

Patriarchs Study and Discussion Questions

Lesson Seven: “Israel” Resettles in Canaan – Genesis 32-36

Skim Genesis 32:1-21.

- 1) According to these verses, what concern did Jacob have? Give the phrases in verses 5, 7, and 11 that summarize the situation. **Jacob’s concern was not only that his brother Esau would not welcome him back, but that Esau might actually harm him and his children. Verse 5 says Jacob wanted “favor in [Esau’s] eyes,” verse 7 says Jacob was in “great fear and distress”; verse 11 says Jacob was “afraid [Esau] would come and attack [him] and also the mothers with their children.”**
- 2) Closely examine Jacob’s prayer in Genesis 32:9-12. What kind of prayers did he pray? Use terms general enough to use as a model for your own prayers. Example: Jacob reminded God of His promises. **Jacob began his prayers by reminding himself who God is (the God of his fathers, the God who gave him direction in the past, the God who promised to prosper him). Jacob humbled himself before the Lord, acknowledging all God had done for him, and stating his own unworthiness to receive these things. Jacob directly asked God for deliverance (to save him from Esau). Jacob acknowledged his feelings (his fear). Jacob appealed to God on behalf of his loved ones (wives and children). Finally, Jacob reminded God of His promises (to prosper him and make his descendants numerous).**
- 3) Is there an aspect of Jacob’s prayer that you seldom use in your own prayer life? If so, write a prayer to God about a current difficulty and include this (neglected) aspect of prayer in it. **Personal sharing regarding incorporating these aspects into one’s prayer life: praise (acknowledgment of who God is), humble thanksgiving for all God has done, petitioning for help in specific areas, exposing and stating one’s feelings, intercession for others, reminding God of His promises with regard to the items petitioned.**

Read Genesis 32:22-32.

- 4) Based on the text, who was the man with whom Jacob wrestled (include verse number)? **Verse 30 implies the man Jacob wrestled with was actually God, because Jacob said he “saw God face to face.”**
- 5) If you have forgotten what “Jacob” means, see Genesis 27:36. You may refer to any Bible text note giving the meaning. Please remember that text notes are *not* the more extensive commentary available in study Bibles but rather, the brief footnotes that clarify translation or give alternate translations of a word or phrase. Based on the accounts of Jacob’s life up to this point, in what ways had his name been fitting? Would he have been anxious to confess his name (and thus, his nature) when he was asked about it (32:27)? **Jacob’s name, “he grasps the heel,” is a Hebrew idiom for “he takes advantage of” or “he deceives.” This name suited Jacob: he swindled his hungry brother’s birthright from him, he deceived his father in order to receive the firstborn’s blessing, and he left for Canaan without telling Laban he was going. Jacob would not have been eager to share his name. The Amplified Bible emphasizes, “The Man asked him, ‘What is your name?’ And (in shock of realization, whispering) he said, “Jacob (supplanter, schemer, trickster, swindler)!”**
- 6) The encounter that occurred in this passage was real, but it also symbolized the meaning of Jacob’s new name “Israel” (“he struggles with God”). In light of Jacob’s previous struggles with significant people in his life, tell what you think this event signified and note who ended the struggle. **The fact that the “Man” (God) ended the struggle is significant. The incident marked a turning point in Jacob’s life. Although he might outwit other people, he realized he couldn’t deceive, overpower, or control God. Jacob’s wrestling match with God at Peniel revealed the deeper issue and true source of his struggles with other human beings: Jacob had not trusted God to take care of him. He wanted to gain God’s blessing in his own way (through scheming and deceit). His real fight was with God. Ultimately, God overpowered him and changed his name to *Israel*, saying, “You have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome” (verse 28). The Lord’s (loving) wounding humbled Jacob. His crippled hip and new name suggest his understanding that the Lord’s blessing comes only through fearing and obeying Him, not by personal manipulation.**

- 7) How have you struggled against the lordship of Jesus Christ? How are you currently resisting Him? Has your resistance left you with any kind of a limp (handicap in life)? **Any person's choice to resist God will end in crippling. The greater our resistance, the more of a limp we are left with. Bodily damage resulting from addictions and the loss of relationships or potential influence are just a few of the ways one may "limp." While we may prefer to control our own lives by our own methods, once our struggle against Christ's lordship ends, we discover that to be humbled under His powerful, loving hand is actually to begin a life of true and rich blessing! Those who have entered this submitted life find God willing to work through their weaknesses, infirmities, and past failures to bring about blessings that exceed their wildest imaginations. Personal sharing**

Skim Genesis 33.

- 8) How was Jacob's reunion with Esau different than he had expected? Who deserved the credit? **Instead of harming Jacob and his family, Esau embraced the limping Jacob, politely declined the generous gifts (initially), and offered to accompany him for the remainder of his journey. The Lord deserves the credit.**
- 9) What has God done for you that exceeded your wildest imagination? **Personal sharing**

Skim Genesis 34.

- 10) Give a brief factual summary of the story. Who were the victims? **Prince Shechem raped Dinah. He and his father then asked Jacob and his sons for permission to marry her, suggesting that the families intermarry more widely. Jacob's sons' agreement was conditional upon the Shechemites' circumcision. However, after the Shechemites were circumcised, Jacob's two sons Levi and Simeon avenged Dinah by killing all the male Shechemites. Jacob feared his sons had given him a bad reputation among the Canaanites. In one way or another, all of the individuals involved were victims. Dinah was raped, her family was disgraced, and Shechem and his extended family were deceived and murdered.**
- 11) Is there a small step you can take toward making peace in a relationship this week (that might go a long way toward preventing some unknown future disaster)? **Personal sharing**

Read Genesis 35.

- 12) According to verses 1-6 and Genesis 28:10-22, under what circumstances had Jacob previously been at Bethel and what was the significance of his return? **Jacob had been at Bethel on his way out of Canaan, when he was young and had stolen Esau's blessing. When he came back to Canaan, over 20 years later (Genesis 31:38), he returned to Bethel. The first time he was at Bethel, he had vowed to make the Lord his God and trust Him for a safe return to Canaan and safekeeping in the meantime. Jacob's return to Bethel reminded him of his vow and of God's faithfulness.**
- 13) What deeply significant events in Jacob's life are described in Chapter 35? **Jacob personally encountered God in a theophany, in which God confirmed Jacob's name change, blessed him, restated His own name as God Almighty, and passed on to Jacob the promises of descendants and land He had made to Abraham and Isaac (verse 9). During this same period of Jacob's life, the deaths of his mother's nurse (Deborah), his wife Rachel, and his father Isaac all occurred. Additionally, Jacob's oldest son Reuben disgraced him by committing incest with Jacob's wife (concubine), Bilhah.**
- 14) What have you learned about God in this lesson that will keep you steady, even in the greatest thrills and the greatest disappointments of your own life? **From Jacob's encounter with Esau: God is able to change people's hearts and He answers prayer. From Jacob's wrestling with God at Peniel: even when God maims us, it is with the intention of blessing us. From Jacob's encounters with God and angels in 32:1-2, 32:22ff, 35:1 and 35:9ff: God always meets us just when we need Him most and in the way we most need to encounter Him. From God's words of promise in chapter 35: God's overarching purposes, both for the world and for my own life, never change. God is faithful and unchanging. Personal sharing**

15) Glance at Genesis 36 just to get the idea of its subject. According to 36:1 and 9, to what important people group, whose kinship to Israel is explained in this chapter, did Esau give his name? **The subject is the “toledoth” (generations) of Esau and tells where his family settled and why (verses 6-8). Esau’s descendants were the Edomites. The Edomites were cousins to the Israelites (Jacob’s descendants).**