



Faith Adventures for Children Together



*Committed to URC Children Together:
enabling everyone to grow more like Jesus
together in the home, church and beyond.*

For guidance on the purpose of the resource and how to use it as a launch pad for your engagement with children and families, please use this link:
<https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FACT-how-to-sheet.pdf>

Genesis 28: 10-19 – Jacob's Ladder

Theme: The story of an encounter with God

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Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning?

Our story today focusses on rocks and dreams of ladders. Balancing rocks has become a 'well-being' activity over recent years but the practice of building cairns (arranging rocks into a stack or pile) has been going on for much longer. Cairns have been used to create navigational aids, as memorials to people and events, and even burial sites. They are often found at the top of mountains or hills.

In our story today, we hear about Jacob. Jacob is travelling to find a wife – having tricked his father into giving him a blessing that was due to his older brother Esau; stealing his birthright and inheritance from him. We learn that Jacob travelled until after the sun had already set, and stopped at a place where he used a stone for a pillow. It might not seem very comfortable to use a rock as a place to rest your head – but maybe it can be, with the right rock!

While Jacob was asleep, he dreamt he saw a ladder – at the place at the top of the ladder he saw God. Angels were climbing up and down the ladder – between heaven and earth.

This is an Old Testament understanding of God where God can seem distant and apart and uses angels and prophets to communicate with the people. Jesus coming to earth changed that view and made God more accessible to people.



In the morning, Jacob used his 'pillow stone' as a pillar and renamed the place where it was from Luz to Bethel (which means House of God). A house of God is an earthly, physical place (such as a church or temple) that is seen as the dwelling place of God. God cannot really be contained in a physical building or location but we earth-bound humans often need something solid and physical to remind us of the presence of God, heaven, and spirit.

In the translation we are recommending, it states that Jacob was afraid and goes on to describe the place where he is as 'holy'. Other translations use different words, but it is worth being aware of any members of your group who might be having bad dreams or nightmares and reassure them accordingly.

Together

How do I help my group to come together and get started with the theme?

Gathering prayer

Jesus, our friend

(use alternate index fingers to point and tap the middle of opposite palms)

Be with us today

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move up and down twice)

As we share together,

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move one forward and one back and alternate twice)

Pray together,

(hands together, palm against palm, as though praying)

Play together,

(hands to each side, palms up, make two small circles outwards)

And get to know you better,

(point up with one hand)

As children together in your family

(one hand out, palm down in front of you, move it sideways and up in three 'steps' as though to indicate children of three different heights)

AMEN

(Two thumbs up, and bring fists slowly together to meet in front of you)

OR

Thank you, God, for bringing us together today.

Help us to grow closer to you in all we do.

Help us to speak and to listen, to learn and to grow together,

Adventuring together with you wherever we may go.

Amen

In-person game – Ladder challenge a game that explores the image of going up and down a ladder.

You will need:

- Tape to mark out a ladder on the floor beanbags and 2 dice.



What you do:

Split the group into two teams, mark out a long wide ladder on the floor for each team.

Each person in each team take turns to roll a dice and they move that many spaces up the ladder (or move their bean bag).

The aim is to get all your team to the top of the ladder and back down again before the other team.

Alternative game – Hopscotch

You will need:

- Something to mark out a hopscotch (tape or chalk)
- Something to throw such as a beanbag or small stones

What you do:

Enjoy a game of hopscotch. The children might enjoy marking the hopscotch out on the ground. This is a great opportunity to play outdoors with chalk if you have the space. You might like to leave the hopscotch as an invitation for others to play.

It's a good opportunity for someone older to visit the group and explain how to play the game.

For those who have not played for a while, here is a helpful link along with some interesting alternatives to the traditional hopscotch game. <https://smartparentadvice.com/how-to-play-hopscotch/>

Experience

For this story we recommend using the New international readers version
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2028%3A10-19&version=NIRV>

Where can I find the story online?

Under fives: Simply told with simple images by Trueway Kids
<https://youtu.be/oWF2wKYiuw0?si=pywMHRGPWo88O5E2>

Over fives: Told with simple animation by Bible stories for Kids
<https://youtu.be/3moyv6qLp40?si=Qw9fwBcELZjcca77>

Songs to support the story

Under fives: God is with us by Upstreet
https://youtu.be/peaU-FiyJhA?si=sloBhHT-_qDWjEdb

Over fives: Dreams by Zeke Varughese
<https://youtu.be/ROahLFcqlUo?si=aJbUf0VcTVsU169J>



Explore

Ideas and activities to explore this week's Bible passage together

A new way to explore the passage

Reflective story around the image of stones

You will need:

- One large stone (Jacob's pillow)
- One normal soft pillow
- Some bricks
- Some smaller rocks for painting

This is a story about a man named Jacob who had a dream.

Place the pillow for the group to see.

I wonder what you dream about? What are the dreams you can remember? Did you know the bible has many stories about people who had a dream given to them by God, a God dream.

Jacob was the brother of Esau and they had fallen out. Jacob was going away to his mother's land. He was walking in the day and sleeping out under the stars by night. One night he stopped to rest and made himself a makeshift bed with a pillow, but it wasn't a soft feather pillow like this, it was a rock.

Take away the pillow and replace it with a rock.

Can you imagine getting a good night's sleep on this?

Jacob must have got some sleep because he had a dream, it wasn't a normal dream, this was a God dream. A dream given to him by God. **(At this point you could use a video clip to show the dream Jacob had or continue with this script.)**

Jacob dreamed he saw a ladder, reaching high up into heaven.

At the top of the ladder Jacob saw God.

There were also angels going up and down the ladder.

Jacob heard God giving him a promise that he would be ok, he would have a large family and God would give him the land he was sleeping on. God also promised to be with Jacob always.

When Jacob woke up, he knew this was a special dream and that he was in a special place.

He anointed the rock with oil and called it Bethel, which means God is here.

Pour a little oil on the rock.

(At this point you could pause to use some of the wondering questions in this session.)

There are lots of stories in the Bible where we see God doing amazing things and Gods people placing rocks as a marker of the occasion. It was a way of remembering stories. The



Bible says that children in the future will ask, “what do these stones mean”? and you shall tell them the story of what God has done.

Place a brick next to the stone.

It makes me think about other stones /bricks. Like the bricks that make up this building – our church – I wonder what stories these bricks could tell? I wonder what God has done or said here in this church? I wonder who could tell us some of the stories from this church?

What about our own stories?

Place a stone in front of every child.

If we had a stone for each one of us, that told the stories of when God has been with, or spoken to us, I wonder what stories they would tell? (Give children a chance to respond with their stories if they would like to.)

Jacob's rock was also a reminder of the promise that God gave him. I wonder what promises God has given to us and our church?

Response – Painting stones

You will need:

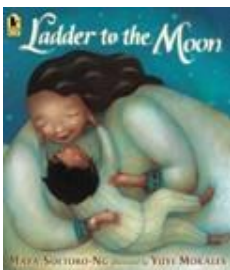
- river pebbles and acrylic paint pens

Invite your group to make two or more stones. Paint them bright and colourful and add the words 'God is here' to the rocks.

Now keep one for yourself as a reminder that God is always with you and place the others around your church and community to tell the message to others.

Modern parables

Jesus used stories to help people understand the things of God, even though they weren't necessarily overtly Christian stories. Lots of children's books can be used in a similar way as a conversation starter on the week's theme. Examples are shared here but you may think of others too.



Ladder to the Moon by Maya Soetoro-Ng

<https://youtu.be/mgYeARgMsvU?si=bjUh8UeiA5HbYykr>

Please be aware that this book could trigger some strong emotions in children who are missing connections with significant people in their lives. If a child in your group has been struggling with this issue then please do support them during and after this story.

Talking together: How might we talk about the story together?

- What, if anything, do you already know about Jacob's story?
- What's the difference between a God dream and a 'you' dream?
- Why do you think Jacob was afraid – would you have been afraid?



- I wonder what Jacob might have done next?
- Have you ever experienced a God dream?

Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- I wonder if you've ever slept outside – what's it like? What sort of things might you see and hear? Is it different to sleeping in your bedroom?
- I wonder what's the most uncomfortable place you've ever slept in?
- I wonder if you have a special place where you feel close to God?

What's in the box (for under fives)

Use the special box or bag and sing "what's in the box/bag? What's in the box/bag? Let's see, let's see, what's in the box/bag" (to the tune of The Farmer's in the Dell). You could tap the top of the box twice after the word 'box'. Pull out the things one by one and then let the children play with them, talking about the theme or the story in simple terms.

This week's box could include:

- Blanket or sleeping bag – talk about how Jacob was tired and needed to find a safe place to sleep. Ask what helps them to feel comfortable when they are sleeping.
- Stones – talk about how Jacob did not have a soft comfy pillow and had to rest his head on a hard stone. Pass the stones around the group and feel how hard they are.
- Picture of steps/ladder (you could use a snakes and ladder board) – talk about how Jacob had a dream of a ladder between earth and heaven.
- Angel toys/costume – Pass round the angel toys or encourage someone to dress in the angel costume. Talk about how Jacob saw Angels moving up and down the ladder to heaven.
- Compass – Show the compass and talk about how the Lord told Jacob that his family would spread from the West to the East and from the North to the South.
- Bottle of oil – talk about how Jacob poured oil onto the stone he had used as a pillow.
- A set of play people to act out the story or random shapes/bits you can move around to make pictures from the story as you tell it (eg stones, felt, twigs etc)

Express

Praying together: how can you involve the children actively in prayer?

Creative prayers - Climbing Angels

You will need:

- simple angel template printed on paper
- scissors
- pens
- string
- sellotape
- straws cut into 2cm pieces (2 per angel)
- a 2p coin (1 per angel)



Cut out the angel shape or for smaller children you could pre-cut the angels. Sellotape two pieces of straw to the angel as shown in the picture. Make sure they are parallel to each other. Sellotape a coin to the bottom of the angel to give it some weight (a 2p coin works well). Thread the string through the straw going up through one and then leaving a loop at the top, feed it back through the other straw.

Attach the loop at the top over a hook or nail on the wall or something that is not going to move and is above head height if possible. Bring the angel to the bottom of the strings and hold each end of the string in a separate hand. To move the angel up the string spread your hands out so that they are wider than the straws and pull on the strings. The angel should rise up towards the hook or nail or secure point.

Relax the strings and the angel should descend.



Prayer

Think about people who you would like to know that God is with them, perhaps who are having a difficult time or are ill or do not know God in their lives. Write the names of the people and situations you would like to pray for on the angels. Pull the angel up and down the string and pray that God will bless them and they will know that God is with them, just as Jacob did in the story remembering that God is always with us.

Spoken prayer

Encourage everyone to stand in a circle and place a large stone in the centre remembering Jacobs stone that was his pillow and the stone that he anointed with oil.

Dear God

As we stand together around this stone

We give our prayers to you

Knowing that you are with us in all that we do,

We praise you and thank you.

(Shout out words of praise and thanks)

Help us to trust your love for us.

Knowing you are always with us

help us to share your love with others.

(Shout out names of people to share Gods love with)

In good times and in bad, in happy times and sad

Knowing that you are always with us.

Amen

Responding together

Here are some suggested crafts and activities, and there is a colouring sheet at the end of this resource. You could also use small play toys and/or have a basket of resources available



so children can choose their own way to respond. <https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FACT-how-to-sheet.pdf>

With an online group, plan whether to deliver any resources in advance or how you will encourage them to use what they've got to hand in their response.

However you do it, it is good for the adults to engage in the response too, and all chat together.

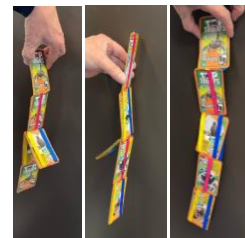
Jacobs Ladder story using photos

Read this week's bible passage and then work together to recreate the story using a series of freeze frame images. Provide a range of props for participants to use. Try laying out props/participants on the floor and taking the images from above so that you can recreate the angels ascending and descending the ladder. Compile the photos into a slideshow and add captions or a voice over to tell the story.

Jacob's Ladder:

You will need:

- 12 playing cards or board cut to 6cm x 8cm
- Three 1m lengths of Ribbon
- Double-sided tape or craft glue (optional)
- Scissors



What you do:

Begin with one piece of card. Put it on the table landscape. Place three strips of double-sided craft tape or lines of glue crossing the card horizontally and parallel to each other, one centrally and one at each side, leaving a slight gap from the edge.



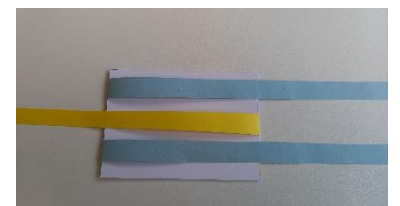
Positioning the ribbons on the Jacob's Ladder is important. Place them over the tape, ensuring they are straight, and smooth down to stick. The two outer ribbons need to be positioned so that they go over the card to the left and the central ribbon so that it goes over the card to the right, as in the picture.

Now you will need to create your first "sandwich" by gluing another piece of card over this one to conceal the ribbon. So you have two pieces of card, one on top of the other, and the ribbons fastened securely in between.



Next, carefully fold the ribbons back over the first segment, aligning them as before. However, this time, DO NOT use any tape or glue! The key to this is to fold the ribbons right over but don't pull them tight.

Now you have finished your first "sandwich" of card and ribbon, start the next one by laying a third card on top of the previous stack but without sticking it in place. As previously, make three lines of double-sided tape or glue. Fold your ribbons over again smoothly and firmly so that they stick to the card and then glue another card on top to create the second sandwich.





You now have your second segment of the ladder. Repeat these three steps until you have used all the cards. Then trim the excess ribbon. Remember each time that you only glue the ribbons in the middle of each sandwich, when you fold them over the upper card in the sandwich you do not glue them.

Hold the Jacob's ladder at the top so that the cards are now in portrait orientation, flip the top card to one side and let gravity do the rest of the work. The cards flip-flop down, one after another, just like the angels going up and down the ladder.

Everyday with Jesus – Walking the Way

What could we do this week to carry on what we've learned? Maybe members of the group could come up with a suggestion. If not, get them to choose from these two challenges:

- Jacob was aware of a place where he felt particularly close to God. This week, look out for a place that feels close to God for you and spend some time there. It could be in church, it could be out in nature, it could be where you sleep, it could even be in a crowded shopping street – it's different for everyone because God is everywhere.
 - Jacob had a God-dream while he slept. This week, remember to say a prayer before you go to sleep and tell God about your day. Ask God to be with you while you sleep and through tomorrow.
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We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of **Jacob's Ladder** with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing lorrainewebb@urc.org.uk

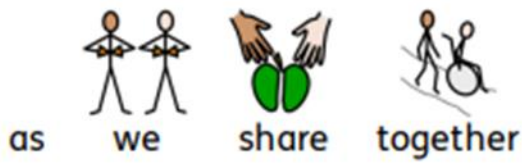
Why not have a look at next week's resource on the story of **Hagar**.



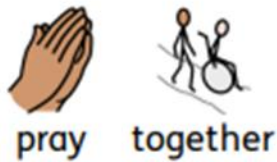
Jesus our friend,



be with us today



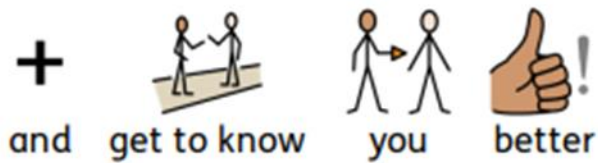
as we share together



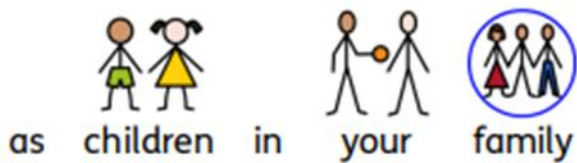
pray together



play together



and get to know you better



as children in your family



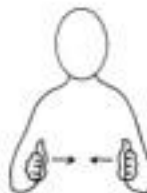
Amen



Right middle finger touches centre of other palm, repeat with left hand



Alternate hands back and forth



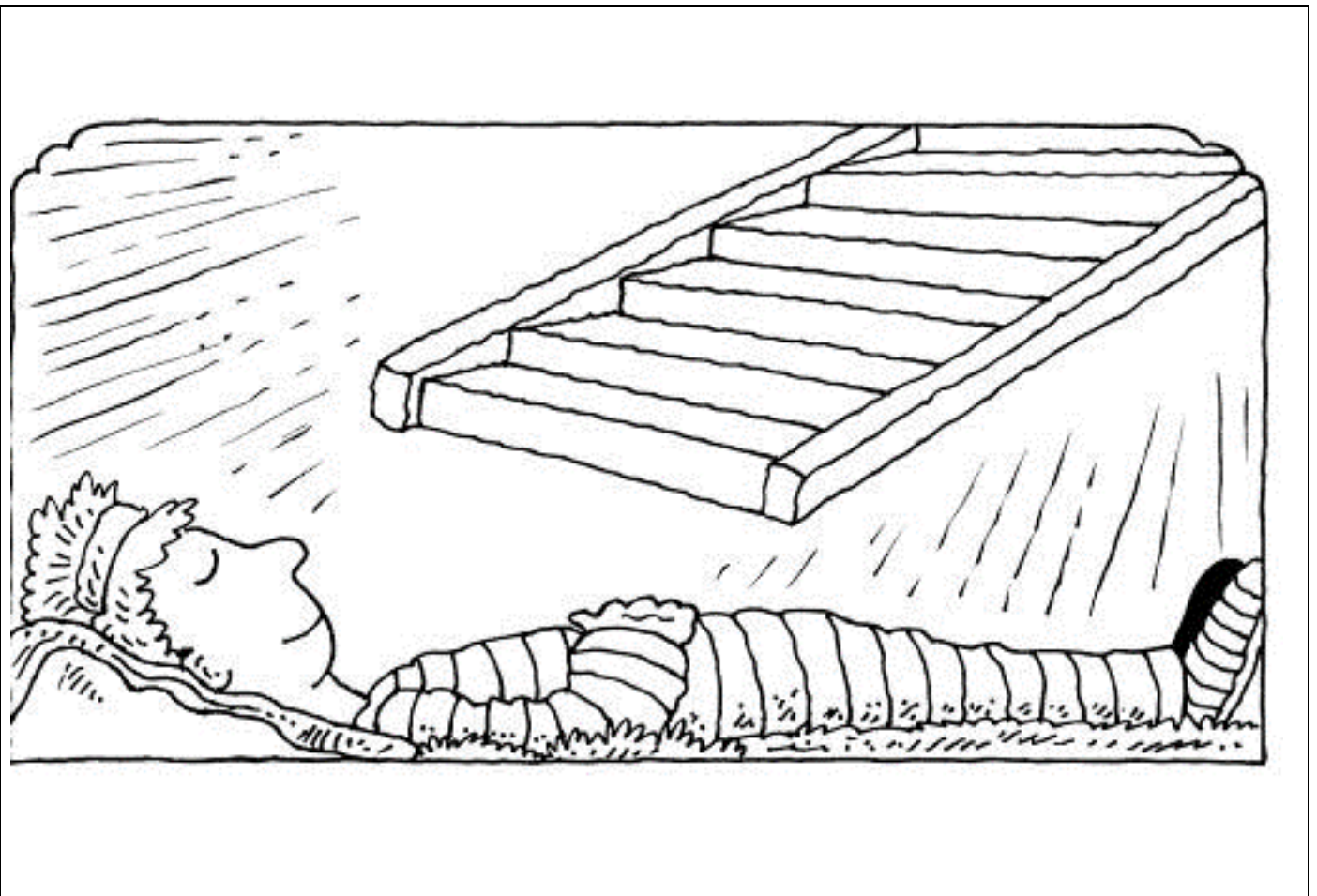


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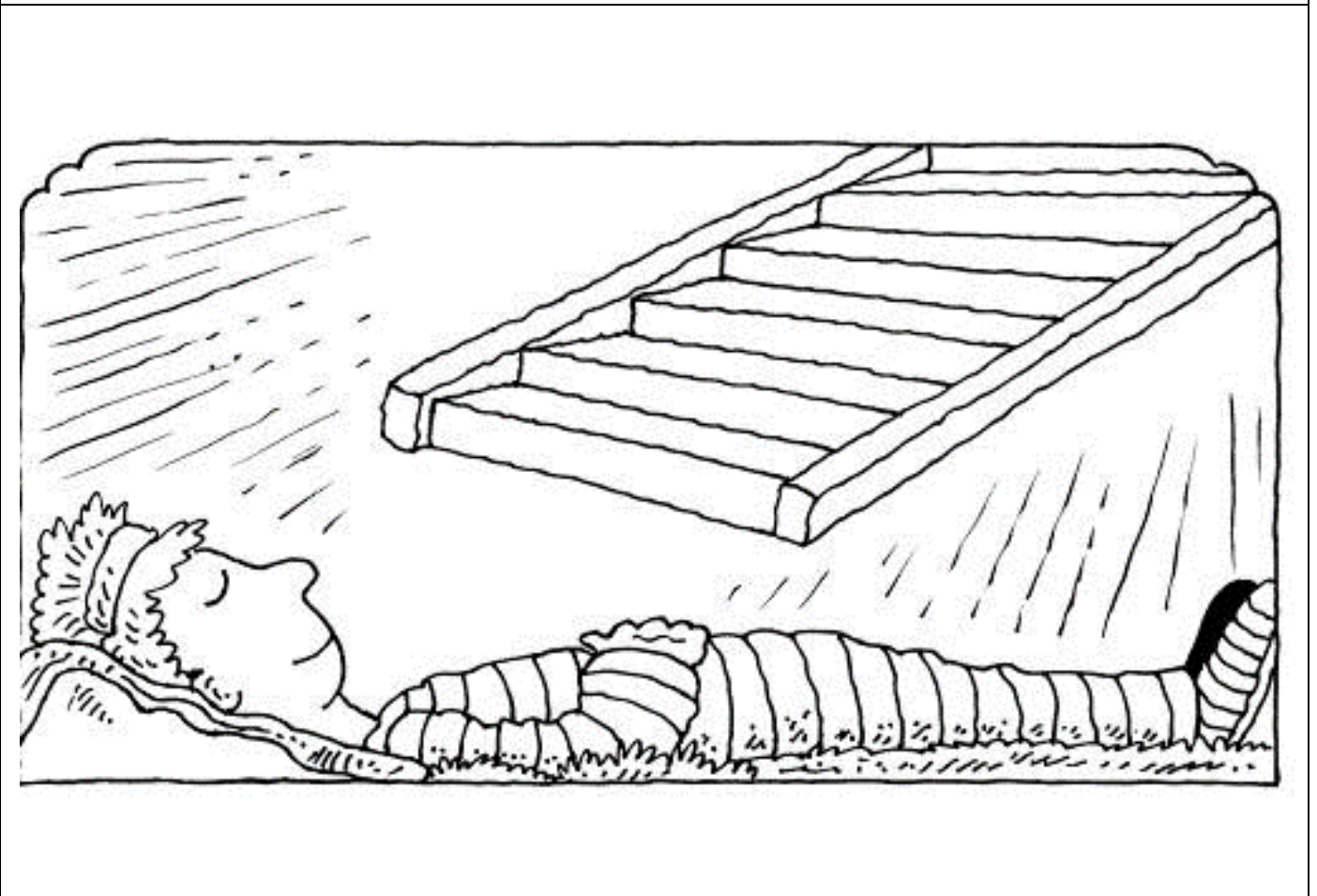




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