

99-12-12b

We're ready now to resume our study over in Genesis chapter 32. We've slowed down and spent some time on especially the background and the significance of this really rather brief episode beginning in verse 22 where after Jacob has taken his two wives, his two female servants, his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of the Jabbok. It's interesting there that the Bible says Leah and Rachel are wives, Bilhah and Zilpah are servants.

They are not accorded the same status, but all eleven are called sons. And regardless of their origin or who their mother was, they are all equal in terms of standing with Jacob. And we find that some of the blessings devolve down even to the sons of the concubines or the servants.

But they all cross over the ford of the Jabbok. He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of day.

When he saw that he did not prevail against him, he touched the socket of his hip, and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as he wrestled with him. It's a good thing there's one Jacob in that passage, or we wouldn't know who did what to whom. He said, Let me go, for the day breaks.

But he said, I will not let you go unless you bless me. And once again, because of the nature of the request, we sort out who's speaking to whom. So he said to him, What is your name? He said, Jacob.

He said, Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed. Then Jacob asked, Saying, Tell me your name, I pray. He said, Why is it that you ask about my name? And he blessed him there.

So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. Just as he crossed over Peniel, the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip. Therefore to this day the children of Israel did not eat the muscle that shrank, which is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank.

We've made some observations about this. Perhaps I should also mention that some interpreters, you remember the episode when Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac, that he placed his hand under his thigh. And I mentioned at that time that in the Bible, in certain places, thigh is a euphemism for the private parts.

And that has been suggested here as well. The word translated socket here is the word which is best translated hollow. It's used of the palm, the hollow of the hand, the palm.

And when it's found by itself or in other combinations, it's translated hollow. So the hollow of the thigh, it is possible that what actually took place here is what they used to teach us in self-defense when I was a midshipman. Whether you're being attacked by someone with a knife or with a clenched fist or whatever it might be, they would teach us the various methods for parrying or diverting the blow.

And then to disable the opponent, the last thing to do was to attack them severely in the private parts. And this gives them something completely different to think about. They're no longer in the mood to attack because they're in extreme discomfort.

And it is possible, and it's difficult to tell from the Hebrew here, because this word for thigh is only used two places in the Old Testament. And we're about to look at the other one here shortly. So it's difficult to know for sure what is, I shouldn't say the word for thigh, the word for wrestling here is only used here and in one other passage.

But the combination of the two, it's much like Jacob wrestling in the dark. We are somewhat in the dark as to who the assailant is and what exactly he does to disable Jacob. But whatever it is, it causes Jacob to walk with a limp afterward.

And it causes them to modify their diet in the later history of Israel. It's interesting that verse 32 of chapter 32 where it says, they do not eat the muscle that shrank, which is on the hip socket. And it says, to this day the children of Israel do not eat that muscle.

Well, what is this day where this is being written? This is going to be in Moses' day. Moses is the author here. We would expect that this is some 400 years after the fact, during the early days of the Exodus perhaps, or whenever it is that Moses wrote these things down.

He says, the children of Israel do not eat it. But there is no other reference to this dietary restriction anywhere else in the Bible. And very little is said about it even in the rabbinic literature.

There is no tradition that has survived down to this day. And this was apparently something that pertained early on. The first few generations after Jacob apparently knew about this particular sinew or muscle or part of the anatomy and refrained from eating it.

But it isn't something that survived as a long-term thing in Israel. People who try to say that the books of Moses were composed late, they were composed during the exile, and you have the J.E.D.P. theory, the Yahwist, the Elohist, the Deuteronomist, and the Priestly Redactor and all this other strangeness that came out in the 19th century, have difficulty with a passage like this because here is a very ancient tradition that has no evidence in the later Old Testament. Why would it be included by a late redactor when it wasn't even in existence in the days of the giving of the Law of Moses? It's not included there, and you would think to be consistent that it would be a part of the Mosaic Law, who these

supposed redactors also supposedly wrote.

But this is another mark of the antiquity and originality of this account, that here was an early, early tradition among the children and grandchildren of Jacob that apparently sort of died out after a while. Probably because the account wasn't written down and widely disseminated until Moses ran across it in the libraries of Egypt and assimilated all of these tablets and other evidences into the book of Genesis. But what we're focusing on is the encounter with the man.

This is my belief, and you're welcome to disagree. I would not die for it one way or the other. There are some who think that this is an incarnation of the Lord God Himself.

There are some who think it is a Christophany, a pre-incarnation appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, because it's believed that He's the revealed member and anytime you have the angel of the Lord, that this is in fact Jesus Christ. I don't think any major doctrines are affected if you choose to believe that. I just don't see any suggestion of that fact in the scriptures.

There's nothing in the New Testament or the Old to suggest to me that when it says angel of the Lord that it isn't an actual angel. But people like to look at the episode we saw with Manoah and his wife where they had the meal that they prepared, the offering, and then they placed it and when the smoke of the offering ascended then the angel of the Lord ascended in the smoke and they see in that a wonderful picture of the work of Jesus Christ who is the sweet-smelling savor. His sacrifice on the cross satisfies God and so on.

I wouldn't argue strongly against that. I think that's a possibility. I personally think that it is a slightly different lesson that is in view there, that it is a signal to them that this is in fact a man from God because that offering is made to God, is ascending to God, and the fact that he goes up in the smoke to God indicates that that is also where he came from.

What is it that he ascended but that he also descended? In the case of that particular messenger. But if he were God himself, he would be able to accept the offering at first hand and it would somehow go directly to him. But in the same way the angels in Revelation say, don't bow down before me, I am a man like you who worship God, this offering is placed on the rock and the smoke goes up to God.

That makes me think that although the messenger represents God and speaks even in the first person on behalf of God, it is in fact a messenger. This was common in ancient thinking, that to talk to the messenger is to talk to God. Jesus reiterated this.

If you have seen me, you have seen the Father. I and my Father are one. To accept me is to accept my Father, and so forth.

And yet we know that he is in fact distinct from the Father. The Father remained in

heaven on his throne. Jesus Christ came down to earth.

The Father did not die on the cross. Jesus Christ did. So there is both the unity and the distinction.

And in the sense that there is a physical body walking around here on earth, whoever that is, whether it is an angel or the Lord Jesus himself, that is not the presence of God the Father. But it may be a representative so closely identified with him that he speaks in the first person. He is addressed as God because it would be like talking through a telephone for us today.

We don't think that the telephone has become the person to whom we are speaking. But we talk to the telephone. We don't actually see the person.

But we speak in the first person. They speak in the first person. These angelic messengers served as sort of a telephone to God.

And they would speak in the first person. The person would speak to them and address them as O Lord, knowing that this person has a direct pipeline to heaven, if you will. Having said that, I am going to, for the sake of our study, assume that this is in fact an angelic messenger speaking on behalf of God.

And as such, he has the limitations of whatever the body was that was issued to him by God for walking around on the earth and speaking and making himself visible. Angels generally are not visible and do not speak in our realm, certainly not in this day. It is very rare for them to do so.

And when they do, they have to take on some sort of a human form. They can apparently pass for human, as we have seen in the example of Lot and the appearance of the two messengers in Sodom. Elsewhere, the commander of the armies of the Lord God, when Joshua sees him, he assumes that he is another human being.

He says, Who are you? Where have you come from? And so on. But there are limitations to whatever this body is. It is not endowed with Superman-type strength.

And Jacob, being a powerful individual, is actually able to subdue or to at least prevent from escaping this messenger. We have seen before, lifting that big stone that generally took three or four shepherds to move. He is a powerful man.

And he is able to prevent this messenger of God from leaving. I will not let you go unless you bless me. Because he knows that if this angel has no power to bless of himself, if he is going to bless, it will be a blessing from God.

He said to him, What is your name? In verse 27, and he says, My name is Yaakov. My name is Jacob. Does the angel already know his name? Of course.

Why does he ask him his name? What does his name mean? Supplanter, manipulator, the one who uses force to obtain what he wants. Who exerts himself to get his way. That is what Jacob means.

In a way, his name means struggler. One who tries to prevail by his own efforts. He says, Your name shall no longer be called Jacob.

But Israel, for you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed. There has been a lot of discussion. What does Israel mean? You would think such a common, well-known name.

We would have a real firm etymology for it. But there is some uncertainty because the verb from which it is constructed, Yatsa, and some have even speculated that it may be Natsa, but this form is Yatsa, Y-A-T-S-A, or S-A-H perhaps, is a relatively rare word. We think that the word for prince, Tsar, T-S-A-R, the Russian word for the big cheese over there, is Tsar, C-Z-A-R, and has its roots in this same word group.

But Yatsa actually means to be strong. And by extension, it means to rule. The Tsar or the prince, he is the strong one.

He is the ruling one. He is the one that exerts his strength over others. And this is a fascinating statement in verse 28, because the messenger says, Your name shall no longer be called struggler, but God rules, or God is strong, or God has prevailed.

The strong one, the ruling one, this is the prevailing one. He says, the reason you're going to... And by the way, there are some that have said, Well, this means he struggles with God. The problem with that is, on all of these theophoric names, theophoric means it's composed of some component of the divine name, Yah, or El.

All of those A-H names, Zephaniah, Zechariah, all of these Yah names have Y-A-H, or Yahweh, as their concluding portion. All of the El names, Ezekiel, Daniel, have El as a component of the name. But in all of the theophoric names, the divine portion, the name of God, is the subject.

Daniel, God is my judge, and so forth. And so, we don't expect that Israel would be any different. Or, Yatsar, or Yatsar El, means God.

God would be the subject of this verb. So, God prevails, God rules, God is strong, is the idea. So, why does Jacob get that name? Why is he asked his name? There's a contrast between the earlier name and the later name.

And that goes back to the preparation that we've made for this in looking at Romans. You have struggled with God and with men. And the word for struggle here is the same verb, Yatsar.

And there are two forms of that. I gave you Yatsar a minute ago. Yatsar and Yatsar seem to be interchangeable.

The earlier form seems to be what's in use here. And that's the one I told you is only found two places in the Old Testament. It's here, this word for struggling with God and with men and have prevailed.

I've seen some people try to translate this, you have struggled with God and with men you have prevailed. To get around the fact that he's prevailed over God, perhaps. You have struggled with God and with men you have prevailed.

But looking at this in the Hebrew, there is an and in front of prevail. And with God and with men you have Im Elohim and Im Anashim. They're parallel with God and with men.

Then there's and and then the word for prevail. The same word for prevail that we saw back there with Rachel. And I don't see any way around it.

He's saying you've struggled with God, you've struggled with men. And you have prevailed. There's some sense in which Jacob has prevailed.

So why this name change? Is he being rewarded with the name because he sort of out wrestled God or God's messenger? He's out wrestled men and he's out wrestled God. And so by his own efforts he's brought himself to the place of blessing and receiving this name. Well, the names themselves tell us a different story.

He says, what is your name? He knows good and well what his name is. But this is one of those divinely instituted questions that brings out an admission. And Jacob says, well, I'm supplanter, I'm struggler, I'm get it by my own effort guy.

He says, your name will no longer be called get it by your own effort guy. Your name is going to be God rules. God is the strong one.

God prevails. Why? Because you're a struggler. You've struggled with God.

You've struggled with men. You've prevailed. Lest you think that by your own efforts you are going to get what you want, I'm going to change your name from guy who gets what he wants by his own efforts to God rules.

God is strong. This is the biggest lesson for Jacob to learn in his life is that he has got to turn to God. He has to rely on God.

And it's more difficult for him because he prevails when he struggles. He works hard and he eventually obtains. He struggles with Laban and eventually succeeds.

He struggles with his brother and he succeeds. He winds up getting the blessing and getting the birthright. And if he's not careful to recognize, if he thinks that this has come

through his own efforts, if he thinks that he's Yaakov, the strong one, the supplanter, the one who grabs the heel, the one who beats people out of things so that he gets what he wants, if he continues to think that, he's going to miss it.

He has to remember that it's God. The only reason he prevailed with Laban is because God blessed him. God made him a promise.

The reason that the elder has served the younger, it's not by anything that he has done. This is the point over in Romans 9. Before they had done anything good or bad, God said the elder will serve the younger. The only reason Jacob prevails is that God ordained in his plan that Esau would serve Jacob.

And it isn't by Jacob's efforts. That's why the name is predicted here. And it isn't even actually given here.

It says your name will be called. There's going to come a day when your name will be called Israel. But it's not yet going to happen.

We saw last time, you go forward a couple of chapters and God says your name is Israel. Now, here at Bethel, you get that name. This is just a prediction.

It's not even actually the blessing. So, in a way, God Yakovs. He out manipulates Jacob because he makes him think he's gotten a blessing when he really hasn't.

And by the way, this asking of the name, this is always an act of a superior to an inferior. This is the king to the suppliant. What is your name, boy? Saul asks David this because he's the king and the other is the subservient one.

So, when he asks him this, this also is a reestablishing of who is in the place of authority. Who is superior to whom? The wrestling match appears to be a draw until the hip episode. But then he says, what is your name? And when he answers and says Jacob, that's an assertion of authority.

But notice in verse 29, tell me your name, I pray. And that I pray there is a translation of that particle that we saw earlier, that Na particle. When God speaks to Abraham and asks him to go to the mountain and sacrifice his son, God makes that a request, not a command.

And he uses that Na. We talked about it at that time. Here's another instance of it.

Tell me your name, I pray. He doesn't say, what is your name? He says, tell me your name. And so this is much more of a, not exactly obsequious, but it's a subservient attitude that Jacob expresses here.

Tell me your name, I pray. He asks him. But the angel replies and says, why is it that you ask about my name? Are you, in other words, are you trying to take the dominant role

here? Are you going to say, well, what is your name? Who's got the final authority here? Who is going to be making the rules, so to speak? Who does rule? Yitzra'el.

God rules. You're not in a position to ask the name. That's the superior to the inferior.

He says, why are you asking my name? Are you trying to turn the tables here? Are you trying to gain the upper hand? Is this another wrestling match kind of a thing? So he blessed him there. And there are blessings and there are blessings. And this is a parting blessing in much the same way as we've seen in the past where there's no substance given to this, there's no mention made of content or behold, I will make you as any kind of offer or a statement of multiplying or giving land or anything else that says he blessed him.

This is in the same way that we say goodbye. That started out as a blessing. Goodbye is a contraction of God be with ye or God be with you.

And all of these atheists and pagans and everybody else, it's always funny to me, they say goodbye all the time and they're basically saying God be with you. They don't know it. But that was a parting blessing.

God be with you. Go with God. Godspeed.

It's another thing people used to say a lot. And when it says he blessed him there, that means he left. He said goodbye and left.

And that's the nature of the blessing. If this was the blessing that Jacob was wrestling for, it would have been fleshed out. It would have said because you have prevailed, here is your blessing.

Behold. And then there would be some content given. But this is just by way of saying he said goodbye to him there.

So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel. For I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved. This is not really accurate because the sun is not yet up.

And the individual with whom he was wrestling said let me go for the day is about to break. But it's still dark. Day has not broken.

And he doesn't see the person's face and he doesn't get the person's name. It's an anonymous messenger from God. And we find out that in verse 31 as he crossed over Peniel, he's regathered himself, limped down to the shore, and he's crossing the ford there.

That's when the sun rose on him and revealed that he was limping on his hip. So he didn't really see God face to face. He didn't even see the messenger face to face because it was too dark.

But he names the place Peniel anyway. He says I have seen God face to face. Of course, this is an expression meaning I have encountered God at first hand.

And my life is preserved. So Jacob wants to use his strength to obtain the blessing. He says I will not let you go until you bless me.

And he is seeking the blessing. He's seeking something from God by that effort. Who encountered who? I've asked this question a couple of times before and I haven't really answered it.

Did Jacob go tackle one of these perhaps glow-in-the-dark, or he saw one of these angelic Mahanaim types and tackled him and wouldn't let him go? Who attacked whom? There's an interesting parallel in this passage and Exodus chapter 4. Moses is another individual who left and went away for a long sojourn and then returned at the command of God. Moses killed the taskmaster, left and went to Midian, spent 40 years there. God appeared to him at the burning bush after that long period of preparation where Moses learned a lot and said go and tell Pharaoh let my people go.

He signs the leper's hand, throw down the rod, turn into a snake and all of that. So I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue. Okay fine, Aaron your brother will go with you.

He will be your mouthpiece. Of course you find Aaron saying very little. Once Moses has that moral support he does all the talking.

He will be your spokesman to the people. He will be a mouth for you. You shall be to him as God.

This is Exodus 4.16. You shall take this rod in your hand with which you shall do the signs. So Moses went and returned to Jethro. Please let me go.

The Lord had said to Moses in Midian go return to Egypt. In verse 19 all the men who sought your life were dead. Verse 20.

Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey and he returned to the land of Egypt. Moses took the rod of God in his hand. The Lord said to Moses when you go back to Egypt see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand.

But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. You will notice God did not say I will harden his heart so that he will not believe in me and have eternal salvation and go to heaven for all eternity. The hardening of the heart has nothing to do with salvation.

It has everything to do with Pharaoh being the instrumentality by which God is going to inflict the plagues on Egypt. God says I'm going to harden his heart. He's not going to be

impressed by anything you do.

God is going to vent his wrath for 400 years of slavery on the nation of Egypt. Can God harden someone's heart in an area such as this? Obviously he can and he does. But it doesn't say anything about I will harden his heart lest he should turn and believe in me and be saved.

Pharaoh's salvation is not an issue. Pharaoh is a pagan unbeliever. The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord.

God wants to punish the entire nation of Egypt. So he is going to put a stubbornness in Pharaoh's heart so that Pharaoh is not going to respond to what is going to begin to make more and more sense even to the advisors of the Pharaoh. Let this accursed people go so that we can get out from under these plagues.

But he's going to be stubborn. He's not going to relent and let them go. And God will inflict all of these plagues and will devastate the land of Egypt and make them willing to finance the expedition by giving all of these gold and trinkets and jewelry and all this to the Israelites as they depart.

And there are going to be many in Egypt who do recognize the sovereignty and the power of the Lord God of Israel and are going to believe in him and are going to leave as a part of the mixed multitude with Israel. So far from being a means of denying salvation this hardening of Pharaoh's heart is a means of saving thousands of people in the nation of Egypt. But God commissions Moses and tells him ahead of time don't expect to get out at the first... you're not going to swing and hit a home run at the first pitch here.

I'm going to harden his heart and he's not going to let you go. So just be patient. You shall say to Pharaoh, thus says the Lord, Israel is my son, my firstborn.

So I say to you, let my son go that he may serve me. If you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn. Now remember this was the last of the plagues.

This was the death of the firstborn on Passover night. The next day after this they packed up and left. God predicts it to Moses and he says, Moses, this is how you're going to know that this is going to be the end of the long run and Pharaoh's stubbornness is killing of the son.

But this is also something that Moses needs to be taking to heart. The things that God does are not just moving circumstances of his plan forward. Everything that God does is something to be analyzed for its spiritual significance, for its applicability to us.

This is the word of God to Moses. Moses needs to think about it and meditate on it. And what does God say? This is freighted.

This is kind of like a little tapping on the back of Moses' skull saying, Moses, I'm talking here about firstborn sons. Think about the concept of a firstborn son. In case you didn't get it, let me say it again.

Firstborn son, Moses, I'm going to talk about my firstborn son, which is the nation of Israel. I'm going to talk about Pharaoh's firstborn son. Moses has a firstborn son.

Is he taking any of this to heart? Is he thinking about it? Because there's an issue with Moses' firstborn son. And Moses is not going to be ready to go back to Egypt and fulfill God's purpose until he gets this squared away. And God gives him a big hint here that Moses doesn't take.

Thus says the Lord, Israel is my son, my firstborn. I say to you, let my son go that he may serve me. If you refuse to let him go, I will kill your son, your firstborn.

Moses doesn't get the message. And that is the background for what follows, which is often seems to be such a cryptic passage. In verse 24, it came to pass on the way at the encampment.

You know what the word for encampment is? Mahana. Like Mahanaim. It came to pass on the way at the encampment that the Lord met him and sought to kill him.

The Lord met Moses and sought to kill him. You get the idea. This is almost another wrestling match.

Is this another messenger? Has he tackled Moses? Something has happened because Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at... And you have Moses in italics there. And it says, cast it at his feet and said, Surely you are a husband of blood to me. This is such a strange sequence of events.

The Lord meets Moses and is trying to kill him. Zipporah circumcises her son and casts the foreskin at his feet. It doesn't say Moses' feet.

It's at somebody's feet. It could be the Lord's feet. It doesn't say.

Yet she says, Surely you are a husband of blood to me. And then in verse 26, he let him go. I would suggest to you that this is another Brook Javik incident.

This is another messenger from God stopping a man with a divine commission at the point of re-entering the place that he's been commanded to go because there's some unfinished business. There's an attitude that needs to be rectified, that the word of God needs to be personally applied, personally taken to heart before you go forward to address others. Jacob is on his way to confront his brother in the same way that Moses is on his way to confront Pharaoh.

And God stops him because there's some unfinished business in his own life and in his

own thinking. And it is evident, you can piece this together from the evidence, what's happened here? Moses is an Israelite. Zipporah is a Midianite.

They don't circumcise in Midian. They don't have the Abrahamic covenant given in Genesis chapter 17. In order to be a part of the covenant, God tells Abraham, you've got to be circumcised.

You and all of the sons in your household, even your male slaves need to be circumcised. Moses has not done this. Why? Apparently he had a discussion about this with Zipporah and she thought it was a gruesome custom.

That's one possibility. The other possibility that suggests itself to my mind is that Moses never mentioned his national origin to Zipporah. He may not have ever owned up to the fact that he was an Israelite.

When you go back and read his encounter with him at the well and so forth, and she asks some questions and things, he is very evasive. He says he has come from Egypt. He's dressed like an Egyptian.

The Egyptians, by the way, did circumcise, oddly enough. So that would explain his own circumcision. But the failure to circumcise his son, if he makes this an issue, this is going to give him away as an Israelite.

If they get into a heated argument about it, he says, well, it has to be this way. And she says, well, why? He's only half Egyptian. Why does he have to be circumcised? Then he's going to have to come out and say, well, to inherit in my nation, to be my heir, to be a part of the covenant with God, he has to be circumcised.

Well, Moses, for one reason or another, either the issue came up and he gave in to Zipporah, or he never did own up until this point to who he was. But he's not going to go back and face Pharaoh and be the means of delivering the nation of Israel until this gets squared away in his own personal life. If you think about the passages in the New Testament, the qualifications of an elder, if he cannot rule well his own household, how can he rule the house of God? How can Moses be the leader of the nation of Israel when he can't even lead his own family? He can't even convince his own wife of what needs to be done.

So, God stops him. The Lord met him in the way, at the encampment. It's interesting that that Mahana word shows up here because this is in the context of Jacob's encounter.

In similar circumstances. And apparently they are grappling with one another. Moses is also a powerful individual.

He killed the taskmaster with his bare hands. So, they're grappling because when you look at... He doesn't let him go until verse 26. But Zipporah figures out what's going on.

By whatever means, she realizes that this is an issue having to do with Moses' failure to obey in the area of circumcision. Was there something said? Did the messenger that's wrestling with Moses from the Lord say, because you have not done this thing, I have been sent to slay you? But it is clear to Moses because he wrote this down. He says the Lord met him and sought to kill him.

There's no doubt that this is a struggle to the death. He is attempting to take Moses' life. And you would think, well, he was just talking with God.

Why didn't God bring this up and save him the trouble of having to nearly get slain? Well, God did. Moses is expected to know this reference to the firstborn. He should have figured this out.

He should have made application. You think, well, gosh, it doesn't seem very clear. When God says, Israel is my firstborn son, that should be a reminder enough.

That was sufficient revelation. Moses should have known. He should have made application and he did not.

How diligent are we to take to heart the things that we learn? To meditate and to make application. It shouldn't have to be a sledgehammer. Pastors and teachers should not have to pre-digest and pre-chew every part of the Word of God.

It's our responsibility as believers to take what we see in the Word of God, to take what we know of God and His purpose and His plan and His character and meditate on it and see how it applies to our lives. Look at the risk that Moses ran. This whole thing almost got ended before it began because of Moses' personal disobedience.

God would have had to raise up some other deliverer and Moses would be a mere footnote. Someone else would have written the Pentateuch. Someone else would have led them for 40 years.

Someone else would have walked up Sinai. Someone else would have seen the glory of God and had his face glow. Someone else would have been hidden in the cleft of the rock with God's hand and seen the hindward parts.

Moses nearly missed out on everything that makes Moses blessed and a great reflection of the glory of God because of one area of disobedience. Not saving faith, disobedience. He didn't think that this was important enough to pursue in his own family and by missing this piece of righteousness he almost missed the entire plan of God for his life.

Zipporah circumcises the son. Remember, he has more than one son at this point. But this is obviously his first born son because that's in the context.

And so she cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at his feet. And you get the idea

that in some kind of way Zipporah knew that this was the issue. That this is the reason that the Lord is trying to kill Moses here.

I think in the person of this messenger. Maybe even the same one that wrestled Jacob. That she said, You are a husband of blood to me.

Obviously she was not in favor of this but she realized she sees what's at stake and so she does it. So he let him go. The Lord, the messenger releases Moses.

Then she said, You are a husband of blood. She says it again. You get the idea that she's hollering this as she stomps away.

She's probably in tears. She's carrying her son off to bandage him. And she's probably repeating this over and over.

You're a husband of blood. You're a husband of blood. Because of the circumcision.

Then that episode ends and in verse 27 you have the Lord telling Aaron to go meet Moses. God doesn't speak to Aaron until this situation with Moses is squared away. Why? Because it's sort of up in the air whether or not Moses is in fact going to carry this mission out until this gets resolved.

And depending on what happens during that encounter and because it comes out because Zipporah gives in. Did Moses tell her? It's almost like that wrestling in the dark. It's very sketchy.

But until that's resolved, Aaron doesn't get the word to go meet his brother. And the interesting thing about verse 27, we don't have time to look into it, but we've already seen that Moses packed up his family and it says in verse 20 that he returned to the land of Egypt. But this is one of those Hebrew telling you what's going to happen but hasn't happened yet because then they're on the way and they meet the messenger from the Lord who sought to kill him.

But then Aaron is told to go meet Moses. He went and met him on the mountain of God. Well, the mountain of God is where Moses saw the burning bush.

And God said, this will be a sign to you. You're going to come back and worship on this same mountain. So this seems quite a distance from Egypt.

So apparently Aaron has made the same journey that Moses did to get all the way over there to the mountain of God. Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord and then they went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. So they went back and went back to Egypt.

But what is the point here? In both cases, and the episode with Moses sheds light for us on the episode with Jacob, Jacob has to get something squared away in his soul. God

encounters him and this messenger wrestles with him to emphatically emphasize to him, don't get to thinking. What is Jacob doing? All of his efforts, he's trying to appease his brother.

Just like he's manipulated and exercised all of his efforts and struggles with Laban and with his brother Esau and with all of these other situations, now he's sending gifts and he's dividing people into camps and he's doing all these things. And if the meeting goes well with Esau, what's going to be Jacob's conclusion? Boy, my efforts really paid off. It's a good thing I sent all those gifts.

It's a good thing I split up into parties. It's a good thing I put all that ahead of me before I met Esau. And God says, look, you need to remember, it's not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, sayeth the Lord.

It's God's strength. God rules. God determines the outcome.

Not your struggling. Not your efforts. God says, in case you forget that, I'm going to have people start calling you Yitzrayel.

Every time someone talks to you, they're going to say, God rules. Hey, God rules. Come here a minute.

Hey, God rules. They're going to start calling him this and telling him this over and over again to remind him so that he does not forget. Because this is going to be the big temptation.

And this is in fact his heritage and the problem with the nation of Israel, who bore that same name and yet had the same problem of remembering whose efforts are pleasing in God's sight. It's not seeking to obtain our own righteousness by works that pleases God. It's submitting to the righteousness of faith.

This is a struggle for Jacob. This is something that he is struggling to learn. But he does in fact make great progress in this area.

But we see that he is still in the midst of it in chapter 33 when he goes forward and lifts up his eyes. Remember lifting up the eyes? Whenever you see that, he lifted up his eyes and behold, that's always the signal that something real significant is coming up in the passage. Abraham comes to Mount Moriah.

He lifted his eyes and behold, there was the mountain in the distance. And so here we have a major shift. It's a good place for a chapter break, chapter 33.

There Esau was coming and with him were 400 men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants, put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last, and then himself behind

them all. So he's got these waves of resistance ahead.

He's going to see what happens. You can tell his priority, who he assigns value to. He still values Rachel the most.

And there's still work to be done and Jacob's soul isn't there. He's seen the difficulty with favoritism in his own family. Rebecca favored him.

Isaac favored Esau. And that favoritism led to distortion and to wrong things happening in his own household. But what's he doing? He's favoring one wife over another.

He's favoring one son over the others. We know later on that this favoring of Joseph is going to be the cause of great misery for Joseph. But it starts way back here.

We think, oh, it's when he gave him the coat of many colors. Look right here. He put Rachel and Joseph last.

Joseph is obviously nearest and dearest to his heart. And the seeds are here for great grief for Jacob because he's still learning. He's still using his own efforts.

He hasn't sorted out trust in God and reliance on God. So then he crossed over and bowed himself to the ground seven times until he came near to his brother. This is where we're going to have to stop this morning.

But if there's one thing we get out of this extended look at the attitude and the pattern of life behind the name Israel, it is that we have to think carefully about the Word of God and let it shed its light on our lives and be sure that we are submissive. That we are obedient as believers. There's far too much emphasis on looking around and seeing if other people are in the faith and if they're walking and we need to go mentor and disciple and minister and so on.

Our calling is to be transformed. Our calling is to be submissive. To be obedient.

To recognize that God rules. That it is God's work and God's grace that is the issue and not our own efforts. This is so beautifully pictured in the life and the words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it's something we want to take to our own hearts. Let's close here in a word of prayer. We thank you, Father, for your patience with us and your long suffering.

We see it demonstrated in the lives of so many of the biblical characters and we know that you are equally patient and compassionate on us as we struggle and are slow to learn and fall on our face time and time again. We pray to God the Holy Spirit will enable us and give us the insight to take these things to heart and to find those areas in our lives where we need to be submissive and where we need to make application of your word to our daily decisions and our priorities. We pray that as a result the glory of our

Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be reflected in our lives and we ask these things in his name.

Amen.