

Sent: Wednesday, March 20, 2019 1:02 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Genesis 32-33

"Be still (cease striving!) and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! The LORD of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold."
(Psalms 46:10-11)

Having appeased Laban (in last week's lesson), Jacob "went on his way" to the land of Canaan and "was met by the angels of God"! This must have reminded him of the angels of God who appeared to him 20 years earlier in a dream "under the stars" at Bethel, as he was departing Canaan for Mesopotamia! It was there that the God of his father Abraham had assured him that He, "would be with him wherever he would go and bring him back to this land" (Genesis 28:12-15). And so, just as angels had met to comfort him as he had departed Canaan, they would now meet him as he returned! Surely God was with him!

He could have headed west and gone directly to Bethel (his ultimate destination), but he somehow realized that he first needed to be reconciled with his brother Esau, in part to fulfill his vow to God! That "if God would be with him and keep him on his journey...and give food to eat and garments to wear, then the Lord would be his God!" (Certainly he had experienced all that and so much more!) Surely God was with him!

And so he sent messengers to Esau who was living in the land of Seir, in the country of Edom (which was southeast of the Dead Sea) to tell Esau (who Jacob calls "my lord") about his "sojourn" with (uncle) Laban, how he had prospered, and now "hoped to find his brother's favor" (perhaps by sharing his riches and maybe returning some of the "blessing" he had stolen from Esau!) But the feedback from his messengers wasn't favorable! Esau was on his way to meet Jacob and "he had 400 men with him"! Oops! Was it "war"? What now?

Well, Jacob did what most of us do in a crisis! He prayed! And what a prayer it was (in Genesis 33:9-12)! Reminding God of His promises (not that God wasn't already aware) and expressing real humility (which Willmington writes was probably the first time he ever acknowledged his "unworthiness" before God)! And, most importantly, asking for "deliverance" from the hand of his brother!

However, Jacob's strategy for "dealing" with Esau didn't demonstrate a whole lot of faith in God's power to change Esau's heart! Instead, he put together what could only be considered a "magnanimous" present of close to 600 animals (sheep, goats, cows, donkeys, and camels) and had his servants "deliver them in droves," announcing that they were a "present" from Jacob "who was behind them"! Making him an offer he couldn't refuse! Thinking that it would "appease" him and somehow gain his acceptance!

Then, as the "present" was being "passed on before him," he tried to sleep, but sleep wouldn't come! And so he arose during the night and "took his two wives and his two maids and his eleven children and all that he had and crossed the ford of the Jabbok river, obviously to get everything set up for the next day's confrontation with Esau!

Then, while being alone, "a man" (an "angel" according to Hosea 13:4), who ultimately became viewed as the pre-incarnate Christ (God), "wrestled with him until daybreak!" (Willmington describes it as, "one of the most mysterious and wondrous events in all the Bible"!) And Jacob, despite already suffering from a dislocated socket in his thigh, finally realized he was fighting with God, yet refused to "let go until he received a blessing"! At that point, God confirmed His presence by telling Jacob that his name would no longer be Jacob, but "Israel, for you have striven with God, and with men, and have prevailed!" (i.e., he was still alive!)

Bill Arnold writes: "Jacob had received his father's (Isaac) blessing by deceit and treachery! Now, wracked with fear of Esau's revenge, his wrestling turned to desperate determination, and he came away crippled, blessed, and renamed! He also learned that, "it was God that he was struggling with all his life" (not Esau in Canaan or Laban in Mesopotamia)! Also that "true blessing comes from submission to God's will" and that, "in God's economy, strength comes through weakness"!

And so Jacob named the place "Peniel," for "he had seen God face to face, yet survived"! He was a changed man! And now ready to "face" Esau!

O what a night!

Genesis 33:1 says: "Then Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and behold! Esau was coming, with 400 men"! And so Jacob quickly went with his plan, which he had carefully crafted, to "put the maids and their children in front, with Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last" (showing his "favoritism")! But now, demonstrating his new character, verse 3 says that he himself passed on ahead of them and bowed down seven times until he came near his brother"! Arnold writes that the "pre-Peniel" Jacob would have remained behind his divided goods and family, but the "post-Peniel" Jacob went on ahead of his family to meet Esau (head-on!).

To Jacob's (and everyone's) surprise, Esau came running to meet him, "and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept!" He then greeted the women and the children, and Jacob noted that, "God had graciously given your servant the children!"

God had obviously been working in Esau's life as well! He at first declined Jacob's "presents," noting that he "had plenty"! But Jacob insisted, for he said he "saw Esau's face as one sees the face of God, and that he had received him favorably"! And so Esau received "his blessing"!

To further show his friendship, Esau welcomed Jacob to accompany him to the land of Seir or to send some of his men along to wherever Jacob would head, all of which Jacob declined (suggesting he was not ready to go that far in their newly struck relationship)! But he would "come to my lord at Seir" someday, he promised, something that apparently never happened!

And so, Esau headed back south to Seir while Jacob journeyed west to Succoth, where he "built for himself a house and made booths for his livestock" (which indicated that he still had a considerable amount of livestock and servants left in his possession after giving Esau so much)! But some time later (not clear on how long he stayed in Succoth), Jacob crossed the Jordan and "bought a piece of land in the city of Shechem (the writer is quick to add, "which is in the land of

Canaan"!) and pitched his tent"! He later, "erected there an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel, meaning "God, the God of Israel"! (Shechem was where God had appeared to Abraham when he first entered Canaan and where he also built an altar to God!)

And so, what a wonderful ending for the Jacob narrative (it would seem)! The God of Abraham and the God of Isaac has now become the God of Jacob!

Would this mean that Jacob (Israel) would actually now "cease striving" and "know" and follow his God and see Him exalted among the nations and in his new world? We'll see as we move on to Genesis 34 and delve into some serious "family matters"!

Well, men, let us too "cease striving" and see God working out His plan and purpose in our lives!

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