

The Book of Genesis / In The Beginning

Part Nine

Wednesday, March 10, 2010

**JACOB RETURNS HOME FOR THE BIG SHOW-DOWN**

Genesis 31 - 35

Chapter 31

JACOB HEADS FOR HOME

1 In previous studies, we have watched the antics of Isaac's and Rebekah's twin sons, Esau  
2 and Jacob (Esau, the elder) as they struggled for supremacy. Jacob, the "deceiver",  
3 wrangled the birthright from his brother and then fled for his life as Esau promised to "get  
4 even." Years later, Jacob got right with God, met Rachel and married her (as well as  
5 Leah whom he was deceived into marrying by her father Laban) and fathered twelve sons  
6 and a daughter (by four different women). In our study tonight, we will see Jacob head  
7 back to Canaan and face his irate brother face-to-face.

8  
9 Genesis 31:1-7

10 **But Jacob soon learned that Laban's sons were beginning to grumble. "Jacob has**  
11 **robbed our father!" they said. "All his wealth has been gained at our father's**  
12 **expense." [2] And Jacob began to notice a considerable cooling in Laban's attitude**  
13 **toward him.**

14 **[3] Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your father and**  
15 **grandfather and to your relatives there, and I will be with you."**

16 **[4] Jacob called Rachel and Leah out to the field where he was watching the**  
17 **flocks, [5] so he could talk things over with them. "Your father has turned against**  
18 **me and is not treating me like he used to," he told them. "But the God of my father**  
19 **has been with me. [6] You know how hard I have worked for your father, [7] but he**  
20 **has tricked me, breaking his wage agreement with me again and again. But God has**  
21 **not allowed him to do me any harm.**

22  
23 We will learn in our subsequent study of Jacob's son Joseph that everything Joseph  
24 touched was successful. He got that trait from God through his father Jacob. Laban  
25 had given Jacob what he thought was inferior sheep and goats for his wages. But Jacob  
26 was told by God how to breed those animals successfully and he was now wealthy with  
27 huge flocks while Laban's animals remained few. The animosity toward Jacob by  
28 Laban's family was building to a crescendo and God told Jacob to get out of there and  
29 head back to Canaan.

1 So now, twenty years after fleeing Esau's wrath, Jacob heads "home." His trip will take  
2 him from on a southwestern trek through Damascus and even further south into what we  
3 know today as the country of Jordan where he will camp at Peniel on the Jabbok River  
4 and then reenter Canaan and settle at Shechem (in today's West Bank - Samaria).

5  
6 It is interesting to note that Jacob's wives, Leah and Rachel, daughters of Laban, also  
7 held their father in low esteem:

8  
9 Genesis 31:14-16

10 **Rachel and Leah said, "That's fine with us! There's nothing for us here—none of**  
11 **our father's wealth will come to us anyway. [15] He has reduced our rights to those**  
12 **of foreign women. He sold us, and what he received for us has disappeared. [16] The**  
13 **riches God has given you from our father are legally ours and our children's to**  
14 **begin with. So go ahead and do whatever God has told you."**

15  
16 How commendable it is when husbands and wives are in agreement on decisions. There  
17 may be discussions and pros and cons; but, when the decision is finally made, they are in  
18 union about it.

19  
20 RACHEL'S FLAW

21  
22 Genesis 31:17-19

23 **So Jacob put his wives and children on camels. [18] He drove the flocks in front of**  
24 **him—all the livestock he had acquired at Paddan-aram—and set out on his journey**  
25 **to the land of Canaan, where his father, Isaac, lived. [19] At the time they left,**  
26 **Laban was some distance away, shearing his sheep. Rachel stole her father's**  
27 **household gods and took them with her.**

28  
29 Jacob knew that Laban would never let him leave the "tribe" without a fight; so he waited  
30 until shearing season when Laban was somewhere perhaps miles away, then gathered his  
31 family, possessions and flocks and left under cover.

32  
33 All might have gone well except....Rachel stole her father's idols. She had been  
34 brought up in the home of an idolater. PARENTS, BE VERY CAREFUL HOW YOU  
35 BRING UP YOUR CHILDREN! THEY WILL FOLLOW YOUR LEADERSHIP,  
36 EITHER KNOWINGLY OR UNKNOWINGLY.

37  
38 Three days later, Laban found out that Jacob had left with his daughters. He was NOT  
39 pleased:

1 Genesis 31:22-23

2 **Laban didn't learn of their flight for three days. [23] But when he did, he gathered**  
3 **a group of his relatives and set out in hot pursuit. He caught up with them seven**  
4 **days later in the hill country of Gilead.**

5  
6 We have already learned that Jacob was not a fighting man - kind of a mama's boy, truth  
7 be known. Laban would have killed Jacob. But God intervened:

8  
9 Genesis 31:26-32

10 **"What do you mean by sneaking off like this?" Laban demanded. "Are my**  
11 **daughters prisoners, the plunder of war, that you have stolen them away like this?**  
12 **[27] Why did you slip away secretly? I would have given you a farewell party, with**  
13 **joyful singing accompanied by tambourines and harps. [28] Why didn't you let me**  
14 **kiss my daughters and grandchildren and tell them good-bye? You have acted very**  
15 **foolishly! [29] I could destroy you, but the God of your father appeared to me last**  
16 **night and told me, 'Be careful about what you say to Jacob!' [30] I know you feel**  
17 **you must go, and you long intensely for your childhood home, but why have you**  
18 **stolen my household gods?"**

19 **[31] "I rushed away because I was afraid," Jacob answered. "I said to myself,**  
20 **'He'll take his daughters from me by force.' [32] But as for your household gods, let**  
21 **the person who has taken them die! If you find anything that belongs to you, I swear**  
22 **before all these relatives of ours, I will give it back without question." But Jacob**  
23 **didn't know that Rachel had taken them.**

24  
25 It is obvious that Jacob did not know Rachel had stolen her father's idols. The next  
26 scriptures tell us that Laban went directly to his daughter's tents in search of his idols.  
27 Let's look in on the drama:

28  
29 Genesis 31:33-35

30 **Laban went first into Jacob's tent to search there, then into Leah's, and then he**  
31 **searched the tents of the two concubines, but he didn't find the gods. Finally, he**  
32 **went into Rachel's tent. [34] Rachel had taken the household gods and had stuffed**  
33 **them into her camel saddle, and now she was sitting on them. So although Laban**  
34 **searched all the tents, he couldn't find them. [35] "Forgive my not getting up,**  
35 **Father," Rachel explained. "I'm having my monthly period." So despite his**  
36 **thorough search, Laban didn't find them.**

37  
38 Let's be blunt about this: If you can sit on your gods and hide them, your gods are  
39 pathetic! I love the way Dr. John Phillips put it: ***"Gods indeed! Gods that could be***  
40 ***stolen! Gods that could be packed up like old pots and pans and stuffed into a bag!***

1 ***Gods that could be bounced and jostled over three hundreds miles without word of***  
2 ***whimper!”***

3  
4 In the rest of this chapter, Jacob verbally jumped all over Laban for his mistreatment.  
5 His gripes included:

- 6 ✓ In his 20 years of service he had to buy his own meals and provisions even while  
7 on duty
- 8 ✓ No insurance. If a lamb was stolen or killed by a wolf, Jacob had to pay for it  
9 himself.
- 10 ✓ He got no vacations. Even in the worst weather conditions, he was expected to  
11 be on duty.
- 12 ✓ Jacob made it clear that had it not been for Jehovah-God, he could not have  
13 survived the ordeal.

14  
15 So an agreement was reached:

16  
17 Genesis 31:48-55

18 **"This pile of stones will stand as a witness to remind us of our agreement," Laban**  
19 **said. [49] This place was also called Mizpah, for Laban said, "May the Lord keep**  
20 **watch between us to make sure that we keep this treaty when we are out of each**  
21 **other's sight. [50] I won't know about it if you are harsh to my daughters or if you**  
22 **take other wives, but God will see it. [51] This heap of stones and this pillar [52]**  
23 **stand between us as a witness of our vows. I will not cross this line to harm you, and**  
24 **you will not cross it to harm me. [53] I call on the God of our ancestors—the God of**  
25 **your grandfather Abraham and the God of my grandfather Nahor—to punish either**  
26 **one of us who harms the other."**

27 **So Jacob took an oath before the awesome God of his father, Isaac, to respect the**  
28 **boundary line. [54] Then Jacob presented a sacrifice to God and invited everyone to**  
29 **a feast. Afterward they spent the night there in the hills. [55] Laban got up early the**  
30 **next morning, and he kissed his daughters and grandchildren and blessed them.**  
31 **Then he returned home.**

32  
33 Chapter 32

34 THE END OF JACOB AND THE BEGINNING OF ISRAEL

35  
36 The biggest problem facing Jacob now is that he knows "back home" Esau, his older  
37 brother, is waiting to kill him. So Jacob decided to send emissaries ahead of him with a  
38 sort of "peace offering."

39  
40 Genesis 32:3-8

1       **Jacob now sent messengers to his brother, Esau, in Edom, the land of Seir. [4] He**  
2 **told them, "Give this message to my master Esau: 'Humble greetings from your**  
3 **servant Jacob! I have been living with Uncle Laban until recently, [5] and now I**  
4 **own oxen, donkeys, sheep, goats, and many servants, both men and women. I have**  
5 **sent these messengers to inform you of my coming, hoping that you will be friendly**  
6 **to us.' "**

7       **[6] The messengers returned with the news that Esau was on his way to meet**  
8 **Jacob—with an army of four hundred men! [7] Jacob was terrified at the news. He**  
9 **divided his household, along with the flocks and herds and camels, into two camps.**  
10 **[8] He thought, "If Esau attacks one group, perhaps the other can escape."**

11  
12       The land of Seir is the area we know today as Petra. On the back page of these notes,  
13 you will see a vertical picture of the entrance to Petra through the Siq (pronounced: seek),  
14 the nearly mile-long canyon through which we have often walked. At places, the canyon  
15 is 8 feet wide and 300 feet deep. The first structure you see as you leave the Siq is "The  
16 Treasury," which was really a tomb, carved out of the solid rock by the Nabateans (a  
17 nomadic group that settled in southwest Jordan about 200 years B.C.) (This is also the  
18 site that greeted Indiana Jones (Harrison Ford) and his father (Sean Connery) in the third  
19 Jones film that concerned the search for the Holy Grail.

20  
21       What a shock to Jacob to learn that his brother Esau was waiting for him with an army of  
22 400 men (the offspring of Esau were the Edomites). Jacob must have panicked!  
23 What were Esau's intentions? To make peace? Or to kill him? (Verse 7 tells us that  
24 Jacob was terrified!) So what does Jacob do? He goes to God in prayer!

25  
26       Genesis 32:9-12

27       **Then Jacob prayed, "O God of my grandfather Abraham and my father,**  
28 **Isaac—O Lord, you told me to return to my land and to my relatives, and you**  
29 **promised to treat me kindly. [10] I am not worthy of all the faithfulness and**  
30 **unfailing love you have shown to me, your servant. When I left home, I owned**  
31 **nothing except a walking stick, and now my household fills two camps! [11] O Lord,**  
32 **please rescue me from my brother, Esau. I am afraid that he is coming to kill me,**  
33 **along with my wives and children. [12] But you promised to treat me kindly and to**  
34 **multiply my descendants until they become as numerous as the sands along the**  
35 **seashore—too many to count."**

36  
37       Jacob decides to put "feet to his prayers." The next day he sends some of his men to  
38 meet Esau with a peace offering:

- 39       ✓ 200 female goats  
40       ✓ 20 male goats

- 1 ✓ 30 camels with their colts
- 2 ✓ 40 cattle
- 3 ✓ 10 bulls
- 4 ✓ 20 female donkeys and their foals

5  
6 Pretty impressive gift! The truth of the matter is that Jacob did not have to send Esau anything. Why? Because:

- 7
- 8 ✓ God has already promised to protect and bless him
- 9 ✓ God has worked on Esau's heart to make him cordial and loving to his brother

10  
11 Sometimes we think we have to work out God's answers ourselves. We should ask  
12 ourselves: Is this something God has instructed me to do? Or am I just lacking in faith  
13 that God will take care of it?

14  
15 And now Jacob and his entourage come to the Jabbok River (in Jordan, where it flows  
16 westward into the Jordan River, about halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead  
17 Sea).

18  
19 Genesis 32:22-30

20 **But during the night Jacob got up and sent his two wives, two concubines, and**  
21 **elevensons across the Jabbok River. [23] After they were on the other side, he sent**  
22 **over all his possessions. [24] This left Jacob all alone in the camp, and a man came**  
23 **and wrestled with him until dawn. [25] When the man saw that he couldn't win the**  
24 **match, he struck Jacob's hip and knocked it out of joint at the socket. [26] Then the**  
25 **man said, "Let me go, for it is dawn."**

26 **But Jacob panted, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."**

27 **[27] "What is your name?" the man asked.**

28 **He replied, "Jacob."**

29 **[28] "Your name will no longer be Jacob," the man told him. "It is now Israel,**  
30 **because you have struggled with both God and men and have won."**

31 **[29] "What is your name?" Jacob asked him.**

32 **"Why do you ask?" the man replied. Then he blessed Jacob there.**

33 **[30] Jacob named the place Peniel—"face of God"—for he said, "I have seen God**  
34 **face to face, yet my life has been spared."**

35  
36

Who was the One Who wrestled with Jacob? Most commentators that I trust concede that it was one other than the pre-incarnate Christ (Jesus' birth in Bethlehem was called 'the incarnation' or God becoming man - so pre-incarnate would take place prior to Jesus' birth as a baby in Bethlehem).

1 How often do we spiritually wrestle with God? Finally we find Jacob just “hanging on”  
2 for dear life. Our Lord says to him, “I am changing your name from Jacob (the  
3 deceiver) to ISRAEL.  
4

5 Now the question has to be: Could not our Lord have pinned Jacob in a second? Why  
6 did they wrestle all night? The answer is, yes, Jesus could have conquered Jacob’s  
7 physical strength in a second. But it took Him all night to conquer Jacob’s will. It  
8 was at this point that Jacob’s carnal nature was broken and for the rest of his life he truly  
9 lived for God and God alone.

10  
11 Chapter 33  
12 THE SHOW-DOWN  
13

14 All of Jacob’s worries ended suddenly:  
15

16 Genesis 33:4-7

17 **Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him affectionately and kissed him. Both**  
18 **of them were in tears.**

19 **[5] Then Esau looked at the women and children and asked, "Who are these**  
20 **people with you?"**

21 **"These are the children God has graciously given to me," Jacob replied. [6] Then**  
22 **the concubines came forward with their children and bowed low before him. [7]**  
23 **Next Leah came with her children, and they bowed down. Finally, Rachel and**  
24 **Joseph came and made their bows.**  
25

26 How often do we worry about things that never come to pass? We are told throughout  
27 Scripture, “Fear not!” Esau told Jacob to keep all his animals because he already had  
28 more than he needed. What a change in Jacob! When we first met him back in  
29 chapter 25, he was a scheming, grasping, “me-first”, obnoxious person. Now, in chapter  
30 33, Jacob - now Israel - is loving, giving, “others-first.” The life of Jacob proves that  
31 anyone can be changed by God.  
32

33 At this point, the brothers separate in harmony, Jacob going back to Canaan and Esau to  
34 Edom (east of the Jordan River Valley). Let us remember that Jacob is longer a lithe,  
35 young man; he is crippled, following his wrestling with God.  
36

37 Genesis 33:18-20

38 **Then they arrived safely at Shechem, in Canaan, and they set up camp just**  
39 **outside the town. [19] Jacob bought the land he camped on from the family of**  
40 **Hamor, Shechem's father, for a hundred pieces of silver. [20] And there he built an**

1 altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

2  
3 That name "El-Elohe" means "God, the God of Israel."

4  
5 Chapter 34  
6 DISASTER!

7  
8 We have been studying Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - the three great patriarchs of Israel.  
9 Have you noted by now that all three of these men had family problems? Jacob has  
10 twelve boys (by four different women) and a daughter Dinah (born to Leah). In this  
11 chapter, Dinah (along with her family new members of a community in Shechem  
12 (modern-day Samaria), encounter a horrible crime:

13  
14 Genesis 34:1-2

15 **One day Dinah, Leah's daughter, went to visit some of the young women who**  
16 **lived in the area. [2] But when the local prince, Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite,**  
17 **saw her, he took her and raped her.**

18  
19 The strangest part of this story is that the young prince (also named Shechem) loved the  
20 girl and wanted to marry her and asked his father to arrange the marriage with Dinah's  
21 father, Jacob.

22  
23 Genesis 34:5-7

24 **Word soon reached Jacob that his daughter had been defiled, but his sons were**  
25 **out in the fields herding cattle so he did nothing until they returned. [6] Meanwhile,**  
26 **Hamor, Shechem's father, came out to discuss the matter with Jacob. [7] He arrived**  
27 **just as Jacob's sons were coming in from the fields. They were shocked and furious**  
28 **that their sister had been raped. Shechem had done a disgraceful thing against**  
29 **Jacob's family, a thing that should never have been done.**

30  
31 Well, Dinah's brothers were furious, of course, and they plotted to do something even  
32 worse to Shechem than he had done to their sister.

33  
34 Genesis 34:13-17

35 **But Dinah's brothers deceived Shechem and Hamor because of what Shechem**  
36 **had done to their sister. [14] They said to them, "We couldn't possibly allow this,**  
37 **because you aren't circumcised. It would be a disgrace for her to marry a man like**  
38 **you! [15] But here is a solution. If every man among you will be circumcised like we**  
39 **are, [16] we will intermarry with you and live here and unite with you to become one**  
40 **people. [17] Otherwise we will take her and be on our way."**

1 Well, first of all, the sons of Jacob were not trying to make it possible for Dinah and  
2 Shechem to be married; they were setting up the men of the village for assassination. It  
3 must be said that following his crime against Dinah, Shechem was trying to do the right  
4 thing by marrying her.

5  
6 Genesis 34:18-19

7 **Hamor and Shechem gladly agreed, [19] and Shechem lost no time in acting on**  
8 **this request, for he wanted Dinah desperately. Shechem was a highly respected**  
9 **member of his family,**

10  
11 You can see why God didn't want Jacob and his family living in this area; if Shechem  
12 was a highly respected member of his family, yet capable and finally guilty of rape, it  
13 showed the low standards by which these people lived.

14  
15 But the men of the area agreed to the proposal and verse 24 informs us that every male of  
16 the town was circumcised. That ritual performed on a adult male requires several days  
17 of recuperation. Jacob's sons did that. It was a trap:

18  
19 Genesis 34:25-29

20 **But three days later, when their wounds were still sore, two of Dinah's brothers,**  
21 **Simeon and Levi, took their swords, entered the town without opposition, and**  
22 **slaughtered every man there, [26] including Hamor and Shechem. They rescued**  
23 **Dinah from Shechem's house and returned to their camp. [27] Then all of Jacob's**  
24 **sons plundered the town because their sister had been defiled there. [28] They seized**  
25 **all the flocks and herds and donkeys—everything they could lay their hands on,**  
26 **both inside the town and outside in the fields. [29] They also took all the women and**  
27 **children and wealth of every kind.**

28  
29 It was mass murder and all at the hands of Jacob's sons Simeon and Levi. Now note  
30 how Jacob handled this mess:

31  
32 Genesis 34:30-31

33 **Afterward Jacob said to Levi and Simeon, "You have made me stink among all**  
34 **the people of this land—among all the Canaanites and Perizzites. We are so few that**  
35 **they will come and crush us. We will all be killed!"**

36 **[31] "Should he treat our sister like a prostitute?" they retorted angrily.**

37  
38 Jacob was more concerned about his own public image than the fact that several of his  
39 boys were killers.

1 We know that it is illegal to take the law into our own hands. And Scripture gives clear  
2 warning on this as well:

3  
4 Romans 12:19-21

5 **Dear friends, never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God. For it is written,**  
6 **"I will take vengeance;**  
7 **I will repay those who deserve it,"**  
8 **says the Lord.**

9 **[20] Instead, do what the Scriptures say:**

10 **"If your enemies are hungry, feed them.**

11 **If they are thirsty, give them something to drink,**  
12 **and they will be ashamed of what they have done to you."**

13 **[21] Don't let evil get the best of you, but conquer evil by doing good.**

14  
15 We can easily understand the anger of Dinah's brothers; but even so it does not excuse  
16 the dastardly act they did.

17  
18 Chapter 35  
19 BACK TO BETHEL

20  
21 It was spiritual renewal time for Jacob! No one needed it more.

22  
23 Genesis 35:1-2

24 **God said to Jacob, "Now move on to Bethel and settle there. Build an altar there**  
25 **to worship me—the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother,**  
26 **Esau."**

27 **[2] So Jacob told everyone in his household, "Destroy your idols, wash yourselves,**  
28 **and put on clean clothing.**

29  
30 Remember that when Jacob and his family left Laban, Rachel stole her father's little gods.  
31 When Laban caught up to them, she sat on the little images and Laban could not find  
32 them. Apparently Jacob either didn't know about the gods or, when he did find out, did  
33 not destroy them. So God tells him plainly: Get rid of them!

34  
35 No sin seems to anger God more than idolatry. The first of the ten commandments is  
36 **THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.** (Exodus 20:3) Polytheism -  
37 or the worship of many gods - characterized the religions of the ancient Near Eastern  
38 world. God told the people of Israel they were never to stoop to that practice, which  
39 meant:

40 ✓ Their worship must be to God alone....no worshipping, praying to, or seeking

1 guidance from any other “god,” spirit or the dead

- 2 ✓ They were to be totally consecrated in their daily living to God and to love Him  
3 with all their hearts. Anything less than this commitment was - and is - not  
4 accepted to God.  
5

6 Jacob was also told to clean up his life and change his clothes - that is, those habits or  
7 ways of life that were displeasing to the Lord.  
8

9 Genesis 35:5-6

10 **When they set out again, terror from God came over the people in all the towns of**  
11 **that area, and no one attacked them. [6] Finally, they arrived at Luz (now called**  
12 **Bethel) in Canaan.**

13 Remember that Bethel means “house of God.”  
14

15 Once again God made it very clear that He would bless Jacob and renewed the covenant:  
16

17 Genesis 35:10-12 **"Your name is no longer Jacob; you will now be called Israel."**  
18 **[11] Then God said, "I am God Almighty. Multiply and fill the earth! Become a**  
19 **great nation, even many nations. Kings will be among your descendants! [12] And I**  
20 **will pass on to you the land I gave to Abraham and Isaac. Yes, I will give it to you**  
21 **and your descendants."**  
22

23 Now as Jacob finally returns home - to the area of Beersheba south of Jerusalem - we  
24 learn that Rebekah has died and there will be several more sad “passings:”  
25

26 Genesis 35:16-18

27 **Leaving Bethel, they traveled on toward Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). But**  
28 **Rachel's pains of childbirth began while they were still some distance away. [17]**  
29 **After a very hard delivery, the midwife finally exclaimed, "Don't be afraid—you**  
30 **have another son!" [18] Rachel was about to die, but with her last breath she named**  
31 **him Ben-oni; the baby's father, however, called him Benjamin.**  
32

33 Rachel was always Jacob’s favorite and she gave him two sons: Joseph and Benjamin.  
34 Jacob’s favoritism will cost the family dearly in the next few chapters. Rachel was  
35 buried where she died, on the north side of Bethlehem. (I gave you a picture of her  
36 tomb in last week’s syllabus.)  
37

38 Rachel wanted to call her second son Ben-oni, which meant “son of my sorrow.” But  
39 Jacob didn’t want that and he called the boy Benjamin, “son of his right hand.”  
40

1 Genesis 35:29

2 **Isaac died at a ripe old age, joining his ancestors in death. Then his sons, Esau and**  
3 **Jacob, buried him.**

4  
5 Isaac was 180 years old when he died. I think it should be noted that we are once again  
6 seeing the life span of individuals growing longer and longer. Last week a lady passed  
7 away who was 113 and another was 112. More and more people are living to the  
8 century mark. Should the Lord tarry, and should the world not be consumed by  
9 pestilences or disasters, medical knowledge will increase life spans to an older and older  
10 age. So we are not taken back by the ages listed in the Bible. Remember that some of  
11 these people had lives that crossed those of Noah and Noah had crossed the paths of the  
12 remnants of Eden's first ancestors.

13  
14  
15 *Next week we continue with the Genesis account and the begin a study on the life of*  
16 *Joseph.*

