



Lesser Known Bible Stories series

Dear God,

Thank you for stories that help us understand our world and your dream for us.

Amen .

JACOB WRESTLES WITH GOD

GENESIS 32:22-32



This book belongs to



Sarah



Abraham



Hagar



Rebekah



Isaac



Ishmael



Laban



Esau



Jacob



Leah



Rachel



Intro / Background to the Story

Jacob is the grandson of Abraham and Sarah. Jacob had an older twin brother, Esau, and they didn't always get along with each other. In fact, when Jacob and Esau were still in their mother's tummy, she could feel that they wrestled around a lot. When it was time for them to be born, Esau was born first and then quickly after that Isaac came into the world holding on to his brother's heel.

Esau was a hunter and Jacob was a shepherd. Jacob did not always play by the rules and got things he wanted to have unfairly. When the boys grew older, Jacob tricked both Esau and their father so that Jacob unfairly replaced Esau as first son. Esau was pretty mad at Jacob when realized what happened, so Jacob ran away to live somewhere else.

On his journey, Jacob was visited by God. God told Jacob he had been chosen and that he would be father of many nations. God said, "Behold I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; I will not leave you until I have done what I said I would do." So Jacob built an altar to God there and called it Bethel and promised that he would give back to God a percentage of all that Jacob ever earned.

Then Jacob moved on to a place called Haran. There he fell in love with a woman named Rebekah and worked it out with her father that Jacob could marry Rebekah after working for her father for seven years. He kept that promise, but after seven years, Rebekah's older sister, Leah, still wasn't married yet and because of that Jacob had to marry her instead. But Jacob loved Rebekah so he worked it out and their father agreed that if Jacob worked for him for seven more years, he could marry Rebekah.

Some time passed and Jacob had twelve sons. Jacob asked his father-in-law, Laban, if he would let him go find a new home of his own. But Laban wanted him to stay and offered him wages for working for him. So Jacob did, but in doing so he tricked his father-in-law, Laban, so that the stronger better sheep of the flock would go to Jacob and the weaker ones would go to Laban. This angered Laban.

And so Jacob gathered everything he had, including Leah, Rachel, his twelve sons, their slaves, and all his animals and possessions and ran away in the middle of the night.

And Laban ran after him and found him and they made a truce: Laban agreed that Jacob could take his daughters as long as he treated them honestly and fairly.

So Jacob set out to make up with his brother Esau. He sent a messenger to let Esau know that Jacob was coming. And that he was coming to ask forgiveness.. When Esau heard this he sent a message back to Jacob that Esau would come to meet Jacob, but he was coming with an army of 400 men.

Jacob was very scared. And he was worried that Esau was going to take revenge on him so he divided his family and household into two camps so they might be kept safe.

And he prayed .

The Story

Later that night, Jacob sent Leah and Rachel and his twelve sons across the stream, but he didn't stay with them.

A man came upon him and they wrestled and struggled and fought. Jacob tired all night long using strength and cunning to overcome the man, as he had done his brother and as he had done with Laban. But Jacob couldn't win. But Jacob didn't give up either. And in the morning, the man touched Jacob's thigh and hurt it very badly.

The man said, "Let's stop this. You're hurt and the sun is coming up. Let go of me."

And Jacob said, "No. I will not let go unless you bless me."

So the man asked Jacob his name and said, "You're name will no longer be Jacob. Because you have struggled with God and with men, and you prevailed, you're name will be Israel, which means "God Rules."

Jacob said, "I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.

And got up and limped his way on to meet his brother.

To remember this story, Israelites took care to not eat the part of an animal that is the part of Jacob's leg that was hurt by God.

The Story

Words to Know

Covenant – a promise of agreement. Usually a promise with a guarantee or a visible sign

Jacob – one who grabs by the heel. Or to :”supplant” which means to overcome and replace

Israel—”he wrestles with God” and also “God overcomes”

Righteousness- always making the right choices - in God’s eyes – Doing the right thing, the right way, and for the right reasons.

Prevail—power against another force

Questions to think about

Why do you think God choose Jacob?

Who are your favorite Superhero characters?

What special features do they have that allow them to win their battles?

Do Superheroes win all their battles?

Why do you think it was important to Jacob that he is first over his brother?

Why do you think it was important to Jacob that he not lose the battle with God?

If all that God had to do was touch Jacob’s thigh to severely hurt Jacob, why do you think he waited until morning to do it?

Who prevailed at the end of Jacob and God’s wrestling match? Who was left standing?

Story Map

Characters:

Setting:

Beginning:

Middle:

End:

Do you like this story? Why or why not?

What is your favorite part?

Can you think of a reason God might want us to remember this story?

Activity

1. Think about a time when you had a fight or an argument with someone. What happened? What did you fight about? How did it end?

2. Imagine you are a superhero. What would be your super strength?

3. Imagine you are Jacob and you wrestle with an angel of God. Draw a picture of what that might look like.

The Story

Jacob Wrestles with God

Genesis 32:22-32

²² Jacob got up during the night, took his two wives, his two women servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed the Jabbok River's shallow water. ²³ He took them and everything that belonged to him, and he helped them cross the river. ²⁴ But Jacob stayed apart by himself, and a man wrestled with him until dawn broke. ²⁵ When the man saw that he couldn't defeat Jacob, he grabbed Jacob's thigh and tore a muscle in Jacob's thigh as he wrestled with him. ²⁶ The man said, "Let me go because the dawn is breaking."

But Jacob said, "I won't let you go until you bless me."

²⁷ He said to Jacob, "What's your name?" and he said, "Jacob." ²⁸ Then he said, "Your name won't be Jacob any longer, but Israel, because you struggled with God and with men and won."

²⁹ Jacob also asked and said, "Tell me your name."

But he said, "Why do you ask for my name?" and he blessed Jacob there. ³⁰ Jacob named the place Peniel, "because I've seen God face-to-face, and my life has been saved." ³¹ The sun rose as Jacob passed Peniel, limping because of his thigh. ³² Therefore, Israelites don't eat the tendon attached to the thigh muscle to this day, because he grabbed Jacob's thigh muscle at the tendon.

