

Genesis
St. Jerome Adult Bible Study
Lesson 8 – Answers

1. The most memorable episode, for me, from Jacob's life before Chapter 35 was his meeting with Esau, his brother. While Jacob considered that there might be trouble and hard feelings, he sent peace offerings and met Esau with pleasure.
2. There were "liturgical" aspects to Jacob's return to Bethel from Shechem: First, he told all the people with him to "Get rid of the foreign gods among [them]"; second, he told them to purify (we assume "bathe") themselves and to don clean clothes. This was a symbolic act to prepare them for a new life with the Lord God (El Shaddai).
- 3a. Jacob's "day of distress" was the time when, fleeing from Esau who had vowed to kill him, the Lord answered his prayer by sending him a dream of a ladder leading to heaven along with a promise:
¹²Then [at Bethel] he had a dream: a stairway rested on the ground, with its top reaching to the heavens; and God's messengers were going up and down on it.¹³And there was the Lord standing beside him and saying: "I, the Lord, am the God of your forefather Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you are lying I will give to you and your descendants.
¹⁴These shall be as plentiful as the dust of the earth, and through them you shall spread out east and west, north and south. In you and your descendants all the nations of the earth shall find blessing. ¹⁵Know that I am with you; I will protect you wherever you go, and bring you back to this land. I will never leave you until I have done what I promised you."
(Genesis 28:12 – 15)
- 3b.
4. Jacob was afraid that the tribes around Shechem would attack him and his company because of the slaughter of the Schechemites but, in 35:5, a great terror fell upon the tribes and they left Jacob alone.
5. In 32:25 – 39, Jacob wrestles with a stranger (God?) who says that Jacob's name will be changed to "Israel". In 35:10, God tells him again that his name will be Israel.

Holman's Bible Dictionary says: "**ISRAEL** (*ihz' ray ehl*) Personal name meaning, "God strives," "God rules," "God heals," or "he strives against

God.” Name God gave Jacob after he wrestled with the divine messenger (Gen. 32:28). Afterwards, Jacob was a changed person, limping on a damaged thigh, with new food regulations, and with a new experience of God that influenced the way he lived. His twelve sons became known as the “sons of Israel,” and the resulting nation became the nation of Israel. Thus Jacob’s experience at the Jabbok became the foundation for the nation of God’s chosen people.

6. God promised Abraham that he would become a great nation and would occupy Canaan. God passed that covenant on to Isaac and, in chapter 35, to Israel.
7. Three major events occur to the family of Jacob as they leave Bethel for Bethlehem: Rachel has a son whom Jacob names Benjamin; Rachel dies and is buried; and Rueben, Jacob’s firstborn, has sex with Bilhah who is Jacob’s concubine.
8. Even though there was tension between them, Isaac and Ishmael joined each other to bury their father Abraham. So, too, did Jacob and Esau come together to bury Isaac.
- 9.
10. Esau (who was called “Edom”, meaning “red stuff”, because he sold his birthright for some red stew) was the father of the Edomites. Although they were “brother nations” the Israelites and the Edomites fought often.
11. Jacob favored his son Joseph more than his other sons who were understandably upset with Joseph. When Jacob gave his favorite son a “long ornamented tunic” (“coat of many colors” in the King James Version) the brothers were even more agitated.
12. Joseph related to his brothers two dreams which clearly showed that he felt himself superior to them and even his father, Jacob. At this revelation, the brothers became resolved to get rid of Joseph.
13. Rueben and Judah both intervened when the other brothers wanted to kill Joseph. Rueben convinced them to throw him into a dry well and he intended to return and rescue Joseph. Judah convinced the brothers to sell Joseph into slavery rather than to kill him.

14. Joseph's brothers could not, of course, have admitted to Jacob what they had done; therefore, they tore up the fancy robe and splashed it with blood so that their father would think that Joseph was killed by wild animals.
15. Judah's son Er married Tamar but, owing to having offended God, was killed. According to ancient rules, it was the duty of the deceased's brother to marry the widow (levirate marriage) and so, Judah's second son Onan marries her. Onan, too, however, offends God and is killed. Judah, not wishing to lose another son, refuses to allow his remaining son to marry Tamar and he sends her back to her father.
16. Clothing plays an important part in both the Joseph story and the Judah-Tamar story. Joseph is identified by his special coat; Judah, by his seal, cord, and staff; Tamar is mistakenly identified as a prostitute by her veil and later properly identified as a widow by her shawl.
17. The Lord is with Joseph so that everything Joseph does credits him in the eyes of Potifphar and later with his jailor.
- 18.