

GENESIS

Chapter 33

Jacob Meets Esau

And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two female servants. 2 And he put the servants with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all. 3 He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. 4. But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. 5 And when Esau lifted up his eyes and saw the women and children, he said, “Who are these with you?” Jacob said, “The children whom God has graciously given your servant.” 6 Then the servants drew near, they and their children, and bowed down. 7 Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down. And last Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down. 8 Esau said, “What do you mean by all this company that I met?” Jacob answered, “To find favor in the sight of my lord.” 9 But Esau said, “I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.” 10 Jacob said, “No, please, if I have found favor in your sight, then accept my present from my hand. For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me. 11 Please accept my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.” Thus he urged him, and he took it. 12 Then Esau said, “Let us journey on our way, and I will go ahead of you.” 13 But Jacob said to him, “My lord knows that the children are frail, and that the nursing flocks and herds are a care to me. If they are driven hard for one day, all the flocks will die. 14 Let my lord pass on ahead of his servant, and I will lead on slowly, at the pace of the livestock that are ahead of me and at the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir.” 15 So Esau said, “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.” 16 So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. 17 But Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built himself a house and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth. 18 And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan-aram, and he camped before the city. 19 And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, he bought for a hundred pieces of money the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent. 20 There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

33:2 *Rachel and Joseph last of all.* Jacob wanted to keep his favorite wife and child farthest away from potential harm. (CSB)

33:3 *bowed down to the ground seven times.* A sign of total submission, documented also in texts found at Tell el-Amarna in Egypt and dating to the 14th century B.C. (CSB)

Servant's act of respect for his lord. (TLSB)

bow. Synonymous with worship toward God (Ex 4:31; 34:8; Ps 95:6; 1Sm 1:28; see note, Ex 33:10) or respect and service for a human being (Gn 33:3; 43:26–28; 1Sm 20:41; 28:14; Est 3:2). God expressly forbade bowing to false gods (Ex 20:4–5). People also bowed to (1) greet someone (Gn 18:2; 19:1), (2) signal humility and repentance (Ezr 9:5; 10:1), and (3) express thanks (Gn 24:52). Bows were done in a variety of ways (1Ch 29:20; 1Ki 18:42; Ne 8:6) and likely included tilting the head, tilting the upper body, kneeling with one's face to the ground, or lying prostrate. The more elaborate the bow, the greater the expression of devotion or emotion (cf Gn 33:3). (TLSB p. 1276)

33:4 *they wept.* With joy. (TLSB)

All Jacob's fears proved unfounded. God had been at work and had so blessed Esau (v. 9) that he no longer held a grudge against Jacob. (CSB)

33:8 *all this company.* The flocks Jacob had sent to Esau. (TLSB)

find favor. So that Esau would be favorable toward Jacob and his family. (TLSB)

Hbr *chen*, "approval" or "affection," related to the idea of grace. Often used in the Hbr expression "found favor in someone's eyes" (cf Gn 6:8; 39:21; Ex 3:21; 11:3; 12:36; 33:12). Common also in the writings of Solomon, especially Proverbs. (TLSB)

33:9 *my brother.* Esau's generous and loving response was in contrast to Jacob's cautious and fearful "my lord" (v. 8). (CSB)

33:10 *like seeing the face of God.* An experience of mercy. Probably also alludes to the fact that Jacob saw God and lived. Here, Esau could have wiped Jacob out. (TLSB)

33:11 *brought to you.* The Hebrew for "present" is the same as that used for "blessing" in 27:35. The author of Genesis was conscious of the irony that Jacob now acknowledged that the blessing he had struggled for was from God. In his last attempt to express reconciliation with Esau, Jacob in a sense gave back the "blessing" he had stolen from his brother, doing so from the blessings the Lord had given him. (CSB)

my blessing. Jacob's gift for Esau. (TLSB)

he took it. By accepting the present, Esau showed that he accepted Jacob. (TLSB)

33:12 *I will go ahead of you.* To accompany and protect Jacob's household. (TLSB)

33:13 *children are frail.* Jacob's oldest son, Reuben, was c 13. (TLSB)

33:14 *until I come to my lord in Seir.* But Jacob did not follow Esau all the way to Seir. No reason is given for why he did not do so. (CSB)

Jacob changed his mind about going to Seir at this time, though he might have visited Esau later. Together, they buried their father, Isaac (35:29). (TLSB)

33:17 Succoth was nearby, located along the Jabbok River. (TLSB)

33:18 *Paddan Aram.* Means "plain of Aram," another name for Aram Naharaim. (CSB)

arrived safely. The answer to Jacob's prayer of 20 years earlier (see 28:21). (CSB)

Shechem. An important city in central Canaan, first built and inhabited during the patriarchal period. Jacob followed in the footsteps of Father Abraham (see 12:6). Jacob dug a well there (see Jn 4:5–6) that can still be seen today. (CSB)

Shechem was across the Jordan, due west of Succoth, in Canaan. (TLSB)

33:19 *hundred pieces of money*. The Hebrew word translated by this phrase is always found in patriarchal contexts (see Jos 24:32; Job 42:11). (CSB)

Purchase of property suggests that Jacob planned to settle here. (TLSB)

33:20 *called it El Elohe Israel*. Jacob formally acknowledged the God of his fathers as his God also (see 28:21). But he lingered at Shechem and did not return to Bethel (see 35:1), and that meant trouble (see ch. 34). (CSB)

Jacob used his new name to confess his faith in the mighty God of heaven and earth. (TLSB)

Ch 33 God turns Jacob's fear into joy as Esau approaches and the two brothers are reconciled. Jacob humbles himself, and Esau forgives. As much as possible, without compromising Christian doctrine and morality, we should make peace with those who oppose us—especially family members. This takes mutual humility and forgiveness. God took the lead here. While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son (Rm 5:10). • Lord God, in Christ You have dealt graciously with me, and in Him I have enough. Amen. (TLSB)