

Genesis Chapter 32 - Commentary By Mike Wells

Chapter 32 Overview:

Overview of Genesis 32: This chapter contains some monumental events in the life of Jacob, including: (1) Jacob's meeting with angels at Mahanaim and His fear of Esau in verses 1-8. (2) Jacob's prayer for deliverance as he prepares a present for Esau in verses 9-23. And, (3) Jacob's wrestling with the Angel in verses 24-32.

Genesis 32 : 1-2 - *1 And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. 2 And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.*

- As Jacob continued on his journey to Canaan, "***the angels of God met him.***"
- The angels were visible and there were evidently many of them.
- Some theologians believe that God caused them to become visible to Jacob to not only encourage him but also to protect him in what would become hostile country.
- See Psalm 91:11-12.
- Jacob immediately perceived they were '***God's host.***'
- The word translated as **host** (hnxm *machaneh*) has the idea of an '**encampment**' or the '**camp of an army.**'
- So he called the place ***Mahanaim*** which literally means two camps—his camp and the camp of the angels.
- Mahanaim is east of the Jordan River, and less than ten miles above the Dead Sea.
- It today would be in the state of Jordan.

Genesis 32 : 3-6 - *3 And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom. 4 And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have so-journed with Laban, and stayed there until now: 5 And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and women- servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight. 6 And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him.*

- Because he was nearing the vicinity where his brother Esau lived, Jacob sent word to him in "***Seir, the country of Edom.***"
- Jacob sent word that he had prospered in the time he had lived with Laban and now was returning.
- The messengers came back with news Esau was coming to meet him with four- hundred men with him.

Genesis 32 : 7-8 - *7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; 8 And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.*

- Jacob interpreted the news of Esau's coming as a fearful thing.

- He figured he was coming to settle the score of Jacob's trickery years earlier.
- So he divided his entourage into two groups, hoping if Esau came in wrath at least some of them would escape.
- He did this in wisdom but also out of obvious fear and cowardice

Genesis 32 : 9-12 - 9 And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: 10 I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. 11 Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. 12 And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

- This is the first record of Jacob ever seeking God's deliverance.
- Some think this was his actual conversion experience.
- 20 years earlier he had tried to make a crass deal with God (Gen 28:20-22)
- However, now from his heart, he turned to and trusted the God of his fathers for the first time in his life.
- As he prayed that night, he reminded God that God had directed him to return to the land of his kind folks.
- Then, from a repentant heart, he asked God to deliver him.
- Because of his simple faith, and repentance God saved him both from the wrath of his brother and from the wrath of Hell.
- He trusted God for his deliverance.
- He then reminded God of His earlier promise to him.

Genesis 32 : 13-23 - 13 And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother; 14 Two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams, 15 Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals. 16 And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove. 17 And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee? 18 Then thou shalt say, They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us. 19 And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him. 20 And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me. 21 So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company. 22 And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. 23 And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.

- Jacob had prepared a significant gift of livestock for his brother.

- He hoped to appease the presumed wrath of his brother (verse 20).
- He ordered the livestock into droves or groups and sent each, one by one, ahead.
- That night he took his immediate family and sent them over the ford of the brook Jabok which is close by Mahanaim.

Genesis 32 : 24-32 - 24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. 25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. 26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. 27 And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. 28 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. 29 And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. 30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. 31 And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. 32 Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

- The *man* with which Jacob wrestled apparently was a physical manifestation of God.
- In verse 30, Jacob noted that he had seen God “*face to face.*”
- God took upon Him a human form—a **theophany** and wrestled with Jacob.
- Though God certainly could have whooped Jacob, He chose to limit His strength.
- God did touch the hollow of his thigh putting it out of joint.
- As the day broke, God asked Jacob to let Him go.
- Jacob, evidently realizing with whom he wrestled, insisted first that He bless him.
- Then, God informed Jacob that he would take a new name, Israel.
- That name in Hebrew literally has the sense of ‘*prevailing with God.*’
- God then pointed out to him that “*as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.*”
- The greater point is that Jacob had prevailed with God in a rudimentary form of prayer.
- He would not let go of Him until God blessed him.
- As Jacob pressed God further, “*he blessed him there.*”
- Jacob therefore called the place **Peniel** (otherwise known as Penuel) both of which have the idea ‘*facing God,*’ or ‘*face to face with God.*’
- He noted that he had “*seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.*”
- The greater context is that he knew he was about to face his brother later that day.
- So he in simple faith asked for God’s help and blessing upon that encounter.
- He wrestled with and prevailed with God in seeking His help and blessing.
- Jacob was at least temporarily incapacitated in his thigh from wrestling with God
- Sinew = tendon at the hip socket
- So God dislocated Jacobs hip socket by causing his tendon to shrink.
- It is noted that the children of Israel to this time do not eat of the sinew of the shank of the thigh of any animal because God caused Jacob’s sinew there to shrink.