

**Union United Methodist Church**  
Fall FOCUS Bible School, 2022  
FOCUS: Followers Of Christ Understanding Scripture  
Study: Book of Genesis

**Week 9: November 30, 2022**

**Abrahamic Covenants: Third Generation - Jacob's Children**

This Week's Study: **Genesis chapters 34 through 38**

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## 1. Recap & Reminder

- **Overview of Genesis**

The table below gives a breakdown of the chapters of Genesis, with themes that we shall be exploring in this study. We shall cover one theme per week. Our next week's study is Genesis 34 through 38 for the week.

<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>Theme</b>
1	4	Creation & The Fall, Original Sin
5	10	Adam through Noah: Judgement & New Covenant
11	14	Babel, A New Beginning in Abram
15	17	Abrahamic Covenants
18	20	Intercession & Judgement: Sodom & Gomorrah
21	25	Isaac - A Promise Fulfilled; Faithfulness Proven
26	30	Abrahamic Covenants: Second Generation - Jacob & Esau
30	33	Jacob's Family; Reconciliation with Esau
<b>34</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>Abrahamic Covenants: Third Generation - Jacob's Children</b>
39	42	Joseph's Trials & Elevation
43	47	Joseph & Migration to Egypt
48	50	Israel in Egypt, Death of Jacob

Please refer to previous weeks' outlines and messages for more background and to catch up. You can find these on our website: <https://unionumcnc.com>

## 2. Genesis 34 to 38 Overview

In these chapters we see the third generation after Abraham, Jacob's children. Jacob had returned to Canaan and been reconciled with his brother, Esau. On

arrival back in Canaan, Jacob first settled in Shechem, until he was instructed by the Lord to move to Bethel.

- **Genesis 33:18-20; 35:27-29 Jacob Returns to Canaan; Isaac Dies**

- **Genesis 33:18-20 Jacob Settles in Shechem**

After his reconciliation with Esau, Jacob completed his return journey to Canaan. He settled in the city of Shechem - a place of later significant events.

- **Jacob paid for the land**

He followed the pattern set for him by his father and grandfather - he paid for the land he used. God had promised the land to them but they did not use any tricks to acquire land - they paid for it.

- **Jacob erected an altar**

- Like Abraham and Esau before him, Jacob erected an altar to mark the significance of his return to Canaan.
- He named the altar after the Lord, whom he now calls: El-Elohe-Israel - which means, "That is God, the God of Israel" "There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel." – v20 Clearly God had become very personal to Jacob, the Lord who had changed his name to Israel.

- **Genesis 25:27-29 - The Death of Isaac**

Jumping to the end of chapter 25, we read about the death of Isaac. Significantly,

- Isaac lived a long time (180 years - v28) - till Jacob returned

Questions:

Did Isaac really need to pass on the blessing at the time he did?

What would have happened if he delayed passing on the blessing?

- Jacob and Esau united to honor their father by burying him together - v29

- **Genesis 34: Rape of Dinah and Its Aftermath**

- **Dinah was raped by a powerful man - Shechem, a prince**

1 "Now Dinah ... went out to visit the women of the region."

2 "When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the region, saw her, he seized her and lay with her by force."

- **Jacob bought his land from Shechem and his brothers (33:19)**  
Thus, Jacob's family were guests in their land even though they paid for the part of the land they lived on.
- **Jacob wanted to consult his sons before making a decision**  
"5Now Jacob heard that Shechem had defiled his daughter Dinah; but his sons were with his cattle in the field, so Jacob held his peace until they came."
- **Shechem "loved the girl" Dinah, and wanted to marry her after raping her**  
3 "And his soul was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the girl, and spoke tenderly to her. 4So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this girl to be my wife."
- **Shechem wanted to make amends by marrying Dinah**  
His father, Hamor, approached Jacob with a marriage proposal and was prepared to pay the dowry, whatever it was (v8-12)
- **Jacob depended on his sons to make a decision**
- **Jacob's sons hatched a secret plan of deceit to avenge their sister's honor.**

13The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully, because he had defiled their sister Dinah.

- **Forced circumcision on the men of Shechem**  
**Abuse of sign of covenant - is this what circumcision was meant for?**  
15Only on this condition will we consent to you: that you will become as we are and every male among you be circumcised. 16Then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live among you and become one people.

- **Simeon & Levi** killed the males of the city while they were recovering from circumcision - v25
- Took Dinah out of Shechem's house - v25
- All Jacobs sons plundered the city - v27
  
- **Jacob was displeased and saddened by his sons' actions**

30Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me odious to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites; my numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household."

  - **They were unrepentant**

31But they said, "Should our sister be treated like a whore?"
  - On his deathbed he held them to account (Genesis 49)

49:5 Simeon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence are their swords. 6May I never come into their council; may I not be joined to their company— for in their anger they killed men, and at their whim they hamstring oxen. 7Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.
  
- **Genesis 35: Jacob Back in Bethel, Rachel Dies**
  - **Jacob moves to Bethel on God's instruction**

1God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and settle there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau."
  - **Jacob called his household to repentance**

In returning to Bethel, a special place where Jacob built an altar to God on his way to and return to Laban, he felt it important to call his whole household to repentance from idol worship.

2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your clothes; 3 then come, let us go up to Bethel, that I may make an altar there to the God who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone."

- **God protected Jacob & his household as they moved to Bethel**

When Jacob called his household to repentance, and obeyed God, he had the Lord's protection in spite of the terrible deeds of his sons in Shechem.

5 As they journeyed, a terror from God fell upon the cities all around them, so that no one pursued them.

- **Covenant renewed; Blessing of Adam & Eve pronounced on Jacob**

In 35:9-15, the Lord appeared to Jacob on his return to Bethel, blessed him again, and renewed the covenant with him, this time pronouncing on him the "be fruitful and multiply" blessing that we first saw pronounced on Adam and Eve.

- **Benjamin born, Rachel dies in childbirth (v16-21)**

- **Reuben's Sin:**

22 While Israel lived in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard of it.

Jacob seems to have said nothing at the time but this cost Reuben his birthright. Jacob pronounced this on his deathbed.

Genesis 49: 3-4 NRSV

3 Reuben, you are my firstborn,  
my might and the first fruits of my vigor,  
excelling in rank and excelling in power.

4 Unstable as water, you shall no longer excel  
because you went up onto your father's bed;  
then you defiled it—you went up onto my couch!

- **Genesis 36: Esau's Family**

Homework: Review Esau's family line in Genesis 36, and share what lessons you glean from this in next week's group discussion.

- **Genesis 37: Beginning of Joseph's Story**

- **Important Context - Jacob settled in land of promise**

37:1 Jacob settled in the land where his father had lived as an alien, the land of Canaan. NRSV

Note:

- Jacob's choice of where to live was determined by where his father and grandfather, Isaac and Abraham, had lived - where God instructed them to live, in Canaan
- They lived as aliens  
"By faith he [Abraham] stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God"  
Hebrews 11:9 NRSV

- **Joseph**

- First son of Rachel, Jacob's sweetheart wife and "son of his old age" (v3). Thus, very much loved by Jacob
- Overtly doted on by his father, who gave him the gift of special clothing to show his love for Joseph, which was "more than any of his children" (v3)
- Jacob's show of love and favoritism for Joseph provoked anger and jealousy and hatred (v4) in his older siblings, none of whom shared a mother with Joseph
- Immature 17-year-old
  - A tell-tale ... bringing bad reports of his brothers to Jacob (v2)

- He had vivid nighttime dreams of his future which he shared freely with his family - provoking more hatred from his siblings (v5-11).
  - Even Jacob started to question, "What kind of dream is this that you have had? Shall we indeed come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow to the ground before you?" (v10 NRSV)
  - Jacob "kept the matter in mind" (v11) - i.e., Joseph's dreams.
- Effect of his brothers' unbridled hatred: 27:12-36
  - His brothers sold him to some Midianites as a slave
  - Reuben was against selling Joseph.
  - The Midianites in turn sold Joseph to Potiphar, of Pharaoh's officials (v36)
- **Genesis 38: Judah & Tamar. God as Silent Observer & Judge**

This chapter's portrayal of God's quiet observance and action in human affairs speaks to common contemporary questions including, "where is God when evil occurs?" and "why did God let this happen?"

In this story we see that apparently no one gets away with anything, even for things done in secret. Secondly, punishment might come in many forms even when the form does not seem to be God acting directly.

- **God as Silent Observer**

God can be seen in this chapter as a Silent Observer of human affairs who acts when wrongdoing occurs.

- Judah's first son, Er, "was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord put him to death" (v7).

Curiously, the text does not go into detail on what his wickedness was. However, the judgement is clear, resulting in capital punishment.

- In the case of Judah's second son, Onan, the text is clear on what he did that displeased the Lord.

His sin seemed to be that he pretended to fulfil his traditional duty to his deceased brother's wife, enjoyed the pleasure of sexual relations with her but ensuring she would not get pregnant by deliberately spilling his semen, thus avoiding the responsibility of fathering a child who would not technically be his (v9).

This secret dishonesty was also punished by death (v10)

- **Judah's Life Choices & Self-Inflicted Troubles**

- He moved away from his brothers and married a Canaanite (v1-2)
- He chose Tamar as a wife for his first son Er (v6)
- When Onan died, he instructed his second son Onan "Go in to your brother's wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her; raise up offspring for your brother" (8).
- Though he promised Tamar his third son, Shelah, he came of age, he refused to fulfil his promise to her.
- Tamar got her own back by seducing Judah as a pretend "prostitute" and having his child.
- Judah's punishment?  
His punishment appears to have been in the perpetual disgrace in society that he experienced as a result of inadvertently fathering the children of his son's wife.

### 3. Daily Study Schedule & Questions

- **Day 1: Genesis 33:18-20; 35:27-29 Jacob Returns to Canaan; Isaac Dies**  
As you read and study the verses, here are some suggestions of themes to reflect on:
  - Jacob's actions on his return to Canaan
  - Why might Jacob have insisted on paying for the land he settled on, rather than rent it?



- Jacob erecting an altar to God on his return
  - Jacob including the name Israel when he named the altar after God.
  - Isaac died after Jacob returned - he had been away at least 20 years. Did Isaac need to pass on the blessing at the time he did? What might have happened if he had waited longer before doing so?
- **Day 2: Genesis 34: Rape of Dinah and Its Aftermath**  
Suggested reflection themes:
    - Should Jacob have let Shechem marry Dinah after he raped her but also fell in love with her and wanted to do marry her?
    - Should Jacob have left the decision to his sons?
    - Jacob's reactions at the time and in Genesis 49 to his Simeon and Levi deceit and murder of the men of Shechem
    - Do honor killings still occur in our world today? From this story, do you think God approves of such killings?
    - Is it ever right to take the law into our own hands?
    - Can we trust God with judgement at the right time?
- **Day 3: Genesis 35: Jacob Back in Bethel, Rachel Dies; Genesis 36: Esau's Family**  
Suggested reflection themes:
    - How God led Jacob even after the tragedy of Shechem
    - The steps involved in Jacob's obedience to God's instructions: repentance from idol worship in his household, move to Bethel
    - God's reaction (protection & covenant renewal and promise) to Jacob's obedience. What are we to expect when we obey God?
    - HOMEWORK: Read through Genesis 36 and see what lessons you can glean from Esau's family story and how it grew, etc.
- **Day 4: Genesis 37: Beginning of Joseph's Story**  
Suggested reflection themes:
    - Joseph's immaturity and signs of that immaturity
    - The cost of revealing what God shows prematurely and/or to others
    - The dangers of parental favoritism among children

- The effects of hatred and jealousy, etc. as exhibited by Joseph's brothers
  - The impact of Joseph's disappearance on Jacob
- Day 5: **Genesis 38: Judah & Tamar. God as Silent Observer & Judge**  
Suggested reflection themes
    - God's observance and judgement of humans and our affairs
    - Judah's life choices and the impact on his whole family
    - Judah's hypocrisy and deceit of Tamar. Why did he do that and how much did it cost him?
    - What was Judah's punishment?