

Genesis 34-36

INTRODUCTION

[Turn to 31:13]

Let's begin with a look at the Outline of Genesis and see where we are in the story of beginnings . . .

I. Introduction • Chs. 1-11

II. The Patriarchs [Abraham & His Descendants] • Chs. 12-50

A. Abraham – Chs. 12-25

B. Isaac – Chs. 26-28

C. Jacob – Chs. 28-36

D. Joseph – Chs. 37-50

Tonight, we wrap up the story of Jacob, Isaac's son and Abraham's grandson, to whom the promises of God, originally given in ch. 12, had passed.

At this point, Jacob has returned from his 20 year exile in Mesopotamia where he had acquired a vast fortune and extensive family.

He's been reconciled to his estranged brother Esau, and he's settle near the Canaanite city of Shechem. [Map] [Met and separated]

When Jacob fled from his home some 20 years before, he'd spent the night at a place he called Bethel, the House of God, because of the vision-dream he'd had there.

God had spoke to Jacob and told him that despite his own clever attempts to wrest the family blessing from his brother, God had graciously ordained that he should receive it.

God promised to bless and prosper Jacob and to bring him back to the land.

Jacob set up a memorial stone and anointed it as a marker of his vision and what God had promised, making a vow himself that if

God did indeed, bless him and bring him back, then he would serve God.

Bethel became for Jacob the place of commitment, of dedication to the Lord.

When God appeared to him in Mesopotamia, he called Himself "The God of Bethel."

13I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family."

It's interesting then to find that when he first returns to the land after being gone for 20 years, instead of going to Bethel, he settled at Shechem. [Show on Map]

For Shechem was a center of Canaanite culture – a culture which was corrupt & headed toward judgment.

CHAPTER 34 • THE DINAH INCIDENT

A. Vs. 1-4 • The Rape of Dinah

1Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land.

Dinah was a teen at this point, and it was natural she would be curious about the other young women her age among whom she now lived. So she went out one day to see how they lived.

The problem was that a young unattended woman was fair game in the Middle Eastern culture of that time, specially in Canaan.

History & archaeology tells us the Canaanite culture was centered on sex; they had an obsession with it so that it permeated their entire culture.

Any young woman who ventured out in public without supervision by her male relatives was considered fair game for the sexual pursuits of the men who found her.

2And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her.

The city of Shechem was a city-state which controlled the entire surrounding region.

The ruler was a man named Hamor, a Hivite; his son was Shechem, named after their ancestor who had founded the city some generations before.

Shechem saw Dinah walking through the city unattended and boldly took her into his chamber.

If his attention was merely sexual at first, he quickly changed and fell in love with her.

3His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young woman and spoke kindly to the young woman.

4So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young woman as a wife."

It's not mentioned how old Shechem was nor if he had other wives.

All that's said is that he determined to be married to Dinah.

He wasn't interested in Dinah as merely some object to gratify his sexual desires; he wanted to marry her and so according to the custom of the time, asked his father to make the arrangements with Dinah's dad.

B. Vs. 5-24 • The Wedding Arrangements Negotiated

5And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter. Now his sons were with his livestock in the field; so Jacob held his peace until they came.

Word came back to Jacob that Shechem had raped his daughter. When the message was delivered, Dinah's brothers were out with the flocks and wouldn't be back till that afternoon.

6Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. 7And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved and very angry, because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, a thing which ought not to be done.

Shechem must have been urgent in his appeal to his father Hamor because he went immediately to Jacob to negotiate the bride price.

The message that had come to Jacob about his daughter was quickly carried to her brothers in the field who hurried home to find

Hamor sitting with their father and working over their arrangements for the union of their sister and Hamor's son.

But the brothers were deeply upset – they considered the rape of their sister a crime that ought to be punished, not rewarded by giving her to the guy who raped her!

8But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as a wife. 9And make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters to yourselves. 10So you shall dwell with us, and the land shall be

before you. Dwell and trade in it, and acquire possessions for yourselves in it."

I want to ask you to think back over our studies in the life of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for the last several weeks.

How does the prospect of intermarriage with the Canaanites sound?

Abraham had forbade the union of Isaac to one of the local Canaanite women.

Isaac and Rebekah were deeply grieved when Esau took Canaanite wives and sent Jacob to Mesopotamia so he wouldn't take one.

Here, Hamor is making an appeal to the sons of Jacob that they can take wives from among the people of the land!

These marriages will frame the basis of alliances for commerce that will enrich them!

Hamor is a great salesman – and the boon he dangles before them is an enticing one.

Jacob ought to have categorically shut it down.

11Then Shechem said to her father and her brothers, "Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you say to me I will give. 12Ask me ever so much dowry and gift, and I will give according to what you say to me; but give me the young woman as a wife."

As was the custom, Shechem had gone with his father when he went to see Jacob. Now he speaks up and pleads with Dinah's family to consent to the marriage.

He doesn't even want to negotiate – he just wants to hear them give their assent to the union. He promises to pay whatever bridal price they request!

At this point, Jacob's sons take over for their father . . .

13But the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully, because he had defiled Dinah their sister.

The boys can see that Shechem is so earnest in acquiring Dinah as a wife that they can work the situation to their advantage.

They feel personally violated by the rape and determine to exact their pound of flesh – literally!

14And they said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a reproach to us.

15But on this condition we will consent to you: If you will become as we are, if every male of you is circumcised, 16then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us; and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. 17But if you will not heed us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone."

This is a ruse on the part of Jacob's sons; v. 13 makes it clear they spoke deceitfully.

They figured that if Hamor and Shechem refused, which as the more likely reply, then they would have an out and could exact revenge for the violation of their sister.

If they consented, this would leave the men of Shechem vulnerable and they could carry out their revenge.

The offer was never a legitimate one; only a ruse.

In v. 16, they say when the Shechemites are circumcised, they will be one people.

If Jacob had hammered anything into the heads of his sons it was the fact that they were never to become one with the Canaanites!

The tragedy is that Jacob's boys prostituted the sacred sign of circumcision God had given to Abraham and his sons of promise to a wicked end.

They were taking something that was meant to be a special and private marker of their covenant with the Lord and turning it into the means of doing great evil.

18And their words pleased Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son. 19So the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he delighted in Jacob's daughter. He was more honorable than all the household of his father.

While the Canaanites were a corrupt people, they were not without those whose morality rose above their peers and Shechem was one such.

Sure his actions in raping Dinah were wrong – deeply wrong, but they were permitted by the customs of that time.

Something inside him felt the guilt of what he had done and he decided to make it right, even by going so far as to submit to circumcision so that he might honor Dinah and make her his wife.

The actions of Dinah's brothers come off in a much darker light compared to the actions of Shechem following his initial sin & crime. So Shechem submitted to circumcision as the very first and in order to secure Dinah as his bride.

But then, Hamor and Shechem were faced with the difficult task of persuading the rest of the men of Shechem to submit to circumcision as well! That would be quite a sell job.

20And Hamor and Shechem his son came to the gate of their city, and spoke with the men of their city, saying: 21"These men are at peace with us. Therefore let them dwell in the land and trade in it.

Being good pitch men, they make the appeal to increased wealth.

For indeed the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters to us as wives, and let us give them our daughters.

This is an indication that Jacob had other daughters besides Dinah who aren't named. The reason Dinah is named is because of this incident.

Hamor went on . . .

22Only on this condition will the men consent to dwell with us, to be one people: if every male among us is circumcised as they are circumcised. 23Will not their livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs be ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us." 24And all who went out of the gate of his city heeded Hamor and Shechem his son; every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

These two were incredible salesmen if they could persuade the entire male population of Shechem to submit to circumcision.

Again, notice how they appealed to the greed of the Shechemites in v. 23.

C. Vs. 25-31 • The Treachery of Simeon & Levi

25Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males. 26And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out. 27The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled. 28They took their sheep, their oxen, and their donkeys, what was in the city and what was in the field, 29and all their wealth. All their little ones and their wives they took captive; and they plundered even all that was in the houses.

Dinah was the daughter of Leah. Two of her full-brothers, Levi & Simeon took it on themselves to avenge her by entering the city at the point at which the men of Shechem would be the most debilitated because of their operation – and put them to death. They slew every adult male in the entire city.

Then, when the other brothers heard about it, they rushed on the city and plundered it.

Their crime was far worse than the rape of their sister.

The rape of Dinah can in no way be justified or made less heinous than it was, but the actions of Simeon & Levi, followed up by

all their brothers, was far worse!
Slaying Shechem might be justified – but even that is doubtful in light of how he sought to make it right by marrying her and treating her well afterward.
There was simply no justification at all for the murder of the men of Shechem. This was a high crime!
And their real motive becomes clear in light of their actions – they plundered the city.
They USED their sister and her misfortune as an excuse, a cloak and shield to cover their greed.
They are not unlike the shyster lawyers today who use consumer protection laws to go after certain businesses they know they can easily extort money out of.
These lawyers do not care at all for the protection of consumers.
They simply see some arcane law as the means to weaseling money out of some shop owner or major corporation.
The proof is that they do not give one penny of the massive settlements they secure to consumers but pocket it themselves and use it as capital to go after even bigger prizes.
Simeon & Levi were the original law team.

30Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, “You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and since I am few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and kill me. I shall be destroyed, my household and I.”

Jacob had no part in the actions of his sons and rebuked the boys.
But notice how his rebuke takes shape – not in righteous indignation because what they’ve done is so morally repugnant; no – he’s concerned about how it will play out among the other Canaanite tribes!
Jacob is more concerned for the impact this treachery will have on his well-being than for what it says about the moral condition of his house!
Forget what the Canaanites and Perizzites think – what about what GOD thinks.
This has been wholesale mass-murder!!!!!!!
Jacob’s attitude here gives us a clue into how Simeon & Levi could have done this in the first place – their father has not been nurturing in them a sense of godly morality.
They’ve seen him striving and conniving his way through life, angling every situation & relationship to gain an advantage over others – isn’t that what they’ve done at Shechem?
They witnessed him go from Rachel’s tent to Leah’s, to Bilhah’s to Zilpah’s and father a whole pack of children.
They watched him sneak away from Mesopotamia.
They witnessed his scheming preparation to meet Esau, and then heard him promise to follow his brother southeast to Edom, when he then turned the opposite direction toward Shechem.
Jacob had allowed them to be influenced by the corrupt culture of Shechem, and had failed to cultivate in them a sense of distinctness and separation from the world which is the essence of holiness & godliness.
The whole problem began when Dinah went out by herself – something Jacob ought not have allowed, and ought to have raised her to see was inappropriate.
Her natural curiosity at how the Shechemite young women of her age lived ought to have been curbed & tempered by the higher value of maintaining a holy lifestyle.
But Jacob hadn’t cultivated a sense of such godly morality in his children.
What he’d cultivated in them was his own conniving, selfish sense of greed.

Parents – make sure that your spiritual growth is being translated into the way you raise your children!
All too often, there’s a disconnect that takes place here and many parents have come to believe it’s not right for a parent to attempt to nurture a sense of morality in their child.
In this modern age, we’re told that truth is relative and that there are no moral absolutes – which is a self-contradictory assertion!
But still, we’re constantly hammered with the idea that morality is self-determined and varies from person to person.
In fact, this idea has become so pervasive, there’s a growing number of people who are actually advocating the acceptance of certain lifestyles and actions that used to be considered perversions & crimes.
Many TV shows, movies, and songs portray sin as a legitimate and acceptable choice.
The result is that many parents hesitate at training their children in morality.
Ephesians 6:4 says –

4And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

[Elaborate]

Town repeals ban on immorality
Posted: April 16, 2003 1:00 a.m. Eastern © 2003 WorldNetDaily.com
The city council of an affluent gated town in southern California has repealed an official ban on immorality, giving legitimacy to those who might commit adultery within city limits, reports the Torrance, Calif., [Daily Breeze](#).
The repeal also gives the wealthy youngsters of the town legal freedom – at least on a municipal level – to engage in premarital sex.
On Monday, the Rolling Hills City Council voted to take the 46-year-old ordinance banning "immoral conduct" off the books.
"So, this is a pro-adultery thing?" joked Councilman James Black before the meeting, according to the paper. "Good for us!"
The council members claim they are not endorsing the breaking of the seventh commandment, but simply doing away with an archaic, unenforceable law. The statute was the second one adopted by the city when it was first incorporated in 1957.
The law bans immoral conduct that it defines as "any person exposing his or her person or the private parts thereof; or the doing of any other act with the intent of arousing, appealing to or gratifying the lust or passions or sexual desires of any person to whom he or she is not married."
Also prohibited is "the act of any person occupying, using or being present in any bed, room, automobile, structure or public place with a person of the opposite sex, to whom he or she is not married, for the purpose of having sexual intercourse with said person."
This is the moral climate you and I live in today – and it’s one that’s aggressively promoted by such youth oriented venues as Rolling Stone and Spin Magazines and MTV.

Simeon & Levi recognized the hypocrisy of Jacob for what it was and replied to his rebuke -

31But they said, “Should he treat our sister like a harlot?”

Of course, this response is no less hypocritical than Jacob’s!
They’d only USED their sister’s misfortune as a cloak for their own purposes.
Like father – like sons!

CHAPTER 35 • RETURNING TO BETHEL

D. Vs. 1-7 • The Call & Return to Bethel

1Then God said to Jacob, “Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.”

Bethel is where Jacob ought to have gone from the start. Now that he’s suffered this humiliating moral defeat and realizes that his own weaknesses and failures are being duplicated in his children, God comes to him and tells him go back to Bethel, the place of his first encounter with God.

It’s time for a fresh start – a renewal.

God told him to go and make an altar – in other words – go and worship there!

Shechem had been a place of sin and failure, but God is the God of renewal.

Each of us has a Bethel - a place of first encounter with God, where He first reveals Himself to us and we pledge ourselves to Him.

But life is often filled with many Shechems, with little outposts and manifestations of the world that attract us and with which we fail.

God ever speaks to us, calling us back to Bethel – to the simplicity of worship and service of Him.

Where do you live today – at Bethel or Shechem?

2And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. **3**Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone.” **4**So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hands, and the earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem.

As God has called Jacob to return to Bethel, Jacob knows he cannot go there and build an altar to worship if he’s going to allow the spiritual pollution that exists in his house to go on.

Rachel still has her father’s teraphim, his little household gods.

Other members of the family and the servants have picked up little pagan trinkets, amulets charms, and idols along the way from Mesopotamia and at Shechem.

Jacob says it’s time to clean house – literally; to get rid of all and anything that smacks of devotion to anything but the Lord alone.

It’s crucial when we come to the Lord, or come back to Him, that we jettison anything that links us to the sin and rebellion of our past.

We read the Book of Acts that in Ephesus, when revival broke out through the ministry of the Apostle Paul, the people brought a vast fortune in books dedicated to magic and the occult and burned them.

This was a way for them to demonstrate their severing the ties to their pagan past.

Eph 5:11 tells us to have no fellowship, no traffic, no sense of participation with the unfruitful works of darkness.

John the Baptist spoke of bearing fruit worthy of repentance. [Mat. 3 & Luke 3]

What he meant was giving evidence of the genuineness of our repentance by not only saying we’re sorry for our sin, but showing a sincere desire to put sin behind us by ridding ourselves of those things which attend sin, facilitate it and promote it.

Are there things around your house, in your car, or at your work that are implements of sin?

Are there magazines, videos, computer files for which you would be embarrassed if one of your Christian brothers or sisters found, let alone the Lord who already sees?

Is there drug paraphernalia you keep around for nostalgia’s sake?

Is there artwork or music in your home that the world considers sophisticated but God calls profane?

Is there something, anything the Lord has quickened your conscience to that needs to be jettisoned? Do it tonight, as soon as you leave here.

God called Jacob back to Bethel, back to a heart of simple worship. But Jacob knew the route back lay through a pathway of purging all that which would render his worship insincere.

Worship must be offered up with clean hands and a pure heart – one undiluted and polluted with competing affections and loyalties.

5And they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities that were all around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.

After the treachery of Shechem, Jacob had worried that the other Canaanites would band together and attack him.

But the moment he turned back to the Lord, the Lord moved to protect him – even though he didn’t DESERVE it!

Jacob’s whole life and story is one long testimony to the grace of God!

6So 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 he built an altar there and called the place El Bethel, because there God appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother.

E. Vs. 8-15 • God Renews The Covenant

8Now Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the terebinth tree. So the name of it was called Allon Bachuth [Oak of Weeping].

Rebekah was Jacob’s mother. By this time she’d passed on and Deborah, the woman who had served as the nursemaid in raising her sons, Esau and Jacob, had moved from Isaac’s camp at Mamre to live with Jacob at Bethel.

She was a beloved figure and when she died they gave her a special place and memorial.

9Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him. **10**And God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name.” So He called his name Israel.

This is a renewal for what we read about in ch. 32.

Jacob means literally – “Heel-catcher” but carries the connotation of a conniving self-sufficient and reliant trickster.

Israel means – one ruled by God; one whose sufficiency is in the Lord.

God had renamed Jacob Israel earlier, when he was about to cross the border back into the land of promise.

But Jacob had not walked in the new identity God gave him; he continued to live in his old self-sufficient ways for some time until he came to see how it would all end if he did not fully repent and embrace the new nature God was offering him.

This is the path it seems many of God’s kids walk:

There’s an initial period of revelation and the entering into relationship with God through faith in Christ.

But then there’s an awkward time of stumbling and fumbling as we struggle with the lures and attractions of the world and with dying to the old way of living and thinking.

For many Christians, there comes some crisis, some moment of enlightenment when they realize being a Christian is far more than fire-insurance.

It’s far more than going to church and reading the Bible – it’s a new identity, and whole new way of life and living that

encompasses everything, every moment of every day.

Being a Christian isn't something you do, it's something you are – 24/7.

And just as Jacob was given a new name to match his new nature, so Revelation 2 says that the culmination of our faith will be accompanied by the impartation of a new name.

11Also God said to him: "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. **12**The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land."

God renewed the covenant He had made with Abraham and then with Isaac, now with Jacob.

13Then God went up from him in the place where He talked with him. **14**So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured a drink offering on it, and he poured oil on it. **15**And Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel.

This is a renewal of what Jacob had done at this same place over 20 years before when he had fled from his home.

He's renewing and recommitting himself to the Lord and sets up a memorial.

MEMORIAL – a way to remember. [Elaborate]

F. Vs. 16-20 • The Death of Rachel & Birth of Benjamin

16Then they journeyed from Bethel. And when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel labored in childbirth, and she had hard labor. **17**Now it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said to her, "Do not fear; you will have this son also." **18**And so it was, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-oni [son of my sorrow]; but his father called him Benjamin [son of my right hand]. **19**So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). **20**And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day.

Benjamin was Jacob's last child.

The labor was severe and the complications of delivery led to Rachel's death.

As she gave birth, Rachel knew she wouldn't survive and named the boy after the circumstances of his birth.

But Jacob graciously renamed him with a moniker of favor. Though he was the youngest, Jacob was elevating him to the place of position and favor over his brothers.

Putting Rachel in her grave has an intense trial for Jacob as this was his love, his sweetheart.

The death of a spouse in the highest form of stress we can know as a human being.

G. Vs. 21-26 • Jacob's Sons Listed

21Then Israel journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder. **22**And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard about it.

This is one more evidence of Jacob's failure to train his children with a sense of proper morality.

This is a shocking case of incest and will mark Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, as a man unworthy of carrying on the family blessing.

Now the sons of Jacob were twelve: 23the sons of Leah were Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; **24**the sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin; **25**the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, were Dan and Naphtali; **26**and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant, were Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Padan Aram.

Actually – all but Benjamin were born in Padan Aram. Ben was born in Canaan as we just read.

H. Vs. 27-28 • The Death of Isaac

27Then Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kirjath Arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had dwelt. **28**Now the days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years. **29**So Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, being old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Isaac was buried in the family plot Abraham had secured there in Hebron.

CHAPTER 36 • THE FAMILY & DESCENDANTS OF ESAU

A. Vs. 1-19 • The Chief Descendants of Esau

They came to be called the Edomites after the nickname of Esau – "Edom."

B. Vs. 20-30 • The Descendants of Seir

These verses give the names of the originals inhabitants of Edom with whom the descendants of Esau intermixed.

C. Vs. 31-43 • The Rulers of The Edomites

CONCLUSION

That brings us to ch. 37 and the story of Joseph, which will take us through the end of the book in ch. 50.

Joseph's is one of the most exciting stories in the entire Bible, which tells an overall story brimming with drama!