

GENESIS

Chapter 35

God Blesses and Renames Jacob

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.” 2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments. 3 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.” 4 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. 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. 6 And Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him, 7 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. 8 And Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried under an oak below Bethel. So he called its name Allon-bacuth. 9 God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. 10 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. 11 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. 12 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.” 13 Then God went up from him in the place where he had spoken with him. 14 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. 15 So Jacob called the name of the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.

35:1 *God said ... to the God who appeared to you.* He wanted Jacob to see distinctly that the God addressing him now in Canaan is the same God who appeared to him on the other side of the Jordan, though the manifestation may be different. God spoke to Jacob in this way not because a different god had appeared to him then (28:13) but because of the distinction of persons in the one, undivided Godhead. (TLSB)

35:2 *foreign gods that are among with you.* Plunder from Shechem (34:28–29) likely included statues of false gods. (CSB)

purify yourselves. Possibly included bathing and sexual abstinence, as well as repentance and faith in the promised Messiah. (TLSB)

35:4 *rings.* Worn as amulets or charms; a pagan religious custom (cf. Hos 2:13). (CSB)

the terebinth tree that was near Shechem. Obviously a well-known tree, perhaps the “great tree” mentioned in 12:6 (see Jos 24:26). (CSB)

35:5 *the terror of God.* God protected his servant. (CSB)

God used this to protect Jacob's family. The cities would have wanted to kill Jacob and his family for what his sons did at Shechem (34:25–30). (TLSB)

35:7 *called the place El-bethel.* God twice revealed Himself here to Jacob; hence the name, which means “God of the house of God.” (TLSB)

35:8 *Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died.* After long years of faithful service (see 24:59). (CSB)

the oak. Again probably a well-known tree, perhaps the “great tree” mentioned in 1Sa 10:3. (CSB)

below. Either “lower than” or “to the south of.” (CSB)

35:9 *Paddan Aram.* Means “plain of Aram,” another name for Aram Naharaim. (CSB)

35:10 *Jacob ... Israel.* The previous assignment of an additional name (see 32:28) is here confirmed. For similar examples compare 21:31 with 26:33, and 28:19 with 35:15.

35:11–12 This event climaxes the Isaac-Jacob cycle. Now that Jacob was at last back at Bethel, where God had begun his direct relationship with him, God confirmed to this chosen son of Isaac the covenant promises made to Abraham (17:1–8; see 28:3). His words echo his original benediction pronounced on man in the beginning (1:28) and renewed after the flood (9:1, 7). God’s blessing on mankind would be fulfilled in and through Jacob and his offspring. See also 47:27; Ex 1:7. (CSB)

God confirmed the name He gave Jacob previously. Luther: “God is speaking about the chief name, concerning the promises.... He has to be Israel ... on account of these promises. But he was also called Jacob [i.e., deceiver] ... on account of his works” (AE 6:263). (TLSB)

35:11 *be fruitful and multiply.* The man Israel was already the father of many children; this command was meant also for his descendants. (TLSB)

35:12 *Abraham and Isaac.* The Lord confirmed His promise to the fathers. (TLSB)

35:14 *pillar.* Jacob had built the previous pillar into an altar (v 7). Here, he set up another pillar. (TLSB)

drink offering. A liquid poured out as a sacrifice, here mentioned for the first time; see Ex 29:40. (CSB)

Luther: “It was the rite for initiating and anointing and was also taken up later by Moses, for he anoints the priests and their clothing, etc., just as Jacob anoints the stone that the place may be consecrated and dedicated to God and that the church might come together in this place to hear the Word of God, to pray, and to give thanks” (AE 6:266). (TLSB)

35:1–15 There was little mention of God in ch 34. Now, He again takes center stage, and Jacob responds. Jacob gets rid of the false gods. He journeys to Bethel, the “house of God.” He again hears God’s promises. He worships. Where God’s people assemble around Word and Sacrament, God Himself is present to forgive those who repent. • “My soul, now praise your Maker! Let all within me bless His name Who makes you full partaker Of mercies more than you dare claim.” Amen. (LSB 820:1) (TLSB)

The Deaths of Rachel and Isaac

16 Then they journeyed from Bethel. When they were still some distance[f] from Ephrath, Rachel went into labor, and she had hard labor. 17 And when her labor was at its hardest, the midwife said

to her, “Do not fear, for you have another son.” 18 And as her soul was departing (for she was dying), she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. 19 So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem), 20 and Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb. It is the pillar of Rachel's tomb, which is there to this day. 21 Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder. 22 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. 23 The sons of Leah: Reuben (Jacob's firstborn), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. 24 The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. 25 The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's servant: Dan and Naphtali. 26 The sons of Zilpah, Leah's servant: Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram. 27 And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned. 28 Now the days of Isaac were 180 years. 29 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.

35:16 *Ephrath*. The older name for Bethlehem (see v. 19) in Judah (see Ru 1:2; Mic 5:2). (CSB)

35:17 *another son*. An echo of Rachel's own plea at the time of Joseph's birth (see 30:24). (CSB)

Benjamin. Joseph was Rachel's firstborn. (TLSB)

35:18 *soul*. Hbr *nephesh*. When the soul leaves the body, death occurs. (TLSB)

Benjamin. Jacob called his son Benjamin lest the name Ben-oni become a constant reminder of Rachel's death. (TLSB)

35:19 *Rachel died*. In childbirth. (CSB)

Bethlehem. May refer to the whole region, not just the city. (TLSB)

35:20 *Rachel's tomb*. See 1Sa 10:2. The traditional, though not authentic, site is near Bethlehem. (CSB)

She was buried at Ramah, along the road running down to Bethlehem. (TLSB)

35:21 *Migdal Eder*. Means “tower of the flock,” doubtless referring to a watchtower built to discourage thieves from stealing sheep and other animals (see, e.g., 2Ch 26:10). The same Hebrew phrase is used figuratively in Mic 4:8, where “flock” refers to the people of Judah (see Mic 4:6–7). (CSB)

Exact location unknown; near Edom. (TLSB)

35:22 Reuben's act was an arrogant and premature claim to the rights of the firstborn—here the right to inherit his father's concubine. For this he would lose his legal status as firstborn (see 49:3–4; 1Ch 5:1; see also note on 37:21). (CSB)

Bilhah, Rachel's maid, was also called Jacob's wife (30:4). Reuben's sin of incest caused him to lose the birthright. (TLSB)

35:26 *sons of Jacob ... born to him in Paddan Aram*. Obviously a summary statement since Benjamin was born in Canaan (see vv. 16–18). (CSB)

35:27 *Isaac*. Jacob's father was still living, though he was prepared to die many years earlier (27:4). (TLSB)

Mamre, near Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron). (CSB)

35:29 *buried him.* In the family tomb, the cave of Machpelah (49:30–31). (CSB)

Isaac was buried near Mamre with his parents and wife, Rebekah. Mention of both Esau and Jacob shows that they were reconciled. Cf ch 33. (TLSB)

35:16–29 Sorrows surround Jacob. He learns of his son's incest with his concubine and also the death of his wife and of his father. God-fearing people such as Jacob sometimes have children who fall into great sin and shame. And even those who receive God's promises, such as Rachel and Isaac, are still subject to death. Mourning is a part of life in a sin-broken world. When sorrows surround you, call on the Lord in prayer. Remember and celebrate His promises, which are guaranteed to you in Jesus' death and resurrection. Because Jesus conquered death and sin, we have comfort in the midst of all troubles. • O Lord, forgive our sins, and bring us to eternal life for Jesus' sake. Amen. (TLSB)