

Genesis Chapter 34-36 – John Karmelich

1. I like to call this section of Scripture, “Don’t let it happen to you!” ☺
 - a) Genesis is not only filled with heroic moments, but also tragic.
 - b) “All Scripture is God Inspired” (2nd Timothy 3:16), and that includes some pretty ugly moments incorporated in this section of Genesis.
2. In this section we are “wrapping up” the life of Jacob.
 - a) We are still going to read of him every now and then through the rest of the book, but the primary focus after this section will be on Jacob’s children.
 - b) In Chapter 33, Jacob fully submitted his will to God
 - i) That was the “wrestling with God” story. The wrestling match did not end until Jacob confessed his own sinful nature to God. At that point, God blessed him.
 - c) In Chapters 34-35, we are going to read of more tragedies happening to Jacob.
 - d) It is so important to understand the principal that “Once you submit your life to God, everything is not wonderful and beautiful”.
 - i) God did promise to bless Jacob in the middle of Chapter 33.
 - ii) Yet we read of more tragedies in Jacob’s life in Chapters 34-35. OK, what gives? ☺
 - iii) First of all, there is the spiritual warfare that occurs. Satan does not want you to be a good witness for others, and thus Satan does his utmost to either persecute you or at the least, get you to compromise with getting God’s will accomplished. We’ll read of that “underlying tone” in this lesson.
 - iv) Second, our old human nature does not want to give up so easily. Just because we mentally and verbally turn our life over to God, our old human nature does not want to go away. Let me explain it another way: If we have a lifetime of bad habits, it often takes awhile for us to let go of those habits, even though God has already forgiven us for those sins committed by those habits.
 - a) God desires that we change. That change means we struggle with our “old self”. This is the topic of Paul’s letter to the Romans, Chapter 6. To paraphrase, “God wants us to do things this way, but we have always done it that way”. Every time that desire to do things “out way” comes up, we need to recognize that that desire and turn it over to God.
 - b) I described in the last lesson that when you ask Jesus to take over, it is like “an army establishing a command central in your body”. That “army” is directed by God. That army then battles your old nature and thus we “struggle with God”, which is what the word “Israel” means.
 - c) The good news is that God eventually wins. If we are simply willing to let God “win”, it will occur. Sometimes, in order for that occur, God allows terrible circumstances in our lives in order for us to realize Gods ways are the best for us.
 - v) Remember that everything that happens to your life is “God filtered”. This is the principal behind Romans 8:28. That means that all the tragedies and all the rough moments are “God filtered” for a purpose. One of my favorite prayers during those times is, “God let not these lessons be wasted on me”.
 3. Which leads us back to Jacob. In Chapter 34, a local prince rapes Jacob’s daughter Dinah. His sons overreact and kill all the males in town. Jacob has to run for his life as a fugitive. In Chapter 35, Jacob has to deal with the death of several loved ones, including his favorite wife Rachel. Rachel dies giving birth to Jacob’s final son, Benjamin.
 - a) What is important to note is that not all the actions in this chapter are explained.
 - b) For example, after Jacob’s sons commit murder, they appear to “get away with it” and there is no further mention of direct punishment to the Jacob’s sons.

- c) The main point of this section focuses on, “Jacob’s actions and the results”.
 - i) Jacob does things that are not God’s will, and bad results happen.
 - ii) Or, Jacob fails to do things that are not God’s will, and bad results happen.
 - d) In this chapter, we read of a lot of innocent people getting hurt by sin, including Jacob’s own daughter Leah.
 - i) One of the tragedies of sin is that it affects the people around us.
 - ii) People often ask, “Why in the Old Testament did God require the slaughter of innocent animals for sin? The animals didn’t do anything”.
 - a) One of the word-pictures being painted by that action is that sin often hurts innocent people. By God wanting the Israelites to slay innocent animals, it is a vivid visual reminder that our sins hurt innocent people.
4. I’m also going to cover Chapter 36 today, which is “only” Esau’s genealogy.
- a) This chapter also goes along with my theme of “Don’t let this happen to you”.
 - b) Esau is a word picture of our old human nature. The New Testament picks up on that. (Hebrews 12:16). Chapter 36 is a word picture of “unhindered growth” of the flesh.
 - c) Esau takes wives of which his parents did not approve (Genesis 26:35). In Chapter 36 Esau renames some of the wives, hoping that might “clean up their image”.
 - d) There are a lot of trivial details that one won’t remember from Chapter 36. The main lessons to learn are:
 - i) God blesses Esau with children and wealth only because he too is a Son of Abraham, and God promised an unconditional blessing on that family.
 - ii) (Balance that thought with) God does not “bless the flesh”. Esau was a man who did not care for the things of God even though God was blessing him.
5. Genesis 34, Vs. 1: Now Dinah, the daughter Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land. ² When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and violated her. ³ His heart was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her. ⁴ And Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Get me this girl as my wife."
- a) To understand why this happened, we have to back to Chapter 33.
 - i) “Jacob, however, went to Succoth, where he built a place for himself and made shelters for his livestock.” (Genesis 33:17, NIV) The specific located where Jacob settled is also called “Shechmen” (Genesis 33:18).
 - ii) The name Succoth means “booths” or “tents”. The idea is that of “temporary shelter”. Yet Jacob “built a place”. This implies he built a wood (or stone) home in this location.
 - iii) Here’s the problem: God said, “I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land.” (Gen 31:13 NIV)
 - a) This means that God wanted Jacob back to the specific location of Bethel. This is where Jacob saw the ladder with angels ascending and descending and God spoke to him back in Genesis 28.
 - iv) With Jacob stopping and building a house in Succoth, Jacob was not doing God’s will. That mistake leads to Dinah getting raped as mentioned here in Verse 2.
 - b) Onto the big question: Why did this rape occur? Who was at fault here?
 - i) Remember that Jacob met his brother Esau in Chapter 32. Jacob then lied to Esau about following him and went the opposite direction.
 - ii) Here’s the important point: Jacob’s children learned that deception was “no big deal”, if our dad can deceive his brother, why can’t Leah just “go run off and check out the town?”

- iii) Even if Jacob told his brothers to keep an eye on her, or even if Jacob told Leah not to wander off, “actions speak louder than words”. Children see our actions far greater than the words we say to them.
 - c) What about the guy who raped her? Isn’t he guilty of this crime?
 - i) Yes of course. He gets killed in revenge in a few verses. One can argue that the punishment did not fit the crime. I’ll let God sort that out in judgment day.
 - ii) I also find it interesting that this guy still wanted to marry Dinah after the rape.
 - a) Usually, guys want nothing to do with a girl after that.
 - b) I may be reading too much into this, but I see “spiritual attacks” in this section. Satan wanted Jacob and his family to “compromise with God” and not go back to Bethel. Therefore when this boy desired to marry Dinah and settle here, you can read this as a word-picture of “spiritual compromise”.
 - d) What about Dinah herself?
 - i) Yes she is guilty of “wandering where she should have not”. This is a good story to read to your daughters about the consequences of just, “I just wanted to see what was happening”. There are some places where young girls should not be.
 - ii) The interesting thing is there is no “epilog” to Dinah’s life after this incident.
 - a) We don’t know the long-term implications of this tragedy.
 - b) The primary focus of this chapter is on Jacob, and therefore, we don’t get a lot of details of the consequences of this action on Dinah.
6. Verse 5: When Jacob heard that his daughter Dinah had been defiled, his sons were in the fields with his livestock; so he kept quiet about it until they came home.
- a) There is a lot of debate over this verse. Essentially, Jacob was “passive” about this event until it could be discussed with his sons.
 - b) Some argue that Jacob did the right thing and showed patience.
 - c) Most argue (including me) that Jacob was too passive and didn’t do the right thing. Let me put my argument this way:
 - i) The word “God” and “Lord” never appear in Chapter 34.
 - ii) The word “prayer” never appears in Chapter 34.
 - iii) When Jacob/renamed Israel is called “Jacob”, it usually means that the ol’ do-it-myself-ignore-God person in view. When Jacob is called “Israel”, it usually means Jacob is struggling to do God’s will. Jacob is only called Jacob in this chapter other than to mention that rape is disgraceful to “Israel”.
 - d) Remember that God tests our faith in many ways, some of them tragic.
 - i) God is saying to Jacob in effect, “I wanted you to be in Bethel. Instead, you build a house in Succoth. Here are consequences you have to suffer for disobedience”.
 - ii) Because of the sin of disobedience, the innocent daughter suffers.
7. Verse 6: Then Shechem's father Hamor went out to talk with Jacob.⁷ Now Jacob's sons had come in from the fields as soon as they heard what had happened. They were filled with grief and fury, because Shechem had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter--a thing that should not be done.⁸ But Hamor said to them, "My son Shechem has his heart set on your daughter. Please give her to him as his wife.⁹ Intermarry with us; give us your daughters and take our daughters for yourselves.¹⁰ You can settle among us; the land is open to you. Live in it, trade in it, and acquire property in it."
- a) Let me paraphrase the father of the guy who raped Dinah. “Hey Jacob, sorry about the rape thing and all. You know how kids are. Listen, my son wants to make it up to you. Let us let our kids get married. We’ll do business with you and we’ll both get richer. How about it ol’ boy?”
 - b) This whole section is about getting Jacob to compromise. God still wants Jacob in Bethel, as indicated in the first verse of Chapter 35. In the meantime, I personally see a Satan-inspired temptation to get Jacob to compromise with God’s will.

8. Verse 11: Then Shechem said to Dinah's father and brothers, "Let me find favor in your eyes, and I will give you whatever you ask. ¹² Make the price for the bride and the gift I am to bring as great as you like, and I'll pay whatever you ask me. Only give me the girl as my wife."
- a) One of the interesting things about this proposal is the lack of any response by Jacob.
 - i) In the next few verse, we are going to see two of Jacob's sons take matters in their own hands and kill every male in town.
 - ii) One has to wonder that if we read of Jacob taking action, or at least if Jacob was praying to God for action, this whole tragedy would have been avoided.
 - iii) Sometimes, as a leader a lack-of-action speaks louder than action. I personally see Jacob's pacificity as part of the problem.
 - b) Let's talk a bit about the rapist-prince-Shechem and his father.
 - i) The prince's name is Shechem, the same name as the town (Genesis 33:18).
 - a) I suspect that this guy has the "abusive/guilty" personality trait. Some people with abusive personalities often feel guilty afterwards and do everything to "make it up" to the person they hurt, only to do it again later.
 - ii) The father knows what he did was wrong and is trying to "make it up" to Jacob. He wants to please his son.
 - a) Notice the father never address the problem of rape.
 - b) Notice any lack of mention of any discipline to his son.
 - c) The father's solution is to "bribe his way" out of it. For those of you familiar with the term "co-dependant". This is when a person living with a problem-person ignores the problem and tries to "fix everything but the problem itself". People who live with alcoholics are often co-dependant because they refuse to deal with the problem itself and try to fix everything around that person. This father fits that profile.
9. Verse 13: Because their sister Dinah had been defiled, Jacob's sons replied deceitfully as they spoke to Shechem and his father Hamor. ¹⁴ They said to them, "We can't do such a thing; we can't give our sister to a man who is not circumcised. That would be a disgrace to us. ¹⁵ We will give our consent to you on one condition only: that you become like us by circumcising all your males. ¹⁶ Then we will give you our daughters and take your daughters for ourselves. We'll settle among you and become one people with you. ¹⁷ But if you will not agree to be circumcised, we'll take our sister and go."
- a) The brothers now speak up and say, "we can't intermarry with you because you are not circumcised." They say that if all the men into town agree to do this, we'll intermarry.
 - i) When we get to Verse 25, we learn the reason for this is because two of the older kids Simon (Son #2) and Levi (Son #3) want to kill the men of this town.
 - b) A couple of thoughts to consider from this paragraph:
 - i) Notice the lack of any action on Jacob's part. That set the stage for this tragedy.
 - ii) Notice that nobody talks to Dinah is if it her intent to go with the man.
 - iii) Notice the lack of prayer by anyone in this family.
 - iv) Notice how the boys use "religion" as a cover up for their plan. Circumcision was not only practiced by the Jews, but some other tribes used the custom as well. It is as the boys are saying, "Perform this religious act, and all is forgiven."
 - v) Circumcision was designed to be a "declaration" that you are now a part of God's family, the same way Christians use baptism as a public declaration of our new faith in Jesus.
 - a) On the surface the requirement of circumcision sounds reasonable as if they want the town to convert to their religion. One has to see this plan in light of the boy's plan to kill and plunder the town.
 - vi) Another point is that the boys are deceivers like Jacob. They have "learned well" from Jacob. This is another case of bad personality traits being past on.

10. Verse 18: Their proposal seemed good to Hamor and his son Shechem. ¹⁹ The young man, who was the most honored of all his father's household, lost no time in doing what they said, because he was delighted with Jacob's daughter. ²⁰ So Hamor and his son Shechem went to the gate of their city to speak to their fellow townsmen. ²¹ "These men are friendly toward us," they said. "Let them live in our land and trade in it; the land has plenty of room for them. We can marry their daughters and they can marry ours. ²² But the men will consent to live with us as one people only on the condition that our males be circumcised, as they themselves are. ²³ Won't their livestock, their property and all their other animals become ours? So let us give our consent to them, and they will settle among us."
- a) Remember that the townsfolk were not believers in the true God. In order for the father/son team to convince the guys in town to perform a circumcision, they use money as an incentive. Notice Verse 23 where it says, "Won't their livestock, their property and all their other animals become ours?"
 - i) Notice there is no "Worship the true God" in order to commit to circumcision.
 - ii) The only benefit offered by "doing this religious thing" is that it is "good for business". Unfortunately, I have met my share of "Christians" who join a church because it is "good for business". I have met my share of politicians who brag about their membership in a certain church for political gain.
 - b) The big-picture idea is still about God's will versus man's will getting accomplished. God did not want Jacob to settle here. God allowed these tragic events to occur in order for Jacob to "move on".
 - i) You can read this whole section as one, big Satan-inspired compromise of Jacob and his sons to not do God's will. As to the townsfolk, all it took was some monetary incentive and they go along with this plan.
11. Verse 18: All the men who went out of the city gate agreed with Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male in the city was circumcised. ²⁵ Three days later, while all of them were still in pain, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every male. ²⁶ They put Hamor and his son Shechem to the sword and took Dinah from Shechem's house and left. ²⁷ The sons of Jacob came upon the dead bodies and looted the city where their sister had been defiled. ²⁸ They seized their flocks and herds and donkeys and everything else of theirs in the city and out in the fields. ²⁹ They carried off all their wealth and all their women and children, taking as plunder everything in the houses.
- a) Here we read of Simeon and Levi killing all the men of the town.
 - b) They waited until everybody was too sore to move to perform their deed.
 - c) Notice in Verse 27 that all the sons were involved in the looting.
 - d) Notice who was missing from the scene: Jacob himself. His passive attitude about the rape lead to the sons taking actions in their own hands, and over-reacting to the problem. Yes the prince-son was guilty, but not the townsfolk.
 - e) When we read of Jacob's life, we don't read of any violent tendencies. If anything, Jacob was passive and under-reacted to situations where he should have taken the lead.
 - i) I wondered how the sons got the point where they could commit mass murder. Jacob the father was a deceiver, but not a violent murderer. We read of Jacob getting angry at Laban, but that was based on years of pent-up anger.
 - ii) Jacob's two sons take that anger "one step further". They saw their father get angry at Laban, but never violently act on their anger.
 - iii) There is no justifying the actions of the sons. It is an over-reaction to a crime.
 - iv) God is "very silent" in this chapter. That is the way God works in our lives sometimes. He lets tragedies occur in order for us to realize our faults and eventually turn back to him. We don't read of God condemning this action, but it is implied by God's silence in this chapter.

12. Jacob's reaction, Verse 30: Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me a stench to the Canaanites and Perizzites, the people living in this land. We are few in number, and if they join forces against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed." ³¹ But they replied, "Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?"
- a) Notice what Jacob did not say, "You kids have committed mass murder".
 - i) Jacob did not say, "Let's seek God and ask forgiveness of this action".
 - ii) Instead we read of Jacob having a pity-party saying in effect, "Woe is me because I will now have a bad reputation in this town and the surrounding folks will come after me for this tragedy".
 - b) Notice the lack of trust in God's promises. Jacob was worried in Verse 30 that his family would be destroyed. God promised that through Abraham, through Isaac and through Jacob, God would make a mighty nation.
 - i) God had to honor that commitment despite the sins of the sons. This is not about the children of Jacob being faithful; this is about God being faithful.
 - ii) God honors his commitments despite our sins, because His reputation is on the line. God still blesses the children of Jacob and makes them a great nation, despite the sin of this chapter.
 - iii) Possibly the most important application of Chapter 34 is that despite the fact that we mess up daily, God still wants to bless us and give us a great life. This is about His promises to us, and nothing else. Yes God still wants us to confess our sins, as God wants us to acknowledge that His way is the right way for us to act in life.
 - c) You have to wonder about the son's motivations in Verse 31. They said they killed all the men in town essentially, to protect the honor of the daughter.
 - i) If that was the case, why did they kill all the males?
 - ii) If that was the case, why did they take all the plunder of the town?
 - iii) We may be seeing the "deceiver" trait being passed on from father to sons.
 - iv) Even if their intention was honorable, it does not excuse the sin itself.
13. Chapter 35, Verse 1: Then God said to Jacob, "Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau."
- a) This verse gets me.
 - i) There is no commentary from God on all the sins committed.
 - ii) There is no comment from God about Dinah getting raped.
 - iii) There is no comment from God about the mass murder of the sons.
 - iv) The only thing God says in effect is "OK Jacob, time for you to do what I told you to do which is go to Bethel and build an altar to me there."
 - b) Sometimes God punishes us by allowing us to see the consequences of our sins.
 - c) Sometimes "life is enough punishment itself" without any further comment from God.
 - d) God still needed Jacob back where he wanted, in order to accomplish His will.
 - i) God is reminding Jacob of a time over 20 years ago, when he first fled from Esau. At that time, Jacob was scared for his life, and God comforted him.
 - ii) Here, Jacob is scared for his life again, and God reminds him of that past time.
 - iii) Sometimes, when life is going terribly and we don't "feel" the presence of God in our life, it is often good to look back at a time when we noticed God was obviously working in our lives. Many Christians keep journals of their prayers and God's answers to those prayers. That way, when the "dark times" come, and God is quiet in order to test us, we can look back how God miraculously got us "this far" to remind us that God is still there.
 - a) In a sense, that is what we have in this verse of Genesis. God is telling Jacob, "Hey, remember that time 20 years ago when I told you I would be with you on your journeys? Well, I'm still here. I never said my presence was conditional. I'm still here. Now go to where I commanded you to go."

14. Chapter 35, Verse 2: So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes."³ Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone."⁴ So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem.⁵ Then they set out, and the terror of God fell upon the towns all around them so that no one pursued them.
- a) If the name of God was missing from Chapter 34, it is definitely present in Chapter 35.
 - b) Now that God is in touch with Jacob again, now we read of Jacob telling the kids "put away your foreign gods" and let's be obedient to what God wanted us to do.
 - c) When one commits a sin against God and wants to start anew, what do you do?
 - i) You start by "burying" your sins at the cross.
 - ii) You start by confessing what you did wrong, and let it go.
 - iii) Notice Jacob told his sons in Verse 3 to take the foreign god (idols) and earrings (probably more symbols of foreign gods) and bury them at Shechem.
 - a) God always want to restore a right relationship with Him, but that means a desire to kill or bury our old sinful ways and "move on" to the new life.
 - b) Before Jacob and the family can go to Bethel, the place where God desired them to go, they first had to stop and bury their foreign idols.
 - c) One has to wonder that if the kids were zealous for the true God, would they even have these idols in the first place?
 - d) One has to wonder that if Jacob told the kids to get rid of those idols a long time ago, would they still commit this violent act?
 - e) We read some chapters back that Rachel took some of her father's foreign gods along, without Jacob knowing about it. One has to wonder if that sin is now "coming home to roost" as that sin as spread to her children as well as her sister's children.
 - d) Look at Verse 5 again, "Then they set out, and the terror of God fell upon the towns all around them so that no one pursued them."
 - i) The townsfolk didn't fear Jacob's tribe because of the murders. They feared Jacob's tribe and because God himself protected Jacob. That is what Verse 5 says.
 - ii) Folks, that is the great lesson here.
 - a) Despite the sins of Jacob and his sons;
 - b) Despite the lack of authority on Jacob's part;
 - c) Despite the lack of obedience on Jacob's part;
 - d) God still wants to bless Jacob, as God still wants to bless us.
 - e) Of course, it doesn't excuse the sin. The sin still needs to be confessed.
 - f) We do read of Jacob and his sons "burying" their foreign gods, which is a word-picture of confessing and "burying" their old sinful ways.
 - g) There are long term consequences of sin that exist. My point is that God does not love us any less because we sinned. God does not say, "You've dropped a few notches in my book" when we sin. ☺ We are not on a rating scale. God is perfect. God knows in advance all the sins that you will commit in your life. Despite that, He loves us with a perfect love and wants the best for our lives.
15. Chapter 35, Verse 6: Jacob and all the people with him came to Luz (that is, Bethel) in the land of Canaan.⁷ There he built an altar, and he called the place El Bethel, because it was there that God revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.
- a) Now Jacob has fulfilled God's command to return to Bethel. There he built an altar and called it, essentially "The God of Bethel". This was Jacob's way of worshiping God by building a stone altar. It was a sign of obedience.

16. Verse 8: Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died and was buried under the oak below Bethel. So it was named Allon Bacuth.
- a) Remember that Jacob's mother was Rebekah. Deborah was Rebekah's nurse.
 - b) This means that Deborah probably raised Jacob. Some kids are raised by a "nanny" more than a mother. That may be why the death was recorded as it affects the life of Jacob. If not, it is simply one of many deaths of loved ones Jacob had to deal with in Chapter 35.
 - c) I suspect, that Jacob had some affection for Deborah. Sometimes, our way of showing love for an elder is simply to "be there" in their dying days.
17. Verse 9: After Jacob returned from Paddan Aram, God appeared to him again and blessed him. ¹⁰ God said to him, "Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel." So he named him Israel. ¹¹ And God said to him, "I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will come from your body. ¹² The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you." ¹³ Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him.
- a) Here, Jacob finally is back where God wants him to be.
 - b) Now and only now does God restate the blessings promised to Jacob earlier:
 - i) God restates the fact that Jacob's new name is Israel (first recorded in Gen. 32:28).
 - c) Let's go back to Chapter 28. This is where Isaac was blessing Jacob, even though Jacob was disguised as Esau and Isaac thought he was blessing Esau:
 - i) Isaac said, "May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may be an assembly of peoples... That you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham." (Genesis 28:3-4b, NIV)
 - ii) Compare what Isaac said with what God is saying to Jacob in these verses.
 - iii) The blessings and commands are almost identical.
 - iv) Despite the fact that Jacob sinned by deceiving his father, God repeats those same blessings to Jacob here in these verses!
 - v) Did God do this because God is condoning Jacob's deception? No! God is doing this only because it is God's will for Jacob to have this land! This has nothing to do with Jacob's faithfulness, this is only because God made the unconditional promises to Abraham and despite Jacob's best efforts to forfeit God's plans, God's will still gets done.
 - vi) The lesson for us is no matter how much we mess up, God still wants to bless us because it is His will to bless us. It is an unconditional promise like the one given to Jacob. In order for us to receive those blessings, God still wants us to "bury our foreign gods (sins)" and be obedient to Him!
 - d) Another idea to catch from this paragraph is that God is usually waiting for us before He gives us further instructions.
 - i) In this paragraph, God is telling Jacob of the great blessings and plans He has for his future. It is only after Jacob is finally obedient of going where God wanted him to go (Bethel) that God gives restates this unconditional blessing upon Jacob.
 - e) The specific promises include "be fruitful and multiply". Gee, Jacob already had 11 sons and 1 girl, how much more fruitful does God expect? ☺
 - i) Grant it, at this time, Rachel was pregnant with the last of Jacob's children, Benjamin, as we will read in a few verses.
 - ii) I believe the idea here is for the children to get wives and Jacob's "clan" to grow as they form a mighty nation.
 - f) The other promise is the reminder that God renamed Jacob "Israel". This was done right after the wrestling match of Genesis 32 where Jacob fully submitted to God.
 - i) God restates the new name Israel to remind Jacob of that submission.

- g) Finally, God restates the unconditional promises of “nations and kings” will come out you, which ties not only to the birth of the Nation of Israel, but Jesus himself.
- i) Remember, from Jacob onward, the only “nation” born is Israel.
 - ii) I believe the phrase “nations will come from you” is in the plural is that Gentile nations will “bow the knee” to the coming Messiah, which is Jesus.
18. Verse 14: Jacob set up a stone pillar at the place where God had talked with him, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it. ¹⁵ Jacob called the place where God had talked with him Bethel.
- a) This is the first mention of a “drink offering”. It is a common term in the Old Testament referring to any liquid offered to God, often poured out right after an animal sacrifice.
 - i) Paul himself, near his death, described his upcoming death as a “drink offering” (2nd Timothy 4:6)
 - ii) The exact meaning is debatable. I believe it is simply the idea of “giving one’s all to God”. It implies “one-ness” or “connectives” with God and the desire that “all I am I give to you”.
 - b) God’s promises stated to Jacob in the last couple of verses are unconditional. I believe this stone pillar and drink offering are meant as a sign of gratitude.
 - i) That is a good lesson for Christians. We live a life of obedience not out of obligation, but out of gratitude. We are thankful of God forgiving our sins and the fact that we get to live for eternity with God, and as a sign of gratitude we then turn and worship God and live in obedience to Him.
19. Verse 16: Then they moved on from Bethel. While they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and had great difficulty. ¹⁷ And as she was having great difficulty in childbirth, the midwife said to her, "Don't be afraid, for you have another son." ¹⁸ As she breathed her last--for she was dying--she named her son Ben-Oni. But his father named him Benjamin. ¹⁹ So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). ²⁰ Over her tomb Jacob set up a pillar, and to this day that pillar marks Rachel's tomb.
- a) From Verses 16 to 19 we read of Jacob moving from Bethel to Ephrath.
 - i) We learn in Verse 19 that Ephrath is also Bethlehem (yes, that Bethlehem!)
 - ii) Rachel was very-pregnant at this point with Jacob’s last son Benjamin.
 - iii) The trip and the labor of pregnancy killed Rachel, when Benjamin was born.
 - a) This is why Rachel called the baby Ben-Oni (“son of my sorrow”) and Jacob called the baby Benjamin (“son of my right hand”)
 - b) One thing I pondered is “Why was Jacob traveling from Bethel to Bethlehem when his wife was pregnant and due any minute?
 - i) Why would Jacob risk the life of his beloved wife on this trip?
 - ii) Remember God wanted Jacob in Bethel. There is no mention at all that God wanted Jacob to go anywhere else. Verse 16 said they “moved on from Bethel”.
 - iii) The only clue we have in Scripture is that Jacob’s “nanny”, his mother’s maidservant died in Bethel.
 - a) I’m speculating, but maybe the death of Jacob’s “nanny” was tragic to Jacob and he wanted to leave to get away from that place.
 - b) The point is I don’t believe it was God’s will for Jacob to leave, and the “nanny-death” may have been an excuse.
 - iv) Remember of Jacob’s two wives and two concubines, Rachel was the one that Jacob dearly loved the most! By traveling during her pregnancy, Jacob may have inadvertently caused her death. I don’t believe it was “God’s will to move”.

- c) One can't help but wonder if this event is meant to be prophetic. Remember that a lot of bible prophecy is used in word-pictures.
 - i) One of the tragic stories around the birth of Jesus is when Herod kills the babies in that town in an attempt to kill the Messiah.
 - ii) Jeremiah made a future prediction regarding Bethlehem: "This is what the LORD says: "A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because her children are no more." (Jeremiah 31:15 NIV)
 - iii) You read this in Jeremiah and say, "When did Rachel ever weep for her children?" The only possibility is when she weeped on her deathbed at Benjamin's birth.
 - iv) This prophecy in Jeremiah is meant to be for the town of Bethlehem. Matthew himself quotes this verse in Jeremiah as being about Herod slaughtering all the babies in that town. Jeremiah associates Rachel with the town of Bethlehem, as that is where Rachel died.
20. Verse 21: Israel moved on again and pitched his tent beyond Migdal Eder. ²² While Israel was living in that region, Reuben went in and slept with his father's concubine Bilhah, and Israel heard of it.
- a) Here is another strange verse. After the death of Jacob's beloved wife Rachel. Jacob decides to move on again.
 - b) Here we read of, Jacob's first son, Reuben having sexual relations with one of his "step-mothers" Bilhah. Bilhah was one of the four women through whom Jacob had his 12 sons. It was through Bilhah that Jacob had Dan, and Naphtali.
 - i) No explanation is given as to why Reuben did this. You can speculate all day as to his motivation, but none is given. It is almost as if God is saying, "I'm listing the sin for everyone to see, and I don't care what is the motivation!"
 - ii) Remember that "God's big plan" was to have the 12 sons become the 12 tribes of Israel. Contemplate the fact that if Reuben got Bilhah pregnant, how "messed up" that would be in God's redemptive plan!
 - iii) This verse also makes you stop and wonder "what other sins" were occurring, but were not recorded in Scripture.
 - c) No consequence is listed for his sin. The only possible consequence is that Reuben may have lost the privilege of being the "firstborn". God eventually choose Judah, the 4th born son to be father of the Messiah-to-come. The 2nd and 3rd born sons were Simeon and Levi, who killed all the men in Chapter 34. One wonders if that was the reason God passed on these three brothers in order to continue the Messianic line through Judah.
 - d) If the focus is still upon Jacob, then one has to wonder if Jacob is not in "God's will" by traveling around when God wanted him to stay in Bethel.
 - e) Sometimes God brings our own sins to light by allowing other personal tragedies to happen. Jacob was "not right with God" at this moment and other tragedies are occurring. Please note that I'm speculating, because again, no reason is stated for this sin.
21. Verse 22 (cont.): Jacob had twelve sons: ²³ The sons of Leah: Reuben the firstborn of Jacob, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. ²⁴ The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. ²⁵ The sons of Rachel's maidservant Bilhah: Dan and Naphtali. ²⁶ The sons of Leah's maidservant Zilpah: Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob, who were born to him in Paddan Aram.
- a) This gets me. All of these sins and tragedies and no commentary on the motivations or consequences of the sins.
 - i) We read of Jacob traveling while his wife was about to give birth. She dies in labor. No mention of any consequences for Jacob traveling at that time.
 - ii) We read of Jacob's oldest son Reuben having sexual relations with Jacob's concubine and we don't read of any consequences.
 - iii) The next verse is God listing the 12 sons of Israel. Why?

- b) The answer may simply be another sign that God is saying, “Jacob, I’m going to bless you.
 - i) God is saying in effect, “Despite of all of your sins, Jacob, I am going to bless you, because My will, will get accomplished”. “Jacob, I am allowing suffering in your life to be more dependant upon me and to grow in your faith, but the promises I made to your grandfather Abraham are unconditional on your behavior!
 - c) Despite Satan’s best efforts to get God to “go back” on His plans to form the Nation of Israel, God’s will still gets done. You can read a lot of these sins and tragedies as demonic efforts to thwarts God’s plan:
 - i) Was Satan was “behind the scenes” the killing of all the men in Shechem?
 - ii) Was Satan was “behind the scenes” of Reuben sleeping with Jacob’s concubine?
 - iii) Was Satan was “behind the scenes” of Jacob stopping in Shechem when God wanted him to go to Bethel?
 - iv) I’m not excusing Jacob’s sins. There are consequences for those sins. The big-picture idea is despite our faults, God still wants to bless us and use us!
 - v) Many of us think that “Oh, God can’t use me, I’ve messed up too much!”
 - a) If God can use Jacob, there is hope for the rest of us! ☺
 - vi) The point is that we are to “never give up on God” because God never gives up on us! God still desires to use Jacob despite his faults. After all of these bad things in the last two chapters, the main commentary we read is God listing the 12 sons of Jacob, which become the 12 tribes of Israel. Through the strangest of ways, God’s will got done!
22. Verse 27: Jacob came home to his father Isaac in Mamre, near Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed. ²⁸ Isaac lived a hundred and eighty years. ²⁹ Then he breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people, old and full of years. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.
- a) We now learn (implied) the reason Jacob kept traveling was to see his father.
 - i) The other possibility is that Jacob was just “wandering around”, now heard his father was dying and traveled to go see him.
 - ii) We read that Esau was also there to bury his father.
 - iii) It is possible that Isaac “got word” to both of his sons to travel to meet him.
 - b) Remember that 20-plus years earlier, Esau vowed to kill Jacob once their father died.
 - i) In Jacob’s encounter with Esau in Chapter 33, we read of a change of heart in Esau and that is no longer an issue. This is the last we read of Esau, other than his genealogy, which is all of Chapter 36. Speaking of which...
23. Chapter 36, Verse 1: This is the account of Esau (that is, Edom). ² Esau took his wives from the women of Canaan: Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Oholibamah daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite-- ³ also Basemath daughter of Ishmael and sister of Nebaioth. ⁴ Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, Basemath bore Reuel, ⁵ and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam and Korah. These were the sons of Esau, who were born to him in Canaan. ⁶ Esau took his wives and sons and daughters and all the members of his household, as well as his livestock and all his other animals and all the goods he had acquired in Canaan, and moved to a land some distance from his brother Jacob. ⁷ Their possessions were too great for them to remain together; the land where they were staying could not support them both because of their livestock. ⁸ So Esau (that is, Edom) settled in the hill country of Seir.
- a) First of all, don’t panic about all the names. Memorization is not a requirement here. ☺
 - b) One of the first questions to ask about Chapter 36 is “Why bother?” Why would Genesis waste 42 verses to list every detail of Esau’s history for the next bunch of generations?
 - i) Part of the answer is to show that God’s promises come true. God promised to bless all the children of Abraham (including grandchildren) and make them fruitful. That promised to Abraham included “kings”, and not just kings of Israel.

- ii) Another aspect is that the nation of Israel is going to have a long history with the Edomites. Chapter 36 mentions four times that Esau is the father of the Edomites and that Esau is synonymous with the Edomites. (Ref.: 36:1, 36:8, 36:19, 36:43).
 - a) OK, so what? ☺ Why is it so important to know that Esau = Edomites?
 - b) Think back to what we have studied about Esau. Esau was the “self-man-man” type of guy, or the “I don’t need that religious stuff, I can take care of myself” kind of guy. That attitude got passed on to his descendants. That is why Esau is synonymous with the Edomites.
 - c) On one hand, God blessed Esau because of the promises to Abraham. On the other hand, Esau left the Promised Land, “because there wasn’t enough room for his stuff” (read Verse 7 again).
 - d) Back to the nation of Israel, they are going to have a long history with these people. The Edomites won’t allow the Israelites to pass through their territory on the way to the Promised Land (Numbers 20). Eventually when King David was expanding the territory of Israel, he conquered the area of the Edomites (2nd Samuel 8:14). Later, the Old Testament Prophet Obadiah in his one chapter book predicted the eventual destruction of the Edomites.
24. The next section is all “names”. For the purpose of this study, you can “skim” the names: Chapter 36, Verse 9: This is the account of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir. ¹⁰ These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz, the son of Esau's wife Adah, and Reuel, the son of Esau's wife Basemath. ¹¹ The sons of Eliphaz: Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam and Kenaz. ¹² Esau's son Eliphaz also had a concubine named Timna, who bore him Amalek. These were grandsons of Esau's wife Adah. ¹³ The sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. These were grandsons of Esau's wife Basemath. ¹⁴ The sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon, whom she bore to Esau: Jeush, Jalam and Korah.
- a) When you read Chapter 36 there is no mention of “God” nor “prayer” nor Lord”. Even if you translate the names, you won’t find any honor to the God of Abraham.
 - i) Chapter 36 gets back to my comment of “Don’t let this happen to you”. ☺
 - ii) It is a word-picture of the “uninhibited growth of the flesh”. The word “flesh” in bible-terms refers to those who don’t seek a life after God.
 - iii) Sin in the bible is often compared to yeast. This is because if you leave yeast alone it grows and spreads. Sin is the same way. So are sinful-people. The family of Esau is a word-picture of a godless family who “think” they are successful based on either luck or their own accomplishments. This chapter is a picture of someone being blessed by God but refuse to acknowledge it.
25. More names to skim; ☺ Verse 15: These were the chiefs among Esau's descendants: The sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of Esau: Chiefs Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, ¹⁶ Korah, Gatam and Amalek. These were the chiefs descended from Eliphaz in Edom; they were grandsons of Adah. ¹⁷ The sons of Esau's son Reuel: Chiefs Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. These were the chiefs descended from Reuel in Edom; they were grandsons of Esau's wife Basemath. ¹⁸ The sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah: Chiefs Jeush, Jalam and Korah. These were the chiefs descended from Esau's wife Oholibamah daughter of Anah. ¹⁹ These were the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and these were their chiefs. ²⁰ These were the sons of Seir the Horite, who were living in the region: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ²¹ Dishon, Ezer and Dishan. These sons of Seir in Edom were Horite chiefs. ²² The sons of Lotan: Hori and Homam. Timna was Lotan's sister. ²³ The sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho and Onam. ²⁴ The sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah. This is the Anah who discovered the hot springs in the desert while he was grazing the donkeys of his father Zibeon. ²⁵ The children of Anah: Dishon and Oholibamah daughter of Anah. ²⁶ The sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran and Keran.
- a) This paragraph lists the leaders among Esau’s descendants. This means that there were other people, but these were the most notable.

- b) If you travel to the land of the Edomites today, it is fairly empty. All of the kings and leaders listed here die off. In the long term, there is no “purpose” of these names.
 - i) It is as if God is saying, “OK you descendants of Esau, I will bless you because of my unconditional promise to Abraham. I still hold you accountable for your life. I give you these great blessings and I demand obedience out of gratitude for what you I have done for you. Eventually, you will die off because “no good thing comes from the flesh”, and like a good mercy killing, this has to come to an end.”
 - ii) I could go through some of these names. There are lots of interesting speculations about harlotry, sin, and problems based on the meaning of these names.
 - iii) Let me just summarize by saying, Chapter 36 is not good. ☺ It is simply a list of an unhindered growth of those who refuse to turn to God.

26. Last hunk of names, Verse 27: The sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan and Akan. ²⁸ The sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran. ²⁹ These were the Horite chiefs: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ³⁰ Dishon, Ezer and Dishan. These were the Horite chiefs, according to their divisions, in the land of Seir. ³¹ These were the kings who reigned in Edom before any Israelite king reigned: ³² Bela son of Beor became king of Edom. His city was named Dinhabah. ³³ When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah succeeded him as king. ³⁴ When Jobab died, Husham from the land of the Temanites succeeded him as king. ³⁵ When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, succeeded him as king. His city was named Avith. ³⁶ When Hadad died, Samlah from Masrekah succeeded him as king. ³⁷ When Samlah died, Shaul from Rehoboth on the river succeeded him as king. ³⁸ When Shaul died, Baal-Hanan son of Acbor succeeded him as king. ³⁹ When Baal-Hanan son of Acbor died, Hadad succeeded him as king. His city was named Pau, and his wife's name was Mehetabel daughter of Matred, the daughter of Me-Zahab. ⁴⁰ These were the chiefs descended from Esau, by name, according to their clans and regions: Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, ⁴¹ Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, ⁴² Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, ⁴³ Magdiel and Iram. These were the chiefs of Edom, according to their settlements in the land they occupied. This was Esau the father of the Edomites.

- a) Let’s get back to the big question: Why waste 42 verses on the family of Esau?
 - i) Couldn’t God have said, “Esau went on to have lots of descendants who eventually ruled a land northeast of Israel, that is today called Jordan?”
 - ii) By the way, the Jordanites are not the direct descendants of the Edomites. That’s another history story!
- b) Again, why waste all of this bible space on these names?
 - i) The best answer is to read Chapter 36 in context of Chapters 35 and Chapters 37.
 - ii) Chapters 35 (and beforehand) focuses on Jacob. This is the family that forms the Nation of Israel. The primary responsibility of this family is to bring God’s law into the world and to bring in the Messiah.
 - iii) Chapter 37 starts the story of Joseph. This is one of Jacob’s sons who leads the family into Egypt to start the process to form the Nation of Israel.
 - iv) While the story of Jacob (Chapter 35, etc.) focuses on “struggling with God”, the story of Joseph (Chapter 37, etc.) focuses on “redemption through God.
 - v) Joseph is a model of redemption. It is a word-picture prediction of the coming redemption of the Nation of Israel through the Exodus and more importantly, the redemption from sin that God has promised through Jesus Christ.
 - vi) But before we can have redemption, we have to see the extent of sin.
- c) Notice what Paul said in Romans (paraphrase): “Before, sin ruled over all men and brought them to death, but now God’s kindness rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 5:21 TLB).

- i) You can read Chapter 36, the spread of Esau’s family as a word picture of “sin spreading in the world”. One of the last books of the Old Testament, the prophet Obadiah, predicts of Esau’s destruction. Despite the growth of Esau/Edom (a word-picture of sin), God predicts its ultimate failure and destruction.
 - ii) Thus, Chapter 36 is necessary, in the word-picture sense that we see the spread of sin before we have the redemption from sin. Despite the “growth” of sin, as pictured in Chapter 36, we have a word-picture of a redemption from sin, as told in the story of Joseph.
27. My apology for running long today. Chapter 36 is too short to cover by itself, and I wanted to start “fresh” with Chapter 37 in the next lesson. Chapter 37 to the end of Genesis begins the third major section of Genesis. (Part 1 is Adam to Abraham, Part 2 is Abraham to Jacob and Part 3 is the story of Joseph).
- a) There are some other neat little tidbits tucked away in Chapter 36.
 - i) For example, one of the descendants of Esau is the Amalekites (Amalek, Verse 12). These people became the archenemies of the Israelites for many generations. God said he would have war with the Amalekites from generation to generation (Exodus 17:16). This is also a word-picture of “fighting sin all of our life”.
 - b) I purposely wanted to focus on the big-picture of Chapter 36.
 - i) Remember the primary purpose of these Genesis lessons is not to give a detailed history of civilization, but to focus on the personal applications to our lives, and thus the focus of Chapters 36 in context of the previous chapters.
28. With that said, let’s close in prayer: Heavenly father, we thank you for the negative and horrid lessons of Scripture as well as the positive ones. Hopefully we can learn from others so we don’t have to repeat the same mistakes. Work in our hearts that these lessons painfully sink in and keep us close to you. May you be glorified in our lives, through the painful as well as the shining moments as you mature us for eternity with You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.