



## Genesis – 35:1-29 Put Away the Foreign Gods! (Lesson #44)

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### Outline for this week in your notes.

- God directs Jacob to Bethel (35:1)
- Jacob calls his family to a renewed faithfulness to Yahweh (35:2-4)
- God divinely protects Jacob and his family (35:5)
- Jacob arrives in Bethel and builds an altar to Yahweh (35:6-7)
- Deborah, Rebekah's nurse dies and is buried (35:8)
- God appears to Jacob again, and reiterates his new name and the Abrahamic Covenant (35:9-13)
- Jacob sets up another pillar to Yahweh (35:14-15)
- Rachel goes into labor while they are journeying (35:16-18)
- Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin (35:19-21)
- Reuben lays with Bilhah (35:22a)
- Jacobs sons are restated (35:22b-26)
- Jacob arrives in Hebron (25:27)
- Issac's death is recorded (35:27-29)

*35:1 God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau." 2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments. 3 Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, so that I may make there an altar to the God who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone." 4 So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears. Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree that was near Shechem.*

**Vs 1-** Here God, once again **appears to Jacob** and **directs him to Bethel**, to the first place where God appeared to Jacob.

This is a **divine revelation**, but it includes **two divine commands**:

- 1) Arise and **go to Bethel to dwell there.**
  - a. Bethel shall be your home at least for a period of time.
- 2) Make an **altar to Yahweh there in Bethel.**

We have seen on a **number of occasions** where **patriarchs spontaneously constructed altars to Yahweh** (Gen 12:7, 8; 13:18; 22:9; 26:25; 33:20), but this is the **only time** where **Yahweh is directing an altar to be constructed.**

Jacob is directed to where **God appeared to him** when he fled from his brother many years earlier, back to Luz, back to the place where he had seen the staircase ascending into the heavens.

Now it was **in Bethel**, where Jacob had the vision of the staircase, when Jacob was first fleeing from Esau (Gen 28:12-15).

This is the God who not only said all of this, but did all this and is commanding his servant to go back to where it all started and there, in Bethel, erect an altar to the true and living God!

**Vs 2** - Here Jacob speaks to his household, this would have likely included not only the four women, and 11 sons, as well as daughters, but likely included all of his servants as well.

This means it likely included many servants who were just added as **prisoners of war** from the massacre in Shechem.

Notice Jacob directs his family to do, **three things** (commandments):

- 1) **Put away** the foreign gods.
- 2) **Purify** yourselves.
  - a. It means to **cleanses yourself, Fruchtenbaum**: *indicates that this would have been by "ritual immersion."*
- 3) **Change** your garments. This would have been part of the purification process.

At **first blush** this is **surprising and shocking**, why has Jacob waited until now to direct his household to put away the foreign gods that were among them?

It seems Jacob knew that some, even if it was just the **new additions from Shechem** had foreign gods and he is directing them to put them away. He then directs them to purify themselves and change their garments.

We wonder if Rachel has continued to hold on to her father's teraphim.

**APPLICATION:** Put away. We too must destroy the household gods in our life, things we watch, things we play with, or things we dabble in that dishonor God.

**APPLICATION:** Ritual immersion. We should practice this too. Let me show you:

*"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1Jo 1:9 ESV)*

**APPLICATION:** Changing our garments.

*"22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." (Eph 4:22-24 ESV)*

**Vs 3** - Following the putting away of the false gods, then Jacob tells his extended family that it is time to **arise, go to Bethel**, and there he will **construct an altar** to the **"God who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone."**

**APPLICATION:** This God, is the same God you and I serve. He is the God who answered us when in distress over our sins, we cried out for mercy, and He is also the God who is with us wherever we go.

Here is how the Psalmist explained it in **Psalm 86**:

*"1 ¶ « A Prayer of David. » Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. 2 Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your servant, who trusts in you — you are my God. 3 Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all the day. 4 Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. 5 For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you. 6 Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; listen to my plea for grace. 7 In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me. 8 ¶ There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours." (Ps 86:1-8 ESV)*

*"Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Heb 13:5 ESV)*

It is not just Jacob! Jesus said it like this:

*“16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” (Joh 14:16-17 ESV)*

**Vs 4 - So they gave Jacob two different things:**

- 1) **Foreign gods**, these would be like the household gods we saw Rachel steal from Laban.
  - a. We are shocked and surprised that they are carrying anything like this with them!
  - b. We wonder what Rachel ever did with Laban’s household gods.
- 2) They also **gave the rings that were in their ears**.
  - a. These particular earrings had some connection to **pagan worship**?

John Gill wrote this: These earrings were *“worn by them in a superstitious way, having the images of these idols on them: so the Targum of Jonathan.”*

Then as we see Jacob **buried them** under the **terebinth tree that was near Shechem**.

**THOUGHT:** If your gods can be buried...

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*5 And as they journeyed, a terror from God fell upon the cities that were around them, so that they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. 6 ¶ And Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him, 7 and there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed himself to him when he fled from his brother. 8 And Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died, and she was buried under an oak below Bethel. So he called its name Allon-bacuth.*

**Vs 5 -** Here we have **the explanation** of why the **Canaanites and the Perizzites**, and the surrounding peoples of the land **did not fall on Jacob** and his extend family.

As they journeyed, from Shechem to Bethel, they did so under **divine protection** and a **“terror”** from God fell upon **all the cities** that were around them.

This word translated **terror** is only used here in the entire Hebrew Bible, it comes from a word that means to be **shattered**, to be **broken**, to be **afraid**, to be **dismayed**.

The simple answer is that **God protected the fledgling nation of Israel**, the **nation who He intended to bring the Messiah through**.

**Vs 6 -** Jacob came to Luz, the last time he was here he was traveling light and alone. This time he arrives with a massive entourage and hundreds if not thousands of animals.

Keep in mind it had been originally named Luz and renamed Bethel when Jacob fled from his brother Esau many years ago!

Now imagine no modern forms of transportation and the massive family that Jacob is overseeing, I imagine this was a massive muscle movement to get this entire extended family packed and on the move.

**Vs 7 -** There in Bethel, Jacob built an altar to Yahweh and called the place El-Bethel. Literally, the **God of the House of God** or the **God of Bethel**.

He called it that because it was here that **God revealed Himself to Jacob when he fled from Esau.**

The last time Jacob was here he set up a memorial, let's look at the text:

*"16 ¶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." 17 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." 18 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." (Ge 28:16-18 ESV)*

**Vs 8** - Here in verse 8, we get **some surprising news**. Surprising because of who it is. We read that **Deborah**, Rebekah's nurse died. This is **not Rachel's nurse**, this is Rebekah nurse Deborah.

Two things here:

1) We knew of Deborah, but we did not know her name:

*"58 And they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will go." 59 So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men. 60 And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, "Our sister, may you become thousands of ten thousands, and may your offspring possess the gate of those who hate him!"" (Ge 24:58-60 ESV)*

2) We have **no idea when she joined Jacob**, we have no idea the situation that brought her to Jacob's extended family, only the news that here she dies.

- a. Did Jacob visit his dad somewhere along the line and since his mom was dead, bring Deborah back? We do not know.
- b. Did Deborah join Jacob while he was in Haran? We do not know.

We just learned that at some point she joined Jacob's extended family, and she has just passed away and she was buried under an oak below Bethel. He called the name of this oak **allon-bacuth**. Literally meaning **"oak of weeping."**

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*9 God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. 10 And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." So he called his name Israel. 11 And God said to him, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body.*

**Vs 9** - Now, here in Bethel, **God once again appears to Jacob**. We do not know exactly what this looked like, but once again, God appears to Jacob.

**As best I can tell this is at least the fifth time that God has appeared to Jacob:**

- 1) Bethel (Gen 28:10-17)
- 2) Command to leave and go back to Canaan (31:3)
- 3) When Jacob wrestled with God (32:24-29)
- 4) In Shechem, when God told Jacob to go back to Bethel (35:1)
- 5) Here is verse 9 (35:9)

The blessing that Jacob has so desperately desired is being heaped upon him by a loving God!

**Vs 10** - Here we see God reconfirms a **number of promises**, most connected to the Abrahamic covenant.

**First**, God once again, reiterated what he had said when he wrestled with Jacob alongside the Jabbok River.

God reiterates that his name is no longer “Jacob” (**heel grabber**) with a secondary meaning of (**supplanter**), but his new name shall be called Israel. He has a new identity, that identity is **Israel - One who prevails with God**. God is reminding Jacob of who he is, Jacob has a noble calling.

**APPLICATION:** If you are a believer, you too have a noble calling:

- You and I have been blessed with all spiritual blessing in Christ (Eph 1)
- You and I are joint heirs with Jesus Christ (Rom 8)
- You and I have been forgiven all our trespasses (numerous verses)

*“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,” (Eph 4:1 ESV)*

**Vs 11 - Then Yahweh says: I am God Almighty (El Shadday).** This is the exact same way that **God referred to himself with Abraham:**

*“When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless,” (Ge 17:1 ESV)*

He then tells Jacob to be fruitful and multiply. Of course this is definitely true of Jacob and is likely serving as a command for Jacob’s sons.

Second, God provides additional promises (Abrahamic Covenant promises):

- 1) A **nation shall come from you. One special nation** shall come from you!
- 2) A **company of nations** shall come from you.
  - a. Likely what God means is one nation, that is a **company of tribes**, or a **company of peoples**. The 12 tribes.
- 3) **Kings shall come from your own body!**
  - a. This is absolutely true in that all the Judean and Israelite kings would descend from Jacob.

This promise was made to Abraham (Gen 17:5-6) and Sarah ( Gen 17:15-16) is now made to Jacob.

**12 The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you." 13 Then God went up from him in the place where he had spoken with him. 14 And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone. He poured out a drink offering on it and poured oil on it. 15 So Jacob called the name of the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.**

**Vs 12 – (4) The land that I promised Abraham, the land that I promised Isaac, I will give to you and to your offspring.**

The land covenant, that started with Abraham, that promise is now extended to Jacob and those who will descend from him.

**The Promised Land.** Last week this came up as a question, that I quickly answered, let me slow down and show you some references (Gen 15:18, Ex 23:31, Eze 49:19):

**Vs 13 -** As far as I remember, this is the first time we have **language around God’s departure** from one of these amazing events when He met with one of the Patriarchs.

God was said to have **“went up”** from Jacob once He had finished speaking with him.

**Vs 14 -** The Jacob built a pillar in the place where he had spoken with Yahweh!

The Hebrew word is **מצבה (matstsebah)**, and indicates a small pile, or a small pillar.

This is the same word and the same activity we read that Jacob did the first time he was here in Bethel:

*“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.” (Ge 28:18 ESV)*

Jacob worships Yahweh! This is the right and proper way to respond to truth, we worship.

Next, he “**poured**” out on it a “**drink offering.**” The Hebrew word translated “**drink offering**” is the Hebrew word נֶסֶךְ (**necek**).

This is the **first use of this Hebrew word** in the entire Hebrew Bible. We will see in the book of **Numbers** that the “**drink offering**” will become a staple in the nation of Israel. Here we see the **first example** of it in the entire scriptures.

We just read it, but this is the **second time** that Jacob has **set up a pillar to God** and the **second time that he has poured oil** on top of that pillar.

**Vs 15** – Jacob once again calls the place **Bethel**.

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*16 ¶ Then they journeyed from Bethel. When they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel went into labor, and she had hard labor. 17 And when her labor was at its hardest, the midwife said to her, "Do not fear, for you have another son." 18 And as her soul was departing (for she was dying), she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. 19 So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem), 20 and Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb. It is the pillar of Rachel's tomb, which is there to this day.*

**Vs 16** - Then they journeyed from Bethel, and while they were some distance from **Ephrath**, which is another name for Bethlehem. As they were traveling from Bethel and they were still **some distance** from Ephrath, **Rachel** went into **hard labor**.

Now up until this point, we had **no idea** that Rachel **was pregnant**. But here as they are traveling south, outside the city of Ephrath, Rachel goes into hard labor.

**Vs 17** - As her labor reaches its peak, at its hardest, the midwife says to her: ***Do not fear you are having another son.***

This is what she has desired, in fact when she had hoped when Joseph was born:

*“22 Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. 23 She conceived and bore a son and said, "God has taken away my reproach." 24 And she called his name Joseph, saying, "May the LORD add to me another son!"” (Ge 30:22-24 ESV)*

Although it has been many years, **God has given Rachel another son.**

**Vs 18** - But this son comes at a very high cost. As her soul was departing, as she was dying in the process of giving birth, as her life was fleeing as new life was coming into the world.

As she was dying, she said that he was to be called Ben-oni, which literally means “**son of my sorrow.**”

But, and Moses gets a little ahead of his skis, ultimately his father Jacob does not go with Ben-oni, but names this boy Benjamin, which means “**son of my right hand?**”

**Vs 19** - Thus we read the tragic news that Rachel died and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is Bethlehem).

**Vs 20** - So Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb, it seems like the pillar he set up for the Lord and this pillar was still standing in Moses' day.

It must have been somewhat significant for we are talking about something that happened in roughly 1900BC and the Exodus occurred in 1446BC, plus 40 years of wilderness roaming, so we are talking 500 years between when Jacob constructed it and when it is mentioned here.

**21 Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder. 22 While Israel lived in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine. And Israel heard of it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve.**

**Vs 21** - Here we are told that Israel journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder. Most scholars agree that the name should be Migdal Eder which is located outside Bethlehem.

**Vs 22** - Israel is living in the land of Canaan, living in the promised land and Reuben goes and **lays with Bilhah his father's concubine**.

Bilhah was Rachel's concubine and Leah's oldest son Reuben goes and lays with Rachel's handmade.

This was following Rachel's death and could have been a move by Reuben to attempt to claim lordship over the extended family. It could also have been that Bilhah was lonely, due to the loss of Rachel and she somehow sought out Reuben.

We will see, if not today, in the coming weeks that Jacob lays the blame for this event at the feet of Reuben.

Bilhah would have been much older than Reuben. Estimates vary, but she would have been at least 20 years or so older than Reuben, and possibly much older.

Moses provides a **simple statement**, that will play out in time: *And Israel heard of it.*

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**23 The sons of Leah: Reuben (Jacob's firstborn), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. 24 The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. 25 The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's servant: Dan and Naphtali. 26 The sons of Zilpah, Leah's servant: Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram.**

**Vs 23** - Here Moses chooses to remind us of the male children that were born to each of the four women, he leads with the first wife (in time) and then moves to the other women:

- **Reuben** – Is the firstborn, we can add who just recently had sex with Bilhah.
- **Simeon** – Is the second born, who was instrumental in the deception at Shechem and was actively involved in killing all the men of the city.
- **Levi** – Is the third born, who was also instrumental in the deception at Shechem and was actively involved in killing all the men of the city.
- **Judah** - Is the fourth born son of Leah.
- **Issachar** – Is the fifth born son of Leah would be born later than the first four. If you remember he was born following the mandrake event.
- **Zebulun** – Is the sixth and final son born of Leah.

**Vs 24** - Moses then moves to the second wife (in time) that Jacob married, Rachel.

- **Joseph** – Is Rachel’s firstborn son.
- **Benjamin** – Is Rachel’s second and last son. Benjamin would have been much younger than his brothers who were all clustered together. Benjamin was the only son born in Cannan.

**Vs 25** - Next Moses moves to Bilhah who was Rachel’s handmade. To Bilhah was born two sons:

- **Dan** – Is Bilhah’s firstborn son.
- **Naphtali** – Is Bilhah’s second born son.

**Vs 26** - Finally, Moses concludes with Leah’s handmade Zilpah and her two sons:

- **Gad** – Is Zilpah’s firstborn son.
- **Asher** – Is Zilpah’s second and final born son.

*27 And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned. 28 Now the days of Isaac were 180 years. 29 And Isaac breathed his last, and he died and was gathered to his people, old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.*

**Vs 27** - Finally, Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, also known as Kiriath-arba, then Moses provides the parenthetical (that is Hebron) where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned. Now again, it is possible that he came prior to this, but it is not mentioned.

How had Isaac been doing, if you remember he had lost his vision when Jacob fled and that was many years prior to this event! We have so many questions!

**Vs 28-29** - We have nothing of what was said, nothing of the reunion, rather we have only the end of Isaac’s life.

Like Abraham Moses’ words are very instructive:

- 1) He breathed his last,
- 2) He died. This is physical death, the heart stopped beating and all brain activity ceased.
- 3) He was gathered to his people. This is a beautiful reminder of the afterlife.
- 4) And his sons buried him. So being gathered to his people is clearly different than being buried.

And his sons (Jacob and Esau) buried him. These brothers had some degree of connection in the Promised Land, some degree of continued fellowship and friendship and here together they buried their father.

The days of Isaac’s life were 180 years. This means when he died Jacob and Esau were 120, for Isaac was 60 when they were born.

If we have our timeline right for Jacob’s life, and I believe we do, then Jacob last saw his father Isaac when he (Jacob) was **77**. So 43 years from the time of Jacob’s departure to Haran until the time of Isaac’s death.

Now when we pick back up in two weeks, **Isaac will still be alive**, so although Isaac has died and been buried, when we pick back up and begin the (toledoh), the generations of Joseph, he will be alive.

Then in chapter 37, we will shift our focus to our next Patriarch Joseph. The focus will shift week after next to this young man Joseph.

Of all the patriarchs, Joseph has more ink devoted to him than any of the others, in total 12 chapters!

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