

## Exegetical Notes – Genesis 33:12-20

### *“Jacob vs Israel”*

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(Now all three of the basic theological questions Genesis asks have been presented and answered in the text. The first question is, “Whose world is it anyway?” The text answers the question by affirming that it is God’s world by right of creation. It is God’s world because God made it. The second question Genesis asks is “How do we get along in God’s world God’s way?” The answer is by trusting God and obeying Him. The third question Genesis asks is “How do we get along in God’s world God’s way with other people, particularly with the members of our own family?” The answer is we get over the offense and forgive and forget. The rest of the book of Genesis shows us how this process works out.)

### **Genesis 33:12-20**

#### **Verses 12-14**

<sup>12</sup> *Then Esau said, “Let us be on our way; I’ll accompany you.”*

<sup>13</sup> *But Jacob said to him, “My lord knows that the children are tender and that I must care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard just one day, all the animals will die. <sup>14</sup> So let my lord go on ahead of his servant, while I move along slowly at the pace of the flocks and herds before me and the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir.”*

- Jacob and Israel are the same person. Israel was the new name that YHWH gave to Jacob after they struggled together (see Genesis 32:22-32). Jacob was becoming a new person. However, the process of sanctification is not finished in one moment. So, the old Jacob struggles with the new Israel.
- Jacob/Israel and his estranged brother Esau reconciled. The answer to the third Genesis question, “How do I get along in God’s world God’s way with other people, particularly the members of my own family?”, has been answered. I must get over the offense, forgive, and forget. The lesson has been learned and the reconciliation complete, but Jacob was not yet fully Israel.
- Esau suggested that he and Jacob/Israel move on together to Seir, the place where Esau lived. However Jacob/Israel declined Esau’s offer. He explained

that the animals and the children with him would hold Esau back and suggested that Esau move on ahead. He implied that he would join Esau in Seir. But Jacob/Israel was still tricky. He had no intention of going to Seir.

### **Verses 15-16**

***<sup>15</sup> Esau said, "Then let me leave some of my men with you."***

***"But why do that?" Jacob asked. "Just let me find favor in the eyes of my lord."***

***<sup>16</sup> So that day Esau started on his way back to Seir.***

- Esau agreed to move on to Seir. He offered to provide Jacob/Israel some of his men to protect him as he moved on to Seir. But, Jacob/Israel, fearing that the armed guard would turn against him after Esau departed, declined that offer, too.
- Jacob/Israel wanted Esau's favor, he wanted to be forgiven by his brother, but he did not trust Esau.
- So, Esau left Jacob/Israel and returned to his home expecting his brother to join him there.

### **Verses 17-20**

***<sup>17</sup> Jacob, however, went to Sukkoth, where he built a place for himself and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place is called Sukkoth.***

***<sup>18</sup> After Jacob came from Paddan Aram, he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan and camped within sight of the city. <sup>19</sup> For a hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent. <sup>20</sup> There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel.***

- Jacob/Israel did NOT follow Esau to Seir. He changed direction and went to Sukkoth instead. He bought a field within sight of the city of Sukkoth and made his camp in that place.
- Jacob/Israel built an altar in his camp at Sukkoth and named it EL ELOHE ISREAL. Translated, the name means "a mighty God is the God of Israel." God saved him from his brother Esau. God was transforming him into a new man. But the process of sanctification was not completed in one step.
- One can only wonder what Esau thought.

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