

# Genesis 35:1-29

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now then, in this, what will be the final section for now of our progress through this part of Genesis, the reason being that it concludes with the death of Isaac, and some of you will remember that we began this section looking at the wife for Isaac, and the beginning of Isaac's adulthood, we might say.

Yes, there had been Isaac previously in Abraham's section, as it were, the previous chapters that we had looked at, but really we're kind of looking at the different patriarchs and the subsequent stories that unfold, and what we found, of course, in these chapters is that Jacob's story folds over and becomes part of Isaac's life and story as well.

This, of course, is exactly how it is in real life. For however long we live, if we are parents or grandparents, our children's lives begin and go on while our life is still going on.

Our day is partially their day. Even if they may not come to their prime, overlapping with us, yet we still overlap our lives with theirs. And so this becomes the final chapter then in Isaac's life, but he's really only mentioned towards the end of it.

It is still about Jacob and his family. And as with other portions of Scripture, we see almost like life itself in microcosm here. We see blessings and we see sorrow and grief.

[ 1 : 24 ] And then we see joys and happiness intermingled with grief. And we see sin. And we see God strengthening and blessing still his people and reminding them of his faithfulness throughout.

The generations of men rise and pass away, but the Lord remains unchanging and faithful forever. And we have all of this, in a sense, in this chapter here.

Now you may remember that the previous chapter concluded with the deceits and the murder and theft carried out by at least two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, and their deceit of the Shechemites and their murder of all the males in their city, and how they carried off the wealth of the little ones, their wives, took them captive and spoiled even all that was in the house.

And then, Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, you have troubled me to make me distinct among the inhabitants of the land. They had entered into a covenant with them, and they had violated that covenant. They had murdered them.

They had shed innocent blood, or comparatively innocent blood, and they had broken faith with them. And now, as Jacob says, our reputation is going to stink in the nostrils, in the eyes of all those around us.

[ 2 : 37 ] We are dead men, effectively. They shall come gather to get themselves together against me and slay me, and I shall be destroyed, I and my house. And we saw at the end of the previous chapter, how this sort of defiance and unrepentant state of Simeon and Levi, should he deal with our sister, as with an harlot, you know, there's no reverence with our father here.

There's no sense of obedience or repentance for anything. Jacob is, we might say, losing control of his family. But we begin to see in this chapter, perhaps one of the reasons why that might be.

And the Lord steps in now at the beginning of this chapter, to seek to offer something of a remedy. God speaks into Jacob's situation.

Life seems to be falling apart. Everything is in tatters for Jacob. Here he is in the promised land, and yet now he is convinced all the inhabitants are about to destroy him and his extended family.

Because, understandably, because, they have violated a solemn oath. They have murdered a whole city of men, taken their wives and children captive, plundered their goods.

[ 3 : 49 ] They are a little better than murderers and bandits. They are murderers and bandits in this land to which the Lord has brought them. So God speaks into this situation. God said to Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there, and make thee an altar unto God that appeared unto thee when thou fledest from the face of Esau thy brother.

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. Now you see, when God speaks into this situation, when Jacob obeys, he recovers something of the authority that he had lost over his family.

God speaks, and Jacob begins at last to obey. And as he rises up to obey, then the authority with which God speaks becomes, almost in a sense, delegated to him as the head of this extended family.

He recovers something of his lost authority, something of his headship. He says, you know, Put away your false gods. We're going up to Bethel. And that's that.

And they all do it. They gave unto Jacob all the strange gods that were in their hand, their earrings that were in their ears. Jacob hid them under the oak that was in Shechem. So, when there is this previous weakness, there had been this weakness before, and helplessness in his present state.

[ 5 : 20 ] And the Lord is drawing attention to him. He says, You're going to Bethel. Remember Bethel when you had nothing? When you crossed the Jordan with the staff in your hand?

And you had nothing, and you turned to me then when I spoke to you. And look, I've blessed you. Look how I've brought you through all the years. And now here you are from having nothing. Here's all your material prosperity.

Here's all your wives and your children and your flocks and your herds. And here's all the plunder and the spoil, stained with the blood of the Shechemites. But look, you've got all this wealth. But where am I in all your thoughts?

Where am I in your ruling? Yes, you've got this weakness in your family, in yourself, this residual weakness and helplessness.

When you used to be helpless physically, you were strong in me. Now you're strong materially, but you're weak in relation to me. Even your family don't obey you now.

[ 6 : 18 ] So go back to Bethel. Go back to basics. Start, as it were, where you met with me before. And we'll try to put this back together again. You have great material blessings.

I have kept my part of the covenant. I have fed you. I have provided for you. I have brought you back to this land in peace. And remember, that was the covenant that Jacob entered into with the Lord.

He said, if God will, this is chapter 28, verse 20, if God will be with me, will keep me in this way that I will go, and will give me bread to eat and rain to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace.

Then shall the Lord be my God. And this stone which I have set for a pillow shall be God's house. Of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee. God has kept his words.

But Jacob has obviously failed somewhat in his. And here we have him giving his instructions then to the family, and the extended family, presumably now to the captives, the women and children of Shechem as well, because they will have worshipped false gods.

[ 7 : 25 ] They perhaps brought some of their false gods with them out of Shechem. And he says, put away the strange gods among you. Be clean, change your garments. Now, changing your clothes, of course, isn't going to make any difference to your relationship to the Lord.

But it was a symbolic act. The act of washing, being clean, putting on clean clothes, and putting away the defilement that was seen to sort of almost symbolically attach to what you had worn, what you had done, what you had touched, when you were in that state of idolatry.

Put it away. Wash those clothes. Change your clothes. Wash you, be you clean. As Isaiah says in chapter 1, verse 16, wash you, make you clean. Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes.

Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Seek judgment. Relieve the oppressed. Judge the fatherless. Plead for the widow. Now, in Jacob's camp now, there is a whole stash of widows, thanks to his sons.

A whole stash of the fatherless, whose fathers have been murdered by Jacob's own sons. You might say, oh, well, he shouldn't keep them now. He should send them back to Shechem. He should let them be free.

[ 8 : 35 ] Okay, let's hold that thought for a minute. Supposing he does. Supposing he sends them back to Shechem and says, no, no, you're not going to be captive with us. Off you go, we'll be free. Back they go to Shechem.

This city filled now with the stinking corpses of their menfolk, where there is no one to protect them, no one to provide for them, no one to feed them, or look after them.

They are going to be prey to every marauding bandit group that comes through the desert or comes upon their empty, open city. They are going to be captured by somebody.

They're going to be taken captive by somebody else or slaughtered or worse. By keeping them, Jacob at least acknowledges their need to protect them.

Their need to make them part of the extended family. Yes, the circumstances under which they have been brought are sinful. But here they are.

[ 9 : 31 ] This is the reality. What are you going to do now? Well, this is the reality. So what he's going to do is make them part of his extended family group, but they're going to be devoted, dedicated to the Lord.

You see, this is the reality that God deals with in our lives. We are ourselves not plaster saints. We are all sinners. We have all got histories.

We've all got a track record. We've all got things in our lives that we are ashamed of. God does not turn around to us and say, well, oh dear, you know, if only you hadn't done such and such, then maybe we could have done some business with your soul, but sorry, you're just too far gone.

Look at all this. You have no way. God is not interested in people who are supposedly crystal clean saints because there aren't such. All it means is that our sins are not so much on display.

He knows every detail of our history. Some of our histories are more public than others, but he knows every detail of our lives. He knows every secret sin of our hearts. God deals with the reality of your life, not with how it should have been or how it might have been or how we wish it would have been if we had it all to do again, but with the reality of where we are now and here we are now with all these Shethelite widows and orphans who have been made such because of Jacob's sons.

[ 10 : 56 ] What is he going to do? Send them back to starve or take care of them and look after them? And he goes for the latter, but if they're going to belong to him, they're going to be part of this family with him as the head, then they have got to become part of the Lord's people.

Put away the strange gods that are among you. Be clean. Change your garments. Make that outward symbolic gesture of putting away the filth and the idolatry of your old life and let us arise and go up to Bethel and I will make there an altar unto God who answered me in the day of my distress and was with me in the way which I went.

He has obviously neglected this duty. Why do we say that he's neglected it? Well, let's look ahead a couple of verses. When Jacob comes to Bethel here at Luz, verse 6, which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people that were with him, he built there an altar and called the place El Bethel, God of Bethel, because there God appeared unto him when he fled from the face to his brother.

But Deborah, Rebecca's nurse, died and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak and the name of it was called Alambachuth or the Oak of Weep and the Oak of Tears.

Rebecca's nurse, where did she come from? Well, there is previous mention of her, of course, if we go back far enough. We see in chapter 24 when Rebecca is first brought by Abraham's servant to be the wife of Isaac when he goes off to meet with Laban and the family.

[ 12 : 29 ] We see there in chapter 24 verse 59 they sent away Rebecca their sister and her nurse, that is this Deborah, and Abraham's servant and his men and they blessed Rebecca and said unto her to her sister we have the mother of thousands of millions that they see presents the gate of those which hate them.

Rebecca rose and her damsels and they rode upon the camels and followed them there. So her nurse, Deborah, obviously went with Rebecca. Now, a nurse who had looked after a child when it was an infant didn't then say, well, it's me done, I'm off to look for another family.

They stayed with the family. They were part of the extended family. The only reason that somebody would leave who had been the nurse for one of the women folk and now one of the chief's wife, as it were, which Rebecca would be, she has come from Syria with Rebecca.

In other words, she has been with Rebecca in Isaac's camp all this time, all these years. She must have been ancient by now. But why would she leave?

Why is she with Jacob's camp now instead of with Isaac's camp? Well, if we were to take the line that Jacob has only just arrived from across the Jordan and from Syria then after his encounter with Laban and with Esau then it doesn't make sense.

[ 13 : 45 ] But if, as was suggested in previous weeks, there's an awful lot of silence, years of silence have gone by. The Bible does not record what must have been Jacob's then journey south to Mount Seir to meet up with Esau like he promised that he would in the previous chapters.

He must have spent time with Esau there. He must have then traveled round to, round the end of the Dead Sea and up again to Mamre to Hebron to spend time with his father in his camp.

And at some point in these passing years Rebecca must have died. If Rebecca had not died her nurse would never have left Isaac's camp.

She would stay as long as her mistress was there. But now she's no longer in Isaac's camp. So Rebecca must now have died. We don't know how long ago, we don't know how many years will have passed.

We don't know how many years these chapters represent. But clearly for all the time that has been there Rebecca having died her nurse then would join herself to Jacob's camp.

[ 14 : 51 ] Why Jacob and not Esau? Because Jacob has wives and handmaids who are Syrian by birth and background. If they speak a different language then it will be the language of Rebecca's nurse.

She will be able to relate to Rachel and Leah and Bilha and Zilpah and their children. She will be able to help with the upbringing of the children when looking after the family affairs and so on.

She will almost as it were fit right in back into the women from the same family which she left herself so many years before. She will have a sense of affinity with Jacob's extent or women of Jacob's family in a way that she would not with Esau's and a way that she would no longer with Isaac's.

Everybody she knew in Isaac's camp would have long since departed this world. So here she is with Jacob's camp. But that means Jacob must have gone down to see Esau.

He must have seen his father. He must have picked up Deborah along the way because his mother is no longer living. None of that we are told about. And he must have continued to dwell in the promised land all this time.

[ 16 : 01 ] Many sons grew up in the incident with Dina and then the incident with the Shechemites. So she is trailing along here with Jacob's camp. In all these years we must conclude that had he ever returned to Bethel, had he ever reaffirmed his vows and restored again his relationship with the Lord, it would have been recorded.

Because the Bible doesn't record every single domestic detail. It doesn't record Rebecca's death. It doesn't record Leah's death. It doesn't record a lot of the things that happen and go on.

But it tends to record major encounters with the Lord between him and his patriarch servants. So if Jacob had come back to Bethel, if he had reaffirmed his vows, if he had gathered his people again around and said we are going to be devoted to the Lord, put away your strange gods, rededicate yourselves, that would have been recorded.

And it isn't. So after all these years, he has let things slide. He has let his relationship with the Lord be neglected.

And to some extent, he has leaped the bitter fruit of that. It is like a building that has been left to decay. Nobody came to smash it up with hammers.

[ 17 : 23 ] It's just as one storm after another ripped a few slates off and then it began to leak. And then the water got into the woodwork and started rot. And then a stray stone hit a window and cracked it and then the glass fell out and then the door began to rust and come off its hinges.

Little by little it decayed. And so likewise his relationship with the man little by little it just decayed. Nobody came and said we are stopping believing in the Lord.

Now he just let it slide. And as his relationship with the Lord became diluted over the years sin came in with his family with his people and wreaked the kind of violence and bloodshed and deceit that we saw there in chapter 34.

So if Rebecca's nurse is with them verse 8 and dying amongst them then she has clearly joined Jacob's camp. That means Rebecca's died.

That means he has been to see his father, been to see his mother no doubt in her lifetime. He has in other words been there in the country for years.

[ 18 : 29 ] But only now are they going up to Bethel. And they journeyed and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

And you might think well there was a missed opportunity they could have wiped them out. Yes on the other hand the Lord had put in their hearts this idea well this is an extended family this is a clan who wiped out an entire city almost single handedly.

Why? Because the prince of that city to whom everyone deferred and everyone just did everything he said and he was a big man and a big shot and they killed him and his father and all the men in the city.

Why? Because he slept with their sister. That's the kind of people you're dealing with. Do we really want to mess with these guys? Do we really want to attack them? This is what they do for that.

What will they do to us if we even attack them? We can speculate about what may have been in their hearts at the end of the day the Lord put the terror of God upon the cities that were round about them.

[ 19 : 32 ] So he came to Luz and all the people that were with him and built their own altar. The name Luz which is the area round about that comes from a root which either means to depart or turn aside or it can mean a place of particular trees of almond trees that can mean a multitude of almond trees which is in the land of Canaan.

But the locals wouldn't have called it Bethel that's Jacob the house of God that's what Bethel means. He built there an altar restoring the altar of course that was there and called it El Bethel God of Bethel because there God appeared unto him and we from the face of his blood.

God appeared a second time unto Jacob after they buried Deborah which appears to be not long after they arrived they haven't entered into this solemn covenant again yet they've just set up the altar they've just begun to get things organised and she dies.

Alan back with the oak of weeping a significant place. We find for example hundreds of years later this oak near Bethel almost certainly the same oak 1 Kings chapter 13 and verse 14 went after the man of God found him sitting under an oak that's just near Bethel because in 1 Kings 13 verse 11 there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel the words which he had spoken unto the king then they told to their father they said which way went he for his sons said the man of God went which came from Judah saddled him in the ass so they saddled him in the ass and he rode thereon and went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak now oak trees are big trees they are not so plentiful in the holy land that there's whole forests of them so where there's an oak in the midst of an otherwise you know bare or landscape it's a major landmark and oaks as we know live for hundreds and hundreds of years it is highly likely it's the same oak mentioned in first kings thirteen which is this al-bacuth under which

Deborah Rebecca's nurse is buried then the lord appears to Jacob again at Bethel i am god almighty in the hebrew it's el shaddai and of course we sometimes put that into modern songs el shaddai but the hebrew el shaddai means god all sufficient all powerful or almighty as it is here be fruitful and multiply a nation and a company of nations shall be of the kings shall come out of my loins now we've already seen the kind of children that Jacob has and we see a little later in the chapter what at least another of his sons gets up to they are not saints in the spiritual sense of the word and yet this is a nation raised up out of the loins of Jacob filled with ordinary sinful wayward fallen men and women and yet these are the people the lord chooses to make his nation out of them out of this fallen nation the lord will choose his own particular redeemed there will always be those who are the lord's even when the country is ruled by an ahab he will have his elijah and his elisha even when it is like sodom and gomorrah he will have his lot even when the world is given over to sin he will have his noah the lord will always have his people amongst the nations no matter how sinful they may be and jacob's children who become these nations are just as sinful as anybody else the land which i gave to abraham and isaac to thee will i give it and to thy seed after thee will i give the land and god went up from him in the place where he talked and he can almost imagine the sorrow of that as god takes his presence up from the altar jacob must be thinking oh no lord stay stay come on stay with us like peter on the mount of transfiguration let's build three booths here one for you one for mooses one for elijah let's keep it here let's keep this presence this spiritual kind of blessing lord stay stay with us but the lord is not going to stay because we must go on he encounters he gives us these spiritual encounters he gives us these times of blessing but life is not all just blessing life is not just all spiritual peace there are plenty of troughs there's plenty of grief in the midst of the joy jacob set up a pillar in the place we talked with it he in a pillar of stone and poured the drink off it and oiled it up the sorrow of god's departure and yet he has not forsaken him he has withdrawn for a time but still jacob is to go on with the lord they journeyed from bethel and there was but a little way to come to ephrah which means fruitful and rachel travailed and she had hard labour came to pass when she was in hard labour the midwife said to her fear not for thou shalt have this son also remember in chapter 30 verse 24 when she had joseph they said well the lord will add another son to you as well and here he is fulfilling his word it's our dying hours that god has kept his word you see we can't say to the lord oh god you didn't keep your word because you said you do this and you haven't done it and the lord if he were speaking back to us might say you haven't done it yet i said i would give it to you in your lifetime i said i would do this for you and i will do it i keep my word just as he kept his word to abraham and to sarah although he years and although he must have thought well it's too late now because neither of us can bear children anymore because we're past that stage and god does a miracle to bring it about little isaac still living at this point god does his miracles he keeps his promise god will add another son to you here's that other son it costs our life but god keeps his

[ 25 : 42 ] promise and whatever god promises to us he will deliver it may cost us our lives but what are we going to do with our lives other than give them to the lord what are we going to extend our lives on if not the eternity the lord has laid up for those that love him what are we going to do with the years that we have the lord has given us if not give them to him he has kept his promise and yet in the midst of this joy of his youngest son there is for jacob the grief of the death of his favorite wife she called his name ben omi son of my sorrow but his father called him benjamin son of the right hand either it could be taken as being son of days of my old age but it's usually taken as being a son of my right hand the great joy of this final gift from the lord in my family rachel died and was buried in the way to which is bethlehem probably the first dimension of bethlehem in the bible here it's associated here with a birth and of course we know the ultimate birth with which it is associated you see how the lord sends these if you like little little hints little forewarnings of all that he intends to do how he draws these things into the overall story now bethlehem it's about 15 miles south of bethlehem and bethlehem itself it's about 25 miles south of shechem now abraham jacob remember he had built an altar in shechem and he called it if we go to the end of chapter 33 el elohe israel god the god of israel and when he raised up the altar of bethlehem he called it el bethlehem the god of bethlehem he had an altar at shechem and he had an altar at bethlehem if you go back to chapter 12 of genesis you see that when abraham comes into the land the first time when abraham first enters the promised land at verses 6 and 7 and then at verse 8 of chapter 12 you see that abraham first built an altar in the holy land at shechem and then he built another altar near bethlehem and these same places the lord is bringing jacob back to again he is if you like that's like the waves crashing on the shore he brings it back and out again out and in again he brings his people back again to places where he has met with them before there is joy there is meeting with the lord there is sorrow and there is grief all intermingled together just like life but the background music to jacob's life here is the ongoing presence of the lord how in the world do people cope with the griefs and joys and sorrows and heartbreak of life without the lord there in their life i don't know personally i pity those who go through their lives with its griefs and separations and bereavements and sorrows and disappointments as well as its joys and encouragements as well but without the lord how empty and bleak and one-dimensional this world must be and he set up a pillar upon a grave that is the pillar of rachel's grave unto this day and that is mentioned again hundreds of years later first samuel chapter 10 when samuel is anointing saul to be the king in chapter 10 verse 2 of first samuel when thou art departed from me today thou shalt find two men by rachel's sepulcher in the border of benjamin at zelah that pillar was still remembered hundreds of years later there is still a muslim shrine in that area which is identified in the area of ebron as rachel's tomb near may not be exactly the same location but the point is she is still remembered there israel journeyed and spread his tent beyond the town of edar we don't know where that is in the holy land we

don't know how many years are passing now it came to pass when israel dwelt in that land reuben went up and lay with bilhah his father's concubine and israel heard it we don't read of reuben repenting we don't read of jacob casting him out of the family but we do know that what he has done here is the same kind of hideous offense that paul castigates the corinthians for that one should have his father's wife first corinthians 5 and he he yeah absolutely castigates them for that and says you cannot continue in the faith of christ with that kind of sin going on what fools men so often are where sexual sin is concerned reuben perhaps as the firstborn probably thought well my father's old you know when he dies everything's going to become mine including all the concubines and all the wives and so on we think well hang on that wouldn't happen would it well remember that in second samuel chapter 12 where the prophet nathan is speaking to david he says to him in verse 8 i gave thee thy master's hearts and thy master's wives into thy bosom and gave thee the house of

Israel of Judah and if that had been too little i would moreover have given unto thee such and such things there may have been tradition in those days that that whatsoever belonged to the master to the father when he died was inherited by the eldest son that would include the goods and chattels men's servants and maid servants he might have thought well bilhar she's not my biological mother what's the problem she's not even my biological mother's maid servant so i'm not sinning against my mother Leah or against Zilpah it's just Bilhar it doesn't really matter it's just an act it's a perfectly natural act i can compartmentalize that and say that's just one aspect of something i did it's not a big deal is it surely it doesn't really matter besides who's gonna know time and time again so many men fall on the basis of thinking it doesn't really matter nobody's going to know Israel heard it his father knew and you can be sure that things were never the same again because more than 27 years later 30 years later when Jacob is blessing his sons on his deathbed in Egypt in Genesis 49 we read these verses three and four Reuben thou art my firstborn my might in the beginning of my strength the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power unstable as water thou shalt not excel because thou wentest up to thy father's bed then defiled still it he went up to my couch 30 years later Jacob hasn't forgotten we might say he hasn't forgiven maybe he did forgive but the fact is the blot the stain is still there the damage to the relationship between father and son is still there unstable as water is that fair does it really matter a little act like that well on the one hand you could say oh no that's compartmentalized i'm still the same person i was maybe that's part of the problem because where men cannot control themselves in these things the likelihood is that that inability to take seriously major decisions how they operate in business and affairs of state and matters of great moment are likewise undermined not many of us will have been around when the abdication crisis was afflicting this country in 1936 now what was the situation there you had a man who was king in the days when this country still had an empire he was king emperor he ruled a quarter of the globe and yet he said himself in his abdication speech he could not discharge the duties that were to be laid upon him without the support of the woman that he loved a woman who was already somebody else's wife and had been somebody else's wife before that and with whom undoubtedly he had been carrying on an affair the same kind of principle made that king unstable as water because he went to somebody else's marital bed took somebody else's wife and this is what happens here it damages Reuben it damages Israel now the sons of Jacob were 12 but the narrative moves on and this is the first listing that we have of all the sons of Jacob complete they are frequently mentioned as the tribes of Israel right through the rest of scripture through the Old Testament and on into the book of Revelation in Revelation 21 it mentions that the 12 tribes of Israel and this is who it's referring to this is the first time that it's been complete with Benjamin and there as well and they're all listed there Leah's children Rachel's children Bilhar and so the tribe is now complete

in that sense for the 12 tribes are now complete and by the time we get to verse 27 jacob will have been probably back in the promised land for something like 60 years he comes to his father isaac in mamra where abraham and isaac sojourned in the days of isaac for a hundred and four score years and isaac gave up the goats and died was gathered unto his people the old and for days and his sons esau and jacob buried him now we see again god's faithfulness and that esau had vowed so many years before when my father dies i'm gonna kill jacob but by now the lord has changed his heart the years have passed the lord has blessed both esau and jacob in different ways because we know that isaac was 60 years old when the twins were born we know that if he's 180 they must both jacob and esau be 120 that means that there is 10 years to go before jacob goes down into the land of egypt in other words the famine is about to start unbeknown to them what this means is that by the time we get to isaac's death if you do the maths joseph has already been in egypt for 12 years he has already been sold into slavery he is already there potiphar's house and so on and then in the prison court he has already been there for 12 years by the time jacob goes down into egypt and stand before pharaoh and says all thy servants 130 years old that's just 10 years away from this point isaac's death so we know now that jacob is 120 here he's 147 when he dies so you do all the maths and you realize that joseph is already down there the story has already begun it's going on we haven't been told it yet in the bible narrative but it is already underway and you see this is the the rolling of the waves onto the shore isaac's life is pronounced complete jacob's life is mostly over by this stage but the next phase of the story it's not just started it's already well on the way before this one's even finished do you see a little gloom seal why a lifetime isn't enough we need an eternity we need an eternity to be able to get the full joy and dimension and appreciation of the wave upon rolling wave of the generations to see what the lord is going to do and how he's going to bring in his gracious works from generation to generation our days though they may be long they won't be as long as i was but here they are though they may be long yet we want to see the next generations and what they will do and what the lord will do with them we want to see them unfold as what a lifetime is not enough even if the bible were not true which of course we know is even if there were no heaven no hell which of course there is but even if it was simply a case if you live your life you fill your years you die that's it how tragic and sad is that how tragic and sad and unsatisfying in the deep and personal and spiritual sense because we want to go further we want to reach on we want to know more we want the next bit of the story to be told we want to be able to hear it and know it and drink it in because it's already underway joseph has already been in egypt for 12 years by the time we reach this verse 29 the next phase of the story it's well underway

it's well unfolding don't you want to be able to know what happens in the end don't you want to be in glory to be able to see as the generations come bursting through the door of grandchildren and great-grandchildren and subsequent generations who will be the lords perhaps some of them won't be many of them won't be just like many of our failed forebears wouldn't have been but there are those who will be those who will we will see if we are there in glory with the lord a lifetime is not enough but the lord in his mercy offers us eternity offers us an eternal life with him not just a hundred and eighty years like isaac has not just 12 tribes and 12 sons although none of us have really got that and we don't have a hundred and eighty years we have a hundred and eighty million billion trillion eternal years with the lord if we are his and still it won't be enough because we can never get too much of the lord and even in this world how can we go a day without him jacob's most blessed times will be when he is with the lord at bethel and elsewhere when the lord comes down and speaks to him and the same will be true of us when the lord as and when the lord deals with our souls speaks to us in our lives these are the times most blessed we would keep them there if we could we would stop time right there if we could we would stay in his presence forever and this is the great promise you can but not here and not for now that eternal unchangeable state of bliss that is what the lord holds out to us for all eternity we have a few short years yes of evil past here but even here as david says in psalm 27 one thing have i desired of the lord that will i seek after that i may dwell in the house of the lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the lord to inquire in his temple what is the house of the lord it is our bethel house of god that is where the lord invites us to be with him for all eternity to abide with us for time to guide us through the heartbreak yes the grief yes where even your joys in children and grandchildren can turn sour when they sin and when they violate the most sacred trusts when they murder when they deceive when they bring shame on yourself your family and all your relations all of us are guilty before god we all have skeletons in our cupboards we all have blood in our hands but the lord deals with us as we are in the midst of our reality and from this fallen reality the lord offers us a blessed eternity because you may rest assured that as with the end of this chapter so with our lives as they go on to their conclusion the next phase of the story is already unfolding somewhere else it'sos