

K-522 Tv Show Part 6 Jacob

by Art Katz

Art Katz explores the transformation of Jacob into Israel, emphasizing the necessity of a personal encounter with God for true change.

Duration: 27:31

Scripture: Genesis 28:10

Topics: "Interview"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Jacob from the Bible. He describes Jacob as a conniving and self-confident man who eventually finds himself in a place of extremity, stripped of everything and desperate. It is in this moment that Jacob wrestles with a man until daybreak, refusing to let go until he receives a blessing. The preacher emphasizes the importance of a radical and total commitment to God, rather than a convenient and cheap religion. The sermon also touches on Jacob's encounter with his brother Esau and his fear and distress when he learns that Esau is coming with 400 men.

Transcript

Ben Israel with Art Katz and Paul Gordon. Hello, welcome to Ben Israel. My name is Art Katz.

And I'm Paul Gordon. As you know, we're Messianic Jews, and you've probably wondered why we use the name Ben Israel for this program. I want to show you my, the book that my brother Art wrote called Ben Israel, and as you know, in Hebrew, Ben Israel means son of Israel.

And Art, the word Israel wasn't always that. Wasn't it changed from something else? It's a very interesting change and significant. You know, that's the name that God gave to Jacob when he touched his life and transformed his character.

I think it's rather interesting to note the instances where God has transformed both the character of men and their names. Abram became Abraham. Jacob became Israel.

The New Testament Saul becomes a Paul. And of course, in a sense, our names have been changed. We've become Israels having been Jacobs.

And I think it might be interesting for our audience to have a sense of what that means and to see the transition. What's required in the one who's a Jacob? What does that represent? And how does one

become an Israel, one having power both with God and with men? And again, the story is given us in this wonderful book of Genesis, the book of beginnings. And we know some of the circumstances of how Jacob was one of two twin sons along with Esau, and that although Esau was the firstborn, he despised his inheritance and sold it for a mess of pottage to a Jacob who treasured it but sought by his cunning to attain it, and was forced to flee in exile from an angry brother who sought to slay him.

And as is so often the case, God has his first opportunity to deal with the Jacobs of the world when they're in flight and when they're in exile. And I say this with a bit of melancholy and sadness because we Jewish Jacobs have been in exile now for 19 centuries, since 70 A.D., when our temple and our city was destroyed and we were dispersed through all the corners of the earth. And I think God is dealing with us Jacobs as he has with our own lives personally.

Why we're come to prosper in exile, but even then we don't enjoy the comfort and the affluence that we oftentimes find there. Although our head is upon comfortable pillows, they might just as well be a rock for all the nachas and satisfaction and joy that it brings us. And especially in our Jewish families today, along with American families of every description, we're finding children who have turned to drugs, turned to witchcraft, turned to Satanism, turned to rebellion.

Children who no longer defer to their parents, nor to their authority. Our heads are on pillows, but for all effects and purposes, for all of the joy and satisfaction we've achieved in our exile, we might just as well be resting upon a stone. That's the place where God met this Jacob.

In the 28th chapter of Genesis, you read in the 10th verse that Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran and lighted upon a certain place and tarried there all night because the sun was set. And he took of the stones of that place and put them for his pillows and lay down in that place to sleep. The sun had set upon his life.

I think that's a rather symbolic expression. He sought to obtain spiritual things, but in the end it caused him to flee in exile. And I think that's a time, at least in my own experience, when God begins first to encounter us.

When the sun has set upon our natural life, upon our own ambitions, upon our own exertions and our dreams, our aspirations, which have pushed him completely out of our lives. When the sun sets on that and we find ourselves in exile with our head upon a stone, it's then that we begin to experience a God calling to us, as he called to this Jacob. And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.

And behold, the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father and the God of Isaac, the land whereupon thou liest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed. You know, precious people, it's interesting not only to take note of what God speaks, but also to what he omits.

There's not a word that comes from the mouth of God, which is in any way happenstance, no chance. These are carefully measured words. I'm the Lord God of Abraham thy father and the God of Isaac, and there God stops.

He doesn't include Jacob in that phrase. It was not yet the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. The point is that Jacob had not yet Israel's God to be his God.

He had not yet come to that real relationship. He was still a man in flight, a man separated, a man striving, a supplanter, one by his own energy, seeking to obtain the things that are spiritual. Before you continue, a lot of people would probably take issue with this verse concerning the angels, and behold the angels of God ascending and descending upon it.

You think there were literally angels ascending and descending on this ladder? Well, it was a dream. I know that there are literal angels. What does it suggest to you? The only thing I was wondering is that many people will read the Scripture and they will attempt to rationalize or spiritualize everything out of the Scripture.

I'll tell you, Paul, that I came to the Bible after a career as an atheist, and I brought to the Scriptures the same kind of habits that I had developed in the academic world. I thought that something was required of me by way of interpretation, and when I found something that made my intelligence to boggle, something that stunned me, something which I could not take literally, I found ways to interpret it. I would have find it allegorical or metaphorical, but you know that my spiritual life went nowhere.

When I began to see that, I stopped and began to receive the Word as it is spoken, as if God means what He says and says what He means, and from that day forth, something began to work spiritually in my life, to move me in a powerful way in God's direction. I'm glad that you've raised this, because we're going to be frequently speaking out of the Scripture, perhaps to many people who are not accustomed to do so, and we want to suggest to you the same thing that we've experienced. Try taking God at His Word.

If He speaks about angels ascending and descending, believe that that's what He means, that there are such realities. When it says that the Lord speaks, believe that it's the Lord speaking. But I think that the interesting thing here is for what God did not speak.

He did not say that He was Jacob's God, because He was not, and that's an enormously important point to consider. God is no one's God automatically. He's not ours by virtue of the fact that we were born Baptists or Methodists, or call ourselves Christians or Jews, or were baptized or bar mitzvahed, or any such ceremonial thing in and of itself.

There's something that's got to happen in the life of a Jacob, an encounter with the living God, in which His life is touched, His personality and character transform, that a new name may be given, that He might be one having power with God and with men. It says in the New Testament Scriptures that the Word was with God, and the Word is God, and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, that the world was made by Him, but the world knew Him not, and that He came to His own, and His own received Him not. But, praise God for these but.

To as many as received Him, to them gave He the power to become the sons of God. Then Israel means Son of Israel, the same kind of sonship to which God brought Jacob, He's seeking to bring all men. Sons of God who know the Father by experience and in a relationship, having come to Him in such a dynamic and authentic existential way, that their very lives and personalities are touched and transformed, that they're given a new name.

It's interesting to see the reaction that Jacob had to this first visitation of God, because in the 16th verse we read, and Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not, and he was afraid, and he said, how dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. You know, there are really two reactions to a visitation of God, sublime joy, joy

unspeakable, or unspeakable terror and fright. Oh, you know, the prophets speak of that.

I was reading the other day in Isaiah, in fact, I've been reading in Isaiah, and I've got it marked here. I think in the second chapter of Isaiah, the 19th verse, Isaiah speaks of the fear that the Lord can instill in us when we don't know Him, in the terrible day that the Lord comes. Isaiah says, And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made, each one for himself to worship, to the moles, and to the bats. And go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth and shake terribly the earth. And you know, Art, in the book of Revelation, there's mention again about this very idea of man in fear, actual fear of the Lord, attempting to hide himself.

If we go into the sixth chapter of the book of Revelation, verse 15, the Lord tells us, And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man. You know, he takes in everybody, doesn't he? Every single manner of man that there could be, is caught up in these various descriptions. Hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

For the great day of the wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand? I almost have the impression that because we've forsaken the fear of God, I think especially in modern civilization, our arrogance and our presumption, our conceit, we have no sense of his magnitude, of his holiness. We act in complete indifference to whether he even exists or not. We make virtually ourselves lords unto ourselves.

And it's as if all of this unspoken and unexperienced fear is going to be saved up for that last day. It really is a thing of great terror and fright to meet the one who comes in great holiness, whom we've chosen not to know, and whom we've willfully neglected. And I think that Jacob's reaction is an accurate response of fear.

But to whom shall his coming be joy? To those whose sins are forgiven, to those who have entered into a relationship with him, to those who know him, to those who seek his coming. And I know that one of the great controversies that separate our Judaism, Messianic Judaism, from conventional and rabbinical Judaism is the question of the coming of the Messiah, whether it's one coming or two comings. And we believe, of course, that he came and that he's coming again, that he came as the Lamb of God, but he shall come as the lion of Judah roaring.

And those who don't agree with our conviction and talk about a coming yet to be experienced, I think express that in a kind of a casualness that suggests that they're really not too eager nor concerned about the time of his coming. There's a God who's looking for a people who will await him, who will eagerly seek the time of his appearing. And we just pray that those who are watching this program and whose hearts are being opened to God, both Jews and Gentiles alike, will come to that place to which God himself brought Jacob, that when he comes, they'll not seek for clefts in the rock in which to hide.

You know what that reminds me of? For instance, a husband and a wife would be gone, let's say for a week, and they have three or four children. And they come home, and the children who have been good are waiting expectantly for their return. And maybe the other children were bad, and they're waiting with

fear because they know when the parents come home, they're going to be punished.

Well, I think that's a very fit analogy. And you know that Jacob is a kind of a spiritual child. So are we all until God begins to bring us to maturity, no understanding.

And in this first visitation of God in his life, he reacts childishly. Because we read in the 21st, Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God. I guess we might say that Jacob is quite a sport, and that if God will do all these things, he might condescend to consider allowing God to be his Lord.

And you know that you can count up, there are 10 personal pronouns mentioned in this one prayer. And I think that's characteristic of the Jacobs of the world. They're self-seekers.

They're willing to give God a shake if he'll do this for them and that for them and help them in the way which they go. But I want to assure you people, with all that's in my heart, that there's a God who is calling us to the way that he goes. He's calling us to his way and out of our way.

And such a prayer, such a self-seeking prayer, is not acceptable in God's hearing. And so it is that these Jacobs, which we are, need so to be dealt with and processed and shaped by God to bring us to a proper place of commitment and to understanding. Now look at the concluding verse of this chapter.

Jacob had been lying with his head upon a stone, has this vision of God, reads this prayer, and then we read, And this stone which I have set for a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee. Again, a very shrewd reckoning of a man who is very much to Jacob, and we know that he took oil and he poured oil upon the stones nearby and he made of it a kind of a monument. And I think that's rather descriptive of the kind of religion that Jacobs appreciate, a religion that's cheap, a religion that's convenient, a religion that's made of just of the materials that happen to be accessible and at hand, a religion that does not require much but the pouring of a little oil on stones that are nearby at hand.

And I tell you that there are people who would much rather endow synagogues or build wings on churches or buy pews or Israel bonds or the kinds of things which men do, the things which are convenient, rather than come to a God who calls them totally to himself in a fearful and a radical way to a total commitment. But Jacob was this way all along, wasn't he? Even in his dealings with his brother Esau, wasn't he a conniver even then? Yes, he sought to get something of great value cheaply and quickly by conniving, that's true. I wish we had the time to really speak about the story of Jacob in the detail that it deserves, but we have to show how a Jacob becomes an Israel.

And God, who has dealt with Jacob through these years, calls him again in the 32nd chapter to return to the land of his origin. We read in that first verse, Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him. And as he approached his land, he sent before him messengers to seek out his brother Esau, who had had all these years to nurture his resentment and bitterness and wrath and his vengeance against the brother who he had considered to have stolen his birthright.

And the messengers returned and said to Jacob, in the sixth verse, we came to thy brother Esau and also he comes to meet thee and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. You know, that's the time when God has a chance in a man's life, when we Jacobs who are full of cunning,

full of designs, full of shenanigans, full of clever enterprises, all kinds of solutions, finally come to a place of such distress, of such extremity, that our wit is no longer able to save us.

Between the rock and the hard spot. That's exactly where God had Jacob. He was greatly afraid and distressed.

But you know that even in that condition, his wit continued to operate. And we know that he divided his flock and his wives and his children and sent one man to head the other, that should he lose one, he would still yet be able to retain half. And yet he does call upon God in that ninth verse, oh God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which sent him to me, return unto thy country.

You see, whatever we say about Jacob, this much has to be acknowledged. He was really an honest man in his way, who realized that although God was the God of Abraham and the God of his father Isaac, he was not yet Jacob's God. He knew his condition.

He knew his condition. And yet he called upon him and told him that he's not worthy of the least of mercies, and asked him to deliver him. And yet even as he speaks these things, out of one side of his mouth, just as Jacob's are given to do, out of the other side, he begins again to connive and to arrange for the circumstances of his own salvation.

People, so long as we're persuaded that we can fashion our own salvation, we're yet Jacob's. And Israel is one who has come to God wholly, the God of his salvation, and knows that only from him cometh his salvation. And look at the elaborate means that he took.

Two hundred she goats and twenty other goats, and ewes, and rams, and milk camels, and their colts, and cows, and bulls, and asses, and foals, and delivered them as an appeasement, and as a gift to his brother, that he perhaps could placate him and buy off his wrath. In the 20th verse we read, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us, his servants are saying, for he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me. And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two women servants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the four Jabbok.

And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over all that he had, and Jacob was left alone. Paul, you know it, and I know it, that we had to come to such a place in our own lives, such a place of extremity, as Jacob's, full of our own wit, and full of our own self-confidence, when there was a time when we sent over all that we had. We were stripped bare, naked, we were lost men, we were desperate, we were all alone.

And the stage is set, and such a moment is that, for a man to be found of God. And surely, there was one waiting to be found. We read, Jacob was left all alone, and there wrestled a man with him, until the breaking of the day.

And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh. The hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh.

And Jacob said, I'll not let thee go, except that thou bless me. Praise God for a Jacob. Praise God for a Jewish heart like this, that when he does have his opportunity, with that one who alone has the power to bless, he will not let him go.

And friends, we're just quoting the Scripture that says, he wrestled with a man. We want to suggest to you today, especially our Jewish kinsmen, that there's a man who's been waiting for us, for these nineteen centuries, for us to come to the end of ourselves, that we might wrestle with him, who alone has the power to bless, who nineteen centuries ago forgave Jewish men their sins. And religious men murmured at him and said, Who is this, who forgives men their sins, for only God can forgive sin, who blessed men, who allowed men to fall at his feet and worship him, and call him Adonai, Lord and God.

There's a man who's waiting to wrestle with us, as he wrestled with Jacob. And except that we wrestle with him and meet him face to face, except that he touch us in the hollow of our thigh, in our masculinity, in our own power, in our own self-sufficiency, in our own resourcefulness, and leave us lame and halt and limp, humbled, made meek, we cannot know him. God is calling us to an encounter with one who is seeking for us to come to the end of ourselves, waiting to wrestle with us.

Have you come to that place? Paul, you were something of an athlete. Why is it that God wrestled with Jacob? What is there about the nature of wrestling that the Greeks celebrated, and that even we recognize today as kind of the supreme and ultimate sport? I think you just said it. The Greeks realized that it was the ultimate test of strength.

It was a manly thing, wrestling. It was a very masculine sport, and that the wrestler who overcame his opponent, it was a thing of strength. It was it was the only way to sum it up.

It was a manly sport. How about this? When we wrestle, we wrestle out of the kishkas. I apologize to our non-Jewish viewers, but the word kishka is a Jewish expression which speaks about the deep inward things.

Wrestling is something that demands one's all our physical strength, our endurance, our stamina, our character. Truly, right out of the very depths of our being, is all required. And except that we've met God from our kishkas, eyeball to eyeball, jowl to jowl, face to face, we've not met him at all.

And Jacob said, he called the name of that place Peniel in Hebrew, for I've seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And God changed Jacob's name. He said, thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and has prevailed.

And it wasn't long after that, people, in the very next chapter, that the Jacob who once sought a cheap and convenient religion of pouring oil on convenient rocks, bought himself an expensive piece of ground, and he built there an altar, and he worshiped God for the first time, and he called that altar in the last verse of the 33rd chapter of Genesis, El Elohe Israel, God, the God of Israel. From that day forth, God was the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and Jacob's God. And our question for you today is, is he your God? Do you know him in spirit and truth? Have you met him? Are you willing to come to the end of your own resources? Are you willing to come to the end of being the foundation of your own salvation? Are you willing to meet him in a deep way? Are you willing to come face to face with that one whom we've avoided all through these centuries, who alone has the power to touch us, to change us, to grant us a new nature, to put his spirit within us, to change our name.

That we ourselves might move from the religion of convenience to the religion of great cost, but of equally great value, to follow him in the way which was not cheap for him, which required the giving of his own life. For if any man would come after me, he said, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. There's a Judaism of convenience, but there's also a Judaism of great cost, but it's a Judaism also of great

reward, a new nature, a new life, an eternity with a God who saves.

Are you willing to meet him? Because I tell you people that there's not a physical wrestling required, only a yielding to him who wrestled the power of hell and death, that we might know God in spirit and in truth. Now I think that wherever you are in your own living room at home today, a call out of the depths of your own inward being, out of your kishkas, out of your heart of hearts to this one whom we've avoided, this man of whom Jacob said, I've seen God face to face, yet I live. Jesus said, if any man see me, he sees the Father, for I and the Father are one.

Whosoever shall call upon this name shall be saved. Would you like to be in Israel today, rather than a Jacob, Kanaiva, Eskima, one doomed to frustration, living by your own wits? There's a God waiting for you to wrestle, to send everything else before you, to be left utterly alone, to call upon him, to be touched of him, to know him. I'd like to end as we began, Paul, in prayer, that these words might really touch the hearts of those who've heard, that however they seem to be foolish, that God is as close as their mouths.

That's what the scripture says, whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Let's pray together that there might be such a union and such a meeting today of Jacob's who shall become Israel's. Precious God, in the wonderful name of the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, we pray that even today in the hearing of these words, hearts may be opened and voices may be raised to call upon you that Jacob's may become Israel, to worship the living God in spirit and in truth.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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