

Genesis 34:1-31 and 35:1-15

Although Jacob had returned to Canaan at the express command of the Lord, it almost seemed like he had jumped from the frying pan into the fire.

And also the possibility of retreat had been effectively cut off by an angry uncle

"--thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm."

So going back would be dangerous, and to all appearances, going ahead would be equally dangerous.

In fact, even standing still was dangerous. Yes, if he stayed where he was, his brother would be confronting him in the morning, and he had 400 armed men with him.

However, that very night Jacob found victory in the midst of defeat---"**Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.**"

He had met "**God face to face,**" and he had been given a new start and a new name. And in the strength of that new name, Jacob had met Esau bravely, humbly, and with a clear testimony--"**God hath dealt graciously with me.**"

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This would have been a good place to end our lesson, but, unfortunately, we cannot. You see, although the new Israel had "**power with God and with men,**" the old Jacob had gotten tired of the pilgrim journey.

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It all began with a very little thing.
At least to Jacob it seemed like a little
thing.

He decided to settle down just outside of
Canaan, at least for a little while.

Genesis 33:17 **"And Jacob journeyed to
Succoth, and built him an house, and
made booths for his cattle."**

Yes, he moved out of his tent and into a
house, and in so doing, he moved out of
the pilgrim lifestyle of his fathers.

Eventually he did move into Canaan, and even
into a tent, but it was a tent whose
stakes were driven far too deeply into
this present evil world.

Yes, **"he bought a parcel of a field, where
he had spread his tent"** just outside
the very wicked Canaanite city of

Shechem, and there he raised his children.

That's where Chapter 34 begins.

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Having sidestepped his responsibility as a pilgrim and as a parent, it was only a matter of time before his daughter was attracted to the big lights of the city, and the good life of Shechem.

Genesis 34:1 **"And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land."**

Eventually Jacob did have other daughters, but apparently at this time, Dinah was his only girl in a family of boys, and no doubt was a favourite of her dad.

In a lot of ways, Dinah had lived a very sheltered life, so her new city friends and her new life really fascinated her.

At first she was a bit shocked by their lack of morals, but before long, she realized that her parents were kind of old fashioned in many ways.

And added to these new experiences was the exciting realization that a very handsome and most influential young man was crazy about her.

In fact, this very city was named after him, or was it the other way around? She wasn't quite sure, but it was pretty impressive anyway.

Before long, Shechem had swept her off her feet, and before long she had given in to his morals, which, of course, were Canaanite morals.

V 2-3 **"And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and**

defiled her.

3: And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel."

Although Shechem had dragged Dinah down to his level, she was not just someone to be used and forgotten.

No, he really wanted to marry her.

V 4 "And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife."

There seemed to be no shame for his actions, nor did his father reprimand him, and it wasn't long before the news spread.

V 5 "And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter: now his sons were with his cattle in the field: and Jacob held his peace until they were come."

However, before his sons got back, Hamor showed up to make the necessary arrangements, and with no apology for his son's defilement of Jacob's daughter.

V 6-7 **"And Hamor the father of Shechem went out unto Jacob to commune with him. 7: And the sons of Jacob came out of the field when they heard it: and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done."**

Here we see the clash between two different cultures and two different sets of morals.

Jacob was upset because his daughter had been **"defiled,"** and his sons were fighting mad because Shechem **"had**

wrought folly in Israel," but Hamor merely considered it business as usual.

V 8-12 "And Hamor communed with them, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longeth for your daughter: I pray you give her him to wife.

9: And make ye marriages with us, and give your daughters unto us, and take our daughters unto you.

10: And ye shall dwell with us: and the land shall be before you; dwell and trade ye therein, and get you possessions therein.

11: And Shechem said unto her father and unto her brethren, Let me find grace in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give.

12: Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye

shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife."

Shechem was most sincere in wanting to gain the family's good will, and was willing to offer any amount of dowry they would desire.

And Hamor was willing to take their family into the society of Shechem with all its supposed material advantages.

I don't think he wished Jacob any real harm, although I'm sure he had an eye for a good deal, and, of course, wanted to accommodate his son.

And certainly there seemed to be a definite appeal to his offer.

Not only could an alliance be financially profitable, but it would solve one of Jacob's major problems, if he was not too particular.

As I mentioned in last week's lesson, his older sons were now of marrying age, and the possibility of obtaining wives in Padan-aram was out of the question. However, with all its seeming appeal, this deal would have been far more lethal than any of Jacob's previous deals with Laban.

In fact, although neither Hamor nor Jacob realized it, there is no doubt in my mind that this was one of Satan's master plans to destroy the nation of Israel.

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With great care, God had set aside Abraham, Isaac, and now Jacob, to father a nation that would someday benefit all the peoples of the earth.

Then in Jacob's family, God had taken the next step towards the establishment of His chosen people.

His 12 sons would be the progenitors of the 12 tribes of Israel, and from one of these tribes, His Son would become flesh and dwell among us.

However, because of Dinah's affair, and Hamor's desire to accommodate his son, Satan had been able to craft a perfect scheme to frustrate God's purposes.

Yes, if Jacob accepted Hamor's offer, it would only be a matter of time before Israel would be completely absorbed into the Canaanite nation.

Not simply because Jacob's sons would marry Canaanite wives, for, indeed, most of them didn't marry that well anyway, but because they would be completely

swallowed up, sons and daughters, into the economy and society of Shechem.

Of course, God would never allow that to happen, but how differently this could have been accomplished if Jacob had maintained his pilgrim lifestyle.

As it turned out, their separation was determined by a very ungodly and foul means, and one that would do untold damage to their testimony.

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The brothers' claim in V 7 that Shechem had **"wrought folly in Israel"** indicates that they had been taught the special position their family held in God's plan, and the seriousness of this shameful act.

However, even with this religious zeal, they didn't seem to be the least concerned

with the fact that *their* "**folly**" would corrupt the family name, and bring great dishonour on the name of Jehovah. So, with cunning craftiness, they promised to make an alliance, when all the time they had no intention of keeping their word.

V 13-17 "**And the sons of Jacob answered**

Shechem and Hamor his father deceitfully, and said, because he had defiled Dinah their sister:

14: And they said unto them, We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us:

15: But in this will we consent unto you: If ye will be as we be, that every male of you be circumcised;

16: Then will we give our daughters

unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people.

17: But if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised; then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone."

Jacob probably wouldn't have agreed with Hamor's plan, and he certainly wouldn't have agreed with his sons' plan of deception and murder, but he seems to have been strangely absent during the whole negotiation.

No doubt, being overcome by grief, he had left the room, leaving the final decision up to his sons.

This was a serious mistake, and a desertion of his role as the head of the house.

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And his sons' plan was extremely wicked for several reasons.

First of all, they made a covenant of peace while planning war.

Secondly, they used God's holy ordinance as a tool to accomplish their treachery.

And, as is often the case when revenge is contemplated, their actions went far beyond the just punishment of the crime.

V 18-23 **"And their words pleased Hamor, and Shechem Hamor's son.**

19: And the young man deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter: and he was more honourable than all the house of his father.

20: And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and

communed with the men of their city,
saying,

21: These men are peaceable with us;
therefore let them dwell in the land,
and trade therein; for the land,
behold, it is large enough for them;
let us take their daughters to us for
wives, and let us give them our
daughters.

22: Only herein will the men consent
unto us for to dwell with us, to be one
people, if every male among us be
circumcised, as they are circumcised.

23: Shall not their cattle and their
substance and every beast of theirs be
ours? only let us consent unto them,
and they will dwell with us."

Hamor was a real salesman, and he used much the same argument on the residents of Shechem that he had on Jacob.

After all, it had worked once, why not again?

However, when it came to his own countrymen, he quietly suggested that they could eventually take over all of Jacob's assets.

V 23 **"Shall not their cattle and their substance and every beast of theirs be ours?"**

How they were going to accomplish this, I don't know, but it doesn't seem quite honest to me.

So with the hope of great gain, the men of Shechem consented to go along with the religious scruples of Jacob's family.

V 24-26 "And unto Hamor and unto Shechem
his son hearkened all that went out of
the gate of his city; and every male
was circumcised, all that went out of
the gate of his city.

25: And it came to pass on the third
day, when they were sore, that two of
the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi,
Dinah's brethren, took each man his
sword, and came upon the city boldly,
and slew all the males.

26: And they slew Hamor and Shechem his
son with the edge of the sword, and
took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and
went out."

It's very clear from V 17 that they could
have taken Dinah home at any time
without resorting to bloodshed.

"--- if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised; then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone."

Simeon and Levi were the sons of Leah, therefore Dinah was their little sister, so you would expect some sort of retribution, but this massacre was nothing less than senseless revenge. And even though the other brothers had not participated in this wanton destruction, they were far from innocent.

In fact, V 27-29 says---**"The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister.**

28: They took their sheep, and their oxen, and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that which was in

the field,

29: And all their wealth, and all their little ones, and their wives took they captive, and spoiled even all that was in the house."

V 27 says they "spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister."

Here was revenge gone completely mad, and their so-called righteous excuse for their actions was, "they had defiled their sister."

What a debauchery!

V 30 "And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together

against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house."

Jacob was absolutely horrified by the cries of the newly made widows and their frantic children, and the sight of the booty being brought into his camp.

Certainly he burned with righteous indignation when he saw his sons' deplorable conduct, but we must admit, it was Jacob who had sidestepped his responsibility as the head of the house, and now it was too late.

And there is no denying the fact that none of this would have happened had he not forsaken his pilgrim lifestyle and had not raised his children just outside of a very wicked Canaanite city.

Galatians 6:7 says, "**Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.**"

And certainly Jacob had reaped sevenfold. Poor Jacob was completely undone.

Previously he had feared annihilation at the hands of Esau, and once again he had forgotten about the protection provided by the Abrahamic Covenant.

Yes, in spite of the fact that God had promised him " ---**thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.**

15: And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither

thou goest---", in spite of all that,
he saw nothing but complete
annihilation ahead.

**"--and I being few in number, they shall
gather themselves together against me,
and slay me; and I shall be destroyed,
I and my house."**

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But his words made little impression upon
his sons.

They showed no repentance for their actions,
but instead, intimated that they had
cared more about Dinah's reputation
than he had.

V 31 **"And they said, Should he deal with our
sister as with an harlot?"**

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Poor Jacob was beside himself with grief and
worry!

Dinah was huddled in a corner, incapacitated by grief.

The news of last night's raid was spreading across the land, and his sons didn't seem to care what happened.

If anyone ever needed a decisive word from the Lord, it was Jacob.

Genesis 35:1 **"And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother."**

In response to God's proclamation, Jacob rose out of the ashes of despair and took back the leadership of his home, and certainly his leadership was needed.

God had spoken, and he would go back to Bethel, back to the place where he had first met his Lord.

The principle is always the same.

When there is failure in our lives, when we have drifted away from the fundamental foundations of our faith, God always calls us back to Himself.

Revelation 2:5 **"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works."**

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So as Jacob hurriedly prepares to leave Shechem, I would like to take a few minutes to consider the significance of his place of refuge.

The name *Bethel* means "the house of God," and, surprisingly, it had never been very far away.

Yes, it was only about 15 miles south of Shechem, but it was 1000 feet higher. And the amazing thing was, even though Jacob had lived in Shechem for about 10 years, as far as we know, he had never visited Bethel.

Also we have to consider the fact that Bethel was almost directly *between* Shechem and Hebron, the place he must have gone to many times to visit his father.

So it almost seems that during those fateful years at Shechem, Jacob had been much more concerned with business than with spiritual growth.

Yes, he had been on a detour, a detour that had started at Succoth and had ended in disaster.

However, now that his world was collapsing around him, God had called him back to his beginnings, and Jacob was glad to go.

Genesis 35:1 **"And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother."**

Jacob knew that there had to be cleansing in his family before they could go back to Bethel.

No, he could no longer ignore his God-given responsibility to purge out the leaven in his home.

When he had first left Padan-aram, his wife Rachel had stolen her father's gods, and probably others in his immediate

family and some among of his servants
would possess household gods also.

And who knows what images might have been
included in the spoil taken from
Shechem?

So it was a sad state of affairs that Jacob
could ignore no longer, especially with
the spectre of complete annihilation
hanging over his head.

No, he could never return to Bethel in that
condition.

V 2-4 **"Then Jacob said unto his household,
and to all that were with him, Put away
the strange gods that are among you,
and be clean, and change your garments:
3: And let us arise, and go up to
Bethel; and I will make there an altar
unto God, who answered me in the day of
my distress, and was with me in the way**

which I went.

4: And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem."

Once again, extreme adversity had brought Jacob back to the Lord, back to his pilgrim lifestyle, and this time, back to Bethel.

And it would be at Bethel, not Shechem, that he learned who God really was.

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Jacob had erected an altar at Shechem without any direction from the Lord to do so, but this time, God specifically commanded him to build another altar at Bethel, an altar erected on a totally

different basis, and under a totally different name.

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The altar at Shechem had always been connected with compromise.

He could worship there surrounded by many things that were utterly incompatible with the holiness of the house of God. He had called it "**El-elohe-Israel**" (God the God of Israel), which was good, but actually, not good enough.

On the other hand, V 7 tells us that Jacob called the new altar "**El-beth-el**," which means "the God of the house of God," and that conveys a higher idea of God.

"God, the God of Israel" is the God of the individual, and that's OK.

In fact, it is wonderful to contemplate what
God has done for me and to me.

Yes, God has graciously connected Himself
with every stone of His house.

But even though all this is blessedly true,
God is still the God of His house.

You see, the beauty of real worship is who
He is, not who we are.

Sometimes we get so wrapped up in what God
has done *through* us that the sweet
incense of praise no longer ascends
before the Holy of Holies.

And that's not good enough.

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So Jacob packed up everything and set out
for Bethel.

It was there that his grandfather Abraham
had built his first altar in the land.

And he had also gone to Bethel after a very
backslidden period in his life.

Yes, he had come back to Bethel after his
disastrous testimony in Egypt.

Abraham had offended the Egyptians, and
Jacob's family had offended the
Canaanites, but God had put both
Abraham and his grandson back on the
right track.

Many years ago, Jacob had met God personally
at Bethel, and now he was back.

And sometimes a Christian needs to get back
to Bethel, back to Calvary, and have
his faith renewed, and his spiritual
life revitalized.

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Genesis 35:5 **"And they journeyed: and the
terror of God was upon the cities that**

were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob."

Because of **"the terror of God"---****"they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob,"** but certainly that was their intent.

So if it had taken God Himself to stop them, then it is quite apparent that the Canaanites were plotting vengeance, and would have killed every last soul in Jacob's family.

And if that had actually happened, Satan would have accomplished his purpose, if not through assimilation, then by annihilation.

But, of course, God would not allow such a thing to happen.

He had put such a fear in their hearts that this great multitude would not attack one small family.

No, it wasn't the terror of the children of Israel that held them back. It was **"the terror of God."**

Too bad Jacob's family hadn't been able to manifest the love of God rather than necessitate **"the terror of God."**

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V 6-7 **"So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Bethel, he and all the people that were with him.**

7: And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother."

"The God of the house of God." It was a step back that resulted in a step forward.

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V 8 **"But Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak: and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth."**

With the passing of Deborah, some very old ties had been broken.

We first heard about Deborah back in Genesis 24, although she was not specifically named there.

Genesis 24:59 **"And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and *her nurse*, and Abraham's servant, and his men."**

Not only was she Rebekah's nurse, but she probably served as Jacob's nurse also.

As a toddler, it would have been Deborah that little Jacob ran to with his broken toys and bleeding knees.

Yes, she had always been there to comfort him.

Probably it was when Jacob returned to Canaan and found that his mother was gone that he took Deborah under his wing.

And I'm pretty certain she would have mothered his boys also, and since she was from Padan-aram, she would have been a comfort to Jacob's wives who had now left their home far behind.

I'm sure there would have been many evenings when Rachel and Leah, and even their handmaidens, would have talked with Deborah far into the night.

And, unlike Jacob's wives, Deborah had been away from home for a very long time, and would have had a thousand questions to ask about old friends of years gone by.

And now that Jacob had *bloodied his knees* once more, it would have been so nice if she could have stayed a little longer.

Yes, a very old tie had been broken, and soon Jacob would experience other great losses in his life.

What a blessing it was to be back in full fellowship with the One Who never changes.

So, Jacob buried his dear old friend under an oak, and called it "**Allon-bachuth**" (the oak of weeping).

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V 9-15 **"And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him.**

10: And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any

more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel.

11: And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins;

12: And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.

13: And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him.

14: And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon.

15: And Jacob called the name of the

**place where God spake with him,
Bethel."**

At first glance, these verses seem to be out of place, as they appear to be recounting past events.

They seem to combine the elements of the Lord's appearance, both at Bethel as Jacob left Canaan, and at that unusual time when he returned to Canaan and received his new name.

However, the Holy Spirit has placed these verses here during Jacob's *second* visit to Bethel.

Everything is a repeat--from the confirmation of his new name to the confirmation of God's promises--and even to the setting up of a pillar.

No, there was nothing new, but rather there was the blessed confirmation that Jacob

was still Israel, and still a prince
with God.

I'm sure he didn't feel much like a prince
any more, but by the grace of God, he
was a prince, and he needed to walk
like a prince.

And in spite of their failures, all of God's
children enjoy a most exulted position
in Christ.

Romans 8:17 tells us that we are **"heirs of
God, and joint-heirs with Christ."**

For Jacob, and for every Christian, it is a
noble calling, and a grave
responsibility to **"walk worthy of the
vocation wherewith ye are called."**

Ephesians 4:1

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In V 1, God had said, "**Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God.**"

And certainly Jacob did dwelt there, at least long enough to build an altar, but then he moved on.

I wonder if that wasn't a mistake?

Whatever the case, he did move on, and next week we will be moving on with him.