

MEETING YOUR DESTINY

Vayishlach: And He Went

In this week's portion, I would like to focus on a couple different topics. At first they may seem disconnected, but I believe the connections will be made the deeper we dive into them.

The story starts off with Jacob leaving his uncle Laban's household. He had worked over 20 years for his two wives and all his livestock, all of it predicated on the fact that Jacob chose to deceive his brother Esau as well as his father for both the inheritance and the firstborn blessing. It was this deception that caused him to have to flee for his life to Laban's house to begin with. But while there, Jacob himself gets deceived. On his wedding night, after working for Rachel for seven years, he ends up receiving Leah instead. The old adage "what goes around comes around" is definitely appropriate for Jacob. But the story goes much deeper than that. And in order for Yahweh to use Jacob in the way He desired, Jacob would have to be purged of his sin once and for all.



Jacob became incredibly wealthy while at Laban's house. Everything he touched seemed to turn to gold. He used his intellect and slyness to grow his flocks and build his household so that when he left, he had so many sheep that he could afford to give Esau two hundred goats and two hundred ewe lambs along with many other cattle. Let's pick up the story in Genesis chapter 32.

First of all, it's amazing that the text immediately says that "So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, 'This is God's camp'" (Gen. 32:1-2). This is significant because it's truly his first step back into the land of his forefathers from which God called him.

QUESTION: How does this last statement relate to your life? How are you returning back to the land of your forefathers?

If you are following the Elohim of Israel, and you have a desire to learn the truth of the Torah and how the entire bible fits together, then you're traveling back to the land of your forefathers. You have lived a life of deception without even knowing it and God has called you to come home, back to the land of your inheritance. It may appear on the outside that you are blessed, just as Jacob appeared to be blessed. But that blessing paled in comparison to just how much blessing the Father wanted to pour out on the house of Israel over the generations.

So the first thing we learn about this journey back to the homeland is that God wants Jacob, and us, to know that His angels have charge over us. He is with us. He wants us to know that we are not making this dangerous journey by ourselves. We are making it with the hosts of heaven encamped around us. To tell you the truth, Jacob kind of missed the entire point of the angels' presence. Why are the armies of heaven surrounding him? Because apparently, he needed protection from an attack! And many times, this is exactly what happens when the enemy sees someone going back to their roots. He forms an attack. But we should not fear because the hosts of heaven are with us. Secondly, it is important to point out that Jacob declares out loud that **"this is God's camp."** This is significant because in those days, it would have been called the camp of Jacob. But Jacob has started the spiritual journey by declaring that his household is not his and he is not the ultimate authority.

In our lives, it is critical that we make that same proclamation for our own households. We must declare to the enemy and to God that we are not the ones in control. **He** is. We must fully absorb this fact and declare that it is "His camp" and that He has the right to do whatever is necessary to make it succeed. All too often we say that we are following God when, in reality, **we** are the ones making all the decisions in an attempt to remain in control. And this is exactly what Jacob did that Yahweh wanted to expose in Him. He declared it with his mouth, but watch what happens right after that.

Genesis 32:6-7 *"Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, 'We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.' [7] So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies."*

Jacob just sees angels all around him and declares that God is the Elohim (Master Judge) of his camp. But at the first sign of distress, he immediately goes back to being in charge, defaulting to his old nature and trying to manipulate his way out of the situation through his age-old cunning.

QUESTION: How often do we do the very same thing? How often do we have a great experience with God and then at the first sign of distress attempt to attack the problem with our own intellect instead of going to Him in prayer? Can you think of a time in your life when you acted just like Jacob?

The angels were all around him. He had declared that God was in control, yet Jacob chose to handle the situation himself. **THIS** is what God had to extract from Jacob. This character trait of running and scrapping his way through life, making things happen and forcing his way through the locked doors had to stop. He *had* to learn how to let **YAHWEH** lead and how to follow and trust the instructions of the Almighty.

Take a look at what happened when Jacob forgot Who was with him. The spirit of fear showed up and caused him to be “greatly afraid and distressed.” But we are not to allow fear to interfere with our lives. For if God is for us, who can be against us?

2 Timothy 1:7 “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, love and a sound mind.”

Fear is not from Yahweh. Fear is born out of a lack of trust in the One that created the heavens and the earth. If you had fifty Navy SEALs surrounding you everywhere you go it would be difficult to fear any one person that came against you. Now imagine having the hosts of heaven behind you, supporting you, and ready to fight for you wherever you go. There **is no fear** for those that know God is with them. No tribulation, no trial, nothing can truly create fear in us when we really comprehend Who is with us.

And what happens to Jacob because of this fear? His entire group gets split in two. Fear divides. I have seen this countless times and have even experienced it in my own ministry. When those that are gripped by fear act on it, the camp will always end in the division. Fear is a demonic spirit with one goal: divide and conquer. It separates you from the power and love of God and brings you into a state of isolation where you operate off of logic and walk by sight. It was in this fleshly way that Jacob processed situations under stress that the Almighty wanted to squeeze out of him. And how did He choose to do that? By forcing him to wrestle.

Genesis 32:22-32 And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok. [23] He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. [24] Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. [25] Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob’s hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. [26] And He said, “Let Me go, for the day breaks.”

But he said, “I will not let You go unless You bless me!”

[27] *So He said to him, “What is your name?”*

He said, “Jacob.”

[28] *And He said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.”*

[29] *Then Jacob asked, saying, “Tell me Your name, I pray.”*

And He said, “Why is it that you ask about My name?” And He blessed him there.

[30] *So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: “For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.” [31] Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip. [32] Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which is on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob’s hip in the muscle that shrank.*

QUESTION: We know that Jacob wrestled with God. But WHY did he wrestle? Why was he required to do so with the angel of the Lord all night? Take a minute and discuss this.

So. Jacob just sent everyone across the river but he stayed on this side of the Jabbok. He had no idea that the angels of heaven had already been dispatched to take care of Esau and change his heart. His family was about to meet a blessing but Jacob stayed behind and was gripped with fear. **Why?**



The truth of the matter is that Jacob was destined from birth to receive the firstborn blessing, but he *chose* to take shortcuts and use his ingenuity to make things happen. He never allowed Yahweh to make it happen for him His way. It was as if Jacob beat him to the punch every time. But no more. Jacob was not allowed to receive one more blessing through his own cunning. He now had to *qualify* for the blessing. He had to face his fears. He had to meet God face-to-face and prevail. He was not allowed to cross that river without first facing himself and the way he reacted to situations.

There can be no doubt that this angel was with him in verse one, but it's as if Jacob completely forgot about him. So God decided to simply stand right in front of him so he could see what had been there all along. Him. God wanted to change the way Jacob moved inside of time. He wanted him to change the way he saw situations and how he viewed life. We are not to walk by sight but by faith and Jacob didn't quite know what that meant. It was Yahweh who told Jacob to go back to the land of his forefathers. Did He not see that Jacob was going to face his brother first in order to do so? Did He not have it under control? Yahweh knew all that was planned for his journey and all of it was just a training exercise to get Jacob ready to lead what would become the greatest nation on earth.

Have you ever heard the phrase, *“You have to take one step back to take two steps forward”*? This is exactly what God was planning for Jacob and it is exactly how He trains us today. Jacob was not allowed to go forward until he came to grips with his past. He had an unresolved conflict. He had defrauded his brother and never looked back. As believers, we are not allowed to go to the next level with God without first making things right with our brother. Take a look at what Yeshua says in Matthew:

Matthew 5:23-24 “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,[24] leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

It is through this principle that God trained Jacob. He allowed Esau to come with four hundred men to intimidate Jacob and cause him to see his sin so he would come before his brother in repentance. This wrestling with God's experience was, in effect, the same as when we're in deep despair and come before Yahweh with prayers and supplications, entreating Him to intervene on our behalf. When Jacob passed the test, he asked the Angel for His name. But the Lord responded by simply giving *Jacob* a **new name**, which, in Hebrew culture, meant he had a **new nature** and a **new mission**. He had qualified to cross the river. But it was not without cost. The Lord touched Jacob's hip so that he would walk with a limp for the rest of his life. This limp is significant.

Limping means that one can no longer go fast. Limping means that one has to lean upon something for support. Limping means that others go first and you lead from behind. And this is exactly the lesson that God needed to teach Jacob. In order to qualify for his true calling, Jacob had to face his past and pay that debt as well as be trained to truly follow God without leaning on his own understanding.

Proverbs 3:5-6

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. [6] In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths.”

This is what Jacob needed to learn...what we **all** need to learn. Jacob was no longer allowed to run ahead of God. He was not allowed to make decisions based on what *he* thought was the right thing to do. He had to lean on God for every step and every circumstance that required a decision. He had to learn to stop leaning on his own understanding but to acknowledge God (You are God of this camp) in everything he did. When Jacob learned this lesson, his name was changed, and he was freed from isolation and allowed to cross the river and meet his destiny. It was His plan all along.

You know, as I sit here and write this, I can't help but get choked up as I see my **own** life in the story of Jacob. Maybe you do, too. I can relate to Jacob in many ways. When I went into ministry full-time I went 100 miles per hour and had to make many decisions on the fly to keep things going. I declared that God was the God of my camp but I leaned much on my own understanding. When God called me to cross the river and go to a higher level in my calling, I was forced to face my past first. When I chose to ignore the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit telling me to *not* go to work for that company in 2007, I had no idea that would be my Esau moment. It was that decision that would put me in exile away from my family. I leaned on my own understanding and **THOUGHT** I was doing the right thing but the Spirit knew better and tried to warn me. That disobedience caused me to be brought to a place where I have to struggle with God. Passing this test will allow me to be reunited with my family so I can continue to meet my calling on the other side of the river.

When God intervenes in our lives, it is for **our** benefit. It is because He desires us to hit our full potential in Him and because He wants to use us to fulfill a certain destiny. All of us are Jacob at one point or another and some of us fit his personality a little more intimately than others. But when all is said and done, in order for each of us to move closer to God and to our own life's destiny, we must cast off the spirit of fear and bitterness and take on the new name that He's given us. We are given the name Israel for a reason. It means **“those who struggle with God rule with God.”** No one crosses that river into their inheritance until they face themselves, face their past, and face God. The only way to truly rule with Him is to struggle with Him.

Are you struggling with Yahweh over something right now? Good. You are about to enter the Promised Land with a new name. Ask Him what He wants you to learn through this struggle. Compare it to the template here in this story of Jacob.

Learn it. Know it. Live it.

Shalom,

Jim Staley