

**God's Refining Grace:
Grace Abounding Toward Sinners
Genesis 35
October 12, 2022**

In Gen. 34 we saw the disastrous consequences of Jacob's seemingly small compromise of not returning to Bethel but instead settling in Shechem, approximately 20 miles, or one-day's journey away.

Jacob's absent leadership, his sons' murderous anger, his family's internal strife, and the potentially imminent danger of the Canaanites that surrounded them are the backdrop for Gen. 35.

I. Repentance, Return, and Renewal (1-15)

The first 4 words of this chapter – “God said to Jacob” clearly show the grace of God.

In verses 2-4 what is the significance of Jacob and his family's response to God's call in general and specifically after the disastrous events of Gen. 34?

After burying the foreign gods and despite the potential for he and his family suffering the consequences of the disastrous events of Gen. 34 Jacob and his family leave Shechem to travel to Bethel.

In verse 5 we see the fulfillment of God's promise to protect Jacob as God causes a terror to fall upon the cities around them.

Note the first two names of the place where God first revealed Himself to Jacob are mentioned – Luz, its original name, Bethel, the name given by Jacob after he awoke from his dream. Now as Jacob returns and builds the altar that God instructed him to build, he calls the place El-Bethel (“God of the house of God”).

The account of Deborah, Rebekah's nurse's, death is unexpected. What is also unexpected is that only Deborah's death is mentioned, not Rebekah's.

Throughout the narrative of Jacob's life, we've seen the consequences of his sinful actions; once again showing that God's people are not exempt from the consequences of their sin. However, because of God's unrelenting grace, his sin does not negate God's promise.

What is significant about God's appearance to Jacob in verses 9-15 and the words spoken to Jacob?

II. Endings, Beginnings, and Transition (16-29)

Despite having received the great promises of God in the previous verses we read of another death, reminding us that just because Jacob has been brought into covenant with God he is not exempt from pain and death which is part of the curse.

As Rachel is dying she names the boy "son of my sorrow" – Ben-Oni, but Jacob who was not involved in the naming of any of his other children doesn't let that name stand and calls the boy Benjamin, "son of my right hand." The right hand is a symbol of strength.

As Rachel's life ends, Benjamin's life begins, bringing Jacob's sons to twelve. As this family journeys further south into Canaan they pitch their tents beyond the tower of Eden, once again

Reuben's act could have been an effort to ensure that Bilhah, the servant of the loved wife Rachel, did not take on the role of being the most-regarded mother in the clan or it could have been an attempt to seize leadership of the family (in the future a similar act will be committed by Absalom when he rebelled against his father David, 2 Sam. 16:21-22). Gen. 49:3-4.

Jacob's exodus from Paddan-aram is completed as he returns to his father Isaac in Hebron.

In reading of Isaac's death, the second generation of God's covenant people have passed away and a new generation comes into focus. Isaac's death is described in a similar way to Abraham's death in Gen. 25:7-8.

What are points of application that can be drawn from Genesis 35 by the first hearers and by us?