

Genesis 35: The Journey Onward

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Jacob was about **105** when the incident with Dinah occurred. He is **120** when Isaac dies at the end of this chapter.

Chapters 35 and 36 provide a bridge. Chapters 37-50 are chiefly concerned with the life of Joseph.

Chapter 35 reads like an **epilogue** of Jacob's narrative, even though he plays a critical role toward the end of Genesis. The narrative moves quickly from scene to scene.

Chapter 36 is taken up entirely with the generations of **Esau**. (Gen 36:1)

Even though Jacob now leaves Shechem, he still maintains **title** to his property—though sometime later he has to fight to regain it from the **Amorites**. (Gen 48:22)

God shows his **patience** with Jacob by saying, "Get up and go." (Gen 35:1)

The event of the previous chapter may be explained in part by a detail we learn in this chapter: there were **idols** in Jacob's household. (Gen 35:2, 4)

In those families where there is a face of religion, and an altar to God, yet many times there is much amiss, and more strange gods than one would suspect. —Matthew Henry

Jacob now asserts **leadership** that was notably lacking in the previous chapter.

How do we see the household of Jacob "preparing" for a time of worship in Bethel? (Gen 35:2)

- put away your foreign gods (*nekar elohiyim*—foreign, alien)
- purify yourselves (*taher*—purify ceremonially and/or morally)
- change your garments (*chalaph*—change, renew, substitute)

The idols in Jacob's household are symbolic of the danger of **intermixing** with the Canaanites.

God's renewal of His covenant (and Jacob's renewal of his vow) are indications of how Jacob's family has been **backsliding**.

Time is apt to wear out the sense of mercies and the impressions made upon us by them; it should not be so, but so it is. —Matthew Henry

God doesn't bring up the incident at Shechem. However, He does remind Jacob that he left Canaan as a **fugitive**. (Gen 35:1)

God's protection comes in the form of **terror** (*chittah*) that falls on the Canaanites. (Gen 35:5)

When Jacob arrives back in Bethel, he once again **renames** the place. This time, the emphasis of the name is on **God**. (Gen 35:7)

At Bethel, worship is offered in the form of **sacrifices**. While Jacob may have made the offering, it was nevertheless a **corporate** affair. (Gen 35:7)

The appearance of **Deborah** in the narrative is unexpected, and suggests that she left Rebekah and joined Jacob's caravan at some earlier point in time (perhaps after Rebekah died). (Gen 35:8)

The naming of the location of Deborah's burial suggests that she was **beloved**.

God appears to Jacob again in the vicinity of Bethel and **reaffirms** Jacob's new name (about 8-10 years after the wrestling match at Peniel). (Gen 35:10)

God declares His name to Jacob: **El Shaddai**. He then reiterates the command to be **fruitful** and **multiply**. In return, God promises that Jacob's offspring will **inherit** the land. (Gen 35:11, 12)

The promise of **kings** points to a royal heritage. (Gen 35:11)

The narrative tells us that God **appeared** to Jacob and then **went up**, thereby suggesting a physical manifestation. (Gen 35:9, 13)

In response to God's revelation, Jacob set up a **memorial** and made another **offering**. (Gen 35:14)

The next portion of the journey we see **joy** mixed with **grief**: the birth of Benjamin and the death of Rachel.

Rachel's **prophecy** is fulfilled in the birth of another son. (Gen 30:24; 35:17)

Notice that verse 18 describes her **soul** as departing. The reality of the immortal soul is also illustrated in the idiom, "gathered to his people."

Yet another black mark occurs on the children of Jacob when Reuben presumptuously sleeps with Bilhah. Consequently, Reuben loses his status as **firstborn** and is replaced by **Judah**. (Gen 49:4, 8)

The first-born is not always the best, nor the most promising. This was Reuben's sin, but it was Jacob's affliction; and what a sore affliction it was is intimated in a little compass, "and Israel heard it." —Matthew Henry

Near the end of this chapter, the sons of Jacob are listed as if to provide a **bookend** to the narrative of his journey to Haran and back.

The death of **Isaac** is recorded here. The account of his burial place in **Mamre** is mentioned in 49:31.

Isaac lived long enough to see the **reconciliation** of Jacob and Esau.