

# 'SURELY THE LORD IS IN THIS PLACE': BLESSING IN THE WORLD

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JACOB'S DREAM OF GOD who blesses him (Gen 28, 10-22) can be read as a celebration of the holiness of the world because of God's abiding presence. This moment of the divine encounter dramatizes Jacob's unfolding awareness of 'earthly blessings' arising within the personal history. He is an inheritor of a blessing given to Abraham and Sarah (Gen 12, 1-3). They are to be a source of blessing, like a pool from which all peoples can drink and find holiness.<sup>1</sup> But God's blessing of Abraham and Sarah has a more primal and universal origin, for God's blessing of humanity in the world is inaugurated with creation.<sup>2</sup> Men and women are those who can respond to the divine address as none other can, 'Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth . . . and have dominion . . .' (Gen 1, 28).

Dominion, men's and women's imaging of God and likeness to the divine *dominus*, will involve human continuance of God's words and generation of life. Jacob thus stands in a long line of inheritors of God's creative blessing. His night-time encounter with God, as angels ascend and descend a staircase, is redolent with echoes of primeval history. His dream embodies a theological vision of the earth itself as the abiding place of the holy, the earthly matter which absorbs the divine in constant, loving communication. It is a world 'which God so loves' (Jn 3,16). Jacob's dream is one moment, among many, when scripture provides a human, earth-bound, physical translation of what divine blessing means. The sojourner's theophany may be read as an incarnation of God's holiness charging the earth and human life with power.

God's first words, in fact, are ones of blessing: 'Let there be light' (Gen 1,3). The phrase 'let there be' sets both a chronological and narrative rhythm for the event which is God's self-expression,

the calling, naming and ordering of existence within time.<sup>3</sup> 'And God saw it was good', a liturgical-like refrain repeated seven times in the first chapter of Genesis, expresses the human intuition of the divine regard which loves what it has called into being, sees that all in the world is good since it comes from the Holy One, and missions life to 'be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth' (Gen 1, 22. 28). From this perspective, any human expression of blessing finds its origin in God's first words and God's benevolent regard. The two phrases 'let there be' and 'it was good' form a kind of internal dialogue between the speaking by God and the mind of God. Human words of blessing imitate God's speaking and reflective gaze.

From the perspective of blessing as a form of human language, there is customarily a formulaic beginning and end of human benedictions, whether in public or private.<sup>4</sup> Such formulas are structured to begin with a reverential address of God, to wish that the divine source empower with good effect what the speaker names or asks for, and to close with grateful acknowledgment of God's benevolence.<sup>5</sup>

A blessing is in its formulaic and spiritual structure a mimetic participation in the creative initiative and rejoicing of God in the world. Human prayers of blessing are confident re-enactments of God's dialogue in creating life. God is the beginner and blesser of all life. The petitioner acknowledges dependence on the one whose words generate life: 'Blessed are you . . . Blessed is the one who . . .' The petition, 'let there be' or 'may there be' is a person's participation in God's will to create, a repetition of God's speech in calling life into existence. Such a prayer concludes with a spirit of confidence in God's benevolence, as if the person says, 'I, too, see that what God does in the world is good'. As such, blessing has a kerygmatic effect, testifying to the hearer the goodness the speaker sees in God's activity.<sup>6</sup>

Blessing involves doing what God does and seeing as God sees. This is surely the spirit in which the rabbis counselled a believer to offer thankful blessing, not merely during the performance of religious duties, but in every circumstance of daily life. After 70 C.E., blessings were also a substitute for offerings which could not be made at the temple in Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup> Blessings could be uttered on seeing beautiful trees or exotic animals, noting the differences of one individual from another, hearing wise counsel from teachers

belonging to other religious traditions, or feeling overwhelmed by natural occurrences of earthquakes, thunder, lightning or rain.

Even when it seemed an immediate evil, such as the flooding of a field, a blessing could be anticipatory of the eventual good effect, fertilizing of the earth. Blessings could attend each uncertain stage of a woman's pregnancy, and each moment of a believer's journey to and through a large city. Appropriate times for blessings in the world could be noted before and after medical treatment, in the privy, waking up at the cock's crowing and performing all the actions of getting bathed and dressed for the day.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the habit of 'secular blessing' represents a believer's perspective on the world and what takes place in it. Like the commandment of God, blessing and holiness need not be sought from a far off place, from the heavens or across the sea (Deut 30,11-14). Blessing and holiness are very near and intimate, already in our mouths and hearts. Blessing is not an unknown or secret revelation, but the stuff of what we already are and hope for as human beings in the world. What God speaks as blessing is already within us.

*Jacob's dream. Experience of blessing in the world*

The story of Jacob's dream (Gen 28,10-22) can be read as a parable about this kind of holiness of the 'kingdom of God' which is the earth itself. Is blessing to be sought 'from on high'? Jacob's story suggests just the opposite, that blessing arises from within the world, within human consciousness, and is made concrete through human action. The holy is not far away, unpolluted by things of earth, physical passion and human striving. Rather, the earth is the ground upon which the Holy One stands. Its dust is the beginning of blessing and image of continuing life. 'Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it', exclaims Jacob when he wakes up after his theophanic dream (Gen 28,16). This has been no ordinary dream jumbling everyday people and occurrences. It is rather one infused with a mysterious aura in which sacred and secular are commingled. A stairway connects heaven and earth, with angels ascending and descending in dynamic motion. God stands near the prone dreamer and addresses him with a blessing (Gen 28,12-15).

The relationship of heavenly to earthly is not frozen in eternal fixity, but full of energy, vitality and rhythmic alternating movement. In the dream, the unseen cosmos of the holy is not a separate plane, but manifests its vitality within earthly time and human

consciousness. The earth is not an empty secular sphere spinning in distant orbit around a sun of divinity whose gravity holds within its measure all benediction and light of holiness. The darkness of Jacob's night reveals a more truthful image of a staircase, not a ladder.<sup>9</sup> The boundary between the sacred and the secular is close, not distant; accessible as a stairway, not a challenging mountain; an open gate between earth and heaven in both directions, not a check-point limiting further passage.

When Jacob wakes up, he does not say the Lord '*was* in this place', but '*is* in this place'. God has not made a stealthy, nocturnal visit to the earth, then slipped back up the stairs to the sacred sphere of the heavens. Rather, the dream is a revelation of the place where the divine presence is grounded and dwells continually—this 'house of God' which is the earth itself. While the revelation to Jacob has been momentary, no longer than a dream's duration, God's visitation by night is actually a revelation to Jacob of a continual truth: the Holy One is here in his world, always blessing and accompanying Jacob, indeed standing by his very side (Gen 28,13).<sup>10</sup>

The Holy One is not to be identified on this occasion with 'three men' (Gen 18,2) or as an 'angel of the Lord' (Gen 22,11). The elohistic tradition of reverential circumlocution sometimes describes the encounter between the Lord and human beings in this indirect way. Rather, God appears to Jacob as a speaker distinct from the angels ascending and descending on the stairway. God is nearer to Jacob than are the angels. It is God who makes a self-manifestation, 'I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac' (Gen 28,13). What the Lord says to Jacob is an empowering blessing, charged with possibility for the future. It confirms and continues the blessing Jacob received from Isaac. God's address of blessing acknowledges Jacob's genealogical lineage, but more fundamentally, identifies God as the originator of the blessing, soul-strength and happiness passed on from parent to child.<sup>11</sup>

The man, emotionally uncertain, on the run from his brother, feels an altogether new kind of reverential fear as his consciousness awakens to the realization of the Holy One's immediacy. He utters a blessing, as if to consecrate a lonely terrain made holy because of the vision that has overshadowed him: 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven' (Gen 28,17). Jacob speaks of the ground, of the

very earth on which he has walked and slept, as a holy place, a locus of the divine presence. The earth itself, upon which Jacob has walked and slept, must be worthy of supporting the feet of the Holy One. From the same ground rises the angelic stairway into the stars. God stands on dust of this ground and Jacob meets God upon it.

The dust of the ground becomes an image of God's particular love, extending itself to Jacob's numerous descendants. 'Your descendants shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south' (Gen 28,14). The dust also carries the message of God's universal care for all humanity in their continuation as a family whose blessings of life-breath began before Abraham, with the very act of creation. God's first creation of humanity from this dust (Gen 2,7) is re-enacted in the promise to Jacob of what God will continue to do for all humanity. 'By you and your descendants shall all the families of the earth bless themselves' (Gen 28,14). The blessing of God makes everything and everyone flourish.

God's blessing comes in a dream, a middle state between life and death. No one can see God and live (Exod 33,30) so Jacob has to be in a state receptive to the direct vision of God, yet assured of living in spite of seeing the truth. The dream state suggests he both sees and does not see God's reality by night, nor can he be confronted directly during daylight. Jacob has to 'wake up' in the middle of the night to the recognition of God's presence and God's blessing in the world. The recognition both possesses him and eludes him. Jacob's dream suggests the delicate aspect of God's immediacy and the elusive aspect of the nocturnal earthly blessing Jacob has received.

#### *Stages in Jacob's growing awareness of blessings in the world*

The scriptural story suggests that Jacob passes through various stages of awareness as he comes to recognize the earthly blessing that the Holy One is communicating. Jacob first understood blessing as an object of desire, as the legal inheritance of his brother Esau, by accident of Esau's emergence from the womb first (Gen 25,24-26). Yet Jacob, as Esau's twin, is also 'first-born' from the same conception and delivery of Rebekah. More conscious of the importance of the power-laden birthright blessing than his brother, Jacob persuades a non-reflective Esau to trivialize its worth and trade it to Jacob for a prepared meal (Gen 25,29-34).

'Blessing is a soul-connection, and souls must come in contact so that the current between them may become alive.'<sup>12</sup> An essential part of obtaining the blessing requires Jacob to replace his brother in drawing physically near his blind father, close enough to feed him and kiss him, close enough to be smelled, touched and breathed upon as Isaac uttered the words of blessing in a one-time ritual (Gen 27,25-27). Jacob believes that as he has received the soul-power of his father at this ritual time, so now he possesses the divinely-confirmed blessing for the length of his own lifetime.

A second kind of awareness is contingent upon an opposite movement, his physical displacement and separation from his father. Jacob eventually finds himself in a state of passage, moving from one place to another. Geographically he is on pilgrimage, making a return journey from Beersheva to Paddan-aram or Haran, the home of his maternal grandparents and relatives (Gen 28,2.10). In this sense, his movement is continuous with the nomadic momentum set by his father and mother, who have been moving from place to place from Gerar to Beersheva (Gen 26,1-25). Jacob leaves his native place and his family in Beersheva to set out across a terrain he has not previously explored. Geographic passage across the land, a form of identification with his parents' and grandparents' way of life, provides one aspect of the setting in which Jacob will receive the earthly blessing of multiplied descendants, a land, and the awareness of divine accompaniment.

A third kind of awareness involves the destination of his pilgrimage, the home of his mother Rebekah. It is from the house and kinship network of his mother that Jacob will find eventual marriage partnership (Gen 28,1-5). Not like his brother Esau, who took wives from local Hittite families and grieved his parents (Gen 26,24; 27,46), Jacob will 'go back home' to maternal soil to find there a fulfilment of the birthright blessing he obtained from his father Isaac (Gen 27,27-29; 28,1-5). He is engaged in a process of return to his mother's land, house and kin in search of a spouse who will mother his own children.

This suggests a distinctly feminine aura around the divine blessing confirmed in Jacob's dream. Earthly blessing comes to Jacob when he finds himself en route to the geographical place of the feminine. Allied with the feminine power in the past, Jacob has already obtained his father's blessing (Gen 27,27-30). His mother knows the danger in Esau's anger and her foresight saves Jacob; his father is ignorant of this danger (Gen 28,41-45). On

pilgrimage to the domain of the feminine, he awakens to a realization of the divine origin of that blessing that came to him. In the middle of the night he hears the divine voice promising its fulfilment. Midway between flight from his mother's presence and security in his mother's land, he experiences himself as the receiver of divine favour and empowerment.

A fourth dimension of awareness touches upon the conventional social motive for his journey, the part of the truth he will share publicly. He is in search for a wife. His twin brother Esau had negotiated this task of adulthood, and already married two local Hittite women (Gen 26,24). Jacob is in movement from single life to committed partnership, and this passage from 'I' to 'we' makes urgent and immediate the need to actualize the blessing of Isaac, 'God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples' (Gen 28,3). Isaac's blessing is one echo of the abiding call of God which sends and blesses at the same time, parents and children in their turn. The blessing of God in the dream foretells Jacob's numerous descendants spreading all over the earth (Gen 28,14). 'From him who is thus filled with blessings, power must radiate in all directions.'<sup>13</sup>

The generative force of this blessing, visited upon Abraham who handed it on to Isaac as a power of the soul, arises in Jacob at a specific chronological point of his maturation in relation to his brother. The power of the blessing will gain force in the spouse-seeking time of Jacob's passage from youth to adulthood. Blessing acquires external realization as he moves from youthful dependency to mature responsibility.<sup>14</sup>

A fifth aspect of his awareness embraces the more urgent reason for Jacob's journey, fear for his life. Esau is resentful and murderously angry at his brother's success in stealing the life-power of the paternal blessing (Gen 27,41).<sup>15</sup> He is biding his time, waiting for Isaac to die; then he plans to kill Jacob. As the inevitable time of his father's death approaches, Jacob is alerted by his mother to the probable and immediate result of Isaac's death from natural causes: Jacob's own violent end, a fratricide. As long as Isaac lives, the fragile dike of the family structure will hold, protecting Jacob from the ungoverned flood of his brother's resentment.

In the last days of her husband's failing strength, Rebekah persuades Isaac to send Jacob to search for a wife. This is her pretext for a vital intervention. Actually, both she and Jacob know that his life will be saved and the birthright blessing made secure

only by his flight. When Jacob leaves, he is driven by fear, urgency and arrested grief, for his mother's mandate is clear: he cannot attend his father in the last days. His mother has made him wake up to the danger he faces in the house of his brother. Jacob's will to survive drives him in a new direction, towards the house of his mother.

Fear for his life is one expression of the blessing at work in him. A disposition readying him for the divine encounter is created by Jacob's will to live and to cling to the blessing he already possesses. He will not surrender the blessing to anyone else. He will leave his father and mother and cling to as yet an un-met wife. His mother awakened in him a climate of fear, making him run for his life. That fear for his life will be transformed into reverential awe and fear of the Lord when he awakens to the realization that God confirms the blessing and promises him a generativity far greater than the preservation of his own life in a time of danger.

A sixth turn of awareness, that of physical limitation, forces itself upon Jacob, opening him to the direct experience of God's blessing. In spite of his fear, his will to live, and his energy for continuing the journey, he must stop walking. His body demands its rest. The night falls upon him. He cannot continue further on his course across the land, no matter how urgent the journey. Not by his choice, but by earth's laws and the body's necessity, he must stop. In this dark time of light ceasing between two days, Jacob awakens to the effectiveness of God's blessing. The hour of God's visitation sounds its intimate address at a mid-time, a dead stop, when Jacob belongs to no one, when he has left one house and not reached the other, when he has departed one place and not reached the next. The place where he can go no further because the sun has set (Gen 28,11), not because of his will but because of the earth's rhythm, this is the place he discovers to be the 'gate of heaven' (Gen 28,17).

A seventh stage of awareness involves Jacob's translation of the dream, his night-knowing of God, into concrete expression. Jacob's active response to God comes, not within the dream itself, but later. He awakens after his dream (Gen 28,16) both emotionally and reflectively, even though it is still dark. Even before daylight, he distances himself from his previous unconsciousness of God in the world. An act of self-reflection cannot be centrifuged from his recognition of the awesome divine presence which inhabits the earth. Realization and response are inseparable: 'Surely the Lord



is in this place; and I did not know it.' His reaction to his new consciousness is fear.

The concretization of his spiritual recognition takes shape as a work of continuing creation, a divine initiative in which Jacob now participates. As though beginning to create his own new world in response to God's empowering visitation, he rises early in the morning. He takes in hand the earth's strongest witness, the stone which supported his head during the night. No longer is it a random stone, but a sacred and permanent record of all that took place between God and Jacob during the night hours. A dream might pass, words uttered might be forgotten, night pass into day, dust can be scattered, but the earthiest element of ground, its stone, undergoes little change once it is formed. Its terrestrial permanence is the fittest record of God's abiding and unrevoked blessing upon Jacob.

The pillow-stone, once a random rock, is reclaimed as the intentionally chosen cornerstone of an earthly construction to which Jacob, generator of families, sets his hand. He pours oil on top of the stone, renames the place Bethel, or 'house of El' and takes a vow (Gen 28,18-22). The ritual he performs accounts for the sacredness later generations attach to this worship site at Bethel.<sup>16</sup>

An eighth movement in Jacob's awareness of his earthly blessing involves his translation of God's words from the 'night language' of the heavenly vision to the 'day language' of terrestrial reality. The vow, according to the rabbis, comprises a dialogue with God. What God says by way of blessing in the dream (Gen 28,13-15) is already an answer to Jacob's requests of God implied by his vow after the dream is over (Gen 28,20-22). When God blessed Jacob in the dream, therefore, Jacob's prayer had already been fulfilled. God had already promised to do what Jacob proposes God will do in the future.<sup>17</sup>

*Jacob's vow (Gen 28,20-21)*

If God will be with me  
and will keep me  
in this way that I go  
so that I come again  
to my father's house

*God's blessing (Gen 28,15)*

Behold, I am with you  
I will keep you  
wherever you go  
I will bring you back  
to this land

From this rabbinic perspective, Jacob asks for what has already been given by God. His vow is simply a restatement of God's first address, by which Jacob acknowledges his awareness of the blessing

promised him. God's creative promise of accompaniment, which begins the dialogue, is concluded by Jacob's vow-prayer, which rounds out the experience of blessing. Jacob, who receives God's promise and 'sees that it is good', gives external sign of that recognition by his vow. The vow says to God, 'I understand what you mean'. If blessing is God's initiatory greeting, Jacob's vow is his blessing of God in return. The vow is Jacob's confirmation of willingness to continue the conversation, and to be an enactor of the blessing, bringing it to fulfilment.

The ninth movement in Jacob's awareness is his realization of the blessing working itself out in his own lifetime. What is the nature of Jacob's blessing? A very physical and earthly one, to be realized within Jacob's own experience, upon a specific land, and within a humanly calendared time-frame. As Pedersen notes, the blessing has a three-fold aspect touching generation of children, fertile flocks and fields, and deliverance from enemies.<sup>10</sup> It is true that the divine blessing upon Jacob has a limitless time-frame, and will endure long after Jacob, for all the families of the earth will share in it.

I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your descendants; and your descendants shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and by you and your descendants shall all the families of the earth bless themselves. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done that of which I have spoken to you (Gen 28,13-15).

The blessing, however, does not leave Jacob empty-handed, as though a blessing communicated to him is being saved by God for a need, a time, or a family that is not Jacob's own. There is an immediacy about God's blessing in the present which arises out of a continuum with the still-living generation of Isaac and Rebekah. It is not, therefore, something Jacob must wait for. The blessing has been active in the world already for a long time. This temporality of blessing active in the world implies that Jacob will not have to wait for his own blessing to be worked out at some indefinite point in the future. Blessing in the world concerns the here and now.

*The Johannine Jesus. Incarnation of the blessing-giver*

This turning point in Jacob's life is evoked by the Johannine evangelist at a moment crucial for the first five disciples of Jesus (Jn 1,35-50). Nathanael, not Simon Peter, is singled out initially as the disciple whose process of commitment is especially significant, to judge from the number of verses devoted to his story.<sup>19</sup> His name, 'Given by God,' may suggest his symbolic role as the paradigm for discipleship in its inaugural stages. Nathanael's name is proof of his family's belief that God's blessing of fruitfulness has been fulfilled. Jesus engages in the longest interchange with him (Jn 1,45-50), and claims to have seen him under a fig tree before Nathanael was aware of it, even before Philip called him.

Did Jesus first 'meet' Nathanael when the guileless Israelite was sleeping under the fig tree, lost in a dream? Is Nathanael a Jacob-like figure who suddenly wakes up and realizes whose holy presence has visited him on the ground from which trees spring up? He calls Jesus 'Son of God', as though acknowledging his intimate relation and family identity with the Holy One, and he vests Jesus with kingly authority. 'Rabbi, you are Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' (Jn 1,49). As Jacob awakened to a realization of the sacredness of the place God appeared, so Nathanael awakens to a personal experience of holiness in the place Jesus met him—under the fig tree when he was unaware and uninformed about his future.

The blessing-like greeting of Jesus, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile', addresses Nathanael directly and signals the beginning of dialogue and invitation into closer relationship. After Jacob woke up, he came to know God as God had already known and blessed him. Nathanael's question, 'How do you know me?' and Jesus's answer, 'Before Philip called you . . .' implies a similar kind of foreknowledge and pre-existent blessing on the part of Jesus. Like Jacob, Nathanael has in some mysterious way come to know as he has been known. As Jacob expressed his recognition of the blessing in his vow, so Nathanael, startled into full recognition, blesses Jesus with his exclamation. The responses of Jacob and Nathanael, by vow and responsive blessing, confirm that they understand the meaning of what the Holy One has said to them. What has begun in blessing will continue in creation and generation. Nathanael, like Jacob, will be a carrier of God's creative blessing for future generations.

Nathanael's benediction represents his bonding with Jesus, the teacher whom he recognizes as the speaker of blessing and fulfiller of his people's hope. 'We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote' (Jn 1,44). For Nathanael and the other disciples, Jesus is the incarnation of God's blessing in the present place. As Jacob knew a God who blessed with generative power that would circumscribe all his descendants, Nathanael intuitively in Jesus a source of blessing wider than the relationship with Nathanael alone. Thus he utters a 'secular blessing' upon Jesus as 'King of Israel', one who incarnates the hope of Moses and prophets, an earthly title which acknowledges his sense that it is the identity of Jesus to be active in the world of human history.

Jesus describes himself to Nathanael and to all the disciples in language rich in allusion. 'You will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man' (Jn 1,51). Jesus assumes the position of the God who once visited Jacob in a dream and blessed him. But Jesus also describes himself as the stairway which joins heaven and earth, the charged course upon which the divine powers ascend and descend. He is the dynamic relation between seen and unseen, resting on the earth, yet accessibility to what lies beyond the earth. Jesus himself is the 'gate of heaven'.<sup>20</sup>

Nathanael might say of Jesus himself, 'Surely God was in this place and I did not know it!' In the Johannine vision, Jesus embodies both the divine appearance and God's place in the world of time and human event. Jesus stands on 'this time's' ground, blessed, fruitful and generative of human life from the beginning of the world. Jesus himself is the earthly and secular blessing of God.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> 'And be thou a blessing (*berakah*): This means, be thou a *berekah* (pool). Just as a pool purifies the unclean, so do thou bring near [to me] those who are afar.' *Midrash, Genesis Rabbah* 39,11.

<sup>2</sup> Westermann, Claus: *Blessing in the bible and the life of the Church*, trans, Keith Crim (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p 59. See the useful study which reviews sixty years of research on blessing in Mitchell, Christopher: *The meaning of BRK 'to bless' in the Old Testament*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 95 (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> Westermann, Claus: *Genesis: a practical commentary*, trans David E. Green (Green Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1987), pp 6-7.

<sup>4</sup> Towner, W. S.: "Blessed be YHWH" and "Blessed art thou, YHWH": the modulations of a biblical formula', *CBQ* 30 (1968), pp 386-399. Also Guillet, Jacques: 'Le langage spontané de la bénédiction dans l'Ancien Testament', *Rech Sc Rel* 57 (1969), pp 163-204. Guillet's survey illustrates the wide variety of subjects, themes and emotions appearing in exclamations of blessing.

<sup>5</sup> Audet, Jean-Paul: 'Esquisse historique du genre littéraire de la "Bénédition" juive et de l'"eucharistie" chrétienne', *Revue biblique* (1958), pp 371-399. Also, Asensio, Felix: 'La "Bendición" bíblica de Yahweh en labios del hombre', *Gregorianum* 48 (1967), pp 253-283.

<sup>6</sup> Towner, p 389.

<sup>7</sup> Bokser, Baruch: 'Ma'al and blessings over food: rabbinic transformation of cultic terminology and alternative modes of piety', *JBL* 100 (1981), pp 572-74.

<sup>8</sup> *Babylonian Talmud, Berakot* 58b-60b (London: Soncino Press, 1939).

<sup>9</sup> Westermann, *Genesis*, p 200.

<sup>10</sup> RSV reading of Gen 28,13: 'The Lord stood above it' [the ladder]. Note offers 'beside him', Westermann, *Genesis*: 'Yahweh stood before him'. p 198:

<sup>11</sup> Pedersen, Johannes: *Israel, its life and culture* (London: Oxford, 1926, originally published in Danish in 1920), p 182.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p 200.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p 199.

<sup>14</sup> Edinger, Edward F.: *The Bible and the psyche: individuation symbolism in the Old Testament* (Toronto, Canada: Inter City Books, 1986), pp 36-41.

<sup>15</sup> Pedersen, pp 182, 199.

<sup>16</sup> Bethel, present day Beitan, lies to the north of Jerusalem. Albright's excavations, begun in 1927, and continued by Kelso through 1960, uncovered remains of a thriving town, including a stone sanctuary, from the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 B.C.), period of the patriarchs. Plentiful springs provide abundant water supply. Cf *Harper's bible dictionary*, ed Paul Achtemeier (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), pp 105-106.

<sup>17</sup> *Midrash, Leviticus Rabbah, Bechukkothai*, 25: 2-3 (London: Soncino Press, 1939, 1961).

<sup>18</sup> Pedersen, pp 210-12.

<sup>19</sup> Schnackenburg, Rudolf: *The gospel according to John*, vol 1 (New York: Crossroad, 1987), pp 313-322.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p 321.