

## Moving on: from Shechem to Bethel Genesis 34-35

If you are new or visiting; *a special warm welcome to you.*  
We trust you enjoy your time with us.

Today we will be having communion. If it is your practice to participate in this we welcome you to join with us in celebrating the Lord's Supper. If this is not your custom or if you are unsure of what to do please just pass the emblems (bread and wine) to the person next to you.

The 3 Patriarchs represent 3 different journeys of faith. **The first generation**, Abraham travelled to an unknown land and lived by faith. He knew the Lord, and was **committed** to the Lord. **The second generation**, Isaac dwelt in the promised land. His knowledge of God relied on his father's faith and what God had done through Abraham rather than deep personal conviction. In living by what he sees an element of **compromise** creeps in. **The third generation**, Jacob did not know the Lord nor did he give any priority to God. While aware that God was blessing him because of his godly heritage, it is not until he returns to the land and has a special revelation that he makes that commitment to God. For much of his life **conflict** predominates. Similar generational patterns are seen in David, Solomon and Rehoboam, and in Joshua and succeeding judges. (Judges 2:7, 10) None of us can rest on what past generations of Christians have done and seen. We each need to have a personal encounter with the Lord and make a commitment to him. If we are relying on the experience of previous generations of Christians our lives will be one of compromise and conflict.

In returning from Paddan-Aram, Jacob has had 3 fearful encounters. The first (Ch 31) was with Laban, his controlling father-in-law who had pursued him, accused him and tried to manipulate the situation to his advantage. Eventually a memorial stone was raised to form a boundary between them, for Laban was committed to an idolatrous lifestyle while Jacob was responding to the call of God to move on. The second encounter (Ch 32) occurred the night before Jacob was to meet with his estranged brother, Esau. In Jacob's fight with a stranger, he sensed something special. When disabled by the man, Jacob pleaded with him for a blessing. This encounter resulted in his "conversion" signified in the change of name from Jacob (deceiver) to Israel (Struggle with God). The third encounter (Ch 33) was with Esau, his brother, who he had deceived many years before. Jacob was afraid that Esau would want revenge. But his encounter with God prepared him for reconciliation with Esau. These 3 encounters illustrate the stages of conversion. There needs to be a break with the past, a wrestling with God with eventual submission to his demands on us, and a facing up to an uncertain future.

After meeting Esau at Penuel east of the Jordan river, Jacob moves his family west across the Jordan river and settled near Shechem where Jacob bought land from the local people to set up camp. At this stage, he had a family of 11 boys, and a single daughter. Over the next 10 years, the family grew and, as children would do, they mixed with the local teenagers of the city of Shechem. But the values and behaviours of the locals were different to those Jacob was now teaching his family. And undoubtedly, some of his children were resenting the impositions of their father's standards on what they could do and not do.

### Living near Shechem Ch 34

While the events of this chapter may seem strange to be included, we believe all scripture is profitable. Dinah is now a young teenager and has been spotted by Shechem, the local chief's son and sexually violated. However, this was not just a boyish fling. Shechem decided he wants Jacob's daughter as his wife. As custom was, his father turns up to negotiate a bride price with Jacob who seems uncertain as to how to proceed. But his sons have no uncertainty about what was right. They were furious and grief stricken (see Gen 6:6) for their sister and knew that it "should not be done". Hamor's proposal for general intermarriage goes completely against God's intention for Israel. Furthermore, Shechem shows no remorse for what he did. His moral values are different and Dinah is but a pawn in negotiations for which a price must be paid. But Jacob's boys have inherited the deceitful nature of their father and while Jacob seems to have withdrawn from the negotiations, his sons suggest that the men of Shechem submit to their religious custom of circumcision. Shechem is keen for he is in love, but he takes time to convince the other men of the city to submit. He convinces them on the grounds that by intermarriage, they will gain all Jacob's wealth. But Simeon and Levi have other ideas. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day when the men are most incapacitated, they slaughter them and plunder the city. Jacob is now fearful of the reaction of other Canaanites. He seems more concerned about the consequences of his son's actions than the rape of Dinah.

