Dvar Acher – Vayetzei
Rabbi Dan Moskovitz, Senior Rabbi
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When Jacob awakens from his dream of the angels ascending and descending the ladder he proclaims "*Achen Yesh Adonai Bamkom Hazeh* / Surely God is in this place!"

This is a pivotal moment because as our sages teach-here the young Jacob realizes seemingly for the first time-that there is something beyond himself—God is present.

Jacob continues, *"ve'anokhi lo yadati. / and I did not know it."* Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks teaches: Anokhi means "I" and it is superfluous in this sentence. To translate it literally we would have to say, "And I, I did not know it." Why the double "I"? To this, Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz (Panim Yafot) gave a magnificent answer.

"How do we come to know that, 'G-d is in this place?' By *ve'anokhi lo yadati* – not knowing the I. **We know G-d when we forget the self**. We sense the "Thou" of the Divine presence when we move beyond the "I" of egocentricity. Only when we stop thinking about ourselves, do we become truly open to the world." Only when we think of others can we begin to understand ourselves and our place in the world around us.

This was the idea of Martin Buber when he articulated his understanding of human and divine relationships in the context of I and Thou. Buber taught, (please excuse the gendered pronouns of the era) that when I experience another person as a Thou, and have an I-Thou experience with him, then he is not a thing among things, nor does he consist of material qualities. He is no longer merely a pronoun (a He or a She), he is **Thou**, and fills my universe completely. It is **not** as if there were nothing but he. Rather it is as if everything else lives in his light.

Jacob's understanding of God in this moment is really an understanding of himself as inspirable from the divinity that is all round him and **within him**.