

Genesis 33-34

Worldview: Events may appear to be directed by man

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. (Psa 51:10)

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (Eze 36:26-27)

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. (Ezr 1:1-2)

Part 1: Reunion with Esau (Chapter 33)

1. Jacob sees Esau coming and orders his children front to back.
2. He goes before them bowing seven times.
3. Rather than attacking Jacob, Esau runs to him and embraces him.
4. After brief introductions, Jacob convinces Esau to accept the gift he had sent before.
5. Esau offers to lead them to Seir, but Jacob uses frail children and nursing flocks as the excuse not to follow.
6. Then Esau offers to leave people behind to travel with them at a slower pace.
7. Jacob refuses – pointing to the favor of God that is with him.
8. Esau returns south toward Seir.
9. Jacob travels west toward Succoth and then Shechem.

Questions:

1. **What is the significance of the order in which Jacob places his children?**
2. **Why doesn't Jacob follow Esau to Seir?**
3. **Why is Esau happy to see his brother?**

Part 2: The Humiliation of Dinah (34:1-24)

1. Dinah goes out to "see the women of the land".
2. She is seized and raped by Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite – the prince of the land.
3. Shechem asks his father to secure Dinah for him as his wife.
4. Hamor comes to speak with Jacob about this – and the possibility of intermarriage between their peoples.
5. Jacob's sons point out that this intermarriage can't happen unless Hamor's men are circumcised.
6. Hamor and Shechem go the gate of the city and convince the men of Shechem to do just that.

Questions:

1. When Jacob is confronted with news about what happened to Dinah, how did he respond? Why?
2. What does Scripture suggest is the reason Hamor wants to have intermarriage between the daughters of Shechem and the daughters of Israel? See 34:23. Do we see similar reasoning from Israel's leaders later in Scripture?
3. What(or who) is missing during the discussion of circumcision? Do we see similar circumstances in our culture today?

Part 3: Brothers' Vengeance (34:25-29)

1. On the third day after all the males of the city were circumcised, Simeon and Levi attack.
2. All the males were killed, and Dinah was removed from Shechem's house.
3. The city was plundered.

Questions:

1. How does the phrase "like father, like son" apply to Jacob's sons?
2. Were the actions of Simeon and Levi appropriate? Why or why not?
3. If God is with Jacob and his family, why was Dinah raped?
4. What is the outcome of the attack of Jacob's sons on the people of Shechem?

Part 4: Back to Bethel (34:30-35:15)

1. Jacob accuses Simeon and Levi of making him "stink to the inhabitants of the land".
2. God tells Jacob to go to Bethel.
3. Jacob cleanses his household of foreign gods and makes plans for the journey.
4. A "terror from God" fell upon the cities to eliminate the chance of pursuit.
5. As he arrives in Bethel, he builds an altar – recall that this is the same Bethel where Jacob meets God as he flees from his brother.
6. The renaming of Jacob is again affirmed. Promises from God are reiterated.

Questions:

1. Why didn't the surrounding cities pursue Jacob after what his sons did?

From our passages today, there are 3 ways in which God accomplishes His plans in a way that is consistent with man's plans:

- a) God may intervene in the spiritual realm to make a man favorable to an action.
- b) God may intervene in the physical realm to direct a man's decisions.
- c) God may allow man's natural inclination to sin to run its course.

In two weeks: Genesis 35-37