

On the Beginning

34. Jacob's Return

NOTE ESPECIALLY Genesis 35-36

After the detour through Succoth and Shechem, Jacob's life got "back on track" when God again called him to "*go up to Bethel*" (Genesis 35:1). Look again at Jacob's promise in Genesis 28:20-22, and at God's call in Genesis 31:13. It was important for him to go back to Bethel.

1. The **Strange Gods**.

Jacob's family needed to get ready to go back to the House of God (Bethel). They had to forsake their sins, especially the sin of idolatry (Genesis 35:2-4). To get back on track, we must always forsake our sins. Have you picked up some sinful activities since you left the path of living by faith? Jacob's family had, and he demanded that they give them up. What would you have to give up if you really came back to God?

2. The **Terror** of God.

When Jacob's family repented of their sin, God prepared the way for them to go to Bethel (See vs. 5-6). In Genesis 34:30, we see Jacob's concerns about the reaction of the heathen to the bad actions of his sons. But the heathen did not "*pursue*" Jacob's family because God put fear in them. When we get right with God, and set out to do His will, He works things out so that we can do it!

3. Back at **Bethel**.

In Genesis 35:6-15, we read about Jacob's return to Bethel. First review Genesis 28:10-22, and compare that passage with this one. After he left home, Jacob saw a vision at Luz, and renamed the place "Bethel," which means "the House of God." There he "*vowed a vow*" to return and worship the LORD at the pillar he set up at Bethel. Compare his vow in Genesis 28 with what he actually did in Genesis 35.

a. He built an altar. The altar was called "El-Bethel," which means the "God of Bethel." In Chapter 28 he was especially impressed with the place, but in Chapter 35 he was impressed with the God of the place!

b. He buried Deborah. One era of his life was ending, and another beginning!

c. He talked with God. On this occasion God reaffirmed the promises of His covenant with Abraham's seed.

d. He anointed (the pillar as the House of God. The pillar, for us, represents) the local Christian church. See how it is described in I Timothy 3:14-15.

*"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly:
But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to
behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the
living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."
(1 Timothy 3:14-15)*

Notice that the church is "*the house of God*." Ever since Bethel, there has been some entity or institution on earth that represents the presence and person of God (Notice

Genesis 28:16– “*Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not*”). In Old Testament days, it was the Tabernacle and Temple. Then when God vacated His House in Jerusalem (Matthew 23:38, 27:50-51), He promised to come and occupy His New Testament House, the church (John 14:15-17, Ephesians 2:19-22). The oil Jacob poured on the pillar at Bethel pictures the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church (Acts 1:6-8, 2: 1-18). We also see pictured here the truth that when a Christian comes back to God, he must come back to the House of God, the church.

4. Birth and **Death**.

The rest of Genesis 35 tells about the birth of Benjamin (12th son of Jacob) and the death of Isaac. Benjamin’s mother died having him, and he became very precious to his father. Rachel called him “Ben-oni,” which means “son of my sorrow,” but Jacob named him “Benjamin”(“son of my right hand”). In these names we can see the image of Jesus Christ, Who came as the Man of Sorrows (Isaiah 53:3), but was exalted to God’s right hand (Psalm 110:1, Ephesians 1:18-23). Isaac died not long after Benjamin was born and Jacob returned home, but more than twenty-five years after Esau had said,

“The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.” (Genesis 27:41 b)

5. The Generations of **Esau**.

The next chapter (36) is given to a summation of Esau’s descendents and of the nation they formed (Edom). According to the usual pattern in Genesis, a branch of the family that will give us Christ is quickly handled and then left behind as the line that actually did give us the Saviour is followed. Chapter 37 goes back to Jacob’s family as the book closes on Esau’s family. The subject of the Bible is Christ!