

OpenTheo

Genesis 32 - 34



Genesis - Steve Gregg

In Genesis 32-34, Jacob prepares to meet his estranged brother Esau after years of rivalry. He wrestles with a divine being, is renamed Israel, and reconciles with Esau, who surprisingly welcomes him with warmth. However, the story of Dinah's rape by the prince of Shechem and her brothers' violent retaliation culminates in the exclusion of Simeon and Levi from receiving inheritance in Jacob's later patriarchal blessings, with Judah eventually receiving the birthright. Through these events, we see how surrendering to God is pivotal in receiving His blessings, and how God can use difficult circumstances to make individuals fully dependent on Him.

Transcript

Alright, so in the last chapter we looked at, which was Genesis 31, Jacob had fled from his uncle because things were souring between them. Not that they had ever been real rosy between those two men, but they had at least gotten along somewhat civilly until such a time as it appeared to Laban's sons that they were losing their inheritance to Jacob. And then because of that, Jacob kind of put, he could see, you know, what was going on and he felt like he better get away from there before they chose to do him harm.

And so he fled with three days head start against those that would pursue him, but they caught up with him. But fortunately, God came to Jacob's rescue and spoke to Laban in a dream and told him not to harm Jacob. And so they parted company on not exactly friendly terms, but at least not violent terms.

And so Jacob is now on his way back to the promised land where he was raised and where his father is still living and where God has told him to go after being absent for 20 years. But he's not there yet. He reaches the the Ford of Jay Bach, which is the place where he would cross into the land.

And so Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, this is God's camp. And he called the name of that place Mahoney.

And then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau, his brother in the land of fear, the

country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, speak thus to my Lord Esau. Thus, your servant Jacob says, I have sojourned with Laban and stayed there until now.

I have oxen, donkeys, flocks and male and female servants. And I'm sent to tell my Lord that I may find favor in your sight. Now, the angels that appeared to him as he was approaching the promised land were no doubt there to encourage him.

There are angels always around the godly, but they don't always show themselves visibly. And so when God does cause angels to appear, especially in a case like this where they don't convey any message, it is no doubt just for him to know that he is not alone. As, for example, when Elisha was in the Sea of Dothan and in 2nd Kings, chapter six, and his servant was afraid and God opened his eyes so he could see that there were angels all around.

Although there was a threat of the Syrians also, yet the angels appeared to outnumber the Syrians and to outright overpower them. And and so this gave comfort. And this is probably what happened to Jacob, too, as he's coming into the land.

He knows that Esau is there somewhere. And the last he has heard is that Esau has threatened to kill him someday. Now, Esau was going to wait until the father died, and that has not happened yet.

But he's still not sure what Esau may do after so long of lack of communication. And yet God has given him the assurance by his being able to see these angels, apparently quite an army of them, because he named the place Mahaniam, which means two camps. Now, that probably means a reference to his own camp, his own troop, his own family and all that he was moving with, as well as the camp of the angels.

And so he sees that he's not traveling alone. There's another camp with him. And so he sends messengers ahead of Esau.

It's interesting that he refers to Esau as my lord and refers to himself as your servant, when in fact the birth oracle had said that the older will serve the younger, Jacob being the younger. Therefore, Esau would be expected to serve him. But Jacob has come humbly to him and referred to Esau as his lord and himself as Esau's servant and just basically says, I've been away.

I'm coming back. I'd love to see you sometime. And he sent servants out, it says, and the messengers returned to Jacob saying, we came to your brother Esau and he also is coming to meet you.

And 400 men are with him. Now, if Esau simply came alone or with a few friends, this would look like a friendly visit. But bringing 400 men with him raises serious questions as to why Esau feels the need to bring such a large company.

And as far as Jacob knows, this company is there in order to help wreak vengeance upon him for Esau's wrath. So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed, and he divided the people that were with him and the flocks and herds and camels into two companies. And he said, if Esau comes to one company and attacks it, then the other company, which is left, will escape.

So he doesn't. He's looking at war, but not really war, because he doesn't have an armed group with him. So it's more like a slaughter.

And so he figures maybe if my possessions and my things are far enough apart that one will have a chance to escape while the other is being massacred. And then Jacob said, oh, God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, Yahweh, who said to me, return to your country and to your kindred and I will deal well with you. I'm not worthy of the least of all your mercies and of all the truth which you have shown your servants.

For I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I've become two companies. Again, the word mehaniim, the name of the place, means two camps or two companies. And his initial reason for calling it that was that there is the company, his company and the company of the angels.

But now his own company has become two companies. He says, you know, I've become so prosperous that I can divide my holdings into two separate companies of some substance. Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children.

For you said, I will surely treat you well and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude. So Jacob actually remembers what God has said and is actually kind of counting on that being true, though he's not entirely confident that that will happen. He doesn't have entire confidence in God, and he puts a lot of stock in his own resources, as we shall see.

He takes measures of his own to try to placate Esau just in case God doesn't come through for him. And he says, so he lodged there that same night and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau, his brother, 200 female goats and 20 male goats, 200 ewes and 20 rams, 30 milk camels and their coats. 40 cows and 10 bulls, 20 female doggies and 10 foals.

That's a lot of livestock. That's like, what was that? Hundreds, many hundreds of head of livestock. It'd be worth something.

And it's intended to be a generous gift to try to, you know, show his good intentions to Esau. And he delivered them to the hand of his servants, every drove by itself and said to his servants, pass over before me and put some distance between successive droves. And he commanded the first one, saying, when Esau, my brother, meets you and asks

you, saying to whom do you belong and where are you going? Whose are these in front of you? Then you should say they are your servant, Jacob.

It is a present sent to my Lord Esau and behold, he is also behind us. So he commanded the second, the third and all who followed the drove saying in this manner, you should speak to Esau when you find him in general. Although, although not maybe exactly the, you know, the less valuable gifts were sent ahead and the more valuable gifts like the camels and the oxen and donkeys were sent later on.

So that by little bits, Esau would be perhaps softened if he was hostile so that one group of animals with their servants attending them would come to him and if he was still angry, he'd encounter another group of gifts and yet another and another so that presumably this would wear down his hostility and eventually cause him to be placated. So that's what Jacob had in mind. So he commanded the second, the third and so forth.

Verse 20 and also say, behold, your servant, Jacob, is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goes before me and after I will see his face. Perhaps he will accept me.

So the present went on over before him, but he himself lodged that night in the camp and he arose that night and took his two wives and two maidservants and his eleven sons and crossed over the ford of Jabbok. So he went to bed, but he couldn't sleep. He was not restful and he was concerned, especially for his family.

And so he moved them to what he hoped would be a safer place. And he took them, sent them over the brook. And sent over what he had.

Then Jacob was left alone and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. Now, when he saw that he did not prevail against him, he touched the socket of his hip and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as he wrestled with him. And he said, let me go for the day breaks.

But Jacob said, I will not let you go unless you bless me. So he said to him, what is your name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel for you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed.

Then Jacob asked him, saying, tell me your name, I pray. And he said, why is it that you ask about my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place, Peniel, which means face of God, for I've seen God face to face and my life is preserved.

And just as he crossed over Penuel, which is another spelling of the same word, means the same thing. The sun rose on him and he limped on his hip. Therefore, to this day, the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which is generally believed to be the sciatica.

And that's the Jews do not eat that if they're observant. Which is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip and the muscle that shrank. Now, this story about Jacob wrestling with this man is extremely obscure.

And yet one gets the impression that it's pretty important because his name is changed to Israel and the name change usually means something significant. God changes people's names. He changed Abram's name to Abraham and Sarah's name to Sarah.

Later, Jesus would change people's names to he renamed Simon Cephas or Peter. And there were other disciples that had other names perhaps given by Jesus. We don't know.

Jesus called John and James Boanerges, which wasn't really a name, but sort of a nickname means sons of thunder. But the point is that God sometimes gives a man another name because a man's name in those days signified something about him, something either about his character or his destiny. We see this conviction also in the parents who named their children.

They see significance in the birth of their children. They have some idea perhaps what their child will become or what they hope he will become. And so they give them names that are, you know, indicators of that.

Jacob's name had been supplanted because that was his early career. He supplanted his older brother for the inheritance. And so that name was descriptive of him.

Here his name is changed to Israel. And the actual meaning of the name Israel has been much disputed. Not all scholars give it the same interpretation.

The older interpreters interpreted as Prince with God or a prince with God. Some say a struggler with God or something else like that. It's not entirely clear, which would be nice if it was because it might give us a little more indicator of what this wrestling match is all about.

But we have what we have and no explanation is given. We have a man just, you know, out of nowhere coming and wrestling with Jacob. Now, some people think this happened in a dream.

That he was struggling in his conscience about what he'd done to Esau, his fears and so forth. His subconscious fears were just giving him some troubled dreams. It's like he was, you know, had some kind of a strife going on in his sleep.

But the fact that he limped on his hip for the rest of his life indicates this was an actual physical encounter. But why it is that a man would come and wrestle with him like this is not at all explained. Of course, at the end of it, Jacob sees that the man is God.

And there's some reason to believe that. Of course, the man had the obvious power to

cripple him with a touch and also by implication, had the authority to give him a different name by which he should go. And so, I mean, these things in themselves suggest that this is not an ordinary man.

In Hosea, chapter 12, there's reference to this wrestling of Jacob with the man. In the book of Hosea, which is immediately after the book of Daniel and chapter 12, it's talking about Jacob in general, his life. And it says in verse three, Hosea 12, three says he took his brother by the heel in the womb and in his strength, he struggled with God.

Now, this is talking about how tenacious Jacob was, even at his birth, even in his in the womb, before his body had come out and been delivered through the birth canal, his hands come out and grab the heel of his older twin brother, indicating something. And then it says, and in his strength, he struggled with God. That's a reference to the story we're now looking at.

And verse four says, yes, he struggled with the angel and prevailed. He wept and sought favor from him. Now, this is Hosea's reminiscence of this story.

It says he struggled with God and that refers to the angel. We have to realize that sometimes the angel of the Lord is a theophany. It's God appearing in a form of an angel or a man.

And that's what Hosea indicates this was. This was God that Jacob was struggling with. And he understood that, too, because I've seen God face to face and my life is preserved.

So that much we can sort out. But why he was struggling with God and why this happened is hard to say. You know, the man had been sleepless for 20 years because he'd had to stay awake night and day to watch the sheep.

He was an old man, nearly 100 years old at this point, 97, and had just been through a stressful time of fleeing from his uncle for 10 days, apparently fleeing night and day. And then he had this stressful encounter with his uncle. Now he's got this new stress.

His brother, who last he knew, wanted to kill him, is coming with 400 men, far more than Jacob could ward off. Jacob has had nothing but stress in his life for a long time and it's getting worse. But no doubt this wrestling match with God happened to indicate that this is a this this wrestling is symbolic.

I mean, it really happened, but it was a symbolic of the struggle that Jacob has been going through in his own life with God that he has been resisting submission to God. Now, you might say, well, you know, we don't read of him resisting submission to God. But remember, he said 20 years earlier, God, if you'll do this and this and this, then you'll be my God.

That was conditional. And he has not yet surrendered to God. He has not yet said, OK, you are my God.

I accept that. God has made promises to him. God has shown him angels that are there to protect him.

God has appeared to his adversary Laban and protected him supernaturally that way. Jacob still has not broken down and said, OK, you are my God. Even as recently as the day before when he met with Jacob, I mean, Laban, he referred to God as the fear of his father Isaac in chapter 31, verse 53, that is, God was the one that Isaac fears that Isaac worships my dad's God, my father's God, my grandfather's God, but he has not yet referred to God as his own God.

And therefore, he is resisting something. There's no reason why he couldn't have submitted to his father's God. And much earlier time after all, he's seen visions of God.

He's received promises from God. He's seen the supernatural intervention of God. You know, the guy is the guy is holding out.

He's holding out on God. And God is wrestling with him. In fact, all of the stress of the past 20 years and especially that which has been going on the previous 24 hours of the past 10 days could be seen as God intensifying the struggle, intensifying the pressure, trying to get him to break down.

Now, why wouldn't Jacob break down? Jacob would not break down because he was actually a very strong and resourceful man. I mean, if he could wrestle all night with an angel at age 97 and the angels still not prevail against him, we're talking about a man who had a lot of natural strength as well as his wits. He had lived by his wits.

He had gotten the birthright and the blessing by his wits. He had become wealthy in Laban's house, not entirely by his wits, but very much he was very actively involved in increasing the flocks. You know, he saw later it was God that had increased them.

But he was a man of resources. He did not see really a need for God in his life, apparently. And many people, that's exactly why they don't become Christians.

They just really don't see why they need to. Who needs God? I'm really doing pretty well by myself, thanks. And I don't really need to grovel before my Creator.

I don't need to humble myself. I'm not really feeling that humble. I feel quite competent.

I feel quite adequate. I'm handling it. Life is hard, but I'm still on my feet.

My head is bloodied but unbowed. I mean, that's where people often stand in resistance to God. And that's where Jacob was at.

Now, this wrestling with God, I think, was almost symbolic of that whole period of struggle. And it was going to come to a head. And he's going to break at this point.

The man coming to wrestle with him, the angel, I believe, was to bring this whole decades-long wrestling match that Jacob had, resisting God's rule, resisting surrender, refusing to be pinned. This is going to come to an end now. Although not easily, because Jacob even wrestled with this man effectively, all night long.

The angel himself found himself unable to conquer him. Now, think about that for a moment. An angel of the Lord can kill 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night.

An angel of the Lord has great power. In fact, this angel clearly had plenty of power. He had no problem crippling Jacob, just touching him.

He could have done that earlier. It's obvious that the inability of the angel, or God, to break Jacob earlier than this was strictly because God honors the man's free will and is trying to bring the man to the point where he will surrender, rather than to simply overwhelm him. And that's how God does work with us.

It would certainly be to our benefit if God would just overwhelm us sometimes and not let us resist. But he honors man's will. God cannot make a man do something in terms of being saintly or surrendered or faithful or love God or any of those things or worship God.

God can't make him do that because that has to be a choice that a man will make. And so even God couldn't make Jacob surrender as long as he was stubborn. But God knows how to put the pressure on.

And there had been a lot of pressure on Jacob and it was getting worse. And this night, a full night, Jacob didn't get any sleep. And not only did he not sleep, it's not just that he tossed and turned his bed.

He had to exert muscular pressure and energy against the man who was trying to subdue him. And Jacob still persisted, still did not give up until the man finally said, OK, it's getting near day. I'm going to have to take care of this more quickly.

And he touched Jacob in the thigh and Jacob felt his muscles shrivel. And he realized, OK, it's hopeless. There's no sense continuing to resist.

But he still held on. And it says the man said, let me go for the day breaks. But he said, I will not let you go unless you bless me.

Now, it sounds like Jacob is like in the bargaining position here. I'm not going to let you go until I get what I want from you. But we just read in Hosea that Jacob wept that he was broken.

He was at the end of his tether and he was weeping and said, I won't let you go. Unless you bless me. I cannot go on without your blessing, which is a surrender to God.

And so the man said to him, what's your name? He said, Jacob. I said, your name shall no longer be called Jacob. But Israel.

Now, that was the blessing. The blessing is you're now. I will go with the traditional translation of a prince with God.

Some think it means governed by God or conquered by God or some other thing. But there's the idea here is that he now belongs to God. He is now God's man.

Because you've struggled with God and with men and have prevailed. Notice, he didn't prevail until he surrendered. Surrendering is prevailing.

I remember when I was in high school, a friend of mine who is also in the Jesus movement. I was impressed at the time I, you know, when when the yearbook was coming out, everyone was supposed to give some kind of a something about themselves to put under their picture in the yearbook. And one of the things was, what was your greatest accomplishment? My friend said, giving up.

He said, my greatest accomplishment was giving up. And that is really what Jacob's greatest accomplishment was here. Surrendering is that I can't go on any further.

You have to bless me. I need to be blessed by you. I'm not self-sufficient.

I'm not adequate. I'm at the end of my strength. And that is where God often will bring somebody.

If you look over at 1 Corinthians, excuse me, 2 Corinthians chapter one, Paul is describing some trials he'd been through, though he does not detail them. And in 2 Corinthians 1.8, Paul says, For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Now, think about that.

God gave Paul trials that were above his strength to endure. They were beyond measure. They were off the charts.

He couldn't measure them. It was beyond our strength to endure them. Now, that seems strange, because Paul himself said in the previous epistle to the Corinthians that God is faithful and will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you're able to endure.

And yet he says, These trials I went through were beyond the capacity of my strength, and we even despaired of life. Then he says, Why? In verse 9. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves. That is, we were facing death and did not appear to have any escape from it.

But we were in that position that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, who raises the dead. Now, he says, The reason God brings us to the point where we're pushed beyond our natural resource, beyond our strength, is that God wants us not to trust in ourselves. He wants us to trust in him.

And as long as we're strong, as long as we still have sufficient strength of our own to face the trials we're going through, we often resist trusting in him. I don't know if it's our pride or if it's just neglect. We just don't think to trust him because we don't need to.

Or maybe we just don't want to admit that we need him. But we do the best we can until we can't do any more on our own. And God sometimes will deliberately bring us to the point where, you know, he hastens the point that we get to.

We can't do any more on our own. Crippling Jacob on this occasion, weakening him so he couldn't fight another hour. And he couldn't probably fight another moment without excruciating pain.

So he's in tears, he's crying out, says, OK, OK, uncle, I need to, I need to be blessed by you. That's how God breaks the man. And Paul knew that dealings of God in his life.

And I believe that there's, if you go through the Bible, that you'll find many stories of how strong men, competent men are, are simply brought by God's providence to the place where they are broken and and helpless so that they then become strong through God's, you know, through trusting God. As Paul said, we had the sentence of death in ourselves so that we would not trust ourselves, but we trust in God. And if you look over at 2 Corinthians 12, Paul talks about another situation which has the same benefit in his life.

2 Corinthians 12. Paul has had a great number of visions. He has not again, he has not detailed them, but he's had tremendous visions such as might make a man feel superior to others spiritually.

But he says in verse one, it is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who 14 years ago, whether in the body, I do not know, or whether out of the body, I do not know.

God knows such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man, whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know. God knows how he was caught up into paradise and heard inexpressible words, which is not lawful for a man to utter of such a one.

I will boast yet of myself. I will not boast, except in my infirmities. Now, I want to say that almost all scholars, not not every last scholar, but most scholars believe Paul's referring to himself.

And he says, I won't boast about myself, I'll boast about this man. It's just kind of a kind of a characteristic way of Paul being kind of coy. You know, he's saying, I want you to know that I've had some tremendous visions, but I feel awkward boasting about.

So I'll tell you about this vision this fellow had. I'll boast about him anonymous, but not about myself. But of course, there's no reason in the world for Paul to tell about this vision if it wasn't his own, because his whole point is to say that he has experienced great visions from God.

And he's going on to say, because of those visions from God, God's had to keep him humble. Now, there'd be no telling about some other man's vision would do in no sense, would not fit into his train of thought at all. But he says in verse six, for, though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will speak the truth.

But I forgive. But I forbear. Lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me or hears from me.

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations. A thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Now, because of the visions he's had, he could get a little up and he could become proud of himself spiritually.

But he says God doesn't permit that because God has deflated my ego with this thorn. I was getting puffed up, but I got popped. This thorn in my flesh was given to me.

And he says it was a messenger of Satan. We know that Satan is often used by God as an instrument to test and to bring about other results that God has in mind. I mean, Job story is the most obvious case that comes to mind.

And he says, lest I be exalted above measure. Now, there's verse eight. He says, concerning this thing, I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

And he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. That is, in Paul's weakness. Therefore, Paul says, most gladly, I will rather boast in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities and reproaches and needs and persecutions and distresses for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I'm strong. Now, what Paul is seeing here is that whatever that weakness was, whatever that thorn in the flesh was that bothered him so much, it tormented him to the point that he actually prayed three times that God would remove it.

And God said, no, it's not exactly what I have in mind. I intend for that weakness to be good for you, because my strength will be made perfect in your weakness. And I think what that means is that when a man is himself weakened and visibly weakened, then

what great things are accomplished through him are obviously God, because one cannot give credit to the man.

Because he's obviously weak, he couldn't accomplish anything. Therefore, it must be God. And therefore, God gets the glory in first Corinthians.

One Paul said God has chosen the weak things and the foolish things to confound the strong and the wise so that no flesh would glory in God's sight. Obviously, that God himself would get all the glory. And so also Jacob, who was a strong man in his own nature, had to be brought to the point of weakness.

He needed a thorn in his flesh, too, which was this shriveled thigh, this permanently crippled condition, apparently. And now and so he leant from that point on. Now, it says in verse 32 of Genesis 32 that for that reason, to this day, the Jews avoid eating that muscle on an animal when they butcher an animal.

They don't eat that muscle because, well, why? Because it is considered to be sacred. God himself put his finger on that muscle on Jacob and anything that God touches is sacred. And therefore, they consider it to be a sacred muscle, even when it's not on Jacob, but on a cow or a sheep or something else.

Now, this abstinence from eating this particular muscle is not something the law of Moses dictates. There's a lot of dietary restrictions in the law of Moses. This is not one of them.

But there are observant Jews and have been ever since this time who have nonetheless chosen not to eat that part of the animal. Now, chapter 33. Now, Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men.

So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants. And he put the maidservants and their children in front, the ones who are the least valuable to him, the slaves. Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last, obviously keeping his favorites closer to him.

Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times until he came near to his brother. This probably meant that he made his approach to his brother by seven increments and bowed each time, and then made another step forward and bowed, sort of an oriental way of showing tremendous deference. But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

This is so much like the story of the prodigal son. This prodigal son comes home groveling, saying, Father, I'm not worthy to be your son. Make me a servant.

And his father runs out and falls on his neck and kisses him. Very same kind of greeting. Now, this was an unexpected response from Esau, and of course, we're never told what

it was that affected that response.

There are a number of possibilities. One is that Esau, his anger had cooled years earlier, and he was just glad to see his flesh and blood again. He hadn't seen his kin for so long, and he felt brotherly toward his brother, even though there were some conflicts before them 20 years earlier.

They probably just seemed insignificant now. Esau, as it turns out, had become prosperous in his own right, so he was no longer begrudging the lost blessing or the lost inheritance, and he was just glad to see his brother. That's one way to understand it.

Another is to suggest that the droves of animals had softened him. Maybe he was coming with 400 men to hurt Jacob, but then he was softened by the generosity and humility expressed by Jacob. Or, perhaps it's best to understand that God himself just softened Jacob's heart.

Jacob seemed to think so, because he's going to say, you know, Esau, seeing your smiling face like that, it's like seeing the face of God. It's like, I see God in this. God has acted, and we know that God intervened in the case of Laban coming after him, so it's very possible that God had specifically intervened to change Esau's disposition, too.

We are not told. But certainly, it was an unexpected warmth of greeting that Jacob had found from his brother, and he lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and Esau said, who are these with you? And Jacob said, the children whom God has graciously given your servant. Then the maidservants came near and their children and bowed down.

And Leah also came near with her children, and they bowed down. Afterward, Joseph and Rachel came near and they bowed down. Then Esau said, what do you mean by all this company which I met? Meaning the animals.

And Jacob said, these are to find favor in the sight of my Lord. But Esau said, I have enough, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself.

And Jacob said, no, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God and you were pleased with me. So, I mean, this surprise, it certainly seemed like a miracle. I mean, even if Esau had not been angry, it would not be expected that he was so affectionate and so warm.

I mean, Jacob sees God in this. He says, you know, seeing your face like this, where you're pleased with me. Well, it's like I see God in this situation.

It's like looking at God in the face. Please take my blessing that is brought to you because God has dealt graciously with me and because I have enough and he urged him.

And so he did take it.

Then he said, let us take our journey and let us go and I will go before you. But Jacob said to him, my Lord knows that the children are weak and the flocks and herds which are nursing are with me. And if men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die.

Please let my Lord go on ahead before his servant. I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that grow before me and the children are able to endure until I come to my Lord in Seir. Now, not Seir is the region where the Edomites, Esau's descendants, later lived.

At this time, in all likelihood, the region was still occupied by the Horites, which were the tribe that had to be displaced by the Edomites in order to take it. Just as the Israelites conquered the Canaanites and took their land, the Edomites conquered the Horites and took their land. In fact, we still have been given no explanation, nor will we be given an explanation of why Esau came with 400 men.

It does seem like overkill for a welcoming committee, especially since the 400 men were not themselves friends of Jacob wishing to say hello to an old friend. Why did he have them with him? Some think that Esau had maybe hired these 400 men as mercenaries to go and fight on his behalf with him against the Horites. That he was actually en route to Mount Seir is obvious because he says so.

And it's possible that he was on his way to do some battle there. 400 men would not seem to be quite enough, unless the Horite villages were rather small and needed to be conquered one by one. But it would then explain why Esau, when the messengers came to him and said, you know, your brother Jacob is coming, would have turned aside to come and brought the 400 men with him.

If they were already traveling with him on the way to Seir, then he might just leave them out there hanging. He'd just say, well, just come with me. I'm going to meet my brother and then we'll go the rest of the way.

And that does seem to be what Esau has in mind here, because he is on his way to Seir. He says, Jacob says, you know, these livestock and children, they can't go that fast. So please, he says, my Lord, go on ahead before your servant.

I will lead on slowly at a pace with the livestock that go before me and the children are able to endure until I come to my Lord in Seir. So Esau said, well, now 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.

So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. And Jacob journeyed to Sukkot, built himself a house and made booths for his livestock. Therefore, the name of the place is

called Sukkot, which means booths.

It would appear that Jacob told Esau that he'd catch up with him at Mount Seir, but he didn't go there. After Esau was gone, he went somewhere else. He went to Sukkot.

Now, I suppose it's possible to say that he did go to Seir and it's not recorded. And then he later came to Sukkot. It's, you know, there could be things inserted in the actual events that are not recorded.

But it sounds like he just didn't go to Mount Seir at all. He went to Sukkot instead. And that would be, I guess, what his intention was.

He may have been deceiving Esau on this occasion, too. I'm not sure. But we do see that he built a house, so he must have bought some property there.

And this would be the second acquisition of property of the chosen family in the Holy Land. And the first was the cave at Mechpelah that Abraham had purchased. And now Jacob has obtained a piece of property also.

And he built a house. He has not lived in a house. Well, he may have lived in a house, but it's hard to say.

He did live in Laban's house, but he probably lived in tents when he was out watching the sheep. And now he built a house in Sukkot. And he also built booths for his livestock.

And maybe that was a new development, because it was so significant that he actually named the place after the fact that there are booths built there. He named it booths. So apparently that was a significant new development, is making structures for his livestock to be in.

Then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem. Now, we don't know how long he stayed in Sukkot. He built a house, and he may have lived there for years.

We don't know. But he eventually left there and came to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan Aram. And he pitched his tent before the city.

And now he's in a tent. And he bought the parcel of land where he had pitched his tent from the children of Hamar, Shechem's father, for 100 pieces of money. Then he erected an altar there and called it El Elohe Israel.

Now, El Elohe Israel means God, the God of Israel, the God of Jacob, in other words. He's calling himself by his new name, Israel. And he is now, for the first time, referring to God as his own God.

So he acknowledges this way that God has kept his promises, that the bargain that Jacob

struck with God, sort of unilaterally at Bethel, God has kept his side. And so Jacob now keeps his side, says, OK, now God is my God. Although it's strange he doesn't say Yahweh Elohe Israel, Yahweh, the God of Israel.

Nonetheless, he does use the name Yahweh in much of his speech. So he obviously means Yahweh. Chapter 34, Now Dinah, the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land.

And when Shechem, the son of Hamar, the Hivite prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her and violated her. His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young woman and spoke kindly to the young woman. So Shechem spoke to his father Hamar saying, Get me this young woman as a wife.

And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah, his daughter. Now his sons were with the livestock in the field. So Jacob held his peace until they came.

Now Jacob heard about this, but he didn't say anything until his oldest sons came home. Now Dinah was daughter of Leah and therefore the full sister of the six sons of Leah, including the oldest sons in the family. And it says that Jacob waited for the sons to come into the field before deliberating what to do.

So Jacob was already bringing his sons into family government decisions and as consultants. This had been done, of course, back when Abraham's servant had gone to negotiate for Rebekah. Laban, the older son of Rebekah, the older brother of Rebekah, the older son of his father, Bethuel, had been involved in the negotiations.

Apparently it was done when the father was old and the sons were adults that they often took part in the family deliberations, even though the father was really the one in charge. And so Hamar, the father of Shechem, went out to Jacob to speak with him. And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it.

And the men were grieved and very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, a thing which ought not to be done. But Hamar spoke to them saying, the soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as a wife and make marriages with us.

Give your daughters to us and take our daughters to yourselves. So you shall dwell with us and the land shall be before you. Dwell and trade in it and acquire possessions for yourselves in it.

Then Shechem said to her father and her brothers, let me find favor in your eyes and whatever you say to me, I will give. Ask me ever so much dowry and gift, and I will give according to what you say to me. But give me the young woman as a wife.

Now, this is a very strange story, of course, because it's really hard to make out what the relationship was between Shechem, the son, who was after whom the city was named, or else he was named after the city, and Dinah was. Now, often commentaries speak of this as the rape of Dinah, as if Shechem just took her and overpowered her and raped her, which could have happened. There are some indicators that she was not allowed to be at liberty, because we will find that in the end of the story, she is still in his house when the brothers go and do their dirty deed.

They find her in Shechem's house and take her home. So, I mean, it would appear that Dinah had gone to visit girls in the land, ended up in Shechem's house, sleeping with him, and either did not want to or was not permitted to go home. So, she may have been abducted, or maybe she wanted to stay.

It's really hard to say. The hardest part about this is that, seen as a typical rape, rape is usually a violent crime, and yet this man loved her. He wanted to marry her.

It sounds like there may have been some kind of, I don't know, mutuality in the relationship. In other words, it's not clear whether he seduced her or raped her. Now, if she's young enough, if she's a young teen, even seduction might be regarded as a form of statutory rape.

But it's not clear that he just kind of grabbed her in an alley and violently raped her. He seemed to be a man who had some honorable intentions, afterward at least, and we're going to find out that he is referred to, even in the story, as being more honorable than the other men of his city. Now, we don't know how low that standard was because these were Canaanites.

Canaanites were not really people with a high moral character. But the fact that the biblical writer would say he was more honorable than the other men of his city, that could have been left out if the biblical writer did not wish to say, you know, the guy had some character. So I don't know that, I mean, it's kind of hard to say he was just strictly a rapist.

It may be that he had seduced her and that she was agreeable, and she might have even been staying with him by her own will or not. There's not enough told here. We really don't know all that's gone on.

And to what degree Dinah was complicit in it. Although, being a very young girl at this time, she, of course, couldn't be expected to be making responsible decisions about these things herself. But the young man, after doing this, sent his father, the king of the city, to negotiate with Jacob about it, to get her to be legally married to him.

And it says, the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor, his father, and spoke deceitfully. Because he had defiled Dinah, their sister. And they said to them, we cannot

do this thing to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a reproach to us.

But on this condition, we will consent to you. If you will become as we are, if every male of you is circumcised, then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us. And we will dwell with you, and we will become one people.

Now, I've read commentators that say they don't think this was legitimate. We know that the brothers didn't have honorable intentions when they made this. They were acting deceitfully.

But some commentators would say, getting circumcised would not be enough to legitimize making the Canaanites one people with the people of Israel. And therefore, that this suggestion was deceitful in that respect. That there's no way they could intermarry and become one people with them just because the people are circumcised, after all, these people were worshipers of Baal or Molech or some other god.

On the other hand, God had told Abraham and later would tell Moses that strangers in their midst who wished to become Jews, who wished to become part of Israel, could be circumcised and become part of them. And so it's possible that this was even part of what was being suggested, that you convert to our religion, of which being circumcised is an emblem. In any case, the brothers did not mean this sincerely, but it may have been the kind of thing which was a legitimate offer they could have made if they had wished to be more legitimate, and that they could have intermarried.

After all, these brothers, these sons of Jacob, had to marry someone. And there were no girls who were Jewish, because they were the only Jews. These twelve, these eleven boys were the only Israelites.

They didn't have Israelite women. So they had to marry non-Israelite women, and no doubt they married Canaanite women. We know Judah did later on in chapter 38.

So, you know, the suggestion, if you guys are circumcised, that we can have our families intermarry is not really something that would be forbidden if God's standards necessarily, assuming that they also became believers in Yahweh. But it says in verse 17, But if you will not heed us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone. And the words pleased Hamar and Shechem, Hamar's son.

So the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he was delighted in Jacob's daughter. He was more honorable than all the household of his father. And Hamar and Shechem, his son, came to the gate of their city and spoke with the men of their city, saying, These men are at peace with us.

Therefore, let them dwell in the land and trade in it. For indeed, the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters to us as wives, and let us give them our daughters.

Only on this condition will the men consent to dwell with us, to be one people. If every male among us is circumcised, as they are circumcised, then as an incentive to these men to agree to be circumcised, which would not be something. I mean, think about it.

It's Shechem, not the men of the city who are in love with this girl. A man who's in love with the girl might say, Well, I'll be circumcised if that's what it takes to be a writer. But these are just the citizens of the city, and they're being asked to be circumcised, too.

I mean, that would take some pretty strong incentives, because being circumcised is extremely painful. And as we shall see in the story. But he had to give them some reason that they could benefit from this, too.

And so he says, Will not their livestock, their property and every animal there be ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us. Apparently, Jacob's livestock was so numerous and his wealth so great that the king was saying to his subjects, This wealth will be distributed among our families if we intermarry with them. It'll enrich our city and our people, too, with the wealth that that will bring in.

So all the people agreed to it. Now, it might have been because of the incentive he just gave, or it might be because he was the king. He may have been giving the orders.

It says, And all who went out of the gate of his city, he did Hamar and Shechem his son. Every male was circumcised. All went out of the gate of the city.

Now, would it probably be wiser for him not to all do it the same day? They could have staggered it. But since they all were circumcised the same day, they were all incapacitated at the same time. And it came to pass on the third day when they were still in pain.

So three days later, they're still too much in pain to defend themselves. That's a long recovery. Says that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males.

Now, it's unlikely that these two men alone were able to overpower all the males. But remember, Jacob's house had many household servants, and these oldest sons would have had command of the servants, too. I'm sure that the Simeon and Levi were the leaders of the attack, but they probably had their servants with them.

Because no matter how much you're hurting, you're not just going to sit there and let two guys kill your whole population. You know, I mean, you'll get up and fight even if you're in pain. But they were definitely considerably incapacitated by the pain and therefore less able to defend themselves.

And so the whole city, the men were slain. The sons of Jacob came upon the slain and plundered the city because their sister had been defiled. They took their sheep, their

oxen, their donkeys, and what was in the city and what was in the field.

So just the opposite happened. Hamar said to his men, you know, Jacob's oxen and sheep and so forth will be ours, but it went the other direction. And all their wealth, all their little ones, all their wives, they took captive and they plundered even all that was in their houses.

And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, you have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites. And since I am few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and kill me. I shall be destroyed, my household and I. But they said, should he treat our sister like a harlot? So, I mean, this is a war crime.

You know, this is an atrocity that they committed. And yet they make light of it. And they say, well, you know, our sister, you know, she was treated with indignity.

Well, OK, maybe something should be done about that. But killing every man in the city is a little overkill. Now, Jacob objected, but not strongly enough and not even to the right reasons.

He didn't say to his sons, you guys have just committed a horrible, unjust act of treachery. You are evil men. Instead, he said, you guys have done me no service here, because now all the people in the area are going to see us as a bunch of treacherous, ruthless, you know, Bedouins.

And they're going to gang up on us and wipe us out lest we do the same thing to them. In other words, you've ruined our reputation here, which is true. But there are some better grounds upon which to object to this action on their part.

And Jacob seems to be mainly concerned about his own safety here. And the men just defend their actions as if there hasn't been some kind of overreaction on their part. Now, this action they did not suffer for immediately.

But later on, when it was time to give out the patriarchal blessings in Genesis 49, Jacob remembered this particular act of theirs, and he denied them their inheritance. Their older brother, Reuben, would have been the natural heir of the birthright, though he had his own problems that arose later on, and he was excluded. But Simeon and Levi would have been the next two sons in line, and both of them were excluded because of this.

And that left Judah next in line, and Judah, therefore, received the birthright eventually. But that's not brought out till later. These men just kind of do this awful deed.

They kind of slough it off as if, well, they're justified in it, and then we hear no more of it until later. And we'll hear no more until later either, because we're going to take a break at this point. And so we will come back to that.