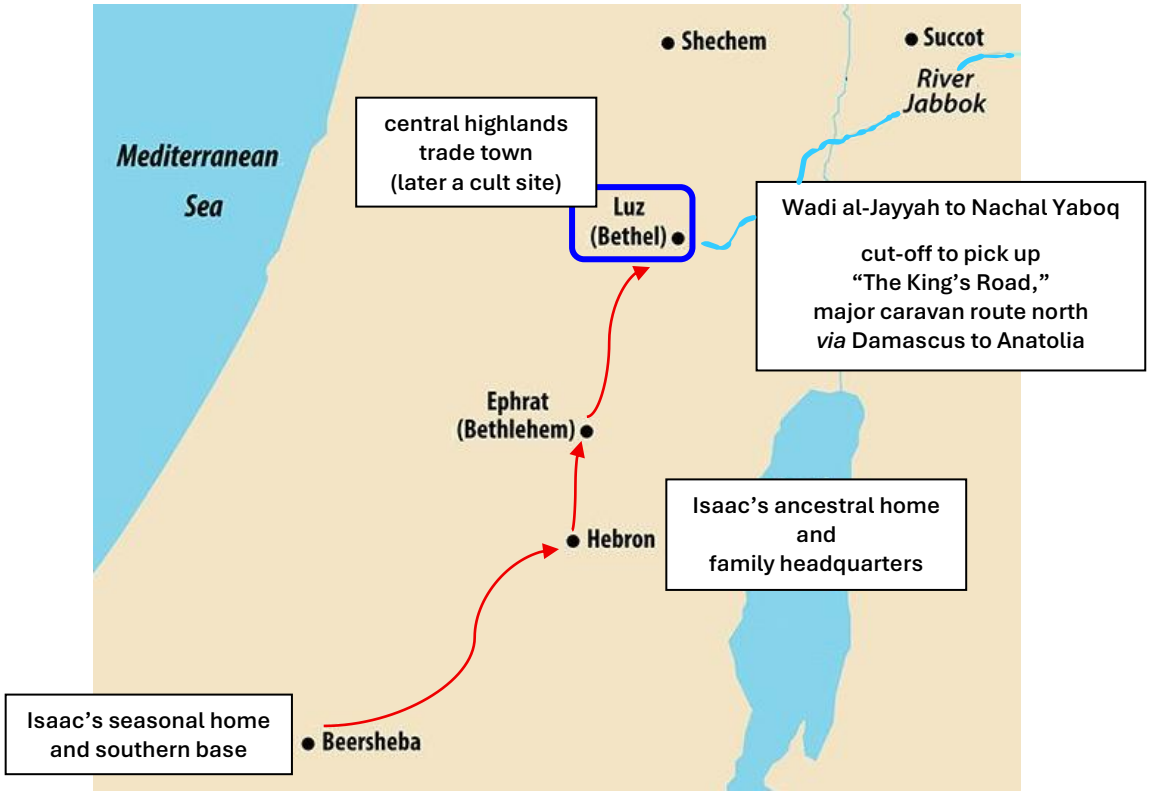
וְהִנֵּה אָנֹכִי עִמָּךְ וּשְׁמַרְתִּיךָ בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵךְ וַהֲשִׁבֹתִיךָ אֶל הָאֲדָמָה הַזֹּאת כִּי לֹא אֶעֶזָבְךָ עַד אֲשֶׁר אִם עָשִׂיתִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי לָךְ׃

28:16] - Jacob startled awake from his sleep and said, "Clearly, The Eternal One is present in this place, and I had not been aware of it!" [28:17] - **In awe, he said "How awesome is this place**! This is none other than the Abode of God, and that is the gateway to heaven."

וַיִּיקַץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְּׁנָתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אָכֵן יֵשׁ יְהוָה בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאָנֹכִי לֹא יָדָעְתִּי׃ **וַיִּירָא וַיֹּאמַר מַה נּוֹרָא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה** אֵין זֶה כִּי אִם בֵּית אֱלֹהִים וְזֶה שַׁעַר הַשָּׁמָיִם׃

28:18] - Early in the morning, Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and anointed it with oil. [28:19] - He named that site Beit-El ["God-house"] (although hitherto the name of the nearby town had been Luz [= "Hazelton"]).

וַיַּשְׁכֵּם יַעֲקֹב בַּבֹּקֶר וַיִּקַּח אֶת הָאֶבֶן אֲשֶׁר שָׂם מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו וַיָּשֶׂם אֹתָהּ מַצֵּבָה וַיִּצֹק שֶׁמֶן עַל רֹאשָׁהּ׃ וַיִּקְרָא אֶת שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא בֵּית אֵל וְאוּלָם לוּז שֵׁם הָעִיר לָרִאשֹׁנָה׃



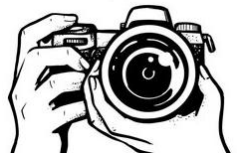
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וַיִּדַּר יַעֲקֹב נֶדֶר לֵאמֹר אִם יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי וּשְׁמָרַנִי בַּדֶּרֶךְ הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ וְנָתַן לִי לֶחֶם לֶאֱכֹל וּבֶגֶד לִלְבֹּשׁ וְשַׁבְתִּי בְשָׁלוֹם אֶל בֵּית אָבִי וְהָיָה יְהוָה לִי לֵאלֹהִים וְהָאֶבֶן הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר שַׂמְתִּי מַצֵּבָה יִהְיֶה בֵּית אֱלֹהִים וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר תִּתֶּן לִי עַשֵּׂר אֲעַשְּׂרֶנּוּ לָךְ

28:20] - Jacob then made a vow, saying, "If God remains with me— protecting me on this journey, on which I am embarking; giving me bread to eat, and clothing to wear; [28:21] - and if I return safely to my father's house— then The Eternal One shall be my God. [28:22] - And this stone, which I have set up as a pillar, shall be The Abode of God, and of all that You give me, I will set aside a one-tenth portion for You!"

וַיִּשָּׂא יַעֲקֹב רַגְלָיו וַיֵּלֶךְ אַרְצָה בְּנֵי קֶדֶם

29:1] - Whereupon Jacob picked up his feet, and went on towards the land of the Easterners.



בֵּית אֱלֹהִים

28:17 / 28:22 - The Abode of God

בֵּית אֵל

28:19 - a god-house [the home of a god]; a sacred place

לֹא תִטַּע לְךָ אֲשֵׁרָה כָּל עֵץ אֵצֶל מִזְבַּח יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה לָךְ

A) Deuteronomy 16:21-22 - You may not plant a sacred grove (nor any kind of tree) alongside the Altar of The Eternal One, your God, which you will be making yourself;

וְלֹא תָקִים לְךָ מַצֵּבָה אֲשֶׁר שָׂנֵא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

neither may you raise yourself up a sacred pillar, the like of which is hateful to The Eternal One, your God.

source	when	who and what	
I Kings 12:29-30	925 BCE	Jereboam establishes the cult of the Golden Calf	**at Beit-El**.
II Kings 10:29	835 BCE	Yehu uproots Ba'al, while sparing the Calf idol	
Amos 3:14 & 4:4	745 BCE	Amos excoriates the idolatrous shrine maintained	



28:11 - **Happening** upon a certain place,

וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם

וַיָּלֶן שָׁם כִּי בָא הַשָּׁמֶשׁ

he lodged there— for the sun had set.

ויפגע - כמו ופגע ביריחו ופגע בדבשת

B) RaSHI (Shlomo Yitzchaqi, 1040-1105) - "He happened upon" - this is the same sense of this verb as in "it extended as far as Jericho" [Joshua 16:7] and "it reached all the way to Daveshet" [Joshua 19:11].

- more over

ורבותינו פירשו **לשון תפילה** כמו ואל תפגע בי

Our sages [in the Talmud, B'rachot 26b,] explained it as "**a term referring to prayer**," as reflected in the verse "Neither make entreaty to me" [Ruth 1:16],

ולמדנו ש**תקן תפלת ערבית**

Now they construe, from this, that it was Jacob **who instituted the *Ma'ariv* evening service**.

ושנה הכתוב ולא כתב ויתפלל ללמדך ש**קפצה לו הארץ**

Yet Scripture intentionally modified it, by writing not "he prayed," in order to teach you that **the earth gathered up before him**.

C) Babylonian Talmud, B'rachot 26b -

תפלות אבות תקנום

The three daily worship services were instituted by the Patriarchs.

אברהם תקן תפלת שחרית שנאמר וישכם אברהם בבקר אל המקום אשר עמד שם

Abraham instituted the *Shachrit* morning service— even as it is said in Scripture: "And Abraham got up early in the morning to the place where he had stood" [Genesis 19:24];

יצחק תקן תפלת מנחה שנאמר ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה לפנות ערב

Isaac instituted the *Minchah* afternoon service— even as it is said in Scripture: "And Isaac went out to meditate in the field towards evening" [Genesis 24:63];

יעקב תקן תפלת ערבית שנאמר ויפגע במקום וילן שם ואין פגיעה אלא תפלה

Jacob instituted the evening prayer— even as it is said in Scripture: "And he lighted upon the place, for the sun had set."

D) Babylonian Talmud, Chullin 91b -

הארץ אשר אתה שוכב עליה וגו'

"The land on which you lie, I have given to you and your progeny" [28:13].

מאי רבותיה

What is the great distinction herein[, of presenting a man with only four cubits of earth]?

מלמד ש**קפלה הקב"ה לכל ארץ ישראל**

This teaches us that **The Holy And Blessed One rolled up the whole of the land of Israel**,

והניחה תחת יעקב אבינו שתהא נוחה ליכבש לבניו

and placed it under our father Jacob, to establish title to it for his subsequent descendants.

E) Lawrence Kushner (1943-) in *Voices of Torah*:

What does the earth shrinking,
have to do with the evening prayer?



Jacob's Dream
by Marc Chagall, 1977

- continued



וַיִּיקַץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְּׁנָתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר

28:16 - Jacob startled awake from his sleep, and said:

אָכֵן יֵשׁ יְהוָה בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה

"Clearly, **The Eternal One is present** in this place"

F) Genesis 9:24-25 -



וַיִּיקַץ נֹחַ מִיֵּינוֹ

Once No'ach was startled awake from his wine-stupor,

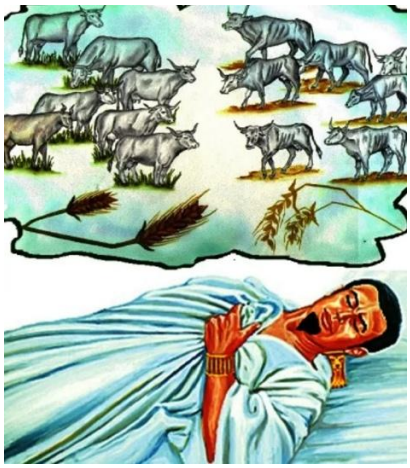
וַיֵּדַע אֵת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לוֹ בְּנוֹ הַקָּטָן וַיֹּאמֶר

upon becoming aware of what his youngest son had done to him, he declared:

אָרוּר כְּנָעַן עֶבֶד עֲבָדִים יִהְיֶה לְאֶחָיו

"Cursed be Canaan— the most subjugated of slaves shall he be to his brothers!"

G) Genesis 41:4-5 -



וַתֹּאכַלְנָה הַפָּרוֹת רָעוֹת הַמַּרְאֶה וְדַקֹּת הַבָּשָׂר אֵת שֶׁבַע הַפָּרוֹת יְפֹת הַמַּרְאֶה וְהַבְּרִיאֹת

When the ill-favored and lank cows ate the seven fat and healthy cows,

וַיִּיקַץ פַּרְעֹה

Pharaoh was startled awake.

וַיִּישָׁן וַיַּחֲלֹם שֵׁנִית

Then he slept… and had yet another dream.

H) Meir of Premishlan (1780–1850), *Or Hamei'ir* - Herein lies the measure of a truly righteous human being.

For no sooner did the pious Jacob awaken, than he undertook to serve The Eternal One. But when Pharaoh— the man of common clay— awoke, he merely turned on his side and went back to sleep.

Therein lies **the difference between the diligent person, dedicated to God, and the indolent person bound to the world**.

- more over



אִם יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי

28:20 - "If God remains with me . . .

וְהָיָה יְהוָה לִי לֵאלֹהִים

28:21 - ". . . then The Eternal One shall be my God."

Genesis 15: 8 Abraham second-guesses God's assurance about his legacy.
Genesis 26:1-3 Isaac prepares to leave The Promised Land for Egypt, in time of famine.
Genesis 32:13 with Eisav fast approaching, Jacob doubts God's promise of protection.
Exodus 3 and 4 God cajoles, flatters, and finally threatens Moses to take the job.
Judges 6:35-40 Gid'on demands repeated mini-miracles to convince him God wants him.
II Kings 20:1-11 Hezekiah doesn't believe Isaiah, until the earth turns backwards for him.

אם יהיה אלהים עמדי - וטעם התנאי שלא יגרום החטא

I) RaMBaN (Bonastruc da Porta, 1194-1270) - "If God will be with me" – and **the reason for this conditional formulation is** [concern] **about the deleterious impact** [on God's promises] **from his sin** [of deceiving his blind father, and robbing his older brother].

הנה אנכי עמך

J) Midrash Genesis Rabbah 76:2 - [In spite of the Divine reassurance offered in verse 15] "See, now, that I am with you [to safeguard you, wherever you go,"]

וכתיב אם יהיה אלהים עמדי

[Jacob declares almost immediately afterwards, in verse 20:] 'If God will be with me….'

אלא מכאן שאין הבטחה לצדיקים בעולם הזה

From which it can be extrapolated that, **in this world, there are no guarantees even for the saintly righteous**."



Jacob departing from his pillar at Beit-El
by James Smetham, *c.* 1870