

Good morning! One of the Old Testament characters that continues to influence me is Jacob. I can identify with Jacob; he was a shifty kind of a character, a sneaky, deceitful “mama’s boy”. His name, Jacob, means “supplanter” or “heel grabber”. Jacob was born a twin, and came out of the birth canal holding his brother’s, Esau’s, heel. He was always trying to get something without having to pay the price for it. He supplanted his brother’s blessing by trickery. Here’s the interesting thing though--- for all of his character flaws, Jacob was God’s choice. I can identify with that, too. Somehow, in God’s providence He has chosen me to be one of His kids and I’m endlessly amazed at that! This morning, let’s look together at a life-shaping event that took place in Jacob’s life:

At the top of the stairway stood the Lord, and he said, “I am the Lord, the God of your grandfather Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and your descendants. Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. What’s more, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. One day I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you.” Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn’t even aware of it!” But he was also afraid and said, “What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God, the very gateway to heaven!” The next morning Jacob got up very early. He took the stone he had rested his head against, and he set it upright as a memorial pillar. Then he poured olive oil over it. He named that place Bethel (which means “house of God”), although it was previously called Luz. Then Jacob made this vow: “If God will indeed be with me and protect me on this journey, and if he will provide me with food and clothing, and if I return safely to my father’s home, then the Lord will certainly be my God.”

Gen. 28:13-21

This passage takes place after Jacob, with his mother’s help, had tricked his father and stolen his brother Esau’s blessing. Esau was coming after him and Jacob was on the run. He lay down to sleep and had a life-changing vision in which God revealed to him that He was going to make him the leader of a great nation. Listen to these promises: *“The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and your descendants. Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. What’s more, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. One day I will bring you*

back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you.” How about that? Pretty great, right? What was Jacob’s response? First of all, he thought he had stumbled upon a special place. *“What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God, the very gateway to heaven!”* There are some people who believe there are gateways or doors between this world and heaven-- I am not one of them. He set up a monument, had a little ceremony, and then changed the name of the place. Finally, Jacob addressed the promises God had made directly, saying in essence, *“OK, so you say You’re going to be with me and protect me. You say You’re going to provide me with food and clothing. You say You’re going to bring me back to my father’s home someday. Well, if you do all that, you’ll be my God.”* Amazing, right? God chose Jacob and yet Jacob seems to have thought that he was choosing God. And so it is with us, too. God chose us long before we were born and He has poured Himself into our lives until eventually we think we are choosing Him. This morning, take a few moments to thank God for choosing you to be one of His kids. You don’t deserve it...but He adopted you anyway!