

**THE ORIGINS OF IT ALL!: A STUDY OF GENESIS
XXXVIII.) COMPLETION, CORRECTION & PERSEVERANCE
GENESIS 35:1 – 37:1**

Q: What have we seen (or perhaps even experienced) about life after spiritual satisfaction and/or fulfillment (of a goal, quest, etc.) has been attained?

- complacency sets in
- commitments and 'best intentions' are forgotten
- spiritual sloth ensues.
- Decay leads to disobedience.

A.) OVER-DUE COMMITMENTS (35:1-7)

Q: Have you ever made or accepted an earnest commitment before the Lord, but then never quite got around to fulfilling it?

Q: How have/can we respond when we remember/are reminded of such forgotten or unfulfilled vows?

- God's emphatic words to Jacob, “*Get Up!*” were filled with layered meaning. Get up from your slumber! Get up from your premature satisfaction! Get up from your settled place! Get up from your hiding! Get up from your settling for less! Get up from your contentment with *some* things accomplished and promises received!
- As the crow flies, Bethel was only about 15 miles south of Shechem but 1,000 ft. higher in elevation.
- Jacob had been living as if the Mountaintop experience before him just wasn't necessary or worth the effort of the climb. He grew content in the valley with a life that he had adjusted to as 'normal' and a safe 'routine.' Going up, to Bethel, by contrast just represented too much change and uncertainty.
- But Bethel is where God had called Jacob to go long ago and where Jacob *had* vowed he would.
- Though the Lord Almighty demonstrated merciful patience with Jacob for a time, that time was limited. We may conveniently forget and even begin to believe that the Lord has 'forgotten' and 'moved on' but He never forgets the charge He gives us or the vows we make to Him!
- All along, God has fulfilled His Promises to Jacob. Most recently, He brought Jacob safely back to the land of his father, made him a father of many and supplied all of his needs. Jacob, however, never did build “God's House” at Bethel as he had earlier promised. Even worse, he had not truly even honored God as the true LORD of his own house.
- This is a situation that Jacob absolutely had to address and correct before the Lord's fuller purpose and blessings could be made complete in him and his family.
- A complete eradication of all idols and spiritual cleansing was thus required.

B.) ACCEPTING DEATH (35:8)

Q: What does it mean to 'accept death'?

Q: What did it mean here to those involved?

Q: What might be a parallel situation for us?

- The passing of a generation.
- The loss of a key leader or influencer.

C.) RE-AFFIRMING THE CALLING (35:9-15)

Q: What is the same or different here and in 17:5-8; 28:18-19?

- It clearly parallels and overlaps with these previous confirmations of the Promise.
- The former, of the Promise to Abraham and extended for his descendents.
- The latter, Jacob's own promise to God when he built the altar at Bethel 30 yrs. earlier.

Q: Why this time?

- Jacob needed a firm reminder of what he had forsaken and what was at stake.
- Contrast between God's faithfulness and Jacob's faithlessness.
- The repeat of the naming is the foundation and just as significant. The struggler has become complacent and soft. Yes, he has ceased directly struggling *against* God. But he also has neglected to turn the other direction and accept struggle *for* God!
- As Dr. Morris puts it: *“The strongest incentive to holy living is the comprehension of our holy calling”* (pg. 521).
- **Ephesians 4:1**

D.) THE PROMISE SUPERCEDES DEATH (35:16-21, 27-29)

- Following Deborah, Rachel and then Isaac die.
- 15 years previously, Rachel gave birth to Joseph and trusted that the Lord would grant her another son. After a very long wait, her faith was rewarded and Rachel gave birth to Jacob's twelfth and last son.
- Benjamin was the only child of the Promise born in the Land.

- Yet, none of this thwarted the Promise of God!

E.) THE PROMISE SUPERCEDES **SIN** (35:22-26)

- Even so, there was 'sin' in the camp as we are reminded and given an example of here.
- Sin is inexcusable and yet not even it can thwart God's Plan & Promise.
- Israel (Jacob) was told of Reuben's sin and not nothing is mentioned of any discipline or consequences. **Do these facts then mean that with God our sins aren't really a significant concern?**
- Absolutely not! Can we so quickly forget the lesson this chapter began with? Any any case, we will see that Reuben's sin here is not forgotten and ends up costing him his birthright (49:3-4).
- The chapter then ends with a list of the grandsons that Israel is to present to his father, Isaac, as evidence that God has been fulfilling His Promises to them both!

Dr. Ross summarizes this chapter thusly:

“God continually calls each generation of believers to rekindle their faith, to revitalize it as if they were in the greatest of spiritual struggles – for they are and dare not let down. Each end is a new beginning, calling for a new commitment. God's people must fulfill their commitments (they which they have vowed to do in God's program) by spiritual renewal in order that God's promises may be confirmed to them in their journey. In this idea I would concentrate on the need for keeping spiritual commitments (because death and sin threaten faith), the manner of fulfilling them (purification and worship), and the results (God's continuing blessing and confirmation of the promises yet to be fulfilled” (pg. 584).

F.) THE PROSPERITY OF **OTHERS** (36:1-37:1)

Q: Keeping in mind the situations of both the Israel written about here, and the Moses-led Israel being originally written to, what is the point and lesson of these details about Esau?

- God is concerned and follows the lives of every individual, in and out of the tribe of chosen ones.
- Esau, that is the tribe and nation that he becomes, IS the same as Edom that threatens Israel as they look to re-enter the Promised Land after the Exodus from Egypt.
- Though not The Promise, God nevertheless was just as faithful fulfilling His promises to Esau.
- Though Jacob was the inheritor of the Promise and guided by the LORD Himself, it is Esau who is physically much more prosperous in every way – offspring, established nation, power and riches.
- **The most important lesson, however, is that while others may see more immediate and tangible material blessings, God's chosen are asked and guided to journey through long periods of refining and proving before their faith is rewarded with much greater spiritual blessings!**

