

A Priest and a Rabbi Walk into a Classroom

Calvary Episcopal Church, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Genesis 32



Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him; ² and when Jacob saw them he said, ‘This is God’s camp!’ So he called that place Mahanaim.

Jacob Sends Presents to Appease Esau

³ Jacob sent messengers before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom, ⁴ instructing them, ‘Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: Thus says your servant Jacob, “I have lived with Laban as an alien, and stayed until now; ⁵ and I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, male and female slaves; and I have sent to tell my lord, in order that I may find favour in your sight.”’

⁶ The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, ‘We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.’ ⁷ Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies, ⁸ thinking, ‘If Esau comes to one company and destroys it, then the company that is left will escape.’

⁹ And Jacob said, ‘O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord who said to me, “Return to your country and to your kindred, and I will do you good”, ¹⁰ I am not worthy of the least of all the steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan; and now I have become two companies. ¹¹ Deliver me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I am afraid of him; he may come and kill us all, the mothers with the children. ¹² Yet you have said, “I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted because of their number.”’

¹³ So he spent that night there, and from what he had with him he took a present for his brother Esau, ¹⁴ two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, ¹⁵ thirty milch camels and their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. ¹⁶ These he delivered into the hand of his servants, each

drove by itself, and said to his servants, 'Pass on ahead of me, and put a space between drove and drove.' ¹⁷ He instructed the foremost, 'When Esau my brother meets you, and asks you, "To whom do you belong? Where are you going? And whose are these ahead of you?" ¹⁸ then you shall say, "They belong to your servant Jacob; they are a present sent to my lord Esau; and moreover he is behind us.'" ¹⁹ He likewise instructed the second and the third and all who followed the droves, 'You shall say the same thing to Esau when you meet him, ²⁰ and you shall say, "Moreover your servant Jacob is behind us.'" For he thought, 'I may appease him with the present that goes ahead of me, and afterwards I shall see his face; perhaps he will accept me.' ²¹ So the present passed on ahead of him; and he himself spent that night in the camp.

Jacob Wrestles at Peniel

²² The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³ He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. ²⁴ Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. ²⁵ When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. ²⁶ Then he said, 'Let me go, for the day is breaking.' But Jacob said, 'I will not let you go, unless you bless me.' ²⁷ So he said to him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Jacob.' ²⁸ Then the man said, 'You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans,¹ and have prevailed.' ²⁹ Then Jacob asked him, 'Please tell me your name.' But he said, 'Why is it that you ask my name?' And there he blessed him. ³⁰ So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, 'For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.' ³¹ The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip. ³² Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the thigh muscle that is on the hip socket, because he struck Jacob on the hip socket at the thigh muscle.

