



**William Blake : Jacob's Ladder**, c.1799-1807. Pen and grey ink and watercolour.

'Jacob's Ladder (Hebrew: יַעֲקֹב סוּלָם Sulam Yaakov) is a ladder leading to heaven that was featured in a dream the biblical Patriarch Jacob had during his flight from his brother Esau in the Book of Genesis.

'The significance of the dream has been debated, but most interpretations agree that it identified Jacob with the obligations and inheritance of the Jewish people chosen by God, as understood in Abrahamic religions.'



**Jacob's Dream. Israel, Contemporary Naive Art by the Ethiopian Jews - the Beta Israel, The House of Israel.** During their wait in transitional camps in Addis Abbeba, the Ethiopian men embroidered biblical stories.

Embroidery, cotton. Made in the 1980's.



**Hilary Sylvester, Biblical Judaic Paintings Inspired from the Bible;  
Jacob's Dream: Jacob's Dreams about the Land God promised Him – Israel.**



### **Jacob's Dream**

#### **Jusepe de Ribera**

With this piece, Ribera is somewhat daring and goes for the most difficult route of all: he merely shows Jacob sleeping, with the tiniest suggestion of Jacob's celestial dream world in the wispy clouds above his head. Ribera thus reveals himself to be a master of painting the invisible, of painting the metaphor.

Ribera's Jacob's Dream is notable for the following qualities;

#### **Composition:**

In the words of one art historian, Ribera's Jacob's Dream is remarkable for its plainness. Ribera is utterly faithful to the scriptures; this countryside certainly is drab and miserable, and Jacob is clad in equally drab and humble garments well befitting his nomadic status.

In fact, at first glance, the idle viewer could be fooled into thinking that this was merely an odd picture of a sleeping shepherd: after all, where is the splendid ladder, the winged angels, the celestial light?

A closer look, however, reveals that this is no ordinary nap: in the sky above Jacob's head, Ribera has painted with the greatest delicacy and subtlety wispy, imaginary angels apparently descending an imaginary ladder. In so doing, Ribera manages to make this biblical story utterly real: the 17th century viewer could perfectly imagine himself in this pictorial space, in the company of such a man.

Ribera divides his canvas in two carefully distinguished realms: the lower, earthly realm, and the higher, heavenly realm, the realm of dreams and spirituality.