OVERCOMING THE DYSFUNCTIONS OF ISRAEL'S PATRIARCHS
XXI. Overcoming Fallout From Family Dysfunction
(Genesis 35:1-15)

I. Introduction

A. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Israel's patriarchs and their respective wives and families, though blessed of God, were imperfect people who at times made huge mistakes that led to serious marital and family dysfunction.

B. Thankfully, Romans 15:4 states that we can learn from whatsoever things were written in the Old Testament for our edification, and that includes our learning how to overcome the dysfunctions of Israel's patriarchs.

C. We view Genesis 35:1-15 on overcoming fallout from family dysfunction for our insight and application:

II. Overcoming Fallout From Family Dysfunction, Genesis 35:1-15.

A. We learned in our study of Genesis 34:1-31 of the troubling fallout of the dysfunction of Jacob's family:

1. Leah's daughter Dinah had foolishly left the protective environs of her family to walk unescorted into Canaanite country to visit pagan women only to be raped by the Canaanite prince Shechem, Gen. 34:1-2.
2. In response, Jacob's infuriated sons tricked the men of Shechem's town into being circumcised, and Levi and Simeon then slew the disabled men and took war spoils from the town, Genesis 34:3-29.
3. Jacob critiqued his sons Levi and Simeon for their slaughter, for he feared the rest of the Canaanites of the area would take vengeance against him for what his sons had done to the men of Shechem, Genesis 34:30.
4. Nevertheless, Levi and Simeon refused to feel remorse for what they had done, for they asserted that Shechem should not have treated their sister Dinah as a harlot, Genesis 34:31.
5. Jacob thus had his hands full of trouble with his calloused sons and angry Canaanite neighbors!

B. God then directed Jacob to align with His will for Jacob for blessing to overcome these troubles, Genesis 35:1.

1. The Lord told Jacob to go south from Shechem to Bethel and there make an altar to the Lord Who had appeared to him when he fled north to Padam-aram from his brother Esau, Genesis 35:1.
2. At that former event, God had graciously promised Jacob in a dream to extend the Abrahamic Covenant that He had made with Abraham and Isaac to Jacob himself, promising to protect Jacob where he was going and to bring him safely back to the Promised Land, Genesis 28:10-15.
3. When Jacob had awakened from the dream, he had vowed that if the Lord would protect and bless him so that he could return to his father's house, then the Lord would be his God, and Jacob would give a tenth of his possessions to the Lord, Genesis 28:16-22.
4. Thus, where family dysfunction had led to his current crisis with the Canaanites, God had Jacob recall his need to heed God in keeping his vow at Bethel to the Lord! As God saved him from Esau when he fled for his own past dysfunction, God would save him from the present fallout of his family's dysfunction!
5. Accordingly, Jacob told his family to put away all foreign gods, to change their clothes that were linked to any allegiance to pagan gods so they could go to Bethel and worship the Lord, Genesis 35:2-3a. Jacob told his family that God was the One Who had answered him in the day of his past distress, so He was the One they must honor now for His help in the current distress they faced with the Canaanites, Gen. 35:3b!
6. Jacob's family gave him all their foreign gods and the earrings they wore that were likely used as pagan fetishes and he buried them under the oak at Shechem before leaving the area for Bethel, Genesis 35:4.
7. Due to this commitment to the Lord, God caused the Canaanites of the land not to pursue Jacob and his family, making them afraid to harm Jacob's family as God thus protected that family, Genesis 35:5.
8. Upon arriving at Bethel that was initially called Luz, Jacob built an altar to the Lord and called the place "El-beth-el," or "(The) God of Bethel," for there the Lord had appeared to him to promise to bless him when he had initially fled from his brother Esau, Genesis 35:6-7.
9. Deborah, the nurse of Jacob's mother Rebekah, died at Bethel, so they buried her under the oak at Bethel and called it "Allon-bachuth," or "Oak of Weeping" (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Gen. 35:8).
10. God then renewed His Abrahamic Covenant with Jacob, adding that kings would come from his loins, and in rededication, Jacob set up another pillar of stone and offered drink offerings to the Lord, Gen. 35:9-15.

***Lesson**: To overcome threatening fallout from his family's dysfunction at Shechem, God had Jacob recall His help when Jacob fled from Esau due to his own former dysfunction to teach Jacob his need to heed the Lord as God for His protection in his current crisis with the Canaanites. As Jacob obeyed God, He guarded Jacob and his family.*

***Application**: May we overcome fallout from past family dysfunction by heeding God's will in our present lives.*