

March 2-8, 2026

## Genesis 24-27; 28-33

“THE COVENANT IS RENEWED”

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**Summary:** *Genesis 24. Abraham commands that Isaac shall not marry a Canaanite—The Lord guides Abraham’s servant in choosing Rebekah as a wife for Isaac—Rebekah is blessed to be the mother of thousands of millions—She marries Isaac.*

*Genesis 25. Abraham marries, has descendants, dies, and is buried in the cave of Machpelah—His descendants through Ishmael are listed—Rebekah conceives, and Jacob and Esau struggle in her womb—The Lord reveals their destiny to Rebekah—Esau sells his birthright for a mess of pottage.*

*Genesis 26. The Lord promises Isaac posterity as the stars of heaven in number—In his seed, all nations will be blessed—The Lord prospers Isaac, temporally and spiritually, for Abraham’s sake—Isaac offers sacrifices—Esau marries Hittite wives to the sorrow of his parents.*

*Genesis 27. Rebekah guides Jacob in seeking blessings—Jacob is blessed to have dominion and rule over peoples and nations—Esau hates Jacob and plans to slay him—Rebekah fears that Jacob may marry one of the daughters of Heth.*

*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.*

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## Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

### What is known about Haran, Abraham's temporary home?

The Biblical area of Haran may have been discovered in modern Iraq. Writings found in an ancient town of Nuzi give some insight to the culture of Biblical times: "NUZI is an ancient city in northeastern Iraq. Between 1925 and 1931, a team of archaeologists from several American universities undertook a series of very successful excavations at the site of ancient Nuzi. They discovered thousands of tablet-documents dating from the 15th-14th centuries B.C.E., the period in which Nuzi was one of the major cities of the Hurrian empire. These tablets, when deciphered, turned out to be extremely valuable, not only shedding light on the lives and customs of the ancient Hurrians, but also for studies of the Bible. The 15th to 14th centuries was also the period of the biblical patriarchs and the city of Nuzi was

the birthright was so important to Jacob, while Esau thought so little of it that he sold it for a pot of lentils." (**Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040-1105) (known as Rashi) Torah commentary**) Jacob may have wanted the birthright because of the attendant privilege of serving in the Temple. "Under the patriarchal order, the right or inheritance of the firstborn is known as *birthright*. This generally included a land inheritance as well as the authority to preside. The firstborn of flocks and of human families was considered as belonging to the Lord and was expected to be dedicated to Him. This dedication could be either literal or by the payment of redemption money (**Exodus. 13:11-16**). From time-to-time certain prerogatives, opportunities, and blessings have attended those who were born of a

part of the same social and cultural area as the city of Harran, the home of the patriarchs. On the assumption that the socio-legal features of life in Nuzi were also current in Harran, it became possible to evaluate many of the biblical tales against the background of the information gleaned from the tablets. During the last few decades, biblical scholars have undertaken just such a comparative evaluation, and have discovered that many puzzling aspects of the narratives concerning the patriarchs are, in fact, revealed to be accurate representations of legal and social features of Hurrian life of that time."

### What will I do about my birthright?

"Esau's selling of his birthright to Jacob also has been confirmed as a legally permissible, though not common, procedure in Hurrian law." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) "The rich traditions and explanations of rabbinic literature fill in some gaps in this sparsely worded story and address the obvious question of why

or canopy is used, probably to symbolize the Temple. A glass is shattered symbolizing the destruction of the Temple. Both the bride and groom are addressed by their Hebrew "special" or "new" names." The "*tallit*" (prayer shawl) is used. To some it is customary to drape the "*tallit*" over the couple. It may be considered symbolic that the "*tallit*" is the remaining remnant of garments used in the ancient temples. Their first intimacy life is under the "*tallit*" with a kiss. "By law, the ring must belong to the bridegroom, and can be constructed of any material, as long as it is free of precious stones . . . it was customary for the groom to cover the bride's head with his *tallit* as a symbol of sheltering her; and in modern-day Israel, for weddings of soldiers on active duty, it is not unusual to see a huppah

particular lineage. Thus, the office of high priest (of the Aaronic order) and the office of the patriarch to the Church (in the Melchizedek Priesthood) are hereditary in nature. Lineage alone does not guarantee the blessings or spiritual power of the office, but the opportunities are offered to the firstborn of the selected lineage. There are several instances in the scriptures of the one who was the firstborn losing his birthright because of unrighteousness and his office being given to another; such is the case with Esau (**Genesis 25:24–34; 27**) and Reuben (**1 Chronicles 5:1–2; Jeremiah 31:9**). (Topical Guide <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bd/birthright?lang=eng>)

### **Who else supposes that marriage is “forever?”**

Marriage in Jewish custom has always been regarded as forever. It may be considered that the ring is used as a symbol of “eternity.” In any case, words such as “Until death do you part” are not part of Jewish wedding ceremonies. The ring is examined by a Rabbi and is considered “*kosher*” only if it is unblemished and with no pits. A “*huppah*”

them are considered foundational by feminists because of the perceptions they provide into the lives of Biblical women of those times. Notable examples are of women who broke the male dominance of the time compared to the scant documentation of most women's lives.

### **How are women part of the covenant?**

“According to Jewish tradition, a covenant was formed between the Israelites and the God of Abraham at Mount Sinai. The *Torah* relates that both Israelite men and Israelite women were present at Sinai; however, the covenant was worded in such a way that it bound men to act upon its requirements and to ensure that the members of their household (wives, children, and slaves) met these requirements as well. In this sense, the covenant bound women as well, though indirectly.” (Judith Hauptman, “Women” *Etz Hayim: Torah and*

constructed of a *tallit* supported by four rifles held by friends of the bride and groom . . . among Orthodox Jews, the preferred custom is to erect the *huppah* outside, or at least in a spot open to the sky, underneath the stars . . .” (Encyclopedia Judaic Jr.)

### **Who are some outstanding women in the Bible?**

Few women are mentioned in the Bible by name and responsibility. Those include the Biblical Matriarchs Sarah, a wife of Abraham; Rebecca, wife of Isaac and mother of Jacob and Esau; Rachel, and Leah, first and second wife of Jacob; Miriam the prophetess, sister of Aaron and Moses; Deborah the Judge, probably a temple priestess; Huldah the prophetess, probably a temple priestess; Abigail, who married King David; Rahab, who saved the spies of Israel and became the fore-mother of Boaz who married Ruth , an important link in the royal Davidic line producing the Messiah; and the Persian Jewish queen Esther. A common experience in the Bible is the important role that women take in disrupting man-made power structures. The result is often a more just outcome than what would have taken place under conventional circumstances. Today, many of

ultimately to the Resurrection of the Dead.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

### **How significant to the Arabs and Jews is Abraham's and his family's burial place?**

Repeating information from the last lesson, the Cave of the Patriarchs also known as the Tomb of the Patriarchs, is known to Jews as the Cave of *Machpelah* (multiple caves). It is a sacred place for Moslems identified as the Sanctuary of Abraham. These multiple caves are situated about 19 miles south of Jerusalem in the heart of the Old City of Hebron, now in the West Bank. According to the Abrahamic religions of Judaism and Islam, the place and adjoining field were purchased by Abraham as a burial plot.

**Commentary. Ed. David L. Lieber. The Jewish Publication Society, 2001. 1356-1359.)**

Women also had a role in ritual life. Women (as well as men) were expected to make a journey to the Temple in Jerusalem every year (men would be expected to attend each of the three main Biblical festivals if they could) and, of course, to offer the Passover sacrifice in the Spring. They would also do so on special occasions in their lives such as giving a special *todah* (thanksgiving) offering after childbirth. Thus, they participated in many of the major religious roles that non-Levites could, although less often and on a smaller and generally more discreet extent.

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

Possibly connecting to the Bible Jacob’s ladder account, there is a legend of a Rabbi, Pinehas Ben Yair, who is buried in 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)

### **Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights**

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

### **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

(**Genesis 23:9, 16-20**) Over the cave is a large rectangular Herodian (37 BCE–73 CE) enclosure. Later, the Byzantines (395 CE) built a Christian Basilica on the site; the structure was converted into the Ibrahimi Mosque following the Muslim conquest (634 CE). It was retaken by Crusaders (1099-1187 CE), and in (1188 CE) it was regained by the Ayyubid sultan, Saladin, who again changed it into a mosque. During the Six-Day War of 1967, the entire Jordanian-ruled West Bank (west side of the Jordan River) was retaken by the State of Israel, and the structure was divided into a synagogue as well as a mosque. The Cave of *Machpelah* is considered to be the second-holiest place in Judaism, after “Temple Square” in the Old City of Jerusalem. Jewish tradition states that in addition to the tombs of Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Leah, the tombs of Adam and Eve are at the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, one of the oldest cities in the world. The sacredness of burial and respect for the dead is a common tradition among most religions.

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).