

## 10.08 Jacob Meets Esau (Genesis 33:1-20)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows  
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

### Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.
- (optional) Use small dowel figures or wooden figures for Jacob and Esau.

**Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach:** Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *pre-incarnate*: before becoming a man; spoken of Jesus

### Scripture (ESV)

Genesis 33:1 And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two female servants. 2 And he put the servants with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all. 3 He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

4 But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. 5 And when Esau lifted up his eyes and saw the women and children, he said, “Who are these with you?” Jacob said, “The children whom God has graciously given your servant.” 6 Then the servants drew near, they and their children, and bowed down. 7 Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down. And last Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down.

8 Esau said, “What do you mean by all this company that I met?” Jacob answered, “To find favor in the sight of my lord.” 9 But Esau said, “I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.” 10 Jacob said, “No, please, if I have found favor in your sight, then accept my present from my hand. For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me. 11 Please accept my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.” Thus he urged him, and he took it.

12 Then Esau said, “Let us journey on our way, and I will go ahead of you.” 13 But Jacob said to him, “My lord knows that the children are frail, and that the nursing flocks and herds are a care to me. If they are driven hard for one day, all the flocks will die. 14 Let my lord pass on ahead of his servant, and I will lead on slowly, at the pace of the livestock that are ahead of me and at the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir.”

15 So Esau said, “Let me leave with you some of the people who are with me.” But he said, “What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord.” 16 So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. 17 But Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built himself a house and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

18 And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan-aram, and he camped before the city. 19 And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem’s father, he bought for a hundred pieces of money the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent. 20 There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

### Introduction/Review:

Twenty years had passed since Esau had threatened to slay Jacob. Had his intentions changed, or had his anger festered and grown worse all these years? Fearful of Esau and the 400 men who were coming with him, Jacob sent five groups of many animals as a gift to Esau so that there might be peace between them. The night before he was to meet Esau, Jacob wrestled all night with the pre-incarnate Son of God, Jesus.

God changed Jacob's name to Israel, meaning prince of God.

## Story:

### *Approaching Esau*

Even though Jacob had this encounter with God, he was still afraid, especially when he could actually see Esau and those 400 men advancing. He decided again to divide his resources—his family. The two female servants, Bilhah and Zilpah, he put first with their children. Next, Leah went with her children. Last, Rachel and Joseph came. Jacob got ahead of them all to be the first to—to what? To be killed? Maybe. It was a tense, terrifying time.

As Esau drew near, Jacob proceeded toward him, stopping seven times to bow, showing respect for this older brother. What would Esau do and say?

### *Embracing Esau*

Wonder of wonders and praise the Lord, Esau didn't advance with a sword! He ran to Jacob with open arms, embraced him, kissed him, and wept. Jacob wept too, ✓maybe at first with relief and then with happiness to see his only brother again after all these years.

### *Introducing the family*

In a little while Esau noticed the women and children nearby. "Who are these with you?" he asked.

Jacob answered, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant." Notice the "*your servant*"; ✓Jacob again is submitting himself to Esau with these words.

The family came to meet their "new" (to them) relative. ✓Maybe Jacob introduced them by name: "First, my servant Bilhah with Dan and Naphtali, her sons; another servant wife, Zilpah, with her sons, Gad and Asher." These six bowed as they were introduced to Esau. Jacob continued, "Here is Leah with Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah." They all bowed to Esau." Last," said Jacob, "is Rachel and her son Joseph." Rachel and Joseph met Esau and bowed.

### *Accepting the gift*

Esau brought up the next matter of business—all those animals Jacob had sent. "What do you mean by all this company that I met?"

Jacob answered, "To find favor in the sight of my lord." Notice "*my lord*" again.

✓True to the cultural custom of bartering, Esau protested, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself."

Jacob had given and did not want to take back; so he, too, protested, "No, please, if I have found favor in your sight, then accept my present from my hand. For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me. Please accept my blessing that I brought for you because God has dealt graciously with me. I have enough."

With that urging, Esau accepted the gift.

### *Excusing himself*

It seemed as if it was time for the brothers to part, but Esau, ✓being hospitable, said, "Let's go ahead on our journey; I will go ahead of you and lead the way."

Jacob excused himself, saying, "My lord" (here is that word *lord* again). "My lord knows that the children are frail, and that the nursing flocks and herds are a care to me. If they are driven hard for one day, all the flocks will die." (✓I personally think they had been driven rather hard for several days early in their journey when they had made it to Gilead in only ten days.)

Jacob continued, “Let my lord pass on ahead of his servant, and I will lead on slowly, at the pace of the livestock that are ahead of me and at the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir.”

Now, Seir [locate on a map] was the place where Esau lived. Jacob sounded as if he intended to follow all that way. Perhaps he did, but that did not happen.\*

Still being courteous, Esau suggested, “Let me leave with you some of the people who are with me.”

But Jacob answered, “What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of *my lord*.”

So Esau and his 400 men left Jacob and started on their way to Seir that day.\*\*

But Jacob journeyed to Succoth [locate on a map] and built himself a house and made booths for his livestock. He called the name of the place Succoth, which means “booths.” ✓Some Bible scholars say he stayed there about eighteen months.

Later, Jacob went to the city of Shechem. He camped before the city, and then bought from the people of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money the piece of land on which he pitched his tent. This is only the second purchase of land (the first was Abraham’s purchase of land for a cemetery) in Canaan, the land promised to the ownership of Abraham and his descendants, one of whom is Jacob.

I am happy to report that at Shechem Jacob erected an altar. Unlike the altar he had built at Bethel, when he spoke of God merely as being the God of his fathers, Jacob named this altar El-Elohe-Israel. This name means “God, the God of Israel.” Jacob, using the new name God had given him, now knew and worshiped the God of Abraham and Isaac as his own God.

---

\*“. . . whither, no doubt, he intended to come when he parted with Esau; but for reasons which after appeared to him he declined it: or more probably he did go thither then, or quickly after; though the Scripture makes no mention of it . . . for that he should tell a lie is not likely, nor does he seem to be under any temptation to it: and besides, it would have been dangerous to have disobliged his brother when on his borders, who could easily have come upon him again with four hundred men, and picked a quarrel with him for breach of promise, and destroyed him and his at once (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/genesis-33-14.html>).

\*\*“Edomites (traced from Esau) and Israelites (traced from Jacob) were in conflict throughout ancient times, *e.g.*, refusal to let Israel go through their territory on the journey to the Promised Land (Numbers 20:18-21). God gave special instructions concerning this enmity, commanding not to fight Edom on the way to Canaan (Deuteronomy 2:4, 5) and warned against hating Edom (Deuteronomy 23:7, 8). However, both Saul and David made war against these descendants of Esau. . . . And the Edomites continued to disobey God. Eight of the prophets recorded in the Old Testament had something to say about the problem (*e.g.*, Amos 9:11, 12; Obadiah 1, 10, 18) (David C. Cook’s junior high curriculum, “Life for Today,” April, May, June 1971).

### **Lessons from this lesson:**

- We see Jesus:  
A descendant of Esau—Herod the Great, whose father was an Idumean (Edomite)—was king when Jesus was born. This is the Herod who ordered the slaughter of the babies after Jesus escaped to Egypt.
- Forgiveness: Esau forgave his brother for all the tricks he had played. God wants us to forgive others also. Think silently of someone you need to forgive. Pray and ask God to help you to forgive as Esau forgave Jacob (Mission Arlington). Jesus paid for our sins on the cross so that God the Father could forgive us of our sins.
- God is God of the impossible: He changed Esau.

### **Activities:**

- Play dough: eleven sons and one daughter
- Discuss ways to handle problems. *Unchristian ways*: (1) Do unto others as they do unto you; (2) “Smearing”—getting even; hurting the other person harder than you were hurt; (3) Boil inside: resent the other person; hold a grudge. *Christian ways*: (1) Forgiving; (2) The cross makes a difference; (3) Thinking more of others than of oneself. Forgiveness of injuries is not an optional thing for the Christian. If a Christian wishes to continue experiencing the knowledge of God's forgiveness, those people must forgive those who have wronged them (Matthew 6:14, 15; 18:21-35) (some points from David C. Cook’s junior high curriculum, “Life for Today,” April, May, June 1971).
- Discuss whether Jacob deserved Esau’s forgiveness. The answer to all these rhetorical questions is *no*. Is forgiveness based on our worth? Did Esau forgive his brother only because he felt he was worth it? Had Jacob made up for his sin against his brother? Could Jacob ever compensate for the birthright stolen from Esau? Forgiveness is not based on our worth or on how much it may seem we deserve to be forgiven. Jacob could not atone for his sin by giving back the birthright to his brother. The gifts were not a payment for the evils of the past but were an expression of Jacob's present attitude—a desire for peace (David C. Cook’s junior high curriculum, “Life for Today,” April, May, June 1971).
- Discuss whether this reunion of the brothers meant there was peace between their descendants. When sin is forgiven, does that mean there will be no trace of the sin left? Can sin of fathers affect children? Sin may have long-lasting effects on our lives. Our brothers and God can forgive us, but this doesn't always erase the effects. Esau's children continued to hate the children of Jacob. (See Footnote \*\* above.)
- Snack: sugar cookies shaped like swords and hearts. If kids snack before the story, remind them that for “twenty years” we have been wondering if Esau would slay Jacob. Today we will find out. If the students think Esau killed Jacob, they should hold up and eat the sword cookie first. Ask students for their reasons. Repeat for eating the heart if they think Esau did not kill Jacob.
- Sing all of “Jacob” found at Lesson 10.01 or on the Songs page at [teachingthebibleto kids.org](http://teachingthebibleto kids.org).
- Review questions: (Game: Using the small figures of Jacob’s sons found in Lesson 10.04, place a son in a pocket chart for each correct answer.)
  1. What did Jacob do when he saw Esau and 400 men coming? [arranged his family with servants and their children first, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last.]
  2. How did Jacob present himself to Esau? [Bowed seven times.]
  3. How did Esau approach Jacob? [Ran to him, embraced him, fell on his neck, kissed him, and wept.]
  4. Jacob said that seeing the face of Esau was like seeing the face of whom? [God.]
  5. In what other specific ways did Esau show forgiveness of Jacob? [Had proper respect for his brother's family; graciously accepted Jacob's gift; offered to provide protection.]
  6. Where did Esau go? [To Seir in Edom.]
  7. Where did Jacob go? [To Succoth in Canaan.]
  8. What did Jacob build in Succoth? [A house; booths for his livestock.]
  9. Fill in the blanks. This was only the \_\_\_\_\_ purchase of the promised land in Canaan. \_\_\_\_\_ had purchased land for a \_\_\_\_\_. [Second; Abraham; cemetery.]
  10. How can we tell Jacob finally worshiped God as his own God? [He built an altar and called it “El-Elohe-Israel”—God, the God of Israel.]



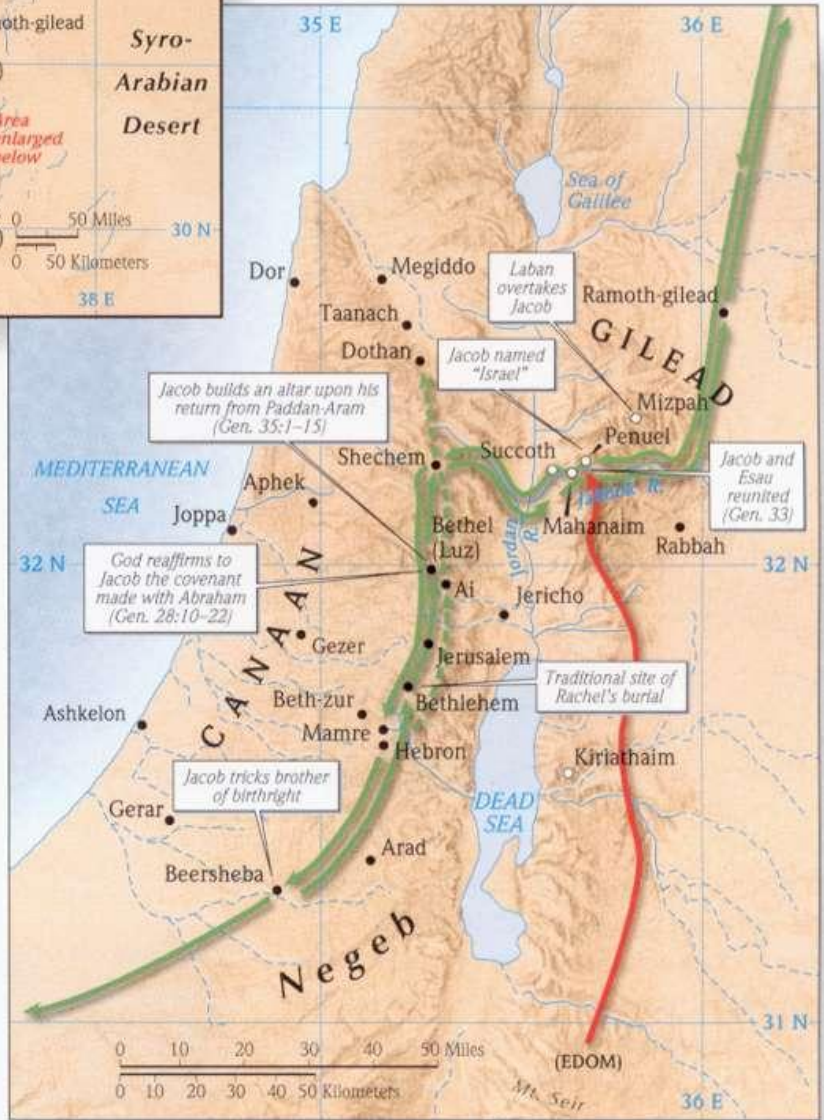
### Memory Verse[s]:

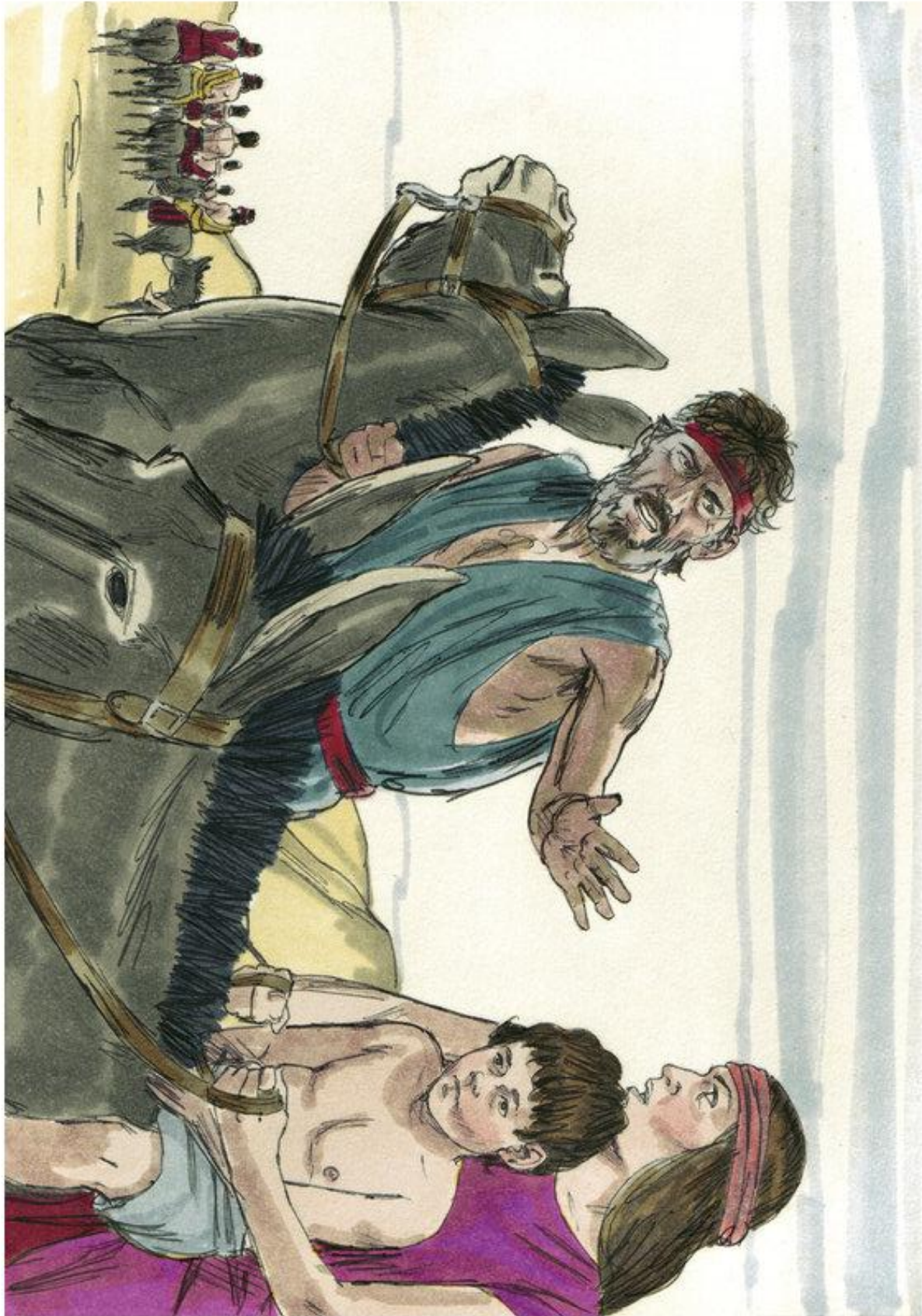
- Genesis 33:20—[Jacob] erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel [“God, the God of Israel”].

### Handwork:

- Find the hidden pictures in the picture of Jacob and Esau found below. Color the picture.

pre-incarnate













After many years, Jacob and his brother Esau met. Jacob was afraid that Esau would be made mad and offered Esau many gifts. But Esau was happy to see Jacob again. Find the items hidden in the coloring sheet below and circle.



Genesis 32:13-20; 33:1-20

Can be copied. Not to be sold.  
Copyright © 1999

Copyright © 1999 by The Church of God, International