

# THE RECONCILIATION OF JACOB AND ESAU

**BIBLE TEXT:** Genesis 33:1-20; 35:1-20.

LESSON 26 Senior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** "When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Proverbs 16:7).

## BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

### Genesis 33:1-20.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.

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

<sup>4</sup> And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> Then the handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves.

<sup>7</sup> And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself.

<sup>10</sup> And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present

## BIBLE REFERENCES:

### I Jacob's Anxiety Over Esau's Approach

1. Esau's immediate departure to meet Jacob after receipt of news of Jacob's returning,

**Genesis 32:6.**

<sup>6</sup> ¶ And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him.

2. Jacob's fear, prior to meeting God at Peniel,

**Genesis 32:7, 8.**

<sup>7</sup> Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that *was* with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands;

<sup>8</sup> And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.

3. Jacob's changed attitude the reason for the different family arrangement in the procession, Genesis 33:1, 2.

### II The Meeting of the Long-separated Brothers

1. Jacob's humility and penitence a striking contrast to his attitude prior to the separation, Genesis 33:3, 4;

**Genesis 27:35, 36, 41-45.**

<sup>35</sup> And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.

<sup>36</sup> And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?

<sup>41</sup> ¶ And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.

<sup>42</sup> And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, *purposing* to kill thee.

<sup>43</sup> Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran;

<sup>44</sup> And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away;

<sup>45</sup> Until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget *that* which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence: why should I be deprived also of you both in one day?

2. Jacob's acknowledgment of God's blessings, Genesis 33:5.
3. Jacob's presentation of his family to Esau, Genesis 33:6, 7.
4. Jacob's offering to Esau an indication of his thankfulness for their reconciliation and a test of their friendship, Genesis 33:8-11.

### III Jacob's Homes in Canaan

1. The resumption of the journey, Genesis 33:12-15.
2. The pause for rest at Succoth, Genesis 33:16, 17.
3. The purchase of land at Shalem and erection of an altar, Genesis 33:18-20.
4. His return to Bethel and worship of God there, Genesis 35:1-15.
5. Rachel's death, Genesis 35:16-20;

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.

<sup>11</sup> 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*.

<sup>12</sup> And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> ¶ So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> ¶ And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which *is* in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan-aram; and pitched his tent before the city.

<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> And he erected there an altar, and called it El-elohe-Israel.

#### Genesis 31:32.

<sup>32</sup> With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what *is* thine with me, and take *it* to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

#### NOTES:

As we have seen from our previous lessons, Jacob was instructed by God to return to the land of his father, from which he fled many years before because of his sin against his brother, Esau. God promised to be with Jacob on his homeward journey, reminding him that He was the Lord Jehovah Whom he had met at Bethel, when he repented of his sins and received salvation. God promised, at Bethel, that even though Jacob would journey afar He would bring him back to his father's country.

When he neared Canaan, Jacob sent a party ahead of him and his family to meet Esau and to tell this brother that they were en route to Canaan. The messengers returned to Jacob and told him that after Esau had received the news he had immediately set out with 400 men to meet Jacob and his party. This caused Jacob to fear for the safety of his family and himself and he immediately went to prayer to remind God of His promise of protection. Jacob was sanctified at that time; and, reassured by God, he set out on the final leg of his journey. It was not long until he saw his brother's company approaching.

When Jacob left Peniel he rearranged his family so they would meet Esau in a manner different from that he intended they would before he wrestled with God there. The servants and their children were put first, then Leah and her children and finally his favourite wife, Rachel, and her son. Having this arranged he passed over before them and met his brother first, himself.

Jacob's attitude in greeting Esau shows a remarkable change in this once deceitful, grasping man. He bowed himself to the ground in the deepest humility and then ran to meet him, embracing him in the most affectionate manner. The years, and the many bitter experiences they had passed through, had changed the attitudes of these brothers. Time does that for most of us. But there was a change in Jacob and Esau that neither time nor life's experiences could ever make. Jacob had met God at Bethel, felt His chastening hand in the years following, and finally had met Him at Peniel, where he was sanctified and purged of his inbred sin and carnality. Jacob's attitude, after his sanctification, was one of deep humility and gratitude. Anyone in that attitude is sure of God's blessings.

How intimate Esau may have been with God, we do not know. His conduct is not too commendable, but we do know that God had at least worked in him for Jacob's advantage, because of the promise that was made when Jacob set out to return to Canaan. This change was enough to make him forget his old grievances and rejoice in this reunion.

Jacob had arranged to give Esau a present of his flocks and herds. This Esau at first declined, saying he had enough and did not need the wealth of his younger brother. But Jacob persisted and prevailed.

It was the custom, in those desert and wilderness countries, for people to show a kind of hospitality toward one another that we do not know in our land. This was rendered necessary because of the great distances between cities or other places where water and food could be obtained. Travellers were protected by their host to the extent that he would give his life if that was necessary for their safety (**Genesis 19:4-8**; <sup>4</sup> ¶ But before they lay down, the men of the city, *even* the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: <sup>5</sup> And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where *are* the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. <sup>6</sup> And Lot went out at the door

## Genesis 35:1-20.

<sup>1</sup> And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.

<sup>2</sup> Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that *were* with him, Put away the strange gods that *are* among you, and be clean, and change your garments:

<sup>3</sup> And let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.

<sup>4</sup> And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which *were* in their hand, and *all their* earrings which *were* in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which *was* by Shechem.

<sup>5</sup> And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that *were* round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

<sup>6</sup> ¶ So Jacob came to Luz, which *is* in the land of Canaan, that *is*, Beth-el, he and all the people that *were* with him.

<sup>7</sup> And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother.

<sup>8</sup> But Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Beth-el under an oak: and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth.

<sup>9</sup> ¶ And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him.

<sup>10</sup> And God said unto him, Thy name *is* Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel.

unto them, and shut the door after him, <sup>7</sup> And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. <sup>8</sup> Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as *is* good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof).

Because of this custom, Jacob could not be absolutely sure that he had found genuine favour in the eyes of his brother, unless a gift from him was accepted by Esau. A person would protect another in those countries, even though they were not friends, but a gift would never be given or received unless there was existing a bond of more than usual friendship. Thus Jacob, in tendering the gift, showed that so far as he was concerned, all past resentment was put away; and Esau, in accepting the gift, showed that he, too, had forgotten and forgiven the injuries that his brother had done to him. When a man's ways please God we find that even his enemies are at peace with him. This is the substance of a promise of God's, given to us in the Bible.

The brothers did not continue on the journey together because the women, young people, and flocks could not keep up with the rigorous pace set by the men in Esau's group. Esau went on ahead and Jacob followed, setting up camp in different places to rest and gather strength for the remainder of the journey. When Jacob established a dwelling place he set up an altar. He did not forget the God of his youth, Whom he met at Bethel and Who had followed him through the difficult days that were now behind him. A devout man once said, "The first thing that pious men do, is to provide for the honour and worship of God." God wants the first place in our lives and affections and will bless everyone who honours Him in this way.

When Jacob named one of these altars, he acknowledged the work God had done for him, not only at Bethel but also at Peniel, for he called the altar El-elohe-Israel, which means God, the God of Israel. Jacob's name was changed to Israel at Peniel where he was sanctified.

The life of Jacob gives us many valuable lessons, some of which are enumerated below. If we apply these lessons to our lives we shall benefit greatly in the eyes of both God and man. We shall have God's blessing upon us.

Deceit is a practice that will bring only trouble to the deceiver. A forgotten God is sure to bring the mercy of immediate judgment upon the prodigal son, that he may be reconciled to his heavenly Father before the door of mercy is closed upon him. A grasping, greedy spirit in a person does not benefit him in the long run. He may gain worldly advantage, by it, but a great many times he will see his wealth lying in ruins at his feet -- even though he holds those gains to the end -- when he comes to stand before God. That person will then realise, too late, the fallacy of living for one's self alone, leaving God out of his plans.

Esau's example is also one from which we can profit. He did not value his privileged position in the family, but sold it for a mere trifle of this world's goods; and when he would have taken it back he could not.

Isaac's family was broken up because of sin. Jacob never saw his mother again after he fled to Haran. He saw his father, in the last years of that old patriarch's life, but the once happy family circle was broken, each one going his own way in an existence that was not easy in those days of nomadic life. How God could and would have blessed them if they had left things in His hands instead of taking them into their own, and going on unmindful of the promised guidance and help from Him, their Heavenly Father!

### **QUESTIONS**

1. How large a company did Esau have with him as he came to meet Jacob?
2. What change did Jacob make in the arrangement of his family and servants after he met God at Peniel?

**11** And God said unto him, I *am* God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins;

**12** And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.

**13** And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him.

**14** And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, *even* a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon.

**15** And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Beth-el.

**16** ¶ And they journeyed from Beth-el; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour.

**17** And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. **18** And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin.

**19** And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which *is* Beth-lehem.

**20** And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that *is* the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day.

3. How did Jacob personally approach Esau?
4. To whom did Jacob give the credit for his wealth and prosperity?
5. Why did Jacob give of his possessions to Esau?
6. Why didn't Jacob's family return with Esau?
7. Where did Jacob stop to rest on his journey after Esau left him?
8. Where did Jacob purchase land for his dwelling place?
9. What did he do there besides pitching his tent?
10. What instructions did Jacob give to his family before he built the altar at Bethel?