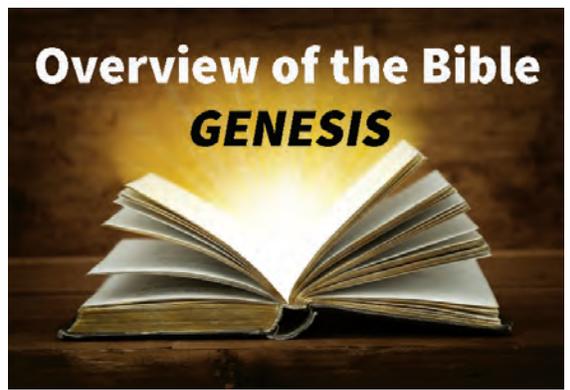


# Jacob

## Genesis 33 - 36 – Lesson 8

Wednesday, April 1, 2020



### Results of Transformation

**Genesis 33.** Jacob's reconciliation with God must be followed by reconciliation with his brother. Note the difference between the pre-Peniel Jacob, who brings up the rear of his company ("*Pass on before me*" 32:16), and the post-Peniel Jacob, who leads the procession to Esau ("*He himself went on before them*" 33:3). And not only is a new courage demonstrated, but also a new humility: "*bowing himself to the ground seven times*" (v. 3b). Then there is a new generosity: "*Accept my present from my hand. . . . Please accept my gift*" (vv. 10-11). His motive in giving the gift to Esau are genuine. He no longer connives. We should also observe the transformation of some sort that Esau has experienced. The grudge-carrying, get-even Esau of ch. 27 had become the conciliatory Esau of ch. 33 and without any encounters with God to explain the change in attitude.

**Genesis 34.** This chapter records a vicious incident in the life of one of Jacob's children, Dinah, his only daughter. She is raped by Shechem, the son of Hamor. What will the 'blessed' Jacob do now? Will he seek revenge? Will he attempt to take justice into his own hands (which is what the commandment "*Thou shalt not kill*" prohibits)?

We discover what Jacob's sons will do, at least two of them, Simeon and Levi. Through 'deceit' (v. 13) -the same Hebrew word applied to Jacob in 27:35 and Laban in 29:25 -Simeon and Levi lure the guilty parties to their death.

But what of Jacob? His first reaction to the news about Dinah is that he "*held his peace*" (v. 5). Was it because his peace held him? Upon learning of his son's macabre war of revenge, he lashes out at Simeon and Levi (v. 30), reserving even harsher words for a later period (49:5-7). Their actions are unjustifiable. The end does not justify the means, although Jacob himself had once subscribed to such a philosophy. Some commentators have taken Jacob to task for his inaction. For them he is a do-nothing, indifferent, insensitive. If so, then the Jacob of ch. 34 hardly demonstrates '*the result of transformation.*' On the other hand, his ability to keep his anger restrained in the face of terrible pain inflicted on oneself or on one's beloved -may be the most challenging and difficult response of all. Perhaps Jacob anticipates the prophet's Suffering Servant, who when 'oppressed and afflicted,' opened not his mouth (Isa. 53:7).

**Genesis 35.** The false gods brought by Rachel from her father's household must be disposed of (vv. 2-4). The spiritual sensitivity of Jacob shows here. Their continued presence is incompatible with the worship of the one God.

For a second time Jacob comes to Bethel, where, more than twenty years earlier, God first met him (vv. 5-8). But now we see a Jacob who has gone from Bethel to El-Bethel, from the house of God to the God of the house of God (v. 7). God now is first; God's house is second.

To reaffirm the transaction at Peniel (ch. 32), God again informs Jacob that now he is Israel (vv. 9-10). To be sure, Jacob had won the name of Israel earlier (32:29). But perhaps the narrative seeks to indicate that it is only after the resolution of his conflict with Esau (Gen. 33) that Jacob was, indeed, Israel.

The death of his wife, Rachel (vv. 16-21), the incest committed by his eldest son, Reuben (v. 22), and the death of his father, Isaac (vv. 27-29), do not overwhelm Jacob. The conclusion to the chapter is appropriate. Isaac is buried by "*his sons Esau and Jacob.*" Alienation has been replaced by proximity.

**Genesis 36.** The "*generations fo Esau*" are introduced by a description of the final parting of Esau and Jacob. We began in ch. 28 with Jacob feeling from Esau. Here it is Esau who leaves Jacob. Much like a parting earlier between Abraham and Lot (13:5-12), Esau and Jacob bid each other farewell and go their separate ways.