

## Exegetical Notes – Genesis 32:22-32

### *“A New Man”*

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(Now all three of the basic theological questions Genesis asks have been presented and answered in the text. The first question is, “Whose world is it anyway?” The text answers the question by affirming that it is God’s world by right of creation. It is God’s world because God made it. The second question Genesis asks is “How do we get along in God’s world God’s way?” The answer is by trusting God and obeying Him. The third question Genesis asks is “How do we get along in God’s world God’s way with other people, particularly with the members of our own family?” The answer is we get over the offense and forgive and forget. The rest of the book of Genesis shows us how this process works out.)

### Genesis 32:22-32

#### Verses 22-24

***<sup>22</sup> That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. <sup>23</sup> After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. <sup>24</sup> So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak.***

- Jacob prepared to meet his brother Esau to whom he had done many wrong things. He was afraid that Esau will greet him in wrath. He knew that Esau was approaching him with 400 armed men (see verse 6). Jacob was greatly afraid of what Esau would do (see verse 7). He had sent a gift to Esau. He had divided his company and sent them ahead of him. Jacob was alone and worried.
- During the night a man (Hosea says an “angel” (see Hosea 12:4)) wrestled with Jacob. The word translated “wrestled” means struggled. Hosea says that in the struggle Jacob wept and begged for mercy. The implication is that the struggle was more than physical. The struggle last through the night until the dawn of the next day.

## Verses 25-28

<sup>25</sup> *When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. <sup>26</sup> Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."*

*But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."*

<sup>27</sup> *The man asked him, "What is your name?"*

*"Jacob," he answered.*

<sup>28</sup> *Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."*

- The being with whom Jacob struggled that night did not force Jacob to surrender. The being allowed the struggle for Jacob's sake. But the being did change Jacob through the struggle. He touched Jacob's hip so Jacob was changed. Though the being was not altered or weakened in the struggle, Jacob was.
- At dawn, the being sought to depart from Jacob. But Jacob told the being that he would not let him leave unless the being first blessed him. First, note that Jacob asked to be blessed by the being. This is an indication that Jacob acknowledged that the being was greater than he. Second, note that Jacob was wounded in the struggle. He left it differently than he entered it. He was changed by this struggle.
- The being asked Jacob his name. This was not because the being did not know Jacob's name. It was to force Jacob into admitting who he was.
- The blessing that the being granted Jacob was a new name. Jacob means deceiver or tricky (see Genesis 27:36). He lived true to his name until this struggle. But from this point on he would be known as Israel. Israel means "the one who persists or struggles with God and who overcomes." He did not overcome God but was altered by the struggle.

## Verse 29

<sup>29</sup> *Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."*

*But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.*

- Jacob wanted to know the name of the being with whom he had struggled through the night. But the question was answered in the new name, IsraEL. The "el" at the end of the name is the Hebrew word for "GOD." In the struggle Jacob was wrestling with God, himself. That is why the being must depart at dawn (see Exodus 33:20). No one may look upon the face of God and live!)

### **Verses 30-32**

***<sup>30</sup> So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, “It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.”***

***<sup>31</sup> The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip. <sup>32</sup> Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob’s hip was touched near the tendon.***

- Jacob understood what had happened that night. He had been struggling with God and God had changed him. He was different as a result of the struggle
- Jacob named the place Peniel which means “the face of God” (the face of EL).
- Jacob limped. God had changed him, weakened him; God had made him less dependent on Jacob and more dependent upon God.
- Out of respect and remembrance of the lesson God taught Jacob on that night, Jews do not eat the sciatic nerve on the hind quarter of any animal. This was a remarkable event! EL Shaddai, the All Powerful God, did not crush Jacob, he allowed Jacob to struggle with Him and in that struggle, Jacob was changed.

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