

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

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.

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,

