

The Results of Disobedience

33:18 to 34:31

God had commanded **Jacob** to go back to **Bethel** (31:3 and 13) and **Ya'akov** had vowed to do so (28:20). But when **he** crossed back into the Promised Land **he** decided to linger in **Succoth** and **Shechem** for several years. Nowhere did **Jacob** seek **God** about **his** decision, and indeed, there is no mention of **God** in this entire section. The pastures of **Succoth** and **Shechem** were green, and **his** possessions had increased to the point where movement was difficult. So **Ya'akov** settled down to what **he** thought was the simple life, having either put off or put aside the fulfillment of **God's** promise to **him**. But there was a worldly cancer that spread into the family of **Jacob** that was not seen in the family of Abraham or of Isaac. The two previous patriarchs had their problems, but nothing like we see in **Jacob's** family.⁵¹⁵

Sometimes when we come off of a mountaintop experience, we meet the cruel cold reality of the world and we are unprepared for it. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, the people had molded a golden calf to worship; after Elijah defeated the prophets of Ba'al on Mount Carmel, he fell into a deep depression and after David defeated the Philistines and the Ammonites, reigning over all of Isra'el, and doing what was right for all his people, he became an adulterer and a murderer. King Solomon was the wisest man in the world and built **God's** Temple; however, later in his life he became convinced that all was meaningless after his heart was turned to the gods of his many wives. Likewise, **Jacob** had wrestled with **God** and had finally received his blessing in the right way, but then he put **God** on the back burner.

This was **the man** who had seen **the face of God**! This was **the man** through whom **ADONAI** had promised that **all the peoples of the earth would be blessed**! This was **the man** who wanted the patriarchal blessing, which included being the spiritual leader of the family. And this was **the man** whom **God's** goodness and mercy had followed all the days of **his** life! But **he** was also **the man** who was in spiritual decline at **Shechem**.⁵¹⁶ It is always the same. There is only one way to coast spiritually, that's downhill, and **Jacob** was coasting.