

## 10. Jacob-Israel (2Q 2022— Genesis)

**Biblical Material:** Gen.32:22–31; Hos. 12:3, 4; Jer. 30:5–7; Genesis 33; Gen. 34:30–35:29.

### Quotes

- The next morning, Israel, limping because of his hip, injured during the night, finally meets his brother. Before greeting him, Israel bows seven times. Esau embraces him, and they both weep. What happens next is even more astonishing. Esau initially refuses his brother's peace offerings, saying that he already has enough. Israel insists, replying: "*No, please; if I find favor with you, then accept my present from my hand; for truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God....*" Gen. 33:10. Israel now sees "*the face of God*" in the face of the very brother who had sworn to kill him. This sacred story shows just how difficult reconciliation is. It involves risk; comes with sacrifice, even injury; and takes faith and trust in one's God. *Andrea Schneider*
- ...If somebody has an association with left or right, that individual is fighting God. He has the intention of fighting God, and his punishment is the punishment that people fighting God will receive. *Ayatollah Khomeini*
- Modern Israel is the result of God's direct intervention in history. I believe that those who speak contrary to this will be found to be fighting God. *Thomas Ice*
- When at last the sinner stops fighting God in his soul and surrenders, gives up his arguments, and yields to the conviction that he is rebellious, and fighting God, and that he completely deserves God's judgment... *R. L. Hymers*
- Belief in a cruel God makes a cruel man. *Thomas Paine*

### Questions

How is God perceived in these stories? As the participants live with the consequences of their actions, what can we learn? How did Jacob decide to become reconciled to Esau? Is it necessarily always wrong to be fighting God? How does God relate to our misunderstandings of him? In what ways do we see the issues in the great controversy working out here?

### Bible summary

Gen.32:22–31 recounts Jacob's fight with God as his new name of Israel. Hosea 12:3, 4 references this as well as the birth of the twins. Jer. 30:5–7 speaks of the time of Jacob's distress. Genesis 33 gives the account of Jacob meeting with Esau and (some degree of) resolution. Gen. 34:30–35:29 takes Jacob's story to the end of his life, noting his grief over the death of his beloved Rachel.

### Comment

How easily we dismiss those we disagree with as "fighting God"! Yet God seems to welcome at least the engagement—for this is surely better than disinterest and apathy...

One of the most striking aspects here in Genesis is how far people have gone from God. Those involved here are supposed to be of better character than others, the lineage that holds to God's principles. Yet there are lies and cheating, misrepresentation and manipulation. Polygamy seems to be accepted without comment, as is slavery. And what was Rachel doing stealing household gods?! Other issues include Jacob's attempts at genetic selection (was that what he was trying to do?), family rivalry, competition between Leah and Rachel in having sons. This

latter point even gets down to providing maidservants as surrogate mothers to Jacob so they can gain his favor by producing more sons!

Jacob, after his deception back home, is still living in fear of Esau. As he fearfully journeys home with his various wives and herds, he realizes he has to face up to Esau. He plans to send flocks as gifts ahead, as a way of reducing his offended brother's anger.

But before the plan goes ahead, he has to face God. The fight at the brook Jabbok illustrates his internal conflict. The eventual outcome was the tipping point in his life, and Jacob becomes Israel—from supplanter to victor. It has been a long struggle, with much pain and sadness—for example having to run from his family and never seeing his mother's face again.

All this is a long way from what God would wish. It almost seems that so soon in the history of humanity God has to draw lessons for us from the way things should *not* be! All too often, despite the differences in time and culture, these Biblical patriarchs are so very much like us in their attitudes and inter-personal relations.

We should not lose sight here of the underlying causes and the continuing drama. The conflict between God and Satan is now playing out here on planet Earth and each one is involved. Satan is trying to win the battle for the minds of God's children, and his successes are all too obvious. If it is a question of numbers, then he is winning here, as the vast majority in the time of the Flood or the Tower of Babel demonstrated. Now generations later, he is still making a play for each and every person, through every trick in the book. Most significantly, by working through humanity's tendency to do things their own way, he seeks to draw the followers of God off-track, and to trust in their own schemes. The deceptive practices in these chapters of Genesis well illustrate the way in which he insinuates and suggests, leading these participants to follow their own inclinations and desires.

### **Ellen White comments**

Jacob in his distress was not overwhelmed. He had repented, he had endeavored to atone for the wrong to his brother. And when threatened with death through the wrath of Esau, he sought help from God... In the power of His might the forgiven one stood up, no longer the supplanter, but a prince with God. He had gained not merely deliverance from his outraged brother, but deliverance from himself. The power of evil in his own nature was broken; his character was transformed. {Ed 147.3}

Jacob, in the great crisis of his life, turned aside to pray. He was filled with one overmastering purpose--to seek for transformation of character...

In the darkness the two struggled for the mastery. Not a word was spoken, but Jacob put forth all his strength, and did not relax his efforts for a moment. While he was thus battling for his life, the sense of his guilt pressed upon his soul; his sins rose up before him, to shut him out from God. But in his terrible extremity he remembered God's promises, and his whole heart went out in entreaty for His mercy. The struggle continued until near the break of day, when the stranger placed his finger upon Jacob's thigh, and he was crippled instantly. The patriarch now discerned the character of his antagonist. He knew that he had been in conflict with a heavenly messenger, and this was why his almost superhuman effort had not gained the victory. It was Christ, "the Angel of the covenant," who had revealed Himself to Jacob. The patriarch was now disabled and suffering the keenest pain, but he would not loosen his hold...

That for which Jacob had vainly wrestled in his own strength was won through self-surrender and steadfast faith. {CC 67.6}