

G-d Was In This Place and I, I Did Not Know It
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Pardes from Jerusalem Podcast

Breishit 28:16

Jacob awoke from his sleep. "G-d is truly in this place," he said, "but I, I did not know it."	וַיִּקָּץ יַעֲקֹב, מִשְׁנָתוֹ, וַיֵּאמֶר, אֵין יְיָ ה' בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה; וְאֵנִי, לֹא יָדַעְתִּי.
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How does each of the following interpret what Jacob said?
 Rephrase Jacob's statement in the terms of each thinker's interpretation.
 Give one word for each as to how we get to G-d.
 Divide these interpretations into categories.
 Which do you particularly like?

Rashi, Troyes, France, 1040-1105

For had I known, I would not have slept in such a holy place.	שאם ידעתי לא ישנתי במקום קדוש כזה.
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Menachem Mendel of Kotzk, Poland, 1787-1859

Panim Yafot (Pinchas Horowitz)

It is only possible for a person to attain that high rung of being able to say, "Surely G-d is in this place" when he or she has utterly eradicated all trace of ego from his or her personality, from his or her sense of self, and from his or her being. The phrase, "I, I did not know," must mean "my I – I did not know."

Hannah Rachel Werbermacher, the Maid of Ludomir, Poland, 1805-1892

When you said G-d was here and you didn't know it, you were talking about yourself and what you had done. You were talking about finding G-d even in your most terrible urges. G-d is truly everywhere; yes, even in midst of evil.

Dov Baer, the Maggid of Mezrich, Poland, d. 1772

I shall teach you the best way to say Torah, to offer your innermost teaching. You must cease to be aware of yourself. You must be nothing but an ear which hears what the universe of the word is constantly saying within you. The moment you start hearing what you yourself are saying you must stop.

Shmuel Bar Nachmani, Eretz Yisrael, late third and early 4th century CE

Vayikra Raba 29:2

In the name of R. Meir, it is said: In the dream of the ladder the Holy One showed Jacob the prince of Babylon going up and coming down, the prince of Media going up and coming down, the prince of Greece going up and coming down, the prince of Edom Rome going up and coming down. Then the Holy One said to Jacob: You, too, go up. In that instant our father Jacob grew fearful and said: Perhaps, G-d forbid, as there is a coming down for these, there will be a coming down for me as well. The Holy One replied, "But you, fear not, O Jacob My servant" (Yirmeyahu 30:10). Though you go up, you will never experience a coming down.	אמרו בשם רבי מאיר: מלמד שהראה הקדוש-ברוך-הוא ליעקב שרה של בבל עולה ויורד, של מדי עולה ויורד, ושל יון עולה ויורד, ושל אדום עולה ויורד, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא ליעקב: אף אתה עולה. באותה שעה נתירא יעקב אבינו ואמר: שמא, חס ושלום, כשם שלא לו ירידה אף לי כן. אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא: "ואתה אל-תירא, עבדי יעקב"—אם אתה עולה אין לך ירידה עולמית.
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Zohar, Moses de Leon, Castile, Spain, 1240-1305

What Jacob really said was: "And I have not known Anochi, i.e. the Shechina, Divine Presence, as much as to say: Behold all this revelation has been vouchsafed to me while I have not yet reached the stage of knowledge of Anochi (I) and of entering under the wings of the Shechina so as to achieve perfection.

Richard Rubenstein – G-d is the ocean and we are the waves. In some sense each wave has its moment in which it is distinguishable as a somewhat separate entity. Nevertheless, no wave is entirely distinct from the ocean which is its substantial ground. The waves are surface manifestations of the ocean. Our knowledge of the ocean is largely dependent on the way it manifests itself in the waves.

Shimshon Ostropoler, Ukraine, died 1648

Adin Steinsaltz, The Thirteen Petalled Rose, 1980

At the highest level of holiness are those persons who have achieved a state in which their whole personalities and all of their actions are inseparably joined to the divine holiness,. Of these persons it is said that they become a chariot for the Divine Presence and, like the chariot, they are totally yielded up to the One who sits on the driver's seat, the throne of glory, and they constitute a part of the throne of glory itself, even though they are flesh and blood, human being like all other human beings

All quotes from "G-d was in this place and I, I did not know it" – by Lawrence Kushner.