

Genesis 33 - The Meeting of Jacob and Esau

A. Esau's warm welcome.

1. (1-2) Jacob's careful preparations.

a. **He divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants:** These preparations were not necessarily carnal. Often the LORD leads us to do very practical things when we follow Him. But the placement of the family shows Jacob was not shy about showing his favoritism to Rachel and Joseph.

b. **He put the maidservants and their children in front:** At least Leah got more protection than the two **maidservants** Bilhah and Zilpah did.

2. (3) Jacob demonstrates his submission.

a. **He crossed over before them:** The best thing about Jacob is now, after being conquered by God, he *leads* the procession coming to meet Esau.

b. **Bowed himself to the ground:** Jacob already sent over gifts and showed he didn't want to take anything materially from Esau. But by bowing down, he showed he is submitted to his brother and wanted no social power over him.

i. Of course, if Jacob didn't take things into his own hands more than 20 years ago this would not be necessary. Isaac's promise to Jacob, *Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren* (Genesis 27:29) would be more immediately fulfilled.

ii. We often simply mess things up when we try to "help God out" in the flesh. God never needs us to sin to help Him further His plan in our life.

3. (4-7) Esau warmly greets Jacob and his family.

a. **Esau ran to meet him:** This probably terrified Jacob. Surely, he thought his life would soon end. Instead, God was working in Esau, and he only wanted to bless Jacob.

b. **Fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept:** Esau and Jacob did not feel a need to "work out" the past. God worked in both their hearts and there was no need to dredge it all up again. What was past was past.

4. (8-11) Esau receives Jacob's gifts: **and he took it.**

a. **So he urged him, and he took it:** This was as important to the reconciliation as Jacob's giving the gifts. When Jacob gave such generous gifts, it was his way of saying to Esau he was sorry and when Esau accepted the gifts, it was his way of accepting Jacob and saying he was forgiven.

i. In that culture, you never accepted a gift from an enemy, only from a friend. To accept the gift was to accept the friendship.

b. **I have enough . . . I have enough:** Both Esau and Jacob have a blessed testimony: **I have enough.** *Godliness with contentment is great gain* (1 Timothy 6:6).

B. Jacob's travels in the Promised Land.

1. (12-17) Jacob and Esau part their ways; Jacob goes to Succoth.
 - a. **Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant:** Jacob was glad to be reconciled with his brother, but didn't want to be too close to him. He was still afraid of Esau.
 - b. **Jacob journeyed to Succoth:** Unfortunately, Jacob still acts like "Jacob," because he said he will go far to the south with Esau to the area of Mount Seir. Instead, he allowed Esau to go a few days beyond him and then headed towards the north to Succoth.
 - i. It's impossible to be Jacob and Israel at the same time.
2. (18-20) Jacob comes to Shechem.
 - a. **And he pitched his tent before the city:** It is good Jacob came to the Promised Land, and he settled there. But he falls short, because it seems God directed him to return to Bethel (Genesis 31:13).
 - b. **Then he erected an altar there and called it El Elohe Israel:** Though he made an altar, it was obedience God wanted first, not sacrifice. Jacob will bear bad fruit and waste time because he is in a place he shouldn't be.

Genesis 34 - Simeon and Levi Massacre Shechem

A. The rape of Dinah.

1. (1-4) A local prince violates Dinah and then wants to marry her.
 - a. **Now Dinah the daughter of Leah:** This chapter contains one of the most shameful incidents in Israel's history.
 - b. **Went out to see the daughters of the land:** Remember, Jacob brought his family to a place God didn't really want them to be. It seems God directed him to return to Bethel (Genesis 31:13), and his time spent in the city of Shechem did much harm to his family.
 - i. Jacob chose a place to live for all the wrong reasons. He wanted to be close to the city (Genesis 33:18), though the city was ungodly. God called him to Bethel. Jacob's poor choice of a place to live left his family open to ungodly influence.
 - c. **Went out to see the daughters of the land:** Dinah's desire to do this understandable but unwise. It is obvious Jacob did not make sure she was properly supervised. To allow her to socialize unsupervised in a pagan town was a real failure on the part of Jacob and Leah.
 - i. "This occurrence serves to illustrate the low standard of morals prevalent among the Canaanites. Any unattended female could be raped, and in the transactions that ensue neither father, nor son feel the need to apologize or excusing what had been committed." (Leupold)
 - ii. But try telling this to a teenager like Dinah! Teenagers often want it all, and they want it now. It is almost impossible for them to see the benefits of waiting for certain things until they are more mature.

iii. A way this difficulty has been measured has been called the marshmallow test. A researcher gives this choice to a four-year-old: “I am leaving for a few minutes to run an errand, and you can have this marshmallow while I am gone, but if you wait until I return, you can have two marshmallows.” Researchers at Stanford did this test in the 1960’s, and a dozen years later they found the kids who grabbed the single marshmallow tended to be more troubled as adolescents. The one-marshmallow kids also scored an average of 210 points less on SAT tests. Learning to delay gratification is important!

d. **Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her:** Jacob’s lack of attention and protection was partially at fault in this tragedy. His own compromise made him less able to stand up to his own children and guide them as he should.

e. **He took her and lay with her, and violated her:** As for the young man named Shechem, **he was strongly attracted** to Dinah and he even **spoke kindly** to her, but then **he violated her** due to his lust.

i. It was a lustful love Shechem had for Dinah, not a spiritual or godly love. He loved her for what she could be and give to him, not for what he could be and give to her. His heart is shown in the words **get me this young woman as a wife**. It was a selfish “get me” kind of love.

ii. It is possible someone to show kindness to another for reasons having nothing or little to do with love. In their desire to connect romantically, the subject of the niceties sometimes forget that the actions might not be genuine.

2. (5-7) Jacob’s lack of outrage; the anger of Simeon and Levi.

a. **Jacob held his peace until they came:** Jacob shows a distinct lack of outrage here. He seemed to take the defilement of his only daughter easily. His refusal to do what is right in regard to his family will encourage two of his sons to do something *ungodly* in response.

i. When God-appointed heads do not take appropriate leadership, it creates a void, which is often filled sinfully.

b. **The sons of Jacob . . . and the men were grieved and very angry:** In this culture, the brothers had a greater responsibility to protect their sister than the father. They will “protect” Dinah’s honor in unwise and sinful ways.

3. (8-12) Hamor and Shechem seek to arrange the marriage of Dinah.

a. **Make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters to yourselves:** This was a dangerous challenge to Jacob and his family. Irresponsible intermarriage with the Canaanites could prove especially harmful for this family with such a destiny in God’s redemptive plan.

b. **Whatever you say to me I will give:** Hamor and Shechem probably thought themselves generous. But their manner of negotiating the arrangement of the marriage insulted Dinah and her family even more with a “just name your price” attitude. They acted as if money and marriage could make her disgrace go away.

4. (13-17) The counteroffer of Simeon and Levi: all the men of the city of Shechem should be circumcised.

a. **If every male of you is circumcised, then we will give our daughters to you:** Hamor and Shechem agreed to such an extreme demand because because circumcision was not only practiced among the Israelites - other ancient peoples also had the practice. Therefore they knew of the practice from the rituals of other nations.

b. **For that would be a reproach to us:** Simeon and Levi have evil intention in this plan. Yet they cover it up with spiritual words, and used Dinah as a cover for their intended evil.

i. They felt justified because the men of Shechem treated their sister as a prostitute.

5. (18-24) Hamor and Shechem convince the men of the city to go along with the plan.

a. **Their words pleased Hamor and Shechem:** Despite the obvious sacrifice involved, Hamor and Shechem were **pleased** with this plan. Beyond the obviously deep attraction Shechem has for Dinah, they were also undoubtedly pleased to begin to marry into a family so large, wealthy, and influential.

b. **Will not their livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs be ours?** It is amazing what men will do for both women and wealth. A whole city of men submits to circumcision so they can **take their daughters to us as wives** and take **their livestock, property, and every animal of theirs.**

B. Simeon and Levi destroy the city of Shechem.

1. (25) The massacre of the men of the city of Shechem.

a. **When they were in pain . . . each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males:** This was not only a brutal, deceptive act, but it also disgraced God's covenant of circumcision. Surely, with this clever act of violent deception, Simeon and Levi showed themselves to be the children of *Jacob* from a bitter, competitive home environment.

i. **In pain:** "Crudely performed, circumcision could be quite incapacitating, particularly after two or three days." (Kidner)

b. **Came boldly:** "The boldness with which they executed their foul plan shows the hardness of their hearts." (Barnhouse)

2. (26-29) They rescue Dinah and plunder the city.

a. **They killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword:** Certainly, they justified this murder and theft by saying they and their sister had been disgraced, but the punishment clearly does not fit the crime.

b. **They plundered even all that was in the houses:** Simeon and Levi probably thought God blessed their murderous plans with great success.

3. (30-31) Jacob's reaction.

a. **You have troubled me by making me obnoxious:** Sadly, Jacob is only concerned with himself. There is no concern for God's righteousness or the death and plunder of innocents. This is *Jacob*, not *Israel* in action.