

## Divine Pattern

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Genesis 35. After being reconciled to Esau, Jacob receives divine instructions to build an altar. He must do so in Bethel. And he must do it to God, who appeared to him when he was fleeing from his twin brother (V 1). Bethel is a well-known place to Jacob and not just from that meeting. When he was returning home from his 20 year stint at his uncle and father-in-law's place in Paddan Aram, Jacob had a very vivid wrestling encounter there with God, which left him limping. And it was there that God changed his name to Israel and blessed him (V 9-15; also Gen. 32:24-29). Perhaps its those memories that make Jacob so thrilled about this task. He charges everyone he has influence over to sort their lives out so that they can join him in this holy assignment. Hence his household and all who are with him have to get rid of their idols and purify themselves (V 2). Its conceivable that they obediently hand everything that is idolatrous to Jacob for him to bury, because they heard of the good stuff God did (V 3-4). The result of Jacob's and his clan's obedience is mind-blowing: God sends terror upon the towns all around them so that no one pursues them (V 5). Consequently they can all go safely to Bethel where Jacob builds the altar (V 6-7).

- Lets stop here: Divine instruction - obedience - protection! Sounds like a Kingdom pattern to me. This time, I'd like to challenge us as follows: Isn't it that God wants us to build him an altar, too? Not one from stones, but one with our lives? In fact, aren't we even supposed to be his temple, i.e. so much more than just the altar (1 Corinthians 3:16-17)? Isn't our life supposed to become a memorial of the Lord's goodness?
- Becoming that holy place means that we too need to strip off everything that has become impure, sets itself up against God in our lives and tries to take his rightful place. So what are our foreign gods and idols we need to get rid of? Donors, employers, tribal affiliations, world-views, culture, traditions, connections, money, houses, tools, cars, greed, sex, power, recognition, comfort, education, titles, holidays, music, sports, computers, latest technology, other possessions, hatred, unforgiveness, our job, fear, wrong relationships, addictions, indifference, pride, ... ?
- We do not read anything about Jacob being scared of the people around him nor distressed he could offend them. All we read is that he is single-minded and doesn't waver. He just wants to get on with the mission God gave him and he wants to do it properly. What is our attitude? Are we scared to set up our lives as a memorial to God for everyone to see, cause they might not like it, feel offended and want to fight us? Are we backing off? Are we driven by what people think of us rather than God? Or do we pursue God's call to live a holy life with determination? If we haven't yet, perhaps we should! We might discover that by following obediently God's decrees, he might send terror into our enemies camp!