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"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"

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nay, within it, there is a hidden door into a larger life. In the strength of the Lord God let us march up to the antagonism and claim the endowment; let us contend with the obstacle and find the secret door. Have you an adversary confronting you today? Does some powerful temptation stand in the way of your life, threatening your moral integrity? Move up to it with courage. Despoil it and make it serve in your own well-being. Or is some threat looming in front of you, some menace, seeking to turn you from the path of right? In the strength of God move up to it and convert its threatened lightning into your own dynamic."

From strength to strength go on,
 Wrestle and fight and pray.
 Tread all the powers of darkness down
 And win the well-fought day.

Teach us, O Lord! according to the greatness of Thy tender mercies, to live and love and fight and serve, with all the devotion and fervour imparted by Thy Holy Spirit, in the conscious enjoyment of Thy fellowship and peace, each day of our pilgrim journey, until Thou dost call us to exchange the scenes of earth for the glories of the city of God and eternal day! Amen!

THE THEOPHANIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

By ALEX SOUTTER

III. Jacob at Peniel

Jacob's life was a variegated one, and may be divided into four parts: (1) in the land as a son who supplanted; (2) "beyond the river" as a shepherd who served; (3) back in the land as a saint who suffered; and (4) in Egypt as a sage and seer who worshipped and prophesied.

His Peniel experience took place at the end of the second stage and the beginning of the third. It was the greatest crisis of his career, the most outstanding landmark of a life lived, first in the shadows, but ultimately in the sunshine of God's unfailing mercy.

He had lived twenty years in Padan Aram with Laban during which time Syrian and Jew each sharpened his wits at the other's

expense. Chap. 31 describes their final parting. Laban, says the inspired writer, kissed his sons and daughters. We are not told he kissed Jacob. Perhaps Laban's love for him rose and fell the first day he saw him: he kissed him then, but so far as we can tell, never after.

Chap. 32 begins with an angelic manifestation of divine protection and closes with a theophanic manifestation of God's tender mercy. In between we find Jacob sending his scouts southward, sending his prayers and supplications heavenward, and sending his people and possessions forward—over the brook. "And Jacob was left alone".

In his prayer he first presents his warrant—the Word of God. The God of his fathers had given him a promise, and this he presents to God as he prays. Moreover, his prayer is intensified and strengthened by the personal note that he brings into it: "God of *my* father Abraham . . . *my* father Isaac". Second, he mentions his worthlessness: "I am not worthy", or "I am too small" (Darby's trans.), but he had to become smaller still before God could make him a prince. And, third, his weakness: "I fear him" (Esau). A frank confession indeed. Fear was the dominant emotion in this strange scene. In the hours that followed, God seemed to deal with his fears by saying, "Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself; and let HIM be your dread and let HIM be your fear" (Isa. 8:13). His father Isaac had so done this that Jacob himself calls God "The Fear of Isaac" (31:42). Had he followed his father's pattern he would never had feared Esau as he now did.

In his prayer he says, "now I have become two bands" (camps). It is the same word as in v. 1, Mahanaim—two camps. Evidently he had not missed the meaning. God had sent His two camps of angels to meet the two camps that comprised Jacob's family. But did Jacob derive from this divinely designed coincidence the reassurance that God would have him enjoy? We think not.

At this point Hosea 12 should be considered. The prophet there draws a comparison between Israel in his day and Jacob when he planned and schemed by the brook. Israel made a covenant with Assyria and bartered their oil for Egypt's protection—and left God out. Hosea reminds them that Jacob had to put all human expedients to the one side before he could obtain the blessing.

Jacob was left alone. Then the conflict began and it continued

till dawn. Chas. Simeon has observed: "This 'wrestling' was not a corporeal trial of strength between two men, but a spiritual exercise of Jacob with his God under the form of an angel or a man". Yet it seems impossible to rule out in its entirety the physical aspect of the conflict. Jacob was literally lamed. He left Peniel halting upon his thigh. He carried this physical disability in a manner that could not be hid. Maclaren says: "We have no material for pronouncing on the manner of it, whether ecstasy, vision, or an objective and bodily fact. The body was implicated in the consequences, at all events, and the impression which the story leaves is of an outward struggle". This latter interpretation seems sound.

The conflict was by no means one-sided. The Man wrestled with Jacob; Jacob strove with the Man—with God. Think first of the Godward side. The conflict was symbolic. It symbolised the controversy and the conflict God had been having with Jacob over a long span of years. God had made Jacob His own, despite the meanness of his nature. God had followed him and striven with him each time he had practised deception. God had taught him the inevitability of reaping whatsoever he sowed. God's patience had long been extended; the divine Potter had yearned over him and worked with him untiringly. Now the climax had been reached. Would grace triumph? Would Jacob learn the divine lesson and emerge from the struggle a new man? If he did, then the victory was God's. Paul crystallises the age-long solicitation resident in the heart of God for His people's welfare when he says: "He which hath begun a good work will perform (perfect) it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). God is at pains to perfect our saintliness. He comes down to our level; lays hold of us, keeps hold of us; strives with us; He is even said to wrestle. Such is the lesson of this great Theophany.

And Jacob strove with God. Maclaren says it is not possible to pronounce on the question of the personality of the silent Wrestler. Graham Scroggie, on the other hand, says: "Without doubt He was Christ, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity", and with this we wholeheartedly agree. Jacob strove with this Man. Why? He dreaded the morrow. He quailed at the thought of extermination. He feared Esau. He fought this fight alone. No substitute could fight it for him. He knew it, therefore he agonised. Hosea 12 undoubtedly gives the closing stages of this

grim scene. His natural resources were spent; he had reached the final limits of his strength; in his extremity he pleaded, he wept, he made supplication. And God—the God of Jacob—yielded to faith's importunity. He always does. It is for each of us to prove it. Each Christian life is but a duplication—in some measure at least—of Jacob's. His aloneness with God and his wrestling with God remind us of the sternness of the battle we each have to fight; the urgency of the hour in which we live. But if the fight is grim it is well worth the effort involved. The apostle calls it the *good* fight of faith, and when facing martyrdom Paul could say, "I have fought *the* good fight" (2 Tim. 4:6, R.V.). The result, doubtless, of that unceasing self-discipline (1 Cor. 9:26) which he practised as a Christian warrior.

The conflict at Peniel, as we have said, was two-fold. God wrestled with Jacob; Jacob wrestled with God. God prevailed—He had His way with Jacob; Jacob prevailed—he became a prince with God. Jacob triumphed when he became nothing; God triumphed when He became to Jacob all and in all. Jacob showed the persistence of faith; God showed the patience of love. Jacob's extremity was God's opportunity; God's benignity was Jacob's opportunity. God saw the faith of Jacob; Jacob saw the face of God. Jacob said, "I will not" when his will was broken—amazing paradox! The human will functions perfectly only when, before God, it is bruised and broken. Thus Jacob was transformed. The supplanter schemed; he wrestled; he clung to the divine Wrestler; he prayed and wept; he became a prince.

"What is thy name? And he said Jacob"; that name epitomised all the dark past. "Thy name shall be called . . . Israel"; that name was the herald of a bright future. Each name is rooted in an unusual phenomenon. Jacob—"He holds by the heel"; it began at his very birth—this propensity to catch or outreach others. Israel—"Wrestler", or, "Prince of God"; the name given to the one who in his utter helplessness is seen cleaving to the Author of Omnipotence. The name Israel was passed on to the nation; and in this day of grace it is given to the whole company of believing souls—Paul calls us the "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16).

"I will not let thee go except Thou bless me . . . and He blessed him there" (vv. 26-29). These words point to the climax of this great passage. The blessing of God in all its perennial freshness and potency had so far eluded him. It is true that by

his adroitness and guile he had seized the blessing of the first-born; by deception and lying he had drawn to himself his father's coveted blessing. But all this manoueuering did not bring him one whit nearer the enjoyment of that blessing that God in sovereign love had predestined for him. There never has been a short cut to blessing, and there never shall. God had blessed Abraham and Isaac (chap. 12:2, 3; 26:12); but the hand of God had laid no such blessing on Jacob's head. True, God had promised to bless others through him (chap. 28:14); but what of the conscious enjoyment of it in his own soul? Unblessed, he began the night-struggle, but fully and consciously blessed, he ended it. He was now, in very truth, in the patriarchal succession. His valley of Baca (Weeping) had been turned into a valley of Berachah (Blessing). And having become the recipient of blessing he later became the dispenser of it (1) to Pharaoh, (2) to Joseph's two sons and (3) to his own twelve sons (Gen. 47:10; 48:14; 49:1-27). Indeed, Jacob's end as head of his own household by far outshines that of Isaac—the result, no doubt, of the tears shed and the vows made at Peniel and elsewhere.

WORLD LEADERS IN THE FINAL CRISES

BY W. W. FEREDAY

III. The King of the North

Israel's ancient enemies will re-appear in the last days, hostile as ever, and will meet their final doom. Some of them, notably Edom, Moab, and Ammon, will be destroyed by Israelite instrumentality (Isa. 11:14; Obad. 21). The most formidable of Israel's foes at the end will be the Assyrian, spoken of frequently in Isaiah and Micah, called the King of the North in Dan. 11:40. This enemy will invade the land with overwhelming forces when the Antichrist is enthroned there. Like Sennacherib in the days of Hezekiah, he will be disappointed of his prey by direct Divine intervention, and he will end even more miserably. Sennacherib was murdered by his own sons (Isa. 37:38), and the last Assyrian will be consigned to Tophet (Isa. 30:33).