

## Gen 28

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### Future Echoes

The passage echoes the past by recalling the events at “Beersheba” (v. 10), where his father Isaac resided (26:23, 33), and by anticipating “Haran” as the planned refuge from Esau’s wrath (27:43). The site “Bethel” (v. 19) evokes memories of the early journeys and worship of Abraham (12:8; 13:3–4). Jacob’s dream recalls the “night” (vv. 11–12) vision Abraham experienced (15:12, 17), and the appearance of the Lord (v. 13) points back to the comparable events in the lives of Abraham and Isaac, to whom the Lord had appeared (12:7; 17:1; 18:1; 26:2, 24). The formulaic language identifying God (v. 13) recalls the epiphanies made to Jacob’s ancestors (15:1, 7; 17:1; 26:24). The promises of land and descendants (vv. 13–14) are at points the exact wording made to Abram in 13:15–16, where the “dust” of the earth is similarly an apt simile. The promise of blessing for all peoples (v. 14b) repeats the precise formula of 12:3 at most points, and it is with slight variations similar to the promise language in 18:18; 22:18; 26:4. The promise of divine guidance and protection (vv. 15, 20) hearkens back to the travels of Isaac (26:3, 24). A guiding angel provided for Abraham’s servant, who traveled to the same city of Nahor also seeking a wife (24:7, 40). The fear (“awesome,” v. 17) that Jacob knew reflects the fear that typically his ancestors experienced (15:1; 26:24). Last, the vow with its promise of paying a “tenth” (v. 22) echoes Abram’s loyalty to God when he met the priest-king Melchizedek (14:20).

K. A. Mathews, Genesis 11:27–50:26, vol. 1B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 443.

Genesis 28:10–22 also looks to the future return from Paddan Aram, fulfilling the promises received at Bethel. The first step toward this fulfillment is the discovery of Rachel, where another “stone” captivates our attention (29:2–3, 8–10). God appears in a matching theophany, directing Jacob to return from Paddan Aram, in which he identifies himself by recalling this initial revelation at Bethel (31:13). The Bethel experience explains Jacob’s return (35:1, 3, 6–7), which culminates in another theophany and cultic act at Bethel (35:9–15). Our passage has its counterpart in the return trip when again Jacob sees the “angels of

God,” acknowledging the place as “the camp of God” (“Mahanaim,” 32:2), and at night encounters God, naming the place “Peniel” (32:30–31) with the same awe he had sensed at Bethel. The presence of God, the “Fear of Isaac,” affords Jacob protection against Laban (31:24, 42). Moreover, the mention of Beersheba (28:10) points ahead to the place that Jacob worships upon his departure with his family to Egypt (46:1, 5). The theophany at Bethel also serves as the foundational event that prompts Jacob’s blessing upon Joseph’s sons when in Egypt (48:3). K. A. Mathews, Genesis 11:27–50:26, vol. 1B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 443.

### **Isaac conforms to God’s will and confirms the blessing to Jacob.**

#### **Esau tries to solve a problem, wrongly!**

Esau actions in getting a new wife, shows that he understands not all the issues were Jacobs fault, and also that Isaac had agreed to God’s plan of Jacob being the Heir of the blessing that God promised.

The second paragraph describes Esau’s reactions to the blessing and Jacob’s departure (vv. 6, 9). In between, the narrative provides Esau’s interpretation of the prior events (vv. 7–8). Instead of opposing Jacob, this time Esau attempted to imitate him. Once he recognized how ill advised it was for him to have wed Hittite wives (cf. Deut 20:17–18), he obtained a wife from the family’s relative, Ishmael. It gave the final stroke to the picture of the hapless Esau, who sealed his status as the rejected son by marrying into the family of the discarded Ishmael.

K. A. Mathews, Genesis 11:27–50:26, vol. 1B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 440–441.

Rebekah actually planned to send for Jacob when the time was right (27:45), but this plan failed. Jacob never did see his mother again. Once again, “faith is living without scheming.” We all need to heed the warning of James 4:13–17.

Warren W. Wiersbe, Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), Ge 28:1–9.

## **God meets Jacob and confirms who he is.**

It is wonderful when a son can leave home with his father's blessing! But Jacob could not depend on his father's faith. He had to meet God and make some decisions of his own.

Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), Ge 28:1–9.

This is the first of at least seven recorded revelations from God to Jacob (see 31:3, 11–13; 32:1–2; 32:24–30; 35:1, 9–13; 46:1–4). The angels on the ladder were an indication of God's care. They appeared again to protect Jacob when he was about to face Esau (32:1–2).

Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), Ge 28:10–12.

Note that Jacob was not a young man when he started out on this venture. He was at least seventy-seven years old. Genesis 47:9 states that Jacob was 130 when he went to Egypt. Joseph was seventeen when he was sold into Egypt, and was thirty when he was presented to Pharaoh (41:46). Add, then, Joseph's thirteen years as a servant to the seven years of plenty and two years of famine, and you have Joseph at about thirty-nine years of age when Jacob came to Egypt. This means Joseph was born when Jacob was ninety-one, and Gen. 30:25 indicates that when Joseph was born Jacob had already fulfilled his fourteen years of service for his wives. This indicates that Jacob was about seventy-seven years old when he began to walk "on his own."

Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), Ge 28:1–9.

Point-The Meaning of the ladder.

The ladder was a visible symbol of the real and uninterrupted fellowship between God in heaven and His people upon earth. The angels upon it carry up the wants of men to God, and bring down the assistance and protection of God to men.

Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 180.

## **A god who cares and responds.**

The revelation was intended not only to stamp the blessing, with which Isaac had dismissed him from his home, with the seal of divine approval, but also to impress upon Jacob's mind the fact, that although Jehovah would be near to protect and guide him even in a foreign land, the land of promise was the holy ground on which the God of his fathers would set up the covenant of His grace. On his departure from that land, he was to carry with him a sacred awe of the gracious presence of Jehovah there. To that end the Lord proved to him that He was near, in such a way that the place appeared "dreadful," inasmuch as the nearness of the holy God makes an alarming impression upon unholy man, and the consciousness of sin grows into the fear of death. But in spite of this alarm, the place was none other than "the house of God and the gate of heaven," i.e., a place where God dwelt, and a way that opened to Him in heaven.

Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 181.

Jacob learns from his future troubles in Haran that he must entrust himself to the Lord, believing that the Lord will guide and protect him in accord with his word (v. 15). In the Jacob narrative to follow (chaps. 29–31), the Lord exceeds his pledge to the descendant of Abraham, ensuring that Jacob not only survives and returns safely but also flourishes. This is reminiscent of Abraham and Isaac, who prospered during their sojourns abroad.

K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, vol. 1B, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 442.

Jacob's vision at Bethel was based on God's pure grace. God appeared to Jacob to assure him of His promise of blessing and protection, prompting in Jacob a marvelous worshipful response in which he vowed loyalty. This passage (a) answers the question of whether the Lord was also the God of Jacob, and (b) shows how Jacob's outlook was dramatically changed.

Allen P. Ross, "Genesis," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 74.

## **Jacob makes a vow (maybe with conditions?)**

There are two interpretations suggested of Jacob's vow: (1) that he is bargaining with God by saying "If ... if ..."; (2) that he is showing faith in God, for the Hebrew word can be translated "Since ... since ..."

Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), Ge 28:16–22.

He realized that his dedication to God meant nothing unless his material goods were under His control as well. Abraham had practiced tithing (14:20), and in both cases the Law had not yet been given. Those who say that the tithe is not for this age of grace miss the fact that the early saints practiced tithing. It was their expression of faith and obedience to the Lord who guided them, guarded them, and provided for them.

Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), Ge 28:16–22.

The ensuing account of his journey in Paddan Aram depicts how the pauper becomes affluent and the trickster undergoes moral metamorphosis (chaps. 29–31). J. Walton observes that with Jacob's vow we discover that his dealings with God are "backward" when compared to Abraham: God tested Abraham, but here Jacob tested God; God instructed Abraham to leave his country before he entered into blessing, but Jacob imposes conditions on God before he vows to benefit the Lord. This behavior by Jacob is what we expect of him, but the Lord is gracious to him and is willing to begin his work with the unworthy Jacob. Jacob will learn that he is totally dependent on the Lord's mercy, leaving behind in Paddan Aram his haughty spirit.

K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, vol. 1B, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 442–443.

Jacob's worshipful response included (a) having fear before the Lord, (b) erecting a memorial stone ... pillar, (c) consecrating the stone by anointing the top of it with oil, (d) naming the place Bethel ("house of God") to commemorate the event, (e) making a vow in which he expressed for the first time his faith in the Lord (the Lord will be my

God), and (f) promising to tithe (v. 22). All these enhance the central idea of God's protecting presence.

Allen P. Ross, "Genesis," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 74.

Several motifs pertaining to later Israelite customs are established here in Jacob. The most notable is the memorial at Bethel. Later the conquering Israelites would reckon this to be a holy place where God could be "seen."

Another motif here is tithing (as with Abram in 14:20). To give a tithe was an act whereby a person acknowledged that everything he had belonged to God. Faith outwardly recognizes this fact in token form.

Also Jacob's vow was an important element in this event. He vowed that if God would protect him, provide for him, and return him to his homeland, then this place would become a major worship center for Him. Vows were important later to Israel.

Moreover, standing stones also become important from this point on. These are different from altars. Memorials were set up to recall divine visitations so that others might learn about God when they would ask, "What do these stones mean?" (Josh. 4:6)

The presence of these important religious motifs stress the point that an anonymous "place" became a major worship center for Israel. The parallel structure between the two sections (Gen. 28:10–13 and 16–19) shows that the worship was a response to the vision.

Allen P. Ross, "Genesis," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 74.

### **Without a vision, the people perish.**

"Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."- Proverbs 29:18

"When people do not accept divine guidance, they run wild. But whoever obeys the law is joyful."- Proverbs 29:18 (NLT)

"If people can't see what God is doing,  
they stumble all over themselves;  
But when they attend to what he reveals,

they are most blessed.”- Proverbs 29:18 the message.

### **The Promises of God**

In John’s Gospel the apostle by Jesus’ teaching showed that the sanctuary of Bethel, “house of God,” was now embodied in the incarnational Messiah. Jacob’s ladder is best understood as a type of Christ’s mediatorial position, connecting heaven and earth. The greater revelation that Nathaniel (and the church) would receive was the salvation afforded by the crucifixion of the Son of Man:

K. A. Mathews, Genesis 11:27–50:26, vol. 1B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 444.

### **The Person of Christ**

Then he(Jesus) said, "I tell you the truth, you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth.”-John 1:51

The ladder symbolizes Jesus Christ. Jacob is a perfect picture of the lost soul—in the darkness, fleeing for his life, away from the father’s house, burdened with sin, and ignorant of the fact that God is near him and wants to save him. The ladder pictures Christ as the only way from earth to heaven. He opens heaven for us and brings heaven’s blessings to our lives. And He alone can take us to heaven.

Warren W. Wiersbe, Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), Ge 28:10–12.

Jesus is the way to heaven!, the conduit, the way that life is brought, a future is established.

Jacob thought he was in a lonely wilderness and awakened to discover he had been at the very gate of heaven! Relating this further to John 1:43–51, we note that Jacob was an Israelite who was full of guile (deceit), while v. 47 describes Nathanael as an Israelite without guile.

Warren W. Wiersbe, Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), Ge 28:10–12.

If you want a better future for your self, your loved ones and the world around, then Jesus is the one true way to allow that to happen.

## **The purposes of the Holy Spirit**

When the Holy Spirit catches up with you?

Here is a young person hiding the truth from her parents. There is a fellow selling his car but not telling the whole truth about its collision history. Here is a businessman, working in a highly religious region and becoming tied to the local church because “it’s good business.” There is no shortage of Jacobs in our day. And they are no less repugnant. Kurt Strassner, *Opening up Genesis, Opening Up Commentary* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2009), 119.

Point-We need to surrender to Hs and allow ourselves to become the people God planned us to be.