

**Jacob's Response
to God's Call**
Genesis 35 - 36

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Begin with prayer

Read: Genesis 35 - 36

Listen: THRU the BIBLE: [Genesis 35:1-29](#), [Genesis 36:1-43](#)

Dear God,

Thank You for this opportunity to pause and reflect on Your Word. Help us see the bigger picture of your story. Deepen our understanding, strengthen our faith, and guide us to walk forward with wisdom and purpose.

Amen



After the sad experiences that Jacob's family had experienced, **God instructed Jacob to go back to Bethel**. Just the mention of that location would have brought back many important memories for Jacob. As a young man, when he ran from his mother's house to get away from Esau, **Jacob spent his first night in Bethel**. Using a rock as a pillow, **Jacob dreamed of a ladder from earth to heaven** and he saw angels going up and down on it.

Jacob Begins His Spiritual Leadership in His Home

Now God called Jacob back to Bethel, and he finally began to **take the spiritual leadership in his home**.



God gave Jacob three instructions:

First, they were to **"put away the strange gods that are among you"** ([Genesis 35:2](#)). Why would they have idols? When Jacob, Rachel, and Leah ran from Laban, Rachel had taken the family idols.

It would be easy to assume that Jacob would have gotten rid of them because he knew the living and true God. But he hadn't, and now we find that **his entire family was worshipping these strange gods**. Now Jacob said they've got to get rid of them.

Secondly, God says, **"Be clean."** For the believer, that means **dealing with sin in your life** (see [1 John 1:9](#)). **God will forgive, but we must confess.**

Third, **"change your clothes."** In other words, get rid of the old garments. In Scripture, **garments speak of habits**. Like a football player wearing a uniform, that is his habit.

Jacob Started Living for God

The day Jacob went back to Bethel, he began to live for God. When Jacob thought of Bethel, he remembered **how God met him when he was in distress.** He was running away from home, homesick and lonely, and came to Bethel **where God promised to be faithful to him.** Now, years later, Jacob saw how God had certainly been faithful to him. **Now God invited him to, "Go back where you started. Begin again."**

As they traveled back to Bethel (that had previously been named Luz), **Jacob and his family were protected by God** so no one pursued them. **He built an altar there and called the place El-Bethel, which means "God of the house of God."** This reveals **spiritual growth in Jacob's life.**

God Renews His Promise

There at that place where God had met with Jacob decades before, God appeared again to him. All those years God had been trying to deal with Jacob, but in many ways **those years spent with Laban were wasted years.**

"And God said to him, **'Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name.'** So He called his name Israel. Also God said to him: **'I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body.'**" *Genesis 35:10-11*

"I am God Almighty" This is the same name God used to introduce Himself to Abraham.

"The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land." *Genesis 35:12*

This now is the **third time God has promised this important land** to his family- first to Abraham, then to Isaac, and now to Jacob. The Lord had to tell each one of these men about it at least two or three times. **Jacob built a pillar of stone** on the place where God talked with him. On the pillar, he poured out a drink offering and called this place, Bethel.

This is the first mention of a drink offering. Leviticus tells us of five offerings, but not a drink offering. The drink offering was just poured on the other offerings, and it went up in the steam. The apostle Paul told the Philippians **that this is the way he wanted his life to be just poured out like a drink offering** (*Philippians 2:17*).

Benjamin is Born

With his beloved wife, Rachel, Jacob had one son, Joseph. Now as they traveled from Bethel, **Rachel went into labor with their second son.** As the child was born, **Rachel was dying.** She called him Benoni, meaning **"son of my sorrow,"** but Jacob looked down at him and said, "I've lost my lovely Rachel, and this little baby looks like her, so **I'll just call him Benjamin, 'son of my right hand.'**"

While it was true that the boy was the son of Rachel's sorrow, Jacob could not call him Benoni. He was not the reason for his sorrow; he was the son of his right hand, his walking stick, his staff, **the one he would lean on in his old age.** This helps us understand the great sorrow Jacob will go through later on. **All of it has its roots in Jacob's sin.**

God doesn't approve of the wrong in our lives. We won't get away with it.



Jacob's love for Rachel was perhaps the only fine thing in his life during those many lost years. He was totally devoted to her and allowed her to get away with anything (like keeping her father's idols). She had given Jacob his son Joseph, and now she gives birth to Benjamin. His life meant her death. It was a great heartbreak to Jacob.

The other ten boys were no joy to him at all. **God reminded him, likely every day, that it was sinful to have more than one wife.** This is especially obvious in the treatment Joseph received from his half-brothers.

Jacob loved Joseph and Benjamin, and the other boys were jealous of them. He shouldn't have shown such partiality to Joseph, because he knew how painful his own growing up years had been when his father had pushed him aside. He knew the trouble it had caused.

Isaac Dies

Isaac, **the old patriarch, full of days, died and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.** This was the only time, after Jacob's return to the land, that the brothers are together again.

God Knew Esau Before Esau Knew Himself

Esau and his family **became the nation of Edom**, which settled southeast of the Dead Sea. If we listed their names, they would be the same as circulate the Arabian desert today. It is a mountainous area. **The capital city, the rock-hewn city of Petra, stands there today.** Prophecy in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Obadiah **concerning Edom has been remarkably fulfilled.**

Esau was an attractive young man, but **he was a man of the flesh.** But so was Jacob for most of his life. Could God have made a mistake about His choice of Jacob over Esau? Esau looked so good on the outside. A little prophecy in Obadiah shows us Esau unveiled. By now, one little Esau has become about 100,000 Edomites. Each one of them is a little Esau. Look at that nation and you'll see what came from Esau. What do we see? **A nation filled with pride (Obadiah 1:3-4). The pride of their heart was a declaration of independence, a soul that says it can live without God** and does not have a need for God. That is Esau.

In the last book of the Old Testament God says, **"Yet Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated"** (*Malachi 1:2-3*). God never said that until over 1000 years after these men lived, but **God knew the heart of Esau at the beginning.** After they worked their way out in history, God chose correctly.

If we follow Esau and his three wives, we'd move with them out of the Promised Land to the land of Seir in Canaan. Here, **Esau's family welcomed Amalek, which is the beginning of the Amalekites.** Down through the centuries those tribes in the desert pushed out in many directions, some across North Africa. **All the Arab tribes came from Abraham, through Hagar, the Egyptian, and through Keturah, whom he married after Sarah died.** The tribes have intermarried, but they belong to the same family as the Israelites.

This is the family history of the Middle East, which extends farther back than any other source and reaches us in today's headlines.



God's Eternal Truths

Relevant to us from *Genesis 35 -36*

1 Cleansing and Confession of Sin:

Jacob's instruction to his family to **"Be clean" and remove their old garments symbolizes addressing sin and letting go of old habits.** This Old Testament physical cleansing is compared with the spiritual truth found in **1 John 1:9**. For the New Testament believer, this means that while **God offers forgiveness, we also have a duty to actively confess and deal with sin in our lives.**



2 The Drink Offering as a Life Poured Out:

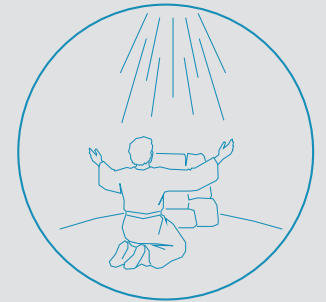
In response to God speaking with him, Jacob sets up a stone pillar and pours a drink offering over it. This is the **first time a drink offering is mentioned in Scripture**; it was an offering that evaporated into steam as it was poured out.

- This truth aligns this with **Philippians 2:17**, noting that **the Apostle Paul used this exact imagery to describe his ultimate spiritual goal**, wanting his own life to be **poured out completely as a drink offering** in service to God.



3 God's unwavering faithfulness to His covenant and the evidence of a believer's spiritual maturity through obedient worship.

- When Jacob obeyed God's call to return to Bethel, he showed that he had **finally begun living for God and taking spiritual leadership in his life.** In response to his obedience, God appeared to him, officially changed his name to Israel, and declared, **"I am God Almighty."** The sources point out that this is the same name God used when He first introduced Himself to Abraham. At this moment, **God renewed His eternal covenant**, promising Jacob the same land He had previously promised to Abraham and Isaac.



- Jacob's response to this divine revelation **perfectly illustrates his maturing journey.** He responded rightly by **building an altar and naming the place El-Bethel**, which translates to **"God of the house of God"**. Just like his grandfather Abraham, **Jacob's faith in Almighty God became evident through his actions.** By making the right decision to follow God's direction back to where he started, and by building an altar of worship, **Jacob's actions revealed genuine spiritual growth in his life.**



Reflection Questions

Question 1

When God introduced Himself as “God Almighty” and renewed the promise of the land, Jacob recognized God’s immense faithfulness and responded by naming the place El-Bethel, which means “House of God”.

Looking back at your own spiritual journey, how has God proven Himself faithful to His promises in your life, and what specific moments or decisions reveal how much you have grown spiritually since you first began walking with Him?

Question 2

Jacob’s spiritual growth was made evident through his tangible actions; he obeyed God’s direction to return to Bethel and built a physical altar of worship to mark his commitment.

What is a practical “altar” you can build in your life such as establishing a dedicated time and place for prayer, stepping into spiritual leadership in your home, or making a specific decision of obedience to actively demonstrate your trust in God Almighty?

Question 3

Putting Away Idols: Even though Jacob knew the true God, he had allowed his family to keep “strange gods” for years. Are there any hidden idols, compromises, or old habits (garments) in your life or home that you need to finally put away to walk in spiritual leadership?

Question 4

Returning to Bethel: God told Jacob to return to the place where He met him in his distress and proved His faithfulness. Where is your “Bethel”, a specific season or moment you can look back on where God met you in a hard time-and how can remembering it help you “begin again” today?

Question 5

Pouring Out Your Life: Jacob’s drink offering models a life wholly dedicated to God, a concept mirrored by the Apostle Paul. In what practical ways are you pouring out your life, time, and resources as a “drink offering” for God’s purposes?

Question 6

Examining Your Heart for Pride: While Esau was an attractive man on the outside, his descendants became a nation filled with pride, living as souls who believed they could live without God. Are there areas in your life where you are operating in the “flesh” or declaring independence from God, rather than relying on Him in humility?



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