



Weekly Inspirations

By Pastor Pat Thompson

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Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place—and I did not know it!” (Genesis 28: 16).

The late Jonathan Henry Sacks, Baron Sacks, was an English Orthodox rabbi, philosopher, theologian, and author. Sacks served as the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth from 1991 to 2013.

He once wrote: “Jewish time is not linear but something more profound. I call it covenantal time. This is time, not as continuous advance, but as a narrative with a beginning and a distant end, in whose midst we are and whose twists and turns continue to surprise us.”

The central theme of what has come to be known as the Old Testament is one of “covenant,” a *promise* that begins with the pledge of the High and Holy One to be the God of the Israelite people. That covenant extends even to us today.

This text is part of the story of Jacob’s flight to get away from his murderous brother, Esau. He camps at a place that he will come to call “Beth-el,” literally, “the house of God.” When he goes to sleep, he chooses a stone for a pillow.

Madeleine L’Engle has written:

“A stone for a pillow. It sounds odd to us, until we remember that very few people on this planet go to bed at night on soft pillows. In Japan the headrest is often made of wood. In some countries it is simply the ground. I’ve tried a stone, not in bed, but late on a hot afternoon, when I call the dogs, and walk across the fields to the woods.

Placed under the neck in just the right way, a stone can help me relax after a morning of typing — though I wouldn’t want it for a whole night. But for a time to rest, to think, to let go and be, a warm, rounded stone can be a good pillow, reminding me that I am indeed in the house of God, that wherever I call upon my maker is always God’s house.

In the morning, when we wake up around a circle of glowing coals with warm stone pillows under our heads, there is always a chance that one of us will sit up and say, “Surely the LORD is present in this place, and I did not know it!”

We might not be always aware of the Divine Covenant, or even of God’s presence, but we cannot escape it. The faithful Mason knows that and lives in its glorious truth.

Faithfully and fraternally,

Pat