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*God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.*

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## Genesis 32.

(2016)

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The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

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## Genesis 32

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### Topics.

- Jacob sees angels of God and called it God's camp and named it Mahanaim.
- Jacob sends messengers with gifts to Esau in order to win his favour.
- Jacob hears Esau is coming with four hundred men and greatly fears.
- Jacob prays, God will deliver him from Esau, that he would not attack him.
- Jacob sends his brother Esau a great number of livestock for a present.
- Jacob sends his servants with extra presents hoping it will appease Esau.
- Jacob takes his wives, his family and everything he had across the stream.
- A man wrestles with Jacob and puts his hip socket out of joint.
- Jacob strove with God and prevailed and his name is changed to Israel.
- Jacob says, "I have seen God face to face, and my life has been delivered."

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

**The previous chapter:** in chapter thirty-one the LORD told Jacob to return to his homeland; Jacob increased in livestock by breeding speckled and spotted animals; Rachel stole her father's gods; God in a dream tells Laban not to harm Jacob; Jacob told Laban whoever stole his household gods will not live and Jacob and Laban made a covenant of peace. The chapter ended with Laban kissing his grandchildren and his daughters farewell and then returning home.

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### Jacob sees Angels of God and called it God's Camp and Named it Mahanaim.

Genesis 32:1-2 ----- <sup>1</sup>Jacob went on his way, and the angels (*Heb. mal'ak*) of God met him. <sup>2</sup>And when Jacob saw them he said, "This is God's camp!" (This is God's host in KJV) So he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

The statement, "Jacob went on his way," refers to Jacob leaving Laban with his two wives Rachel and Leah, their two servants Bilhah and Zilpah and their eleven children and his multitude of livestock. (Gen. 31:51-55) and travelling to Jacob's homeland in the land of Canaan.

He now begins his journey through the country that was to be the heritage of his offspring. The following verses of this chapter show that he was anxious and fearful that Esau would seek to take his revenge upon him as he had planned to do some twenty years ago.

- These twenty years I (Jacob) have been in your (Laban's) house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock. (Gen. 31:41).
- Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob." (Gen. 27:41).

For this reason, it was very timely that sometime after leaving Laban and journeying toward the land of Canaan angels of God should met him.

**Angels:** in this verse comes from the Hebrew word (*mal'ak*) it literally means to dispatch or send as a deputy or a messenger especially of God. It can refer to an angel of God, a prophet, a priest, a teacher, an ambassador, a king and a messenger.

It is interesting to notice that the word messengers in verse three and six comes from this same Hebrew word (*mal'ak*).

Amongst commentators there are various speculations concerning the manifestation of these angels and how they were seen by Jacob, following are the five most common: -

1. They were prophets sent by God to encourage him on his journey.
2. They were a caravan of messengers sent by God to encourage him and give him information concerning his elder brother Esau's presence in Seir.
3. They were a company angels appearing in a dream that he sees to assure him of protection against his brother, much like he saw angels on the road to Padan-aram in a dream ascending and descending on a ladder from heaven to earth to assure him of God's watchful care over him (Gen. 28:12).
4. They were a company (or host) of angels on earth camped as it were beside or around his own camp that he saw in a vision in his mind or as an outward hologram which only he saw that encouraged him and assured him of God's protection as he (about twenty years later) enters the Land of Canaan again in similar circumstances of danger.
5. They were a company of literal angels that appeared to Jacob in human form or some visible and glorious form, as they frequently appeared to the patriarchs of the Old Testament that had invisibly been with him all along, but now visibly appear to encourage him because of the great fear he had for the safety of his family.

In the King James Bible Jacob calls them God's host (v1) and the following verses show that angels are ministering spirits sent forth by God to minister to His people, the heirs of salvation as Jacob was: -

- The angel of the LORD camps around those who fear him, and delivers them (Ps. 34:7).
- The LORD will command his angels concerning you to guard and keep you in all your ways. (Psalm 91:11)
- Angels are all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation? (Heb. 1:14).

Whichever of the above five applies Jacob recognized them as a host of God's angels and whether they were literally visible to the physical eyes of the body or unseen by the natural eyes, but made visible by the eye of faith they were visible to Jacob to testify of the continued presence and protection of God and as such he calls the name of the place of their appearing Mahanaim (v2).

**Mahanaim:** comes from the Hebrew word (*machaneh*), it literally means double camp (i.e., two camps) and can refer to a camp of travelers or of troops or army of soldiers and their tents and figuratively to a host, camp or army of angels. It is also a place in Palestine.

In the context of these verses it refers to the following two camps: -

1. The small and earthly camp of tents that fearful Jacob and his defenceless servants and helpless women and children set up and rested in.
2. The heavenly and spiritual camp of the angels of God's presence surrounding Jacob, his servants and his family acting as a wall of protection between him and those who might wish him harm.

### **Jacob sends Messengers with Gifts to Esau in Order to Win His Favour.**

Genesis 32:3-5 ----- <sup>3</sup>And Jacob sent messengers (*Heb. mal'ak*) before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom, <sup>4</sup>instructing them, "Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: Thus says your servant Jacob, 'I have sojourned with Laban and stayed until now. <sup>5</sup>I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, male servants, and female servants. I have sent to tell my lord, in order that I may find favor in your sight."

To understand Jacob's fear of Esau it needs to be mention that at least twenty years ago Rebekah Jacob's mother enticed him to dress as Esau for the purpose of deceiving her frail and dying husband Isaac into giving Jacob the promised blessing of Abraham instead of Esau. When Esau discovered Jacob's cunning trickery he hated him with such vengeance that he planned to kill him immediately after Isaac had been buried. (Gen. 27:41).

Rebekah hearing of Esau's threat to murder her son told Jacob to flee to her brother Laban in Haran until Esau forgets what Jacob had done to him and his fury is turned away. (Gen. 27:41-45). Now at least twenty years later Jacob is about to meet his older brother Esau. The twenty years is made up from the two lots of seven years Jacob worked for the hand of Rachel in marriage and the extra six years he worked breeding speckled and spotted livestock to provide for his family.

- Twenty years I (Jacob) have been in your (Laban's) house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock. (Gen. 31:41).

This is why Jacob is preparing to send messengers to tell his older brother Esau what he has been doing for the last twenty years and with a present of oxen, donkeys, flocks and servants so that he might win Esau's favour.

**NOTICE:** the word messengers here and in verse six comes from the same Hebrew word (*mal'ak*) that the word angels in verse one comes from.

### **Jacob Hears Esau is coming with Four Hundred Men and Greatly Fears.**

Genesis 32:6-8 ----- <sup>6</sup>And the messengers (*Heb. mal'ak*) returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and there are four hundred men with him." <sup>7</sup>Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. He divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two camps, <sup>8</sup>thinking, "If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, then the camp that is left will escape."

Jacobs fear of his brother Esau, would not only stem from the fact he had by cunning trickery and deception robbed him of the blessing, but also the fact that as they grew up together as boys Esau was a skillful hunter of the fields, while Jacob was a quiet man happy to occupy himself around the tents of the camp. It is certain now after twenty years that Esau is a highly skillful warrior.

- When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. (Gen. 25:27).

#### **NOTE.**

It should be mentioned, that Jacob's wrongdoing was not in taking the blessing of the firstborn since God had promised him the blessing and Esau had long before sold it to him for a pot of red stew, if he is to be blamed for any wrongdoing it would be in the way he went about obtaining it.

- The LORD said to her (Rebekah), "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger." (Gen. 25:23).
- Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.) <sup>31</sup>Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now." <sup>32</sup>Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" <sup>33</sup>Jacob said, "Swear to me now."

So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. <sup>34</sup>Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright. (Gen. 25:29-34).

**NOTICE:** the word messengers in verse six and in verse three comes from the same Hebrew word (*mal'ak*) that the word angels in verse one comes from.

Jacob's messengers tell him that his brother Esau is coming toward him with four hundred men, Jacob hearing this is struck with great fear for the safety of his family. He reasons that if Esau is coming with hostile intentions his best alternative is to divide his camp into two different groups in the hope if one group was attacked the other group could escape.

**Jacob Prays, God will Deliver Him from Esau, that He Would Not Attack Him.**

Genesis 32:9-12 ----- <sup>9</sup>And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,' <sup>10</sup>I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps (two bands in KJV). <sup>11</sup>Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children. <sup>12</sup>But you said, 'I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'"

This is the first recorded prayer in the Bible, though it is short it is a good pattern for prayer since it embraces all that is needed as the following shows: -

- Even though Jacob had amazing and various manifestations of angels appear to him He directs the prayer not to angels, but to the God of his father Abraham and of Isaac (v9). He clearly understood that angels were not to be worshipped (Rev. 22:9) and that it was not to them that prayer should be directed, but to God who would then send the angels out according to His will to act as ministering spirits to serve those who are to inherit salvation (Heb. 1:14).
- He prays with a thankful heart for the undeserved favours he had received.
- He draws God's attention to His promise that He would do him good (v9).
- He humbly confesses that he is not worthy of God's steadfast love, faithfulness and favour that He had already shown him (v10).
- He communicates to God his past difficulties and his present troubles and fears (v10).
- He asks God to deliver him from his present troubles and difficulties (v11).
- He again reminds God of His promise to do him good (v12).

Jacob is not driven to such earnest heartfelt prayer solely for himself, but because he loves his wives (the mothers of his eleven children and daughter Dinah) and cares about his servants with him. His statement, "The LORD told him to return to his country and to his kindred (v9) refers to the following verse: -

- The LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you." (Gen. 31:3)

And God's promise that He would make Jacobs offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude (v12) refers to the following verse: -

- The LORD stood above it (the ladder reaching from earth to heaven) and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you (Jacob) lie I will give to you and to your offspring. <sup>14</sup>Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be

blessed. <sup>15</sup>Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." (Gen. 28:13-15).

Jacobs humble cry, "I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love," (v10) not only refers to God's promise that He would greatly multiply his offspring and give to them the land of Canaan, but also to the promise that He would be forever with him to protect and keep him. Jacob being fully aware that there was nothing within him that would allow him to claim righteousness before God, based upon his own merits falls before the LORD confessing that he is not worthy of even the least of God's mercies or deserving of His favour.

However, even though Jacob would have been aware of his own sinful aberrations and dysfunctions that dwell within human nature, it would be safe to suppose that as he was praying this prayer he was also recalling the way in which he deceived his dying father into giving him the blessing of the firstborn and the threat of his brother Esau to kill him for doing such a thing.

**With only my staff I crossed this Jordan:** (v10) when Jacob's mother Rebekah told Jacob to flee from his home for fear his brother Esau would kill him, he left as a feeble and fearful traveller with practically nothing except his staff, most likely believing that he would return home sometime soon.

However as is common to all mankind, what we think to do, is often hindered by unforeseen circumstances. The circumstance Jacob could never have foreseen was the cunning way in which Laban had Jacob take Leah as his wife, instead of Rachel and that he required him to work fourteen years for Rachel and to gain provisions and goods for his household he needed to work an extra six years.

This means that he had not seen his family for at least twenty years, which it would be safe to suppose was a far longer period of time than he would have at first expected when his mother Rebekah told him to flee to her brother Laban in Haran for safety, until it was safe for him to return.

- These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock. (Gen. 31:41).

When Jacob fled from Esau and from his home he had no wives, no children, no servants and no sheep or cattle and now he has wives, children, servants and a multitude of cattle and sheep.

**With only my staff I crossed this Jordan:** (v10) Jacob is either near the river Jordan or standing upon a high hill looking at it or pondering it in his mind. He is reflecting back to when he fled from his home and crossed the river without any wives, children, servants, cattle and sheep to go to his mother's brother Laban in Haran. Now on his return trip he is about to cross it again with wives, children, servants and a multitude of livestock to go into the land that the LORD had promised him.

**Now I have become two camps:** (v10) (bands in KJV) in contrast to being one united happy family and company of people Jacob, because of the fear of Esau had now divided his wives, children, servants, and cattle into two different groups.

**Jacob Sends His Brother Esau a Great Number of Livestock for a Present.**

Genesis 32:13-16 ---- <sup>13</sup>So he stayed there that night, and from what he had with him he took a present for his brother Esau, <sup>14</sup>two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, <sup>15</sup>thirty milking camels and their calves, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. <sup>16</sup>These he handed over to his servants (*Heb. `ebed*), every drove by itself, and said to his servants, "Pass on ahead of me and put a space between drove and drove."

From the livestock Jacob had gained during the six years (Gen. 31:41) that he worked and breed speckled and spotted animals he took for a present to give to Esau the following number of animals: -

- 200 female goats and 20 male goats.
- 200 ewes and 20 rams.
- 30 milking camels and their calves and 40 cows and 10 bulls.
- 20 female donkeys and 10 male donkeys.

This vast number of animals that Jacob has taken from his main stock shines a light upon the following three things: -

1. How greatly Jacob feared Esau.
2. How abundantly God had blessed Jacob during the six years he breed speckled and spotted livestock.
3. Why Jacob felt unworthy of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that God had shown him (v10).

It appears that Jacob sent these animals in separate groups of their own kind in the following order: -

- The first group of servants would take the 200 female goats and 20 male goats.
- The second group of servants would take the 200 ewes and 20 rams.
- The third group of servants would take the 30 milking camels and their calves and the 40 cows and the 10 bulls.
- The final group of servants would take the 20 female donkeys and 10 male donkeys.

Jacob most likely reasoned that by sending the present in this way it would have a greater impact upon Esau and by placing some distance between each group of servants and their animals give a longer period of time for Esau's anger (should he have any) to dissipate, before he saw Jacob and his family being the last to appear.

#### **Jacob sends His Servants with Extra Presents Hoping it will Appease Esau.**

Genesis 32:17-20 ----- <sup>17</sup>He instructed the first, "When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, 'To whom do you belong? Where are you going? And whose are these ahead of you?' <sup>18</sup>then you shall say, 'They belong to your servant (*Heb. `ebed*) Jacob. They are a present sent to my lord Esau. And moreover, he is behind us.' <sup>19</sup>He likewise instructed the second and the third and all who followed the droves, 'You shall say the same thing to Esau when you find him, <sup>20</sup>and you shall say, 'Moreover, your servant Jacob is behind us.' " For he thought, "I may appease him with the present that goes ahead of me, and afterward I shall see his face. Perhaps he will accept me."

Jacob instructs the leader and speaker of each group of servants and all those with them to say exactly the same thing when they are approached by Esau and he asks anyone of them, "Who do these animals belong to, where are they going and who is it that is following them." (v17) Whoever is asked these questions is to reply saying, "They belong to their servant Jacob and are a present sent to his master Esau who is following behind them." Jacob's hope is that by the time he comes before Esau his anger will be dispelled and he will accept him rather than be hostile toward him. Notice, Jacob humbles himself before Esau by referring to himself as his servant and exalts Esau as his lord (i.e., master).

#### **Jacob takes His Wives, His Family and Everything He had Across the Stream.**

Genesis 32:21-23 ----- <sup>21</sup>So the present passed on ahead of him, and he himself stayed that night in the camp. <sup>22</sup>The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. <sup>23</sup>He took them and sent them across the stream (brook in KJV), and everything else that he had.

**Jabbok:** (v22) comes from the Hebrew word (*Yabboq*) it literally means pouring forth and refers to a river East of the Jordan.

**Stream (brook in KJV):** (v23) comes from the Hebrew word (*nachal*) it literally means a stream, though it can refer to a river, a winter torrent; a narrow brook that runs through a valley and to the shaft of a mine.

It is a river that flows through the Valley of the Arnon (Deut. 3:16) (Num. 21:24) that is sometimes crossed with difficulty; but in summer it is very shallow. It is very likely that it is referred to here as a brook or stream, because at this time it was flowing more like a stream than a river and was easily crossed.

That night refers to the night Jacob organized his servants to take Esau a present, after organizing them he sends the first, second and third servants with his present of animals ahead of him. He himself (no doubt with other servants) stays in the camp that night to help to move his two wives, their servants Bilah and Zilpah, his eleven children (and Dinah) and everything else he had across the stream of Jabbok and to show them what order they were to march in as they walked toward Esau and to teach them what to say and how to behave when they meet him.

In the following chapter we are told that Jacob had organised them to walk toward Esau in the following three separate groups with some distance between each group:

1. The first group to approach Esau was Bilhah and Zilpah and their children.
2. The second group to approach Esau was Leah and her children.
3. The last group to approach Esau was Rachel and her son Joseph.

He arranged his family according to their preciousness in his eyes and walks himself in front of them all. Each group bows before Esau and in this manner humbled themselves before him and exalt and esteemed him above themselves. Though Jacob had the rights and promise of the first-born, they nevertheless all gave Esau the honour of the firstborn. (Gen. 33:6-7).

**Dinah:** though Jacob at this time had twelve children the Scripture says, "He took his eleven children and crossed the Jabbok river," (v22) Dinah, Jacob's only female child is not mentioned (as women are often omitted in Scripture) however it is naturally supposed that she was with them and was embraced in the number of the men.

The primary focus of the entire Old Testament is the twelve sons of Jacob (Benjamin is born later) (Gen. 35:16-18) and the tribes that descend from them, this is also why Dinah would be missing from the list since Scripture primarily focuses upon the main characters of the bigger picture of the story.

### **A Man Wrestles with Jacob and puts His Hip Socket out of Joint.**

Genesis 32:24-26 ---- <sup>24</sup>And Jacob was left alone. And a man (*'iysh*) wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. <sup>25</sup>When he saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. <sup>26</sup>Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

After organizing his family and moving them across the stream of Jabbok, it seems Jacob returned to the other side of the river to find some quiet place where he could be alone to pray and express his fears and pray for the safety of his family before the LORD and for his mercy and protection.

The word man in this verse (v24) comes from the Hebrew word (*'iysh*) it literally means to be existing and refers to a man as an individual, a male person and to a great and mighty man or champion. Amongst commentators there are various ideas who this man that wrestled with Jacob was, the most common three are, an angel, Jesus and God since there are reasons for all three we will look at each one separately: -



1. **An angel:** based upon the following words of Hosea, Jacob strove with the angel and prevailed; he wept and sought his favor (Hosea 12:4) many believe that this man was actually a supernatural angel appearing in bodily form as a human man and having the substance of a man as they often appeared to the faithful in the Old Testament.

For further information of men appearing as angels, see the title: -

- Angels can be Human Messengers, in Angels (ON WEBSITE MENU)

2. **The Lord Jesus Christ:** (also called by many the angel of the covenant) those who hold to the teaching that Jesus is also the LORD God the Almighty Himself, believe that the man was Jesus they use Hosea's words, "Jacob in his manhood strove with God," (v3) and the fact that Jacob would not pray and make supplication to a created creature as the angels were to support their reasoning.

Due to their belief that Jesus is actually God the Father who became God the Son in human form they naturally reason that this angel was the Son of God in human form. The problem with this scenario is that it forces the reader to believe Jesus the son of God is actually God the father, yet there is not one verse in the entire Bible that expressly states that Jesus is God, nor do the apostles and Jesus himself teach that he is God.

**Words of comfort and encouragement:** since the teaching that Jesus is God has such a strong hold on much of traditional Christianity the following will encourage and comfort faithful brothers and sisters in Christ who maybe in some doubt and unsure of what to believe concerning the Father and the Son. The Bible very clearly shows that even if Jesus was God no one has to know this to be saved to eternal life since there is not one verse in the entire Bible that states: -

- We must believe that Jesus is God to be saved.

Nor is there one verse from Genesis to Revelations that says: -

- Whoever believes that Jesus is God will be saved.

In total contrast to this silence there are literally multitudes of Scriptures throughout the pages of the New Testament that very clearly proclaim: -

- We must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved.

And that say: -

- Whoever believes that Jesus is the Son of God will be saved.

Surely if it was important to believe that Jesus was actually God to be saved to eternal life Jesus, the apostles and Paul would have told us at least once in all their teaching concerning salvation, but all we hear from Paul, the apostles and Jesus himself is them saying that we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved to eternal life. Jesus himself said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

For further information, see the title: Trinity (The Doctrine of the Trinity).

In Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

- 3 **The LORD God:** based upon Hosea's words, "In his manhood Jacob strove with God," (v3) and the fact that a few verses further down Jacob himself when referring this man that he wrestled with says, "I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered," (v30) clearly showing that Jacob viewed this man as a manifestation of God's omnipresent Spirit appearing in the form of a man.

**Face to Face:** it perhaps should be mentioned here that the expression, "I have seen God face to face," does not mean that he literally saw God's face, but that he had a very intimate encounter with Him. It is much like a romantic couple writing to each other or communicating online or over the phone who overtime come to know each other so well they are able to say, it is as though I have seen them face to face.

- The LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. (Exod.33:11).
- The LORD spoke with Moses face to face at the mountain, out of the midst of the fire. (Deut. 5:4).
- There has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. (Deut. 34:10).
- Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the LORD. And Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face." (Judges 6:22).

**The Angel of the LORD:** in Exodus chapter three (in the King James Bible), the angel of the LORD is given the following titles: the angel of the LORD, the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob and God (v6). The LORD the I AM THAT I AM and the LORD God of the Hebrews.

**This angel acts as** God's agent on earth and amongst mankind; speaks in a human language that people understand; appears very awesome when appearing as a man and when he appeared before men, they often did not know it was the angel of the LORD.

**The name of this angel:** is wonderful and fire does not harm him; he is not bound by our laws of physics and laws of science in any way and he often speaks as though he is the LORD God and acts for Him.

**The angel of the LORD can be seen as:** God's presence, God's voice and God's power. He is God appearing to man in a form that will not destroy him. Should God appear to any descendant of Adam (which we all are) in His fullness and Holiness His presence would destroy them. This is why God always appears surrounded in dark clouds, fire or as some form of spiritual angelic being such as the Angel of the LORD.

It is certain that the invisible, Immortal Eternal Almighty Holy God of creation, the source of all life and Omnipotent God the Eternal Spirit is able to take on various spiritual angelic manifestations as he did to Moses in the burning bush (Exod. 3:2), to Hagar as she fled to Egypt (Gen. 16:7-9) and to others to reveal to them His eternal plans that He purposed in His eternal mind before the foundations of the world for mankind's salvation on earth and His plans and purposes for their lives.

For further information, see the title: -

- Angel of the LORD in, Angels (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Based upon these facts we are on safe ground to suppose that the man Jacob wrestled with was the Angel of the LORD acting for God and appearing in human form.

**Until the breaking of the day:** (v24) during this same night Jacob moved his wives, children, servants, and cattle and all that he had in his camp to the opposite side of the river Jabbok to prepare them for meeting Esau, so how long this wrestling lasted we cannot know.

**His hip socket was put out of joint:** (v25) this refers to the socket into which the end of the thigh bone sits. If this bone is thrown out of joint the whole body is utterly disabled, for this reason the thigh was seen as the strength of a man. Ponder for a moment, Jacob has prayed that God would protect him and his family from Esau and in response to this prayer God dislocates Jacob hip which means should Esau be hostile Jacob has absolutely no hope of winning a battle against him.

It seems that now, after Jacob has taken so many things into his own hands God is now about to teach him that he must stop living in fear and relying on his own cunning and reasoning and trust God and His promise that He would bring him home safely as he promised in the following verse: -

- The LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you." (Gen. 31:3).

**Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him:** (v25) some believe this entire story was a vision of the imagination of Jacob's mind that God gave him, much like the vision of the angels ascending and descending on the ladder that stood between heaven and earth (Gen. 28:12).

Others feel it is an allegory (parable or symbolic story), but these two ideas are ruled out by the circumstances of the story and especially by the change of Jacob's name to Israel, and his following lameness to which the national tradition of the people of Israel not to eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket, because God touched the socket of Jacob's hip on the sinew of the thigh (v32) testifies even to the day of writing this.

This wrestling was real and physical, mental and spiritual, it embraced a physical wrestling, a wrestling of faith and an earnest inward tear-filled prayerful wrestling (Hosea 12:4) and had Jacob not been on his own it would most likely have also been a visible wrestling to those watching on.

**Jacob Strove with God and Prevailed and His Name is changed to Israel.**

Genesis 32:27-29 ---- <sup>27</sup>And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." <sup>28</sup>Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." <sup>29</sup>Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him.

**You have striven with God and prevailed:** (v28) there is no doubt that God could have overcome Jacob with a simple breath, but instead chose to wrestle with him, perhaps to test his strength and determination to hold fast to his faith. Jacob clearly passed this test.

Even after his hip had been dislocated he would not let go of this wrestler despite the agony and pain he would have been feeling he kept his ground during the struggle until he had blessed him (v26). Jacob proved once again that he valued and treasured God's blessing above all other things, he would rather suffer his bone being put out of joint than go away without the blessing of the LORD.

**You have striven with man and prevailed:** (v28) means that Jacob had overcome the many afflictions and oppositions of men and all the hardships Laban had placed upon him.

**Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel:** (v28) the name Jacob comes from the Hebrew word (*Ya'aqob*) and (*ʿaqab*) it literally means, heel-catcher and carries the idea of supplanting (i.e. to displace, unseat, supersede and usurp). In contrast to this the name Israel comes from the Hebrew word (*Yisra'el*) and (*ʿel*), it literally means he will rule as God and carries the idea of prevailing and having strength and power as a prince.

By changing Jacob's name to Israel God gave him a permanent mark of honour, from this time onward he would be remembered not for his cunning deception and skilful management, but celebrated as a true and faithful servant of God. What greater name could God bestow upon a child of Adam than, "a prince with God."

**NOTE:** unlike Abram whose name was forever changed to Abraham and is never again spoken of as Abram, Jacob from here on is sometimes referred to as Jacob and at other times as Israel, depending upon the context of the story being spoken of. In most cases it will be found when the focus of the story is upon the flesh, backsliding or worldliness concerning the nation of Israel the name Jacob is used, whereas should the focus of the context be heavenly and godliness the writer will use the name Israel.

**Jacob says, "I have seen God Face to Face, and My Life has been Delivered."**

Genesis 32:30-32 ----- <sup>30</sup>So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered." <sup>31</sup>The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip. <sup>32</sup>Therefore to this day the people of Israel do not eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip on the sinew of the thigh.

Jacob called the place where he wrestled with God and prevailed, "Peniel," it comes from the Hebrew word (*P<sup>e</sup>nuw'el*) and literally means, "the face of God," and by implication carries the idea of God looking upon a person and having respect to them. Clearly a very apt name since Jacob had seen an appearance of God and obtained His favour there. It is a place East of the Jordan River.

**I have seen God face to face:** does not mean that Jacob had seen God in His essence (i.e., His fullness and substance) for John tells us that no man has ever seen God.

The apostle John wrote: -

- No one has ever seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (John 1:18).

Hagar says of the LORD who spoke to her: -

- You are a God of seeing and said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me." (Genesis 16:13).

All the people gathered at Mount Sinai said to Moses: -

- You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die. (Exodus 20:19).

When Gideon perceived he had encountered the angel of the LORD he said: -

- Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face. <sup>23</sup>But the LORD said to him, "Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die." (Judges 6:22-23).

Jacob was amazed that he has had such a supernatural and close encounter with God and still lives to tell the story. He speaks of it with wonder, as others did, that he should see God, and not be struck dead by the glory of His presence.

For further information concerning seeing God face to face, see the notes under the title, "A Man Wrestles with Jacob and puts His Hip Socket out of Joint," following (vs24-26) (above).

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