

Come Follow Me

Genesis 28-33



Jacob's "ladder" - Gen. 28.11-6

וַיַּחְלֵם וְהִנֵּה סֻלָּם מִצָּב אֶרֶצָה

And he dreamed, and behold! A
sullam was set up towards the
earth...

(this word probably denotes
steps and not necessarily a
ladder)



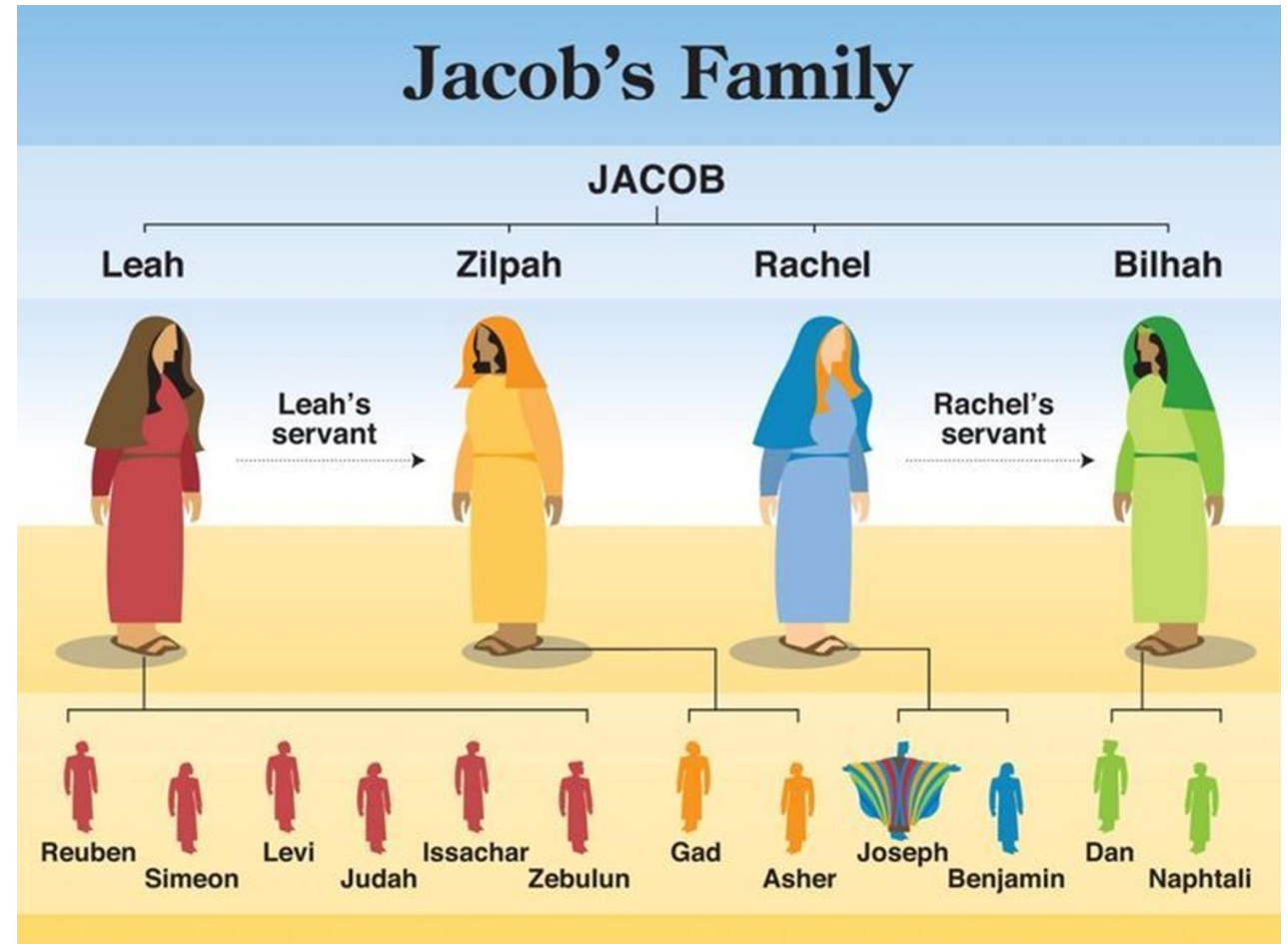
The Mysteries of God

“Wherefore, we again say, search the revelations of God; study the prophecies, and rejoice that God grants unto the world Seers and Prophets. **They are they who saw the mysteries of godliness; they saw the flood before it came; they saw angels ascending and descending upon a ladder that reached from earth to heaven...**”

Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Deseret Book, 1976, p. 12-13.



Genesis 29-30




Gen. 29-30

The names all tell a story

<i>Mother</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Reason for Name</i>
Leah	Reuben	See a son	Joy for having a son (see Genesis 29:32).
Leah	Simeon	Hearing	Because the Lord heard that she was hated (see Genesis 29:33).
Leah	Levi	Joined	"This time will my husband be joined unto me" (Genesis 29:34).
Leah	Judah	Praise	"Now I will praise the Lord" (Genesis 29:35).
Bilhah	Dan	Judging	"God hath judged me" (Genesis 30:6).

Bilhah	Naphtali	Wrestling	"With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister" (Genesis 30:8).
Zilpah	Gad	Troop	"Leah said, A troop cometh" (Genesis 30:11).
Zilpah	Asher	My happiness	"Leah said, Happy am I" (Genesis 30:13).
Leah	Issachar	A reward	God hath given me my reward (Genesis 30:18).
Leah	Zebulun	Dwelling	"Now will my husband dwell with me" (Genesis 30:20).

Rachel	Joseph	Adding	"The Lord shall add to me another son" (Genesis 30:24).
Rachel	Benjamin	Son of my right hand	"You are the son of my right hand" (see Genesis 35:18).



Jacob departs Laban's company – Gen. 31

The Lord tells Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers!" (Gen. 31.1-2)



Rachel's household Gods – Gen. 31.30-35

The story of the **stolen *teraphim*** is interesting. There is much debate among scholars about what the images were that were stolen by Rachel and what they represented. The Hebrew word which is sometimes used for small images of false gods is *teraphim*. Some translators render the word as **“household gods.”** Was Laban an idolator? If so, why did Jacob go all the way back to Haran to find a wife if they were idolators like the Canaanites? Others believe they were astrological devices used for telling the future. But this suggestion raises the same question. One scholar theorized that **these images were somehow tied in with the legal rights of inheritance**

(see Guthrie, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 104. See also Westermann, *Genesis 12-36: Commentary*, p. 493).



Stolen *teraphim*

Westerman (p. 493) claims that the reason for the theft of the *teraphim* had to do with their accusation against Jacob in Gen. 31.14-16, where Laban has taken away their inheritance. We read in Genesis 31.15 that Laban has מְכָרְנוּ וַיֹּאכַל גַּם־אֶכּוֹל אֶת־כֶּסֶפֶנוּ – “he has sold us, also he ate our silver,” suggesting that these women are owed something by Laban, and the theft of the *teraphim* somehow compensate for this injustice.

Nahum Sarna suggests that these items were stolen in order that Rachel might deprive Laban from detecting Jacob’s escape. (Sarna, p. 216)



Genesis 32.24-32 Jacob's Wrestle

“Who wrestled with Jacob on Mount Peniel? The scriptures say it was a man. The Bible interpreters say it was an angel. More than likely it was a messenger sent to Jacob to give him the blessing. To think he wrestled and held an angel who couldn’t get away, is out of the question. The term angel as used in the scriptures, at times, refers to messengers who are sent with some important instruction. Later in this chapter when Jacob said he had beheld the Lord, that did not have reference to his wrestling.”

(Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:17.)



Other interpretations

A celestial patron of Esau-Edom
(Sarna)

An externalization of all that Jacob
has to wrestle with (Alter)

A river crossing being from another
realm (Westermann)

The text is enigmatic!



The Wrestle

Speaking of his call to the Apostleship 12 weeks before he was sustained) [During] those long days and weeks I did a great deal of thinking and praying, and fasting and praying. **There were conflicting thoughts that surged through my mind**—seeming voices saying: ‘You can’t do the work. **You are not worthy.** You have not the ability’—and always finally came the triumphant thought: ‘You must do the work assigned—you must make yourself able, worthy, and qualified.’ And the battle raged on.

The Wrestle



I remember reading that Jacob wrestled all night, ‘until the breaking of the day,’ (Gen. 32:24) for a blessing; and I want to tell you that for eighty-five nights I have gone through that experience, wrestling for a blessing. Eighty-five times, the breaking of the day has found me on my knees praying to the Lord to help me and strengthen me and make me equal to this great responsibility that has come to me. I have not sought positions nor have I been ambitious. Promotions have continued to come faster than I felt I was prepared for them.

(“The Resolve of Obedience,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1985, 32)

“TO PREVAIL”

שָׂרָה

TO PERSIST; TO EXERT ONESELF; TO PERSEVERE

- ▶ POSSIBLY RELATED TO TERMS DENOTING “CHIEFTAIN, PRINCE, RULER, OR TO ACT AS A PRINCE OR RULER”?

ISRAEL - A "THEOPHORIC" NAME

ישראל



Theophoric Name (One that contains the name
of God within it)

יְשׁוּרָאֵל - אֱלֹהִים (וְהַיִּם)



LET GOD PREVAIL!

- ▶ In the imperfect form, the verb “he will prevail” looks like this:

- ▶ יִשָּׁרָה

- ▶ Another form called a **Jussive** may be what President Nelson was referring to in his comments. The Jussive is a **3rd person imperative**, usually translated with a “Let [the subject] DO this [verb]!” This Jussive verb loses the final ה and so it would appear like this:

- ▶ יִשָּׁר

- ▶ Now consider יִשָּׁר אֵל !

- ▶ It could read a few ways:
 - ▶ **Let God Prevail!** or **Let God Exert** [His strength]! or **Let God Continually Strive!**



Jacob's defeating God is blasphemous; his defeating a man is meaningless. One naturally tries to posit some intermediary, but still supernatural being: an angel. But why is the term *mal'āk* then avoided, especially since it already forms one of the *Leitwörter*, and angels play prominent roles elsewhere in the Jacob saga?⁴⁹ On the other hand, *'ēlōhîm* can certainly refer by itself to angels; cf. 32:2–4!⁵⁰

The only reasonable answer is that it is not the author's intention that we resolve this issue; i.e., the ambiguity is precisely his aim. He is making use of the play of oppositions, as molded by the conventional uncertainty in regard to the identity of supernatural beings, to heighten the associative significance of the name Israel. Perhaps Jacob did defeat only a man; the event is then itself typological and symbolic. Perhaps he defeated God himself; an act only comprehensible as an expression of the ultimate divine favor: God allowed himself to be bested. Or perhaps it was, after all, an angel Jacob overcame, a victory tantamount to raising him, and his descendants, to members of the divine assembly, albeit, like prophets, human ones. The point is this: the meaning is in the restless activity of the mind as it tests each option. By being unclear on such a vital point the text allows intimations of all possible answers. This is what makes it "spacious," as von Rad said.

The concept of pregnant ambiguity is a cornerstone of modern literary analysis. This biblical story presents an extreme example of its use. But here both the ambiguity and the extremeness are, from the biblical point of view, essential. The name Israel is such a mystery that paradox is the only fit form of expression in describing its origin.

Stephen Geller, "The Struggle at the Jabbok: The Uses of Enigma in Biblical Narrative," *JANES* 14 (1982): 50-51. See: <https://janes.scholasticahq.com/article/2303-the-struggle-at-the-jabbok-the-uses-of-enigma-in-a-biblical-narrative>



Genesis 33.3-4

In the biblical account, the word “embraced” constitutes a paronomasia on the name “Jacob” (Similar wordplay on “Jacob” in terms of embrace can be found in Genesis 29:13 and 48:10) similar to the paronomasia on “wrestle” יָבַקַּ (yē’ābēq) and Jacob (Ya’āqōb). This wordplay is a sublime pun on “Jacob” that emphasizes his transformation from his former identity: **he is no longer the “heel [-grabber]” or “usurper,” but “the embraced,” i.e., “the at-one-ed.”** This pun confirms Hugh Nibley’s suggestion that “the word conventionally translated as ‘wrestled (yē’āvēq)’ can just as well mean “embraced.”

See: [Bowen](#), p. 157.

"As though I had seen the face of God..." - Gen. 33.10

This is an important connection between the text of Gen. 32 and Enos' work. Following this "divine" embrace, Jacob articulates his feelings about this "reconciliation" or "at-one-ment" in words that recall his "wrestle" at Peniel ("face of God") where he saw God "face to face" (Genesis 32:30) and his earlier words ("I will see his face, and he will [lift up my face]," 32:20): And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: for therefore **I have seen** [*rā'îti*] **thy face** [*pānêkā*], **as though I had seen** [*kir'ôt*] **the face of God** [*pěně 'ělohîm*], and **thou wast pleased with me** [or, "thou hast been reconciled to me"] (Genesis 33:10). Enos, who goes down to the grave with the knowledge that the Lamanites will one day be reconciled to God (Enos 1:12-17),...

"As though I had seen the face of God..." - Gen. 33.10

... anticipates his final "reconciliation" and "atonement" to God in words that directly recall Genesis 32:20 and 33:10: And I soon go to the place of my rest, which is with my Redeemer; for I know that in him I shall rest. And I rejoice in the day when my mortal shall put on immortality, and shall **stand before him; then shall I see his face with pleasure**, and he will say unto me: Come unto me, ye blessed, there is a place prepared for you in the mansions of my Father. Amen. (Enos 1:27).



"As though I had seen the face of God..." - Gen. 33.10

... "Enos's words here, adapting Jacob's words from the Jacob-Esau story, constitute a marvelous play on both "Peniel" and "Israel." Enos rejoices in the eventual at-one-ment of his body and spirit, i.e., his becoming an immortal man, and he foresees that when **he finally stands "before" God** (cf. Peniel), he will "see his face with pleasure," just as when Jacob "saw" Esau's "face" and was finally reconciled to him (Genesis 33:1-4). **He knows the Lord will embrace him.**" (cf. 2 Nephi 1:15; 4:31-35; Alma 34:16; Mormon 5:11; Luke 15:20; Moses 7:63). See: Bowen, p. 157.

