



## Genesis 33-34

As a background for chapter thirty-three, let's go back and see what God said to Jacob in chapter thirty-one, verse three. "And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee." So, he has the word of God to start out on. God is saying to go back to your family and your land and He would be with Jacob. Jacob is on his way back now and he sends his servants ahead to tell his brother Esau that he is coming home and that God has blessed him with a great abundance of goods. He is evidently seeking to indicate to Esau that he is not coming back to claim his birthright or any kind of sustenance from the family. The servants returned with the message that his brother was coming to meet him with four hundred armed men. Jacob recognized that this was an unusual kind of welcome and he was fearful. He prayed for the LORD to help him and reminded God of the promises he had made to Jacob.

Either the LORD directed Jacob or he did it by his own scheming, but he set out to restore his relationship with Esau. He did this by building him up and calling him lord and referring to himself as his servant. Then he sent before him the different groups of animals which were to be a gift for Esau. Now in chapter thirty-three, we come to the showdown where Esau and Jacob meet.

"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. And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindmost." (Gen.33:1-2).

"And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother." (Gen.33:3).

According to the ancient tablets, which are a famous archeological discovery, and deals with laws and customs of that period, when you approached a king you were to bow seven times. By this, Jacob was acknowledging Esau's lordship over him. "And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept." (Gen.33:4).

The brothers, at this point, probably did a lot of sharing of things that had happened in the twenty years since they had seen each other.

"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." (Gen.33:5).

Now, Esau also had a big family by this time and we will read of that in a few chapters.

"Then the handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves. And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves; and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves." (Gen. 33:6-7).

Probably at a signal from Jacob they came near and presented themselves to Esau.

"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. And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself. And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present 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. 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." (Gen.33:8-11).

Esau questioned the droves that he had met on the way and now he asks about the people that are with Jacob. Jacob told him they were his children and that the LORD had blessed him with plenty. There are two different Hebrew words used for "enough." The one used when Esau said he had enough was "Rab" and the one used when Jacob said he had enough was "kol," which means, I have everything. Jacob had learned

that God was his resource and when God becomes your resource, you have everything. Others may have a lot, but there is that total sufficiency which is ours when we have God.

"And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee. 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." (Gen.33:12-13).

"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." (Gen.33:14).

It would seem that Jacob is still unsure of Esau. He is hesitant to go together with him to Seir. He wants to take a slower pace so his animals won't die and his children won't be weary, as they are young. He has been going at a faster pace fleeing Laban, and now wants to continue at a slower pace.

"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. So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir." (Gen.33:15-16).

"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." (Gen.33:17).

It is interesting and you can't tell from the text whether Jacob is trying to deceive Esau again or what; for, evidently he had no intention of returning to Seir. He built a house in Succoth and settled there for many years.

When he met Esau, the oldest of his children, Reuben, was probably about twelve years old. When they left Succoth and moved to Shechem where Jacob's daughter, Dinah, was raped by the prince and the older brother's revenged her by killing the males of Shechem; they had to be somewhere in their twenties at this time; so, it is possible that they stayed at Succoth for eight years. Succoth was on the other side of Jordan and they had not yet come back into the land that was promised to Abraham.

"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. 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. And he erected there an altar, and called it El-elohe-Israel." (Gen.33:18-20).

They had crossed the Jordan and come into the land at last. It is possible during the eight years spent in Succoth, that Jacob went to visit Esau and his aged father, Isaac. We don't know for sure as the scripture doesn't say.

When he came to Shechem, he bought a parcel of land and dug a well. This is the well where Jesus met the woman of Samaria. The well is still there today outside the ancient ruins of the city of Shechem. Shechem is at the foot of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. It is in a valley close to the capital city of the northern kingdom which was Samaria. It was Mount Gerizim where the men would stand to bless the people as they came over Jordan and they would stand on Mount Ebal to recite the curses. All of this was in the area where Jacob came and pitched his tent. Jacob erected an altar and called it "God, the God of Israel" and this is the first time that Jacob has used the new name that God had given him. He has, now, come back into the land; but, is still not totally obedient for God had said to return to the land and to his family. His family are some eighty miles south of Shechem in Beer-Sheba. His disobedience became costly.

"And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land." (Gen.34:1) Dinah, being the only girl in the family and having eleven brothers went out to find some friends among the daughters of the land.

"And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her." (Gen.34:2). It is impossible for us to know Dinah's character, so, we don't

know if she was in agreement to this. She might have been in rebellion against her parents strict rules, but the scripture doesn't say. It only says that Shechem violated her.

"And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel." (Gen.34:3) Shechem found himself drawn to Dinah and he loved her.

"And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife." (Gen.34:4) Marriage was made by arrangement and it always involved a dowry. Shechem is asking his father, the king, to get this young girl for his wife.

"And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; now his sons were with his cattle in the field; and Jacob held his peace until they were come." (Gen.34:5) From the story, it seems that Dinah remained at the house of Hamor. Jacob realized he could do nothing without his sons as he was outnumbered. He waited until they came home and shared with them what had happened to Dinah.

"And Hamor the father of Shechem went out unto Jacob to commune with him. And the sons of Jacob came out of the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done." (Gen.34:6-7). They had a great concern for the promises of God and for the line from which the promises were to come.

"And Hamor communed with them, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longeth for your daughter; I pray you give her him to wife. And make ye marriages with us, and give your daughters unto us, and take our daughters unto you. And ye shall dwell with us; and the land shall be before you; dwell and trade ye therein, and get you possessions therein." (Gen.34:8-10).

"And Shechem said unto her father and unto her brethren, Let me find grace in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give." (Gen.34:11). The father and son are seeking to strike a bargain with Jacob and Dinah's brothers. They are asking them to intermarry with them and become a part of their society. This would have completely frustrated the plan of God in bringing the Messiah into the world.

Shechem was so in love with Dinah that he said, "Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me; but give me the damsel to wife." (Gen.34:12).

"And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father deceitfully, and said, because he had defiled Dinah their sister; And they said unto them, We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us." (Gen.34:13-14).

"But in this will we consent unto you; If ye will be as we be, that every male of you be circumcised; Then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people." (Gen.34:15-16). We will become one with you on the condition that all of the males consent to be circumcised. Now, they did this deceitfully, as the scripture declares, and as we will see as we read on.

"But if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised; then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone. And their words pleased Hamor, and Shechem Hamor's son. And the young man deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter; and he was more honourable than all the house of his father." (Gen.34:17-19). Shechem was so in love with Dinah that he didn't delay but was immediately circumcised.

"And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city, saying, These men are peaceable with us; therefore let them dwell in the land, and trade therein; for the land, behold, it is large enough for them; let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters. Only herein will the men consent unto us for to dwell with us, to be one people, if every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised. Shall not their cattle and their substance and every beast of theirs be ours? only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us." (Gen.34:20-23).

Hamor and Shechem are selling the men of the city on this prospect of intermingling the Hebrews

and all that they have with the people of the land.

"And unto Hamor and unto Shechem his son hearkened all that went out of the gate of his city; and every male was circumcised, all that went out of the gate of his city." (Gen.34:24).

"And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males. And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out. The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister. They took their sheep, and their oxen, and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that which was in the field. And all their wealth, and all their little ones, and their wives took they captive, and spoiled even all that was in the house." (Gen.34:25-29).

They looted the whole place and took the women and children for slaves.

"And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house. And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?" (Gen.34:30-31).

Jacob indicates a weakness of character in dealing with his sons here. What they had done was not excusable, but it should be noted that the whole issue arose because of Jacob's disobedience.

Often that one step of disobedience compounds into a major issue. We step out of God's will and start to do our own thing and even though we may rationalize it, it is disobedience to God's will for us. Incomplete obedience, that failure to submit your life to the will and plan of God, can lead to all kind of problems and to disasters such as happened to Jacob. You will find yourself in situations and wonder how you got there; but, it all began with moving away from the center of God's will.

There are places where you and I, as a child of God have no business being. If you go into those places, you are stepping out of the purpose and plan of God for your life and you can find yourself enmeshed in all kinds of tragic situations just because you're where God doesn't want you to be.

Look at all the trouble that Samson brought upon himself every time he ventured into the land of the Philistines, which was the camp of the enemy. He always ended up in trouble and it finally ended with his death.

You may think you're strong enough to go and that you just go to watch and not participate. You want to see what they do. When I was in seminary, there were guys who would go down to the "follies." They would say, "We just want to know what we're preaching against." We have no business being in those type of places and this kind of rationale doesn't work.

The moment you step into the enemy's territory and out of the will of God, you're opening the door and you can be sure you're going to be facing some major problem.

Jacob stepped out of the will of God. God said to go back to his family and he bought land in Shechem and settled down there. That incomplete obedience brought to him, now, a parcel of trouble as his sons did this despicable thing. They destroyed all the males of Shechem, who had sincerely entered into a covenant with them.

This covenant with the requirement of circumcision was almost blasphemous. This was a sacred mark between God and His people Israel and here they were requiring these heathen to take the sacred mark of consecration to God. These people knew nothing of consecration to God; so, they were taking the sacred things and treating them blasphemously. To top that off, they murdered the men and took the women and children as servants.

This act of the brothers was not dealt with immediately. Jacob doesn't say anything more about it at this time. When Jacob is on his deathbed and going around the room pronouncing upon his sons the

patriarchal blessing, the deed of Simeon and Levi is not forgotten. In chapter forty-nine, as Jacob is dying and pronouncing the prophesies of the future on each of his sons, he looks at Simeon and Levi and says, "Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel; I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." (Gen.49:5-7). Jacob doesn't really give any blessing to Simeon and Levi, but curses their anger and their actions.

Jacob knows that he has to move. He has created an abomination among the people. He is obnoxious to them and has to move on.

May the LORD help us to learn the first lesson of restoring a bad relationship. Surely, Jacob's relationship with Esau was bad. Esau hated Jacob and sought to kill him, but, Jacob blessed his brother and edified him. He shared his material wealth with him and touched him by embracing and kissing him. That love that had been dead was rekindled between Jacob and Esau.

Jesus said to change, that you had left your first love and were to do your first works over. The way to restore a lost love relationship is to go back and do the first works over. Change from your present coldness and aloofness. Begin to give to that one that you love, who has lost their love for you. Build them up and share with them openly. God can restore bad relationships.

The second lesson to learn here, is to obey God completely. Stay out of the enemies camp and let your obedience to God's purpose and plan be complete. Don't settle down in Shechem when God has called you to go all the way back to your family.