

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

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

Jacob continued on his journey as well. Then we are told that "the angels of God" met him, and he saw them and evidently recognized them for whom they were. Jacob then identified the place he met them as "Mahanaim," which means two camps—I assume for the camp of God's host and his own camp. We are not told anything of what was said between Jacob and the angels or what the purpose of the meeting was. The main point to me here is that he recognized the angels "of God."

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

Gen. 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:

Gen. 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.

Next thing we are told is that Jacob sends messengers to his brother Esau to tell him he is coming home with all his possessions after spending the last years of his life with their Uncle Laban and wants to meet him as a friend (with favor).

Gen. 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.

Gen. 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;

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

Evidently Esau didn't say much since when the messengers returned, they only knew that Esau was coming to meet him—with 400 of his men! This puts fear into Jacob, so he decides to divide his camp into two groups. That way if one group is attacked, maybe the other group could get away.

It's interesting again to note Jacob's obedience and response to the Lord when he tells him to go home. God has proven his protection and blessing for the past twenty years. He told Jacob that He would take him home safely. But the first thing Jacob does is respond with fear and take action to see what **he** can do to protect his people—**then** he decides to seek God in prayer. It just seems like if I could talk with God personally/visibly like some of these OT saints had the privilege of doing and could recognize angels in my presence, that living a consistently victorious life would be a lot easier—but I know I am no better than they. Satan still likes to plant doubts in my mind, but I am thankful that I can recognize God's work in my life and the lives of my family and that I really am learning to **rest** in my faith after forty years.

Gen. 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:

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

Gen. 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.

Gen. 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.

Jacob prays and reminds God that He was the one who told Jacob to go home, and He would make him prosper, enough that he could form two large encampments. Jacob does recognize that he is unworthy of the Lord's blessings in his life. Then he asks for God's protection from Esau based on His promise to make Jacob's descendants like the sand of the sea.

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

Gen. 32:14 Two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams,

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

Gen. 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.

Gen. 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?

Gen. 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.

Gen. 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.

Gen. 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.

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

The next morning Jacob prepares a gift for Esau. He chooses 200 female goats, 20 male goats, 200 ewes, 20 rams, 30 female camels with their young, 40 cows and 10 bulls, 20 female and 10 male donkeys. He puts each group into herds (goats, ewes/rams, camels, cows/bulls, and donkeys). Then he sends them ahead with servants with instructions to keep space between the herds. When they meet Esau, they are to identify themselves as servants of Jacob and the animals as gifts from "thy servant Jacob." Then they are to say that Jacob is coming behind them.

Obviously, Jacob is trying to buy his brother's love and forgiveness. Seems like that is still a huge misconception today—that you can buy love! I truly think that

the only way you can earn love is by showing love (giving unselfishly of yourself for another's benefit). Satan doesn't really have any new tricks does he?

Gen. 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.

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

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

Gen. 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.

Gen. 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.

Gen. 32:27 And he said unto him, What *is* thy name? And he said, Jacob.

Gen. 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.

Gen. 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.

After sending his gifts ahead, Jacob spends the night in the camp. First, his two wives, two maidservants, and eleven sons were taken across the ford of Jabbok away from the camp. He also sent all his possessions with them. Then Jacob is left alone. Then, as far as we are concerned, out of nowhere a man appears who wrestles with Jacob until daybreak. Jacob refuses to let him go without a blessing. The man asks Jacob his name, and he tells him it is Jacob. Then the man tells him his name is now Israel because he had "power with God **and** with men, and hast prevailed." (I just realized that this is a big clue that he was wrestling with Jesus before He came to earth as the Savior, since He is both God and man.) Jacob asks the man his name, but he is answered with a question and is then blessed by the man. God is always more interested in the fact that we learn the lessons He wants to teach us than whether we understand how or why He chose to teach us a lesson in a particular way.

Israel means "he struggles with God." That is even more interesting as you think about the nation of Israel. As a nation, Israel has continually struggled with God throughout history—but in the end they will overcome once they recognize the Messiah in the tribulation to come.

(1/06) I was reading *Can Man Live Without God*, by Ravi Zacharias, and had to include the enlightenment I received on this section of scripture.

"...The scriptures tell us that Jacob wrestled with God throughout the night, crying out 'I will not let you go except you bless me.' It was the cry of a desperate man, not knowing what ominous fate awaited him the next day.

God responded with an extraordinary challenge to Jacob: 'What is your name?' This is an incredible question from an omniscient being! Why would God ask Jacob for his name? Think of all that God could have said

by way of reprimand. Instead, He merely asks for Jacob's name. God's purpose in raising this question contains a lesson for all of us, too profound to ignore. In fact, it dramatically altered Old Testament history. In asking for the blessing from God, Jacob was compelled by God's question to relive the last time he had stolen from his brother.

The last time Jacob was asked for his name, the question had come from his earthly father. Jacob had lied on that occasion and said, 'I am Esau,' and stole the blessing. Now he found himself, after many wasted years of running through life looking over his shoulder, before an all-knowing, all-seeing Heavenly Father, once more seeking a blessing. Jacob fully understood the reason and the indictment behind God's question, and he answered, 'My name is Jacob.'

'You have spoken the truth,' God said, 'and you know very well what your name signifies. You have been a duplicitous man, deceiving everyone everywhere you went. But now that you acknowledge the real you I can change you, and I will make a great nation out of you.'

Greatness in the eyes of God is always preceded by humility before Him...."

Ravi has obviously read into the scriptures beyond the specific details of the conversation that were given, but I believe his insight is from the Spirit. It certainly spoke to my heart.

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

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

Gen. 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.

In verse 30 Jacob seems to recognize that he has confronted God "face to face." This whole story raises many questions to me:

- 1) The man appears without explanation.
- 2) Why would Jacob wrestle him to begin with unless he felt he was defending himself?
- 3) How could they physically endure a night-long struggle?
- 4) Why would Jacob expect a blessing from a man who attacked him?
- 5) Did he ask the man's name to confirm his suspicion?
- 6) Why did God struggle with him to begin with?
- 7) Why did He allow Jacob to overcome?

My thoughts – Maybe this story is here to help the Israelites and us understand that God wants us to be overcomers in whatever struggles He places or allows in our lives. Most of the time these struggles/adversities in our lives seem to appear out of nowhere.

Sometimes I know I have been fighting for my spiritual life, and I think I watched Jason in a struggle for his spiritual life as well. Many times these times

of struggle seem to last forever and you wonder if there is ever going to be a light at the end of the tunnel. If we recognize that God is sovereign in our lives and that nothing can touch us without His permission, then we can be confident of blessing as a result of the “refining fire” or struggle. I know sometimes in my life I’ve debated whether a time of testing was from God or Satan. I know now that they are all through God’s sovereign control in my life and are only allowed by Him for my ultimate blessing and His glory.

Jacob was left with a permanent limp. I think this reminds us that God was in control all along. He could have ended the struggle at any point He chose. Instead, He allowed Jacob a victory he did not deserve – mercy – to strengthen his faith. Jacob was singled out by God’s choice for this special encounter. Though my life won’t have the same impact nationwide, I know I was chosen to be at this point in time as a small part of God’s whole plan. When I concentrate on how special that is, I get a renewed spirit of determination to live victoriously and not dwell on where I have stumbled and fallen along the way.