

## Genesis Chapter 32-33 – John Karmelich

1. If I had to pick my favorite section of Genesis in terms of personal application, this is it.
  - a) Back when I wrote on Genesis 22, which is Abraham's offering of Isaac, I specified that section as the most important. I still believe that. That section is probably the best word-picture of the price Jesus paid on the cross in Genesis.
  - b) Chapters 32 and 33 focuses on Jacob facing his worse fears. I love this lesson because it is a reminder to us to trust God in the face of fears.
2. If I had to summarize this whole section in one word, it would be "struggle".
  - a) We are going to read of Jacob "struggling (wresting) with God. After wresting all night, Jacob "wins" and God blesses Him. We'll discuss what all that means later in this lesson.
  - b) In this chapter, Jacob has to face his brother Esau. The last time Jacob saw Esau was 20 years ago, when Esau vowed to kill Jacob. God told Jacob to go back home, and now Jacob has to face Esau again. The "struggle" of this section is about Jacob facing his fears.
3. One thing I contemplated at this point is, "Why does Genesis spend so much time on Jacob?"
  - a) There were a bunch of chapters on his grandfather Abraham. That is understandable. God needed one person to start a nation, and those chapters focused on the growth and maturity of Abraham. The highpoint of Abraham's life was the offering of Isaac.
  - b) There were a bunch of chapters on Isaac, but a lot less than those on Abraham or Jacob.
    - i) Isaac is a word-picture of the "promised son". Genesis spends more time reminding Abraham of the "promised son", than the actual birth of Isaac.
    - ii) The word-picture is a reminder to the Israeli people of another "Promised Son" who will become the Messiah for Israel.
    - iii) In comparison to the detailed life of Abraham or Jacob, there is not a lot of space given to Isaac. Isaac can be summed up as "God promised Abraham a son and well, here he is." ☺ There were a few chapters about his life, but the latter chapters focus on the deception of Jacob upon his father Isaac.
  - c) Of all the major characters in Genesis, Jacob is the most contemptible.
    - i) He appears to have more rotten personality traits than the other major characters of Genesis combined. We read more of his sins and conniving than anyone else in Genesis. Yet Jacob is the one renamed "Israel" and Jacob is the one who became the literal father of the nation of Israel. His 12 sons became the 12 tribes of Israel.
    - ii) So why did God pick "this guy"? Why didn't Abraham have 12 sons or Isaac have 12 sons to form Israel? Why pick a guy who "lives by his wits" to be used as the father of the Nation of Israel?
  - d) The first thing to remember is "If God can use Jacob, there is hope for all of us". ☺
    - i) I think one of the big-picture ideas to see about Jacob is how if someone chooses to follow God, He can then take the most rotten of people and transform them slowly into a mature relationship with God.
    - ii) Our main purpose for this life is to prepare us for the next life. Eternity is a lot longer than our lifespan on earth. If God is preparing us to be with Him for eternity, then God desires to mature us and make us more "like Him" in that preparation. The main purpose of the Law is to show what God requires of us. The main purpose of Jesus dying for us is that a perfect sacrifice is needed to live in eternity with a perfect God. Once we have made that commitment, God then works through us to live the life as taught in the Law that God desires for us. The secret to living the Christian life is not through self-discipline of obeying the law, but to be submissive to God so He can make us a better person from the inside out.
    - iii) Which leads us back to Jacob. Jacob believed in the God of his father and grandfather, but in the early years, that was about it.

4. The story of Jacob is one of maturity. Visualize God as a military army first conquering a small territory in Jacob's heart and then spending the rest of Jacob's life conquering aspect after aspect of Jacob's life until Jacob gets into full submission. That is the "big picture" of Jacob.
  - a) And of course, that is the big-picture of our life as Christians. Asking Jesus to come into our hearts is like asking Jesus to "establish a military base with in us". We then spend the rest of our lives struggling with God. We struggle because our old sinful ways refuse to die without a fight. For those who seek God and desire for God to take over our lives, the good news is that God eventually wins. We struggle in the meantime, as we don't want to change our old nature. The phrase "old sins die hard" is because we don't want to give up our old sinful nature. One of the reasons God chose crucifixion as a method for Jesus death is to show the painful way that sin must die in each of us.
5. Which leads us to Chapters 32 and Chapters 33 of Genesis.
  - a) The high point of this story is Jacob "wresting with God". At the end of the match, Jacob is renamed "Israel". It is the first time the word "Israel" is used in the bible.
  - b) The word "Israel" has a number of translations. Among them is "Prince with God."
    - i) Another translation that fits better in this text is "Struggles with God".
    - ii) The name Israel can mean "one who struggles with God."
      - a) That name fits Jacob well as his old conniving ways struggle with the desire to obey God's will and God's commands.
    - iii) One of the interesting facts about God renaming Jacob "Israel" is the fact that the bible goes "back and forth" with the two names. Usually, when God renames someone, the new name sticks.
      - a) God renamed Abram to Abraham (Gen. 17:5), and the new name stuck.
      - b) God renamed Sarai to Sarah (Gen. 17:15), the new name stuck.
      - c) The exception is Jacob/Israel. The remainder of the bible goes back and forth between both names. What most scholars suspect is that when Jacob (or the nation of Israel) is acting sinfully, the bible goes back to calling Jacob "Jacob" to remind the reader of Jacob's old nature.
      - d) When the bible uses the name "Israel" or the Israel people as "sons of Israel" (as opposed to the "sons of Jacob"), there is a word-picture that, at that particular moment, Jacob/Israel is doing God's will, or at the very least is "correctly-struggling" to get God's will accomplished.
6. The particular plot-point of these two chapters is Jacob having to meet his brother Esau again.
  - a) Remember that God told Jacob a few chapters back to go to the Promised Land.
    - i) Further, we are going to read of Jacob seeing angels, which are to remind Jacob to not be afraid.
  - b) Jacob fears for his life. We read a lot of the old "conniving Jacob" coming back.
  - c) We'll read of Jacob making lots of statements and doing lots of things out of fear.
  - d) We'll read of Jacob going to all sorts of trouble because in Jacob's mind, they were all necessary in order to stay alive. It is as if Jacob is thinking, "Yes, yes, I know God told me I'm going to be blessed back in the Promised Land, but God doesn't understand how much Esau wants to kill me and I have to use my best conniving wits in order to survive."
  - e) The classic lessons to us have to do with trusting God in the midst of our fears.
    - i) One of the great lessons Jacob learns in these chapters is "Most of the things in life we fear never happen!" Jacob did all sorts of things out of fear that Esau would kill him. Yet we read that Esau's heart has changed after 20 years. When God said He would bless Jacob's homecoming, God meant it despite Jacob's lack of trust. As always, this is not about Jacob keeping his promises, it is about God.
    - ii) A reason for studying your bible is to learn that God is always faithful to keep the promises he made to us despite our own sinful actions.

7. OK, 51 verses to cover today, and I haven't even started yet. Let's go! ☺
8. Chapter 32, Verse 1: Jacob also went on his way, and the angels of God met him. <sup>2</sup> When Jacob saw them, he said, "This is the camp of God!" So he named that place Mahanaim.
- a) Chapter 31 ended with the final meeting between Jacob and his father in law Laban.
    - i) The final scene was them saying good-bye and good riddance to each other. ☺
    - ii) Jacob and Laban were too much alike to live in the same location. Because neither trusted each other, they both made a pack to not cross each other's territory under the penalty of death.
    - iii) These two became more at peace once that agreement was made. The families all said goodbye to each other. Jacob, his two wives, his two concubines, and his 11 sons and 1 daughter (to date) were on their way.
  - b) Now in Chapter 32, the scene opens up just outside of what-is-today Israel.
  - c) Verse 1 covers most of the 500-mile journey from where Jacob was in Chapter 31 to where Jacob will be in the next few chapters.
  - d) The word "Mahanaim" means "two camps". Jacob realized that besides his own camp of people, there is another "camp of angels" at this particular location.
  - e) Beginning in Verse 2, we are going to read of Jacob preparing to meet his brother Esau.
    - i) The last words Esau said to Jacob was twenty years ago. Esau vowed to kill Jacob once their father was dead. At that time, they thought their father was dying. Their father Isaac is still alive at this time, yet I doubt Jacob was still aware of this fact. All Jacob knew was that Esau wanted to kill him.
    - ii) I believe the angels were there to visually remind Esau not to worry.
      - a) Jacob had a fear of going forward and having to face Esau.
      - b) Remember in the last chapter, Jacob could not go back as he had an agreement with Laban not to cross a certain point, or Laban can kill him.
    - iii) As we will see, that didn't help alleviate Jacob's fears, at least not for long.
    - iv) A typical biblical "pattern" of God is that He often gives us some reassurances either before or after some difficult event in our life. The point is that God wants us to trust Him through that difficult event. At the same time, God is testing us to see how well we do trust Him in that event.
      - a) It is similar to the idea of teaching a child to walk. We guide and hold the child, but then let them go so they can mature. After they fall, then we pick them up and encourage them to try again. In a similar way, God is trying to mature us through various events of our lives. We often get reassurance before or after a major event as God is teaching us to trust Him as we "walk on our own".
      - b) Based on the principal of "God tests us" I get a little nervous when God has manifested himself in my life somehow. There is a part of me that has learned that when I get my own little reassurances that God is there, somehow, I suspect there may be some great lesson around the corner of my life that God is preparing for me.
9. Verse 3: Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. <sup>4</sup> He instructed them: "This is what you are to say to my master Esau: 'Your servant Jacob says, I have been staying with Laban and have remained there till now. <sup>5</sup> I have cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, menservants and maidservants. Now I am sending this message to my lord, that I may find favor in your eyes.' "
- a) You have to remember that Edom is a territory just northeast of Israel where Esau settled. The words "Edom" and "Esau" are similar. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau.
  - b) Just how Jacob knew he was going to encounter Esau again was unknown. The text doesn't specify how and where Jacob became aware that He was going to see his brother.

- c) Notice what Jacob does not say in a message to Esau: "God has blessed me and gave me orders to return home. I am trusting in those orders that God will protect me on the way back. You happen to be along the way, so let's do lunch." ☺
  - d) You have to see the fear that Jacob has in this message to his brother Esau.
    - i) Jacob calls himself "Your servant Jacob".
      - a) Remember Jacob deceived his brother out of the birthright of the firstborn and primary "blessing" of this father. In a sense, Jacob wants to throw all of that away in order to protect his life and call himself as "your servant".
    - ii) Second, Jacob lists all of his possessions.
      - a) There is no mention of Jacob's wives and children, just an inventory of all the "stuff" that Jacob now has. This is a promise of a bribe. Jacob is saying in effect, "I'm rich, and maybe I can buy my way out of being killed".
10. Verse 6: When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, "We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him."
- a) Remember God promised Jacob that he would return to the Promised Land in tact. God promised that He would be with Jacob.
  - b) Yet, Jacob was more focused on the fact that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men. Jacob's only thought was "I'm going to be killed by my brother".
11. Verse 7: In great fear and distress Jacob divided the people who were with him into two groups, and the flocks and herds and camels as well. <sup>8</sup> He thought, "If Esau comes and attacks one group, the group that is left may escape."
- a) Notice what Jacob does not say, "Lord, you promised I would get home safely and I know angels are here with me. Now give me the peace and strength to meet my brother and let me trust in You through this difficult situation."
  - b) Instead, we read of the conniving return of the "Old Jacob".
    - i) His plan was to divide everyone in two groups. That way, if Esau attacks one, the other can make a run for it.
    - ii) On the surface, this sounds like a good plan. The only problem is that it lacks any trust in God's promises to Jacob.
12. Verse 9: Then Jacob prayed, "O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,' <sup>10</sup> I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups. <sup>11</sup> Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. <sup>12</sup> But you have said, 'I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.' "
- a) OK, now Jacob prays. ☺
  - b) It is as if Jacob is saying "OK, God, I've devised this plan for my safety, now bless it!"
    - i) Reread this paragraph from the perspective of Jacob saying, "I've devised this plan for my safety, now God, please bless it". (Go ahead, I'll wait. ☺)
    - ii) God doesn't work that way. If God would have blessed Jacob's plan, then Jacob himself gets the credit for being alive and not God himself.
    - iii) God desires we pray first, and then move from there.
    - iv) "Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." (James 4:15 NIV)
    - v) Unfortunately, I have seen too many Christians and too many churches say to God in so many words, "Here are my plans, now bless them. The late pastor Ray Steadman once quipped, "churches make water channels and pray for the Holy Spirit to flow down that channel". The problem with that method is you are putting "God in a box". God will work the way He wants to work. Our job is to figure out which way God wants to go, and then follow.

- vi) When we are not sure which way God wants us to go, we simply go forward. A great prayer is something like “bless it or block it” and see if God is then blessing or blocking our plans.
  - c) Getting back to Jacob, on a positive note, there is nothing wrong with Jacob bringing his fears to God.
    - i) Jacob was afraid, and he brought those fears to God.
    - ii) Jacob reminded God of His promises to Jacob. It is acceptable to state in our prayers God’s promises to us. We do this not to remind God as if He forgot, but to remind ourselves what God has promised to us. We ask God to bless us because it is His will to do so, not based on our deeds.
13. Verse 13: He spent the night there, and from what he had with him he selected a gift 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 female camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. <sup>16</sup> He put them in the care of his servants, each herd by itself, and said to his servants, "Go ahead of me, and keep some space between the herds."
- a) Jacob prayed this prayer of relinquishment, and then went back to his plan to bribe his brother with gifts in order to stay alive. The first group of people to encounter Esau would be servants with a pile of gifts. Jacob hoped that would appease Esau’s anger.
    - i) It is like Jacob saying “OK, God I trust you to get me through this, but just in case, let me organize a big bribe gift just in case you don’t answer the prayer!”
  - b) There are commentaries that make a big deal about this animal inventory and the “hidden meaning behind the numbers”. I’m not sure how relevant all of that is. The main thing is Jacob was willing to give a big pile of his lifetime earnings in order to stay alive.
14. Verse 17: He instructed the one in the lead: "When my brother Esau meets you and asks, `To whom do you belong, and where are you going, and who owns all these animals in front of you?' <sup>18</sup> then you are to say, `They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a gift sent to my lord Esau, and he is coming behind us.' "
- a) Notice the terms “lord Esau” and “servant Jacob” in Verse 18.
  - b) To paraphrase, “Gee Esau, remember all of that treachery to get the blessing and birthright? Well sorry about that ol’ brother of mine. Look, here’s a bunch of stuff to let you know I’m sorry about that. Do you mind letting me live now?” ☺
  - c) The climax of this whole section of fear is coming up in a few verses. I’ll tie it all together when we get there.
15. Verse 19: He also instructed the second, the third and all the others who followed the herds: "You are to say the same thing to Esau when you meet him. <sup>20</sup> And be sure to say, `Your servant Jacob is coming behind us.' " For he thought, "I will pacify him with these gifts I am sending on ahead; later, when I see him, perhaps he will receive me." <sup>21</sup> So Jacob's gifts went on ahead of him, but he himself spent the night in the camp. <sup>22</sup> That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. <sup>23</sup> After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. <sup>24</sup> So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak.
- a) Jacob’s scheme is to send a group with gifts, but Jacob himself is not among them.
    - i) Then a second group is to go, again without Jacob, but with more gifts.
    - ii) Then a third and a fourth, etc. Everyone eventually goes except Jacob himself.
    - iii) By Verse 24 Jacob is alone as everyone is gone ahead of him.
  - b) You can almost sense Jacob’s fears growing with every moment.
  - c) Fear, if left unchecked, grows and consumes you. Fear is the opposite of faith. Just like one’s faith can grow, so can one’s fears.

16. Verse 24 (again): So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak.<sup>25</sup> When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man.<sup>26</sup> Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."<sup>27</sup> The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered.<sup>28</sup> Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."
- a) Here is the climax of the chapter. Jacob sent everyone ahead of him and was now alone in the camp. We now read of Jacob wrestling with "someone" all night long. Jacob refused to give up until this man "blessed him". The man agreed, and then said that Jacob's name will now be called "Israel" because Jacob struggled with God and "overcame him".
  - b) OK, first of all, who is this "man" Jacob struggled with?
    - i) Hosea 12:4 said it was an "angel" that Jacob wrestled with.
      - a) "He (Jacob) struggled with the angel and overcame him; he wept and begged for his favor. (Hosea 12:4 NIV)
    - ii) Jacob himself said that he "struggled with God". Verse 27 says it was a "man".
  - c) So did Jacob struggle with God, a man or an angel?
    - i) When the bible describes angels, there is a "special angel" mentioned every now and then called "The Angel of the Lord". Most Old Testament translations have the word "Angel" with a Capital-A in front when describing this special Angel.
    - ii) Another key translation point is the bible will say "The Angel" as opposed to just "an angel". That idea is given in Hosea 12:4 in as well.
    - iii) My view, along with many Christian scholars is that this is an "Old Testament appearance of Jesus himself". Whenever you read of "The Angel of Lord" appearing, you can see this as being Christ himself in his preincarnate state. Remember that Jesus always existed. He "became flesh" during the times of the Gospels, but Jesus always existed.
    - iv) There is another view that this angel/man was simply a representative of God who was doing God's will as he "wrested" with Jacob.
      - a) Jacob wants this Angel of the Lord to bless him (Verse 26). Jacob says that he "struggled with God". Jacob did not say he struggled with an angel or with a man. I take that literally which is why I believe this is a preincarnate appearance of Jesus-as-God-becoming man.
  - d) OK, on to the important stuff. ☺ Why did Jacob wrestle with God/man/angel? In fact, why did they wrestle all night? Why did Jacob win? After all, if this is God, this should be no contest! How can Jacob "wrestle with God" and win in the first place? If this was God, or at least God's representative, why didn't God just tie up Jacob or pin him down and simply explain to Jacob what is God's will?
    - i) You can tell I spend way too much time thinking about this stuff! ☺
    - ii) This gets back to Jacob's fears. Jacob was consumed by his fears. Now, everyone was gone ahead to meet his brother, and Jacob was alone with his fears.
    - iii) First of all, envision a young father wrestling with his six-year-old son. They are playing and wrestling. At any time the father could use his strength to overcome the son, but the father is playing at the "son's level". That is "somewhat" of the idea of the man/angel wrestling with Jacob.
    - iv) The next important thing to notice is Verse 24 says, "The man wrestled with him."
      - a) This says the "man" wrestled with Jacob, not the other way around.
      - b) The God/man/angel initiated the match, not Jacob.
      - c) Here's the important part, pay attention! ☺ This is about God getting Jacob to surrender his will to God's will! The wrestling is about Jacob submitting to God's will.

- d) Maturity as a Christian is about submitting our will to God. At the same time, God gives us free will. We are free at any one moment to choose to do God's will or our own will. God of course, knows what is best for us and wants to mature us. At the same time, God doesn't violate our free will. What God does is put situations in our life where He wants us to figure out that His will is the best way for us to live. Thus, our desire to do things "our way" wrestles with God's desire to do things His way.
  - e) Thus the word-picture we have here of God "wrestling" with Jacob.
  - f) Jacob prayed a few verses back for God to help him. God "answered" that prayer with this wrestling match.
- e) With all of that in mind, now let's read Verse 25 again: "When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man."
- i) Again, vision a father and son wrestling. When the verse says, "When the man saw that he could not overpower him" it is a word-picture of God not being able to get Jacob out of his own free will to give up his fears.
  - ii) Why did God "do hip damage" to Jacob at this point? Let's face it; God could have spoken to Jacob to submit, or a thousand other possibilities?
    - a) Remember that Jacob's fear was what Esau would do to him. Jacob prayed it out, but also thought, "I could make a run for it". Remember Jacob's plan was to have two companies face Esau with Jacob being part of the second company. Jacob's plan was to run if Esau attacked.
    - b) Now God "broke Jacob's hip", or something like that. The point is Jacob couldn't run. God "took away" Jacob's escape route. Jacob's only choice at this point is to fully trust God to keep Jacob alive.
    - c) Remember that this is about God trying to mature Jacob. God may take away our other "options" in order to trust Him more!
- f) Verse 26 again: Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."
- i) This verse comes after the "hip breaking". The God/man/angel asks to be let go. I personally read this as "OK, Jacob My will and your will have been wrestling all night. It is time for you to make a decision. I've laid out your options so you can't walk away. It's time to face Esau."
  - ii) Jacob's respond of "I will not let you go unless you bless me" is a cry out for full submission. It is to say, "OK, OK, I give up, let your will be done.
  - iii) Jacob is asking for God's blessing after, and only after he has fully submitted his desires to God.
- g) Verse 27 again: "The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered."
- i) This is my favorite verse in the chapter. If you're interested, I'll explain why. ☺
  - ii) Remember the name Jacob means "heal-catcher". The word implies deceiver and one who connives his way into getting what he wants.
  - iii) By God asking Jacob what is his name, Jacob is admitting and confessing his sinful ways to God! Remember that 20 years earlier when Jacob was deceiving his going-blind father Isaac by pretending to be Esau. His father Isaac asked Jacob "Who are you?" (Genesis 27:32) and Jacob lied directly to his father. Think about "Who are you?" in direct comparison to God asking, "What is your name?"
    - a) This is about God asking Jacob to confess his sinful ways.

- iv) Here's the important part: For God to bless us, we have to fully submit our will to his. That also includes fully admitting our sins and our sinful nature to God. Saying to God "I want to do your will". Trying to please God based on our own efforts of "I did it out of self-discipline" doesn't cut it with God. Submitting to God's will is about God getting all the credit.
  - h) Which leads us to Verse 28: "Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."
    - i) Now that Jacob has confessed his sinful ways,
    - ii) Now that Jacob has fully turned his life over to God,
    - iii) Now God (as this man) chooses to bless him.
  - i) I have now spent about two pages on these four verses. I believe they are a key moment in Jacob's life and his relationship with God. The prayer to you and I is that these lessons not be wasted. May God use this "word-picture" of Jacob's life to remind us on a moment-by-moment basis about confessing our sins to God and at that point, fully submitting our desires and our will to what God wants for our life.
  - j) The word "Israel" means struggle with God, but in a victorious capacity. Israel can mean, "Struggle with God and overcoming because we submitted to God's will!"
    - i) It is only by "losing" that we win with God. After we agree to "lose" our will, God, out of love for us, then blesses us far greater than our will can accomplish.
  - k) OK, let's take a deep breath and move on. ☺
17. Verse 29: Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.
- a) Verse 29 adds to the mystery of who is this God/man/angel?
    - i) The question is never answered, even when Jacob asked it directly.
  - b) The God/man/angel never says, "I am God" nor says "I am an angel sent by God". I believe the purpose of this verse is that God wants Jacob himself to figure out that this is God in a man's body. As we Christians call it, the "preincarnate appearance of Jesus".
18. Verse 30: So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."
- a) In Verse 30, Jacob figures out it was God himself. Jacob says he saw God "face to face".
  - b) Jacob is amazed that God didn't kill him ("yet my life was spared").
    - i) One of the difficult aspects that Christians wrestle with is the idea that God wants to punish us. We feel guilty about our own sins. We think that God wants to punish us. Out of guilt we try to do things to please God.
    - ii) What God simply wants is a confession and desire on our part to change for the better. He is not asking for perfection, simply the acknowledgement that what we did was wrong, restitution if possible, and the willingness to do what is right.
    - iii) The sin itself is still dealt with. That is what "the cross" is all about. God can't let us "get away with any sin whatsoever". Yet God in His love for us, doesn't kill us when we sin, as His desire is to mature us by confessing our sin and "moving on".
19. Verse 31: The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip.  
<sup>32</sup> Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob's hip was touched near the tendon.
- a) One has to remember that Genesis was "compiled" by Moses, roughly 400 years later.
  - b) I believe Jacob himself wrote of this event. The Book of Genesis is a collection of writings that were passed on from one generation to another and then compiled in one book by Moses. (The other possibility is God himself "dictated" the stories to Moses).
  - c) I mention this because Verse 32 is an "editorial" comment by Moses.
    - i) Verse 32 says that "to this day", the Israelites do not eat the tendon next to the socket hip of any animal to remember this event by Jacob.
    - ii) "This day" refers to the time of the Exodus and the time Moses was alive.



- iii) This is a tradition that may have been passed on from Jacob's children, for the next 400 years to the time of Moses.
  - iv) The interesting thing is that when you read all of the commandments in Exodus through Deuteronomy, Moses never comments ever again on this tradition.
  - v) Orthodox Jews of our time still practice this custom based on this verse.
  - vi) What they are remembering is not that God broke Jacob's hip, they are remembering that Jacob submitted to God's will. By purposely not eating this particular section of say a lamb, it is a reminder of full submission to God.
  - vii) I don't believe Christians have to practice this custom. Reading the story and submitting to God is important, not the ritual of avoiding this part of the animal.
20. Chapter 33, Verse 1: Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two maidservants. <sup>2</sup> He put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. <sup>3</sup> He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother.
- a) Now comes the moment of the big confrontation.
  - b) Esau has already received the pile of gifts sent by Jacob. That will be discussed later.
  - c) Now Jacob is lining everybody up to meet Esau.
  - d) What is important to notice is the order. The concubines and their children are first, Leah and her kids are next, and finally, Leah, the one Jacob loved the most is last.
  - e) Beginning in a few chapters we are going to read of the adventures of Jacob's son Joseph.
    - i) A good portion of that section is about the other brothers being jealous of Joseph.
    - ii) Remember that Joseph is the son of the favored-wife Rachel.
    - iii) Here in this chapter, all the children of the other wife Leah and the children of the concubines get "second status" to Rachel and Joseph. One can sense how the seeds of jealousy could start even this far back in Genesis.
  - f) Jacob "bowed seven times" to his brother in Verse 2. This was a cultural greeting of that time. The number seven implies "completeness". (For example, God rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day from his creation). To bow seven times is the idea of "complete honor" or "complete submission" of one to another.
21. Verse 4: But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept. <sup>5</sup> Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. "Who are these with you?" he asked. Jacob answered, "They are the children God has graciously given your servant." <sup>6</sup> Then the maidservants and their children approached and bowed down. <sup>7</sup> Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down.
- a) The first thing to notice is that not only has Jacob changed after 20 years, so has Esau.
    - i) Esau gives his brother a big hug and then asks about Jacob's family.
    - ii) All the family members bowed down to Esau, probably based on Jacobs' orders.
  - b) Esau wept and hugged Jacob as a long lost brother. There was no anger anymore.
    - i) My personal theory as to why Esau was no longer angry is twofold:
      - ii) First, we're going to read where Esau is now rich. Esau was angry about his brother's deception because it means Jacob would get most of the family inheritance. Since Esau is now rich on his own, this pacified his anger.
      - iii) Second, God changed Esau. Don't take this lightly.
      - iv) God promised Jacob he would get home safely. If that meant getting past Esau, God "worked it out" so Esau is not a problem.
        - a) "When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him." (Proverbs 16:7 NIV)

- v) This also reminds me of another great proverb: "Most of the things we worry about in life never happen". Think of all of the stress and problems had about Jacob facing Esau. After all of that, none of it was necessary.
  - vi) Think of all the time and effort we spend worrying about something that never happened. Remember that "worrying" is taking responsibility upon yourself that God never intends for you to have!
22. Verse 8: Esau asked, "What do you mean by all these droves I met?" "To find favor in your eyes, my lord," he (Jacob) said. <sup>9</sup> But Esau said, "I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself." <sup>10</sup> "No, please!" said Jacob. "If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably. <sup>11</sup> Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need." And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it.
- a) To paraphrase, Esau is asking "What's the deal with all the gifts? I have plenty of stuff, you go ahead and keep it". Esau only agreed to keep the gift because Jacob insisted.
  - b) There is a great contrast to notice between Jacob and Esau here:
    - i) Esau says, "I already have plenty, my brother" in Verse 9.
    - ii) Jacob says, "I have all I need" in Verse 11.
    - iii) Also notice Esau does not give God any credit for his success while Jacob gives God all the credit for his success.
    - iv) Esau is the word-picture of the "self-made man". He worked hard all of his life and thought his success only came from his hard work. He doesn't give God any credit for his success because Esau thought it was "all him".
    - v) Jacob on the other hand says, "I have all I need", because Jacob understood that all he owned belonged to God, and God provides all of his needs.
    - vi) On a similar note, Paul said, "And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." (Phil 4:19 NIV)
      - a) That does not mean God wants us to be lazy and God will spoon-feed us.
      - b) It means that if we are doing God's will for our life, all of the needs, be it practical and/or spiritual needs will be provided. This is a promise made by God to Jacob (implied) and to Paul (stated).
23. Verse 12: Then Esau said, "Let us be on our way; I'll accompany you."
- a) Esau's plan was to have a family reunion. I suspect Esau wanted Jacob to meet all of his wives and kids. Remember that 400 men accompanied Esau (Genesis 32:6). We know now the purpose of this escort was for Jacob's safe passage on the rest of his journey.
  - b) It is ironic to consider that Jacob heard about the 400 men, Jacob thought that they were there to kill him. Now he discovers the men are there for his safety.
24. Verse 13: But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are tender and that I must care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard just one day, all the animals will die. <sup>14</sup> So let my lord go on ahead of his servant, while I move along slowly at the pace of the droves before me and that of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir."
- a) From here to the end of the chapter, we are going to read of Jacob planning another deceit. Jacob doesn't want to go visit Esau's family. Therefore, Jacob starts making excuses why his family can't join Esau.
  - b) In a few verses, we are going to learn that Jacob travels in the opposite direction of Esau's men once they are out of distance. In fact, we don't read of Jacob and Esau encountering each other again until the day of their father's death.
  - c) To paraphrase Jacob, "Look Esau, you have 400 men (assumed) on horseback. I've got women, young kids and animals. We can't move as fast as you. You go on ahead and we'll catch up".
  - d) At this point, I'd like to finish this section of the text and then get to the question of "why did Jacob do this?"

25. Verse 15: Esau said, "Then let me leave some of my men with you." "But why do that?" Jacob asked. "Just let me find favor in the eyes of my lord." <sup>16</sup> So that day Esau started on his way back to Seir. <sup>17</sup> Jacob, however, went to Succoth, where he built a place for himself and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place is called Succoth.
- a) The main point is that Jacob convinced his brother to start going without him. Once Esau was out of sight, Jacob went in the opposite direction. Succoth (which means "booth's or "shelters") is the exact opposite direct of where Esau was headed (toward Seir).
26. Verse 18: After Jacob came from Paddan Aram, he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan and camped within sight of the city. <sup>19</sup> For a hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent. <sup>20</sup> There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel.
- a) This is the second piece of real estate bought by someone of the Jewish line. Remember Abraham bought a burial ground for his wife and himself in Genesis 23.
  - b) Now we read of Jacob buying a place to set up an altar to God. The term "El Elohe Israel" simply means an altar to the God of Israel.
    - i) The land bought by Abraham and the land bought by Jacob will become the only real estate owned in the Promised Land until after the Exodus.
  - c) This action by Jacob goes back to a vow Jacob made back in Chapter 28:
    - i) Jacob said, "so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth." (Genesis 28:21-22 NIV)
    - ii) Most commentators believe what Jacob is doing in Chapter 33:18 is fulfilling that vow of a "tenth". God blessed Jacob over the past 20 years and now Jacob is fulfilling that promise with this altar/real estate.
27. Now let's get to the big question: Why did Jacob do all of this? Why did Jacob lie to his brother about following him and go in the opposite direction?
- a) There are both "positive and negative" aspects about Jacob's actions. I'll discuss the negative aspects first.
    - i) First, we still have "Jacob the deceiver" in view. Jacob lied directly to his brother. Despite Jacob having his hip broken by God (so he couldn't run), despite the positive reaction by Esau seeing Jacob again, despite the fact that Esau told Jacob to keep his gifts, we still read of the "scared Jacob" lying to his brother, probably out of fear of his life.
    - ii) This goes to show that "sin does not die of old age". Just because you have fully submitted your will to God, don't expect your old sinful ways to just "pack up and leave". This is why our relationship with God is a moment-by-moment basis. Even when we have "victory by full submission" one moment, the next moment we can be back to our old ways again. This is what we see here in Jacob.
    - iii) The interesting thing is that we don't read of God "punishing" Jacob directly for this action. The next chapter is about Jacob's daughter being raped by a local resident of where Jacob settles and Jacob's sons avenging that action. Jacob is forced to move on out of fear of revenge. One has to wonder if Jacob agreed to go with Esau, that incident would never have happened.
  - b) There is also a positive aspect to Jacob leaving, although it doesn't excuse deception. God called Jacob to go back to his homeland and Jacob refused to let Esau be a "distraction". Esau no longer lived in the land of his father Isaac, but now lived east in his own land "Edom". (What is today part of the country of Jordan.) God told Jacob in Genesis 31:3 to get back to "land of your fathers". That means to go to what-is-today Israel and not go with Esau to what-is-today Jordan. By going the opposite direction of Esau, Jacob was obeying God's orders.

- i) There is another word-picture in play here. Esau, throughout Genesis has been a word picture of “the world”. It is word-picture of the type of person who for the most part, doesn’t care much for the things of God but is only interested in pursuing his own life his own way.
  - ii) The New Testament picks up on this word picture too: “See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. (Hebrews 12:16 NIV)
  - iii) The word picture for us is that “Jacob is choosing to follow God as opposed to following man’s ways. One can read this section as a “temptation” by the devil to get Jacob to ignore God’s will of going “home” and following Esau instead.
  - iv) Again, it doesn’t excuse Jacob lying to Esau, but it is possible and probable that Jacob’s heart is in the right place.
28. Wrap up time: This whole section keys on Jacob’s struggles with God, struggles with his fears and struggles with his family members. The high point of the section is Jacob fully submitting to God’s will in an all night wrestling match. The word-picture of the wrestling match is that God wants you to surrender your will to His. If you pray for God to come into your life, because of that prayer, He will “wrestle with you” in many ways and forms. It is only by “losing, you win”. Once we fully “give up”, like Jacob, is when God blesses our life.
29. Let’s Pray: Father, let not these lessons be wasted on our life. When we pray for your will to be done, we often fail to see the full implications of that prayer. Help us not to get to the low-point of Jacob before we fully submit our will to yours. Further, in the areas of our lives where we still won’t “let go”, wrestle-those areas out of our lives and don’t stop until you bless us. Change us so that we may draw closer to you, and be better witnesses for you to others around us. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.