

Pentwater Bible Church

*Jacob Becomes Israel & Meets Esau
Genesis Message Sixty-Seven
Genesis 32: 22 - 33: 20*



Jacob Wrestles with The Angel by Rubens 1624

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Genesis Message Sixty-Seven Jacob Becomes Israel & Reconciles With Esau

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Review:

THE TREATY OF GALEED

Genesis 31: 43-55

Jacob's truthful words to Laban clearly cut Laban to the heart. He was publically exposed as a scoundrel, and now using emotion to assuage the situation. Then Laban clearly losing the confrontation with Jacob tries to save face by making two claims.

1. First he says that the daughters, children and flocks belong to him.
2. Second he claims that he has some power over his daughters and grandchildren.

Both of these claims were charades. He knew that his daughters were given to Jacob as wives in a work arrangement, which lasted for fourteen years. He also knew that Jehovah God had stopped him from harming Jacob as originally intended. Clearly still trying to preserve his dignity in this situation he proposes a treaty with Jacob to accurately frame the independence of Jacob from Laban after twenty years of servitude. In so doing Laban states the purpose of the treaty, which was: to *“let it be for a witness between me and thee.”* Laban was concerned that now that he was exposed Jacob might try and harm him! When one has an evil heart he sees others as capable of the same. When one's heart is pure he usually does not conceive of other concocting evil against them. This is why the Lord Jesus warned his first wave of disciples who he sent out as evangelists to be wary of the culture (Matthew 10: 16).

Jacob quickly assents to the treaty and immediately begins to set a stone as the foundation for a pillar to commemorate the event. He then instructs his children (brethren) to, *“Gather stones; and they took stones, and made a heap: and they did eat there by the heap.”* Following customary second millennial B.C. custom they had a meal to celebrate and affirm the covenant. This covenant was designated to assure peace between the two groups. Then came the naming of the marker.

Laban initiated the name calling it *Jeger-shah-dutha*, which in Aramaic means “the heap of witness.” Jacob the Hebrew making a clear distinction between the two groups, Pagans and Hebrews, called it Galeed. It has the same meaning but Jacob was clearly defining the physical as well as the religious boundary between the two. In Genesis 10: 22 Aram is designated, a son of Shem. Genesis 22: 21 also designates another person named Aram who is a grandson of Nahor, Abraham's brother. Aramean was from the earliest times the equivalent of heathen in the Jewish vernacular, because the heathen neighbors of the Jews used the Aramean tongue. The part of this territory known in the Old Testament as Aram is the portion west of the Euphrates. Greek writers referred to the people of this region as Syrians, which is probably a corruption of the Assyrians. This region is now called Syria.

Now the term Galeed is affirmed and strengthened by Laban with the title **מִצְפָּה** *Mizpah*. This Hebrew word means “watchtower.” Laban said to Jacob, “*Jehovah watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.*” One, he was affirming the Lord’s place in controlling Jacob’s life and two he was issuing a warning to him. Most take this verse out of context and misapply it to mean that the Lord will watch over us and protect us while we are separated from each other. As pleasant a thought and parting benediction between friends and loved ones this is, this is *not* the intent of this verse. It was a warning between two men who could not trust each other. The pillar and heap were erected, as a border between the two geographic regions so neither would cross over to the other’s side. Laban knew the *teraphim* was stolen by somebody in Jacob’s entourage, he just could not find it. Believing it provided claim to his property he did not want Jacob to come back to Paddan-Aram and laying claim to his estate. Laban then goes on to define the meaning of the heap of witness. He says if Jacob does two things he will come into divine judgment.

1. If he afflict Laban’s daughters.
2. If he marries any additional women besides the two he has.

Then Laban says, “*see, God is witness betwixt me and thee.*” The Hebrew word for witness is *aid* **אֵד** which is the root of Galeed, thus the formation of the term Galeed. This covenant was made between two men who could not trust each other.

Jacob and Laban made a treaty to abide in peaceful coexistence. This was not to be long lasting. After the time of the Canaanite conquest by Joshua and settlement, Hebrew relations with the people of Aram were hostile. In fact even in the wilderness wandering (Cir. 1420 B.C.) the treaty boundary was breached.

Since they had an agreement Laban clearly defines it as: “*I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm.*” Laban was taking much liberty with the term god when he referred to “*The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us.*” Abraham and Nahor’s father was Terah and he as well as Nahor did not worship the same God as Abraham. Jacob realizing this affirmed it with “*And Jacob sware by the Fear of his father Isaac*” the true God Jehovah Elohim. So they swear by their respective deities and Laban has some security that Jacob will not breach the boundary and render the usefulness of the *teraphim* null. Jacob does not care because he does not know it is in his possession. Jacob’s response was to offer a sacrifice, which he did, and they had a covenantal meal.

This narrative concludes with Laban getting up in the morning and kissing his daughters and grandsons (sons in the text) and depart back to Paddan-Aram. He seems to ignore Jacob, which is much different than the first meeting twenty years ago (Genesis 29: 13).

JACOB AND THE ANGELS

Genesis 32: 1-2

Jacob now leaves the place of the covenant, which are the mountains of Gilead to continue his journey back home.

As he leaves angels again meet him as they did in Genesis 28: 12 when he was leaving the Land. Jacob was under God's divine escort. Jacob saw them and said, "*This is God's Host.*" The Hebrew word for host is *machaneh*. He was saying this is "God's camp." He then named it Mahanaim, which means two camps. He was referring to his camp and God's camp (the angelic host).

JACOB'S MESSAGE TO ESAU

Genesis 32: 3-21

Jacob had settled with Laban and was on the way home. He knew that he still had to deal with his twin brother Esau who had threatened to kill him. So knowing this he sent messengers to meet with Esau in the land of Seir. Esau had settled there. This was due south of Gilead where Jacob had met Laban. The field of Edom is designating that it is south of Ammon and Moab, which today is Jordan. Jacob sent his messengers to meet with Esau and started calling him the respectful title of lord. The message they are to convey has three components.

1. I have spent all the time gone from you with Laban (he avoids the conflict with Laban).
2. I have acquired much wealth.
3. I want to find favor in Esau's sight.

At this first mission of the emissaries they are to convey Jacob's intention to make peace with Esau. Jacob does not know what Esau's intentions are toward him. The messengers report back that Esau whom Jacob is now called his brother and no longer lord seems to already know he is in the region. They further report that Esau is coming with four hundred men to meet him. The standard size of militia in the OT seems to be about that level (I Samuel 22: 2, 25: 13, 30: 10, 17). Now Jacob gets concerned because he does not know if Esau coming with this army still means to kill him or not.

As soon as Jacob hears their report he responds in two ways. First he makes camp preparations. His fear is also described as being greatly afraid and distressed. He saw fit to divide the camp in half to allow one half to escape from Esau's soldiers who might have been seeking revenge on Jacob. Second, he begins to pray. He asks Jehovah God to make good His promise to protect him as he faithfully returns home at God's command. Jacob also acknowledges that all God's lovingkindness and grace is laid upon an unworthy servant. He closes the pray stating that there are more promises yet to be fulfilled.

Jacob diplomatically offers to soften Esau's potential hostility by offering gifts. He offers 550 animals in all which is a substantial appeasement. The animals have significance to the Orthodox Hebrews as penned in notes to the Bereshit Rabbah number seventy-five. The ox and the ass each refer to their view of two Messiahs (Bereshit Rabbah 75: 6). The ox is the Messiah who would conduct the final war; according to tradition he would be descended from Joseph, and would be the forerunner of the real Messiah, descended from David the king. The ass is the suffering servant messiah who

descending from Joseph will die. They hold to a dual Messiah theology failing to see the Lord Jesus as both. One is a Son of Joseph and the other the Son of David.

The servants of Jacob divide the cattle and move a distance away from him to wait the appearance of Esau and the four hundred soldiers prepared to give them gifts.

Today's Message:

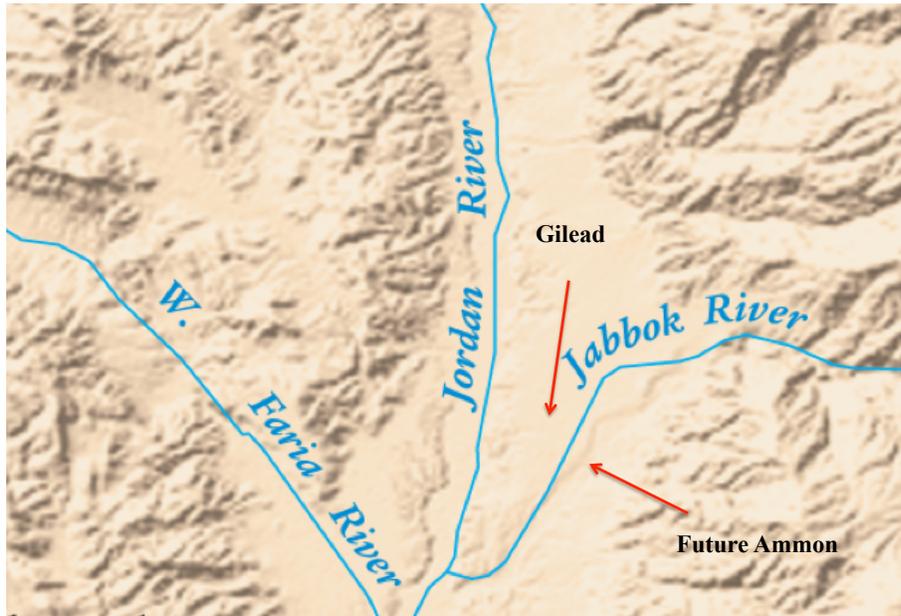
JACOB WRESTLES WITH THE ANGEL

Genesis 32: 22-32

²²And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two handmaids, and his eleven children, and passed over the ford of the Jabbok. ²³And he took them, and sent them over the stream, and sent over that which he had. ²⁴And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. ²⁵And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he wrestled with him. ²⁶And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. ²⁷And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. ²⁸And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed. ²⁹And 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. ³⁰And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for, said he, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. ³¹And the sun rose upon him as he passed over Peniel, and he limped upon his thigh. ³²Therefore the children of Israel eat not the sinew of the hip which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip (ASV 1901).

As we enter this episode it is important to realize that there are many many differing views on the interpretive schema of this section of Scripture. Typical departure from the Whole Council of God leads one to miss the significance of these events. Some commentators fail to account for Christ as Messiah, Second Person of the Trinity and making preincarnate appearances. Some simply do not see the significance of Jacob's name change nor understand it, so speculations abound. Finally the purpose of the assault is seemingly debatable as well.

Initially Jacob moved the entire family south of the river Jabbok to allow a hasty retreat if the encounter with Esau proved adversarial. So in verse twenty-two Jacob crossed the Jabbok River, which was a border between Gilead, and the area, which later became Ammon. Therefore he left Gilead and went into the country of Ammon. It was nighttime when he rose up and took his women, and children with him and crossed over the stream with them and all their possessions. Now they were closer to the Promise Land but not in it yet. We can see from the map below that they were still on the east side of the River Jordan.



What Jacob did was to leave his family and possessions on the south side of the Jabbok River and then go by himself back to the north side. He was probably checking to insure that all the possessions had been moved to the south side of the Jabbok. This isolation set the stage for the third appearance of God to Jacob. The text says that “*there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.*” The Hebrew word for wrestled is a word play on the word for the river, Jabbok. The Hebrew word for wrestling is found only here in the Bible. It is another hapax legomenon. The word is *vayaahvaak* וַיִּאָבֵק and it means to wrestle or get dusty. It comes from the root *avak*, which is dust. So the basic meaning of this passage is that Jacob got dusty while wrestling. It is also a word play on his name, which has the same root as Jabbok. We get the picture from the Hebrew language of tying all three entities (Jacob, wrestling and Jabbok) to an important event through the Hebrew word plays.

Jacob then wrestled with one that had the appearance of a man. We know this to be the Angel of Jehovah or a preincarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bereshit Rabbah says it was the guardian angel of Esau (BR 77: 3). Whether it was Esau’s guardian angel or not, Hosea 12: 5 identifies the “man” as an angelic being and not an earthly man. The wrestling went on all night until the morning. The text says that the angel did not prevail against Jacob. This is not because He was not able. Angels are significantly stronger than men. It was because He wanted the struggle to last. Jacob was going to come out of it a better more refined man. Finally when the Lord wanted the wrestling to end He gave Jacob’s thigh a debilitating supernatural blow like Isaiah received in Isaiah 6: 7. As a result Jacob’s hip was dislocated. Still Jacob would not release his hold on the Angel until He blessed him. Interestingly the Angel asks Jacob his

name and he answers “Jacob.” The Angel then said, “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed.” So God calls Jacob Israel, which in Hebrew is **יִשְׂרָאֵל** *Yisrael*, or a combination of the two Hebrew words *sarah* and *el* and it literally means “he who strives with God.” The word plays offer significance to our understanding of Israel and Jacob. He strove with Laban, Esau and God Himself as he took the Abrahamic Covenant he was prophecied to receive. It would have been given to him but God allowed him to conspire with Rebecca against Esau and Isaac to take the covenant on his own. Further, Esau was unworthy, as the Bible tells us that Esau despised his birthright (Genesis 25: 34; Hebrews 12: 16-17). The history of the Nation Israel clearly fulfills this struggling with the Arabs and God as well as the Jews continually turned from Him to follow after the pagan nations around them. What we see in the word play of the word “Israel” is that God fought for Jacob and God will fight for Israel. Even though they sin terribly, God will be on their side in all the world’s nations that seem to transpire against them.

Jeremiah 31: 35-37

³⁵Thus saith Jehovah, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who stirreth up the sea, so that the waves thereof roar; Jehovah of hosts is his name: ³⁶If these ordinances depart from before me, saith Jehovah, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. ³⁷Thus saith Jehovah: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith Jehovah (ASV 1901).

This story ends with Jacob asking the Angel to identify Himself. The Angel responds with a question just as He did to Manoah, Samson’s father (Judges 13: 18). He says, “Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?” In the Judges passage, which is very similar, the Angel answers and says, “Seeing it is wonderful.” He does not answer here in the Genesis passage, but it is the same God. In the same circumstances He is so named in Hebrew as wonderful which is *pele* **פֶּלִיאַ** and only used with God in the Hebrew Bible. We see the same word used of the Lord Jesus in a well-known Messianic passage. This is Jesus making a preincarnate appearance.

Isaiah 9: 6

⁶For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (ASV 1901).

The angel at Jacob’s request blesses him and Jacob renames the place on the north side of the river Jabbok *Peniel*: for, said he, “I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.” Peniel literally means in Hebrew, “The Face of God.” Jacob is acknowledging that the Angel is indeed God and he has been preserved through the

struggle and will be preserved in the struggles with Esau and the world in general as it turns against Israel.

The last verse speaks to an eating tradition the Jews used to embrace regarding this event. They used to remove the arteries and tendons of meat before it was prepared for consumption in commemoration of this event, the origin of Israel. Later it was not incorporated into Rabbinic Law and it not considered kosher today. Nevertheless some Jews practice this ritual. This was the original practice though, to remember the origin of Israel and the struggles they have and will encounter until Jesus returns.

JACOB MEETS WITH ESAU

Genesis 33: 1-17

¹And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau was coming, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. ²And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost. ³And he himself passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. ⁴And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept. ⁵And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are these with thee? And he said, The children whom God hath graciously given thy servant. ⁶Then the handmaids came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves. ⁷And Leah also and her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves. ⁸And he said, What meanest thou by all this company which I met? And he said, To find favor in the sight of my lord. ⁹And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; let that which thou hast be thine. ¹⁰And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found favor in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand; forasmuch as I have seen thy face, as one seeth the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me. ¹¹Take, I pray thee, my gift that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it. ¹²And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee. ¹³And he said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and that the flocks and herds with me have their young: and if they overdrive them one day, all the flocks will die. ¹⁴Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on gently, according to the pace of the cattle that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come unto my lord unto Seir. ¹⁵And Esau said, Let me now leave with thee some of the folk that are with me. And he said, What needeth it? let me find favor in the sight of my lord. ¹⁶So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir. ¹⁷And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him a house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth ¹⁸And Jacob came in peace to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-Aram; and encamped before the city. ¹⁹And he bought the parcel of ground, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor,

Shechem's father, for a hundred pieces of money. ²⁰ And he erected there an altar, and called it El-elohe-israel (ASV 1901).

Jacob still thinking that Esau was a threat saw Esau and his four hundred soldiers coming and prepared for the worst by dividing the camp again. This time the divisions would be in three sections. The handmaids and their children first, followed by Leah and her children with his favorite Rachel and her son Joseph in the rear. Being brave and acting as a protective father he moved himself up to the front and approached Esau and was prepared to suffer the brunt of the attack should it come. As Jacob approaches Esau's presence he humbles himself by bowing low to the ground seven times. Esau responds by kissing Jacob in a warm embrace. Esau and Jacob both wept which indicated they were again brothers and Esau had forgiven Jacob.

Esau then met with Jacob's family, as Jacob remains subservient to Esau calling himself Esau's servant. All of Jacob's family in the divided sections approach Esau and bow to him. Esau then accepts Jacob's gifts while trying to refuse, as he is wealthy too. After this Esau offers Jacob an escort to his entourage. Jacob begs off since their children and some of the cattle could not keep up the pace of Esau and his army. He tells Esau that he should go at his own pace and Jacob will catch up with him at Seir. Jacob did not go to Seir though as the text tells us following these passages. Esau as a parting offer of an escort said he could leave some of his men as an armed escort. Jacob refused and went on his way to Succoth not Seir. Rabbis say the meeting of Jacob and Esau in Seir will take place in the Messianic Kingdom. Jacob was still on the east side of the Jordan and apparently stayed there for quite some time as he built a home and enclosures for his vast flocks.

Then Jacob after some time went to the Land. He moved to Shechem in Canaan and encamped there. He bought land and began to settle there near the tribe of Hamor. He bought the property for four hundred pieces of money. This is another example of a Jewish purchase of some land in Israel. Years later this is where the bones of Joseph would be re-buried (Joshua 24: 32).

NEXT WEEK: THE TRAGEDY OF DINAH AT SHECHEM

Please Call or e-mail with any questions or comments.

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