

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27

### JACOB'S DREAM (GENESIS 28)

*“Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it!” (Genesis 28:16)*

Jacob, on journey to Paddan-aram, stopped at “a certain place” (11) to rest for the night. He was leaving behind family to go build one of his own, being obedient to his father Isaac’s wishes that he not take a wife from among the women of Canaan, but instead find a bride from among his mother’s side of the family. Jacob was also leaving behind conflict — he’d stolen a birthright from his brother Esau and, in a sense, was “running away” from a place that represented both home and hardship. This trip, truthfully, was part of his mother Rebekah’s plan to get Jacob out of town long enough for Esau’s anger to subside. Though leaving home with his father’s blessing, Jacob must have wondered if this was the last time he would see this place or these people, and certainly had to wonder if God was still on his side, despite his deception.

As Jacob laid his head to a stone pillow for a good night’s sleep, when his eyes closed, his mind opened. He dreamed of a ladder stretching to heaven, angels ascending and descending and he saw the Lord who spoke to Jacob, promising to bless his descendants and saying: “I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land” (28:15).

On waking, Jacob recognized the presence of God with him. Indeed, it was as if this unnamed patch of land was now holy ground. “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it!” Jacob exclaimed. Why such amazement? Because of the powerful revelation in Jacob’s dream, or because in his travel to this lonely space of the land “in between” — between what was and what could be — Jacob wondered, was the God of heaven still with him, even though he lied and stole from his brother?

The good news is that both are true — God constantly desires to reveal those promises to us, in dreams and in waking. God also walks with us, even in our failings. Because God is with us always, both in faithfulness and failing, we have a great assurance of God’s love. And wherever the presence of God is, that space is sacred, that ground is holy. Jacob acknowledged that special truth with the exclamation “How awesome is this place!” (17) and then by anointing his stone pillow and setting it up as an altar to that sacred time and space, calling it “Bethel” or “house of God.”

Perhaps it’s time we begin to memorialize the sacred spaces where we’ve met God on journey, and acknowledge that wherever God is, it is holy. Whether walking in pain or in view of God’s promise, it isn’t our circumstance that makes ground holy, but God.