

Lessons from Torah – 45 - Genesis 35

A Time to Recommit

1. In Genesis 28:20-22, after his dream of the Ladder reaching to heaven, Jacob made God a promise concerning that place, which he called Bethel.
2. In Genesis 31:13, while Jacob was working for Laban in Haran, God reminded him of that promise and said it was time to return to Bethel and fulfill that vow.
3. In Genesis 35:1, God again reminds Jacob of their encounter at Bethel and tells him to return there after the disaster in Shechem (34:13-31).
4. His return to Bethel was meant as a recommitment to the God who had been so committed to Jacob and his father Isaac and grandfather Abraham, and involved the past, the present and the future:
 - a. The Past –
 - i. 35:1 – This is where God appeared to Jacob so many years ago, when he had nothing but a staff
 - ii. 35:6 – The place used to be called Luz but Jacob renamed it Bethel – “house of God”
 - iii. 35:8 – The death of Deborah (Rebekah’s nurse) reminds us of Jacob’s father Isaac.
 - iv. 35:9-15 – We are reminded of God appearing to Jacob on his return to the land.
 - v. 35:10 – His new name was meant to represent a new life, which he had yet to show
 - vi. 35:23-26 – the son of Jacob – all but Benjamin were born before Jacob returned to Canaan
 - b. The present
 - i. 35:2-5 – Recommitment – often ushers in a powerful chapter in the believer’s life (see Exodus 4:24-26 and Acts 19:11-20)
 1. Spiritual – identifying and rejecting false gods
 2. Physical – bathing
 3. Relational – clean clothes represent showing respect and love for each other
 4. Psychological – changing clothes speaks of confessing sins in order to remove the stain of sin
 - ii. 35:7 – Worship
 - iii. 35:21-22 – The need for daily repentance (John 13:10)
 - iv. 35:27-29 – Death of Isaac and Jacob and Esau, who started the chapter as enemies (35:1) end it as companions (35:29)
 - c. The future
 - i. 35:11-12 – Promise of the Land affirmed
 - ii. 35:16-20 – After living a while at Bethel, Jacob moves on – his 12th and last son, Benjamin, is born, and Rachel dies
 - iii. Her death is a sign of future suffering
 1. Matthew 2:16-18 – death of the babies in Bethlehem at Jesus’ birth
 2. Jeremiah 31(:15) – prophecy regarding ‘the time of Jacob’s trouble’ (the Great Tribulation) leading up to Messiah’s return)
5. Perhaps we need to take inventory of our lives, remembering God’s past faithfulness, recommitting ourselves to living for him above all else, with our eyes on the eternal future promised to us.