# THE LADDER FROM HEAVEN

GOD FORGIVES ME AND IS ALWAYS WITH ME.



**MEMORY VERSE**

**"To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness" (Daniel 9:9).**

## Word of the Week—Forgiveness:

Giving up the right to punish someone when they have done wrong or hurt us; letting go of hurtful feelings like anger or hatred toward a person who has hurt us or others. If we repent, God forgives us. He offers to wipe away our sin completely, like dirty clothes being washed clean.

This week's lesson is based on Genesis 27:41-46; Genesis 28; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 183-188; and *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 379-383. **Extra Reading:** *The Bible Story*, vol. 2, pp. 20-24.

SUNDAY

# The Family Fight

**Mission Challenge:** Pray each day for God to show you who to invite to Sabbath School.

**DO:** Use Isaiah 40:31 to encourage someone who may be down. Write or draw the promise on a card and give it to them.

Growing up in the fields had been so much fun. There were little lambs to chase, gardens to make, and land to explore. At night there was always a fire to build, stories to swap, and stars to count together. Jacob and Esau grew up in a happy, loving home. But everything had changed. Jacob and Rebekah's lies had hurt everyone.

Jacob dragged his feet as he walked to the fields to check on the sheep. He had cheated his brother of the birthright. He had lied to his father and to God! It made him feel terrible inside.

Esau frowned as he cleaned his hunting knife. He was furious! His anger grew more each day. *How could his brother do this to him?*

It feels terrible when families fight. It's hard to know what to do when we are hurting like this. But God knows and He is always there to help us. The Bible tells us, "Lord, you are kind and forgiving. You have great love for those who call to you" (Psalm 86:5, ICB).

What can we do when we have trouble with our family or friends? **Read Psalm 86:6, 7.**

We can also talk to older people we trust—at church, school, or in our bigger families—to help us stay safe and have peace in our homes.

God could heal the hurt between Jacob and Esau. He could bring forgiveness and peace to their family. He longed to give them joy. Would they let Him?

## Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *Have you ever had a bad argument with someone you love? What did you do to make things better?*
- *If you feel like that again, what can you remember, and what could you do?*

**Pray:** Thank God for His love and forgiveness.





☐ MONDAY

# A Father's Forgiveness and Blessing

"I will kill my brother Jacob" (Genesis 27:41), declared Esau.

What terrible words! Esau spoke them only to his friends, but the shocking words were passed on. When they reached Rebekah's ears, they made her gasp with fright! Esau's hatred was so deep and ugly that it filled her with worry. She must keep Jacob safe! Quickly she called for him. What did she say he must do? **Read Genesis 27:43, 44.**

Rebekah then hurried off to Isaac's tent. She didn't want to worry frail Isaac by telling him of Esau's cruel plan to kill his brother. Instead she told Isaac she was worried Jacob would marry a local Hittite woman.

Isaac *really* didn't want Jacob to marry someone who didn't love God, as Esau had done. He wanted the very best for his son. Old Isaac called Jacob to his side. He would miss him very much, but Jacob was to go and find a wife from his mother's family in Haran. Then Isaac blessed Jacob with the beautiful promises God had given to Grandfather Abraham: "May God All-Powerful bless you and give you many children. May you become the father of many peoples. May the Lord give you and your descendants the blessing of Abraham" (Genesis 28:3, 4, ICB).

Although Jacob had chosen to lie and trick his old father, and hadn't said he was sorry afterward, Isaac still loved him. Isaac loved him so much that he blessed him before he left home. What a kind, gracious father Isaac was! There are many times in our lives when we do the wrong thing (sometimes even on purpose, as Jacob did), but God offers us grace. He is the kindest, fairest, most-loving of all Fathers.

**BRAINSTORM:** How many other Bible characters can you think of who forgave someone?

## Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *How might Jacob have felt:*
  - *When he found out his very own brother wanted to kill him?*
  - *When his father blessed him?*
- *Think of a time someone forgave you for doing something wrong. How did you feel when they forgave you?*

**PARENT FAITH TALK:** Share a time someone gave you the gift of forgiveness.

**PRAY:** Thank God for helping others to forgive you.

TUESDAY

# A Lonely Path

Tears welled up as Rebekah hugged her son goodbye and sent him quickly on his way. Terrified that Esau might chase him, Jacob took off running. He avoided people and towns as he hurried along the lonely trails in the blackness of night.

His heart pounded with fear. His body ached. But worse still Jacob felt all alone. He had lost his family. He even believed that he had lost God as his friend, because of his bad, bad choice.

After two long, weary days Jacob stopped. Lonely and disappointed with himself, he cried out to God. He sobbed and poured out his heart, telling God how very sorry he was. He asked God to forgive him. And God did—right away!

But Jacob didn't *feel* any better—he still didn't *feel* as though God was with him. He begged God to somehow show him that he was not disowned as a friend or ignored.

What does Jacob need to *know* right now?

**Read Isaiah 41:10 and 1 John 1:9.**

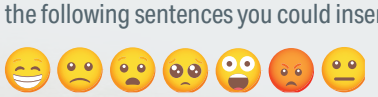
Sometimes our negative feelings of guilt and helplessness are so strong that we forget what we *know* to be true. Our emotions—what we feel—take control of our minds, and it is hard to believe the truth. This is exactly how Satan wants us to feel! "He goes around like a roaring lion looking for someone to eat" (I Peter 5:8, ICB). When he is trying to "eat us up" with guilt, shame, and loneliness, we can confidently claim Bible promises. We can trust our forgiving God to always be with us, even when we don't feel as if He is.

## Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *Why did Jacob cry and pour out his heart to God?*
- *Next time you feel as if God hasn't forgiven you, recite your memory verse. Can you say it now?*

**Pray:** Is there anything you would like to ask God to forgive you for? Ask Him to forgive you. Then thank Him that He has.

**Do:** What feelings are these emojis showing? Choose which of the following sentences you could insert each feeling into:



- "When I feel ____, I will remember that God is always with me."
- "When I feel ____, I will remember that God has forgiven me."

WEDNESDAY

# A Beautiful Dream

Step by step, by weary step . . . Jacob's tired feet had taken him far from home. Lonely and exhausted, he slumped down on the hard ground and laid his head on a stone. There were no soft mattresses or pillows on this journey! Even so he fell fast asleep.

God's big heart understood exactly how Jacob felt. He understands how awful it is to feel lonely, guilty, and unforgiven (Psalm 139:3). So God did something special for Jacob; He gave him a beautiful dream.

What did Jacob see in the dream? **Read Genesis 28:12.**

Imagine having a dream like that! Bright and shining, the ladder stretched all the way from the earth up, up, up to heaven. Shimmering angels moved up and down the ladder. The Lord stood at the top, surrounded by dazzling glory. What did God say to Jacob in the dream? **Read Genesis 28:13,14.**

Then God said something more. He had saved the best till last: "I am with you, and will protect you wherever you go . . . I will not leave you" (Genesis 28:15, ICB).

God encouraged Jacob with the wonderful truth that he was still loved and protected. The shining ladder and the beautiful angels gave Jacob absolute proof that it didn't matter what he had done or how he felt; he was forgiven and connected with the God of heaven. God wants us to both *know* and *feel* that we are loved and protected by Him too (Matthew 28:20). The ladder represented Jesus, who would come to this earth to save us from our sins and reconnect us to God.

Sometimes He reminds us of this in personal and special ways, as in dreams.

## Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *Why did God give Jacob the dream?*
- *Do you know anyone else, in the Bible or personally, who God also encouraged with a dream?*

**Fast Fact:** God spoke to Bible characters 21 times in dreams. They are recorded in Genesis, Matthew, Daniel, Judges, and 1 Kings. You may like to find out more about these dreams.

**Do:** Make Jacob's ladder. You could draw or paint it, make it from modeling clay, or with sticks tied together. Write God's promise on a cloud shape and attach it to the top: "I am with you" (Genesis 28:15). You will add to this tomorrow.

**Pray:** Thank God for caring about you, even when you are discouraged because of something you have done wrong. Also thank God for your comfortable bed!



THURSDAY

# Jesus and His Angel Helpers



The dazzling angels on the ladder would always remind Jacob that God loved him. God had forgiven him and would always be with him. But there was even more to learn from this amazing dream.

The shining ladder in Jacob's dream represented Jesus. He is the only way that sinful people on earth can be connected with their loving God in heaven. The Bible says, "There is only one way people can reach God. That way is through Jesus Christ" (1 Timothy 2:5, ICB).

The shining angels going up and down the ladder showed Jacob that angels work hard to connect people with their Father God in heaven too. Thousands of angels are always busy helping God with His work of loving people and helping them stay close to God. "Angels are constantly ascending and descending [going up and down] this ladder of shining brightness, bearing the prayers of the needy and distressed to the Father above, and bringing blessing and hope, courage and help to the children of men" (Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 153).

What else do the angels do? Read the following verses and finish the sentences.

**Psalm 34:7.** Angels . . .
**Luke 22:43.** Angels . . .
**Luke 1:11-13.** Angels . . .

Jacob felt very, very, very far from God. No wonder God gave him a beautiful dream filled with angels on a bright shining ladder.

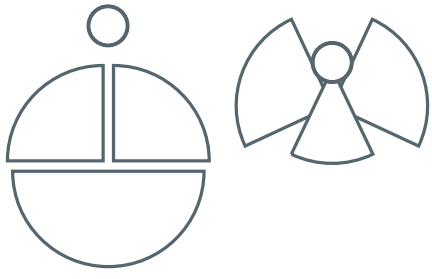
## Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *How close do you think Jacob felt to God when he woke up from his dream?*
- *The ladder reminds us of how Jesus and the angels connect us with God. What could you do to help connect someone with God?*

**Pray:** Thank God that Jesus is like the ladder connecting us to God. Thank Him for His shining angel helpers too.

**For You, Parents:** "It is the work of the angels to come close to the tried, the suffering, the tempted. They labor untiringly in behalf of those for whom Christ died" (Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp.153, 154).

**Do:** Make some angels to go on the ladder you made yesterday. You may like to make them from paper circles as shown to the right.



FRIDAY

# Praise and a Promise

Jacob woke up in the stillness of the night. Oh what a dream! He had seen the shining light of God's angels. The God of heaven and earth was with him!

He jumped to his feet, his loneliness and guilt all gone. In the early-morning light, Jacob thanked and praised God. "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it," he said. "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" (Genesis 28:16, 17).

How did Jacob worship God? *Read Genesis 28:18.*

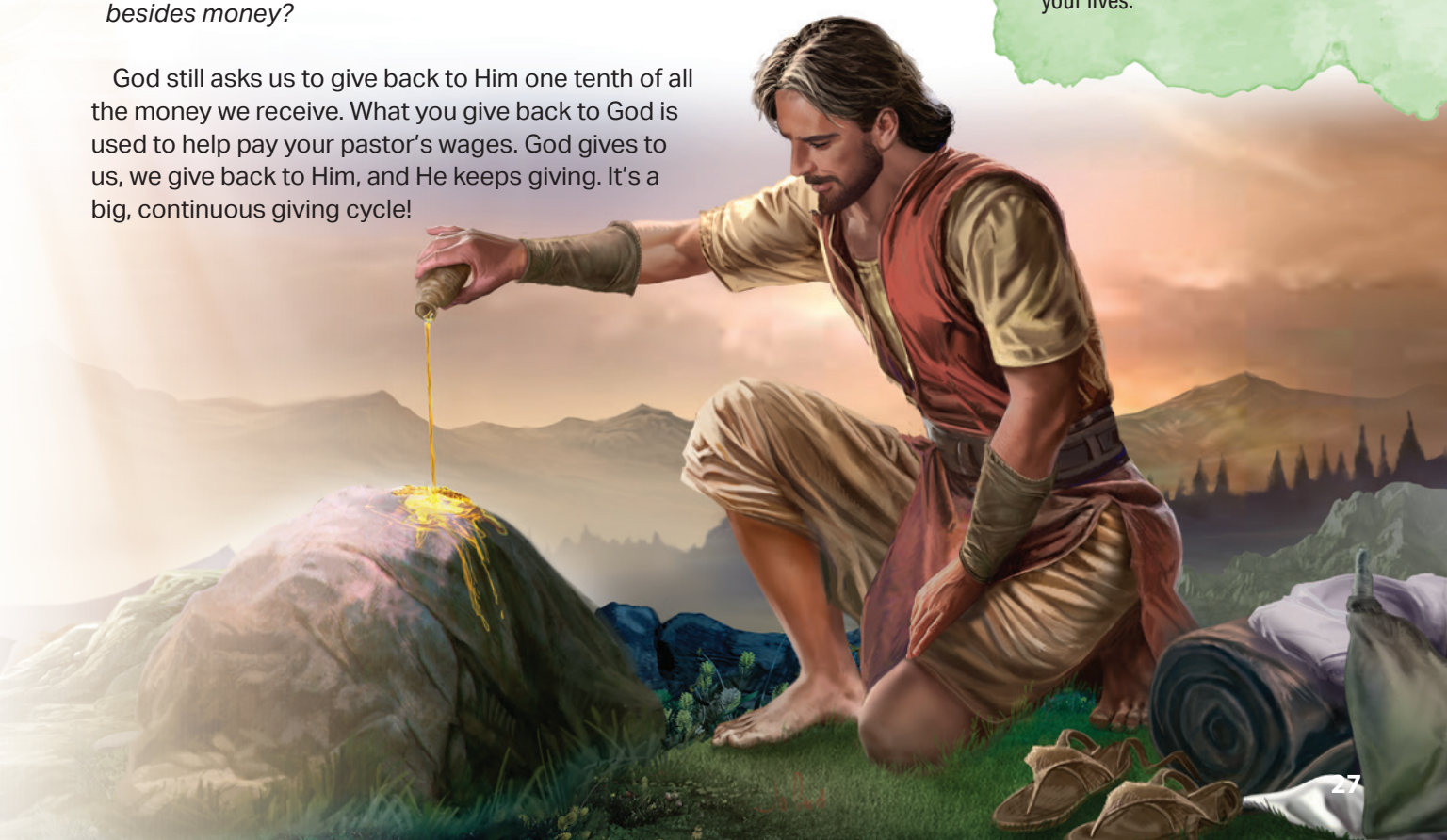
This is how people in Bible times remembered important events and special places. Jacob never ever wanted to forget the amazing dream God had given him. Overcome with God's great love, he called the place Bethel, which means "house of God."

Then Jacob showed that he accepted God's beautiful promises. He said, "I want God to be with me and protect me on this journey. I want God to give me food to eat and clothes to wear. Then I will be able to return in peace to my father's house. . . . And I will give God one-tenth of all he gives me" (Genesis 28:20, 21, ICB). Jacob felt forgiven and close to God again. What a wonderful blessing!

## Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *After Jacob felt forgiven and close to God again, he said he would give one tenth of all he was given to God, because he was so thankful. Have you ever given tithe to God? What could you give as a thank offering? What could you give besides money?*

God still asks us to give back to Him one tenth of all the money we receive. What you give back to God is used to help pay your pastor's wages. God gives to us, we give back to Him, and He keeps giving. It's a big, continuous giving cycle!



## Friday Night

### Share and Praise

- Use your ladder to tell the story to your family. Who else could you share the story with?
- Before you say or sing your memory verse, sing "Nearer My God to Thee" (*The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 499). Invite family members to share a time they have known and felt God's mercy or forgiveness.

### Family Journal

- What have you learned about forgiveness from this week's story?
- Respond: "One thing I'd like to do because of what I've learned is . . ."

### Pray

Psalm 105:5 says, "Remember the wonderful things He has done" (ICB). With your family, thank God for the wonderful things He has done in your lives.



SABBATH SPECIAL

# The Dream Of Hope

Struggling with the feeling that God was calling her to a great ministry, the young teenager had no peace. Ellen Harmon thought she was the least likely person God would choose. She'd endured a lonely, painful childhood and had many health problems. She'd also been taught that God was punishing and terrifying. How could someone as weak as her serve this kind of God?

God had big plans for Ellen. One day she would help start the Seventh-day Adventist Church (as Ellen G. White) and write many books to bring others to Christ! God gave Ellen a dream to show her His love and forgiveness and encourage her, just as He did for Jacob.

In her dream young Ellen saw the following:

"I seemed to be sitting in despair, with my face in my hands, reflecting like this: If Jesus were upon earth, I would throw myself at His feet, and tell Him all my sufferings.

"Just then the door opened, and a beautiful person entered. He said: 'Do you wish to see Jesus? You can see Him if you like. Take everything you possess and follow me.'

"I heard this with unspeakable joy, and gladly gathered up my possessions and followed my guide. He led me to a steep, frail stairway. He cautioned me to keep looking upwards, so I wouldn't grow dizzy and fall.

"Finally we reached the top, and stood before a door. My guide directed me to leave all my things. I cheerfully laid them down. He then opened the door and I stood before Jesus!

"There was no mistaking that beautiful face; that expression of kindness and majesty could belong to no other. As His gaze rested upon me, I knew at once that He understood every circumstance of my life and all my thoughts and feelings.

"I tried to shield myself from His searching eyes; but He smiled, placed His hand upon my head, and said, 'Fear not.'

"His sweet voice thrilled my heart with a happiness it had never before experienced. Overcome with emotion, I sank down helpless at His feet. While scenes of beauty and glory passed before me, I seemed to have reached the safety and peace of heaven.

"Soon my strength returned, and I arose. The loving eyes of Jesus were still upon me, filling my soul with gladness."

Just like Jacob, Ellen woke with joy and purpose. She wrote, "This dream gave me hope."

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