

## Genesis 32-35

### Jacob's Transformation and the Covenant Renewal

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#### Theme:

Wrestling with God brings Change

#### Key Topics:

Wrestling at Peniel (Jacob is blessed)  
Encounter with Esau  
Return to Bethel (rape of Dinah and revenge of sons)  
Covenant Reaffirmed

#### Chiasm:

Two challenging events are sandwiched between two 'God Encounters' in Jacob's life.

**32** Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. <sup>2</sup>And when Jacob saw them he said, "This is God's camp!" So he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

'angels of God' - same phrase as Ch 28:11-13 (20 years before when fleeing Esau)

'I'm still with you.'

Mahanaim (2 camps) - possibly 'God's camp' and 'Jacob's Camp'

Does Esau still want to kill him?

Rebecca never sent for him

True to his nature: Jacob protects himself with his own wit and devices (displays lack of trust in God)

<sup>3</sup> And Jacob sent<sup>[b]</sup> messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom, <sup>4</sup> instructing them, "Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: Thus says your servant Jacob, 'I have sojourned with Laban and stayed until now. <sup>5</sup> 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.'"

showing great respect (and probably fear) of his brother.

Strategy 1: buy Esau's favor

<sup>6</sup> 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." <sup>7</sup> 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, <sup>8</sup> thinking, "If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, then the camp that is left will escape."

Esau's reply isn't recorded  
400 men: militia

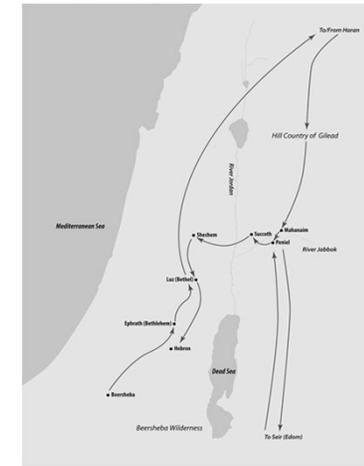
Are they coming in peace or war?

Strategy 2: divide for safety

<sup>9</sup> 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,' <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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.'"

- Strategy 3: prayer
- He is not fully committed to God yet.
- using the Covenant name of God and connecting to God's legacy of blessing for his fathers
- prayer only comes after he has already made other arrangements
- seeking a divine stamp of approval
- Misquotes God
- He believed in God second, himself first
- He felt that God needed his help.

<sup>13</sup> So he stayed there that night, and from what he had with him he took a present for his brother Esau, <sup>14</sup> two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, <sup>15</sup> thirty milking camels and their calves, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. <sup>16</sup> 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."



<sup>17</sup> 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?' <sup>18</sup> 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.'" <sup>19</sup> 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, <sup>20</sup> and you shall say, 'Moreover, your servant Jacob is behind us.'" For he thought, "I may appease him<sup>[d]</sup> with the present that goes ahead of me, and afterward I shall see his face. Perhaps he will accept me."<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>21</sup> So the present passed on ahead of him, and he himself stayed that night in the camp.

Messengers and animals have gone ahead - putting a human shield between Esau and Jacob, so Jacob can bring up the rear.

<sup>22</sup> The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children,<sup>[d]</sup> and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. <sup>23</sup> He took them and sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had.

- Prayer time? Peace and quiet?

<sup>24</sup> And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. <sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

- Jacob is finally alone.
- 'Man': angel; God himself; (Pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus)
- (Spurgeon): the wrestling Angel of the covenant had come to wrestle out of him much of his own strength and wisdom."
- Pride – dependent on own strength, wisdom, wit

Insight of original Language aids understanding:

The name of the river is *Yab'bōq*, which means "**emptying.**"

The man involved is named *Ya'aqōb*, which means "**heel-grabber.**"

The contest he engages in is described by *yē'ābēq*, meaning "**grappling, wrestling.**"

<sup>27</sup> And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." <sup>28</sup> Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel,<sup>l</sup> for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed."

<sup>29</sup> Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. <sup>30</sup> So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel,<sup>l</sup> saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered."

<sup>31</sup> The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip. <sup>32</sup> 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.

*Jacob* means heel-catcher, deceiver, smooth-talker

*Israel* is a compound of two words: *sarah* (meaning, *fight, struggle, or rule*) and *el* (meaning, *God*). "God strives," or "God rules."

Name change: a change of identity; angel was claiming Jacob as his own

limp = physical brokenness,

new name = spiritual brokenness

Blessing repeated in Ch. 35; sandwiched between now and then are 2 conflicts

### JESUS PARALLEL

The pre-incarnate Jesus, in the form of an angel, brings himself 'low' (comes to earth and matches strength) and risks being 'defeated' so that Jacob can strive with him and ultimately win the blessing and gain the victory of faith.

- No longer Jacob, but 'Israel'

The actual incarnation - Jesus 'came low' centuries later in a barn in Bethlehem and permitted humanity to strive with him. He allowed himself to be 'defeated' by humans (in the arrest and execution), so that we believers gain the victory and blessing of ABUNDANT and ETERNAL LIFE by putting our faith in him and being born again.

- We are no longer sinners, but saints
- We are no longer lost, but found
- We were dead, now we are alive
- We are children of God

### CHAPTER 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.

- No fear expressed this time
- The wrestling brought visible change
- this time he puts himself on the frontline
- 7 times - number of completion/perfection: completely humble
- The God who has always been with him will pave the way for restoration

<sup>4</sup> But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. <sup>5</sup> 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." <sup>6</sup> Then the servants drew near, they and their children, and bowed down. <sup>7</sup> Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down. And last Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down. <sup>8</sup> Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company<sup>[a]</sup> that I met?" Jacob answered, "To find favor in the sight of my lord."

- Unexpected response
- Your servant – language reversal of blessing's 'the older shall serve the younger'
- Both men have been changed by God

<sup>9</sup> But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself." <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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.

- Esau 'has enough' even without the covenant blessing
- Divine restoration
- Esau parallels the role of the Father Figure - was the one wronged,
- Like the son, Jacob takes what does not rightfully belong to him (the birthright and all the stuff that goes with it) in exchange for the bowl of stew
- Jacob goes away to a foreign land and then later returns
- Esau reconciles Jacob to himself.

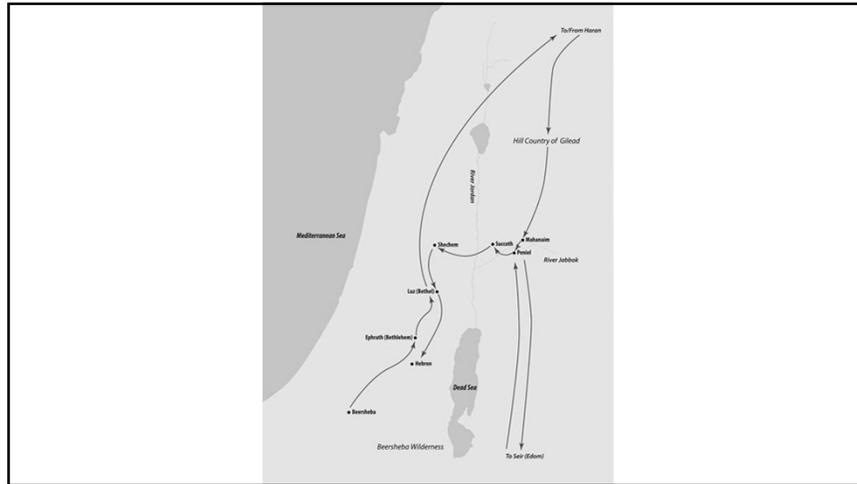
<sup>12</sup> Then Esau said, "Let us journey on our way, and I will go ahead of<sup>[a]</sup> you." <sup>13</sup> But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are frail, and that the nursing flocks and herds are a care to me. If they are driven hard for one day, all the flocks will die. <sup>14</sup> 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."

<sup>15</sup> 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." <sup>16</sup> So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. <sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>[a]</sup>

- 'You go on ahead, we'll meet you there'
- gives Esau a good head start then goes the opposite way before turning west. (Still got some deceiver in him).

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

- Arrives safely: remember Jacob's vow in Ch. 28
- Shechem the man likely named after the city
- El-Elohe-Israel: 'Mighty is the God of Israel,' or 'El, the God of Israel' (Israel the person)



**34** Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the women of the land. **2** And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he seized her and lay with her and humiliated her. **3** And his soul was drawn to Dinah the daughter of Jacob. He loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. **4** So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, “Get me this girl for my wife.”

- This is rape - the NASB says ‘he took her and lay with her by force’
- Humiliated: no longer a virgin makes her a poor choice of wife
- Shechem feels entitled to get his way and expects his father to do what he wants

**5** Now Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter Dinah. But his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob held his peace until they came. **6** And Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. **7** The sons of Jacob had come in from the field as soon as they heard of it, and the men were indignant and very angry, because he had done an outrageous thing in Israel by lying with Jacob’s daughter, for such a thing must not be done.

- says nothing, does nothing for Leah’s daughter (silent)
- Contrast this response to Joseph’s ‘death’
- Israel - first time that Jacob’s new, God-given name is used in reference to a distinct group of people

**8** But Hamor spoke with them, saying, “The soul of my son Shechem longs for your<sup>1a</sup> daughter. Please give her to him to be his wife. **9** Make marriages with us. Give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves. **10** You shall dwell with us, and the land shall be open to you. Dwell and trade in it, and get property in it.” **11** Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, “Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you say to me I will give. **12** Ask me for as great a bride-price<sup>1b</sup> and gift as you will, and I will give whatever you say to me. Only give me the young woman to be my wife.”

- Hamor and Shechem do not mention the rape
- no remorse, only opportunity for wealth and peace? (Smooth over the crime)
- Focus is material wealth
- Intermarrying would make them a single, prosperous people.
- Offer enrages the brothers further
- Jacob should not allow his sons to intermarry with the Canaanites
- God will give Jacob and his descendants the land of Canaan without taking Hamor’s offer
- Shechem is desperate to marry Dinah

**13** The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully, because he had defiled their sister Dinah. **14** They said to them, “We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us. **15** Only on this condition will we agree with you—that you will become as we are by every male among you being circumcised.”

- Jacob is present but silent
- Sons: maybe Simeon and Levi
- Deceitfully: like father, like son

**16** Then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to ourselves, and we will dwell with you and become one people. **17** But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter, and we will be gone.”

- The sons suggest using the sacred ceremony of circumcision for a sinful purpose.
- Deceit: Had no intention of intermarrying, this would have been a violation of the covenant and their ‘endogamy’ – marrying within specific group to retain religious and family identity

<sup>18</sup> Their words pleased Hamor and Hamor's son Shechem. <sup>19</sup> And the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he delighted in Jacob's daughter. Now he was the most honored of all his father's house. <sup>20</sup> So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying, <sup>21</sup> "These men are at peace with us; let them dwell in the land and trade in it, for behold, the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters as wives, and let us give them our daughters. <sup>22</sup> Only on this condition will the men agree to dwell with us to become one people—when every male among us is circumcised as they are circumcised. <sup>23</sup> Will not their livestock, their property and all their beasts be ours? Only let us agree with them, and they will dwell with us." <sup>24</sup> And all who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

- Present the financial opportunity presented by intermarrying with Jacob's family - it's all about the wealth
- Adult circumcision: painful and dangerous; takes several days' recovery
- Shechemites also deceitful
- Acting in their own best interest
- Their greed will do them in

<sup>25</sup> On the third day, when they were sore, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and came against the city while it felt secure and killed all the males. <sup>26</sup> They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword and took Dinah out of Shechem's house and went away.

<sup>27</sup> The sons of Jacob came upon the slain and plundered the city, because they had defiled their sister. <sup>28</sup> They took their flocks and their herds, their donkeys, and whatever was in the city and in the field. <sup>29</sup> All their wealth, all their little ones and their wives, all that was in the houses, they captured and plundered.

- Full brothers
- We find out Dinah had been taken and was being held
- Retribution was well beyond the scope of the original offense
- Brothers reacting out of honor more than justice
- Actions disqualify them for the blessing of the firstborn at Jacob's death

<sup>30</sup> Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me stink to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites. My numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household." <sup>31</sup> But they said, "Should he treat our sister like a prostitute?"

- Jacob finally speaks
- No mention of rape or the sons' trickery or violence – what does this mean?
- Fearful: Worried about being attacked, family destroyed
- This would negate the promises of God to give his descendants the land and make them 'many'
- Lack of trust and faith in God to complete His promise

<sup>35</sup> God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau." <sup>2</sup> So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments.

<sup>3</sup> Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, so that I may make there an altar to the God who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone." <sup>4</sup> So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears. Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree that was near Shechem.

- Where he should have gone in the first place
- Turns his perspective around
- Hid (or buried) the idols
- Symbolic burial: complete renouncement of idols?

And as they journeyed, a terror from God fell upon the cities that were around them, so that they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. <sup>6</sup> And Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him, <sup>7</sup> and there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel,<sup>[a]</sup> because there God had revealed himself to him when he fled from his brother. <sup>8</sup> And Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried under an oak below Bethel. So he called its name Allon-bacuth.<sup>[b]</sup>

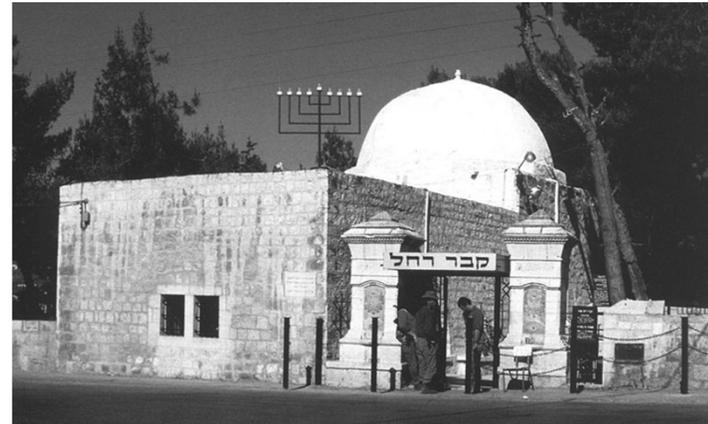
- Once again, God protected Jacob and family as they traveled so they can arrive in Bethel
- second conflict resolved
- El-bethel: God is in Bethel
- Fled: angels ascending/descending:
  - I will give you the land
  - Offspring be like dust of the earth, spread out and blessed
  - I am with you and will keep you
  - I'll bring you back here
- Allon-bacuth: Oak of weeping

<sup>9</sup> God appeared<sup>[c]</sup> to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. <sup>10</sup> And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." So he called his name Israel. <sup>11</sup> And God said to him, "I am God Almighty:<sup>[d]</sup> be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body.<sup>[e]</sup> <sup>12</sup> The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you." <sup>13</sup> Then God went up from him in the place where he had spoken with him. <sup>14</sup> And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone. He poured out a drink offering on it and poured oil on it. <sup>15</sup> So Jacob called the name of the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.

- God appears (unknown form) to bless him- reaffirming all the covenant promises
- makes Jacob the heir to the divine promises that were given to Abraham and Isaac.
- Blessing repeated [bottom of the sandwich: blessing, conflict, conflict, blessing]

<sup>16</sup> Then they journeyed from Bethel. When they were still some distance<sup>[f]</sup> from Ephrath, Rachel went into labor, and she had hard labor. <sup>17</sup> And when her labor was at its hardest, the midwife said to her, "Do not fear, for you have another son." <sup>18</sup> And as her soul was departing (for she was dying), she called his name Ben-oni,<sup>[g]</sup> but his father called him Benjamin.<sup>[h]</sup> <sup>19</sup> So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem), <sup>20</sup> and Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb. It is the pillar of Rachel's tomb, which is there to this day. <sup>21</sup> Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.

- Ben-oni: 'son of my trouble'
- Benjamin: 'son of my right hand'



<sup>22</sup> While Israel lived in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine. And Israel heard of it.

Now the sons of Jacob were twelve. <sup>23</sup> The sons of Leah: Reuben (Jacob's firstborn), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. <sup>24</sup> The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. <sup>25</sup> The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's servant: Dan and Naphtali. <sup>26</sup> The sons of Zilpah, Leah's servant: Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram.

<sup>27</sup> And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned. <sup>28</sup> Now the days of Isaac were 180 years. <sup>29</sup> And Isaac breathed his last, and he died and was gathered to his people, old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

- Reuben: Leah's son, Dinah's full brother, Jacob's firstborn
- Bilhah: Rachel's maid
- Revenge on mother's behalf?
- Revenge for Jacob's 'non-response' to Dinah's rape?
- consensual?
- Exertion of authority over Jacob
- Israel heard of it: another non-reaction
- Death of Isaac: Esau and Jacob are reunited again

Despite significant conflict in Jacob's life that had the potential to destroy the covenant promise of God, in becoming a nation and multiplying exceedingly, and in keeping the land God had promised, the whole narrative of Jacob's transformation in chapters 32-35 demonstrates God's faithfulness in keeping His covenant promise and His overarching power to accomplish it.