**God of El Bethel**

**(Jacob Returns to Bethel) Lesson 23**

**Genesis 34:1-35:29**

**Key Verse: 35:1** 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.”

Even though Jacob met God at the Jabbok River personally, fear still remained in his heart. He did not go straight to the Promised Land, Beersheba, but stayed in Shechem, where he met an unexpected trouble because of his children.

Finally, God intervened the incident and Jacob returned to his father’s land. God taught Jacob to live by faith, not by sight to the end. The righteous will live by faith, not by sight.

1. **Look at 34:1-12. What happened when Jacob attempted to settle down and live a compromised life in Shechem? Look at 13-31. How did Simeon and Levi try to solve this problem? How did Jacob respond to their deceitful and murderous act?**

**Dinah and the Shechemites**

**34**Now Dinah, the daughter Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land. **2**When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and raped her. **3**His heart was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. **4**And Shechem said to his father Hamor, “Get me this girl as my wife.”

**5**When Jacob heard that his daughter Dinah had been defiled, his sons were in the fields with his livestock; so he did nothing about it until they came home. **6**Then Shechem’s father Hamor went out to talk with Jacob. **7**Meanwhile, Jacob’s sons had come in from the fields as soon as they heard what had happened. They were shocked and furious, because Shechem had done an outrageous thing in[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+34-35&version=NIV#fen-NIV-988a)] Israel by sleeping with Jacob’s daughter—a thing that should not be done.

**8**But Hamor said to them, “My son Shechem has his heart set on your daughter. Please give her to him as his wife. **9**Intermarry with us; give us your daughters and take our daughters for yourselves. **10**You can settle among us; the land is open to you. Live in it, trade[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+34-35&version=NIV#fen-NIV-991b)] in it, and acquire property in it.” **11**Then Shechem said to Dinah’s father and brothers, “Let me find favor in your eyes, and I will give you whatever you ask. **12**Make the price for the bride and the gift I am to bring as great as you like, and I’ll pay whatever you ask me. Only give me the young woman as my wife.”

**13**Because their sister Dinah had been defiled, Jacob’s sons replied deceitfully as they spoke to Shechem and his father Hamor. **14**They said to them, “We can’t do such a thing; we can’t give our sister to a man who is not circumcised. That would be a disgrace to us. **15**We will enter into an agreement with you on one condition only: that you become like us by circumcising all your males. **16**Then we will give you our daughters and take your daughters for ourselves. We’ll settle among you and become one people with you. **17**But if you will not agree to be circumcised, we’ll take our sister and go.”

**18**Their proposal seemed good to Hamor and his son Shechem. **19**The young man, who was the most honored of all his father’s family, lost no time in doing what they said, because he was delighted with Jacob’s daughter. **20**So Hamor and his son Shechem went to the gate of their city to speak to the men of their city. **21**“These men are friendly toward us,” they said. “Let them live in our land and trade in it; the land has plenty of room for them. We can marry their daughters and they can marry ours. **22**But the men will agree to live with us as one people only on the condition that our males be circumcised, as they themselves are. **23**Won’t their livestock, their property and all their other animals become ours? So let us agree to their terms, and they will settle among us.” **24**All the men who went out of the city gate agreed with Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male in the city was circumcised.

**25**Three days later, while all of them were still in pain, two of Jacob’s sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, took their swords and attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every male. **26**They put Hamor and his son Shechem to the sword and took Dinah from Shechem’s house and left. **27**The sons of Jacob came upon the dead bodies and looted the city where[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+34-35&version=NIV#fen-NIV-1008c)] their sister had been defiled. **28**They seized their flocks and herds and donkeys and everything else of theirs in the city and out in the fields. **29**They carried off all their wealth and all their women and children, taking as plunder everything in the houses.

**30**Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, “You have brought trouble on me by making me obnoxious to the Canaanites and Perizzites, the people living in this land. We are few in number, and if they join forces against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed.” **31**But they replied, “Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?”

1. Shechem, the son of Hamor, the ruler of the land, raped Dinah, the daughter of Jacob. Shechem wanted to marry Dinah, whose brothers were furious.

When Jacob did not return and compromised with easy-going life, an unexpected thing happened to him through his children. We should not compromise, but obey God’s word and live by faith. (Pro 3:2)

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”

When Abraham did not wait for God’s time and compromised with Sarah’s word, by taking Hagar, he had a big family problem and trouble.

1. Simeon and Levi deceived Shechemites and killed all of them. They promised to become one with the Shechemites, to marry with them, and asked them to be circumcised to become like them. While they were in pain, S and L attacked them and killed all of them. They made many enemies in the land.
2. Jacob rebuked them that they brought trouble to all his families…

S and L learned deceit from their father Jacob.

1. **Look at 35:1. What did God command Jacob to do and why? What lesson did Jacob learn from the trial in Shechem? Why and how does our compromised life displease God?**

**Jacob Returns to Bethel**

**35**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.”

1. God commanded Jacob to go up to Bethel, where he built an altar to God, who appeared to him.

**God helped Jacob to remember his first love and first encounter with God**. It is easy for us to forget our first love and first experience when we are too busy or too blessed.

Revelation 2:4-5. “You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.”

John 15:5: “Remain in me…Apart from me you can do nothing.”

**God wanted to make Jacob a blessing, a father of many nations.**

1. Jacob learned that the righteous must live by faith from the beginning to the end. He had to obey God, rely on him, not on himself.
2. Compromise is lack of faith and trust in God.

**Hebrews 11:6,** “Without faith it is impossible to please God, if anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and gives rewards to those who earnestly seek him.”

1. **Look at 2-7. How did Jacob respond to God’s command? Why did Jacob build an altar at Bethel? Look at 8-15. How did God bless Jacob? What shows Jacob’s spiritual growth?**

**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. **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.” **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. **5**Then they set out, and the terror of God fell on the towns all around them so that no one pursued them. **6**Jacob and all the people with him came to Luz (that is, Bethel) in the land of Canaan. **7**There he built an altar, and he called the place El Bethel,[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+34-35&version=NIV#fen-NIV-1019d)] because it was there that God revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.

**8**Now Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died and was buried under the oak outside Bethel. So it was named Allon Bakuth.[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+34-35&version=NIV#fen-NIV-1020e)] **9**After Jacob returned from Paddan Aram,[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+34-35&version=NIV#fen-NIV-1021f)] God appeared to him again and blessed him. **10**God said to him, “Your name is Jacob,[[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+34-35&version=NIV#fen-NIV-1022g)] but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel.[[h](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+34-35&version=NIV#fen-NIV-1022h)]” So he named him Israel.

**11**And God said to him, “I am God Almighty[[i](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+34-35&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-1023i" \o "See footnote i)]; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants. **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.” **13**Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him.

**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. **15**Jacob called the place where God had talked with him Bethel.[[j](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+34-35&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-1027j" \o "See footnote j)]

1. Jacob repented of his sin of unbelief and asked all his family members to repent and obey God’s command. He took a spiritual leadership for spiritual reformation. When Jacob obeyed God, all his family obeyed him.
2. Jacob buried all idols and rings under the oak---which means Jacob obeyed God’s command by act, not only by words. He repented from his heart.
3. Building an altar was the expression of his gratitude for God who helped him to repent and to do right.

He called the place, El-Bethel’ God of Bethel. Jacob restored his relationship with God through his repentance.

1. God blessed Jacob with a covenant blessing. God changed Jacob’s name to Israel. God reassured his blessing on Jacob by changing his name and promising the covenant blessing.
2. **Look at 16-29. What happened to Rachel and Isaac? Describe 12 sons of Jacob and their position in Israel’s history. As a conclusion of Jacob’s story, what can you learn the God of Jacob?**

**The Deaths of Rachel and Isaac 16**Then they moved on from Bethel. While they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and had great difficulty. **17**And as she was having great difficulty in childbirth, the midwife said to her, “Don’t despair, for you have another son.” **18**As she breathed her last—for she was dying—she named her son Ben-Oni.[[k](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+34-35&version=NIV#fen-NIV-1030k)] But his father named him **Benjamin.[**[**l**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+34-35&version=NIV#fen-NIV-1030l)**]**

**19**So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). **20**Over her tomb Jacob set up a pillar, and to this day that pillar marks Rachel’s tomb. **21**Israel moved on again and pitched his tent beyond Migdal Eder. **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**: **23**The sons of **Leah: Reuben** the firstborn of Jacob, **Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun.----6 sons from Leah**

**24**The sons of **Rachel:** **Joseph and Benjamin**.---**2 sons from Rachel**

**25**The sons of Rachel’s servant **Bilhah: Dan and Naphtali**. **26**The sons of Leah’s servant **Zilpah: Gad and Asher.**

These were the sons of Jacob, who were born to him in Paddan Aram. **27**Jacob came home to his father Isaac in Mamre, near Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed. **28**Isaac lived a hundred and eighty years. **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.

God of Jacob is the God of faithfulness & patience. In the midst of Jacob’s selfish ambition, God accomplished his will to make them a father of many nations.