

INTRODUCTION

- Jacob is returning to the Land of Canaan after 20 years and if you remember, the reason he left was because his twin brother Esau promised to kill Jacob after their father Isaac had died
- The issue between Jacob and Esau is still alive as far as Jacob is concerned after 20 years
- Thus as Jacob enters the land of Canaan he sends messengers to Esau to let Esau know he is sorry for what has happened between them

Genesis 32:3–5 (NKJV)

³ Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. ⁴ And he commanded them, saying, “Speak thus to my lord Esau, ‘Thus your servant Jacob says: “I have dwelt with Laban and stayed there until now. ⁵ I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.” ’ ”

- The word “favor” is the Hebrew word “hen” and it’s used in reference to someone is requesting or asking for kindness, compassion or mercy
- Jacob is asking Esau to be forgiving towards him

Genesis 32:6–8 (NKJV)

⁶ Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, “We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and four hundred men *are* with him.” ⁷ So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that *were* with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies. ⁸ And he said, “If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the other company which is left will escape.”

- Esau is coming with 400 men and Jacob is greatly afraid (it means he had a feeling of dread come over him) and he is greatly distressed (it means it was all he could think of)... what am I going to do?
- He divides his company into 2 groups as a defensive measure
- It would be impractical to run because he has small children and livestock so in the event of an attack, he is looking to minimize his loss
- After Jacob exhausts all his strategies... he calls upon the LORD

I like something that Oswald Chambers said...

We tend to use prayer as a last resort, but God wants it to be our first line of defense. We pray when there's nothing else we can do, but God wants us to pray before we do anything at all. Most of us would prefer, however, to spend our time doing something that will get immediate results. We don't want to wait for God to resolve matters in His good time because His idea of "good time" is seldom in sync with ours.

- An observation I've made after 40 plus years of ministry
- I've never heard any complain because they prayed too much
- But I have heard many wish they had prayed more
- Jacob just left "God's Camp" in vs. 1 and by vs. 7 he's paralyzed
- Maybe you've been there... gone from feeling like God is your best friend and with you to feeling like you're facing your worst fears alone

Genesis 32:9–12 (NKJV)

⁹ Then Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you': ¹⁰ I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies. ¹¹ Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me *and* the mother with the children. ¹² For You said, 'I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.' "

Notice how Jacob prays...

- He refers to God as Elohim (The Creator God of Power)
- But it's the God of my father Abraham and my father Isaac... not my God
- And the LORD or "YHWH" who said to me... the Covenant making God
- He now reminds God of the deal God made with him
- Jacob says... I'm doing what you told me to do, now do what you said you would do
- You said you will deal "well" with me or "do good" to me
- He says... I am not worthy meaning "I am small, insignificant"
- Often people say... God is too busy dealing with real problems like ending world hunger... my problems are insignificant, He doesn't care out my problems

- Jacob is saying the same thing... my problems are insignificant, not deserving of all the “mercies” (Hebrew “chesed” or “grace”) and of all the “truth” (Hebrew “faithfulness”)
- I left Canaan with just my staff and now I’ve returned with 2 companies (really only 1, but he’s divided it and now he’s asking for double protection)
- Jacob asks the LORD to deliver him, rescue him, save him
- NOTE: In the Hebrew mindset, salvation was always immediate
- In the Western mindset we make salvation a future thing... I’m saved and now I’m going to heaven
- The Hebrews always saw salvation in terms of deliverance from physical danger... enemies, sickness, poverty, oppression, captivity to Babylon, bitterness in families
- In the New Testament we add the dimension of the afterlife but it was never meant to replace the Hebrew understanding of salvation but to complete it... the physical reveals the spiritual
- The only One with the power to save is the LORD who is Jesus Christ
- Jacob is calling on the LORD... what does Paul say? Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Romans 10:13) not only in a spiritual sense, but in a physical sense in real time

Genesis 32:13–21 (NKJV)

¹³ So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother: ¹⁴ two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, ¹⁵ thirty milk camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten foals.

¹⁶ Then he delivered *them* to the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, “Pass over before me, and put some distance between successive droves.” ¹⁷ And he commanded the first one, saying, “When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, saying, ‘To whom do you belong, and where are you going? Whose *are* these in front of you?’ ¹⁸ then you shall say, ‘They *are* your servant Jacob’s. It *is* a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also *is* behind us.’ ” ¹⁹ So he commanded the second, the third, and all who followed the droves, saying, “In this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him; ²⁰ and also say, ‘Behold, your servant Jacob *is* behind us.’ ” For he said, “I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me.” ²¹ So the present went on over before him, but he himself lodged that night in the camp.

- Now Jacob implements a final tactic... a diplomatic initiative to soften Esau's hostility towards him
- He sends 3 waves of tribute to Esau, each wave increasing in value and surprise, separated by distance to create anticipation
- A total of 550 animals
- Jacob instructs them on what to say when they arrive and after all the gifts arrive Jacob is hoping Esau will forgive him when they meet

Genesis 32:22–32 (NKJV)

²² And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok. ²³ He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. ²⁴ Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. ²⁵ Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. ²⁶ And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" ²⁷ So He said to him, "What *is* your name?" He said, "Jacob." ²⁸ And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed." ²⁹ Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell *me* Your name, I pray." And He said, "Why *is* it *that* you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there. ³⁰ So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." ³¹ Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip. ³² Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which *is* on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank.

Jacob is preparing to meet Esau

- He crosses the Jabbok river (referred to by the Arabs as the "blue river") at a shallow and narrow point to move (called a ford) from the northern to the southern side of the river
- Before bridges, they would lay down stepping stones or timber to walk across and to do this at night suggests Jacob is still taking defensive measures against attack and gain a psychological advantage
- After all of Jacob's entourage has crossed the river, he is alone
- That is when he is met with by a mysterious man who Jacob later recognizes as the LORD Jesus (Penuel means the Face of God)

- The man wrestles with Jacob until morning
- It's interesting because there is a play on words here...
- Wrestle is the Hebrew word "yeabeq" and so we have Yacob Yeabeq'ing at the Yabok river
- When morning comes, the mysterious man delivers a sudden, powerful blow to the hollow of Jacob's hip (acetabulum), the cup-shaped socket in the hipbone and strains (not dislocates) Jacob's hip
- But Jacob won't let go until the man gives him a blessing
- So the LORD asks Jacob... what is your name?
- Names are significant in the Bible because the Hebrews believed names were given by God and represented a man's character or God's plan for that person's life
- Often names were given as a memorial to a respected loved one or an event that occurred at the time of one's birth
- Another way to ask this question... who are you?
- Jacob answered... "heel catcher, over reacher, one who trips up, one to follows closely to supersede and replace (this implies a filling of a place once occupied by something lost, destroyed or no longer usable)
- In other words... Jacob is an opportunist and that is how he identifies himself
- God changes his identity, gives him a new name... your name will no longer be called "opportunist" but Israel (governed by God) for you have struggled with God and man and have prevailed

Interesting perspective

- There are many who struggle with God and lose
- They give up on God, they give into the lies of the world, they don't prevail
- There are many who struggle with man and lose
- They give into men's opinions of them, peer pressure, they don't prevail
- But to arrive at a place of faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone, to not be controlled by the fear of man is to prevail
- And because Jacob has prevailed and come to a place of faith in the LORD, overcoming the fear of man

Jacob asks the LORD to tell him his name and the LORD answers...

- Why is it that you ask about My name?

- The Rabbi's teach that any attempt to discover the identity of a divine being is turned aside... but I don't believe that is what is implied
- I believe the LORD is saying... haven't you figured out who I am by now? Are you still wondering? Are you still unaware?
- Remember in Genesis 28 Jacob was unaware of God's Presence and after several dreams, visitations with angels Jacob is still unaware
- And just as God blessed Jacob in Genesis 28 God blesses him in Genesis 31 and Jacob finally gets it... I have seen the face of God
- Jacob calls the name of the place... the face of God because he saw the face of God and lived
- His expression... "my life is preserved" speaks of the intensity of this encounter...

The utterly overwhelming nature of the mysterious contact with the awesome majesty of the transcendent yet immanent God. Nahum M. Sarna, [Genesis](#), The JPS Torah Commentary, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 228.

- Exodus 33:20 God says no man will see my face and live... so what has changed? Exodus 20... the law is given
- Once the law is given, man's relationship comes under the law but Jacob sees the LORD before the law is given (by faith)

The Jews have developed a doctrine of struggle from this passage

- They associate the name Israel with struggle and triumph in the face of overwhelming odds
- The earliest mention of Israel is a victory hymn by King Merneptah of Egypt (1207 BCE) who reports Israel is laid to waste, his seed is not"
- The second is a victory inscription of King Mesha of Moab (ca. 830 BCE) which declares Israel has perished forever
- The name Israel itself comes from the stem that means to strive and thus they embrace the idea that knowing God is a struggle

Vs. 32 reveals to us a Jewish tradition

- They do not eat the muscle that shrank which is on the hip socket
- This indicates Jacob's injury was permanent

Genesis 33:1–5 (NKJV)

33 Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants. ² And he put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last. ³ Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. ⁴ But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. ⁵ And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, “Who *are* these with you?” So he said, “The children whom God has graciously given your servant.”

- Immediately after Jacob has this life changing encounter with God he sees Esau with an army of 400 men
- The difference this time is Jacob’s absence of fear
- He places his kids with their moms in order to present them to Esau
- Then he bows 7 times (literally lies prostrate on the ground) which is what you would when meeting a King (Jacob humbles himself)
- Esau is moved by Jacob’s humility and runs up to meet him, embrace him, hug him, kiss him and they wept together
- Then Jacob introduces his family to Esau

Genesis 33:5–12 (NKJV)

⁵ And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, “Who *are* these with you?”

So he said, “The children whom God has graciously given your servant.”

⁶ Then the maidservants came near, they and their children, and bowed down. ⁷ And Leah also came near with her children, and they bowed down.

Afterward Joseph and Rachel came near, and they bowed down. ⁸ Then Esau said, “What *do* you *mean by* all this company which I met?” And he said, “*These are* to find favor in the sight of my lord.” ⁹ But Esau said, “I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.” ¹⁰ And Jacob said, “No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me. ¹¹ Please, take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.” So he urged him, and he took *it*. ¹² Then Esau said, “Let us take our journey; let us go, and I will go before you.”

- The etiquette of the Near Eastern culture requires Esau to make a show of refusing the gift and Jacob to press it on him
- This was to insure the gift was sincere to give the appearance that the recipient accepts it reluctantly
- This also gives Jacob the opportunity to be gracious to Esau with his words... seeing you is like seeing the face of God and you don't come to God empty handed...
- Please accept my gift because God has been gracious with me and because I have enough... really that is the attitude of giving
- God is gracious and He has blessed me with enough
- Now technically Esau is supposed to reciprocate, but he doesn't which suggests according to their culture that Esau recognizes they are settling their differences, not just exchanging civilities

Genesis 33:13–17 (NKJV)

¹³ But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children *are* weak, and the flocks and herds which are nursing *are* with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die. ¹⁴ Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant. I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me, and the children, are able to endure, until I come to my lord in Seir." ¹⁵ And Esau said, "Now let me leave with you *some* of the people who *are* with me." But he said, "What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord." ¹⁶ So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. ¹⁷ And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, built himself a house, and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

- Esau assumes that Jacob was on his way to pay him a visit, so he offers to travel together (Jacob is still working it)
- However, Jacob never intended to visit Esau and delicately disengages from Esau and after Esau leaves Jacob heads north back across the Jabbok River to Succoth (tabernacle) which is near Peniel
- Succoth is located on a road that connects Canaan with a major trade route that ran north to south from Damascus

Genesis 33:18–20 (NKJV)

¹⁸ Then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which *is* in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and he pitched his tent before the city. ¹⁹ And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent,

from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money. ²⁰ Then he erected an altar there and called it El Elohe Israel.

- After a brief stay at Succoth, Jacob returns to Canaan to a city named Shechem and here he buys a parcel of land from the children of Hamor
- Abraham purchased the Cave of Macpela when he first came to Shechem in Genesis 23 and now Jacob purchases a plot of land
- Thus we have Israel's right to the land first as given by God who owns the land, then legal through Abraham's purchase and the purchase of wells, then expanded by Jacob's land purchase
- This is important because the claim of the Palestinians to the land is completely unfounded... the Bible is us a legal document and gives us a legal record of the transactions in the land
- Jacob also erects an altar on the land and called it El Elohe Israel... the Mighty God Of Israel

Genesis 34:1–10 (NKJV)

34 Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. ² And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her. ³ His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young woman and spoke kindly to the young woman. ⁴ So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young woman as a wife." ⁵ And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter. Now his sons were with his livestock in the field; so Jacob held his peace until they came. ⁶ Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. ⁷ And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard *it*; and the men were grieved and very angry, because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, a thing which ought not to be done. ⁸ But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as a wife. ⁹ And make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters to yourselves. ¹⁰ So you shall dwell with us, and the land shall be before you. Dwell and trade in it, and acquire possessions for yourselves in it."

- One of the characteristics of the inhabitants of Canaan is the sexual depravity that is the result of their godless society

- Dinah, places herself in danger by leaving the encampment unchaperoned to see the “daughters of the land”, to hang out with people her own age, to visit and see the sights
- Curiosity is dangerous when you’re curious about the things of the world
- Dinah’s curiosity puts her in a situation where she is raped, violated by a rich, aristocratic ruler (prince) of the city-state of Shechem
- In other words, although Dinah put herself in harms way she did not consent to sexual relations
- The use of the word violated suggest that the entire community is infected by this evil deed done against Dinah
- The word “disgraceful” in vs. 7 is a powerful word that speaks of an offense that is so abhorrent that it threatens to tear apart the fabric of Israel (the first use of the name as a nation) and cannot go unpunished

Genesis 34:11–17 (NKJV)

¹¹ Then Shechem said to her father and her brothers, “Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you say to me I will give. ¹² Ask me ever so much dowry and gift, and I will give according to what you say to me; but give me the young woman as a wife.” ¹³ But the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully, because he had defiled Dinah their sister. ¹⁴ And they said to them, “We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that *would be* a reproach to us. ¹⁵ But on this *condition* we will consent to you: If you will become as we *are*, if every male of you is circumcised, ¹⁶ then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us; and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. ¹⁷ But if you will not heed us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone.” The Prince wants to marry Dinah and Jacob gives the impression that he is favorable towards this marriage on one condition... they are circumcised

- The Prince wants to marry Dinah and we see in this passage some insight on how marriage customs are developed in the Bible

In Genesis 2, God brings Eve to Adam (the language implies Eve was willing to come) and they become one flesh (through sexual relations)

- The moment Adam and Eve were intimate God considered them married and from that point forward they are one flesh

- Genesis 24 Eleazar goes to Abraham's homeland and brings back Rebekah (who comes willingly) to be Isaac's wife
- Isaac takes Rebekah into his mom's tent and they have sexual relations and she became Isaac's wife
- No ceremony, no pronouncement... God considered them one flesh from that point forward
- Genesis 29 Jacob goes to Abraham's homeland and takes Leah and Rachel to be his wives but this time we see the beginning of a tradition
- When Leah becomes Jacob's wife they are to celebrate and be intimate with each other for one week, after which Jacob was free to take Rachel
- We also see the mention of a dowry in Genesis 31:15 where Leah and Rachel say their father Laban has spent their money... the money he made off Jacob who worked 20 years for his daughters
- The purpose of the dowry was to pay for the daughters in the event something happened to Jacob and they had to return home
- Both Leah and Rachel agree to be Jacob's wives
- Now we come to Dinah and this is the first time that someone is violated which means she did not consent to be the Prince's wife
- Thus the Prince took her against her will and she probably went along with it in fear of losing her life.
- Nevertheless, the Prince wants to marry Dinah (probably his intent all along) and his father (Shechem) offers a dowry and a gift
- He also offers to make a trade agreement with Jacob
- But there are several problems... (1) The crime done against Dinah must be punished (2) Jacob did not want Dinah to be married to a Canaanite... but a young man from Abraham's homeland
- And thus, Jacob's sons plot revenge for their sisters violation
- We will also see how Jacob's sons have picked up on their father's ways of doing things and use deception to render justice for Dinah's violation
- It's a reminder that our kids don't listen to what we say as much as they listen to what we do... our lives speak louder than our words
- So we will finish the study with this cliff hanger and pick it up next time...