

## Research on: **Jacob Wrestling with the Angel**

### Gen. 32: 24-30

“Jacob, a patriarch, was the second son of Isaac and Rebekah and the grandson of Abraham. He fathered the twelve tribes of Israel and was connected with the period which marked the beginning of the history of the Children of Israel” (Shotwell 102).

*Jacob* is *ya'aqob* in Hebrew which means “heel holder or supplanter” (Gesenius 357).

*Rebekah* is *Ribqah* in Hebrew which means “rope with a noose, the name of a girl who ensnares men by her beauty, ensnarer” (Gesenius 755).

*Isaac* is *Yitschaq* in Hebrew which means “he laughs” (Gesenius 360).

“This second son of Isaac and Rebekah is a wonderful example of the two-fold nature of the average human being. A born bargainer, he even bargained with God, vowing that if Jehovah would be his protector and good provider, he would put Him first in his life and tithe regularly. He shrewdly bargained with his twin brother, Esau, for the much coveted birthright, and craftily obtained the firstborn blessing with the connivance of his mother. He met his peer in his Uncle Laban, who became his father-in-law: the deceiver became the deceived. From then on the two were engaged in a battle of wits, a battle which Jacob won by outmaneuvering Laban.

“But Jacob also expressed many admirable qualities: He was deeply religious with a strong faith in God’s omnipresence and ever-available protection and goodness. He was patient in disappointment when he discovered after seven years of unpaid labor that he had been given the wrong sister in marriage” (Tatham 61-62).

### Gen. 32:1

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

In Hebrew, the word for *breaking* is *alah* which means “to go up, ascend, to come up before God, cause to go up, stir up mentally, increase the light” (Gesenius 630).

“**There wrestled.**—This verb, *abak*, occurs only here, and without doubt it was chosen because of its resemblance to the name Jabbok. Its probable derivation is from a word signifying *dust*, because wrestlers were quickly involved in a cloud of dust, or because, as was

the custom in Greece, they rubbed their bodies with it” (Ellicott’s Commentary, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/genesis/32-24.htm>).

“Jacob’s struggle there took place in his own consciousness; he was alone with his fear of Esau and the evil in his own nature which he knew must be overcome: sensuality, deceitfulness, selfishness, covetousness. Until these devils were cast out he knew he did not deserve God’s protection and benefactions. He won the wrestling match when he saw ‘God face to face’” (Tatham 62).

“The O.T. story is dramatizing here the consequence that comes to every soul that has tried too long to evade the truth about himself. Thus far, Jacob’s life had seemed successful. By one stratagem and another he had outwitted Esau, Isaac, and Laban. Coming home prosperous, all the outward circumstances might have made him boastful. But his conscience saw something else. He saw his world shadowed by his guilt. He was brought up short to a reckoning with himself, which was a reckoning with God” (IB 1.723).

Jacob had to face his own thoughts, his doubts, fears, his lies, and guilt, his own conscience. He wrestled with his concept of identity. Jacob is wrestling with his own consciousness. Alone with his fear of Esau and the evil in his own nature: sensuality, deceitfulness, selfishness, covetousness. These false beliefs had to be cast out.

He needed a complete transformation, a grand spiritualization of thought, a new name. An identity change

Angel: gives him the assurance of God’s ever-presence

**Breaking** is *alah* and means “to go up, ascend, to come up before God, to stir up mentally increase the light”

**Wrestles:** *abak*, occurs only here

Derived from a word signifying DUST because dust was rubbed on wrestlers bodies, and they rolled around in the dust.

**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.**

“The hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, it was a symbol of the fact that Jacob was in the grip of a power which his self-assurance could not match. Jacob knew that henceforth he could never walk in lofty arrogance again” (IB 1.723 ).

“On these same Middle Eastern sands centuries ago, the Hebrew patriarch Jacob spent a night in abject despair anticipating the approach of an overwhelming army led by his own brother, whom he had betrayed. Jacob had used up all his options—he’d sent his family away and even sent out

gifts of appeasement. And yet, he was not at peace. His character, dominated by traits of manipulation and deceitfulness, had yet to be transformed.

“The Bible account pictures the transformation process as a wrestling match between Jacob and "a man"—perhaps his better nature. By daybreak, "the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him," and Jacob was defeated.

“Literally without a leg of his own to stand on, Jacob conceded to the overwhelming power of his better nature” (The Art of Peacemaking, May 6, 2002, CSS)

“When the mysterious antagonist touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, it was a symbol of the fact that Jacob was in the grip of a power which his self-assurance could not match. Jacob know that henceforth he could never walk in lofty arrogance again” (Interpreter’s Bible Commentary, Vol 1, p. 723).

“Persistency

CHARLES J. DEAN

From the [April 30, 1927 issue](#) of the *Christian Science Sentinel*

Then Jacob's heart was filled with a great fear, and the darkness of that fear, shutting in close about him, foretold a long night of struggle for spiritual freedom. For a long time he wrestled with the error, but without making any apparent headway. Then "the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint." Yet he fought bravely on, steadfast in his resistance to evil's claims. Many times during that night of struggle the suggestion probably came to him to give up, to yield to the temptation to surrender; but Jacob persisted, and fought on until the "corporeal mortal embracing duplicity, repentance, sensualism," as Mrs. Eddy in part defines "Jacob" in "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" ([p. 589](#)), yielded, and Jacob's consciousness became so filled with "the revelation of Science, in which the so-called material senses yield to the spiritual sense of Life and Love" (*ibid.*), that the testimony of material sense was silenced, and he was free.

From the very beginning, the outcome of the struggle depended largely upon Jacob's unyielding resistance to error, his persistent rejection of evil suggestions. He was apparently alone, and there appeared to be no possible help for him; but divine Love was there, tenderly awaiting the moment when, after being sufficiently tested and found to be true and faithful, the light of a new

understanding should dawn upon him, and he should be blessed with the name of Israel. Then, lifting up his eyes, he saw his brother coming to him. No longer did Jacob fear Esau as a hating, revengeful mortal, but saw him expressing goodness and forgiveness”

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

“A great while before day, Jacob being alone, more fully spread his fears before God in prayer. . . . Jacob kept his ground; though the struggle continued long, this did not shake his faith, nor silence his prayer. He will have a blessing, and had rather have all his bone put out of joint than go away without one. Those who would have the blessing of Christ, must resolve to take no denial. The fervent prayer is the effectual prayer” (Matthew Henry’s Commentary, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/genesis/32-25.htm>).

“In the good and evil that made up Jacob there were two factors of nobility that saved him. The first was his awareness that life has a divine meaning above its material fact—the awareness that made him seek the birthright and made possible his vision at Bethel. The second quality, revealed here in his wrestling, was his determination. He had struggled all night until he was lame and agonized; but when his antagonist wished to separate himself, Jacob desperately held on. When a man is forced to wrestle with moral reality and its consequences, he may try to get rid of them as quickly as he can. But Jacob’s quality was otherwise. Caught in the grip of judgment, his prevailing desire was not for escape. He would hold on until something decisive happened. In punishment, as in prosperity, he would not let the experience go until he had wrung a blessing from it” (*IB* 1.724).

“Throughout the narratives Jacob’s life has been characterized by struggle—particularly by a struggle to obtain a blessing from God. Jacob has struggled with his brother, his father, his father-in-law, and now with God. His own words express the underlying meaning of each of these narratives: ‘I will not let you go unless you bless me.’ Here we see a graphic picture of Jacob’s struggling for the blessing, struggling with God and man” (*EBC* 1.255).

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

A new name of profound significance is given to Jacob:

His self- will yielded and his nature was changed

Name means nature, character, identity.

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.

“*Israel*. That is, *He who striveth with God*, or, *God striveth*. The name is clearly a title of victory, from a root meaning “to persevere” (Cambridge Bible, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/genesis/32-28.htm>).

“A new name is given to Jacob. There is profound significance in the names of God (see Expos. on vs. 29). What of the significance of the name of a man?” (*IB* 1.724).

“A name was much more than a label of a personality. Know a name and you had a way open to the secret of the person” (*IB* 1.726).

“...he spent a long night in prayer, and ‘there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.’ In this spiritual experience his self-will yielded, his nature was changed and the true birthright became his through grace. The angel 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.’

“As the name was to the Hebrews the symbol or expression of the nature, the change of name is significant of the moral change in the patriarch himself; he is no longer Jacob the Supplanter, the Crafty one, the Overreacher, but Israel the Perseverer with God, who is worthy also to prevail” (Shotwell 103).

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.

“Disclose to me thy nature” (Barne’s Notes, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/genesis/32-29.htm>).

“Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? - Canst thou be ignorant who I am? And he blessed him there - gave him the new heart and the new nature which God alone can give to fallen man, and by the change he wrought in him, sufficiently showed who he was” (Clarke online).

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

“Jacob had to feel the truth of God—to feel in his own experience an actual contact with the Infinite, to know the awful power of God’s holiness that may have to blast and burn our petty human confidence before it can fully bless. That is why Jacob called the place of his struggle Peniel, and said that he had seen God face to face. He did not need to be told anything.

Ineffably he knew that his soul was not only preserved but expanded because he had encountered the terrible but transforming spirit of the Lord” (*IB* 1.728).

*Peniel* in Hebrew means “the face of God” (Gesenius 682). There are two ways to pronounce this word in English: “ pih NIGH el, or PEN ih el” (Severance 128).

In the presence of

In front of

A mirror relationship

Original and image

Isn't that our normal, natural state – nothing in between, nothing hidden, nothing obscure

Jacob's identity was intact

He saw himself face to face with God, as God's image

His whole character was transformed

He gained a deep, clear understanding of God and had direct communion with Him.

Jacob AND Esau were instantly haled of enmity and fear toward one another.