

OVERCOMING THE DYSFUNCTIONS OF ISRAEL'S PATRIARCHS

XVIII. Trusting God With Our Fears Of Our Relatives

(Genesis 32:1-32)

I. Introduction

- A. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Israel's patriarchs and their respective wives and families, though blessed of God, were imperfect people who at times made huge mistakes that led to serious marital and family dysfunction.
- B. Thankfully, Romans 15:4 states that we can learn from whatsoever things were written in the Old Testament for our edification, and that includes our learning how to overcome the dysfunctions of Israel's patriarchs.
- C. We view Genesis 32:1-32 on trusting God with our fears of our relatives for our insight and application:

II. Trusting God With Our Fears Of Our Relatives, Genesis 32:1-32.

- A. Though Jacob and Laban had parted ways to avoid threatening each other again, a bigger threat faced Jacob as he headed south – that of meeting his estranged brother Esau! Jacob had fled north to Laban in Padan-Aram to escape his brother Esau who had wanted to kill him (Genesis 27:42-44), but now Jacob was returning with his herds and wives and children in an even more vulnerable position before Esau (cf. Genesis 31:17-18)!
- B. Significantly, when Jacob left his meeting with Laban and headed south, God's angels met him, and Jacob realized this and called the name of that place "Mahanaim," meaning "double camp" in Hebrew to refer to the camp of God's angels and Jacob's camp, Genesis 32:1-2; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Gen. 32:2. In view of Jacob's dream about God's protecting and encouraging angels at Bethel when Jacob had fled from Esau northward (cf. Gen. 28:10-22), this appearance of God's angels would have reminded Jacob of God's past promise to bless him, what was meant to encourage him to trust the Lord for protection from Esau!
- C. However, Jacob was not fully committed to trusting God with his brother, so he made defensive preparations:
 - 1. First, Jacob sent messengers ahead to his brother Esau humbly to ask that Esau treat him well since he was returning from Laban with his vulnerable family and herds, Genesis 32:3-5.
 - 2. In response to this effort, the messengers returned to report that Esau was coming to meet Jacob with four hundred men, what left Jacob thinking that Esau might want to do Jacob great harm, Genesis 32:6-7a.
 - 3. Thus, Jacob divided his family, servants and herds into two companies so that if Esau killed one company, the other company might escape, Genesis 32:7b-8.
 - 4. Jacob then humbly pleaded with the Lord Who had graciously promised to bless him to deliver him from his brother while also sending his flocks and family on ahead in a self-defensive move, Genesis 32:9-12.
 - 5. He also sent various groups of servants with gifts of livestock on ahead to pacify Esau, Genesis 32:13-23.
- D. As Jacob stayed there that night, he wrestled with a man all night long until daybreak, Genesis 32:24. We know from Genesis 32:29-30 that this man was the Preincarnate Christ as Jacob named the place Peniel since he had seen God face to face and his life was still preserved!
- E. This wrestling recalls the wrestling that had occurred between Esau and Jacob in their mother's womb, cf. Genesis 25:21-24. Also, when the twins were born, Jacob took hold of his brother Esau's heel as if their struggle still occurred (cf. Gen. 25:26), and this effort by Jacob continued as sought to grasp Esau's birthright and his blessing (cf. Gen. 25:29-34 and 27:1-38). Also, Jacob "wrestled" with Laban for the 20 years he was in Padan-Aram (Gen. 31:41-42), so the natural way for Jacob to try to solve his problems was to "wrestle"!
- F. God planned to break that "wrestling" habit to get Jacob fully to trust in Him, and God achieved this by letting Jacob face a trial where he had no choice but to trust the Lord as his only hope, Genesis 32:24-32:
 - 1. When the Preincarnate Christ saw that he had not prevailed against Jacob by physically wrestling with him, Christ miraculously touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, putting it out of joint, Gen. 32:24-25 NIV. This left Jacob completely helpless physically to protect even himself from his brother Esau!
 - 2. Christ then told Jacob to let Him go because the day was breaking, but Jacob said he would not let him go unless He blessed him, Gen. 32:26. That is what God wanted – to get Jacob to rely fully on the Lord!
 - 3. Accordingly, Christ changed Jacob's name to Israel, meaning "Prince" for as a prince he had power with God and with men and he had prevailed by putting his faith completely in the Lord, Genesis 32:27-28.
- G. Due to this event, Jacob was able to face his meeting with Esau with God's protection, cf. Genesis 33:1-17.

Lesson: *If we have fears or concerns with relatives that may be as deep as what even Jacob faced, the solution for us as it was for Jacob is to get to the point where we lean ENTIRELY on the Lord for His help!*

Application: *If we have deep concerns about any relative, may we fully rely on the Lord for His deliverance!*