

February 28-March 6, 2022

Genesis 28-33

“SURELY THE LORD IS IN THIS PLACE”

Summary: *Genesis 28. Isaac forbids Jacob to marry a Canaanite—He blesses Jacob and his seed with the blessings of Abraham—Esau marries a daughter of Ishmael—Jacob sees in vision a ladder reaching up into heaven—The Lord promises him seed as the dust of the earth in number—The Lord also promises Jacob that in him and in his seed all the families of the earth will be blessed—Jacob covenants to pay tithes.*

Genesis 29. Jacob meets Rachel at the well—He serves Laban seven years for her—Laban gives to Jacob first Leah then Rachel in marriage—Jacob serves another seven years—Leah bears Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah.

Genesis 30. Jacob marries Bilhah, and she bears Dan and Naphtali—He marries Zilpah, and she bears Gad and Asher—Leah bears Issachar and Zebulun and a daughter, Dinah—Then Rachel conceives and bears Joseph—Jacob works for Laban for wages of cattle and sheep.

Genesis 31. The Lord commands Jacob to return to Canaan, and Jacob departs secretly—Laban pursues him; they resolve their differences and make a covenant of peace—Laban blesses his descendants, and he and Jacob part company.

Genesis 32. Jacob sees angels—He asks God to preserve him from Esau, for whom he prepares presents—He wrestles all night with a messenger of God—Jacob’s name is changed to Israel—He sees God face to face.

Genesis 33. Jacob and Esau meet and are reconciled—Esau receives Jacob’s presents—Jacob settles in Canaan, where he builds an altar.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What is in a name, the name Jacob?

It is a common practice among religious Jews that a special Hebrew name is given to the newborn child. It is an additional name to the one the person is usually known by. A girl receives her name at birth and the boy at eight days of age, at the circumcision. “A convert to Judaism is considered a newborn child, and, from the *halakhic* (Hebrew legalistic) point of view, he has no father or mother. Thus, if a whole family converts, the children and the parents start their lives as Jews with no legal relationship. Because of this state of affairs, converts are always named as though they were the sons of

Abraham . . .” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) When blessings are given for health, at marriages and at other festive occasions, often the ‘new’ or ‘special’ name is used. In some Jewish communities it is customary for the father to bless his children on the Sabbath eve when he returns from the synagogue. The name and the blessings connected to it are accordingly passed on through generations. New names are a regular covenant practice among the Children of Israel. Jacob’s name, “comes either from the Hebrew root *akeb* meaning “to follow, to be behind” but also “to supplant, circumvent, assail, overreach,” or from the word for “heel.” It can also be taken to mean “may God protect.” (**Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions*, University of Chicago**)

Press (1978), p. 33) The Bible refers to the Jacob's birth as he held on to the heel of his older twin brother Esau (**Genesis 25:26**). The name is etymologized in a direct saying of Esau in **Genesis 27:36**, by Jacob having "supplanted" his elder brother by buying his birthright.

How can I use the name and meanings of "Israel" in my life?

This name Israel has been translated several different ways including "he wrestles with God", "Prince of God," "he struggles with God," and several more. The name "Israel" can be seen as a complete sentence in one word. The name has three components - Y, SR and AL. The "Y" is a prefix meaning "he," as in a man. The "AL" usually pronounced as "EL" which is the Hebrew word for "God." The Hebrew word "SR" literally means "turn the head." It is often translated as the male, the man, the "prince" or "ruler," one who turns the head of the people. . . . Because the "Y" is in front of the word "SR" we know that this is a verb and not a noun (this is standard Hebrew grammar) and can literally be translated as "he turns the head of God." The way I like to understand this is that when Israel (either Jacob or his descendants) speaks to God, God, the father of Israel, stops what he is doing and turns to his son and says "What do you want my son." (**Jeff A. Benner, <https://www.ancient-hebrew.org/names/Israel.htm>**) As we read, Jacob was confronted by a heavenly being. They wrestled all night, and in the morning, seeing he could not prevail, Jacob's assailant agreed to bless Jacob in return for a truce, and gave him a new name: "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." (**Genesis 32:28**) The word, Prince, is a man of God. When I take God's name upon myself, He prevails! Now, the reason God commanded, "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass

together." (**Deuteronomy 22:10**), is because the yoke makes the load uneven to the small and the large animal, it is not fair. However, consider that the name "Israel – man or prince of God is what the Lord meant when He said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (**Matthew 11:29**) He is stronger, He was destined to take the load! As I take His name upon me, I become a man or woman of God (EL), and He prevails!

How can I bring the Lord to prevail with and for me – all day, every day?

"And that this house may be a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of glory and of God, even thy house; That all the incomings of thy people, into this house, may be in the name of the Lord; That all their outgoings from this house may be in the name of the Lord; And that all their salutations may be in the name of the Lord, with holy hands, uplifted to the Most High;" (**Doctrine & Covenants 109:16-19**) (**Deuteronomy 6:4-14**) An observant Jewish person is reminded of this by the content of the parchment in the *Mezuzah* (small doorpost container) on almost every entrance and gate post in a Jewish home, or verses on a pendant around the neck, or reading the scriptures or prayer book – even while walking or waiting. Alma, a Book of Mormon prophet said, ". . . let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you. (**Alma 34:27**) "Yea, cry unto him for mercy; for he is mighty to save. Yea, humble yourselves, and continue in prayer unto him. Cry unto him when ye are in your fields, yea, over all your flocks. Cry unto him in your houses, yea, over all your household, both morning, mid-day, and evening. Yea, cry unto him against the power of your enemies. Yea, cry unto him against the devil, who is an enemy to all righteousness. Cry unto him over the

crops of your fields, that ye may prosper in them." Cry over the flocks of your fields, that they may increase. But this is not all; ye must pour out your souls in your closets, and your secret places, and in your wilderness. Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you. (Alma 34:18-27)

Which type of altar do I use?

There are two types of Altars mentioned in the Bible. One is for sacrifices; another is for covenants. The covenant altar is often called a "pillar" in the English Bible. "With the destruction of the Second Temple sacrifices were no longer made. It was then said: "Now that there is no altar, a man's table . . . and prayer takes the place of the sacrifices." "The *Talmud* (written Biblical Jewish interpretations) describes in detail the various modes of conduct to be observed at meals. For example, persons should engage in a discussion of *Torah* during the meal so that they will be "as though they had eaten at the table of God." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) "Furthermore, the table is regarded as a substitute for the altar in the Temple, and therefore, it must be treated with reverence. Before any meal, the hands must be washed pronouncing the appropriate blessing over the washing, after which bread is eaten. The meal is concluded with the Grace after Meals." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) The covenant altar is clearly inferred; "And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it." (Genesis 28:18) "And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth" (Genesis 28:22) "And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar." (Genesis 31:45) The Messianic meaning of

covenants is shown by Isaiah; "Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." (Isaiah 28:16) An "echo" of temple order is still apparent at the last known place of the Jewish temple, the Western, or Wailing wall. An Orthodox practice is that small pieces of paper are placed between the cracks of the old temple wall stones with names written on them, names of people who require special prayers and blessings.

Who is my ultimate sacrifice?

As mentioned in a previous lesson, in ancient times, animal sacrifices always happened at the north end of the altar. This is mentioned in the Bible. "And he shall kill it on the side of the altar northward before the LORD: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall sprinkle his blood round about upon the altar." (Leviticus 1:11) The place of crucifixion was at the north end of Mount Moriah, north of the altar. Additional symbolism can be found by comparing the rabbinic tradition that Isaac was in his early thirties when Abraham brought him to Mount Moriah. Jesus was sacrificed on the eve of his thirty-fourth birthday, (the first day of Passover that year). "According to the Bible the altar was made of stones joined together with earth, the wider stones being placed below and the narrower above. The stones of the altar of the Temple were smooth and were plastered over twice a year, and according to Judah Ha-Nasi were smoothed down with a cloth every Sabbath eve. Four stones were placed at the four corners of the altar; these were known as the "horns" of the altar." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

How do I learn that the Messiah is the "Rock of Salvation?"

To portray the Lord's Messianic holiness, altars in the temple – the house of the

Lord, were always of natural stone. “And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.” (**Exodus 20:25**) “And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.” (**1 Kings 6:7**) Later, as we enjoy the Old Testament, we read how Daniel interpreted a dream and testified of the “Sure Stone” . . . made without hands . . . “Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.” (**Daniel 2:45**) The “stone” prevailed, not the works of man, iron, brass, clay, silver and gold.

What might “Jacob’s ladder” mean to me?

“According to the *Midrash Genesis Rabbah*, (Genesis commentary by Rabbinic sages of the fourth and fifth centuries C.E.) the ladder signified the exiles which the Jewish people would suffer before the coming of the Jewish messiah. First the angel representing the 70-year exile of Babylonia climbed “up” 70 rungs, and then fell “down.” Then the angel representing the exile of Persia went up a number of steps, and fell, as did the angel representing the exile of Greece. Only the fourth angel, which represented the final exile of Rome/Edom (whose guardian angel was Esau himself), kept climbing higher and higher into the clouds. Jacob feared that his children would never be free of Esau’s domination, but God assured him that at the End of Days, Edom too would come falling down. (**Rabbi Dr. Hillel ben David. *The Four Exiles*, betemunah.org**) In a description of the “Temple of Jerusalem |

Judaism,” the **Encyclopedia Britannica** states, “The place at which Jacob stopped for the night was in reality Mount Moriah, the future home of the Temple in Jerusalem, which was considered to be the “bridge” between Heaven and Earth. As mentioned in last week’s insights, possibly connecting to the Bible Jacob’s ladder account, there is a legend of a Rabbi, Pinehas Ben Yair, who is buried in the city of Safed, north of the Galilee, in Israel “He constructed the famous “ladder of saintliness” in which Caution (against evil) leads through Eagerness (for good), Cleanliness, Purity, Asceticism, Holiness, Humility, Fear of God, Attainment of the Holy Spirit (divine inspiration), (and) ultimately to the Resurrection of the Dead.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) An Apostle of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day saints, Elder Marion G. Romney (1897-1988) taught, “The steps on the ladder represent covenants we make with God that bring us closer to Him. He also said, “Temples are to us all what Bethel was to Jacob” (**Temples—the Gates to Heaven, *Ensign*, Mar. 1971, 16**). Temples are “mountains of the Lord” where we go to lift ourselves above the things of this world, draw nearer to God and heaven, and learn how to enter His presence eternally. The ordinances we receive in the temple are essential to our exaltation; thus, the temple is the “gate” to God and eternal life.” (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/manual/old-testament-seminary-student-study-guide/the-books-of-genesis-moses-and-abraham/genesis-28-jacobs-sacred-experience?lang=eng>) At that time in history, Bethel, where the Ark of the Covenant was kept for about 300-years, was located about 12-miles north of Jerusalem (destined to be the permanent home of the Ark – in the Temple’s Holy of Holies).