

HELPS FOR BIBLE STUDY ON THE BOOK OF GENESIS

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General Subject: *The Return of Jacob and His Life with His Family*

Chapter 32: *Jacob's Conversion*

I. Preliminary Events:

A. "Mahanaim" vss. 1, 2

1. What is the significance of the fact that the angels of God met Jacob at this time?
 - a. Where and when had angels had a part in Jacob's life before?
 - b. Why should they appear at this particular time?
 - c. Where was Mahanaim?
2. What is the meaning of "Mahanaim"? To what does Jacob refer by this name?

B. Jacob's messengers to Esau vss. 3-8

1. What does the fact that Jacob sends these messengers at this time prove?
 - a. Where was Jacob now?
 - b. Where had Esau settled?
 - c. Was this action of Jacob not a bit premature?
2. What is Jacob's attitude at this time toward Esau?
 - a. Why does he call Esau his "lord"? Why does he call himself Esau's servant? Was this true? Was it proper?
 - b. Does the rest of Jacob's message fit in with this terminology? Why does Jacob refer to his great possessions?
 - c. Why does he want to find grace in Esau's sight?
3. With what news did the messengers return?
 - a. Does the text state the purpose of Esau's coming to meet Jacob with four hundred men?
 - b. How does Jacob evidently interpret Esau's coming?
 - c. Why was Jacob "greatly afraid and distressed"?
 - 1) Does this represent a different turn of events for Jacob?
 - 2) If Jacob's trust had been in the right place, would he have to be afraid?
 - 3) Was Jacob perhaps attempting to solve matters, up to this time, in his own strength?
 - d. Would it be correct to say that God Himself was through Esau coming against Jacob at this time, that is, against Jacob as he attempted to solve his problems with an arm of flesh?
 - e. What was God's purpose in Jacob's becoming afraid and distressed?
4. What was Jacob's strategy in meeting the situation?
 - a. Was this a good piece of strategy?
 - b. Was this the solution for his fear and distress?

C. Jacob's Prayer vss. 9-12

1. To whom does Jacob pray?
2. On what basis does Jacob plead?

3. What does he acknowledge concerning himself?
4. For what does he plead?
5. How would you evaluate this prayer of Jacob?
 - a. Was deliverance from Esau the thing Jacob most needed at this time?
 - b. Or did Jacob need more deeply deliverance from his own carnal nature?
 - c. How do you harmonize Jacob's strategy with Jacob's prayer? Does he mean to say, "Lord, please make my strategy succeed"?
6. How did the Lord answer Jacob's prayer?

D. Jacob's Plan to Appease Esau vss. 13-23

1. Describe Jacob's plan vss. 13-20.
2. Evaluate the plan.
 - a. What did Jacob intend to achieve by this?
 - b. What was the idea of leaving a space between drove and drove?
 - c. Would this leave the two-fold impression of being a very elaborate and generous present and of Jacob's being a great and powerful man?
 - d. Are the words "thy servant" said "with tongue in cheek"?
3. What was the location of this activity?
 - a. Where is the Jabbok?
 - b. How and why was Jacob finally left alone that night?

II. Jacob Wrestling with God vss. 24-32 (Cf. Hosea 12:3, 4)

A. The Object of the Wrestling.

1. For what did Jacob wrestle? Vs. 26
 - a. Did Jacob merely want a blessing in general?
 - b. Or did he want the blessing of the covenant? Cf. vs. 12
 - c. What is implied in that blessing?
 - d. Were Jacob and the other patriarchs merely interested in the temporal blessings of the land of Canaan? Proof?
2. Was this blessing now at stake?
 - a. Is it correct to say that Jacob had been wrestling for this blessing all his life?
 - b. What was the difference between Jacob and Esau in this respect? What produced this difference?
 - c. On what had Jacob relied all his life in his struggle for the blessing? Proof?
 - d. What is the meaning of the name Jacob? Do you think it is a nice name? Is there also a reference to the carnal element in Jacob in this name?
3. How and why does God come against Jacob at this time?
 - a. Through Esau? What will be proved if Esau comes and destroys Jacob?
 - b. Why does God come personally against Jacob? What is the purpose of this? What is Jacob compelled to do finally with a view to the covenant and then its blessing?

B. The Wrestling.

1. Who was it that came to wrestle with Jacob? Proof?
2. What was the character of the battle?
 - a. Was the chief question one of physical strength?
 - b. Or was the question whether Jacob was spiritually strong enough to "overcome God"?

- c. What purpose did the physical side of this wrestling serve?
- 3. How did Jacob battle? Hosea 12:4
 - a. For what did Jacob weep?
 - b. What does it mean that he made supplication? What is implied in supplication?
- 4. On what basis did Jacob plead? (cf. vs. 12)
 - a. Did Jacob personally possess this Word? Proof?
 - b. What change came over Jacob at this time therefore?
- C. The Outcome.
 - 1. Jacob's new name.
 - a. Why was his name changed?
 - b. What memory would always be connected with the name Jacob?
 - c. What is the meaning of and the reason for the name Israel?
 - d. Why are God's people later still called "Jacob"?
 - 2. Did Jacob obtain the blessing?
 - a. Why does he ask for the name of Him Who wrestled with him?
 - b. Why is that name not given? Was it necessary? Was this name revealed in the fact that "He blessed him there"?
 - 3. What was the possibility of this victory?
 - a. How could Jacob prevail and overcome God?
 - 1) If God came against Jacob, how could Jacob conquer?
 - 2) How could he even have the courage to wrestle?
 - b. How only can God be held and prevailed upon? And how only is it possible to do this?
 - 4. Is this wrestling and victory characteristic of all spiritual Israelites?

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