

with the form of the dream ; to the dreaming youth, they may have seemed to lengthen out until they reached the sky, and to become peopled with heavenly beings. *Angels*; literally, "messengers," who used this ladder or stair in their services between earth and heaven. Here, as always in the Old Testament, the angels are represented as wingless beings. *Ascending and descending*. The vision pictures the intercourse which, though it is unseen to the natural eye, is always going on between heaven and earth, and was used by our Lord to represent the constant and living intercourse ever kept up between Himself and the Father (see John 1 : 51).

## II. God's Promises, 13-17.

V. 13. *The Lord stood above it*; Rev. Ver. Margin, "the Lord stood beside him." *I am the Lord God of Abraham...and...of Isaac*. Such an introduction was sufficient to win Jacob's confidence. Our fathers' experiences of God are surely the best of reasons for our faith, and also one of His best answers to our heart. *The land whereon thou liest*; "a description peculiarly appropriate to the solitary and homeless fugitive who had not where to lay his head." No possession was his but only a lodging place. *To thee will I give it*; the first promise—a land and a home.

Vs. 14, 15. *Thy seed...as the dust of the earth*; the second promise—a numerous posterity extending over the full length and breadth of the land. *To the west*; down across the plain of Philistia to the Mediterranean Sea. *To the east*; to the regions beyond the Jordan. *To the north*; to the range of Lebanon and even Damascus. *To the south*; to the desert and beyond the sea. Read 2 Sam., ch. 8 ; 2 Chron., ch. 26, in order to see when the boundaries of Israel actually reached these limits. *In thee...all the families of the earth...blessed*; the third promise; a blessing to humanity universally. To impress upon posterity lofty ideals is surely a magnificent privilege. *I am with thee*, etc.; the fourth promise. *Will keep thee*. The lonely youth was to have companionship and protection throughout all his wanderings, and, in the end, he was to be brought back to his home.

Vs. 16, 17. *The Lord is in this place*. "There was no loneliness now in this un-

peopled waste : it was full of God." *I knew it not*. Jacob had believed God far away. He had thought that God dwelt only in a special locality, the place where his father, for the time, had pitched his tents. *He was afraid*; because he had unconsciously been treating this holy place as common ground, by sleeping on it. *The house of God*; a beautiful name for the place where God dwells with His people and holds communion with them. *The gate of heaven*; like the wide gateway of some Eastern town where people gather for business and social intercourse.

## III. Jacob's Vow, 18-22.

V. 18. *A pillar*; a sacred stone. Such sacred stones were common and were centres of a worship that was condemned by the later prophets and the law (see Deut. 16 : 22; Hosea, ch. 10 ; Micah 5 : 13). See also *Light from the East*. *Poured oil upon...it*; in accordance with the ancient custom, to set it apart to God. Jacob may have carried the oil with him in a small skin bag, to be used as a medicine or food in case of necessity.

Vs. 19-22. *Beth-el*. See Geography Lesson. The name means, "house of God." *Luz*; an ancient settlement, just a little to the north of this spot, but far surpassed later by its sacred neighbor. *Vowed a vow*. Jacob responds to God's promises by undertaking a definite religious service. Note the four conditions of Jacob's promise : (1) the presence of God ; (2) protection ; (3) food and clothing ; (4) safe return :—all these except (3) being parallel to God's promise in v. 15. *Shall be God's house*; that is, a place of pilgrimage and worship. *The tenth*. See *Light from the East*. Jacob's promise, or vow, implied the consecration to God of (a) self, (b) possessions.

## Light from the East

PILLAR—The Semitic tribes often reared a pillar of unhewn stone as a memorial of a covenant, a battle, a signal deliverance or a vision. When it was consecrated, as in this case, by an offering, it became not only a memorial, but also an altar of God and a centre of worship, because God's manifestation of Himself had made the place holy ground. It was customary to invoke His