This week's Torah portion Vayetze Covers the first part of the journey of Jacob our patriarch. Fleeing the wrath of his brother, Jacob is on the road back to the old country, the safety his mother presumes of her brother's home. And of course as we know the story Jacob stops for the night and has his famous dream of a ladder with angels on it going up and down and God appears directly to Jacob and makes the covenantal promise to him as he had made with Abraham. Notice while Abraham spoke directly with God Jacob can only encounter God in a dream. When he awakens with a start he proclaims " Achen Yesh Adonai Bamkom Hazehl". According to our rabbis this was none other than the very same Mt that his father Isaac was nearly sacrificed upon and would later become the Temple Mount. [1]

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. Until now Jacob has been either a lone clever operator when he was able to take Esau's birthright for a cup of lentil soup and in cahoots with his mother, Rebecca, able to gain his father's blessings. God seemed not present in the life of young Jacob until now.

As Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks writes: ." When Jacob wakes from his sleep,…., he says, "Surely (Adonai) is in this place ve'anokhi lo yadati." Anokhi means "I." In this sentence, it is superfluous. 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

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[1] Maimonides teaches, "It is universally accepted that the place on which David and Solomon built the Altar, the threshing floor of Ornan, is the location where Abraham built the Altar on which he prepared Isaac for sacrifice. Noah built [an altar] on that location when he left the ark. It was also [the place] of the Altar on which Cain and Abel brought sacrifices. [Similarly,] Adam, the first man, offered a sacrifice there and was created at that very spot (Hilchot Beit Habechira 2:2)…"

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 and the Creator of the world."[2]

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 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), limited by other Hes and Shes, a dot in the universal grid of time and space. Nor is he a characteristic that can be experienced and then described. He is not merely a loose bundle of labeled qualities. Standing alone and whole, 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.

This is true in the same way as a song is not merely a collection of tones, nor a verse a mere collection of words, nor a statute a collection of lines. One must tear and break apart in order to make a unified whole revert back to its component parts. So it is with the person whom I call Thou. I can abstract from her the color of her hair or the shadings of her speech, or the aura of

[2] http://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation-5769-vayetse/

her graciousness, and in fact I must often do this, but as soon as I do, she is no longer Thou, whole and complete.

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 **with in him**.

When I was a teen on the March of the Living I had an I Thou moment, a moment when God was in that place a I didn't know it at first.

Montreal Girls Choir – sing Eli Eli it rains on a clear day.