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Jacob Versus Israel.

II

Gen. 32:27-28.

We have followed Jacob, on his journey toward Mesopotamia until after he awoke from that inspiring vision at Bethel. Four fifths of his journey lay yet before him and we hear nothing of him until he came into the country of Laban, where he met, accidentally, met the shepherds and also the daughter of his uncle, at a well. With Eastern simplicity of manners, he greeted Rachel with cordial affection and was welcomed into the household of Laban with as much enthusiasm as if he had been a son instead of a stranger whose only introduction was the nominal tie of kinship.

At the expiration of a month during which he served his uncle, doubtless in tending flocks, perhaps in company with his fair cousin whose first introduction to him was in capacity of a shepherdess, he makes a bargain with Laban to serve him for seven years, on condition that at

the end of that time he shall receive Rachel as a wife, for whom he declares his love. The contract was ratified and it is beautifully added that those seven years of service seemed to Jacob but a few days for the love he had to her. Patiently he toiled through all these long years, counting the sacrifice nothing for her sake. At the expiration of the term he demanded his bride, and Laban made a wedding feast, and substituted Leah, the elder daughter, for Rachel a fraud which the bridal veil and marital customs of the country would render easy. To Jacob's protest against the deception, Laban's apology was that it would not accord with the social laws of the land to marry the younger before the first born daughter, and proposed as a compromise to give Jacob Rachel also, on condition of another seven years service, to be rendered after this double wedlock.

When we read his narrative, we cannot but be impressed with this example of poetic justice or retribution. It often pleases God that our punishment shall come in the exact form of our evil doing. And here the wily Jacob is himself deceived by wile. He that defrauded his brother of his birthright is himself defrauded of his bride, by his uncle. Now again must have come to him the memory of his treacherous dealing in the house of his father, and his disappointment on discovering that an elder sister had been led to the marriage altar behind the long veil which he supposed hid the fair faced form of the careful and well favored Rachel - must have been mingled with not a few pang of remorseful and bitter memory. So surely are men often made victims of the same kind of outrages which they have practiced. Phalarus?

A week was kept for Leah's marriage feast according to Oriental habit, and then Rachel became his wife also, and another feast a week followed, and then came another seven years service which probably seemed still shorter since the object of his love was now his own. We must not understand Laban as proposing to Jacob to "fulfil her week," as meaning that Jacob should first serve out this second term before marrying Rachel. He means fulfil Leah's week of marriage festivity. It was not after another week of years, but after the seven days appropriated to the first wife's nuptials that he was to receive and did receive Rachel. The polygamy of Jacob, must be explained like that of Abraham, and as the marriage of two sisters is to be explained, as not yet expressly forbidden in the Law of God.

Jacob's preference for Rachel over Leah was undisguised, and doubtless caused great unhappiness to Leah. And as a compensation for her grief, God granted her ^{six} sons, ^{and one daughter}, while yet Rachel was childless. Afterward Rachel also bore a son Joseph.

And now, having for fourteen years been in exile and a servant for his uncle Jacob naturally yearned for home. Upon proposing to return, Laban entreated him to stay, declaring that he had learned by experience - "by divination" that the Lord had blessed him for Jacob's sake - a declaration which is regarded as proof of the heathenism of Laban's household. For though he may have feared the Lord he appears to have served the gods of Paganism, acknowledging Jehovah but indulging idolatrous and heathenish practices.

Jacob had served him well for fourteen years, but does not appear to have been enriched himself by his faithful toil, except in wives and children. Jacob however agrees to stay in Chanaan and still feed Laban's flocks upon condition of certain wages: he proposes to remove from Laban's flocks all the speckled and spotted and brown cattle among the sheep & goats and take them and all such as should thereafter appear among the flocks, as his hire. This was a fair and low price for his labor, since the sheep in oriental countries are nearly all white and the goats of a dark color or speckled yet Jacob asks only the sheep that have dark spots or specks and the goats that were white spotted or striped, as his hire. To this Laban gladly acceded. Again Jacob's cunning craft came to his aid. By the adoption of certain

Expedients which in accordance with natural laws were calculated to produce such results, Jacob however caused this class among the sheep & goats to multiply rapidly and the stronger cattle to fall to his portion, so that he increased in property with great rapidity, until his prosperity excited the Envy of his uncle and caused alienation and final separation.

As to the lawfulness of the means which he employed to enrich himself at Laban's expense, we should incline to think he shewed somewhat the same overreaching sharpness as in his conduct towards Esau, were it not for two or three facts. 1. He was smarting under a sense of the Keen ^{for 20 years} injustice. With all his power, he had served Laban, yet his only pay for the first seven years was the monstrous trick by which he was made to marry Leah instead of Rachel;

and ten times had Laban changed his wages, which means we presume that whenever a bargain seemed likely to prove profitable to Jacob, Laban diminished his hire.

2. Again, however sagacious and cunning Jacob may have been in enriching himself, he cannot be shown to have done anything against his conscience, according to the degree of enlightenment peculiar to those days, nor did he probably get more than his labor deserved as its reward.

3. God's blessing was really the source of his prosperity and seems to have sanctioned if it did not suggest the very means employed, as appears from that vision in which Jehovah condemned Laban's injustice toward him and bade him return to his own land .1596:174. And so he set out upon his return to the land of Canaan.

He was now it is thought 98 years old, and with two wives and two concubines, (their respective handmaids) and twelve children, (eleven sons and one daughter) and much cattle men servants maid servants, camels & asses, he left the place of his exile and turned his steps toward Bersheba.

On departing Rachel stole the images. Teraphim - which probably corresponded to the Penates of classical nations, a kind of household gods - representing the human form. another proof of Laban's idolatrous practices. Her motive in their appropriation was doubtless indefinite superstitious confidence in their power as ignorant Romanists even now trust to charms & relics and rosaries & crucifixes etc. Laban, on the third day after, started in pursuit and overtook him in Mt Gilead, $\frac{4}{5}$ of way home?

On the way Laban was warned not to harm Jacob, or hinder his return. On overtaking him he charged him with the theft of the images, of which Jacob was ignorant and where Rachel covered by a deception, placing them in the camels furniture and seating herself upon them. Thus one sin agaimed to others. Superstition prompting idolatry, theft, deception, falsehood. After a controversy in which to say the least Jacob vigorously conducts his own defence for his hasty flight and charges upon Laban the injustice from which for 20 years he had suffered at his hands. Bearing the loss of cattle stolen or torn of beasts, injured by drought or frost, suffering the frequent change of his wages, and all manner of verbal robbery, reconciliation takes place, and a covenant of perpetual amity is formed, ratified by erection of a heap of stones.

To this heap was given by Laban the name Jagar Sahadu
tha, by Jacob Baled. "heap of witness" - and Mizpah or
Watch tower. Gen. 31: 49. and after a sacrificial feast,
Laban parting affectionately from his children and grandchil-
dren returns to Mesopotamia, and Jacob journeys
on toward his father's home, and has another vision of
the angels of God. The object of this second appearance of
heavenly messengers seems to have been similar to the first.
When he was fleeing from Esau's angry hate, into ^{Exile} Padan
Aram, the opening heavens at Bethel assured him of
God's Providential care and jealousy of his promises.
Now, just left by Laban and returning from exile into the
land of his father and approaching the district where
Esau ruled as chieftain, the angels encamp around
about him, as though again to teach him that though

Encompassed with dangers, (as Elisha's servant was afterward permitted to see) those who were for him were more than were against him. Ps. 34:7. The fear of Laban was succeeded by the old fear of Esau and God therefore gave this vision to comfort and encourage him. When Jacob saw the heavenly messengers he said: This is God's host: and he called the place Mahanaim i. e. Two camps.

He sent messengers to Esau, with civil and almost servile messages, and receives word in reply that his brother is on his way to meet him with a band of 400. Notwithstanding Divine assurances, Jacob's faith like that of too many others was weak. and fearful lest Esau was coming with hostile intent he divided his company into two bands, hoping if one were attacked the other might escape. Then in a humble and penitent prayer invoking

God's deliverance, he sent a prophetic present to his brother which shows both the greatness of Jacob's wealth and his fear of his powerful brother.

Previous to meeting Esau, there occurred one of the most remarkable & mysterious visions of his life. Sending on his caravan, across the Brook Jabbok, he was left alone, and as he lay there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of day." Hosea called this "man" the angel and Jacob says of him "I have seen god face to face". A variety of opinions exists as to who this mysterious being was, a created angel, God in angelic form or a manifestation of the Logos, Christ before his incarnation. One difficulty is found in the supposition that the greatness of the creator should thus condescend to a personal contest with a creature.

Here was an epoch, a crisis in Jacob's history. There had been in his character and conduct much that was very vicious and faulty, and he had suffered long trial & trouble on account of it, and endured long penitential and reformatory discipline. And now returning from a 20 years exile to the land of his birth and inheritance, God ordained that here should be the turning-point of his life; that here both his repentance and reformation should reach their consummation & that he should be taught by an event whose memorial he should carry henceforth both in his memory and on his person, that only by desperate struggle could he overcome the evil in himself and prevail with God to obtain true spirituality and sanctity.

It was indeed a turning point in his life. Should he now fall into Esau's power, fall beneath his long cherished resentment, and still suffer the natural penalty and retribution for that overreaching which twenty years of slavery to a hard taskmaster had not expiated. Or should he obtain mercy and be received back to his father's house as heir to the promises? This eventful night, the passage of the ford Jabbok "wrestling" was to decide: and this strange unearthly struggle with a divine messenger, in which by God's mercy and strength he is permitted to prevail assures him that his repentance, ripened under the discipline of a score of years and leading to such humble resolves and mighty wrestlings is accepted by God.

That Jacob declared "I have seen God face to face" and called the place "Peniel" - faced God proves nothing as to its being Jehovah or Jesus with whom he wrestled for nothing would be more natural than for him to speak of an angel who evidently possessed miraculous power, as "god." The object of that touch which dislocated his thigh was doubtless to prevent him from being huffed up by the abundance of revelations and that he might not think he had overcome by his own might.

There are indications that this midnight, all-night wrestle was a kind of prayer in action. Observe the desperate determination and importunity, of his reply when the angel said: Let me go for the day break. etc: I will not let thee go, except thou bless me! And observe the language of the divine messenger: thy name shall no more be called Jacob but Israel. Prince of God for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. Hosea 12: 3-6 throws a little light on this narrative, as meant like that vision at Bethel to teach Jacob and all of us the power of prayer. "By his strength he had power with God: yea he had power over the angel and prevailed; he kept and made supplication unto him... Therefore

turn thou to thy God: Keep mercy and judgment: and
wait on thy God, continually." Here then we get new in-
sight into that night struggle. Perhaps it was only a
vision, and the disjuncting of the thigh assured him
of a real divine presence in his night wrestle: but
in any case it was a long night of agonizing strug-
gle, of weeping, wrestling supplication, rewarded by
a memory of the divine presence, and blessing, and
a new name, badge of his spiritual victory.

All the events which follow serve to satisfy us that here was the grand turning point of the patriarch's life. At Bethel he rose one round upon the ladder toward heaven - in Chanaan, under the suffering of just such overreaching as he had practised, he rose another step. Here, at the brook of wrestling he climbed up to a still loftier height. At Bethel it was perhaps only consciousness of sin to which he was brought. In Chanaan, repentance was wrought; but here holy resolve and consecration henceforth left him to the elevation of a prince of God.

As I said all the events which follow confirm the belief that in the mountains of Gilead he began a thoroughly new life.

His meeting with Esau, though marked by a homage almost servile to our eyes, was a practical Confession of his wrong doing towards his brother and his readiness to make all possible restitution. Even his seeming Servility was a kind of concession to Esau as Elder brother, and so by Oriental Customs entitled to obedience and reverence. And Esau appears to have regarded the magnificent present of 200 she-goats, 20 he-goats, 200 ewes, 20 rams, 30 milch camels, with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, 20 she-asses and ten foals, which Jacob pressed upon his acceptance - as a propitiatory offering: and possibly it was this practical proof of his brother's repentance which touched the heart of the chieftain

of Idumea and led to the establishment of such generous and complete restoration of amity + fraternity.

After parting from Esau, Jacob built a house and cattle-booths at Succoth, and purchases a dwelling place where Abraham had bought a burial place, in Shechem or Sychem. There, as further proof of newness of life he built an altar, and calls it the God of Israel. Even this slight circumstance is not meaningless. He had hitherto spoken of Jehovah as the God of Abraham and the God - or Fear of his father Isaac. Here there is not only the Erection of a primitive Sanctuary and the establishment of divine worship; but he devoutly acknowledges Jehovah as his god and in the name of the altar perpetuates the memory of that vision which had given him his new name "Israel"

Having by the misdeeds of Hamor the Hivite and the impetu-
ous anger of his Sons become involved in troubles in Shech-
em, God sends him to Bethel, to dwell there. And here
again he gives proof of newness of life. Before setting
out he purifies his family from all relics of Chaldean
& Canaanitish idolatry. The teraphim which Rachel
stole, the earrings which were probably charms or tal-
ismans, idolatrous symbols worn in the ear, he hid
or buried under the sacred oak in Shechem. And
on coming to Bethel he first fulfils his old vow and
confirms his new vow, by rearing another altar.
El. Bethel! And here again God appears to him, bles-
sing him, confirming to him his symbolic spiritu-
al name Israel and amplifying his promises to him.

The latter part of Jacob's life was one of disciplinary suffering. Up to the time of his return from Padan Aram, we think of him only as the thrifty crafty active shepherd. But henceforth, from his second visit to Bethel, almost all his years seem to be those of passive endurance of domestic grief. The rounds of the ladder by which he was to rise higher toward heaven were bathed in blood - rounds of divine discipline in sorrow.

The first hard blow on his heart was the death of his beloved Rachel - who died near Bethel, in giving birth to Benjamin. He buried her in the way to Bethlehem and set a pillar on her grave: and no doubt he buried with her the love of many long years. Soon after occurred that incest of his first born with his father's concubine which

filled Israel's heart with grief and compelled him to withhold the birthright blessing from Reuben when he gave to his twelve sons his parting blessing.

On coming to Hebron, where Isaac dwelt, he buried his aged sire, at the ripe fulness of his years, 180. and once more the twin brothers meet at their father's sepulchre.

All these trials were but the beginning of sorrows to this Israel. Joseph one of the two sons of his beloved Rachel, and whom he loved more than all his children was correspondingly hated by his brethren. The details of the painful history of these domestic troubles begotten of parental partiality and of a brother's superior virtues, belong to the history of Joseph's life. But the outline of this awful tragicomedy belong to this patriarchal history.

That growing hatred between brethren which made it impossible for the others to speak peaceably to Joseph - what a constant vexation and sorrow to a father's heart. and then the sudden disappearance of the well beloved son, with no memorial of him but the bloody coat of many colors, now having added to its hues the scarlet of life's own vital flood. - O what a terrible bereavement - all the sadder from the mystery and uncertainty which shrouded it! The agony of the aged father ought to have melted a heart of iron. when, now not less than 120 years old he rent his clothes, put sackcloth upon his loins and mourned for his son many days, refusing to be comforted and with the pathos of unspeakable & inconsolable sorrow, saying: I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning."

Then succeeded the horrors of famine, compelling Jacob to send to Egypt for bread. where Simeon was held as a hostage and Benjamin was demanded by the unknown and seemingly harsh ruler of the Kingdom of the Pharaohs. And so all this dark cloud of discipline, is suddenly broken and lifted and through the rift breaks the sunshine which illumines the closing years of Jacob's life. His fainting heart cannot believe at first that his darling son is yet alive. and as he sees confirming proofs he is faint with impatience of joy. Again God appears to him in a night vision and directs him to go to Egypt, where he is restored to Joseph, introduced to Pharaoh, blessed with a home, and dies at the age of 147. He was embalmed in Egypt but buried in Canaan!

Some attention has been given to the details of this long & eventful life at the risk of tediousness, because so much of importance and interest gathers about it, and so many things demanded explanation.

But let us not leave this biblical biography without at least a cursory glance at the lessons it teaches.

We have no time for a complete analysis of Jacob's character. But some of its features are very marked & bold and his early vices are as prominent as his virtues.

Nothing stands out more conspicuously in his character than his shrewdness, which unhappily was not at all scrupulous about the measures it adopted. He was well named the "supplanter." He entrap his brother by his pot. tags, outwits him in the matter of birthright, deceives his

father, plots with his mother, bargains even with god in his prayer at Bethel, and overreaches Laban. How typical of Israelitish character, as we see in Shylock of Venice & Isaac of York, and the modern Jew. We see in him that timid ^{cautious} ~~cautious~~ watchfulness, cunning, selfishness, and business thrift which have made the name of Jew a by-word. These qualities, accompanied with fraud & falsehood constituted vices which must be refined away - and they were - in the crucible of a slavish service and long Exile and the hotter furnace of domestic bereavement and sorrow. It is really remarkable how he who had thus selfishly and unscrupulously supplanted his brother should for 20 years under Laban be the victim of that same overreaching policy of which he had been before so skillful a master!

So does god often scourge away our vices, by allowing others to apply to our backs the very scourge we have ourselves applied to others!

But that, with these vicious traits were mingled traits no less virtuous and noble, and that especially a life of holy struggles & conquests brought out in Jacob a peculiarly beautiful type of piety no one who is not blinded by ignorance or prejudice can fail to see. "only a persons attempt to demand perfection of what is held up before us as imperfect can blind us to the final beauty of the Patriarchs character. How touching the affection that made seven years seem but as seven days for the love he bore Rachel. that bore Isaac & Rebekah and even Rebekahs nurse in faithful remembrance, that so far

seminately cherished Joseph + Benjamin. Amid all his unhappy traits, see his "unbroken endurance, undying resolution, heroic zeal, patient long suffering! While the impartial scripture records his craft, timidity, servility, duplicity, it with equal fidelity records his steadfast purpose, resolute sacrifice of present to future good, fixed principles, purifying Elevating sanctifying his nature. And so we find him in his latter days, more trustful, energetic, earnest, affectionate and in best sense religious. Kitto. From his vision at Bethel and preeminently from his experience at Jabbok, his life becomes transformed and at last transfigured. He achieves a new life - wins a new name. - The supplanter becomes the victor over self & sin - Israel. Then by suc-

cessive trial and affliction, out of the duplex type of his youthful character comes the "princelike godlike manhood of his maturer years!

If you would appreciate the ^{self} conquest possible to a human soul by god's help contrast Jacob's false dealing in the matter of birthright with his dying hours. Behold the venerable patriarch of 150 years - gathering his sons about his bed, and like the swan which dying sings its sweetest song, breaching in his last hours that sublimely prophetic poem of blessing! How full of lofty thought, wreathed in poetic diction! adorned with matchless imagery; how full of loftiest sentiment, religious fervor and divine foresight! How had this character risen out of the low level of selfish

policy and cunning duplicity, into the lofty heights of holy beauty, dignity, majesty! how had the struggling soul grown in strength, in religious conviction and pious affection. how many steps of that mysterious ladder had the supplanter ascended, when as prince of god once crowned with the diadem of prayer he was at last wreathed with the unfading garlands of prophecy and then from this uppermost step of the ladder, rose into the Paradise of god!

Brethren, Jacob's hope is our own. Success is attained only through struggle. A resolute soul, importunate prayer, earnest effort, desperate desire, dependence upon god, these will secure to any of us by the grace of Jehovah final victory over all foes!

Jacob was embalmed and borne by an Egyptian
Escort to the Cave of Machpelah!

In this embalming of the dead, the brain was by
hooked wires drawn from the cavity of the skull, the
contents of the abdomen removed. all that was spe-
cially liable to decay taken from the body, and the
whole void cleansed with wine & drugs and filled
with aromatic spices - the probable secret of the
Embalming process was the diffusion of creosote
thro' the tissues by agency of heat. Then with myrrh
& cassia etc. the odor of decay was displaced by the
fragrance of sweet ointments, and the whole form wrap-
ped in clean white linen cloth covered with a resinous
gum.

How symbolic this last process of the spiritual transformations in Jacob's character. By the discipline of many trials, everything corrupt and vicious was removed. The odor of selfishness and worldliness displaced by the sweet fragrance of sanctity & spirituality! The whole character cleansed as with heavenly lotions and celestial spices, and wrapped in the clean white linen of a true sanctity. And so through all these centuries, the memory of the Israel who wrestled with God's angel and prevailed is embalmed in sacred history! a precious relic of heroic struggle and triumphant victory! a grand incentive to struggling souls in all time to come, to put faith in the God of Bethel, and of Israel!

Dehrot. Sab. P.M Jan 26. 1873.