

Genesis 33 – Israel Reconciles With Esau

I. Jacob's Humble Heart On Display (1-11)

A. Jacob Humbly Reconciles With Esau (1-7)

1. Jacob Sees Esau Coming (1a)

a. Esau is approaching with his 400 men

- i. Later Esau will offer to leave some of his men with Jacob for protection
- ii. This implies that Esau was indeed coming to kill Jacob
- iii. Although not certain, Esau (by God's grace) probably changed his mind when he saw Jacob

b. Jacob still believes Esau is coming to kill him

2. Jacob Humbles Himself Before Esau (1b-3)

a. Jacob divides up his family (1b)

b. Jacob presents his family by importance (2)

- i. Jacob still favors Rachel and Joseph
- ii. The two concubines and their children are set first in the most vulnerable place
- iii. Leah and her children are next
- iv. Rachel and Joseph are last
 - Joseph is the only son mentioned here
 - Joseph's special status will be important in Genesis

c. Jacob goes ahead of them bowing down (3)

- i. Jacob demonstrates his humility and repentance by going first
- ii. The old Jacob would have stayed behind his family
- iii. Jacob bows down before Esau
 - When Jacob received the blessing from Isaac, he was told "may your mother's sons bow down to you. (Gen. 27:29)
 - Here Jacob bows to Esau showing that he is repentant for what he stole from Esau
 - Remember that Jacob is hobbled and still bowing

d. Jacob truly has been changed and desires reconciliation with Esau

- i. Having been made right with God causes man to desire being right with one's brother
- ii. Jacob is demonstrating the effect of having his heart changed

3. Jacob and Esau Reconcile (4)

a. Esau runs to, embraces, and kisses Jacob

b. The two brothers weep together

- i. At some point God has eased Esau's wrath
 - when he saw Jacob?
 - when he passed all the droves of animals?
- ii. God had again intervened to protect Jacob from his sin – God had answered Jacob's prayer

- “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.” – Gen. 32:11
- God moves even in the hearts of unbelievers for the good of His people

4. Jacob Presents His Blessing Before Esau (5-7)

a. Jacob Introduces His Family (5)

- i. Esau asks who all the people are - Jacob left Isaac’s house alone
- ii. Jacob is careful with his language
 - These are the children God has given – Jacob attributes them to God’s divine grace
 - Many times in the OT, children are seen as a blessing from God – Jacob avoids using this term
 - Perhaps Jacob refrains from using the term “blessed” because it was he who stole the blessing from Esau – perhaps he didn’t want to cause offense and risk their lives

b. Jacob’s Family Presents Themselves Before Esau (6-7)

- i. The family presents themselves in the order Jacob divided them
- ii. The family is well aware of Jacob’s favoritism and they present themselves accordingly
- iii. The family also bow down in humility before Esau

B. Jacob Explains His Offering To Esau (8-11)

1. Jacob’s Payment is Refused (8-9)

a. Esau questions all the droves (8a)

- i. Esau asks why he had passed all the animals and servants Jacob had set apart previously
- ii. Perhaps Esau is simply looking for Jacob to explain why he would give the droves, since the servants were instructed to tell Esau they were a gift from Jacob

b. Jacob explains the repentant offering (8b)

- i. Jacob explains that the offering was to find favor in Esau’s sight
- ii. Jacob presents the offering as a demonstration of repentance
- iii. Jacob hopes that the droves would make up for the blessing he stole from Esau
 - there is some debate as to whether Jacob thought he was returning the blessing to Esau or whether he was simply repentant for stealing it
 - either way, the offering was given with a heart of repentance in order to appease Esau

c. Esau refuses the offering (9)

- i. Esau has enough possessions
- ii. Esau has prospered outside of the promised land

2. Jacob’s Thankful Gift is Accepted (10-11)

a. Jacob presents it as a thankful offering (10)

i. Jacob now presents the offering as a gift of thanksgiving for Esau accepting him

ii. Jacob compares Esau's face to the face of God

- Jacob is comparing this meeting with the meeting he had with God at Peniel in chapter 32

- This doesn't mean that Esau looks like God. Jacob, though deserving punishment, received grace and acceptance from God at their meeting. He has also received it from Esau

- Esau, like God, has accepted Jacob

- Jacob has prevailed against God and man as his name implies

b. Jacob urges Esau to Accept (11a)

i. Jacob now uses the word "blessing" to show that he desires to give Esau a blessing (baracha)

ii. Jacob is adamant about Esau accepting his gift. He earnestly desires to make his transgression right (AFTER Esau has already accepted him)

c. Esau Accepts His Offering (11b)

3. Everything up to this point demonstrates the change that has taken place in Jacob – however, Jacob

II. Jacob Still Struggles To Trust and Obey (12-20)

A. Jacob Deceitfully Refuses Esau's Protection to Seir (12-15)

1. Jacob Declines Esau's Company (12-14)

a. Esau offers to accompany Jacob (12)

b. Jacob says the flocks cannot be driven hard (13)

c. Jacob offers to come to Seir slowly (14)

i. Various ways of interpreting this section

ii. Some maintain that this is just a polite way of parting company with Esau

iii. Some maintain that Jacob is lying about his intentions to come to Seir

iv. It would seem that even after his encounter with God, Jacob still has struggles telling the truth – Jacob says that he will come to Esau in Seir (He doesn't)

- NOTE: Some say that he may have went after camping at Succoth. There isn't any evidence of this and it seems that the author is unconcerned as to why Jacob didn't go

2. Jacob Declines Esau's Men (15)

a. Esau offers to leave men for protection

b. Jacob refuses Esau's protection

B. Jacob Does Not Obey God Completely (16-20)

1. Jacob Does Not Go To Seir (16-17)

a. Esau returns to Seir (16)

b. Jacob travels to Succoth (17)

- i. We are also not told why Jacob camps here
- ii. He is headed toward Shechem
- iii. It would seem that Jacob should be going back to Bethel because of what God told him in 31:13 – “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.”
 - Jacob neither returns to Isaac’s house nor to Bethel
 - Instead he camps in Shechem

2. Jacob Settles in Shechem (18-20)

a. Jacob finally camps in Shechem (18)

- i. The text says he “pitched his tent toward the city”
- ii. Where have we heard that language before

b. Jacob buys land in Shechem (19)

c. Jacob names an altar there (20)

- i. Jacob names the altar El-Elohe-Israel, which means “God, the God of Israel”
- ii. Notice that throughout this chapter, he has still been called Jacob, although God changed his name in chapter 32
- iii. Jacob has encountered God and been changed – but the old Jacob is still there. He will fight with the old man throughout his life.

