

The Bible Times

I Can't Believe That's In The Bible



Number 12

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God Gets in Wrestling Match (And Taps Out)

Read Genesis 32:1-2

- As we begin to look at this chapter, it is helpful to look 20 years earlier in Jacob's life and remember why Jacob had left home in the first place. **Why had Jacob left home?**
- "Twenty years earlier, when Jacob had first left home, God had permitted him to see angels in a dream at Bethel. There Jacob had seen angels carrying his prayers to God and returning with God's help. Now Jacob was returning home, and God again let him see angels, except this time not in a dream. Jacob was wide awake when "the angels of God met him." Angels are normally invisible; they don't have flesh and bone and blood. But at this critical juncture in Jacob's life, God wanted to reassure him that he was not heading into an uncertain future all alone. He therefore let Jacob see two encampments of angels (to his left and his right or ahead of him and behind him)."

(People's Bible Commentary: Genesis, p.265)

Commented [S1]: The stated reason was to find a wife...however, the real reason was Esau's desire to kill Jacob for stealing the blessing (Gn. 27:41)

Read Genesis 32:3-5

- Jacob sent a message to his brother who was now living in Seir. **What were the two parts of his message?**
- Why do you think Jacob included the information about all his animals and servants?**

Commented [S2]:
"I, your brother, am coming to meet you"
"I, your servant, am requesting your goodwill."

Commented [S3]: "Jacob's reference to his livestock holdings would assure Esau that Jacob's purpose in returning home was not to file his claim for a double share of his father's possessions. He didn't need that, and he didn't want that." (PB266)

Read Genesis 32:6-8

- Why is Jacob filled with great fear when he hears about Esau's coming to meet him?**
- What is Jacob's solution?**

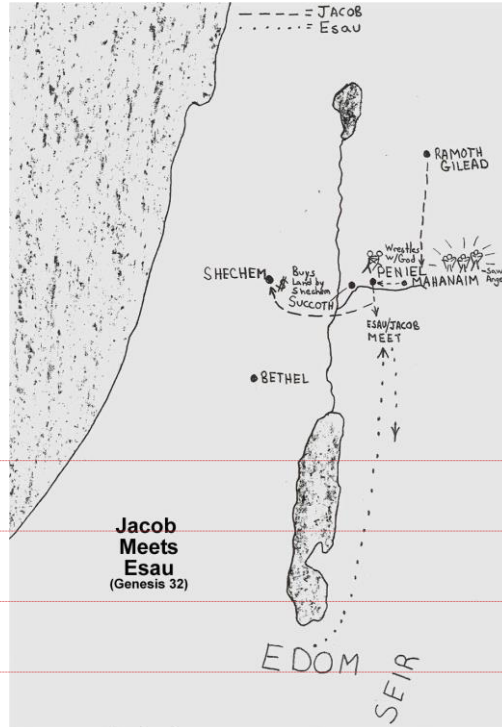
Commented [S4]: Esau has 400 men with him
Also, remember Esau's anger and hatred when Jacob left

Commented [S5]: Divide up the family so that if attacked at least one part may be able to flee and survive

Read Genesis 32:9-12

- “Throughout the last few chapters of Genesis, we have repeatedly observed attitudes and actions of Jacob that we would not want to imitate. Not so here. Jacob’s prayer to God before meeting Esau is a model prayer that can teach us much that will improve our prayer lives” (*People’s Bible: Genesis, p.266*). Note the parts of his prayer in each verse and how this is a good model prayer for us.

- V.9—
- V.10—
- V.11—
- V.12—



Jacob Meets Esau
(Genesis 32)

Commented [S6]: (talk about the below comments first)

Model prayer

- Recognize unworthiness
- Admit our inability to handle the problem ourselves
- Remind God of his promise

Commented [S7]: Command of God

Commented [S8]: I am unworthy

Commented [S9]: Help me, save me

Commented [S10]: Lord, here is your promise

Read Genesis 32:13-21

- Jacob here sends a gift to his brother that included a total of 550 animals. Why did Jacob separate them into separate herds?

Commented [S11]: “If each of the five herds came separately, the size of Jacob’s gift would be more likely to impress Esau. Jacob also hoped that this procedure would delay Esau’s arrival and would allow more time for his anger to cool down.” (PB269)

Read Genesis 32:22-32

- The Setting: “Jacob and his caravan had reached the Jabbok, a stream that flows into the Jordan from the east just about midway between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. After leading family and flocks south across the Jabbok under cover of darkness, Jacob himself went back across the stream, apparently to spend some time alone with the Lord in prayer. As he began once again to pour out his heart to God, he suddenly became aware that out of the darkness someone had grabbed hold of him and was wrestling him to the ground. The mysterious struggle continued—for hours—until the first streaks of dawn appeared in the eastern sky.” (*People’s Bible: Genesis, p. 270*)

- “In commenting on this passage, Martin Luther said, “This text is one of the most obscure in the Old Testament.” Although there are elements of this wrestling match that are difficult to understand and to explain, there are some basic truths that are immediately clear.”
(People’s Bible: Genesis, p. 270)

- In verse 24 we are told, “Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak.” **What is strange about this situation?**

Commented [S12]: Jacob’s opponent is referred to as “the man” but is later identified as God.

How is it then that it says that the man could not defeat Jacob?
--God did not want to defeat Jacob, he was teaching Jacob to hold God to his promises.

- **Why did the man ask, “What is your name?” (v.27)**

Commented [S13]: ““What is your name?” the Lord asked him, not because he had forgotten but because he wanted to remind Jacob that he had been a “heel-grabber,” one who took unfair advantage of a rival. That old name no longer fit this man, and so God gave him a new one.” (PB271)

- **Note the name change.**

Commented [S14]: He is no longer Jacob “the heel grabber”...he is now Israel meaning “he struggled with God”

- **How can a mere mortal become an Israel?**

Commented [S15]: Hold God to his promises

When the Bible uses the name “Israel” who is it referring to?

- **Note Jacob’s memento of his victory with God. Also note how this was remembered by the people who came after Jacob.**

Commented [S16]: Jacob left the scene limping

Even in Moses’ day (500 years later) people didn’t eat the thigh meat at the hip socket because of what happened here

- **What ought we to do when we are in situations where it seems to us like God is against us?**

Commented [S17]: Hold God to his promises

Read Genesis 33:1-3

- How did Jacob display a spirit of love and concern for his family when they went to meet Esau?
- Explain what Jacob is doing.
- How old were Jacob and Esau as they met here?

Commented [S18]: After he had arranged his wives and children behind him, he put himself at the head of the line. He would be the first to die should Esau begin a massacre.

Commented [S19]: "As Jacob stepped toward Esau, he fell to his knees with his forehead to the ground, got up, walked a step or two, and bowed again. He did this *seven times*. Although he knew God had announced that the older twin was to serve the younger, Jacob repeatedly referred to himself as "servant" and to his brother as his "lord," treating him with the utmost respect. If in years gone by Esau had detected arrogance in his twin brother, he saw none now." (PB274)

Commented [S20]: 90s
See below

Understanding Jacob's Age

- Genesis 47:9 – Jacob was 130 years old when he met Pharaoh in Egypt
- Genesis 45:11 – There were 5 more years of famine after Jacob came to Egypt
- Genesis 41:29-30 – There was a total of 7 good years and 7 years of famine
- Genesis 41:46 – Joseph was 30 years old when he entered Pharaoh's service

130 Jacob's age when entering Egypt
-9 (5 famine years remaining = Joseph in Pharaoh's service for 9 years so far)
-30 age when Joseph entered Pharaoh's service
91 Jacob's age at Joseph's birth

- Genesis 31:38 – Jacob spent 20 years with Laban
- Genesis 29:27 – Jacob's marriages happened 7 years into those 20 years

Since Joseph was born while they were still living in Haran, Jacob had to have been in his 70s when he first came to Haran.

Read Genesis 33:4-11

- Note the change in Jacob since the last time he saw his brother: "Instead of wanting to *deprive* Esau of a blessing, Jacob almost had to force Esau to *accept* this tangible evidence of the Lord's blessing." (People's Bible Commentary: Genesis, p.275)

- Note the terms that Jacob uses to refer to himself. What is interesting about that?

Commented [S21]: "Although he knew God had announced that the older twin was to serve the younger, Jacob repeatedly referred to himself as "servant" and to his brother as his "lord," treating him with the utmost respect." (PB274)

Read Genesis 33:12-20

- Why did Jacob decline Esau's offer to remain with him?
- (verse 19) Why did Jacob buy property at Shechem and not move back in with Isaac?

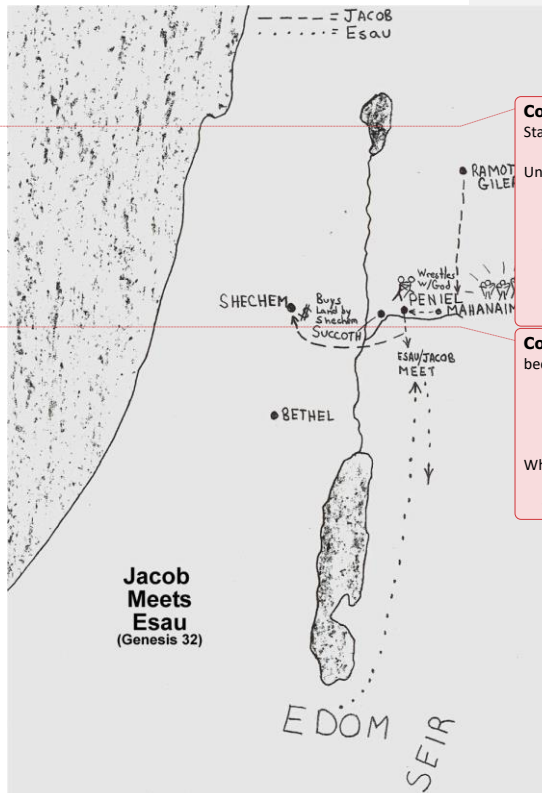
Commented [S22]:
Stated reason = we can't move as fast as you

Unstated reasons =
 • Didn't need protection...he knew God was his protection...after all a few days earlier he had seen God's angels
 • Maybe he didn't want to remain with Esau's family because of their lack of appreciation for the messianic covenant...remember Esau's 3 wives – 2 heathen Canaanites and an Ishmaelite
 • Maybe it also was because he wanted to be in the Promised Land...Seir was not a part of the Promised Land

- "There are two interesting sidelights in later Israelite history to the real estate transaction recorded here. Several centuries later, after the Israelites had occupied the land of Canaan, they buried Joseph's mummified remains in Shechem, as he had requested (50:25; Joshua 24:32). And one of the most interesting conversations the Lord Jesus had was with a Samaritan woman whom he met at a well in Sychar (Shechem), on the piece of property Jacob had bought (John 4:5)."

(People's Bible Commentary: Genesis, p.278)

Commented [S23]: We don't know...but I bring this up here because Isaac is still alive.
 • Isaac was 60 years old when the boys were born (25:26)
 • Isaac dies at 180 (35:28)
 • Therefore, if Jacob is in his 90s, Isaac is in his 150s, and he still has another 20-30 years to live
 Why buy property?
 • Shows that he was trusting the promise that this land would be their possession



- (verse 20) What is interesting about the name that Jacob gives to the altar that he built (El-Elohe-Israel or God, the God of Israel)?

Commented [S24]: Jacob is using the name that God recently gave him

Prayer – O Lord, help me always to trust you and hold you to your promises. Forgive me for the times that I focus on myself rather than on you. Amen.