



Genesis – 33:1-20
Forgiven!
(Lesson #42)

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Outline for this week:

- Jacob arranges his family to meet Esau (33:1-2)
- Jacob and Esau meet (33:3-4)
- Esau enquires about all the women and children (33:5)
- Jacob introduces Esau to each group (33:6-7)
- Esau enquires about the droves he saw earlier (33:8)
- Jacob implores Esau to take his gift (33:9-11)
- Esau offers to lead Jacob’s group into the land (33:12-14)
- Jacob indicates that he does not need any assistance (33:15)
- Esau returns home (33:16)
- Jacob goes to Succoth (33:17)
- Jacob settles outside Shechem (33:18-19)
- Jacob builds an altar (33:20)

Jacob’s Timeline

Event	Jacob’s Age	Genesis
Jacob’s grandfather Abraham dies	15	25:7
Jacob sent to Laban in Haran	77	28:5
Jacob marries Leah and Rachel	84	29:21-30
Jacob fathers Joseph with Rachel	91	30:22-24
Jacob flees from Laban to Canaan	97	Ch. 31
Jacob’s son Joseph is sold into slavery	108 / Jos -17	37:12-36
Jacob’s father Isaac dies	120/ Is - 180	35:28-29
Jacob reunites with Joseph and moves his family to Egypt	130 / Jos -39	47:28
Jacob dies	147	47:28

33:1 *And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two female servants. 2 And he put the servants with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all. 3 He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.*

Vs 1 - As best we understand this Jacob is now traveling south towards Mt Seir, traveling in the direction that he knows will bring him into contact with Esau, he sees in the distance a man coming and hundreds of men are coming with him.

I would guess they are riding camels or donkeys, we do not know, but Jacob sees them in the distance, he knows that it is Esau.

Here Jacob places in **distinct groups** the **children along with their mothers:**

Jacob takes Bilhah along with Dan and Naphtali.

Jacob takes Zilpah along with Gad and Asher.

Jacob takes Leah along with Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah.

Jacob takes Rachel along with Joseph.

Vs 2 - In the lead (the front) group he placed, Bilhah along with Dan and Naphtali as well as Zilpah along with Gad and Asher.

In the second group he placed, Leah along with Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah.

In the third and final group he placed, Rachel along with Joseph. Just an interesting note, so that you see it. The **only son** named here in chapter 33, in this part of the story by Moses is Joseph.

Now we are not sure if this was precautionary or the order that Jacob would introduce them.

For sure, they are arranged in the **order of importance** with Jacob. Both handmaidens and their children, then Leah and her children, then Rachel and Joseph. The key point here is that Jacob takes the lead.

Vs 3 - Then Jacob went on before all of them, he took the lead, he would be the first person who would encounter Esau. As he approached Esau and his four hundred men, we see that Jacob bows himself to the ground seven times until he came to his brother.

Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum: *"Jacob's action was: and (he) bowed himself to the ground seven times, which was a common practice in ancient world protocol."*

It is the moment of truth! It is the moment we have been building to for three weeks.

At Luz (Bethel), God had said:

"13 And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. 14 Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 15 Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."'" (Ge 28:13-15 ESV)

In Haran (maybe two weeks ago) God had said:

"Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you."'" (Ge 31:3 ESV)

Last night, near Mahanaim, God had said:

"Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed."'" (Ge 32:28 ESV)

Isn't God's patience with Jacob amazing? The same is true for you and I. God is patient, longsuffering, kind, and loving. We see that in his interaction with our brother Jacob.

4 But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. 5 And when Esau lifted up his eyes and saw the women and children, he said, "Who are these with you?" Jacob said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant." 6 Then the servants drew near, they and their children, and bowed down. 7 Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down. And last Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down.

Vs 4 - As they get close, Esau likely girds up his robe and runs to meet Jacob.

It is almost like he could not constrain himself, Esau runs to Jacob, he embraces him, he falls on his neck, he kisses him, and together they weep.

This is the homecoming that Jacob has desperately wanted. This is the homecoming that he has been praying for, since he started his journey from Haran, and maybe even sooner.

Here, his older brother runs to him, embraces him, falls on his neck, and kisses him. **As best we can tell Esau has forgiven Jacob. On top of that Esau is not holding any grudges** against Jacob and he **runs to him**, he embraces him, he kisses him and they **wept together**.

APPLICATION: Now I want to camp here for a moment:

“30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” (Eph 4:30-32 ESV)

This is what forgiveness looks like. This is how you and I have been forgiven, this is how you and I are to forgive. As a believer, God has forgiven us unconditionally and he is calling you and I to forgive unconditionally.

In Matthew 18, Jesus provides a parable of the **unforgiving servant**. Let’s peek at that briefly, as we consider forgiveness:

“23 “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. 24 When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ 27 And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.” (Mt 18:23-27 ESV)

Roughly speaking, in today’s numbers a talent would be worth approximately **\$600,000**. So, **10,000 talents** is presented to us as an **incalculable debt!** If we calculate it the sum would be about **6 billion dollars**.

We are very much like Christ when we forgive others who have wronged us!

OK, back to the parable to finish the point. So the man has been forgiven this impossible sum!

“28 But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ 29 So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ 30 He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.” (Mt 18:28-30 ESV)

Now a common laborer earned about a denarius a day. So, if we use \$20 per hour x 8 hours x 100 days. This debt is approximately \$16,000 in today’s money. But it is owed to this man who was just forgive 6 billion dollars! Now this all strikes us a bizarre, that a man who has been forgiven of so much can hold on to a debt so small. That is the lesson, may you and I not be that man or woman.

I am also reminded of the father in Luke 15. OK, back to our story...

Vs 5 - We can picture this in our minds, as **Esau and Jacob are embracing** the **three groups are closing distance** to them. Esau lifts up his eyes and sees three groups of women and children coming.

** So do not forget that 20 years ago, Jacob left with essentially nothing:

“I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.” (Ge 32:10 ESV)

Now he is coming back with two wives, two handmaidens, and twelve children, with likely thousands of animals as well as servants.

NOTICE: The Jacob tells Esau these are the children who God **אלהים** (**‘elohiym**) has graciously given me. He gives glory to God for the children that God has given him.

APPLICATION: When people ask us how did you acquire this job, this house, this whatever, what is our response? Is it our ingenuity or is it the grace of God in our life!

Vs 6 - As the lead group arrived where Jacob and Esau were: Bilhah along with Dan and Naphtali, Zilpah along with Gad and Asher and they all bowed down in deference to Esau.

Vs 7 - Then the second group arrived, Leah along with Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah and they too bowed down out of deference to Esau. And finally the third group arrived, Rachel along with Joseph and they too bowed down out of deference to Esau.

8 Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company that I met?" Jacob answered, "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 Jacob said, "No, please, if I have found favor in your sight, then accept my present from my hand. For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me. 11 Please accept my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough." Thus he urged him, and he took it.

Vs 8 - Then Esau shifts to ask **about the five droves of animals and servants** that he met as he was approaching Jacob. **What was meant**, by all this prior company that I met this morning?

The Jacob replies: **"To find favor in the sight of my lord."** Jacob is clearly trying to purchase Esau's favor.

APPLICATION: If you are a child of God, if you have placed faith in Jesus, you possess God's favor. God has given you His best, (His Son) and withholds nothing from you. You do not need to grovel for God's attention or His love. Jesus has died for you; God has done everything for you.

Graveling not required: *"When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." (Joh 19:30 ESV)*

Back to our story... **Again**, you see Jacob call Esau **"my Lord."**

Now, I will be honest this **ruhs me wrong**. We are to be a **humble people**, we are to recognize as Peter says:

"5 "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you," (1Pe 5:5-6 ESV)

Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum in his commentary wrote: *"All this shows that Jacob was willing to relinquish the patriarchal blessing, as seen in the title Jacob applied to Esau, Lord; and Jacob referred to himself as Esau's servant."*

I am not sure if I agree that Jacob is thinking down that line. But, here is the real deal though, God has established who will receive the blessing and God has not changed his mind! But Jacob tells Esau, this is all a gift from me to you (**Lord Esau**), that I might find favor in your site.

Vs 9 - Esau responds: *"I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself."* Now we do not know how much Esau had, we do know that he was able to muster, hire, or whatever 400 men when needed.

We are right to assume he is a wealthy and powerful man.

But here Esau replies to Jacob, you keep the animals that came to me this morning in **five separate "droves", I have enough.**

Vs 10 - Then Jacob replies: No, if I have found favor in your sight please accept this gift. The Jacob says this: ***For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me.***

I think it is important for us to see that Jacob's attitude has changed over the years.

It appears, that Jacob recognizes the wrong that he has done. Maybe he has learned that we do not have to run over people to get our way. Instead, if we will trust God, and deal kindly and honestly with people, God will take care of us.

Maybe Jacob has grown up over the last 20 years. Maybe the boy who left Canaan 20 years ago is nothing like the mature man of faith who has arrived back in Canaan, and maybe that is the point God would have us see!

This is a word play on Peniel and Jacob **draws a parallel** between his earlier encounter with God at Peniel (which means the face of God) and his meeting with Esau.

Like God, Esau shows unmerited favor to Jacob.

Vs 11 - Jacob continued to urge Esau to take the 580 animals, take the gift, take the blessing that he brought to him. Because God has dealt graciously with me.

Elohim has dwelt with me according to grace, God has shown me unmerited favor, therefore please accept this gift for I have enough.

In **verse 9**, Esau said: You keep the gift for yourself, for I have “**enough**”, the Hebrew word is רַב (rab) (rab). It means I **have much**, I have a **great amount**, I have a **bounty** already. That is what Esau said.

Here Jacob says: *Please accept my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.*” The word translated “enough” is a different Hebrew word, it is כֹּל (kol). It means I have everything; I have all things. Jacob is not saying I have enough, He is saying, **God has given me everything. I am loaded!**

APPLICATION: Now when I hear Jacob say that. I do not think of Jacob, I think of you and I.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,” (Eph 1:3 ESV)

“16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 ¶ and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.” (Ro 8:16-17 ESV)

Jacob looks at Esau and says, no you please take this gift from my hand because God has given me **everything!** If you are a believer, you like Jacob can look at anyone else in the world and tell them with great boldness that **God has given you everything!**

OK, so verse 11 ends with this: *Thus he (Jacob) urged him (Esau), and he took it.*

Notice, Esau took the gifts, Esau received the gifts. He could have kept refusing and he could have simply walked away and left the gifts right there.

APPLICATION: Have you received the free gift of Jesus Christ. Have you of your own will and volition accepted Jesus Christ, the gift of God, by placing faith in Him and what he has done for you?

12 Then Esau said, "Let us journey on our way, and I will go ahead of you." 13 But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are frail, and that the nursing flocks and herds are a care to me. If they are driven hard for one day, all the flocks will die. 14 Let my lord pass on ahead of his servant, and I will lead on slowly, at the pace of the livestock that are ahead of me and at the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir."

Vs 12 - Then Esau says, hey let's journey on our way, and I will lead the way. I will **go ahead of you**, I will **lead you**, it seems **he is implying to Mt Seir**. Esau is offering Jacob an escort back into Canaan.

As best we can tell at this point, **Issac is residing in Hebron. So, it is possible that Esau assumed Jacob would go and live in the area where his father was living.**

We will **not actually hear about Isaac** until Genesis 35, here is what we will read in a couple of weeks:

“And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned.” (Ge 35:27 ESV)

Vs 13 - Jacob replies, My Lord, you know that the children are frail (tender, delicate) they are little, they are young, we cannot push them hard.

This is the **heart of a Sheppard** and a man concerned with his flocks and who loves his children. He is concerned about pushing too hard and possibly injuring or even killing the weak.

It is possible, that this is an **excuse** and for whatever reason Jacob does not desire to follow behind Esau. Maybe, he does not fully trust Esau.

Maybe he is fully trusting **Yahweh** for his **direction and protection**. We cannot be sure...

Vs 14 - Once again, we see that Jacob calls Esau Lord, again I wonder if this is all custom or if Jacob is elevating Esau. In fact, in **chapters 32 and 33** Jacob uses the term Lord to refer to Esau in one way or another **9 times (Gen 32:4, 32:5, 32:9, 32:18, 33:8, 33:13, twice in 33:14, and 33:15)**.

You can see what Jacob proposes. You go on at your own speed and I will lead on slowly (considering the pace of the livestock and the children), **until I come to my Lord at Seir**.

SO YOU KNOW: We have **no record of Jacob ever going to Seir**.

I cannot speak for what is going on with Jacob when he says this only to say that **he does not go to Seir**. So **is he lying, or does Jacob change his mind? I will leave that for you to decide**.

15 So Esau said, "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 But Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built himself a house and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

Vs 15 - Jacob turns down following Esau or allowing Esau to leave some of his men behind to guard Jacob as he comes back into Canaan. **Esau says**, OK great. I will leave some of my men with you. I will leave an armed escort that can travel with you at your speed.

Likely Esau is **being nice**, likely he has **genuinely forgiven** his brother and now Esau is going above and beyond what Jacob could have hoped for or imagined!

Jacob prayed to God and asked God to be **delivered from his brother's hand**, what God has done is that Esau is offering to deliver Jacob from anyone's hand in the area who might want to do him harm!

But Jacob denies his request and tells him there is no need to do such a thing.

Vs 16 - At this, **Esau returns to Seir**, and we would assume with the four hundred men that accompanied him.

Vs 17 - But Jacob, But Jacob journeyed to Succoth...

Jacob instead of going south to Seir, in the direction of Esau's home. He goes to Succoth and stops there.

Two things:

- 1) This was a very short trip from where Jacob was when he met Esau.
- 2) This was still outside the border of the Promised Land.

Jacob journeys to Succoth, the Hebrew word literally means **booths**. It is here in Succoth that Jacob built himself a house and he built booths for his animals.

So the first thing that catches our attention is Jacob does not yet enter the Promised Land, Jacob opts to build a home and shelters for his animals in Succoth, outside the borders of the Promised Land.

This whole house building and booth building project would have taken time, but the text gives us no hint how long Jacob was in Succoth, only that he built his first home here.

Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum wrote: *“According to rabbinic tradition, he (Jacob) lived there eighteen months.”*

18 And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan-aram, and he camped before the city. 19 And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem’s father, he bought for a hundred pieces of money the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent. 20 There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.”

Vs 18 - At some point, exact time unknown Jacob moves from **Succoth** to **Shechem**.

He comes there in peace, he comes there in safety, thus fulfilling what God had said when he left the promised land:

“13 And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, “I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. 14 Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 15 Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”” (Ge 28:13-15 ESV)

And what he had said when he told Jacob to leave Haran:

“Then the LORD said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you.”” (Ge 31:3 ESV)

Shechem is in the land of Canaan. Shechem was a city that Jacob finally arrived at when he came from **Paddan-aram**. Shechem is about 20 miles west of Succoth and Shechem has the distinction of being the **first place named** when Abraham entered Canaan many years earlier:

“4 ¶ So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, 6 ¶ Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.” (Ge 12:4-7 ESV)

It also has the distinction of being the **first place where Abraham built an altar to Yahweh**. **Then we are told Jacob camped before the city**. Like Abraham and Isaac, he was a rancher, who abode in tents and Jacob camped before Shechem.

Three interesting points about this area outside Shechem:

- 1) Jacob will dig a well in this area:

“3 he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. 4 ¶ And he had to pass through Samaria. 5 So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob’s well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7 A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.”” (Joh 4:3-7 ESV)

2) Years later, this was where the bones of Joseph would be reburied:

“As for the bones of Joseph, which the people of Israel brought up from Egypt, they buried them at Shechem, in the piece of land that Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money. It became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph.” (Jos 24:32 ESV)

3) This is the very area, between Mt Ebal and Mt Gerizim where the nation of Israel will formally enter the Promised Land after the fall of Jericho:

“And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, you shall set the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal.” (De 11:29 ESV)

“11 ¶ That day Moses charged the people, saying, 12 “When you have crossed over the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. 13 And these shall stand on Mount Ebal for the curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.” (De 27:11-13 ESV)

This little area is an area rich with history and it all starts here in Genesis!

One more point, so that I say it and remind us all. The Bible is a book anchored in **actual ancient history**. This is the word of God, but it is not simply a religious book, it is a book whose history is absolutely accurate and reliable.

Vs 19 - When Israel arrives here, the area is controlled by Hivites, a Canaanite tribe whose chieftain was a **man named Hamor**. Hamor had a son named Shechem, and from Shechem, Israel bought for 100 pieces of money a **piece of land** and pitched his tent on that land.

But it was here, Jacob purchased his first piece of the Promised Land from the sons of Hamor, in particular Shechem’s father.

Vs 20 - It was here in **Shechem** that Jacob **erected his first altar**. We cannot help but wonder if he **rebuilt the altar that Abraham had erected** so many years earlier.

Abraham was **77 years old** when he erected that altar, Jacob is **greater than 97 years old**, for that was his age when he left Haran and we do not know how long he stayed in Succoth.

But it has been years since Abraham erected the initial altar in Shechem. He calls the name of the altar: **El-Elohe-Israel**.

This is actually **three Hebrew words**:

- **אל** (**‘el**) (**ale**) – The abbreviated form of God.
- **אלהים** (**‘elohiyim**) – The longer form of God
- **ישראל** (**Yisra’el**) – **Jacob’s new name**.

Literally – **God, the God of Israel**, the best translation is **“A mighty God is the God of Israel”**

By the way, this is the first use of Jacob’s new name, outside of when the Angel of the Lord gave it to him.

The stage is set for the story to continue to develop of how God builds the nation of Israel, through which he will bring the Messiah into the world.