

Jacob Went On His Way, and the Angels of God Met Him

32: 1-2

DIG: Who saw the angels of God? What significance did they have to Jacob? Where did Jacob encounter ADONAI the first time? For Jacob, what was the meaning of naming different places *God's House*, *God's Camp* and *God's Face*?

REFLECT: When have you felt threatened like Jacob did? If you are a believer, what reason do you have not to be afraid?

Jacob left Laban and went on his way. But he was not alone because **the angels of God met him (32:1)**. Just as **the angels of God met him** when he was leaving the Land at Bethel (28:12), now **the angels of God meet him** as he is returning to the Promised Land. Humanly speaking, **Jacob** (Hebrew: *Ya'akov*) was very vulnerable. **He** had a small band of servants, **his wives** and **his children**. **Joseph**, the youngest, was six years old when **Jacob** returned to the Promised Land. If **God** had not intervened, Laban could have easily destroyed **him**; and there was every reason to believe that Esau had the same idea in mind.

But when **Ya'akov** saw **the angels** he knew he was under divine escort. Previously, when he saw **the angels** he had named the place Bethel. But now, **when Jacob saw them**, he said: **This is the camp of God! So he named that place Mahanaim**, which literally means *two camps* (32:2). This was **Jacob's** way of saying he was not only guarded by his small band of servants, but more importantly, he was guarded by **God's** powerful **angels**. There was **Jacob's camp**, and **God's camp** with **the angels**.

Scripture seems to imply that it was only **Ya'akov**, not **his company**, who saw **the angels**. Because of **his** faith and obedience to **God's** call to return to the Land, **He opened his eyes**, just as he did on another occasion when Elisha and his servant seemed all alone against overwhelming odds (**Second Kings 6:16**). Although invisible under normal circumstances, **the angels of God** are real nonetheless. It was important that **Jacob** could see **them** at that time. **ADONAI** had protected **him** in Haran and **He** would protect **him** in Canaan. When **Ya'akov** first encountered **ADONAI**, **God** at **Bethel**, he called the place *God's House* (20:10), and here, on this second great occasion, he is conscious of *God's Camp*. But there is a deeper experience to pass through before he can raise his third and crowning memorial to *God's Face* when he will wrestle with **Him** at **Peniel** (32:30).⁵⁰¹

The angels of God have comforted many a believer without seeing them. And He has said to Jacob and He has said to us: I will never leave you or forsake you; we can say with confidence, "ADONAI is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me (Hebrews 13:5b-6).

Haftarah Vayetze: Hoshea (Hosea) 12:12-14:9 (A); 11:7-12:12 (S)

(see my commentary on Deuteronomy Af - Parashah)

B'rit Chadashah suggested reading for Parashah Vayetze:

Yochanan (John) 1:43-51