

THE RETURN TO BETHEL
Genesis 35:1-15

INTRODUCTION

When the Bible chronicles a character's life, there are often gaps in time as we read through. This is not the case in Genesis 35:1-15. Recording a tragic time for Jacob's family from Genesis 34, he knew he had lost control. With his children in rebellion, all having differing opinions – things were out of order. Now we see how God steps in. Jacob will respond correctly, and things get back on track. Peace, purity, and proper priority return to the home, as God directs **The Return To Bethel**.

DIGGING DEEPER

Read through Genesis 35:1-15 several times. This text provides great insight into family dynamics and order that honors God. Practical and personal application is available to the careful student. *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15).* Dig deeply beloved, and enjoy your study of **The Return To Bethel**.

Pray for wisdom and understanding, and let's begin.

I. Genesis 35:1. Return to Bethel. As God speaks to Jacob, it is not in anger. He directs Jacob back to the place – and time – where he first met the Lord so many years earlier (**Genesis 28:10-22**). Notice the commands, *“Arise, go, dwell, make and altar”*. Bethel is really more than a location, but a time when God was everything to Jacob. In some ways, Jacob had allowed the affairs of life to take priority over his relationship with the Lord. See **Revelation 2:1-7**, and pause to consider your relationship with the Lord. Have you allowed other things to crowd out your first love? *Selah.*

II. Genesis 35:2-3. Jacob takes charge. He knew exactly what needed to be done, and called for tough action. Idolatry and impure influences had taken root over time. A change of location was not enough. Cleansing and rededication to the things of the Lord was needed. Like Gideon (**Judges 6:25-26**) and Asa (**1 Kings 15:13**), anything idolatrous had to go. Ungodly, worldly influences had to be done away with. He called for purity & cleansing. **Psalm 119:9, 1 John 1:9.** Do you have idols or influences in your life that need to go? Friends, dress, entertainment, music, priorities?? **Micah 6:8.**

III. Genesis 35:4. The family responds. Even though this was a hard message, the family respected his authority because it was right. As Jacob spoke the truth, they reacted wonderfully. Notice also – once the idols and junk were dealt with, the past was buried and not brought up again. In obeying their father, order was restored to the family.

IV. Genesis 35:5-10. Knowing God's presence. Protected by God, they journeyed to El Bethel. Appearing to Jacob once again, God blessed Jacob. Surely God is always present and will never leave or forsake us. But how does God make Himself known to you specifically? *Selah* **Psalm 16:11, Psalm 97:5, Psalm 100.** Cultivate an awareness of God's presence.

V. Genesis 35:11-15. God recommits. God Almighty (*El Shaddai*) reassured Jacob that His plan has not changed. Jacob responded beautifully. For the first time in Scripture, a drink offering was poured out on the pillar. Oil was poured on it too. Jacob's actions showed an undiluted, joyful commitment to the Lord. **Romans 11:26-27.** Israel shall be his name now.

Genesis 35:1-15 is another place in Jacob's life where he deserves high marks. Family order is reestablished. God is recognized in His proper position - #1. Jacob is blessed as he returned to fully depend upon & dedicate himself to God. Beloved, even if family issues like Jacob's are not a concern, what specific lessons might the Lord still have for you from this study? *Selah*

CONSIDER There are times in life when God steps in to call for us to examine ourselves.

- It is never too late to make changes. Honor God. He will honor you. **1 Samuel 2:30, Galatians 6:7-8, John 12:26**
- God never corrects harshly, but in a firm but loving manner. **Psalm 103:10-14, Hebrews 12:5-11**
- You cannot serve God and hold on to the junk this world offers. **Matthew 6:24, Matthew 16:24-26, Mark 10:29-30**

Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works... Revelation 2:5

PRAY

- Pray for the baptism picnic – weather, for those who are going to be baptized, for any unsaved friends or family who come.
- That the Lord would reveal any area in your life that you have put something before Him.
- He would show you if there is any area where you have allowed the world to creep into your home.
- For this fellowship to remain pure and holy and separate from the world.
- Say a special prayer for Sam and Beena in India!