

# The Cure for Worldliness

GENESIS 35

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## Opening Thoughts

- \* Gen 35 is a testimony to the fact that God does not give up on his people
  - ◆ No-one or nothing mentioned in Gen 34 is remotely redeemable
- \* Yet in spite of sin — and its impact — God continues to shape Jacob and the Nation for his purposes
- \* In this chapter we see the cure for worldliness, which is ...
  - ◆ Straighten up (fulfill your vows) and fly right (clean up your life)
- \* But more comforting — [God's faithfulness](#)

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## Structure

- \* The providential “prodding” - v. 1
- \* The purification of the people - vv. 2-4
- \* The protection of God - vv. 5-8
- \* The promises of God - vv. 9-15
- \* The perfecting of Israel - vv. 16-29

READ 351

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## Providential “Prodding”

- \* God’s prodding is found in four imperatives ... signaling urgency
  - ◆ Arise, Go Up, Dwell (Live) there, Make an altar
- \* Why does God “prod” Jacob so urgently?
  - ◆ Because he has not fulfilled his vow ...
  - ◆ Having “dawdled” in Shechem for 10 years now
- \* What lesson is there for us in God’s prodding?
  - ◆ Home is where the Lord is, suggesting that ...

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## Providential “Prodding”

- ◆ “Church” should be at the center of where we choose to live
- \* Jacob’s dwelling in Shechem has allowed his family to become entangled with and conformed to the world around them!
- \* Which is not a purely OT concept ... Paul says as much in Rom 12:1-2 [TURN ... READ]
- 📖 Reminding us ... The more we hang around the world, the more we become like the world

## Purification of the People

- \* Why the call for purification?
  - ◆ Because in 10 short years they had adopted the “ways of the world,” including ...
  - ◆ Syncretism (foreign gods) and materialism (jewelry)
- \* Which brings a couple of implications to my mind ...
  - 📖 Absent radical separation, past practices cling to us
  - 📖 Without consistent spiritual discipline the idols pile up!
  - 📖 We never grow “too old” for God to be at work in us

# Purification of the People

🕊️ There is nothing sweeter than becoming more like Christ

- \* Jacob recognizes the need to purge his household b4 they worship God ... likely triggered by the events of the prior chapter
- \* Jacob commands a 3-fold purging — **What is it?**
  - ◆ “Put away” or “discard” your IDOLS!
    - ▶ While not quite the idea of “repentance” it is a strong exhortation to “take out the trash in their worship”

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# Purification of the People

- ◆ “Purify” yourselves
  - ▶ The Hebrew verb used (טהר) is used in reference to ceremonial cleansing for OT sacred duties
  - ▶ Thus implying not just a “bath,” but a genuine “internal renewal” — a **change of heart**
- ◆ “Change” your garments
  - ▶ Again noting this was a standard part of preparation for ceremonial activities and signified **putting off the old and putting on the new**

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## Purification of the People

- \* In v. 3, Jacob provides the motive for his commands of purification — making reference to what?
  - ◆ The vow he made way back in Gen 28:20ff in response to God promises in 28:13ff
  - ◆ Finally after a decade of “dawdling” Jacob will return to Bethel (where God commanded) and fulfill his vow
- \* In v. 4, we see the people’s full compliance and Jacob’s “disposal” of the offensive items

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## Protection of God

- \* Much like the Israelites future march in the wilderness ... the “fear of God” protected Jacob from retribution on his journey
- \* Why the emphasis on the “land of Canaan” in v. 6?
  - ◆ To highlight he was “finally home” — where he should have been all along!
- \* What is interesting about the name given to the place in v. 7?
  - ◆ Jacob switches his emphasis from the place itself — the house of God (Gen 28:16-17) ...

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## Protection of God

- ◆ To the OCCUPANT of the place — The GOD ... of the house of God ...
- ◆ Demonstrating his matching faith
- \* What is the point of v. 8?  
**READ 35:9-15**
- ◆ I don't really know ...
- ◆ Most likely Deborah had come to live under Jacob's care after Rebekah's death
- ◆ And she was quite dear to Jacob as his "nanny"

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## Promises of God

- \* God does not disappoint in Jacob's return
- \* He appears to Jacob again and reaffirms His blessings ... first announced in Gen 32:24ff
- ◆ His name change — first reminding him of his "old self" (Jacob), followed by his new identity (Israel)
- ◆ God reminds Jacob of His sovereignty by telling him His name
  - » I am God Almighty ... אל שׁדַי — Ironically offering the identity Jacob asked for, but did not receive when wrestling with God!
  - » There is an interesting note of irony here ... turn to Gen 28:1-5

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## Promises of God

- ▶ Isaac called on “Almighty God” in sending Jacob off
- ▶ And now “Almighty God” closes the episode Himself by affirming the blessings Isaac bestowed on Jacob
- ◆ From this sovereignty 2-promises issue ... **What are they?**
  - ▶ A national promise — A nation and a company of nations ruled by future kings - v. 11c
  - ▶ Several personal promises ...
    - ◆ Many **descendants** — who will occupy **the land**

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## Promises of God

- \* In v. 13, the encounter ends as abruptly as it began — “God went up”
  - ◆ This was to be God’s 2<sup>nd</sup> to last appearance to Jacob ...
  - ◆ The final one coming in Gen 7:1-17 instructing Jacob to go down to Egypt
- \* Jacob responds as he did in Gen 28 ...
- \* Yet this time **surely** with a deeper knowledge of, appreciation for, and confidence in God ...
- \* Which will be tested in the final verses of this chapter

READ 7:5-16-29

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## Perfecting of Israel

- \* In choosing the word **perfecting** to describe this final section ...
- \* I'm emphasizing the idea of **completion**
- \* Verses 16-29 — and chapter 36 — “finish” the story of Isaac ... and the formation of Israel
- \* And lead us to the generations of Jacob — told primarily through the life of Joseph

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## Perfecting of Israel

- \* The perfecting proceeds in several stages
- \* First in vv. 16-21 Rachel is granted her wish made back in Gen 30:22 ... **Which was?**
  - ◆ God “remembered” Rachel and she bore another son
  - ◆ She named him Joseph — one meaning of which is **May He add**
  - ◆ So indeed God honored this request with the birth of her second son ...

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## Perfecting of Israel

### \* What is interesting about Benjamin's birth?

- ◆ Rachel's conception is never recorded ... unlike the birth narratives of Gen 30
- \* Contrary to being joyful as with her first son — recognizing she was dying in childbirth — Rachel names the child בֶּן־אוֹנִי (Ben-Oni)
  - ◆ Means “Son of my sorrow”
  - ◆ There is a hint of prophetic irony in her dying in childbirth - Turn to Gen 30:1

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## Perfecting of Israel

- \* Which Jacob promptly overrides with the name בְּנִימִין (Benjamin) which means ...
  - ◆ “Son of my right hand” — representing a place of honor
- \* There is an interesting allusion here on the two states of Christ — **What are they?**
  - ◆ His humiliation (Sorrow)
  - ◆ His exaltation (Seated at the right hand)
  - ◆ Christ was a Son of suffering as well as an exalted Son

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# Perfecting of Israel

- \* There are two “Bible trivial pursuits” facts about Benjamin’s birth — **What are they?**
  - ◆ The only child born “in the land”
  - ◆ The only child that Jacob named
- \* As the text notes, Rachel dies and is buried on the way to Ephrath (Bethlehem) and Jacob memorialized her grave site with a pillar — that remains to this day!

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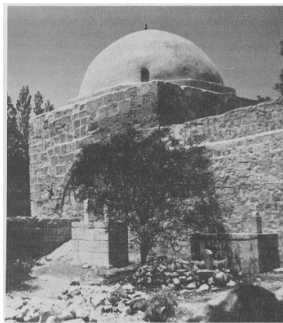
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Constructed in 12th century AD by the crusaders at the traditional site of Rachel’s burial



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## Perfecting of Israel

- \* What will become the “12 tribes” of Israel is now complete
- \* After burying Rachel, Jacob continues on toward Hebron and makes camp at the tower of Eder
  - ◆ The text capitalizes “Eder” suggesting it is a city or town name — this is unfortunate
  - ◆ The Hebrew ... מִגְדַל-עֵדֶר ... means “tower of flocks”
  - ◆ Jacob camped by a shepherds watch-tower ... perhaps a well known one warranting its notation

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## Perfecting of Israel

- \* Stage 2 is the enigmatic “parenthetical” in v. 22a — **What is going on here?**
- \* There are three interesting options
  - ◆ **One:** Rueben — born of Leah — may have wanted to defile Bilhah (Rachel’s maid) so that she would not succeed Rachel as Jacob’s #1 favorite wife
    - Recall Rueben previously cared for Leah by bringing her mandrakes

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## Perfecting of Israel

- ▶ So, maybe he thought his actions would somehow elevate Leah's "wife" prominence
- ◆ **Two:** As the "firstborn" it could have been a claim or challenge to Jacob's family headship — **Where else do we see this in Scripture?**
  - ▶ Absalom's sleeping with David's concubines
- ◆ **Three:** My preference — An act of rebellion included, like Dinah was in the genealogy, to establish a historical fact for a future event ... **Which is what?**

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## Perfecting of Israel

- ◆ The reason for the loss of his birthright in Jacob's "death-bed" blessings found in Gen 49:3-4
- \* Regardless of motive — Reuben's sleeping with his father's wife was a clear act of rebellion, and unbridled lust, for which he paid a steep price
- \* Stage 3 itself has "3" final vignettes — forming an epilogue to Isaac's patriarchal reign

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## Perfecting of Israel

- ◆ **First** we have the genealogy of Isaac's grandsons by Jacob who will form the 12 tribes of Israel - v. 22b-26
- ◆ **Second** we have the **FULL**, that is complete return of Jacob, to the family compound as the heir apparent - v. 27
- ◆ **Third** we have the death and burial of Isaac ...

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## Perfecting of Israel

- ◆ Though in reality his death was 12 years hence\*\*
- ◆ Like his father Abraham — he lived to a ripe old age ...180 years
- ◆ And was buried by his two sons ... noting the last time that Scripture records the “two boys” were together

\*\*TRUST ME ... ITS COMPLICATED, BUT TRUE

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