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Introduction

Jacob is commanded of God to go to Beth-el, and to build an altar there, Genesis 35:1. His exhortation to his family to put away all strange gods, etc., Genesis 35:2, Genesis 35:3. They deliver them all up, and Jacob hides them in the earth, Genesis 35:4. They commence their journey, Genesis 35:5; come to Luz, Genesis 35:6; build there the altar El-beth-el, Genesis 35:7. Burial place of Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, Genesis 35:8. God appears again unto Jacob, Genesis 35:9. Blesses him and renews the promises, Genesis 35:10-13. To commemorate this manifestation of God, Jacob sets up a pillar, and calls the place Beth-el, Genesis 35:14, Genesis 35:15. They journey to Ephrath, where Rachel, after hard labor, is delivered of Benjamin, and dies, Genesis 35:16-19. Jacob sets up a pillar on her grave, Genesis 35:20. They journey to Edar, Genesis 35:21. While at this place, Reuben defiles his father's bed, Genesis 35:22. Account of the children of Jacob, according to the mothers, Genesis 35:23-26. Jacob comes to Mamre to his father Isaac, who was probably then in the one hundred and fifty-eighth year of his age, Genesis 35:27. Isaac dies, and is buried by his sons Esau and Jacob, Genesis 35:29.

Verse 1

Arise, go up to Beth-el - The transaction that had lately taken place rendered it unsafe for Jacob to dwell any longer at the city of Shechem; and it seems that while he was reflecting on the horrible act of Simeon and Levi, and not knowing what to do, God graciously appeared to him, and commanded him to go up to Beth-el, build an altar there, and thus perform the vow he had made, Genesis 28:20, Genesis 28:22.

Verse 2

Put away the strange gods - *עֲלֵם אֱלֹהֵי הַנִּזְכָּרִים* (elohey hannechar), the gods of the foreigners, which were among them. Jacob's servants were all Syrians, and no doubt were addicted less or more to idolatry and superstition. These gods might belong to them, or, as some have conjectured, they were the teraphim which Rachel stole; but these have already been supposed to be astrological tables, or something of this kind, called by Laban his gods, because by them he supposed he could predict future events, and that they referred to certain astral and planetary intelligences, by whose influences sublunary things were regulated. But it is more natural to suppose that these gods found now in Jacob's family were images of silver, gold, or curious workmanship, which were found among the spoils of the city of Shechem. Lest these should become incitements to idolatry, Jacob orders them to be put away.

Be clean, and change your garments - Personal or outward purification, as emblematical of the sanctification of the soul, has been in use among all the true worshippers of God from the beginning of the world. In many cases the law of Moses more solemnly enjoined rites and ceremonies which had been in use from the earliest ages. A Hindoo considers those clothes defiled in which he has been employed in business, and always changes them before eating and worship. - Ward.

Verse 3

Answered me in the day of my distress - Not only when he fled from the face of his brother, but more particularly when he was in his greatest strait at the brook of Jabbok.

Verse 4

And - ear-rings which were in their ears - Whether these rings were in the ears of the gods, or in those of Jacob's family, we may rest assured that they were not mere ornaments, but served for superstitious purposes. Ear-rings were certainly worn as amulets and charms, first consecrated to some god, or formed under some constellation, on which magical characters and images were drawn. A very ancient and beautiful one of this kind brought from Egypt, cut out of a solid piece of cornelian, now lies before me. It was evidently intended for the ear, as the opening is too small for any human finger; and it is engraved all over with strange characters and images, which prove that it was intended for a talisman or amulet. It seems to be such a one as St. Augustine describes, Epist. 73, which was suspended from the tip of the ears both of men and women, not for the purpose of ornament, but through an execrable superstition, for the service of demons. Execranda superstitio ligaturarum, in quibus etiam in aures virorum in summis ex una parte auriculis suspensae deputantur, non ad placendum hominibus, sed ad serviendum daemonibus. See Clarke on Genesis 24:22 (note).

Verse 5

The terror of God - A supernatural awe sent by the Almighty, was upon the cities that were round about, so that they were not molested in their departure. This could be owing to nothing less than the especial providence of God.

Verse 7

(El-(beth-(el) - $\text{el}^{\text{TM}}\text{el}^{\text{a}}$ the strong God, the house of the strong God. But the first el is wanting in one of De Rossi's MSS., as it is also in the Septuagint, Vulgate, Syriac, and some copies of the Arabic. The sentence reads much better without it, and much more consistent with the parallel passages.

Verse 8

But Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died - She was sent with Rebekah when taken by Abraham's servant to be wife to Isaac, Genesis 24:59. How she came to be in Jacob's family, expositors are greatly puzzled to find out; but the text does not state that she was in Jacob's family. Her death is mentioned merely because Jacob and his family had now arrived at the place where she was buried, and the name of that place was called Allon-bachuth, $\text{the oak of weeping}$, as it is likely her death had been greatly regretted, and a general and extraordinary mourning had taken place on the occasion. Of Rebekah's death we know nothing. After her counsel to her son, Genesis 27:5-17, Genesis 27:42-46, we hear no more of her history from the sacred writings, except of her burial in Genesis 49:31. Her name is written in the dust. And is not this designed as a mark of the disapprobation of God? It seems strange that such an inconsiderable person as a nurse should be mentioned, when even the person she brought up is passed by unnoticed! It has been observed that the nurse of Aeneas is mentioned nearly in the same way by the poet Virgil; and in the circumstances, in both cases, there is a striking resemblance.

$\text{Tu quoque littoribus nostris,}$
 Aeneia nutrix, Aeternam moriens famam,
 Caleta, dedisti:
 Eet nunc servat honos sedem tunus; ossaque nomen,
 Hesperia in magna, (si qua est en gloria), signat.
 At pius exequils Aeneas rite solutis,
 Aggere composito tumuli, postquam alta quierunt
 Aequora, tendit iter veils, portumque relinquit.
 Aen., lib. vii., ver. 1, etc.
 $\text{Thou too, Cajeta, whose indulgent cares}$
 Nursed the great chief, and form'd his tender years,
 Expiring here (an ever-honor'd name!)
 Adorn Hesperia with immortal fame:
 Thy name survives, to please thy pensive ghost;
 Thy sacred relics grace the Latian coast.
 Soon as her funeral rites the prince had paid,
 And raised a tomb in honor of the dead;
 The sea subsiding, and the tempests o'er,
 He spreads the flying sails, and leaves the shore.
 Pitt.

Verse 9

God appeared unto Jacob again - He appeared to him first at Shechem, when he commanded him to go to Bethel, and now that he is arrived at the place, God appears to him the second time, and confirms to him the Abrahamic blessing. To Isaac and Jacob these frequent appearances of God were necessary, but they were not so to Abraham; for to him one word was sufficient - Abraham believed God.

Verse 13

And God went up from him - This was not a vision, nor a strong mental impression, but a real manifestation of God. Jacob saw and heard him speak, and before his eyes he went up - ascended to heaven. This was no doubt the future Savior, the Angel of the covenant. See Genesis 16:7.

Verse 14

A drink-offering - nesech , a libation. These were afterwards very common in all countries. At first they consisted probably of water only, afterwards wine was used; see on Leviticus 7:1 (note), etc. The pillar which Jacob set up was to commemorate the appearance of God to him; the drink-offering and the oil were intended to express his gratitude and devotion to his preserver. It was probably the same pillar which he had set up before, which had since been thrown down, and which he had consecrated afresh to God.

Verse 16

There was but a little way to come to Ephrath - The word kibrath , translated here a little way, has greatly perplexed commentators. It occurs only here, in Genesis 48:7, and 2 Kings 5:19; and it seems to have

Verse 26

Born to him in Padan-aram - i.e., all but Benjamin was born in Canaan, Genesis 35:16, Genesis 35:17.

It is well known that Padan-aram is the same as Mesopotamia, and hence the Septuagint translate *ἡ μεσσημωτία*, *ἡ μεσσημωτία*, *ἡ μεσσημωτία*, Mesopotamia of Syria. The word signifies between the two rivers, from *ἡ μεσσημωτία*, the midst, and *ἡ μεσσημωτία*, a river. It is situated between the Euphrates and Tigris, having Assyria on the east, Arabia Deserta, with Babylonia, on the south, Syria on the west, and Armenia on the north. It is now the province of Diarbek, in Asiatic Turkey, and is sometimes called Maverrannah, the country beyond the river; and Aram Naharaim, Aram or Syria of the two rivers.

Verse 27

The city of Arbah, (which is Hebron) - See Genesis 23:2. It has been conjectured that Jacob must have paid a visit to his father before this time, as previously to this he had been some years in Canaan; but now, as he was approaching to his end, Jacob is supposed to have gone to live with and comfort him in his declining days.

Verse 29

Isaac gave up the ghost - and was gathered unto his people - See Clarke on Genesis 25:8 (note).

Esau and Jacob buried him - See Genesis 25:9. Esau, as we have seen Genesis 33, was thoroughly reconciled to his brother Jacob, and now they both join in fraternal and filial affection to do the last kind office to their amiable father. It is generally allowed that the death of Isaac is mentioned here out of its chronological order, as several of the transactions mentioned in the succeeding chapters, especially 37 and 38, must have happened during his life; but that the history of Joseph might not be disturbed, his death is anticipated in this place. It is supposed that he lived at least twelve years after Joseph was sold into Egypt.

This chapter contains several subjects which are well worthy of the reader's most serious attention.

1. That such a family as that of Jacob should have had false gods in it, is a matter not less astonishing than real: and suppose that we allow, as is very probable, that their images and rings were got from strangers, the Syrians and the Shechemites, yet their being tolerated in the family, though it is probable this was for a very short time, cannot be easily accounted for. It is true the Law was not then given, and the unity of God not so particularly taught as it was afterwards. Besides, we have already seen that certain superstitions were compatible in those early times with general sincerity and attachment to the truth; those times and acts of ignorance were winked at, till superior light shone upon the world. Between many of the practices of Laban's family and those of the surrounding heathenish tribes, there might have been but little difference; and this was probably the reason why Dinah could so readily mix with the daughters of the land, Genesis 34:1, which led to the fatal consequences already reviewed. Sin is like the letting out of water - when once a breach is made in the dyke, the stream becomes determined to a wrong course, and its progress is soon irresistible. Had not Jacob put away these strange gods, the whole family might have been infected with idolatry. This saying of one of the ancients is good, *Vitia transmittit ad posterum, qui praesentibus culpis ignoscit* - Seneca. He who is indulgent to present offenses, transmits sin to posterity. The first motions of it should be firmly resisted; after struggles are too often fruitless.

2. The doctrine of a particular and especial providence has another proof in this chapter. After the sanguinary conduct of Jacob's sons, is it not surprising that the neighboring tribes did not join together and extirpate the whole family? And so they certainly would, had not the terror of God fallen upon them, Genesis 35:5. Jacob and the major part of his family were innocent of this great transgression; and on the preservation of their lives, the accomplishment of great events depended: therefore God watches over them, and shields them from the hands of their enemies.

3. The impatience and fate of the amiable Rachel, who can read of without deploring? Give me children, said she, or else I die, Genesis 30:1. Her desire was granted, and her death was the consequence! God's way is ever best. We know not what we ask, nor what we ought to ask, and therefore often ask amiss when we petition for such secular things as belong to the dispensations of God's providence. For things of this kind we have no revealed directory; and when we ask for them, it should be with the deepest submission to the Divine will, as God alone knows what is best for us. With respect to the soul, every thing is clearly revealed, so that we may ask and receive, and have a fullness of joy; but as to our bodies, there is much reason to fear that the answer of our petitions would be, in numerous cases, our inevitable destruction. How many prayers does God in mercy shut out!

4. The transgression of Reuben, of whatsoever kind, was marked, not only by the displeasure of his father, but by that of God also; see Genesis 49:4. It brought a curse upon him, and he forfeited thereby the right of primogeniture and the priesthood: the first was given to Judah, the second to Levi. Is it not in reference to this that our Lord addresses these solemn words to the angel of the Church of Philadelphia: Behold, I come quickly;

hold that fast which thou hast, that No Man Take Thy Crown? A man, by sowing a grain of forbidden sweets, may reap an abundant harvest of eternal wretchedness. Reader, let not sin rob thee of the kingdom of God.

5. Here we have the death of Isaac recorded: most that can be said of his character has been already anticipated, see Genesis 22, etc. He appears to have been generally pious, deeply submissive and obedient. He was rather an amiable and good, than a great and useful, man. If compared with his son Jacob, in the early part of their lives, he appears to great advantage, as possessing more sincerity and more personal piety. But if compared with his father Abraham, O, what a falling off is here! Abraham is the most perfect character under the Old Testament, and even under the New he has no parallel but St. Paul. Isaac, though falling far short of his father's excellences, will ever remain a pattern of piety and filial obedience.