

“FORGOTTEN VOWS TO GOD”

Edited By

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Genesis 35:1-7

INTRODUCTION

1. We begin our study with Gen 35:1-7...
 - a. Where we find God telling Jacob to go to Bethel (v.1).
 - b. In which he is to build an altar (v. 1)
2. Why did God command him to go and build?
 - a. Jacob made a vow to God, but he seems to have forgotten about it. Now, God is calling him to fulfill the vow.
3. We can learn several lessons about "**The Vow Jacob Made To God**", and these **lessons** can be applied to our service as Christians.

I. SOME HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A. JACOB MAKES A VOW (Genesis 27-28)

1. The vow was made as he was fleeing the wrath of Esau. Jacob had stolen Esau's blessing from their father Isaac. (See Genesis chapters 27 and 28)
2. After leaving Beersheba, he headed toward **Haran** (Genesis. 28:10)
Genesis 28:10 *And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran.*
3. On the way, he stopped at what is now called **Bethel** (Gen 28:19)
Genesis 28:19 *And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.*
 - a. There he had a dream, in which he saw what we commonly call "Jacob's Ladder" [angels ascending and descending on a ladder between heaven and earth]. (Genesis 28:12)
 - b. In this dream, God promises to be with him and safely return him to his home (Genesis 28:13-15).

Genesis 28:13-15 *And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; 14 And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 15 And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*

4. The dream prompted Jacob to make **his vow**. (Gen 28:16-22)
 - a. To make the LORD his God if God carries out His promise. (Genesis 28:20-21)

Genesis 28:20-21 *And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, 21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:*

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b. To sanctify the stone upon which his head had rested and which he has set up as a pillar.
(Genesis 28:22a).

Genesis 28:22a *And this stone, which I have set for a pillar; shall be God's house:*

c. To give God a tenth of all that God will give him. (Genesis 28:22b)

Genesis 28:22b *...and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.*

B. TWENTY SAFE, PROSPEROUS YEARS IN HARAN. (Genesis 29-30; 31; 32-33)

NOTE: Genesis 31:38 *This twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten.*

Genesis 31:41 *Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times.*

1. As God promised, He was with Jacob, and Jacob prospered both in family, and in gaining wealth -
Genesis 29-30

Genesis 30:43 *And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses.*

2. As Jacob was returning, God kept him safe...

a. From Laban, who was pursuing him - Gen 31

b. From Esau, who was coming to meet him - Gen 32-33

C. LIVING IN THE LAND OF CANAAN. (Genesis 33:18-19).

1. Jacob had settled near the city of Shechem, not bothering to go back to Bethel, where the Lord had appeared to him, where he had made his vow. (Genesis 33:18-19).

Genesis 33:18-19 *And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padanaram; and pitched his tent before the city. 19 And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money.*

So it appears that Jacob had forgotten his vow, and for this reason God commands him to return to Bethel.
(Genesis 35:1)

Genesis 35:1 *And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. [What lessons or principles of truth can we learn from this? There are several...]*

II. OUR VOWS

A. FORGETTING

1. God **FULFILLS**, we **FORGET**. (Genesis 30:43; 33:18a; Ecclesiastes 5:4)

We saw where God fulfilled His vow in Genesis 30:43.

Genesis 30:43 *And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses.*

...but Jacob had not fulfilled his part of the bargain. He went to Shalem but not to Bethel (Genesis 33:18a).

Genesis 33:18a *And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padanaram; and pitched his tent before the city.*

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This "forgetfulness" seems to occur most often when vows are made in times of trouble

- 1) Like those made in a foxhole
- 2) Or those made in an airplane during extreme air turbulence or mechanical problems
- 3) Or those made in an effort to solve marital problems

“Spare of the moment” vows are just as binding as those made upon careful reflection! (Ecclesiastes 5:4)

Ecclesiastes 5:4 *When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it;*

2. We sometimes forget our vows when things are **GOING WELL**. (Deut 8:11-20)

In the case of Jacob...

- 1) He had a nice family
- 2) He had become extremely wealthy
- 3) He had settled down in his home country

The same is often true of many Christians...

Many obey the gospel at times in their lives when they are troubled, but later, especially if they enjoy financial security, they forget their commitment to God and Christ.

Consider God's warning to Israel against forgetfulness after they entered the "promised land".

(Deuteronomy 8:11-20)

Deuteronomy 8:11 *Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:*

Deuteronomy 8:19-20 *And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. 20 As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.*

3. We forget by allowing ourselves to be **INFLUENCED** by the world. (Genesis 35:2)

- a. Note that Jacob's family had accepted the foreign gods of the people around them. (Genesis 35:2)

Genesis 35:2 *Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments:*

- b. In similar fashion, many people do not live up to the vow they made when they became Christians. (2 Timothy 4:10 - Demas)

2 Timothy 4:10 *For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.*

4. Many Christians are zealous at first, but often lose interest in spiritual matters when influenced by...

- a. Friends(?)
- b. Popular (ungodly) music - whether secular or 'religious',
- c. By attending a feel good, no good, "Doctrine-less" church led by panty waist, thumb sucking, compromising Dr. do anything for a crowd preacher/pastor.

5. Many Christians are influenced by the materialism and immorality of our society, but again, this is no excuse for "forgotten vows".

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III. THE ANSWER

A. IF WE HAVE FORGOTTEN OUR VOWS: GO BACK TO THE BEGINNING. (Genesis 35:1a)

1. We noticed that Jacob was told to go back to Bethel

Genesis 35:1a *And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there:*

2. In a similar way, Jesus told the church at Ephesus to go back to the beginning. (Revelation 2:4-5)

Revelation 2:4-5 *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. 5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

a. The church had left their "first love"

b. They were told to "remember...from where you have fallen"

c. And to "repent and do the first works"

3. For Christians who have left their "first love", they too need to "do the first works" (the fundamentals, such as Bible study, prayer, etc.)

B. WE NEED TO FULFILL OUR FORGOTTEN VOWS. (Genesis 35:9-15)

1. When Jacob fulfilled his vow, God appeared to him and renewed the promises that had been made to Abraham and Isaac . **(READ Genesis 35:9-15)**

2. So it can be with us!

a. It may be that we have forgotten the original commitment we made when we first obeyed the gospel of Christ, but if we will just return to Christ:

In prayer, with true sorrow, and fulfill our vow of service and devotion to Him ...all the spiritual blessings that He has to offer can be ours again! (1John 1:9)

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

C. WE NEED TO FULFILL NOT RENEW OUR VOWS. (Genesis 35:6-15)

1. There came a time in Jacob's life when he fulfilled his promise to God. (Genesis 35:6-15)

Genesis 35:6-15 *So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Bethel, he and all the people that were with him. 7 And he built there an altar, and called the place Elbethel: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother. 8 But Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak: and the name of it was called Allonbachuth. 9 And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. 10 And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. 11 And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; 12 And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. 13 And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him. 14 And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. 15 And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel.*

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IV. EXPECTATIONS OF GOD

A. GOD EXPECTS US TO KEEP THE VOWS WE MAKE. (Ecclesiastes 5:2-5)

1. God does not take vows lightly, and neither should we. (Ecclesiastes 5:2-5)

Ecclesiastes 5:2-5 *Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. **3** For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words. **4** When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. **5** Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.*

2. Let's be sure to keep any covenant or vow that we make with God; for example...

a. The "vow" we made when we became Christians, such as: a vow to follow Christ with all our heart, to dedicate our self to Him in His service. To do **HIS** will. Are you faithfully keeping your "vow(s)" to God?

3. God expects us to keep our word!

CONCLUSION

1. Are you a Christian, but not living the dedicated and committed life that God expects?

2. Then, like Jacob, you have forgotten your vow...

a. And you need to come back to the Lord in full surrender

b. The blessings of heaven await you if you do!

If you are not yet a Christian, these same blessings can be yours if you will only accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. Do what God requires and wants you to do. (Acts 16:30-32)

Acts 16:30-32 *And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? **31** And they said, **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. **32** And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.***