

Genesis 35

Verses 1-4

Then God said to Jacob, “Arise, go up to Bethel and live there, and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.” ² So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Remove the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves and change your garments; ³ and let’s arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me on the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone.” ⁴ So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which they had and the rings which were in their ears and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near Shechem.

Then God said to Jacob, “Arise, go up to Bethel and live there, and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.

See Map 3505



Bethel is 23 miles, about a day's journey, south of Shechem. Bethel is 900 feet above Shechem in altitude; 2900 vs 2000 feet above Sea Level.

The massacre at Shechem made Jacob very uncomfortable, and most likely this is why God told Jacob to move. There would have been relatives in nearby towns that figured out what had happened and called for action against Jacob and his tribe.

Just as Jacob had to flee from Esau after he deceived him, Jacob must now flee from the relatives of Shechem after his two sons deceived the people of Shechem

² So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Remove the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves and change your garments;

This would have included the idols stolen from Laban by Rachel. The ear-rings were unholy because they were thought to provide protective power and their garments needed to be clean, representing cleanliness in their hearts. Maybe this is the origin of our custom to wear our Sunday best. However, that custom has been on the decline for a number of years now.

Verses 5 - 8

⁵ As they journeyed, there was a great terror upon the cities which were around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. ⁶ So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him. ⁷ Then he built an altar there, and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed Himself to him when he fled from his brother. ⁸ Now Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the oak; and it was named Allon-bacuth.

As they journeyed, there was a great terror upon the cities which were around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob

His two sons had indeed put the whole tribe at risk but God put a great fear in the hearts of the people that lived in that area in order to save Israel from their wrath.

A similar thing fell upon the citizens of Jericho at the approach of the Israelites.

See Joshua 2:8 - 11

⁸ Now before the spies lay down, she came up to them on the roof, ⁹ and said to the men, “I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have despaired because of you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. ¹¹ When we heard *these reports*, our hearts melted and no courage remained in anyone any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth below.

⁷ Then he built an altar there, and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed Himself to him when he fled from his brother.

Jacob had promised to return to this spot during his flight from Esau, but it seems that God had to remind him of his promise. Jacob had promise that if God watched over him, then God would be his God and that he would give God 10% of all he had.

⁸ Now Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the oak; and it was named Allon-bacuth.

Rebekah was buried in the cave of Machpelah but the time and circumstances of her death are not recorded.

See Genesis 49:29 - 32

²⁹ Then he commanded them and said to them, “I am about to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, ³⁰ in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is opposite Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field from Ephron the Hittite as a burial site. ³¹ There they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah, there they buried Isaac and his wife Rebekah, and there I buried Leah— ³² the field and the cave that is in it, purchased from the sons of Heth.”

So isn’t it interesting that the death of her nurse is recorded. Deborah was given this special recognition indicating that she was highly respected and sincerely loved. The place of Deborah's burial means Oak of Weeping.

It would be interesting to know exactly how old Deborah was at the time of her death.

See chart 3510

Ch	Person	Event	Age	Year
21	Abraham	Isaac born	100	1896
22	Abraham	Abraham Tested	120	1876
23	Sarah	Sarah dies	127	1859
24	Isaac	Marries Rebekah	40	1856
25	Isaac	Esau and Jacob born	60	1836
25	Abraham	Abraham dies	175	1821
26	Esau	Marries two Hittites	40	1796
25	Ishmael	Ismael dies	137	1773
27 - 28	Isaac	blessing	137	1759
27 - 28	Jacob	Trip to Haran	77	1759
29	Jacob	7 years for Rachel	77-84	1752
29 - 30	Jacob	7 years and 11 kids	84-91	1752 - 1745
30	Jacob	Joseph born	91	1745
31	Jacob	6 years for the flocks	97	1739
32-33		Jacon & Esau reunite	97	1739
35	Deborah	Buried near Bethel	??	1739
35	Jacob	Benjamin born	97	1739
35	Rachel	Dies giving birth	35	1739

Isaac married Rebekah in 1856 BC and Deborah was her Nurse. Then she passed away around 1739, 117 years later. If Deborah was just 30 years old when Rebekah married Isaac, then she died at the age of 147. Her age is not the most important part of this story, but it is interesting that Jacob who was very blessed by God lived to the age of.....wait for it..... 147!!

By the way, we would have no idea how old she was if we did not keep track of when these biblical events took place. This is one aspect of bible study that many students have overlooked because many teachers and preachers of the bible have failed to set the example.

Verses 9 -15

⁹ Then God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him. ¹⁰ God said to him,

**“Your name is Jacob;
You shall no longer be called Jacob,
But Israel shall be your name.”**

So He called him Israel. ¹¹ God also said to him,

**“I am God Almighty;
Be fruitful and multiply;
A nation and a multitude of nations shall come from you,
And kings shall come from you.**

**¹² And the land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac,
I will give to you,
And I will give the land to your descendants after you.”**

¹³ Then God went up from him at the place where He had spoken with him. ¹⁴ So Jacob set up a memorial stone in the place where He had spoken with him, a memorial of stone, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it. ¹⁵ And Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him, Bethel.

⁹ Then God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him. ¹⁰ God said to him,

**“Your name is Jacob;
You shall no longer be called Jacob,
But Israel shall be your name.”
So He called him Israel.**

Jacob was a supplanter, one who wrongfully seizes and holds the place of another. This was first seen at his birth in Genesis 25 when he held onto his brother's heel. Later in that chapter he trades a bowl of stew for his brother's birthright. It was wrong for Jacob to take advantage of his brother in this way. Then in Genesis 27 at the age of 77 he stole his brother's blessing.

Israel means one who wrestled with God. This occurred in Genesis 32 before Jacob met with his brother. God says that Jacob shall be called Israel because he had contended with God and with man and prevailed. However, Jacob met his match when it came to Laban and it was only by God's intervention that he prospered.

¹¹ **God also said to him, “I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply;
A nation and a multitude of nations shall come from you,
And kings shall come from you.**

At this point Jacob already had 4 wives, 11 sons and a number of daughters. He also had many herds, flocks and other possessions. So why does God say “be fruitful and multiply” to Jacob at this point in his life? Being fruitful implies more than an increase in family members and physical possessions.

See 2 Peter 1:3 - 7

³ **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in *the* last time. ⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷ so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which perishes though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;**

¹² **And the land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you.**

Jacob is 97 years old and the year is 1739 BC. This promise will be fulfilled under the leadership of Joshua beginning in 1406 BC. This promise was fulfilled about 350 years after it was given to Jacob. This promise was a matter of faith. ☺

¹⁴ **So Jacob set up a memorial stone in the place where He had spoken with him, a memorial of stone, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it. ¹⁵ And Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him, Bethel.**

Him should be capitalized. This is an easy mistake to make.

Jacob's response to God was one of worship. This is similar to the experience he had at the same spot in Genesis 28. However, in Genesis 28 he had a dream, whereas here it says that God appeared to him.

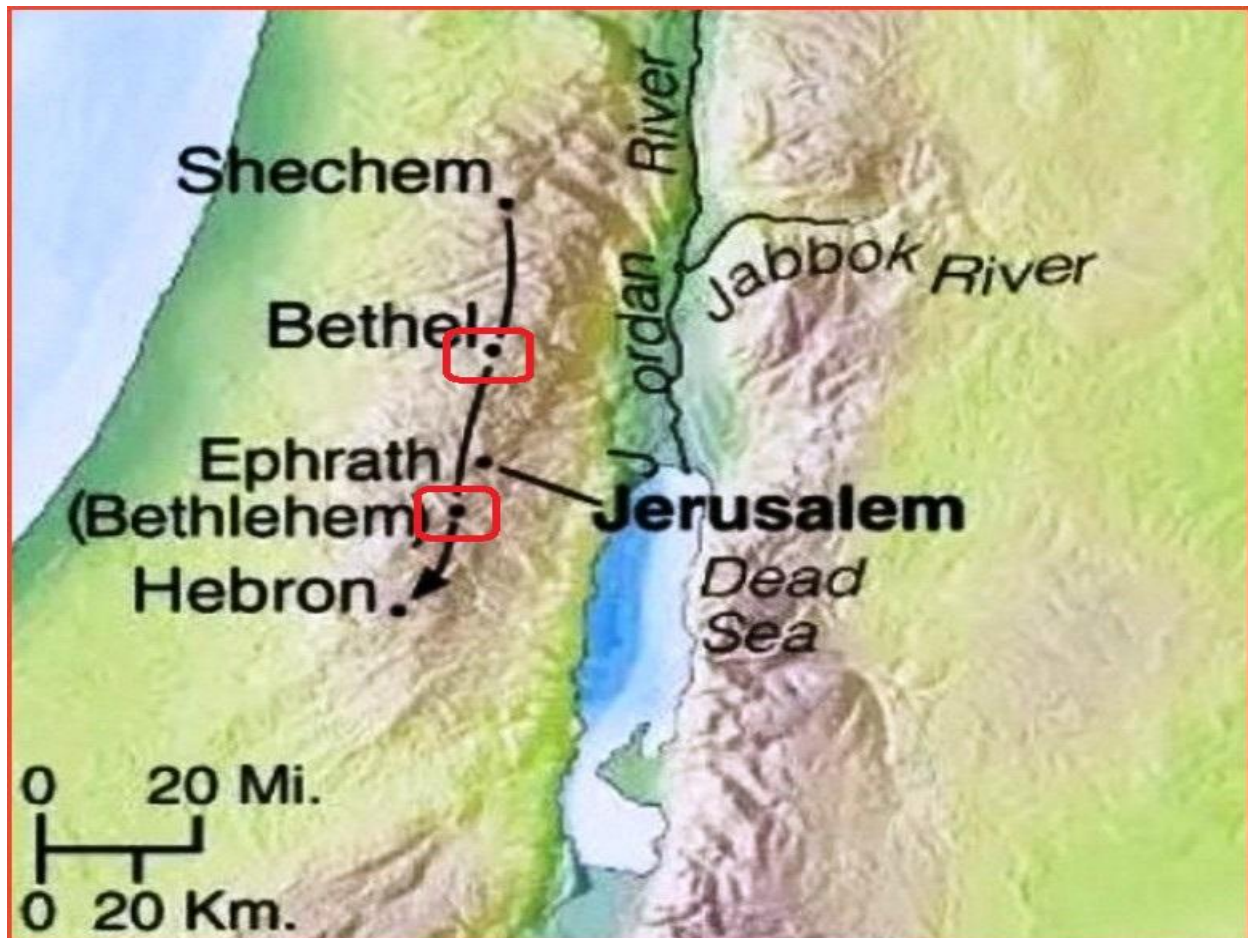
We don't know all the details of how God appeared to him but appearing seems to imply some kind of physical form as opposed to having a dream.

Verses 16 - 21

¹⁶ Then they journeyed on from Bethel; but when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and she suffered severe difficulties in her labor. ¹⁷ And when she was suffering severe difficulties in her labor, the midwife said to her, “Do not fear, for you have another son!” ¹⁸ And it came about, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. ¹⁹ So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). ²⁰ And Jacob set up a memorial stone over her grave; that is the memorial stone of Rachel’s grave to this day. ²¹ Then Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.

¹⁶ Then they journeyed on from Bethel; but when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and she suffered severe difficulties in her labor.

See Map 3515



Bethlehem was also known as Bethlehem Ephrathah

See Micah 5:2

**But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Too little to be among the clans of Judah,
From you One will come forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.
His times of coming forth are from long ago,
From the days of eternity.”**

¹⁷ And when she was suffering severe difficulties in her labor, the midwife said to her, “Do not fear, for you have another son!”

The good news of a son was quickly followed by tragedy.

¹⁸ And it came about, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin.

This is a verification of life after death. The body will die but our soul or spirit lives on. This idea is foundational to all believers, so much so, that the phrase “her soul was departing” is used as a euphemism for death.

Benoni means son of my sorrow and this may be why Jacob renamed him. Benjamin means son of my right hand or son of my old age. Jacob was 97 years old when Benjamin was born but this was not a miracle as in the case of Abraham when he was 100 and “as good as dead”.

¹⁹ So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).

There is some sad irony here because Rachel had cried to Jacob saying, "Give me children, or I die."

See Genesis 30:1

Now when Rachel saw that she had not borne Jacob *any* children, ^[a]she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, “Give me children, or else I am going to die.”

²⁰ And Jacob set up a memorial stone over her grave; that is the memorial stone of Rachel's grave to this day. ²¹ Then Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.

Moses wrote the book of Genesis near the end of his life (1406 BC) so this pillar over Rachel's tomb was still present after 300 years.

Jerome says that the tower was one Roman mile from Bethlehem. Jerome was one of the Fathers of the early Christian Church (347-420 AD). His major work was the translation of the Scriptures from Hebrew and Greek into Latin.

Verses 22 - 26

²² And it came about, while Israel was living in that land, that Reuben went and slept with his father's concubine Bilhah, and Israel heard *about it*. Now there were twelve sons of Jacob— ²³ the sons of Leah were Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, then Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; ²⁴ the sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin; ²⁵ and the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's female slave, were Dan and Naphtali; ²⁶ and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's female slave, were Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram.

²² And it came about, while Israel was living in that land, that Reuben went and slept with his father's concubine Bilhah, and Israel heard *about it*.

Reuben lost the birthright because of this immoral act

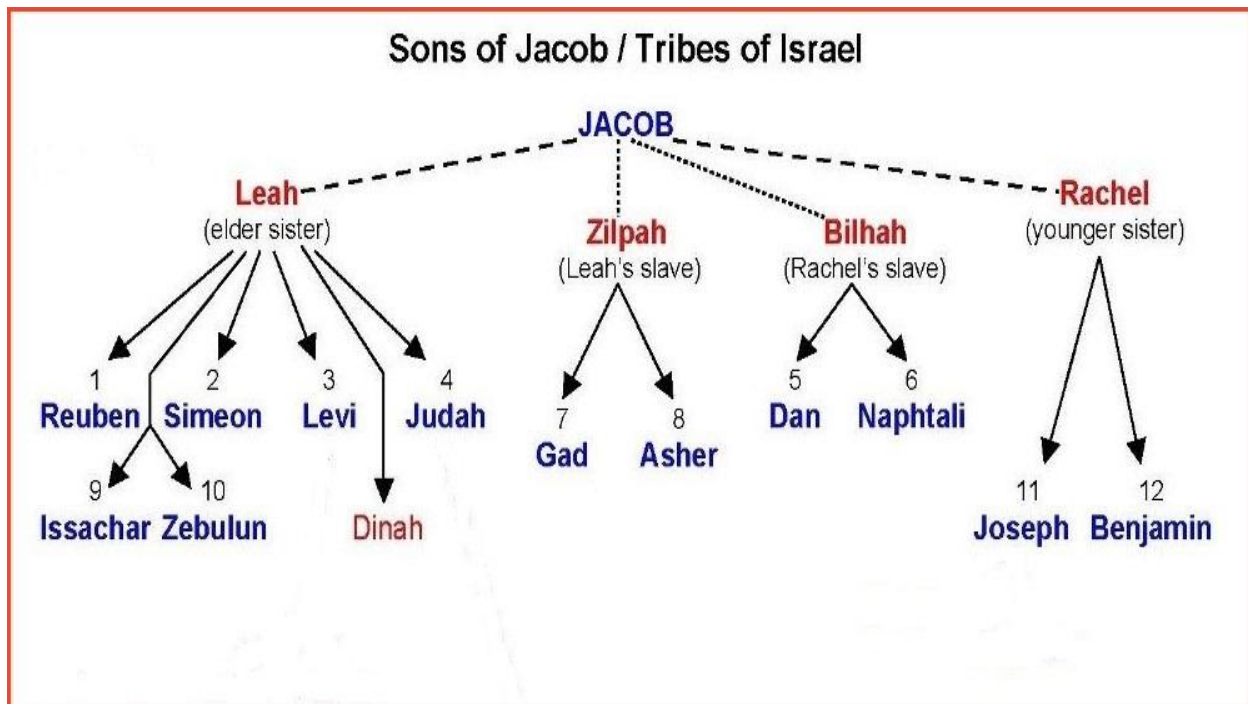
See 1 Chronicles 5:1

Now the sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel; so he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright. ² Though Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came the leader, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph).

The birthright included a double portion and the right to rule but Reuben lost this right and it was divided between two other sons. Joseph was given the double portion (his two sons became two tribes in Israel) and the right to rule over Israel was given to Judah.

Now there were twelve sons of Jacob—

See chart 3520



These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram.

11 of the 12 sons were born in Paddan-aram. His last son Benjamin was born in Canaan.

Verse 27 - 29

²⁷ Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre of Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had resided. ²⁸ Now the days of Isaac were 180 years. ²⁹ Then Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, an old man of ripe age; and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

²⁷ Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre of Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had resided.

See Map 3525



Now the days of Isaac were 180 years

Isaac was 180 when he died so Jacob was 120 years old. In chapter 37, Jacob is 108 years old, so we know this event is not in chronological order. It was probably stated here simply for the sake of convenience.

²⁹ Then Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, an old man of ripe age; and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Isaac was buried in the cave of Machpelah at Hebron but that detail is not given in this verse.