

The Divine Wrestling Match



Jacob & Laban

Jacob's relationship with his uncle Laban was fractious, untrusting and characterised by deceit, trickery and fraud.

- Laban deceived and tricked Jacob with his daughters
- Jacob deceived Laban in relation to his cattle
- Jacob fled from Laban back into the land of God's promise
- Laban pursued him

All the above are recorded in detail in Genesis 29-31

Jacob & Laban Make a Covenant

Genesis 31.44-48

- Jegar-sahadutha (heap of the testimony) – Laban
- Galeed (heap of the witness) – Jacob
- Mizpah – Jacob also named the place Mizpah which is Hebrew for watchtower

Jacob Continues His Journey Toward Bethel

Genesis 32.1-2 *And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.*

Mahanaim Compound name meaning to **settle down or to camp**

In Gen 32.2 it is plural meaning **two camps**

Root from which the Hebrew word for **spear** derives

So why did Jacob use this word for two camps when there was just him & his family?

Met by angels

Jacob has just left the house of Laban where he had lived for many years, and in company with a long caravan, consisting of wives, children, servants, and all his wealth turned into cattle, is journeying back again to Bethel and southern Judea. His road leads him close by the country of Esau and he is naturally terrified to meet his justly incensed brother who has previously threatened to kill him.

There is significance for us in the church of the living God today as we consider this meeting of the angels with Jacob at Mahanaim. As with Jacob:

1. They meet us on the dry dusty roads of common life
2. They meet us punctually in our hour of need

The Significance of Mahanaim in biblical history

Mahanaim is the place to which David fled from the insurrection of his son Absalom; having arrived at Mahanaim, where he sheltered with a man named Barzillai

(2 Samuel 17:24)

Mahanaim became one of the Levitical cities

(Joshua 13:26–30, Joshua 21:38; 1 Chronicles 6:80)

Mahanaim was a city of refuge and became a stronghold the sanctuary of important fugitives

(2 Samuel 18:2)

Mahanaim was the city to which Abner, the commander of Saul's army, took Saul's son Ish-bosheth, to establish him as king of Israel

(2 Samuel 2:8).

Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau

Genesis 32.7-8

Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.

Genesis 32.22-23

And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.

The Biblical Principle Jacob Should Have Remembered

" behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and **be sure your sin will find you out**" (Numbers 32.23)

Jacob's Prayer

The prayer Jacob offered to God is instructive to us today. Here are the individual elements of his desperate prayer"

- Genesis 32.9 Call to remembrance of God's past dealings
- Genesis 32.10 A prayer of confession (His sin has certainly found him out!)
- Genesis 32.11 A supplication for deliverance from the hand of Esau
- Genesis 32. A recitation of Gods past promises

Jacob's Encounter with The Preincarnate Christ

Genesis 32.24-28 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. 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.

And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. 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.

Parallels in the "Conversions" of Jacob & Peter

John 1.40-42 *One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone.*

Here in John 1 is described the conversion of Peter as he comes to saving faith in Christ as the Messiah. Note the name change from Simon to Cephas.

The Greek word for conversion that is associated with salvation is **strepho** and means literally to turn around and go another way. This meaning is well illustrated in its use by Matthew in 18.3 as meaning turning from sin to faith in Christ.

Luke 22.32

*And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art **converted** (**Greek: Epistrepho**) strengthen thy brethren.*

Note the Greek word for conversion here, epistrepho, means to turn around and go back to the beginning. A returning to where one began.

Jesus described Peter's "faith" as being stretched to its limit. He was confident that Peter would survive this attack with God's help. His confidence indicates the superior power of Jesus over Satan in spiritual warfare. When he did turn back (Gr. epistrepho) to Jesus, Peter would need to help his brother disciples ("brethren")—whose faith Jesus' betrayal, arrest, trials, crucifixion, death, and burial would challenge (cf. John 21:15-17; 1 Thess. 3:2, 13; 1 Pet. 5:10; et al.).

Turning around and going back to the beginning – Jesus wrought this in Jacob, centuries later in Peter & He is still doing it today