

Genesis

Chapter 28



**Michael Fronczak
Bible Study Resource Center
564 Schaeffer Dr.
Coldwater, Michigan 49036**

biblestudyresourcecenter.com

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Genesis 28

¹And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. ²Arise, go to Padanaram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother. ³And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; ⁴And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham. ⁵And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Padanaram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

⁶When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to Padanaram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan; ⁷And that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Padanaram; ⁸And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father; ⁹Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife.

¹⁰And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. ¹¹And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put *them for* his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. ¹²And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. ¹³And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I *am* the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; ¹⁴And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵And, behold, I *am* with thee, and will keep thee in all *places* whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done *that* which I have spoken to thee of.

¹⁶And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew *it* not. ¹⁷And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful *is* this place! this *is* none other but the house of God, and this *is* the gate of heaven. ¹⁸And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put *for* his pillows, and set it up *for* a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. ¹⁹And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city *was called* Luz at the first. ²⁰And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, ²¹So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: ²²And this stone, which I have set *for* a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

Genesis 28:1

And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.

[blessed him] This blessing was freely given, after he obtained the birthright by deceit (Genesis 27:1-46). Perhaps it was needful to erase all doubt as to whether the birthright really belonged to him.

And blessed him—Now voluntarily and cheerfully confirmed to him the blessing, which he had before obtained through subtlety. It was necessary that he should have this confirmation previously to his departure; else, considering the way in which he had obtained both the birthright and the blessing, he might be doubtful, according to his own words, whether he might not have got a curse instead of a blessing. As the blessing now pronounced on Jacob was obtained without any deception on his part, it is likely that it produced a salutary effect upon his mind, might have led him to confession of his sin, and prepared his heart for those discoveries of God's goodness with which he was favored at Luz.¹

[charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan] Early on God forbade Israel to mix with other nations, (Genesis 24:3; Exodus 34:12-16; Numbers 23:9; Deut. 7:3-4; Joshua 23:12; Ezra 9:1-10:44; Neh. 13:1-30). Esau's failure in this grieved his parents (Genesis 26:34-35). God cursed such carelessness in Israel (Numbers 25:1-8; Judges 3:5-8).

Isaac called Jacob and blessed him—He entered fully into Rebekah's feelings, and the burden of his parting counsel to his son was to avoid a marriage alliance with any but the Mesopotamian branch of the family. At the same time he gave him a solemn blessing—pronounced before unwittingly, now designedly, and with a cordial spirit. It is more explicitly and fully given, and Jacob was thus acknowledged "the heir of the promise."²

McGee: Intermarriage always leads to godlessness. I say this as a caution. I recognize that we are living in a day when young people are not very apt to take advice from an old preacher. They wonder what he knows about it all. Frankly, if you want to know the truth, I know a whole lot about this particular matter. I've done years of counseling and have had many, many couples come to me and have been able to watch them through the years. The story is pretty much the same. A young lady or a young man will say they have met the right person, the one they wish to marry. That person is not a Christian. However, they want to marry that person and win him or her for the Lord. May I say this, young lady, if you cannot win him for the Lord before you get married, you will not win him after you are married. May I say this, young man, if you cannot win her for the Lord before you get married, you will not win her after you are married. God forbids the godly to marry the godless. It always entails sorrow. I have seen literally hundreds of cases, and I have never yet seen a case where it has worked. Never yet! You can't beat God! God

¹ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

² JFB Commentary

has put it down indelibly all the way through the Word that the godly are not to marry the godless. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14). The New Testament strictly tells Christians that they are not to be unequally yoked. You don’t get unequally yoked by sitting on a platform with an unbeliever, as some critics have accused me of doing! You do it by intermarrying. That’s the way you join up with them. And God strictly forbids it.³

Genesis 28:2

Arise, go to Padanaram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother’s father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother’s brother.

[Arise, go to Padan-aram ... and take thee a wife] This mission was similar in purpose to that of Genesis 24.

[Bethuel] The son of Nahor and Milcah, and father of Laban and Rebekah (Genesis 28:2-5; Genesis 11:29; Genesis 22:23; Genesis 24:15,24,47,50; Genesis 25:20), called "the Syrian" in Genesis 28:5. He was evidently dead at this time, for Laban took over the marriage bargaining of Eliezer for Rebekah in Genesis 24.

Torah Class: Isaac, having agreed with Rebecca that the last thing the family needed was more Canaanite women added to the clan through marriage, instructs Jacob to go take a wife from his mother’s family up in Mesopotamia. Let me remind you once again that the term enmeshed family doesn’t go nearly far enough in explaining the societal structure of that era; because Isaac is demanding all this of a son who is in his late 70’s.⁴

Go to Padan-aram—This mission, in its spirit and design, is nearly the same as that in Genesis 24 (note). There have been several ingenious conjectures concerning the retinue which Jacob had, or might have had, for his journey; and by some he has been supposed to have been well attended. Of this nothing is mentioned here, and the reverse seems to be intimated elsewhere. It appears, from Genesis 28:11, that he lodged in the open air, with a stone for his pillow; and from Genesis 32:10, that he went on foot with his staff in his hand; nor is there even the most indirect mention of any attendants, nor is it probable there were any. He no doubt took provisions with him sufficient to carry him to the nearest encampment or village on the way, where he would naturally recruit his bread and water to carry him to the next stage, and so on. The oil that he poured on the pillar might be a little of that which he had brought for his own use, and can be no rational argument of his having a stock of provisions, servants, camels, etc., for which it has been gravely brought. He had God alone with him.⁵

³McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:116). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

⁵Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Old Testament

Paddan Aram. This place name only appears in Genesis. It is either a designation for the general area of northern Mesopotamia (= Aram Naharaim in Genesis 24:10) or perhaps another name for Haran. In Akkadian, both *padanu* and *harranu* mean “path” or “road.” In either case, Jacob is instructed to return to his ancestors’ homeland to seek a bride as part of their practice of endogamy (marrying within a select group).⁶

Padan Aram is a region of Haran in northern Aram (Syria) near the Euphrates River.

Genesis 28:3

And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people;

God Almighty *El Shaddai*, (God Almighty) is believed to have originally meant “God, the One of the Mountain” and thus to have expressed the association of a deity with his mountain abode well known in Canaanite literature (cf. the “Lord, Him of Sinai” in Judg. 5:5). In the Priestly conception, the four-letter name translated as LORD was disclosed only in the time of Moses (Exod. 6:2-3), and *El Shaddai* was the name by which God revealed Himself to the patriarchs.⁷

God Almighty: This Hebrew phrase, *El Shaddai*, is used by or in the hearing of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (35:11). God later identified Himself to Moses with this same name (Ex. 6:3).

Missler: Two factors: 1) Maintain purity of the line of descent in general; 2) The existence of the *Rephaim*, et al. (Gen 6:4, etc.). After the announcement of Gen 15:13-16, Satan had four centuries to lay down a mine field...Joshua was instructed to wipe out all of certain tribes...Josh 11:20-22, et al. Cf. Deut 3:11.⁸

That thou mayest be a multitude of people—**לקהל עמים** *likhal ammim*. There is something very remarkable in the original words: they signify literally for an assembly, congregation, or church of peoples; referring no doubt to the Jewish Church in the wilderness, but more particularly to the Christian Church, composed of every kindred, and nation, and people, and tongue. This is one essential part of the blessing of Abraham. See Genesis 28:4.⁹

This is the 39th prophecy in Genesis (Genesis 28:3-4, partially fulfilled, but will be completely fulfilled when Christ comes). The next prophecy is in Genesis 28:13.

⁶ Bible Background Commentary

⁷ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

⁸ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

⁹ Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Old Testament

Sevenfold Blessing of the Prophecy

1. God Almighty bless you (Genesis 28:3)
2. Make you fruitful (Genesis 28:3)
3. Multiply you (Genesis 28:3)
4. Make you a multitude of people (Genesis 28:3)
5. Give you the blessing of Abraham (which is justification by faith, Genesis 28:4; Genesis 15:6; Romans 4; Galatians 3:14)
6. Give your seed the blessing of Abraham (Genesis 28:4; Genesis 15:6; Romans 4; Galatians 3:14 with Isaiah 66:7-8; Zech. 12:10-13:1; Romans 11:25-28)
7. Give you the land of Canaan, as promised Abraham (Genesis 28:4; Genesis 13:14-18; Genesis 15:18-21; Genesis 17:7-8)¹⁰

God, Sovereignty—Isaac’s prayerful blessing of Jacob is a beautiful expression of faith in the benevolent sovereignty of God. Isaac recognized that God could bring good things to pass in the life of his son through whom the covenant people of God would grow. Isaac frankly recognized that without the blessing of God, the future is left to chance and subject to hostile forces and human failure.¹¹

Genesis 28:4

And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.

Adam Clarke: Give thee the blessing of Abraham—May he confirm the inheritance with all its attendant blessings to thee, to the exclusion of Esau; as he did to me, to the exclusion of Ishmael. But, according to St. Paul, much more than this is certainly intended here, for it appears, from Galatians 3:6-14, that the blessing of Abraham, which is to come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, comprises the whole doctrine of justification by faith, and its attendant privileges, viz., redemption from the curse of the law, remission of sins, and the promise of the Holy Spirit, including the constitution and establishment of the Christian Church.

Torah Class: Then Isaac blesses Jacob before he departs with the blessing we see in Vs 3 and 4. Let’s not just hurry by this blessing. If God has shown me one thing about the OT, it’s that you ALWAYS want to look closely when a blessing or a curse is pronounced. We tend to read them as little more than quaint, and sometimes puzzling, sayings of a long extinct culture; but almost to a fault they are prophetic, and we will eventually find a link to that blessing or curse in later parts of the OT, or sometimes, in the NT.

Back in Genesis 27:27-29, we see the blessing Isaac gave to Jacob, the BLESSING, that one that Esau assumed he had been cheated out of; and what we notice if we look closely is that it contained only SOME of the elements of the covenant promise that God had originally made to Abraham, then was handed off to Isaac in its entirety. WHY?

¹⁰ Dake’s Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

¹¹ Disciple’s Study Bible

Because, Isaac was in the middle of a real battle with his faith. I think we can also safely assume that Isaac was not entirely convinced that the one he gave the blessing to was Esau (which, of course, it was NOT).....and that he wasn't exactly enamored with the character of either of his twin sons. So, either he gave the blessing half-heartedly, because he was unconvinced his son would actually carry it forward, or he was withholding part of it until he sensed the time was right.

Now, many years earlier, when Abraham was given the covenant promise by God, one of the elements of the covenant included that Abraham would be the father of a great nation. If we look back at Gen 12:2, perhaps you will remember that I told you that the Hebrew word used for "nation" was "goy". And, that when goy is used it usually means "gentile nations". However, let me parse that just a little bit more: in Abraham's time, to take the word "goy" to mean strictly non-Hebrew would have had no meaning: because until Isaac was born, there was no distinction between Hebrew and non-Hebrew nations produced by Abraham. That is, though Abraham was called the first Hebrew, it was with the birth of his sons Ishmael and Isaac that the first fork in the road, the differentiation between Hebrew and non-Hebrew offspring, would really occur, with Isaac being the Hebrew and Ishmael and all the other sons and daughters of his being the non-Hebrews. So, as "goy" is used in Gen 12:2, in the earliest development of the Hebrew people, it is referring to BOTH Hebrew and non-Hebrew nations: nations at large without regard to being Hebrew or non-Hebrew.

Now, coming back to Genesis 28:3, we see what appears to be the same blessing that God gave to Abraham, and then Abraham gave to Isaac, now being transferred by Isaac to Jacob; but there is an important difference. Where most bibles say that Isaac said to Jacob something like "that you may become a company of people....or.....company of nations" the Hebrew for "company of people or company of nations" is "*kahal ammim*". This is entirely different than what God promised to Abraham, AND what was promised to Isaac; that is, that they would produce "goy".....a mixture of nations. For "*kahal ammim*" in its most literal translation is used in Hebrew as the **OPPOSITE** of what God told Abraham. Literally, "*kahal ammim*" means a "holy convocation of fellow countrymen". Put in other words, it means an assembly of people, for holy purposes, consisting of people from the same tribe or groups of tribes.

That is, Jacob, soon to be renamed "Israel", will be the first in the line of covenant promise to produce ONLY Hebrews. He will produce ONLY nations of Hebrew people.....ONLY the people who would become called, by the time of Moses, "His (God's) precious treasure".

Let me summarize that again: Abraham produced both Hebrew and non-Hebrew offspring (just as God promised him in Gen 12:2), with Isaac being the Hebrew. Abraham's son Isaac also produced Hebrew and non-Hebrew people, with Jacob being the Hebrew. But, Jacob produced ONLY Hebrews.....all the tribes of Israel....which is exactly what the blessing of "*kahal ammim*", a holy convocation of fellow countrymen, is telling us.¹²

¹² Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

Chumash: Toras Menachem; “The Blessing of Abraham”

Normally, when the Torah relates how a certain individual received a particular blessing, we are informed why the blessing was given. For example, in the preceding section we read how Isaac wanted to bless Esau because he was getting old. Similarly, we read earlier God gave a series of blessings to Isaac to prosper in the Land of Israel, to counter his intention to leave the Land. Abraham likewise received God’s blessing for a specific reason, “All the nations of the world will be blessed through your children, because you listened to My voice.

In the current passage, we read how Isaac blessed Jacob before his departure to Padan-Aram to find a wife. The blessing is verse 3, to be “fruitful and multiply, and you will become an assembly of nations,” thus makes sense, as this was connected to Jacob’s marriage.

However, when reading verse 4, Rashi was troubled by the question: How is the blessing of Abraham and the inheritance of the Land of Israel connected with Jacob’s journey to find a wife? This blessing seems rather out of place.

Therefore, Rashi searched for an explanation why the “blessing of Abraham” could be connected with Jacob’s marriage preparation. Rashi came to the conclusion that Isaac’s blessing here must have been the words that God said to Abraham in connection with having children: “I will make you into a great nation” (12:2), and, “[All the nations of the world] will be blessed through your children” (22:18).

In fact, the former blessing is particularly appropriate in the case as it was given to Abraham before embarking on a journey, which is precisely what Jacob was about to do here. Rashi comments there that God gave Abraham this blessing because, “traveling diminishes.. fertility,” so “the blessing of Abraham,” was especially apt for Jacob at this time, when he was embarking on the task of building a family.

One serious problem here however is that God’s blessing to Abraham to have any children was not, in fact, fulfilled. For during his travels, Abraham only merited one son who proved to be a true heir.

In response to this problem, Rashi continued, “May those blessings be for you.” I.e. that god’s words for Abraham were actually intended for Jacob, (And we see that they were indeed fulfilled, for despite all his travels Jacob established twelve tribes who were all true heirs.)¹³

Genesis 28:5

And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Padanaram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob’s and Esau’s mother.

[**Syrian**] Called "the Syrian" twice (Genesis 28:5; Genesis 25:20). Laban, his son, is called the same three times (Genesis 25:20; Genesis 31:20,24). Jacob is so-called in Deut. 26:5. Naaman the leper is the only other person so-called (2 Kings 5:20; Luke 4:27). The Syrian language was widespread in the days of the kings of Israel (2 Kings 18:26; Ezra 4:7; Isaiah 36:11). Syria is used 77 times and Syrians 61 times of a land north of Palestine

¹³ Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

and its people who often fought Israel. They are mostly referred to in the books of Kings and Chronicles, as the enemies of the Jews.

Bethuel the Syrian—Literally the Aramean, so called, not because he was of the race of Aram the son of Shem, but because he dwelt in that country which had been formerly possessed by the descendants of Aram.

Aramean. The origin of the Arameans is problematic. They do not actually appear in Mesopotamian records until the end of the second-millennium Assyrian annals of Tiglath-pileser I (1114-1076 B.C.). In the ninth century Shalmaneser III mentions kings of Aram in Damascus (including Hazael and Ben-Hadad III). However, this is many centuries after the setting of the ancestor narratives. The mention of Arameans in relation to Abraham and Jacob is likely a reference to scattered tribes of peoples in upper Mesopotamia who had not yet coalesced in the nation of Aram, which appears in later texts. Based on other examples from cuneiform literature, the name Aram may in fact have originally been that of a region (cf. Sippar-Amnantum of the Old Babylonian period) and was later applied to people living there. Current evidence suggests that the Arameans inhabited the upper Euphrates throughout the second millennium, first as villagers and pastoralists, then as a political, national coalition.¹⁴

McGee: If you were to give the nationality of this family, you would have to say they were Syrians because that is what they are called in the Scriptures. Sometimes the question is asked, “Was Abraham a Jew? Was he an Israelite?” No, actually he was not. There were no Israelites until the time of Jacob whose name was changed to Israel. His twelve sons were Israelites. The line came from Abraham, he is the father of the race, but you’re not going to call Abraham a Midianite, I hope, and yet he is the father of the Midianites, also.¹⁵

Ramban: “The brother of Rebekah, Jacob’s and Esau’s mother” Because it stated that Isaac commanded Jacob to get a wife from the daughters of Laban, his mother’s brother, Scripture mentions that he was also the brother of Esau’s mother. It would have been proper for Isaac to have commanded Esau likewise, but since he knew that the blessing of Abraham would apply only to Jacob and his seed, he did so only to Jacob. Now Scripture further mentions that Esau heard that his father had commanded Jacob not to take a wife from among the daughters of Canaan and that he should go to his mother’s brother Laban. He [Esau] heeded his father’s will that one not take a wife from among the daughters of Canaan, but he did not act properly and take a wife from the daughters of Laban, despite his [Laban’s] being his mother’s brother. Scripture further mentions that he took her besides his former wives, and he did not divorce the evil wives since he followed his heart’s desire more than he followed the will of his father.¹⁶

¹⁴ Bible Background Commentary

¹⁵ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:116). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹⁶ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

Genesis 28:6

When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to Padanaram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan;

Five Things that Esau Saw

1. That Isaac had blessed Jacob (Genesis 28:6)
2. That Jacob had been sent to Syria for a wife
3. That Jacob was charged not to take a wife of Canaanites
4. That Jacob obeyed his parents (Genesis 28:7)
5. That Canaanite women displeased Isaac (Genesis 28:8)¹⁷

Genesis 28:7

And that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Padanaram;

[obeyed his father and his mother] It was convenient and profitable to obey. Jacob always obeyed where there was some gain (cp. Genesis 25:30-31; Genesis 27:8,13; Genesis 31:1-13).

Genesis 28:8

And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father;

Genesis 28:9

Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife.

[unto Ishmael] Going "unto Ishmael" means he took a wife from his descendants, for Ishmael had been dead about 15 years. Ishmael was 14 when Isaac was born (Genesis 17:17,24-25), and Isaac was now 138. See note, *Genesis 27:1.

[took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife] His first wives had been a constant grief to his parents (Genesis 26:34-35; Genesis 27:46); now he hoped to please them with wives from Abraham's son, Ishmael. Taking Mahalath meant he married his father's niece, as Jacob married his mother's niece. This was as far from the Canaanite women in the land as he could get; it seems this was not an act of malice but of respect.

¹⁷ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

Torah Class: Well, moving on, beginning in V6, we are told that Esau observed that Isaac sent Jacob to Mesopotamia to get a wife, because his father detested Canaanite women. Poor Esau; he's already taken 2 Canaanite wives, which had greatly displeased his father, and now in a misguided attempt to make amends, he goes to his father's brother's family, Esau's uncle Ishmael, the son Abraham had sent away, and Esau takes an Ishmaelite woman as his 3rd wife. What a knucklehead. But, as matter-of-fact as this event is told, its future effect is beyond calculation. Because here an alliance through intermarriage is formed, that bonds the two dispossessed firstborns, rejected by Yahoveh as possible heirs to the covenant line of promise, Ishmael and Esau, into what will rather quickly turn into a permanent anti-Israel group of nations. It is the alliance and gene pool mixing of Ishmael and Esau who form the vast bulk of Islam in the world today, and the entire bulk of Arabs. This report of such few words in verse 9, radically altered the course of history, and set in motion the circumstances that will bring about the anti-Christ and the end of history as we know it.¹⁸

Adam Clarke: Then went Esau unto Ishmael—Those who are apt to take every thing by the wrong handle, and who think it was utterly impossible for Esau to do any right action, have classed his taking a daughter of Ishmael among his crimes; whereas there is nothing more plain than that he did this with a sincere desire to obey and please his parents. Having heard the pious advice which Isaac gave to Jacob, he therefore went and took a wife from the family of his grandfather Abraham, as Jacob was desired to do out of the family of his maternal uncle Laban. Mahalath, whom he took to wife, stood in the same degree of relationship to Isaac his father as Rachel did to his mother Rebekah. Esau married his father's niece; Jacob married his mother's niece. It was therefore most obviously to please his parents that Esau took this additional wife. It is supposed that Ishmael must have been dead thirteen or fourteen years before this time, and that going to Ishmael signifies only going to the family of Ishmael. If we follow the common computation, and allow that Isaac was now about one hundred and thirty-six or one hundred and thirty-seven years of age, and Jacob seventy-seven, and as Ishmael died in the one hundred and thirty-seventh year of his age, which according to the common computation was the one hundred and twenty-third of Isaac, then Ishmael must have been dead about fourteen years. But if we allow the ingenious reasoning of Mr. Skinner and Dr. Kennicott, that Jacob was at this time only fifty-seven years of age, and Isaac consequently only one hundred and seventeen, it will appear that Ishmael did not die till six years after this period; and hence with propriety it might be said, Esau went unto Ishmael, and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael to be his wife.¹⁹

when Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, &c.—Desirous to humor his parents and, if possible, get the last will revoked, he became wise when too late (see Matthew 25:10), and hoped by gratifying his parents in one thing to atone for all his former delinquencies. But he only made bad worse, and though he did not marry a "wife of the daughters of Canaan," he married into a family which God had rejected. It showed a partial reformation, but no repentance, for he gave no proofs of abating his vindictive purposes

¹⁸ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

¹⁹ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

against his brother, nor cherishing that pious spirit that would have gratified his father—he was like Micah (see Judges 17:13).²⁰

Ishmael was Isaac’s half brother, the son of Abraham and Hagar, Sarah’s maidservant (Genesis 16:1-4, 15). After marrying two foreign girls (Genesis 26:34), Esau hoped his marriage into Ishmael’s family would please his parents, Isaac and Rebekah.²¹

It seems fitting that the one non-favored older brother (a hunter, 25:27) marries into the immediate family of the other (a bowman, 21:20). A Midrash points out that Esau’s attempt at rectification missed the point: “If he had put out the first wives, [he would have been all right]. But in addition to the wives he had – one source of pain upon another!” (Gen . Rab. 67:13). Mahalath is missing from the list of Esau’s wives in 36:2-3, where Basemath is Ishmael’s daughter (cf.26:34).²²

Esau attempted to find favor in Isaac’s eyes by doing what Isaac wished. By marrying **Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael**, Esau believed he had met the standard Isaac had given Jacob (v. 1). Sadly, Esau could not regain his lost blessing. Mahalath is the same woman as Basemath, the daughter of Ishmael, in 36:2. Her name probably means “Dance.”²³

Genesis 28:10

And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran.

[Haran] After leaving Ur, Abraham settled here until Terah died (Genesis 11:26-30). Nahor remained here, which gave reason for the journeys of Genesis 24 and Genesis 28.

Jacob went out, &c.—His departure from his father's house was an ignominious or disgraceful flight; and for fear of being pursued or waylaid by his vindictive brother, he may have not taken the common road, but went by lonely and unfrequented paths, which would have increased the length and dangers of the journey.

Genesis 28:11

And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put *them for his pillows*, and lay down in that place to sleep.

²⁰ JFB Commentary

²¹ Life Application Notes

²² The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

²³ The Nelson Study Bible

Missler: Esau married his cousin: the unchosen Esau joined the unchosen line of Ishmael. [Attempting to please Abraham at the human level; no spiritual regard evident of the Covenant, etc.]²⁴

[certain place] Where *Abraham built his second altar, Bethel, about forty-eight miles from Beersheba* (Genesis 28:19). Genesis 12:8.

[stones] Only one stone. He likely used the folds of his garment as well as his headdress to soften the pillow, explaining the plural of Genesis 28:18.

[lay down in that place to sleep] Sleeping in the open was a custom of shepherds; it was no hardship for Jacob (Luke 2:8).

Adam Clarke: A certain place, and tarried there—From Genesis 28:19, we find this certain place was Luz, or some part of its vicinity. Jacob had probably intended to reach Luz; but the sun being set, and night coming on, he either could not reach the city, or he might suspect the inhabitants, and rather prefer the open field, as he must have heard of the character and conduct of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah. Or the gates might be shut by the time he reached it, which would prevent his admission; for it frequently happens, to the present day, that travelers not reaching a city in the eastern countries previously to the shutting of the gates, are obliged to lodge under the walls all night, as when once shut they refuse to open them till the next day. This was probably Jacob's case.

Adam Clarke: He took of the stones—He took one of the stones that were in that place: from Genesis 28:18 we find it was one stone only which he had for his pillow. Luz was about forty-eight miles distant from Beer-sheba; too great a journey for one day, through what we may conceive very unready roads.

he lighted upon a certain place—By a forced march he had reached Beth-el, about forty-eight miles from Beer-sheba, and had to spend the night in the open field.²⁵

McGee: The place he has come to, as we shall see in a moment, is Beth-el, literally, “the House of God.” Beth-el is twelve miles north of Jerusalem, and the home which Jacob left was probably twenty-five or thirty miles south of Jerusalem. This means that Jacob covered at least forty miles that first day. You can see that he is really hotfooting it away from Esau. He wants to get as far from him as he can, but the farther he gets away from Esau, the farther he gets away from home.

What do you think he was feeling that night? Well, he was very lonely, that is for sure. He was probably homesick. As far as the record is concerned, this was his first night away from home.²⁶

²⁴ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

²⁵ JFB Commentary

²⁶ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:117). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Jerome; “Those who suffer persecution” Consider our ascetic [Jacob]: he was running away from a very cruel man; he was fleeing his brother, and he found help in stone. That stone is Christ. That stone is the support of all those who suffer persecution, but to the unbelieving Jew it is “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of scandal.”²⁷

Jerome; “The stone was Christ” When Jacob was in flight from his brother, in Mesopotamia he came to Luz, and there to rest, Scripture says, he placed a stone under his head. The stone under his head was Christ. Never before had he put a stone under his head; only at the time when he was escaping from his persecutor. When he was in his father’s house, and as long as he was in his father’s house and enjoyed the comforts of the flesh, he had no stone at his head. He departed from his home, poor and alone; he left with only a staff, and immediately that very night he found a stone and placed it at his head. Because he had a pillow of that kind upon which to rest his head, think of the vision he saw. “He dreamed that a ladder was set up on the ground with its top reaching to heaven; angels were ascending and descending on it.” He saw angels descend from heaven to earth and others ascend from earth to heaven. Would you know that the stone at Jacob’s head was Christ, the cornerstone? “The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” That is the stone that is called Ebenezer in the Book of Samuel. That stone is Christ. The name Ebenezer, moreover, means “the Stone of Help.” Jacob woke from his sleep, Scripture says, and what did he say? “This is the house of God.” What did he do? He poured oil over the stone.” Unless we penetrate the spiritual mystery of holy Scripture, what reason is there that he should anoint the stone?²⁸

Genesis 28:12

And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

[**ladder**] Hebrew: *cullam* (HSN-5551), to pile up, like terraces; a stairway (cp. John 1:51).

Adam Clarke: He dreamed, and behold a ladder—A multitude of fanciful things have been spoken of Jacob’s vision of the ladder, and its signification. It might have several designs, as God chooses to accomplish the greatest number of ends by the fewest and simplest means possible. 1. It is very likely that its primary design was to point out the providence of God, by which he watches over and regulates all terrestrial things; for nothing is left to merely natural causes; a heavenly agency pervades, actuates, and directs all. In his present circumstances it was highly necessary that Jacob should have a clear and distinct view of this subject, that he might be the better prepared to meet all occurrences with the conviction that all was working together for his good. 2. It might be intended also to point out the intercourse between heaven and earth, and the connection of both worlds by the means of angelic ministry. That this is fact we learn from many histories in the Old Testament; and it is a doctrine that is unequivocally taught in the

²⁷ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

²⁸ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

New: Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? 3. It was probably a type of CHRIST, in whom both worlds meet, and in whom the Divine and human nature are conjoined. The LADDER was set up on the EARTH, and the TOP of it reached to HEAVEN; for GOD was manifested in the FLESH, and in him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Nothing could be a more expressive emblem of the incarnation and its effects; Jesus Christ is the grand connecting medium between heaven and earth, and between God and man. By him God comes down to man; through him man ascends to God. It appears that our Lord applies the vision in this way himself, first, In that remarkable speech to Nathanael, Hereafter ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man, John 1:51. Secondly, in his speech to Thomas, John 14:6: I am the Way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.

Jacob's itinerary. Jacob takes the central ridge road that goes through the hill country from Beersheba through Hebron, Bethel and Shechem to join the main artery, the Great Trunk road, in Beth Shan. It would have taken a couple of days to get from Beersheba to Bethel (about 60 miles), and the trip to Haran would have taken over a month (about 550 miles).

Miracle, Revelation—Jacob's dream proved to be a confirmation of God's presence and purpose. The Old Testament treats dreams as instruments of revelation. In Jacob's confusion and fear and guilt he needed a fresh revelation of God's will. God spoke through the instrument of the dream.

Humanity, Spiritual Nature—Physical and emotional stress frequently lead a person to seek God. The spiritual nature of the most disobedient of people may be awakened in such a confrontation. Awareness of God's presence changes our lives, bringing new devotion and stewardship of life to God.²⁹

Thirty-four Dreams of Scripture

1. Abimelech, of Sarah (Genesis 20:3)
2. Jacob, of a ladder (Genesis 28:12)
3. Jacob, of ring-straked cattle (Genesis 31:10-13)
4. Jacob, of Egypt (Genesis 46:2)
5. Laban, of Jacob (Genesis 31:24)
6. Joseph, of brethren (Genesis 37:5)
7. Joseph, of brethren (Genesis 37:9)
8. Chief butler, of himself (Genesis 40:9)
9. Chief baker, of himself (Genesis 40:16)
10. Pharaoh, of famine (Genesis 41:1-4)
11. Pharaoh, of famine (Genesis 41:5-8)
12. A Midianite, of Gideon (Judges 7:13)
13. Solomon, of wisdom (1 Kings 3:3-15)
14. Eliphaz, of a spirit (Job 4:12-21)

²⁹ Disciple's Study Bible

15. Job, of terror (Job 7:14)
16. Nebuchadnezzar, of kingdoms (Daniel 2)
17. Nebuchadnezzar, of himself (Daniel 4)
18. Daniel, of kingdoms (Daniel 7)
19. Daniel, of kingdoms (Daniel 8)
20. Daniel, of God (Daniel 10:5-9)
21. False prophets, of lies (Jeremiah 23:27-32; Jeremiah 29:8)
22. Diviners, of false things (Zech. 10:2)
23. Joseph, of Mary (Matthew 1:20)
24. Joseph, of flight to Egypt (Matthew 2:13)
25. Joseph, of returning home (Matthew 2:19)
26. Joseph, of Herod (Matthew 2:22)
27. The wise men, of warning (Matthew 2:12)
28. Pilate's wife, of Jesus (Matthew 27:19)
29. Cornelius, of an angel (Acts 10:3-6)
30. Peter, of animals (Acts 10:10-16)
31. Paul, of a man (Acts 16:9)
32. Paul, of going to Rome (Acts 23:11)
33. Paul, of safety (Acts 28:23-24)
34. John, of Christ (Rev. 1:12-18)³⁰

Appearances of Angels to Men

Scripture records at least 104 appearances of angels to human beings. They have appeared to:

1. Hagar (2 times, Genesis 16:7-11; Genesis 21:17)
2. Abraham (3 times, Genesis 18:2; Genesis 22:11,15)
3. Lot and Sodomites (Genesis 19:1-22)
4. Jacob (3 times, Genesis 28:12; Genesis 31:11; Genesis 32:1)
5. Moses (Exodus 3:2)
6. Balaam (Numbers 22:22-35)
7. Joshua (Hebrews 5:15; Exodus 23:20-23; Exodus 32:34)
8. Israel (Judges 2:1-5)
9. Gideon (Judges 6:11-22)
10. Manoah's wife (Judges 13:3-5)
11. Manoah and his wife (Judges 13:9-21)
12. David (2 Samuel 24; 1 Chron. 21)
13. Elijah (4 times, 1 Kings 19:5-7; 2 Kings 1:3,15)
14. Elisha and servant (2 Kings 6:16-17)
15. Assyrians (2 Kings 19:35; Isaiah 37:36)
16. Hebrew children (Daniel 3:25-28)
17. Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3:24-25)
18. Daniel (5 times, Hebrews 6:22; Daniel 8:16; Daniel 9:21; Daniel 10:5-21; Daniel 12:5-7)

³⁰ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

19. Zechariah (7 times, Hebrews 1:8-19; Zechariah 2:3; Zechariah 3:1-6; Zechariah 4:1-5; Zechariah 5:5-10; Zechariah 6:4-5; Zechariah 12:8)
20. Joseph (3 times, Matthew 1:20; Matthew 2:13,19)
21. Mary (Luke 1:26-38)
22. Zacharias (Luke 1:20-38)
23. Shepherds (Luke 2:9-14)
24. Jesus (2 times, Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:43)
25. Some women (Matthew 28:1-5)
26. The disciples (Acts 1:11)
27. Peter and John (Acts 5:19)
28. Philip (Acts 8:26)
29. Cornelius (Acts 10:3,30-32)
30. Peter (Acts 12:7-11)
31. Paul (Acts 27:23)
32. John (52 angels in Revelation)³¹

Ramban: “And behold a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it” In a prophetic dream, He showed Jacob that whatever is done on earth is effected by means of the angels, and everything is by decree given to them by the Supreme One. The angels of God whom the Eternal hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth, would not do anything minor or major until they returned to present themselves before the Master of the whole earth, saying before Him, “We have traversed the earth, and behold it dwells in peace, or is steeped in war and blood,” and He commands them to return, to descend to the earth and fulfill His charge.³²

Chromatius; “The ladder is the cross of Christ” Through the resurrection of Christ the way was opened. Therefore with good reason the patriarch Jacob relates that he had seen in that place a ladder whose end reached heaven and that the Lord leaned on it. The ladder fixed to the ground and reaching heaven is the cross of Christ, through which the access to heaven is granted to us, because it actually leads us to heaven. On this ladder different steps of virtue are set, through which we rise toward heaven: faith, justice, chastity, holiness, patience, piety and all the other virtues are the steps of this ladder. If we faithfully climb them, we will undoubtedly reach heaven. And therefore we know well that the ladder is the symbol of the cross of Christ. As, in fact, the steps are set between two uprights, so the cross of Christ is placed between the two Testaments and keeps in itself the steps of the heavenly precepts, through which we climb to heaven.³³

Caesarius of Arles: “The Lord is in heaven and on earth” Now if Jacob sleeping on the ground prefigured the Lord, why is it that the Lord in heaven rested and leaned upon the ladder? How was Christ the Lord seen on top of the ladder in heaven and in blessed Jacob on the ground? Listen to Christ himself say that he is in heaven and on earth: “No

³¹ Dake’s Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

³² Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

³³ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

one has ascended into heaven except him who has descended from heaven: the Son of Man who is in heaven.” Notice that the Lord himself said he is both in heaven and on earth. We confess, dearly beloved, that Christ the Lord is head of the church; if this is true, he is in heaven with regard to the head but on earth as far as the body is concerned. Moreover, when the blessed apostle Paul was persecuting the church, Christ exclaimed from heaven: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” He did not say, “Why do you persecute my servants?” Nor did he say, “Why do you persecute my members?” But he said, “Why do you persecute me?” Now the tongue cries out if the foot is stepped on, You stepped on me, even though the tongue cannot be stepped on at all; through the harmony of charity the head cries out for all the members. Therefore Jacob was sleeping and saw the Lord leaning on the top of the ladder. What does it mean to lean on the ladder, except to hang on the cross? Consider, brothers, that while hanging upon the wood of the cross he prayed for the Jews, and you will realize who shouted from heaven while leaning on the ladder of Jacob. But why did this happen on the road, before Jacob obtained a wife? Because our Lord, the true Jacob, first leaned on the ladder, that is, the cross, and afterward formed a church for himself. At the time he gave it the wages of his blood, intending to give it later the dowry of his kingdom.³⁴

Genesis 28:13

And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I *am* the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

Missler: This vision at Bethel (a) confirms that the Lord was also the God of Jacob; and (b) shows how Jacob’s outlook was dramatically changed.³⁵

This is the 40th prophecy in Genesis (Genesis 28:13-15, it is partially fulfilled and will be completely fulfilled in the Millennium and New Earth). The next prophecy is in Genesis 30:24. Here the Abrahamic covenant was confirmed to Jacob by God. The first and last time it was confirmed to Jacob by Isaac (Genesis 28:3).

The Fifteen "I Will's" of God to Jacob

1. I will give you the land of promise (Genesis 28:13).
2. I will keep you wherever you go (Genesis 28:15).
3. I will bring you again to this land (Genesis 28:15).
4. I will not leave you until I have fulfilled My obligations to you (Genesis 28:15).
5. I will be with you (Genesis 31:3).
6. I will deal well with you (Genesis 32:9).
7. I will do you good (Genesis 32:12).
8. I will give you this land (Genesis 35:12).
9. I will give this land to your seed (Genesis 35:12).
10. I will make of you a great nation in Egypt (Genesis 46:3).

³⁴ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

³⁵ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

11. I will go down with you into Egypt (Genesis 46:4).
12. I will bring you up again (Genesis 46:4).
13. I will make you fruitful (Genesis 48:4).
14. I will make of you a multitude (Genesis 48:4).
15. I will give this land to your seed (Genesis 48:4).³⁶

Genesis 28:14

And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

[as the dust of the earth] Abraham's seed compared to three things:

1. The dust of the earth (Genesis 13:16)
2. The stars of heaven (Genesis 15:5; Genesis 22:17)
3. The sand of the sea (Genesis 22:17)

Adam Clarke: Thy seed shall be as the dust—The people that shall descend from thee shall be extremely numerous, and in thee and thy seed—the Lord JESUS descending from thee, according to the flesh, shall all the families of the earth—not only all of thy race, but all the other families or tribes of mankind which have not proceeded from any branch of the Abrahamic family, be blessed; for Jesus Christ by the grace of God tasted death FOR EVERY MAN, Hebrews 2:9.³⁷

Genesis 28:15

And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all *places* whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done *that* which I have spoken to thee of.

Missler: God was present with Jacob wherever he went; explained in words by God and recognized in faith by Jacob. God *confirms to Jacob the covenant* made with Abraham and Isaac, promising him the land, descendants as numerous as the dust, and universal blessing through him. God also promised to protect and be with Jacob while he was out of the land and to see that he returned.³⁸

[for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of]

Compare the circumstances under which the promise is repeated (Genesis 28:15; Deut. 31:6; Joshua 1:5-8; 1 Chron. 28:20; Hebrews 13:5-6; Matthew 28:20).

³⁶ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

³⁷ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

³⁸ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

Adam Clarke: And, behold, I am with thee—For I fill the heavens and the earth. “My WORD shall be thy help.”—Targum. And will keep thee in all places, εν τη δω παση, in all this way—Septuagint. I shall direct, help, and support thee in a peculiar manner, in thy present journey, be with thee while thou sojournest with thy uncle, and will bring thee again into this land; so that in all thy concerns thou mayest consider thyself under my especial providence, for I will not leave thee. Thy descendants also shall be my peculiar people, whom I shall continue to preserve as such until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of—until the Messiah shall be born of thy race, and all the families of the earth—the Gentiles, be blessed through thee; the Gospel being preached to them, and they, with the believing Jews, made ONE FOLD under ONE SHEPHERD, and one Bishop or Overseer of souls. And this circumstantial promise has been literally and punctually fulfilled.

Twelve Examples of God Being "with" Men

1. Ishmael (Genesis 21:20)
2. Abraham (Genesis 21:22)
3. Jacob (Genesis 28:15,20)
4. Joseph (Genesis 39:2,21; Acts 7:9)
5. Moses (Joshua 1:5)
6. Joshua (Joshua 1:5,9)
7. Samuel (1 Samuel 3:19)
8. David (2 Samuel 5:10; 1 Chron. 17:2)
9. Solomon (1 Chron. 28:20; 2 Chron. 1:1)
10. Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20:11)
11. Jesus (John 3:2; Acts 10:38)
12. Paul (2 Tim. 4:17)³⁹

stairway. The ladder or stairway that Jacob sees in his dream is the passageway between heaven and earth. The comparable word in Akkadian is used in Mesopotamian mythology to describe what the messenger of the gods uses when he wants to pass from one realm to another. It is this mythological stairway that the Babylonians sought to represent in the architecture of the ziggurats. These had been built to provide a way for the deity to descend to the temple and the town. Jacob’s background would have given him familiarity with this concept, and thus he would conclude that he was in a sacred spot where there was a portal opened between worlds. Though he sees the stairway in his dream, and the messengers (angels) are using it to pass between realms (embarking on and returning from missions, not a procession or parade), the Lord is not portrayed as having used it, but as standing beside it (this is the proper translation of the Hebrew idiom).⁴⁰

³⁹ Dake’s Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

⁴⁰ Bible Background Commentary

THE STORY OF JACOB (28:10-36:43)

Jacob did everything, both right and wrong, with great zeal. He deceived his own brother Esau and his father Isaac. He wrestled with an angel and worked fourteen years to marry the woman he loved. Through Jacob we learn how a strong leader can also be a servant. We also see how wrong actions will always come back to haunt us.

28:10-15 God's covenant promise to Abraham and Isaac was offered to Jacob as well. But it was not enough to be Abraham's grandson; Jacob had to establish his own personal relationship with God. God has no grandchildren; each of us must have a personal relationship with him. It is not enough to hear wonderful stories about Christians in your family. You need to become part of the story yourself (see Galatians 3:6-7).⁴¹

Genesis 28:16

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew *it* not.

The Lord is in this place; and I knew it not—That is, God has made this place his peculiar residence; it is a place in which he meets with and reveals himself to his followers. Jacob might have supposed that this place had been consecrated to God. And it has already been supposed that, his mind having been brought into a humble frame, he was prepared to hold communion with his Maker.

[I knew it not] I didn't expect it (cp. Job 9:11; Job 13:14; 1 Samuel 3:4-7).

Genesis 28:17

And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful *is* this place! *this is* none other but the house of God, and *this is* the gate of heaven.

[house of God] It was a "house of God" (Bethel, Genesis 28:19), because he saw God in it. It was the gates of heaven because the ladder reached up to it.

Adam Clarke: How dreadful is this place!—The appearance of the ladder, the angels, and the Divine glory at the top of the ladder, must have left deep, solemn, and even awful impressions on the mind of Jacob; and hence the exclamation in the text, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God—The Chaldee gives this place a curious turn: "This is not a common place, but a place in which God delights; and opposite to this place is the gate of heaven." Onkelos seems to suppose that the gate or entrance into heaven was actually above this spot, and that when the angels of God descended to earth, they came through that opening into this place, and returned by the same way. And it really appears that Jacob himself had a similar notion.

⁴¹ Life Application Notes

Genesis 28:18

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put *for* his pillows, and set it up *for* a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

Stone Monuments:

Jacob set the stone up for a monument and anointed it to consecrate it to God as an altar (Genesis 28:18). About thirty years later he repeated his solemn vow in the same place (Genesis 35:14). It was customary to do this when commemorating great events. Moses did this at Sinai (Exodus 24:4). Joshua set up two monuments at Jordan (Joshua 4), and at Shechem (Joshua 24:26). Samuel set up one to witness victory over the Philistines (1 Samuel 7:12). Stones for memorials were allowed, but as idols were forbidden (Leviticus 26:1; Deut. 16:22). There is an unfounded tradition that the stone Jacob set up was afterwards brought to Jerusalem, later taken to Spain, then to Ireland and finally to Scotland. On what is supposed to be that very stone, the kings of Scotland sat when crowned. Edward I had it brought to Westminster and placed under the chair on which kings of England were to be crowned.⁴²

And poured oil upon the top of it—Stones, images, and altars, dedicated to Divine worship, were always anointed with oil. This appears to have been considered as a consecration of them to the object of the worship, and a means of inducing the god or goddess to take up their residence there, and answer the petitions of their votaries. Anointing stones, images, etc., is used in idolatrous countries to the present day, and the whole idol is generally smeared over with oil. Sometimes, besides the anointing, a crown or garland was placed on the stone or altar to honor the divinity, who was supposed, in consequence of the anointing, to have set up his residence in that place. It appears to have been on this ground that the seats of polished stone, on which the kings sat in the front of their palaces to administer justice, were anointed, merely to invite the deity to reside there, that true judgment might be given, and a righteous sentence always be pronounced.⁴³

pillars and anointing. The sacred pillars or standing stones are well known in the religious practice of the ancient Near East predating the fourth millennium B.C. They are featured prominently in Canaanite cultic installations such as the high place at Gezer and were also used in the Israelite temple at Arad. Other standing stones were simply set up as memorials. From basins sometimes found near the foot of such pillars, it is inferred that libations (liquid offerings) were poured over them, as we see Jacob doing in Genesis 35:14. The anointing of the pillar would constitute the dedication of it.⁴⁴

The Tanakh frequently associates sacred pillars, an important element of ancient worship, especially in Canaan, with idolatry (e.g., Deut. 12:3; 16:22; Hos. 10:1-2; Mic. 5:12). Nonetheless, Moses sets up twelve of them at the foot of Mount Sinai (Exod. 24:4), and Joshua erects one in the temple at Shechem (Josh. 24:26). Ibn Ezra (here and on Deut. 16:22) thinks that sacred pillars were prohibited only if they were erected to the honor of

⁴² Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

⁴³ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

⁴⁴ Bible Background Commentary

other gods. More likely is a Midrash that sees in the practice a vestige of an early form of worship that was later proscribed altogether (Sifre Deut. 146; see also Rashi on Deut. 16:22).⁴⁵

Ramban: “And he set it up for a pillar” Our Rabbis have explained the difference between a pillar and an altar by saying that a pillar consists of one stone while an altar is composed of many stones. It further appears that a pillar is made for pouring libations of wine upon it and for the pouring of oil upon it, but not for sacrifices and not for offerings, whereas an altar is for bringing Burnt-offerings thereon. When Israel entered the Land, the pillar was prohibited to them because the Canaanites had established it as an ordinance of an idolatrous character to a greater extent than the altars. Even though it is written concerning the altars, Ye shall break down their altars, [since the altars were not as prevalent as pillars among the Canaanites, He did not prohibit the Israelites from making their own altars]. It may be that He did not want to prohibit all sacrifices, and so He retained the altar as fit for libations and sacrifices.⁴⁶

Genesis 28:19

And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.

Bethel/Luz. As noted in Genesis 23:2, place names change based on the appearance of new peoples or significant events. Bethel was an important town located in the central hill country just north of Jerusalem. An important east-west road lay just south of the town, making it a crossroads for travelers and a likely place for the establishment of a cultic site. There is some speculation that Luz was the original city site and that Bethel (literally “house of God”) was a separate cultic site located outside the town. Once the Israelites had established themselves in the region, however, the site’s association with Abraham (Genesis 12:8) and Jacob would have caused the older name to be superseded.⁴⁷

Bethel was about ten miles north of Jerusalem and 60 miles north of Beersheba, where Jacob left his family. This was where Abraham made one of his first sacrifices to God when he entered the land. At first, Bethel became an important center for worship; later, it was a center of idol worship. The prophet Hosea condemned its evil practices.⁴⁸

Given the importance of Bethel in Israelite worship and the positive evaluation of it in several biblical texts (e.g. Judg. 20:18, 26:28; 21:2-4; 1 Sam. 7:16), it is appropriate that its foundation should be attributed to the patriarch Jacob. Nonetheless, after King Jeroboam I established a temple there to rival the one in Jerusalem, some texts loyal to

⁴⁵ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

⁴⁶ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

⁴⁷ Bible Background Commentary

⁴⁸ Life Application Notes

the letter saw in Bethel a hotbed of idolatry and condemned it roundly (e.g., 1 Kings 12:25-13:34). Our passage presumes that it was the site of a legitimate temple.⁴⁹

Genesis 28:20

And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

Vows to God

The only recorded vow before the law of Moses. God Himself remembered it (Genesis 31:13). Vows were to be made (Leviticus 23:37-38; Numbers 29:39), but were to be voluntary (Numbers 30:2; Eccles. 5:4-6) and not be broken (Leviticus 5:4-13; Leviticus 22:18-25; Numbers 15:2-16; Numbers 30:2-16; Deut. 23:18-22). The estimation price of vows was determined by age and sex (Leviticus 27:1-25). Edible things were offered in vows (Leviticus 7:16-18; Deut. 12:6-26; Judges 18:14). Certain things were forbidden to be offered (Deut. 23:18-23). See Job 22:27; Psalm 22:25; Psalm 50:14; Psalm 56:12; Psalm 61:5; Psalm 65:1; Psalm 66:13; Psalm 76:11; Psalm 116:14-19; Proverbs 20:25; Nahum 1:15.⁵⁰

Three Examples of Rash Vows:

1. Jephthah's awful vow (Judges 11:29-40)
2. The vow of Israel (Judges 21:5-6)
3. The vow to death of forty men (Acts 23:12)

Seven Examples of Common Vows:

1. Jacob's vow to pay tithes (Genesis 28:20-22)
2. Hannah's vow (1 Samuel 1:11,27-28)
3. Elkanah's yearly vow (1 Samuel 1:21)
4. Job's vow with his eyes (Job 31:1)
5. David's vow (Psalm 132:2)
6. Jonah's vow (Jonah 2:9)
7. Paul's vow (Acts 18:18)

[If God will be with me] Not If God, implying doubt, but Since God will be with me, as promised in Genesis 28:13-15.

Vowed a vow—A vow is a solemn, holy promise, by which a man bound himself to do certain things in a particular way, time, etc., and for power to accomplish which he depended on God; hence all vows were made with prayer.

vows. Vows are promises with conditions attached, almost always made to God. In the ancient world the most common context for a vow was when a request was being made to deity. The condition would typically involve God's provision or protection, while that which was vowed was usually a gift to deity. This would most commonly take the form

⁴⁹ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

⁵⁰ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

of a sacrifice but could refer to other types of gifts to the sanctuary or priests. Fulfillment of a vow could usually be accomplished at the sanctuary and was a public act. In Jacob's vow the conditions actually extend through the end of Genesis 28:21. Jacob promises a tithe upon the fulfillment of the conditions.⁵¹

Adam Clarke: If God will be with me, etc.—Jacob seems to make this vow rather for his posterity than for himself, as we may learn from Genesis 28:13-15; for he particularly refers to the promises which God had made to him, which concerned the multiplication of his offspring, and their establishment in that land. If, then, God shall fulfill these promises, he binds his posterity to build God a house, and to devote for the maintenance of his worship the tenth of all their earthly goods. This mode of interpretation removes that appearance of self-interest which almost any other view of the subject presents. Jacob had certainly, long ere this, taken Jehovah for his God; and so thoroughly had he been instructed in the knowledge of Jehovah, that we may rest satisfied no reverses of fortune could have induced him to apostatize: but as his taking refuge with Laban was probably typical of the sojourning of his descendants in Egypt, his persecution, so as to be obliged to depart from Laban, the bad treatment of his posterity by the Egyptians, his rescue from death, preservation on his journey, re-establishment in his own country, etc., were all typical of the exodus of his descendants, their travels in the desert, and establishment in the promised land, where they built a house to God, and where, for the support and maintenance of the pure worship of God, they gave to the priests and Levites the tenth of all their worldly produce. If all this be understood as referring to Jacob only, the Scripture gives us no information how he performed his vow.

Genesis 28:21

So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:

McGee: What is he doing? He wants to trade with God. He says, "Now, God, *if* You will do this for me..." But God has already *told* him that He is going to do every one of these things for him—"I am going to keep you; I am going to bring you back to this land; I am going to give you this land; and I'm going to give you offspring." Then Jacob turns around and bargains with Him, "*If* You will do it, then I'll serve You."

God doesn't do business with us that way. He didn't do business that way with Jacob either. If He had, Jacob would never have made it back to that land. God brought him back into that land by His grace and mercy. When Jacob did finally come back to Bethel, he came back a wiser man. Do you know what he came back to do? To worship and praise God for His mercy. God had been merciful to him.

Many people even today say they will serve the Lord *if* He will do such and such. You won't do anything of the kind, my friend. He doesn't do business that way. He will extend mercy to you, and He will be gracious to you without asking anything in return. But He does say that if you love Him, you will really want to serve Him. That will be the

⁵¹ Bible Background Commentary

bondage of love. It is the same kind of love a mother has for the little child. She becomes its slave. That's the way that He wants you and me.⁵²

Genesis 28:22

And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

Missler: First recorded confession of Jacob: a vow and the tithe.⁵³

[God's house] Hebrew: *bayith* (HSN-1004) *Elohiym* (HSN430), "house of Elohim" (cp. Bethel, Genesis 12:8).

tithe. In the ancient world tithing was often a means of taxation. There were tithes paid to the temple as well as those paid to the king. Since income and personal wealth was often not primarily in money, all goods were included in the calculations of the tithe, as indicated here by Jacob in the phrase "all that you give me." Jacob's tithe is clearly voluntary rather than imposed and therefore would not be associated with taxation of any sort. There is no temple or priesthood at Bethel, so to whom would Jacob give his tithe? It is likely that Jacob anticipates that any wealth coming to him would be in the form of flocks and herds. In such a case the tithe would be represented in sacrifices at Bethel.⁵⁴

Jacob's pledge of a tithe at Bethel may thus have functioned as a counterpoint to Abraham's gift of a tithe at Salem (Jerusalem) in 14:20.⁵⁵

The vow to erect a memorial and to give YAHWEH a tenth of his substance was a sign of genuine devotion. The Lord honored Jacob's vow (see 31:13).⁵⁶

Chrysostom; "His Godly Attitude" See the good man's gratitude: In making his request Jacob did not bring himself to ask for anything lavish – just bread and clothing. On the other hand, he promised to the Lord what lay within his power, realizing God's generosity in giving and the fact that he surpasses our expectations in rewarding us. And so he said, "I will consider the monument God's house, and of all the things provided me by you I will set aside a tenth." Do you see his godly attitude? He still had not received anything, and yet he promised to devote to God a tenth of what was due to be given him.

Let us not pass idly by these words, dearly beloved. Instead, may we all imitate this good man, we in the age of grace imitating this man who lived before the law, and let us ask the Lord for nothing of this world. After all, he does not wait for reminder from us. Even if we don't ask, he grants us what we need. "He makes the sun rise on evil people

⁵² McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:119). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵³ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

⁵⁴ Bible Background Commentary

⁵⁵ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

⁵⁶ Believer's Study Bible

and good, and rains on just and unjust.” Let us believe him as he advises us in these words, “Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things will come to you in addition.” Do you see that he personally has made the former things ready for us and promises to give the latter as a bonus? Accordingly, don’t request as an initial favor what you are likely to receive as a bonus, thus reversing the due order. Instead, let us seek the former things, as he directed, so that we may come to enjoy the former and the latter.⁵⁷

Torah Class: Jacob leaves Beer-sheba, and travels about 40 miles when he stops after 2 or 3 days for a night’s rest at an anonymous, very rocky place. It is here in the Torah that we find Jacob making a separate identity for himself, which allows him to become the 3rd and last Patriarch. It was necessary for him to leave his land, and his father, mother, and siblings for God to work with him.....just exactly as it was so with his grandfather, Abraham. There Jacob has a dream, a vision actually, and in it, he’s given a glimpse of the Heavenly spirit world. He sees angels, *Malach Elohim*, in Hebrew (so we know that these are heavenly messengers, angels) going back and forth from Heaven to earth; receiving their instructions from God in Heaven and then going forth to do His will on Earth. And, there, God Himself gives Jacob the promise of the land, and of many descendants, and that these descendants will bless all the families of the earth. He also tells Jacob not to worry, because God will be with him wherever he goes, and He WILL bring him back to this land, because He has promised the land to Jacob and his descendants forever and it will happen just as promised. By the way: in V13 where most Bibles say God or Lord, the original Hebrew is Yahweh.....God’s personal name.....so this was God the Father speaking to Jacob, and Jacob was quite aware of that fact.

But, the entire tone of this episode is one of surprise; first because Jacob had no clue that God would come to him in such a manner, and second because Jacob was likely feeling pretty defeated right about now. This was no happy trip to Mesopotamia he was on; he was running for his life. And, he was leaving the scene of a disaster of his own making; he had deceived his father and his brother to obtain the blessing, and had to walk away empty handed just to survive.

This blessing upon Jacob represented the official transfer, if you would, of the covenant promise from Isaac to Jacob. Jacob had been blessed a few days earlier with similar blessing by his father, but only NOW does Yehoveh validate those blessings.

Notice also that since our Torah study beginning with Genesis 1, we have watched God transfer His place of residence from Heaven to Earth, the Garden of Eden, and back again. And, let’s not too quickly pass this “ladder”, or better perhaps “stairway” between Heaven and Earth: for this is another Biblical “type” of what is to come: you see, these two facts worked together. This stairway represented the connection between man and God that was currently broken. In the beginning, Man could come directly to God, because God was present WITH man. But rebellion and sin broke that connection, and God removed Himself BACK to Heaven. Yet, for those who trust, there is the ladder, the stairway, by which God sends His ministering Angels to do His work on Earth. Later, another connection between heaven and earth would come, the Wilderness Tabernacle. Still further into the future, the real ladder would come; the One who would reconnect

⁵⁷ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

God with Man, Yeshua. Think that's just allegory or a nice story? Listen to what Jesus Himself says in John 1:51: "...truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man".

Oh, what we miss by not thoroughly studying the Torah. For without FIRST seeing what was happening with Jacob, here, in Genesis, how in the world are we to FULLY understand this kind of odd statement made by Jesus 1800 years later, and recorded in what we call the NT? Yet, what an easy link to make once we know both. For Jacob, this was both current reality AND prophecy. For us, this is not only reality, it is prophecy **fulfilled**. Yeshua is our ladder, the ONLY ladder that re-connects us with God. It's upon Him that the Angels ascend and descend, today, in our time.

Jacob was truly awestruck by what he was shown. He called the place "house of God", or as we better know it Beth-el.....beth, house.....el, God. Or more correctly, el Beit-el, which means "the house of the god, El". Watch the use of the word El occurring before the exodus from Egypt. For, up to God giving Moses His personal name at Mt. Sinai, God was most known as El Shaddai.....with emphasis on the El part. In other words, before Mt. Sinai, no one knew God's personal name. So, he was known by a number of titles, most beginning with either IL or EL. After Mt. Sinai, we'll see the use of the word El start to diminish, as it is slowly being replace by the word Yehoveh.

There is another interesting happening here that we should take a look at: the anointing of the stone that Jacob had laid his head on to sleep during that vision. What is the meaning of this? Well, first off, we can see just how old this concept of anointing with oil is, for this is taking place around 1800 BC. As to exactly what meaning this held in Jacob's mind is not clear, but obviously it had something to do with his encounter with God. Probably it meant to establish a new covenant bond between Jacob and Yehoveh, one that involves a vow; because it was unknown in that time to use a rock as a memorial marker after anointing it with oil (and, we also won't find it for that purpose in the Bible). Anointing with oil was in rather widespread use in this era, and often marked the making of an agreement, not unlike the more extensive covenant of salt that involved animal sacrifice. Marking boundaries and creating memorial markers using a stone (they were called Standing Stones) was also common.....but they weren't anointed with oil.

Yet, I think it goes beyond that. Here we have Jacob resting on a rock, and then anointing it; I think it is possible that there is a link between this and Messiah, because Messiah means, in Hebrew, the anointed one. One must also inquire just why Yeshua is so often referred to as.....of all things.....a rock. Now certainly, allegorically, we can see the physical characteristics of solidness, and steadiness, of a rock and apply it to Yeshua. But, we must remember that the context of the New Testament is just as Hebrew as the context of the Old Testament. The Jewish people just didn't pick up any old metaphor that struck them; this was an ancient, traditional society that had an enormous history of well-established meanings in the events of the past, particularly as involved the Patriarchs. I seriously suspect that the calling of Messiah Yeshua the "rock" referred as far back as this event with Jacob, whereby he anointed the rock that he rested his head upon.

Jacob vowed to God that He would give all his allegiance to Him.....and that of all God gives him, he will return a tenth. Once again, we see the principle of the tithe so very early on in scripture.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

Jacob's dream at Bethel: this passage, which according to most source critics is a combination of J and E, is the continuation of 27:45, and records Jacob's first direct encounter with God. In a dream, he sees a "stairway" or ramp of the sort with which Mesopotamian temple towers (ziggurats) were equipped and atop which the deity was thought to appear to communicate to his worshippers (28:12). The LORD assures Jacob that he will inherit the patriarchal promise, thus demonstrating that, however deceitfully it was gotten, Isaac's blessing on him conforms to God's will and that Jacob's exile will be temporary (vv. 13-15). Waking, Jacob realizes the awesomeness of the place and consecrates it as a sanctuary (vv 16-19), vowing to give God a tithe if He protects him as He has promised (vv 20-22).⁵⁹

Adam Clarke: ON the doctrine of tithes, or an adequate support for the ministers of the Gospel, I shall here register my opinion. Perhaps a word may be borne from one who never received any, and has none in prospect. Tithes in their origin appear to have been a sort of eucharistic offering made unto God, and probably were something similar to the *minchah*, which we learn from Genesis 4 was in use almost from the foundation of the world. When God established a regular, and we may add an expensive worship, it was necessary that proper provision should be made for the support of those who were obliged to devote their whole time to it, and consequently were deprived of the opportunity of providing for themselves in any secular way. It was soon found that a tenth part of the produce of the whole land was necessary for this purpose, as a whole tribe, that of Levi, was devoted to the public service of God; and when the land was divided, this tribe received no inheritance among their brethren. Hence, for their support, the law of tithes was enacted; and by these the priests and Levites were not only supported as the ministers of God, but as the teachers and intercessors of the people, performing a great variety of religious duties for them which otherwise they themselves were bound to perform. As this mode of supporting the ministers of God was instituted by himself, so we may rest assured it was rational and just. Nothing can be more reasonable than to devote a portion of the earthly good which we receive from the free mercy of God, to his own service; especially when by doing it we are essentially serving ourselves. If the ministers of God give up their whole time, talents, and strength, to watch over, labor for, and instruct the people in spiritual things, justice requires that they shall receive their support from the work. How worthless and wicked must that man be, who is continually receiving good from the Lord's hands without restoring any part for the support of true religion, and for charitable purposes! To such God says, Their table shall become a snare to them, and that he will curse their blessings. God expects returns of gratitude in this way from every man; he that has much should give plenteously, he that has little should do his diligence to give of that little.

It is not the business of these notes to dispute on the article of tithes; certainly it would be well could a proper substitute be found for them, and the clergy paid by some other method, as this appears in the present state of things to be very objectionable; and the mode of levying them is vexatious in the extreme, and serves to sow dissensions between the clergyman and his parishioners, by which many are not only alienated from the Church, but also from the power as well as the form of godliness. But still the laborer is

⁵⁹ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

worthy of his hire; and the maintenance of the public ministry of the word of God should not be left to the caprices of men. He who is only supported for his work, will be probably abandoned when he is no longer capable of public service. I have seen many aged and worn-out ministers reduced to great necessity, and almost literally obliged to beg their bread among those whose opulence and salvation were, under God, the fruits of their ministry! Such persons may think they do God service by disputing against “tithes, as legal institutions long since abrogated,” while they permit their worn-out ministers to starve:—but how shall they appear in that day when Jesus shall say, I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; naked, and ye clothed me not? It is true, that where a provision is established on a certain order of priesthood by the law, it may be sometimes claimed and consumed by the worthless and the profane; but this is no necessary consequence of such establishment, as there are laws which, if put in action, have sufficient energy to expel every wicked and slothful servant from the vineyard of Christ. This however is seldom done. At all events, this is no reason why those who have served God and their generation should not be comfortably supported during that service; and when incapable of it, be furnished at least with the necessaries of life. Though many ministers have reason to complain of this neglect, who have no claims on a legal ecclesiastical establishment, yet none have cause for louder complaint than the generality of those called curates, or unbeneficed ministers, in the Church of England: their employers clothe themselves with the wool, and feed themselves with the fat; they tend not the flock, and their substitutes that perform the labor and do the drudgery of the office, are permitted at least to half starve on an inadequate remuneration. Let a national worship be supported, but let the support be derived from a less objectionable source than tithes; for as the law now stands relative to them, no one purpose of moral instruction or piety can be promoted by the system. On their present plan tithes are oppressive and unjust; the clergyman has a right by law to the tenth of the produce of the soil, and to the tenth of all that is supported by it. He claims even the tenth egg, as well as the tenth apple; the tenth of all grain, of all hay, and even of all the produce of the kitchen garden; but he contributes nothing to the cultivation of the soil. A comparatively poor man rents a farm; it is entirely out of heart, for it has been exhausted; it yields very little, and the tenth is not much; at the expense of all he has, he dresses and manures this ungrateful soil; to repay him and keep up the cultivation would require three years’ produce. It begins to yield well, and the clergyman takes the tenth which is now in quantity and quality more in value than a pound, where before it was not a shilling. But the whole crop would not repay the farmer’s expenses. In proportion to the farmer’s improvement is the clergyman’s tithe, who has never contributed one shilling to aid in this extra produce! Here then not only the soil pays tithes, but the man’s property brought upon the soil pays tithes: his skill and industry also are tithed; or if he have been obliged to borrow cash, he not only has to pay tithes on the produce of this borrowed money, but five per cent interest for the money itself. All this is oppressive and cruelly unjust. I say again, let there be a national religion, and a national clergy supported by the state; but let them be supported by a tax, not by tithes, or rather let them be paid out of the general taxation; or, if the tithe system must be continued, let the poor-rates be

abolished, and the clergy, out of the tithes, support the poor in their respective parishes, as was the original custom.⁶⁰

Gleanings in Genesis - Pink:

THE MAN JACOB

GENESIS 28

JACOB and his experiences may be viewed from two chief viewpoints: as a picture of the believer, and as a type of the Jewish nation. We shall take up the latter first. As to Jacob foreshadowing the history of the Jews we may note, among others, the following analogies:

1. Jacob was markedly the object of God's election: Rom. 9:10. So, too, was the Jewish nation. See Deut. 6:7; 10:15; Amos 3:2.

2. Jacob was loved before he was born, Rom. 9:11–13. Of the Jewish nation it is written, "Thus saith the Lord, the people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest, the Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:2, 3).

3. Jacob was altogether lacking in natural attractiveness. This is singularly true of the Jewish people.

4. Jacob was the one from whom the Twelve Tribes directly sprang.

5. Jacob is the one after whom the Jewish race is most frequently called. See Isa. 2:5, etc.

6. Jacob was the one whom God declared should be "served," Gen. 25:23; 27:29. Of the Jews the prophetic scriptures affirm, "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up Mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up My standard to the people, and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers; they shall *bow down to thee* with their face to the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet" (Isa. 49:22, 23). And again it is written of Israel, "And they shall *bring* all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules" (Isa. 66:20).

7. Jacob was the one to whom God gave the earthly inheritance, Gen. 27:28; 28:13. So, too, the Jews.

8. Jacob suffered a determined effort to be *robbed* of his inheritance, Gen. 27: Isaac and Esau. So have the Jews.

9. Jacob valued the blessing of God, but sought it in carnal ways, totally opposed to faith, Gen. 26:27. So it is written of the Jews, "For I bear them. record that they have a zeal of God, but not *according to knowledge*. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:2, 3).

10. Jacob was exiled from the land as the result of his *sin*, Gen. 28:5. So have the Jews been.

⁶⁰ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

11. Jacob spent much of his life as a wandering exile from the land; such has been the history of his descendants.

12. Jacob was distinctly the *wanderer* among the patriarchs, and as such a type of the wandering Jew!

13. Jacob experienced, as such, the sore chastenings of a righteous God. So, too, the Jews.

14. Jacob had no “altar” in the land of his exile: thus also is it written of the Jews, “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a King, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice” (Hos. 3:4).

15. Jacob set his heart upon the land while exiled from it. His yearning for home is strikingly expressed in his words to Laban: “Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country,” (30:25). How we behold the same yearning among the Zionists today, as they appeal to American and British statesmen to make it possible for them to return in safety to Palestine!

16. Jacob was unjustly dealt with in the land of exile, Gen. 29:23; 31:41, 42.

17. Jacob developed into a crafty schemer and used subtle devices to secure earthly riches, Gen. 30:37, 43.

18. Jacob while in exile receives promise from God that he shall return unto the promised land, Gen. 28:15.

19. Jacob received no further revelation from God during all the years of his exile, until at length bidden by Him to return, Gen. 31:3.

20. Jacob was graciously preserved by God in the land of his exile and was the object of His ceaseless providential care.

21. Jacob became wealthy while in the land of exile, Gen. 30:43.

22. Jacob, because of this, had stirred up against him the enmity of those among whom he sojourned, Gen. 31:1.

23. Jacob ultimately returned to the land bearing with him the riches of the Gentiles, 31:18.

24. Jacob is seen at the end *blessing* the Gentiles (Gen. 47:7), and acting as God’s prophet, Gen. 49. In all these respects Jacob was a striking type of the Jew.

We shall next look at Jacob as a picture of the believer. It is intensely interesting to mark how each of the patriarchs foreshadowed some distinct truth in the believer. In Abraham we see the truth of Divine sovereignty, and the life of faith; in Isaac Divine sonship, and the life of submission; in Jacob Divine grace, and the life of conflict. In Abraham, election; in Isaac, the new birth; in Jacob, the manifestation of the two natures. Thus we find the *order* of these Old Testament biographies foreshadowed accurately what is now fully revealed in the New Testament. Again, we may remark further that, typically, Jacob is the *servant*. This is ever the Divine order. Abraham, the chosen object of God’s sovereign purpose, necessarily comes first, then Isaac, the *son* born supernaturally, the heir of the father’s house, followed by Jacob, the *servant*. It is needful to call special attention to this order today, though we cannot here enlarge upon it. Man would place sonship at the *end* of a long life of service, but God places it at the *beginning*. Man says, Serve God in order to become His son; but God says, You must first be My son in order to serve Me acceptably. The apostle Paul expressed this order when he said: “Whose I am, and whom I serve” (Acts 27:23). How carefully this order is guarded in our type appears further in the fact that *before* Jacob commenced his service at

Padanaram he first tarried at Bethel, which means “the House of God”—we must first enter God’s household before we can serve Him! That Jacob *does*, typically, represent *service* is clear from, Hos. 12:12, where we are told, “And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel *served* for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep.” The *history* of this we get in Genesis 29 and 30. As a servant with Laban, Jacob was singularly *faithful*. Here is his own challenge, “These twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was, in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night.”

There is still another way in which this *progressive order* in the typical foreshadowings of the three great patriarchs comes out. This has been forcefully set forth by Mr. F. W. Grant who, when commenting on the words of the Lord to Moses at the burning bush—“say unto the children of Israel, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob sent me unto you”—says, “In Abraham we find manifested the type of the Father, and in Isaac admittedly that of the Son, in Jacob Israel we find a type and pattern of the Spirit’s work which is again and again dwelt on and expanded in the after scriptures. Balaam’s words as to the people, using this double—this natural and this scriptural—name, are surely as true of the nation’s ancestors. ‘It shall be said of Jacob, and of Israel, what hath God wrought?’ What God hath *wrought* is surely what in the one now before us we are called in an especial way to acknowledge and glory in. For Jacob’s God is He whom we still know as accomplishing in us by almighty power the purposes of sovereign grace.”

While it is true that each of the three great patriarchs exemplified in his own person some fundamental truth of Divine revelation, yet it is to be particularly noted that each succeeding individual carried forward what had gone before, so that nothing was lost. In Abraham we behold the truth of election—God’s singling of him out from all the people on the earth; yet in Isaac the *same* truth is manifested, as is evident from the passing by of Ishmael and God’s declaration that “In Isaac shall thy seed be called.” Isaac represents the truth of Divine sonship, born supernaturally by the intervention of God’s power. Now in Jacob both of these truths, with important additions, are also to be observed. Even more notably than in the cases of Abraham and Isaac, Jacob is the object of God’s sovereign choice “Jacob gives occasion to the exercise of God’s sovereignty as to the twin children of Isaac and Rebekah. ‘For they being not yet born, nor having done any good or bad, that the purpose of (rod according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls, it was said to their mother, the elder shall serve the younger.’ It had been shown before in casting out the bondwoman and her son; but so it was now far more emphatically in Jacob chosen, not Esau. No flesh shall glory in His sight; in Jehovah certainly as it ought to be. Is man *only to think am talk of his* rights? Sinful man! Has God alone no rights? Is He to be a mere registrar of man’s wrongs? Oh! his wrongs, not rights: this is the truth, as no believer should forget from the dawn of a vital work in his soul!” (“Jacob,” by W. Kelly).

As the above truth is now so much controverted we subjoin a further quotation from the pen of one who is regarded as one of the leading orthodox teachers of our day: “In all this we see the marvel and glory of the Divine sovereignty. Why the younger son should have been chosen instead of the elder we do not know. It is, however, very striking to

find the same principle exercised on several other occasions. It is pretty certain that Abraham was not the eldest son of Terah. We know that Isaac was the younger son of Abraham, and that Joseph was not the eldest son of Jacob. All this goes to emphasize the simple fact that the order of nature is not necessarily the order of grace. All through, *God decided to display the sovereignty of His grace* as contrasted with that which was merely natural in human life. The great problem of Divine sovereignty is of course insolvable by the human intellect. It has to be accepted as a simple fact. It should, however, be observed that it is not merely a fact in regard to things spiritual; it is found also in nature in connection with human temperaments and races. All history is full of illustrations of the Divine choice, as we may see from such examples as Cyrus and Pharaoh. *Divine election is a fact, whether we can understand it or not* (italics ours). God's purposes are as certain as they are often inscrutable, and it is perfectly evident from the case of Esau and Jacob that the Divine choice of men is entirely independent of their merits or of any prevision of their merits or attainments (Rom. 9:11). It is in connection with this subject that we see the real force of St. Paul's striking words when he speaks of God as acting 'according to the *good pleasure* of His will' (Eph. 1:5), and although we are bound to confess the '*mystery* of His will' (Eph. 1:9), we are also certain that He works all things 'after the *counsel* of His will' (Eph. 1:11—italics not ours). There is nothing arbitrary about God and His ways and our truest wisdom when we cannot understand His reasons is to rest quietly and trustfully, saying, 'Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.' 'In His Will is our peace'" (Dr. Griffith Thomas, Commentary on Genesis)

Not only is the Divine sovereignty illustrated in Jacob, as in Abraham, but we also see typified in him the truth of regeneration (as in the case of Isaac) inasmuch as *nature* was set aside, and only in answer to prayer and by Divine intervention was Rebekah enabled to bear Jacob: see Gen. 25:21.

That which is most prominent in the Divine dealings with Jacob was the matchless *grace* of God, shown to one so unworthy, the marvelous *patience* exercised toward one so slow of heart to believe, the changeless *love* which unweariedly followed him through all his varied course, the *faithfulness* which no unfaithfulness on Jacob's part could change, and the *power* of God which effectively preserved and delivered him through numerous dangers and which, in the end, caused the spirit to triumph over the flesh, transforming the worm Jacob into Israel the prince of God. How these Divine perfections were displayed will be discovered as we turn our attention to the various scenes in which the Holy Spirit has portrayed our patriarch. We turn now to look briefly at Jacob in Genesis 28.

In our last article we dwelt upon Jacob deceiving his father, now we see how quickly he began to suffer for his wrongdoing! "And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. *Arise, go to Padanaram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban, thy mother's brother*" (28:1, 2). Jacob is sent away from home, to which he returns not for many years. In our studies upon Isaac we have seen how he foreshadowed those who belong to the *heavenly* calling, whereas, as we have pointed out above, Jacob typified the people of the *earthly* calling. This comes out in many incidental details. Isaac was forbidden to leave Canaan (type of the Heavlies)—24:5, 6—and his bride was brought to him, but Jacob *is sent forth out of Canaan* to the house of his

mother's father in quest of a wife, and thus was signified the evident contrast between Isaac and Jacob, and Jacob's *earthly* place and relationship.

“And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thy liest to thee will I *give* it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of” (28:10–15). There is much here that might be dwelt upon with profit to our souls, but we can do little more than mention one or two things.

Here we behold the marvelous *grace* of God, which delights to single out as its objects the most unlikely and unworthy subjects. Here was Jacob a fugitive from his father's house, fleeing from his brother's wrath, with probably no thought of God in his mind. As we behold him there on the bare ground with nothing but the stones for his pillow, enshrouded by the darkness of night, asleep—symbol of death—we obtain a striking and true picture of *man in his natural state*. Man is never so *helpless* as when asleep, and it was while he was in *this* condition that God appeared unto him! What had Jacob done to *deserve* this high honor? What was there in him to *merit* this wondrous privilege? Nothing; absolutely nothing. It was God in *grace* which now met him for the first time and here *gave* to him and his seed the land whereon he lay. Such is ever His way. He pleases to choose the foolish and vile things of this world: he selects those who have nothing and gives them everything: he singles out those who deserve naught but judgment, and bestows on them nothing but blessing. But note—and mark it particularly—the recipient of the Divine favors must first take his place *in the dust*, as Jacob here did (on the naked earth) before God will bless him.

And under what similitude did the Lord now reveal Himself to the worm Jacob? Jacob beheld in his dream a *ladder* set up on the earth, whose top reached unto heaven, and from above it the voice of God addressed him. Fortunately we are not left to our own speculations to determine the signification of this: John 1:51 interprets it for us. We say fortunately, for if we could not point to John 1:51 in proof of what we advance, some of our readers might charge us with indulging in a wild flight of the imagination. The “ladder” pointed to *Christ Himself*, the One who spanned the infinite gulf which separated heaven from earth, and who has in His own person provided a Way whereby we may draw near to God. That the “ladder” reached from earth to heaven, told of the *complete* provision which Divine grace has made for sinners. Right down to where the fugitive lay, the ladder and right up to God Himself the “ladder” reached!

In His address to Jacob, the Lord now repeated the promises which He had made before to Abraham and Isaac. with the additional assurance that He would be with him, preserving him wherever he went, and ultimately bringing him back to the land. In perfect harmony with the fact that Jacob represented the earthly people we may observe

here that God declares Jacob's seed shall be "as the dust of the earth," but no *reference* is made to "the stars of heaven!"

The sequel to this vision may be told in few words. Jacob awoke and was afraid, saying, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (v. 17). Next, he took the stone on which his head had rested and poured oil upon it. Then he changed the name of the place from Luz to Bethel. It is instructive to note this change of name, *Luz*—its original name, signifies "separation," while Bethel, its new name, means "the house of God." Is it not beautiful to mark the typical force of thief God calls us to *separate from the world*, but in leaving the world *we enter His house!* "Never do we part from ought at His call, but He far more than makes it up to us with His own smile" (W. Lincoln).

Finally, we are told, "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God. And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house, and of all that Thou shalt give me *I will surely give* the tenth unto Thee" (28:20–22). How true to life this is! It was not only characteristic of Jacob personally, but typical of *us* representatively. *Jacob failed to rise to the level of God's grace* and was filled with fear instead of peace, and expressed human legality by speaking of what *he* will do. Oh, how often *we* follow in his steps! Instead of resting in the goodness of God and appropriating His free grace, like Jacob, we bargain and enter into conditions and stipulations. May the God of Grace enlarge our hearts to receive His grace, and may He empower us to magnify His grace by refusing to defile it with any of our own wretched additions.⁶¹

Book of Jasher: Chapter 29

25 Now therefore my son hearken to my voice, to all that I shall command thee, and refrain from taking a wife from amongst the daughters of Canaan; arise, go to Haran to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father, and take unto thee a wife from there from the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother.

26 Therefore take heed lest thou shouldst forget the Lord thy God and all his ways in the land to which thou goest, and shouldst get connected with the people of the land and pursue vanity and forsake the Lord thy God.

27 But when thou comest to the land serve there the Lord, do not turn to the right or to the left from the way which I commanded thee and which thou didst learn.

28 And may the Almighty God grant thee favor in the sight of the people of the earth, that thou mayest take there a wife according to thy choice; one who is good and upright in the ways of the Lord.

29 And may God give unto thee and thy seed the blessing of thy father Abraham, and make thee fruitful and multiply thee, and mayest thou become a multitude of people in the land whither thou goest, and may God cause thee to return to this land, the land of thy father's dwelling, with children and with great riches, with joy and with pleasure.

⁶¹Pink, A. W. (2005). *Gleanings in Genesis* (245). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

30 And Isaac finished commanding Jacob and blessing him, and he gave him many gifts, together with silver and gold, and he sent him away; and Jacob hearkened to his father and mother; he kissed them and arose and went to Padan-aram; and Jacob was seventy-seven years old when he went out from the land of Canaan from Beersheba.

31 And when Jacob went away to go to Haran Esau called unto his son Eliphaz, and secretly spoke unto him, saying, Now hasten, take thy sword in thy hand and pursue Jacob and pass before him in the road, and lurk for him, and slay him with thy sword in one of the mountains, and take all belonging to him and come back.

32 And Eliphaz the son of Esau was an active man and expert with the bow as his father had taught him, and he was a noted hunter in the field and a valiant man.

33 And Eliphaz did as his father had commanded him, and Eliphaz was at that time thirteen years old, and Eliphaz rose up and went and took ten of his mother's brothers with him and pursued Jacob.

34 And he closely followed Jacob, and he lurked for him in the border of the land of Canaan opposite to the city of Shechem.

35 And Jacob saw Eliphaz and his men pursuing him, and Jacob stood still in the place in which he was going, in order to know what this was, for he did not know the thing; and Eliphaz drew his sword and he went on advancing, he and his men, toward Jacob; and Jacob said unto them, What is to do with you that you have come hither, and what meaneth it that you pursue with your swords.

36 And Eliphaz came near to Jacob and he answered and said unto him, Thus did my father command me, and now therefore I will not deviate from the orders which my father gave me; and when Jacob saw that Esau had spoken to Eliphaz to employ force, Jacob then approached and supplicated Eliphaz and his men, saying to him,

37 Behold all that I have and which my father and mother gave unto me, that take unto thee and go from me, and do not slay me, and may this thing be accounted unto thee a righteousness.

38 And the Lord caused Jacob to find favor in the sight of Eliphaz the son of Esau, and his men, and they hearkened to the voice of Jacob, and they did not put him to death, and Eliphaz and his men took all belonging to Jacob together with the silver and gold that he had brought with him from Beersheba; they left him nothing.

39 And Eliphaz and his men went away from him and they returned to Esau to Beersheba, and they told him all that had occurred to them with Jacob, and they gave him all that they had taken from Jacob.

40 And Esau was indignant at Eliphaz his son, and at his men that were with him, because they had not put Jacob to death.

41 And they answered and said unto Esau, Because Jacob supplicated us in this matter not to slay him, our pity was excited toward him, and we took all belonging to him and brought it unto thee; and Esau took all the silver and gold which Eliphaz had taken from Jacob and he put them by in his house.

42 At that time when Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and had commanded him, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife from amongst the daughters of Canaan, and that the daughters of Canaan were bad in the sight of Isaac and Rebecca,

43 Then he went to the house of Ishmael his uncle, and in addition to his older wives he took Machlath the daughter of Ishmael, the sister of Nebayoth, for a wife.

Jasher - Chapter 30

1 And Jacob went forth continuing his road to Haran, and he came as far as mount Moriah, and he tarried there all night near the city of Luz; and the Lord appeared there unto Jacob on that night, and he said unto him, I am the Lord God of Abraham and the God of Isaac thy father; the land upon which thou liest I will give unto thee and thy seed.

2 And behold I am with thee and will keep thee wherever thou goest, and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of Heaven, and I will cause all thine enemies to fall before thee; and when they shall make war with thee they shall not prevail over thee, and I will bring thee again unto this land with joy, with children, and with great riches.

3 And Jacob awoke from his sleep and he rejoiced greatly at the vision which he had seen; and he called the name of that place Bethel.⁶²

Edersheim: (Genesis Chapter 28)

For, that Isaac was now acting in faith, and that he discerned how, without knowing it, he had blessed, not according to his own inclination, but according to the will and purpose of God, appears from the subsequent history. It seems that Esau, full of hatred and envy, resolved to rid himself of his rival by murdering his brother, only deferring the execution of his purpose till after the death of his father, which he also believed to be near at hand. Somehow Rebekah, ever watchful, obtained tidings of this; and knowing her elder son's quick temper, which, however violent, did not long harbor anger, she resolved to send Jacob away to her brother Laban, for "a few days," as she fondly imagined, after which she would "send and fetch" him "from thence." But kindness towards her husband prompted her to keep from him Esau's murderous plan, and to plead as a reason for Jacob's temporary departure that which, no doubt, was also a strong motive in her own mind, that Jacob should marry one of her kindred. For, as she said, "If Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life be to me?" Petulant as was her language, her reasoning was just, and Isaac knew it from painful experience of Esau's wives. And now Isaac expressly sent Jacob to Laban, to seek him a wife; and in so doing, this time consciously and wittingly, renewed the blessing which formerly had been fraudulently obtained from him. Now also the patriarch speaks clearly and unmistakably, not only reiterating the very terms of the covenant-blessing in all their fullness, but especially adding these words: "God Almighty . . . give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee." Thus Isaac's dimness of spiritual sight had at last wholly passed away. But the darkness around Esau seems to only have grown deeper and deeper. Upon learning what charge Isaac had given his son, and apparently for the first time awakening to the fact that "the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac* his father," he took "Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael" as a third wife - as if he had mended matters by forming an alliance with him whom Abraham had, by God's command, "cast out!" Thus the spiritual incapacity and unfitness of Esau appeared at every step, even where he tried to act kindly and dutifully.

⁶² The Book of Jasher, Faithfully Translated 1840, Hebrew to English, J.H.Perry & Co, Salt Lake City UT

* There is no mention here that Esau dreaded God's displeasure, or even thought of it. We may remember our earthly, and yet, alas, forget our heavenly Father.

To conclude, by altering and adapting the language of a German writer: After this event Isaac lived other forty-three years. But he no more appears in this history. Its thread is now taken up by Jacob, on whom the promise has devolved. Scripture only records that Isaac was gathered to his fathers when one hundred and eighty years old, and full of days, and that he was buried in the cave of Machpelah by Esau and Jacob, whom he had the joy of seeing by his death-bed as reconciled brothers. When Jacob left, his father dwelt at Beersheba. The desire to be nearer to his father's burying-place may have been the ground of his later settlement in Mamre, where he died. (Genesis 35:27-29) Rebekah, who at parting had so confidently promised to let Jacob know whenever Esau's anger was appeased, may have died even before her favorite son returned to Canaan. At any rate the promised message was never delivered, nor is her name mentioned on Jacob's return.

Chapter 17 - Jacob's Vision at Bethel - His Arrival at the House of Laban - Jacob's double Marriage and Servitude - His Flight from Haran - Pursuit of Laban, and Reconciliation with Jacob

(GENESIS 28:10-31:55)

IT had been a long and weary journey that first day when Jacob left his home at Beersheba.* More than forty miles had he traveled over the mountains which afterwards were those of Judah, and through what was to become the land of Benjamin. The sun had set, and its last glow faded out from the gray hills of Ephraim, when he reached "an uneven valley, covered, as with gravestones, by large sheets of bare rock, - some few here and there standing up like the cromlechs of Druidical monuments."** Here, close by a wild ridge, the broad summit of which was covered by an olive grove, was the place where Abraham had first rested for some time on entering the land, and whence he and Lot had, before their separation, taken a survey of the country. There, just before him, lay the Canaanitish Luz; and beyond it, many days' journey, stretched his weary course to Haran.*** It was a lonely, weird place, this valley of stones, in which to make his first night's quarters. But perhaps it agreed all the better with Jacob's mood, which had made him go on and on, from early morning, forgetful of time and way, till he could no longer pursue his journey. Yet, accidental as it seemed - for we read that "he lighted upon a certain place," - the selection of the spot was assuredly designed of God.

* We infer from the sacred text that Jacob made his first night's quarters at Bethel.

** Stanley, Sinai and Palestine, p. 217.

*** The journey from Beersheba to Haran is quite four hundred miles.

Presently Jacob prepared for rest. Piling some of the stones, with which the valley was strewn, he made them a pillow, and laid him down to sleep. Then it was, in his dream, that it seemed as if these stones of the valley were being builded together by an unseen

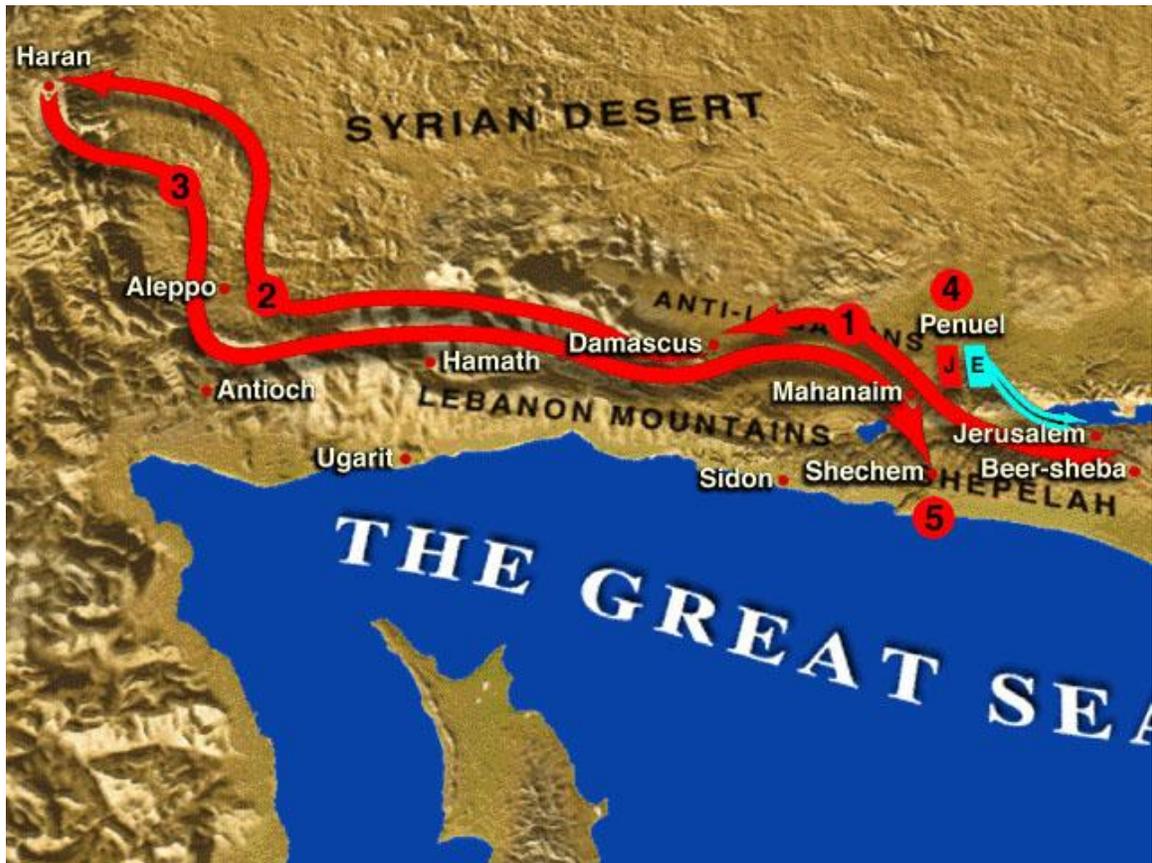
hand, step upon step, "a ladder" - or, probably more correctly, "a stair." Now, as he watched it, it rose and rose, till it reached the deep blue star-spangled sky, which seemed to cleave for its reception. All along that wondrous track moved angel-forms, "ascending and descending upon it;" and angel-light was shed upon its course, till quite up on the top stood the glorious Jehovah Himself, Who spake to the lonely sleeper below: "I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac." Silent in their ministry, the angels still passed up and down the heaven-built stairs, from where Jacob lay to where Jehovah spake. The vision and the words which the Lord spoke explain each other, the one being the symbol of the other. On that first night, when an outcast from his home, and a fugitive, heavy thoughts, doubts, and fears would crowd around Jacob; when, in every sense, his head was pillowed on stones in the rocky valley of Luz, Jehovah expressly renewed to him, in the fullest manner, the promise and the blessing first given to Abraham, and added to it this comfort, whatever might be before him: "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." And what Jacob heard, that he also saw in symbolic vision. The promise was the real God-built stair, which reached from the lonely place on which the poor wanderer lay quite up to heaven, right into the very presence of Jehovah; and on which, all silent and unknown by the world, lay the shining track of angel-ministry. And so still to each one who is truly of Israel is the promise of that mysterious "ladder" which connects earth with heaven. Below lies poor, helpless, forsaken man; above, stands Jehovah Himself, and upon the ladder of promise which joins earth to heaven, the angels of God, in their silent, never-ceasing ministry, descend, bringing help, and ascend, as to fetch new deliverance. Nay, this "ladder" is Christ,* for by this "ladder" God Himself has come down to us in the Person of His dear Son, Who is, so to speak, the Promise become Reality, as it is written:

"Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." (John 1:51)

* So both Luther and Calvin understood it.

"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely Jehovah is in this place, and I knew it not." Quite another fear now came upon him from that of loneliness or of doubt. It was awe at the conscious presence of the ever-watchful, ever-mindful covenant-God which made him feel, as many a wanderer since at such discovery: "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." And early next morning Jacob converted his stony pillow into a memorial pillar, and consecrated it unto God. Henceforth this rocky valley would be to him no more the Canaanitish Luz, but Beth-el, "the house of God;" just as John the Baptist declared that God could of such stones raise up children to Abraham. At the same time Jacob vowed a vow, that when God had fulfilled His promise, and brought him back again "in peace," he would, on his part also, make the place a Beth-el, by dedicating it to God, and offering unto the Lord a tenth of all that He should give him, which also he did. (Genesis 35:6, 7) ⁶³

⁶³ Alfred Edersheim, Bible History, Old Testament, studylight.org



(Hosea 12:12) *And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep.*