

JACOB'S ENCOUNTER: GENESIS 32:1-32

JACOB RETURNED TO MEET HIS BROTHER ESAU: Gen.32:1-3

In Genesis chapter 31, the Lord told Jacob to return to his father's land. He also noticed that his father-in-law Laban's countenance was changed towards him, and he knew it was not for good. Jacob had cheated all his life. The reason he was living with his father-in-law was, he ran away from home when his brother Esau discovered that he had stolen his birthright. He was then told by the Lord to return home. He faced two fears, first the reaction of Laban, his fathers-in-law if he told him he was leaving with his two wives, their children and his flock. His second fear was facing his brother Esau, how would Esau deal with him when they met.

Being the deceiver as he was, he decided to leave secretly without saying goodbye to Laban. He told his wives that the Lord told him to return to his father's house. They gathered everything they had and departed for Canaan during the night. He dealt with his first fear by leaving secretly.

JACOB FEARED HIS BROTHER ESAU: Gen. 32:4-23

While he was on his journey, he started planning to face his next fear. He could no longer run away from it, he had to face it head on. He knew how angry Esau was when he left, and although it was more than twenty years since he ran away, he was concerned that his brother was still angry with him.

When someone does you wrong, and they know that you know, it does not matter how many years have passed, when they have to face you, they are concerned with your reactions. In verses 4 and 5 we notice that Jacob shows signs of humility when he referred to himself as servant and Esau as lord. At the same time, he also indicated that he was not returning the way he let, he had

then acquitted wealth of his own and was not returning because he was in need of assistance. He listed what he was able to accumulate while he was away. At the same time it could be interpreted that he was boastful, but because he was fearful of his brother and was willing to share with him as peace offering, I believe he was simply stating that he found favor while he was away.

Jacob devised a plan to make a peace offering to his brother, however; he was not prepared to go in front and face him face to face. He divided his servants and possessions into groups and gave the same instructions to each. He felt that if Esau was still angry with him and did not accept his offering and killed those servants, he would still be alive to negotiate with his brother. All would not be lost at the encounter with his brother.

His messenger returned and told him that Esau was on his way to meet him, and he had 400 men with him. Jacob was afraid of the outcome of the encounter with his brother. (Genesis 32:6. -8)

He turned his attention towards God and recalled how blessed he had been. He went with nothing, and he was returning with two bans. He called unto the Lord, the God of Abraham and Isaac, and said he was returning in obedience to Him. He did not deserve the blessings he had, he had also received the promise from Him that He would make him a great nation, yet his brother was on his way, and he was afraid that he might kill him and his wives. He asked the Lord to deliver him from the hands of his brother.

Notice in verse 9 of Genesis chapter 32, Jacob prayed to the God of his father, Abraham and Isaac, he did not say my God, and he referred to Him as the Lord, not my Lord. That shows he prayed to their God and Lord, but he had not yet claimed Him to be his God and Lord. He was relying on his father's God but did not claim Him to be His God. This shows that for the first time Jacob called on God for deliverance, prior to that he did everything in his deceptive way.

When he ran away from Esau in Genesis 27:41-46, 28:1-6 or when he secretly left Laban in the middle of the night Genesis 31:17-23, but then, that he had to meet Esau face to face he was relying on God for his deliverance. (Genesis 32:9-13)

The fear of his encounter with his brother Esau caused Jacob to turn to seek the Lord. He acknowledged how underserving he was of God's blessings, claimed His promise and sought His protection from the hands of his brother, yet he did not claim Him to be His God and Lord.

How typical it is when faced with pending disaster, individuals become penitent and seek the Lord. He thought if he sent a peace offering a head of him to his brother, that would appease him, and his life would be spared. He sent an envoy ahead of him with gifts for his brother, but he stayed behind. That night he took his two wives and 11 children over the brook Jabbok, and he was left alone. (Genesis 32:14-23)

JACOB'S ENCOUNTER:

He was alone that night and had a wrestling match with a man all night. Jacob held onto the man and refused to let him go until he received a blessing from him. The encounter he anticipated was with his brother Esau, but God had another plan for him. Jacob had not yet repented; he was still selfish always looking out for himself. Notice how he did not lead his servants to meet his brother but stayed behind at a distance. Should his brother be still angry, then he would kill the servants who were in front, and he would still have another opportunity to negotiate with his brother. He was holding on to the promise God made to him that he would make him great, and the number of his family members could not be counted. If he were fully trusting God, he would be bold and lead his men to face his brother, knowing that God's hand of protection was upon him, and no harm would come upon him. He played it safe and had a plan (B).

When we trust God, we rely on Him completely without a backup plan.

He wrestled with the man all night and would not let him go until he was blessed by him.

You may be having your encounter which has cause you to be wrestling, it may be for weeks, months or even years. You are holding on to the thing with which you are struggling and holding on to God. It makes you restless and you are seeking God's blessing but still holding on to your old nature. The thing that has a stronghold on you. Your encounter is meant to change you, you cannot have an encounter with God and remain the same.

The man asks him what his name was, he said Jacob. The man told him he was no longer Jacob but Israel. Jacob means supplanter which is often interpreted as someone who seizes, circumvents, or usurps. All his life that was what he did, that meaning describes his character.

His encounter was about to change him and his name. Your encounter will do the same. It will change you from the inside out and your name will be changed to holy child of God.

Jacob's name was changed to Israel, which means "God contender, Wrestles with God,

Triumphant with God. His wrestling all night was a wrestling match with God. He would not let go of the man until he blessed him; neither should you let go of God. He has a blessing for you, He wants to change you and give you a new name from lost to saved, to holy, child of God. The struggle may be long but let go and let God. Let go of the stronghold and hold tightly to God, rely on His promises, Trust Him completely.

Jacob's encounter was so dramatic that the man had to touch the socket of his hip in order for him to release his grip on him. That touch was a constant reminder for him, because for the rest of his life his hip was out of it's joint, which caused him to walk with a limp as long as he lived.

He was changed from Jacob the one who seizes, to Israel, the Father of the Jewish nation of Israel, a prince who had power with God.

He anticipated an encounter with his brother and feared for his life, then he called out of his desperation to the Lord for deliverance. He admitted he did not deserve the blessings he had received and was willing to share it with his brother in order to make peace with him.

God had a bigger plan for him, He wanted to change him to be a man of character. He wanted to change his heart.

Before he could have his encounter with his brother, he had to experience his encounter with God. When you hurt someone, you must make peace with God first, seek His forgiveness, then with a pure heart you can reconcile with your brother who suffered the wrong you did to him.

When we hurt someone, we do not hurt just that person but many. The first person we hurt is God, by disobeying Him. Jesus said the second commandment is to love our brother as ourselves. (Matthew 23:35-40) If we love someone, we will not hurt them. If Jacob had met with his brother and the brother accepted his gifts, he would have paid for his wrong doing in his selfish ways and there would not have been any change in him.

His encounter caused a change of name and character in him.

Have you been in a wrestling match and holding on to God, waiting for Him to bless you, while you are still holding unto your stronghold? The man had to knock Jacob's hip out of its socket before he let go of his grip, what has to happen to you before you let go of your grip that stands between and your blessings?