

Dream at Bethel

by [Mischa Willett](#) in the [July 26, 2005](#) issue

Quiet now, but for camel's tongues,
lopping fat and sticky in the young

desert night, big wind in the black backdrop
of sky, crickets and their ancient legs, log-pops

from my small fire. Cool on my feet,
this breeze after two days walking since trees

of my village waved their shaggy good-byes. My wool socks
stuffed in boots, I relax; put a smooth rock

under my head, start to dream the dreams of my life:
I can fly like hawks, have green-eyed wives

from the east, am a sailor with a swift ship,
fish, kingdoms under me, then this:

a ladder leaning into clouds, bright like sun-high noon,
quick as raindrops, up and down, angels, soft as moon.

Then a whisper comes sliding too, down the ricket of the bars,
promising health, wealth, good luck, descendants like the stars.

The fire is dim as voices when the drop
of my leg wakes me. Blinking, I prop

on an elbow and look around for stairs, an unnatural
hint of spirits, but see only my bearded camels,

some lights on a hill from town, my boots, provisions.

I think better of my strange vision.

At breakfast I splash oil on my pillow rock—
it seems holy still—and get ready to walk, pack

everything, give the camels some straw,
call the place Church, to remember what I saw.