

ADONAI IS IN THIS PLACE*

אָכֵן יֵשׁ יְהוָה בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה

וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי:

וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי:

וַיִּירָא וַיֹּאמֶר

מִהֲנוֹרָא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה

אֵין זֶה כִּי אֵם־בֵּית אֱלֹהִים

זֶה שַׁעַר הַשָּׁמַיִם:

Surely Adonai is in this place
and I did not know it.

And he was afraid, and said:
How full of awe is this place.

This is none other than the house of God,
and this is the gate of heaven.

Surely Adonai is in this place—God is present even here, in this wilderness (barren of Torah), so it too must be transformed into a sanctuary for the service of deeds to the Holy One. *And I did not know it*—If I had known that God is everywhere, I would not have been sleeping but awake to the divine will. *And he was afraid*—He now understood that each human being was responsible for the “Glory of God on earth” (S.R. Hirsch). *And said: How full of awe is this place*—That is, of “understanding,” according to the Targum (Rashi). *This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven*—“The . . . [gate of Heaven] where angels ascend to and descend from heaven” (N. Sarna), that is, where the means of communication between God and humankind are particularly accessible and powerful. He had come to see that the house of God, where the presence of God is palpable, is such that the angels must find God among humankind; and every home in which God is to be found is thus a “Gate of Heaven, a gate through which we come to God, [and] accordingly, the most consummate union of the earthly with the heavenly” (S.R. Hirsch).

* Genesis 28:16-17 (in Vayetze)