

## THE FRUIT OF JACOB'S SINS

**PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.**

These five chapters serve to illustrate two important principles of Scripture. First, sin has serious long-range effects upon the life of the sinner. Second, God providentially overrules man's sin and shortcomings in order to accomplish His own purposes.

Jacob's return to Canaan was according to God's will, but the fruit of many of his earlier sins caught up with him and his years in Canaan were the diary of a chastised man. It is true that God forgave Jacob's sin and deception and gave him a new name (32:24-32), but He did not cancel all the effects of his sin.

Most of Jacob's children showed a lack of godly character which, for the most part, seems to be the result of ungodliness in their parents. Dinah's defilement by Hamor's son (Gen 34) came from Jacob's friendly relationships with the ungodly Canaanites. The deception used in the massacre of the Shechemites by Simeon and Levi indicates that they had learned well their lessons in deception from their father, who was a master at deception. Reuben's defilement with Bilhah seems to illustrate the fact that Jacob's children had not been properly disciplined to keep themselves pure (35:22-26). The hatred by the sons of Jacob for Joseph developed to a large degree because of the favoritism Jacob showed to Joseph. This favoritism was not handled right on Jacob's part, even though Joseph was a very good son; thus it caused Joseph to be sold into Egypt as a slave. Judah's choice of a wife further illustrates Jacob's lack of control as a father because he allowed Judah to choose a wife from among the wicked Canaanites (38:1). In spite of all of the sin and failure of Jacob and his family, God worked to establish a nation through them which He could call His own. God even used the schism caused by Jacob's special treatment of Joseph to get these people moved to Egypt where they would grow into a nation. God may have to overrule man's sin for His own purposes, but each individual is still held responsible for his own sin. God can forgive the eternal penalty of sin, but there are temporal effects of sin which must be endured. Jacob illustrates the Bible verse warning us that "the way of the transgressor is hard" (Prov. 13:15).

### **I. Disappointments of Jacob — 34:1-35:29**

#### **A. Defilement of Dinah — 34:1-31**

##### **1. Shechem's Immorality — 34:1-5**

34:1-5 - Jacob once again was in the promised land and dwelt at Shechem - the place of Abraham's first stop in the land (12:6). He had even purchased a piece of land at Shechem, but he should have returned to Bethel where he had met the Lord on his trip to Haran. Instead he stayed at Shechem and dwelt among the heathen of the land. There it was that his daughter Dinah was sexually defiled by Shechem, one of the princes of the city. He then desired to have her as his wife. Dinah must have been approximately fifteen years old, which means Jacob had been here for about ten years. Jacob was wrong for letting his daughter mix so freely among the heathen. His lack of separation cost him plenty.

##### **2. Hamor's negotiations — 34:6-24**

34:6ff - Hamor came to negotiate the necessary dowry and arrangements for Shechem's marriage to Dinah. But Jacob's sons were angered by Shechem's folly (insensible moral behavior) because it was a reproach upon their family name. Hamor's proposal (34:8-10) should have served as a warning to Jacob - the influence of paganism would have its impact on his children, especially on Dinah.

34:13ff - Jacob's sons deceitfully agreed to Hamor's terms if the pagans would be circumcised. This was a sign of God's covenant with Abraham and his seed. The Canaanites were a cursed people and circumcision could not change their immorality and idolatry.

34:23-24 - It appears that Hamor may have intended to use this arrangement to further his own material possessions.

### **3. Simeon and Levi's massacre — 34:25-29**

34:25-29 - The men of Shechem submitted to the rite of circumcision, unaware that this would be the seal of their death. Simeon and Levi entered the city three days later when the men were physically immobilized from the circumcision and slew the men and spoiled the city. Dinah also was rescued. This was not an act of just retribution but of deceit and sordid cruelty. Two wrongs never make a right. This unscrupulous act later affected Simeon and Levi's blessing (cf. 49:5).

### **B. Distress of Jacob — 34:30-35:15**

34:30-31 - Jacob rightfully was troubled over the action of Simeon and Levi. However, he seemed to be more concerned about his reputation and safety than the honor of God. The members of Jacob's family were God's chosen representatives on earth. Jacob had failed to live up to his new name. Instead, he busied himself with earthly affairs while remaining negligent in spiritual and parental business. What a price he paid for the field at Shechem - his daughter's purity, his own reputation, and God's honor.

#### **1. God's command — 35:1**

35:1 - Now that Jacob was in another predicament, God once again was able to minister to him. He instructed him to return to Bethel. To Jacob, Bethel was a place of blessing, vowing, and encouragement (cp. 28:12-22; 32). As a backslidden man, Jacob had to return to Bethel to renew his dedication to God.

#### **2. Jacob's preparation — 35:2-8**

35:2-4 - Jacob's burial of idolatrous objects indicates the spiritual neglect he had given to his family. Nevertheless, he was spiritually perceptive to recognize the need for separation from pagan idols if he were to commune with God. The influence of the world included idols and earrings - perhaps some sort of cultic object. To have God's fellowship and blessing, one must cleanse himself from the trappings of the world.

35:5-8 - God protected Jacob and his family from retaliation by putting fear into the hearts of the surrounding people (cp. Josh 2:9, 11). Jacob built an altar at Bethel and worshipped God. His mother's nurse, Deborah, died in Bethel and was buried there.

#### **3. God's reconfirmation — 35:9-15**

35:9ff - God again appeared to Jacob. No doubt it was in some visual form - a theophany. He reminded him of his new name and of his responsibility. He also reconfirmed the Abrahamic Covenant to him. God identified Himself as the Almighty One - the One Who had power to carry out His promise (cp. 17:1)

35:14-15 - Jacob then set up a stone and poured out a drink offering on it. Later in the Mosaic economy, the drink-offering was an indication of expending all for God. God in grace again condescended to give Jacob a new start.

### **C. Death of Rachel — 35:16-20**

35:16-20 - From Bethel, Jacob journeyed to Bethlehem and on the way Rachel gave birth to Benjamin, but she died in childbirth. Was this a test of Jacob's faith now that he had reconsecrated his life to God? Could Jacob trust the God who was able to provide all that he needed? Rachel named her son, Jacob's twelfth, Ben-oni, meaning "son of my sorrow." But Jacob renamed him Benjamin, meaning "son of my right hand" - a position of honor. Jacob did not journey south to bury Rachel in the cave of Machpelah,

but established a memorial for her near Bethlehem. Rachel serves as a picture of Israel weeping for her children (Jer 31:15-16; Mt 2:18-19).

#### **D. Descendants of Jacob — 35:21-26**

35:21ff - Jacob's twelve sons are listed noting one more sad episode - Reuben's sin. Following Rachel's death, Reuben had sexual relations with her handmaid Bilhah. This may have been his attempt to show his authority as Jacob's successor (cp. 29:32; 49:3-4; 1 Chron 5:1-2). Instead, he forfeited the blessing of the firstborn rightfully belonging to him which was given to Joseph and Judah.

#### **E. Death of Isaac — 35:27-29**

35:27-29 - Jacob then journeyed south to Hebron where Isaac was still living. This was at least 12 years after Jacob had returned from Haran. This was at least 32 years after Isaac had given him the blessing when it was expected that Isaac would soon die (cp. 27:41). He finally died at age 180, approximately 43 years after the blessing was given to Jacob. He was buried by Jacob and Esau at the cave of Machpelah.

### **II. Descendants of Esau — 36:1-43**

#### **A. Esau in Edom — 36:1-19**

36:1ff - Esau had forfeited his right to spiritual blessings (Heb 12:16) but Isaac had still given him a blessing relating to his posterity. It is appropriately mentioned here. Esau had five sons and one of his grandsons was Amalek, father of the desert tribe known as the Amalekites (Ex 17:8-14; 1 Sam 15:2-3).

#### **B. Original Inhabitants of Edom — 36:20-30**

36:20-30 - Esau was the father of the Edomites, but Esau's descendants intermarried with the Hurrions who were dwelling in the land.

#### **C. Kings of Edom — 36:31-39**

36:31-39 - Edom had kings before Israel (36:31). The fact that these kings are over Edom indicates the influence that Esau's posterity realized.

#### **D. Dukes of Edom — 36:40-43**

36:40-43 - Dukes or tribal princes from Esau's lineage are listed. These reigned in prominent cities of Edom. Esau is called the father of the Edomites (cf. Obadiah).

### **III. Detestation of Joseph — 37:1-36**

#### **A. Reason for the Detestation — 37:1-27**

##### **1. Because of his favored position — 37:1-19**

37:1ff - There are three reasons why Joseph's brothers disliked him. First, he had given an evil report about them to Jacob (37:2). This evil report either means he told Jacob about the immoral behavior of his brothers or else how they rejected Joseph's delegated authority over them. Second, Jacob was careless and did not conceal his special love for Joseph. The coat of many colors may have indicated that he would succeed his father as the future leader of the family - normally a position given to the firstborn son (2 Sam 13:18-19). Third, Joseph's dreams, though true and prophetic, caused further animosity by his brothers. This first dream dealt with sheaves of grain which represented the twelve sons. Joseph's sheaf arose and the other 11 made obeisance to him. His second dream concerned the sun, moon, and eleven stars which represented his family and these likewise made obeisance to him. These dreams showed his future position of authority over them, but they enraged his brothers against him.

37:12-19 - Jacob sent Joseph to check on the welfare of his brothers who were supposed to be near Shechem. When Joseph got to Shechem, he found that they had moved to Dothan. He finally found them in their new location, but they saw him coming. The envy of his brothers "inspired" them to conspire against him and slay him.

## **2. Because of his plotting brothers — 37:20-27**

37:20ff - The brothers planned to kill Joseph but Reuben persuaded them to drop him into a pit to die of thirst and hunger. It was a special pit with a narrow mouth. Reuben planned to see to it that he would be rescued and returned to his father, however (cf. 37:22). Apparently Reuben was not immediately available when a caravan approached, for Judah became the spokesman and they decided to sell Joseph as a slave -- money was better than blood.

## **B. Result of the Detestation — 37:28-36**

### **1. Ishmaelites' purchase — 37:28**

37:28 - The Ishmaelites and the Midianites are both mentioned in this verse and it appears that they had joined together into one nation. At any rate people from both nationalities were involved in purchasing Joseph from his brothers for twenty pieces of silver. Joseph was only seventeen and he pleaded for his brothers to change their minds, but they refused to listen to his cries (42:21). Joseph would not see his father again for 22 years when he would be 39 years old.

### **2. Reuben's anguish — 37:29-30**

37:29-30 - When Reuben returned to the pit where Joseph had been placed earlier and found it empty, he was in deep anguish. He was the oldest son and would be held responsible for Joseph's welfare. He feared to face his father without Joseph, his favorite son (cf. 42:22, 37).

### **3. Jacob's remorse — 37:31-35**

37:31ff - Joseph's brothers deceived their father in two ways. First, they made it appear that Joseph had never reached them (37:32) and second, they dipped Joseph's coat in goat's blood to make it appear that he died a violent death. But all of this deception would one day be discovered. It is ironic that Jacob had deceived his father with goat's skins and now his sons deceived him with goat's blood (Gal 6:7).

### **4. Joseph's position — 37:36**

37:36 - Joseph's dreams indicated he was to have pre-eminence over his brothers. At this point in his life, it must have seemed remote. The Midianites sold him to Potiphar - an official of Pharaoh's court. The title "captain of the guard" literally means "chief of the executioners," maybe a reference to the slaying of animals for Pharaoh's kitchen or for religious sacrifice. The Pharaoh in rule was most likely Sesostri III (Senusert III) who reigned from 1878-1843 B.C. This experience as a slave was a necessary step for Joseph to take in order to become a proper leader.

## **IV. Depravity of Judah — 38:1-30**

### **A. Evidenced in His Choice of a Wife — 38:1-5**

38:1ff - This episode of Judah's wickedness is introduced for three apparent reasons. First, it is an additional chapter in Jacob's failure as a parent. Second, it provides a marked contrast between Judah and Joseph. Judah yielded to immorality, but Joseph fled from it. Third, it illustrates that sin is never truly hidden but will one day be exposed. Judah chose a wife of the wicked Canaanites. She lived in Adullam, about 13 miles southwest of Bethlehem. Three sons were born to this sinful marriage - Er, Onan, and Shelah.

**B. Evidenced by the Rearing of His Children — 38:6-11**

38:6ff - Judah chose Tamar to be Er's wife, but Er was so wicked that God slew him. There were no sons born to this marriage, so Judah commanded Onan to beget children for Er through Tamar (levirate marriage), but he refused so God took his life, also. Judah then instructed Tamar to remain at her father's house until his third son, Shelah, could be given to her in marriage when he was old enough.

**C. Evidenced by His Relationship to Tamar — 38:12-30**

38:12ff - Tamar, after some time, realized that Judah was not going to keep his promise about Shelah. So after Judah's wife died and when he was going to see his sheep shearers, Tamar used the occasion to seduce Judah by posing as a harlot so that she might have a child by appealing to his sensual desires. Judah thought she was a prostitute and went unto her to satisfy his fleshly desires. She demanded a pledge, payments which included his signet, bracelets, and staff (38:18). These were given as a guarantee that he would give her a kid goat for her services.

38:20ff - When Judah sent the promised kid, no harlot could be found because Tamar had resumed her role as a widow. Judah was willing to forget the whole episode lest he be shamed (38:23). Later, however, Judah heard that Tamar had played the harlot and was pregnant. Judah ordered her punished by burning. However, she was able to prove that Judah was the father by his signet, bracelets and staff. Judah had to admit to his own wicked deed and revoked the punishment for her. She was more righteous than he was.

38:27-30 - Tamar gave birth to twins and Pharez was considered the firstborn by Scripture and according to Ruth 4:18-22 he was the ancestor of David and later of the Messiah (Matt 1:3-16). Again, God's grace is evidenced as He overruled the sin of man to accomplish His purpose. This, however, in no way justifies sin because God always demands a punishment for sin.