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## **Genesis 35**

(2019)

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## Genesis 35

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### Topics.

- God tells Jacob to go to Bethel and make an altar to God.
- Jacob tells his household to put away their foreign gods and go to Bethel.
- A terror from God fell upon the cities around the sons of Jacob.
- Jacob came to Luz in Canaan and built an altar called El-Bethel.
- Rebekah's nurse is buried at Bethel under an oak below Bethel.
- God tells Jacob a second time his name will be Israel.
- God tells Jacob he will give him the land he gave to Abraham and Isaac
- Jacob sets up a pillar in Bethel where he spoke with God.
- Rachel gives birth to Benjamin then dies and is buried in Bethlehem.
- Israel hears that Reuben laid with Bilhah his father's concubine.
- The sons of Jacob that were born to Jacob in Paddan-aram.
- Isaac died and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

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**The previous chapter:** in chapter thirty-four Shechem a Hivite seizes Dinah and lays with her; Hamor proposes his men and Jacob's men marry each other's daughters, but Jacob's sons only agree to give Dinah to Shechem if all their men are circumcised so all the men agree to be circumcised. The chapter ended with Simon and Levi slaughtering Hamor, Shechem and all the males and taking Dinah from the city and Jacob fearing that the Canaanites and the Perizzites would attack them.

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### GENESIS 35:1

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#### God tells Jacob to Go to Bethel and Make an Altar to God.

- **Genesis 35:1:** God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau."

The previous chapter ended with Jacob telling his sons that they had brought trouble on him by making him to stink to the Canaanites and the Perizzites. (Gen. 34:30-31), because Simeon and Levi had massacred all the men of the city of Shechem and then Simeon and Levi with Jacob's other sons took all the women and their children captive and all this bloodthirsty revenge because Shechem had seized Dinah their sister and laid with her. There is no doubt, that what Shechem had done was an atrocious and horrific crime, but to slaughter an entire city of innocent men and take their wives and children captive was a far greater crime. (The full story is in chapter 34). God seeing that this horrendous crime would so greatly offend the surrounding nations (and rightly so) that they would gather themselves together against Jacob, because of their disgust at what his sons had done, tells Jacob to pack up and leave. Just as he had fled from Esau, because of his threat to kill him (Gen. 27:41-45).

Jacob now flees in the same way from the nations in the land of Canaan for fear they would wipe his family from the face of the earth. Bethel was originally called Luz (Gen. 28:19) (Gen. 35:6). The word "Bethel," comes from the Hebrew word (*Beyth-'El*) it literally means, house of God. God Himself takes Bethel as a title for Himself saying, "I am the God of Bethel." (Gen. 31:13). Figuratively any place in which a person has an encounter with God can be called Bethel since it means, "the house of God," some modern-day assemblies and fellowship groups adopted this name for their church or gathering.

**Make an altar to the God who appeared to you when you fled from Esau:** (v1) this refers to Genesis chapter twenty-seven where we read that Esau hated Jacob with such a hatred he was planning to kill him, so Rebekah told him to flee, and then rather than upset Isaac (who was on his death bed) by telling him of Esau's evil plot she instead told him to send Jacob away to Laban her brother in Haran to find a wife. (Gen. 27:41-46). In the following chapter (28), Isaac sends Jacob to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel his mother's father to take a wife from the daughters of Laban his mother's (Rebekah) brother. (Gen. 28:1-5). On Jacob's way to Haran he stayed at a certain place and took a stone and laid down to sleep and in a dream saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven with angels ascending and descending on it. God appeared to him from the top of it and said:

- He will give the land of Canaan to him and his offspring
- His offspring will be like the dust of the earth
- In him and his offspring all the families of the earth will be blessed.
- God will be with him and keep him wherever he goes and will bring him back to the land of Canaan.
- God will not leave him until he has done what he has promised to him.

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Then Jacob said, "This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." He then took the stone and set it up for a pillar and called the name of the place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at first. (Gen. 28:10-19).

It was at Bethel that Jacob made a vow to God saying:

- If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, <sup>21</sup>so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, <sup>22</sup>and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you." (Gen. 28:20-22).

It is possible that God is sending Jacob back to Bethel to erect a second altar to perhaps remind him of this vow since God has done all that Jacob asked of him. It is also possible that because of all the trials, hardships and troubles that came upon Jacob since he made the vow that he had forgotten it and God in this manner is about to bring it to his mind. It matters not how many trials and hardships we suffer or how many troubles come out way it does not excuse us from not keeping vows and promises we make especially to God. This is why James wrote:

- Above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation. (James 5:12).

In colloquial language this means, don't make promises, simply say what you mean and mean what you say and do it.

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## GENESIS 35:2-4

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**Jacob tells His Household to Put away their Foreign gods.**

- **Genesis 35:2-4:** So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods (strange gods in KJV) that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments. <sup>3</sup>Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, so that I may make there an altar to the God who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone." <sup>4</sup>So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears. Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree that was near Shechem.

**Put away the foreign gods:** (v2) (strange gods in KJV) that are among you gods like those that Rachel stole from her father Laban, that some members of Jacobs family may have had, or his servants, or the women he took captive or gods that his sons may have taken with the spoil when they plundered the city of Shechem and took all their wealth that was in the houses because Shechem had defiled their sister Dinah. (Gen. 34:27-29). If Jacob's sons did take gods when they plundered the city of Shechem of its wealth it is very likely that they would have taken them for their monetary value since many of them would have been made of silver or gold and not for their religious value.

**Purify yourselves and change your garments:** (v2) this means get rid of everything that is offensive to God, such as any form of idol or image of one whether they are painted pictures, pieces of jewelry, religious clothing that has images of pagan gods and idols on them etc. It also means repent of all inward belief in these other gods and all ceremonial practices and scarifies to them. Adorning ourselves outwardly with clean clothes and new clothes or turning up to church in our best clothes means nothing if we don't have within the body of flesh a new and clean heart.

**The rings that were in their ears:** (v4) this does not refer to earrings that are worn as ornaments, but to those worn for superstitious purposes such as good luck charms and those pagans wore for the honour of their idols. Earrings and bracelets are universally worn in the East that have engraved upon them images of the sun, the moon and their gods and are often connected with spells and idolatry and worn in honour of their gods. They are worn in the same superstitious way that some religious people wear a gold or wooden cross around their neck as a lucky charm or something the wearer puts their faith in to protect them or bring them prosperity and blessings. When a person wears the cross with this mindset it is just as much an abomination to God as the superstitious earrings and bracelets the pagans wore. It perhaps should be mentioned here that there is nothing wrong with wearing such a cross if it is simply worn as a piece of jewellery or to let others know that the person wearing it is a Christian. It is only when it is worn as described above that it become an offence to God and a mockery to what Christ achieved for us when he surrendered his life to it. There is only one place a Christian should place their faith and their trust and that is in their King and Saviour and not in a cross, no matter how beautiful it may appear or what sentimental value it may have.

**Hid them under the terebinth tree near Shechem:** (v4) (oak tree in the KJV) it refers to a strong tree such as the oak, the elm or teil tree etc. Jacob may have dug a hole and hidden these gods and superstitious earrings and charms etc., under such a tree because the tree would not be dug up or cut down and therefore the gods would be hidden for many years or perhaps, because it was a place only known to him or closest to him.

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## GENESIS 35:5

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### A Terror from God Fell upon the Cities Around the Sons of Jacob.

- **Genesis 35:5:** And as they journeyed, a terror from God fell upon the cities that were around them, so that they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.

Despite the murderous horror that the sons of Jacob had committed and that came before God in heaven He supernaturally protected and delivered Jacob. Considering the number, power, and rage of their enemies had this terror not fallen upon the surrounding nations of Canaan Jacob and his family would have been annihilated from the face of the earth. We are not told what this great terror may have been, however it would be reasonable to suppose it may have been something like:

- The terror that comes when dark thunderous storm clouds fill the skies and when lightning bolts cover the earth.
- The terror God said He would send upon Israel's enemies, the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites (Gen. 23:23) that would throw them into confusion and cause them to turn their backs on Israel and flee from them. (Exod. 23:27).
- The terror that caused the hearts of the inhabitants of Canaan to melt away when they heard that Israel's God had dried up the Red Sea.
- The fear that caused the hearts of Israel's enemies when they heard how Israel had devoted Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites beyond the Jordan, to destruction and there was no spirit left in any man. (Joshua 2:9-11).
- The fear of the LORD that was upon the cities around Gerar when Israel attacked them and struck them down and carried away their livestock in abundance and returned to Jerusalem. (2 Chron. 14:14-15).

Whatever form this terror may have taken it gave the inhabitants of Canaan such clear evidence that God's protecting power and presence was with Jacob and his family that they turned from their united plan to destroy Jacob's small band of men and his family fearing they would be destroyed themselves if they continued.

**NOTE:** in chapter thirty-seven we read that Joseph brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem (Gen. 37:12) which means that Jacob may have retained possession of the land near the city of Shechem that he had purchased from Hamor and his son Shechem.

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## GENESIS 35:6-7

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### **Jacob came to Luz (Bethel) and Built an Altar Called El-bethel.**

- **Genesis 35:6-7:** And Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him, <sup>7</sup>and there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed himself to him when he fled from his brother.

**El-beth-el:** comes from the Hebrew word (*Beyth-'El*) and which literally means the God of Bethel and the house of God. El comes from the Hebrew word (*'ayil*) it literally means strength and mighty, especially the Almighty God (but can be used also of any deity). It refers to a place a little north of Jerusalem in Canaan. Jacob builds an altar at Bethel as God instructed him to do (v1) which it is safe to suppose reminds Jacob of His previous appearance to him at that place (Gen. 28:18-22). We are told that Jacob calls this second altar El-bethel, because God appeared to him there and comforted and encouraged him there when he was fleeing from Esau his brother. It is also likely he gave it such a name to confirm the name he had previously given the first altar that he had erected in the same place and perhaps to show respect to God and make a thankful acknowledgment for his many promises and the honour He had given him by changing his name from Jacob to Israel.

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## GENESIS 35:8

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## **Rebekah's Nurse is Buried at Bethel under an Oak Below Bethel.**

- **Genesis 35:8:** And Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried under an oak below Bethel. So he called its name Allon-bacuth.

This oak was beneath Beth-el, refers to the valley below it. The word Allon-bacuth comes from the Hebrew word (*'allown*) it literally means an oak of weeping and refers to a monumental tree. Figuratively it carries the idea of mourning and weeping. The fact Jacob called the grave of Rebekah's nurse, Allon-bacuth shows how greatly she was loved and how much she will be missed. When Isaac's servant took Rachel from Laban her brother in Haran to be a bride for Isaac Deborah her nurse went with her (Gen. 24:59), so she would have been an elderly woman by now which may mean that after Rebekah's death Deborah was taken into Jacobs family or at some-time during Isaac's travels she became the nurse for Jacob's household and travelled with him. Considering Jacob had twelve sons and a daughter there is no doubt the need for Deborah's vast knowledge and experience would have been greater in Jacobs household than Isaac's.

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### **GENESIS 35:9-10**

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#### **A Second Time God tells Jacob His Name will be Israel.**

- **Genesis 35:9-10:** God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. <sup>10</sup>And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." So he called his name Israel.

The first time God said that Jacobs name would no longer be Jacob, but Israel was when he had left Laban at Paddan-aram and was travelling back to Beersheba in Canaan and on this journey just prior to meeting his brother Esau with four hundred men (Gen. 32:1-23) he prayed. During this prayer a man wrestled with him and put his hip out of joint and then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered." (Gen. 32:24-32). For further information concerning this man who wrestled with Jacob see:

- Genesis 32:24-26 in, Commentary Old Testament (ON WEBSITE MENU).

One of the reasons Jacob fled from Shechem was for fear the surrounding nations would come against him and his family, because of his son's murderous slaughter of the men of the city (Gen. 34:24-29). Since this was such a horrendous crime and sin it is possible Jacob was in doubt as to whether God's promise would still stand or whether his sons murderous act would have annulled them. After all the hardships, trials and troubles there is no doubt that the favorable appearance of God again in his life would have brought him great comfort and encouragement.

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### **GENESIS 35:11-12**

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#### **God will Give Jacob the Land He Gave to Abraham and Isaac.**

- **Genesis 35:11-12:** And God 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 from your own body. <sup>12</sup>The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you."

God reinforces to Jacob the following promise that He gave to his grandfather Abraham and to his father Isaac that:

- He would be fruitful and multiply and a nation and a company of nations shall come from him.

- Kings would come from his own body (i.e., his own bloodline).
- He would give him and his offspring the land that He gave to Abraham and Isaac.

God promised Jacob's grandfather Abraham that his descendants would become a great nation; all the families of the earth would be blessed in Abraham; Abraham and his offspring would inherit the land of Israel (Canaan) forever and that the whole world will be blessed through Abraham and his offspring. (Gen. 12:1-18) (Gen. 13:16) (Gen. 17:8) (Gen. 22:16-18).

**Ponder for a moment:** Jesus Christ is the greatest blessing that has ever walked upon the earth and the greatest blessing that the world will ever know and he came through the bloodline of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and his descendants. It is only through these men's offspring that we have the Bible, the Saviour, and the Gospel. Abrahams' descendants are the foundation upon which the Christian church has sprung up from. With this in mind, consider the struggles, backsliding, the gross wickedness, troubles and hardships that biblical history records of Abrahams' offspring and yet the sovereign and eternal plan God purposed in His eternal mind before time began is being accomplished. This shines a spotlight upon the truth that it matters not what kings, governments, nations, individual do nothing will prevent God's eternal plan for His Son, His people and His Kingdom coming to pass. All of these promises can be claimed by faithful Jews and Gentiles who have faith in Christ the true offspring of Abraham. Through Christ, God is at this present moment inviting children of Adam to forsake the ways of the world and enter into his spiritual Kingdom. God will not only make those who accept this invitation a great nation, but will also make them the head of all nations of the world when His Son returns in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords. Their name will be great amongst the inhabitants of the earth and all families of the earth will be blessed by their rule of compassion, fairness and justice (in contrast to self-exaltation, fame and pride) over the nations with Christ as their head and their King. Added to this blessing those who take up God's invitation will inherit an immortal body, eternal life and everlasting happiness, while the wicked and those who rebel against him and his government will be condemned. After Abraham offered up Isaac God said:

- Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup>I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies <sup>18</sup>and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice." (Gen. 22:16-18).

This promise crowns all other promises because it points forward to the promised Messiah, in whom all the promises are fulfilled. Abraham was called to leave the place of his birth and his kindred and all his past earthly joys, but the LORD promises He would make up the loss to him. The blessing to Abraham was not just that he himself would be blessed, but that he would be a great blessing to others. This covenant with Abraham is still valid today it is as effective and trustworthy as the day the LORD spoke it to Abraham and it is guaranteed to all who dwell on earth who repent before the LORD and believe in the promised seed of Abraham Israel's Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ and Saviour of the world. For further information, see the titles:

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment.

In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

**Be fruitful and multiply:** (v11) now the time of increase is about to come, Abraham has given birth to Isaac a son of promise who in turn has given birth to Jacob one son of promise who has now given birth to eleven sons of promise and at least one daughter and now God tells him, "be



fruitful and multiply." From this time forth the multiplication of Israel is rapid. In twenty-six years after this time Jacob goes down into Egypt with seventy others, besides the wives of his married descendants and around two hundred and ten years after that the book of Exodus tells us that the number of men that came out of Egypt was about six hundred thousand (Exod. 12:37-38) (Num. 1:46). If we suppose each man had either one wife, sister or child that would mean a least one million two hundred thousand men and women came out of the exodus, plus their livestock of flocks and herds. (Exod. 12:37-38). The future history of Israel shows that a nation and a company of nations and kings spoken of in (Gen. 35:11) came out of Egypt and that God's promise to Abraham, Jacob and Isaac had begun. This promise is continuing to be fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ the true seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In Christ not only are the Jews part of the family of Abraham, but Gentiles by faith are also being adopted into the family of Abraham and in this way Jacob's family if greatly multiplying and will continue to do so until the Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory.

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## GENESIS 35:13-15

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### **Jacob Sets up a Pillar in Bethel where He Spoke with God.**

- **Genesis 35:13-15:** Then God went up from him in the place where he had spoken with him. <sup>14</sup>And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone. He poured out a drink offering on it and poured oil on it. <sup>15</sup>So Jacob called the name of the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.

The statement, "God went up from him," (v13) shows that this was an exceptional appearance of God to Jacob in some visible display of His presence and glory while he talked with him. God may have appeared to him:

- As the angel of the LORD in human form as He had to others on various occasions.
- In a cloud that covered Him similar to when He would appear to Moses at the door of the tabernacle.
- As the LORD appeared to him as he appeared to him above the Ladder with the angels ascending and descending upon it. (Gen. 28:1-22).

But these are only speculations. However, it matters not how God appeared to Jacob all we need to know is that He did and spoke with him until He had finished confirming to Jacob that he is heir of the Abrahamic covenant.

**Jacob set up a pillar of stone:** (v14) to permanently mark this second spot where God had appeared and spoke to him, but not in a dream as before, but while he was awake Jacob not only sets up a stone pillar, but pours a drink-offering of wine on it and then anoints it with oil. The drink and wine offering signify gratitude and devotion while oil is used to signify the quickening and sanctifying power of the Spirit of God. This was not simply a pillar of stones like many others, but a consecrated monumental pillar to signify this special and unique visitation of God to Jacob.

**Jacob called the place Bethel:** (v15) Jacob had already previously named this place Bethel when he had the vision of the angels ascending and descending on a ladder and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it, he then called the name of that place Bethel (the name of the city was Luz at the first). He then made a vow, saying, "If God will keep him and give him food and clothing so that he comes again to his father's house in peace then the LORD shall be his God and the stone that he had set up for a pillar will be God's house and all that He has given him He will give



a tenth to God. (Gen. 28:11-22). Later the angel of God said to him in a dream, "Lift up your eyes and see, all the goats that mate with the flock are striped, spotted, and mottled, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me, now arise, go out from this land (Paddan-aram) and return to the land of your kindred (Beersheba). (Gen. 31:12-13).

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## GENESIS 35:16-20

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### Rachel Gives Birth to Benjamin and He is Buried in Bethlehem.

- **Genesis 35:16-20:** Then they journeyed from Bethel. When they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel went into labor, and she had hard labor. <sup>17</sup>And when her labor was at its hardest, the midwife said to her, "Do not fear, for you have another son." <sup>18</sup>And as her soul was departing (for she was dying), she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. <sup>19</sup>So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem), <sup>20</sup>and Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb. It is the pillar of Rachel's tomb, which is there to this day.

**Ephrath:** comes from the Hebrew word (*parah*), it literally means fruitfulness and carries the idea of bearing fruit, bringing forth fruit, to make fruitful and causing fruit to grow, it is another name for Bethlehem. Jacob leaves Bethel and when he gets some distance from Jerusalem Rachel begins giving birth to her child, the midwife seeing her great pain and the difficulty she was having comforts her by saying that she will have another son. (Her first son was Joseph) (Gen. 30:20-26). While Rachel is dying she names her new born son Ben-oni which comes from the Hebrew word (*'aven*) it literally means son of my sorrow and then she dies. Rachel names her child according to her sorrowful circumstances.

Jacob no doubt overwhelmed with great grief at watching the wife he loved die renames their son Benjamin which comes from the Hebrew word (*yamiyn*) (*banah*) it literally means, the son of the right hand, a son (as a builder of the family name). the name, "son of the right hand," is an exceptionally dear and precious name. The meaning of both names was manifested in his offspring. The tribe of Benjamin showed bravery and courage, but was at the same time involved in a great number of sorrowful disasters and troubles.

**As her soul was departing (for she was dying) (v18):** some use these words to support the theory that all humans have an immortal soul, but this is reading far more into the verse than what is meant. The words, her soul was departing simply means that she was dying, the life that was within her that is in all of us had come to its end. No man or woman born of Adam has immortal life dwelling within them, we are all mortals. This is why we all need the salvation that God planned and purposed in his eternal mind for mankind before the foundations of the world and why Christ died for us. It is also why the resurrection of the faithful is so precious, it is only after the resurrection that we are given immortality and eternal life, until that glorious day we only exist in the eternal mind of God. This state for the faithful is, in the New Testament referred to as sleeping in Christ.

**NOTE:** some people find it difficult to comprehend God raising the dead, but think of it this way: we have super computers today that have in their memories literally trillions of bits of information and at the touch of a key any one of those bits is resurrected to us on a brightly coloured screen (soon it is most likely they will simply appear in the air), then with another touch of the key it all vanishes into the super memory and is gone, until we touch a key and resurrect it again. Knowing that God has given his creation a mortal mind and finite memory to be able to build such amazing computers should make it very easy to understand how God keeps us all in His immortal mind and eternal memory waiting for the right time to touch the supernatural keyboard of heaven and raise us once again to life.

Added to this very few Christians have any trouble believing God created the universe that we live in so raising the dead in comparison is not such a difficult task for such an awesome, powerful and majestic God (Heb. 11:3). For further information concerning the resurrection, see the title:

- Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

**Jacob set up a pillar over Rachel's tomb:** (v20) the words, "which is there to this day," means that the pillar was there at the time this letter was written, however today there is a tomb built over the grave of Rachel about a mile from Bethlehem. At Jacob's time the pillar would have been a pillar of stones, whereas today the site consists of a rock with eleven stones upon it, one for each of the eleven sons of Jacob who were alive when Rachel died in childbirth. Over the centuries the rock was covered by a dome supported by four arches. The large tomb is now covered by a velvet drape. Today, due to the deteriorating security in the region a much larger stone building with a hallway has been built around the original tomb, to act as a fortress, complete with guard tower, soldiers and barbed wire, because of this the original tomb is barely visible behind its enclosing fortress.

- So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem), and Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb. It is the pillar of Rachel's tomb, which is there to this day. (Gen. 35:19-20).

For Jews, Rachel's Tomb is the third holiest site after the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron. It has become an important place of Jewish pilgrimage, especially Jewish women unable to give birth. Jewish tradition has it that Rachel weeps for her children and that when the Jews were taken into exile, she wept as they passed by her grave on the way to Babylon.

- Thus says the LORD: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more." <sup>16</sup>Thus says the LORD: "Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work, declares the LORD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. (Jer. 31:11-16).

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This third-holiest site, has been the scene of prayer and pilgrimage since the time of Rachel's burial. It is considered holy to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Worshippers and tourists continually visit the site, though Arab violence often makes this dangerous and at certain times not possible.

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## GENESIS 35:21-22

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### Israel Hears that Reuben Laid with Bilhah His Father's Concubine.

- **Genesis 35:21-22:** Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder. <sup>22</sup>While Israel lived in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine. And Israel heard of it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve.

**The tower of Eder:** is somewhere near Bethlehem the exact location is unknown. While Jacob (now called Israel) is camped near Bethlehem Reuben Jacobs first born son to Leah (Gen. 29:32) lays with Rachel's handmaid Bilhah who had given Jacob two sons (Dan and Naphtali). It is certain that Israel was greatly grieved when he heard of this great sin that both Bilhah and Reuben had committed, they may have thought they would have been able to keep it hidden, but either by one of the other sons or some other person Jacob came to hear of it and no more is said. The Bible does not waste time detailing the darkness of sin.

Though there is no mention of Jacob rebuking Reuben it is certain it gave him great offence, grief and trouble and the following verses show that he remembered it to his dying day, and that he took away the birthright from Reuben because of it:

- Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the firstfruits of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power. <sup>4</sup>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! (Gen. 49:3-4).
- The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's couch, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel, so that he could not be enrolled as the oldest son (1 Chron. 5:1).

**The sons of Jacob were twelve:** (v22) which were heads of the twelve tribes this is most likely mentioned here, because Benjamin is now born and Jacob had no more sons. Jacob's daughter Dinah is naturally not mentioned here because she was not the head of a tribe. Reuben's sin with Bilhah and Simeon and Levi's murderous slaughter of the men of the city of Shechem shines a spotlight upon the truth that the fathers of Israel were not chosen for their virtues or any redeeming features, but only by God's mercy, whose election was not changed by their faults.

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## GENESIS 35:23-26

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### The Sons of Jacob that were Born to Jacob in Paddan-aram.

- **Genesis 35:23-26:** The sons of Leah: Reuben (Jacob's firstborn), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. <sup>24</sup>The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. <sup>25</sup>The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's servant: Dan and Naphtali. <sup>26</sup>The sons of Zilpah, Leah's servant: Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram.

The statement, "The sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram," is a figure of speech often used in Scripture, whereby that which belonged to the greater part is ascribed to all. They were all born in Paddan-aram except for Benjamin who was born beyond the tower of Eder (i.e., near Bethlehem) (Gen. 35:21)

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## GENESIS 35:27-29

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### Isaac Died and His Sons Esau and Jacob Buried Him.

- **Genesis 35:27-29:** And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned. <sup>28</sup>Now the days of Isaac were 180 years. <sup>29</sup>And Isaac breathed his last, and he died and was gathered to his people, old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

The following verses show that God promised Jacob he would be with him from the time he left Laban in Haran and keep him on his travels and bring him safely to Isaac his father and his kindred at Hebron.

- I am with you (Jacob) and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land (Canaan). For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. (Gen. 28:15).
- The LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you. (Gen. 31:3).
- Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good (Genesis 32:9)

These verses show that God promised to keep Jacob wherever he goes; He would bring him back to Canaan; He would never leave him until He had done what He had promised Jacob He would do and He would be with

him to do him good. Now the words, "Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had dwelt. (Gen. 35:27) show that God kept all His promises to Jacob.

**Isaac breathed his last:** (v28) it is interesting to look at Jacob's life, he was in his day and still is today considered one of the great fathers of Israel and the Christian faith, and yet his own life was far from flawless and certainly had its fair share of sorrows, griefs and troubles, yet God greatly honored him by changing his name from Jacob to Israel and crowned him with the glory of being the head of the house of Israel. The lesson to be learned from this is that God has not called any of us based upon any virtue or merit in us, but because of His love and mercy, supporting this great truth are the following words of Paul:

- God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8).

Isaac lived 180 years and Esau and Jacob buried him in the graveyard of the faithful. This shows that from the time Jacob met his older brother Esau and he ran toward him and they embraced and kissed (Gen. 33:1-4) they continued to remain friends.

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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