

## Genesis 33

This chapter concludes the unfinished story between Jacob and Esau. In the process, it shows how God has blessed Jacob and been present in his life. The last paragraph segues into the story of Dinah in chapter 34.

### TRANSLATION - 33:1-16:

**1** Then Jacob lifted his eyes and saw and behold Esau was coming and with him four hundred men and he divided the children to Leah and to Rachel and to the two maids. **2** And he put the maids and their children at the head and Leah and her children after them and Rachel and Joseph after them. **3** So he crossed before them and bowed to the earth seven times to approach his brother. **4** And Esau ran to meet him and he embraced him and fell on his neck and he kissed him and they wept.

**5** Then he lifted his eyes and saw the women and the children and he said, "Who [are] these with you?" And he said, "The children whom God graciously gave your servant." **6** Then the maids stepped forward, they and their children and they bowed. **7** Then Leah stepped forward and her children and they bowed and afterward, Joseph stepped forward and Rachel bowed.

**8** Then he said, "Who for you [are] all this gift which I met?" And he said, "In order to find grace in your eyes, my lord."

**9** Then Esau said, "There is to me a multitude, my brother. Let yours be to you what [is] yours." **10** Then Jacob said, "No, please. If, please, I have found grace in your eyes, then take it, my gift, from my hand because therefore I have seen your face like the face of God and you have received me favorably. **11** Take, please, my blessing which has been brought to you by God and that there is to me all." And he urged him and he took.

**12** Then he said, "Let us break camp and let us go. Let me go before you."

**13** Then he said to him, "My lord, knowing that the children [are] weak and the flock and the cattle nursing on me and they drove hard for a day then all the flock will die. **14** Let cross, please, my lord before me, his servant. Then I, myself, will mosey along, gentle to the feet of the work which [is] before me and to the feet of the children until which I come to my lord at Seir."

**15** So Esau said, "Let me set, please, your people with the people who with me." And he said, "What is I have found grace in your eyes, my lord." **16** So Esau returned in that day to his path, to Seir.

### WORDS:

"To divide" (verse 1) means to "divide into" and is used 15 times. "To graciously give" (verse 5; 77 times) is related to the word "grace." It means "to be gracious, show favor, or compassion." "To receive favorably" (verse 10; 48 times) is all one word. It can mean "to be pleased with, accept with pleasure, or become friends with." "He urged" (verse 11) is not found frequently (7 times), but it was seen in 19:3, 9. These will be its only uses in Genesis.

### COMMENTS:

Jacob does not yet know what Esau's thoughts and intentions are (cf. 27:41-45). When Jacob saw Esau coming, as his messengers had said, with four hundred men, he divided his group. Those who were least attached to him, the maids and their children, were put to the front. Leah was next and then Rachel, his preferred wife. Yet, in contrast to the prior chapter (32:17-21), here Jacob goes in front, taking the lead, perhaps with renewed encouragement after his encounter with God. Jacob showed extreme deference to his brother by bowing down seven times before him.

Verse 4 reveals the depth of love and the power of forgiveness we see in Esau. He ran to Jacob. He embraced him. He "fell on his neck," kissed him, and then the two wept. "Falling

on one's neck" is an idiom to reflect the intensity of the embrace between the brothers. Then Esau asks of the women and children and Jacob responds with a "theology of children" response: "The children whom God has graciously given your servant." Then each individual group came to Esau and bowed before him, showing their honor and respect to their uncle.

Esau then asked about the gifts Jacob had sent ahead of him and Jacob responded that it was to receive grace in the eyes of his brother. Jacob knew that he did not deserve the warm embrace of his brother, and yet he hoped for it. Being a wealthy man in his own right, at first Esau turns the gift down. Jacob insists, all the more reason because he did find grace in Esau's eyes. To see Esau, with the attitude which he had, was to Jacob as if he had seen God face to face (32:30), which he had in the prior paragraph. Jacob informs Esau that God had blessed him and so Jacob wanted to share those blessings with his brother. Apparently after even more urging, Esau accepted the gift. Observe at verse 11 that the Hebrew word for "gift" (as many translations translate it) is actually the word "blessing" as we have translated it.

Finally, Esau encouraged them all to continue their journey, but Jacob felt that he had driven the cattle, not to mention the children, too hard over the past few days. Any harder driving would kill the flocks. So Jacob encouraged Esau to go on ahead of him and Jacob would proceed leisurely, as the cattle and children could maintain. At some point, Jacob said, he would see Esau in Seir. Some commentators suggest Jacob is lying since we have no record of Jacob visiting Esau at Seir, yet we do not have a complete record of all the patriarchs did, so he may have visited with him at some point which is not recorded. Additionally, plans may have changed and Jacob might not have been able to visit his brother in Seir. There are certainly other possibilities besides impugning the motives of a man of whom we have so little record.

Esau offered to leave some of his own servants with Jacob, but the little brother did not see a need of that. Therefore, Esau returned to his home in Seir.

#### APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - There are beautiful words in verse 5 spoken of children. Jacob believes God has given the children; they are His gracious gift.

*Later Hebrew writers* - The psalms also present children as gifts from God (Psalms 127 and 128).

#### TRANSLATION - 33:17-20:

**17** So Jacob broke camp toward Succoth and he built for himself a house and at that place he made booths; therefore he called the name of the place Succoth. **18** So Jacob came in peace to the city of Shechem which [was] in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram and he encamped toward the city. **19** Then he bought a parcel of the field which he spread out there his tent from the hand of the sons of Hamor, father of Shechem, for one hundred *quesitas*. **20** Then he erected there an altar and he called to Him, God, the God of Israel.

#### WORDS:

"Succoth" (verse 17) and "booths" are related words. It is generally translated "booth or tabernacle." The word is used 31 times and is mostly associated with the "Feast of Booths." Jacob names yet another place. "To encamp" (verse 18; 143 times) means to "decline, camp, encamp, pitch camp, lay siege." *Quesitas* is left untranslated because we do not know what type of money it was. The term is found also in Joshua 24:32 and Job 42:11.

"God" (*EI*) as a name for God (the shortened form for the typical *Elohim*) is used 192 times and, like the plural form, can refer to false gods. Here is the first time we have the designation the "God of Israel" which will be used a total of 404 times in the OT.

#### ARCHEOLOGY:

Succoth is found 19 times. This is its only use in Genesis. It is mostly used in the book of Judges, chapter 8. Shechem is found 58 times. We saw it in 12:6 where Abraham stopped on his way into Canaan. Shechem was on the highway running north from Egypt into Damascus, passing through Beersheba and Jerusalem.

#### COMMENTS:

Jacob traveled to Succoth (20 miles further west) and built a house there and made booths for his livestock. The Hebrew word for “booths” is “Succoth.” Eventually, Jacob travelled on to Shechem and he camped there near the city. Just as Abraham had bought a parcel of land (for a grave site), so Jacob buys land as well, where he could pitch his tent. As with Abraham, this purchase illustrates Jacob’s confidence that his family will inherit the land. The land was bought from Shechem’s father, the sons of Hamor, for one hundred pieces of money. We do not know what the value of this “money” was since this Hebrew word is only found three times in the Scriptures. Hamor and Shechem are introduced into the account because they serve an important role in the next chapter.

At Shechem, Jacob built an altar and called on the name of Jehovah God, whom he designates: “God, the God of Israel.” Jacob is fulfilling his vow he made in 28:21. The God with whom he wrestled was now his God. Jacob and Esau will meet again when their father passes from this life (35:27-29).

#### APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - Jacob has been blessed by God, with the birthright and blessing of his father, while in Padan Aram for twenty years, with multiple appearances of angels of God, and with a warm and receptive reception by his brother. Jacob is learning that God fulfills His promises.

*Contemporaries of Moses* - The bones of Joseph will be carried out of Egypt and buried in the land of Jacob (Josh. 24:32).

*NT writers* - Jacob will build a well here, where Jesus will talk with a woman about living water (John 4:5-6).