

What You Need to Know About ISAAC & JACOB:

“The Lord who leads armies makes this solemn vow: ‘Be sure of this: Just as I have intended so it will be; just as I have planned, it will happen.’” Isaiah 14:24 NET

Study Number Twelve – Genesis 35:1-29

This particular chapter is not the end of the life of Jacob. The book of Genesis is centered around Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

Joseph comes into play. In fact, we will see where he is in the study. And much of the text from here on to the end of the book of Genesis is on the life of Joseph.

Jacob relates to that, indirectly, and we will remember some of the things as we bring his life to a close. But primarily what we’re seeing in this passage is a man who’s been running uphill into the wind all of his career. We see him finally getting his head together. We see him finally in a position for God to really bless him.

And it’s going to involve a lot of pain, a lot of hurt, and a lot of sorrow. And many of us who go through some of these things are going to be able to relate.

Listen to what Max Lucado says about shaping our lives:

(Shaped by God by Max Lucado)

God sees our life from beginning to end. He may lead us through a storm at age thirty so we can endure a hurricane at age sixty. An instrument is useful only if it's in the right shape. A dull ax or a bent screwdriver needs attention, and so do we. A good blacksmith keeps his tools in shape. So does God.

Should God place you on his anvil, be thankful. It means he thinks you're still worth reshaping.

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That's been true of Jacob, hasn't it? We've watched some new reshaping experience in each study. First of all, we see him at home getting the birthright and then the blessing by devious means. And out of that, having to spend twenty years in Paddan Aram.

Well now we've actually blown thirty years since he left home, because he stayed in Succoth and Shechem about ten years. And as the scene of our study opens, God is going to speak to him about fulfilling His will and purpose—which he has fallen short of for these ten years.

He actually lied to his brother after reconciliation. He said that he was going to come slowly to Seir, but he turned right around and went north up to Succoth. He put up some sheds and stayed there for a period of time. Finally, he went across

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into the land to the city of Shechem and he built a house there and stayed for the rest of that ten-year period.

And what is so sad about all of that is he had this wonderful experience with the Lord at Peniel. He was given his new name, Israel, and he was really, really eager to do what God wanted him to do. But something happened. We don't know whether it was the temptation of good land for the flocks and all of that, weary from traveling so fast from Haran all the way down to the eastern side of the Jordan, or just what it was.

One of the things we have to learn though, is when we delay in our obedience, it will always lead to a distraction. We will do something we shouldn't be doing; we'll be going someplace we shouldn't be going, and it's going to be a school of hard knocks for us if we delay in being obedient to what obviously God wants us to do.

Living in disobedience is a very unpleasant experience. The church at Ephesus was living without its first love. The church at Laodicea was lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot. The Lord was very sick over that situation.

We will see Jacob finally recognizing the fact that the safest place in the world is to be where God wants him to be.

Succoth and Shechem to Jacob was like Sodom and Gomorrah to Lot. It's way short and out of the will of God.

We find that after a crisis many times there is complacency. God urges us to invest intensely and wisely every moment we have to live. Not to just quit and rest on our oars, but to stay intense in view of the finish line.

He said it in:

John 9:4

I must work the works of him that send, while it is day. For the night is coming when no man can work.

John 4:35, 36

Don't tell me there are four months and then cometh harvest, behold I say unto you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, they are white already.

In other words, "Now get after it!"

"You should have been out there yesterday"—is the intensity that is felt by those who really want to finish strong and serve our Lord.

Now Shechem was a good place for sheep, but he lost his little lamb. Dinah's a teenager before they leave there and she's messing around with some kids up at Shechem High School and ends up getting raped.

This really, really got Simeon and Levi mad. This is their full-

blooded sister, because she was born to Leah. Well, they went into town and they told the citizens, because the kid that did it wanted to marry her. Simeon and Levi went into town and said, “Well we can’t marry anybody that hasn’t been circumcised. So if you guys will fulfill the Abrahamic covenant then we’ll talk about this.”

And so they go to the gray-heads in Shechem and recommend this. And on the third day after circumcision, they were totally immobilized and Simeon and Levi wiped out the whole male population.

This is where we are in this episode. Jacob is livid and scared to death that the other cities in the area will join together and wipe them out. And then he hears from the Lord as to what He’s going to do.

There’s a really painful price when we’re not where God wants us to be, doing what God wants us to be doing. And here we have this amazing story.

Now those ten years of delay in doing what God wanted them to do:

1. came from the FEAR OF ESAU—he was afraid to move into the land for fear that Esau would come back and change his mind.
2. He knows that HE LIED TO ESAU. And so because he doesn’t show up at Seir pretty quickly, he’s going to say, “here

we go again,” and he goes back to the way he was.

3. Or just HIS OWN DISOBEDIENCE. The fact that he knows that he left Bethel with a commitment and a promise from God that the Lord was going to take him all the way back to Bethel and there were definite instructions in Paddan Aram. “You are to rise and go to Bethel,”—not Succoth and Shechem.

And so there has to be a lot of guilt. It repulses the heart of God when He sees partial obedience in His children. And the transforming of Jacob into Israel is a long, slow process. So don’t get excited over the fact that this is something that can happen overnight.

When God is at work, there’s a long road back to obedience and fellowship. And that’s where we are.

Ready? Let’s dig into the text.

v. 1 Then God said to Jacob, “Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau.”

“Then God said to Jacob, ‘Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau.’”

He reminds him of everything. He’s saying, “Go to where I told

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you thirty years ago.”

“Go to Bethel,”—“because it’s there I met you going up, and it’s there I’m going to meet with you going in.”

“and build an altar there”—“recognizing the fact that I have been faithful to you during all these years that you were fleeing from your brother Esau.”

There are **THREE COMMANDS** and they’re very clear:

1. “Go up to Bethel,”
2. “settle there,”
3. “build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau.”

It’s very, very specific.

If we’re going to deal with worldliness in our life, if we’re going to deal with complacency in our life, if we’re going to deal with laxity in our life, we have to make some decisions to separate from it.

Now look at the **TRAGEDY**:

Shechem is just thirty miles away from Bethel.

What’s He saying?

“Go back where it started, place of your commitment and conversion, and I am going to meet you there. I’ve still got a lot of things I need to do.”

“What are you thinking?” He’s saying in Shechem.

“Well, you know, I will get around to it eventually. I’ve still got quite a bit of stuff. I’ve got to mop up here first before I get serious about going.”

What’s our excuse? Are we as passionate as we should be? Why aren’t we?

How’s that going to look at the Judgment Seat of Christ? And just play it against it. And whatever the excuse, how important is that going to be when we meet the Lord face-to-face?

“Think of all you missed for those ten years that you were living in Shechem when you should have been over there in Bethel experiencing the Lord’s blessing.”

And so the Lord Himself takes it on Himself to say, “This is where you need to go and I told you to do that and that you were coming back there. So I’ve been waiting.”

At least when Jacob is told, he does it.

Verse 2—now he tells them **THREE THINGS**. This is the **KEY**

TO REVIVAL right here.

v. 2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes.

“So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him,”

Command #1:

“Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and”

Command #2:

“purify yourselves and”

Command #3:

“change your clothes.”

We are going to church. We are going to meet the Lord.

There are **THREE REQUIREMENTS**.

Psalm 24:3, 4

Who may ascend the hill of the Lord?

Who may stand in his holy place?

He who has clean hands and a pure heart,

who does not lift up his soul to an idol
or swear by what is false.

These are the things that are required for an audience with
the Holy God.

Put away—“get rid of,”

be clean—“purify yourselves,”

change your garments—“change your clothes.”

Probably some of these, especially Simeon and Levi, are
covered with blood from Shechem. So they’ve got dirty clothes
on.

But all of these things relate to us in a personal way.

First of all, “Get rid of the foreign gods you have among you,”

2 Corinthians 6:17, 18

Wherefore, come out from among them and be ye separate,”
saith the Lord. “And touch not the unclean thing. And I will be
a father unto you. You shall be my sons and daughters,” saith
the Lord Almighty.

Now the idol isn’t a little metal thing that’s sitting in the
corner. It could be anything that’s taking more time away
from us than we would give to the Lord on a daily basis. We

have to decide our own level of idolatry, because that's basically a distraction in our lives.

Psalm 139:23

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
try me and know my thoughts

Isn't it interesting He uses the term, "Get rid of the foreign gods you have among you"?

What do we think happened? Most likely when he and Rachel were laying there in bed, Rachel confessed her sin. She said, "You know, Jacob, you said some awful mean things back there when you said the guy that had the idols was going to die. But you didn't know I had them hidden in my saddle."

Out of love for her, he probably didn't make an issue out of that. Because he didn't, idolatry has spread to the whole rest of the family, because they see Rachel doing it. And after all, she's the number one wife in the crew.

Isn't it an amazing thing how we don't think we're influencing anybody at all and then we wake up one day to realize that people are just walking right in our steps? And everything we do they take to the house knowing, because we're a spiritual person?

1. "Get rid of the idols," and God can't bless it. And the laxity obviously was there.

2. “purify yourselves.” What does that mean for us?

2 Corinthians 7:1

Having therefore these promises dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and Spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Having a passion to be pure. Having a passion to be right.
Having a passion to walk with God.

1 Peter 1:16

“Be ye holy for I am holy,” says the Lord.

The cleansing of the life of the believer comes by making confession of sin in our lives.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse from all unrighteousness.

Isaiah 52:11

Be ye clean who bear the vessels of the Lord.

We are told that when we come to the communion table, do we go there every time with the command of the Lord “examine

yourself, before we partake?

It's a process of realizing that this is a sacred mission we're taking when we go and take the bread and the cup. We're identifying with our Savior and His death, burial and resurrection.

Do we examine our hearts? It's a constant thing to let the Lord do it. And He's so gracious in the way He forgives.

3. "change your clothes."

Now to apply that to us in the New Testament, the word "clothing" refers to the OLD NATURE and the NEW NATURE.

When we live in the flesh we're living with the old man or the old clothes. When we're living in the spirit, we're living with the new clothes.

Colossians chapter 3 has a great picture of putting off the old garments.

Isaiah 64:6

All our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.

Getting rid of that and putting on the new man, which is the **FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT:**

LOVE,

JOY,

PEACE—these things which would manifest themselves in our life.

“Clean up! We’re going to go meet with the Lord. And put on some clean garments. Get ready.”

We need to get excited and let God examine our hearts to see if there’s anything that’s more important than our relationship with Him. Any idols that we’ve got to get rid of.

John said that in the last verse in the little epistle of 1 John:

1 John 5:21

My little children, keep yourself from idols.

We are to keep ourselves from them and then cleanse ourselves. Being specific in dealing with stuff so we don’t just hope that it goes away.

That the Spirit of God would come down and bless us in such an abundant way. God comes when He sees things done on His terms not ours.

Too many times we’re rationalizing it.

Marcus Rainsford said:

(Our Lord Prays for His Own: Thoughts on John 17 by Marcus Rainsford)

A main part of our sanctification [that is being made holy] here on earth, is carried on, and perfected, in learning our sinfulness, experiencing our nothingness, and realizing our corruption, our misery, and our ruin.

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That isn't pretty—any of it—but that's part of it!

The closer we get to the Lord, the closer, the more aware we are of sin in our life. It just goes with the territory. We come to the light, we're going to see things from His perspective and point of view.

That's why he told Nicodemus:

John 3:19

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

To deal with it we have to come to the light and accept it the way it is, and then address it.

v. 3 Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will

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build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone.”

“Then come,”

1. “get rid of your foreign gods,”
2. “purify yourself,” and
3. “change your clothes,” and
4. “Then come!”

“let us go up to Bethel, [and when I get there] I’m going to build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone.”

What a testimony. That is God’s faithfulness for thirty years. He is now going right into the center of the will of God. And when we pull the curtain for the final time at the end of this study, he’s there. And it just brings such joy to say that if God could do it for him, He can do it for each of us.

And that just gives us goosebumps all over to know that He hasn’t given up on him! Look at this! Thirty years! Did God give up? No! He’s going to pick up right where we left when we get to Bethel here in just a minute.

He built an altar there, paying tribute to God. And he said,

“we’re going to pay tribute to God” and God has done TWO THINGS:

1. He has “answered me in the day of my distress.”

“When I was leaving, He really was there for me.”

2. “and who has been with me where I have gone.”

Through the whole thirty years, He’s been there.

Oh what a testimony. Thirty long years.

It’s like the prodigal father coming home instead of a prodigal son, isn’t it? He’s really coming back, and “come, let us go up to Bethel.”

“[God] has been with me where I have gone.”

Look what they do—verse 4.

v. 4 So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem.

“So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears,”

Now ladies, don’t get worried about earrings there. This goes with the religious stuff. That dangling junk that they wear as

part of their worship to these idols.

“and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem.”

Well, we will have **FOUR BURIALS** in this passage of scripture.

Well, they gave everything, they took care of it, they buried it there, and now Jacob is finally putting God first. The family is surrendering all the other gods.

Now God is first and we think of the **COMMAND** of John the apostle: “Little children, guard yourselves from idols,” is now true. (ref. 1 John 5:21)

v. 5 Then they set out, and the terror of God fell upon the towns all around them so that no one pursued them.

“Then they set out, and the terror of God fell upon the towns all around them so that no one pursued them.”

The Lord promised that He would protect him and take him all the way back and “the terror of the Lord,” whatever that was.

The term **SHECHEM MASACRE** was something they didn’t want to mess with because they wiped out the whole town so everybody left them alone. It was like God was protecting them as they made the journey.

Psalm 91:11

For He will order His angels
to protect you wherever you go.

That's "the terror of the Lord," that's the Lord getting them through the situation and His protection is to strike terror in the hearts of these citizens.

(What On Earth Have I Done?: Stories, Observations, and Affirmations by Robert Fulghum)

If you imagine that what you fear in the future is already part of your past, the present looks pretty good.
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Psalm 50:15

and call upon me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you shall honor me.”

v. 6 Jacob and all the people with him came to Luz (that is, Bethel) in the land of Canaan.

“Jacob and all the people with him came to Luz (that is, Bethel) in the land of Canaan.”

We've made the big loop, now we're back.

The joy of the Lord is his strength! He's where he needs to be and he's been missing it. He didn't even realize he's been missing it, because there haven't been any altars and there haven't been any times of worship and praise. And now he's back!

v. 7 There he built an altar, and he called the place El Bethel, because it was there that God revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.

“There he built an altar, and he called the place”—WHAT?—
“El Bethel,”

Understand that? That's “the God of Bethel,” not just “the house of God.” It's “the God of the house of God.”

Now the significant thing about that statement that the term “El Bethel” is focusing on the PERSON and not the PLACE.

So many times we focus on the PLACE and the PERSON gets second.

For instance, we talk about THE CHURCH and then we come down and we talk about JESUS, instead of putting Him as the head of the body of the church. We are together as a church glorifying and honoring the Lord Jesus Christ and our heavenly Father.

Throughout church history that transition is so subtle and so

many people get caught up in the place and forget the person. It's the church this and the church that, and the church everything, rather than the Lord of the church with whom we have a personal relationship.

“because it was there that God revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.”

The text just tells us he's back and focusing on the **PERSON** NOT THE PLACE.

Peter bordered on that, didn't he? Remember on the Mount of Transfiguration what he said? Here was Elijah and Moses talking to Jesus and Jesus is transfigured before them, and as soon as they're done, what does Peter say? “Let me build three tabernacles so we can stay here forever!”

In other words, the PLACE rather than the PERSON. And so many times the emphasis is in the wrong place when we put it on the place.

Notice when reading about the children of Israel and the Ark of the Covenant, as they get further and further away from God and they start living in the period of the judges and idolatry and wickedness, what do they do? They use the Ark of the Covenant to take with them so that they have God's blessing. They want the ARTICLE rather than GOD HIMSELF.

The focus through all of those chapters is so painful, because

it's the Ark of the Covenant this, the Ark of the Covenant that, and not God Himself.

The whole evidence is that Jacob's back where he belongs. The God of the house of God.

We create and maintain an environment of greatness when we're walking in fellowship with God. And people around it really know it too. There is an authority to our life and we're exalting the Person of Jesus and He means everything in the world to us.

Now it's kind of like a whole different story in verse 8, isn't it? Because we've got a death right on the scene here, but when we make a commitment and we walk with God there are going to be deaths in our life. There's going to be suffering.

It's not like so many people teach that when we increase our obedience, that obligates God to really bless us and make us into something and give us this and that. This is reality, friends. When we get serious with God, there are going to be some things that seem unexplainable, but it's all part of the shaping process as we're thrown upon the anvil. We are willing for the first time to let God do His thing with us.

And expect it. Know that it's going to come and there will be a purpose of rebuilding it.

v. 8 Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died and was buried under the oak below Bethel. So it was

named Allon Bacuth.

“Now Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died and was buried under the oak below Bethel. So it was named Allon Bacuth.”

“Allon Bacuth”—“the oak of weeping.”

Now we don’t know anything about Deborah. Other than that we know that when the servant—way back there in that first episode—came back with Rebekah to Isaac, the nurse came with her, and that nurse, obviously, was Deborah.

Deborah is probably about 170 years old. Why she ends up back with Jacob is still a mystery. We don’t have any record of Rebekah’s death, although we know that it happened, because Jacob will tell us at the end of the whole series of studies in Genesis 49 that he buried her there with Isaac.

And so she has died. Now it could be that when Rebekah died, because Jacob was her favorite son, she instructed Deborah to go and live with Jacob. And possibly she did come then to Paddan Aram, made that trip, and has lived with him during this period of time, serving as she’s always done in a quiet way and not really making any waves. So therefore, she’s not seen in the picture. She just comes in and goes out.

What’s the significance of that? There comes a time in our life when we get serious in our walk with God that we’re going to have to cut some things from the past. And this is the last strand to be cut from that life back there with Esau and Isaac,

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in that home that was so divided.

Now that strand has been cut. His mother is gone, there's Isaac that we're going to see, but Deborah's part of that.

v. 9 After Jacob returned from Paddan Aram, God appeared to him again and blessed him.

“After Jacob returned from Paddan Aram, God appeared to him again and blessed him.”

See what happens when we get right with Him? The Lord appears to him and God is going to do TWO THINGS:

1. God's going to appear to him and then
2. God's going to bless him.

And the way He's going to bless him is to put him in the line for the Abrahamic covenant, because everything we see in these next few verses is just the Abrahamic covenant all over again.

When we let God do it, the blessings begin to flow. And in the midst of the adversity and sorrow, we know they're all for a purpose—to make us more like Christ.

Tony Evans has this great illustration:

(Are Christians Destroying America? How to Restore a

Decaying Culture by Tony Evans)

One day my mother told me the story of the three little pigs. You know the story. The first two pigs built shaky houses, so the big, bad wolf was able to huff and puff and blow them down.

But the third little pig was together. He is my man. He built a sturdy house, so when his brothers came to him for protection, he invited them to sit down and enjoy the fire in his fireplace while the big wolf huffed and puffed.

The wolf blew, but nothing happened. He blew again and nothing happened. He blew again and nothing happened. The difference was that the third pig built his house out of bricks.

The first pig built a house of straw. If you are trying to build your home on a good income, Satan is going to huff and puff and blow your house down.

The second pig's house was made of wood. If you are trying to build your home on success and fame, Satan is going to huff and puff and blow your house down.

But if you will build your house on Jesus Christ, on the solid rock of God's Word, Satan can huff and puff while you and your family sit around the fireplace enjoying the blessing of God. And if enough fathers build homes like this, Satan can huff and puff on America and she will not fall!

This is what God offers to husbands and fathers who will build their homes on Him.

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That's what Jacob is beginning to discover, and the pieces are really falling together.

v. 10 God said to him, “Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel.” So he named him Israel.

Here’s the exact same statement we had at Peniel.

“God said to him, ‘Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel.’ So he named him Israel.”

God already knew that he was going to spend thirty years in Succoth and Shechem. And he wasn’t going to be living up to his name Israel, so he goes back and reverts to the old Jacob for thirty years. And now God is on track with him and now we’ve got the picture.

He is now ISRAEL—and he’s the one who fought Him.

Isn’t it neat? Listen to this. God picks up with him exactly where He left off at Peniel. It’s like these ten years of being out of fellowship and doing all of this stuff has not affected the purposes or the plan or the promises of God.

When God gets ahold of us, He picks up right where we left off. He writes, “I don’t remember,” over anything we’ve done in our disobedience. So believe Him! Now we’ve been forgiven, freed and set free.

God is so wonderful! He doesn’t chew him out either, by

saying, “Where have you been for the last ten years?”

v. 11 And God said to him, “I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will come from your body.”

“And God said to him, ‘I am God Almighty;’”

What is that? That’s *El Shaddai*. That’s the God that revealed Himself to Elijah. That’s the God who revealed Himself to Abraham back there in the initial covenant in Genesis 17.

“I’m *El Shaddai*—the Almighty One. The Adequate One, the Promise Keeper.”

“be fruitful and increase in number.”—That’s exactly what He said to Abraham—“A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will come from your body.”

There’s the SEED in verse 11 and the LAND in verse 12.

v. 12 The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.”

“The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.”

“It’s yours forever!”

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It's an unconditional, eternal kingdom! So today we know who has the rights to that land by the promises of the Abrahamic covenant.

v. 13 Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him.

“Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him.”

Well, God CAME, God SAID IT, God DID IT, and now Jacob is going to IMPLEMENT everything that He said.

COMMUNION—PRAYER LIFE has now been established.

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me,” David prayed in Psalm 51. That’s the picture. (ref. Psalm 51:10)

v. 14 Jacob set up a stone pillar at the place where God had talked with him, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it.

“Jacob set up a stone pillar”

This is exactly what he did the first time when he came out thirty years ago. After meeting God at the top of the stairs, he did this very same thing.

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“[He] set up a stone pillar at the place where God had talked with him, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it.”

The very same thing as thirty years ago, but he’s a whole lot smarter today than he was when he was going out. We know that for sure.

v. 15 Jacob called the place where God had talked with him Bethel.

“Jacob called the place where God had talked with him Bethel.”

He certainly did that the first time. He just added “El Bethel” here. And his faith is being perfected now.

v. 16 Then they moved on from Bethel. While they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and had great difficulty.

“Then they moved on from Bethel.”

We see that they are going on down to see Isaac in the plains of Mamre before he dies.

“While they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and had great difficulty.”

Well they’re on the trip and they’re just twelve miles from

Bethel, “the house of bread.”

They leave the house of God and go to the house of Bread—the place the Lord provides.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then all these other things will be added unto you.” (ref. Matthew 6:33)

Here we go! But why the sorrow at this point?

Sorrow is often used as a part of spiritual training. And we have to include sorrow and suffering in our theology, or we will become a bitter person. We’ll become angry, get distant from God, and blame Him. God is just trying to make us more like His Son, if we properly respond to what He’s trying to do.

These sorrows are just a part and parcel of life.

It has come time for Rachel to depart. But before she does, just twelve miles short of Bethlehem, she dies.

We look at Rachel’s life and it was filled with sadness, wasn’t it?

On her wedding night, her sister was put in the bed. She had all the jealousy, the anger and the frustration in her being unable to have children for almost fourteen years of married life. She saw the handmaids and Leah have kids but she hadn’t.

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And remember, she said, “Give me children or I die.”

She also prayed, when Joseph was born, that she’d have another son. And that answer to her prayer is given right here—verse 17.

v. 17 And as she was having great difficulty in childbirth, the midwife said to her, “Don’t be afraid, for you have another son.”

“And as she was having great difficulty in childbirth, the midwife said to her, ‘Don’t be afraid, for you have another son.’”

So she’s dying with the awareness that God had been faithful to give her this child that she had asked for.

v. 18 As she breathed her last—for she was dying—she named her son Ben-Oni. But his father named him Benjamin.

“As she breathed her last—for she was dying—she named her son Ben-Oni. But his father named him Benjamin.”

Now let’s stay there for just a second because we need to divide those words and then we’ll move on.

“Ben-Oni” means “son of my sorrow.” The word Ben means “son” in Hebrew. “Oni” means “son of my sorrow.”

When Jacob heard that, he thought about every time he would call him he'd have to think of Rachel and her death. So he calls him Benjamin—"son of my right hand."

There is such significant typology in that, it's beyond comprehension.

Jesus Christ, the greater Son of David, came as a "son of sorrow" when He left the Father's right hand. But now He sits and intercedes at the Father's right hand.

And just like He is a Benjamin to us, who intercedes for us 24 hours a day, He's there much involved in our lives as the GREAT INTERCESSOR.

So he "named him Benjamin"—rightfully so.

The will of God, the Divine Sculpture, has now accomplished His purpose.

Maybe, just maybe, Jacob loved something that he shouldn't have loved in Rachel. We don't know. Maybe it was God's plan to be different. We don't know, because he made all those choices when he got to Paddan Aram without any prayer. We certainly have no questions about Rebekah being the right choice for Isaac.

But is all this complicating the fact that Jacob just never really surrendered to the Lord and let the Lord lead him and

provide? So what's happening in his life is Deborah dies, now Rachel dies. We can just see the Sculptor at work in his life, softening and breaking.

v. 19 So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).

“So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).”

And it was not a very pleasant experience at all. In fact, when he was with Joseph at the time of the blessing in Genesis 49, he returned to this and said, “That was the greatest sorrow in my life, when on the road to Bethlehem Rachel died.”

So this has touched him very, very deeply.

v. 20 Over her tomb Jacob set up a pillar, and to this day that pillar marks Rachel's tomb.

“Over her tomb Jacob set up a pillar, and to this day that pillar marks Rachel's tomb.”

Well, we have a “pillar of great joy” and “communion with the Lord” and then we have a “pillar of sorrow,” don't we?

Listen to what he says to his sons:

Genesis 49:29-32

Then he gave them these instructions: “I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, which Abraham bought as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite, along with the field. There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried, there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried, and there I buried Leah...

Now Rachel might have had him through life, but in death Leah is buried there in the cave of Macpelah, along with the other five citizens. He wants to be buried there as well. Joseph and the family carry out that mission.

v. 21 Israel moved on again and pitched his tent beyond Migdal Eder.

“Israel moved on again and pitched his tent beyond Migdal Eder.”

That’s “the watchtower for the flock.” He’s getting real close to Mamre.

v. 22 While Israel was living in that region, Reuben went in and slept with his father’s concubine Bilhah, and Israel heard of it. Jacob had twelve sons:

“While Israel was living in that region,”—in other words they’re still journeying close to get with Isaac—“Reuben went in and slept with his father’s concubine Bilhah, and Israel

heard of it. Jacob had twelve sons:”

He doesn't do a thing about this, but when it comes to the blessing back there in Genesis 49, he takes away the rights of the firstborn from Reuben and gives them to Joseph. And he really scorches him badly for what he did in this situation.

We don't know why these things happen. A lot of people think that this was planned by Reuben because now he was afraid that because Rachel was gone, Bilhah would get the place of blessing as her handmaid in the family. And he wanted to disenfranchise her from any possibility of that happening, so that Leah would still have her place of prominence in the family.

We don't know what was going on in his mind. It was a sick mind. And obviously what he did here, he had to have some design in doing it. It wasn't just lust certainly. There was some reason, because of Bilhah's relationship to Rachel, that he felt like he needed to act and take matters into his own hands.

Max Lucado does such a good job when he says:

(Shaped by God by Max Lucado)

In the shop of a blacksmith, there are three types of tools.
There are tools on the junkpile:

 outdated,
 broken,

dull,
rusty.

Then sit in the cobwebbed corner, useless to their master,
oblivious to their calling.

There are tools on the anvil:
melted down,
molten hot,
moldable,
changeable.

They lie on the anvil, being shaped by their master, accepting
their calling.

There are tools of usefulness:
sharpened,
primed,
defined,
mobile...

pp. xv-xviii

And he goes on to describe, the choices are ours at this point,
of whether we're going to allow the Lord to do what He does:

(Shaped by God by Max Lucado)

To find me, look over in the corner of the shop,
[we sense Reuben is saying this]
over here,
behind the cobwebs,
beneath the dust,

in the darkness.

There are scores of us,
broken handles,
dulled blades,
cracked iron.

Some of us were useful once, and then . . . many of us never were.

But, listen, don't feel sorry for me.

Life ain't so bad here in the pile . . .

no work,
no anvils,
no pain,
no sharpening.

And yet, the days are very long.

pp. 3-4

Now what he does in these remaining verses is he reviews the family.

v. 23 The sons of Leah: Reuben the firstborn of Jacob, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun.

“The sons of Leah [there are six of them and daughter Dinah who is not mentioned]: Reuben the firstborn of Jacob, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun.”

So Leah's sons are mentioned.

v. 24 The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin.

“The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin.”

And then we have the four children that were born to the two handmaids.

v. 25 The sons of Rachel’s maidservant Bilhah: Dan and Naphtali.

“The sons of Rachel’s maidservant Bilhah: Dan and Naphtali.”

First of all, “Bilhah: Dan and Naphtali.”

v. 26 The sons of Leah’s maidservant Zilpah: Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob, who were born to him in Paddan Aram.

“The sons of Leah’s maidservant Zilpah: Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob, who were born to him in Paddan Aram.”

It’s all put together now. Here’s the twelve tribes—the twelve individuals who are going to be involved.

v. 27 Jacob came home to his father Isaac in Mamre, near Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed.

“Jacob came home to his father Isaac in Mamre, near Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed.”

So he's back now—the place of the Abrahamic covenant. He's there with his father.

v. 28 Isaac lived a hundred and eighty years.

“Isaac lived a hundred and eighty years.”

And so he lived a whole lot longer than we thought back there when he was blind and thinking that he was going to have to get the whole blessing taken care of.

v. 29 Then he breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people, old and full of years. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

“Then he breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people, old and full of years. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.”

How thrilling! Esau did not hold any bitterness in Seir, for him not coming, but together they joined together. In the last snapshot we have of them. They're at the funeral of their dad and they're doing it together.

The text tells us Isaac died at 180 years old. Right? So that makes the twins, Jacob and Esau, 120 years old, doesn't it?

Jacob is going to live 27 more years. He will be 147 when he dies.

Okay, 17 of those years are going to be spent down in Egypt with Joseph, right? So we've got 10 years left.

At this point, with the death of his dad, he has also experienced—and it's not written here—that the brother sold Joseph into Egypt.

He's already there. He is one year from being prime minister of Egypt at this time when this is written. Just put that with all the other sorrow of Deborah, Rachel, Bilhah and now on top of it, the death of his dad. And then on top of that, his son that he loves so much is lost, as far as he's concerned.

Want one more? There's an economic crisis that literally wipes everybody out. It's the famine that finally gets him down into the land. Remember that?

When we start putting this all together, we don't cry about any little hard times we're having in comparison to what he went through.

So Jacob is 130 years old when he goes to Egypt to be reunited with Joseph. So there's just 10 years left here. Seven of those 10 years are going to be good years, aren't they? And so we back up and we're just about a year from Joseph being 30 and him taking the reins of government. Finally, after 7 good years, the famine comes and during that time Jacob and Joseph are reunited.

Joseph, by the way, lives to be 110 years old. He served in the Egyptian administration for 80 years. He was 30 when he took the reins of government.

So he lost his beloved wife Rachel, lost his dad Isaac, lost Deborah the nurse, lost his son Joseph, and had a handmaid defiled by Reuben. And on top of that, an economic collapse.

There are six lessons that come out of this final episode.

Lesson #1: God is ever calling us to Bethel to our meeting with Him. From the garden of Eden it has been Adam, “Where are you?”

Lesson #2: Restoration to fellowship involves casting out the idols experiencing the cleansing of the Spirit through confession and the changing of our garments for His robe of righteousness.

Lesson #3: A man in fellowship is more concerned about the person than he is the place.

Lesson #4: There are no rebukes upon return, only promises.

Lesson #5: Sorrow is used as a part of the training process to make us more godly.

Lesson #6: A lot of sorrow in our lives is explained because we love what we should not.

(Heaven by Randy Alcorn)

An old theologian once said, “Who chides a servant for taking away the first course of a feast when the second consists of far greater delicacies?” Who then can regret that this present world passes away when he sees that an eternal world of joy is coming? The first course is race, but the second is glory, and that is as much better as the fruit is better than the blossom.

CHARLES [Haddon] SPURGEON

p. 201

John Eaves, who knew he had cancer, had one goal and that was to finish well. And he did. He pulled it off. This is the last poem that came to his mind before he died:

(Finishing Well: Learning to Live Through Terminal Illness by John Eaves)

*A lone runner ran down a dusty road;
his body ached from the weight of his load.
Dreams of the finish line seemed to explode
for the race was far too long.*

*“I can run no more,” he said with a cry.
But just as that moment a man ran by.
He matched the pace of the runner’s stride
and began to sing this song.*

*“Run, keep on running, you’ll finish the race.
Fix your eyes on me and then I’ll set the pace.*

*Cast off anything that will hinder you.
Run . . . for your race is almost through.”*

*And with those words the man pulled ahead.
The runner thought of the words he'd said.
But soon his gaze was drawn instead
to the body of the man.*

*For his feet were maimed from an awful blow;
his hands were marred by a wound long ago.
With each stride the pain would show,
but the man still sang this song.*

*“Run, keep on running, you'll finish the race.
Fix your eyes on me and then I'll set the pace.
Cast off anything that will hinder you.
Run . . . for your race is almost through.”*

*They topped a hill and there below
Stood a coliseum grand.
The greatest runners of all time
were seated in the stands.*

*As they entered in the crowd began
to urge them round the field.
In the song they sang the man's name ran
. . . a mystery revealed.*

*“Run, keep on running, you'll finish the race.
Fix your eyes on me and then I'll set the pace.*

*Cast off anything that will hinder you.
Run . . . for your race is almost through.”*

*Jesus ran so we follow Him.
We compete as those who know we'll win.
The prize awaits God's champions—
the faithful who'll endure.*

*With each step He's by our side;
those who've come before look on in pride.
We'll end our course and come inside
to join The Runner's Song.*

pp. 11-13

Shortly thereafter, he entered into the joy of his Lord.

Father, we thank You for Your Word and how real and relevant it can become to us. Lord, each of us, teacher and student alike, need to come and bury the idols. We need to come and clean our hearts. We need to come and be those who put on new clothes, the clothes of the Spirit's garments of love, joy, peace, gentleness, kindness, faithfulness, self-control. These beautiful manifestations of Your presence in our lives. Thank You so much for this time together and we ask now You'll bless us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

What You Need to Know About ISAAC & JACOB:

“The Lord who leads armies makes this solemn vow: ‘Be sure of this: Just as I have intended so it will be; just as I have planned, it will happen.’” Isaiah 14:24 NET

Study Number Twelve – Genesis 35:1-29

v. 1 Then God said to Jacob, “Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau.”

v. 2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes.

v. 3 Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone.”

v. 4 So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem.

v. 5 Then they set out, and the terror of God fell upon the towns all around them so that no one pursued them.

v. 6 Jacob and all the people with him came to Luz (that is, Bethel) in the land of Canaan.

v. 7 There he built an altar, and he called the place El Bethel, because it was there that God revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.

v. 8 Now Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died and was buried under the oak below Bethel. So it was named Allon Bacuth.

v. 9 After Jacob returned from Paddan Aram, God appeared to him again and blessed him.

v. 10 God said to him, “Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel.” So he named him Israel.

NOTES

NOTES

v. 11 And God said to him, “I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will come from your body.

v. 12 The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.”

v. 13 Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him.

v. 14 Jacob set up a stone pillar at the place where God had talked with him, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it.

v. 15 Jacob called the place where God had talked with him Bethel.

v. 16 Then they moved on from Bethel. While they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and had great difficulty.

v. 17 And as she was having great difficulty in childbirth, the midwife said to her, “Don’t be afraid, for you have another son.”

v. 18 As she breathed her last—for she was dying—she named her son Ben-Oni. But his father named him Benjamin.

v. 19 So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).

v. 20 Over her tomb Jacob set up a pillar, and to this day that pillar marks Rachel’s tomb.

v. 21 Israel moved on again and pitched his tent beyond Migdal Eder.

v. 22 While Israel was living in that region, Reuben went in and slept with his father’s concubine Bilhah, and Israel heard of it. Jacob had twelve sons:

v. 23 The sons of Leah: Reuben the firstborn of Jacob, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun.

v. 24 The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin.

v. 25 The sons of Rachel’s maidservant Bilhah: Dan and Naphtali.

v. 26 The sons of Leah’s maidservant Zilpah: Gad and Asher.

These were the sons of Jacob, who were born to him in Paddan Aram.

v. 27 Jacob came home to his father Isaac in Mamre, near Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed.

v. 28 Isaac lived a hundred and eighty years.

v. 29 Then he breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people, old and full of years. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Genesis 35:1-29 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What message does Jacob receive from God in verse 1?

3. What does Jacob command his family to do as a result of this word from the Lord?

4. Where does Jacob go and what does he do according to verses 6 & 7?

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5. What message does Jacob receive from the Lord in verses 10-12?

6. What is Jacob's response to this message from the Lord, according to verses 14 & 15?

7. What happens to Rachel in verses 16-19?

8. What is the name of the son born to Rachel in her death?

9. Which verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: God is ever calling us to Bethel to our meeting with Him. From the garden of Eden it has been Adam, “Where are you?”

LESSON #2: Restoration to fellowship involves casting out the idols experiencing the cleansing of the Spirit through confession and the changing of our garments for His robe of righteousness.

LESSON #3: A man in fellowship is more concerned about the person than he is the place.

LESSON #4: There are no rebukes upon return, only promises.

LESSON #5: Sorrow is used as a part of the training process to make us more godly.

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LESSON #6: A lot of sorrow in our lives is explained because we love what we should not.

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