

Today's Torah portion is Genesis 28:10-32:3, Hosea 11:7-14:9, John 1:19-51. And he went out.

Jacob's Dream

¹⁰ Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ He ^[a]came to ^[b]a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it ^[c]under his head, and lay down in that place.

Many times, leaving a situation created by our own choices, others' choices or a combination thereof we find ourselves in Jacob's position, in a hard place, with nowhere comfortable to rest our heads. Fortunately we are not beyond the reach of God even there.

¹² He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ And behold, the LORD stood ^[d]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 ^[e]descendants. ¹⁴ Your ^[f]descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will ^[g]spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your ^[h]descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵ 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 ^[i]promised you.

God reiterates the promise he originally made to Abraham and encourages Jacob, reminding him that he has the presence of God with him wherever he goes. We do not always realize what a great blessing it is to have God's presence in our daily lives.

¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." ¹⁷ 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."

In the midst of our difficulties we are prone to focus on the situation and fail to recognize that we are exactly where we need to be to have a life changing encounter with God. Notice that he was afraid. Proverbs 9:10 states that, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." It is not a debilitating fear but rather the moment the viewfinder shifts and we are unsettled by the glimpse of the magnitude of the power we are in contact with. Suddenly, we and our problems are minuscule in the face of this power that sustains the universe and steers the course of history. It is when we, like Jacob, realize that the only appropriate response is worship.

¹⁸ So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put ^[i]under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top. ¹⁹ He called the name of that place ^[k]Bethel; however, ^[l]previously the name of the city had been Luz. ²⁰ Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will

keep me on this journey that I ^[m]take, and will give me ^[n]food to eat and garments to wear,²¹ and I return to my father's house in ^[o]safety, then the LORD will be my God. ²²This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

So Jacob leaves in the morning, with renewed hope and purpose. I trust that you have read this week's Torah portion that tells the account of Jacob's adventures in the household of Laban until God tells Him it is time to go. Jacob leaves secretly, Laban hears of it, and catches up to him. The confrontation is heated but God intervenes and though it is in Laban's power to harm Jacob, he heeds God's warning and does not. Jacob sums up the time in Laban's household:

⁴¹These twenty years I have been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flock, and you changed my wages ten times. ⁴²If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had not been for me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the toil of my hands, so He rendered judgment last night."

How long are we willing to work and wait and be taken advantage of to have God's plans come to fruition in our lives? I confess that I have a lot to learn in that department!

The next portion is from Hosea, who describes the state of the relationship of the people to God. Not a pretty picture! The portion names specific places and people but the underlying attitudes are present in every generation and are applicable today.

Hosea 11:7 - So My people are bent on turning from Me.

Though ^[a]they call ^[b]them to *the One* on high,
None at all exalts *Him*.

Hosea 13:6 - *they had* their pasture, they became satisfied,
And being satisfied, their heart became proud;
Therefore they forgot Me.

Hosea 14:9 - Whoever is wise, let him understand these things;
Whoever is discerning, let him know them.
For the ways of the LORD are right,
And the righteous will walk in them,
But transgressors will stumble in them.

These verses reveal a progression in the heart. First a focus on accomplishing one's own goals while still giving lip service, then accomplishment and the forgetting of God altogether. Then a

reminder from a prophet that God's ways are still best. The solution?

John 1:29 The next day he *saw Jesus coming to him and *said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

John fulfills his purpose by being the voice in the wilderness, introducing the Savior. This is followed by an account of Yeshua calling his disciples. "Follow me. " Each had his own way of saying , "Yes" but right now we will listen in to Nathanael's answer.

Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel." ⁵⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these." ⁵¹ And He *said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

Nathanael recognizes the Sovereign God in Yeshua, and receives an answer that takes us back to Jacob who saw the angels ascending and descending and declared, "This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

What an assurance that Yeshua is indeed the gate of Heaven, and the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham and reiterated to Jacob centuries ago.

Do not lose heart, God is with you, God is intervening on your behalf in the midst of the efforts of others to take advantage of you, and will execute judgement at the right time. Continue in God's ways, do what is right in His eyes, give the enemy no cause to accuse you. God is faithful and his timing perfect. Though he has not yet called you out He has not ceased to work toward what he plans to accomplish in your life.

And His presence is with you, remember the magnitude of the power that is active on your behalf.