

Genesis 32: Homeward Bound

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The narrative continues immediately after Laban and Jacob make their covenant.

Jacob is now between a **rock** and a **hard place**. He has Laban behind him and Esau in front of him.

The **promise** that God made in Jacob's dream is coming to pass in this chapter: "I will bring you back to this land." (Gen 28:15)

How does God dramatically demonstrate the faithfulness of His promise, "I will be with you wherever you go"? (Gen 32:1)

This is the now the second time Jacob has seen a vision of **angels**. In this case, Jacob should realize they are there for his **protection**.

When God designs his people for extraordinary trials, he prepares them by extraordinary comforts. —Matthew Henry

Jacob once again **names** a location with significant redemptive importance. What was the last place he named? What else does he name in this passage? (Gen 28:19, 32:30)

Mahanaim is a compound word meaning **two camps**. To what does this refer? (Gen 32:2)

Jacob was aware that Esau was in **Sier**. He may have also known that Esau was still **angry**.

Jacob now has to be concerned about the safety of his entire **household**. They may all be in danger of Esau's anger on account of Jacob's sin.

Jacob dispatches **messengers** to carry greetings to Esau. What is Jacob's posture? (Gen 32:4)

Jacob has no intention of **pulling rank** on Esau.

Recall that *adown* means **master** and *ebed* means **slave**.

What is the one thing that Jacob is seeking from Esau by way of the messengers?

The Hebrew word for favor (*chen*) can also be translated **grace**. (Gen 32:5)

When Jacob receives the reply from Esau, he immediately prepares for an **attack** by dividing the camp. (Gen 32:6)

Angry men have good memories. —Matthew Henry

Jacob's defensive preparations are followed by **prayer** in which he expresses **humble reliance** upon God and appeals to God's **covenant promises**. (Gen 32:9-12)

Jacob **petitions** God on behalf of himself and his family. (Gen 32:11)

Jacob is hoping to **turn away** Esau's anger by meeting him with gifts before he arrives in the camp. Jacob is exercising **prudence** while trusting in **providence**.

Each gift is accompanied by the same message: From Jacob your **servant** to Esau my **lord**.

What purpose was served by separating the flocks into several droves with space in between?

The size of the gift was an indication of the wealth that Jacob had accumulated during his last six years of service to Laban: 220 goats, 220 sheep, 30 nursing camels; 50 cows, and 30 donkeys—each with a mix of male and female suitable for growing the flock. (Gen 32:14-15)

After moving his family and possessions across the Jabbok, Jacob stays behind the group (perhaps to pray). Instead, he is met by a man intent on **wrestling**. (Gen 32:24)

The "man" is **superior** to Jacob in terms of rank and physical strength.

- Jacob seeks his **blessing**.
- The man demands Jacob's **name** (and refused to give his own).
- The man **overpowers** Jacob.
- The man **renames** Jacob.
- The man identifies Himself by virtue of Jacob's new name: **Israel**.
- At Jacob's insistence, the man **blesses** Jacob.

In response to this encounter with the man, Jacob names the place **Peniel** or **Penuel**, which means **face of God**. (Gen 32:30-31)

Jacob seemed to understand that it was no small matter to **survive** a personal encounter with God. (Gen 32:30)

Jacob's "prevailing" over the man was only possible by **grace**. (Gen 32:28)

Jacob's wounded hip served as a constant reminder of God's **presence** and Jacob's **weakness**. How was this injury commemorated by later generations?

After wrestling with God, Jacob is now prepared to meet Esau with newfound **courage** and **resignation**—relying on God to control the outcome.

Part of the lesson of Jacob's trouble with Laban and Esau is that it demonstrates how we often encounter trials even when we seek **obedience** to God's commands.