

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GENESIS 35 & 36

GENESIS 35:1-4 - SPIRITUAL HOUSE CLEANING

ON THIS DAY, THE LORD CALLS JACOB TO RETURN TO BETHEL, THE PLACE OF HIS ENCOUNTER WITH GOD. JACOB PREPARED HIMSELF TO GO AND CALLS FOR HIS FAMILY - A LARGE COMPANY AT THIS POINT - TO PREPARE THEMSELVES TOO. HE TELLS THEM TO "PUT AWAY THE FOREIGN GODS...PURIFY YOURSELVES" IN A WAY, JACOB IS ACTING AS THE PRIEST OF HIS HOUSE, GETTING HIS WIVES, CHILDREN AND COMPANIONS TO BECOME HOLY, FOR THEY ARE GOING TO MEET WITH GOD.

THE LORD WAS *HIS* GOD, BUT HE IS DIRECTING HIS FAMILY TO JOIN HIM IN THE WORSHIP, MAKING THE LORD *THEIR* GOD TOO. IT'S WILD TO THINK THAT THE FAMILY OF JACOB HAD TO BE TOLD TO DO THIS! DIDN'T THE SONS OF JACOB WORSHIP THE LORD ALONE? DIDN'T JACOB ONLY HIRE PEOPLE WHO LOVED THE LORD? DIDN'T JACOB'S WIVES BOW WITH THEIR HUSBAND TO THE LORD ONLY? APPARENTLY NOT. BUT AS THEY GO TO BETHEL, THIS FAMILIAL REVIVAL BEGINS.

GENESIS 35:5-8 - GOD IS WITH JACOB AS HE JOURNEYS TO BETHEL

NOTICE WHAT HAPPENS AFTER JACOB GET HIS HOUSE IN ORDER. 35:5 TELLS US THAT "GREAT TERROR" WAS UPON THE CITIES JACOB PASSED AS HE JOURNEYS TOWARDS BETHEL. THE HEBREW PHRASING HERE LITERALLY MEANS 'A TERROR OF GOD.' IT WAS AS IF WHEN JACOB TRAVELED THROUGH THE LAND, THE PEOPLE RECOGNIZED GOD'S FAVOR UPON HIM AND THEY KNEW NOT TO MESS WITH HIM. WHEN JACOB ARRIVES AT BETHEL HE FOLLOWS THROUGH WITH HIS DESIRE TO WORSHIP THE LORD AND SETS UP AN ALTAR.

WHILE IN BETHEL, DEBORAH THE NURSE TO REBEKAH (JACOB'S MOTHER AND ISAAC'S WIFE), DIES. SHE IS BURIED UNDER AN OAK THERE.

GENESIS 35:9-15 - THE LORD APPEARS TO JACOB AT BETHEL

JACOB'S OBEDIENCE TO TRAVEL BACK TO BETHEL (AND SURELY TO REMOVE THE IDOLS FROM HIS HOUSE) IS REWARDED BY ADDITIONAL ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD. HERE AT BETHEL, THE PLACE WHICH MEANS "HOUSE OF GOD," GOD "BLESSED" JACOB WITH THE BLESSING OF ABRAHAM.

IN THIS BLESSING, GOD CONFIRMS THE CHANGE OF JACOB'S NAME TO "ISRAEL" AND GOD SPEAKS THE ABRHAMIC BLESSING WHICH WE HAVE GROWN FAMILIAR WITH SINCE GENESIS 12. "BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY, NATIONS AND KINGS WILL COME OUT OF YOU, AND I WILL GIVE YOU THE LAND WHICH I PROMISED TO ABRAHAM AND ISAAC" LAND, DESCENDANTS AND BLESSING.

JACOB HAD BEEN IN BETHEL BEFORE AS HE RAN AWAY FROM ESAU DECADES BEFORE. IN THE STORY FROM GENESIS 28, WE LEARNED ABOUT THE FAMOUS DREAM ABOUT "JACOB'S LADDER." GOD HAD CONFIRMED TO THE PROMISE TO JACOB AT THIS TIME, YEARS AGO - WHY DO IT AGAIN?

THAT'S A GOOD QUESTION. PERHAPS IT COULD BE THAT BECAUSE OF ALL THAT HAS TRANSPIRED IN JACOB'S LIFE SINCE THAT MOMENT, THE LORD WANTED TO REAFFIRM AND REMIND JACOB ABOUT WHAT HIS CALLING AND LIFE WAS REALLY ABOUT. IT HAD BEEN QUITE SOME TIME SINCE THE LORD SPOKE THESE WORDS TO JACOB. SINCE THEIR FIRST ENCOUNTER HE LIVED AS LABAN'S SERVANT FOR OVER 20 YEARS.

HE HAD WIVES AND CHILDREN AND FEARS ABOUT MEETING ESAU AGAIN. ALL OF THIS HAS NOW FADED AND JACOB HAS SHOWN EFFORT IN THE AREA OF GETTING HIS FAMILY HOLY AND GOD-CENTERED AGAIN. AND SO THE LORD REMINDS JACOB ABOUT HIS PROMISE TO HIM AND ABOUT THE FUTURE HE HAS PLANNED FOR JACOB'S DESCENDANTS.

SOMETIMES WE NEED THESE KIND OF REMINDERS DON'T WE? IT'S EASY TO GET OFF TRACK, IT'S COMMON TO GET DISTRACTED. AND IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT WE ARE UNSURE OF GOD'S PROMISES BEING TRUE ANYMORE AFTER WE HAVE LIVED SOME TIME ON OUR OWN PATH. THE FAITHFUL AND LOVING GOD WE SERVE - GOD ALMIGHTY, (HEB: "EL-SHADDAI") (V. 11) - IS GOOD TO COME AGAIN AND SPEAK HIS WORD AND PROMISES OVER OUR LIVES SO WE CAN GET BACK TO LIVING AS WE SHOULD - AS HIS CHOSEN AND REDEEMED PEOPLE. THESE REMINDERS IN SCRIPTURE AREN'T BECAUSE GOD HAS FORGOTTEN AND NEEDED TO REMEMBER. IT'S MORE LIKELY THAT WE HAVE FORGOTTEN AND WE NEED TO REMEMBER.

GENESIS 35:16-21 - RACHEL DIES DURING CHILDBIRTH

COMING OFF THE HEELS OF THIS GREAT MOMENT WITH THE LORD, JACOB LOSES RACHEL, HIS DEAR WIFE AND THE LOVE OF HIS LIFE. IF YOU REMEMBER FROM PREVIOUS CHAPTERS SHE WAS BARREN FOR QUITE SOME TIME AND ONLY HAD ONE SON, NAMED JOSEPH. SHE HAS A SEVERE LABOR AND DIES AS A RESULT. AS SHE IS DYING, SHE NAMES HER SON "BEN-OMI" MEANING "THE SON OF MY SORROW" BUT JACOB/ISRAEL CALLS HIM "BENJAMIN" WHICH MEANS "SON OF MY RIGHT HAND". JACOB/ISRAEL WANTS TO REMEMBER HIS SON AS A PRECIOUS AND IMPORTANT CHILD DUE TO THE LOSS OF HIS MOTHER. HOW TRAGIC.

HOW OFTEN DO WE HEAR ABOUT SOMEONE WHO GETS SERIOUS ABOUT GOD ONLY TO HAVE TO FACE A TRAGIC OR DIFFICULT SITUATION IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARDS. THIS IS JACOB'S STORY HERE. THE FAMILY IS IN ORDER, HE'S REMINDED OF GOD'S BLESSING AND THEN HIS BELOVED WIFE DIES. YET IT MIGHT BE GOOD FOR US TO CONSIDER THAT ULTIMATELY IF RACHEL IS GOING TO DIE, JACOB IS FINALLY AT THE PLACE IN HIS HEART, IN HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND WITH HIS FAMILY SITUATION TO HANDLE THE TRIAL BY SEEKING THE LORD'S HELP. CAN YOU IMAGINE WALKING THROUGH SUCH A TRAGEDY WITHOUT GOD HOLDING YOUR HAND?

GENESIS 35:22 - REUBEN'S SIN

YIKES! THE IDOLS MIGHT BE GONE FROM THE HOUSEHOLD BUT THE SIN HASN'T LEFT THEIR HEARTS. REUBEN, JACOB/ISRAEL'S FIRST BORN HAS SEX WITH BILHAH, WHICH WAS RACHEL'S MAID, AND HIS BROTHER DAN & NAPHTALI'S MOM! WE DON'T KNOW HOW LONG AFTER THE DEATH OF RACHEL THIS HAPPENED, BUT THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN MESSED UP NO MATTER WHEN IT OCCURRED. HERE IS MORE INSIGHT INTO THIS QUICK VERSE FROM THE ESV STUDY BIBLE:

"WHILE REUBEN'S ACTION MAY HAVE BEEN PROMPTED BY INAPPROPRIATE LUST, IT CHALLENGED JACOB'S POSITION AS HEAD OF THE HOUSEHOLD. AS THE FIRSTBORN SON, REUBEN MAY ALSO HAVE VIEWED HIS ACTION AS ESTABLISHING HIS AUTHORITY OVER HIS BROTHERS (SEE [2 SAM. 16:20–23](#)). YET IT HAD THE OPPOSITE EFFECT (SEE [1 CHRON. 5:1–2](#)). ALTHOUGH INITIALLY JACOB TAKES NO IMMEDIATE ACTION AGAINST REUBEN—IMPLIED BY THE NARRATOR'S BRIEF COMMENT, ISRAEL HEARD OF IT—HE LATER DENIES REUBEN HIS PREEMINENCE AS THE FIRSTBORN ([49:3–4](#)). ALTHOUGH JACOB'S ACTIONS RUN COUNTER TO THE PROVISIONS FOR INHERITANCE IN [DEUT. 21:15–17](#), THE UNSEEMLY BEHAVIOR OF REUBEN MEANS THAT HE WILL NOT INHERIT WHAT HE OTHERWISE WOULD HAVE RECEIVED." (ESV STUDY BIBLE, GENESIS 35:22).

GENESIS 35:22B-39 - JACOB/ISRAEL'S SONS, ISAAC DIES

ISAAC, WHO WE HAVEN'T HEARD FROM IN A WHILE WITH THE STORY'S FOCUS ON JACOB DIES. THE NARRATOR TELLS HE DIED "AN OLD MAN OF RIPE AGE" (LIT: "SATISFIED WITH DAYS"). THOUGH WE THOUGHT JACOB WAS DYING WHEN HE FIRST BLESSED HIS TWO SONS OVER 2 DECADES AGO (GENESIS 27), HE ENDS UP LIVING THIS ENTIRE TIME. ESAU AND JACOB UNITE AGAIN TO BURY THEIR FATHER. THE CHAPTER ENDS WITH THIS GENEALOGY AND REPORT OF JACOB'S VISIT TO ISAAC FOLLOWED BY HIS DEATH. IT IS THE BIBLE'S WAY OF ENDING ONE ERA AND TURNING THE FOCUS TO THE NEXT. AS WE MOVE ON IN OUR STORY, WE WILL SEE THE FOCUS TURN TOWARDS JACOB'S SONS, THE NEXT ABRAHAMIC FIGURES WHO WILL BE CENTRAL TO GOD'S PLAN.

BUT FIRST, LET'S READ ABOUT THE DESCENDANTS OF ISAAC'S OTHER SON, ESAU.

GENESIS 36:1-43 - ESAU'S DESCENDANTS

REMEMBER, ESAU WAS A GRANDSON OF ABRAHAM. HIS CHILDREN ARE BIOLOGICALLY PART OF THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE IN A SENSE EVEN THOUGH ESAU REJECTED HIS PLACE AS FIRST BORN OF ISAAC. HIS DESCENDANTS WILL BE KNOWN AS THE EDMITES AND FOR THE MOST PART WILL CAUSE TROUBLE AND BE IN CONFLICT WITH THE ISRAELITES.

WHEN YOU THINK OF THE GREAT MEN AND WOMEN OF THE BIBLE, HOW OFTEN DO WE THINK OF THEM AS FLAWED MEN AND WOMEN WHO GOD WORKED IN AND THROUGH? I THINK IT'S EASY FOR US TO FORGET THAT THEY WERE HUMAN - JUST LIKE YOU AND I - AND STRUGGLED AND MADE MISTAKES AND DIDN'T ALWAYS LIVE IN A WAY THAT WOULD HAVE "MADE PRINT". YET, SCRIPTURE DOES GIVE TIME TO SPEAK ABOUT THEIR WRESTLINGS. OTHER THAN JESUS, THE HEROES OF THE BIBLE WERE NOT PERFECT, FLAWLESS OR WITHOUT MOMENTS OF FAITHLESSNESS. IT'S GOOD THAT WE THINK OF THEM IN A GOOD LIGHT AS WE LOOK BACK AT THEIR STORIES, BUT IT'S ALSO IMPORTANT FOR US TO REMEMBER THAT IT WAS GOD AT WORK IN THEM, TO WORK AND CAUSE HIS WILL TO BE DONE.

JACOB, ONE OF THE "PATRIARCHS" HAS TO TELL HIS IMMEDIATE FAMILY TO GET RID OF IDOLS. UP UNTIL THIS TIME THEY HAD THEM IN THEIR POSSESSION AND LIKELY WERE WORSHIPPING THEM IN SOME WAY. THIS MOMENT IN SOME WAYS DOESN'T REFLECT FAVORABLY ON JACOB. AND YET GOD ORDAINS THAT IT IS INCLUDED IN THE STORY OF HIS SACRED SCRIPTURE.

AND I'M GLAD HE DID. BECAUSE ALTHOUGH GENESIS 35 DOESN'T START OUT REFLECTING WELL ON JACOB AND HIS FAMILY, HOW HE HANDLES THE SITUATION DOES. HE LEADS HIS FAMILY TO WORSHIP THE LORD. HE CALLS FOR THEM TO REMOVE THEIR IDOLS AND GET HOLY IN BODY AND HEART. HE CALLS THEM TO WORSHIP THE GOD THAT "ANSWERED HIM IN THE DAY OF DISTRESS", SHARING HIS TESTIMONY WITH THEM FOR WHAT GOD HAD DONE.

JACOB IS BOLD, HE'S DETERMINED AND HE'S LEADING, EVEN IF IT TOOK HIM SOME TIME TO GET THERE. I CAN RELATE TO THIS, CAN YOU? SOMETIMES WE DON'T START WELL, BUT BECAUSE OF GOD'S GRACE, WE CAN ADJUST, MAKE CHANGES, AND GET ON THE RIGHT TRACK IN THE END.

PERHAPS THERE IS AN AREA WITH YOUR MARRIAGE THAT YOU NEED TO MODEL THIS CHANGE. MAYBE IT'S YOUR ROLE AS A PARENT OR GRANDPARENT? MAYBE THE WAY YOU HAVE BEEN INTERACTING WITH FRIENDS OR CO-WORKERS NEEDS TO SHIFT? IT'S NOT TOO LATE FOR YOU TO STAND UP AND DO WHAT IS RIGHT. IT MIGHT BE DIFFICULT, YOU MIGHT NOT GET EVERYONE CHEERING YOU ALONG THE WAY, BUT DOING NOTHING BECAUSE DOING WHAT IS RIGHT IS "HARD" ISN'T A GOOD EXCUSE.

SO YOU HAVEN'T BEEN PRAYING FOR THE THINGS YOU SHOULD BE PRAYING FOR. START TODAY. YOU HAVEN'T BEEN KIND TO SOMEONE WHO HURT YOU. START TODAY. YOU HAVE BEEN SELFISH RATHER THAN SERVING. START TODAY. YOU HAVE BEEN STINGY INSTEAD OF GENEROUS. START TODAY. YOU'VE BEEN HOLDING ON TO BITTERNESS RATHER THAN FORGIVING PEOPLE. START TODAY.

YOU SEE IN THE TEXT THAT AS JACOB WENT HIS WAY, THE LORD WAS WALKING WITH HIM. JACOB GOT UP, CALLED HIS FAMILY TO REPENTANCE AND STARTED WALKING TOWARDS THE PLACE WHERE HE WOULD MEET WITH HIS GOD - AND "AS THEY JOURNEYED THE 'TERROR OF GOD'" WALKED WITH THEM (35:5)." GOD WASN'T DOING THIS WITH JACOB SITTING WHERE HE WAS ALLOWING THE DYSFUNCTION IN HIS HOUSE. GOD GAVE JACOB HIS BLESSING AND FAVOR AS JACOB SET OUT TO WORSHIP.

GET YOUR HOUSE IN ORDER, GET YOUR LIFE IN ORDER, AND THEN GET UP TO SEEK AND WORSHIP GOD. HE WILL BLESS YOUR ON THIS JOURNEY AND BE WITH YOU AS YOU GO. START TODAY.