Genesis

**Of Life and Death (35:1-22)**

*From a study of Luther’s Works: Lectures on Genesis, Paul Kretzmann’s Popular Commentary of the Bible, and the Lutheran Study Bible*

## **Jacob on the Move (35:1-7)**

* The Lord’s command to return to Bethel.
  + In the context of the previous chapter, things were not going well.
  + The Lord looks to restore Jacob
    - Psalm 9:9-10
    - Why do bad things happen to “good” people?
      * God permits all these things to be done that He may teach us to pray, cry out, and groan. [[1]](#footnote-1)
    - What was so important about Bethel?
      * Genesis 28:12-15
    - Where does the Lord God invite you to return in times of distress?
  + The use of an altar in this place.
    - But He adds the command about raising an altar, that is, about instituting worship, and there this rule is to be noted, that without the Holy Spirit no method or means of worshiping God is to be taken up.[[2]](#footnote-2)
      * Relics and idols
* Jacob calls for a change under his roof **FIRST**
  + No strange gods
    - Matthew 3:10
    - Genesis 31:19
    - Jacob does not only understand them to be golden or silver images but what is attached to them or the state of mind produced by them, which is the head, so to say, of a silver or golden statue, namely, the worship. For otherwise there is nothing sinful in a statue, but I can make use of it, just as Rachel above used the idols of her father Laban when she put them under her bottom. But the sin that condemns is the trust of the heart which is offered to a statue, although the image itself is the occasion for evil.[[3]](#footnote-3)
    - First Table issue
      * Commandments 1-3
  + Purify yourselves
    - Luther views this as a Second Table issue
      * Commandments 4-10
    - Isaiah 1:16
    - Psalm 51:10-11
    - Matthew 5:23-25
  + Sunday-go-to-meetin’ clothes
    - adorn yourselves also with an external act of worship[[4]](#footnote-4)
    - a certain respect is also owed to external ceremonies, gestures, and customs so that there may be honorable and orderly gatherings in that place where the Word is taught and where invocation is made and other sacred acts are performed.[[5]](#footnote-5)
    - all things may be done decently and in order, according to 1 Cor. 14:40. But those who neglect these matters indicate that they believe nothing and despise God and the church. For in an ecclesiastical assembly we should not conduct ourselves as if we were in a tavern. Some dignity is required here.[[6]](#footnote-6)
* Time to go to church
  + Once those are ready, now it is time to go to Bethel and build an altar.
    - But to preach, to hear the Word, to give thanks, and to pray, these are the true sacrifices.[[7]](#footnote-7)
  + The importance of worship.
    - But he does so because he has a God who makes promises, hears him, defends him, and rescues him from all evils which at times seemed quite irremediable.[[8]](#footnote-8)
* Buries the strange gods and the earrings
  + Earrings are bad?
    - Reference to the statues?
    - The word נֶזֶם itself signifies a little moon or semicircle of gold like a new moon, by which they adorned the brow from one ear to the other as though with a diadem.[[9]](#footnote-9)
  + Why not melt the gold down?
    - My reply is that he did it because of the abuse of these things, which, he knew, God utterly rejected. He himself wanted to despise ill-gotten gains utterly since he had other resources derived from the blessing of God to expend on the poor.[[10]](#footnote-10)
* People were afraid of them
  + What had Jacob been previously afraid of?
  + Who is protecting them?
  + What does this have to say to us today?
* Worship at Bethel
  + Bethel means “the house of God”

## **Deborah Dies (35:8)**

* What is so important about Deborah?
  + Rebekah’s nurse
    - Genesis 24:59
    - Deborah the nurse is introduced as a saintly woman and as very dear to the patriarch Jacob, perhaps because by age and her outstanding piety she was very well fitted to strengthen him in his very grave temptations. Hence Jacob laments her death, and he names the oak under which she is buried after the weeping.[[11]](#footnote-11)
    - How did she get to Jacob?!?
      * It appears, however, that after the years of Jacob’s servitude were completed, Deborah was sent to recall Jacob from Mesopotamia, as Rebecca had promised above, saying (Gen. 27:45): “Then I will send and fetch you from there, etc.”[[12]](#footnote-12)
  + The importance of mourning
    - Romans 12:15
  + Age comparison
    - Jacob is at least 106 at this time
      * Rebekah was about 50 at the time of Jacob’s birth.
      * Believed that a nurse would have exceeded Rebekah by 40 years
      * Putting Deborah at 186-190 years old
        + Would have seen Shem

## **A New Name (reinforced) (35:9-15)**

* God appears to Jacob to bless him
  + Note the difference from 35:1
* “You are Israel”
  + Genesis 32:28
    - Striven with God and prevailed?
      * After having given us the promise He pretends that He is quite alienated from us; He allows us to be tempted and simply hides His face as though He had forgotten all promises. Then it is necessary to beg, ask, knock. And when it seems to us that we are still being neglected and are succumbing, it is necessary to persevere and to press on in faith, prayer, and patience. In this manner we overcome God, not abandoning the promise of God who promises. In this perseverance in prayer and faith God becomes a visible God from a hidden God, comforting us and doing what we wish, as it is written (Ps. 145:19): “He fulfills the desire of all who fear Him,” and likewise (John 15:7): “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.”[[13]](#footnote-13)
  + A family trait
    - Genesis 17:5
    - Baptismal names
  + Why then is both “Jacob” and “Israel” used interchangeably from this time forward?
    - He has to be Israel and be called Israel especially and properly on account of these promises. But he was also called Jacob according to the common custom of men on account of his works. That is not the chief name, just as the works which godly men do according to the Law are not their principal works, but they are Jacobitic, even though they are required by this life. God demands both, that we believe and do works, so that we are both Israelites and Jacobites. But from faith and the promise we are above all named Israelites. By our own works, however, that we obey our magistrates and parents, that we live honest and chaste lives, etc., we are Jacobites. [[14]](#footnote-14)
* A blessing renewed
  + Genesis 1:28
  + Genesis 17:16
  + Kings?
    - 1 Samuel 8:7
      * “Does not belong to the discussion of this passage.”
* A place set apart for worship… again
  + Genesis 28:19

## **Rachel Dies (35:16-20)**

* A short distance traveled
* Things are not looking good in the delivery room.
  + A blessing?
    - Assumption that the blessing would come through Rachel?
  + What was put away before traveling to Bethel?
* A departing soul
  + Luther recognizes this as commending her soul to God.
* A dying wish changed
  + Rachel calls the boy, “Ben-oni”
    - Meaning “son of my sorrow/strength”
  + Jacob/Israel calls the boy, “Ben-jamin”
    - Meaning “Son of the right hand”
* Jacob buried her just outside of Bethlehem
  + Micah 5:2
  + The pillar of Rachel’s Tomb
    - They did not throw away the dead like the bodies of beasts, but they set up memorials of them for a perpetual and immortal reminder so that they might be testimonies of the future resurrection, which they believed and expected.[[15]](#footnote-15)

## **New Problems (35:21-22)**

* In the midst of Israel’s grief, the firstborn Reuben sleeps with Bilhah.
  + An act to overthrow Dad/Jacob/Israel?
  + Both are to blame
    - Deborah and Rachel were scarcely dead and buried and their bones were still warm, so to say, when this crime is perpetrated. For they were the mistresses of the household morals and discipline, and when they were removed, Bilhah, Rachel’s maid, remained in charge.[[16]](#footnote-16)
  + Punishment to come
    - Genesis 49:3-4
    - Where is retaliation from the brothers?
      * Especially Dan and Naphtali!
      * They either listen to dad…
        + Or they are complacent!
  + It is not without a special purpose, then, that he is called Israel in this place, for the Holy Spirit takes it with ill grace that a father exalted in this manner by God should be most disgracefully dishonored by a son in the wife who had succeeded the deceased Rachel.[[17]](#footnote-17)
    - How is future Israel treated by her children?

1. Martin Luther, [*Luther’s Works, Vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lw06?ref=Bible.Ge35.1&off=5188&ctx=r+way+for+now.%E2%80%9D%0aBut+~God+permits+all+thes), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 6 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 223. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Martin Luther, [*Luther’s Works, Vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lw06?ref=Bible.Ge35.1&off=11925), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 6 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 225–226. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Martin Luther, [*Luther’s Works, Vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lw06?ref=Bible.Ge35.2&off=10031&ctx=der+the+papacy.+But+~Jacob+does+not+only+), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 6 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 230–231. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Martin Luther, [*Luther’s Works, Vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lw06?ref=Bible.Ge35.2&off=11926&ctx=ebrate+the+Sabbath%3b+~adorn+yourselves+als), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 6 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 231. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Martin Luther, [*Luther’s Works, Vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lw06?ref=Bible.Ge35.2&off=12067&ctx=do+not+justify.+For+~a+certain+respect+is), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 6 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 231. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Martin Luther, [*Luther’s Works, Vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lw06?ref=Bible.Ge35.2&off=12550&ctx=in+assemblies%2c+that+~all+things+may+be+do), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 6 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 231. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Martin Luther, [*Luther’s Works, Vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lw06?ref=Bible.Ge35.3&off=2311&ctx=and+external+signs.+~But+to+preach%2c+to+he), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 6 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 233. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Martin Luther, [*Luther’s Works, Vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lw06?ref=Bible.Ge35.3&off=6953&ctx=+God%E2%80%99s+deliverance.+~But+he+does+so+becau), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 6 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 235. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Martin Luther, [*Luther’s Works, Vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lw06?ref=Bible.Ge35.4&off=2427&ctx=ments+of+the+idols.%0a~The+word+%D7%A0%D6%B6%D7%96%D6%B6%D7%9D+itsel), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 6 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 238. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Martin Luther, [*Luther’s Works, Vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lw06?ref=Bible.Ge35.4&off=3761&ctx=uried+in+the+earth%3f+~My+reply+is+that+he+), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 6 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 239. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Martin Luther, [*Luther’s Works, Vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lw06?ref=Bible.Ge35.8&off=810&ctx=+there+is+equality.+~Deborah+the+nurse+is), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 6 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Martin Luther, [*Luther’s Works, Vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lw06?ref=Bible.Ge35.8&off=9410&ctx=ntion+of+her+death.+~It+appears%2c+however%2c), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 6 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 255–256. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Martin Luther, [*Luther’s Works, Vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lw06?ref=Bible.Ge35.9-10&off=6513), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 6 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Martin Luther, [*Luther’s Works, Vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lw06?ref=Bible.Ge35.9-10&off=15954&ctx=ad+to+be+exercised.+~He+has+to+be+Israel+), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 6 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 263. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Martin Luther, [*Luther’s Works, Vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lw06?ref=Bible.Ge35.20&off=157&ctx=hers+magnificently.+~They+did+not+throw+a), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 6 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 273. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Martin Luther, [*Luther’s Works, Vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lw06?ref=Bible.Ge35.22&off=1251&ctx=her+Reuben+himself.+~Deborah+and+Rachel+w), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 6 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 275. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Martin Luther, [*Luther’s Works, Vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lw06?ref=Bible.Ge35.22&off=7275&ctx=+had+been+Rachel%E2%80%99s.+~It+is+not+without+a+), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 6 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 277. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)