GENESIS 33

Esau Meets Jacob

1 Then Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked. He saw Esau coming to him with 400 men. So he separated Leah's children, Rachel's children, and the children of the two concubines. **2** Then he put the concubines and their children at the front, and[i] Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph at the rear. **3** Then he passed over the brook before them and bowed to the ground seven times as he was approaching his brother. **4** But Esau ran to meet him, and[ii] embraced him, and threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. They *both* wept.

5 Then Esau lifted up his eyes and saw the women and the children. So he said, "Who are those with you?"

And Jacob said, "These are the children whom Elohim has graciously[iii] given your servant."

6 Then the female servants came forward with their children and bowed down. **7** Then Leah also came forward with her children and they bowed down. Finally, Joseph and Rachel came forward and bowed down.

8 Then Esau said, "What do you mean by all the herds of animals that I met?" So he said, "To find grace in the sight of my lord."

9 But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself."[iv] **10** But Jacob said, "No! Please![v] If I have now found grace in your sight, receive my present at my hand. For I have finally seen your face. It is as though I saw the face of Elohim[vi] because you welcomed me. **11** Please take the blessing that I gave you. Elohim has dealt graciously[vii] with me, and I have enough."

Because Jacob kept insisting, Esau took it.[viii]

12 Then Esau said, "Let us start on our way back. I will go before you."

13 But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with their young are with me. If we drive hard for even one day, all the flock will die. **14** Please, my lord, go on ahead of me. I will follow slowly, at a pace that the animals and the children who are with me can endure. We can meet again when I come to my lord at Seir."

15 Then Esau said, "Let some of my people stay with you."

But he said, "There is no need for that. Let me find grace in the sight of my lord." **16** So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir.

Jacob's Bad Choice

17 Jacob journeyed to Succoth where he set up a place for himself and made booths for his cattle.[ix] Therefore, the name of the place is Succoth.[x]

18 Then Jacob left Padan Aram and came safely[xi] to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan. He pitched his tent near the city. **19** Then he bought a parcel of a field where he had set up his tents.[xii] He bought it from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, for 100 pieces of silver. **20** He also built an altar there. He named it "El, the Elohim of Israel."[xiii]

[i] The literary technique of Polysyndeton uses multiple "and"s (or other conjunctions) in a series. It slows the reader and gives emphasis to each item. By this ordering of family groups, everyone could easily see that Rachel was the favorite wife.

[ii] The literary technique of Polysyndeton uses multiple "and"s (or other conjunctions) in a series. It slows the reader and gives emphasis to each item.

[iii] The Hebrew חָנַן (*chaw-nahn*) means to stoop in kindness to an inferior. It emphasizes unearned grace and kindness. Synonyms include favor, bestow, beseech, have mercy on, pray, and be gracious.

[iv] The gifts were regarded as a covenant of friendship. If Esau accepted those gifts, he could not do anything of vengeance. The fact that he refused this first offer was the same as refusing friendship. Esau is still planning on using the 400 men to strike Jacob.

[v] Jacob knows his life is at stake. His brother refused the first offer. He has to be as persuasive as possible if he wishes to live. They both are in the midst of deep spiritual warfare at this moment.

[vi] Jacob recognized the face of God through Esau's welcoming.

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[viii] Finally! In Eastern cultures, accepting a gift was a token of peace. He has avoided the immediate moment of hostility. If Esau had refused the gift, he could have at the worst put the initial welcome behind him and taken his long await vengeance. Refusal of the gift, at the best, would mean that there could never be any lasting harmony between them. But when Esau accepted the gift, there was a chance — a slim chance — that they could start over with brotherly intentions.

[ix] Succoth means "booths." This is a bad choice because Jacob is not following Yahveh's instructions. He is supposed to be going to Beer Sheba (Gen 28:15, 21; Gen 31:3, 13; and Gen 32:9). This blocks the way back to God and to Isaac. It also opens the way for the sad story of Dinah and the murder of Shechem.

[x] This is also a bad choice for two more reasons (see the prior footnote). First, he chose to live away from Isaac. He is not returning to the parental source of the covenant with Elohim. He is acting like an unsaved, self-centered, independent person. He is in danger of drifting away from the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac. Second, he ignored his promise to Esau. He did not go to Seir. It takes two to have a relationship. Jacob has decided NOT to try a relationship with his brother. Jacob did NOT try to heal the long-standing broken relationship. As a result, the Edomites become Israel's long-term enemy.

[xi] The Hebrew שָׁלֵם means complete, safe, peaceful, whole. It is related to the word "shalom."

[xii] Lucifer knows about the Gen 15:13 promise to bring Abraham's descendants back to Israel. He is busy working to rise up several nations of Nephilim (Gen 6:4 "This also happened after that."). Jacob is unwittingly putting down roots in enemy territory.

[xiii] The Hebrew is אֵל אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (In most Bibles it is: "God, the plural God of Israel" or El Elohe-Israel). Note that it is not the God of Jacob — yet.