

JACOB GETS A NEW NAME: TAPLK ABOUT WWW RAW (GENESIS 32)

Genesis 32:1-12. *A Prayer to Yahweh about Esau*. Jacob and Uncle Laban have agreed to disagree and have established a border secured by a pile of commemorative stones and a covenant of peace. Now, it's time to deal with 20 years of angst in the stew pot, seeking reconciliatory peace, but shalom may be all that's possible. Esau.

As Jacob was returning messengers from God met him—he named the place, two camps (Mahanaim).⁵ So, Jacob then sent his own messengers ahead to Esau instructing them to tell Esau:

Your servant Jacob has been staying with Laban and has been there until now. I've got lots of wealth—slaves, cattle, donkeys, flocks. I am sending this message to incur your approval.

When they returned to Jacob, they reported that Esau is coming to meet you, and is bringing 400 hundred men with him. Jacob was freaked, so he divided his entourage into two camps. He felt that if Esau attacked one, the other group could get away. Then Jacob did the smart thing... Praying he said:

O God of my grandfather Abraham and my father Isaac. O Yahweh, You were the one who told me to go home, and that You would prosper me. I am unworthy of Your kindness, Your fidelity to Your servant. When I left home, I had only my staff, now I have two camps of people and belongings. Save me, I pray, from the anger of Esau—I am afraid he will attack me, and the mothers with their children. You have indeed said, "I will surely make you prosper and your descendants will be impossible to count."

- Q Why did the Lord God send angels to Jacob?
- Q Summarize Jacob's message to Esau. How would you interpret this message?
- Q What elements of Jacob's prayer touched the Lord our God? Do you think the Lord God will answer Jacob's prayer in the manner he wishes?

GENESIS 32:1-12

Jacob also went on his way, and the angels of God met him. ²When Jacob saw them, he said, "This is the camp of God!" So he named that place Mahanaim [i.e., *two camps*]. ³Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. ⁴He instructed them: "This is what you are to say to my master Esau: 'Your servant Jacob says, I have been staying with Laban and have remained there till now. ⁵I have cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, menservants and maidservants. Now I am sending this message to my lord, that I may find favor in your eyes.' " ⁶When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, "We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him." ⁷In great fear and distress Jacob divided the people who were with him into two groups, and the flocks and herds and camels as well. ⁸He thought, "If Esau comes and attacks one group, the group that is left may escape." ⁹Then Jacob prayed, "O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,' ¹⁰I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups. ¹¹Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. ¹²But you have said, 'I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.' "

⁵Located in Gilead east of the Jordan and north of the Jabbok. Two camps had just met in hostility and separated in peace. Two camps were again about to meet (in hostility, Jacob thought) and separate in peace. But Jacob called this crucial place "two camps" after seeing the angelic encampment, suggesting that he saw God's encampment as a divine assurance. God's host had come to escort him safely to Canaan (see 33:12,15). Yet he also feared meeting with Esau, so he divided his household into two camps.

Genesis 32:13-22. Jacob Prepares His Gift to Esau. Next morning Jacob cut out 200 nannies, and 20 bucks from the goat herd and 200 ewes and 20 rams from the sheep herds. Thirty cows & their sucklings from the camels, 40 cows & 10 bulls from the cattle herd, and 20 jennies and 10 jacks from among his donkeys. All (≈ 565 animals) were to be handled by his servants—go ahead of me, Jacob said, but keep some space between the herds.

To the lead servant and all others Jacob ordered, when confronted by Esau and he asks “Whose wealth is this?” then you’re to say, “They belong to your servant Jacob; they’re a gift sent to my lord Esau. He is coming behind us.” Make sure you say this!

Jacob thought this gift or gifts might pacify Esau, and perhaps later he will receive me in peace.

So Jacob’s gifts went on ahead, but he spent the rest of the night in camp; that night Jacob got up and took Rachel & Leah, Zilpah and Bilhal, his 11 sons, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.⁶

- Q To what extent was the 565 animals a bribe or a gift? Price for re-entry? Or a tariff to avoid conflict?
- Q What was the message that Jacob wanted to make sure his servants communicated to Esau? [Hint: “Lord” “Servant” “Brother” 565 are now Esau’s!]
- Q Do you think it will work (for those of you who don’t know or haven’t yet read ahead)?

GENESIS 32:13-22

He spent the night there, and from what he had with him he selected a gift for his brother Esau: ¹⁴two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, ¹⁵thirty female camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. ¹⁶He put them in the care of his servants, each herd by itself, and said to his servants, "Go ahead of me, and keep some space between the herds."

¹⁷He instructed the one in the lead: "When my brother Esau meets you and asks, 'To whom do you belong, and where are you going, and who owns all these animals in front of you?' ¹⁸then you are to say, 'They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a gift sent to my lord Esau, and he is coming behind us.' "

¹⁹He also instructed the second, the third and all the others who followed the herds: "You are to say the same thing to Esau when you meet him. ²⁰And be sure to say, 'Your servant Jacob is coming behind us.' " For he thought, "I will pacify him with these gifts I am sending on ahead; later, when I see him, perhaps he will receive me." ²¹So Jacob's gifts went on ahead of him, but he himself spent the night in the camp.

²²That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.

⁶Today called the *Wadi Zerqa*, flowing westward into the Jordan about 20 miles north of the Dead Sea.

Genesis 32:23-32. *Jacob Gets a New Name, and a Limp*. After his four ladies were across the Jabbok, he sent over his possessions. So... Jacob was left all alone except "a man" wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw he couldn't overpower Jacob, he touched Jacob's hip so severely that his hip was wrenched as they wrestled. Then the man said, *It's time to go, morning comes, let me go*. Jacob was not ready to let go—I won't let you go until you bless me.

The man asked, just what is your name anyhow? Jacob you say. No longer—because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome—your name is no longer Jacob, but Israel [Hebrew for *he struggles with God (El)*].⁷

Jacob asked for the man's name—why do you ask my name, the man asked. The man blessed him there. So Jacob (Israel) called the place Face of God because it's because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.

As the morning broke on the Face of God, Jacob (Israel) was limping because of his hip. By the way, to this day Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip because Jacob's hip socket was touched near the tendon.

- Q Why doesn't the writer call Jacob Israel from this point on?
- Q What does it mean to have your name changed from heel grabber to God struggler?
- Q Just who was this man who wrestled with Jacob?
- Q Why is this incident recorded in Scripture? What value does it have for us as believers? To what extent are we Israelites?

GENESIS 32:23-32

After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. ²⁴So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. ²⁵When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. ²⁶Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

²⁷The man asked him, "What is your name?"

"Jacob," he answered.

²⁸Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."

²⁹Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."

But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.

³⁰So Jacob called the place Peniel, [*face of God*] saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

³¹The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, [*face of God*] and he was limping because of his hip.

³²Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob's hip was touched near the tendon.

⁷wrestled. God wrestled (*yeabeq*) with Jacob (*yaaqob*) by the Jabbok (*yabboq*)—the author delighted in wordplay.