

Genesis Chapter 32

Verses 1-23

“Mahanaim” was the name given to the place, meaning “Double Camp,” possibly a reference to the two camps or bands of angels, or his camp and the angels’ camp.

The “Jabbok” was a tributary of the Jordan, about 24 miles north of the Dead sea.

The name is related to the Hebrew word for “wrestled” (in verse 24), yaboq for “Jabbok,” and ye abeq for “wrestled.”

Genesis 32:1 "And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him."

"And Jacob went on his way":

From Gilead towards the land of Canaan.

“The angels of God”:

To comfort and help him, to protect and defend him, to keep him in all his ways, that nothing hurt him (Psalm 91:11).

These are ministering spirits sent forth by God to minister to his people, the heirs of salvation; and such a one Jacob was.

With one crisis behind him and before him the suspense of having to face Esau, Jacob was first met by an angelic host, who must have reminded him of Beth-el, which served also as a timely reminder and encouragement of God’s will being done on earth (28:11-15).

Genesis 32:2 "And when Jacob saw them, he said, This [is] God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim."

"And when Jacob saw them":

These appeared in a visible form, most probably human, and in the habit, and with the dress of soldiers, and therefore afterwards called a host or army.

Aben Ezra thinks that Jacob alone saw them, as Elisha first saw the host of angels before the young man did that was with him (2 Kings 6:17).

"He said, this is God's host":

Or army, hence he is often called the LORD of hosts; angels have this name from their number, order, strength, and military exploits they perform.

"And he called the name of the place Mahanaim":

Meaning "double camp," i.e., one being God's and one being his own.

It was located east of the Jordan River in Gilead near the River Jabbok.

Which signifies two hosts or armies; either his own family and company making one, and the angels another, as Aben Ezra observes. or they were the angels, who very probably appeared in two companies, or as two armies, and one went on one side of Jacob and his family, and the other on the other side; or the one went before him, and the other behind him.

The latter to secure him from any insult of Laban, should he pursue after him, and distress him in the rear, and the former to protect him from Esau, near whose country Jacob now was, and of whom he was in some fear and danger.

Thus, seasonably did God appear for him.

In the previous lesson, the last thing Jacob did was to build an altar and worship.

God is pleased by this kind of action.

We see here, angels, ministering spirits, meeting Jacob.

Jacob recognized who they were.

Genesis 32:3 "And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom."

"And Jacob sent messengers before him unto Esau his brother":

Or "angels": not angels simply, as Jarchi, for these were not under the command, and in the power of Jacob to send, nor would they have needed any instruction from him afterwards given, but these were some of his own servants.

Esau it seems, was removed from his father's house, and was possessed of a country after mentioned, called from his name; and which Aben Ezra says lay between Haran and also the land of Israel.

But if it did not directly lie in the road of Jacob, yet, as it was near him, he did not choose to pass by without seeing his brother.

"Seir ... Edom":

The territory of Esau south of the Dead Sea.

Which had its first name from Seir the Horite; and Esau having married into his family came into the possession of it, by virtue of that marriage.

Or rather he and his sons drove out the Horites, the ancient possessors of it, and then they took it to themselves.

From whom it was afterwards called Edom, a name of Esau, which he had from the red pottage he sold his birthright for to his brother Jacob (Genesis 25:30).

Genesis 32:4 "And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now:"

"And he commanded them":

Being his servants.

"Saying, thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau":

Being not only a lord of a country, but his eldest brother, he chose to show in this manner, to soften his mind, and incline it to him; and that he might see he did not pride himself upon the birthright and blessing he had obtained.

And as if these were forgotten by him, though hereby he does not give up his right in them.

"Thy servant Jacob saith thus":

Expressing great humility and modesty; for though his father Isaac by his blessing had made him lord over Esau, the time was not come for this to take place, his father not being yet dead.

And besides, was to have its accomplishment not in his own person, but in his posterity.

"I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now":

Had been a sojourner and a servant in Laban's family for those twenty years past, and had had a hard master, and therefore could not be the object of his brother's envy, but rather of his pity and also compassion.

Genesis 32:5 "And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight."

"And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants":

This he would have said, lest he should think he was come to ask anything of him, and put himself and his family upon him; and lest he should treat him with contempt, as a poor mean beggarly creature, and be ashamed of the relation he stood in to him.

"And I have sent to tell my lord":

Of his coming, and of his state and circumstances.

"That I may find grace in thy sight":

Share in his good will, which was all he wanted, and that friendship, harmony, and brotherly love, might subsist between them, which he was very desirous of.

As you remember, Esau had threatened to kill Jacob and he had fled.

Twenty years was a long time.

Many hurts have gone away in that period of time.

Jacob humbled himself before his brother and even called him lord (not capitalized).

He quickly told his brother that he would not be dependent on him for a living, that God had abundantly blessed him while he was gone.

He was asking Esau to forgive and forget.

Grace means unmerited favor.

That was what he was asking for.

Jacob, in all of this, is being very humble.

Genesis 32:6 "And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him."

"And the messengers returned to Jacob":

After they had delivered their message, with the answer they brought back.

"Saying, we came to thy brother Esau":

Which, though not expressed, is then implied in these words, and is still more manifest by what then follows.

"And also he cometh to meet thee": And pay a friendly visit, as they supposed.

"And four hundred men with him":

Partly to show his grandeur, and partly out of respect to Jacob, and to do honor to him.

Though some think this was done with an ill design upon him, and which indeed seems probable; and it is certain Jacob so understood it, as is evident by the distress it gave him.

And by the methods he took for his safety, and by the gracious appearance of God unto him, and the strength he gave him on this occasion, not only to pray to and wrestle with him, but to prevail both with God and men, as the following account shows.

Genesis 32:7 "Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that [was] with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands;"

“Greatly afraid and distressed”:

Knowing what he had done to his brother in getting the birthright and blessing from him, and what an enmity he had conceived in his mind against him on that account, and remembering what he had said he would do to him.

Therefore, might fear that all his professions of respect to him were craftily and cunningly made to take him off of his guard, and that he might the more easily fall into his hands.

He sought reconciliation with Esau (verses 4-5), but the report of the returning envoys (verse 6), only confirmed his deepest suspicions that Esau’s old threat against him (27:41-42), had not abated over the years.

And his coming with force indicated only disaster (verses 8, 11).

Especially when he heard there were four hundred men with him.

This struck a terror into him, and made him suspicious of an ill design against him; though herein Jacob betrayed much weakness and lack of faith.

When God has promised again and again that he would be with him, and keep him, and protect him, and return him safe to the land of Canaan.

He prepared for the attack by dividing his company of people and animals.

"And he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and the herds, and the camels, into two bands":

Some of his servants and shepherds with a part of the flocks and herds, in one band or company; and some with the rest of them, and the camels, and his wives, and his children, in the other.

Genesis 32:8 "And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape."

"And said, if Esau come to the one company, and smite it":

The first, which perhaps consisted only of some servants, with a part of his cattle; so that if Esau should come in a hostile manner, and fall upon that, and slay the servants, and then take the cattle as booty.

"Then the other company which is left shall escape":

By flight, in which most probably were he himself, his wives and children, and the camels to carry them off who would have notice by what should happen to the first band.

But one would think that, notwithstanding all this precaution and wise methods taken, there could be little expectation of escaping the hands of Esau.

If he came out on such an ill design; for whither could they flee?

Or how could they hope to get out of the reach of four hundred men pursuing after them, unless it could be thought, or might be hoped, that the first company falling into his hands, and the revenge on them, and the plunder of them, would satisfy him, and he would proceed no further?

But Jacob did not trust to these methods he concerted, but takes himself to God in prayers.

Jacob felt near panic when he found that Esau and 400 of his men were coming out to meet them.

Jacob felt that this was an army coming to destroy him and his family.

He prepared a battle plan, and knew that his little group was no match for Esau and four hundred of his men.

Jacob had a plan of retreat.

Verses 9-12

Commendably, notwithstanding the plans to appease his brother (verses 13-21), Jacob prayed for deliverance, rehearsing God's own commands and covenant promise (verse 12; see 28:13-15).

Acknowledging his own anxiety, and confessing his own unworthiness before the LORD.

This was Jacob's first recorded prayer since his encounter with God at Beth-el on the way to Laban (28:20-22).

Genesis 32:9 "And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee:"

"And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac":

In this distress, he does not consult the teraphim Rachel had taken from her father; nor does he call upon the hosts of angels that had just appeared to him, to help, protect, and guard him; but to God only.

The God of his fathers, who had promised great things to them, and had done many great things for them.

Who was their God in covenant, as He was his also, though he makes no mention of it.

And who was heir of the promises made to them, the birthright and blessing being entailed upon him.

"The LORD which saidst unto me, return unto thy country, and to thy kindred":

The same God had appeared to him, when in Laban's house, and bid him return to his own country, and father's house.

In obedience to which command he was now on his journey there, and being in the way of his duty, and acting according to the will of God.

Though he had no dependence on, nor put any confidence in anything done by him, as appears by what follows.

Yet he hoped God of his grace and goodness would have a regard unto him, as he was doing what he was directed to by him.

And especially since he had made the following gracious promise:

"And I will deal well with thee":

Bestow good things on thee, both temporal and spiritual, and among the former, preservation from evils and dangers is included.

Genesis 32:10 "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands."

"I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies":

Or of any of them, according to his humble sense of things his mind was now impressed with.

He was not worthy of the least mercy and favor that had been bestowed upon him; not even of any temporal mercy, much less of any spiritual one.

And therefore did not expect any from the hands of God, on account of any merit of his own.

Or "I am less than all thy mercies"; Jacob had had many mercies and favors bestowed upon him by the LORD, which he was aware of, and thankful for.

Notwithstanding all the ill usage and hard treatment he had met with in Laban's house, those being great ones.

He was not worthy of all or any of them; nor deserving of the least of them, as our version truly gives the sense of the words.

"And of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant":

In performing promises made to him; grace, mercy, and goodness are seen making promises, and truth and faithfulness in the performance of them.

Jacob had had a rich experience of both, and was deeply affected therewith, and which made him humble before God.

"For with my staff I passed over this Jordan":

The river Jordan, near to which he now was, or at least had it in view, either with the eyes of his body, or his mind; this river he passed over when he went to Haran with his staff in his hand, and that only, which was either a shepherd's staff, or a travelling one, the latter most likely.

"And now I am become two bands":

Into which he had now divided his wives, children, servants, and cattle; this he mentions, to observe the great goodness of God to him, and the large increase he had made him, and how different his circumstances now were to what they were when he was upon this spot, or thereabout, twenty years ago.

The best thing to do when a person has this kind of problem is to call on God, and that was what Jacob did.

Jacob reminded God of his ancestry through Abraham and Isaac.

He thinks they might have more influence with God than he would.

Then he reminded God that it was He who told him to come back home.

Jacob humbled himself and reminded God that when he left his homeland, the only thing he had was a staff.

Now he had been so blessed, that he had two bands of people and all this wealth God had blessed him with.

He was not ungrateful.

Now we see the prayer Jacob prayed to God.

Genesis 32:11 "Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, [and] the mother with the children."

"Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau":

For though his brother, it was his brother Esau, that had formerly vowed revenge upon him, and had determined to kill him (Genesis 27:41).

He knew not but that he was still of the same mind; and now having an opportunity, and in his power to do it, being accompanied with four hundred men, he feared he would attempt it.

Therefore, entreats the LORD, who was greater than he, to deliver him from falling into his hands, and being destroyed by him.

"For I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children":

For whom Jacob seems to be more concerned than for himself.

The phrase denotes the utter destruction of his family, and also the cruelty and inhumanity that would be exercised therein; which shows what an opinion he had of his brother, and of his savage disposition.

Genesis 32:12 "And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude."

"And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good":

All kind of good, most certainly and constantly; so Jacob rightly interpreted the promise, "I will be with thee" (Genesis 31:3); for the promise of God's presence includes and secures all needful good to his people.

And from this general promise Jacob draws an argument for a special and particular good, the preservation of him and his family, he was now pleading for; and the rather he might hope to succeed, since the following promise was also made him.

"And make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude":

Which could not be fulfilled, if he and his family were cut off at once, as he feared; but God is faithful who has promised.

Jacob realized his only chance was with God's help.

He remembered that God spared him from Laban, and he knew God could do this, also.

Jacob was not only concerned for himself, but for his family as well.

God likes for us to remind Him of His Word.

Jacob reminded God of His promise to make his seed so innumerable as the sands of the sea.

Verses 13-21

The logistics of Jacob's careful appeasement strategy (550 animals Esau would prize), may highlight his ability to plan, but it highlights even more, given the goal statement at the end (verse 20).

His failure to pray and believe that God would change Esau's heart.

Genesis 32:13 "And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother;"

"And he lodged there that same night":

At Mahanaim, or some place near it.

"And took of that which came to his hand":

Not what came next to hand, for what he did was with great deliberation, judgment, and with much prudence.

Wherefore the phrase signifies what he was possessed of, or was in his power, as Jarchi rightly interprets it.

"A present for Esau his brother":

In order to pacify him, gain his good will, and avert his wrath and displeasure (see Prov. 18:16).

Though Jacob had prayed to God, committed himself and family to him, and left all with him, yet he thought it proper to make use of all prudential means and methods for his safety: God frequently works in and by means made use of.

Genesis 32:14 "Two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams,"

"Two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams":

And it seems this proportion of one he goat to ten she goats, and of one ram to ten ewes, is a proper one, and what has been so judged in other times and countries.

Genesis 32:15 "Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals."

"Thirty milch camels with their colts":

Milch camels were in great esteem in the eastern countries; their milk being, as Aristotle and Pliny say, the sweetest of all milk.

"Forty kine and ten bulls":

One bull to ten cows; the same proportion as in the goats and rams.

"Twenty she asses and ten foals":

And supposing thirty colts belonging to the camels; the present consisted of five hundred and eighty head of cattle: a large number to spare out of his flocks and herds, that he had acquired in six years' time; and showed a generous disposition as well as prudence, to part with so much in order to secure the rest.

Jacob had chosen a large gift of animals for his brother.

Perhaps, to soften him up before he got to the family.

You can see, just from this gift, how wealthy Jacob had become.

Genesis 32:16 "And he delivered [them] into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove."

"And he delivered them into the hand of his servants":

To present them to Esau as from him.

"Every drove by themselves":

There seems to have been three droves (see Genesis 32:19); very probably the two hundred and twenty goats, male and female, were in the first drove; and the two hundred and twenty sheep, ewes, and rams, were in the second drove.

And the thirty camels, with their colts, and the fifty cows and bulls, with the twenty she asses and ten foals, which made in all one hundred and forty, were in the third drove.

"And saith unto his servants, pass over before me":

Over the brook Jabbok (Gen. 32:22), a day's journey or less before him, as Jarchi observes, rather a night's journey, as seems by the context; for these were sent out at evening, and Jacob stayed behind all night, as appears by what follows:

"And put a space betwixt drove and drove":

His meaning is, that they should not follow each other closely; but that there should be a considerable distance between them, and which he would have them careful to keep.

His view in this was; partly to prolong time, Esau stopping, as he supposed he would, at each drove, and asking questions of the men.

And partly that he might the better and more distinctly observe the largeness of his present, and his generosity in it.

And so, both by the present, and by the frequent repetition of his submission to him as his servant, his wrath, if he came out in it, would be gradually abated, and before he came to him he would be in a disposition to receive him with some marks of affection and kindness, as he did.

Genesis 32:17 "And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose [art] thou? and whither goest thou? and whose [are] these before thee?"

"And he commanded the foremost":

He that had the care of the first drove, which consisted of goats, male and female.

"Saying, when Esau my brother meeteth thee":

As there was reason to believe that he would, his being on the road, and him first of all, as being the foremost.

"And asketh thee, saying, what art thou?"

That is, whose servant art thou?

To whom dost thou belong?

"What place art thou travelling to?"

"And whose are these before thee?"

Whose are these goats?

To whom do they belong thou art driving?

For in driving and travelling on the road, sheep and goats went before those that had the charge and care of them.

Whereas, in leading out to various pastures, the shepherds went before, and the flocks followed (see John 10:4).

Genesis 32:18 "Then thou shalt say, [They be] thy servant Jacob's; it [is] a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he [is] behind us."

"Then thou shalt say, they be thy servant Jacob's":

Both the goats before them, and they themselves that had the care of them, belonged to Jacob, who directed them to speak of him to Esau as his "servant".

"It is a present sent unto my lord Esau":

Which is the answer to the second question.

"And behold also he is behind us":

That is, Jacob: this they were bid to tell, lest he should think that Jacob was afraid of him, and was gone another way.

But that he was coming to pay a visit to him, and might expect shortly to see him, which would prepare his mind how to behave towards him.

Genesis 32:19 "And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him."

"And so commanded he the second and third":

Those who had the care of the second and third droves, he ordered them to say the same things, and in the same words as he had the first.

"And all that followed the droves":

Either all that were with the principal driver; that if any of them should happen to be interrogated first, they might know what to answer; or those that followed the other droves.

"Saying, on this manner shall you speak to Esau, when you find him":

That is, when they met him and perceived it was he that put questions to them.

Genesis 32:20 "And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob [is] behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me."

"And say ye moreover, behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us":

This is repeated to impress it upon their minds, that they might be careful of all things, not to forget that, it being a point of great importance; for the present would have signified nothing, if Jacob had not appeared in person.

Esau would have thought himself, at best, slighted; as if he was unworthy of a visit from him, and of conversation with him.

"For he said":

That is, Jacob, or "had said" in his heart, within himself, as might be supposed from the whole of his conduct.

For what follows are the words of Moses the historian, as Aben Ezra observes, and not of Jacob to his servants, nor of them to Esau.

"I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face":

He had hoped the present would produce the desired effect; so that it would turn away his wrath from him, and pacify him; and then he should be able to appear before him, and then see his face with pleasure.

Or, "I will expiate his face" as some render the words, or make him optimistic and favorable.

Or cover his face, as Aben Ezra interprets it, that is, cause him to hide his wrath and resentment, that it shall not appear; or cause his fury to cease.

Jarchi; remove his anger, wrath, and displeasure.

As Ben Melech; all which our version takes in, by rendering it, "appease him"; and then:

"Peradventure he will accept of me":

Receive him with marks of both tenderness and affection, and in a very honorable and respectable manner.

Genesis 32:21 "So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company."

"So went the present over before him":

Over the brook Jabbok, after mentioned, the night before Jacob did.

"And himself lodged that night in the company":

Or "in the camp", either in the place called Mahanaim, from the hosts or crowds of angels seen there; or rather in his own camp, his family and servants.

Or, as Aben Ezra distinguishes: In the camp with his servants, and not in his tent, lest his brother should come and smite him.

And so says Nachmanides (medieval Jewish scholar).

Notice, Jacob did not send the gifts, until after he had heard that Esau and four hundred men were coming toward him.

Jacob planned this scheme to soften up Esau.

He gave him one group at a time, rather than all at once, so that each gift would make Esau a little more tender hearted toward Jacob.

He felt that, perhaps, by the time Esau had received all these gifts, he would accept him.

Verses 22-32

This unique, nightlong wrestling match at Peniel ends with the 97 year old Jacob having a change of name (verse 28), and the place having a new name assigned to it (verse 30), in order to memorialize it for Jacob and later generations.

The limp with which he emerged from the match (see verses 25, 31), also served to memorialize this event.

Genesis 32:22 "And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok."

"And he rose up that night":

In the middle of it, for it was long before break of day, as appears from (Genesis 32:24).

"And took his two wives":

Rachel and Leah.

"And his two womenservants":

Bilhah and Zilpah, or, "his two concubines", as the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan; which distinguishes them from other womenservants or maidservants, of which, no doubt, he had many.

"And his eleven sons":

Together with Dinah his daughter, though not mentioned, being the only female child, and being a little one.

"And passed over the ford Jabbok":

Over that river, at a place of it where it was fordable, or where there was a ford or passage.

This was a river that took its rise from the mountains of Arabia, was the border of the Ammonites, washed the city Rabba, and ran between Philadelphia and Gerasa, and came into the river Jordan.

"Jabbok":

A stream 60 to 65 miles long, east of the Jordan River which flows into that river midway between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead sea (ca. 45 miles south of the Sea of Galilee).

Genesis 32:23 "And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had."

"And he took them, and sent them over the brook":

His wives and children, under the care of some of his servants.

"And sent over that he had":

All that belonged to him, his servants and his cattle or goods.

Jacob sent his family over the river, and he stayed behind alone.

He was afraid his brother was coming to destroy all of them.

Jabbok was half way up the Jordan River.

This Scripture does not say, but we may assume that he was crying out to God.

God was the only one that can help him now.

Verses 24-32

"And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day:"

The man is identified by some as the preincarnate Christ, and by others as an angel, a special messenger from God.

Some even cite (Hosea 12:4), to support both views!

The context seems to favor the angel being the preincarnate Christ (verse 30 and the phrase “for I have seen God face to face”).

If we assume the deity of the messenger, God allowed Himself to be overcome; and Jacob was crippled; his “thigh was out of joint.”

The blessing constituted the changing of his name from Jacob, “Heel Catcher,” “supplanter,” or Deceiver,” to “Israel,” meaning “May God Prevail [for him].”

Thus, he was now recognized as “Prince with God.”

Genesis 32:24 "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day."

“Wrestled a man”:

The site name, Peniel, or “face of God,” given by Jacob (verse 30), and the commentary given by Hosea (Hos. 12:4), identifies this man with whom Jacob wrestled as the Angel of the Lord who is also identified as God, a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ (see note on Exodus 3:2).

This was an interesting statement.

How can you be alone and wrestle with someone at the same time?

This man that Jacob wrestled with had to be a spirit.

We heard earlier that angels had met Jacob on the road.

It was certainly possible that they never left.

In fact, even now, Christians have angels who minister to them daily.

At any rate this man spoken of here, was either the Spirit of God, or perhaps an angel representing God to Jacob.

Genesis 32:25 "And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him."

"And when he saw that he prevailed not against him":

That he, the man, or the Son of God in the form of man, prevailed not against Jacob, by casting him to the ground, or causing him to desist and leave off wrestling with him.

Not because he could not, but because he would not, being willing to encourage the faith of Jacob against future trials and exercises.

And especially under his present one.

Besides, such were the promises that this divine Person knew were made to Jacob, and so strong was Jacob's faith at this time in pleading those promises in prayer to God, that he could not do otherwise, consistent with the purposes and promises of God, than suffer himself to be prevailed over by him.

"He touched the hollow of his thigh":

The hollow part of the thigh or the groin, or the hollow place in which the thigh bone moves, and is said to have the form of the hollow of a man's hand bent backwards.

"And the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him":

That is, the hip bone, or the thigh bone, was moved out of the hollow place in which it was.

This was done to let Jacob know that the person he wrestled with was superior to him, and could easily have overcome him, and obliged him to cease wrestling with him if he would.

And that the victory he got over him was not by his own strength, but by divine assistance, and by the sufferance of the one he wrestled with; so that he had nothing to boast of.

And this shows the truth and reality of this conflict.

That it was not visionary, but a real fact, as well as it teaches the weakness and infirmities of the saints, that attend them in their spiritual conflicts.

Have you ever been in prayer all night and wrestled with God?

Sometimes, when we need an answer to a prayer, we will keep on praying, just like Jacob did here, even unto the breaking of day.

The fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

When we pray in earnest without doubt, our prayers will be answered.

Jacob needed God desperately.

He felt that all was lost, Unless God intervened.

He just would not give up.

He had to have God's help.

This touch would affect the walk of Jacob.

Jacob would never be the same again.

Genesis 32:26 "And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

"And he said, let me go, for the day breaketh":

This was said that he might seem to be a man that was desirous of going about his business, as men do early in the morning.

Though the true reason perhaps was, that his form might not be more distinctly seen by Jacob, and much less by any other person.

"And he said, I will not let thee go except thou bless me":

For by his touching his thigh, and the effect of that, he perceived he was more than a man, even a divine Person, and therefore insisted upon being blessed by him.

Thus, faith in prayer lays hold on God, and will not let him go without leaving the blessing it is pleading for.

Which shows the great strength of faith, and the desired result of the prayer of faith with God (see Exodus 32:10).

Again, this was prayer that would not be stopped without an answer from God.

Genesis 32:27 "And he said unto him, What [is] thy name? And he said, Jacob."

"And he said unto him, what is thy name?"

Which question is put, not as being ignorant of it, but in order to take occasion from it, and the change of it, to show that he had granted his request, and had blessed him, and would yet more and more.

"And he said, Jacob":

The name given him at his birth and by which he had always been called, and therefore tells it him at once, not staying to ask the reason of the question.

Genesis 32:28 "And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."

"No more Jacob, but Israel":

Jacob's personal name changed from one meaning "heel-catcher" or "deceiver" to one meaning "God's fighter" or "he struggles with God" (35:10).

"With God and with men":

An amazing evaluation of what Jacob had accomplished, i.e., emerging victorious from the struggle.

In the record of his life, "struggle" did indeed dominate:

- (1) With his brother Esau (chapters 25-27);
- (2) With his father (chapter 27);
- (3) With his father-in-law (chapters 29-31);
- (4) With his wives (chapter 30); and;
- (5) With God at Peniel (verse 28).

"For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed":

This is given as a reason of his name Israel, which signifies a prince of God, or one who as a prince prevails with God.

Which confutes all other meanings of the name, as the upright one of God, the man that sees God, or any other.

He now prevailed with God in prayer, and by faith got the blessing, as he had prevailed before with Esau and Laban, and got the better of them, and so would again of the former.

Hence some render the word, "and shall prevail"; and indeed, this transaction was designed to fortify Jacob against the fear of his brother Esau.

And from whence he might reasonably conclude that if he had power with God, and prevailed to obtain what he desired of him, he would much more be able to prevail over his brother, and even over all that should rise up against him, and oppose him.

And this may not only be prophetic of what should hereafter be fulfilled in the person of Jacob, but in his posterity in future times, who should prevail over their enemies, and enjoy all good things by the favor of God.

For it may be rendered, "thou hast behaved like a prince with God, and with men", or, "over men thou shalt prevail".

These Scriptures convince me, even though I cannot prove it, that this "man" he wrestled with, was the Spirit of the Lord.

Only God can pronounce blessings.

Only God can change our name to suit the job He has ordained us for.

He will no longer be a trickster, but father of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jacob's tenacity, or hanging on to God in the face of all odds, had won him favor with God.

All believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are spiritual Israel (God's fighters).

We also, will be princes and princesses, when we reign with the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Genesis 32:29 "And Jacob asked [him], and said, Tell [me], I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore [is] it [that] thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there."

"And Jacob asked him, and said, tell me, I pray thee, thy name":

Being asked his own name, and told it, and having another given him more significant and expressive, he is emboldened to ask the person that wrestled with him what was his name (Exodus 3:13).

For Jacob knew that he was God, as appears by his earnest desire to be blessed by him; and he knew it by the declaration just made, that he had power with God as a prince.

But he hoped to have some name, taken by him from the place or circumstance of things in which he was, whereby he might the better remember this affair; as he was pleased to call himself the God of Beth-el, from his appearance to Jacob there (Genesis 31:13).

Therefore, since he did not choose to give him his name, Jacob himself imposed one on the place afterwards, as a memorial of God being seen by him there.

"And he said, wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?"

Which is both a reproof of his curiosity, and a denial of his request; signifying that he had no need to put that question, it was more than enough for him that he had got the blessing, and which he confirms.

"And he blessed him there":

In the same place, as the Vulgate Latin version, where he had been wrestling with him, as he was taking his leave of him; for this was a farewell blessing, and a confirmation of that he had received, through the name of Israel being given him.

Genesis 32:30 "And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

"And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel":

In (Genesis 32:31), Peniel, which signifies the face of God, or God hath looked upon me, or hath had respect to me: there was afterwards a city built here, which was called by the same name (see Judges 8:8).

It is said to be four miles from Mahanaim; the reason of it follows:

"For I have seen God face to face":

It may be observed, that in wrestling, men are face to face, and in this position were Jacob and the man that wrestled with him; which he seems to have respect unto, as well as to the familiarity and intimate communion he was admitted to.

"And my life is preserved":

Though he had wrestled with one so vastly superior to himself, who could have easily crushed this worm Jacob to pieces, as he is sometimes called; and though he had had such a sight of God as face to face, referring as is thought, to a notion that obtained early, even among good men, that upon sight of God a man instantly died.

Though we have no example of that kind: but perhaps he observed this for his encouragement.

That whereas he had met with God himself, and wrestled with him in the form of a man, and yet was preserved.

He doubted not that, when he should meet with his brother and debate matters with him, he should be safe and unhurt.

"Penile" (see note on verse 24).

No one can look upon the face of God the Father and live.

This truly was an appearance of God.

I say again, probably, the Lord, God the Word, or some form of His Spirit.

The second one of the Trinity is the doer of God.

I believe this struggle was a prayer struggle, and Jacob prayed through and reached God.

Many times, we will find in the Scriptures that God changed the name of those who were chosen by Him to do a specific job, as God changed Abram to Abraham.

The name would correspond with the job.

"Peniel" means face of God.

Genesis 32:31 "And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh."

"And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him":

It was break of day when the angel desired to be let go, and by that time the parley held between them ceased, and they parted.

The sun was rising; and as Jacob went on it shone upon him, as a token of the good will and favor of God to him, and as an emblem of the sun of righteousness arising on him with healing in his wings (Mal. 4:2).

"And he halted upon his thigh":

It being out of joint, of which he became more sensible when he came to walk upon it.

Besides, his attention to the angel that was with him caused him not so much to perceive it until he had departed from him.

The thing that stands out in this to me is that, the darkest hour is just before dawn.

This was the case here, with Jacob.

Just as God allowed Paul to have a thorn in his flesh to keep him humble, this limp of Jacob's would remind him of this encounter with God.

He would realize without God, there was no victory.

Genesis 32:32 "Therefore the children of Israel eat not [of] the sinew which shrank, which [is] upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank."

"Eat not of the sinew ... hollow of the thigh":

Which was contracted by the touch of the angel, and by which it had been weakened and benumbed; or the sinew of the part that was out of joint, the sinew or tendon that keeps the thigh bone in the socket.

This might refer to the sciatic muscle or tendon.

The observation that up to Moses' time ("to this day"), the nation of Israel did not eat this part of a hindquarter intrigues because it bears no mention elsewhere in the Old Testament, nor is it enshrined in the Mosaic Law.

It does find mention in the Jewish Talmud as a sacred law.

This abstaining from eating the sinew is a reminder, even now, to Jacob's descendants of his encounter with God.

Genesis Chapter 32 Questions

1. Who met Jacob?
2. When Jacob saw them, what did he call them?
3. What did Jacob name this place?
4. What means double camp?
5. Who did Jacob send messengers ahead to?
6. What country was this place in?
7. What message did Jacob send?
8. What helps anger to subside?
9. What did Jacob call Esau?
10. What did Jacob ask Esau to do?
11. What does grace mean?
12. What frightened Jacob about Esau coming?
13. Why did Jacob separate into two companies?
14. What did Jacob feel Esau was coming for?
15. When Jacob was so afraid, what two names did he call God?
16. What had God told Jacob to do?
17. What was the only thing Jacob had when he went to work for Laban?
18. How did Jacob's prayer begin?
19. Who, besides himself, was Jacob concerned about?
20. How does God feel about us reminding Him of his Word?
21. Where were the gifts Jacob sent Esau?

22. Why did he send them?
23. When Esau asked them, what were they to say about the animals?
24. When did Jacob send the gifts?
25. Who did Jacob send over the ford Jabbok?
26. Who did Jacob wrestle with?
27. Who did this actually have to be?
28. What happened to Jacob, when this being did not prevail?
29. What type of prayers brings answers?
30. When will Jacob be willing to stop?
31. What did this being ask Jacob?
32. What was Jacob's name changed to?
33. Why?
34. Who do I believe this is?
35. What does "Israel" mean?
36. When Jesus takes over power as King of the earth, who will the Christians be?
37. What does "Peniel" mean?
38. Which one of the Trinity is the doer God?
39. When is it the darkest?
40. What would remind Jacob of his encounter with God?