



Jacob Returns to Bethel

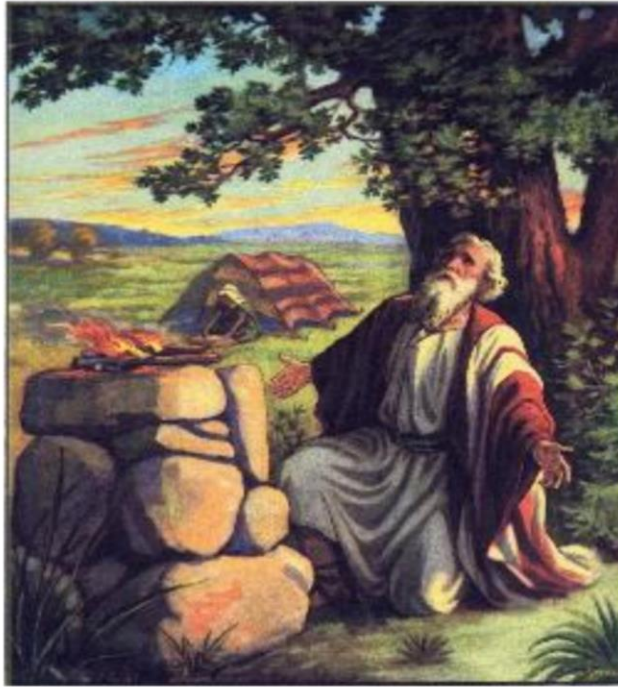
Genesis 35

Shortly after Simeon and Levi killed all the men in Succoth, God told Jacob to go to Bethel and live there and make an altar to God.

Jacob told everyone in his family and all who worked for him to get rid of any statuettes of foreign gods, purify themselves and to prepare to relocate. He told them that they were moving to Bethel. He told them that he would build an altar there to God, who had been with him in every way and everywhere he went. So they gave Jacob all the idol's they possessed and the earrings which were in their ears and Jacob buried them under the terebinth tree which was near Shechem.

As they traveled, the terror of God was upon the people of the cities that were all around them. The people were so terrified that they did not pursue Jacob's or his sons. If two sons killed all the men in a city, the surrounding cities wanted no part of the Jacob clan. So Jacob went to Luz (that is, Bethel), with all the people who were with him. He built an altar there and called the place El Bethel, because that is where God appeared to him when he ran from his brother.





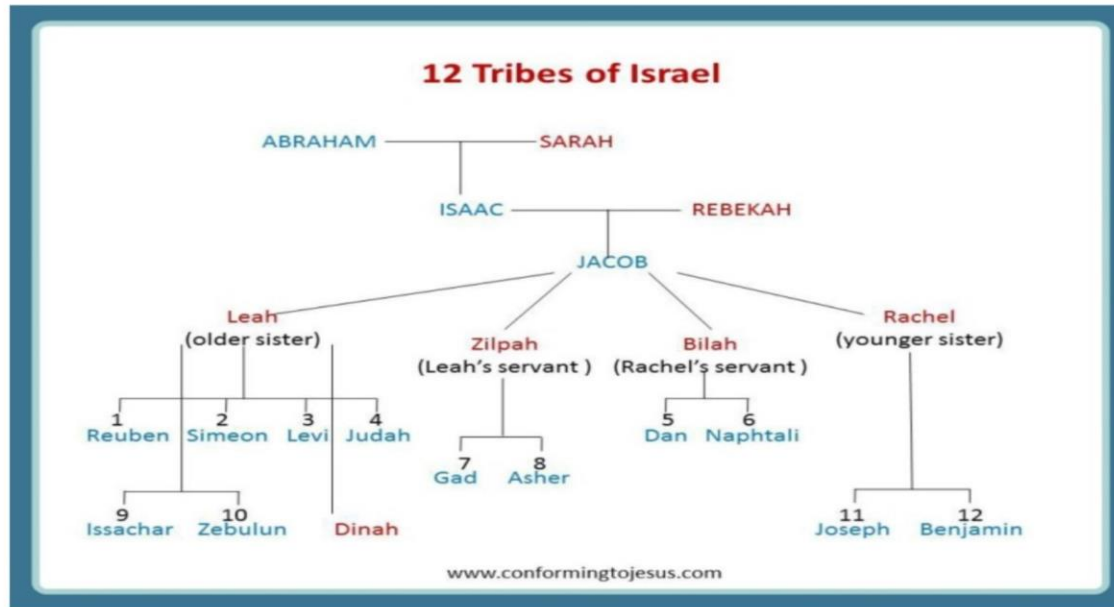
Now it wasn't long before Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died. She helped raise Jacob and Esau. She was there at their birth. Deborah spent most of her life with Rebekah, and with Isaac. She was highly thought of by Isaac and his household. Esau and Jacob, and almost all of Jacob's servants were very sad at her passing.

Not long after the funeral, God appeared to Jacob, and said to him, "Your name has been Jacob, but not anymore, Israel is now your name." Also, God said to him, "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation, more than one nation shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land." Then God ascended from him in the place where He talked with him. So Jacob set up a pillar in that place, a pillar of stone, and he poured a drink offering on it, and he poured oil on it and he called the place Bethel.

As they traveled from Bethel, when they were near Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth to a child. This birth was hard for her. The lady that was helping her knew this was a troubling birth. She tried to give Rachel as much peace as she could. She told Rachel, "Do not fear. You will have this son also." Although it it was extremely hard, Rachel gave birth to the child and called him Ben-On, then she died. Israel changed his name to Benjamin. Benjamin means son of my right hand. Many Hebrew families named their youngest child Benjamin.

So Rachel was buried there, on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). Jacob set a pillar on her grave and it is still there to this day.





Israel (Jacob) had a total of twelve sons. The sons of Leah were Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. The sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin. The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, were Dan and Naphtali. The sons of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant, were Gad and Asher.

Jacob went to his father Isaac in Hebron (his dad still called him Jacob), where Abraham and Isaac had lived. Isaac was one hundred and eighty years old. While Jacob was there, Isaac breathed his last and died. I'm guessing that it was known that Isaac's time was short because there was time enough for Esau to get there. The Bible tells us that both sons, Esau and Jacob, were there to bury their father. Back then, they had to bury the body within three days.