

Pentwater Bible Church

Jacob to Bethel, Death of Rachel and Isaac
Genesis Message Sixty-Nine
Genesis 35: 1-29



Death of Rachel; Gustav F. Metz 1847

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Dentwater Bible Church

Genesis Message Sixty-Nine Jacob to Bethel, Isaac and Rebecca Die

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Review:

THE RAPE OF DINAH

This section of Scripture begins the terrible story of Dinah's rape and subsequent retaliation by her birth brothers Levi and Simeon. Jacob was supposed to be on the way from Paddan-Aram to Bethel where his father and mother lived. He had not seen them for twenty plus years and they had never met his wives and children. He was on the way to be with them (Genesis 31: 18 etc.) when he stopped in Shechem. He should have kept going and not mingled with the Canaanites for they were staunch pagans and did not know the God of Israel. Such would be the temptation that would plague this nation throughout their existence. They were commanded to be separate and they would mingle even to the point of marrying into the pagans and adopting their idolatrous ways turning from the God that gave them the unique Covenant separating them out from the rest of the world as God's people.

His father told him not to marry a Canaanite woman (Genesis 28: 1). In fact when Jehovah God appeared to him he made a vow to return to Bethel not Shechem (Genesis 28: 21). So by Jacob settling in Shechem, buying property, and building a house he was not in too much of a hurry to keep his vow. This ugly episode in the history of Israel demonstrates divine intervention by Jehovah to move Jacob to the spot where God wanted him and Jacob had vowed to be. The struggle with the Angel of Jehovah (Genesis 33: 24-32), which was indicative of the struggling Jacob and his people, would have throughout their history. This is one of those instances.

Dinah was the young birth sister of Simeon and Levi all born to Leah. The text identifies Dinah with Leah as opposed to Jacob bringing to mind the loveless relationship Leah had with Jacob. She was probably in her mid teens and her brother in their early twenties. The natural inclination of people is to seek companionship within their age group. Dinah *went out to see the daughters of the land*. The problem here is that the Canaanites had a very low moral character and Jacob should not have exposed his family to this group by setting up residence there. It was an implicit endorsement of them by taking steps of establishing permanent residence there (purchasing land and home). Hence the blame for this situation falls square on his shoulders. Finally, this is the first time in the Bible where a Jewish woman is socializing with the pagan Canaanites.

While she is out with her friends Shechem the son of the town's king Hamor is attracted to her.. *He took her, and lay with her, and humbled her*. The Hebrew text uses the stronger direct object of grammar for *she* indicating without a doubt that she was raped. This was forced, not a consensual sexual encounter. In fact the word for humbled is *anah* עָנָה and it means to be put down or brought low. She was treated as a common

slovenly girl, which caused her to feel degraded. She now had no chance of ever having a valid marriage.

In Genesis 34: 3 Shechem her rapist ends up falling in love with Dinah (*he loved the damsel*). So now Shechem is professing love for Dinah and he keeps her in his home. Even though he said he loved her she was still essentially a prisoner in his home. He then asks his father to obtain her as his wife. Interestingly, the Hebrew word for damsel in verse three is *naara*, which means a young woman. However the word, which is translated into English as damsel in verse four, is *yaldah*, which is child. Shechem knows what he has done. He raped a child, called her a young woman to her face and now approaches his father explaining the situation and asks him to get her as his wife. This realization by Shechem according to the Mid-Eastern customs of that time required him to legally obtain her father's permission to enter into a marriage contract with him. So this is additional motivation to marry Dinah.

Jacob discovers the nature of the situation and he says nothing. He waited until his sons came in from working in the field to confide in them. Now Jacob did not know all that happened since it was behind closed doors at Shechem's house but he knew that it was bad and Dinah was not released to come home. About the same time as Jacob's sons came home Hamor was visiting with a proposal for him. The sons were understandably very grieved about what had happened to their sister. The text says, *and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter*. The word for folly means a godless act, which pollutes families and breaks up tribes as well as dividing man and God. The Hebrew word for folly is *nevalah*, which is used thirteen times in the OT and eight of those times it means a sexual crime (Genesis 34: 7; Deuteronomy 22: 21; Judges 19: 23; 19: 24; 30: 6; 20: 10; II Samuel 13: 12; Jeremiah 29: 23). This is also the first appearance of the word Israel referring to the whole group. The family now was seen as a separate nation with their own national identity. This section of Scripture ends with a large understatement characterizing the rape as, *which thing ought not to be done*.

HAMOR NEGOTIATES FOR DINAH

Genesis 34: 8-17

Without any reference to the rape or offering an apology, Hamor now proposes marriage for Shechem and Dinah. Additionally he proposes that the Israelites intermarry with the Canaanites, live with them and engage in trade with them. This is essentially an offer of citizenship thereby ending their nomadic life. This was not always available to the nomads who usually lived on the periphery of the many city-states with the ancient Near East. Soon Hamor will tell a different story (Genesis 34: 23) to his people selling them on the concept. He will emphasize the materialistic benefits to them due to Jacob's obvious wealth. Shechem who came to the meeting with Hamor begins to talk and makes an offer to Jacob and his sons. He says, *Let me find favor in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give.*¹² *Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife.* The Jews were well aware of the Abrahamic Covenant they inherited which would separate them from the other nations but this was an enticing offer. They knew they could not accept his offer but nevertheless had to extricate Dinah from Shechem's house. Shechem is practically

begging to get Dinah as his wife offering anything the Israelites wanted in return. The sons slyly responded by saying, *We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us.*” There is still no mention of the rape only Shechem’s desire to marry her and he still has her at his home. The Israelites only know of the rape through third parties who told Jacob. So in the *open* negotiations they are not addressing any redress for the rape. Each party knows the situation without it being revealed in the open. So the sons propose that they will accept Hamor’s offer if there is a mass circumcision of all the males in Shechem. This is a calculated deception of the part of both parties with the Israelites making a direct attack on the perverse sexually immoral religious system the Canaanites followed. The very act of circumcision was God given to the Hebrews and they should not have treated it so cavalierly with the Canaanites. The sons of Israel left the negotiations with an either/or ultimatum. Either the Canaanites took them up on the offer or there was no deal. Dinah then must be returned and they would leave the area.

THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE CANAANITES

Genesis 34: 18-24

The offer of Jacob’s sons was pleasing to Hamor and Shechem so they agreed to proceed because Shechem loved Dinah. They now had the obstacle of convincing the men of the city to get circumcised which would give them access to Jacob’s other daughters and his wealth in trade relations. The Israelites first attempt at foreign policy as a nation would prove odious to the Canaanites. Because the city held Shechem in an honored position they agreed to the mass circumcision. Each male in the city was then circumcised as agreed. The positive points of benefit to the city would be:

1. The Israelites are peaceful.
2. If we let them dwell with us trade will be beneficial for us.
3. The land is large enough for all to live in.
4. We can exchange women as wives.
5. We will obtain their cattle and all they have; hence the better part of the bargain.

THE MASS SLAUGHTER

Genesis 34: 25-29

The birth brothers of Dinah, Simeon and Levi waited three days, which is when circumcision pain will be at its worst. They got swords and stealthily attacked the men of the city. Because they had a large advantage they were able to kill all the men of the city of Shechem. They got Shechem and Hamor too then rescued Dinah from her captivity. Once they started killing they knew they had to kill them all or there would be retribution. When that was done they plundered the city. They completely sacked the city taking all the women and children captive as well as all of its wealth. Hamor sold the circumcision to the city’s men on the basis of them being able to take all the Israelites wealth *“Shall not their cattle and their substance and all their beasts be ours.”* Now it was turned around and he lost all including his life. The women and children were absorbed into Israel as servants or slaves.

JACOB'S TROUBLE

Genesis 34: 30-31

Jacob could only see trouble from the inhabitants in the nearby city-states when they hear of his slaughter of the men of Shechem. He was fearful they there would be an allied attack on Israel when the other nations discovered what happened. He did not seem to mind the principle only the method of retaliation which Simeon and Levi used to avenge and rescue Dinah. They argue that they had to do it because Shechem dealt with Dinah as a harlot. When Shechem offered to pay for Dinah he was essentially turning her into a prostitute in their eyes. They viewed Jacob as too willing to compromise for a heinous act against their sister. The only problem was they went too far in getting retribution for Dinah's defilement. Jacob will remember this on his deathbed, which is given in Genesis chapter forty-nine. He did not give either Levi or Simeon their own portion of the Land. Finally, God has never permitted marriage between a Canaanite and an Israelite. Joshua took Shechem without a fight later in Israel's history because the population recognized it was under Israeli suzerainty as a result of the actions recorded here.

Today's Message:

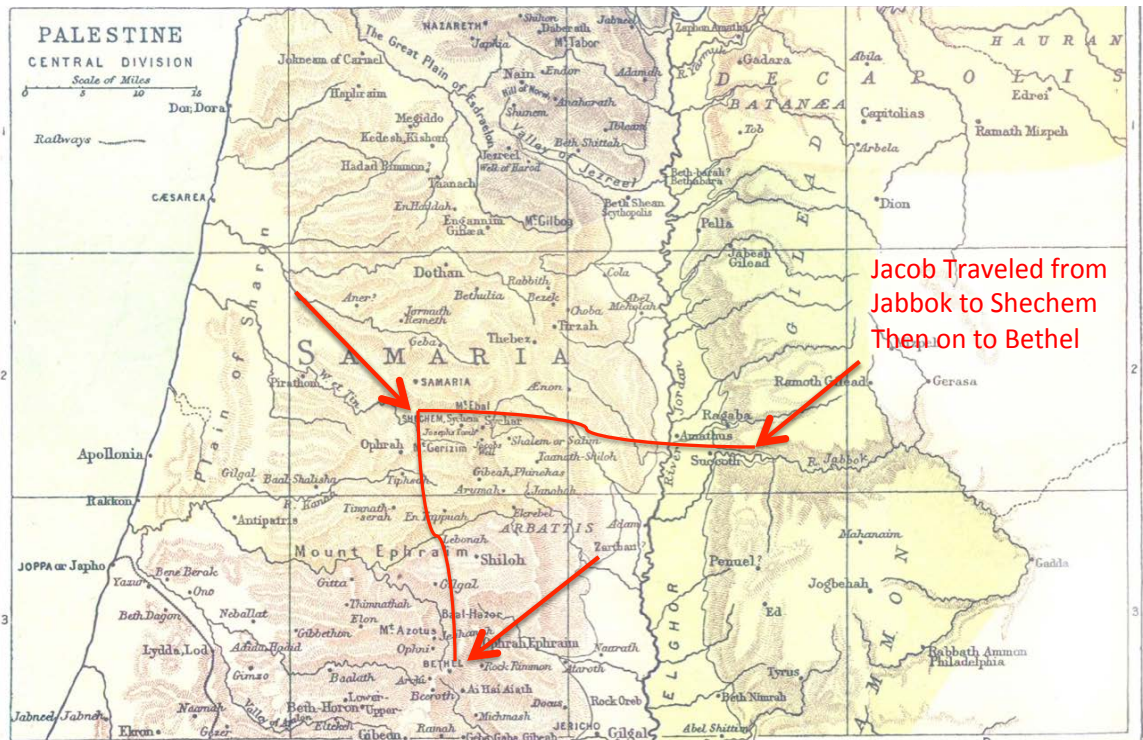
JACOB RETURNS TO BETHEL

Genesis 35: 1-15

¹ And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, who appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. ² Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the foreign gods that are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your garments: ³ and let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. ⁴ And they gave unto Jacob all the foreign gods, which were in their hand, and the rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. ⁵ And they journeyed: and a terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob. ⁶ So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan (the same is Beth-el), he and all the people that were with him. ⁷ And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el; because there God was revealed unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother. ⁸ And Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried below Beth-el under the oak: and the name of it was called Allon-bacuth. ⁹ And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. ¹⁰ And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. ¹¹ And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; ¹² and the land which I gave unto Abraham

and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.
¹³And God went up from him in the place where he spake with him. ¹⁴And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he spake with him, a pillar of stone: and he poured out a drink-offering thereon, and poured oil thereon. ¹⁵And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Beth-el (ASV 1901).

The Lord God now appeared to Jacob for a fourth direct revelation. He told him to , *Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there.* He also told him to *make there an altar unto God.* It was there that he fled from Esau and where the Abrahamic Covenant was confirmed to him. Jacob had been in Shechem for ten years. This was not how he should have complied with the solemn vow he made to God (Genesis 28: 20-22) to return to Bethel his father’s home. The tragic incident with Dinah’s rape was probably the consequence of his failure to accommodate his debt to God.



Jacob Travelled from Jabbok to Shechem, then to Bethel (Map from Logos Software)

Deuteronomy 23: 21

²¹When thou shalt vow a vow unto Jehovah thy God, thou shalt not be slack to pay it: for Jehovah thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee (ASV 1901).

Apparently since he was in Shechem for so long he had no intention of going the fifteen miles to Bethel to fulfill his vow to Jehovah God. Perhaps Jacob still did not realize that the situation with Dinah was the divine retribution for his failure to keep his vow. The God of the universe did not forget and made the situation at Shechem such that he could

no longer stay there. God was now commanding him to go and build an altar in Bethel to Him. Periodically the Patriarchs would build altars on their own to God. This time however, God was issuing a direct commandment for Jacob to do so. Because of Jacob's response it appears that he is now getting the full impact of God's righteousness and his responsibility to conform to His commands. He says to the entire entourage with him, "*Put away the foreign gods that are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your garments.*" He may or may not have known of the teraphim that Rebecca had stolen from Laban but the Canaanite slaves and servants from Shechem certainly had them. The people who came with him from Haran (Genesis 30: 43) probably had them too. Jacob knew that he must rid his camp of any idols that could induce idol worship. God does not permit any rival gods (Exodus 20: 3). The burial of the idols because they were dead, was followed by a ritual purification through the washing of the body (Mikveh). This was a sign of the purification of the heart from the defilement of idolatry. They also put on clean and festal clothes, as a symbol of the sanctification and lifting of the heart to the Lord. It is worthy to note they left the idols and earrings representing them at Shechem. Earrings in themselves are not wrong. These were used for magical purposes and therein lies the problem. They had to be put away (Hosea 2: 13). In a like manner of the Mikveh when a New Testament person accepts Christ and becomes a believer he or she must be baptized as a outward sign expressing their inward regeneration for all to see.

Remembering what Simeon and Levi did to the men of Shechem and the fear Jacob had of reprisal from the neighboring cities God gave him divine protection for the trip to Bethel (*they journeyed: and a terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob*).

Jacob arrived at Bethel, which is also called Luz. He built an altar and named the place *El-beth-el* which means "The God of the House of God."

Genesis 35: 8 records the death of Deborah who was Rebecca's nurse (Genesis 24: 59). She had previously been a life-long wet-nurse to Rebecca, which means that Rebecca had died while Jacob was working for Laban in Haran. She probably nursed Esau and Jacob as infants then came to him in Shechem after Rebecca's death. Deborah was about one hundred eighty years old at death. The name of the place of her burial was Allon-Bacuth, which means "The Oak of Weeping." The mourning at her death, and including it in the text, are evidence that she must have been a faithful and highly esteemed servant in Jacob's house.

In verse nine another divine appearance to Jacob occurs which is the second appearance of Jehovah God to Jacob since he came from Paddan-Aram. The purpose was to again reconfirm the Abrahamic Covenant through Jacob for a second time. Thirty years before He appeared to him before his journey to Paddan-Aram in a dream. This time it was in daylight and visible as the Shekinah Glory (*And God went up from him*). He identifies Himself as El-Shaddai, The Mighty God! God reaffirms his name change to Israel and says, "*be fruitful and multiply.*" Then He makes four promises to Jacob:

1. A nation shall be of you (one nation).
2. A company of nations shall be of you (the twelve tribes).
3. Kings shall come out of your loins (Forty nine plus Jesus).
4. The Land is promised personally to Jacob, not only to his offspring.

The pillar that Jacob sets up gets dedicated with oil and a drink offering. The drink offering added to the pillar and oil signify Jacob's treatment of it as the House of God. Finally there is a reaffirmation of the name Beth-El honoring a place of worship and a place of offerings.

THE DEATH OF RACHEL AT BENJAMIN'S BIRTH

Genesis 35: 16-20

¹⁶And they journeyed from Beth-el; and there was still some distance to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labor. ¹⁷And it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; for now thou shalt have another son. ¹⁸And it came to pass, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin. ¹⁹And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath (the same is Beth-lehem). ²⁰And Jacob set up a pillar upon her grave: the same is the Pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day (ASV 1901).

Rachel was dying as she gave birth to Benjamin the only son to be born in The Land. The other eleven were all born in Mesopotamia. She called him Ben-Oni which means son of my distress or suffering. Because the root of the name *oni* is *aven*, which connotes an iniquity or lie, some see this as divine retribution for her sins and Jacob's vow to kill the person who stole Laban's teraphim (Genesis 31: 32). She was buried on the way to Ephrath, which is the region where Bethlehem is located. The road to Bethlehem is the central trunk route, which runs throughout the Hill Country of Ephraim and Judah. At the time I Samuel 10: 2 was written it says that Rachel's sepulcher is on the border of Benjamin at Zelzah. Even though tradition places Rachel's tomb on the outskirts of Bethlehem it is actually in the territory of Benjamin near the city of Ramah.

As she dies in childbirth the midwife comforts her and lets her know it is a boy. She realizes that she is dying hence the name she gives the boy means suffering. Jacob is obviously very blessed at the time of his grief of losing Rachel so he renames the boy Benjamin which means "Son of my right hand." This is indicative of a position of honor. He places a pillar at her grave and it was still there in Samuel's day and Jeremiah's day as well. Its specific location has been lost today.

JACOB'S SONS AND REUBEN'S SIN

Genesis 35: 21-26

²¹And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Eder. ²²And it came to pass, while Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard of it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve: ²³The sons of Leah: Reuben, Jacob's first-born, and Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Zebulun; ²⁴the sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin; ²⁵and the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid: Dan and

Naphtali; ²⁶and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid: Gad and Asher: these are the sons of Jacob, that were born to him in Paddan-aram (ASV 1901).

Jacob's new name, Israel is now used to identify him as he journeys to the tower (Migdal) of Eder. This is on the outskirts of Bethlehem and is mentioned in Micah 4: 8. It is in this place that Reuben had sexual relations with his father's concubine Bilhah. She had been Rachel's handmaid and gave birth to Dan and Naphtali. Some see this as a possible usurpation of Jacob's position as head of the family. A similar event happened with King David and his son Absalom (II Samuel 3: 7; 12: 8; 16: 20-22). Eventually Israel learned what had happened and did nothing at that time. He would though when he was dying and handing out blessings to his sons (Genesis 49: 3-4). Ruben will lose the birthrights as first-born for this heinous sin. Finally this section of scripture ends with a listing of the twelve sons of Israel who were born in Paddan-Aram with the exception of Benjamin who was born in the Land.

THE DEATH OF ISAAC

Genesis 35: 27-29

²⁷And Jacob came unto Isaac his father to Mamre, to Kiriath-arba (the same is Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac sojourned. ²⁸And the days of Isaac were a hundred and fourscore years. ²⁹And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, old and full of days: and Esau and Jacob his sons buried him (ASV 1901).

Jacob came to his father. This is the first recorded meeting of the two since Jacob came back to the Land. Isaac probably never got to meet Rachel. Jacob was seventy-nine when he left and was one hundred eight when he returned. Therefore he would be with Isaac for the last twelve years of his life. Isaac lived until one hundred eighty years and was the longest living of all the Patriarchs. Jacob was one hundred twenty at the time of Isaac's death. The text says Isaac gave up the ghost and was gathered to his people affirming that there is life after death. Isaac was buried by both of his twin sons Esau and Jacob. Isaac's death is reported here to end this Toldot, but it did not occur chronologically here. He actually lived for twelve more years after Jacob returned to the Land. It is included here to conclude the Toldot. Isaac was alive when Joseph was abducted. At that time he was one hundred sixty seven. Isaac died during the time of Joseph's elevation to the prime minister's office in Egypt. Isaac died ten years before Jacob had to move to Egypt because of the famine. So he did not know of the outcome of Joseph's life.

NEXT WEEK: THE GENERATIONS OF ESAU AND BEGINNING THE STORY OF JOSEPH

Please Call or e-mail with any questions or comments.

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