



Torah for Turbulent Times

"Looking Up"

The latest updates on infection rates are grim. It's news enough to bring us down in spirit and hope. Surely things will start improving at some point. During these continuing turbulent times it can be helpful to have a reminder to look up. Enter last week's Torah reading. Jacob sets out on a journey of growth. "His wandering is the first stage of his people's path from local family or tribe to a pace setter on the world's road to redemption." (R. Yitz Greenberg) On any journey there are sure to be bumps and pitfalls. Along the way, it's also important to remember to look up, to have dreams, and visions for the future. We meet Jacob on the run from his brother Esau. He rests for the night and a dream ensues. A ladder appears, with its bottom on the ground and its top reaching into the sky. Angels are going up and down, and G-d stands nearby. The symbol of the ladder grounds us and reminds us to look up, to see beyond ourselves, and to put our lives in perspective.

As the saying goes, two Jews, three opinions. Some commentators say the ladder is a delivery system of sorts, helping Jacob's prayers rise to G-d. Others say it's a comment about how everything in our universe here below is in some way connected to the Divine above. Yet others note it represents the various levels or dimensions of our world. I wonder, "*What are your thoughts on the symbolism of the ladder? What reminds you to look up when things are looking down all around us?*" Mindfully, we are to take it all one step, one rung, at a time.

With our Thanksgiving feast behind us, it's almost time for the next celebration. In just over a week it will be time to dust off the menorah, light candles, and grab a sack of potatoes and some oil. We light the first candle on Thursday evening, December 10. Over the next couple of weeks I'll share some Hanukkah teachings. Meanwhile, join me tomorrow evening to begin to get ready with our "Hanukkah for Adults" conversation. [\[Zoom link\]](#)

Beyond the life sustaining posture of *looking up*, we'll also be *looking out* next week - for light, for the miraculous, and for healing and hope.

Rabbi Mark