

## The Book of Genesis

### Chapter 32

**32:1 As Jacob continued his journey he was met by angels** [Hebrew: "malach" = "messenger"] **of God.** (REB)

**32:2-3 When Jacob saw them, he said, "This is the camp** [REB: "company"] **of God!" So he named that place Mahanaim. Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir** [stretched from south of the Dead Sea to the Arabian Gulf], **the country of Edom** [thus named after God drove out the Horites when Esau moved there (DEU 2:22)]. (NIV)

#### Mahanaim

The name Mahanaim means "two camps" or "two companies" and referred to the company of God's angels and the company of Jacob's family.

#### Jacob's Return

The last time Jacob and Esau were together, Esau was threatening to kill Jacob for stealing his blessing (27:41). Jacob now returns under God's direction, and before coming to his father Isaac, notifies his brother.

**32:4-5 He instructed them: "This is what you are to say to my master Esau: 'Your servant Jacob says, I have been staying with Laban and have remained there till now. I have cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, menservants and maidservants. Now I am sending this message to my lord, that I may find favor in your eyes.'"** (NIV)

Jacob is asking Esau's forgiveness for what he had done 40 years ago in 1758 BC.

**32:6 The messengers returned to Jacob and said, 'We went to your brother Esau and he is already on the way to meet you with four hundred men.'** (REB)

**32:7-8 In great fear and distress Jacob divided the people who were with him into two groups, and the flocks and herds and camels as well. He thought, "If Esau comes and attacks one group, the group that is left may escape."** (NIV)

After doing all he could for his family, Jacob now turns to God to do what only He can do.

**32:9-10 Then Jacob prayed, "O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,' I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups** [REB, TAN: "camps"; NKJ: "companies"]. (NIV)

**32:11 Save me, I pray, from my brother Esau, for I am afraid that he may come and destroy me; he will spare neither mother nor child.** (REB)

Esau's Character

Jacob knew that Esau could be ruthless, showing no mercy even to women and children.

**32:12 "For You said, 'I will surely treat you well' [NIV: "make you prosper"], and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.' "**

**32:13-15 He spent the night there, and from what he had with him he selected a gift for his brother Esau: two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty female camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. (NIV)**

As one last preparation, Jacob hatches a plan to appease Esau by offering him a gift worth a fortune by the standards of that day.

**32:16-20 He put them in the care of his servants, each herd by itself, and said to his servants, "Go ahead of me, and keep some space between the herds." He instructed the one in the lead: "When my brother Esau meets you and asks, 'To whom do you belong, and where are you going, and who owns all these animals in front of you?' then you are to say, 'They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a gift sent to my lord Esau, and he is coming behind us.'" He also instructed the second, the third and all the others who followed the herds: "You are to say the same thing to Esau when you meet him. And be sure to say, 'Your servant Jacob is coming behind us.'" For he thought, "I will pacify him with these gifts I am sending on ahead; later, when I see him, perhaps he will receive me." (NIV)**

Jacob had learned the importance of doing good to those who hate you (MAT 5:44).

**32:21-23 So Jacob's gifts went on ahead of him, but he himself spent the night in the camp. That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. (NIV)**

The place of fording was about 10 miles east of the Jordan River, 35 miles north of the Dead Sea.

**32:24 Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man [God Himself, not an angel] wrestled with him until the breaking of day.**

**32:25 When the Man saw that He could not get the better of Jacob, He struck ["naga" = anything from a touch to a violent blow] him in the hollow of his thigh, so that Jacob's hip was dislocated as they wrestled. (REB)**

Jacob's Struggle

Apparently God manifested Himself in the human form, limiting His physical power to be equal with Jacob's. The whole purpose of this wrestling match was to complete the needed requirements for renaming Jacob.

**32:26 And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"**

Since God manifested Himself to Abraham in daylight periods, there must be more significance to the end of the night than God not wanting to appear during the day. There may have been an agreement made before they started wrestling to stop once it became light.

**32:27-28 So He said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." 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."**

#### Jacob's Renaming

"Israel" can be derived from two different combinations of Hebrew words:

1. *sarah* [ruled as a prince]...*el* [God]: "*a prince of God.*"
2. *ish* [man]...*raah* [he saw]...*el* [God]: "*the man who saw God.*"

#### Jacob's Prevailing

Jacob's entire life had been one of struggle. He struggled with his brother and father to obtain the patriarch's blessing. He struggled with his father-in-law to obtain the wife he wanted and then the livestock he was promised. Now he had struggled with God to receive His blessing.

**32:29 Then Jacob asked Him, saying, "Tell me Your name, I pray." And He said, "Why is it that you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there** [TAN: "You must not ask my name!" And he took leave of him there."].

God was not yet ready to reveal Himself to Jacob as El Shaddai.

**32:30 So Jacob called the place Peniel** [or *Penuel*, derived from "panim...el" meaning "the faces of El"], **saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."** (NIV)

**32:31-32 The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping on his hip. That is why the children of Israel to this day do not eat the thigh muscle that is on the socket of the hip, since Jacob's hip socket was wrenched at the thigh muscle.** (TAN)

Verse 32 is an editorial comment possibly made after Moses.