

Genesis: The Book of Beginnings

Focus	Four Great Events								Four Great Persons				
Divisions	1	2	3	4	5	9	10	11	12	25:19	27	37:2b	50
	Creation		Fall		Flood		Nations (Babel)		Abraham	Isaac	Jacob	Joseph	
Topics	Primeval History of Humanity								Patriarchal History of Israel				
	Beginning of the Human Race								Beginning of the Hebrew Race				
Locations	East (Eden to Ur)								West (Canaan to Egypt)				
Time	2,000 + years (20% of Genesis)								About 286 years (80% of Genesis)				

Author: Moses

Date written: after 1445 BC

Theme: Israel's Origin & Early Years

Purposes: 1) to present the beginning of everything but God
 2) to record God's choice of Israel & His covenant plan for the nation
 3) to show how the sin of man is met by the redemption of God



The Book of Genesis

1:1-2:3 – The Creation of the Heavens and the Earth

2:4-4:26 – The Generations of the Heavens and the Earth

5:1-6:8 – The Generations of Adam

6:9-9:29 – The Generations of Noah

10:1-11:9 – The Generations of Shem, Ham and Japheth

11:10-26 – The Generations of Shem

11:27-25:11 – The Generations of Terah

25:12-18 – The Generations of Ishmael

25:19-35:29 – The Generations of Isaac

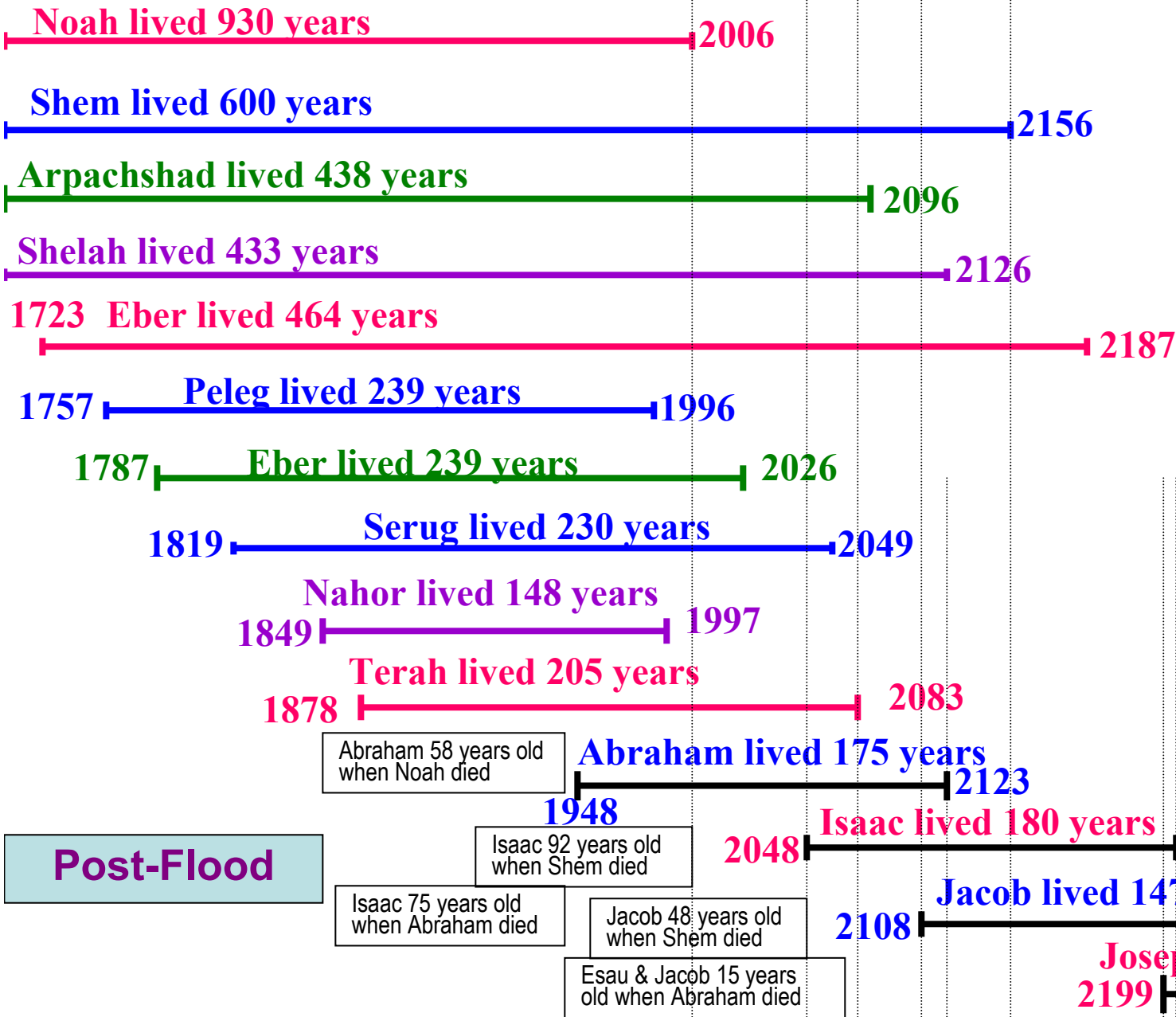
36:1-43 – The Generations of Esau

37:1-50:26 – The Generations of Jacob



Years from Creation

1700	1800	1900	2000	2100	2200	2300
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BC

- 2165 - Abram born
- 2090 - Abram reaches Canaan
- 2089 - To Egypt because of famine
- 2066 - Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed
- 2065 - Isaac born
- 2028 - Sarah dies
- 2025 - Isaac marries Rebekah
- 2005 - Esau and Jacob born
- 1990 - Abraham dies
- 1928 - Jacob flees to Haran
- 1921 - Reuben born
- 1914 - Joseph born
- 1897 - Joseph sold into slavery
- 1885 - Isaac dies
- 1875 - Jacob and family enter into Egypt
- 1858 - Jacob dies
- 1804 - Joseph dies

Post-Flood

Abraham 58 years old when Noah died

Isaac 92 years old when Shem died

Isaac 75 years old when Abraham died

Jacob 48 years old when Shem died

Esau & Jacob 15 years old when Abraham died

Joseph 29 years old when Isaac died
Joseph 54 years old when Jacob died

1928BC

Jacob arrives at Haran

Jacob = 77 years old

1921BC

Jacob serves 7 years for Leah

Jacob marries Leah

7 days later

Jacob marries Rachel

Jacob = 84 years old

1914BC

Jacob serves 7 years for Rachel

Jacob = 91 years old

1908BC

Jacob serves 6 years to provide for his family

Jacob's 11 sons & 1 daughter born during his 20 year sojourn with Laban in Haran

Jacob = 97 years old



<http://www.pbc.org/library/files/html/4878.html>

Genesis 34 is one of the most disturbing chapters in all of scripture....To neglect such a passage, which slaps us in the face with wickedness of our world, is to risk living in denial.

Genesis 34, like Genesis 26, constitutes something of a digression in the Jacob narrative. These two digressions appear near the beginning and end of the narrative... The narrator of Genesis is concerned with the Abrahamic Covenant, a feature of which concerns the call of Abraham's people to be a blessing to the nations. Both Genesis 26 and Genesis 34 concern how the people of Abraham interact with the nations. **Both show that a patriarch mistreated a woman: Isaac endangered his wife by presenting her as his sister, and Jacob does nothing about the rape of his daughter, Dinah.**

The narrator in Genesis 34-35 depicts Jacob's life in microcosm. **Jacob's life has largely been about his failure and God's grace.** In Genesis 34, he fails. In Genesis 35, God responds with grace. The hopeful sign is that in Genesis 35 Jacob is more responsive to God than he has been in the past.

After his reunion with Esau in Genesis 33, Jacob is on the verge of returning to Bethel, where God first appeared to him, and to his father, but he gets waylaid in Shechem.



Genesis 34:1-31 – The Rape of Dinah and Its Repercussions

v1-5 Dinah and Shechem

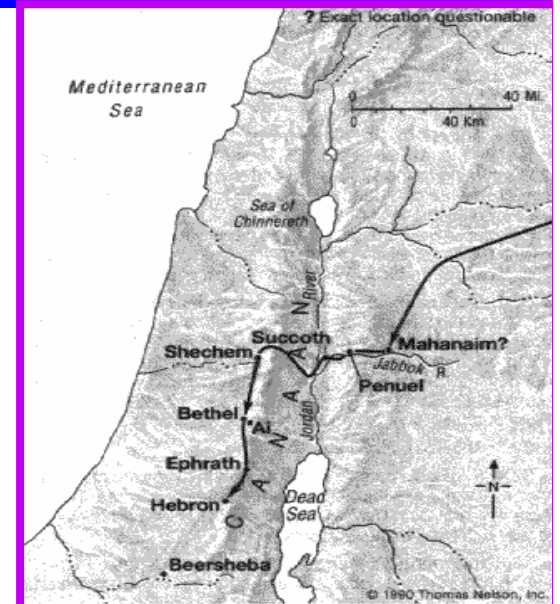
¹ Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land. ² And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he took her and lay with her by force. ³ **And he was deeply attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her.** ⁴ **So** Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, “Get me this young girl for a wife.”

Excavations at the gate of Shechem suggest that it was a city of about 40-50 families

cf. Amnon and Tamar (2 Samuel 13)

Jacob = 105 years old in 1900 BC

Dinah about 13-14 years old



Jacob Returns to Canaan



<http://www.pbc.org/library/files/html/4878.html>

The narrator briefly mentioned the birth of Dinah in Genesis 30:21 to prepare us for her appearance in this scene. He identifies her as “the daughter of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob.” **At first, Jacob cared little for Leah, so we may now wonder: How much does he care for his daughter by Leah?**

Dinah’s intentions were to pay a social visit on the local women and on the face of it, this seems innocent enough. However, the narrator has already noted the wickedness of the Canaanite women (Genesis 24:3; 28:1, 6). The Hivites, who inhabit this city, are a class of Canaanites. Where the women are, the men are also and so to venture forth in this manner, especially without escort, is to court disaster. **(Today, like Dinah, some girls, and some women—not to mention some boys and some men—court disaster in the way they dress, the way they act and the places they visit.)** **However, Jacob bears some of the responsibility for Dinah’s actions because he is not proactive on his daughter’s behalf.**

Literally, Dinah went out to “see” the women. However, Shechem, the son of Hamor, the Hivite prince, “saw” her. He liked what he saw, so he raped her. The narrator tells us that Shechem “took” her.



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Esau twice used the same word in Genesis 27:36 when he said Jacob “took” his birthright and blessing. **Jacob, it seems, can’t escape his past. He illicitly took what belonged to Esau; now someone else illicitly takes his daughter.**

Literally, Shechem “cleaved” to Dinah, as if she were his wife (Genesis 2:24). The narrator in two places has already told us that Dinah was Jacob’s daughter. He informs us again in verse 3 to highlight Jacob’s responsibility in the matter. Further, Shechem offers no apology, nor does he make reparations. In fact, he has the temerity, after raping Dinah, to woo her with tender words. He may speak tenderly to her face, but when he speaks of her to his father it’s as if she were a commodity: “Get me this young girl for a wife.”

Here’s a man who gets what he wants with no concern for propriety. He is somewhat like what we’ve seen from Jacob for most of his life, though Jacob never used force. Shechem has intercourse with Dinah (by force!); then he cleaves to her as if she were his; then he woos her with words; then he seeks marriage. **As the God of Jacob has decreed, intercourse belongs to marriage, and if marriage is sought, it should be preceded by words of tenderness.**



Genesis 34:1-31 – The Rape of Dinah and Its Repercussions

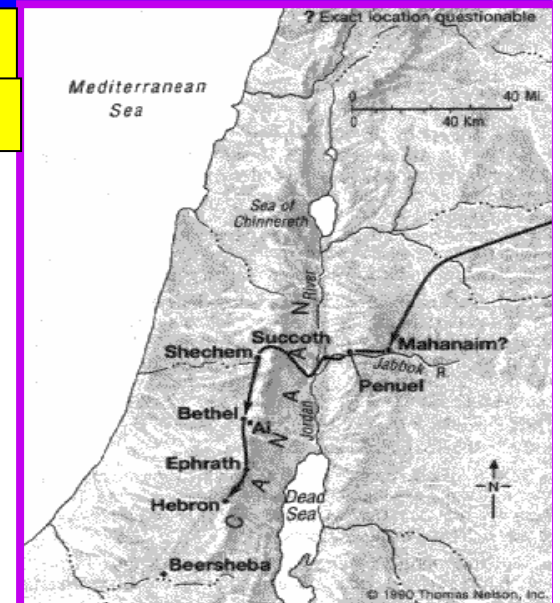
Jacob = 105 years old in 1900 BC

Dinah about 13-14 years old

v1-5 Dinah and Shechem

⁵ Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; **but** his sons were with his livestock in the field, **so** Jacob kept silent until they came in.

The narrator has depicted the scene in such a way that we expect Dinah's father to be outraged. When David heard that Amnon raped Tamar, he was "very angry" (2 Samuel 13:21). We expect Jacob to feel similar rage. Instead, Jacob hears about the rape and remains silent. The narrator doesn't tell us whether he felt anything at all.



Jacob Returns to Canaan



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Notice though that when Jacob's sons hear what happened to their sister, they are anything but passive. They are "grieved" and, like David, "very angry." The narrator comments that such a disgraceful thing ought not to be done, particularly "in Israel," the people of God. Jacob's family had not yet become the nation of Israel. **Jacob's name, however, has just been changed to Israel because of his new relationship with God. This is both an indictment against Jacob** and a warning against such behavior to the first readers of Genesis, who comprised the nation of Israel. Jacob's "sons" react when "Jacob's daughter" is raped, but Jacob doesn't.

Later, when Jacob assumes that his son Joseph is dead, he "mourned for his son for many days," he "refused to be comforted," he expected to mourn for the rest of his life and he wept (Genesis 37:34-35). Jacob, if he were to lose his son Benjamin, also envisioned mourning until his death (Genesis 42:38).

Why is Jacob so concerned for these two sons and not for his daughter? Joseph and Benjamin were the only children born to Rachel, his favorite wife, so he favored them. Jacob was less inclined toward Leah and, therefore, his daughter by her.



Genesis 34:1-31 – The Rape of Dinah and Its Repercussions

v6-10 Hamor's Offer

⁶ Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. ⁷ Now the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done. ⁸ **But** Hamor spoke with them, saying, “The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; please give her to him in marriage. ⁹ And intermarry with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves. ¹⁰ **Thus** you shall live with us, and the land shall be *open* before you; live and trade in it, and acquire property in it.”

v11-12 Shechem's Offer

¹¹ Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, “If I find favor in your sight, then I will give whatever you say to me. ¹² Ask me ever so much bridal payment and gift, and I will give according as you say to me; **but** give me the girl in marriage.”



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Hamor came to speak to Jacob, but the passive father is joined by his outraged sons. Hamor not only proposes marriage on behalf of his son, he proposes large-scale intermarriage between the two peoples. This, he suggests, will work to the economic advantage of Jacob's family. The narrator has already made his feelings clear about intermarriage. Also, **in Deuteronomy 7:3-4, he warns the Israelites against marrying the people of the land, who would turn them toward other gods.**

Such reasoning is still valid today. Followers of Jesus shouldn't marry those who worship other gods, in part because of how the other gods may influence them.

Shechem even goes his father one better by offering Jacob's family an over-the-top bridal gift, saying, in essence, "name your price." **Jacob offered an over-the-top price for Rachel: seven years of service** (Genesis 29:18). Shechem asks the family to "give me the girl in marriage." **Jacob told Laban, "Give me my wife"** (Genesis 29:21). Neither Shechem nor Jacob used the woman's name, and each spoke of her as if referring to a commodity.



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Shechem says, “If I find favor in your sight, then I will give whatever you say to me.” Jacob, knowing that God had shown him favor, used similar words when he was seeking forgiveness from Esau. Jacob, like Shechem, offered a “gift” to the party in question (Genesis 33:8, 10). Shechem, unlike Jacob, shows no vulnerability, no humility and no remorse.

Jacob, because of his experience with Rachel and Esau, should be able to see right through Shechem for Shechem is merely a violent version of a younger Jacob. Alas, he remains on the sidelines. Evidently, he doesn't care to see the truth. Instead, Jacob allows his sons to respond to Shechem and Hamor. They do so with deceit, a tactic they no doubt learned from their father (Genesis 27:35). On the positive side, they feel moral outrage, act on behalf of “their sister” and call her “our sister,” putting their father to shame, who did nothing about his daughter.

Genesis 33:10 10 And Jacob said, “No, please, if now I have found favor in your sight, then take my present from my hand, for I see your face as one sees the face of God, and you have received me favorably.”



Genesis 34:1-31 – The Rape of Dinah and Its Repercussions

v13-17 The Deceit of Jacob's Sons

13 **But** Jacob's sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor, with deceit, and spoke to them, **because** he had defiled Dinah their sister. 14 And they said to them, “We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, **for** that would be a disgrace to us. 15 Only on this *condition* will we consent to you: **if** you will become like us, in that every male of you be circumcised, 16 **then** we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live with you and become one people. 17 **But if** you will not listen to us to be circumcised, **then** we will take our daughter and go.”



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The sons make a counterproposal. They will agree to the Hivites' terms if the men of the city are circumcised. **God gave the rite of circumcision to Abraham and his descendants as a sign of his covenant with them (Genesis 17:10).** If the Hivites agree, the sons say, they will become “one people” with them. The sons abuse the sacred rite of circumcision, as it turns out, in order to murder the people they would become one with.

Of course, they have no business becoming one people with the Hivites, who worship other gods. The sons of Jacob, in ostensibly going along with the Hivites' proposal, make a mockery of marriage. This arrangement is even more botched than the one between Jacob and Laban by which Jacob ended up with two wives. Clearly, the sons learned a few things—most of them not good—about marriage from their parents.

If we have lived by taking from others, we shouldn't be surprised if something is taken from us. If we treat people like commodities, we shouldn't be surprised if someone close to us, or we ourselves, are treated like a commodity. If we practice deceit, or if we neglect our marriage, we shouldn't think that our children aren't watching and learning.



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When the whole earth endeavored to be “one people” apart from the Lord, he put an end to the project (Genesis 11:6). As Genesis 34 unfolds, the sons of Jacob will be anything but the blessing to the nations that they were called to be (Genesis 12:1-3, 28:14).

If the Hivites agree to their terms, the sons of Jacob say, they will “give our daughters to you.” If not, they will “take our daughter and go.” They call Dinah their daughter, as if they were speaking for their silent father.

But this leaves us with a question: Where exactly is Dinah? We haven’t heard anything about her whereabouts since she went out to visit the daughters of the land. The narrator gives us a hint in verse 17 but doesn’t answer the question until later in the story. Shechem “took” Dinah by force and raped her. The sons seem to be threatening that they will “take” her back.



Genesis 34:1-31 – The Rape of Dinah and Its Repercussions

v18-24 The Circumcision of the Hivites

18 Now their words seemed reasonable to Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son. 19 And the young man did not delay to do the thing, **because** he was delighted with Jacob's daughter. Now he was more respected than all the household of his father. 20 **So** Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city, and spoke to the men of their city, saying, 21 "These men are friendly with us; **therefore** let them live in the land and trade in it, for behold, the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters in marriage, and give our daughters to them. 22 Only on this *condition* will the men consent to us to live with us, to become one people: that every male among us be circumcised as they are circumcised. 23 Will not their livestock and their property and all their animals be ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will live with us." 24 And all who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and to his son Shechem, and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

Excavations at the gate of Shechem suggest that it was a city of about 40-50 families



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Hamor and Shechem—particularly Shechem—respond favorably to the offer. Shechem is portrayed as a man of influence. Hamor and Shechem gather the men of the city at the gate, the place where legal and commercial transactions were negotiated. They put their own spin on the sons' counterproposal in order to persuade their fellow citizens.

First, they say the men are “friendly.” The men are anything but friendly, but Shechem, who is blinded by lust, can't see it. When proposing intermarriage to Jacob's family, Hamor and Shechem told the newcomers that they could acquire “property” in the land. Now they tell their fellow citizens: “Will not their livestock and their property and all their animals be ours?” Hamor and Shechem offered Jacob's family economic prosperity, but in reality they intended to rule over—and prosper from—the family.

Lured by the hope of prosperity, the men of the city pay the price of circumcision.



Genesis 34:1-31 – The Rape of Dinah and Its Repercussions

v25-29 The Slaughter of the Hivites

25 Now it came about on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came upon the city unawares, and killed every male. 26 And they killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went forth. 27 Jacob's sons came upon the slain and looted the city, **because** they had defiled their sister. 28 They took their flocks and their herds and their donkeys, and that which was in the city and that which was in the field; 29 and they captured and looted all their wealth and all their little ones and their wives, even all that was in the houses.



Proverbs 6:20-35 – The Folly of Adultery

- 20 My son, observe the commandment of your father,
And do not forsake the teaching of your mother;
- 21 Bind them continually on your heart;
Tie them around your neck.
- 22 When you walk about, they will guide you;
When you sleep, they will watch over you;
And when you awake, they will talk to you.
- 23 For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light;
And reproofs for discipline are the way of life,
- 24 To keep you from the evil woman,
From the smooth tongue of the adulteress.
- 25 Do not desire her beauty in your heart,
Nor let her catch you with her eyelids.
- 26 For on account of a harlot *one is reduced to a loaf of bread,*
And an adulteress hunts for the precious life.
- 27 Can a man take fire in his bosom,
And his clothes not be burned?
- 28 Or can a man walk on hot coals,
And his feet not be scorched?
- 29 So is the one who goes in to his neighbor's wife;
Whoever touches her will not go unpunished.
- 30 Men do not despise a thief if he steals
To satisfy himself when he is hungry;
- 31 But when he is found, he must repay sevenfold;
He must give all the substance of his house.
- 32 The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense;
He who would destroy himself does it.
- 33 Wounds and disgrace he will find,
And his reproach will not be blotted out.
- 34 For jealousy enrages a man,
And he will not spare in the day of vengeance.
- 35 He will not accept any ransom,
Nor will he be content though you give many gifts.



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Three days after the Hivites are circumcised, Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, spring into action. In one sense, the punishment fits the crime. Ironically, the men of the city are weakened in the body part that Shechem used to rape Dinah. The demand of circumcision was a ploy in order to weaken the men of the city. For the first time since verse 1, Dinah's name is used. Her brothers take up her honor.

They also take up their swords and slaughter the unsuspecting—and weakened—men of the city. The narrator finally lets us know that Dinah had been living in Shechem's house, evidently against her will. Jacob's passivity, therefore, is all the more reprehensible. Simeon and Levi kill Hamor and Shechem last of all and then rescue their sister.

Earlier, Dinah "went out" (yasa) to visit the daughters of the land, and Shechem "took" her by force. The narrative comes full circle: Simeon and Levi "took" Dinah and "went forth" (yasa). Shechem used force to have intercourse with Dinah, and Simeon and Levi use force to rescue her. Dinah had gone out, and now her brothers bring her back.

The rescue operation is justified. However, killing every man of the city, apart from the direction of the Lord, is not. The aftermath compounds the matter: Jacob's sons loot the city. Rescuing their sister who was raped is one thing; raping the city of the one who raped their sister is another.



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Having made a mockery of both circumcision and marriage, the sons of Jacob now make a mockery of holy war. They engage in it without the Lord's direction, and they collected the spoils for themselves instead of dedicating them to the Lord (Numbers 31:1-24). Jacob censures Simeon and Levi, both in this text and in Genesis 49:5-7.

Without doubt, the proper response when someone close to us is somehow violated is moral outrage. When the powerful abuse the powerless, we should be offended, as the sons of Jacob were. We should stand up in the name of justice. But it is all too easy to take justice into our own hands, turn it into vengeance and find biblical rationale for doing so. When we do so, we overreact. We go too far. We abuse the scriptures, just as surely as the sons of Jacob abused circumcision, marriage and holy war. We make a mockery of the faith, and the reputation of the gospel suffers.

Let us not forget that the Old Testament injunction of "an eye for an eye" was meant to limit the punishment so that it did not exceed the crime. The law mitigated against the tendency to overreact (Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20).

The Muslims may have their suicide bombers, who find reason for their actions in their scriptures, but we have our abortion clinic bombers, who co-opt our scriptures. Moral outrage is appropriate. Advocacy is appropriate. Taking the law into our own hands is inappropriate.

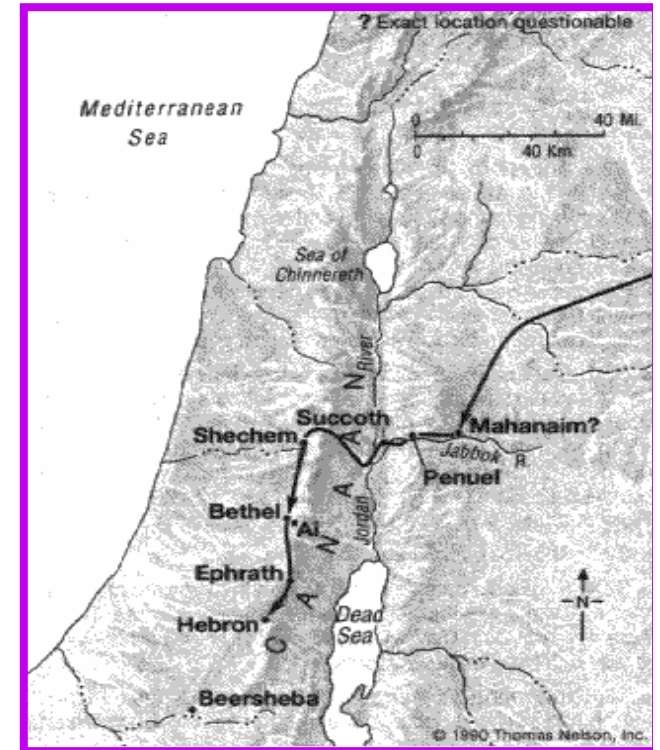


Genesis 34:1-31 – The Rape of Dinah and Its Repercussions

v30-31 Jacob's Rebuke

30 Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, “You have brought trouble on **me**, by making **me** odious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and **my** men being few in number, they will gather together against me and attack **me** and **I** shall be destroyed, **I** and **my** household.”

31 **But** they said, “Should he treat our sister as a harlot?”



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Jacob has remained silent throughout the story in places where he was expected to speak. He kept silent when he heard that Dinah had been raped. When Shechem and Hamor came to speak with Jacob, he didn't speak back. Instead, he let his sons speak for him, with disastrous results. Finally, he speaks. But he doesn't speak well.

Jacob's concern, in speaking with Simeon and Levi, is mostly for himself. In one verse, he uses a first-person pronoun—"I" or "me"—seven times. He's concerned with how this massacre could cause the people of the land to attack him, although he does at the end worry that this could also affect his household. He feared Esau in a similar vein (Genesis 32:11).

The narrator thus informs us of **one reason why Jacob didn't take up his daughter's honor in the first place. He was worried that standing up for Dinah could have threatened his reputation with the Hivites and other Canaanites and thereby endangered the safety of his family.** His daughter's honor was less important to him than his family's reputation, which he considered essential for its survival.

There is no concern, however, for how this slaughter represents the God of Abraham. Jacob says nothing about the rape of his daughter. There's no concern for how his sons made a mockery of circumcision, marriage and holy war. Finally, he offers no commendation for Simeon and Levi's quite proper moral outrage at the rape of their sister.



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Simeon and Levi, in their response to their father, show him that moral outrage is the appropriate response and that Jacob shamed himself by doing nothing. They say that Shechem “treated our sister as a harlot” by having sex with her and then offering payment. The words “our sister” are particularly poignant. Dinah’s brothers feel a familial connection with her, but her father does not.

Jacob’s silence in the first place and his speech in the second place are both shameful.

The price of passivity

This story is a call to parents to be proactive in the lives of their children. In their formative years, we should be taking an active role in how they dress, who they spend time with and where they go. We are their teachers and their protectors so that they will be able to make good decisions on their own when the time comes.

Why do we sometimes assume a posture of passivity, even when we should be morally outraged? Because we think activity will cost us. Someone else’s honor is not as important to us as our safety, reputation and tranquility. We’d rather stay uninvolved because of where involvement might lead. Who knows how they’ll react to us, or what they’ll expect of us, if we enter the fray?



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We know we should stand up, but we're glued to our chairs. We know we should move into the light, but we hide in the shadows. We know we should speak, but we hold our tongues. That which is right takes a back seat to that which is convenient.

Often, we're all too happy to abdicate our responsibility and let others speak and act in our place. We shouldn't be surprised, therefore, when they speak and act poorly, with disastrous consequences, if it isn't their place to do so. We think passivity will keep us safe, but it often comes with a price. The vacuum created by our passivity is filled by others with less noble intentions.

How many families and institutions, for example, have swept sexual abuse under the rug in order to protect their reputations? Obvious signs of abuse are ignored. Abuse becomes known, but the child is told to live with it and remain quiet. Like the three monkeys, we "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil." Because no one speaks up, abuse is perpetuated, maybe even by the child who becomes a wounded adult and replicates what was done to him or her.

Pilate, the governor of Judea, knew that Jesus was innocent, but in order to keep the peace, he capitulated to the crowd and delivered Jesus up to be crucified (Matthew 27:22-26). He receded into passivity, kept the peace—for the time being—and crucified the Son of God.



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If we assume a passive posture in life, we may find ourselves being shown up by others, even those who worship other gods, who are more than willing to act on what they believe. Jacob was shown up not only by his sons but also by the pagans....

When passivity backfires, its partner aggression often takes over. We act—rather, we overreact—to compensate for our passivity or because now, finally, we feel threatened. Personal concern then takes precedence over concern for the gospel. We speak up, but for the wrong reasons and in the wrong way.

If Genesis 34 gives us no place for resting on laurels in the spiritual life and shows us the danger of passivity, how can we guard against a letdown? **First**, if passivity is our tendency, we must be aware of it. And if it's our tendency, we may be particularly susceptible after spiritual triumphs. Genesis 34 may be the wake-up call we need. **Second**, as always, we must give constant attention to our spiritual lives through regular involvement with the word, prayer and the people of God.

Enter the fray, and don't pull back from it even until your dying breath.

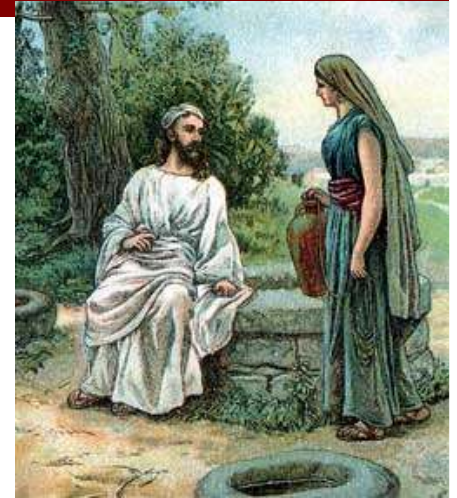


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The new Dinah

There is good reason to believe that the Samaritan village of Sychar, mentioned in John 4, is identical to Shechem (Genesis 33:19, 48:22; John 4:5-6). At the least, it was located near, if not on top of, Shechem. At Sychar, Jesus met a woman who, like Dinah, hadn't fared well at the hands of men. This place marked Jacob's failure as a father to his daughter. Hundreds of years later, a similar woman, who even called Jacob "our father," in the patriarchal sense, spoke with Jesus.

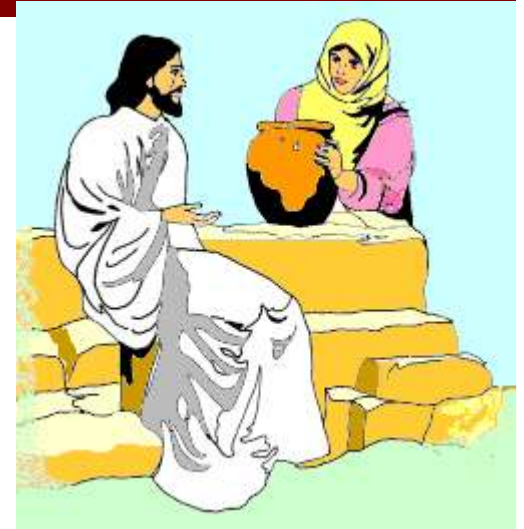
The woman asked him, "You are not greater than our father Jacob, are you, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?" With Genesis 34 in the background, perhaps we should hear pain in this woman's voice. She would hope to meet someone greater than Jacob. In describing this interaction, John leaves it up to us to draw a conclusion that goes something like this: "Oh, dear woman, you have no idea.

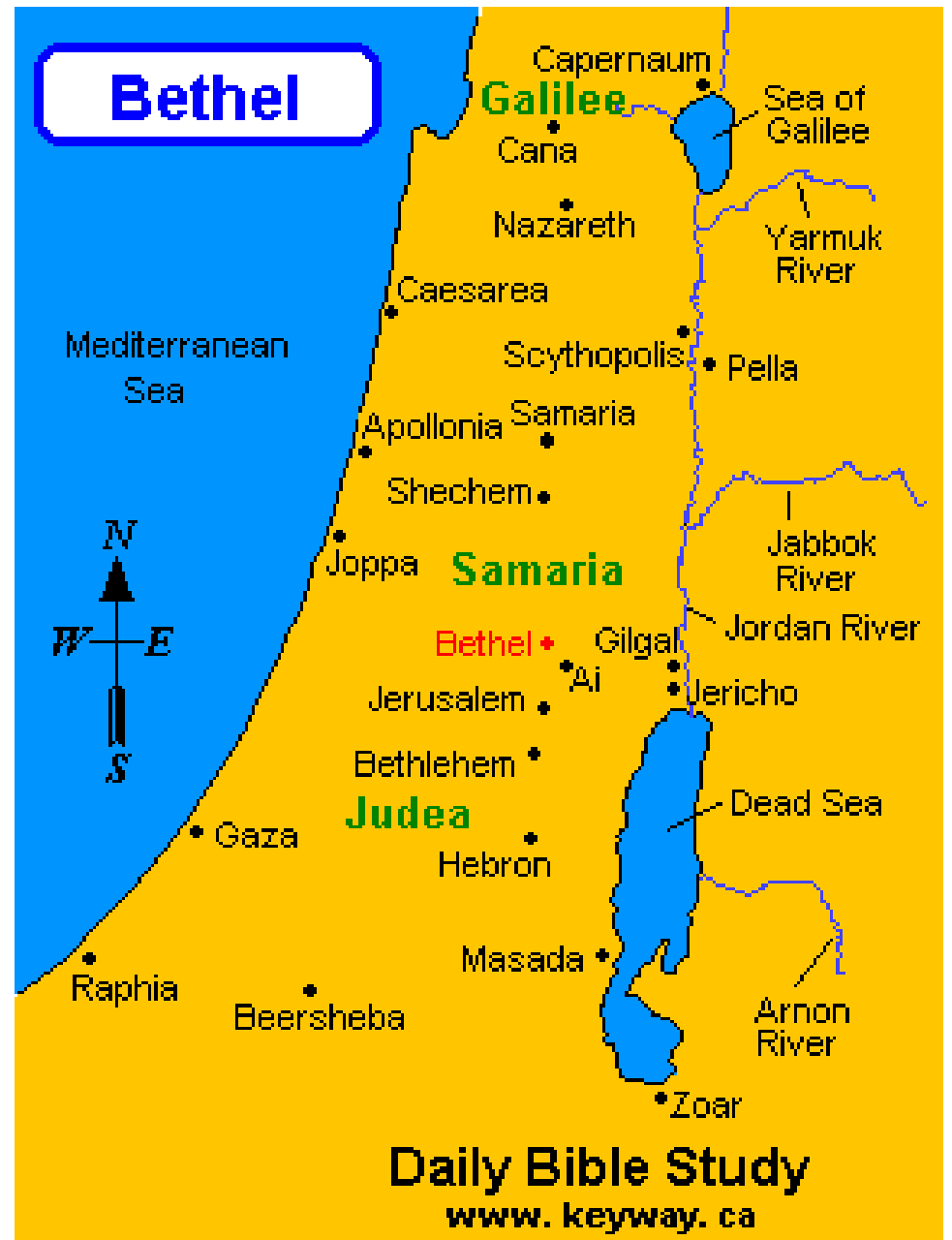


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Whereas Jacob's sons "came upon the city" and killed its men because one of them raped their sister, this woman urges the men of the city to "come" out of the city to meet Jesus. Indeed, they "went out of the city," and many came to believe in him. **Jesus came to Sychar as the new and better Jacob to redeem its residents, and the new Dinah, and rewrite the ugly story of Genesis 34.**

Is there a Shechem in your life? Like Dinah, have you been abused in some way? Like Jacob, have you paid a high price for your passivity? Like the sons of Jacob, did you take your own vengeance, and take it too far? **Jesus wants to visit that place, bring healing to it and reclaim it for God.**





Altar and stele at Bethel

<http://www.pbc.org/library/files/html/4879.html>

Jacob was on his way to Bethel, but he ended up in Shechem. In Shechem, Jacob's daughter was raped. He did nothing about it, so he lost the respect of his sons, who slaughtered the men of Shechem and looted the city. Instead of being a blessing to the nations, as a carrier of the Abrahamic Covenant, Jacob was a curse.

The story of how God met him, and of how Jacob picked himself up, gives us a map for resuming our spiritual journeys on the heels of spiritual failure.

As the Jacob narrative comes to a close in Genesis 35, Jacob comes first to Bethel and then to Hebron, where his father was residing. The final legs of his journey were anticipated by his vow in Genesis 28:20-22.

Genesis 28:20-22

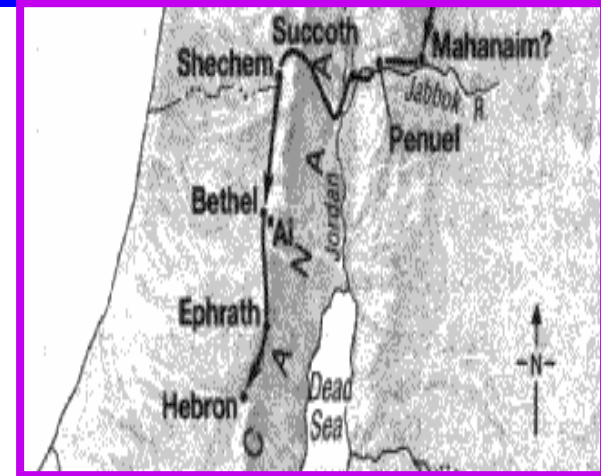
20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, 21 and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God. 22 "And this stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house; and of all that Thou dost give me I will surely give a tenth to Thee."



Genesis 35:1-29 – The Return to Bethel and Hebron

v1-7 – The Command to Return

1 Then God said to Jacob, “Arise, go up to Bethel, and live there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.” 2 **So** Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your garments; 3 and let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and has been with me wherever I have gone.”



Bethel is slightly less than 30 miles south of Shechem but 1,000 feet higher. It is tragic that Jacob was only a day's journey away from the will of God.

Genesis 35:1-29 – The Return to Bethel and Hebron

v1-7 – The Command to Return

4 **So** they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods which they had, and the rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near Shechem. 5 As they journeyed, there was a great terror upon the cities which were around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. 6 **So** Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him. 7 And he built an altar there, and called the place El-bethel, **because** there God had revealed Himself to him, when he fled from his brother.

Deborah died at about 150 years old. She must have been about 20 years old when she left with Rebekah

v8 – The Death of Deborah

8 Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the oak; it was named Allon-bacuth.



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God speaks to Jacob, who is badly in need of course correction after his stumble in Shechem. Jacob must not need to be reminded of his failure, for God doesn't even mention it. **The command to return to Bethel and make an altar would remind Jacob of the vow he made there to make the Lord his God in response to the Lord's promises to be with him, protect him and bring him back to the land of Canaan.**

He must "go up" to worship at Bethel, gaining 1,000 feet in elevation, as pilgrims would later go up to worship in Jerusalem (Psalm 24:3). After sinking to another low in Shechem, Jacob must make a spiritual ascent.

When he came to Bethel the first time, he was fleeing from his brother Esau, who wanted to kill him. Faith will be required for this journey, for Jacob is now afraid of the inhabitants of the land after his sons slaughtered the Hivites (Genesis 34:30).

Jacob knows he must do something before moving to Bethel. He and his family have been defiled by the rape of the city of Shechem. So Jacob calls his family to repentance. In addition to the household idols that Rachel took from her father, Jacob's caravan had evidently accumulated other idols along the way. The people must forsake those idols, undergo ritual purification for the defilement of Shechem and change their garments in commemoration of a new way of life.



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Jacob, acknowledging that God has fulfilled his promises, will now lead a pilgrimage to Bethel, which is the place where God met him when he had little to hope for in life. Jacob becomes a worship leader. He also collects the idols and hides them under an oak, giving them a proper burial.

God continues to bless Jacob with his protection. The surrounding cities were just as afraid of Jacob as he was of them, so they refrained from attacking him. They evidently feared that a god was with Jacob, just as the inhabitants of Jericho would later be terror-stricken because of the Lord's presence with Israel (Joshua 2:10-11).

The narrator refers to Jacob's destination by both its old name (Luz) and its new name (Bethel), reminding readers of God's appearance to Jacob that prompted the change. Jacob returns not as the lonely individual of an earlier era, for the narrator takes note of "all the people who were with him." He has come to the same place, but he's a different man.

Jacob builds the altar in obedience to the Lord. He gives the city yet another name, "El-Bethel," which means "God of the House of God." The additional name represents an intensification that acknowledges not so much the significance of the place but the significance of God. He gives the place this name not so much because it is special but because "God had revealed himself" to Jacob there.



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The mention of the death and burial of Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, whose name has not been mentioned in Genesis to this point, leaves readers with the question: "What about Rebekah?" Rebekah was expecting to send for Jacob, her beloved son, only a few days after he left for Haran, but she apparently died before seeing him again (Genesis 28:44-45). By giving Deborah a place of honor, and skipping over Rebekah's death, the narrator is rendering his verdict on Rebekah's deceitfulness (Genesis 27:5-17).

The oak under which Deborah is buried is named Allon-bacuth, which means "Oak of Weeping." We're left with the impression that Jacob's tears wouldn't be so much for Deborah, but for a mother he would never see again.



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Making a spiritual ascent

Sometimes, we wander off course without knowing it. When we become part of something like the debacle of Shechem, we realize we took a wrong turn somewhere. When such a realization grips us, we may be tempted to subject ourselves to self-flagellation or wallow in self-pity, neither of which helps us get back on track. God tells us, as he told Jacob, “Arise, go....”

We must pick ourselves up and get moving in the right direction.

Reconnecting with God’s promises, which led us to commit ourselves to him in the first place, helps us to do so—God promises, *in Christ*, to protect us and bring us safely into the new Promised Land, the new creation.

In resuming our journey, we make a spiritual ascent. Through our own lethargy, we got stuck in the valley of Shechem, so to speak. Now the mountain looms before us, and we must climb it. As we climb higher, our hearts beat faster, the air gets fresher and the view gets clearer.

Faith is necessary to make an ascent on the heels of failure. If Jacob was afraid that his failure could incite the Canaanites, we may be afraid that our failure disqualifies us from even attempting such an ascent. To trust that God is still with you after your failure is a step of faith. Seen from this perspective, failure can serve as a foothold as we climb the mountain.



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Before we resume our journey, there is a place for mourning our sin and its effect, without subjecting ourselves to self-flagellation or wallowing in self-pity. **Many of us use failure as an excuse for staying in Shechem instead of taking the risky journey to Bethel.** If we ended up in some kind of spiritual Shechem, we've probably incorporated some other gods into our worship. The values of whatever culture we live in have a pervasive influence. The other gods are burdensome, so we must put them away and give them a proper burial. **Put away materialism, consumerism, pride, libertarianism and sensuality. Doing something to symbolize the burial of foreign gods can be a helpful exercise.**

If we've defiled ourselves, we must purify ourselves. We do this by coming to the cross of Christ, by letting his blood cleanse us. Symbolism helps in this aspect also, particularly the symbolism of the Lord's table.... **When you resume your spiritual pilgrimage, you make sure you travel with some companions.** We climb the mountain together, not as individuals, because we can't make it on our own. If we try to do it by ourselves, we'll never make it to Bethel. We'll end up back in Shechem. **Maybe, if our experience has been somewhat like Jacob's, we can even become leaders in the pilgrimage. Our experience with failure can serve to connect us all the more deeply with God's grace and make us all the more fit to be worship leaders.**



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Here's the most remarkable thing about failure that comes out of this story: Our failure, even our moral failure, can actually work to our advantage. Jacob expected the debacle of Shechem to incite the Canaanites, but it actually paralyzed them. **Who knows how God's grace can turn our missteps into advantages? What a God!** (C's Note: repentance came first)

The apostle Paul says that "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." We therefore might think of asking the question that Paul himself asks next: "What shall we say them? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?" His answer: "May it never be!" (Romans 5:20-6:1). If you think that grace gives you license to sin, then you haven't understood grace.

As you climb higher, some current experience may remind you of a prior experience. But like Jacob, you have come to this place as a different man, as a different woman. The similar present experience, therefore, serves to show you how far God has taken you. You don't think the way you used to think. You don't worship the way you used to worship. You don't struggle the way you used to struggle. Sometimes, it takes a similar experience that reminds you of a prior experience to illustrate just how far you've come.

The current experience, then, may actually be an intensification of your earlier experience. Earlier, a certain place was significant. Now, the God who led you to that place is even more meaningful to you.



Genesis 35:1-29 – The Return to Bethel and Hebron

v9-15 – The Covenant Reaffirmed

9 Then God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him. 10 And God said to him,

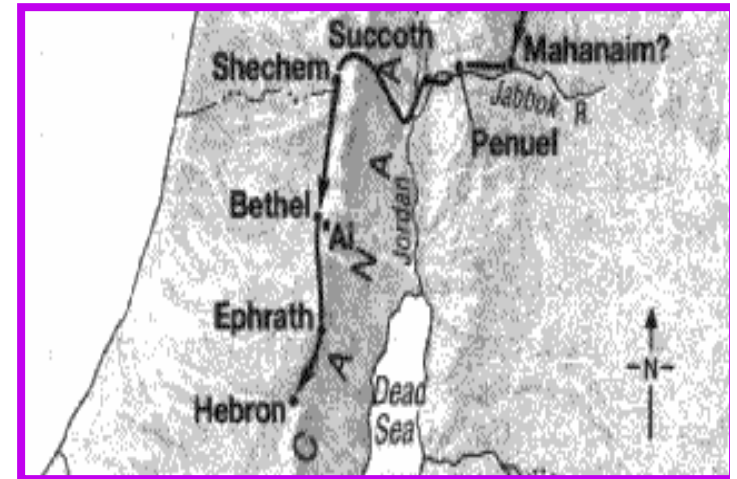
“Your name is Jacob;
You shall no longer be called Jacob,
But Israel shall be your name.”

Thus He called him Israel.

11 God also said to him,

“I am God Almighty;
Be fruitful and multiply;

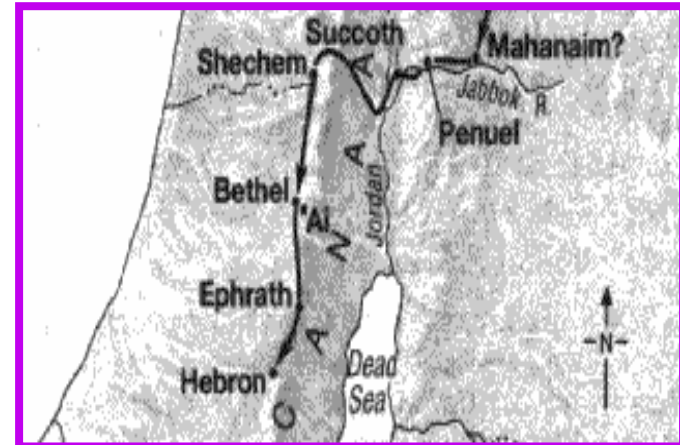
A nation and a company of nations shall come from you,
And kings shall come forth from you.



Genesis 35:1-29 – The Return to Bethel and Hebron

12 And the land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac,
I will give it to you,
And I will give the land to your descendants after you.”

13 Then God went up from him in the place where He had spoken with him. 14 And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He had spoken with him, a pillar of stone, and he poured out a libation on it; he also poured oil on it. 15 So Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him, Bethel.



1st drink offering in
the Bible

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Once again, God appears to Jacob at Bethel. The narrator has already described Bethel as being “in the land of Canaan” (verse 6). Now he connects the timing of God’s appearance to Jacob as being “when he came from Paddan-aram.” **These descriptions echo Genesis 33:18: “Now Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram, and camped before the city.”**

Jacob’s stay in Shechem was disastrous. The narrator implies on the one hand that Jacob should have pressed on to Bethel, but on the other hand that God is giving Jacob a fresh start in the Promised Land.

God’s appearance to Jacob this time at Bethel is not only reminiscent of his earlier appearance there but also of his appearance at Peniel. At Peniel, God appeared as a man and changed Jacob’s name to Israel (Genesis 32:28). Jacob’s original name came to be associated with his conniving nature. When he wrestled with God, he finally confessed that his name was Jacob, the conniver. His new name, Israel, which implied a new destiny, was a reminder that his strength was in his weakness and in his dependence on God.

Now, after Jacob’s name has been changed to Israel, God appears to him not as a man but directly and says to him, “Your name is Jacob.” At Shechem, Jacob acted like Jacob, not Israel. God, then, reaffirms the new destiny despite Jacob’s failure and thereby challenges him to live in a way that befits his new name. God’s “renaming” of Jacob at Bethel is more personal than it was at Peniel, which serves to intensify God’s reaffirmation of him.



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In verses 11 and 12, God affirms that Jacob is the carrier of the Abrahamic Covenant, summing up and even expanding the earlier promises of Genesis 28:3-4 and 13-15. God treated Abraham in a similar way when he re-articulated his promises to him in Genesis 17:1-8. **The future of humanity is still with Jacob, Abraham's grandson, despite his checkered past, even his recent checkered past.**

Jacob went up to worship God at Bethel; now God, having descended to meet with Jacob, goes up from Bethel. **No matter how high Jacob ascends, God still must descend to meet with him.**

When Jacob first came to Bethel, then called Luz, it was a “certain place” of no distinction. **But after God appeared to Jacob there, Jacob named it Bethel, which means “House of God,” because God was “in this place” (Genesis 28:11, 16). It is God's presence that is significant, and only his presence makes a place significant.** The word “place,” which appeared five times in Genesis 28:10-22, appears three times in Genesis 35:13-15, reminding readers of Jacob's first visit to this place.

For Jacob, this place has special significance, because God has appeared to him twice here. So he does what he did when God first appeared to him and blessed him. When Jacob came to Bethel the first time, he used a stone for a pillow. It was a lonely, hard place. But after God appeared to him, Jacob converted the stone into a pillar and poured oil on top of it, commemorating God's presence there. So he sets up another pillar and consecrates it in a similar manner.



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Jacob remembers how desperate he was. He remembers how God showed up when he needed him most. So he worships in the same way, remembering how God has sustained him since then. He is not a man who has forgotten where he's come from. He commemorates the latest appearance of the Lord in a way that recollects the first appearance. Stones were also part of Jacob's journey when he arrived in Haran and when he left Haran (Genesis 29:10, 31:14). It's been a hard life. But God has been with him. So at Bethel, Jacob gathers up two-plus decades of memories and worships the Lord with them.

Bethel looms large in Jacob's psyche. It is, in a sense, his spiritual home, a place he keeps returning to, in actuality and in thought.

Conspicuous by its absence this time is a vow. Jacob does not vow to make the Lord his God in return for the fulfillment of promises. He knows the Lord has fulfilled his promises. Jacob *has* made the Lord his God. This time, he came to Bethel as a worshiper, and he will leave as a worshiper.

A fresh start

What do you do with the realization that you should have done something differently? You can't go back and do it again. You can't change what you did—or didn't do—in Shechem. But God's appearance at Bethel assures us that he wants to give us a fresh start. As a carrier of the New Covenant, which fulfills the Abrahamic Covenant, you haven't lost your calling. You still have a job to share the life of God with others. The time for moping around is past. The time for worship has come.



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When you become a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, you receive a new identity and a new destiny. God himself often affirms that identity and destiny at different times after you've begun following Jesus. Then, maybe, like Jacob, you fail, and you think you should be further along by now.

Then somehow, God comes along and reaffirms your identity and your destiny just at the moment you're thinking about what might have been if you had made better choices. It is a powerful thing to sense God's affirmation; it is an even more powerful thing to sense God's reaffirmation at a time when you are all too aware of your shortcomings.

When reaffirmation comes in this more personal way, it challenges us to live in a way that befits our identity and our destiny. It reconnects us with God's promises in a more intense, expansive way. We appreciate to a greater degree that God is changing, and will change, everything, and that he's using us—yes, us!—as his agents of change.

God has a future for the world. Where is that future? It's right here, in this room, and in millions of others like it, whether they are towering cathedrals that pierce the sky or thatched-roof huts that barely get off the ground. Wherever the people of God are gathered, the future of humanity is in that place. We who follow Jesus are the carriers of the covenant, which means we are the carriers of Christ, despite our checkered past, even our recent checkered past. The future of humanity is with all us Jacobs who carry Christ to the world.



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When you arrive at someplace like Bethel, which reminds you of a previous encounter with God, remember how desperate you were. Remember how the Lord showed up when you needed him most. Remember how he has sustained you since then. Let us not be people who forget where we've come from. Let us not forget that God has transformed hard places into places of worship. Gather up your memories and worship the Lord with them. This time, you have come to this place as a worshiper, and you will leave as a worshiper.

You have a life that you've dragged around. Maybe you've dragged it through Shechem. But don't miss the love of God that's found you. Don't be thinking where you might have been. Instead, start where you are. Step into your skin.

Church of Jacobs

Spiritual failure does not disqualify us from the spiritual journey. In fact, Genesis 35:1-15 encourages us to mount a spiritual ascent on the heels of spiritual failure. If we do so, we'll have plenty of company—a church full of men and women who identify with Jacob and his failure. So let's all join hands and journey up the mountain together. Arise; let us go up to Bethel.



BREAK TIME



Genesis 35:1-29 – The Return to Bethel and Hebron

v16-20 – The Death of Rachel

about 1899 BC, when Joseph was about 15 years old

16 Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and she suffered severe labor. 17 And it came about when she was in severe labor that the midwife said to her, "Do not fear, **for** now you have *another* son." 18 And it came about as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni; **but** his father called him Benjamin. 19 **So** Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). 20 And Jacob set up a pillar over her grave; that is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day.

Binyamin in Hebrew, literally 'son of the right.' Some interpret this as 'son of the right hand,' meaning a son of strength (Ramban). Others state that it means 'son of the south,' since Benjamin was the only son born in the Holy Land, which is to the south of Aramaea (Rashi; *Sefer HaYashar* p.96). There is also an opinion that it is the same as *ben yamim*, son of days, or son of old age (Rashi; Rashbam; *Tzava'ath Binyamin* 1:6; Philo, *De Nominum Mutatione* 3:92).



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In Rabbinical Literature:

Rachel and Leah were twin sisters, fourteen years old when Jacob came to their father's house; consequently they were twenty-one years old at the time of their marriage to Jacob (Seder 'Olam Rabbah ii.). The terms "elder" and "younger," applied respectively to Leah and Rachel (Gen. xxix. 16), are explained by the Rabbis as referring to the divine gifts bestowed upon their descendants; for while royalty and the priesthood remained permanently with Leah's descendants, they were held only temporarily by Rachel's—royalty with Joseph and Saul, and the priesthood with the tabernacle of Shiloh (Gen. R. lxx. 15). In other respects the two sisters were alike, both being ancestresses of kings, heroes, prophets, judges, and conquerors (*ib.* lxx. 14; Tan., Wayeze, 13).



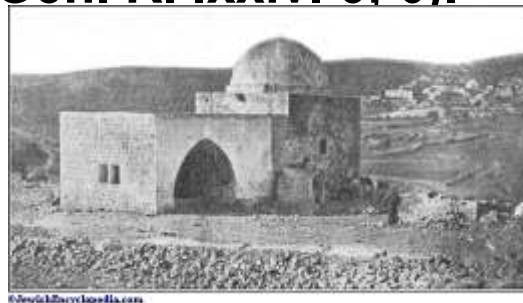
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As Rachel's death occurred fifteen years after her marriage, she must have died at the age of thirty-six (Seder 'Olam Rabbah *l.c.*; Midr. Tadshe, in Epstein, "Mi-Kadmoniyyot ha-Yehudim," Supplement, p. xxi., where the number 37 must be corrected to 36). The "Sefer ha-Yashar" (section "Wayishlah," p. 56b), however, gives her age at the time of her death as forty-five. Rachel's early decease was due, according to the general opinion of the Rabbis, to Jacob's involuntary curse uttered when Laban was searching for the teraphim, "With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live" (Gen. xxxi. 32), he not knowing that Rachel had taken the images. R. Judan's opinion, however, was that Rachel died before Leah because, although she was the younger sister, she spoke before Leah when they were addressed by their husband (*ib.* xxxi. 14; Midr. Agadat Bereshit li. 3; Pirḳe R. El. *l.c.*; Gen. R. lxxiv. 3, 6).

[\(see image\)](#)

Traditional Tomb of Rachel.

(From a photograph by Bonfils.)



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"Rachel Mourning for Her Children"

Rachel's death was so deeply felt by Jacob that he considered it the greatest of all his sorrows (Ruth R. i. 3). He buried her on the road to Ephrath because he foresaw that the Israelites, when driven into captivity along that road, would need her intercession with God in their behalf (Midr. Agadah to Gen. xxxv. 19; Gen. R. lxxxii. 11). Jer. xxxi. 15 (see Biblical Data, above) is the source of **the midrashic legend** that when the Israelites were driven into captivity by Nebuzar-adan, and the supplications of the Patriarchs and of Moses proved of no avail, Rachel arose from her grave and implored God's clemency, basing her plea upon her own self-abnegation with regard to her sister. God thereupon promised her the restoration of Israel (Lam. R., Petiḥta, 25).

Rachel was one of the four Jewish matriarchs, all of whom were prophetesses (Ber. 60a), and who are often referred to in the liturgy, Rachel being mentioned before Leah. As **the four different plants** with which the Jews were commanded to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. xxiii. 40) **are considered by the Rabbis to symbolize the four matriarchs, Rachel, who died the youngest, they consider symbolized by the willows of the brook, which fade sooner than any other plant (Lev. R. xxx. 10).E.**



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Parshat HaShavua - Weekly Torah Commentary - Parshat Vayechi 5767

by Rebecca Stone and American Jewish World Service

In Parshat Vayechi, Jacob is on his deathbed, imparting his final words of wisdom and blessing to his sons. He first calls Joseph in alone, and implores his son to bury him in Israel, in the Cave of Machpelah, where his ancestors are buried. After begging Joseph to bury him, Jacob tells Joseph that Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Menasheh, will receive **an inheritance equal to his other sons. Jacob then says, "But as for me - when I came from Paddan, Rachel died in the land of Canaan on the road, while there was still a stretch of land to go to Ephrath; and I buried her on the road to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.' Then Israel saw Joseph's sons and he said, 'Who are these?'"¹**

Commentators have struggled with this passage. Why does Jacob feel compelled to recount Rachel's death to Joseph at this point in their conversation - after he asks to be buried in his homeland, and before blessing his grandchildren? Some say that Jacob feels guilty asking to be buried in the Cave of Machpelah, because Rachel had not been buried there. He is afraid that Joseph will harbor feelings of hostility toward him and he feels the need to explain himself. However, Jacob does not give much of an explanation. He does not explain why he didn't carry Rachel's body to the Cave, or why he didn't return at a later date to move her remains to the special burial place of all of his ancestors.

Rashi's explanation is even more puzzling than the passage itself. Rashi claims that Jacob's goal is to explain to Joseph why Rachel wasn't buried in the Cave with the rest of her family. Rashi continues:



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Even though she died but a short distance from Bethlehem, G-d commanded Jacob to bury her by the roadside so that she could help the Jewish people when Nebuzaradan, the chief general of Nechubadnezzar of Babylon, would lead Israel into captivity after the destruction of the first temple. When the Jews were passing along the road to Bethlehem, tormented, hungry, and exhausted, Rachel's soul came to her grave, and wept, beseeching G-d's mercy upon them (see Jeremiah 31:14). G-d heard her plea. As the prophet Jeremiah relates, "A voice is heard on high, the sound of lamentation.... Rachel weeping for her children... G-d replied to her: 'Withhold your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded,' says G-d. 'And your children shall return to their border.'"

Why does Rashi quote such a long passage from Jeremiah, seemingly irrelevant to Jacob's explanation of Rachel's death? Why do we need to know here about G-d's response to Rachel when she weeps for her children? What is Rachel's work that G-d rewards her for? Why would G-d command that Rachel be stationed at the side of the road to weep and mourn alone?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe analyzes Rashi's commentary and explains that Rachel was not commanded by G-d to be buried alone on the side of the road. Rather, Rachel requested it. After seeing a revelation about the exile of her descendents, she asked to be positioned near them during their most difficult times, to comfort them in their pain. Since her years as a mother were so short, she wanted to retain the role of motherhood forever, and she could not bear the sight of her children suffering alone. Rachel's self-sacrifice is precisely what G-d rewards when G-d says, "There is a reward for your actions."



http://www.jewishservice.org/learn_details.html?catID=9&lid=793

According to Jeremiah, it is Rachel's cries that G-d hears when our people are going through their most difficult periods.

This inspiring explanation of Rachel's actions is especially powerful as we consider the apathy that plagues our world. As we think of Rachel's love for her people, let us remember the lack of tears and action for the victims in Darfur, the women in Rwanda with HIV/AIDS, raped during the genocide, the child soldiers in Uganda, and the 9-year-old prostitutes in India. With Rachel as our role model, it is our responsibility to strive not only for empathy - a level of connection where we truly *can't bear the suffering of others*, but also for solidarity - where we will feel compelled to stand alongside our fellow human beings in their time of greatest need. I pray that, inspired by Rachel, we will become advocates and supporters of other peoples who are experiencing their own devastation and emotional exile. Ultimately, I hope that G-d will promise us that because of *our* prayer, charity and self-sacrifice, our brothers and sisters of the world will be returned to their "borders" of peace, safety, and prosperity.



Genesis 35:1-29 – The Return to Bethel and Hebron

v21-26 – The Sin of Reuben

Reuben about 26-28 years old

21 Then Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder. 22 And it came about while Israel was dwelling in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard *of it*. Now there were twelve sons of Jacob - 23 **the sons of Leah**: Reuben, Jacob's first-born, then Simeon and Levi and Judah and Issachar and Zebulun; 24 **the sons of Rachel**: Joseph and Benjamin; 25 and **the sons of Bilhah**, Rachel's maid: Dan and Naphtali; 26 and **the sons of Zilpah**, Leah's maid: Gad and Asher. These are the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram.

Bilhah at least 15 years older



<http://bible.ort.org/books/penttd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=1&CHAPTER=35>

According to Talmudic tradition, after Rachel's death, Jacob moved his bed to the tent of Rachel's handmaid Bilhah. Reuven moved Jacob's bed and placed it in Leah's tent (*Shabbath 55a, b; Targum Yonathan; Rashi*). The Hebrew word here, *shakhav*, literally means to lie down or to make bedding arrangements, but it is often used as a euphemism for sex. Some say that Reuben actually desired Bilhah and lay next to her (*Yov'loth 33:2,4*). At the time Bilhah was drunk (*Tzava'ath Reuven 4:13*). In any case, Reuben lost the birthright because of this. See [Genesis 49:4](#); 1 Chronicles 5:1. See 2 Samuel 16:22, 20:3.



<http://www.sogospellovers.com/forums/showthread.php?t=10322>

Reuben was the son of Leah and it is likely that after Rachel's death he feared that his father Jacob would take Bilhah to be his wife and Leah, Reuben's mother, would continue to be unloved. Therefore, Reuben had sexual relations with Bilhah and defiled her in Jacob's eyes. This type of incest was actually unheard of even in many of the pagan lands of that day and time. The Code of Hammurabi even forbade such a thing. Why would Reuben stand to such a despicable act. He was desperate. He gave in to passionate, but erroneous thinking which caused him to use an extremely faulty method for helping his mother.

In case you are tempted to think that Reuben was a total imbecile who was capable of no good consider his behavior in trying to save his brother Joseph's life in Genesis 37. In Genesis 42:22 we see him rightly rebuking his brothers, *And Reuben answered them, "Did I not tell you not to sin against the boy? But you did not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood."* However, in this situation he erred in an extremely terrible way. It is so sad that his mother Leah was unloved. However, Jacob had provided for her. He had been tricked into marrying her. This was a sad situation for both of them. Reuben could have tried speaking to Jacob about his mother's situation. Maybe it would have worked, and maybe it wouldn't have. Maybe he already had done so, but Jacob wasn't receptive to the idea. Whatever the situation Reuben became so desperate that he committed a heinous and wicked act in order to get a good result for his mother.

As a minister, I have seen people do this in churches, in their families, and in their friendships. They see something that needs fixing and maybe even begin to undertake some proper steps for fixing the problem.



<http://www.sogospellovers.com/forums/showthread.php?t=10322>

However, when results are slow or don't come at all they begin to play God and take whatever steps are necessary to "fix" the problem. All the while they are justifying their evil actions by telling themselves that they are doing something noble for someone else, or for the church, or even the kingdom of God.

This problem can be remedied by trusting in the sovereign power of God and letting Him fix injustices in His time. We should certainly be willing to do all that we can do to right wrongs, but some things need God's divine intervention to fix them. If God doesn't fix the wrong, then maybe He is going to use it to develop character in the people involved.

So, the next time you are tempted to do the right thing the wrong way, don't. It cost Reuben his place as the first born of Israel. His place was given to his brother Judah.

*"Reuben, you are my firstborn,
my might, and the firstfruits of my strength,
preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.
Unstable as water, you shall not have preeminence,
because you went up to your father's bed;
then you defiled it--he went up to my couch! (Genesis 49:3-4)*

Wait on the Lord and trust in Him. Trust in His sovereign power, His justice, His knowledge. Trust in Him completely. He sees the total picture, but we don't. He is God, and we are not.



Genesis 35:1-29 – The Return to Bethel and Hebron

v27-29 – The Death of Isaac

27 And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre of Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned.

28 **Now the days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years.**

29 And Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, an old man of ripe age; and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Isaac lived from
2065BC -1885BC



[http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/
view.jsp?artid=457&letter=E](http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=457&letter=E)

Jacob and Esau meet peaceably at their father's house (Pirke R. El. xxxviii.), and both sons at the death of Isaac vie in showing filial piety (ib.). At the division of Isaac's property Esau claims as the first-born the right to choose. On the advice of Ishmael he appropriates all the personal property, but agrees to Jacob's taking title to the land of Israel and the cave of Machpelah. A written instrument of this cession is made, whereupon Jacob orders Esau to leave the country. Esau withdraws (Gen. xxxvi.), and is compensated by one hundred districts in Seir (Pirke R. El. xxxviii.).

In the "Sefer ha-Yashar" Esau returns to Canaan from Seir (whither he had emigrated) upon hearing that Isaac is dying. Jacob also repairs thither from Hebron. Jacob and Esau with their respective sons bury Isaac in Machpelah. The division of the property is made on the proposal of Jacob, who leaves Esau to determine which he will take, the personal riches or the land. Nebajoth, Ishmael's son, urges Esau to take the movable property, since the land is in the hands of the sons of Canaan. This he does, leaving "nothing unto Jacob," who writes all particulars of the transaction in a book of sale, Esau returning with his wealth to Seir. In Gen. R. lxxxii. and lxxxiv. Esau is represented as emigrating from Canaan from shame at his former conduct.



<http://www.faithtacoma.org/sermons/Genesis/genesis71.htm>

As we have said before, Genesis is divided into ten "toledots." Toledot is the Hebrew word and it is variously translated "family record" or "family history" or "generations", or simply, perhaps too simply, as in the NIV, "account." The first of these toledots begins in Genesis 2:4, with the account of creation in Genesis 1 serving as a prologue to the entire book. The last of them begins in 37:2, the toledot of Jacob, which will be, as we have seen, not the story of Jacob but of his sons, as, for example, the toledot of Terah was about Abraham and the toledot of Isaac was about Jacob and Esau. A toledot is an account of one's descendants. The passage before us this morning is the ninth of these ten toledots. We will have the same word again in v. 9, but in this one instance in the Book of Genesis, this is a repetition not a new division or toledot.

A family history or a genealogy of Esau is expected here, in any case, because the genealogy of the rejected line is characteristically given first in Genesis. We have the genealogy of Cain in Genesis 4 and then of Seth in Genesis 5. Ishmael's toledot comes before that of Isaac. And, now, we have Esau's before Jacob's. In each case the genealogy of the rejected line is much shorter, mostly a list of names only.



Genesis 36:1-42

The Generations of Esau

The Sons of Esau born to Him in Canaan (v1-5)

1 Now these are *the records* of the generations of ^{=hairy} Esau (that is, ^{=red} Edom). 2 Esau took his wives from the daughters of Canaan:
^{=ornament} Adah the daughter of ^{=terebinth, mighty} Elon the Hittite, and ^{=tent of the high place} Oholibamah the daughter of ^{=answer} Anah and the granddaughter of ^{=coloured} Zibeon the ^{=villagers} Hivite;
3 also ^{=spice} Basemath, ^{=God will hear} Ishmael's daughter, the sister of ^{=heights} Nebaioth.
4 And Adah bore ^{=my God is (fine) gold} Eliphaz to Esau, and Basemath bore ^{=friend of God} Reuel,
5 and Oholibamah bore ^{=he hurries to aid} Jeush and ^{=concealed} Jalam and ^{=bald} Korah. These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan.



Genesis 36:1-42

The Generations of Esau

Esau Moves to Seir (v6-9)

6 Then Esau took his wives and his sons and his daughters and all his household, and his livestock and all his cattle and all his goods which he had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to *another* land away from his brother Jacob. 7 **For** their property had become too great for them to live together, and the land where they sojourned could not sustain them because of their livestock. 8 So Esau lived in the hill country of Seir; Esau is Edom. 9 These then are *the records of* the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir.



Genesis 33:1-16 – Jacob Meets Esau

bowing 7 times = Israel bows to her enemies today (cf. Isa 49:23; 60:14 where Israel's enemies will bow to her)

¹ Then Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids. ² And he put the maids and their children in front, and Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. ³ But he himself passed on ahead of them and bowed down to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.



Jacob =
supplanter,
deceiver
Israel =
prince with
God



Rachel's maid
Bilhah = troubled
Dan = a judge
Naphtali = wrestling



Leah's maid
Zilpah = a trickling
Gad = a troop
Asher = happy



Leah = weary
Reuben = Behold a Son
Simeon = heard or hated
Levi = joined
Judah = praise
Issachar = there is recompense
Zebulun = exalted
Dinah = judgment



Rachel = ewe
Joseph = Jehovah
has added

⁴ Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

The Jots in Genesis 33:4 by Monte Judah

*Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him,
and fell on his neck and kissed him,
and they wept.*



This the first instance of the Jots (small dots above each letter). Many sages say that the kiss of Esau was disingenuous. What he wanted to do was bite Jacob in the neck with his teeth (the jots). While this seems fascinating, it doesn't hold up for the other instances of the jots. However, an element of this does speak to the other instances of the jots. It has do with Jacob's flock (his family).



[http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/
view.jsp?artid=457&letter=E](http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=457&letter=E)

His Murderous Intentions Toward Jacob

Increasing in wealth, Esau and his children have feuds with the inhabitants of Canaan. This induces him to locate at Seir ("Sefer ha-Yashar," *l.c.*). Laban, vexed at Jacob's departure, treacherously incites Esau to attack his brother on his way home. But Rebekah, apprised of Esau's intention, warns Jacob of the danger, and sends seventy-two of his father's servants to Mahanaim to his aid, with the advice that he should enter into peaceful relations with Esau. Messengers are despatched to Esau, who repulses them, vowing vengeance. Jacob beseeches God for help. Four angels are sent by God to appear each in turn before Esau "like 2,000 men, in four bands under four captains, riding on horses and armed with all sorts of weapons." Esau and his men flee and plead for mercy. He resolves to go and meet Jacob, who at his brother's approach is greatly troubled, but, noticing the greater alarm of the others, receives Esau with brotherly affection ("Sefer ha-Yashar," *l.c.*). The kiss they exchange and the tears they shed at this meeting have been differently construed. **The word (Gen. xxxiii. 4), being dotted in the Masoretic text, indicates, according to some, that Esau really repented; while others maintain that even in this scene he acted the hypocrite** (comp. Judas' kiss; Sifre, Num. ix. 10; Gen. R. lxxviii.; Ab. R. N. 34; Ex. R. v.). The latter view obtains in Targ. Pseudo-Jonathan to the verse: Jacob wept on account of the pain in his neck, which had been bitten by Esau; and Esau shed tears because his teeth hurt him, Jacob's neck having been turned into smooth stone or ivory (see Rashi *ad loc.*; Gen. R. lxxi.). Jacob was aware of the hypocrisy of Esau (Pirke R. El. xxxvii.), as appears from the latter's explanation offered to God when reproved for having profaned holy things by his gifts and address to Jacob. Esau had planned to kill his brother "not with arrows and bow but by [my] mouth" (Pirke R. El. *l.c.*) "and sucking his blood"; but the fact that Jacob's neck turned into ivory thwarted his intention.



The Man Esau

1. struggle began in Rebekah's womb (Gen 25:22)
2. Isaac's first born son, red, hairy all over (Gen 25:25)
3. a skilful hunter, a man of the field (Gen 25:27)
4. loved by Isaac because he had a taste for game (Gen 25:28)
5. despised his birthright (Gen 25:29-34), immoral & godless (Heb 12:16), remorseful but not repentant (Heb 12:17)
6. married 2 Canaanite women (Gen 28:6)
7. bitter & angry at Jacob for stealing his blessing (Gen 27:34, 44)
7. bore grudge against Jacob (Gen 27:41)
8. planned to kill Jacob after Isaac's death (Gen 27:42)
9. married Mahalath, Ishmael's daughter (Gen 28:9)

The Prophecy (Genesis 25:23)

**“Two nations are in your womb;
And two peoples shall be separated from your body;
And one people shall be stronger than the other;
And the older shall serve the younger.”**

The Sins of Edom

1. refused to let Israel pass thro' their land (Num 20:14-21; Deut 2:1-8; Jdg 1:16) because of their fear of them (Deut 2:4)
2. arrogance in heart (Ob 2), spoke arrogantly against God (Ezek 35:12)
3. did violence to his brother Jacob (Ob 10)
4. stood aloof when strangers plundered him (Ob 11)
5. gloated & rejoiced over Jacob's calamity (Ob 12-13; Ps 137:7; Ezek 35:15), reviled Israel (Ezek 35:12)
6. Looted Jacob's wealth (Ob 13), wanted her land (Ezek 35:10)
7. Cut down Jacob's fugitives (Ob 14), slew the sons of Israel (Ezek 35:5); shed innocent blood (Am 1:11)
8. Imprisoned Jacob's survivors in the day of their distress (Ob 14)
9. took vengeance against Judah (Ezek 25:12)
10. had everlasting enmity, envy, hatred (Ezek 35:5,11), had continual anger, maintained fury forever (Am 1:11)
11. did not hate bloodshed (Ezek 35:6)

The Prophecy (Genesis 27:39-40)

**“Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling,
And away from the dew of heaven from above.
And by your sword you shall live,
And your brother you shall serve;
But it shall come about when you become restless,
That you shall break his yoke from your neck.”**

God's Blessing of Esau & Edom

1. Blessed Esau with plenty (Gen 33:9) - property, sons, livestock (Gen 36:6-8) & land
2. given Mount Seir as a possession (Deut 2:5; Josh 24:4) so they dispossessed the Horites and settled there (Deut 2:12)
3. did not allow Israel to attack the sons of Esau (Deut 2:4-6)
4. Edom revolted in Jehoram's day (ca. 848 BC) & made a king (2Kg 8:16-22; 2Ch 21:10)

God's Judgment of Edom

1. Saul inflicted punishment on Edom (1Sam 14:47)
2. Edomites became servants to David (2Sam 8:14), 18,000 Edomites killed; David put garrisons in Edom (1Ch 18:12-13), Joab struck down every male in Edom but some escaped (1Kg 11:15-17)
3. God will cut off man & beast from Edom; fall by sword by Israel's hand (Ezek 25:13-14; 35:7,8)
4. laid waste, made an everlasting desolation, cities uninhabited (Ezek 25:13; 35:4-5,7,9,14,15; Joel 3:19)
5. given over to bloodshed (Ezek 35:6)
6. God will deal with Edom according to his own anger (Ezek 35:11)
7. fire sent to consume her cities (Am 1:12)

Genesis 36:1-42

The Generations of Esau

10 These are the names of Esau's sons:

=my God is (fine) gold

=ornament

Eliphaz the son of Esau's wife Adah, Reuel the son of Esau's

=south =speaker. eloquent

wife Basemath. 11 And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar,

=watch-tower =a burnt valley =hunter

=restrained

Zepho and Gatam and Kenaz. 12 And Timna was a concubine of

=dweller in a valley

Esau's son Eliphaz and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These are the sons of Esau's wife Adah.

=friend of God

=rest

=rising

13 And these are the sons of Reuel: Nahath and Zerah,

=astonishment

=fear

Shammah and Mizzah. These were the sons of Esau's wife

=spice

Basemath.

=tent of the high place

14 And these were the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah and the granddaughter of Zibeon: she bore to

=answer

=coloured

Esau, Jeush and Jalam and Korah.

=he hurries to aid =concealed

=bald



Genesis 36:1-42

The Generations of Esau

15 These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz, the first-born of Esau, are chief Teman, chief Omar, chief Zepho, chief Kenaz, 16 chief Korah, chief Gatam, chief Amalek. These are the chiefs descended from Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Adah.

17 And these are the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: chief Nahath, chief Zerah, chief Shammah, chief Mizzah. These are the chiefs descended from Reuel in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Esau's wife Basemath.

18 And these are the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah: chief Jeush, chief Jalam, chief Korah. These are the chiefs descended from Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah.

19 These are the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and these are their chiefs.



[http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/
view.jsp?artid=457&letter=E](http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=457&letter=E)

Esau's Death.

Esau's death is not mentioned in the Bible. The Rabbis supply the information that it was brought about in an altercation with Jacob's sons over their right to bury their father in the cave of Machpelah (Soṭah 13a). The "Sefer ha-Yashar" gives full details of the dispute. Joseph invokes the "bill of sale" witnessed between Esau and Jacob after Isaac's death, and sends Naphtali to Egypt to fetch the document. Before quick-footed Naphtali returns, Esau unsuccessfully resorts to war, and is slain by Dan's deaf and dumb son, Hushim, who, though assigned to protect the women and children at Jacob's bier, upon seeing the commotion rushes on Esau, smites him with the sword and cuts off his head; whereupon Jacob is buried in the cave.

The Rabbis emphasize the fact that Esau's "hairy" appearance marked him a sinner (Gen. R. lxxv.) and his "red" ("edom") color indicated his bloodthirsty propensities ("dam" = "blood"; Gen. R. lxxiii.); they make him out to have been a misshapen dwarf (Gen. R. lxxv.; Cant. R. ii. 15; Agadat Bereshit xl.) and the type of a shameless robber, displaying his booty even on the holy "bimah" (Midr. Teh. to Ps. lxxx. 6); but his filial piety is nevertheless praised by them (Tan., Kedoshim, 15, where his tears are referred to; *ib.*, Toledot, 24, where the fact that he married at forty, in imitation of his father, is mentioned approvingly).



Genesis 36:1-42

The Generations of Esau

The Sons of Seir the Horite (v20-30)

20 These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan and Shobal and Zibeon and Anah, 21 and Dishon and Ezer and Dishan. These are the chiefs descended from the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom.

22 And the sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam; and Lotan's sister was Timna, concubine of Esau's son, Eliphaz

23 And these are the sons of Shobal: Alvan and Manahath and Ebal, Shepho and Onam.

24 And these are the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah - he is the Anah who found the hot springs in the wilderness when he was pasturing the donkeys of his father Zibeon.



Genesis 36:1-42

The Generations of Esau

25 And these are the children of Anah: Dishon, and
^{=tent of the high place} **Oholibamah**,^{wife of Esau} the daughter of Anah.
^{=answer} ^{=thresher}

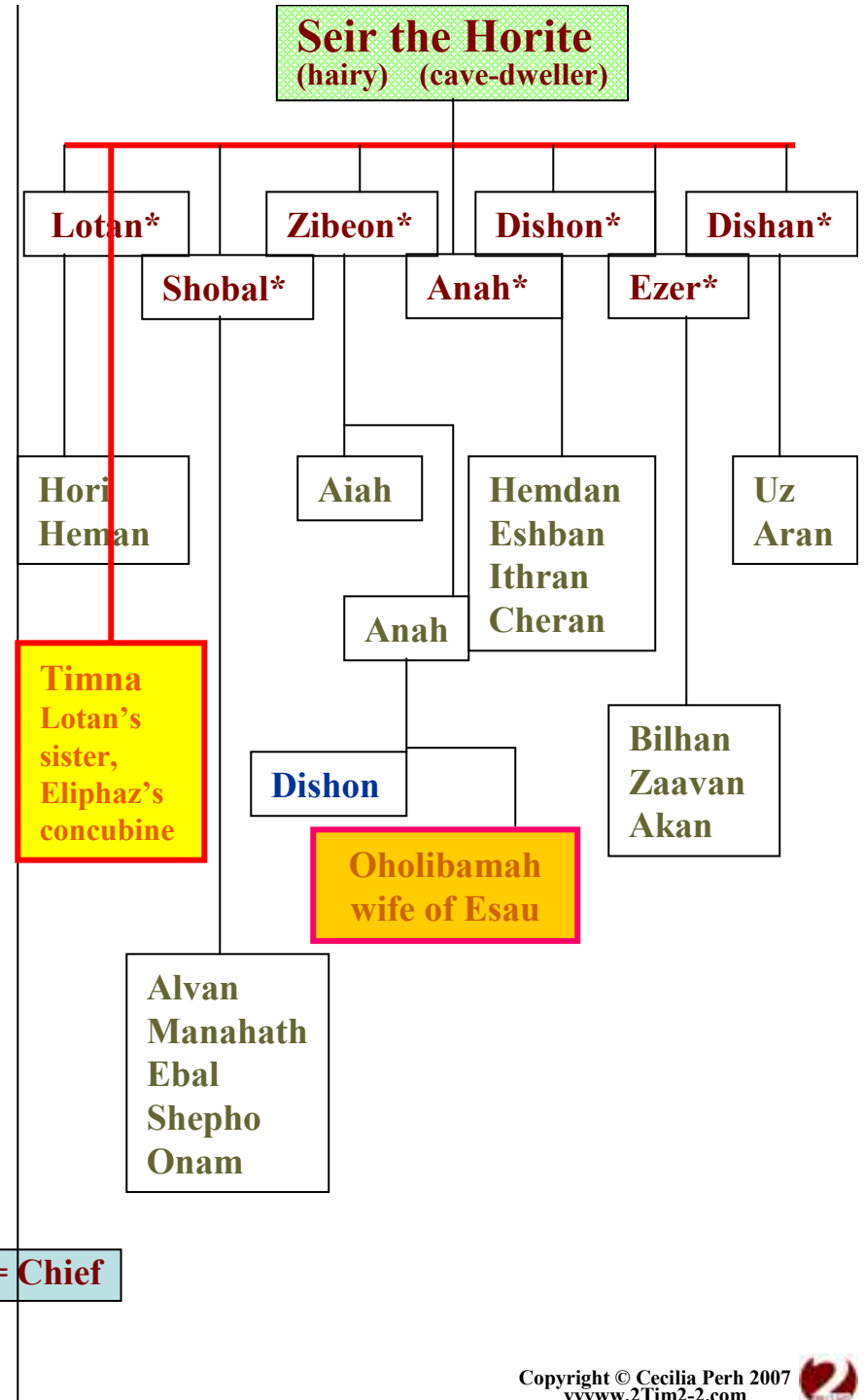
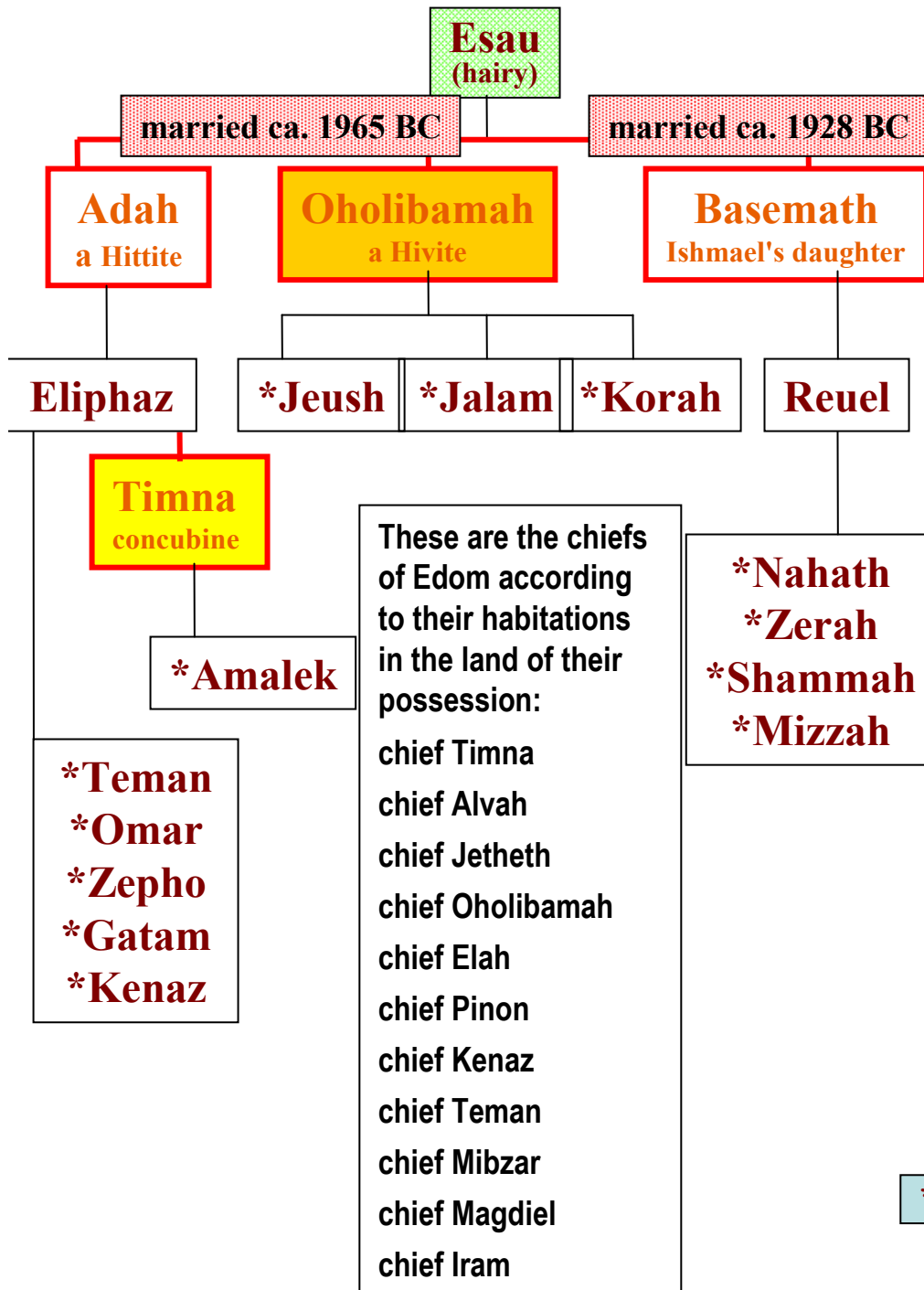
26 And these are the sons of Dishon: Hemdan and Eshban
and Ithran and Cheran.
^{=thresher} ^{=desire} ^{=fire of discernment}
^{=advantage} ^{=lyre}

27 These are the sons of Ezer: Bilhan and Zaavan and Akan.
^{=their decrepitude} ^{=treasure} ^{=troubled} ^{=sharp-sighted}

28 These are the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran.
^{=thresher} ^{=wooded} ^{=joyous}

29 These are the chiefs descended from the Horites: chief Lotan, chief Shobal, chief Zibeon, chief Anah, 30 chief Dishon, chief Ezer, chief Dishan. These are the chiefs descended from the Horites, according to their *various* chiefs in the land of Seir.





Genesis 36:1-42 The Generations of Esau

The Kings in Edom (v31-39)

31 Now these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the sons of Israel. 32 Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, and the name of his city was Dinhabah. 33 Then Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah became king in his place. 34 Then Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites became king in his place. 35 Then Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the field of Moab, became king in his place; and the name of his city was Avith. 36 Then Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah became king in his place. 37 Then Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth on the Euphrates River became king in his place. 38 Then Shaul died, and Baal-hanan the son of Achbor became king in his place. 39 Then Baal-hanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadar became king in his place; and the name of his city was Pau; and his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, daughter of Mezahab.

=destruction

=burning

=give thou judgment

=a desert

=rising

=sheepfold, fortress

=haste

=southward

=mighty

=solitary

=strife

=of his father

=ruins

=garment

=vineyard of noble vines

=desired

=wide places or streets

=Baal is gracious

=mouse

=honor

=bleating

=favored of God

=pushing forward

=waters of gold



<http://classiclit.about.com/library/bl-etexts/lginzberg/bl-lginzberg-legends-2-1dd.htm>

THE SONS OF JACOB AT WAR WITH THE SONS OF ESAU

Jacob having been interred with royal pomp, and the seven days' period of mourning over, the conflict between the sons of Jacob and the sons of Esau broke out anew. In the skirmish that had ensued when Esau advanced a claim upon a place in the Cave of Machpelah, while his brother's remains still lay unburied, he lost forty of his men, and after his death fortune favored his sons as little. Eighty of their followers were slain, while of the sons of Jacob not one was lost. Joseph succeeded in capturing Zepho the son of Eliphaz and fifty of his men, and he clapped them in chains and carried them off to Egypt. Thereupon the rest of the attacking army led by Eliphaz fled to Mount Seir, taking with them the headless corpse of Esau, to bury it in his own territory. The sons of Jacob pursued after them, but they slew none, out of respect for the remains of Esau.

On the third day a great army gathered together, consisting of the inhabitants of Seir and the children of the East, and they marched down into Egypt with the purpose of making war upon Joseph and his brethren. In the battle that came off, this army was almost totally destroyed, not less than six hundred thousand men were mowed down by Joseph and his warriors, and the small remnant fled precipitately. Returned to their own country after this fatal campaign, the sons of Esau and the sons of Seir fell to quarrelling among themselves, and the sons of Seir demanded that their former allies leave the place, because it was they that had brought misfortune upon the country.

The sons of Esau thereupon dispatched a messenger in secret to their friend Agnias, king of Africa, begging his aid against the sons of Seir. He granted their request, and sent them troops consisting of foot-soldiers and mounted men.



<http://classiclit.about.com/library/bl-etexts/lginzberg/bl-lginzberg-legends-2-1dd.htm>

The sons of Seir, on their part, also sought allies, and they secured the help of the children of the East, and of the Midianites, who put warriors at their disposal. In the encounters that ensued between the hostile forces, the sons of Esau were defeated again and again, partly on account of treachery in their own ranks, for their men sometimes deserted to the enemy while the combat was on. At last, however, in the battle that took place in the desert of Paran, the sons of Esau gained a decisive victory. They massacred all the warriors of the sons of Seir, and the Midianites and the children of the East were put to flight.

Thereafter the sons of Esau returned to Seir, and they slew all the inhabitants of the place, men, women, and children, sparing only fifty lads and maidens. The former they used as slaves, and the latter they took to wife. They also enriched themselves with the spoils, seizing all the possessions of the sons of Seir, and the whole land was divided among the five sons of Esau. Now these descendants of Esau determined to put a king over themselves, but in consequence of the treachery committed during the war there prevailed such hatred and bitterness among them that they decided never to appoint a ruler from their own people. Their choice fell upon Bela, the son of Beor, one of the warriors sent to them by King Agnias. His peer could not be found among the allied troops for bravery, wisdom, and handsome appearance. They set the royal crown upon his head, built a palace for him, and gave him gifts of silver, gold, and gems, until he lived in great opulence. He reigned happily for thirty years, and met his death then in a war against Joseph and his brethren.



<http://classiclit.about.com/library/bl-etexts/lginzberg/bl-lginzberg-legends-2-1dd.htm>

This war came about because the sons of Esau could not banish from their memory the disgrace of the defeat inflicted upon them by Joseph and his people. Having enlisted the aid of Agnias, and of the Ishmaelites and other nations of the East, they set forth on a second campaign against Egypt, in the hope of delivering Zepho and his followers from the hands of Joseph. In spite of their enormous host--they had no less than eight hundred thousand men of infantry and cavalry--they were defeated at Raamses by Joseph and his brethren and their little company of six hundred men. Beside their king Bela, they left one-fourth of their army upon the field. The loss of their king discouraged them grievously, and they took to flight, hard pressed by Joseph, who cut down many of the fugitives.

When he returned from the battle, Joseph ordered manacles and fetters to be put upon Zepho and his followers, and their captivity was made more bitter unto them than it had been before.

The sons of Esau appointed Jobab of Bozrah to succeed their dead king Bela. His reign lasted ten years, but they desisted from all further attempts at waging war with the sons of Jacob. Their last experience with them had been too painful, but the enmity they cherished against them was all the fiercer, and their hatred never abated.

Their third king was Husham, and he ruled over them for twenty years. During his reign Zepho succeeded in making good his escape from Egypt. He was received kindly by Agnias, king of Africa, and appointed commander-in-chief of his troops. He used every means of persuasion to induce his sovereign lord to enter into a war with Egypt, but in vain, for Agnias was only too well acquainted with the strength and heroism of the sons of Jacob.





Eight Kings of Edom

- 1) **Bela the son of Beor** reigned in Edom, and the name of his city was Dinhabah
- 2) **Jobab the son of Zerah** of Bozrah
- 3) **Husham** of the land of the Temanites
- 4) **Hadad the son of Bedad**, who defeated Midian in the field of Moab, became king in his place; and the name of his city was Avith
- 5) **Samlah** of Masrekah
- 6) **Shaul** of Rehoboth on the *Euphrates* River
- 7) **Baal-hanan the son of Achbor**
- 8) **Hadar** and the name of his city was Pau; and **his wife's name was Mehetabel**, the daughter of Matred, daughter of Mezahab

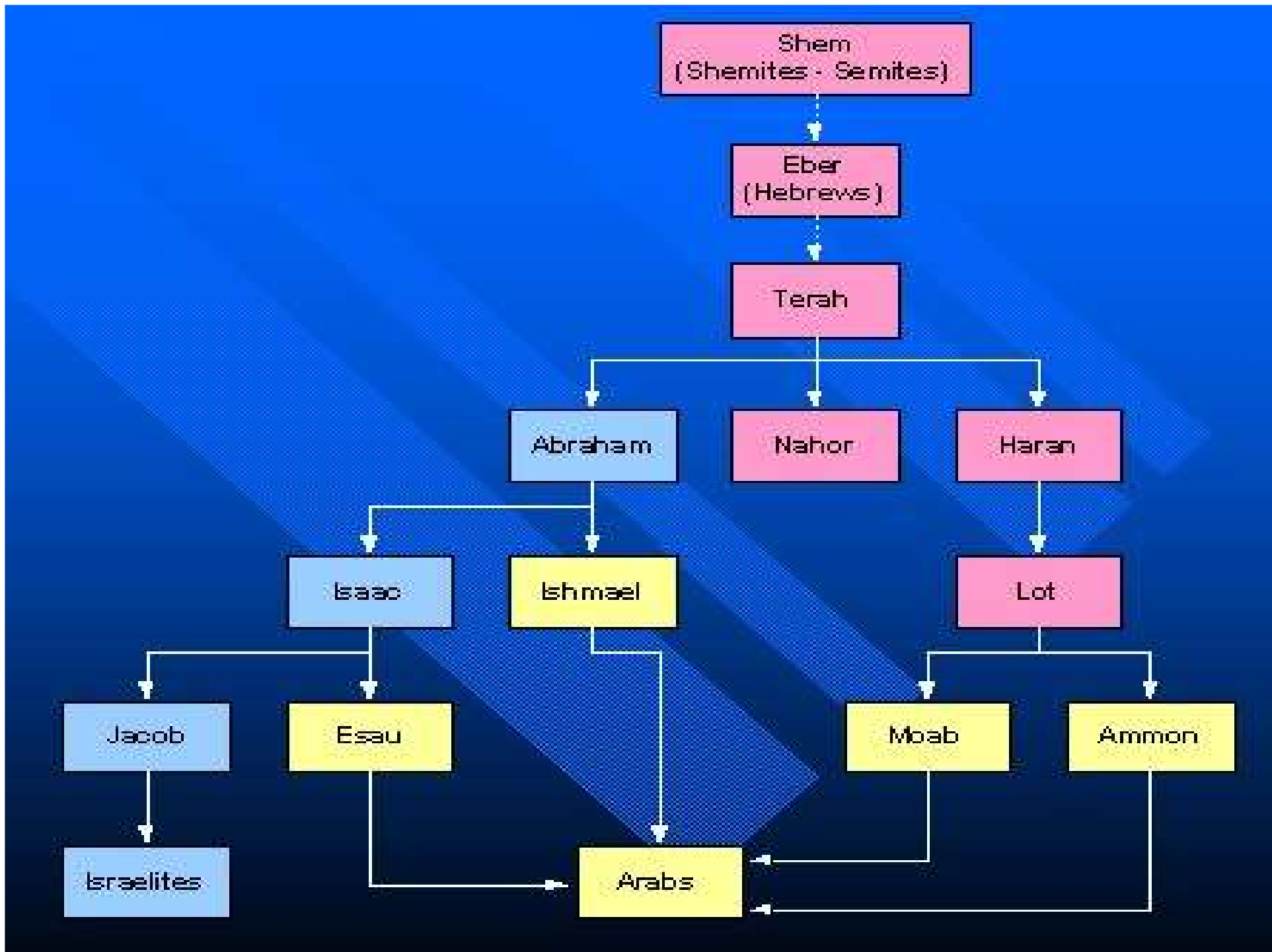
Genesis 36:1-42

The Generations of Esau

The Chiefs of Esau (v40-42)

40 Now these are the names of the chiefs descended from Esau, according to their families *and* their localities, by their names:
chief ^{=restrained} Timna, chief ^{=evil} Alvah, chief ^{=a nail} Jetheth, 41 chief ^{=tent of a high place} Oholibamah,
chief ^{=an oak} Elah, chief ^{=darkness} Pinon, 42 chief ^{=hunter} Kenaz, chief ^{=south} Teman, chief
^{=fortress} Mibzar, 43 chief ^{=prince of God} Magdiel, chief ^{=belonging to a city} Iram. These are the chiefs of Edom (that is, Esau, the father of the Edomites), according to their habitations in the land of their possession.





<http://www.faithta.coma.org/sermons/Genesis/genesis71.htm>

Now, my first instinct, as you may imagine, was to pass by this material altogether. What could be less interesting and less spiritually helpful than a genealogy? Aren't genealogies the standing joke about the dull parts of the Bible?...

But I have been reminded many times over these past months in Genesis of the literary and theological sophistication of this first book of the Bible. Nothing is here by accident, nothing to no purpose. And more and more scholars have realized that and are helping us to see all that the author intended us to see in each succeeding paragraph of this great story of the beginning of the world and of the salvation of mankind...more and more scholars now realize that Genesis is a masterpiece of narrative art. They realize that the book is teaching the highest and deepest theology by means of its narrative. Further,...no one ever denied that entirely, the final product is a remarkably cohesive, seamless, and sophisticated employment of those various sources to present theological truth in narrative form.

Nothing appears in this book that does not have a purpose. Every part of the narrative serves some important purpose. The book itself, from the general divisions to the specific details, reveals the hand of a master communicator as well as a practiced theologian. And that is all besides the fact that, as Christians have always believed and as we believe, the whole of this great piece of human literature and theological writing was the achievement not merely of the human author but of the Holy Spirit himself, superintending the process until what at last was written was precisely what God intended to say to the church and the world in this first and most important book of his Holy Scripture.



<http://www.faithtacoma.org/sermons/Genesis/genesis71.htm>

That fact ought to convince us that chapter 36 is worth our paying some attention to. It is worth our asking: Why is it here? What did the author of Genesis want to convey to us by this means? What truth for our lives are we to find in this account of Esau's descendants? And, as soon as the question is put that way, certain answers immediately begin to emerge.

1. For example, you remember that the Lord had promised Rebekah, before the birth of her twin sons, Esau and Jacob, that two nations were in her womb. Now we see that it was so. Jacob became the nation of Israel and Esau the nation of Edom. It isn't simply a family history, but a national history that we are given in chapter 36, the history of Edom.

2. That leads to a second point. The fact is, the genealogy takes us far beyond the time of Genesis itself. As verse 31 explicitly indicates, the genealogy stretches over a time that takes us up to the time of the Israelite kings, centuries after the time covered in Genesis itself. The developed structure of vv. 9-43 has suggested to many scholars that all of that material was a secondary insertion into an original narrative that ended at v. 8. Anyone can easily see that 36:8 would have naturally led directly to 37:1. Esau settling in Seir would have led immediately to the statement that Jacob remained in the Promised Land. What is more, 36:1-8 as the genealogy of Esau would be roughly parallel in size and scope to the genealogies already given of Cain and of Ishmael. Finally, the fact that the heading "This is the account or toledot of Esau" is repeated at v. 9 and that the material in 36:1-5 about Esau's wives and sons is also repeated in vv. 10-14 further suggests that 36:9-43 was a separate account, inserted as a whole, later, perhaps, the very last part of the Book of Genesis to be added to it.



<http://www.faithta.coma.org/sermons/Genesis/genesis71.htm>

Genesis, you may remember, is formally anonymous. No author is identified. No author of the first five books of the Bible is ever mentioned in those books themselves. We know that it is generally the work of Moses, for we are told that elsewhere in the Bible. But we know that there were later additions made after the time of Moses. The account of Moses' death and burial, for example, was not by Moses. And no one disputes this. The final form of the book may not have been reached until some time later, as v. 31 indicates, during the time of the Israelite kings.

By that time, of course, Israel and Edom had a long history of bitter rivalry and antagonism. They were not only two nations, they were two nations often at war with one another. Indeed, if vv. 9-43 were written during the days of David or Solomon, when Edom had been incorporated into the Israelite empire, it would be **a further demonstration of the fact that, as God had promised, the older of Rebekah's two sons did, in fact, serve the younger.** Remember, the original readers of the Book of Genesis, the readers for which the Book was first written were the citizens of the nation of Israel, who were being taught the origin and the meaning of their national history. They knew the nation of Edom as an ancient enemy.

3. But, clearly, there is a greater theological purpose in this genealogy than simply to demonstrate that God's promises had come true or to explain how the bitter relations between Israel and Edom had come about. **For Edom and Israel do not simply represent two families, or even two nations. They represent, as Cain and Seth and Ishmael and Isaac before them, the only two peoples that exist in the world, the only two nations that have ever existed in this world: the kingdom of this world, of the devil, and of unbelief on the one hand, and the kingdom of our God and of his Christ on the other.**



<http://www.faithtacoma.org/sermons/Genesis/genesis71.htm>

From the very beginning of the book, in chapter 4, we have seen this division of mankind into the communities of faith and unbelief. Already at the beginning of human history, right after the fall, men in rebellion are found seeking to build the city of man and men who have faith in God are found building his city in the world. The story of Genesis, and so the story of the world and all of its history as it unfolds, is, primarily, the story of God calling a people out of rebellious and fallen humanity to be his very own, bearing with that people through all of their ingratitude and disobedience, and using them to bring light and life to the rising generations until finally God's people as a whole will be regathered in the paradise from which they were driven by sin. But alongside of that story is its mirror-opposite, the story of the kingdom of man -- born in rebellion against God, marked by violence, pride, and, at last, futility. They build their towers of Babel, but always in the end, God frustrates their hope to find peace and life apart from him. They trouble the saints, they carry out their rebellion against God by seeking the harm of his kingdom and people and city. But God is seen, through it all, protecting his people and securing them in his salvation. This was, as you remember, the great theme of the toledot of Isaac, the story of Jacob and Esau.

Consequently, all through the book, the challenge of this divinely inspired author to his readers is this question, over and over again: to which line, to which nation, to which kingdom, to which people, do you belong? And though it puts it in the terms appropriate to its time -- Esau and Jacob; Edom and Israel -- the question is exactly the same today.



<http://www.faithtacoma.org/sermons/Genesis/genesis71.htm>

But all the while the author of Genesis, brilliant theologian as he is, forces upon us over and over again the recognition, however unwelcome, that everyone in the world belongs to one line or another, to one people or another, to one master or another, and, so, to one future or another -- to live in Eden remade and renewed, or forever to live outside of Eden, to live in the Promised Land or to live in the desert wastes of Edom among the Edomites. The world desires to unite all people in one kingdom, one family. It refuses to acknowledge the antithesis between the two very distinct and different peoples who inhabit the world. **The Bible, on the contrary, is forever reminding us of it!** The world's philosophy is monistic; the Bible's dualistic.

...Chapter 36 of Genesis is a powerful reminder to us of what we are always tempted to forget or, at least, to neglect bearing much in mind. **There are two peoples occupying this world, two and only two: the people of Edom and the people of the Promised Land, the people who live their lives in rebellion against God and the people who walk with God.**

Here is the great lesson of this long list of names. Read them one by one. Think of the lives they lived, the children they bore, the things they accomplished. Just like countless other human beings. And then remember: there, but for the grace of God, go I.





<http://www.pbc.org/library/files/html/4875.html>

Written by Troy Ussery, a self-described quiet man, who spoke of having feelings at one time for a woman who seemed unaware of him:

Feelings are such silly things.

They come without permission,

demanding my submission,

to lift someone to inner fame;

someone who does not even know my name.

Feelings are such silly things.

