

# Genesis 33-35

March 13, 2011

## Introduction:

Jacob is returning to the land of his birth with his wives, his children, and his fortune. He sent everyone ahead and had wrestled the night before with God (THE angel of the Lord). Jacob's hip was now out of socket; he had been "blessed".

### 33:1-17: What takes place in chapter 33 verses 1 to 17?

- Jacob fearfully meets Esau. Esau is forgiving and glad to see Jacob and his family. Jacob insists that Esau take the gifts of livestock. Esau resisted, saying that he, too, had been blessed and did not need them. Esau eventually takes the gift and returns to his home, traveling at a greater speed with his men than Jacob could travel with his livestock and family.

### 33:1-3: Do you notice any change in Jacob in verses 1 to 3?

- In the last chapter, Jacob was going to be the last one to encounter Esau. If Esau sought to take or kill any of Jacob's people, it appears that Jacob had made arrangements to flee and save his own "neck". But Jacob has now wrestled with God and been blessed with a "limp". The arrogant one has been humbled. In these verses he puts himself *ahead* of his family so that Esau, if he is inclined to kill anyone, will kill him and not his family.

### How else do you see in these verses that Jacob has really been changed?

- Jacob keeps insisting that Esau take some of his wealth. Prior to wrestling with God, Jacob was always swindling wealth from others.

### 33:12-14: What do we learn about leadership in verses 12 to 14?

- You cannot "travel" at the pace of your best people; you have to pace yourself so that those slower to adapt can still follow. Leadership is taking people with you, not running off and leaving them behind. If you think that you're leading and no one is following, you're just taking a walk. Most people adapt to change slowly...even leadership themselves when the idea is not theirs. Leaders bring people along, they don't run over them and they don't run off and leave them.

33:18-20: Notice in verses 18 to 20 that Jacob moves to Shechem (*SHEK-um*), which is in the land of Canaan.

### 34:1-12: What takes place in chapter 34 in verses 1 to 12?

- **Dinah** goes into Shechem and the man Shechem sees her, wants her, takes her, and rapes her. He is deeply infatuated with Dinah and wants to marry her. Shechem and his father **Hamor** (*HAY-marr*) go to Jacob and his sons to ask permission for Shechem to marry Dinah. They offer to pay any bridal payment that Jacob would name.

### 34:13-24: What takes place in verses 13 to 24?

- Jacob's sons say that they cannot give her in marriage unless every male in Shechem (the town) is circumcised. Hamor and Shechem convince the males of the city to be circumcised and the mass circumcision takes place.

Were Hamor and Shechem good politicians? If so, why?

- Yes. They wanted Dinah for Shechem; something the city people could not care less about. So they tell the people that they will end up with all of Jacob's wealth in the end. Rather than admitting their own selfish motive, they appealed to the selfishness and greed of their people.

### **34:25-31: What takes place in verses 25 to 31?**

- Two of Jacob's sons go into town three days later and take the lives of all of the males. It appears that their other brothers joined them in looting the city and taking captive the livestock, women, and children. Jacob rebukes Simeon and Levi for their treacherous act and fears repercussions from surrounding tribes. Simeon and Levi justify what they had done because their father did nothing when their sister (Jacob's daughter) was raped.

### **What do we know about Shechem from chapters 33 and 34?**

- It appears that he was a spoiled, entitled brat (see 34:4). We learn in 33:18-19 that the city is named after the son (Shechem), not the father (Hamor). We learn in 33:19 that Hamor had other sons; obviously Shechem was the favored one (like Joseph will be). In 34:2 we learn that Shechem is aggressive, reckless, and out of control. He was somewhat of a psycho: in 34:3, after he has raped Dinah, he tries to be nice and sweet to her. NOTE: Sweet-talking people can be dangerous people. Shechem was a self-centered man and leader: he was willing to put those he ruled over through a lot of pain to get what he wanted.

### **What do you think about what Jacob's sons did?**

- Just as Jacob had deceived his father, so Jacob's sons were now deceiving him. They made the deal with Shechem and Hamor without Jacob's knowledge. Jacob only knew of what was going on after the slaughter. You have to have some admiration for Dinah's brother's anger and motivation to defend their sister's honor and avenge her rape.

**One of the reasons we are *not* to get revenge but instead leave room for the "wrath" of God (Romans 12:19-21) is that we never get "even". The law of an "eye for an eye" and a "tooth for a tooth" (Leviticus 24:17-20) was given to keep people from over-avenging wrongs done to them. For Simeon and Levi to have killed Shechem for his crime might have been justified, but not to kill his father and *all* of the males of the city.**

### **35:1: What do we learn from verse 1 of chapter 35?**

- It would appear that God did not just want Jacob to return to Canaan (31:13), he wanted him to return to Bethel (where he had the dream about the angels and the ladder – 28:12-19). If this is true, then Jacob's "partial" obedience resulted in the rape of his daughter and in his two sons slaughtering all of the men of a city. If Jacob had gone straight to **Bethel**, which this verse indicates is what God probably told him to do, then none of this would have happened. In **Scripture**, we don't always have *every* word of a conversation recorded. This verse seems to have a tone of exasperation: "ARISE, GO TO BETHEL".

### **Is *partial* obedience disobedience or obedience?**

- In one sense, partial obedience is better than complete disobedience. To do part of what God wanted you to do is better than not doing anything God wants you to do. On the other hand, partial obedience includes clear disobedience. Is the truth the truth if any of it is a lie? In this case, Jacob's partial obedience was tragic for his daughter and sons, and deadly for an entire city of males.

### **35:1-4: What takes place in verses 1 to 4 and what do we learn there?**

- Jacob makes his entire household and servants give up their idols. He is now purging his family from idolatry. This would include the idol that Rachel stole from her father (31:30-35).

**What do we learn from Jacob doing this *now*?**

- Trial, crisis, and tragedy often motivate people to do what God has been telling them to do all along. We are more likely to forget God when we are blessed (**Deuteronomy 8:10-18**) and most likely to really find God when we hurt (**Jeremiah 29:10-14**).

**Did you not find it interesting that Jacob “*hid*” the idols rather than destroying them (**35:4**)?**

**35:9-15:** God again speaks to Jacob when he gets to the place where he was to be: Bethel. God reminds Jacob of his promise to make him a great nation and to give Canaan to his family. God again confirms that no longer Jacob (the cheater) but Israel, the one who wrestled with God and overcame. Who did Jacob overcome when he wrestled with God?

- Jacob did not overcome God; he submitted to God and overcame *himself* (who he was; his old nature).

**35:16-29:** Rachel’s prayer gets answered: she has *children* (her second son) and it costs her, her life. **See Genesis 30:1.** Reuben has sex with one of his father’s concubines (child-bearers). Jacob gets back to Isaac, Isaac dies, and is buried by his two sons.