

# Raslin' Match

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Genesis 32

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Jacob's life was a constant struggle, starting from his pre-birth wrestling match with Esau (Gen 25:21-22). This was just the beginning of a life marked by conflicts. Yet, as we delve into Jacob's life, we should always remember God's response to Rebekah's prayer, *"Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger."*

His life evoked division in his home between his father and mother. Isaac loved Esau, and Rebekah loved Jacob (Gen 25:28). The gulf deepened as Jacob took advantage of his twin brother in his moment of weakness and purchased Esau's birthright (Gen 25:29-34). This rift reaches its pinnacle when Rebekah hatches a plan for Jacob to deceive his aging and blind father into blessing him in place of Esau (Gen 27:1-40). Esau vows to kill Jacob upon the death of his father, and as a result, Jacob flees into what would be a 20-year exile.

While in Haran, Jacob worked for his uncle, Laban. After being deceived by Laban, he married Leah and subsequently married Rachel, his true love. He manipulated the outcomes in his favor with the cattle. After 20 years, Jacob escapes Laban's grip and makes his way "home." However, now he must face Esau.

At the beginning of chapter 32, Jacob is between a rock and a hard place (Laban 31:51-52 & Esau). A telling sign of Jacob's fear is the mention of Esau's name nine times in this brief passage (32:1-21). Jacob is being hunted down by unconfessed sin! His conscience is screaming at him for his past transgressions! There are many people in church today who suffer from the same affliction as Jacob. Barnhouse writes, *"You who read this have some name for your fears. Stop right now and cease to rationalize your fears. Ask God to turn you inside out and deliver you from what you have excused as an inferiority complex. As though a child of God, destined to sit upon the throne of God, and to be like the Son of God, should be filled with anguish at the memory of some sin long thrust out of sight, which is now clamoring for recognition!"*

## I. When God Empties Us – Kenosis (Genesis 32:22-24a)

- A. Jacob's Fear (Genesis 32:7)
  - 1. Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men (Genesis 32:6)
  - 2. Jacob divides his company in two (Genesis 32:7-8)
- B. Jacob's Prayer (Genesis 32:9-12)
  - 1. The instruction to return (32:9, Genesis 31:3)
  - 2. The realization of unworthiness (32:10)
  - 3. The plea for deliverance (32:11)
  - 4. The reminder of the promises (32:12)
- C. Jacob's restlessness (Genesis 32:22-23) (Jacob took his wives, servants, and children across Jabbok)
- D. Jacob's aloneness (Genesis 32:24a)
  - 1. When we submit our wills to the Lord, we empty ourselves of our will, become selfless, and surrender our will to Him. **(Galatians 2:20–21, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.)**

## II. When God Opposes Us (Genesis 32:24b-25)

- A. Jacob's Attacker. **Hosea 12:1–4, Ephraim feeds on the wind and pursues the east wind all day long; they multiply falsehood and violence; they make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried to Egypt. 2 The Lord has an indictment against Judah and will punish Jacob according to his ways; he will repay him according to his deeds. 3 In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God. 4 He strove with the angel and prevailed; he wept and sought his favor. He met God at Bethel, and there God spoke with us—**
- B. Jacob's Enemy (Genesis 32:24b) (Jacob's opponent matched Jacob's strength and no more)
  - 1. His kindness and severity **(Romans 11:22, Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity**

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toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. **Hebrews 12:6**, *For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.*"

- a) Kindness – considerate, warm-hearted, humane, gentle, and sympathetic.
  - b) Severity – to show harshness toward someone; someone to be feared
  - c) He [Jacob] would discover that, as a student once said about C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*, "Aslan is no tame lion."
2. God gave Jacob a permanent reminder (32:25)
- C. What the passage is not...
1. It is not Jacob wrestling with God (or prevailing in prayer).
  2. It is not Jacob seeking God
- D. What the passage is...
1. It is God reducing Jacob to nothingness. (See himself as poor, helpless, worthless creature)
  2. It is God teaching Jacob there is strength in weakness.
  3. It is God showing Jacob His way (touching his thigh, or He won). God will put us out of joint, our plans in chaos, and our lives in disappointment in order to gain our humble submission.
  4. What is Christian? (Matthew 5:3-11) (Poor, saddened, humble, hungry, thirsty, merciful, pure, peacemaker, opposed, reviled)

### **III. When God Reshapes Us (Genesis 32:26)**

- A. Jacob is remade in God's image and surrendered to His will.
- B. Jacob is clinging to God and no longer wrestling against Him.
- C. Who could the adversary be?
  1. Is it Esau or a hired assassin, or one of Esau's followers set on revenge?
  2. Is it the guardian angel of Esau as Jews have fabled?
  3. It is the adversary of God's people?
  4. It is God shaping us **Galatians 4:19–20**, *My little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! 20 I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.*

### **IV. When God Renames Us (Genesis 32:27-29)**

- A. Heelcatcher The Identity of Jacob: What is your name? (32:27) (Deceiver; Trickster; Supplanter, Overreacher, Cheater)
  1. What was probably a term of endearment at his birth defined his life.
  2. Jacob got ahead by tripping up others.
  3. He had his mother's love, but he deceived his father to get his blessing.
  4. He had manipulated the cattle in Haran to outsmart Laban.
  5. God was a means to and end for Jacob up to this long night of his life.
  6. The Dangers of unconfessed sin (1 John 1:8)
    - a) Psalm 32:1-5
    - b) Psalm 38:1-8
    - c) Psalm 40:11-12
- B. Israel becomes his new name (Genesis 32:28).
  1. Commentators disagree on the meaning.
  2. Some say it means, "He struggles with God," or "He prevails with God."
  3. However, many believe the Hebrew to be interpreted as, "God rules," or, "God commands," or "God prevails." The belief is that the same Hebrew logic applies
  4. to Israel as it is other names.
- C. God Blesses Jacob (Genesis 32:29).

### **V. When God Repurposes Us (Genesis 32:30-32)**

- A. We experience the presence of God (30)
- B. We experience the positioning of God (31)
  1. Jacob walked with a limp for the rest of his life as a reminder of this night.
- C. We experience the prolonging of God (32).