

## FULFILLING THE NEW COVENANT

### A Devotional Meditation on Vayetzte (And He Went Out)

Genesis 28:10-32:2; Hosea 12:12-14:9; Isaiah 40:1-31; Jeremiah 31:31-34;  
Romans 8:18-23; 1 Corinthians 2:14-16; Hebrews 8:8-12

Albert J. McCarn  
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How do people “hear from God”? Unless they know Him, they probably don’t hear from Him. Even if they do, it’s not usually an audible voice, but a certain pattern of communication we come to recognize.

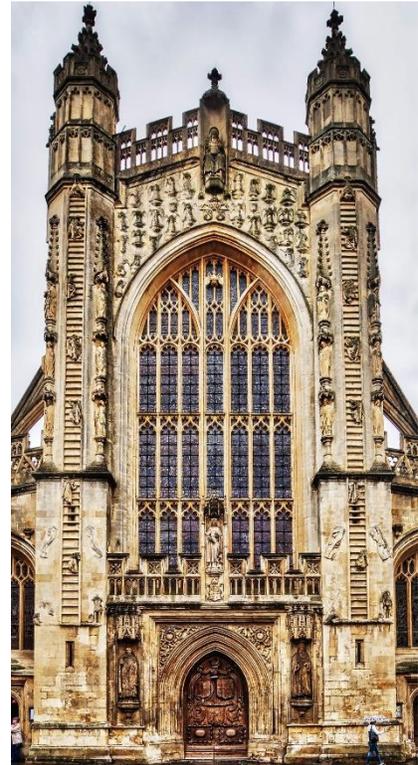
That is my experience, at least. Only once have I ever come close to hearing an audible voice of God. That happened a few days before my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, when a message dropped into my spirit with the words, “You’ve had 40 years to learn the wisdom of the Pharaohs. Now it’s time to learn from Me.”

That message marked a milestone in my relationship with God. That relationship had begun when, as a child, I received and believed the testimony of my parents, grandparents, pastors, and teachers about their relationships with God. My own testimony developed as I wrestled with alternatives to the Judeo-Christian worldview, and concluded that the only objective Truth resided in the God of Israel.

In my youth, I enjoyed several “mountaintop experiences” when I felt close to God. The ecstasy of those moments punctuated my growing intellectual understanding of God and His Word. That, however, was the extent of the relationship. He was part of my life, but not the center of my existence. I was at the center, and I expected God to bring success in all my endeavors. He made me a soldier, and I expected Him to ratify my choices as I strove to be the best soldier I could be, according to my definitions.

My core identity was as a soldier, and everything in my life revolved around that identity. It was only when God removed that identity for a season that I realized my priorities were out of order. He was the reason for my existence, and therefore He was supposed to be at the center of my life. My wife and I, as “one flesh,” were to be a unified new creation in Him. Our children were to be the holy expression of that union. My careers as a soldier, scholar, and government employee were the avenues where God placed me to accomplish His purposes. Success was not to be defined by promotions, salary, or material possessions, but by the degree to which I glorified the Name of my Creator.

That’s how I understand these things now, more than twenty years after that Divine Message dropped into my spirit. Years of preparation had made me ready to receive the message and act on it. Immediately afterward, I entered an extended time of intense



*West façade of Bath Abbey, England, depicting angels ascending and descending on Jacob's Ladder (Gen 28:10-22). Photo by Granboca, May 2, 2016, CC BY-SA 4.0, [via Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:West_façade_of_Bath_Abbey.jpg).*

prayer and Bible study that transformed my intellectual relationship with the Almighty into a continuous dialogue as I ask Him to teach me His ways and direct me in applying His counsel every day. This is what it means to know God. Being in relationship with Him means we learn His priorities and make them our own priorities.

It's hard to convince people that this is the right way to live, especially when they see godly people suffering from sickness and other problems. He doesn't promise to give us a life free of trouble, but He does promise to carry us through our troubles. That's how He refines us to be faithful expressions of Himself in His creation. It takes a degree of spiritual maturity to understand that, and most people don't have that kind of maturity. That's why Paul tells us,

Now a natural man does not accept the things of the *Ruach Elohim* [Spirit of God], for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. But the one who is spiritual discerns all things, and he himself is discerned by no one. For "who has known the mind of *ADONAI*, that he will instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Messiah.

1 Corinthians 2:14-16 TLV

In asking, "who has known the mind of *ADONAI*, that he will instruct Him?" Paul quotes from Isaiah 40, the chapter that begins,

"Comfort, comfort My people," says your God. Speak kindly to the heart of Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her warfare has ended, that her iniquity has been removed. For she has received from *ADONAI*'s hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of *ADONAI*, Make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

Isaiah 40:1-3 TLV

This connection to Isaiah brings up several points. The first is that we finite human beings cannot possibly understand our infinite Creator. Second, the only people who have any hope of understanding something about our Creator are those who have a relationship with Him. Third, it's the Spirit of God Who provides that understanding, and through the Spirit we have the Mind of Messiah. Fourth, the Hebrews have understood these concepts for millennia. The reason God called Abraham out of his homeland and established a covenant with him was so that his family would be the first among all humans to have such a relationship. He wanted Abraham's family to demonstrate this to all nations, and help them enter the same covenantal relationship.

The story of Abraham's family is the story of relationships – both of individuals with one another and with God, and the relationship of the entire family and nation of Israel with God. Jacob's story is a prime example. Like me, he had known God through the testimony of his elders, and his own intellectual development through studying the Torah as it had been revealed up to that point. However, it was only when he was ready, and when God had isolated him from his previous life in his father's house, that Jacob finally heard from God directly. That's the story of Jacob's Ladder, when he had a vision of God while sleeping at the place he called Beth-El, House of God. It was there that God promised to pass on to Jacob the covenant blessings of Abraham – to give him the land of Israel, and make him a nation through which all the nations would be blessed. He

promised as well to be with Jacob and watch over him, to bring him back to the Promised Land, and not to forsake him.

That was a major step in the process of transforming Jacob into Israel. Jacob no longer had to rely on what he had heard about God from his parents and grandparents, but could testify about how he had heard from God. That testimony still carries the people of Israel through every trial they face, individually and as a people. That testimony also carries us who have been adopted into the Hebrew nation through our trials. We know that if our fathers and mothers heard from God, then we can as well, provided our hearts are inclined toward Him. Ultimately, that's what our Redeeming God wants, and what all Creation has been waiting to see. That's the purpose of the New Covenant, as Jeremiah explains:

“But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days”—it is a declaration of *ADONAI*— “I will put My *Torah* within them. Yes, I will write it on their heart. I will be their God and they will be My people. No longer will each teach his neighbor or each his brother, saying: ‘Know *ADONAI*,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest,” it is a declaration of *ADONAI*. “For I will forgive their iniquity, their sin I will remember no more.”

Jeremiah 31:32-33 (33-34) TLV

When entire generations of native-born and adopted Israelites demonstrate their living relationship with the Almighty, then we will know that the terms of the New Covenant are fulfilled.