

## THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

JACOB'S *SULAM* (Gen. 28:12): The "ladder" (or "stairway") that Jacob saw in his visionary dream symbolizes both his connection to the land and his quest for the sublime. It is firmly grounded on earth, yet its top ("head") reaches up toward heaven. Torah is a *sulam*: It is rooted in this world and its human concerns; yet it aspires to reach spiritual heights.

Jacob's "*sulam*" illustrates that spiritual elevation is based on moral concerns of everyday living. The "*sulam*" stands up as a ramp leading to the "gateway to Heaven" -- "*sha'ar ha-shamaim*." Torah's moral system, governing human, mundane affairs, derives its inspiration and authority from Heaven -- "*min ha-shamaim*." In his moral and religious life, a Jew moves constantly, upwards and downwards, on Jacob's *sulam*.

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### **Thought of the Week**

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By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

THE "SULAM" (Stairway) in Jacob's dream (Gen. 28:12) symbolizes the faith of Judaism. This sulam is firmly established on the ground but its peak reaches the heavens. No spiritual aspirations may be realized in this world unless they are rooted in concrete reality; on the other hand, no material assets maintain their value unless they are geared to lofty ideals. This dreamy sulam, evoking as it does the imagery of the ancient Babylonian ziggurat or temple tower, "with its top in the sky" (cf. Gen. 11:4)—is transformed into a uniquely Jewish symbol—bridging the earthly with the heavenly, expressing the yearning of the Jew to endow the mundane and the ordinary with sanctity and significance. On this symbolic sulam we all go up and down, down and up.

**Thought of the Week**

**By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda**

THE PHILISTINES, with whom the Patriarchs regrettably entered into an alliance, were virtually foreign invaders of an unknown origin. "Pelishtim" (from the root verb "palosh") means those who penetrated the land. They also as suddenly disappeared from it, even before the Israelite Settlement. Later, another wave of invaders – fierce, warlike, technologically superior and politically well organized – also called Philistines, entered the west-south coast of Eretz Israel from the Mediterranean. These were no descendents of the former Philistines, but of Aegean origin, from Crete (Caphtor; Amos 9:7). They persistently fought with the Israelites; but, unlike the latter, they did not survive the Babylonian onslaught (6th century B.C.E.). Though vanquished forever without trace, they did leave a dubious, lingering mark: their name "Palestine" for their former coast region. The Romans, in their desperate, annihilative war against the Jews (1st century C.E.), desiring to obliterate the original, ethnological name, Eretz Israel, applied to the entire land of Israel this harmless, purely geographical designation—Palestine—after an extinct people, already perished long ago.

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**Thought of the Week**

**By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda**

NAMES, NAMES: Jacob's sons were named by his two wives, Leah and Rachel. Each of them named her own and also her maid's. To her own children Leah gave names which show gratitude to God: **Reuven**, "God saw my need;" **Shimeon**, "God heard me;" **Yehuda**, "I will thank God;" **Yisachar**, "God rewarded me;" **Zevulun**, "God gave me a gift." Her maid's children, however, were named by Leah less pietistically. They express a feeling of being Lucky, Gad, and blessed, **Asher**, in the eyes of friends. An intriguing sentiment is revealed in Leah's spontaneous burst, "ba gad." Read as two words (Qeri), they mean "Here comes luck (or Gad)." As written in one word (Ketiv), it means "He betrayed me!" subtle resentment against Jacob for his intimacy with her maid. True, she (Leah) initiated it, but why didn't he refuse? A delicate combination of joy and hurt in a single short exclamation. Rachel's way of naming is touched with sadness and entreaty. After years of agonizing barrenness, she is blessed with a son. Her shame is now removed, but she names him with a plea to God for more: **Yosef**, "Let God add another son." She wastes no time; her life-long prayer comes through even after she is answered. The names Rachel gave to her maid's sons are somewhat harsh: **Dan**, judgment; **Naftali**, struggle. The name of her youngest son, born on her death-bed, is particularly tragic: "A son of my grief" (**Ben-Oni**). Jacob, however, redeemed the name: **Bin-Yamin**, A son of strength.

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### Thought of the Week

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By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

WHAT IS A HOLY PLACE? Compare two mountains: Mt. Moriah and Mt. Sinai. Mt. Moriah, site of the *Akeda* (binding of Isaac), symbol of the ultimate expression of human devotion to God, is regarded as the most holy place in Judaism and the choice for Israel's Temple of eternity. On the other hand, Mt. Sinai, site of *Matan-Torah* (giving of the Law), the supreme experience of God's revelation to His people, never assumed permanent sanctity: It was holy only momentarily, during the *Ma'amad* (outstanding drama) itself; then it reverts to being an ordinary mountain. It is the *Ma'amad* in drama that we must constantly remember, not its spatial location; the event of revelation, not its particular stage; the message of revelation, not its particular stage; the message of revelation, not its geographical spot; its insight must endure, not its site. A holy place in Judaism is a place where people consecrate themselves and make their lives more meaningful and sacred.

**Candlelight time 4:39 Sabbath ends 5:32**

**Scriptural reading for Saturday, Dec. 5:**

**VAYETZE: Genesis 28:10-32:3**

**HAFTARAH: Hosea 12:13-14:10**

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, Dec. 1:

VAYETZE: Genesis 28:10-32:3

HAFTARAH: Hosea 12:13-14:10

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**Thought of the Week**

**By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda**

*THE BORDERS OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL are not defined in the Divine promise to Israel, the patriarch (Gen. 28:13-15): "The land on which you are lying, to you I will give and to your descendants." There, unlimited expansion is envisioned: "You shall spread out to the west, to the east, to the north, and to the south." The territorial limits of the Promised Land were to be ultimately determined by the people's historical presence--their efforts and achievements in possessing, building and defending their land. The unusual phrase "on which you are lying" (literally confined to the tiny spot where Jacob was then sleeping), poetically encompasses the whole of the land. It conveys a symbolic message: The land on which the people are dwelling ("lying")--is theirs. "Every place on which the sole of your foot shall tread--to you I have given!" (Joshua 1:3).*

VAYETZE: Genesis 28:10-32:3

HAFTARAH: Hosea 12:13-14:10

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***Thought of the Week***

**By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda**

JACOB, third link in the newly emergent patriarchal tradition, is both its catalyst and crystallizer; he stamps and preserves it with the vigor and thrust of his compelling personality. Heroic and romantic, industrious and gracious, direct and shrewd – in war and in peace – he sharply represents the essential inherited traits of his two great predecessors: persistence and devotion. Moreover, he becomes the father of the people with the totality of his family and the completeness of its heritage. Whereas Abraham courageously breaks with his ancestral tradition; Isaac devoutly clings to his; Jacob – the first to be entrusted with a legacy both received and transmitted by his father – is destined to struggle valiantly for continuity and growth. This he does, rearing and sustaining his family, with much agony and compassion. The Patriarchs of Judaism emerge in Genesis not as typical founders of a new faith – as religious fanatics, smashing idols and preaching salvation for their adherents and damnation for all the rest – but, to the contrary, as down-to-earth family men, concerned with the mundane affairs of this world, engaged in building and planting, decent and gracious to all, and working for a society of abundance and justice.

## THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

ROMANTIC LOVE between man and woman serves as a dramatic model for the abiding love between God and Israel. In two amazing verses (12:13-14), Hosea draws the parallel, using the name Israel in the first verse, for the patriarch Jacob, and in the second, for his descendants, the people of Israel.

*Jacob fled to the field of Aram: --*

*There Israel labored for a woman;*

*For a woman, Israel guarded.*

*And so out of Egypt: --*

*Through a prophet, the Lord delivered Israel*

*Through a prophet, Israel has been guarded.*

The patriarch displayed tender and tireless devotion to his dearest woman, Rachel. To win her, he worked hard; for many years he guarded her father's sheep. This gallant dedication of the people's father is reciprocated by God in His love for the people. The romantic love experienced by Israel the patriarch is both the merit and paradigm for the divine love by Israel the people.

### Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

ROMANTIC LOVE between man and woman is viewed by the Prophets as a perfect model for the sublime love between God and His people. Jacob (also called Israel), the father of the people, is the supreme lover: he arduously works and tends sheep in order to wed his beloved Rachel. His devotion is matched only by God's devotion to the people of Israel, redeeming and protecting them. This correlation between the two loves, the romantic love of Jacob for a woman and the heavenly love of God for Jacob's descendants, is delicately (and daringly) expressed by Hosea (12:13-14): "Jacob fled to the field of Aram; Israel (Jacob) labored for a woman; for a woman he guarded (sheep). So, too, through a prophet did the Lord bring Israel out of Egypt; through a prophet they were guarded." Human love elicits divine love.

Candlelight time 4:50 Sabbath ends 5:42

Scriptural reading for Saturday, Nov. 15:

VAYETZE: Genesis 28:10-32:3

HAFTARAH: Hosea 12:13-14:10

## Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

SISTERLY DEVOTION played a role in the story of Jacob and his marriage to two sisters, Leah and Rachel. It was Rachel, the younger, shapely and beautiful to behold, whom Jacob loved. For her he agreed to work seven years as servant to her father, Lehan, specifying his terms very explicitly (Gen. 29:18): "For Rachel; your daughter; the younger one." But to no avail; Lehan deceived him. At the evening following the wedding feast, Lehan smuggled into the nuptial bed his older, less attractive daughter, Leah. Jacob was intimate with her all night, thinking she was Rachel. Only in the morning did Jacob realize, to his surprise and dismay, the sneaky switch: "Behold, she is Leah!" – blaming her father: "What have you done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I worked with you? Why did you cheat me?" Was it not for Rachel that I worked with you? Why did you cheat me?" Now, how could Jacob be so reckless and uncouth as to fail to recognize, even in the dark, that the woman with whom he slept all night was not the woman he loved? Presumably, as a precaution against Lehan's possible trickery, Jacob entrusted Rachel with identity signs known to them only. But Rachel, in order to save her poor sister Leah from shame, confided to her the secret signs, so she could fool Jacob and pass (at least until daybreak) as the younger sister. (Talmud, Meg. 13b). Thus, out of her sisterly devotion, Rachel betrayed her trust with Jacob, and she and her sister became partners to their father's despicable scheme against him. Jacob, however, in his unfading love for Rachel, worked another seven years in order to obtain her as his wife.

Scriptural reading for Saturday, Dec. 9:

VAYETZE: Genesis 28:10-32:3

HAFTARAH: Hosea 12:13-14:10

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## **THOUGHT OF THE WEEK**

**By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA**

ROMANTIC LOVE between man and woman serves as a dramatic model for the abiding love between God and the people of Israel. In two amazing verses, Hosea draws the parallel (12:13-14), using the name Israel (*Yisra-El*) interchangeably: In the first verse, for the patriarch Jacob (*Ya'akov*); and in the second, for all his descendants, the people of Israel:

*Jacob fled to the field of Aram:*

*There Israel labored for a woman;*

*For a woman, Israel guarded.*

*And so out of Egypt:*

*Through a prophet, the Lord delivered Israel;*

*Through a prophet, Israel has been guarded.*

Tirelessly and tenderly, the patriarch Jacob-

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Israel displayed devotion to Rachel. To win her, he worked hard for years, guarding her father's sheep. This gallant and protective dedication is reciprocated by God. The romantic love displayed by Israel the patriarch is thus the merit and model for the Divine love lavished on Israel the people.

The two verses of Hosea's lofty song are parallel. The first mentions Aram, arena of the patriarch's struggles; the second mentions Egypt, arena of the people's troubles. In the first, the patriarch guards (*shamar*); in the second, the entire people is guarded (*nishmar*).

It is through the medium of Divine revelation – the enduring deeds and words of Moses and the prophets – that God delivers Israel, constantly guarding the people with Divine supernal love.

## THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

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### RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

WHAT IS TORAH'S ATTITUDE TO ROMANTIC LOVE? Although neither the term nor most of its modern connotations were known in biblical and Talmudic times, romantic love is rooted in Hebrew Scriptures and rabbinic sources.

The classic paradigm is the Song of Songs. There the man in love (the *dod*) describes his beloved woman (the *ra'aya*) as a "Garden Locked" (*gan na'ul*; 4:12). She is a cherished treasure, a blooming beauty, intact, untouchable and inaccessible. This imagery portrays a non-possessive relationship: The beloved is forever honored and treasured; never taken for granted, never treated as "conquered" by him, or "belonging" to him. No one (including the lover himself!) may unlock the guarded garden; only she herself will do so. Freely and joyfully she will "open" herself to her *dod*, her dear one, and invite him (4:16b): "Let my dear one (*dod*) come to his garden and savor his/its luscious fruits."

Romantic love between a man and a woman serves as a dramatic model for the abiding love between God and Israel. In two amazing verses Hosea draws the parallel, using the name Israel (*Yisra-El*) interchangeably, first for the patriarch Jacob (*Ya'akov*) and then for his descendants, the people of Israel (12:13-14):

*Jacob fled to the field of Aram; there Israel labored for a woman; for a woman, Israel guarded. And so out of Egypt – through a prophet, Hashem has delivered Israel; through a prophet, Israel has been guarded.*

Tenderly and tirelessly Jacob/Israel displayed devotion to his dearest woman (Rachel). To win this woman he worked hard for years guarding her father's sheep. This dedication is appreciated and reciprocated by God. As Israel (the father) labored and guarded for a woman, so God delivered and guarded Israel (the people) through a prophet.

## **THOUGHT OF THE WEEK**

**RABBI ZVI YEHUDA**

*LEAH, TOO, WAS BEAUTIFUL* (Gen. 29:16-17): “Laban had two daughters, the older named Leah and the younger named Rachel; Leah’s eyes were soft, while Rachel was beautiful in shape and appearance.” The portrayal of Leah’s eyes as “soft” is commonly taken as disparaging, exposing her eyes as weak, weeping, weary (her name, Leah, means “tired”). The verse draws a contrast between the unsightliness of Leah and the wholesomeness of Rachel (her name, Rachel, means (lovely and delicate as) “a lamb.” More appealing

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is the view of Targum Onklos, followed by Rashbam and modern scholars, that the “softness” of Leah’s eyes is an advantage and her depiction as a compliment. Correlating two forms of womanly beauty, the verse portrays both sisters as beautiful: Rachel with her shapely figure, exquisitely attractive in both features and complexion; and Leah with her “soft” eyes – alluringly gentle, tender and kind. A woman’s beautiful eyes mirror her overall beauty, leaving no need to inspect the rest of her body (Talmud).

## E WEEK

Friday, November 23, 1990

HUDA

LEAH WAS TOO BEAUTIFUL (Gen. 19:16-17): “Laban had two daughters, the older named Leah and the younger named Rachel; Leah’s eyes were soft, while Rachel was beautiful in shape and appearance.” The portrayal of Leah’s eyes as “soft” is commonly taken as disparaging, exposing her eyes as weak, weeping, weary (her name, *le’ah*, means “tired”). The verse thus appears to draw a contrast between the unsightliness of Leah and the wholesomeness of Rachel (her name, *rahel*, means [lovely and delicate as] “a lamb”). More appealing is the view of *Targum Onklos*, followed by *Rashbam* and modern scholars, that the “softness” of Leah’s eyes is an advantage and her depiction a compliment. Correlating two forms of womanly beauty, the verse portrays both sisters as beautiful: Rachel with her shapely figure, and lovely in both features and complexion; and Leah with her “soft” eyes – alluringly gentle, tender and kind. A woman’s beautiful eyes mirror her overall beauty, leaving no need to inspect the rest of her body (Talmud).

Friday, November 15, 1991

WEEK

By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

ROMANTIC LOVE between a man and a woman serves as a dramatic model for the abiding love between God and Israel. In two amazing verses, Hosea draws the parallel, using the name Israel (*Yisra-El*) interchangeably, first for the patriarch Jacob (*Ya'akov*) and then for his descendants, the people of Israel (12:13-14):

*Jacob fled to the field of Aram –  
There Israel labored for a woman;  
For a woman, Israel guarded.*

*And so out of Egypt –  
Through a prophet, the Lord has delivered Israel;  
Through a prophet, Israel has been guarded.*

Tenderly and tirelessly Jacob/Israel displayed devotion to his dearest love (Rachel). To win this woman he worked hard for years, guarding her father's sheep. This gallant and protective dedication is appreciated and reciprocated by God. As Israel (the father) labored and guarded *for* a woman, so God delivered and guarded Israel (the people) *through* a prophet. The prophet Hosea acclaims the romantic love displayed by the patriarch as the model for God's love lavished on the people.

## **THOUGHT OF THE WEEK**

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### **RABBI ZVI YEHUDA**

ROMANTIC LOVE between a man and a woman serves as a dramatic model for the abiding love between God and Israel. In two amazing verses, the prophet Hosea draws the parallel, using the name Israel (*Yisra-El*) interchangeably, first for the patriarch Jacob (*Ya'akov*) and then for his descendants, the people of Israel (12:13-14):

*Jacob fled to the field of Aram –*

*There Israel labored for a woman;*

*For a woman, Israel guarded.*

*And so out of Egypt –*

*Through a prophet, the Lord has delivered  
Israel;*

*Through a prophet, Israel has been guarded.*

Tenderly and tirelessly, Jacob/Israel displayed

devotion to his dearest woman (Rachel). To win this woman's love, he worked hard for years guarding her father's sheep. God, in turn, appreciated and reciprocated the dedication of the patriarch. As Israel (the father) labored and guarded for a woman, so God delivered and guarded Israel (the people) through a prophet. Hosea acclaims the romantic love displayed by the patriarch as the merit and model for God's love lavished on the people.

That romantic love serves in Jewish sacred literature as a fitting metaphor and paradigm for Divine love illustrates that Judaism recognizes that human love is intrinsically sacred and Divine love is forcefully real!

Torah on page 63.

Friday, December 4, 1992

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## IGHT OF WEEK

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By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

BEAUTY OF TWO SISTERS: Leah and Rachel (Gen. 29:16-17);

*Laban had two daughters, the older named Leah and the younger Rachel; Leah's eyes were soft, while Rachel was beautiful in shape and appearance.*

The portrayal of Leah's eyes as "soft" is commonly taken as disparaging, exposing her eyes as weak, weeping, weary (even her Hebrew name may mean "tired"). Thus, the verse, unkindly and unlikely, draws a contrast between the unsightliness of Leah and the wholesomeness of Rachel (whose name, "lamb," may indicate that she is

similarly lovely and delicate.)

More appealing is the view of *Targum Onklos*, followed by *Rashbam* and modern scholars, that the "softness" of Leah's eyes is rather an advantage and her depiction is a compliment. Correlating two forms of womanly beauty, the verse portrays both sisters as beautiful: Rachel with her overall shapely figure, exquisitely attractive in both features and complexion; and Leah with her "soft" eyes – alluringly gentle, tender and kind. A woman's beautiful eyes mirror her overall beauty, leaving no need to inspect the rest of her body (*Midrash Shir-Hashirim Rabbah* 3:4).

### Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

THE BEAUTY OF LEAH AND RACHEL—Laban's two daughters, both married to Jacob—is described in Scripture by contrast (Genesis 29:17): "Leah's eyes were *'rakot'*, while Rachel was shapely and good-looking." Now what does *'rakot'* mean? It is commonly rendered as weak and unattractive; the Midrash explains it as a result of excessive weeping and bemoaning (at the prospect of having to marry Esau). If so, Scripture draws a blatant contrast between the ugliness of the older sister against the beauty of the younger. The preferable interpretation is that *'rakot'* means soft, tender, and lovely. The contrast is between two types of physical attractiveness; Leah had charming eyes while Rachel was graced with a lovely figure and an exquisite appearance. Both sisters, however, were equally beautiful—each in her own way.

Friday, November 19, 1993

#### RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

JACOB'S EMPLOYMENT at Laban's household serves in Jewish law as a model for ideal labor relations. Unlike the conventional Shakespearean image of the Jewish patriarch as the arch cheat and conniver ("The Merchant of Venice"), Maimonides points to the patriarch as a paradigm of honesty and dedication (Code, Civil Laws, Hiring 13:7):

*"Just as the employer is enjoined not to deprive the worker of due wage or delay it, so is the worker enjoined not to deprive the employer of due work, by idling away the working hours a little here and a little there, thereby wasting the entire day deceitfully. Rather, the worker must be very demanding of oneself in doing the job, working to the best of one's ability – as the righteous Jacob said (to Leah and Rachel, Genesis 30:43): 'For with all my might I have served your father ...'"*

Proper labor relations depend on mutual respect and commitment. Exploitation and cheating are denounced in Jewish law, whether they are practiced by the employer against the employee, or vice versa. The employer must treat the employee as a free and dignified person, not a slave. Conversely, the employee must work for the employer with integrity and honesty.

**Candlelight time: 4:39 P.M. ... Sabbath Ends at 5:32**

*Scriptural readings for tomorrow morning:*

**VAYETZE: Genesis 28:10-32:3**

**HAFTARAH: Hosea 12:3-14:10**

**THOUGHT OF THE WEEK:**

*Jacob served as an employee in Laban's household for 20 years, we learn in Vayetze. His devoted and untiring service is vividly recorded in the Torah. This account comes to teach us a moral lesson concerning honest labor. In doing his job Jacob demonstrated resourcefulness, diligence, honesty and dedication. To his women, Jacob said: "You know that with all my might I have worked for your father" (Gen. 31:6.) Based on this statement, Maimonides codifies: "Just as the employer must be careful not to deprive the poor worker of his wage or withhold it from him when it is due, so must the worker be careful not to deprive the employer of the benefit of his work by idling away his time. . . He must work to the best of his capabilities. As the righteous Jacob said, 'With all my might I have worked for your father.' Therefore, he was rewarded in this world, too, as it is stated: "So the man grew exceedingly rich." (Gen. 30:43.) (Civil laws, Hiring. 13.) Sings the Psalmist: "When you eat the fruit of your toil, blessedness and well-being are yours (128:2).*

**by Rabbi Zvi Yehuda**

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, Nov. 18:

VAYETZE: Genesis 28:10-32:3

HAFTARAH: Hosea 12:13-14:10

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**Thought of the Week**

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**By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda**

*HONEST LABOR is demonstrated by Jacob (Gen. 31:6): "With all my might I have worked for your father," he said to Laban's daughters. Based on it, Maimonides (Civil Laws) codifies: "The employer must be careful not to deprive the poor worker of his due wage or withhold it from him. Also, the worker must be careful not to deprive the employer of the benefit of his work by idling away his time, a little here and a little there, thus wasting the whole day deceitfully." So signs the Psalmist (128:2): "When you eat the fruit of your toil, blessedness and well-being are yours."*

## Thought of the Week

By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

JACOB'S DREAM (Gen. 28:12) combines two scenes, a static and dynamic (each opens with "behold"): "And behold, a stairway set on earth and its top reaching to heaven. And behold, God's messengers ascending and descending on it." The static scene is an erected stairway (*sulam*) leading to the sky; an imagery recalling an ancient ziggurat tower. The *sulam* symbolizes polarity and connectivity between our roots in mundane reality ("set on earth"), and our transcendent aspirations ("reaching to heaven"). The dynamic scene is angelic action; God's *mal'akhim* (messengers) moving up and down, between earth and heaven. They represent all of us: we never stand still; we either progress or regress, on our own "*sulam*" between the material demand and the spiritual quest.

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, Nov. 15:

VEYETZE: Genesis 28:10-32:3

HAFTARAH: Hosea 12:13-14:10

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*Thought of the Week*

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

JACOB'S DREAM (Gen. 28:12) of "a 'sulam' (ladder, or stairway) set on the ground and its top reaching to the sky" is a vivid symbol of Judaism's vitality. It is concerned with both the mundane and the sublime. It has its strong roots in the soil; it strives to perfect and sanctify "this world." It also reaches out to the heights of spirituality and idealism. Without "its top reaching to the sky" there is no meaning and essence to its being "set on the ground." Nor is there any substance and reality in "reaching to the sky" without being rooted in the soil. The vital and viable "sulam" (progress) of Judaism embraces both heaven and earth.

Scriptural Reading for Saturday Morning, Nov. 27:

VAYETZE: Genesis 28:10 — 32:3

HAFTARAH: Hosea 12:13 — 14:10

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**Thought of the Week**

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By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

*JACOB'S DREAM: On his journey from the land to Mesopotamia, Jacob had a dream: He saw a "sulam" (stairway), based on the ground, its peak reaching to the heavens, and on it God's messengers going up and coming down (Gen. 28:12). The imagery of the "sulam," as well as the Tower of Babel (11:4), is rooted in the reality of ancient Mesopotamian architecture, the Ziggurat, a towering temple, built as a "Gateway to Heaven." This symbolizes man's persistent striving to reach the heights. The divine agents ascending and descending the "sulam" may illustrate the constant tension between man's ups and downs in his endeavors and achievements. Jacob encounters this vision with humility and awe.*