

Lesson 31

7.8 Jacob x Israel

- We saw in the last lesson how the descendants of Abraham and Isaac continued. Isaac married Rebekah and they had twins, Esau and Jacob (*supplanter*). God had said before they were born that Jacob would receive the blessing of descendants, and we saw how he received this promise from his father. Because Isaac and Rebekah were divided over the preference of sons, Jacob received the promise in a way not prepared by God, but the promise, the everlasting covenant, prevailed.
- So, Isaac orders Jacob to go to the land of Rebekah's family, so that he doesn't marry someone from Canaan. On the way to Padan-Haran Jacob has a dream and, in the dream, God confirms the promise to Jacob.

⇒ **Genesis 28:10~17** Jacob has a vision of the heavens and receives God's promise.

- After Jacob's arrival in Paddan-Haran, it happened:

- Jacob finds the house of his uncle Laban, Rebekah's brother, and marries Laban's daughter Leah.
- Jacob then married the other daughter, Rachel, whom he loved.
- Jacob's sons were born; from Leah, Rachel and their handmaids, 12 sons who would give rise to the 12 tribes of Israel. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher and Joseph.

- Jacob was a '*supplanter*' and always wanted to be above men and God; it was like that with Esau, with Laban, his uncle, and with God too. With God, Jacob made all his plans and then said: '*Lord, bless my plan and deliver me, then you will be indeed my God*'.

⇒ **Genesis 28:18~22;** After Jacob had received God's promise, Jacob put conditions on God and expressed his disbelief.

- But can God bless someone in the old way? No. But God doesn't give up on Jacob. When Jacob is returning with his family to the land of Canaan, God gives Jacob a 'squeeze', it's as if God is saying: '*Jacob, you are the heir of promise and now I'm really going to bless you, you will no longer be a supplanter*'.
- Jacob left Paddan-Haran, and when he reached a stream called the Jabbok, he felt he had to stay there. All his family passed through the river first, but he remained without passing through.

⇒ **Genesis 32:22~32**

- This passage is strange, but wonderful. Jacob prevailed with men: he fought with Esau and got the primogeniture, he fought for the blessing and got the blessing, he fought with Laban and beat Laban, and now he says he fought with God, and he prevailed. Did he prevail? Under what conditions did he prevail?
- At the beginning of the struggle Jacob was struggling with a man, and at the end we see that he struggled with God, how can we say that? In **V.30** Jacob says: '*...I have seen God face to face and my life has been preserved*'; he understood that it was God. When Jacob says in **V.29**: '*Tell me Your name, I pray*', God replied: '*Why is it that you ask about My name?*' God had already spoken his name when he changed Jacob's name to Israel, the '**EL**' ending of Israel means God.

- The Bible says that no one has ever seen God, God the Father. God in this passage is Jesus Christ himself before his incarnation as a man. We will study the appearances of Jesus Christ in the OT later on. Every time someone says in the OT that they have seen, talked to or been touched by God; they are referring to a '*Christophany*', Jesus Christ appearing before his incarnation. God is seen only in the person of Jesus Christ.
- Jacob was wrestling with a man, and what happened at the beginning of the struggle? **V.25:** '*when he saw*', who does he mean that he saw? It refers to the man who fought with Jacob. '*Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him!*' This is our resistance to God; this is when we say no to God. God comes for us, wants to save us, and we resist God; in other words: we prevail against God. Our will, our free will is sovereign before God.
- But sometimes God gives us a '*nudge*' that makes us limp. Jacob became literally, physically limp, so that he would know it wasn't a dream, so that he would know it wasn't a vision, that it was real. This is a lesson for us.
- When Jacob went limp, his flesh gave way, and then he asked for the blessing (**V.26**). That's why God was able to say, now with another meaning (**V.28**): '*you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed*'. In the struggle with God, when God manages to make me '*limp*' and I ask for a blessing, I have prevailed, that is, I submitted myself to Him. It's the opposite of what the world thinks, now here Jacob has prevailed in God's favor.
- When Jacob was wounded, he understood and then stopped resisting God. Sometimes God has to use these methods. God could now bless him, it's as if God said: '*Jacob, the blessing you have received, the way you have received it, is not enough for the heir of the promise to enter the promised land*'. When God wanted to leave and Jacob had understood everything, Jacob said: Now I want to be blessed (**V.26**), '*I will not let You go unless You bless me!*'. We have to talk to God like this: '*Lord, until I receive your blessing, I won't let you go!*'. That is to prevail, that is to insist on intercession, prayer, a personal relationship with God; I will not let you go unless you bless me.
- Then (**V.27**), Jacob had to make a confession; he was going to change his name. This is a type, a figure, of the new birth. First you have to confess: what is your name? And I say, sinner. And Jesus then speaks when I accept him as Savior: you are no longer called a sinner, you are now called a saint, separated from sin. When God said, '*What is your name?*', Jacob replied, '*Supplanter*'. Then God said (**V.28**): '*Your name (supplanter) shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel*'.
- God declared to Jacob '*you have prevailed*', because in the end he was blessed. Then Jacob asks (**V.29**): '*Tell me Your name, I pray.*' God then replies: '*Why Is it that you ask about My name?*' The name was already at the end of Israel, '**EL**'. So, Jacob, now Israel, understood perfectly and in **V.30** he declares that the place was called '*Peniel*', that is, '*Peniel: For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.*'. And so, Israel was born.
- Jacob is a name, a figure used for our old nature, '*supplanter against God*'. Israel is a name, a figure used for the spiritual nature, where everything is made new: '*I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved*'.