

Isaac Sends Jacob Away (Gen. 28:1-5)

1 Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. 2 Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother.

3 “May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may be an assembly of peoples; 4 And give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you, that you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham.” 5 So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Padan Aram, to Laban the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

- We see here a shift in Isaac. We see Isaac calling Jacob, and suddenly Isaac has come to life again. He has become an authoritative figure once again.
- Isaac is also very concerned that Jacob not marry as poorly as his Esau. Things have changed, and he sincerely wishes that Jacob might receive the blessing.
- Isaac administers to Jacob a blessing which covers the items we have typically seen in this section of Genesis.
- Jacob sets out for the household of Bethuel with the belated and full blessing of his father. He has the blessing, but he is probably looking over his shoulder.
- Padan Aram may mean the road to Aram or the crossing over to Aram. Basically the idea is that you are passing over to a different territory. This is the boundary in and out of the Promised Land.

Esau Takes Another Wife (Gen. 28:6-9)

6 Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,” 7 and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Padan Aram. 8 Also Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac. 9 So Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.

- Here, pathetically, Esau belatedly tries to work his way into the good graces of his parents. Esau doesn’t seem to have considered previously that Isaac also had been displeased by the Hittite wives he had married.
- Of course, the marriage issue now has little bearing now on the ultimate issues in his life, and the big question of who will inherit the blessing.
- He goes out and he finds a wife in the household of his deceased uncle Ishmael. Unfortunately, we could say for Esau that three wrongs don’t make a right.

Jacob’s Ladder (Gen. 28:10-12)

10 Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. 11 So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. 12 Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

- Jacob didn’t voyage the way the others have voyaged before him. Abraham came with people and possessions. Isaac got his wife when Abraham sent Eleazar, but Jacob was completely alone, humanly speaking.

- His choice of a resting place was not deliberate. He simply landed on that place because he needed to stop for the night. However... there are no accidents!
- The stone pillow has often been seen as a picture of Christ, the Rock of salvation.

About Jacob's Ladder

In this vision of the night, Jacob saw a portal into Heaven, with a ladder for the angels to ascend and descend. The idea of a ladder here may not necessarily be our typical ladder with rungs that you climb, but it could also be something like a stone staircase.

- Remember that in the Hebrew mentality, there are **three** heavens. The *first heaven* is the atmospheric heaven, which we call “the sky.” The *second heaven* is a spiritual heaven, the spiritual places which surround the earth. But the *third heaven* is what people think of when, in English, they say, “Heaven.”
- They also had a concept of the underworld, called Sheol, as we’ve discussed. Jacob’s ladder or stairway is the first indication anywhere in the Scriptures of the abode of God in the common sense of the word “Heaven.”
- We see the angels of God traveling back and forth from Heaven to Earth. God is the One who sends them on their missions, and they obey His will.
- A picture of Jesus Christ: He is the stairway between this world and Heaven. Jesus Himself told Nathaniel “*Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.*” (John 1:51) He joins our worlds and makes them one in Him.
- “Christ is the way; all God’s favors come to us, and all our services go to him, by Christ. If God dwells with us, and we with him, it is by Christ. We have no way of getting to heaven, but by this ladder...” – Matthew Henry

God Is In This Place (Gen. 28:13-17)

13 And behold, the LORD stood above it [or alongside it] and said: "I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. 14 Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. 15 Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."

16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." 17 And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!"

- The Hebrew is ambiguous and can also be read to say He was alongside Jacob at the bottom of it, conversing with him.
- God reveals Himself to Jacob by the covenant name of YHWH, and He says that He's the God of his fathers. He confirms the covenant by making the promises to Him personally. It's like the blessing that he received from Isaac, but imagine hearing this from God Almighty Himself!
- There are also some personal promises that God makes to him, concerning Jacob's own situation and his own troubles of the moment. God said he will not leave him until he has done for Jacob what He has started.
- We have also traveled somewhere, maybe we've even been on the run in some way or another, and we didn't know that God had already gone ahead of us and was there awaiting us. He says that the Lord is surely there, and in the Hebrew this indicates that he is surprised.
- His response was a perfectly appropriate one. Whenever God appears, whenever God speaks, the right response is to be afraid.

- He says it's the house of God and the gate of Heaven, and those two things have always gone together. The house of God certainly is the gate of heaven.

The Naming of Bethel; The Vow (Gen. 28:18-22)

18 Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. 19 And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously. 20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, 21 so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God. 22 And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

- In that culture, people would set up stone pillars as memorials.
- He called the place **Bethel**, which means "house of God." Jacob was not staying in the city called *Luz*, but he was outside of the city.
- The word **Luz** means the almond tree, or the wood of the almond tree. This is perhaps a strange kind of a pun, because the word for almond tree in Hebrew is just like the word for watching over something: *And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Jeremiah, what do you see?" And I said, "I see an almond [shaqed] branch." Then the LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching [shaqad] over my word to perform it."* (Jer. 1:11-12)
- There is also another meaning for *Luz*, and it is departure or separation.
- Jacob makes a vow, which none of the others did. He is always bargaining! God is going to spend the next twenty years of Jacob's life not only blessing him, but sanctifying him so that his character, faith, and devotion would all be pure.
