

Genesis

Jacob-Israel

Lesson #10 for June 4, 2022

Scriptures: Genesis 32:22-31; 33; 34:30-35:29; Hosea 12:3-4; Jeremiah 30:5-7.

1. In this lesson we will follow the life of Jacob after he left Laban and returned to Canaan and the change of his name from Jacob to Israel.
2. God appeared to Laban and told him not to cause trouble for Jacob. Later, God appeared to Jacob, seeming to wrestle with him. At about the same time, God appeared to Esau, telling him not to attack or injure Jacob or his family. What does this tell us about God's concern for each of us individually? Would you like to have that kind of guidance?
3. Jacob's struggle that night with Christ is described as the *time of Jacob's trouble*. A time like that will come again to the people living in the final days of this world's history.

Jeremiah 30:5-7: ⁵"I heard a cry of terror,
a cry of fear and not of peace.

⁶Now stop and think!

Can a man give birth to a child?

Why then do I see every man with his hands on his stomach
like a woman in labour?

Why is everyone so pale?

**⁷A terrible day is coming;
no other day can compare with it—
a time of distress for my people,**

but they will survive."—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Jeremiah 30:5-7). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].^{†‡}

4. God's promises held true for Jacob/Israel. Try to imagine Jacob's thoughts as he got closer and closer to Esau. He was the only one in his large company who knew about Esau in detail and about their previous experiences and conflicts.

5. Jacob sent a group of messengers ahead of the large company, presenting gifts for Esau.

Genesis 32:6: When the messengers came back to Jacob, they said, "We went to your brother Esau, and he is already on his way to meet you. He has 400 men with him."—*Good News Bible.** [Were those men peacekeepers? Or, warriors?][‡]

6. And how did the LORD respond?

Genesis 32:22-31: ²² That same night Jacob got up, took his two wives, his two concubines, and his eleven children, and crossed the River Jabbok. ²³After he had sent them across, he also sent across all that he owned, ²⁴but he stayed behind, alone.

Then **a man** came and wrestled with him until just before daybreak. ²⁵When **the man** saw that he was not winning the struggle, he struck Jacob on the

hip, and it was thrown out of joint. ²⁶**The man** said, “Let me go; daylight is coming.”

“I won’t, unless you bless me,” Jacob answered.

²⁷ “What is your name?” the man asked.

“Jacob,” he answered.

²⁸ **The man** said, “Your name will no longer be Jacob. **You have struggled with God** and with men, and you have won; so **your name will be Israel.**”

²⁹ Jacob said, “Now tell me your name.”

But he answered, “Why do you want to know my name?” Then he blessed Jacob. [Was Jacob able to see the “Man” with whom he was fighting? Was it God?]

³⁰ Jacob said, “**I have seen God face to face, and I am still alive**”; so he named the place Peniel. ³¹The sun rose as Jacob was leaving Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†‡}

Hosea 12:3-4: ³Their ancestor Jacob struggled with his twin brother Esau while the two of them were still in their mother’s womb; when Jacob grew up, he fought against God— ⁴he fought against an angel and won. He wept and asked for a blessing. And at Bethel God came to our ancestor Jacob and spoke with him.—*Good News Bible*.^{*} [Why would God do such a thing?][‡]

7. At some point in his struggle with Christ, Jacob must have recognized that it was no ordinary human being with whom he was wrestling.

It is precisely at this moment that God chooses to approach Jacob. This extraordinary confrontation will radically change the character of Jacob. As a result, **Jacob is renamed Israel**. Jacob’s encounter with God at Peniel corresponds to his Bethel encounter. The two accounts echo each other in words, structure, and themes. While Bethel begins at sunset, Peniel ends at sunrise, with the prospect of a glorious future. After a night of wrestling, Jacob emerges from his encounter with a blessing and a new name. He has **had a personal encounter with the God of love** and lived. In turn, Jacob is able to look upon the face of his enemy, his brother, Esau, in humility and love.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} 132.[†] [What would your spouse say to you if you woke up one morning and said that you had had a fight or struggle with God and that He had changed your name?][‡]

8. What happened that night beside the Jabbok River? What was God trying to teach Jacob as they wrestled? Did Jacob know with whom he was fighting? (See Genesis 32:28.) Why did He approach Jacob in that way? Does God usually appear to us as an adversary? (Compare Joshua 5:13-15.) Was there any special significance to this nighttime battle? Why did God change Jacob’s name at that point? Why did He apparently refuse to tell Jacob His name? Notice Jacob’s response at the end of their conversation: “**I have seen God face to face, and I am still alive.**” (**Genesis 32:30, GNB**^{*}) Was God just playing with Jacob? Is there any way that Jacob could have, in fact, wrestled with God and overcome Him? Why was he given the name “God struggles”? Or, “May God struggle”?

9. How do you understand Genesis 32:28? Compare this encounter with Abraham's several encounters with God.

Jacob's distress derives from two causes. The first is horizontal and is related to his brother. The second is vertical and relates to God. Jacob's first concern is with his brother, to whom he sends two companies of messengers. This initiative is a strategic operation to safeguard the second camp: in the event that the first camp is attacked, the second camp will have time to escape. Jacob decides to send "two camps of messengers" to Esau. Jacob calls his two camps of human messengers by the same name, *makhaneh*, "camps" (*Gen. 32:7, [8]*). Jacob understands that in order to recover his relationship with God, he must restore his relationship with his brother.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 133.§ [The brackets and the content in brackets in the paragraph above are in the Bible study guide.]‡

10. Jacob struggled there at the River Jabbok, because he knew that God had instructed him to return from Haran to Canaan and, yet, he saw danger ahead. Jacob reminded God that He had promised him a posterity, and, likely, he would have no surviving offspring if Esau attacked them.
11. Jacob had divided his family and workers into two separate groups in the hope that if Esau should attack one group, the other group might be able to escape.
12. After sending those two camps ahead of him, Jacob remained behind on the other side of the Jabbok where he wrestled with God.
13. Why would God come down and apparently "wrestle" with Jacob? There can be no question but the fact that it was Christ Himself, even though He is referred to as *a man* or *the man*.

The information that this Man (God) did not prevail contains an important theological lesson about God in His relationship with humans. God's "weakness" in His confrontation with humans is an expression of His grace and love and of the mystery of His incarnation to save humans. The impression of weakness is immediately contradicted by the Man's next move. A simple touch is sufficient to produce the dislocation, suggesting a superhuman power.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 134. [God's apparent "weakness" in dealing with human beings is His refusal to take away our freedom. Love is impossible without freedom.]‡

14. Jacob sent several parties with large gifts to Esau.

Genesis 32:4,18-20: ⁴He instructed them to say: "**I, Jacob, your obedient servant**, report to my master Esau that I have been staying with Laban and that I have delayed my return until now...."

¹⁸ "You must answer, 'They belong to your servant Jacob. He sends them as a present to his master Esau. Jacob himself is just behind us.' " ¹⁹He gave the same order to the second, the third, and to all the others who were in charge of the herds: "This is what you must say to Esau when you meet him. ²⁰You must say, 'Yes, your servant Jacob is just behind us.'" Jacob

was thinking, “I will win him over with the gifts, and when I meet him, perhaps he will forgive me.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

15. In the morning, Jacob moved forward to meet his brother. They had been separated for 20 years.
16. What connection was there between Jacob’s experience of seeing the face of God at Peniel and Jacob’s experience of seeing the face of his brother? What is the implication of this connection regarding our relationship with God and our relationship with our “brothers,” whoever they may be?

The two companies at last approached each other, the desert chief leading his men of war, and Jacob with his wives and children, attended by shepherds and handmaidens, and followed by long lines of flocks and herds. **Leaning upon his staff, the patriarch went forward to meet the band of soldiers. He was pale and disabled from his recent conflict, and he walked slowly and painfully, halting at every step; but his countenance was lighted up with joy and peace.**

At sight of that crippled sufferer, “Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.” [Genesis 33:4, *KJV*]* **As they looked upon the scene, even the hearts of Esau’s rude soldiers were touched. Notwithstanding he had told them of his dream, they could not account for the change that had come over their captain.** Though they beheld the patriarch’s infirmity, they little thought that this his weakness had been made his strength.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 198.3-4.†‡

Jacob bows himself seven times before his brother (*Gen. 33:3*), whom he calls several times “ ‘my lord’ ” (*Gen. 33:8, 13, 15, NKJV*) and with whom he identifies himself as his “ ‘servant’ ” (*Gen. 33:5; compare with Gen. 32:4, 18, 20, NKJV*). Significantly, Jacob’s seven bows echo his father’s seven blessings (*Gen. 27:27–29*); furthermore, when he bows, he specifically reverses his father’s blessing, about “ ‘nations [bowing] down to you’ ” (*Gen. 27:29, NKJV*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, May 30.§ [The brackets and the content in brackets in the paragraph above are in the Bible study guide.]‡

17. When Jacob approached his brother limping and Esau saw him, Esau came running to Jacob, embraced him, and kissed him. **To Jacob, that was like seeing the face of God.**

The error that had led to Jacob’s sin in obtaining the birthright by fraud was now clearly set before him. He had not trusted God’s promises, but had sought by his own efforts to bring about that which God would have accomplished in His own time and way.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 197.2-198.0.†

[From the writings of Ellen White=EGW:] **Satan had accused Jacob before the angels of God, claiming the right to destroy him because of his sin; he had moved upon Esau to march against him; and during the patriarch’s long night of wrestling, Satan endeavored to force upon him a sense of his guilt, in order to discourage him, and break his hold**

upon God.... [Were God and Satan both working on Jacob at the same time? Think of Jesus on the cross.]

Had not Jacob previously repented of his sin in obtaining the birthright by fraud, God could not have heard his prayer and mercifully preserved his life. [If Jacob had not repented, Satan would have tried to claim that Jacob belonged to him. But, since Jacob had repented, God rebuked Satan and claimed Jacob as His.] So in the time of trouble, if the people of God had unconfessed sins to appear before them while tortured with fear and anguish, they would be overwhelmed; despair would cut off their faith, and they could not have confidence to plead with God for deliverance. But while they have a deep sense of their unworthiness, they will have no concealed wrongs to reveal. Their sins will have been blotted out by the atoning blood of Christ, and they cannot bring them to remembrance.

Satan leads many to believe that God will overlook their unfaithfulness in the minor affairs of life; but the Lord shows in His dealing with Jacob that He can in no wise sanction or tolerate evil. All who endeavor to excuse or conceal their sins, and permit them to remain upon the books of heaven, unconfessed and unforgiven, will be overcome by Satan. The more exalted their profession, and the more honorable the position which they hold, the more grievous is their course in the sight of God, and the more certain the triumph of the great adversary.

Yet Jacob's history is an assurance that God will not cast off those who have been betrayed into sin, but who have returned unto Him with true repentance. It was by self-surrender and confiding faith that Jacob gained what he had failed to gain by conflict in his own strength. God thus taught His servant that divine power and grace alone could give him the blessing he craved. **Thus it will be with those who live in the last days. As dangers surround them, and despair seizes upon the soul, they must depend solely upon the merits of the atonement. We can do nothing of ourselves. In all our helpless unworthiness we must trust in the merits of the crucified and risen Saviour. None will ever perish while they do this. The long, black catalogue of our delinquencies is before the eye of the Infinite. The register is complete; none of our offenses are forgotten. But He who listened to the cries of His servants of old, will hear the prayer of faith and pardon our transgressions. He has promised, and He will fulfill His word.** [God has a better record of our past sins than Satan does. God can even read our motives! The Bible is full of the details about the sins of the saints. If all records of the sins of the saints must be erased, will there need to be a huge burning of Bibles before we enter heaven?]

Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined. His experience testifies to the power of importunate [persistent, insistent, tenacious] prayer. It is now that we are to learn this lesson of prevailing prayer, of unyielding faith. The greatest victories to the church of Christ or to the individual Christian are not those that are gained by talent or

education, by wealth or the favor of men. They are those victories that are gained in the audience chamber with God, when earnest, agonizing faith lays hold upon the mighty arm of power.

Those who are unwilling to forsake every sin and to seek earnestly for God's blessing, will not obtain it. But all who will lay hold of God's promises as did Jacob, and be as earnest and persevering as he was, will succeed as he succeeded. "Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily." Luke 18:7, 8.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 201.3-203.2.†‡

I saw that the four angels would hold the four winds until Jesus' work was done in the sanctuary, and then will come the seven last plagues. These plagues enraged the wicked against the righteous; they thought that we had brought the judgments of God upon them, and that if they could rid the earth of us, the plagues would then be stayed. **A decree went forth to slay the saints**, which caused them to cry day and night for deliverance. This was **the time of Jacob's trouble**.—Ellen G. White, *Early Writings** 36.2.†

18. There are several people listed in Scripture who had their names changed by God: Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Joshua, Paul, and Peter—to mention a few. Why did God change those people's names?

Genesis 33:1-17: Jacob saw Esau coming with his 400 men, so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two concubines. ²He put the concubines and their children first, then Leah and her children, and finally Rachel and Joseph at the rear. ³Jacob went ahead of them and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother. ⁴But Esau ran to meet him, threw his arms round him, and kissed him. They were both crying. ⁵When Esau looked round and saw the women and the children, he asked, "Who are these people with you?"

"These, sir, are the children whom God has been good enough to give me," Jacob answered. ⁶Then the concubines came up with their children and bowed down; ⁷then Leah and her children came, and last of all Joseph and Rachel came and bowed down.

⁸ Esau asked, "What about that other group I met? What did that mean?" Jacob answered, "It was to gain your favour."

⁹ But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have."

¹⁰ Jacob said, "No, please, if I have gained your favour, accept my gift. **To see your face is for me like seeing the face of God, now that you have been so friendly to me.** ¹¹Please accept this gift which I have brought for you; God has been kind to me and given me everything I need." Jacob kept on urging him until he accepted.

¹² Esau said, "Let's prepare to leave. I will go ahead of you."

¹³ Jacob answered, "You know that the children are weak, and I must think of the sheep and cattle with their young. If they are driven hard for even one day, the whole herd will die. ¹⁴Please go on ahead of me, and I will follow

slowly, going as fast as I can with the livestock and the children until I catch up with you in Edom.” [How did Esau know that Jacob was approaching? Did Jacob ever go to Edom?]

¹⁵ Esau said, “Then let me leave some of my men with you.”

But Jacob answered, “There is no need for that for I only want to gain your favour.” ¹⁶So that day Esau started on his way back to Edom. ¹⁷But Jacob went to Sukkoth, where he built a house for himself and shelters for his livestock. That is why the place was named Sukkoth.—*Good News Bible*.*††

Jacob’s experience of God’s forgiveness at Peniel, where he saw the face of God, is now repeated in his experience of his brother’s forgiveness, which he identifies as if he saw the face of God. Jacob lives a second Peniel, the first one preparing for the second one. Jacob has been forgiven by God and by his own brother. Truly, he now must have understood, even more than before, the meaning of grace.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, May 30.

19. After successfully meeting Esau and, then, moving on to establish a place in Canaan, **Jacob purchased a piece of land from the inhabitants of Canaan.** (Genesis 33:19)
20. For the first time in his life, Jacob/Israel was exposed to the troubles of settling into the land. He did his best to find accommodation with the surrounding Canaanite neighbors. It reminds us of the experience of Isaac and Abimelech as recorded in Genesis 26.
21. Read the story in Genesis 34. **Dinah, Jacob’s only daughter** wanted to have an opportunity to spend time with other young women. But, she was apparently a beautiful young woman and was very attractive to Shechem, the king’s son. He could not control his passions, and he attacked her and raped her. As a result, her older brothers, Simeon and Levi, tricked the Shechemites into circumcising themselves so that they could become a part of the Israelite community. And then while they were physically disabled from the circumcision, Simeon and Levi attacked them and destroyed all the men, taking the property and the women back with them to their camp.

The story of this sordid incident highlights the ambiguity of the characters and of their actions. The sensual Shechem, who violates Dinah, also is characterized as sincere and loving Dinah, and he wants to try to make amends. He is even willing to undergo the covenant rite of circumcision.

Meanwhile, Simeon and Levi, who present themselves as the defenders of God and His commandments, and who resist intermarriage with the Canaanites (*Lev. 19:29*), resort to lies and deception (*Gen. 34:13*) and are ready to kill and plunder (*Gen. 34:25–27*). Their actions were not only reprehensible (why not punish the one man who had done it?) but also had the potential to cause many more problems.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, May 31. §

22. Sincere repentance involves moving away from and eliminating sin. God protected Jacob and his family after the Shechemite debacle.
23. In these stories, we see not only acts of kindness and grace but also acts of deceit and deception. What does this tell us about human nature? Would any of us do some of those things?

24. As a result of that experience at Shechem, Jacob feared for his life and decided to move his family to Bethel. At Bethel, Rebekah's elderly nurse, Deborah, died. And **the blessing that was given to Abraham and to Isaac, promising that the entire land would be theirs, was repeated to Jacob.**
25. Jacob did what he could to eliminate all false religious practices. He told all those in his camp to put away their Canaanite idols, part of which they apparently took from the city of Shechem, as well as the "household gods" that had been stolen by Rachel from her father. (Genesis 31:19,32)
26. How many of the people in Jacob's camp were still worshiping idols? We do not know.
27. The saddest part of this portion of Jacob's life was the death of Rachel—during childbirth.
- Genesis 35:16-21:** ¹⁶ Jacob and his family left Bethel, and when they were still some distance from Ephrath, the time came for Rachel to have her baby, and she was having difficult labour. ¹⁷When her labour pains were at their worst, the midwife said to her, "Don't be afraid, Rachel; it's another boy."
¹⁸But she was dying, and as she breathed her last, she named her son Benoni, but his father named him Benjamin.
¹⁹ When Rachel died, she was buried beside the road to Ephrath, now known as Bethlehem. ²⁰Jacob set up a memorial stone there, and it still marks Rachel's grave to this day. ²¹Jacob moved on and set up his camp on the other side of the tower of Eder.—*Good News Bible*.*
28. Unfortunately, three interrelated incidents took place: (1) Benjamin was born; (2) during that birth of Benjamin, Rachel died; (3) Reuben, Jacob's first son by Leah, then slept with Jacob's concubine. Benjamin was the only child of Jacob to be born in the Promised Land. The dying Rachel named her son Ben-oni, meaning "son of my sorrow," because of the pain and her dying process. Jacob, by contrast, named him Benjamin, meaning "son of the right hand."
29. Despite all their problems and dysfunctional behavior, why did God continue to work with the family of Jacob/Israel? Why didn't God decide to work with the descendants of Job? Or, Melchizedek? Or, some family in the Far East? Or, did God try and failed? Imagine what God could have done with a family who all followed Him carefully in every detail of their lives.
30. Once again, we see that the lives of the so-called saints are filled with evil and sinful events. So, **why does the Bible record all those sins?** Is it to help us understand that they were real people? If nothing evil had been recorded about any of them, we would think they were some kind of super-human saints!
31. Why do you think that at least some of them were enticed into practicing idolatry? Why would people choose to worship a piece of clay? Or, wood? Or, metal?
32. In this lesson we have seen: (1) The direct distress of Jacob as he approached Canaan and his brother; (2) Jacob wrestling with God and succeeding and having his name changed to Israel; and then, (3) Jacob, facing his brother as if it was "the face of God."
33. What do we know about that terrible day which is coming which is called *the time of Jacob's trouble*?

Zephaniah 1:14-18: ¹⁴ The great day of the LORD is near—very near and coming fast! That will be a bitter day, for even the bravest soldiers will cry out in despair! ¹⁵It will be a day of fury, a day of trouble and distress, a day of ruin and destruction, a day of darkness and gloom, a black and cloudy day, ¹⁶a day filled with the sound of war trumpets and the battle cry of soldiers attacking fortified cities and high towers.

¹⁷ The LORD says, “I will bring such disasters on mankind that everyone will grope about like someone blind. They have sinned against me, and now their blood will be poured out like water, and their dead bodies will lie rotting on the ground.”

¹⁸ On the day when the LORD shows his fury, not even all their silver and gold will save them. The whole earth will be destroyed by the fire of his anger. He will put an end—a sudden end—to everyone who lives on earth.—*Good News Bible*.*

Daniel 12:1: The angel wearing linen clothes said, “At that time the great angel Michael, who guards your people, will appear. Then there will be a time of troubles, the worst since nations first came into existence. When that time comes, all the people of your nation whose names are written in God’s book will be saved.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Matthew 24:15,21: ¹⁵ [Jesus said:] “You will see ‘The Awful Horror’ of which the prophet Daniel spoke. It will be standing in the holy place.” (Note to the reader: be sure to understand what this means!)...²¹ “For the trouble at that time will be far more terrible than any there has ever been, from the beginning of the world to this very day. Nor will there ever be anything like it again.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

34. Many years later, Paul described his experience of fighting with sin.

Romans 7:23-25: ²³But I see a different law at work in my body—a law that fights against the law which my mind approves of. It makes me a prisoner to the law of sin which is at work in my body. ²⁴What an unhappy man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is taking me to death? ²⁵Thanks be to God, who does this through our Lord Jesus Christ!

This, then, is my condition: on my own I can serve God’s law only with my mind, while my human nature serves the law of sin.—*Good News Bible*.*

35. Is that experience something similar to what Jacob experienced?

36. In our day, we also struggle when encountering people who have a different race or culture or religion? Is learning to love our brothers and sisters no matter what their background somewhat equivalent to what happened to Jacob in this lesson?

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