

The Stone Pillow

Abram receives the call from God.

In last week's email, we shared brand new images from the **iBIBLE** Chapter 7 animatic. In looking at those images, you may have noticed the odd shape of Abram's pillow as he sat up in bed and received God's call. Join us today as we take a deeper look at this image and some of the interesting things we have learned in the process of creating the first ever complete presentation of God's Divine narrative with **iBIBLE**.

iBIBLE Chapter 7 follows God scattering the people at the Tower of Babel and highlights the story of Abram's call from God to follow Him. To illustrate this, we show Abram in bed. While doing the research into what type of pillow he may have used, some interesting information came to our attention:

The earliest use of pillows occurred in Mesopotamia...These early pillows were made of stone and carved into a cradle shape—they were not designed for comfort. Instead, these stone pillows were used to elevate the head so that insects wouldn't crawl into a sleeper's mouth, nose, or ears! —[The History of Pillows](#)

Ancient Mesopotamian stone pillow.

This utilitarian purpose is important. The pillows helped to prevent insects from going where they should not be. This type of hard pillow seems to have been typical in many ancient cultures, and there is record of them being used in places such as Egypt, China, and Mesopotamia.

Other methods were also sometimes used to avoid insects getting into sleeping people's ears:

When [bushmen in the Kalahari] sleep, their heads never touch the ground because there are crawly things in the sand that can get into their ears. They dig their elbows into the soft sand and use their shoulders as pillows. —“Animals are Beautiful People,” 1974

Bushmen sleeping on their elbows.

This is just one small detail, but it adds color and context to a completely different Bible story from later in the book of Genesis: Jacob's stone pillow!

Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. —Genesis 28:10–11 [ESV]

Jacob anointing the stone pillow.

The question is often asked: “Why would Jacob use a stone as a pillow?” Knowing this ancient context, it makes a lot more sense. Jacob used a stone as a pillow because that was customary for his time. In this story, Jacob had a vision of God and angels going up and down stairs leading to Heaven, and in the morning, he used that stone pillow as a memorial.

And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, “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 offspring. Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.” And he was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. —Genesis 28:12–13; 16–18