

## Plan and Purpose Bible Lesson #III-8—Genesis 33-37

Genesis 33 records Jacob-Israel's homecoming. Jacob is fully expecting the meeting of his brother Esau to be a hostile one. (Read Genesis 33) When we consider that Moses wrote the book of Genesis over 200 years after the events of this chapter, plus the history of hundreds of years before this, we can appreciate that he had to write it in a considerably digested form. Even though the events related here were, in a sense, recent compared to the events before the flood for example, still Moses was not able to include everything that happened. In this case, Esau obviously came with the intent to kill Jacob and his family. We aren't told what happened to change his mind, but I strongly suspect that God put a fear in his mind before he met Jacob that made him think twice about his original intent. Jacob, likewise had to make some mental adjustments. We're told that he sent 3 droves of animals ahead to meet Esau and told his servants that he sent with them, to tell Esau that these were presents from Jacob and that Jacob was coming behind them. When the two brothers met, it turned into a tearful reunion instead of an armed conflict. Esau at first refused to accept the gifts that Jacob wanted to give to him, but finally, at Jacob's urging, accepted them. Then Esau wanted to go along with Jacob and all of them go to the land of Seir where Esau lived. Jacob wisely refused this as this was not where he was headed and did not want to go with Esau. Finally, they parted ways again with Esau going back to Seir and Jacob to a place that took its name from the fact that Jacob built a house there for him and his family and build booths for his livestock. The word for booths is Succoth, which is what the place was called from that time.

After staying there for a period of time, Jacob moved on to the city of Shechem. According to my Bible map, Shechem would have been about 25 miles from Succoth. Here he purchased a parcel of land from Hamor, the prince, or ruler of the city and the land around it, and built an altar and called it EleloheIsrael.

(Read Gen. 34:1-5) We saw in chapter 30 that Jacob had a daughter named Dinah by his wife Leah. We said at the time that it is possible that Jacob had more than one daughter, but we only have record of this one girl because of an event that was to happen in which she would play a very prominent part. This is the event we referred to. Apparently, even though Shechem took Dinah by force and lay with her, he loved her very much and though he kept her in his house, he decided the right thing to do was to marry her, but he needed his father's permission and Jacob's permission.

Jacob heard what had happened, but since he was basically by himself because his sons were out feeding the livestock in the field, he did not say anything to anybody until they returned.

(Read Gen. 34:6-24) Hamor and Shechem went out to Jacob to seek his permission for Shechem to take Dinah for a wife. Not only did they want Jacob to agree to give Dinah to Shechem, they wanted for there to be intermarriage between the people of Shechem and the

family of Jacob. So far as Jacob's sons were concerned, they considered what Shechem had done to be a major crime against Jacob and his family. So they came up with a plan of deceit in which they told Hamor and Shechem that they couldn't agree to such an arrangement until the men of Shechem were circumcised as they were. This didn't sound that bad to Shechem and Hamor, so they went back to the city and convinced the men of the city that this was the thing to do. They all agreed, so all of the males in the city of Shechem were circumcised. (Read Gen. 34:25-31) Three days later, when the men were very sore, Simeon and Levi took their swords and went into the city and killed all of the men of the city including Shechem and Hamor and took Dinah their sister back home with them. The book of Jasher indicates that they killed over 700 males that day. They then spoiled the city. Even under the circumstances, Levi and Simeon would have had to be exceptional physical specimens to accomplish such a task.

When Jacob found out what happened, he was greatly disturbed and reminded Simeon and Levi that they were very small in number and that the Canaanites could easily destroy them. The book of Jasher indicates that the surrounding kings did put together an army of over 10,000 men, but before they attacked Jacob and his sons they asked their counselors what they should do. These counselors recounted what all had happened to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and concluded that they would not just be fighting Jacob and his sons, but would be fighting their God. When they contemplated this, they changed their mind and went home without ever attacking Jacob.

When Jacob confronted Simeon and Levi about what they had done, their answer in verse 31 was, **"Should he (Shechem) deal with our sister as with an harlot?"** They simply could not see that they had any other choice in the matter.

Jacob did not forget what danger these two brothers put all of Jacob's family in. When he gathered all of his sons together to bless them in Gen. 49, he did not bless them but said instead in verses 5-7, **"Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret (council); unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel."** We aren't told just what this meant to Simeon, but we know that Levi was not given an inheritance in Israel except for some cities, but were scattered through all of the tribes of Israel.

(Read Gen. 35:1-5) Bethel is the name that Jacob gave the place that was called Luz after Jacob spent a night there on his way to Padanaram. If you recall, Gen. 28 told us that Jacob dreamed a dream that night in which a ladder extended from the earth into heaven with angels going up and down the ladder. The Lord stood above it and reiterated most of the same promises to Jacob that He had made to Abraham. Jacob then named the place Bethel, meaning the House of God. It was also here that he took a stone and set it up for a pillar and anointed it with oil and made a vow to God that if God would bring him safely again to his father's house,

then the Lord would be his God and he would give a tenth of all that God gave him back to God.

Now God is telling Jacob to go back to Bethel. To purify his family before they went to Bethel, Jacob had them change raiment and gathered up all of the strange gods and ear rings (probably part of the spoils that they got from the city of Shechem, when they spoiled the city, that were probably made of precious metals) and buried them under an oak tree near Shechem.

Verse 4 verifies what the book of Jasher said about the people of the land after Jacob's sons killed all of the males of Shechem and spoiled the city. The people developed a great fear of Jacob and his family because of Jacob's God, so they did not pursue them as they left Shechem.

(Read Gen. 35:6-8) Jacob again builds an altar at Bethel and calls the place Elbethel (God of the House of God) because God first appeared to him there when he went down to Padanaram. We're told that Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died there. The Scripture says nothing more about Rebekah from the time that Jacob left home. Whether Deborah came to Jacob with a message, or whether she joined his household following Rebekah's death we're not told.

(Read Gen. 35:9-15) God appeared to Jacob again and re-affirmed that Jacob's name was changed to Israel and that the promises to Abraham now applied to Jacob. Though it was really part of the promises that were originally made to Abraham, verse 11 is of particular interest to me. God tells Jacob to be fruitful and multiply first. Jacob already had 11 sons and only had one more after this, so this command has to apply to Jacob's family. When Jacob blessed his sons just prior to his death, part of the blessing he gave to Joseph is recorded in Gen. 49:22, **"Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well: whose branches run over the wall."** Later on I Chronicles 5:1 confirms that the birthright was given to Joseph, but that the sceptre went to Judah. The birthright included the fruitfulness mandate while the king line was separated from the birthright and given to Judah. Also in Gen. 48, Jacob called Joseph and his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh to him and adopted the two sons of Joseph saying in verse 16, **"Let my name be named on them,"** i.e. Israel, and then in verse 19 he said of Ephraim, the younger son, **"his seed shall become a multitude of nations,"** and of Manasseh, **"he shall become a people, and he also shall be great."**

Here in verse 11 of chapter 35, we find the elements of the birthright and as we have looked ahead a little, we find that those elements were to be bestowed on two sons, Joseph and Judah. God then re-affirmed the land inheritance to Jacob and his seed that He had promised Abraham.

Jacob-Israel again set up a pillar of stone and poured a drink offering and oil on it. As we have mentioned before, there is a strong tradition that Jacob took this stone with him one or the other times and the stone remained in the hands of his family from then on. It is now located in Scotland but is called, among its several names, the Coronation Stone, as it sat beneath the seat of the coronation throne upon which the kings and queens of Great Britain

are crowned. Though the Scots currently have it, it has been agreed that when the next monarch of Britain is crowned, it will be returned to the coronation throne for the occasion.

(Read Gen. 35:16-20) Jacob again took his family and traveled toward Ephrath, another name for Bethlehem. As they neared Ephrath, Rachel travailed. Her labor was more than she could take and she died after giving birth to another son. As she was dying, she named her son Benoni, meaning Son of my sorrow, but Jacob named him Benjamin, meaning Son of my right hand. Dr. Bullinger, in his Companion Bible, had the following note on the name: "The word rendered "sorrow" (*'avon*) is a *Homonym*, the other meaning being "strength," and is so rendered in Gen. 49:3; Deut. 21:17; Job 18:7, 12 &c. It is rendered "mourning" in Deut. 26:14; Hosea 9:4. This *Homonym* is the basis of Jacob's change of Benjamin's name.

We're told that Rachel died and was buried in the way to Ephrath and Jacob set up a pillar on her sepulcher. Not only was the location of her sepulcher well known in Moses' day, but I Samuel 10:2 indicates that it was still well known in Samuel's day.

(Read Gen. 35:21-26) Reuben's sin proved to be a costly one for him. In Gen. 49, as Jacob was blessing his sons, he attributed the advantages usually associated with one's first born to Reuben, but then in verse 4 he had this to say about him, **"unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch."** Then in I Chron. 5:1 we find the following statement: **"For he (Reuben) was the firstborn; but forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright."** So we see that he lost the blessings of the birthright because of his sin.

We now have all twelve of Jacob's sons with the birth of Benjamin.

(Read Gen. 35:27-29) Isaac dies at the age of 180 years old. Both Jacob and Esau buried him we're told. There is no indication of animosity between the two brothers at this point, but throughout the rest of Scripture, we'll see that their descendents were in opposition to each other one way or another.

While we won't read Gen. 36 in our class, I recommend that everyone read it simply for the record. This chapter gives us the genealogy of Esau and his family. As we have already mentioned, he had three wives. From these three wives he had five sons. We won't encounter very many of the descendents of these five sons by name in Scripture, though there will be elements of their descendents in the different nations and/or groups that we will encounter. Probably most outstanding of these descendents is Amalek, son of Eliphaz by his concubine Timna. Eliphaz was one of the sons of Esau.

Esau moved his family to the land of Sier which was located in the far southern portion of the land of Canaan. We will find this land referred to as the land of Edom as we study further.

(Read Gen. 37) This story of Joseph is a very important story for us to know and understand for a number of reasons. It is a good example of types and shadows of things to

come. It has a lot of symbolic language, that we will need to understand much of the rest of the Bible, especially the book of Revelation. It is very important that we know not only the stories such as this story, but know where they fit in the overall history, and that we know the complete Bible so that we can see how God speaks to us through such things as types and shadows and symbolism. We'll look at some examples as we study this story so that hopefully we can project this importance.

Joseph was obviously Jacob's favorite son, possibly because he was the first son of the wife Jacob loved the most, Rachel. I believe that we can determine from the story that Joseph was probably what we might consider today, a spoiled brat. The book of Jasher confirms that was the case and Joseph was not above using his father Jacob to elevate himself over his brothers whenever he got the chance. We're told in verse 2 that he was with his half brothers, Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher, sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, as they fed the flock, and that he brought an evil report of his brothers to Jacob. The inference is that he made up the evil report to enhance himself before Jacob. Because of these types of antics, his brothers hated him.

Jacob made Joseph a coat of many colors. According to a note in the Companion Bible, the coat had long sleeves which would have only been worn by the chief and his heir. The colors marked it as priestly or royal. The coat was probably the thing that really started the hatred of Joseph's brothers toward him.

But Joseph did not help himself with his brothers. We're told that he dreamed a dream in which they were all in the field binding sheaves of grain when his sheaf stood upright and the sheaves of his eleven brothers stood round about and bowed down to Joseph's sheaf. Joseph then told his brothers his dream. They understood that this meant that he would rule over them and probably thinking this to be another of his antics to show himself superior to the rest of them, they hated him all the more. Of course, we know now that this indeed was prophetic of what was to happen to them later when they would have to go to Egypt to beg food from him.

But Joseph was not through yet. He had another dream in which he saw the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars make obeisance to him. Dr. Bullinger has a note in his Companion Bible saying the eleven stars were the eleven signs of the Zodiac, Joseph being the twelfth. When he told his brothers about this dream it only added fuel to the fire. Jacob, apparently seeing the hatred building admonished Joseph, questioning such an event, but he kept the dream in his mind, apparently not sure just how to take it.

This dream is important in that it provides us with some symbolism that helps make an identification in the book of Revelation. We're told in verse 1 of Rev. 12, **"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars."** The woman is not named, but the symbolism of this dream of Joseph's, the sun, moon and 12 stars in Genesis represents Jacob and his family, so can be used in Revelation, I believe, to identify the woman as Israel, or Jacob's family. If we

watch for this kind of symbolism and what it stands for throughout the Bible, I believe we can correctly read the symbolic language of Revelation.

As with the dream of the sheaves, this dream also is prophetic of what was to happen with Joseph and his family. Note that Jacob **“observed the saying.”**

Though Jacob had moved his family to Hebron after Levi and Simeon killed all of the men in Shechem, he apparently still had his flocks pastured there. Dr. Bullinger indicates that there was a special expression in the original texts that indicated a doubtful reading of verse 12 and suggested that Jacob’s sons had left the sheep and had gone to feed themselves and make merry. This is somewhat confirmed by the book of Jasher. The point is that Jacob had reason to be concerned about the welfare of his sons both from the standpoint that they had gone to Shechem, where they certainly would not be very popular, and the possibility that they might be planning a party for themselves. So he sent Joseph, who was 17 years old at the time, to check on his brothers and the flocks and to bring word back to Jacob.

It turns out that the brothers had left Shechem and gone to Dothan, making it difficult for Joseph to find them. Dothan was on a well traveled trade route into Egypt. When the brothers saw Joseph coming, they plotted among themselves to kill him. When Reuben, the oldest brother, heard of their plot, he talked them into not killing him but instead casting him into a pit, with the idea that he would come back and take Joseph out of the pit and send him back to their father.

While eating their lunch and debating what, if anything more they should do to Joseph, a company of Ishmeelite merchants came by and Judah suggested that they sell Joseph to these merchants, to which they all agreed. So they took him out of the pit and sold him as a slave to these merchants. Reuben apparently was not with the rest when all this happened and when he returned to take Joseph out of the pit he was gone. Being the oldest, Joseph was his responsibility, and now he had failed and didn’t know what to tell Jacob.

Again, the brothers conspired to put together some evidence in a lie and send the evidence to Jacob. They took the coat of many colors that they had taken from Joseph, killed a goat and dipped the coat in the blood with the idea that it would appear that Joseph was attacked and killed by a wild beast of some kind.

This dipping the coat into the blood is another clue that we need to understand the book of Revelation, as well as the overall story of the Bible. Earlier in this study we briefly discussed the birthright for which Jacob traded a bowl of pottage to Esau. We indicated that the two mandates, the dominion mandate and the fruitfulness mandate, given to Adam and reiterated to Noah were part of this birthright. We will see later in our study that Jacob splits this birthright giving the dominion mandate to Judah and the fruitfulness mandate to Joseph. In effect, as we will see in future studies, the dominion mandate represents the king and the fruitfulness mandate represents the kingdom, or the people. Christ is to inherit this kingdom of God. In His first coming, He came of Judah and claimed the kingship, though the priests

thought they had thwarted this claim. But to inherit the whole kingdom, He needs the kingdom, i.e. the people, the fruitfulness mandate. In Revelation 19, we find a prophecy describing His second coming. We're told in verse 11 that He sat on a white horse and that He was called Faithful and True. Going down to verse 13 we see, **"And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood."** This prophetically ties Him to Joseph, the holder of the birthright. We'll study this further in more detail, but this helps us understand the importance of Gen. 37.

When Jacob received this news that his favorite son had supposedly been killed, his mourning was very great and he refused to be comforted by his sons and daughters.

The chapter ends telling us that Joseph was sold as a slave to Potiphar, captain of the guard for the Pharaoh. JRL