

## Israel

### Genesis 33:1 – 20



~ We're waking up with a crippled Jacob this morning in this report from our Spiritual Safari. Jacob just can't seem to win with God at this point in his life. The Lord has brought Jacob to the place where Jacob has no option but to immediately surrender all to the Angel of the Lord. Interestingly, now that Jacob has been "pinned down" – subdued – by the Lord, his trouble isn't over. In fact, it has just begun. Amazingly, this is also the high point in Jacob's life. That's when God went after him. We were told last night a man wrestled with Jacob; and we know that Jacob wasn't looking for another fight. Jacob was running from Laban, Esau AND the Lord. Laban is behind him, and Esau is in front of him, and both want to kill him, as far as he knows. That's when God wrestled Jacob and broke him. Now, Jacob has no idea what will happen in just a few hours when the sun comes up. This has been a long, dark night and I doubt that Jacob has gotten any sleep at all.

The Angel of the Lord was the aggressor in the fight with Jacob in Bethel. The preincarnate Lord Jesus Christ is Who the Man is there. Jacob had initially refused to obey God; and he was sure he could overcome his problems all by himself - but found out very quickly that there was no way he could ever overcome the Lord. Still, Jacob would not surrender so God "touched the hollow of his thigh" – just a single touch from God broke this man completely. Well, the struggling and striving is over and from here on we will see a real change in Jacob; and ultimately we will see he is a real man of God. In this chapter we're going to see the turning point of him becoming a new man.

The psychiatrist today tells us that our brains establish certain synaptic connections which are formed by habit and are the reason we do what we do, whatever it happens to be. Well, perhaps – but – we are creatures of habit, and we will act accordingly all of our days down here, you may be sure. We may – and probably will - get out of God's will for some time in our lives, but there will always be a major difference between us and the

lost man - as we see from here forward in the life of Jacob. In Laban's home, Jacob was a real man of the flesh: working and marrying and all business. Here, at Peniel, Jabbok, it is fighting – Jacob is definitely struggling, he's prepared to strike offensively and will defend himself and his family at all costs.

Paul had three distinct periods of time in his life. First, Paul was converted; next, Paul thought he could live the Christian life. He found out that the things he didn't want to do were the very things he continued to do - and Paul found out there was no good in the old nature - and no strength and no power in the new nature. So, Paul ends up crying out, "...oh, wretched man that I am!" Who shall deliver us from this body of death, friends? This is where we stop, bow down, worship Christ and thank God for Him! If you ever have any help in this world with anything in your life it's going to come from Jesus Christ. With the mind we serve the law of God but with the flesh the law of sin. We all make the mistake early on in our Christian lives of thinking we can live a so-called Christian life; but they that are in the flesh cannot please God – impossible.

Alright, the sun is up now in our safari and we're riding out on the plains with Jacob, his wives and his sons. Jacob sees Esau coming so he splits the family up into four groups. See, Jacob hopes that at least some of them can escape being killed! God brings now that moment for Jacob when, although he has said he trusted God, there has never been this kind of real trial in his life, either. This yielding will be a real act of the will for Jacob. His family is in jeopardy. Jacob is scared to death now....

***1 And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids.***

***2 And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.***

***3 And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.***

***4 And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.***

***5 And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant.***

***6 Then the handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves.***

***7 And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves.***

***8 And he said, What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And he said, These are to find grace in the sight of my lord.***

***9 And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself.***

***10 And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me .***

***11 Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it.***

~ This scene is almost comical because Jacob didn't steal away from Laban and move on with these herds just to give them away to Esau. That just wasn't part of Jacob's thinking when he left out of Haran. Esau wasn't interested in the gifts. This man truly had missed his brother. The man of the world today is, for the most part, much more kind and compassionate than most Christians – and that's sad to say. It happens to be true, however. I know some men who would not consider themselves Christians that would give you the shirt off their back, literally – or better yet – they'll buy you a new shirt. They will let you in their home and stay there without question and without contribution, if you really needed that. Esau is a man

of the world, but he honestly felt affection on some level that I am sure he defined as love for his brother. Interestingly, Esau offers to protect Jacob here when Jacob tells him that they can't move very fast with the family....

***12 And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee.***

***13 And he said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die.***

***14 Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure, until I come unto my lord unto Seir.***

***15 And Esau said, Let me now leave with thee some of the folk that are with me. And he said, What needeth it? let me find grace in the sight of my lord.***

***16 So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir.***

***17 And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.***

~ There is a deep and absolute truth in this account of Jacob and Esau that can easily be missed completely - and that is this: there has been a profound change in the heart and life of Jacob. That literally explains everything concerning these two brothers as we move forward in the Bible. All of Jacob's clever scheming for personal gain has culminated into him offering to give away the farm to the person he deceived. Everything Jacob had worked for his entire life was suddenly compromised; but just as the Lord had prepared Laban not to harm Jacob, the Lord, likewise, prepared Esau to receive Jacob. There is no love and there is no peace without God, my friends – and Jacob has both now! The reconciliation of Jacob and Esau appears genuine, too. There's no reason it shouldn't be - and we have no reason to doubt it.

Only the Lord God can work things out this way, friends! If Jacob had been left to his own cupidity and cunningness or cleverness he would have met a violent death a long, long time ago. We're going to stay with Jacob as we continue on in Genesis - and he will soon look back over his life and see the myriad ways that the Hand of God has moved him – very definitely – and Jacob will give God the glory. However, there is evil and sin that has been sown, my beloved, and will, also very definitely, bring Jacob a full harvest of bad stuff later in his life. Trouble is the offspring that is there for Jacob – it's waiting for him. It is critical to keep that in view. There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of hell and of death.

So, Esau has left a small band of men to protect Jacob and his family, and he rides off for the time being. To his credit, Esau will be back for his father, Isaac's, funeral; just as Ishmael had returned with Isaac for Abraham's funeral. See, the man of the world is, by and large, empathetic, sympathetic and caring; at least, on the surface, and to a certain conditional level. Jacob has been criticized for stopping at Succoth and for not having proceeded directly to Bethel. I feel that being recently crippled, Jacob deserves some understanding and sympathy as he goes through spiritual therapy to learn to walk with his new spiritual legs; and let's not criticize him too much because he's going the entire rest of the way through our safari with us....

***18 And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padanaram; and pitched his tent before the city.***

***19 And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money.***

***20 And he erected there an altar, and called it Elelohe-Israel.***

~ The God of Israel ~ Jacob is on his way to Bethel - but he hasn't gotten here just yet. Jacob left Succoth and went to Shechem and built an altar. This is the first altar we see Jacob build, which represents the first testimony Jacob gave. Unfortunately, in the next chapter we're going to see

that stopping in this place was a big mistake. There is going to be a scandal in Jacob's family with Dinah, the only daughter of Leah, being defiled by Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivite. Simeon and Levi will avenge this act by slaying all the inhabitants of the city of Hamor. There's no justification for this and it will be the dark blotch on the family of Jacob. This reveals that he didn't get away from Laban too soon. God was right in bringing Jacob out of that environment – and to this trouble and testing - because God is right in everything He does, friends.

The Lord seems to spend an inordinate amount of time and effort in Genesis on family heredity. He is very concerned about His children and His Family. God is also adamant that believers shall not marry unbelievers and pollute that family tree – while personally becoming unequally yoked. We've already seen this before - it's a big deal. The home environment is the other area in which the Lord seems to spend a great deal of energy getting over to our thinking. There is trouble and strife - on a global and international scale – regarding the environment today; and it has a direct correlation to the constant trouble and strife in Abraham's family – coming from Adam, going through Isaac and beyond the nation Israel – and possibly past the modern church. Remember, Isaac and Rebekah had favorite children and that's what led to the particular problem in this passage the first place.

So, our Spiritual Safari ends this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God by coming to a particularly sad, sordid chapter of the Bible, indeed. We're going to see what must have been abject heartbreak to old man Jacob at that time. Actually, though, we need to call Jacob "Israel" from here on out because that's his new name now. The altar has been built and we can be sure of one thing: Jacob now has a testimony for the Living and True God. Now there can be spiritual development and growth in life that can be seen outwardly. So, may I say this kindly – Christian friends? – do not expect that you're going to be a full grown, mature Christian overnight when you get saved - because it ain't happening. You may be able to understand divine truth because the Holy Spirit is our Teacher – but – your growth and my growth is slow – very – very – very slow. Progress is not observed on a minute by minute or hour by hour basis.

Don't expect too much of others, either; but let's expect excellence from our selves in glorifying Christ forevermore ~

