

Do You Know Who Needs You?

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As we sit by the warm glow of our Chanukkah menorot, may we dream as Jacob dreamed, of building our own stairway to heaven. For you must know that we are the stairway! We are the bridge that connects heaven with earth. We are God's messengers who bring God's love, wisdom, and compassion into the world.

Do you believe in angels? The Bible surely does.

But when the Bible speaks of angels, it does not mean supernatural creatures with wings. The Hebrew word for angel is *malakh*. *Malakh* refers to anyone or anything that serves as a messenger or a manifestation of God.

In the Torah reading for last Shabbat, *Parashat vayeitzei*, our patriarch Jacob sees angels in a dream. In Genesis, chapter 28, verses 10-12, we read, “Jacob had a dream. A stairway was set on the ground and its top reached to the sky and angels of God were going up and down on it (*olim veyordim bo*).”

Now our rabbis raised a question: why were the angels “going up” to heaven? Shouldn’t they have been “coming down”? The angels’ presence on earth suggested to our sages that home base for angels is not up in heaven --but down here-- on earth. We human beings are God’s angels. We are God’s messengers of love and caring.

We know this to be true. We know people who are so wonderful, people who are such beautiful and magnificent human beings, that they are to us like angels.

Moreover, each one of us in this sanctuary tonight has been, is, or will yet be, a guardian angel, a messenger of God’s love and caring, to someone else. Rabbi Lawrence Kushner writes:

“There must have been a time when you entered a room and met someone and after a while you understood that unknown to either of you there was a reason you had met. You had changed the other or he had changed you. By some word or deed or just by your presence the errand had been completed.

Each lifetime is the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. No one has within themselves all the pieces to their puzzle. Everyone carries with them at least one and probably many pieces to someone else’s puzzle. Sometimes they know it. Sometimes they don’t. And when you present your piece, which is worthless to you, to another, whether you know it or not, whether they know it or not, you are a messenger from the most high.”

So, later tonight, when you are relaxing at home, please reflect on this: is there not someone out there for whom you are – or could be—a guardian angel? Someone you know needs you to be their guardian angel. Do you know who it is?

You know, it's no coincidence that we read in the Torah about angels and the stairway to heaven in advance of Chanukkah. For one of the purposes of Chanukkah is to help us see the light within us – and to help that light glow even brighter.

One week from tonight we will light our Chanukkah menorot. This ritual of kindling lights symbolizes our God-given responsibility to increase the light of the world, to bring more Godliness into it, to bring more light and beauty and truth and warmth into an oftentimes cold, cruel, and indifferent world.

Think of yourself as a candle. And we all know what candles can do. One candle can light another. And another. And another. Someone once said, "There are people who wait for the dawn to come and there are people who bring the dawn with them." Each one of us has the power to banish the darkness, to bring the dawn for someone else.

How can you bring the dawn? When your heart helps another heart to take heart. How can you bring the dawn? When your mind eases the distraught mind of another. How can you bring the dawn? When your soul restores hope to the soul of another.

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Do you believe in angels? If you know that you can be a source of light, you do believe. If you have met your guardian angel, you do believe. If you want to be a guardian angel, you surely do believe!