And Jacob left Beer-Sheba. Rashi cites a famous comment from Bereishis Rabbah to clarify why the Torah mentions Jacob's departure from the city: The departure of a righteous person from a place makes an impression, for when a righteous person is in a city, he constitutes its magnificence, its splendor and its grandeur. Once he departs, its magnificence, splendor and grandeur depart. Is there a specific part of the phrase which suggests that Beer-Sheba was a beautiful city before Jacob left it, and that his departure rendered it desolate? On what basis does the Midrash derive this interpretation about the departure?

In Parashas Bo, we read, [Moses] exited from Pharaoh with burning anger, (Ex. 11:8). Here the term implies permanent dislocation. Similarly, And Jacob left Beer-Sheba. Jacob was uprooted by forces beyond his control, compelled to leave a place he loved. It is in light of the phrase that the Midrash and Rashi conclude that Jacob left a place to which he had become bonded. Jacob and Beer-Sheba had merged into a symbiotic entity, and now Jacob had to leave Beer-Sheba and become dislocated.

How are we to understand the symbiotic relationship between Jacob and Beer-Sheba? To gain insight into this connection, we must consider Beer-Sheba's special significance in Jacob's life. And he [Abraham] planted an eishel in Beer-Sheba, and he called there in the name of the Lord, the God of the world (21:33). Beer-Sheba was the first home of the covenantal community, the center of spiritual life for the adherents of Abraham's teaching. When Jacob left Beer-Sheba, he was pulled away from this spiritual center. Perhaps he was frightened that if he left the home of his father and grandfather and the center of their teaching, he would also lose his role as leader and teacher of the covenantal community.

This symbiotic relationship between Jacob and Beer-Sheba is also evident in the narrative of Jacob's departure from the city. Rashi cites a famous comment from Bereishis Rabbah: He would also lose his role as leader and teacher of the covenantal community. Jacob and Beer-Sheba, in this context, are seen as inseparable. Jacob's departure from Beer-Sheba signifies not just a physical movement, but a spiritual one as well.
And Jacob left Beer-Sheba, and he went to Haran. When Isaac was faced with famine and wanted to leave Eretz Yisrael, he was barred from taking this step. If leaving the Promised Land was forbidden, why did God tell Jacob to do so? Was not his mission as an ancestor of the Jewish people bound up with the Land of Israel? Jacob surely asked himself: Can I really succeed in building a community in Haran? Why should I leave behind the myriads of adherents whom Abraham and Isaac trained? Apparently it was God’s will that Jacob begin anew with a community of twelve souls and, ultimately, seventy: all the souls of the house of Jacob who came to Egypt were seventy (46:27). In Haran, Jacob was called upon to start a new community with a handful of children. Here God teaches a fundamental truth about Judaism. The wisdom and moral principles are recognizable and understandable in every location, in every country—even on the moon. Had Jacob not left Beer-Sheba, the community would have been limited only to the Land of Israel. Judaism must also be taught outside Israel. (Darosh Darash Yosef, p. 76; Boston, 1978)

The paradigmatic figure who found God despite His transcendence is the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel’s prophetic revelation took place not in the Temple, nor even in the Land of Israel, but rather in a concentration camp in the midst of the bitter Babylonian exile, among the captives on the River Kebar (Ezek. 1:1). Yet, despite the fact that it was a time of acute hester panim, the heavens opened and saw visions of God. (Ezek. 1:1). When Ezekiel declared, Blessed is the glory of God, from His place (ibid. 3:12), he was referring to the huge distance between God and His people. Jacob similarly encountered God in a time of travail. Penniless, fleeing his brother, on the road towards exile, Jacob also perceived God as

Chazal interpret the word הקס in the context of prayer, both in regard to Jacob and Abraham. Chazal indicate that Abraham instituted the Shacharis prayer based on the verse, וַיִּשְׁכַּב אֶקֶס בָּקָר אֲלֵה, And Abraham arose early in the morning to the place, where he had stood before the Lord (19:27). Based on this verse, in which the word הקס also appears, they suggest that Jacob instituted the Ma’ariv prayer. The word הקס has the connotation of an appointment, a date, a rendezvous in a certain place at a certain time. Prayer is our rendezvous with God, which ideally takes place at a specific time and specific place every day. (Lecture to Rabbinic Alumni, 1968)

And behold, angels of God were ascending and descending upon it. According to the Midrash, Jacob’s image was engraved on the heavenly throne (Bereishis