



וישלח Vayishlach / And He Sent

[Genesis 32.3](#)—36.43 / [Hosea 11.7](#)—12.12 / [Matthew 17](#)—18

“Go!” “Help!” In [Genesis 31.13](#), God tells Jacob to return to the Land. First Jacob deals with an angry Laban, who is taken by surprise at Jacob’s hasty departure. Now Jacob knows that Esau could still be angry since Jacob got Esau’s blessing, even though 20 years have passed. So in [Genesis 32.3](#), Jacob sends מלאכים *malakhiym* messengers/representatives/angels (the same word used to describe the beings ascending to heaven and descending on Jacob’s Ladder in the previous portion) ahead of him to Esau. Sure enough, the מלאכים return with news that Esau is closing in with 400 men. In response, Jacob does three things.



First, he panics.

Second, in [Genesis 32.7](#) he divides his people, flocks, herds, and camels into two מהנות *makhanote* bands/armies. This is the feminine plural version of the same word that’s masculine plural just a few verses earlier, [Genesis 32.2](#), מהנים, when Jacob named the place where he had seen angels *Ma-khaniym*. This dividing into two camps/armies happens again, first about 1,000 years later, after Solomon’s death. The 10 northern tribes take the name ישראל *Yisra’el* Israel and the two southern tribes become יהודה *Yehudah* Judah, [1 Kings 12](#). Another 1,000 years later, believers in ישוע *Yeshua* Jesus/salvation start as a sect of Judaism, but soon Judaism and Christianity have been two distinct camps. The Jewish apostles need Peter’s revelation from God in [Acts 10.9-23](#) to know that it’s OK for Gentiles to enter the Church, [Acts 11.1-18](#) and [Acts 15](#). Now Jews are sure the Church is only for Gentiles!

Third, Jacob prays. Beginning in [32.9](#), he appeals: 1. To the God of his fathers 2. Whose voice tells him to return 3. Who gives him truth and many possessions 4. Who promises to make his descendants numerous, so please save! Praying God’s promises is good.

Jacob cleverly divides up gifts for Esau and sends them in separate droves with instructions to each servant to say that Jacob is coming behind. I used this principle once when my wife was going to pick me up at the ferry. I missed the boat she was waiting for. Then I missed the next one. Finally I made the third, but I figured she would be angry. So I had a friend of mine go ahead of me down the dock and tell Susan how much I appreciate her! It seemed to work.

That night, Jacob wrestles with the Angel.



Jacob Becomes יִשְׂרָאֵל Beginning in [Genesis 32.24](#), Jacob wrestles all night with a שׂאִישׁ *eesh* man/champion/great man. After the fight, Jacob's name change, and the Angel's refusal to give His Name, יִשְׂרָאֵל in [32.20](#) names the place פְּנוּאֵל *Penuw-el* Facing God, because, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." This is similar to the experience of Samson's parents in [Joshua 13](#), when they have a visit from the Angel of יְהוָה *YHVH* the LORD, ask His name, are denied, and then Manoah tells his wife in verse 32, "We shall surely die, for we have seen God!" She wisely points out that God would not give them instructions on how to raise their son and then kill them. The "Angel of יְהוָה" appearing here and in other passages is arguably a pre-incarnation appearance of שׁוֹעַ appearing to critical characters in the Bible before His birth. So Jacob could be one of the few in history to see שׁוֹעַ before His incarnation. One day to come, the descendants of Jacob will see שׁוֹעַ in the flesh again, [Zechariah 12.10](#).

Earlier in Genesis, Abram becomes Abraham and Sarai becomes Sarah. Jacob's new name יִשְׂרָאֵל *Yisrael* means God Prevails/Contender/Soldier of God and also Prince of God (see Gesenius' definition for the root שָׂרָה *Sarah* Prince; אֵל *El* God).

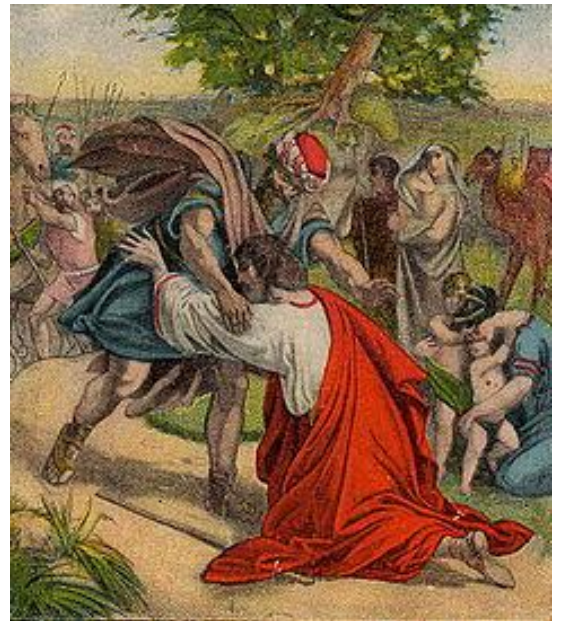
You Become...? Believers in שׁוֹעַ will also receive a new name. [Revelation 2.17](#) quotes שׁוֹעַ (it is שׁוֹעַ speaking, according to the previous chapter, especially [1.12-18](#)) saying that each believer will receive a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it. Have you ever wondered what your new name will be?



Wrestling with God Each of us wrestles with God in one way or another before trusting Him. After the Angel wrestles with Jacob, He touches Jacob's leg, causing an injury so that he limps for the rest of his life. After wrestling with God, we walk differently also, a reminder of life change. Today, Jacob's descendants wrestle with שׁוֹעַ.

When Jacob leaves the Land in [Genesis 28.11](#), the sun sets. As יִשְׂרָאֵל returns with a new walk in [32.32](#), the sun rises.

Bittersweet Reunion In [Genesis 33](#), Jacob and Esau finally meet. Esau is satisfied enough with the gifts of flocks, herds, and camels that he doesn't kill Jacob with the help of the 400 armed men he brought along. But not all is well. In manuscripts of [Genesis 33.4](#), there is a dot above each letter of וישקהו *vayisha'qayhu* and he kissed him. These are not vowel points. Tradition is that these dots represent teeth—Esau's kiss is more of a bite.



Obedience is Better Than Sacrifice In [Genesis 28.19-22](#), Jacob vows to God that he will return to בית-אל *Beyt-El* Bethel/House of God, if God provides for him. Now here he is, back in the Land, wealthy and free from Laban and Esau, and in [33.17](#) he heads off to... סכות *Succot* Succoth/booths. There he builds a home and booths for his cattle. He buys land near Shechem (modern day Nablus) and builds an altar, [33.20](#), which he names אל אלהי ישראל *El Elohey Yisra'el* The Mighty God of Israel. Is it OK not to do what you promised as long as you make an altar to God?

[Genesis 34](#) tells the evil that befalls Jacob's family in Shechem. So God reminds Jacob in [35.1](#) to return to בית-אל. In verse 2, Jacob tells his entire household to get rid of their gods, purify themselves, change their clothes, and go to בית-אל. Getting rid of gods would include even the gods Rachel stole from her father Laban, which Laban never found and about which Jacob may not have known. Does Rachel get rid of her gods when Jacob commands everyone to do so? We don't know. But we do know that Rachel dies soon, [35.19](#), just after giving birth to Jacob's 12th son, Benjamin. Rachel dies at אפרתה *Ephratah* Ephrata/Place of Fruitfulness, also known as בית-להם *Beyt-Lekhem* Bethlehem/House of Bread.

Verse 5 says that the terror of God is on the cities around the family of ישראל and they do not pursue Jacob. In the same way, when we get rid of idols in our lives, stop sinning, put on the garments of righteousness that only God can provide, and move to the House of God, those who might have given us trouble will back off. It is important for the Dad in the home to help family members put away idols and live in בית-אל. As Joshua will say a few hundred years later, "...as for me and my house, we will serve יהוה," [Joshua 24.15](#). And as James will say about 2,000 years later, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you," [James 4.7](#).

Whose Promised Land? Does the Land of Israel belong to the nations, to the U.N., to the Muslims, to the nations that currently surround the partial Land owned by Israel? We are free to believe whatever we want. Here is what Scripture says:

- [Genesis 12](#) God tells Abram to go to a Land He will show him, promises to make him a great nation, make his name great, whoever blesses him will be blessed, whoever curses him will be cursed, all peoples on earth will be blessed through him, and the Land goes to Abram's seed
- [Genesis 13.14](#) God confirms that Abram will receive the Land
- [Genesis 15](#) God confirms that Abram will receive the Land, Abram believes God—and that is counted as righteousness, the foundation for the Gospel ([Romans 4.3](#), [Galatians 3.6](#), [James 2.23](#)), God makes a covenant with Abram, promising to his seed the Land from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates
- [Genesis 17](#) God confirms His covenant with Abram, changes Abram's name to Abraham, again promises the Land to Abraham's seed, establishes the covenant of circumcision, and promises Abraham that the covenant will be with son Isaac
- [Genesis 21.10](#) God promises Abraham that Ishmael (Arabs) will not get the Land
- [Genesis 27.29](#) Isaac blesses Jacob: nations will serve him, Esau will bow to him, those who bless him will be blessed, and those who curse him will be cursed
- [Genesis 28.13](#) God promises the Land to Jacob and his seed
- [Genesis 32.29](#) The Angel changes Jacob's name to **ישראל** Israel
- [Genesis 35.10](#) God confirms Jacob's name change to **ישראל**
- [Exodus 3.8](#) God tells Moses He will take **ישראל** from Egypt to the Land
- [Numbers 14](#) God promises that all **ישראל** will perish in the wilderness for failing to take the Land, except for the two faithful spies Joshua and Caleb
- [Numbers 24.9](#) God confirms through Balaam that whoever blesses the people of **ישראל** will be blessed and whoever curses them will be cursed
- [Deuteronomy 32.49](#) God tells Moses to view the Land He is giving to **ישראל**
- [Book of Joshua](#) **ישראל** takes the Land
- [Jeremiah 16.14-16](#) God promises to return **ישראל** to the Land after exile
- [Ezekiel 37](#) God promises to return **ישראל** to the Land after exile
- [Book of Ezra](#) **ישראל** returns to the Land after exile

The Land is called **ישראל** after Jacob, grandson of Abraham. It's not Palestine, the name given to the Land by a Roman general after the time of **ישוע**. Palestine is derived from Philistine, the ancient enemy of **ישראל**, and was applied to the Land to discourage Jewish occupation after Rome drove out the Jews. The Land was never called Palestine in Bible times. The one [exception](#) in the KJV is a derivative of Philistine.

ישראל for Jews God promises **ישראל** to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that the Land will be theirs forever. Not to Ishmael, ancestor of today's Arabs, the son of Abram's servant girl Hagar. The slave will not share the inheritance with the free, [Galatians 4.30](#). Not to Esau, considered the ancestor of the Roman Empire and Western civilization, who sells his birthright for a meal and marries into a family of terrorists ([Hittites](#)). Believers grafted into the olive tree of **ישראל** can share these blessings with Jews since, as Paul says in [Romans 2.29](#), circumcision is of the heart and Spirit, the sign of the true Jew.

מגדל-אדר Tower of the Flock In [Genesis 35.21](#), after Rachel's death, Jacob travels to **מגדל-אדר** *migdal eder*. [Micah 4.8-9](#) speaks of this place about 1,500 years later, saying that the Kingdom of the Daughter of Jerusalem will come there. The tower itself is originally a military lookout, but as the centuries pass it becomes a tower for keeping watch over sheep. Here you can see the area of **מגדל-אגר**, with Bethlehem in the background.



A few verses later, Micah 5.2 ([5.1](#) in Hebrew) says that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. What's the connection? Targum Yonatan, a translation/interpretation of the Prophets in Aramaic, the lingua franca of the Jews in Babylon about 500 years before **ישוע**, comments on this and Jacob at **מגדל-אדר**, "He spread his tent beyond Migdal Eder, the place where King Messiah will reveal Himself at the end of days."

Josephus says that Passover drew crowds large enough to require 250,000 lambs, one lamb per ten people on average. These were spotless lambs, raised specifically for Passover in **מעגל-אדר**, near Bethlehem and Jerusalem. When the angel tells the Bethlehem shepherds in [Luke 2.9-12](#) that the Savior is born nearby in a manger, they know where to look—a lambing pen for the spotless Passover lamb, the Savior who takes away our sin.



Knowing that God's Messiah, the Son of David, will be born in Bethlehem, doesn't it make sense that King David himself would be born there? About 1,000 years after Jacob and about 1,000 years before **ישוע**, God tells Samuel in [1 Samuel 16.1](#) to select a son of Jesse of Bethlehem to replace King Saul. God's choice is the youngest, David—who was out watching the flocks of sheep!

Glossary, in order of appearance:

וישלח	<i>vayishlach</i>	and he sent
מלאכים	<i>malakhiym</i>	messengers/representatives/angels
מחנות	<i>makhanote</i>	bands/armies
מחנים	<i>Ma-khaniym</i>	Mahanaim
ישראל	<i>Yisra'el</i>	Israel
יהודה	<i>Yehudah</i>	Judah
ישוע	<i>Yeshua</i>	Jesus/salvation
איש	<i>eesh</i>	man/champion/great man
פנואל	<i>Penuw-el</i>	Facing God
יהוה	<i>YHVH</i>	the LORD/God's holy Name
שרה	<i>sarah</i>	prince
אל	<i>El</i>	God
וישקהו	<i>vayisha'qayhu</i>	and he kissed him
בית-אל	<i>Beyt-El</i>	Bethel/House of God
סכות	<i>Succot</i>	Succoth/booths
אל אלהי ישראל	<i>El Elohey Yisra'el</i>	The Mighty God of Israel
אפרתה	<i>Ephratah</i>	Ephrata/Place of Fruitfulness
בית-לחם	<i>Beyt-Lekhem</i>	Bethlehem/House of Bread
מגדל-אדר	<i>Migdal Eder</i>	Tower of the Flock