

Introduction

In fulfillment of an earlier assignment I gave to you (see the notes on Genesis 28-31), I looked at every chapter in Genesis to see if they mention sin and death. Death, murder or killing is mentioned in chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50. Not all of these have to do with human death, but note that death, as an intrusion into the creation because of sin, permeates the testimony of Genesis, and indeed of the whole Bible.

Sin is mentioned by that word or by a specific occurrence in chapters 3, 4, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 42, 49, 50. Again, the consistent message of the Bible is that sin permeates the human race. It cannot be overlooked or ignored: it is prevalent.

Jacob Prepares to Sees Esau Again, ch. 32

Notice that Jacob prays earnestly in 32:9-12 on the basis of God's earlier promise (28:15, 31:3, 13). He is facing a very foreboding situation in that Esau was coming to see him, but cries to God to fulfill his promises.

In vv. 13-21, the Bible tells us that Jacob sent several waves of animals to Esau as a gift. He hoped that this would appease his brother after 20 years of stewing about the stolen birthright.

The next section records one of the most interesting encounters in the book of Genesis, in which Jacob wrestles with a man who actually is a Theophany—an appearance of God. Several things happened in this encounter:

1. Jacob wrestled with God until daybreak.
2. God put his hip out of joint. This is the reason that the children of Israel do not eat the muscle around the hip socket. Maybe a good orthopedic person can explain to us the anatomy behind these statements! ☺
3. God blessed Jacob.
4. God asked Jacob what his name was. Note 27:18ff where Jacob lied about his identity.
5. This time Jacob told the truth about his name.
6. God renamed Jacob to Israel.
7. Jacob asked the name of the man with whom he wrestled, but God would not give it.
8. God realized that he had seen God face to face and had lived. This is why he named the place Peniel, which means “face of God.”

Jacob Meets Esau, ch. 33

Upon seeing Esau afar off, Jacob arranged his family to arrive in a certain order before Esau (maybe in order of dispensability?). Jacob insists that Esau receive his present, even though Esau had need of nothing and did not initially want to receive the gift.

They agreed that Esau would go ahead to his home in Seir, and Jacob would follow behind at a slower pace because of the need to drive the animals carefully.

The Sin of Shechem, and Response of Simeon and Levi, ch. 34

One of Jacob's daughters was named Dinah (from Leah). This chapter recounts how she was raped by a Hivite named Shechem, son of Hamor.

In vengeance, the sons of Jacob, particularly Simeon and Levi, hatch a deceitful plan to kill the people of Hamor's and Shechem's city. They conned them all into getting circumcised, with the promise that they would dwell with them in peace. Of course, Hamor and Shechem thought they might get some financial advantage out of this arrangement (34:23). But this hardly justifies what Simeon and Levi did next. While the Hivites were recovering from the surgery, they killed them. Simeon and Levi are censured for this act in Gen. 49:5-7. The other sons of Jacob plundered the goods of the city.

The Bible is very clear that rape is wrong, but it is also clear that the one who sinned is the one who must be punished (Ezekiel 18:4, 20; although see Exodus 20:5, 34:7; Num. 14:18; 5:9 for some thought-provoking material). Others should not be punished for the iniquity of the criminal. Jacob knew this and said that his sons had made him obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land.

Jacob at Bethel Again, ch. 35

The first part of the chapter deals with God's direction to Jacob to go to Bethel again and worship. This was the place where the ladder-dream occurred, in chapter 28. So Jacob tells his family and people to sanctify themselves in preparation for going to that place. They removed all the foreign gods from among themselves. Do you wonder why he hid the idols under a tree (35:4) instead of just destroying them?

It is at this point (35:8) that Rebekah's nurse died. This is an interesting reference, because you will recall that Jacob's wives were Leah and Rachel. Rebekah was the wife of Isaac, Jacob's mom, as we learned way back in chapter 24. 24:59 mentions her without giving her name. She apparently outlived Rebekah, was taken into Isaac's family, and then died at this point.

In verses 9-13, God reiterates the Abrahamic covenant again to Jacob. Jacob would have a large progeny, and the land would belong to him and his descendants. God gave it to them.

In 35:16-26, we learn that Rachel, the favorite wife of Jacob, dies while giving birth to another son. This son is named Benjamin. He plays an important role in the story of chapters 37-50, as we will see.

Another sin occurred in the family—the eldest son Reuben committed incest with one of his father's concubines, Bilhah. In Gen. 49:3-4, Reuben is censured for this act and loses the blessing of his father.

Finally, Jacob came back to see his elderly father Isaac after many years. Isaac died at the age of 180. His twin sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Genealogy of Esau, ch. 36

Esau is the ancestor of the Edomites, who come up again and again in Biblical history, all the way from here to the books of Obadiah and Malachi. This seems to be a main point of the chapter, as the “Esau is Edom” phrase is repeated four times – in verse 1, 8, 19, and 43. This was first mentioned in 25:30.

This is another genealogy chapter, with tons of names. Maybe try sometime to diagram this genealogy and see what it looks like.

Conclusion

What have you learned? There was certainly a lot of sin going on in the family. Not a good example, but one to warn us.