

**GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Genesis” (Subtitled: Is there a snake in your Garden too?) Further subtitled: Lessons from the Garden! Lesson 25. (Gen chapters 32:1-33:20). For lesson copies, go to <http://www.montgomerychurch.org/resources8.html>**

**Overview:** We continue to work our way through the “Jacob cycle” in Genesis, watching as God works to transform the character of Jacob the “*deceiver/grasper*” into Jacob the “*reconciler/giver*.” The literary structure of chapters 25-36 (below), known as “ring composition” helps reveal this remarkable change. This lesson will look at the reconciliation chapters (32 & 33). As you read, note that Jacob, true both to his old and new nature, plans, prays, and plans again for his inevitable encounter with his brother Esau – who was set on killing him over 15 years ago (27:41) – as he returns to the promised land. Along with chapter 28, chapter 32 marks the second powerful pivotal point in the transformation of Jacob by God as God appears once again to Jacob! Some perplexing, fascinating aspects of this part of Jacob’s journey confront us.

- (A) Prologue (25:19-24)
- (B) Isaac and the Canaanites: Conflict and Covenant (26)
- (C) JACOB AND ESAU: DECEPTION (27)
- (D) Bethel: Departure from promised land to land of ancestors (28:10-22)
- (E) Jacob and Laban: Deception and Reconciliation (29-31)**
- (D) Mananaim: Return to promised land from land of ancestors (32:1-2)
- (C) JACOB AND ESAU: RECONCILIATION (32-33)
- (B) Jacob and the Canaanites: Deception and Enmity (34)
- (A) The Edomites (36)

**Read 32:1-8:** First, Jacob is met by angels (perhaps recalling for us the fact that he also met angels ascending and descending the staircase upon his departure over 15 years ago at Bethel, 28:12). He names the place as “the camp of God,” (“*Mahanaim*” Two Camps).

- 32:3-5: Despite this apparent assurance of God’s continued Presence, what does Jacob do to begin to prepare for his impending encounter?
- 32:6-8: Jacob receives word of Esau’s impending arrival with his own big entourage. What is his reaction and, keeping in mind that God continues to reveal aspects of His Protecting Presence, what do you make of Jacob’s reaction? Discuss.
- 

**Read 32:9-12:** At this point, Jacob *prays* beseeching God’s promised blessing and acknowledging God’s power as the power to make all things happen. Re-read 28:20-22 and contrast his earlier conditional vow of obedience before God to his current prayer. Has Jacob learned anything in 15 years? What change do you observe in Jacob and what applies, if anything, to your life? Discuss.

**Read 32:13-21:** Jacob has *prayed*, however, as added insurance Jacob continues with his own *plan*. What does Jacob do in hopes of “pacifying” Esau, v. 20, to effect reconciliation? Do we do the same? Discuss.

**Read 32:22-32:** The wrestling match! On the eve of his encounter with his brother, Scripture introduces a very puzzling element.

- What happens in Jacob’s life in this encounter? [Note both the aspects of conflict and blessing]
- Jacob renames the site of his reentry into the Promised Land. What does he call it and why does he give it that name?
- Jacob limps off to his impending encounter. What do you make of this entire scene? Discuss.

**Read 33:1-15:** As an apparent consequence of his encounter, Jacob now does an interesting thing. He moves to the “front” of his entourage (women, children & livestock), no longer remaining in the background.

- In 33:3, what does Jacob do when he sees his previously estranged brother?
- In 33:4,10-11, how does Jacob characterize the abundance of goods he is preparing to give to his estranged brother? What do you learn about Jacob at this point that applies to your life? Discuss.
- 33:12-15: Esau responds to Jacob by now offering his own gift of protection. The scene is powerful: two estranged brothers, one formerly bent on killing the other, now trying their best to outgive each other! What lesson, if any, do you learn from these verses? Discuss.

**Read 33:16-20:** The chapter closes with Jacob purchasing land in Shechem (Samaria area), and then building an altar, claiming the land for the God of his fathers. He embraces his new name by including it in the name he gives for the altar: *EI Elohe-Israel* (God, the God of Israel; or Mighty is the God of Israel).

- What lesson do you learn from Jacob’s actions? Discuss.