

The Return

GENESIS 33–35

FIRST DAY: Introduction

Life is full of upheavals. One day might bring reconciliation and hope, while another produces tragedy, heartache, and turmoil. How can we maintain, let alone prosper, in such an unpredictable and fluctuating atmosphere? We can, by returning to the house of God and re-centering our lives around Him. Only God can lead us, secure us, and prosper us in such uncertain times.

This is the lesson Jacob learned. His life was rife with ups and downs. In the midst of his turmoil, God called him back to Bethel (*The House of God*). There Jacob was reminded of his first encounter with God, His faithful care, and His promises.

In all our lives, there will be highs and lows, ups and downs, mountains and valleys. Since this is the condition of life, we need to continually re-center our lives upon the Lord and seek His direction.

Ask the Lord to help you to re-center your heart and thoughts on Him.

SECOND DAY: Read Genesis 33

1. Having wrestled all night with God, Jacob prepared to meet his brother. Use Genesis 33:1–14 to describe:
 - a. What Jacob saw (verse 1a)



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

According to the Tel Amarna tablets, it is proper when greeting a king to bow to the earth seven times in approaching him.³²

—Pastor Chuck Smith

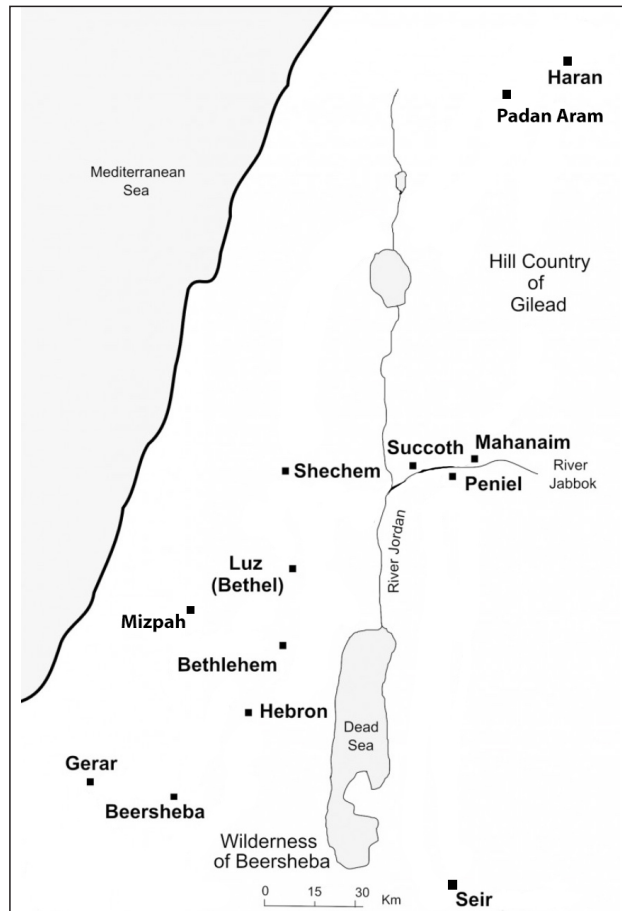


FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In Genesis 33:9 Esau told Jacob, *I have enough*. He used the Hebrew word *rab*, which means, *I have much*. In verse 11, Jacob used the same phrase, except he used the word *kol*, which means, *I have everything*.

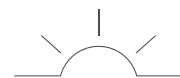
- b. What Jacob did (verses 1b–3)
- c. Esau’s response (verse 4)
- d. The interaction between the brothers (verses 5–11)
 - (1) Use Genesis 27:41 to contrast this interaction with Esau’s words from twenty years earlier. What do you find remarkable about this?
 - (2) What reason did Jacob give for his generosity to Esau? (verses 10–11)
 - (a) What does this demonstrate to you about Jacob?
- e. Esau’s suggestion to Jacob (verse 12)
- f. Jacob’s reply (verses 13–14)

2. Esau then suggested at least leaving some men with Jacob for protection, but Jacob said there was no *need* (Genesis 33:15). Use Genesis 33:16–18 to mark the brothers' departures and destinations on the map below:



- a. Where Esau settled (verse 16)
- b. Where Jacob journeyed and settled (verses 17–18)
*Also note Genesis 31:49; 32:2, 30.

(1) What did he do there?



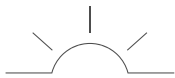
FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Succoth (Sukkot) means *booths* or *shelters*. *Succoth* is also a major Jewish festival (*The Feast of Booths/Tabernacles*), which commemorates God's sheltering of the Israelites in the wilderness.

3. According to Genesis 33:18, *Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem*. Considering all of Jacob's encounters, why is this remarkable?

4. After settling in Shechem, Jacob built an altar and called it *El Elohe Israel*, or *The Mighty God of Israel* (Genesis 33:19–20). Drawing from what you have studied about Jacob, why is this a fitting title?
 - a. What title would you give to your life's story?

5. Share something from the reconciliation of Jacob and Esau that ministers to you.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

*This occurrence serves to illustrate the low standard of morals prevalent among the Canaanites. Any unattended female could be raped.*³³
 —H.C. Leupold

THIRD DAY: Read Genesis 34

1. While Jacob's family lived in Shechem, *Dinah the daughter of Leah* befriended the *daughters of the land* (Genesis 34:1). When she went to visit them, a man named Shechem *saw her*. Use Genesis 34:2–4 to answer the following questions:
 - a. Who was Shechem? (verse 2a)

 - b. What did he do? (verse 2b)

- c. What did Shechem want? (verse 3)
 - d. What did he demand of *his father*? (verse 4)
2. This terrible incident provoked a variety of responses. From Genesis 34:5–12 share your thoughts about the responses of:
- a. Jacob (verse 5)
 - b. Hamor (verses 6, 8–10)
 - (1) Use Deuteronomy 7:3–4 to understand and comment on why it would be unwise for Jacob’s family to follow Hamor’s suggestion.
 - c. The sons of Jacob (verse 7)
 - d. Shechem (verses 11–12)
3. Use Genesis 34:13–19 to summarize:
- a. Jacob’s sons’ answer to Shechem (verses 13–17)

- b. Shechem's response (verses 18–19)
4. After hearing the offer of the *sons of Jacob*, Hamor and Shechem went to persuade *the men of their city* to agree to it (Genesis 34:20). Use the words of Hamor and Shechem in Genesis 34:21–24 to note and comment on:
- a. Their persuasion (verse 21)

 - b. The *condition* (verse 22)

 - c. Their true motive (verse 23)
 - (1) What stands out to you from the rationale of the men of Shechem?

 - d. The response of *all who went out of the gate* (verse 24)
5. From Genesis 34:25–29 summarize what Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, did when the men of Shechem *were in pain*.

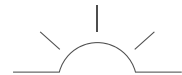
6. The aftermath of Dinah's rape and her brothers' subsequent revenge created divergent perspectives in the family. Use Genesis 34:30–31 to contrast and remark on the perspective of:
 - a. Jacob (verse 30)

 - b. Simeon and Levi (verse 31)

7. Recall that God had commanded Jacob to return to the land of his family (Genesis 31:3, 13). Considering the debacle in Shechem, what warning or lesson do you receive?

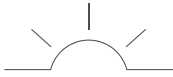
FOURTH DAY: Read Genesis 35:1–15

1. Contrary to Jacob's dire prediction (Genesis 34:30), what hopeful directive did God give Jacob? Genesis 35:1
 - a. Use Genesis 28:11–19 and 31:13a to underscore why Bethel was a good place for Jacob to *dwell*.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Note that God is not mentioned at all in Genesis 34. However, in Genesis 35, when Jacob returned to Bethel, God will be mentioned ten times.

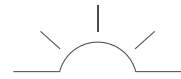


FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In the Bible,
a change of garments
symbolizes a new
spiritual beginning, a
change of character, or
a change of position.

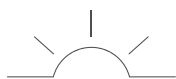
2. From Genesis 35:2, record Jacob's instructions to his family:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
3. According to Genesis 35:3, what did Jacob intend to do at Bethel?
4. Use Genesis 35:4–8 to record your observations concerning:
 - a. The family's cooperation (verse 4)
 - (1) What does this pagan collection suggest to you about the spiritual condition of Jacob's family?
 - b. God's protection (verses 5–6)
 - c. Jacob's altar (verse 7)
 - d. Rebekah's nurse (verse 8)

5. When Jacob reached Bethel, God *appeared* to him and *blessed* him (Genesis 35:9). What did God remind Jacob about:
- Jacob's name (verse 10)
 - God's name (verse 11a)
 - The nation (verse 11b)
 - The land (verse 12)
- Why do you think this reminder was necessary?
 - Note that the blessing of God, which Jacob sought, was not fully his until he returned to Bethel. What does this suggest to you about God's promises?
6. How did Jacob honor the place God spoke to him? Genesis 35:13–15
7. From your study today, where do you need to be to receive the blessings and promises of God?



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

God revealed Himself to Jacob as *El Shaddai*. This is the same covenant name God revealed to Abram (Genesis 17:1).



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Reuben lost his birthright as the firstborn son because of his fornication with Bilhah. By the standards of that time, this could be interpreted as a challenge to usurp his father's leadership.

Simeon and Levi forfeited their birthright because of their violence at Shechem, making Judah the son that received the promise of Abraham's Seed (the Messiah).

FIFTH DAY: Read Genesis 35:16–29

1. Use Genesis 35:16–19 to summarize what happened as Jacob's family *journeyed* south from Bethel.
 - a. Rachel's dying act was to name her son Ben-Oni, *son of my sorrow*. Why do you think Jacob changed his name to Benjamin, *son of my right hand*?

(1) Interestingly, Rachel was not buried in the family crypt at Hebron (just fourteen miles away). From Genesis 35:19–20, describe Rachel's burial.

2. After *Israel journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder*, what folly did Reuben commit? Genesis 35:21–22
3. From Genesis 35:23–26, list Jacob's sons according to their mothers.
 - a. Leah's sons

- b. Rachel's sons

 - c. Bilhah's sons

 - d. Zilpah's sons
4. Use Genesis 35:27–29 to describe the last years of Isaac's life.
- a. What do you find most interesting about this scene?
5. From your study this week, share a way you see God's faithful work in Jacob's life.

SIXTH DAY: Review

1. Write a brief impression of:
 - a. Jacob
 - b. Dinah
 - c. Shechem
 - d. Simeon and Levi
 - e. Rachel
 - f. Reuben
2. From your study this week, what have you observed about Our Great Creator?