



## TODAY'S READING: GENESIS 32-36

### OVERVIEW:

Jacob gets word that Esau is ensuing; Jacob wrestles with the Angel of God; Jacob's name is changed to Israel; the peaceful reunion between Jacob and Esau; Dinah, Jacob and Leah's daughter is raped; the revenge carried out by Simeon and Levi; Jacob's return to Bethel; God reaffirms the Abrahamic Covenant with Jacob.

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

When we left Jacob in chapter 31 in yesterday's reading, he had finally rid himself of his adversary, Laban. As chapter 32 begins, he has to concern himself with an even greater adversary, his own brother, Esau, who had threatened to take his life 20 years earlier.

But before he can be reconciled with his brother, he first needed to be reconciled with his God. Notice in 32:34 that "*Jacob was left alone.*" Many times God is most at work in our lives when we feel most alone. That night Jacob wrestled all night with the "man" who is the "angel" of Jehovah in the Old Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God brought Jacob to this place of aloneness because He wanted to break him. God wanted Jacob to cry "uncle," as it were, or in the words, of Galatians 2:20, "*Not I, but Christ.*" The key was in getting Jacob to face who and what he really was.

God asked Jacob his name (obviously, knowing it full well!), so that he would have to say, "I am Jacob." Or in other words, "I am a schemer, a deceiver, and a liar." Once Jacob admits his name, God graciously changes it! Jacob ("supplanter"), becomes Israel ("God prevails"), signifying one who has "power with God and men." Verse 31 indicates that God had given Jacob the dawn of a new day. He not only had a new name, but a new walk. For the rest of Jacob's life, he would walk with a limp.

Interestingly though, as chapter 33 begins, he is not living up to his new name and his new position with God. He is called "Jacob," not "Israel," and he "lifted up his eyes." (ie. He is walking by sight, not by faith.) He is a graphic picture of believers in Christ who are given a new name (Acts 11:26; Rev. 3:12) and a new position (Phil 3:15; Eph. 1:4), yet don't live up to who they are "in Christ." Chapter 33 finds Jacob continuing his scheming, his lying, and his disobedience. Though he has the mark of God on his life, he is walking like the man he used to be before his life-changing encounter with God. Ephesians 4:22-23 says, "*That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*"

Keep in mind as we are reading of Jacob's "journeys," that back in chapter 31:13, God had called Jacob to return to Bethel. As he journeyed toward Bethel, the place of his vision and his vow, he discovered the beautiful valleys and opportunities for financial gain near Shechem (33:18). Jacob ended up staying there for 10 years (!), until his precious 14 year old daughter was raped by the king of Shechem's son. As an old song says,

*Sin will take you farther than you want to go,  
Slowly, but wholly, taking control.  
Sin will leave you longer than you want to stay.  
Sin will cost you far more than you want to pay.*

Unbelievably, even after the atrocity meted out upon his daughter, and then the atrocity meted out by his two sons in murdering in cold blood every single Shechemite male in revenge for their sister, Jacob's only concern still seems to be only himself! Notice in verse 30 that Jacob's response includes eight first-person pronouns in one measly sentence! (me, me, I, me, me, I, I, my).

In chapter 35, God again reminds Jacob of his previous instruction to return to Bethel (31:11-13). Sadly, Jacob had been living in Shechem for 10 years, when Bethel was only 30 miles away! It serves as a great reminder to us that it is easy to be moving in the right direction spiritually, and yet fall far short of full surrender (Heb. 4:1,9,11).

In chapter 35, Jacob leads his family back to Bethel, where God reaffirms to him the Abrahamic Covenant, and the fact that He had changed his name. Praise God for His unbelievable mercy and grace!

### **CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

In BENJAMIN – Gen. 35:16-19

Notice in this first mention of "Bethlehem" in the Bible, that a mother is told, "*Fear not; thou shalt have this son also.*" And she gives birth in the city of Bethlehem, to one to whom the father calls "*the son of my right hand.*" Centuries later, another mother is told, "*Fear not, ... thou shalt... bring forth a son.*" (Luke 1:30-31). And she gives birth in the city of Bethlehem (Luke 2:4,7) to the One God the Father calls "*the Son of My right hand*" (Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3,13: 8:1; 10:12; 12:2).