

Sent: Wednesday, March 6, 2019 2:39 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Genesis 28:10-30-:24

"Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these (stars)? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of His might, and because He is strong in power, not one is missing." (Isaiah 40:26)

Ever spend a nite all alone "under the stars"? Well, Jacob did! He's on the run, out on his own, probably for the first time in his life, running for his life from his brother Esau, after having schemed to steal his birthright and to gain the all-important "blessing" of his father, Isaac (with plenty of help from his mother, Rebekah)! Although "duped" by his son, Isaac finally seemed to see the light, after hearing Rebekah say that she was "tired of life" because of Esau's Hittite wives and so he charged Jacob to go back to, "the house of Bethuel, in Mesopotamia, to take a wife from the daughters of Laban, Rebekah's brother! (Where Abraham, many years before had instructed his trusted servant, to do the same thing in finding a wife for Isaac!)

And so Jacob, the "son of promise," is running for his life from the "promised land" intent on "finding a wife"!

His first stop on the way just happened to be a place called "Bethel," 50 or so miles north of Beersheba, and maybe 10 miles north of what would become Jerusalem, the city of God! At or near the place where Abraham had "pitched his tent and called on the name of the Lord," when he first entered the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:8) and where he returned, after his fateful journey to Egypt, and again, "called on the name of the Lord"! (Genesis 13:3-4)

How amazing that Jacob would just happen to stop there and camp out "under the stars," choosing a stone as his "pillow" (ironically fitting for the hard-headed Jacob!). And it was there that God would appear to him, for the first time in Jacob's life, in a "dream" of a ladder reaching to heaven, "with angels of God ascending and descending"! (I remember so well, as a little kid laying down on the ground, looking up into the sky and thinking about God! Also singing the song, not theologically sound as it turns out, "We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder." Which I liked to call, "Jake's step ladder"!)

Genesis 28:13-15 says: "And behold, the Lord stood above it, and said: 'I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 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 promised you."

These promises actually go beyond those given to Abraham and Isaac! God added that He would, "be with him and keep him wherever he would go, and bring him back to the land of Canaan, and not leave him until He had done what He promised to do!" Wow! And the "angels"! Hebrews 1:14 says: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation?" (That includes us!)

As Bill Arnold notes, "It was one thing for Jacob to hear his father share with him the promises of God. It was quite another to hear it from God Himself. Would he now truly believe and be receptive to God's message? Would the God of his father Abraham, and the God of his father Isaac, become his God?"

Well, here's how Jacob responded after he awoke: "Surely the Lord is in this place!" 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!" And so he took the stone that he used as a "pillow" and made it a pillar and poured oil on it and then made a vow, saying that, "If God will be with me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, and I return to my father's house in safety, then the Lord will be my God." (God "with us"! This same truth applies to us! Matthew 28:20 says "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world!" The "Lo" is short for "Lowell," I like to think! Ha!)

Was this still the same "old" Jacob, bargaining with God? (Ever done any bargaining with God?) Arnold probably says it right, calling it, "Jacob's pathetic attempt to manipulate God as he has so far been able to do to everyone else." If a "believer," he may not yet have been fully committed.

Genesis 29:1 says, "Then Jacob went on his journey..." and finally came "to a well," near Haran, where he just happened to see the beautiful daughter of Laban: Rachel! And it was, "love at first sight," I'd guess we'd say! (Here we see again the likeness to Abraham's servant's earlier journey, but with something here missing! The prayer and compassion of Abraham's servant in seeking the will of God!)

Well, you know the rest of the story! Laban tricked Jacob by giving him Rachel's older, "weak-eyed" sister, Leah, after Jacob worked seven years for Rachel! And Jacob's persistence and finagling to finally get Rachel too. Imagine all of the rivalry, jealousy, bickering, favoritism, and chaos that ensued with two wives, two concubines, and twelve children (from four different mothers) all competing for Jacob's attention!

Jacob had met his match with Laban! (When I think of Laban, I think of the Farmers Insurance commercial on TV: Like the insurance man, Laban, "knew a thing or two! Because he had seen a thing or two!") Just as Laban and Leah had deceived Jacob, Jacob and Rebekah had deceived Isaac! And Rachel and Leah competed with each other just as Jacob and Esau had competed with each other! The younger versus the firstborn! The loved and the unloved! We see the parallels! All in the family! Family feud! Some things never change they say! Human nature! Sinful mankind!

It is interesting that in all of this human turmoil, God was still in control! Genesis 29:31 says that, "Now God saw that Leah was unloved and He opened up her womb, but Rachel was barren" (bringing up memories of Sarah and Rebekah)! And, also interestingly, it was Leah who gave birth to Levi, who would turn out to be the father of Israel's priestly line, and to Judah, who would turn out to be the father of the "line of Christ"!

Our lesson ends on a positive note, with Genesis 30:22 where, "God remembered Rachel...and (finally) opened her womb," and she gave birth to Joseph, someone who will become another "favored son" and result in much more family drama, but all somehow fitting together in the amazing, sovereign plan of God!

And so we continue to learn more about our God! A God of grace and mercy! Faithful to His promises! Sovereign! And, more specifically, continuing to work out His "redemptive plan for the ages," despite sinful, fallen man! As we come to the end of another great Genesis story, God's plan is still intact!

Well men, go with God this week and be a blessing! And, as Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. used to say, "Do right! Do right! Do right (he always said it three times) until the stars fall!"

Lowell