

Stumbling Stones

1. Genesis 28:10-22

And Yaakov went out from Beer-sheva, and went to Haran. And he encountered a certain place and slept there, for the sun had set. And he took from the stones of that place, and he placed them under his head and lay down in that place.

He had a dream; a stairway was set on the ground and its top reached to the sky, and angels of God were going up and down on it. And the LORD was standing beside him and He said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Avraham and the God of Yitzchak: the ground on which you are lying I will assign to you and to your offspring. Your descendants shall be 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. Remember, I am with you: I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is present in this place, and I did not know it!" Shaken, he said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than a House of God, and this is the gateway to heaven."

And Yaakov awoke early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He named that site Beit-El; but previously the name of the city had been Luz. Yaakov then made a vow, saying, "If God remains with me, if He protects me on this journey that I am making, and gives me bread to eat and clothing to wear, and if I return safe to my father's house - the LORD shall be my God. And this stone, which I have set up as a pillar, shall be a House of God; and of all that You give me, I will set aside a tithe for You."

- *In this text, Yaakov is on the run from his brother Esav who wishes to kill him. What does Yaakov stumble upon in this story?*
- *Consider the mention of stones at the beginning and end of this narrative. How are they used each time to create intentional space?*

וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּאֵר שֶׁבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ חֲרָנָה:
וַיִּפְגַּע בְּמָקוֹם וַיֵּלֶן שָׁם כִּי-בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ
וַיִּקַּח מֵאֲבָנֵי הַמָּקוֹם וַיִּשֶׂם מֵרָאשָׁיתוֹ
וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא:

וַיַּחְלֹם וְהִנֵּה סֹלֶם מַצֵּב אֶרְצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ
מַגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהִנֵּה מַלְאָכֵי אֱלֹהִים
עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים בּוֹ: וְהִנֵּה יְהוָה נֹצֵב עָלָיו
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹרָהּ אָבִיךָ
וְאֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה שֹׁכֵב
עָלֶיהָ לְךָ אֲתִנְנָה וְלִזְרַעְךָ: וְהָיָה זְרַעְךָ
כַּעֲפַר הָאָרֶץ וּפְרָצְתָ יָמָה וְקִדְמָה
וְצַפְנָה וְנִגְבָּה וְנִבְרַכְוּ בְךָ כָּל-מִשְׁפְּחֹת
הָאָדָמָה וּבְזַרְעֶךָ: וְהִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי עִמָּךְ
וְשָׁמְרְתִיךָ בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר-תֵּלֶךְ וְהִשְׁבַּתִיךָ
אֶל-הָאָדָמָה הַזֹּאת כִּי לֹא אֶעֱזָבְךָ עַד
אֲשֶׁר אִם-עָשִׂיתִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר-דִּבַּרְתִּי לְךָ:

וַיִּיקֶץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁנָתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲכֵן יֵשׁ יְהוָה
בְּמָקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי: וַיִּירָא
וַיֹּאמֶר מֵהַנּוֹרָא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה אֵין זֶה כִּי
אִם-בַּיִת אֱלֹהִים וְזֶה שַׁעַר הַשָּׁמַיִם:

וַיִּשְׁכֹּם יַעֲקֹב בְּבֹקֶר וַיִּקַּח אֶת-הָאֶבֶן
אֲשֶׁר-שָׂם מֵרָאשָׁיתוֹ וַיִּשֶׂם אֹתָהּ מִצְבֵּה
וַיִּצַק שֶׁמֶן עַל-רֹאשָׁהּ: וַיִּקְרָא
אֶת-שֵׁם-הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא בַּיִת-אֵל וְאוּלַם
לִזֵּי שֵׁם-הָעִיר לְרֹאשְׁנָה: וַיֵּדֶר יַעֲקֹב
נֶדֶר לֵאמֹר אִם-יְהִי אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי
וְשָׁמְרָנִי בַדֶּרֶךְ הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ
וְנָתַן-לִי לֶחֶם לֶאֱכֹל וּבְגָד לְלַבֵּשׁ:
וְשָׁבְתִי בְשָׁלוֹם אֶל-בַּיִת אָבִי וְהָיָה יְהוָה-
לִי לְאֱלֹהִים: וְהָאֶבֶן הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר-שָׁמְתִי
מִצְבֵּה יְהִי בַּיִת אֱלֹהִים וְכָל אֲשֶׁר
תִּתֵּן-לִי עֹשֶׂר אֶעֱשְׂרֶנּוּ לְךָ:

2. Steps to the Hulda Gates at the southern wall of the Temple Mount, Jerusalem.



3. Leviticus 19:14

You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind. You shall be in awe of your God: I am the LORD.

לֹא־תִקְלֹל חֵרֵשׁ וּלְפָנָי עֵוֶר לֹא תִתֵּן מְכַשֵּׁל
וְיִרְאַתָּ מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה:

- *This text is read in Jewish tradition as both a literal and figurative command. How would you unpack the many messages of this verse?*