

GENESIS CHAPTERS 32-33

32-33 GEN NLT-C

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The literary form known as a chiasm (X) occurs in verses 32:24-32. Ancients sometimes used it to highlight their main points. Notice that "hip" occurs in A and A'. Now the reader knows what is most important in these verses. A chiasm serves as a heavenly watermark and can be seen in whatever language the Scriptures are translated into.

- A. 24 This left Jacob all alone in the camp, and a Man came and wrestled with him until the dawn began to break. When the Man saw that He would not win the match, He touched Jacob's hip and wrenched it out of its socket.
- B. 26 Then the Man said, "Let Me go, for the dawn is breaking!" But Jacob said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me."
- C. 27 "What is your name?" the Man asked. He replied, "Jacob."
- X. 28 "Your name will no longer be Jacob," the Man told him. "From now on you will be called Israel, because you have fought with God and with men and have won."
- C'. 29 "Please tell me Your name," Jacob said.
- B'. "Why do you want to know My name?" the Man replied. Then He blessed Jacob there.
- A'. (30) Jacob named the place Peniel (which means "face of God"), for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been spared." The sun was rising as Jacob left Peniel, and he was limping because of the injury to his hip. (Even today the people of Israel don't eat the tendon near the hip socket because of what happened that night when the Man strained the tendon of Jacob's hip.)

Genesis Previously

Mankind Created	Nations Formed	Abram Covenanted
Abram at War, is Honored, Land Boundaries Specified		
Sarai substituted, then Rejected Hagar; the Lord supported Her Expanded Names given to Sarai and Abram.		
Abraham was Visited and Warned about Sodom Sodom Was Destroyed, but Lot and Daughters Were Saved.		
King Abimelech takes and quickly returns Sarah		
Isaac is born, then Hagar and Ishmael are dismissed		
The near-sacrifice of Isaac and the death of Sarah.		
Isaac Marries Rebecca		
Isaac prays for a son and received two. God blessed Isaac.		
Jacob acquired both the family birthright and family blessing.		
Then Jacob left Canaan to marry. He saw a stairway to heaven.		
Jacob married Leah, then Rachel. He acquired property.		
Jacob returns to Canaan, Laban pursues, but makes agreement		

Jacob is about to experience a marvelous transformation as he returns to Canaan. He will meet:

- (1) the angels of God,
- (2) the Lord himself, and
- (3) his brother Esau.

We need to understand that Jacob was now elderly, anywhere from a little less than 90 to close to 100 years old.

God had promised in 31:3: "**Return to the land of your father and grandfather and to your relatives there, and I will be with you.**" This was really a safe-conduct pass back to the Promised Land.

The two great enemies confronted by Jacob were Laban in the land of his long servitude, and Esau in the land to which he was returning. The visions at the beginning of each confrontation assured Jacob of God's blessing and protection.

JACOB PREPARES TO MEET ESAU

(Genesis 32:1) As Jacob started on his way again, angels of God came to meet him. **(2)** When Jacob saw them, he exclaimed, "This is God's camp!" So he named the place Mahanaim.

- When **Jacob** left the Promised Land, **angels** had appeared to him in a dream and now **angels** appear upon his return. **Mahanaim** means *two camps*, probably referring to his own camp and that of the **angels** of God. He was encouraged by this encounter and sent word ahead to his brother Esau as we see next.

(3.) Then Jacob sent messengers ahead to his brother, Esau, who was living in the region of Seir in the land of Edom. **(4)** He told them, "Give this message to my master Esau: 'Humble greetings from your servant Jacob. Until now I have been living with Uncle Laban, **(5)** and now I own cattle, donkeys, flocks of sheep and goats, and many servants, both men and women. I have sent these messengers to inform my lord of my coming, hoping that you will be friendly to me.'" **(6)** After delivering the message, the messengers returned to Jacob and reported, "We met your brother, Esau, and he is already on his way to meet you—with an army of 400 men!"

- "The messengers were to be very polite: **"Your servant."** **"My master."** They were to tell **Esau** of Jacob's **wealth**.
- He had cheated his brother out of his inheritance. (Genesis 25) and the family blessing. (Genesis 27) The last recorded words from **Esau** were **"I will kill my brother, Jacob."** Genesis 27:41 Now **Jacob** makes it clear that he



that it happened, but was not recorded. **Bradford** sees it as a deception by **Jacob** and he never went to visit **Esau**.

(15.) "All right," Esau said, "but at least let me assign some of my men to guide and protect you." Jacob responded, "That's not necessary. It's enough that you've received me warmly, my lord!"

- **Jacob** also turned down the offer to have some of Esau's **men** accompany his caravan. **Jacob** was fully rewarded by the way he had been received by **Esau**.

16) So Esau turned around and started back to Seir that same day. (17) Jacob, on the other hand, traveled on to Succoth. There he built himself a house and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place was named Succoth (which means "shelters"). (18) Later, having traveled all the way from Paddan-aram, Jacob arrived safely at the town of Shechem, in the land of Canaan. There he set up camp outside the town. (19) Jacob bought the plot of land where he camped from the family of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for 100 pieces of silver. (20) And there he built an altar and named it El-Elohe-Israel.

- **Jacob** stayed a while at **Succoth** and built housing **for** his people and **shelters** for his livestock. Then he moved on to **Shechem** and purchased some land from the **family of Hamor**.

Jacob chose not to live in the **city** as Lot had, but purchased land for his family and flocks outside of town. He would have access to their markets, but would be able to conduct his own business on property that he now owned. **Shechem** was later named Sychar and is the place where Jesus encountered the Samaritan woman in the Gospel of John.

- **He set up an altar** so there would be a specific place to worship and called it *Mighty is the God of Israel*.

wants to reconcile. The feedback from the **messengers** is that **Esau** is headed this way with **400 men!**

(7) **Jacob** was terrified at the news. He divided his household, along with the flocks and herds and camels, into two groups. (8) He thought, "If Esau meets one group and attacks it, perhaps the other group can escape."

- **Jacob** took action to minimize his losses if **Esau** wanted to do battle. He divided them into **two groups** so one could escape if needs be. Then he could ask for God's help knowing that he had done all that was available to him.

JACOB'S HUMBLE PRAYER

(9.) Then Jacob prayed, "O God of my grandfather Abraham, and God of my father, Isaac—O LORD, You told me, 'Return to your own land and to your relatives.' And You promised me, 'I will treat you kindly.' (10) I am not worthy of all the unfailing love and faithfulness You have shown to me, Your servant. When I left home and crossed the Jordan River, I owned nothing except a walking stick. Now my household fills two large camps!

- **Jacob** repeats his safe-conduct promise from the Lord and sees that he is not worthy. His family and wealth are a blessing from the **Lord**.

(11) O LORD, please rescue me from the hand of my brother, Esau. I am afraid that he is coming to attack me, along with my wives and children. (12) But You promised me, 'I will surely treat you kindly, and I will multiply your descendants until they become as numerous as the sands along the seashore—too many to count.'"

- Jacob prayed, reminding the **LORD** of his earlier promises. He **prayed** specifically about his fear of **Esau**. (Vs. 11) He spoke again of his safe-conduct promise.

- **Burton Coffman** observes: “The sins of Jacob, committed long previously, were the basis of his pitiful fear, a condition that always results when sin is committed. As a matter of fact, Esau had long ago forgiven Jacob and had probably longed to see him. *Josephus* preserved the tradition that, ‘When Esau received the messengers from Jacob, he was very glad.’ Of course, Jacob did not know that.”
- Next, Jacob gathers a peace offering for Esau:

(13.) Jacob stayed where he was for the night. Then he selected these gifts from his possessions to present to his brother, Esau: (14) 200 female goats, 20 male goats, 200 ewes, 20 rams, (15) 30 female camels with their young, 40 cows, 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys, and 10 male donkeys. (16) He divided these animals into herds and assigned each to different servants. Then he told his servants, "Go ahead of me with the animals, but keep some distance between the herds."

- The **gifts**:
 - 220 goats. Milk and cheese.
 - 220 sheep. Wool to make clothing.
 - 30 camels with their young. Long range transportation.
 - 50 head of cattle. Milk and meat.
 - 30 donkeys. Local transportation.
- There were five herds totaling 550 animals in all. It was a tribute worthy of a king. **Jacob** sent the enormous **gift** ahead of his family so **Esau** would encounter the **gift** first.

(17) He gave these instructions to the men leading the first group: "When my brother, Esau, meets you, he will ask, 'Whose servants are you? Where are you going? Who owns these animals?' (18) You must reply, 'They belong to your servant Jacob, but they are a gift for his master Esau. Look, he is coming right behind us.'" (19) Jacob gave the same instructions to the second and third herdsmen and to all who followed behind the herds: "You must say the same thing to Esau when you meet him. (20) And be sure to say,

very gracious to me. I have more than enough." And because Jacob insisted, Esau finally accepted the gift.

- **Esau** inquires about the gift of animals that he had already encountered. (Vs. 8) **Esau** at first rejected the **gift** because of his own prosperity but the newly generous Jacob insisted that he take the **gift** and **Esau accepted. Jacob** made it clear that he wanted to see his brother on peaceful terms. (Vs. 10) **Bradford** offers additional insight: “In Mid-Eastern style greeting, with the greatest respect, Jacob offers gifts to his brother and introduces his family. Esau at first refuses the gifts, but eventually accepts. “Jacob is wise, though, and even after Esau has been gracious, Jacob continues to talk with Esau as an inferior speaking to his superior. By the way, Middle Eastern custom demands that all gifts be initially refused, before they’re accepted. This little Kabuki dance we see with Jacob offering, Esau refusing and then finally accepting could have gone no other way; there is no special spiritual meaning to it.”

PLANS ARE MADE TO VISIT ESAU

(12) "Well," Esau said, "let's be going. I will lead the way." (13) But Jacob replied, "You can see, my lord, that some of the children are very young, and the flocks and herds have their young, too. If they are driven too hard, even for one day, all the animals could die. (14) Please, my lord, go ahead of your servant. We will follow slowly, at a pace that is comfortable for the livestock and the children. I will meet you at Seir."

- **Jacob** turned down **Esau's** offer to accompany the caravan. It had to move very slowly to prevent deaths among the animals.
- The destination was Esau's domain of **Mt. Seir**, but the arrival is not recorded in Scripture. Whether the visit by Jacob ever occurred is disputed. **Burton Coffman** believes

upon his two sons was, at this moment in history, exactly reversed. For, Jacob's blessing was that Jacob would be master over his brothers (meaning his tribe), and Esau's was that he would be under the yoke of his kin. Instead, Jacob has laid his life at his brother's feet.

(4.) Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. And they both wept.

- The old hatreds were gone. **Esau** had been the one wronged and he took the lead in demonstrating forgiveness. They both **wept**, showing remorse over the past events.

ESAU RELUCTANTLY ACCEPT JACOB'S GIFTS

(5.) Then Esau looked at the women and children and asked, "Who are these people with you?" "These are the children God has graciously given to me, your servant," Jacob replied. (6) Then the servant wives came forward with their children and bowed before him. (7) Next came Leah with her children, and they bowed before him. Finally, Joseph and Rachel came forward and bowed before him.

- The introductions come next:
 - **The servant wives and their children.**
 - **Leah and her children.**
 - **Joseph and Rachel.**

(8) "And what were all the flocks and herds I met as I came?" Esau asked. Jacob replied, "They are a gift, my lord, to ensure your friendship." (9) "My brother, I have plenty," Esau answered. "Keep what you have for yourself." (10) But Jacob insisted, "No, if I have found favor with you, please accept this gift from me. And what a relief to see your friendly smile. It is like seeing the face of God! (11) Please take this gift I have brought you, for God has been

'Look, your servant Jacob is right behind us.'" Jacob thought, "I will try to appease him by sending gifts ahead of me. When I see him in person, perhaps he will be friendly to me."

- **Burton Coffman** noticed this: "The skilled arrangement of its presentation is one of the marvels of this episode. None of the drove captains knew that he was being followed by another drove, for he was instructed to say, 'Jacob is behind us.' Thus, no loose-tongued servant could apprise Esau of the full extent of the gift, which he would not know until Jacob himself appeared. This intention lay behind Jacob's instruction that there should be a space between drove and drove. One must admire that kind of planning."

(21) So the gifts were sent on ahead, while Jacob himself spent that night in the camp. (22) During the night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two servant wives, and his eleven sons and crossed the Jabbok River with them.

- The leader of each herd was to explain the purpose of his herd: a **gift** for Esau. Jacob hoped that the cumulative effect would be to deter an attack from **Esau**. He may have made a **night** crossing of the **Jabbok River** as a matter of safety.

JACOB WRESTLES WITH THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

(23.) After taking them to the other side, he sent over all his possessions. (24) This left Jacob all alone in the camp, and a Man came and wrestled with him until the dawn began to break. (25) When the Man saw that He would not win the match, He touched Jacob's hip and wrenched it out of its socket. (26) Then the Man said, "Let Me go, for the dawn is breaking!" But Jacob said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me."

- **Jacob** wrestled all night with an unknown man who turned out to be the Angel of the Lord. Hosea 12:4-5:
Yes, he wrestled with the Angel and won. He wept and pleaded for a blessing from Him. There at Bethel he met God face to face, and God spoke to

him— the LORD God of Heaven's Armies, the LORD is His name!

- The Angel finally used super-human power and put **Jacob's hip** out of place. Even though disabled by the angel, Jacob still asked for a **blessing**.

(27) "What is your name?" the Man asked. He replied, "Jacob." (28) "Your name will no longer be Jacob," the Man told him. "From now on you will be called Israel, because you have fought with God and with men and have won."

- The Lord changed **Jacob's name** from *deceiver* to *he who wrestles with God*. He was no longer a con man.

(29) "Please tell me Your name," Jacob said. "Why do you want to know My name?" the Man replied. Then He blessed Jacob there. (30) Jacob named the place Peniel (which means "face of God"), for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been spared." (31) The sun was rising as Jacob left Peniel, and he was limping because of the injury to his hip. (32) (Even today the people of Israel don't eat the tendon near the hip socket because of what happened that night when the Man strained the tendon of Jacob's hip.)

- **Jacob** had outwitted Isaac, Esau and Laban. **Tom Bradford** says it so beautifully:

Jacob had always won against men before, with his own skills and cunning, often mixed with deceit. But, when he recognized that what he was wrestling was far more than flesh and blood, He knew he could not win as he always had . . . and so, instead, gave up and asked to be BLESSED.

And, like most of us, we cannot seem to arrive at this point until we are broken and disabled. If we take the most literal possible sum of Jacob's name it means "the cunning self-helpful supplanter," and how well it characterized Jacob's life up till now. But, because Jacob yielded to God, he was to have a new destiny and

it would be reflected in his new name: "Israel" . . . a prince with God. From here on in the Biblical narrative, we see a new Jacob. No more does he rely on himself, his fleshly ways, he rests in God's strength. And, he will be called Israel.

Peniel means **Face of God**. (Vs. 30) **Jacob** was grateful that he was allowed to live. (Vs. 30)

- It is not clear if the **hip** injury was permanent or just temporary. This began a custom that lasted a while. This sentence may have been added by an editor such as Moses. (Vs. 32)

JACOB MEETS ESAU

(Genesis 33:1) Then Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming with his 400 men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and his two servant wives. (2) He put the servant wives and their children at the front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. (3) Then Jacob went on ahead. As he approached his brother, he bowed to the ground seven times before him.

- **Jacob** arranged the family in ascending importance for the encounter with **Esau** and his men.
 - The **servant wives** and their **children** in **front**.
 - **Leah** and her **children** next.
 - **Rachel and Joseph** in the **rear**.
- **Jacob** took the lead, **bowing seven times** as **Esau** approached. He appears to have new courage since the encounter with the Lord. He shows new humility as he approaches Esau. (Vs. 3)
- **Tom Bradford** understands the significance of the moment:
 - This was absolute capitulation. By Middle Eastern standards, Jacob presented himself and his entire clan to Esau as subject to Esau's mercy or wrath. The irony of this situation is hard-hitting; the blessing of Isaac