

Covenant & Conversation

FAMILY EDITION

INSPIRED BY THE TEACHINGS OF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Jonathan Sacks
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY

Vayetse: The Ten Percent

DEVELOPED BY SHOSH HILL

parsha recap

Yaakov begins the long journey towards his mother's family in Charan. Along the way, he stops to rest, and dreams of a ladder with angels going up and down. God appears to Yaakov, repeats the blessings already given to Avraham and Yitzchak, and promises to protect him and eventually bring him back to Canaan. In response, Yaakov vows to build a house for God and to give back a tenth of everything God provides him.

- Why do you think the angels were moving both up and down, and not going in just one direction?
- What do you think it means to give a tenth of everything back to God?
- Since the blessings regarding the whole family were already given to Avraham, why did God repeat them to Yitzchak and Yaakov?

a closer look

עַשֵּׂר אֲעַשְּׂרֶנּוּ לָךְ

"I will dedicate a tenth..." (BEREISHIT 28:22)

RABBI SACKS TEACHES US:

'This promise (to give a tenth) later became the practice of giving a tenth of one's income to charity... Tzedakah is a form of prayer. To know God is to act with justice and compassion, to recognise His image in other people, and to hear the silent cry of those in need.'

Rabbi Sacks quotes Rabbi Yehuda ben Ilai in the Mishna, as follows:

- *'There are ten strong things in the world: Rock is strong, but iron breaks it. Iron is strong, but fire melts it. Fire is strong, but water extinguishes it. Water is strong, but the clouds carry it. The clouds are strong, but the wind drives them. The wind is strong, but man withstands it. Man is strong, but fear weakens him. Fear is strong, but wine removes it. Wine is strong, but sleep overcomes it. Sleep is strong, but death stands over it. What is stronger than death? Acts of tzedakah. For it is written, "Tzedakah delivers from death."'*

moral matters

LET'S DISCUSS!

- Why do you think Rabbi Sacks says **tzedakah is like a kind of prayer**?
- What do you think is meant by, '**to know God is to see Him in other people**'?
- Rabbi Yehuda ben Ilai lists many powerful things in the world. Why do you think he ends with **acts of tzedakah** as the **strongest**.