

April 30, 2017 - Gen. 28:10 – 29:30 - Jacob's Dream at Bethel, Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel

Torah Readings: Gen. 28:10 – 29:30 - Jacob's Dream at Bethel, Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel

Psalm 23

Haftorah - Hosea 12:13 – 13:5 + 14:9-10

Jacob's Dream

The dream came when Jacob was in a dire situation, pursued by Esau and facing an uncertain future despite the blessing he received.

Genesis 28:11-12 - "And he lighted on 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."

Why a rock for a pillow?

It was common for travelers. The Egyptians used a block of wood to support their head in their beds.

Josephus (Antiqu. I. 1. c. 19. sect. 1.) says Jacob chose to stay in the open ground instead of going into the nearby town because of his dislike of the Canaanites.

The stone "pillow" symbolized the altar of sacrifice. Like Abraham's horror of great darkness, Jacob asleep was a type of Christ crucified and in the grave.

Jewish commentators identify this place with Mount Moriah, and say that the stone which Jacob placed under his head was one of those which had formed the altar upon which Isaac had been bound for sacrifice. The name Beth-el (House of God) signified, they add, the temple, and as makôm—place—is thrice used in this verse, it mysteriously foreshadowed the three temples—Solomon's, Zerubbabel's, and Herod's—which successively occupied the site.

A Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah) interprets the scene completely as a vision of the future Temple as the "gate of heaven" - its prayers and sacrifices being the bridge between heaven and earth:

"And behold a ladder—this is the incline [leading to the Temple altar]. Stationed on the earth—this is the altar, as it says (Exodus 20:21), "Make for me an altar of earth." And its top reaches the sky—these are the offerings whose fragrance rises to heaven. And behold the angels of God—these are the high priests. Ascending and descending on it—that is, they ascend and descend on the incline. And behold God stands above it, as it

says (Amos 9:1), "I saw God standing on the altar."

Or, an alternate rabbinical picture is of the giving of the Law at Sinai:

"And he dreamed and behold a ladder — this is Sinai. Stationed on earth — as it says (Exodus 19:17), 'They stood at the base of the mountain.' And its top reaching the sky — as it says (Deuteronomy 4:11), 'And the mountain was alight with fire unto the heart of the sky.' Further, the numerology of the letters of ladder are equal to those of Sinai in Hebrew. They both add up to 130. The Hebrew noun (sullam, "ladder, stairway") occurs only here in the Old Testament.

Jacob's Ladder

The ladder is an ancient symbol. Ladders were mentioned in the Pyramid Texts as one explanation for how the dead king reached the sky to be united with the sun god Khepri.

The ladder could signify the Cross, or Christ himself. Christ bridges the gap between Heaven and Earth, He said his body was a "temple" and his sacrifice atoned "once and for all."

Jesus links Jacob's Ladder to Himself:

John 1:51 - "And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

"That by the angels of God ascending and descending, is to be understood, that a perpetual intercourse should now be opened between heaven and earth, through the medium of Christ, who was God manifested in the flesh. Our blessed Lord is represented in his mediatorial capacity as the ambassador of God to men; and the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man, is a metaphor taken from the custom of dispatching couriers or messengers from the prince to his ambassador in a foreign court, and from the ambassador back to the prince." - Adam Clarke, early 19th-century Methodist theologian

Jacob's image was reflected and present in Heaven

The four faces on the heavenly merkabah chariot/throne mentioned in **Ezekiel 1:10** were a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle. The Rabbis equate that "man" with Jacob.

The angels ascended and descended on it, meaning "on him" (Jacob) according to the midrash Rabbah on Genesis 28.

"It is though (said the angels) his features are engraved on high; they ascended on high and saw his features, and they descended below and found him sleeping (Gen. Rab 68:12)

Jacob is the one "whose likeness is engraved on the throne of glory, and **whom you**

(angels) have so greatly desired to see” (Yer. I and II, Neof. Gen. 28:12)

Compare **I Peter 1:3-12** - "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; **which things the angels desire to look into.**"

John 4:12 - Recall that regarding the well of Jacob, Jesus said he supplants Jacob and is superior to him.

Christ as mediator/intercessor reflected in the ladder

1 Timothy 2:5 - "For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity--the man Christ Jesus. "

"And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant," - (**Hebrews 12:24**)

Christ answers to Job's statement: Neither is there any daysman (mediator) betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both. (**Job 9:33**)

He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through him, because he always lives to make intercession for them" (**Hebrews 7:25**)

Another Blessing for Jacob

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; 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. 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."

Similar to previous blessings given to Abraham in **Genesis 12:2-3**, **Genesis 13:15**, **Genesis 17:1-8** and Isaac in **Genesis 26:3-4**.

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."

Where have we not been seeing or expecting God's presence? All of us could say this.

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."

First mention of an asset tithe - a tenth of all he had. In Genesis 14:20, Abraham pays a tithe to Melchizedek of Jerusalem. Later the laws of tithing were given: Leviticus

27:30-33.

Jacob arrives at the well of Haran

Genesis 29:2 - "And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, see, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone was on the well's mouth."

The well was a cistern or tank, often covered with a large stone requiring two or three men to remove it.

Genesis 29:6 - "... behold, Rachel his daughter comes with the sheep."

Rachel means "ewe."

Why was Laban's daughter out there with the sheep?

The Jews say (Targum Jonathan in loc. Pirke Eliezer, c. 36.), that the hand of God was upon Laban's flock, and there were but few left, so that he put away his shepherds, and what remained be put before his daughter Rachel. But there is another explanation.

"It is customary, even to this day, for the children of the greatest Emir to attend their flocks; the same is related of the seven children of the king of Thebes, of Antiphus the son of Priam, and of Anchises, Aeneas's father" - Gill's Exposition

Abraham's servant Eleazer met with Rebekah at a well, but not this one. (Genesis 24:11)

Genesis 29:7 - "And he said, See, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together: water you the sheep, and go and feed them."

"gathered together" (i.e. to shut them up for the night in their sheepfolds) Jacob probably wanted to quickly water the sheep and then take them to the fields to feed to get the shepherds away from the well so he could meet Rachel alone.

Genesis 29:11 - "And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept."

He wept for joy at the providence of God that had brought him so opportunely to the place, and at the sight of a person so nearly related to him; and who he hoped would be his wife, and was the person designed of God for him.

Laban outfoxes the trickster

See <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/an-aramean-destroyed-my-father/>

Jacob's "enslavement" to Laban was a precursor to Israel's slavery in Egypt.

The Passover Haggadah says: "Come and learn what Laban the Aramean sought to do our father Jacob. For Pharaoh issued his edict against only the males, but Laban sought to uproot all, as it is said, 'An Aramean would have destroyed my father, and he went down to Egypt and he became there a nation, great, mighty and populous.'"

The Haggadah understands the word *oved* (wandering) as *ibed* (destroyed), changing the vocalization of the word. Read this way, Laban the Aramean destroyed my father, that is, Jacob. Of course, Laban did not destroy Jacob; they made a covenant not to kill each other. Consequently, Laban is usually seen as one who *would* have destroyed Jacob.

How? By his trick of substituting Leah for Rachel.

Had Jacob married Rachel first, Joseph would have been the firstborn and his brothers wouldn't have envied him and wouldn't have sold him into slavery. If he had not been sold into slavery, Jacob and his sons would not have gone down to Egypt. If they had not gone down to Egypt, their descendants would not have been enslaved under Pharaoh.

—R. Azriel Hildesheimer (1820-1899), German rabbi

By destroying Jacob's "fatherhood"

When Laban said, "The daughters are mine and their children are mine, and the flocks are mine," he wanted them to still be his and be called by his name. In this, he wanted to destroy Jacob's fatherhood, that is, his title of "father." In truth [Rachel and Leah] had said "Are we not as strangers to him (i.e., to our father, Laban)?" that is, Laban no longer had the title of "father" over them.

—Rav Tzadok haKohen of Lublin (1823-1900), Polish Hassidic tzaddik

Still Seeking Destruction

The word *oved* is present tense and means destroys. Laban was always trying to destroy Jacob and even today.

—R. Zalman Sorotzkin (1881-1966), Lithuanian rabbi

Laban was a close relative, and therefore represents an inward threat, as Pharaoh represents an enemy on the outside. They represent two kinds of yetzer hara or "evil inclination."

Laban the Aramean convinces a person that a mitzvah (a commandment) is a sin or that a sin is a mitzvah. Since it comes through trickery (rama'ut, a pun on Aramean) it can even deceive a tzaddik (righteous man)

—Rabbi Jacob Aryeh ben Solomon Guterman of Radzymin (1792?1874), Polish Hassidic Tzaddik

You inner Laban can turn a mitzvah (commandment) into a sin when you do good out of

oppression or duty. He can make you believe a sin is a mitzvah (commandment) when you take an evil action from a good motivation.

Laban in Rabbinical Literature

See the Jewish Encyclopedia <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/9568-laban>

Laban is identified by the Rabbis with Beor, Balaam's father, and with Chushan-rishathaim (Judges iii. 8), the last name being interpreted as "perpetrator of two evils" (Sanh. 105a; comp. Targ. pseudo-Jonathan to Num. xxii. 5). R. Joshua b. Levi, however, identifies Laban with Kemuel (Gen. xxii. 21), the latter name being interpreted as, "who stood up against God's people" (; Gen. R. lvii. 4).

The name "Laban" is interpreted as "glowing with wickedness" (ib. lx. 8), and the surname "Arammi" (= "the Aramean") as an anagram of "ramma'ah" (= "impostor"; ib. lxx. 17). Laban is called also "the master of impostors" (ib. lxxv. 6). When he saw the bracelets on Rebekah's arms (Gen. 24: 30) he determined to kill Eliezer; but the latter, divining his intention, pronounced the Sacred Name, by which he caused camels to remain suspended in the air above the well. This and Eliezer's resemblance to Abraham made Laban believe that Eliezer was Abraham. Laban therefore invited him to enter the house (Midr. Abkir, in Yalk., Gen. 109; comp. Midr. Hagadah on Gen. 24:23).

Laban's answering before his father shows that he was impudent (Leḳaḥ Ṭob to Gen. 24:50). His promptness in meeting Jacob (Gen. 29:13) was due to his eagerness for wealth; for he thought that if Eliezer, a servant of Abraham, brought with him ten camels loaded with the goods of his master, Jacob, being Abraham's grandson, would certainly bring still greater riches. He consequently ran to meet Jacob, and, seeing the latter without camels, thought that perhaps he had gems about his person or in his mouth. He therefore hugged and kissed him (Gen. R. lxx. 13; comp. Midr. Hagadah, l.c.). Disappointed at not finding anything valuable, Laban said to Jacob: "I had the intention to make thee my king; but, as thou possessest nothing, thou art nothing more than a simple relative of mine" (Gen. R. l.c.; comp. Gen. 29:14).

Before Jacob's arrival Laban's flocks were scanty, as they had always decreased through pestilence (Pirḳe R. El. xxxvi.). When Jacob had completed his seven years of service, Laban assembled his countrymen and consulted them as to the best means to retain him; "for," said he, "ye know that formerly we had a scarcity of water, and it is only through this righteous man that we are now blessed with an abundance of it."

His countrymen advised him to substitute Leah for Rachel (Targum pseudo-Jonathan and Yerushalmi to Gen. 29:22; Gen. R. lxx. 17). Laban took pledges of his countrymen that they would not divulge his design, and then pawned the pledges for wine which he served to their owners, who were his guests. Laban took the precaution to extinguish the light in the banqueting-room, lest Jacob should at once see that it was Leah.

On Jacob inquiring the reason, Laban answered that it was a custom of his country. The

guests, drunk with wine, sang "ha Lia" (= "she is Leah"); but Jacob did not understand the real meaning of the exclamation (Gen. R. l.c.; "Sefer ha-Yashar," section "Wayeze").