

# CHAPTER 32

## INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS 32

This chapter informs us of Jacob's proceeding on in his journey, and of his being met and guarded by an host of angels, (<sup><0131></sup>Genesis 32:1,2); of his sending messengers to his brother Esau, acquainting him with his increase, and desiring his favour and good will, (<sup><0133></sup>Genesis 32:3-5), who return and report to him, that Esau was coming to him with four hundred men, which put him into a panic, and after devising ways and means for the security of himself; and those with him, at least a part, if not the whole, (<sup><0136></sup>Genesis 32:6-8); then follows a prayer of his to God, pressing his unworthiness of mercies, and his sense of them, imploring deliverance from his brother, and putting the Lord in mind of his promises, (<sup><0139></sup>Genesis 32:9-12); after which we have an account of the wise methods he took for the safety of himself and family, by sending a present to his brother, dividing those who had the charge of it into separate companies, and directing them to move at a proper distance from each other, he, his wives and children, following after, (<sup><0123></sup>Genesis 32:13-23); when they were over the brook Jabbok, he stopped, and being alone, the Son of God in an human form appeared to him, and wrestled with him, with whom Jacob prevailed, and got the blessing, and hence had the name of Israel, (<sup><0124></sup>Genesis 32:24-28); and though he could not get his name, he perceived it was a divine Person he had wrestled with, and therefore called the name of the place Penuel, (<sup><0129></sup>Genesis 32:29-31); the hollow of his thigh being touched by him with whom he wrestled, which put it out of joint, he halted as he went over Penuel, in commemoration of which the children of Israel eat not of that part of the thigh, (<sup><0131></sup>Genesis 32:31,32).

**Ver. 1.** *And Jacob went on his way*, etc.] From Gilead towards the land of Canaan:

*and the angels of God met him*; to comfort and help him, to protect and defend him, to keep him in all his ways, that nothing hurt him, (<sup><0911></sup>Psalms 91:11,12); these are ministering spirits sent forth by God to minister to his people, the heirs of salvation; and such an one Jacob was.

**Ver. 2.** *And when Jacob saw them,* etc.] These appeared in a visible form, most probably human, and in the habit, and with the accoutrements of soldiers, and therefore afterwards called an host or army. Aben Ezra thinks that Jacob alone saw them, as Elisha first saw the host of angels before the young man did that was with him, (<sup>4167</sup>2 Kings 6:17):

*he said, this [is] God's host:* or army, hence he is often called the Lord of hosts; angels have this name from their number, order, strength, and military exploits they perform:

*and he called the name of the place Mahanaim;* which signifies two hosts or armies; either his own family and company making one, and the angels another, as Aben Ezra observes; or they were the angels, who very probably appeared in two companies, or as two armies, and one went on one side of Jacob and his family, and the other on the other side; or the one went before him, and the other behind him; the latter to secure him from any insult of Laban, should he pursue after him, and distress him in the rear, and the former to protect him from Esau, near whose country Jacob now was, and of whom he was in some fear and danger; thus seasonably did God appear for him. The Jewish writers <sup>f1529</sup> say, the host of God is 60,000, and that the Shechinah, or divine Majesty, never dwells among less, and that Mahanaim, or two hosts, are 120,000; there was afterwards a city of this name near this place, which very likely was so called in memory of this appearance, (<sup>4123</sup>Joshua 21:38); and there seems to be an allusion to it in the account of the church, (<sup>2163</sup>Song of Solomon 6:13); it was in the land of Gilead, and tribe of Gad, forty four miles from Jerusalem to the southeast <sup>f1530</sup>.

**Ver. 3.** *And Jacob sent messengers before him unto Esau his brother,* etc.] Or “angels”: not angels simply, as Jarchi, for these were not under the command, and in the power of Jacob to send, nor would they have needed any instruction from him afterwards given, but these were some of his own servants. Esau it seems was removed from his father's house, and was possessed of a country after mentioned, called from his name; and which Aben Ezra says lay between Haran and the land of Israel; but if it did not directly lie in the road of Jacob, yet, as it was near him, he did not choose to pass by without seeing his brother; and therefore sent messengers to inform him of his coming, and by whom he might learn in what temper and disposition of mind he was towards him:

*unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom*: which had its first name from Seir the Horite; and Esau having married into his family, came into the possession of it, by virtue of that marriage; or rather he and his sons drove out the Horites, the ancient possessors of it, and took it to themselves, from whom it was afterwards called Edom, a name of Esau, which he had from the red pottage he sold his birthright for to his brother Jacob, (<sup><0250></sup>Genesis 25:30); perhaps it is here called Edom by an anticipation, not having as yet that name, though it had in Moses's time, when this history was wrote; (see <sup><0338></sup>Genesis 36:18,20,24 <sup><0312></sup>Deuteronomy 1:12,22).

**Ver. 4.** *And he commanded them*, etc.] Being his servants:

*saying, thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau*; being not only a lord of a country, but his eldest brother, and whom he chose to bespeak in this manner, to soften his mind, and incline it to him; and that he might see he did not pique himself upon the birthright and blessing he had obtained; and as if these were forgotten by him, though hereby he does not give up his right in them:

*thy servant Jacob saith thus*, expressing great humility and modesty; for though his father Isaac by his blessing had made him lord over Esau, the time was not come for this to take place, his father not being yet dead; and besides, was to have its accomplishment not in his own person, but in his posterity:

*I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now*; had been a sojourner and a servant in Laban's family for twenty years past, and had had an hard master, and therefore could not be the object of his brother's envy, but rather of his pity and compassion.

**Ver. 5.** *And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants*, etc.] This he would have said, lest he should think he was come to ask anything of him, and put himself and his family upon him; and lest he should treat him with contempt, as a poor mean beggarly creature, and be ashamed of the relation he stood in to him:

*and I have sent to tell my lord*; of his coming, and of his state and circumstances:

*that I may find grace in thy sight*; share in his good will, which was all he wanted, and that friendship, harmony, and brotherly love, might subsist between them, which he was very desirous of.

**Ver. 6.** *And the messengers returned to Jacob*, etc.] After they had delivered their message, with the answer they brought back:

*saying, we came to thy brother Esau*; which, though not expressed, is implied in these words, and is still more manifest by what follows:

*and also he cometh to meet thee*; and pay a friendly visit, as they supposed:

*and four hundred men with him*; partly to show his grandeur, and partly out of respect to Jacob, and to do honour to him; though some think this was done with an ill design upon him, and which indeed seems probable; and it is certain Jacob so understood it, as is evident by the distress it gave him, and by the methods he took for his safety, and by the gracious appearance of God unto him, and the strength he gave him on this occasion, not only to pray to and wrestle with him, but to prevail both with God and men, as the following account shows. The Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem call these four hundred men leaders or generals of armies, which is not probable; they were most likely Esau's subjects, his tenants and servants.

**Ver. 7.** *Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed*, etc.] Knowing what he had done to his brother in getting the birthright and blessing from him, and what an enmity he had conceived in his mind against him on that account, and remembering what he had said he would do to him; and therefore might fear that all his professions of respect to him were craftily and cunningly made to take him off of his guard, and that he might the more easily fall into his hands, and especially when he heard there were four hundred men with him; this struck a terror into him, and made him suspicious of an ill design against him; though herein Jacob betrayed much weakness and want of faith, when God has promised again and again that he would be with him, and keep him, and protect him, and return him safe to the land of Canaan; and when he had just had such an appearance of angels to be his helpers, guardians, and protectors:

*and he divided the people that [was] with him, and the flocks, and the herds, and the camels, into two bands*: some of his servants and shepherds, with a part of the flocks and herds, in one band or company, and some with the rest of them, and the camels, and his wives, and his children, in the other.

**Ver. 8.** *And said, if Esau come to the one company, and smite it*, etc.] The first, which perhaps consisted only of some servants, with a part of his

cattle; so that if Esau should come in an hostile manner, and fall upon that, and slay the servants, and take the cattle as a booty:

*then the other company which is left shall escape*; by flight, in which most probably were he himself, his wives and children, and the camels to carry them off who would have notice by what should happen to the first band; but one would think, that, notwithstanding all this precaution and wise methods taken, there could be little expectation of escaping the hands of Esau, if he came out on such an ill design; for whither could they flee? or how could they hope to get out of the reach of four hundred men pursuing after them, unless it could be thought, or might be hoped, that the first company falling into his hands, and the revenge on them, and the plunder of them, would satiate him, and he would proceed no further? but Jacob did not trust to these methods he concerted, but betakes himself to God in prayer, as follows.

**Ver. 9.** *And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac,* etc.] In this distress he does not consult the teraphim Rachel had taken from her father; nor does he call upon the hosts of angels that had just appeared to him, to help, protect, and guard him; but to God only, the God of his fathers, who had promised great things to them, and had done great things for them; who was their God in covenant, as he was his also, though he makes no mention of it, and who was heir of the promises made to them, the birthright and blessing being entailed upon him:

*the Lord which saidst unto me, return unto thy country, and to thy kindred*; the same God had appeared to him, when in Laban's house, and bid him return to his own country, and father's house; in obedience to which command he was now on his journey thither, and being in the way of his duty, and acting according to the will of God, though he had no dependence on, nor put any confidence in anything done by him, as appears by what follows; yet he hoped God of his grace and goodness would have a regard unto him, as he was doing what he was directed to by him, and especially since he had made the following gracious promise:

*and I will deal well with thee*: bestow good things on thee, both temporal and spiritual, and among the former, preservation from evils and dangers is included.

**Ver. 10.** *I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies,* etc.] Or of any of them, according to his humble sense of things his mind was now impressed

with; he was not worthy of the least mercy and favour that had been bestowed upon him; not even of any temporal mercy, and much less of any spiritual one, and therefore did not expect any from the hands of God, on account of any merit of his own: or “I am less than all thy mercies”<sup>f1531</sup>; Jacob had had many mercies and favours bestowed upon him by the Lord, which he was sensible of, and thankful for, notwithstanding all the ill usage and hard treatment he had met with in Laban’s house, and those were very great ones; he was not worthy of all, nor any of them; he was not deserving of the least of them, as our version truly gives the sense of the words:

*and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant*; in performing promises made to him; grace, mercy, and goodness are seen making promises, and truth and faithfulness in the performance of them; Jacob had had a rich experience of both, and was deeply affected therewith, and which made him humble before God:

*for with my staff I passed over this Jordan*; the river Jordan, near to which he now was, or at least had it in view, either with the eyes of his body, or his mind; this river he passed over when he went to Haran with his staff in his hand, and that only, which was either a shepherd’s staff, or a travelling one, the latter most likely: he passed “alone” over it, as Onkelos and Jonathan add by way of illustration; unaccompanied by any, having no friend with him, nor servant to attend him. Jarchi’s paraphrase is,

“there was not with me neither silver nor gold, nor cattle, but my staff only.”

*And now I am become two bands*; into which he had now divided his wives, children, servants, and cattle; this he mentions, to observe the great goodness of God to him, and the large increase he had made him, and how different his circumstances now were to what they were when he was upon this spot, or thereabout, twenty years ago.

**Ver. 11.** *Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau*, etc.] For though his brother, it was his brother Esau, that had formerly vowed revenge upon him, and had determined to kill him, (<sup>-0274:</sup>Genesis 27:41), and he knew not but that he was still of the same mind; and now having an opportunity, and in his power to do it, being accompanied with four hundred men, he feared he would attempt it; and therefore entreats the Lord, who was greater than he, to deliver him from falling into his hands, and being destroyed by him:

*for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, [and] the mother with the children;* for whom Jacob seems to be more concerned than for himself; the phrase denotes the utter destruction of his family, and the cruelty and inhumanity that would be exercised therein; which shows what an opinion he had of his brother, and of his savage disposition.

**Ver. 12.** *And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good,* etc.] All kind of good, most certainly and constantly; so Jacob rightly interpreted the promise, “I will be with thee”, (<sup>Q1816</sup>Genesis 31:3); for the promise of God’s presence includes and secures all needful good to his people; and from this general promise Jacob draws an argument for a special and particular good, the preservation of him and his family, he was now pleading for; and the rather he might hope to succeed, since the following promise was also made him:

*and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude;* which could not be fulfilled, if he and his family were cut off at once, as he feared; but God is faithful who has promised.

**Ver. 13.** *And he lodged there that same night,* etc.] At Mahanaim, or some place near it:

*and took of that which came to his hand;* not what came next to hand, for what he did was with great deliberation, judgment, and prudence; wherefore the phrase signifies what he was possessed of, or was in his power, as Jarchi rightly interprets it:

*a present for Esau his brother:* in order to pacify him, gain his good will, and avert his wrath and displeasure, (see <sup>Q1816</sup>Proverbs 18:16); though Jacob had prayed to God, committed himself and family to him, and left all with him, yet he thought it proper to make use of all prudential means and methods for his safety: God frequently works in and by means made use of: the account of the present follows.

**Ver. 14.** *Two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams.*] And it seems this proportion of one he goat to ten she goats, and of one ram to ten ewes, is a proper one, and what has been so judged in other times and countries <sup>f1532</sup>.

**Ver. 15.** *Thirty milch camels with their colts,* etc.] Milch camels were in great esteem in the eastern countries; their milk being, as Aristotle <sup>f1533</sup> and Pliny <sup>f1534</sup> say, the sweetest of all milk:

*forty kine and ten bulls*; one bull to ten cows; the same proportion as in the goats and rams:

*twenty she asses and ten foals*; and supposing thirty colts belonging to the camels; the present consisted of five hundred and eighty head of cattle: a large number to spare out of his flocks and herds, that he had acquired in six years' time; and showed a generous disposition as well as prudence, to part with so much in order to secure the rest.

**Ver. 16.** *And he delivered [them] into the hand of his servants*, etc.] To present them to Esau as from him:

*every drove by themselves*; there seems to have been three droves, (see <sup>(1319)</sup>Genesis 32:19); very probably the two hundred and twenty goats, male and female, were in the first drove; and the two hundred and twenty sheep, ewes, and rams, were in the second drove; and the thirty camels, with their colts, and the fifty cows and bulls, with the twenty she asses and ten foals, which made in all one hundred and forty, were in the third drove: though Aben Ezra thinks there were five droves; nor is it improbable, the goats in one drove, the sheep in another, the camels and colts in a third, and the kine and bulls might make a fourth, and the asses with their foals a fifth:

*and saith unto his servants, pass over before me*: over the brook Jabbok, (<sup>(1322)</sup>Genesis 32:22), a day's journey or less before him, as Jarchi observes, or rather a night's journey, as seems by the context; for these were sent out at evening, and Jacob stayed behind all night, as appears by what follows:

*and put a space betwixt drove and drove*; his meaning is, that they should not follow each other closely; but that there should be a considerable distance between them, and which he would have them careful to keep: his view in this was, partly to prolong time, Esau stopping, as he supposed he would, at each drove, and asking questions of the men; and partly that he might the better and more distinctly observe the largeness of his present, and his munificence in it, and so, both by the present, and by the frequent repetition of his submission to him as his servant, his wrath, if he came out in it, would be gradually abated, and before he came to him he would be in a disposition to receive him with some marks of affection and kindness, as he did.

**Ver. 17.** *And he commanded the foremost*, etc.] He that had the care of the first drove, which consisted of goats, male and female:



*saying, when Esau my brother meeteth thee*; as there was reason to believe he would, being on the road, and him first of all, being the foremost:

*and asketh thee, saying, what [art] thou?* that is, whose servant art thou? to whom dost thou belong?

*and whither goest thou?* what place art thou travelling to?

*and whose are these before thee?* whose are these goats? to whom do they belong thou art driving? for in driving and travelling on the road, sheep and goats went before those that had the care of them; whereas, in leading out to pastures, the shepherds went before, and the flocks followed, (~~800~~ John 10:4).

**Ver. 18.** *Then thou shall say, [they be] thy servant Jacob's*, etc.] Both the goats before them, and they themselves that had the care of them, belonged to Jacob, who directed them to speak of him to Esau as his “servant”:

*it [is] a present sent unto my lord Esau*; which is the answer to the second question:

*and behold also he [is] behind us*: that is, Jacob: this they were bid to tell, lest he should think that Jacob was afraid of him, and was gone another way; but that he was coming to pay a visit to him, and might expect shortly to see him, which would prepare his mind how to behave towards him.

**Ver. 19.** *And so commanded he the second and third*, etc.] Those who had the care of the second and third droves, he ordered them to say the same things, and in the same words as he had the first:

*and all that followed the droves*; either all that were with the principal driver; that if any of them should happen to be interrogated first, they might know what to answer; or those that followed the other droves, besides the three mentioned, which countenances Aben Ezra's notion of five droves, before observed:

*saying, on this manner shall you speak to Esau, when you find him*; that is, when they met him and perceived it was he that put questions to them.

**Ver. 20.** *And say ye moreover, behold, thy servant Jacob [is] behind us*, etc.] This is repeated to impress it upon their minds, that they might be careful of all things, not to forget that, it being a point of great importance; for the present would have signified nothing, if Jacob had not appeared in

person; Esau would have thought himself, at best, but slighted; as if he was unworthy of a visit from him, and of conversation with him:

*for he said*: that is, Jacob, or “had said”<sup>f1535</sup>, in his heart, within himself, as might be supposed from the whole of his conduct; for what follows are the words of Moses the historian, as Aben Ezra observes, and not of Jacob to his servants, nor of them to Esau:

*I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterwards I will see his face*: he hoped the present would produce the desired effect; that it would turn away his wrath from him, and pacify him; and then he should be able to appear before him, and see his face with pleasure: or, “I will expiate his face”<sup>f1536</sup>, as some render the words, or make him propitious and favourable; or cover his face, as Aben Ezra interprets it, that is, cause him to hide his wrath and resentment, that it shall not appear; or cause his fury to cease, as Jarchi; or remove his anger, wrath, and displeasure, as Ben Melech; all which our version takes in, by rendering it, “appease him”; and then,

*peradventure he will accept of me*: receive him with marks of tenderness and affection, and in a very honourable and respectable manner.

**Ver. 21.** *So went the present over before him*, etc.] Over the brook Jabbok, after mentioned, the night before Jacob did:

*and himself lodged that night in the company*; or “in the camp”<sup>f1537</sup>, either in the place called Mahanaim, from the hosts or crowds of angels seen there; or rather in his own camp, his family and servants; or, as Aben Ezra distinguishes, in the camp with his servants, and not in his tent, lest his brother should come and smite him; and so Nachmanides.

**Ver. 22.** *And he rose up that night*, etc.] In the middle of it, for it was long before break of day, as appears from (<sup><01324></sup>Genesis 32:24);

*and took his two wives*, Rachel and Leah,

*and his two womenservants*, Bilhah and Zilpah, or, “his two concubines”, as the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan; which distinguishes them from other womenservants or maidservants, of which, no doubt, he had many:

*and his eleven sons*; together with Dinah his daughter, though not mentioned, being the only female child, and a little one:

*and passed over the ford Jabbok*; over that river, at a place of it where it was fordable, or where there was a ford or passage: this was a river that took its rise from the mountains of Arabia, was the border of the Ammonites, washed the city Rabba, and ran between Philadelphia and Gerasa, and came into the river Jordan, at some little distance from the sea of Gennesaret or Galilee <sup>f1538</sup>, about three or four miles from it.

**Ver. 23.** *And he took them, and sent them over the brook*, etc.] His wives and children, under the care of some of his servants:

*and sent over that he had*: all that belonged to him, his servants and his cattle or goods.

**Ver. 24.** *And Jacob was left alone*, etc.] On the other side of Jabbok, his family and cattle having passed over it; and this solitude he chose, in order to spend some time in prayer to God for the safety of him and his:

*and there wrestled a man with him*; not a phantasm or spectre, as Josephus <sup>f1539</sup> calls him; nor was this a mere visionary representation of a man, to the imagination of Jacob; or done in the vision of prophecy, as Maimonides <sup>f1540</sup>; but it was something real, corporeal, and visible: the Targum of Jonathan says, it was an angel in the likeness of a man, and calls him Michael, which is not amiss, since he is expressly called an angel, (<sup><2124></sup>Hosea 12:4); and if Michael the uncreated angel is meant, it is most true; for not a created angel is designed, but a divine Person, as appears from Jacob's desiring to be blessed by him; and besides, being expressly called God, (<sup><0128></sup>Genesis 32:28,30); and was, no doubt, the Son of God in an human form; who frequently appeared in it as a token and pledge of his future incarnation: and "this wrestling" was real and corporeal on the part of both; the man took hold of Jacob, and he took hold of the man, and they strove and struggled together for victory as wrestlers do; and on Jacob's part it was also mental and spiritual, and signified his fervent and importunate striving with God in prayer; or at least it was attended with earnest and importunate supplications; (see <sup><2124></sup>Hosea 12:4); and this continued

*until the breaking of the day*: how long this conflict lasted is not certain, perhaps not long; since after Jacob rose in the night he had a great deal of business to do, and did it before this affair happened; as sending his wives, children, servants, and cattle over the brook: however, this may denote, that in the present state or night of darkness, wrestling in prayer with God

must be continued until the perfect state commences, when the everlasting day of glory will break.

**Ver. 25.** *And when he saw that he prevailed not against him,* etc.] That he, the man, or the Son of God in the form of man, prevailed not against Jacob, by casting him to the ground, or causing him to desist and leave off wrestling with him; not because he could not, but because he would not, being willing to encourage the faith of Jacob against future trials and exercises, and especially under his present one: besides, such were the promises that this divine Person knew were made to Jacob, and so strong was Jacob's faith at this time in pleading those promises in prayer to God, that he could not do otherwise, consistent with the purposes and promises of God, than suffer himself to be prevailed over by him:

*he touched the hollow of his thigh;* the hollow part of the thigh or the groin, or the hollow place in which the thigh bone moves, and is said to have the form of the hollow of a man's hand recurved:

*and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him;* that is, the huckle bone, or the thigh bone, was moved out of the hollow place in which it was: this was done to let Jacob know that the person he wrestled with was superior to him, and could easily have overcome him, and obliged him to cease wrestling with him if he would; and that the victory he got over him was not by his own strength, but by divine assistance, and by the sufferance of the himself he wrestled with; so that he had nothing to boast of: and this shows the truth and reality of this conflict; that it was not visionary, but a real fact, as well as it teaches the weakness and infirmities of the saints, that attend them in their spiritual conflicts. The word used in this and the preceding verse comes from a root which signifies dust; it being usual with wrestlers to raise up the dust with their feet when they strive together, as Kimchi<sup>f1541</sup> remarks, as well as it was common with the ancients to wrestle in dust, and sand<sup>f1542</sup>; and hence the phrase "descendere in arenam", combatants were called "arenarii".

**Ver. 26.** *And he said, let me go, for the day breaketh,* etc.] This was said that he might seem to be a man that was desirous of going about his business, as men do early in the morning; though the true reason perhaps was, that his form might not be more distinctly seen by Jacob, and much less by any other person:

*and he said, I will not let thee go except thou bless me*; for by his touching his thigh, and the effect of that, he perceived he was more than a man, even a divine Person, and therefore insisted upon being blessed by him: thus faith in prayer lays hold on God, and will not let him go without leaving the blessing it is pleading for; which shows the great strength of faith, and the efficacy of the prayer of faith with God; (see <sup><1020></sup>Exodus 32:10 <sup><2617></sup>Isaiah 62:7 <sup><9165></sup>James 5:15,16).

**Ver. 27.** *And he said unto him, what [is] thy name?* etc.] Which question is put, not as being ignorant of it, but in order to take occasion from it, and the change of it, to show that he had granted his request, and had blessed him, and would yet more and more:

*and he said, Jacob*; the name given him at his birth, and by which he had always been called, and therefore tells it him at once, not staying to ask the reason of the question.

**Ver. 28.** *And he said, thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel,* etc.] That is, not Jacob only, but Israel also, as Ben Melech interprets it, or the one as well as the other; or the one rather and more frequently than the other: for certain it is, that he is often after this called Jacob, and his posterity also the seed of Jacob, though more commonly Israel, and Israelites:

*for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed*: this is given as a reason of his name Israel, which signifies a prince of God, or one who as a prince prevails with God; which confutes all other etymologies of the name, as the upright one of God, the man that sees God, or any other: he now prevailed with God in prayer, and by faith got the blessing, as he had prevailed before with Esau and Laban, and got the better of them, and so would again of the former: hence some render the word, “and shall prevail”<sup>f1543</sup>; and indeed this transaction was designed to fortify Jacob against the fear of his brother Esau; and from whence he might reasonably conclude, that if he had power with God, and prevailed to obtain what he desired of him, he would much more be able to prevail over his brother, and even over all that should rise up against him, and oppose him; and this may not only be prophetic of what should hereafter be fulfilled in the person of Jacob, but in his posterity in future times, who should prevail over their enemies, and enjoy all good things by the favour of God: for it may be rendered, “thou hast behaved like a prince with God, and with men”, or, “over men thou shalt prevail”.

**Ver. 29.** *And Jacob asked [him], and said, tell [me], I pray thee, thy name*, etc.] Being asked his own name, and told it, and having another given him more significative and expressive, he is emboldened to ask the person that wrestled with him what was his name; (<sup><00B13></sup>Exodus 3:13); for Jacob knew that he was God, as appears by his earnest desire to be blessed by him; and he knew it by the declaration just made, that he had power with God as a prince; but he hoped to have some name, taken by him from the place or circumstance of things in which he was, whereby he might the better remember this affair; as he was pleased to call himself the God of Bethel, from his appearance to Jacob there, (<sup><00B13></sup>Genesis 31:13); therefore since he did not choose to give him his name, Jacob himself imposed one on the place afterwards, as a memorial of God being seen by him there:

*and he said, wherefore [is] it [that] thou dost ask after my name?* which is both a reproof of his curiosity, and a denial of his request; signifying that he had no need to put that question, it was enough for him that he had got the blessing, and which he confirms:

*and he blessed him there;* in the same place, as the Vulgate Latin version, where he had been wrestling with him, as he was taking his leave of him; for this was a farewell blessing, and a confirmation of that he had received, through the name of Israel being given him.

**Ver. 30.** *And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel*, etc.] In (<sup><00B28></sup>Genesis 32:31); Peniel, which signifies the face of God, or God hath looked upon me, or hath had respect to me: there was afterwards a city built here, called by the same name; (see <sup><00B08></sup>Judges 8:8 <sup><1125></sup>1 Kings 12:25); it is said <sup>f1544</sup> to be four miles from Mahanaim; the reason of it follows:

*for I have seen God face to face:* it may be observed, that in wrestling men are face to face, and in this position were Jacob and the man that wrestled with him; which he seems to have respect unto, as well as to the familiarity and intimate communion he was admitted to:

*and my life is preserved:* though he had wrestled with one so vastly superior to himself, who could have easily crushed this worm Jacob to pieces, as he is sometimes called; and though he had had such a sight of God as face to faces referring, as is thought, to a notion that obtained early, even among good men, that upon sight of God a man instantly died; though we have no example of that kind: but perhaps he observed this for his encouragement; that whereas he had met with God himself, and

wrestled with him in the form of a man, and yet was preserved, he doubted not that, when he should meet with his brother and debate matters with him, he should be safe and unhurt.

**Ver. 31.** *And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him*, etc.] It was break of day when the angel desired to be let go, and by that time the parley held between them ceased, and they parted, the sun was rising; and as Jacob went on it shone upon him, as a token of the good will and favour of God to him, and as an emblem of the sun of righteousness arising on him with healing in his wings, (<sup>300</sup>Malachi 4:2);

*and he halted upon his thigh*; it being out of joint, of which he became more sensible when he came to walk upon it; and besides, his attention to the angel that was with him caused him not so much to perceive it until he had departed front him: some think he went limping all his days; others, that he was healed immediately by the angel before he came to Esau; but of either there is no proof.

**Ver. 32.** *Therefore the children of Israel eat not [of] the sinew which shrank*, etc.] Which was contracted by the touch of the angel, and by which it was weakened and benumbed; or the sinew of the part that was out of joint, the sinew or tendon that keeps the thigh bone in the socket, together with the flesh that covered it, or the muscle in which it is; or that sinew, others, that contracts itself and gives motion to the thigh bone to work itself: of this the Israelites eat not:

*which [is] upon the hollow of the thigh*; or the cap of it:

*unto this day*; when Moses wrote this history:

*because he [the angel] touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, in the sinew that shrank*; and very superstitiously do they abstain from it unto this day: they have a whole chapter in one of their treatises in the Misnah <sup>f1545</sup>, giving rules concerning it; where it is forbidden to eat of it, whether in the land of Israel or out of it; whether in common food or sacrifices, even in burnt offerings it was to be taken out; and whether in cattle of the house or of the field; and both in the right and left thigh, but not in fowls, because they have no hollow, and butchers are not to be trusted; and whoever eats of it to the quantity of an olive is to be beaten with forty stripes; and because the Jews are more ignorant of this nerve, as Mercer observes, therefore they abstain from all nerves in the posteriors of animals. Leo of Modena says <sup>f1546</sup>, of what beast soever they eat, they are very careful to take away

all the fat and the sinew which shrunk: and hence it is, that in many places in Italy, and especially in Germany, they eat not at all of the hinder quarters of ox, lamb, or goat; because there is in those parts of the beast both very much fat, and also the forbidden sinew; and it asketh so much care to cleanse the parts of these, that there are few that are able to do it, or dare to undertake it.