

This first promise becomes deeply significant in about 25 years' time. By contrast, we do not ever read that Jacob fulfilled his promise to give God a tithe.



Now this is the hard bit. There are two possible interpretations of this passage.

Any suggestions of what they might be?

Jacob is either being genuine and the if is about response rather than uncertainty. Then Jacob is responding positively to God. The Hebrew can be read this way. But the "you give me everything, I'll give you a tenth" sounds like Jacob is doing exactly the same thing he did with the birthright, the same thing he has done all his life. He is trying to make a deal with God from which he will profit. It looks like this is more about getting a good bargaining than it is about faith.



Can you bargain with God this way?

So why does God accept this bargain?

Bethel does not mean that Jacob is now saved or knows God; by his own admission, God is not yet the God of Jacob. And Jacob will only allow this to happen if God fulfills His side of the bargain. Jacob has wrestled with Esau three times. The wrestling with God has just started. The barrier between God and Jacob has been breached. From now on, God will work in Jacob to achieve his ends. God will soften him up.



Why do you think God appeared to Jacob at this point?

Firstly, because he needed it, he was discouraged and in fear. But more importantly, to birth something spiritual in his life. This is really important because it shows us how God works in people's lives to draw them to Himself.

Has God worked this way in your life? I.e. Done things even before you were saved to change you and draw you to Himself.



Is there a Jacob in your family or among your friends?

If so, what should you be doing?

It is generally felt that Jesus parable of the Prodigal son is based on Jacob's life. Sometimes God has to take people away to work on them. At this point, Rebekah and Isaac were only going to get in the way. God promises He will not let Jacob go until He has achieved His goals (again, this becomes very significant later in the narrative).



Crisis and Encounter.

It is important to remember that Jacob is not there yet; he is not even close. But he has started. God has brought a crisis into his life, followed by an encounter. Many people who get saved as adults do so because God uses the same technique with them. They encounter a crisis, then either find that God steps in all by Himself or seek the help of Christians with the crisis. A crisis followed by an encounter. If this is a key method that God uses to bring people to Himself, we need to be ready to cooperate.



What kind of crisis?

What kind of an encounter?

What are the implications for us?

Bringing life, hope and freedom to people, communities and nations.

FREEDOM

Christian Church

Jacob - Part 3 - Bethel - The House of God.



Quick recap. When Rebekah is pregnant with twins, the two boys are wrestling in her womb, she asks God what is happening and He tells her that two nations are fighting for supremacy. He tells her that the younger child is the one chosen by Him and through him God will achieve His promises. The two boys, when they are born, could not be more different, either physically or in their temperaments. The two seem to be always at odds with each other. Jacob, the younger, buys the birthright (the inheritance) from Esau in a shady manipulative deal. He then tricks his father, Isaac, into blessing him instead of Esau. Esau is furious and plans to kill Jacob.

His mother comes up with a plan to send him back to her family in Paddan Aram, supposedly to find a wife, but really to save his life. Isaac blesses him again. This blessing, Genesis 28:3-4, makes it clear that despite Jacob's trickery and his best efforts to derail his life, God's promise has come true; he will be the line through which the promises to Abraham will be fulfilled.

We saw that Jacob's life fell into four sections and that each of these presents Jacob in a different light. We have also seen that these seasons end in crises and have encounters with God between them.



What was the first crisis?

What things have we learned about Jacob so far?



Leaving Home

Read Genesis 28:10-12

Jacob is sent from home with nothing but a blessing. He is sent away empty-handed. He is sent to find a wife, but is given no dowry for her. (cf. Genesis 24:10). It is a long journey c750Km

What was Jacob like? Genesis 25:27

Where is he now?



Jacob is totally out on a limb. He is away from everything he loves and everything he has known. His brother wants to kill him and his father is just pleased to be rid of him. He has lost everything he set out to grasp. Travelling by yourself at this time is a dangerous thing to do. There are human and animal dangers all around him. For the very first time in his life, he is truly alone. He camps for the night, possibly close to the city of Luz.



How do you think he is feeling?

What do you think is going through his mind?

www.freedom.gen.nz
studies@freedom.gen.nz
Pastor Ray Moxham





Apart from the loneliness and perhaps the sense of failure. If Esau wanted a chance to kill Jacob, he was never going to get a better one. Esau is the hunter and no one would ever know! His mind is perhaps full of fears for the future: will he make it to Paddan Aram, will he succeed? Jacob is beginning to question whether what he did was right, perhaps questioning who he really is and maybe even whether there is something in this God thing. He probably jumped at every noise!

Putting a stone under your neck is still done in some African cultures when they sleep.



**What happens?
What does he see?**

This is sometimes called Jacob's ladder. Jacob sees angels ascending and descending. The angels don't appear to have anything to do with Jacob.

What do you think this dream of angels means?



The implication is that this is a place where heaven and earth meet. Where communication between the physical and the spiritual is possible. A place where God breaks into the world. The cultures around Israel laid great significance in such places; they usually became sites of sacrifice, because they believed it was only at such places that the gods could be partitioned or controlled. Babel was such a place. The Bible does have God speaking at such places, but it does not have him tied to them.



In Genesis, God appears and speaks often and he does so where and how He wishes. His appearance at one place does not guarantee that he will appear there again. Jacob's interpretation of this as a sacred site, and God's use of it as such, suggest that Jacob thinks of God in pagan terms.



Jesus alludes to this vision. John 1:51 But the Gospels never record a time when it happened.

What do you think he is saying?

Jesus is saying that this dream is fulfilled in Him. He is where heaven and earth meet, He is the open communication between God and man.

What did Jacob do to receive this dream?



**Do you think God took advantage of his psychological state?
Why doesn't God rebuke him for his sins?**

The first and second parts of Genesis show an interesting shift in 1-11 God acts through punishment in 12-50 He acts in blessing. i.e. God uses blessing, not punishment, to achieve His purposes.



**What does this tell us about God?
What does this tell us about ourselves?**



An Encounter with God

Read Genesis 28:13-15

How does God introduce Himself?

Abraham knew God and had a relationship with Him, and so did Isaac. Again, we are confronted with the question: will Jacob?



What does God promise Jacob in verses 13-14?

Where have we heard these promises before?



These are three of the four basic things that God promised Abraham time and again through Genesis. Genesis 12:2-3, 7, 13:14-17, 15:5, 17:6-8, 18:18, 22:15-18 etc. The promise that they will possess the land, be a great and numerous nation and that through them the whole world will be blessed. (The fourth promise of relationship is found in verse 15.) These promises are hardwired into the very structure of the first five books of the Bible. (David Clines)



**Does he deserve this?
What conditions does God give to these promises?
What does this tell us about God and His nature?
How have these promises been fulfilled?**



Half of the planet today claim descendency from Abraham. Jews physically, Arabs physically through Ishmael, Muslims and Christians spiritually. Galatians 3:7. No, Jacob didn't deserve, it and no, there were no conditions, and Yes, God is a God of Grace who acts sovereignly.

What four personal promises does God give Jacob? Genesis 28:15

Jacob is in no condition to bless anyone.

How do you think this made Jacob feel?



A Realisation of God

Read Genesis 28:16-19

What was Jacob's immediate response?

Did you notice he misinterprets what has just happened – Awesome place rather than awesome God. He seems to think of God as tied to this place.



**Why is he afraid?
What does Bethel mean?
Where is Bethel?** John 14:23

Bethel means house of God.

A Response to the vision of God. A Recognition of God. Worship?

**Why does he set up a pillar and pour oil over it?
What effect do you think this encounter with God has on Jacob?**

switches fear of Esau for fear of God.



Making a Bargain.

Read Genesis 28:20-22

**What does Jacob identify as his goals? (what is most important to him?)
Are these God's goals for him?**



What two promises does Jacob make to God?

God will be Jacob's God (the goal of the story)

Jacob will give God a tenth of all God gives him.