

Dr. Kenneth Mathews, Genesis, Session 19, Jacob Wrestles with God and Meets Esau, Genesis 32-33

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This is Dr. Kenneth Mathews in his teaching on the book of Genesis. This is session 19, Jacob Wrestles with God and Meets Esau. Genesis 32 and 33.

Today is session 19 entitled Jacob wrestles with God and meets Esau chapters 32 and 33. With each of the narratives regarding the patriarchs Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph, we find that there is a crisis that leads to the spiritual life of each patriarch and a confirming of each patriarch's faith and trust in God. And this is what we come to see in chapters 32 and 33 in the life of Jacob.

The crisis is that after having a peaceful resolution with Laban, and now that he is, that is, Jacob is returning with his family and the wealth of his flocks and herds and servants, he is headed toward Canaan, which will then lead to facing his arch-rival, Esau. Esau, you'll recall, is the one who said that he was going to murder Jacob at the first opportunity after his father, Isaac, had passed away. And that's what, of course, caused Jacob to flee to Aram in the first place.

But now he's returning to the land of promise. You'll recall that the tension in the Jacob narrative is that he's outside the land of promise. And we've always wondered if he, as readers, would return.

Now, after 20 years, he is returning. But before he can successfully meet with Esau and survive, he knows that he must have the blessing of God. And so, we will find that he wrestles overnight with an unnamed wrestler or fighter, antagonist.

This will prove to be his wrestling with God. Then, with God's blessing, favor, and presence, he will be in a position to meet Esau in chapter 33. Chapters 32 and 33 should be read in tandem, as indicated by a critical connection between the two.

And if you'll look with me in your Bible, in chapter 32, in Wrestling with God, and I might say that the wrestling partner, the antagonist, the intruder, is identified as a man. And so, we pick it up with verse 30, and we'll certainly come back to more detail later in a moment. So, Jacob called the place Peniel.

And so, this fight, this struggling with God, he identifies it as a place, Peniel, which means the face of God, the face of God. Now, this might remind you of chapter 28, where Jacob has his dream of the ladder, the stairway that stretches from earth to heaven, and the angels are ascending and descending. And the Lord is there.

After awakening, he realizes that he's at Beth El, the house of God, the presence of God in that place, and he names it accordingly, Beth El. And so, we have similarly the

naming of that location as Peniel, which is in the Transjordan region, northeast. And the explanation in verse 30 is, it is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.

Later in the Pentateuch, you will read of how Moses had a face-to-face relationship with God. And so those who first read the Pentateuch in Genesis and the light of the whole Pentateuch would know the importance of their father, Jacob, the father of the 12 tribes of Israel, whose name is also Israel. Now, he had the same favor and encounter with God as Moses, their beloved leader, he too had experienced.

He goes on to say in verse 30 that, yet, my life was spared because one cannot see God face to face directly; there must be some buffer, some indirect connection with God face to face. In the case of Moses, it was the luminary presence of the glory of God. And I think, in this case, Jacob is wrestling with God as he manifests himself as a man.

Hosea, he refers to this passage in chapter 12, and he identifies the man as an angel. And this may remind you of chapter 18. Remember how Abraham receives three men, three visitors, and we come to learn from that passage that one of the three manifesting himself as a man is Yahweh, the Lord God himself.

And then there are two manifesting themselves as men are also identified in chapter 19 as two angels. So chapter 18 and this occasion have those similarities, yet my life was spared. So, it's important for us to keep that in mind because when it comes to Jacob meeting Esau, recounted in chapter 33, there is a reference to the face.

And so, when we look at this passage, after the two Esau and Jacob first meet, we find that Jacob says to Esau in verse 10, 33.10. No, please, said Jacob, if I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift for me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God. Now that you have received me favorably.

Clearly an echo of what we find in Jacob wrestling with God. And what is the point? We read these two chapters in concert because the author wants to point out that it is on account of Jacob's encounter with God that he can face Esau and see in this encounter with Esau the outworking of God's presence and plan, his program for these two men and for Jacob in particular. Jacob now will recognize that in Esau, he has received Esau's favor and acceptance of Jacob.

So, with that in mind, we see that the theme of struggle continues, especially with Laban in his household. Antecedent to that was the struggle with Esau. And so now

we continue in this case, not with Laban, but now with Esau, and not departing the land, but returning to the promised land.

And in doing so, really the struggle, the most profound struggle that Jacob has, is not with Esau, it's not with Laban, it's the struggle he has with God. He really struggled with his own inner personal struggles, his own coming to terms with his need to depend upon God even for his survival. What will occur as a result of chapters 32 and 33, wrestling with God and meeting Esau, is that we will find he's a different man than when he left the land of promise 20 years earlier.

That dream at Bethel was the beginning of his spiritual pilgrimage, his first encounter with God. And then the succeeding years, from time to time, God's appearance and God's message to Jacob. Now Jacob must learn from the Lord more personally how he must depend upon the Lord.

In the past, he had depended upon his own ability to manipulate, and to achieve his own selfish ends. But now, if there's going to be the favor of God, if there's going to be survival, if there's going to be a continuation of the legacy of God's promises to Abraham and his descendants, he must repent, and he must become a changed man. And what will become indicative of this change will actually be the change in his name.

For we will find that in his wrestling with the intruder, the antagonist, his opponent in the dark of the night, the man, the God himself, his name will be changed from Jacob to Israel. And the significance of the name change is very important to indicate the message in the transformation of the man himself. Jacob, you know, means he grasps the heel of his brother in the womb of his mother, Rebecca.

And metaphorically, the idea is to deceive. He's the trickster. He's the deceiver.

And when it comes to Israel, the intruder calls him Israel, which means he struggles, he wrestles, he struggles with God. And so now we find that he is struggling with God in this sense, that he recognizes that he must have the favor and blessing of God. Well, when it comes to these two chapters, they're so artfully penned by the author, and there are so many wordplays; we just saw the wordplay between Peniel and the face of God.

There are allusions—we saw that one with face-to-face—and there will be allusions to earlier chapters, such as chapter 28 of Bethel. And there are remarkable ironies. So in the first section, chapter 32, the wrestling with God, there's a motif, an idea of messengers.

Now remember, angels are also considered messengers, it's the same word. So, let's begin with the opening 12 verses. And we find in verses one and two that on his way home, homeward, he was met by angels of God.

And these are messengers, and he named that place Mahanaim. Mahanaim means two camps. And so, he exclaims the camp of God, in point of fact, there are two camps of God.

And this will be reflected in the way in which Jacob will divide his people and his flocks. We pick that up in verse seven. In great fear and distress, Jacob divided the people who were with him into two camps.

Now, the New International Version reads groups, but the Hebrew word is two camps, and the flocks and herds and camels as well. He thought that if Esau came and attacked one camp, the camp that was left might escape. So, with that in mind, then we can see that there is a parallel between the celestial, the spiritual, and the terrestrial, the concrete human experience with Esau.

So, well, having seen these messengers, he must have been encouraged that God is with him. So, Jacob sent messengers ahead of him; these would have been his servants to his brother Esau. And he told them that this is what they are to say.

Now, I want you to notice, and this is important also for us. In verse four, he instructed them, as his servants, this is what you are to say to my master Esau. And then this is the quote, your servant Jacob. Why is this language important? My master, your servant.

There are different ways in which you could interpret the way in which Jacob plans to confront Esau. We know that in verse six, the messengers return saying, Esau is coming, he's coming to meet you, and he has 400 armed men. And that's why it reads in seven, in great fear and distress.

Then Jacob will do, Jacob subsequently divided his animals into groups and sent servants with each group with a distance between each group of animals. So, you may think of it as recurring waves of gifts that are, that is brought each to gift these herds, these animals, to Esau. So, with that in mind, then you could interpret that as saying, well, there he is again, manipulating his way to soften up Esau, and to have leverage over Esau, and to manipulate Esau, and try to shame or embarrass Esau.

He's trying to buy him off, you might conclude. Another way to look at it is it might not be at all malicious, but rather a wise gesture on his part. The book of Proverbs indicates that in coming before a person of great authority like a king, it is wise to bring a gift to recognize the lordship of the king.

So maybe this is wisdom on his part. Yet another way in which we can possibly understand this action on the part of Jacob is that Jacob is expressing his repentance over the way he mistreated Esau deceived him, and caused Esau great pain and sorrow, and how that led to such a disruption in the family.

How that led to all of his own personal sorrow and troubles in the household of Laban, and the struggles and competition between his two wives. And so, this is the way I take it when it comes to Jacob. I believe he is legitimately humbling himself when he says, my master, your servant.

This is the language that will occur. For example, you will find this in verse 17: Jacob instructed the one in the lead, that is, with the first group of herds.

When my brother Esau meets you and asks to whom do you belong and where are you going? And who owns all these animals in front of you? Then you are to say they belong to your servant, Jacob. They are a gift sent to my Lord, my Lord, Esau. This again continues when we find this occurring in the way Jacob speaks to Esau.

Jacob responds in verse 5 when Esau says, who are all these who are coming with you? All of his children. Jacob answered, in chapter 33, verse 5, that they are the children God has graciously. He sees that God's engagement in his life has graciously given his servant, again referring to Esau. Now that Esau also has a heart that has been changed as a consequence of what occurred during these 20 years, we don't know.

Is this Esau's response solely on the basis of the gifting? I don't think so. I think more is at work here. Because if you look at verse 9 of this chapter 33, and Jacob is offering as a gift, animal after animal, all of these droves of animals.

Esau said, no, you don't need to give this to me. I already have plenty, my brother. See, kinship is a bond of loyalty that Esau recognizes at this later point in his life.

And he says, keep Jacob what you have for yourself. A little later in chapter 33, we find in verse 12 that Esau wants to accompany Jacob with his 400 men to protect him. I think this is a gesture of kinship.

Let us be on our way, and I'll accompany you. But Jacob said to him, my Lord, my Lord. And he concludes in verse 14, my Lord, my Lord.

Then again, in verse 15, my Lord. So, I think this is a pattern on the part of Jacob in chapters 32 and 33, that he's not using this language primarily as a strategy to deceive, to manipulate. And then he goes about in his own selfish way.

Rather, I think that what is at work here is that he recognizes how he has cheated Esau and how he wants to go about reconciling with Esau and now, returning then to the beginning of chapter 32, where it speaks of the messengers in chapters, chapter 32, verses 1 through 12. I want you to recognize that Jacob is not acting independently of God, but he's showing his dependence upon God.

Even before the encounter of wrestling with the intruder, because he prays in verse 9. Then Jacob prayed, O, God of my father, see, this is an echo of the promises, an allusion to the legacy. And he is in that train of inheritance. So, he's putting himself squarely and solidly in the environment of not any God, not a generic God, but a God who has chosen to reveal himself and to commit himself by covenant to Abraham and then to Isaac.

And hence, of course, the triple reference that had become classic, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and now the God of Jacob. So, continuing on in verse 9, he says, Oh, Yahweh, oh, Lord, who said to me, and this is an echo now of chapter 31, verse 3, where he's going to say to Jacob, it's time for you to return to the homeland. Go back to your country and your relatives.

So, we don't want to leave out kinship, that very important connection of legacy, and I will make you prosper. And then he goes on, I think, to express his humility. He says I am unworthy of all the kindness.

This has to do with covenant loyalty, the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. When I crossed this Jordan, I had only my staff, but now I have become two groups. Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me and also the mothers with their children.

If he had been just solely selfish and self-interested, would he have included the wives? Would he have included the children? He's thinking also about the inheritance. So, I think that he's coming to a place of looking at the bigger plan and program of God for blessing for not just him, not even just the immediate family, but rather for generations to come. But you have said verse 12; I will surely make you prosper.

And here we have an echo where in chapter 28, verse 14, it refers to making his descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted. Next, we have the series and waves of gifts in verses 13 through 21. So it says in 13, he spent the night there.

So, he is spending the night at the place that he will identify later as Peniel. And so, he is on the east side. He's on the east side with all of his camp of the Jordan.

He spent the night there and from what he had with him, he selected a gift. And the word gift occurs again in verse 18. And the significance of gift is it may well be an echo, a wordplay on the sound of the word of Nehemiah.

And let me help you see this. In verse two, remember you have the dual form of the word camp. And so, mehanaim, two camps.

The word for gift is menhah. So, you can hear similarity in language. Now, if that's the case, if the word chosen for gift is menhah, now that is a not an unusual word from the perspective of the Pentateuch worship setting because a menhah is an offering.

So, this is a gift, an offering. Now, it's not a sacred setting. It's not a setting for worship.

So, it is secular here, but it's referring perhaps to mehanaim, that there is again an idea here in the text that God's presence and the angels are superintending this plan on the part of the way he will approach his brother. So there's a listing of all these various animals, and he's saying, go ahead of me and keep some space between the herds, he says in verse 16. We had read earlier, and this is what each one of these leaders of a herd is to say when the question is raised: who owns these animals, and why are you driving these herds in this fashion? And the response is, they belong to your servant Jacob, they are a menhah, they are a gift sent to my Lord Esau and he is coming behind us.

So, in verse 19, he also instructed the second group, the third group, and all the other groups who followed the herds, you are to say the same thing to Esau when you meet him and be sure to say, your servant Jacob is coming. For he thought to himself, I will reconcile, I will pacify him with these gifts I am sending on ahead. Later, when I see him, perhaps he will receive me, and perhaps he will accept me.

So, Jacob's gifts went on ahead of him, crossing the Jordan, but he himself spent the night in the camp. So, he's hanging back with his family and later we find that he sends forth his family before he himself comes. Now he spent the night in the camp, and this word pacify is the same word that's used for making atonement.

Of course, here, it's secular. Making atonement would be in the setting of sanctuary and worship. But to make atonement, you can hear it in the etymology of the English word in one minute. So, the idea is reconciliation.

I will reconcile him with these gifts, and he hopes that will be a favorable outcome. This is the kind of language that is used in chapter 33, in which he seeks the favor of Esau. And you will find that the word favor is used often with the language in a phrase favor in a person's eyes.

And so, this is what occurs in verse 8 of chapter 33. You'll see it here. And Esau asks, what do you mean by all these droves I met? And to find favor in your eyes, my Lord, he said.

Now to find favor, and this word favor is the same word that occurs for grace. And so he wants to find acceptance, to receive acceptance, and to receive welcome. And in fact that certainly is what is occurring.

But now we must move on to the struggle for blessing in verses 22 through 32, the end of the chapter. Now he does send in verse 22 his family across the Jabbok. And that is a river that flows.

It's a Wadi river that flows westward into the Jordan River. It's east and it flows westward into the Jordan, some 20 miles north of the Dead Sea. So, and by the way, I might mention this may be a wordplay because, in Hebrew, the word for Jacob and the word for Jabbok are similar.

So, Jacob got a cove and then Jabbok, Jabbok. Okay, now even the word wrestle, which we find in verse 24. So, Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak.

Even the word wrestle has a similar sound: yabak, yabak. So, these three may be a wordplay to emphasize the event, its nature, and its location. When the man saw, in verse 25, that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip.

Now this word touch can be rendered with the idea of strike or hit. It could be light, it could be more aggressive, more powerful. The point is that even though Jacob seems to be getting the better of the man, the man must be all the more powerful because all he does is touch, even if you say strike the socket of his hip, so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man.

This is one of the great mysteries, of course, the identity of the man. Another mystery here, who is the winner of this struggle? Who has truly prevailed? And the writer of Hosea makes it clear that it is in this wrestling Jacob who prevails over God, but yet it is God who prevails over Jacob. And I think we can understand that both are true.

On the one hand, God certainly prevails because of the disjunct hip. And that in doing so, Jacob releases the man in this wrestling match. But see, Jacob, it can also be understood to have prevailed because he receives what he sought, because he wanted God's blessing.

And he's saying, I'm not going to let go of you until I receive your blessing. And it says that God blessed him there. That's the way I understand it, that God blessed him there.

There's even ambiguity here because is it that Jacob blessed God? Or is it that God blessed Jacob? And we might say that this ambiguity, this mystery, this absence of clarity, the absence of seeing his face in the sense of seeing his actual being is a way of speaking of the hiddenness of God. Now, God wants to be seen because he shows up in various ways, visions, he comes in dreams, he speaks, he interacts, he encounters, and he appears as a man. All of this takes place for revelation and for encounters and, for personal relationships, and for teaching the patriarchs and the readers about who he is, his identity, his plan; he's unveiling all of this.

He wants to be known. He wants to be sought after. He wants to be worshipped in the sense of an engaging kind of knowledge.

And yet, at the same time, God's almighty being, his person, cannot be taken on as an equal. He, you may be treated as an equal, but not a true equal. There has to be some kind of buffer between you and God, between the patriarch and God.

God provides that. So there is a hiddenness, a mystery, an unveiling, but also a hiddenness about God. And the mystery of God is what attracts us to God.

I think of Moses in the burning bush, who was attracted to that burning bush that was not consumed. And there in the presence of the burning bush was God Almighty. And so Jacob begins to recognize that he's not wrestling with Esau, he's not wrestling with flesh and blood, but he's wrestling with God.

Now, of course, the man says, let me go, for it is daybreak. So, this has to do with God's hiddenness in the restraint so that Jacob will not see him. Now, we have the component that's important as well when it comes to the identification of the man and the identification of Jacob.

See, the man, rather I should read with verse 26. Jacob replied I will not let you go unless you bless me. The man asked him, what is your name? That sounds rather striking, isn't it? He would ask him his name because when you have a name, you have a sense of control.

And that's what's at work here. Who's in control? What's at stake? They're wrestling, who's in control of the other person? Now, it's shifted, who's in control by gaining the leverage of identification? So, the man asked Jacob, what is your name? And Jacob, he answered. Then the man said, here we have, like with Abram and Abraham, like with Sarai and Sarah, now we're going to have a name change that is fitting for Jacob and all future Israel.

And Israel will be marked by Jacob's experience right here. Those who are descendants of the household of Jacob, the 12 tribes of Israel, and all those who become affiliated,

although foreigners, with the covenant of Yahweh and become members of believing Israel, that this will be the touchstone for their identity—one who struggles with God, seeking after the blessing of God, showing exclusive loyalty to God.

Humbling himself before God, now, as we will see, in receiving God's blessing, that is who we are. So, please tell me your name. Let me back up to verse 28.

Because you have struggled with God, this is what Israel means, and with men, and have overcome. And Jacob said, please tell me your name. Ah, but the man replied, why do you ask my name? Then he blessed him there.

And I take it that this is God who is blessing Jacob. And he's not going to identify himself. Jacob called the place the face of God, saying it's because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.

The sun rose above him, and so did daylight. And as he passed Peniel, now in the Bible, that translation, the New International Version, it helps the reader, giving the same word Peniel, but in the Hebrew Bible, it's an additional form. It's a variant form of Peniel.

It's actually Penuel, also the face of God. And it may be that in your translation, it says Penuel, which is the same location. And he was limping, and limped the rest of his life, seen as a marker.

He is tattooed, so to speak, with this encounter with God. Therefore, to this day, the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob's hip was touched, was struck near the tendon. Now, this is not found in the food laws of the Bible.

But it did become a tradition in Israel, and they practice this observance of not eating the tendon as a reminder of their spiritual ancestry, as well as their biological ancestry and their national ancestry, because this has overwhelming spiritual implications. And what's in the background here, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, is the covenant commitment that God had made to Israel's fathers. Now, we move on to chapter 33, where we have the restored gift.

This is seeing as some engagement, some effort to restore the gifts that had been robbed of Esau. He's not restoring the blessing, but he is restoring, he is returning, he is making an effort to say to Esau, I know I stole this from you. The only way I can make this good to you is to offer these gifts to you.

And then we will find that Jacob will continue on his way after the two depart, and takes up a temporary residence in Shechem. So, in verses 1 through 4, Jacob and Esau meet. What a climactic moment.

If you had not known this, if you had not read it before, if you had not heard the stories

before, can you imagine the heightened tension as to what's going to be Esau's response? After all, he has these warriors with him. Jacob does not. He was altogether vulnerable.

His family could have been enslaved. He himself could well have been murdered. All that he possessed could have been taken by Esau, and so he would have had his vengeance satisfied.

Now, what Jacob chooses to do is a measure of hoping that his family might survive. And so, he divided the children, and he did so according to the mother and the servants of the mother. So, Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants.

He put the maidservants and their children in front. Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph. Now, this would be important because you'll recall at this point Rachel had birthed Joseph, and so his favored wife Rachel had one child, Joseph.

At this point, probably in the mind of Jacob, he wanted Joseph to receive the blessing because he loved Joseph so very much as his child by the one he favored, Rachel. Later, we find that Benjamin is born to Rachel. Now, he put them at the rear.

It would have been probably a vain effort, but maybe if there had been an attack, they would have all scattered, and perhaps Rachel and Joseph or maybe just Joseph himself would have survived. He himself went on ahead and bound down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother. So, he held back while the droves were moving forward, and then he divided up his family, and he went on ahead, hopefully, to be reconciled with his brother.

And it says he bound down seven times. The seven times, as you know, would have been a fully expressed humility and acceptance of his desire to recognize his brother, a gesture of humility, a gesture of loyalty. Now, he's not actually saying, I'm going to become a servant, literally, but is a way of saying, as I find it here and as most commentators will, an act of brotherly love, repentance, and an act of recognizing that Esau was mistreated.

Verse 4, then, but Esau ran. Now, notice that Esau ran. He was so excited to see his brother.

He didn't receive the gifts begrudgingly or anything of the sort. He doesn't want the gifts. He just wants his brother.

What a change we see. God has been at work in these 20 years with Esau and Jacob, and both men have prospered. Both men have been under the blessing of God, and both men will be brought together here. And so, he meets Jacob.

He embraces him. He threw his arms around his neck and kissed him, and they wept in brotherly kinship. And so, he has to inquire, what has gone on with you, Jacob? Look at all of this family you have.

And he says, very importantly, here in verse 5, Jacob says, God has graciously given. And so, this is a recognition. God has gifted me.

I am gifting you. So, the servants and the mothers rightly bow down. They follow the pattern of Jacob as an act of respect.

And then, we have already read what follows in verse 8, where what is this all about? He wants clarification. And he says I want to offer this to you. I want to find favor in your eyes, my Lord.

And then, we find that Esau says, I already have plenty. Now, we will learn about this in chapter 36, which speaks of his descendants and how, emerging from him, chiefs and various people groups will emerge. So, Esau says, no, no, I don't want to accept this.

I just want to have a relationship with you restored. And so, once this has been understood, then Esau accepted it. And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it.

And I think if Jacob had not been on the level, then certainly since the reconciliation, the threat is over, and that Esau has said, no, no, no, you don't have to do this, then Jacob could well, if he was just the manipulated, manipulative trickster, scoundrel that he had been at one time, he said, okay. If Esau, if you insist, but rather, he insisted, and Esau responded. So, now Esau wants to protect him and accompany him.

Was he suspicious that there could be something underway with Esau? I don't know, it was probably a wise move on his part to say, I don't need you to accompany me. Maybe he's saying, in effect, I know I can trust God to help me along the way. And I can't move with the kind of speed that would be required of your warriors because these, he says, young fox and herds, the younger nursing, and this would lead to their death.

So, he explains that. So, what he has in mind here is that ultimately, he will join in a region of Edom, where Esau is situated, in Mount Seir. He mentions this in verse 14 at the conclusion.

And so, Jacob says, just let me find favor in the eyes of my Lord. That's all I need. I don't need men to accompany you.

I don't need to accompany me. I don't need a few of your men. And so he built a place called Sukkoth.

And Sukkoth is a word that's used for booths. And you can remember the building of booths for the wilderness wanderings and then the festival of booths. So, he built these shelters for his livestock.

And this, as I said, would be north, east, and then, after Jacob came from Paddan Aram, he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan. Shechem will be an important location when it comes to the career of Jacob. And we will find this is a touch for understanding chapter 34, where he will have a relationship that sours with the locals, the Shechemites, who are also Hivites.

That's the rape of Dinah that occurs by the prince of the Shechemites. And his name is Shechem. And we'll come to that in our next lesson.

But the point is that geographically, there's a separation between the two camps. You have Esau, who's gone back to his homeland. You have Jacob, who is in a different location.

And I think that it's important to separate these two in terms of God's plan and the program of a blessing. So, that's what the conclusion here is, preparing us for linkage with chapter 34. And there, as in the tradition of his fathers, he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel, God, the God of Israel.

Striking, isn't it? It's Israel now. God, El, the general name that's used for God. But now the identification of El is specifically told in terms of Jacob, Israel, for the people of Israel, for the great nation that will come, that is formed in their redemption from Egypt, the great Passover.

The covenant promises at Mount Sinai, the building of the tabernacle, where there will be a meeting with the people of Israel and God, and all that has to do with this covenant relationship. And this is a part of how Israel will come to identify itself. Living under the blessing and care of God, based in the elective love of God for their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and then Jacob.

What we learn from this, we learn from is that in each case, these three major figures in Genesis, Abraham in his crisis of faith, where in chapter 22, he's instructed to sacrifice his only begotten beloved son, and that would be Isaac, and he passes that test. And then when it comes to Joseph, the meeting he has with his brothers, when they come and into Egypt and meet the brother they had sold off decades earlier, will Joseph take advantage? Will he avenge himself? Or is there reconciliation? And he is reconciled to his brothers. And then here in our case with Jacob, a crisis is occurring.

What will happen? And he entrusts himself and all that he owns into the hands of God and says, God has favored me, and I must have God's ongoing blessing if I am to survive and if his plan is to proceed as he has promised.

This is Dr. Kenneth Mathews in his teaching on the book of Genesis. This is session 19, Jacob Wrestles with God and Meets Esau. Genesis 32 and 33.