

# GENESIS 32

## Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau

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### KEYWORD

God (Plural)  
God (Singular)  
LORD  
GOD  
Lord  
lord  
El Olam  
Bara  
Asah  
Beth  
Numbers

### REVERANCE

Elohim (The Trinity)  
El  
Jehovah & or Yahweh (YHWH)  
Jehovah & or Yahweh  
GOD the Master (Kurios), Adonai  
Man the Master  
Everlasting God  
God creating from nothing  
God making or assembling from existent materials  
House

- 1 - Unity between God the Father & His Son Jesus (John 10:30)
- 2 - Represents union, division, and verification
- 3 - Harmony, New Life & completeness (467 times)
- 4 - Creation & The creative ability of God.
- 5 - God's grace, goodness and favor toward humans (318)
- 6 - Imperfection of man and the sin and weakness he has
- 7 - Perfection
- 8 - New beginnings
- 9 - Divine completeness or conveys the meaning of finality (49)
- 10 - God's authority, completeness, order, and divine perfection
- 11 - Disorder, chaos and judgment (11 - 24 & "11th" - 19)
- 12 - God's power and authority (187)
- 13 - Rebellion
- 40 - Represent completeness or wholeness.
- 70 - Perfect spiritual order carried out with all power.

### Keywords

“create” (bara), “make” (asah), and “form” (yatsar). In Isaiah 43:7 – All the three are used.

*Jehova means the becoming one as God relates to man and man's needs and becomes to man whatever man may need*

### PRAYER

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**Father we thank you for the privilege of studying your word together.**

Thank you for the records Jesus, that lead us to you and eternal life in you.

**Jesus let your Holy spirit now implant upon our hearts your truths.**

Thank you Jesus that revelation knowledge will flow freely, uninterrupted & un-hindered by satanic or demonic forces.

**In Jesus's name and everybody say Amen!**

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# GENESIS 32

## REVIEW

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Jacob resolved his conflict with Laban and now returns to the land of Canaan where he again faces another unresolved conflict.

He must pass near the region where his twin brother Esau lives to return home.

After being met by some angels of God and declaring that place "God's camp," Jacob began working a strategy to know if he can make peace with Esau.

Twenty years have passed since Jacob cheated Esau out of the family blessing when he pretended to be Esau, fooling their blind father, Isaac.

Esau became murderous in response and when their mother Rebekah learned of Esau's plan to kill Jacob, he had literally run for his life to Laban's household in Paddan-Aram in Genesis 28:1-5.

Now returning to his homeland, Jacob could not know if Esau had forgiven him and so he began sending messengers to Esau to let him know he is back in the land, that he is wealthy, and that he hopes to find favor in Esau's sight.

He called Esau lord and himself Esau's servant in verses 1-5.

When Jacob's servant returned from Esau, he brought no message other than that Esau is coming with 400 men.

Jacob couldn't know but only presume that Esau was coming to attack him.

He grew greatly distressed and fearful—so terrified that he planned to potentially lose half of his own people.

Jacob's first response was to divide everything in his large company into two camps.

If Esau attacks one group, perhaps the other half of the company can survive.

Though Jacob seemed to plan for the worst possible outcome, he prayed with great faith and humility and addressed the God of Abraham and Isaac and reminded God—and himself—that he is in this position because of God.

He obeyed God's command to return, and trusting His promise to do good for Jacob.

Jacob acknowledged that God had shown his love and faithfulness far beyond what Jacob deserved.

Jacob then clearly expressed his fear of Esau and asked God to deliver him, reminding God once more of His promise to make of Jacob a great nation in verses 9-12.

Next, Jacob prepared an enormous gift, sent ahead to his brother Esau, in hopes of appeasing his presumed anger.

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## GENESIS 32

The gift included five herds of animals: goats, sheep, camels, cows, and donkeys, some 550 animals in all.

They are to reach Esau, one herd after the other, each with a message to "my lord Esau" that his "servant Jacob" presents these gifts and follows behind in verses 13–20.

Having sent the gift on its way, Jacob rose in the night and packed up his family and all he owns, and crossed over the Jabbok River, only to return alone to the other side.

There he is unexpectedly—and without any biblical explanation—engaged in a wrestling match, in the dark, with a mysterious stranger.

Jacob and this unknown assailant appeared to be evenly matched in this physical combat, which continued nearly to dawn.

Finally, the mysterious man attained a major advantage over Jacob, dislocating Jacob's hip in verses 21–25.

Jacob, somehow realizing he has been wrestling God Himself, or perhaps an angel, refused to release his combatant without a blessing.

In a deeply symbolic moment, the man insisted that Jacob—infamous for his deception and trickery identify himself.

Jacob did so, honestly, seeming to admit not only his true self but his position of weakness.

In response, the man, now revealed to be God, changed Jacob's name to *Israel*.

Israel means "God fights."

The man said that Jacob had fought with God and with men, and had prevailed in verses 26–30.

The man blessed Jacob and Jacob renamed the place Peniel, meaning "face of God."

Jacob declared he has seen God's face and been allowed to live.

As the sun rises, he limps away to rejoin his family and meet his brother in verses 31–32.

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*That's it, The Summary of Genesis 32*

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# GENESIS 32

## GEN 32: 1

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And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.

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It is interesting that after the tension and the battle, the angels of God were there to meet him and to minister to him.

This is Jacob's second encounter with angels.

The first time, he received a vision from the Lord in a dream of angels going up and down a ladder or staircase with the Lord Himself at the top in Genesis 28:12-13.

This time, however, Jacob is apparently wide awake.

After Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, the angels came and ministered to Him.

This wonderful revelation of God's presence and care came *after* Jacob finally separated from Laban, the worldly man.

Separation from the world brings greater insight to the believer.

Our Mahanaims occur at much the same time as that in which Jacob beheld this great sight.

Jacob was entering upon a more separated life.

He was leaving Laban and the school of all those tricks of bargaining and bartering which belong to the ungodly world.

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## GEN 32: 2

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

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The word Mahanaim means the place of two hosts.

Mahanaim is referenced several times later in Israel's history.

It was one of the cities of the Levites in Joshua 13:26 and, later, became the seat of Ish-bosheth's reign over northern Israel in 2 Samuel 2:8-9.

The name and remains are still preserved in a place called Mahneh.

David also sought safety there when Absalom was after him in 2 Samuel 17:24.

Now it was not as if God's angels just joined Jacob...

No they were with him the entire time.

Jacob could now *see* God's angels with him and it provided great encouragement.

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## GENESIS 32

Angels, though “higher” beings than us, are ordained by God to be our servants in Hebrews 1:14 and they serve God’s people even as they served Jesus in Matthew 4:11.

In 2 Kings 6:15-17, Elisha’s servant had his eyes opened to see the tremendous angelic host surrounding them.

I read this story in Billy Graham’s book *the Angels, God’s Secret Agents*, page 3 that:

John Paton, a missionary to the New Hebrides Islands, told of how one night hostile natives surrounded his mission’s headquarters, intent on driving the Patons out of their home and killing them.

He and his wife prayed through the entire night, and when daylight finally came, their attackers were gone.

A year later, the chief of the tribe became a Christian, and Paton asked the man about that night.

The chief replied, *“Who were all those men you had with you there?”*

The missionary explained only he and his wife were there.

The chief insisted he had seen hundreds of big men with shining garments and swords circling the mission headquarters, so the natives were afraid to attack.

That night in the New Hebrides Islands, there certainly was a “double camp,” a group of angels to help and serve the missionary family.

Spurgeon thought about the great multitude of angels that God has available for His people’s help:

It may be that every star is a world, thronged with the servants of God, who are willing and ready to dart like flames of fire upon Jehovah’s errands of love.

If the Lord’s chosen could not be sufficiently protected by the forces available in one world, he has but to speak or will, and myriads of spirits from the far-off regions of space would come thronging forward to guard the children of their king.

Now I do not ask that you desire to see angels, but if you see one, well and good.

However God’s presence is better than the sight of the best of his creatures.

Perhaps the Lord favored Jacob with the sight of angels because he was such a poor, weak creature as to his faith.

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### GEN 32: 3-4

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

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## GENESIS 32

(Twenty years have passed since Jacob deceived his father Isaac and stole the family blessing from Esau in Genesis 27:30–35.

Before that, Jacob had also manipulated Esau into selling his birthright in Genesis 25:29–34.

The reason Jacob left home in the first place is because his mother Rebekah had learned that Esau planned to kill Jacob in Genesis 27:41–45.

Did Esau still want Jacob dead?

Jacob had no way of knowing.

Their parting was certainly on poor terms, and nothing had happened in the meantime to suggest the brothers have been in contact.

Before traveling through the vicinity, Jacob sent messengers to make contact with Esau where he lives in Edom as a show of good faith.

Jacob also began by humbling himself and beginning his message with “**your servant Jacob.**”)

<sup>4</sup>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.

(In a show of good faith, Jacob sent messengers to Esau before moving through the land.

He told his messengers to tell Esau that he has been living with Laban, in Haran, for the last 20 years since he left home.

Jacob's message pointedly referred to his brother as "my lord Esau" and referred to himself as Esau's servant.

This indicates Jacob's deference, respect and, likely, his great fear of his brother.

This does not imply that Jacob mistakes his actual authority: though he was the younger, he held the birthright and the blessing.

In addition, two separate prophecies declared that Esau would serve Jacob in Genesis 25:23 and Genesis 27:40.

Jacob, though, would not risk claiming authority over his brother for the moment.

A person can be right, and still suffer the consequences of acting foolishly, especially if the other person's mind is set on revenge.)

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GEN 32: 5

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## GENESIS 32

And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and women-servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight.

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Jacob wasn't boasting.

Instead he tried to anticipate his brother's thinking and to answer Esau's concerns.

He just wanted Esau to know that he was a man of wealth and that he did not come to take anything from him or get his inheritance or get his share of what belonged to his father, Isaac but that he comes home to make his peace with him.

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### GEN 32: 6

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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.

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It doesn't sound like the kind of welcoming party that Jacob is looking forward to.

Possibly, Esau had heard that Jacob was coming back and had rounded up these four hundred men; because, it was in his mind to kill his brother.

He, perhaps, was seeking to fulfill the vow he had made.

He had planned to wait until his father, Isaac, had died; but, here was a chance to get Jacob when he was still out of the land and Isaac would never know.

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### GEN 32: 7

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Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; **(the Hebrew phrasing in this verse implies he is terrified.)** and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands,

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Before Jacob left home, after his brother swore to kill him, Rebekah told Jacob in Genesis 27:45

*Until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send and bring you from there.*

Rebekah never sent for Jacob; therefore, he had every reason to believe that Esau was still angry with him 20 years later.

But Jacob also had every reason to believe God would protect him.

He seems to have forgotten God had a special camp of angels there to protect him.

His great fear and distress was not appropriate for someone under God's protection.

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## GENESIS 32

- Jacob's fear was wrong, because it followed after a great deliverance.
- Jacob's fear was wrong, because he had just had a remarkable divine visitation.
- Jacob's fear was wrong, because it probably arose out of a remembrance of his old sins.

Jacob could have said,

*"I don't know if Esau is coming to me in peace or in war. I hope for peace, but if it is war, I trust God will protect me."*

Remember when Laban confronted Jacob with a hostile militia, Jacob boldly stood up to him and spoke his mind in Genesis 31:36-42; yet unfortunately he's afraid to meet Esau.

This was because Jacob knew he was in the right with Laban, but he knew he was in the wrong with Esau.

Shakespeare was right when he wrote, *"Conscience does make cowards of us all,"*.

As Jacob had no strength before Esau because of guilt, many Christians today are also hindered by memory of their past sins and failings.

So basically the pile of stones was behind him, so he couldn't cross over them and go back; but, Esau was in front of him.

So, he divided the people and the animals into two bands, instead of one large group.

In splitting his company, Jacob used human wisdom and schemes to prepare for Esau's coming.

He should have trusted that God could protect all he had.

Jacob has already forgotten about God's two camps in verse 2 and tried to make his *own two companies*.

In one of Spurgeon's quote he said:

*"Jacob is the type of a believer who has too much planning and scheming about him; he is a wise man according to the judgment of the world..."*

*Abraham never descended to any of the tricks by which Jacob sought to increase his flocks; he lived, like a princely man, in simple, childlike confidence in God, willing to be injured rather than to seek his own interests."*

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### GEN 32: 8

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

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## GENESIS 32

He planned to form, sort of a holding company.

The ones in the front group might be able to hold Esau and his men while the second group got away.

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### GEN 32: 9-10

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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;

*(After first reacting in fear and unbelief, Jacob did the right thing.*

*He went to the LORD and prayed a good prayer, humble, full of faith, full of thanksgiving and God's Word.*

*Ironically you would say that Jacob's fear was good because it led him*

- *To prayer*
- *To take a review of his life and*
- *To seek out a suitable promise from God.*

*Take note that Jacob's prayer had God's word (what God said in Genesis 31:3).*

*He also quoted God's promises,*

*"I will surely treat you well" (remembering God words in Genesis 28:13-15).*

*Many of our prayers fall short, because there is none of God's Word within them.*

*Often there is none of God's Word in them, because there is little of God's Word in us.*

*Jacob remembered what the LORD had said to him.*

*He said to God, for You said.)*

<sup>10</sup>*I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies,*

*(Jacob's prayer had humility and thanksgiving.*

*Jacob understood he was not worthy of what God did for him or what he asked God to do, but he relied on what God promised and not upon his own worthiness.)*

*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.*

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Jacob was reminded of the purpose of his flight at the beginning of his journey.

He had fled because Esau had made a threat to kill him.

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## GENESIS 32

He didn't take anything with him except a walking stick and the last time that he crossed the Jordan, his only possession was this staff.

Now, he is remembering the mercies and goodness of God and that he has blessed him with wives, children, servants, and a multitude of flocks and Jacob is overwhelmed with it all.

Take note that before asking for God's help, Jacob gave thanks for the enormous good God had already done for him.

That's a good pattern for us to follow, as well.

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### GEN 32: 11

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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. (This was an expression descriptive of a total annihilation from which no one would escape. It is equivalent to our statement today of no survivors.)

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"God, I am afraid, deliver me from my brother."

I love the honesty of Jacob with God.

I think when we come to God, we need to be totally honest.

Sometimes, on our part, there is a foolish endeavor to con God with our prayers and to make ourselves look a little better than we really are.

God knows our heart.

George Mueller, a great man of faith and prayer, was once asked what was the most important part of prayer. He answered:

"The 15 minutes after I have said, Amen."

No matter how great Jacob's prayer was, his faith would be seen in what he did *after* his prayer.

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### GEN 32: 12

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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.

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Jacob is reminding God of His promise and if he is killed, how can this promise come true?

It's wonderful to pray on the basis of God's promises and we should pray this way and hold God to His word.

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## GENESIS 32

It helps to strengthen you, when you know God has promised the very thing you are praying for.

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### GEN 32: 13

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

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After Jacob prayed and laid out the whole situation to God, recognizing that he was afraid in that he didn't have the strength or the manpower to battle with Esau and his four hundred men, he turns around and starts to scheme on his own.

We are so much like Jacob, God help us!

We put it in God's hands and then we start to scheme and plot on our own.

This was one of Jacob's problems and became a tremendous weakness with him.

Our greatest natural strength becomes a spiritual barrier and a problem to our spiritual development.

The fact that Jacob was able, by his cunning, to get by and to do so many things; he took advantage of his brother, Esau, and bought the birthright.

By his cleverness, he disguised himself as Esau and got the blessing from Isaac and he outwitted Laban and got the strong herds.

Now, he puts it all in God's hands and then immediately reverts back to his old scheming ways and seeks to appease Esau.

Unfortunately what Jacob didn't know was that Esau had long ago forgiven him and had probably longed to see him.

Josephus preserved the tradition that,

*"When Esau received the messengers from Jacob, he was very glad."*

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### GEN 32: 14-15

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

(Now does Jacob's strategy—splitting his people and lavishing gifts on Esau—show a lack of faith?

Does he not fully trust God's ability to protect him?

Perhaps, and this would be a common modern response: that Jacob needed to do nothing more than "have faith."

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On the other hand, Jacob's actions are not entirely foolish—in fact, they are sensible—and his attitude is one of fear, but not despair.

It would be fair to say Jacob is doing what he can to avoid a tragedy and relying on God to secure the results.

Another possibility is that Jacob truly felt guilt for stealing the blessing from Esau 20 years earlier.

That would make the sending of gifts a sincere attempt at making restitution.)

<sup>15</sup>Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals.

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Livestock was the large-scale currency of ancient times.

Living animals provided a renewable source of milk, meat, labor, and fertilizer, transportation, and clothing.

The size of this gift to Esau tells us that Jacob had become enormously wealthy and that this wasn't meant to be a mere token of kindness to Esau.

Jacob was giving his brother a significant portion of his own wealth.

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### GEN 32: 16-20

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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.

(Jacob seems to be a good example of the principle: *“When all else fails, pray.”* 😊)

As soon as he finished praying, he took up his own strategies again.

So Jacob's strategy included sending these animals out with servants to meet Esau before Esau's party of 400 men reached him.

Specifically, his servants were to deliver the herds to Esau one at a time, in five distinct groupings of goats, sheep, camels, cows, and donkeys.

Jacob tells them to keep some space between each herd as they went toward Esau and his men.

This, again, shows Jacob's mastery of manipulation. 😊

Each additional gift would magnify how magnificent these presents are.)

<sup>17</sup>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?

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## GENESIS 32

(Jacob anticipated the moment when each group will reach Esau and his men.

He knew Esau would ask the servant what is going on:

- Whose man are you?
- Where are you going with this herd?
- Who are these coming behind you?

In the following verses, Jacob provided his servants with very specific answers to these questions.

His goal was to emphasize, in no uncertain terms, his attempt to reconcile with his brother.)

<sup>18</sup>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.

(This gift is a good example of the way we trust in our ability to do things and make things happen apart from trusting God.

Reminds me of a popular traditional Christian song that says:

- ♪ *All to Jesus, I surrender, all to Him I freely give;*
- ♪ *I will ever love and trust Him, in His presence daily live.*
- ♪ *I surrender all, I surrender all,*
- ♪ *All to Thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender all.*

But we, so often like Jacob mean,

*"I surrender all the goats. If that isn't enough, I will surrender all the sheep. If that isn't enough, I will surrender all the camels..."*

To this point, what Jacob refused to do was to surrender *himself*, truly trusting in God's promise of protection.)

<sup>19</sup>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.

(Jacob clearly hoped to impress and overwhelm Esau with his generosity and make it increasingly difficult for Esau to want to kill him.)

<sup>20</sup>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.

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## GENESIS 32

Jacob knew that he is in a life threatening situation and wanted to appease his brother with these gifts.

He spaced them all out so that Esau's wrath might be appeased when he sees all of these animals. Cleverness!

Scheming his way out of a situation that he had already turned over to God.

God wants to work in Jacob's life. He has chosen Jacob to be one of the patriarchs, the father of the twelve tribes of Israel.

God has chosen that the Messiah would, one day, come from Jacob and one of the tribes.

Jacob has been chosen by God for special privileges, but, he is still not usable; so, God has a problem. Jacob is not fully surrendered to God.

God can't do all he desires to do for you until your life is completely surrendered to Him.

As long as you can get by with your wit, your cunning and your devices; God is apt to let you go, but He will put the squeeze on you.

God put the squeeze on Jacob when Laban came, but he put up the stones and made a non-aggression pact with Laban and got out of it.

Now the word has come that Esau is coming and the squeeze is on and so he prays; but, he turns right back to his scheming again.

He hasn't fully surrendered his life and so, God can not do the full work He is wanting to do in Jacob's life.

It takes complete surrender and so God has to deal further with him.

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### **GEN 32: 21-23**

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So went the present over before him; and himself lodged that night in the company. <sup>22</sup>And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two women-servants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok.

(Jabbok is a stream that's part of the borders of the Promised Land that flows west into the Jordan, entering it about halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea.

Today the Jabbok is known as the Zerka.

The name Jabbok means wrestler, a name evidently given to it later in commemoration of Jacob's experience that night.

Now Jacob a rose in the night gathered his family of two wives, two servant wives, and 11 children and crossed the ford of the nearby Jabbok River.)

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## GENESIS 32

<sup>23</sup>And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.

(Jacob sending his family over the brook was a demonstration of his faith, because he left himself no retreat.

If Esau wanted to attack his group, they would quickly be backed up against the river.

So he spent the night alone.

This was his last night on the east side of the Jordan River, and he probably spent the night in prayer.

God had to get Jacob alone before He dealt with him.

While all the activity of the huge entourage surrounded Jacob, he could busy himself with a thousand different tasks.

Once he was alone, God commanded his attention.

Think of all Jacob had to pray about:

- Thanking God, remembering all that the LORD did for him, wondering how God would fulfill His work in him.

This was a significant turning point in Jacob's life and he knew it.)

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### GEN 32: 24a

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And Jacob was left alone;

(I believe that Jacob wanted to get a good night's rest and so he sent his wives, children and servants over to the other side.)

and there wrestled a man with him

(As the following verses show, this was no mere man.

This is another special appearance of Jesus in the Old Testament before His incarnation in Bethlehem. This was God in human form.)

until the breaking of the day.

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Of all of the things that you don't need the night before a major confrontation, is a wrestling match all night long.

When you want to be alert, sharp and at your best and instead you are worn down by a wrestling match.

Many times we find ourselves wrestling with God over a situation.

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## GENESIS 32

God is dealing with us on issues and we wrestle with Him, not wanting to surrender.

God was wrestling with Jacob to bring him to the place of surrender so that He can do all that He wants to do through this man, but Jacob is a tough nut.

How did Jacob manage to keep up his struggle throughout the entire night?

I do not know. But I do know that his determination to hang in there was no greater than our frequent determination to have our own way and eventually win out over God.

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### GEN 32: 25

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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.

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There is some controversy over the use of the phrase "could not" or "was not able" when it comes to God's contest here with Jacob.

Some object to the idea that God "can't" out-grapple a human being.

However, the language used is relatively clear.

The phrase *lō yā'kōl* is also used in verses such as Genesis 13:6, Exodus 40:35, and 1 Kings 5:3, where it means "was unable."

Key to this misunderstanding is the context of intent.

Those who instruct students in the martial arts deliberately hold back when sparring.

That is, they restrict their techniques and limit their force.

This allows the student to continue competing, rather than being quickly and pointlessly defeated.

In the case of a more skilled student, the instructor is "unable" to defeat that opponent using a limited approach.

At that point, if they choose to, the instructor can stop holding back and end the fight.

Which, in fact, seems to be exactly what this mysterious opponent chose to do with Jacob, delivering a sudden and crippling attack.

Some assume that the man's "touch" of Jacob implied a miraculous act.

However, grappling techniques often involve wrenching or dislocating the joints.

It's entirely feasible for Jacob's opponent to have simply maneuvered him in the right way to deliver a devastating injury, one which could have permanently affected Jacob's ability to walk.

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# GENESIS 32

## GEN 32: 26

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And He said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

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A lot of times it is difficult to understand the full truth of the story by reading words on a page.

Words on a page do not give you tonal inflection.

I think that because we don't hear the tonal inflections, we, oftentimes, misinterpret scripture.

In the Garden of Eden when God said to Adam, "...Where art thou?"

We often hear that as the words of an arresting officer ready to do him in.

I think if we had heard the voice in the garden we would have heard the sob of a heart broken father.

We need to hear the tone of voice.

Fortunately when Hosea makes commentary on this he gives us the tone of voice.

Hosea says in chapter twelve, verse four,

*"Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him..."*

So, Jacob was not demanding from a place of strength, but he was crying out from a place of weakness.

He was now defeated.

Jacob's plan was to run if all failed, but now God has put an end to that plan.

He has put his hip out of socket and there is no way that Jacob can run.

God has brought Jacob to the place of total surrender as he weeps and prays for God's blessing.

It is interesting that when Jacob asks the LORD for a blessing the LORD responds by asking Jacob what his name is.

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## GEN 32: 27-28

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And He said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

**(This simple question and answer represented a colossal moment in human history, and a defining example for understanding Christian theology.)**

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## GENESIS 32

- Jacob was a man with a reputation for deception and lies.
- Even his name suggested deception: *Ya'aqōb* meaning "heel-grabber."
- Jacob was waiting & planning to see how his reunion with Esau will go the next day.

All of these emphasizes the level of conflict, struggle, and scheming present in Jacob's life.

After grappling for some time, the stranger suddenly took advantage in the fight by dislocating Jacob's hip.

At this point, Jacob seemed to realize he has been wrestling with a physical manifestation of God Himself, or possibly some kind of angel.

Though seriously injured, Jacob not only refused to submit, he demanded the man bless him before he will release his grip.

In a brilliant, pointed moment of crisis, the man asked a question striking right at the heart of Jacob's past, his personality, and his need:

*What is your name?*

Jacob demanded a blessing, something he once stole by lying about his identity in Genesis 27:19.

In this instant, Jacob could either continue to be a liar, and a deceiver, or he can be honest about who he really was.

Jacob was given an opportunity to confess, and thank God "the heel puller", "the usurper" admitted the truth.

As a result, God gave him a new name, and a new identity, as the father of God's chosen people.

The symbolism of this event is critical to Christian understanding of sin and salvation.

Despite Jacob's lies and schemes, and all of his struggling against God, he couldn't be truly blessed until he recognized his own disadvantage and admitted who he really was.

In response, God granted Jacob a new name, symbolically making him into a "new man" with a renewed purpose.)

<sup>28</sup>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.

The blessing is that, no longer will you be Jacob or "heelcatcher," but you will be Israel or "ruled by God."

You will no longer be a self-sufficient, self-made man, but you will be a man ruled by God.

What a blessing when your life is ruled by God.

## GENESIS 32

This is exactly what Jacob needed and the blessing was obtained by his surrender to God.

God had to cripple him in order to crown him.

The Bible says, *“Woe unto him who strives with his maker.”*

Why? Because God desires only the best for you and when you wrestle with Him, you are actually fighting against your own good.

God wants to show you His mercy and His love, but you’re fighting against it when you run from Him and wrestle against Him.

- So, Jacob is crippled and is now defeated.
- He surrenders and he weeps and prays for a blessing.
- The blessing is a change of character.

The name expressed his character.

“Supplanter” very well expressed the character of this sly and cunning guy, Jacob.

That’s exactly what he was, but now there is going to be a change of character and what a blessing that change was.

God wants to change your character from a carnal man to a spiritual man; from a life governed by the flesh to one governed by the Spirit.

That’s God’s intention for you.

Does God have to cripple you to do it?

I hope not! I hope that we will not be so foolish as to wrestle with God until He has to bring us into full submission to Him.

If God has to use that measure, one day we might say with Paul in II Cor. 12:9,

*“...Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”*

The day came when Jacob rejoiced in the crippling, because of the work; the power of God was manifested in his life when he came to the place of surrender to God.

Verse twenty-eight is often misinterpreted because they do not hear the tone of Jacob’s pleading voice.

They think that Jacob prevailed with God because of his tenacity, but he prevailed with God by his surrender.

The LORD is open to the cry of His children.

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## GENESIS 32

Often, the time we prevail with Him is when we pray and weep and come to the end of ourselves.

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### GEN 32: 29

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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.

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In other words, what difference does it make what my name is.

I believe and am convinced that Jacob was wrestling with Jesus Christ and that this is one of the theophanies, the appearances of Jesus in the Old Testament times.

A theophany is the appearance of God in the form of man. No man has ever seen God, but Jesus has made Him known to us.

The fullness of the Godhead bodily dwells in Jesus.

When the Old Testament speaks of seeing God, they have seen God in the form and in the person of Jesus Christ.

And thus Jacob was blessed of being defeated by God.

It was the blessing of the passing of the old (**Jacob**) life, and the coming of a new (**Israel**) life.

It may also have had to do with the great idea of the blessing of Abraham, and meeting Jacob's immediate needs for security in the midst of fear.

Whatever Jacob needed, God's blessing provided at the moment.

We note that **He blessed him there** – at that particular place.

- The place of special trial and testing.
  - The place of intense pleading to God.
  - The place of seeing the face of God.
  - The place of conscious weakness.
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### GEN 32: 30

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

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## GENESIS 32

Jacob named the place **Peniel** (*Face of God*), because he *did* know the name of the *Man* who wrestled with him.

He was the same One who wrestled with Jacob all his life.

Jacob also understood it was only by God's grace and mercy he escaped from this episode with his life.

No man should be allowed to wrestle with God and live, but God was gracious.

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### GEN 32: 31

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*And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.*

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Jacob, now leaves this place where he has seen God and wrestled with Him.

As he goes over the Jabbok towards his family, he is limping because of his hip.

You can hear Rachel and Leah say, as they are running to meet him,

"Jacob, Jacob, what is wrong?"

And he says,

"Don't call me Jacob, call me Israel. I am a new man, I have met God.

I've surrendered to Him; so, call me governed by God."

Verse thirty-two brings up one of Israel's customs, even to the present day.

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### GEN 32: 32

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*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.*

---

It would indicate that the crippling was permanent.

Now, just to peek ahead a little, let's look at verse four of chapter thirty-three.

It says,

*"And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept."*

I don't think this would have been the end of the story if Jacob had not surrendered to God; but, having surrendered God worked out the details of the whole thing.

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# GENESIS 32

By the time the confrontation came, there was no confrontation; only embracing and weeping.

Oh, how God can change our situation if we'll only surrender to Him.

BTW: The custom of not eating this specific part of an animal's body is still followed by many Jewish people.

The law of Moses does not forbid this eating of the sinew of the thigh on the hip socket.

However, it is many Jewish persons' way of recognizing this crucial moment in Israel's identity and acknowledging the God who fights for them.

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## **THE LESSONS WE LEARN FROM THIS STUDY ARE:**

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1. Don't get caught up speculating and miss the most important information God is sharing with us.
  2. If you are like me, you probably have a lot of questions about this mysterious wrestling match between God and Jacob.
  3. Why did God want to wrestle? Why was Jacob winning? Why did the wrestling match need to end when the sun rose?
  4. All of these are fair questions and worth thinking about, but don't miss the key details that are easily understood from this text.
  5. God blessed Jacob by changing his name to Israel. This is hugely important because it explains how Jacob's descendance, who we will read about through the rest of the Old Testament, became known as the Israelites.
  6. It's not wrong to think about the mysteries of the Bible, but don't spend all your time thinking about the details we aren't given to the neglect of the details we are given.
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We will start from Chapter 33 next week ...

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## **IF YOU HAVEN'T RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR PERSONAL SAVIOUR, I WANT YOU TO PRAY THIS PRAYER WITH ME RIGHT NOW**

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- Heavenly Father, I realize that I'm a sinner
  - But right now I repent of my sins
  - I make you my Lord
  - I receive the free gift of forgiveness of sin
-

# GENESIS 32

- I need you, Jesus
- Be my savior
- So right now I declare by faith that I am saved in Jesus' name. Amen & Praise God

If you just prayed that prayer with me online, please let us know through our website and we shall send you a free eBook as a gift to you today.

Otherwise, welcome to the family of God. Amen!

## LET'S STANDUP FOR THE FINAL BLESSING

Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us:

- Be with you, bless you and keep you
- May the Lord cause his face to shine upon you and give you peace
- May your heart be filled with his love
- May you walk in the spirit
- May you be strengthened by the work of his Holy spirit in your inner man
- May you be increased in knowledge and understanding of His word, His will and His purposes for your life that you might walk before the Lord in a way that's pleasing unto him
- And may God increase your faith and your trust
- May he work in your life in a beautiful way as he nurtures you and as he leads you into that path of fellowship with him self
- May your life be enriched in all things in Christ Jesus
- And May the Lord and his blessings be upon you while we are absent from each other until we are brought back together again to continue our fellowship and our growing together in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ
- Amen