

January 24, 2021 - An Unlikely Patriarch

Read and consider the following from Genesis 28

¹⁰⁻¹² Jacob left Beersheba and went to Haran. He came to a certain place and camped for the night since the sun had set. He took one of the stones there, set it under his head and lay down to sleep. And he dreamed: A stairway was set on the ground and it reached all the way to the sky; angels of God were going up and going down on it.

¹³⁻¹⁵ Then GOD was right before him, saying, "I am GOD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. I'm giving the ground on which you are sleeping to you and to your descendants. Your descendants will be as the dust of the Earth; they'll stretch from west to east and from north to south. All the families of the Earth will bless themselves in you and your descendants. Yes. I'll stay with you, I'll protect you wherever you go, and I'll bring you back to this very ground. I'll stick with you until I've done everything I promised you."

¹⁶⁻¹⁷ Jacob woke up from his sleep. He said, "GOD is in this place—truly. And I didn't even know it!" He was terrified. He whispered in awe, "Incredible. Wonderful. Holy. This is God's House. This is the Gate of Heaven."

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ Jacob was up first thing in the morning. He took the stone he had used for his pillow and stood it up as a memorial pillar and poured oil over it. He christened the place Bethel (God's House). The name of the town had been Luz until then.

²⁰⁻²² Jacob vowed a vow: "If God stands by me and protects me on this journey on which I'm setting out, keeps me in food and clothing, and brings me back in one piece to my father's house, *this* GOD will be my God. This stone that I have set up as a memorial pillar will mark this as a place where God lives. And everything you give me, I'll return a tenth to you."

Think about it:

1. From a worldly standpoint, Jacob was an unlikely candidate for greatness. What are some qualities that the world today says are important? How do these line up with what God says is important?
2. Do you think God still speaks to people in dreams? Have you ever felt like you had a dream from God?
3. Jacob is coming from a somewhat dysfunctional family, but later in Genesis, his family will be restored. Have you ever been in a situation that you felt was undesirable, that God was able to use for good?
4. Jacob constructed a pillar of stones to memorialize a special place where he encountered God. Think back on your faith journey. What are some significant places where you've encountered God?
5. Jacob promises to return a tenth of all that God gives him. What has God given you? How can you use what God has given you for good?

