

Before we start looking at the text chosen for today we need to know a little about the real reason why Jacob had left his parents. God had promised Jacob's grandfather Abraham 1- a land to live in, 2-grow into a nation of people and 3-a blessing. Before Abraham died, he had passed this promise onto Isaac. Isaac felt that he might die soon and wanted to bless his eldest son according to his own ideas and not wait for God to do things in His time. Both Rebekha AND Jacob didn't wait for God to deal with the situation. They started sorting out things their way. All the lies and plans went wrong and Esau the first-born son became so angry that he wanted to kill his brother Jacob. This really messy situation arose because father Isaac, mother Rebekha AND both sons wanted to do things their own way and nobody put their trust in God to do things in His time. Today we follow Jacob who had two reasons for leaving: 1) fear that his brother would kill him and 2) to find a suitable wife from their own background as his father had instructed him.

**Read Genesis chapter 28:vs 10-11-12:** Here's Jacob! Imagine him, fleeing, a long journey ahead of him, travelling to Mesopotamia, to where his mother's family lived. This was more or less the same road that his grandfather Abraham had travelled when he followed God's call and where God had appeared to him twice many years before. (Genesis 12:1-3). (last week's study)

This Jacob, this man, who had never been on his own before and who was his mother's favourite son. He had no idea what the next day would bring, weary, tired, afraid and lonely. All he wants is to find a place to rest and sleep, any place would do as far as he was concerned as long as he would be safe from wild animals and robbers.

**Read vs 13-14:** to have a dream like this was not what Jacob had expected nor that he would encounter the Lord. In his dream, Jacob saw a "ladder" on the earth and going up into Heaven with God waiting at the top of this ladder. This ladder was a passageway, a link between heaven and earth. The deeper meaning of this 'ladder' is that in John 1:51 Jesus refers to Himself being the ladder, the one and only access/way to Heaven through Him. The presence of the angels was a reminder that God would be with Jacob on his journey to Haran but also on his life's journey. Then Jacob heard God's voice who begins with: **I am**. These are well-known words spoken to Moses, to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob and later by Jesus Himself. Next Jacob heard the promises to Abraham and Isaac repeated to him. Jacob had no doubt heard about the great God who appeared to Abraham and to Isaac, but now this same God had a personal encounter with Jacob himself. This was a life-changing experience for Jacob. The same goes for us: God won't let us go until His work is complete in us.

**Read vs 15-16:** Here God clearly tells him clearly: **I am with you**, reminding him that despite the lonely and dangerous journey he was not alone **AND** that God would keep him wherever he went **AND** to bring him back. On top of all these, God promises to fulfil the words He has spoken to Jacob. This must have been an amazing experience for Jacob. Nowhere do we read that before this happened, Jacob lived a life in dependence of God, God was what his father had told him but not a great presence in his daily life. When Jacob woke up from this dream, he remembered all that had happened. Suddenly this place to rest and to be safe had a very special significance for him: a place where he had met God and that he had been shown the gateway to heaven. Just as for us, God meets us in our own place and shows us Jesus as the only way to His presence and Kingdom.

**Read vs 17-18:** After the excitement of having met God he became afraid, not that he was scared, but with the meaning that he was full of reverence for God's presence and words like "fantastic, incredible, unbelievable and awesome" is what he can think of. In verse 18 the English text begins with 'so'. That little word tells us that when Jacob woke up because it was a new day there was only one way for him to honour God and that was to mark the stone with oil as a sign of holiness and to give it a name: the house of the Lord, Beth-el. For him an ordinary place with the name of Luz was transformed into a holy place under God's guidance. All that Jacob had to do was to trust God's words.

**Read vs 19-20-21:** However, Jacob realised that because God had approached him, he needed to respond to Him, he wanted to show God that he would accept God's guidance in his life. He did this by making a solemn promise, a vow, completely out of free will.

Through this encounter Jacob had learned to worship, to pray, to honour God, Yahweh, and to listen to Him. He had realised that when God speaks, a response is required sooner or later. That goes also for each individual who hears God speak. It's openly acknowledging God's presence.

This passage reminds us that we are all on a journey in life and for this moment, we inhabit this space, this place. This is not an empty or meaningless place; it is holy ground - because this is the place that God has chosen to encounter with you and me today. He meets with us and offers us the promise of His presence, the promise of His protection and the promise of His blessing in our lives.

Like Jacob, we may still be full of doubts – but that's OK. Our doubts do not negate the promise of God in our lives. The promises of God are greater than our doubts. God's words are as true to us today as they were to Jacob all those years ago: "Remember, I

will be with you and protect you wherever you go...I will not leave you until I have done all that I have promised you."

God waits on us today and wants to encounter us here today. And so we come with our faith and with our doubts and we ask God to bless us and to journey with us so that we know his blessings this day and for evermore.

Amen