

GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Genesis” (Subtitled: Is there a snake in your Garden too?) Further subtitled: Lessons from the Garden! Lesson 26. (Gen chapters 34:1 – 35:29). For lesson copies, go to <http://www.montgomerychurch.org/resources8.html>

Overview: The chapters studied today virtually complete the “Jacob cycle” in Genesis, where we have watched as God transformed the character of Jacob the “*deceiver/grasper*” into Israel the “*reconciler/giver*.” The literary structure of chapters 25-36 (below), known as “ring composition” help reveal this remarkable change. This lesson will move beyond the reconciliation chapters (32 & 33) where we encountered a reverse of expectations. You recall that in chapters 32 and 33 God appeared to Jacob, not as a protector/comforter but as an antagonist against the now contrite Jacob. Then Jacob’s estranged brother Esau who one would anticipate would be hostile against Jacob appears in peace as one whose face reflects the face of God (33:10). In today’s chapters, we encounter another reversal in expectations as we read of a tragic episode in the life of Jacob’s only daughter – Dinah. Chapters 34-35 depict Jacob and his children “safely” back in the land of promise, with the one exception of the vignette regarding Jacob’s only daughter, Dinah. Interestingly, the entire remainder of Genesis will focus only upon Jacob’s sons and the events in their lives.

- (A) Prologue (25:19-24)
- (B) Isaac and the Canaanites: Conflict and Covenant (26)
- (C) JACOB AND ESAU: DECEPTION (27)
- (D) Bethel: Departure from promised land to land of ancestors (28:10-22)
- (E) **Jacob and Laban: Deception and Reconciliation (29-31)**
- (D) Mananaim: Return to promised land from land of ancestors (32:1-2)
- (C) JACOB AND ESAU: RECONCILIATION (32-33)
- (B) Jacob and the Canaanites: Deception and Enmity (34)
- (A) The Edomites (36)

Read 34:1-12 Shechem, the royal son of the man who sold Jacob his property, violates Dinah, falls in love with his victim, and then seeks the hand of Dinah through his father, Hamor, who extends a totally open hand to Jacob and his entourage.

- What does Jacob do upon hearing of the heinous act committed upon his daughter?
- What does Hamor propose to Jacob regarding the future of their two peoples?
 - The previous scene in Scripture pictured Jacob and Esau moving from hostility to reconciliation (33:18-20) while this narrative moves from presumed peace and security to violent rape. What do you make of the contrast? Discuss.

Read 34:13-31: Interestingly, Jacob’s sons (not Jacob) assume negotiations on behalf of their sister.

- In 34:13-17, Jacob’s sons make a proposal to Shechem and his father Hamor.
 - What is their proposal and how does Scripture characterize it?
 - Briefly discuss what you think about the theme of “deceit” that keeps popping up in the Jacob cycle.
- In 34:18-24, Shechem and the townspeople agree to the condition and act upon it. What do they expect to occur because of their obedience and why do they expect that?
- In 34:24-29, after the males are circumcised, what happens to these Canaanites?
- In 34:30-31, Jacob chides his sons about their actions. What is Jacob’s concern and how do the sons respond to Jacob? What do you think this means for future relations in Canaan? Briefly discuss.

Read 35:1-29: Watch how God resolves Jacob’s fears, what God instructs Jacob to do, and how closure ensues.

- Re-read 35:1-8: What does God instruct Jacob to do and what is Jacob’s response? Also, what does God do to fulfill His previous promise of protection? How does any of this apply to your life, or does it? Discuss.
- Re-read 35:9-14: God reappears to Jacob, blessing him. What does God say and how does Jacob respond? Again, think about your own lives. Briefly discuss what you learn from the relationship between God & Jacob and Jacob & God. How does it apply to you?
- Re-read 35:16-29: The chapter closes with several death reports, including the peaceful death of Isaac and the death of Rachel in childbirth (the birth of Benjamin). This prepares us for the lineage of Esau (chapter 36) and the “Joseph cycle” to follow. What do you learn from these verses that may apply to your life? Discuss.