

## **Dr. Kenneth Mathews, Genesis**

### **Session 17: Jacob's Flight and Dream at Bethel (Genesis 27:41-28:22)**

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#### **Keywords**

Jacob, Esau, Bethel, El Shaddai, Dream, Covenant, Rebekah, Isaac, Haran, Padan Aram

#### **Abstract**

This session by Dr. Kenneth Mathews focuses on Genesis 27:41–28:22, tracking Jacob's flight from Beersheba to his mother's ancestral home in Haran to escape the murderous wrath of his brother Esau. During this journey, Jacob experiences a pivotal divine dream at Bethel, where God establishes a personal relationship with him and confirms the Abrahamic covenant promises of descendants, land, and universal blessing. The lecture analyzes themes of human deception and divine providence, emphasizing how God's protective presence and grace transcend human moral failure to fulfill His redemptive purposes.

#### **Outline**

##### **I. Introduction to Session 17: Jacob's Flight and Dream at Bethel (Genesis 27:41–28:22)**

- A. Scope of the study: Jacob's flight from Beersheba to his mother's homeland in Haran
- B. The twin dynamic: Jacob ('heel-grasper' or 'deceiver') vs. Esau
  - 1. Historical deception of the birthright exchanged for stew
  - 2. Recent deception of the patriarchal blessing from a blind Isaac

##### **II. Esau's Anger and Rebekah's Strategic Intervention (Genesis 27:41–46)**

- A. Esau's deep-seated hatred and murderous intent
  - 1. Vengeance planned immediately after Isaac's anticipated death
  - 2. Biblical parallel: Cain and Abel's fratricidal tension on the precipice of execution
  - 3. Theological connection: Matthew 5:21–22 (Sermon on the Mount) and 1 John 3:15 on anger as heart-murder
- B. Rebekah's protective strategy and the deception motif
  - 1. Direct instruction to Jacob to flee to her brother Laban in Haran
  - 2. Expectation of a brief stay ('a few days') that eventually spans twenty years
  - 3. Motivation to avoid losing both sons in a single day through murder and subsequent blood vengeance

C. Rebekah's ploy to Isaac: Seeking a wife from the homeland

1. Explicit loathing ('disgusted') of the local Hittite women who married Esau
2. Emphasis on endogamy (marriage within the family/worshippers of Yahweh) rather than exogamy (marrying local idolaters)

### III. Isaac's Charge and the Blessing of El Shaddai (Genesis 28:1–9)

A. Sending Jacob away with an explicit patriarchal command

1. Contrast with Abraham (who prohibited Isaac from leaving Canaan)
2. Strict prohibition against marrying Canaanite women

B. The Covenantal Blessing of El Shaddai (God Almighty)

1. Link to creation and procreation promises of Genesis 1:28
2. Guarantee of the Abrahamic land and descendant inheritance
3. Linguistic origin of El Shaddai: Generic terms (El, Elohim) used alongside Yahweh to designate the covenant God

C. Esau's attempts at family bridge building and reconciliation

1. Recognition of the family's deep distress over his Hittite wives
2. Marriage to Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael (uniting Ishmaelites and Edomites)

### IV. Jacob's Transcendent Dream at Bethel (Genesis 28:10–22)

A. The Journey and the Significance of "Place" (Maqom)

1. Solo trek from Beersheba toward Haran through the hostile wilderness
2. The threefold recurrence of the word "place" in the Hebrew text of verse 11
3. The pillow-stone placed under, beside, or adjacent to his head

B. The Visual Revelation of the Dream

1. A stairway (or ladder) connecting the earth to the sky/heaven
2. Messengers (angels) of God ascending and descending, serving as active divine links
3. The Lord (Yahweh) standing above or beside Jacob

C. The Divine Covenantal Pronouncements

1. God's self-revelation: "I am Yahweh, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac"
2. Tripartite promise: Abundant descendants, land inheritance, and universal blessing for all families of the earth
3. Theology of Presence: God's personal vow of protection, companionship, and safe return

D. Jacob's Awakening and Sacred Response

1. Holy fear and awe upon recognizing the transcendent presence of God in an unmarked location
2. Identifying the location as "the house of God" and "the gate of heaven"
3. Setting up the pillow-stone as a sacred pillar (massebah) and consecrating it with oil
4. Renaming the ancient city of Luz to Bethel ("House of God")

5. Jacob's Vow: A statement of faith and loyalty, committing to tithe a tenth of all God's provisions

## **V. Theological and New Testament Integration**

- A. The transition from inherited family faith to personal relationship with Yahweh
- B. New Testament connection: Jesus Christ identifying Himself in John 1:51 as the true ladder/stairway between heaven and earth
- C. The supremacy of divine grace and mercy superseding human sin, weaknesses, and greed
- D. The ultimate seed of Abraham: Christ as the singular offspring in whom the promise of universal blessing is realized