

Genesis Lesson 19: Genesis 32-33

Lecture

- In thinking about Genesis 32-33, the theme of reconciliation came to mind.
 - To reconcile means to establish a close relationship between; to settle or resolve; or to bring oneself to accept.
 - Thus, reconciliation fits with Jacob wrestling with God and with his meeting with his brother Esau.
 - In writing about reconciliation in the context of Jesus Christ, Paul said the following in Colossians 1:19-22:
 - “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.”
 - Even though this passage speaks about Jesus Christ’s role in the world, I find it fitting to describe Jacob.
 - Jacob was hostile to Esau in Canaan and was alienated from him for 20 years.
 - Jacob needed to settle the relationship between himself and Esau permanently.
 - Jacob was slow to accept that God was in control of his life. God provided for him, prospered him, and protected him.
 - Jacob needed to accept that God was not only the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac, but that God was also the God of Jacob.
 - Most certainly, Jacob needed a closer relationship with God and the story of him wrestling with God creates this relationship.

- Jacob’s reconciliation with God begins with Genesis 32:1-2 and concludes in Genesis 32:22-32.
 - “Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. ² And when Jacob saw them he said, “This is God’s camp!” So he called the name of that place Mahanaim.”
 - The term “angels of God” was used in Jacob’s dream at Bethel (Genesis 28:12). The term is only used in the Old Testament in these 2 verses.
 - Jacob sees the angels of God on his departure from Canaan and upon his return.
 - God promised in Genesis 28:15, “I am with you” and in Genesis 31:3, “I will be with you.”
 - We might say that the presence of the angels of God demonstrates that God was with him.
 - Psalm 34:7 says, “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers him.”
 - Mahanaim means “two camps.” Commentators are not sure what the name means as the passage provides no further clarification.
 - Mahanaim may mean “God’s camp” and “Jacob’s camp.”
 - Or it may be a reference to the 2 camps where Jacob had split his people, flocks, herds, and camels (see verses 7 and 10).
 - Lastly it could be a reference to Jacob’s camp and Esau’s camp.

- Archaeologists have not located Mahanaim, but it is mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament.
 - “But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul’s army, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim,⁹ and he made him king over Gilead and the Ashurites and Jezreel and Ephraim and Benjamin and all Israel.” 2 Samuel 2:8-9
 - “Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed the Jordan with all the men of Israel.²⁵ Now Absalom had set Amasa over the army instead of Joab. Amasa was the son of a man named Ithra the Ishmaelite, who had married Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruiah, Joab’s mother.²⁶ And Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead.” 2 Samuel 17:24-26
- Jacob is very fearful about his planned meeting with Esau. Notice that he is not trying to avoid this meeting. He sends messengers to Esau in Seir to let him know he (Jacob) is returning to Canaan.
 - Scripture is silent on how Jacob knows Esau is in Seir. In addition, when Jacob and Esau meet, Jacob does not inquire about Isaac. This suggests that some information about Esau and Isaac may have filtered back to Jacob.
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 - “And Jacob said, ‘O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,’¹⁰ 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.¹¹ Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children.¹² But you said, ‘I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’”
 - Notice that Jacob again refers to God as the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac. He is still not Jacob’s God.

- Jacob finally shows some humility before God by admitting that he does not deserve everything God has done for him.
 - Jacob makes a plea for God to protect him from what he fears will be an attack by Esau, which was certainly a rational plea given Esau's previous desire to kill Jacob.
 - Jacob then ruins the prayer by reminding God of his promises to prosper him and make his offspring innumerable. God has already prospered Jacob and he has established a good foothold on his multitude of descendants.
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- After Jacob prayed for his safety, Jacob put together a gift for Esau and sent all his possessions and his family across the Jabbok River.
- Jacob remains alone on the other side of the Jabbok River and has a restless night.
 - Verse 24 states Jacob wrestled with a man all through the night. Who was the man?
 - This question has perplexed scholars because Hosea declares in Hosea 12:3-4:
 - “In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God. ⁴ He strove with the angel and prevailed; he wept and sought his favor.”
 - When “the man” renamed Jacob to Israel, he says in Genesis 32:28, “for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.”
 - Jacob declares in verse 30 that he has seen God face to face.
 - This is startling because God will later say to Moses in Exodus 33:20, “‘But’, he said, ‘you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.’”

- There are other clues about who “the man” was.
 - He will not give his name, and he has the power to rename Jacob and bless Jacob (see Genesis 32:28-29).
 - He has the supernatural power to disable Jacob just by touching his hip (Genesis 32:25).
- Remember our definition of a theophany from www.gotquestions.org:
 - “A theophany is a manifestation of God in the Bible that is tangible to the human senses. In its most restrictive sense, it is a visible appearance of God in the Old Testament period, often, but not always, in human form.”
- Some reform scholars have labeled this appearance of God as a Christophany (a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ).
- Jacob demanded that “the man” he wrestled with give him a blessing. While not explicitly stated in the chapter, the blessing was three-fold: Jacob’s new name Israel, Jacob saw God and lived, and the preservation of Jacob’s life when he meets with Esau.
- How do we know that this encounter with God has changed Jacob (Israel)?
 - First, Jacob accepts the name change to Israel.
 - The name change represents God’s authority over Jacob.
 - Israel means, “He strives with God.”
 - The name change at this point in Biblical history is important because Israel will become the name for the nation of God’s people after the exodus from Egypt.
 - The name change also indicates a change of character for Jacob. He is to be changed from the selfish, conniving, self-reliant Jacob to a man of God.

- J. I. Packer writes:
 - “He had hitherto been self-reliant, believing himself to be more than a match for anything that might come, but now he felt his complete inability to handle things, and knew with blinding, blazing certainty that never again dare he trust himself to look after himself and carve out his destiny.”
- Second, Jacob realizes that he needs no longer fear that Esau will kill him. He states in Genesis 32:30, “and yet my life has been delivered.” God has spared his life.
- Third, before Jacob wrestled with God, he had sent his family and his possessions ahead of him and he remained *behind* (Genesis 32: 22-24). After Jacob wrestled with God, Jacob himself went *ahead* of everyone to meet Esau (Genesis 33:3).
- Fourth, we can see from Jacob’s encounter with Esau that he is *mostly* a changed man.
 - He is deferential and submissive to Esau.
 - I say mostly because Genesis 33:16-17 tells us that Jacob cannot be lured to Seir by Esau. He may have forgiven him but has not entirely forgotten Esau’s previous threat to kill him.
- Fifth, at Shechem Jacob builds an altar which he calls El-Elohe-Israel, which means “God, the God of Israel.” (Genesis 33:20).
 - Jacob is now calling upon God as *his* God, not just the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac.
 - Jacob is fulfilling the pledge he made to God in Genesis 28: 20-21, “Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, ²¹ so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God.”

- Next, let's explore Jacob's meeting with Esau in more detail.
 - There is a great reversal of previous Genesis verses in this meeting.
 - In Genesis 27:29a-b, Isaac's blessing upon Jacob, disguised as Esau, states, "Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you."
 - In Genesis 33:3, it is Jacob who bows before Esau.
 - "He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother."
 - Not only does Jacob bow down to Esau, but so also do all his wives and children.
 - "Then the female servants and their children approached and bowed down. ⁷ Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down." Genesis 33:6-7
 - In Genesis 33: 5 and 8, Jacob respectively refers to himself as "Esau's servant" and addresses Esau with "my lord".
 - In Genesis 33:8, Jacob, once dishonest, is now honest with this brother. He tells Esau directly that he is buying Esau's forgiveness with the 550 animals he has sent him as a gift, "to find favor in the sight of my lord."
 - The amount of this gift is significantly larger than what one nation might even pay in tribute to another nation at this time.
 - The new Jacob (Israel) must make atonement for stealing his brother's blessing and for conniving to take Esau's birthright in exchange for a bowl of stew.
 - Gordon Wenham suggests that just as Jacob needed to make peace with God, he now needs to make peace with his brother.
 - "For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably." Genesis 33:10

- Later Scripture passages will stress the importance of making peace with one's brother.
 - “Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart.” Leviticus 19:17
 - “How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!” Psalms 133:1
 - “Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.” Proverbs 17:9
 - “But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister, will be subject to judgment.” Matthew 5:22
- Victor Hamilton notes that Esau has also undergone a character change. His hatred towards Jacob has been muted.
 - Esau runs to meet Jacob. He embraces him and they weep together.
 - Esau is reluctant to accept the gift Jacob is offering him.
 - Esau invites Jacob to live with him in Seir.
- The intervening scripture between Genesis 27 and Genesis 33 tell us nothing about what Esau has been doing.
 - He lost his double share of Isaac's inheritance, but he seems to have done well in the last 20 years.
 - Genesis 33:1, “And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him.”
 - Genesis 33: 9, “But Esau said, “I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.”

- It is interesting to note that Jacob, in his new-found humility, reduces the last 20 years of his life into 2 sentences.
 - “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.’” Genesis 33:5
 - “God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.” Genesis 33:11
 - Jacob does not mention his being duped by Laban into serving him for 14 years and being duped into polygamy by Laban. Jacob also does not mention Laban’s trickery with the flocks.
 - Much like he did in explaining to Leah and Rachel the need to leave Paddan-Aram in Genesis 31, Jacob now gives God all the credit for his 12 children and his wealth.
 - The man who stole his brother’s blessing, who would test God to bless him and who would demand a blessing from God, now admits God has blessed him.

- Why doesn’t Jacob follow Esau to Seir?
 - Jacob does not entirely trust Esau.
 - Jacob does not want to mingle his herds and family with Esau’s, as this could lead to conflict over water and intermarriage.
 - Jacob’s future is in Canaan, not Seir, which was in what will become northwestern Edom.

- Jacob's first action upon settling in Canaan is to camp outside the city of Shechem. (Shechem refers to the city where Shechem lived.)
 - Shechem was the first place Abram passed on his way to Bethel and the Negev.
 - “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. ⁸ From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD. ⁹ And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negev.” Genesis 12:5-9
 - Abram only passed through Shechem. Jacob, on the other hand, buys a piece of land there from Hamor, Shechem’s father. There he lived with his family. (Genesis 33:19)

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Then the LORD said to Jacob, “Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you.” Genesis 31:3

1. Read Genesis 32:1-21.

a. What happened as Jacob was on his way back to the land of his father Isaac?
Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. ² And when Jacob saw them he said, “This is God’s camp!” So he called the name of that place Mahanaim. Genesis 32:1-2

b. What was Jacob’s plan for meeting Esau?
And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom, ⁴ instructing them, “Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: Thus says your servant Jacob, ‘I have sojourned with Laban and stayed until now. ⁵ I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, male servants, and female servants. I have sent to tell my lord, in order that I may find favor in your sight.’” Genesis 32:3-5

c. What was Jacob’s immediate response when he heard from the messengers he had sent to Esau?
And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, “We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and there are four hundred men with him.” ⁷ Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. He divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two camps, ⁸ thinking, “If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, then the camp that is left will escape.” Genesis 32:6-8

d. What does Jacob do next?

- Jacob prays to God.
- And Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,’¹⁰ 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.¹¹ Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children.¹² But you said, ‘I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’” Genesis 32:9-12

e. What was Jacob’s plan for the next day?

So he stayed there that night, and from what he had with him he took **a present for his brother Esau,**¹⁴ two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams,¹⁵ thirty milking camels and their calves, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys.¹⁶ **These he handed over to his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, “Pass on ahead of me and put a space between drove and drove.”**¹⁷ He instructed the first, **“When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, ‘To whom do you belong? Where are you going? And whose are these ahead of you?’**¹⁸ **then you shall say, ‘They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a present sent to my lord Esau. And moreover, he is behind us.’”**¹⁹ He likewise instructed the second and the third and all who followed the droves, “You shall say the same thing to Esau when you find him,²⁰ and you shall say, ‘Moreover, your servant Jacob is behind us.’” **For he thought, “I may appease him with the present that goes ahead of me, and afterward I shall see his face. Perhaps he will accept me.”**²¹ So the present passed on ahead of him, and he himself stayed that night in the camp. Genesis 32:13-21

- f. Reread Genesis 31:3 and Genesis 31:11-13. How do these verses appear to conflict with Jacob's plan?
- Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you." Genesis 31:3
 - Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am!' ¹² And he said, 'Lift up your eyes and see, all the goats that mate with the flock are striped, spotted, and mottled, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. ¹³ I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now arise, go out from this land and return to the land of your kindred.'" Genesis 31:11-13
 - Jacob does not trust God to protect him from Esau. He was in fear and distress.

2. Read Genesis 32:22-32.

- a. What did Jacob do that night?
The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³ He took them and sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had. ²⁴ And Jacob was left alone. Genesis 32:22-24
- b. What happened while Jacob was alone?
And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. ²⁵ When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. ²⁶ Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." Genesis 32:24-26
- c. What does Jacob demand?
But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." Genesis 32:26
- d. Who was Jacob wrestling with?
God
- e. Why was Jacob given a new name?
And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." ²⁸ 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." Genesis 32:27-28

- f. What name was given to the place and why?
So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.” Genesis 32:30
- g. How does Exodus 33:20 add context?
But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.”
Exodus 33:20
- h. What Jewish dietary habit happened because of this event?
Therefore to this day the people of Israel do not eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob’s hip on the sinew of the thigh. Genesis 32:32

3. Read Genesis 33:1-11.

- a. When Jacob sees Esau, what does he do next?
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. Genesis 33:1-3
- b. What does the positioning of the women and children say about their relationship to Jacob?
Rachel prized Rachel and Joseph more than Leah and her children and the 2 maids and their children.
- c. What do Jacob’s actions in front of Esau suggest?
Jacob fears that Esau and his men will slaughter his family.
- d. What was Esau’s reaction when he saw Jacob?
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?” Genesis 33:4-5

- e. What was Esau's response to the flocks and herds which he met on the way to meeting Jacob?
Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company that I met?" Genesis 33:8
- f. What does Jacob say in response?
Jacob answered, "To find favor in the sight of my lord." 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. Genesis 33:8-11
- g. Why might Jacob be offering restitution to Esau? (Hint: see Genesis 27-28.)
Jacob had stolen Esau's birthright.

4. Read Genesis 33:12-20.

- a. What does Esau want to do next?
Then Esau said, "Let us journey on our way, and I will go ahead of you." Genesis 33:12
- b. What is Jacob's response?
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." Genesis 33:13-14
- c. Where does Esau go?
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.** Genesis 33:15-16
- d. Where does Jacob go?
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. Genesis 33:17
- e. What do you infer about Jacob's relationship to Esau?
Jacob does not really trust Esau.

- f. After leaving Sukkoth, where did Jacob go next?
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. Genesis 33:18
- g. Reread Genesis 12:6-7. What was notable about this place?
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. Genesis 12:6-7
- h. What does Jacob do in Shechem?
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. Genesis 33:19
- i. What is the meaning of the name of the altar?
- There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel. Genesis 33:20
 - El-Elohe-Israel means “God, the God of Israel.”

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Lecture

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 - “Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed the Jordan with all the men of Israel.²⁵ Now Absalom had set Amasa over the army instead of Joab. Amasa was the son of a man named Ithra the Ishmaelite, who had married Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruiah, Joab’s mother.²⁶ And Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead.” 2 Samuel 17:24-26
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- Remember our definition of a theophany from www.gotquestions.org:
 - “A theophany is a manifestation of God in the Bible that is tangible to the human senses. In its most restrictive sense, it is a visible appearance of God in the Old Testament period, often, but not always, in human form.”
- Some reform scholars have labeled this appearance of God as a Christophany (a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ).
- Jacob demanded that “the man” he wrestled with give him a blessing. While not explicitly stated in the chapter, the blessing was three-fold: Jacob’s new name Israel, Jacob saw God and lived, and the preservation of Jacob’s life when he meets with Esau.
- How do we know that this encounter with God has changed Jacob (Israel)?
 - First, Jacob accepts the name change to Israel.
 - The name change represents God’s authority over Jacob.
 - Israel means, “He strives with God.”
 - The name change at this point in Biblical history is important because Israel will become the name for the nation of God’s people after the exodus from Egypt.
 - The name change also indicates a change of character for Jacob. He is to be changed from the selfish, conniving, self-reliant Jacob to a man of God.

- J. I. Packer writes:
 - “He had hitherto been self-reliant, believing himself to be more than a match for anything that might come, but now he felt his complete inability to handle things, and knew with blinding, blazing certainty that never again dare he trust himself to look after himself and carve out his destiny.”
- Second, Jacob realizes that he needs no longer fear that Esau will kill him. He states in Genesis 32:30, “and yet my life has been delivered.” God has spared his life.
- Third, before Jacob wrestled with God, he had sent his family and his possessions ahead of him and he remained *behind* (Genesis 32: 22-24). After Jacob wrestled with God, Jacob himself went *ahead* of everyone to meet Esau (Genesis 33:3).
- Fourth, we can see from Jacob’s encounter with Esau that he is *mostly* a changed man.
 - He is deferential and submissive to Esau.
 - I say mostly because Genesis 33:16-17 tells us that Jacob cannot be lured to Seir by Esau. He may have forgiven him but has not entirely forgotten Esau’s previous threat to kill him.
- Fifth, at Shechem Jacob builds an altar which he calls El-Elohe-Israel, which means “God, the God of Israel.” (Genesis 33:20).
 - Jacob is now calling upon God as *his* God, not just the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac.
 - Jacob is fulfilling the pledge he made to God in Genesis 28: 20-21, “Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, ²¹ so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God.”

- Next, let's explore Jacob's meeting with Esau in more detail.
 - There is a great reversal of previous Genesis verses in this meeting.
 - In Genesis 27:29a-b, Isaac's blessing upon Jacob, disguised as Esau, states, "Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you."
 - In Genesis 33:3, it is Jacob who bows before Esau.
 - "He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother."
 - Not only does Jacob bow down to Esau, but so also do all his wives and children.
 - "Then the female servants and their children approached and bowed down. ⁷ Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down." Genesis 33:6-7
 - In Genesis 33: 5 and 8, Jacob respectively refers to himself as "Esau's servant" and addresses Esau with "my lord".
 - In Genesis 33:8, Jacob, once dishonest, is now honest with this brother. He tells Esau directly that he is buying Esau's forgiveness with the 550 animals he has sent him as a gift, "to find favor in the sight of my lord."
 - The amount of this gift is significantly larger than what one nation might even pay in tribute to another nation at this time.
 - The new Jacob (Israel) must make atonement for stealing his brother's blessing and for conniving to take Esau's birthright in exchange for a bowl of stew.
 - Gordon Wenham suggests that just as Jacob needed to make peace with God, he now needs to make peace with his brother.
 - "For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably." Genesis 33:10

- Later Scripture passages will stress the importance of making peace with one's brother.
 - “Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart.” Leviticus 19:17
 - “How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!” Psalms 133:1
 - “Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.” Proverbs 17:9
 - “But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister, will be subject to judgment.” Matthew 5:22
- Victor Hamilton notes that Esau has also undergone a character change. His hatred towards Jacob has been muted.
 - Esau runs to meet Jacob. He embraces him and they weep together.
 - Esau is reluctant to accept the gift Jacob is offering him.
 - Esau invites Jacob to live with him in Seir.
- The intervening scripture between Genesis 27 and Genesis 33 tell us nothing about what Esau has been doing.
 - He lost his double share of Isaac's inheritance, but he seems to have done well in the last 20 years.
 - Genesis 33:1, “And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him.”
 - Genesis 33: 9, “But Esau said, “I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.”

- It is interesting to note that Jacob, in his new-found humility, reduces the last 20 years of his life into 2 sentences.
 - “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.’” Genesis 33:5
 - “God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.” Genesis 33:11
 - Jacob does not mention his being duped by Laban into serving him for 14 years and being duped into polygamy by Laban. Jacob also does not mention Laban’s trickery with the flocks.
 - Much like he did in explaining to Leah and Rachel the need to leave Paddan-Aram in Genesis 31, Jacob now gives God all the credit for his 12 children and his wealth.
 - The man who stole his brother’s blessing, who would test God to bless him and who would demand a blessing from God, now admits God has blessed him.

- Why doesn’t Jacob follow Esau to Seir?
 - Jacob does not entirely trust Esau.
 - Jacob does not want to mingle his herds and family with Esau’s, as this could lead to conflict over water and intermarriage.
 - Jacob’s future is in Canaan, not Seir, which was in what will become northwestern Edom.

- Jacob's first action upon settling in Canaan is to camp outside the city of Shechem. (Shechem refers to the city where Shechem lived.)
 - Shechem was the first place Abram passed on his way to Bethel and the Negev.
 - “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. ⁸ From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD. ⁹ And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.” Genesis 12:5-9
 - Abram only passed through Shechem. Jacob, on the other hand, buys a piece of land there from Hamor, Shechem’s father. There he lived with his family. (Genesis 33:19)