

PARSHAT VAYETZEI  
GENESIS 28:10-32:3  
7 KISLEV 5782/11 NOVEMBER 2021



*Jacob's Ladder*  
Oil on canvass by Helen Frankenthaler

NO GREATER GOOD THAN HOPE

1. Jacob worked for Rachel for seven years. They were in his eyes as only a few days, because of his love for her. (Genesis 29:20)
2. During the period of his working, it seemed to him that the time was short when compared to the value of the anticipated reward, which was tremendous in his eyes. Additionally, these were peaceful and sweet days, as he exulted in his love and expectation – and there is no greater good than hope. (Samuel David Luzzatto)
3. One of the most important distinctions I have learned in the course of reflection on Jewish history is the difference between optimism and hope. Optimism is the belief that things will get better. Hope is the belief that, together, we can make things better. Optimism is a passive virtue, hope is an active one. It takes no courage to be an optimist, but it takes a great deal of courage to have hope. (Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Dignity of Difference*)

4. Hope focuses more directly on the personal attainment of specific goals, whereas optimism focuses more broadly on the expected quality of future outcomes in general. (Fred Bryant and Jamie Cvengros, “Distinguishing Hope and Optimism,” *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 2004)

In other words, optimism is the belief that things will turn out all right; hope makes no such assumption but is a conviction that one can act to make things better in some way. (Arthur Brooks, “The Difference Between Hope and Optimism,” *The Atlantic* 09/23/2021)

5. As long as within our hearts  
The Jewish soul sings,  
As long as forward to the East  
To Zion, looks the eye –  
Our hope is not yet lost,  
It is two thousand years old,  
To be a free people in our land  
The land of Zion and Jerusalem.
6. Not everything is lost. Responsibility cannot be lost, it can only be abdicated. If one refuses abdication, one begins again. (James Baldwin, *Just Above My Head*)