

JACOB: HIS RETURN JOURNEY TO CANAAN  
(Genesis 32:1 – 33:20)

**INTRODUCTION**

The context for the events we read about today is found in Gen. 31:3, *Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you*". As this journey unfolds, we will see further evidence both of Jacob's life change and of God's grace toward him.

**HIS STRUGGLE WITH FEAR** (32:1-32:21)

v.1,2 "*Jacob also went on his way and the angels of God met him. ----. So he named that place Mahanaim*"

There are only two occasions when the scriptures record a meeting between Jacob and angels – the first at Bethel = *house of God*, on his way out of Canaan (28:10-22) and now, at Mahanaim = "*two camps*" on his way back. Both meetings serve the same purpose, i.e., **to assure him of God's protection and accompaniment.**

v.3-8. When we last met Esau, he lived in Beersheba (28:10). He has now moved about 60 km SE to the country of Edom – a land that his descendents will subsequently populate. Jacob's message to Esau is well chosen, "*Your servant Jacob ---- now I am sending this message to my lord that I might find favour in your eyes*". These are the words of a man who is much different in character from the man who left Canaan 20 year years earlier. He has learnt the wisdom of the soft word, the wisdom of deference, and the reality of what it means to be humbled, (Prov.15:1; Prov.16:18).

Jacob is enveloped by fear and is deeply distressed to hear that his brother is coming to meet him with 400 men.

v.9-12 In the midst of his fear Jacob prays what in many ways it is a model prayer for the distressed of heart.

- He reminds the Lord both of His command and of His promise.
- He acknowledges his unworthiness.
- He reflects upon God's faithfulness.
- He prays for deliverance.
- He again reminds the Lord of His promise.

v.13-21 Jacob now prepares a princely gift (a minhâh) of livestock for his brother (550 animals in all, 490 of which were female). The 30 female camels were particularly valuable, being a principal part of the riches for any arab. This, however, was more than a gift, it was restitution! Restitution must occur before we have a claim on the mercy of God.

**HIS STRUGGLE WITH GOD** (32:22-32)

Perhaps fearing a night attack, Jacob sends his wives and sons and remaining possessions to the far side of the Jabbok River (a tributary of the Jordan River about 24 km north of the Dead Sea), and camps alone. That night an event occurs that will be a turning point in his life. While there is much we don't know or understand, we do know:

- That at some point during the night a protagonist comes into his camp and wrestles with Jacob. Hosea 12:4 calls this protagonist both an "angel" and God.
- When this divine messenger finds that he and Jacob are locked in an impasse, he uses supernatural power to wrench Jacob's hip. Despite this injury, Jacob refuses to let go until he is assured of God's blessing.
- It is significant that when Jacob seeks his blessing, the man says to Jacob,

If you are new or visiting; *a special warm welcome to you.*  
We trust you enjoy your time with us.

Today we will be having communion. If it is your practice to participate in this we welcome you to join with us in celebrating the Lord's Supper. If this is not your custom or if you are unsure of what to do please just pass the emblems (bread and wine) to the person next to you.

**Today**

- Speaker John Hannah
- JCF 5.00pm

**Friday Kids Club**

- Kids Club for Year 3 - Year 7  
Thursday 6:30pm - 7:30pm  
Wray Street Youth Hall  
For more information contact:-  
Hamish Smith, (03) 4739547

*Next Week*

- **Sunday** Ross Pettigrew

*Crèche Roster*

- June 15 Sarah McIlroy  
Jennifer Pettigrew  
June 29 Georgie Urquhart  
Sam Symons

*Prayer*

**Richard & Nancye Yarrall, USA** would like prayer for an evangelist outreach to be held from June 18th to 30th. The STEP team helping will come together from Wisconsin, Nebraska, Oregon, South Carolina and Washington. Prayer is needed for the Children's Bible Clubs, which will be held in the afternoons in 3 different blocks of apartments. Also in one block of apartments there are two couples interested in the Spanish meetings. Please pray that the outreach will build up confidence and that they will join the church.

**Jillian Gow, Japan**, would appreciate prayer for an outreach on 21st & 22nd July. A special outreach is planned for the 21st to families of believers. Give thanks for a man who is to be baptised on 22nd June.

“What is your name?” for name reveals nature!! Jacob is given a new name, “Israel” – “he struggles with God [and with men and have overcome]”.

What do we learn from this event?

Some of the struggles of life are designed by the Lord himself in order to advance His purposes in us. They not only come with His authority, but they come with specific purpose in mind. While, at the time, we might feel, isolation, darkness, fear, powerlessness, vulnerability, exhaustion and scarring, God grants the corresponding divine gifts of conversion, faith, courage, surrender, endurance and transformation.

Jacob has come to realise that the real source of blessing rests not in deceit and personal trickery, nor in his own power, but a dependence upon God himself.

We are reminded of an even greater struggle that occurred in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus, like Jacob, emerged, intent upon doing His Father’s will.

When the crisis of faith passes we will be changed by it, marked by it and perhaps limping because of it. BUT we can move forward from the encounter to a new place of intimacy and knowledge of the Father. The sun will rise again!

**HIS MEETING WITH ESAU** (33:1-20)

As Jacob sees Esau approaching he organises his family according to their importance to him. He goes on ahead, and in a mark of servitude, bows seven times as he approaches his brother. “But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.” What a remarkable event!

A welcome that reveals forgiveness, grace, and love – almost a reminder of the return of the prodigal son!! The hurts of the past have been buried.

Esau now asks two questions:

“Who are these with you?” he asked. Cross ref. Jacob’s reply with I Cor. 4:7.

“What do you mean by all these droves I met?” While Esau at first declines the gift, Jacob insists on his accepting it - he thus shares the blessing given to him by the Lord!

Esau offers to accompany Jacob - apparently to his home in Seir (c.f., 33:14). Here again Jacob stumbles in that: He fails to state his true intention. His later actions reveal that he gave excuses as a subterfuge to avoid doing what Esau had suggested.

He fails to refer to the explicit command of God to return, “to the land of your fathers”, i.e., to Canaan.

Esau now travels South and returns to Seir while Jacob turns westward and travels to Shechem where he purchases a plot of land for 100 pieces of silver and sets up an altar that he calls, “El Elohe Israel”, i.e., the God of Israel.

**TAKEAWAYS**

1. God not only protects his children, but accompanies them through the hardships, trials and sufferings of life.
  2. Effective prayer recognizes our unworthiness, reflects upon God’s faithfulness, and rests upon the promises of God.
  3. Restitution is not just an option, it is an obligation.
  4. The great struggles of life are not given to overwhelm us, but to lead us to a greater dependence upon the One who loves and cares for His children. They are designed to lead us to a new place of knowledge and intimacy with our heavenly Father.
- The hurts of the past are to be forgiven and not harboured. They are to be buried.

**Small Groups**

**Tuesday**

- Ladies Home Group - see Laura Hannah 473-7954
- Central Home Group - see Steve Clark 479-2070
- Brockville Home Group - see Geoffrey Stewart 476-7888
- Town Home Groups - see Dave Smeaton 477-2110

**Thursday**

- JCF Home Group - see Gideon Chang 488-2118

**Friday**

- Friday morning Home Group - see Bethney Stewart 476-7888

**Prayer Groups**

**Thursday**

- All Saints main church building from 5:15pm

**Sunday**

- All Saints Hall from 8:30am


**NOTICES**

- Urgent request for people to volunteer for the crèche roster. We have had people asking to be taken off the roster but no one to take their place. If you can assist please contact Vicki Halford 488 1820.