

# Parsha Ponders

Vayigash | Jan 2, 2025 | 2 Teves 5785

## *Night visions and exile assurances<sup>1</sup>*

ויאמר אלקים במראת הלילה ויאמר יעקב יעקב

G-d spoke in a night vision, and He said: “Yaakov, Yaakov”<sup>2</sup>

We don't find that Hashem spoke to Avraham or Yitzchak in a night vision. We only find it in this instance with Yaakov, as well as when he had his famous dream about the ladder going to heaven. The reason is because in both instances he was ready and prepared to move to outside the land of Israel, to dwell there. The ladder case, when he was going to live with Lavan, and now, when he was going to live with Yosef in Egypt.

Since Yaakov was essentially going into exile, Hashem appeared to him specifically at night. This was to teach him that even at night, which symbolizes the darkness of exile, the Divine Presence is with the Jewish people<sup>3</sup>. It's quite appropriate then the teaching that the forefathers enacted the three daily prayers<sup>4</sup>. Avraham enacted the morning prayers of *Shacharis*, Yitzchak enacted the afternoon prayers of *Mincha*, and Yaakov enacted the night prayers of *Maariv*.

It goes deeper than that. We are taught that the Divine Presence only dwells upon a person outside the land of Israel if it originally dwelled upon them in the land. We see this with the prophet Yechezkel<sup>5</sup>. As well, besides the connection between the forefathers and the three daily prayers, we have another connection<sup>6</sup>. The morning prayers correlate to the morning daily offering, the afternoon prayers correlate to the afternoon daily offering. What do the evening prayers correlate to? The burning of the fats and limbs of the animals which were offered that day. This burning can be started by day and continue into the night<sup>7</sup>.

Yaakov, who had the power to bring the Divine Presence with him from the land of Israel to outside it, is therefore the appropriate person to institute the *Maariv* prayers. Usually, there is no Temple service at night. An exception is the burning of the fats and limbs. Since the animal was offered by day, the burning of its fats and limbs can continue into the night. So too, the Divine Presence can accompany us from the Holy land to outside of it.

From this ability of Yaakov, to take with him the Divine Presence of the land of Israel into the exile, we can learn a powerful lesson for ourselves. When the Jewish people are holding on tight to the traditions of their ancestors, going in the same path and values, then they are a mighty and everlasting nation. Since the Divine Presence rested amongst them while the Temple stood, so too it rests amongst them in the darkness of exile. However, if they forget the ways of their ancestors, failing to follow in their ways, then they are considered on their own. We know that the Divine Presence doesn't dwell outside the land of Israel. Without that connection to the past, to when we lived in the land, there's no hope to bring that Divinity into our lives while in exile. This is something we must never forget. Good Shabbos

---

<sup>1</sup> Based on [Meshech Chochmah](#) to [Genesis](#) 46:2

<sup>2</sup> [Genesis](#) *loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> See [Megillah](#) 29a, that throughout history the Divine Presence has always gone into exile with the Jews

<sup>4</sup> [Berachos](#) 26b

<sup>5</sup> [Moed Kattan](#) 25a

<sup>6</sup> [Berachos](#) *loc. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> [Ibid](#) 2a