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Genesis 28

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Genesis 28

Topics.

- Isaac tells Jacob to take a wife from Laban's daughters his mother's brother.
- May God Almighty give the blessing of Abraham to Jacob and his offspring.
- Isaac sends Jacob away to Laban the brother of Rebekah his mother.
- Esau takes Ishmael's daughter Mahalath to wife, besides the wives he had.
- Jacob leaves Beersheba and goes toward Haran and lays down to sleep.
- Jacob dreams of angels ascending and descending on a ladder to heaven.
- Jacob says, "Surely the LORD is in this place, this is the gate of heaven."
- Jacob sets up a stone for a pillar and called the name of that place Bethel.
- Jacob makes a vow that he will give a full tenth of all he has to the LORD.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

The previous chapter: in chapter twenty-seven the focus was upon Rebekah and Jacob deceiving frail and dying Isaac into giving the blessing to Jacob rather than Esau who he desired to give it to; Esau with bitter tears asking his father for at least one blessing; Isaac blessing Esau and saying that he will break the burden of his brother and Esau hating Jacob and setting his mind to kill him. The chapter ends with Rebekah telling Jacob to flee to Laban in Haran until Esau's fury turns away.

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GENESIS 28:1-2

Isaac tells Jacob to take a Wife from Laban's Daughters.

- **Genesis 28:1-2:** Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and directed him, "You must not take a wife from the Canaanite women. ²Arise, go to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel your mother's father, and take as your wife from there one of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.

After Rebekah telling Jacob to flee to Laban in Haran until Esau's fury turns away and to find a wife from his own people (Gen. 27:41-46), we now we pick up the story with Isaac telling Jacob not to take a wife from the Canaanites, but go to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel his mother's father, and take a wife from one of the daughters of Laban his mother's brother.

Haran: was located in Paddan-aram it was the city where Terah, Abraham and their family settled after leaving Ur of the Chaldee's while travelling to Canaan (Gen. 11:31). Abraham sent his steward there to find a wife among his kinsfolk for his son Isaac. The steward found Rebecca here. Later Isaac and Rebecca sent their son Jacob there to avoid the wrath of his brother Esau and to find a wife. Here Jacob worked for Laban; fathered eleven sons and a daughter, Dinah, (Gen. 35:22-26) (Gen 46:15); amassed livestock and wealth Gen 31:18) and from there Jacob went to Shechem and the Land of Israel where his twelfth son was born to him. (Gen. 33:18).

Paddan-aram: (also Padan-aram), meaning plain of Aram, was the name for the region around the northern-Syria city of Haran, located at the northernmost reach of the Euphrates River (the territorial definition of Syria has varied over the course of history). When Isaac was forty years old he took Rebekah a Syrian from Padan-aram to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padanaram, the sister to Laban the Syrian. (Gen. 25:20 KJV). The following verses show that when the time came for Jacob to marry, his father Isaac sent him to Padan-aram to find a wife from among his mother's Syrian people.

- Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and directed him, "You must not take a wife from the Canaanite women. ²Arise, go to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel your mother's father, and take as your wife from there one of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. (Gen. 28:1-2).

To escape the wrath of his brother Esau, Jacob spent over twenty years living with his mother Rebekah's brother Laban in Syria. It was there that all of Jacob's sons, (except Benjamin) and Jacob's daughter Dinah were born. Benjamin was the only Israelite patriarch who was actually born in the land of Israel.

- Now the sons of Jacob were twelve. ²³The sons of Leah: Reuben (Jacob's firstborn), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. ²⁴The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. ²⁵The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's servant: Dan and Naphtali. ²⁶The sons of Zilpah, Leah's servant: Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram. (Gen. 35:22-26)

It was upon his return from Padan- aram that God renamed Jacob as Israel:

- God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. ¹⁰And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." So he called his name Israel. (Gen. 35:9-10).
- And God said to him, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body. ¹²The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you." (Gen. 35:11-12).

It is interesting to notice that Abraham was born in what is today Iraq and all but one of the Israelite patriarchs were born in what is today Syria, yet today's modern-day Syria and Iraq are Israel's most persistent enemies.

GENESIS 28:3-4

May God Give the Blessing of Abraham to Jacob and His Offspring.

- **Genesis 28:3-4:** God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. ⁴May he give the blessing of Abraham to you and to your offspring with you, that you may take possession of the land of your sojournings that God gave to Abraham!"

May he give the blessing of Abraham to you and to your offspring: (v4) when Jacob appeared as Esau before his father Isaac, he believing Jacob was Esau unwittingly, gave him the blessing. Now the blessing is more fully given in that Jacob is acknowledged as the heir of the promise God gave to Abraham.

God's promise to Abraham: God singled Abraham out from among his fellow-idolaters in the land of Ur, that He might preserve a people for Himself, among whom true worship of Him might be maintained until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ through the birth of Mary and ultimately his return in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16). From this time forward Abraham and his offspring are the central focus of the history recorded in the Bible. Though Abram deeply loved God he was tried

and tested more than most in that he was called to willingly leave the land he had been raised in to travel to a place not knowing where he was going and live in tents in a foreign and hostile land (Hebrews 11:8-9). Those who turn to God and leave their comfort zone will not, only never regret their decision, but will gain by the change they have made. The call God gave to Abraham, is the same Gospel call that goes out into the world inviting the children of Adam into God's Kingdom, all who hear this call must be willing to leave their comfort zone to gain God's love and grace and be heirs to the promised eternal inheritance. Following are the many precious promises God gave to Abraham:

- I will take you from your own people and make you the head of a great nation and another people.
- I will bless your offspring with an inheritance of land that they can call their own.
- I will make your name great.
- I will bless them that bless you, and curse those that curse you.
- In you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

All of these promises can be claimed by faithful Jews and Gentiles who have faith in Christ the true offspring of Abraham. Through Christ, God is at this present moment inviting children of Adam to forsake the ways of the world and enter into his spiritual Kingdom. God will not only make those who accept this invitation a great nation, but will also make them the head of all nations of the world when His Son returns in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords. Their name will be great amongst the inhabitants of the earth and all families of the earth will be blessed by their rule of compassion, fairness and justice (in contrast to self-exaltation, fame and pride) over the nations with Christ as their head and their King. Added to this blessing those who take up God's invitation will inherit an immortal body, eternal life and everlasting happiness, while the wicked and those who rebel against him and his government will be condemned.

Ponder for a moment: Jesus Christ is the greatest blessing that has ever walked upon the earth and the greatest blessing that the world will ever know and he came through the bloodline of Abraham and his descendants. It is only through his offspring that we have the Bible, the Saviour, and the Gospel. Abrahams' descendants are the foundation upon which the Christian church has sprung up from. With this in mind, consider the struggles, backsliding, the gross wickedness, troubles and hardships that biblical history records of Abrahams' offspring and yet the sovereign and eternal plan God purposed in His eternal mind before time began is being accomplished. This shines a spotlight upon the truth that it matters not what kings, governments, nations, individual do nothing will prevent God's eternal plan for His Son, His people and His Kingdom coming to pass. For further information see titles:

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment.

In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

GENESIS 28:5

Isaac sends Jacob to Laban the Brother of Rebekah His Mother.

- **Genesis 28:5:** Thus Isaac sent Jacob away. And he went to Paddan-aram, to Laban, the son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

The previous chapter ended with Rebekah asking Abraham to do this very thing. This repetition of details that have already been made known is a common practise amongst Oriental writings. It is a style of writing designed

to impress all the details concerning family relations upon the mind of the reader. Jacob had the greatest blessings promised to him both of this world and of the world to come, and, at the same time, reaps the bitter fruit of his fraud against his brother in the hardship and exile of at least twenty years. The aged Isaac is not without his share in unpleasant consequences of endeavouring to give the blessing to Esau and by doing so go against the will of God, since this resulted in Esau setting his mind to murder his brother Jacob, Rebekah also suffered for her part in losing the son she loved for at least twenty years. It is interesting to notice now that Jacob has been confirmed in the possession of the birthright his name is placed first.

Jacob went to Padanaram: (v5) Padanaram is about four hundred and fifty miles from Beersheba. The following verse shows that both Laban and Bethuel were called Syrians:

- Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to be his wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean (the Syrian in KJV) of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean (the Syrian in KJV). (Gen. 25:20).

An Aramean was a member of an ancient Aramaic-speaking people inhabiting Aram (the modern nation of Syria) and most of Mesopotamia in the 11th–8th centuries BC. The Arameans mentioned in the Bible are Syrians, the following verses show that in some verses where the King James Bible uses the word Syrian certain modern bibles such as the English Standard Bible when translating the word Syrian substitute it with Aramean which comes from the Hebrew word (*'Arammiy*) from Hebrew (*'Aram*) and literally refers to an Aramæan and Syrian.

- Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to be his wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean (Syrian in KJV), of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean. (Genesis. 25:20).
- Isaac sent Jacob away and he went to Paddan-aram, to Laban, the son of Bethuel the Aramean (Syrian in KJV), the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother. (Gen. 28:5).
- Jacob tricked Laban the Aramean (Syrian in KJV), by not telling him that he intended to flee. (Gen. 31:20).
- God came to Laban the Aramean (Syrian in KJV) in a dream by night and said to him, "Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad." (Gen. 31:24).
- You (Israel) shall make response before the LORD your God, 'A wandering Aramean (Syrian in KJV) was my father. And he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. (Deut. 26:5).

GENESIS 28:6-9

Esau takes Ishmael's Daughter Mahalath to Wife.

- **Genesis 28:6-9:** Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he directed him, "You must not take a wife from the Canaanite women," ⁷and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and gone to Paddan-aram. ⁸So when Esau saw that the Canaanite women did not please Isaac his father, ⁹Esau went to Ishmael and took as his wife, besides the wives he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth.

Esau already had two wives he had taken Judith and Basemath daughters of the Hittites for wives when he was forty years old. These two women had made the life of Isaac and Rebekah bitter (Gen. 26:34-35). One of the reasons for this of course would be Judith and Basemath indifference to the God of Abraham and lack of respect toward Isaac and Rebekah and their practice of idolatry. Esau would have been fully aware that his two Hittite women constantly grieved his father and mother and now determines to take Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael as a wife. Is it any wonder God according to His sovereign will and eternal plans and purposes made sure the blessing of the firstborn would go to Jacob and not Esau?

Jacob goes toward Haran and Lays down to Sleep.

- **Genesis 28:10-11:** Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep.

In the previous chapter Isaac bestowed the blessing on Jacob, now in this chapter God is about to confirm the greater part of the blessing upon him. He leaves Beer-sheba where Isaac and Rebekah lived to travel to Haran with the consent of his parents and no doubt letters proving that he was their heir as Isaac had been to Abraham. Sometime during his many days of travelling he took a stone and placed it under his head to act as a pillow. Since resting the head on a stone would be enormously uncomfortable, especially for a full night, he most likely overlaid it with sheep skins, blankets or something similar. God in His wise providence is preparing Jacob for the vision spoken of in the following verses.

GENESIS 28:12-15

Jacob Dreams of Angels Ascending and Descending on a Ladder.

- **Genesis 28:12-15:** And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! ¹³And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. ¹⁴Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵Behold, 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."

This is not a common dream, but a dream that is completely under the divine direction and influence of the Almighty God. It should be noticed that each of the three stages of this dream has emphasis given to it by the word behold and each one rises to a climax at the final behold when the Almighty God of the promised covenant is seen standing at the top of the ladder between heaven and earth. Even though Jacob had obtained the forgiveness of his father it is almost certain that his thoughts would have been full of guilt and self-accusing that he had not only brought this exile upon himself and the wrath of his brother against him, and very likely he also feared that God had forsaken him. This vision would have given Jacob enormous comfort, encouragement, and confidence that God was on his side both in his present circumstances and his future prospects.

The three beholds:

1. The expression "Behold the angels ascending and descending," (v12) may be taken to be expressive of the service of angels in the affairs of man, in the book of Hebrews it is written, "Angels are ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?" (Heb. 1:14). In the context of this verse they may be seen as the mediators bringing Jacob by a dream into union with the invisible, immortal Holy, Sovereign, Almighty God; the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob; the God of Israel and acting as mediators between Jacob and God. Angels either ascend to God to receive His commands or descend to earth for the execution of them. They are employed as ministering spirits to serve all the purposes and wisdom of God who stands at the top of the ladder, directing the angels according to His will, counsel, and purposes in heaven to bring about His own glory and the good of His people.

2. The expression, "Behold the LORD stood above the ladder and Jacob stood below it," (v13-14) is a picture of Jacob being separated from heaven by sin (as we all are), and the ladder bringing to him God's mercy, favour and blessing and into communication with God, while at the same time teaching him that he is accepted by God through a mediator (as we all are). The ladder signifies a medium, channel or way of communication between heaven and earth, by which angels pass to and fro on errands of mercy, blessings and salvation. It teaches that God's mercy flows from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven through a mediator and that it is only through a mediator that mankind has communication with God and are accepted by Him.

- Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6).

All, who dwell on earth, are separated by sin from heaven, but through a mediator they are reconciled. The ladder reaches from heaven to the faithful on earth it is steady, firm and sure and shows that though God dwells in heaven He extends his mercy, care and government to the earth by the power of the angels making use of them as ministering spirits for the good of His people.

The promise renewed: God renews the promise of the land, of the seed, and of the blessing in that seed for the whole race of man. Westward, eastward, northward, and southward the promise is to break forth. This expression points to the world-wide universality of the Kingdom of the promised seed of Abraham that will be established when the stone that Daniel in his vision saw that was cut out by no human hand, strikes the great image that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon saw in his dream having:

- A head of gold (Babylon).
- A chest and arms of silver (Media Persia).
- Its middle and thighs of bronze (Greece).
- Its legs of iron (Rome).
- Its feet partly of iron and partly of clay (the final world Empire).

The stone made without hands strikes the great image and breaks all these kingdoms (symbolizing all the kingdoms of the world) in pieces so that they become like the chaff of the summer threshing floors and the wind carries them away so that not a trace of them will be found. After this Daniel sees in his vision the stone that struck the image becoming a great mountain that fills the whole earth. During these days the God of heaven sets up a Kingdom that will never be destroyed or left to another people. It shall break in pieces all the kingdoms of the world and bring them to an end. The stone that was cut from a mountain by no human hand that broke in pieces the gold, the silver, the bronze, the iron and the clay will establish a Kingdom that will stand forever. (Dan. 2:31-35) (Dan. 2:44-45). This Kingdom is the Kingdom God promised to Abraham and his offspring. In this vision of the angels ascending and descending God renews the promise of the land westward, eastward, northward, and southward and the blessing in the promised seed of Abraham for the whole human race. It points to the world-wide universality of the Kingdom that God establishes when the stone that was cut from a mountain by no human hand breaks in pieces all the kingdoms of this world and establishes God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth.

Symbolically: the ladder represents Christ, by whom heaven and earth are united and who is called the way to heaven which this ladder was. Jesus through the resurrection has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him (1 Peter 3:21-22). Now as the head of the angels he sends them either to God or from God to minister to the heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14). This is also confirmed by the following words of Jesus:

- Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man. (John 1:51).

It is interesting to notice in verse thirteen that the LORD said to Jacob, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father," since Abraham was actually his grandfather, his true father was Isaac, but Abraham in the context of this verse is referred to as Jacob's father, because he is his father concerning the covenant.

Behold, I am with you: (v15) in the previous chapter Jacob deceived his frail and dying father Isaac by pretending to be Esau so that he would be given the blessing rather than Esau who Isaac desired to give it to. In this way Jacob pulled off the biggest deception recorded in the Bible. Now after pulling off such a blatant deception he is resting on his journey as he travels to Haran to find a wife. It is almost certain that on his lonely days of travel to Haran to find a wife he pondered over and over again in his mind all the trickery that he and his mother Rebekah had done. With this in mind it is easy to imagine the enormous comfort and joy God words, "I am with you," would have been to him. The following verses show that Jacob is in the third generation that the announcement of this promised blessing has been made.

1 The LORD said to Abram:

- I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3).

The angel of the LORD confirmed the promise to Abraham saying:

- I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore and your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, ¹⁸and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice. (Genesis 22:15-18).

2 The LORD appeared to Isaac and said:

- I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. ⁴I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands and in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. (Gen. 26:2-4).

3 The LORD in a dream said to Jacob:

- 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. (Genesis. 28:15).

Summary of the vision of the ladder, the angels and the Lord Jesus Christ: Israel's promised Messiah the Lord Jesus Christ and Saviour of the world came from Jacob's bloodline the heavenly and earthly ladder pictured in this vision symbolises Jesus earthly ministry and heavenly ministry. Jesus is the bridge of union between the material and the spiritual world, Paul in his letter wrote:

- There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5).

Jesus himself claims:

- Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man. (John 1:51).

The vision contains a faint foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus Christ the true communication between heaven and earth. He is the ladder between God and man, it is upon him and no other that all divine gifts descend. Symbolically this ladder signifies Jesus ministry on earth reconciling sinners

to God, while the top of the ladder resting in heaven can be seen as his ascension to heaven and of those in Christ being spiritually seated in heavenly places and being raised from this earth to heaven. Jesus is the way to all God's favours; it is by him and him only that sinners draw near to the throne of grace and find God's acceptance; there is no way of getting to heaven, but by Christ; he is the great blessing of the world, of those dwelling on earth the only ones that are shut out from salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ, are those who shut themselves out. There is no other way of getting to heaven but by this ladder, Jesus said:

- I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6).

The favour of God, His salvation and all the blessings the angels do for us are only made possible because of the Lord Jesus Christ who has reconciled all things on earth and all things in heaven. In the book of Colossians Paul wrote:

- God, through His beloved Son reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. ²¹And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²²he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him (Col. 1:20-21).

GENESIS 28:16-17

Surely the LORD is in this Place, this is the Gate of Heaven.

- **Genesis 28:16-17:** Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." ¹⁷And 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."

Jacob's mind was filled with awe as he woke from his sleep, his statement, "Surely the LORD is in this place and I did not know it: (v16) does not mean that he was unaware of the omnipresence of God (meaning, present everywhere at the same time). What astonished him was that God would reveal Himself in such a special manner in the desert place that he was in so far away from the sanctuary and his father's house and from the congregation of the faithful and the place where they met for public worship, especially since he was fleeing from his family home where he had no doubt spent many times in communion and prayer with God and most likely was feeling depressed and a certain sense of guilt for all the grief and trouble he had caused by his deception and trickery.

Surely the LORD is in this place: (v16) means that God was there by revelation, by His presence and by the manifestation of His mind and will to Jacob and by the communion He had with him in his dream.

The house of God and at the gate of heaven: (v17) whenever anyone senses a unique and special presence of God upon their mind or their life they can proclaim as Jacob did, "this is the house of God and at the gate of heaven," meaning God's revelation, presence, mind, or blessings have come to them regardless of where they are or what they are doing. It carries the idea that heaven has opened its gates and a unique and special gift of God has come upon a person no matter where they maybe.

I knew it not: (v16) prior to God revealing Himself to Jacob in the dream he was totally unaware that God was in the desert place where he was sleeping. Sometimes God is present with His people and they are not aware of it. This mostly stems from the idea that God's presence can only be found inside the walls of a church building, but this is not so. It, matters not whether we are in the desert; a city; in a house; at work in the field or office; in a shop or in the street, we may keep up our communion with God. In the book of Hebrews, it is written:

- I will never leave you nor forsake you. (Heb. 13:5).

This means when our awareness and sense of God being with us and our communion with Him is broken, it is our fault, not God's. It should be mentioned here, the more we see of God and commune with Him the more we will become aware of our inward lack of holiness before Him. This greater awareness of the ugliness that dwells within should not drive us away from God, since it is evidence that we are drawing nearer to Him, but instead cause us to embrace His grace in a far greater measure. This will result in the heart spontaneously and continually offering up to heaven thoughts and emotions of thankfulness and gratitude, because it is only by the blood of God's beloved Son offered up on the cross of Calvary that such abundant grace flows from the throne of heaven and it is only by this grace that heavens windows are opened to us and our dirt stained clothing is covered with Christ's royal robe of righteousness. Jacob's statement, "Surely the LORD is in this place," (v16) emphatically shows that Jacob had absolutely no doubt that God's manifestations of Himself, His presence and His love was with him. It is not uncommon for God to meet with His people where they did not think He had been or would be found, and at other times meet them even when they have not asked for Him. Likewise, God by His Spirit and love gives certainty to the heart and mind of His people that inwardly convinces them that He is with them, yet they find it almost impossible to communicate this inward sense of God too others and certainly cannot prove it.

GENESIS 28:18-19

Jacob sets up a Stone for a Pillar and Called the Name Bethel.

- **Genesis 28:18-19:** So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. ¹⁹He called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at the first.

Beer-sheba Abraham, and then Isaac, had for so long made Beer-sheba their home

Bethel: comes from the Hebrew word (*Beyth-'El*) it literally means, house of God this of course is why Jacob named this place that he had such a unique encounter with God, "the house of God." This is not the first time this place received the name Bethel. The following verses show that Abraham also worshipped God here, and that the name Bethel already existed.

- The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD. (Gen. 12:7-8).
- Abram journeyed on from the Negeb as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, ⁴to the place where he had made an altar at the first. And there Abram called upon the name of the LORD. (Gen. 13:3-4).

This should not surprise anyone since any place in which a person has an encounter with God could be called Bethel since it simply means, the house of God, some modern-day assemblies and fellowship groups adopted this name for their church or gathering.

The name of the city was Luz at the first: (v19) the word Luz comes from the Hebrew word (*Luwz*) (as growing there), based upon the following verse, "Jacob took fresh sticks of poplar and almond and plane trees, and peeled white streaks in them, exposing the white of the sticks." (Gen. 30:37) it may refer to some kind of nut-tree, perhaps the almond or hazel tree. In the book of Joshua, we read:

- The allotment of the people of Joseph went from the Jordan by Jericho, east of the waters of Jericho, into the wilderness, going up from Jericho into the hill country to Bethel. ²Then going from Bethel to Luz. (Joshua 16:1-2).

Showing that Luz and Beth-el were distinct places, however though separate they were near to one another. It is very likely that at the time of Joshua's conquest Beth-el was considered a holy place rather than a town, and when Ephraim seized upon Luz and put the people to the sword (Judges 1:23-25) he transferred the name of Beth-el to it. Jacob did not go into the city, but slept on the open ground some place a mile or two away from it. Luz and Bethel were about twelve miles from Jerusalem.

Jacob set up a stone and pillar: (v18-19) Jacob took the stone he had used as a pillow (no doubt covered with some kind of animal skin or blanket) and gathered other stones from the field and with them built a pillar of stones with the one he slept upon resting on the top of the pillar. This setting up of the pillar of stones would act as a monument of the event and a memorial for future generations. This practice is still common in the East, in memory of a religious vow or engagement. The pouring of oil upon the pillar was an act of dedication and signified that this was a holy place.

GENESIS 28:20-22

Jacob Makes a Vow to give a Tenth of all He has to the LORD.

- **Genesis 28:20-22:** Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, ²¹so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, ²²and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you."

I will give a full tenth to you: (v22), some ministers today use this verse to support the teaching that members of churches today should pay ten percent of all that they earn to the church they belong to. However, it should be noticed, Jacob puts a lot of conditions on God before he is prepared to pay the tithe and it is not God telling Jacob to tithe, but Jacob saying to God that he will:

- 1 If God will be with him.
- 2 If God will keep him in the way that he goes.
- 3 If God will give him bread to eat.
- 4 If God will give him clothing to wear.
- 5 If God will allow him to return to his father's house in peace.

Jacob says to Isaac if God will do these five things for him then he will give the LORD a tithe (ten percent) of all that God has given him. Jacob requires the LORD to meet certain conditions and blessings concerning his life before he was willing to give the tithe to God, he was only willing to pay the tithe after God had met the conditions he had laid down. This promise of Jacob to pay God a tithe cannot be used to support the teaching that the commanded law of tithing applies to those in the New Testament who are under the New Covenant of grace. Jacob is not keeping any law, but making a promise to God and even then, he is only going to keep the promise if God meets his conditions. If any religious teacher did use this story to support tithing today, they should also be teaching their followers that it would be right and proper for them to lay down certain conditions for God to meet as Jacob did before they had to pay the tithe.

Old Testament tithing: God gave the command to tithe to Israel at Mount Sinai when Israel was in the wilderness. It was one of the instructions (amongst the many) that God gave to Moses to give to Israel for Israel to adopt as their tax system after they had crossed the River Jordan and established themselves in the Promised Land. All Israel was to give a tithe of all that their land produced and offer it up at the altar to the LORD. This does not mean that God mystically came down to consume these offerings (except on special occasions), but that they became food for the Levitical

priesthood and their families and for Aaron and his household (Num. 18:8-9). Giving to Aaron the high priest and his household was considered the same as giving to the LORD. This is because they were serving as mediators between the LORD and His people (Num. 18:10-14). This principle is the same today giving to the faithful serving Christ is considered by God the same as giving to the Lord.

Levites: the priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests. From the tithe the common people of Israel gave to the tribe of the Levites the Levites were to take a tithe of the best from it and give it to Aaron the high priest. This tithe supplied food for Aaron and his household. The common people of Israel would shepherd their flock under a rod and every tenth animal that passed under the rod became the animal to be tithed. This means that animal the people tithed to the Levites could be healthy, lame or sick. Unlike this tithe the Levites were to select from their tithe the best of the animals that the common people had tithed to them and give them to Aaron for his and his household's daily food.

Israel's tax system: Israel was chosen by God to be a totally separated nation from the rest of the world and its system. They were to have their own land, governments and laws. One of these laws was the commanded law of tithing ten percent of all that their livestock, their land and their orchards produced. This was the only tax God commanded the entire nation of Israel to pay. It supported the Levites the priesthood the singers in the LORDS service and supplied food for the orphans, the widows and the poor.

The third-year tithe: every tribe was to store their tithe in their cities, towns and villages for two-years and then in the third year at the appointed time take them to Jerusalem and give them to the Levites. The grain would be stored in storehouses while the livestock was kept in the surrounding farmland of their cities for the next two-years then in the third year the tithe was taken to Jerusalem. If the people lived too far away from the Jerusalem they could sell their tithe of livestock and grain and take the money to Jerusalem and give it to the Levites, since this was a time when all the tribes of Israel were gathered together before the house of the LORD it was a time of great rejoicing, celebration and giving thanks

NOTE: during the time of Joseph the food was stored during the good-years to last for the seven years (some of it may have been stored longer) so it certainly would not have been difficult to for Israel to store the third-year tithe for two-years.

The Promises Land: if the priesthood and the people of Israel kept Gods commands, laws and statutes and did not turn to other gods to worship them and destroyed everything in their land that was opposed to the LORDS teachings and to His ways and made God pre-eminent in all things that they did. God promised to bless their land so that it produced crops and fruit in abundance and bless the health of their livestock so that they greatly multiplied. In this way the people of Israel would not only have prospered in everything they put their hand to do, but would also have become the head of all nations and not the tail as God had promised them. Sadly, Israel not only turned to other gods to worship them, but also entered into gross sin so they have never yet reached their full potential as a nation before God and before the world (God's eternal plan for the nation of Israel is still a work in progress).

Things that were tithed: cattle, sheep, goats, crops, wine, oil wheat, grain, honey, wine, herbs and spices frankincense and all that the land produced.

God's House of worship: under the Old Testament covenant God only gave instruction to build one temple to service the entire land of Israel and it was built with an abundance of money, mostly from two of the world's richest Kings (David and Solomon) and the spoils and gifts of pagan nations. There was not a temple for every tribe and they did not go to the temple every week. The primary purpose of temple during the Old Testament was for the sacrificing of animals and for the forgiveness of sin and only the high priest was permitted to enter into the presence of God.

Following are seven reasons the commanded law of tithing does not apply to the Christian faith:

1. Israel totally owned all the land of Canaan that they lived in, Christians don't.
2. The government of Israel and the people of the entire nation were of one faith Christians live amongst a multitude of faiths and under a secular government.
3. Israel only paid a tax of ten percent Christian pay far above this.
4. The government of Israel was not to allow religions opposed to their faith to build their temples in their land Christians have no power over the government ruling over them to prevent this happening.
5. Israel was called to destroy their enemies; New Testament believers are called to love their enemies.
6. The people of Israel were to rely on a human high priest to intercede before God on their behalf Christians are not to have any human priest stand before them and God other than the Lord Jesus Christ.
7. Israel only had one temple of worship for the entire nation; Christians have multitudes of churches throughout every nation of the world.

If religious teachers impose tithing onto believers today, they should also be imposing the multitude of other laws God gave to Moses otherwise they are simply picking out verses of Scripture that work to their own advantage and financial gain. To isolate this one law of tithing and lift it out from all the other commanded laws Moses gave to Israel and apply it to Christianity today is doing the Bible, the people of God and God Himself, a great injustice especially since the commanded law of tithing was a law given to God's people who were in a totally different religious system to the religious system Christians live in today.

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Surely if religions are going to embrace the Old Testament Law of Moses concerning tithing, they should also embrace Moses law of the Sabbath Day which states:

- Six days work shall be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD whoever does any work on it shall be put to death (Exod. 35:1-2).

Why is it possible to embrace one and not the other? Especially since both were given at the same time by God to Moses, for the people of Israel. Those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, the one and only true High Priest should not be modeling their giving and the church on the Old Testament pattern of tithing and the temple. To discover what has changed and how it has changed see the title:

- Tithing in the New Testament in, Tithing (ON WEBSITE MENU).

This stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house:

(v21) this refers to the stone and pillar spoken of in (v18-19). Giving a pillar of stones the name, "The House of God," should not seem strange as it was the place God confirmed to Jacob the promise of Abraham (v12-15) which affects all God's people throughout the Old and New Testament and will reach its ultimate and perfect fulfilment when Israel's promised Messiah the Christ and Saviour of the world returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth. Added to this anywhere God's people gather to worship God can be referred to as the "House of God."

Today those who do not have the luxury of a church building gather in the open air or under the shade of trees (especially those in third world countries) or a scenic and quiet area. It is right and proper for those who assemble in this manner to worship God to call that place, "The House of God."

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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