

Genesis

Memorize the TRUTH!

Lesson 19 God Renews His Promises Genesis 34–36

Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Psalm 51:10

Tragedy in Shechem – Genesis 34:1-17

Day 1

1. What wrongful act set the stage for the events recorded in this chapter?
2. a. What did the young man and his father offer to do in order to compensate for the harm that had been done to Israel's daughter?

b. Why might this offer have seemed good to the men in Jacob's family?
3. a. What emotions motivated Jacob's sons to seek revenge instead?

b. What did Jacob's sons propose as a solution?

Learn the TRUTH!



If Satan cannot destroy God's people, he will try to dilute their commitment to God. Throughout history, God's people have struggled to keep themselves a distinctive people with a unified purpose. Are you living a distinctive Christian life with a single purpose — to know God and make Him known to others?

The Brothers' Revenge – Genesis 32:13-21

Day 2

4. What motivated the men of Shechem to comply with the demands of Jacob's sons?
5. Which of Jacob's sons were responsible for the massacre? What part did the others play in this tragic event?
6. What conclusions about Jacob's sons can we draw from this episode?
7. What relationships in your life encourage you to grow spiritually? How? What relationships hinder your spiritual growth. Why?

Reminder at Bethel
Genesis 35:1-15

Day 3

8. a. What important step of obedience did Jacob take in response to God's command to return to Bethel?
- b. Why was abandoning false gods essential for this family who would become heirs of God's covenant?
9. The false gods in Jacob's time were made of metal, stone or wood. What kinds of false gods do people in our culture worship?
10. a. Why did God appear to Jacob at Bethel a second time?
- b. Why do you think He chose to reconfirm the change in Jacob's name?

Sadness and Sin
Genesis 35:16-29

Day 4

11. What new sorrows came into Jacob's life at this time?
12. a. What attitude toward his father did Reuben reveal in Genesis 35:22?
- b. What does Genesis 49:3-4 say about the consequences of this action?
13. a. Can you think of a past action that has resulted in permanent consequences in your own life?
- b. How can Romans 8:1, 28-30 encourage you to trust God with those consequences?

The Children of Esau
Genesis 36:1-43

Day 5

14. a. How did Esau's choice of wives reveal his indifference toward God?
- b. What does Hebrews 12:16 tell us about Esau?
15. a. What do you see today in our lives that reveals indifference toward God and His Word?
- b. What can we do to remedy that?

Live the TRUTH!

Jacob chose to purchase land at Shechem and build an altar there. Years earlier he had made a vow to God at Bethel, where he should have returned. Jacob's altar was in the wrong place! God had to command him to return to Bethel after the atrocities occurred at Shechem. Are things going wrong because you are disobeying God? Choose God's way, or you too may have a tragedy to contend with.

Commentary Genesis Lesson 19

When Jacob departed from his family in Genesis 28, he promised to return to Bethel and fulfill a vow he made to God, which remains partially unfulfilled. Instead of honoring his promise, Jacob settles among the people of the land. Dinah, Jacob's daughter, goes out one day to visit the Gentile women of the land. While she is in Shechem, the son of the local ruler "took her and violated her" (34:2). Afterward, he decides that he wants to marry Dinah. Bad news travels fast. Dinah's brothers are shaken by the treatment of their sister and take matters into their own hands.

When Shechem's father Hamor begins to negotiate a marriage pact with Jacob, they plan to integrate the family of Israel into their own tribe. The true threat to the people of God emerges. For the rest of the Old Testament, Israelites will struggle to maintain their unique identity. Had Hamor's proposal been accepted, Israel would have ceased to exist as a distinct people, erasing any clear public testimony to God. This problem will become so acute in a few years that God will have to move Israel into Egypt to preserve them as a people.

Shechem appeals directly to Jacob and to his sons for the marriage. He is so smitten by Dinah that he is willing to pay anything to marry her. Jacob's sons hatch a devious plan, basing their plot on the rite of circumcision. This distinctive mark is so important to them, that they cannot consider letting Dinah marry someone without it. Shechem will have to submit to the rite to marry their sister. Subtly, they extend the proposal to the entire city. Otherwise, Shechem will never see Dinah again. Hamor and Shechem immediately consent and call a meeting of Shechem's men to present the idea. Their main selling point is economic advantage; Hamor observes that the presence of the Israelites is highly desirable. After brief discomfort, their city will experience great profit. Shechem's men agree.

Jacob's sons wait until the men of Shechem are in pain to carry out their scheme. Simeon and Levi kill all the men of the city and recover Dinah. The other sons plunder Shechem, carrying off all its wealth, its flocks and herds, and the women and children. Their actions represent simple butchery born of resentment. Jacob reprimands Simeon and Levi and fears that their encampment will always be in danger.

Jacob is sure that his days are numbered because of his sons' rash actions. God appears to him again and orders him to move south to Bethel, the scene of His original appearance to him — a gentle way of reminding him of his unfulfilled vow. Jacob prepares his family to go to Bethel and to cast aside their "foreign gods" (35:2). Newly sanctified by leaving their pagan associations at Shechem, God supernaturally protects them by sending terror of them on the neighboring towns. They arrive at Bethel without incident, where Jacob builds the promised altar, designating it *El Bethel, the God of Bethel*.

**Check
It Out:**

God hates sin and wants His people to stand against it. Dinah's brothers were morally right in being "filled with grief and fury" (34:7) over the rape of their sister. However, their indignation turned quickly to sin as they chose deception, greed, and murder to wreak revenge on the entire city of Shechem for the despicable deed of one man. How different the outcome would have been if the Lord had been consulted instead of ignored. God reserves vengeance for Himself: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord" (Romans 12:19). That principle has not changed!

At last Jacob is home, and God appears to him once again. The Lord encourages the patriarch and again emphasizes his new name of Israel. God confirms every major promise that He has already made to Abraham and Isaac. Israel commemorates the occasion by erecting a stone pillar as a testimony to God's work in his life. For unstated reasons, Jacob and his family move away from Bethel and head south toward Bethlehem. They do not go far before Rachel begins labor. She lives long enough to deliver her second son, but dies shortly after naming him *Ben-Oni, son of my sorrow*. Jacob renames him *Benjamin, son of my right hand*. Rachel is buried about 10 miles north of Bethlehem.

Jacob again is disappointed by one of his sons. Reuben, his first-born, sleeps with Bilhah, Jacob's concubine. Reuben's actions will cost him dearly at the time of Jacob's death. This incident serves an important role in the unfolding of Genesis. Simeon and Levi have already proven to be untrustworthy. Jacob will bypass these three sons when the time comes to issue his patriarchal blessing. Judah will inherit the ruler's scepter, finally to be placed in the hands of his great Descendant, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The uneasy peace between Jacob and Esau will be reflected in years to come by conflicts between their descendants. Genesis 36 explains that these will arise because the Edomites become large and powerful rivals for territory. Esau built his family from Canaanite stock, with women who did not share his family's commitment to the Lord God of Israel. By marrying Canaanite wives, all traces of worship of the one true God fade from his family. His offspring would go to war with Jacob's from time to time, and the relations between the two nations would rarely be comfortable.



There is no mention of God in Chapter 34. Decisions that affect the history of lives, tribes, and nations are made without reference to God. Jacob the patriarch is Jacob the passive. He had seen God "face to face" (32:30), yet he failed to bring his great faith experience into his own home. When Jacob/Israel arrived in Canaan, he "pitched his tents" within sight of the city of Shechem and failed to provide moral leadership for his children in an immoral, violent environment.

The goal is to be in the world without being of the world. Jesus prayed for us that we would be able to successfully do that (John 17:15-19). Environment can, and often does, have a powerful influence. Do not let it be said of you that God is not mentioned in this chapter of your life.



How did Esau's descendants (the Edomites) and Israel's descendants clash many years later?

Numbers 20:14-21