

## Coastal Notes | Genesis 35:1–15 | 06-01-26

**BIG IDEA: True Faith Does Not Just Claim God — It Clears Out Everything That Competes With Him.**

### INTRODUCTION — BACK TO BETHEL

**Last week:** Genesis 34 ended without resolution. Without God. Simeon and Levi had just massacred a city. Jacob was silent. And then — immediately — Genesis 35:1. **God speaks.**

Today we go back to Bethel. Back to the place where God first met Jacob. Where the vow was made. And where the vow is finally kept. True faith does not just claim God — it clears out everything that competes with Him.

### SCENE 1: THE VOW (Genesis 28:10–22)

Before we can feel the \_\_\_\_\_ of Genesis 35, we need to go back twenty years.

Jacob was \_\_\_\_\_. Running from his brother Esau. He left everything. He had nothing. He was nobody on a road to nowhere.

#### Genesis 28:12–13 (NASB)

“Then **he dreamed**, and behold,  
a ladder **was set on the earth** with its top **reaching** to heaven;  
and behold, **the angels of God**  
**were ascending and descending on it.**  
And behold, **the Lord stood above it and said,**  
**‘I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac;**  
**the land on which you lie,**  
**I will give it to you and to your descendants.’”**

The Hebrew word for ladder — sullam — may be better translated \_\_\_\_\_. Some scholars connect it to the \_\_\_\_\_ — the stepped temple towers of Mesopotamia. But here the staircase comes from God downward. Heaven reaching to earth. Not man reaching to heaven.

**At Babel they built upward to reach God on human terms. At Bethel God came down to reach Jacob on divine terms.**

#### Genesis 28:20–22 (NASB)

“Then **Jacob** made a vow, saying,  
‘If **God** will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take,  
and will give me food to eat and garments to wear,  
and I return safely to my father’s house,  
then **the Lord will be my God...**  
and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.”

Jacob \_\_\_\_\_ with God. If you do this — then the Lord will be my God. This is not mature faith. But God accepted the terms. Because God always meets people where they are.

That was twenty years ago. Tonight he is back. And God has \_\_\_\_\_ every part of the bargain. Now it is \_\_\_\_\_’s turn.

## SCENE 2: THE COMMAND

### Genesis 35:1 (NASB)

“Then God said to Jacob, ‘Arise, go up to Bethel and live there, and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.’”

Notice what God does not say. He does not \_\_\_\_\_ Genesis 34. He says \_\_\_\_\_ . Go up to Bethel. Make an \_\_\_\_\_. That’s it.

God is pointing Jacob back to the moment when He \_\_\_\_\_ to him. Go back to where it started and finish what he \_\_\_\_\_.

**Sometimes the most healing thing God can say is not — let’s talk about it. It is — arise. Get up. Go back to the altar.**

## SCENE 3: THE PURGE

### Genesis 35:2–4 (NASB)

“So **Jacob** said to his household and to all who were with him,  
‘Put away the foreign gods which are among you,  
and purify yourselves and change your garments;  
and let us arise and go up to Bethel,  
and I will make an altar there to God,  
**who answered me in the day of my distress**  
**and has been with me wherever I have gone.**’  
So they gave to **Jacob** all the foreign gods  
which they had and the rings which were in their ears,  
and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near **Shechem.**”

Jacob's response is \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. He gives three instructions.

\_\_\_\_\_ the foreign gods. \_\_\_\_\_ yourselves. \_\_\_\_\_ your garments.

Where did the foreign gods come from? Rachel \_\_\_\_\_ her father Laban's household idols back in Genesis 31. The earrings were amulets — objects of religious allegiance. Jacob buries all of it under the oak near Shechem.

Notice what Jacob says: 'God answered me in the day of my \_\_\_\_\_ and has been with me wherever I have gone.' This is Jacob's testimony.

**TRUE FAITH does not just claim God — it clears out everything that COMPETES with Him.**

#### SCENE 4: THE TERROR

##### Genesis 35:5 (NASB)

"As they journeyed, there was a **great terror** upon the cities which were around them, and **they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.**"

After the massacre, Jacob was genuinely afraid. He expected retaliation. The surrounding cities had every reason to pursue his family. Nobody came.

A \_\_\_\_\_ from God fell on the \_\_\_\_\_ cities. The Hebrew word is chittath — a dread, an overwhelming fear.

**God protected a family that did not deserve protection. That is not justice. That is grace.**

#### SCENE 5: THE ALTAR

##### Genesis 35:6–8 (NASB)

"So **Jacob** came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the **land of Canaan**, **he** and **all the people** who were **with him**. **He built an altar there**, and called the place **El-bethel**, because there **God** had revealed **Himself** to him when he fled from his brother. Now **Deborah**, **Rebekah's** nurse, **died**, and **she was buried below Bethel under the oak**; it was named Allon-bacuth."

Jacob arrives at Bethel. He builds the altar. He names it El-Bethel — the God of Bethel. Not the place. The God of the place.

And then — in the middle of the most sacred moment — Deborah dies. Rebekah's nurse. The last living connection to his mother. She is buried under an oak. The oak is named Allon-bacuth. The Oak of Weeping.

**The Oak of Weeping stands right next to the altar. The most sacred moments of covenant renewal do not protect you from grief. They just give you somewhere to bring it.**

## SCENE 6: THE REAFFIRMATION

### Genesis 35:9–12 (NASB)

“Then **God** appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and **He** blessed him. **God** said to him, ‘Your name is **Jacob**; you shall no longer be called **Jacob**, but **Israel** shall be your name.’ Thus, **He** called him Israel. **God** also said to him, ‘I am **God Almighty**; be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you. The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you.’ Then **God** went up from him in the place where **He** had spoken with him.”

God appears to Jacob again. This is the \_\_\_\_\_ major \_\_\_\_\_ encounter in Jacob's life. Genesis 28 at Bethel. Genesis 32 at the Jabbok. And now Genesis 35 at Bethel again. Full circle.

God \_\_\_\_\_ the name \_\_\_\_\_. What happened at the Jabbok was real. The limp was real. The new name was real.

**God does not get tired of reaffirming the covenant to people who keep forgetting it. He is more committed to the promise than we are.**

## SCENE 7: THE STONE

### Genesis 35:13–15 (NASB)

“**God** went up from him in the place  
where **He had spoken with him**.  
**Jacob** set up a pillar  
in the place where He had spoken with him,  
a pillar of stone,  
and he poured out a drink offering on it;  
he also poured oil on it.  
So **Jacob** named the place  
where **God** had spoken with him, **Bethel.**”

God goes up from Jacob. And Jacob sets up a \_\_\_\_\_ pillar. Pours  
\_\_\_\_\_ on it. Pours a \_\_\_\_\_ on it. Names the place Bethel.

The first time he poured oil on this stone he had \_\_\_\_\_. He was a fugitive with  
a rock for a pillow. This time he pours oil and wine — the elements of \_\_\_\_\_ —  
on the same stone. Returning \_\_\_\_\_ to the place he left poor.

The stone is a \_\_\_\_\_. In the ancient world, mountains were the meeting place  
of heaven and earth. Jacob cannot build a mountain. But he can stack stones upward to  
mark where heaven came down. A miniature \_\_\_\_\_. A \_\_\_\_\_  
ground.

There is an echo of \_\_\_\_\_ here. Sacred space. The presence of God. Oil and  
wine poured out in worship. Garments changed. Foreign things buried and cleared away.

**Every stone Jacob set up was pointing forward to the One who would say — destroy  
this temple and in three days I will raise it up. The final altar. The final stone. The final  
place where heaven and earth met permanently.**

# PERSONAL REFLECTION

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

**1. What are you still carrying that was supposed to stay buried at Shechem? What idol, habit, or allegiance has been living in your household that has no business going to Bethel?**

---

---

---

**2. Jacob's vow was conditional — if you do this then you will be my God. Has your faith ever felt more like a transaction than a commitment? What would it look like to come to God without conditions?**

---

---

---

**3. Jacob brought the whole household to Bethel. Who in your household is watching what you do with God? What are you modeling about what it means to belong to Him?**

---

---

---

**4. The Oak of Weeping stands right next to the altar. Where in your life is worship and grief happening at the same time? Have you brought that grief to the altar or are you keeping it separate?**

---

---

---

# BIBLE NERDS ONLY

## Whose Earring Is That? Jewelry, Allegiance, and the Purge of Genesis 35



### **In the Ancient World, Jewelry Was Not Fashion — It Was Allegiance**

When Abraham's servant put a gold ring on Rebekah's nose in Genesis 24:47, it was not a compliment. It was a claim. She had been chosen. The ring announced it before any words were spoken. In the ancient Near East, what you wore on your body told the world whose you were — which household, which god, which lord.

The earrings in Genesis 35:4 functioned the same way. They were not accessories. They were allegiance markers. Amulets shaped as foreign gods, worn as protection and devotion. Every earring in Jacob's household was a visible declaration of belonging to something other than the God of Bethel.

### **The Accumulation — Layers of Competing Lords**

By the time Jacob calls the household together in Genesis 35, the spiritual contamination is not one thing — it is layered.

Rachel stole her father Laban's household teraphim in Genesis 31. Mesopotamian household gods carried secretly for twenty years. Jacob did not know. She sat on them when Laban searched the camp. They traveled into Canaan hidden in a camel saddle.

The household also likely carried earrings and amulets brought from Paddan-aram — objects so normal in that culture that nobody thought twice about wearing them. And then Genesis 34 happened. Jacob's sons looted all of Shechem. Flocks, herds, wealth, and everything in the houses — which would have included Canaanite cult objects. A fresh layer of a different pagan system now sitting in the same camp alongside the Mesopotamian one.

Two pagan geographies. Two sets of spiritual allegiances. Twenty years of accumulated compromise. And Deuteronomy 32:17 and 1 Corinthians 10:20 are both clear — behind the idol is not nothing. Something was being fed. It is worth asking whether the spiritual darkness of Genesis 34 — Jacob's silence, Simeon and Levi's unchecked rage, the moral freefall of the whole chapter — happened in a household that had been spiritually compromised at the object level for two decades.

### **The Same Objects — Two Completely Different Outcomes**

Centuries later in Exodus 32, Israel panics at the foot of Sinai while Moses is on the mountain. Aaron calls for gold earrings. The people tear them off and hand them over. Aaron melts them down and makes a calf.

**Exodus 32:2–3** *“Aaron said to them, ‘Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.’ Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron.”*

Same objects. Same act of collection. Completely opposite outcome. What Jacob's household surrendered for burial under an oak, Israel handed over for an idol. The earring is not the problem. The direction of the surrender is everything.

### **The Slave Law and What Belonging Actually Looks Like**

**Exodus 21:5–6** *“But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go free,’ then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently.”*

In the ancient world the pierced ear was the mark of permanent, chosen belonging. The seventh year came. The door was open. He could have walked out free. He looked at his master, his wife, his children — the household he had come to love — and said I will not go free. The awl went through his ear. That piercing said: I am not leaving. I belong here. Permanently.

Jacob's household removing earrings before going to Bethel is the inverse of that moment. They are taking off the marks of every other lord before approaching the one they actually belong to.

Centuries later, the Apostle Paul opens his letter to Rome the same way — *doulos* Christou Iesou. Bondservant of Christ Jesus. Not reluctant property. Willing, permanent belonging to one master — because of the family he found there.

# ANSWER KEY

## SCENE 1 — THE VOW

- Feel the \_\_\_ of Genesis 35: **WEIGHT**
- Jacob was \_\_\_: **ALONE**
- Better translated: **STAIRCASE**
- Connect to the \_\_\_: **ZIGGURATS**
- Jacob \_\_\_ with God: **BARGAINED**
- God has \_\_\_ every part: **KEPT**
- Now it is \_\_\_'s turn: **JACOB'S**

## SCENE 2 — THE COMMAND

- Does not \_\_\_ Genesis 34: **EXPLAIN**
- He says \_\_\_: **ARISE**
- Make an \_\_\_: **ALTAR**
- When He \_\_\_ to him: **APPEARED**
- Finish what he \_\_\_: **PROMISED**

## SCENE 3 — THE PURGE

- Response is \_\_\_ and \_\_\_: **IMMEDIATE / PRACTICAL**
- \_\_\_ the foreign gods: **PUT AWAY**
- \_\_\_ yourselves: **PURIFY**
- \_\_\_ your garments: **CHANGE**
- Rachel \_\_\_ the idols: **STOLE**
- Day of my \_\_\_: **DISTRESS**
- Everything that \_\_\_ with Him: **COMPETES**

## SCENE 4 — THE TERROR

- A \_\_\_ from God: **TERROR**
- The \_\_\_ cities: **SURROUNDING**

## SCENE 6 — THE REAFFIRMATION

- This is the \_\_\_ major encounter: **THIRD**
- \_\_\_ major encounter: **DIVINE**
- God \_\_\_ the name: **REAFFIRMS**
- The name \_\_\_: **ISRAEL**

## SCENE 7 — THE STONE

- Sets up a \_\_\_ pillar: **STONE**
- Pours \_\_\_ on it: **OIL**
- Pours a \_\_\_ on it: **DRINK OFFERING**
- First time he had \_\_\_: **NOTHING**
- Elements of \_\_\_: **ABUNDANCE**
- Returning \_\_\_ to the place he left poor: **WEALTHY**
- The stone is a \_\_\_: **MAN-MADE MOUNTAIN**
- A miniature \_\_\_: **SACRED SPACE**
- A \_\_\_ ground: **CONSECRATED**
- Echo of \_\_\_: **EDEN**