

Genesis 28:1-5 and 10-22; 29:1-14

Aim of Lesson

To show how God guided and blessed Jacob and revealed to him the important part he was to play in the divine purpose.

Background study

Find maps showing Jacob's route to Haran, and pictures of the land and of wells. Study the history of the phenomena of dreams as used by God to communicate with men.

Suggested outline of lesson

Remind the children of the situation at the end of the last lesson and of the necessity for Jacob to leave home to escape from his brother's anger. In spite of all that had happened, Isaac gave his son a parting blessing and good fatherly advice. He reminded him that he was chosen of God and must take great care to choose a godly wife, and he directed him to his mother's family back in Haran. Remind the children of the long journey that Rebekah had originally made from her own home in order to marry Isaac.

Jacob listened to his father's advice and followed it - relieved, no doubt, to have some definite place to go. Despite his father's warmth and concern, and despite the prospect of finding a wife and making a life of his own, Jacob left his family and his homeland with a heavy heart. He faced a long, lonely and dangerous journey. Describe his means of travel and the terrain through which he would pass with all its dangers. In those days travelling alone was risky. His journey would probably be along rough paths near to the caravan routes from Egypt to Syria, through sparsely populated country where he might encounter wild animals or thieving attackers. Though lonely, he was soon to be reminded that he was not alone.

In relating the dream, make it clear that it was a vision which came to Jacob while he slept and should not be confused with the sort of dreams which are the natural experience of everyone. Ask the children to try and imagine the loneliness of Jacob as he lay down in the dark, without shelter and far from family or friends. Help the class to appreciate something of the contrast as Jacob was comforted by the knowledge of God's powerful and reassuring presence, first by the sight of angels and then by the sound of God's voice. Quote the exact words of the promise (Genesis 28:13-14) and, by questioning the children, get them to realize how closely these words echo the promises God made years before - to Abraham (Genesis 13:15-17) and then to Isaac (Genesis 26:3-4). It is certain that Jacob knew of these promises and to hear them confirmed at this time would be a tremendous source of strength to him when he most needed it. In addition there was the personal reassurance that God would protect him and one day bring him back to the promised land (verse 15).

Discuss how different Jacob would have felt, on waking, from the way he had felt the night before. He experienced a sense of reverence at having been in the presence of God in that place which now assumed a special significance, and he marked the spot with a simple memorial. He had complete faith that God would keep his promises and he expressed his prayerful response in a vow of dedication to God's service, culminating in a promise to donate a tenth of all his goods to the Lord.

At this point, refer to a map and show the distance and the terrain he had to traverse to reach Haran. Describe what the watering place would have looked like and convey how welcome a sight it must have been for the weary and dusty traveller. Surely God must have guided Jacob to find the very well at which his mother's family watered their sheep. How happy Jacob must have been, after so long and lone a journey, to meet his relatives. Think about the exchange of greetings that would have taken place, and what questions would have been asked and answers given, as he made himself known to them. They would be eager to learn what had become of Rebekah and whether she was well and happy. There is no doubt that Jacob was immediately attracted to Rachel and that she was kindly disposed towards this young man who had so willingly helped her with her task, and who had greeted her with such emotion. Without Jacob realizing it, God's recent promise had already started to come true.

Relevance to the children's lives

In the middle of the night, Jacob was alone and afraid. After the vision, he was no longer afraid for he felt the presence of God though he could not see him. In fact, God had been with him all the time and Jacob had only to realize it. What, therefore, should we always remember?

Worksheets

The code reads 'I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go'.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, thank you for today's story of Jacob. Help us to know that, just as you cared for him, you will also care for us, if we are faithful. Amen.

Memory verse

"I fear no evil; for thou art with me" (Psalm 23:4).