

JACOB BECOMES ISRAEL ACCORDING TO THE ELOHIST SOURCE (GENESIS 32:22-31)

²² [Jacob] got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.

²³ He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he [still] had.

Jacob has already sent many flocks and herds ahead of him. Why?

²⁴ Jacob was left alone; and a man* wrestled with him until daybreak.

[*Heb. *'iysh*, from a root (ysh) meaning 'to exist'; perhaps better translated as *being*]

What is the nature of that 'being'?

²⁵ When the man ['iysh] saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. ²⁶ Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me."

²⁷ So he [the being] said to him, "What is your name?"

Why does the being want to know his opponent's name?

What happened the last time Jacob had to name himself in order to receive a blessing?

This time Jacob tells the truth: And he said, "Jacob."

²⁸ Then he [the being] said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel*,

[*Heb. *is-ra-el*: 'one-striving with-God'. *El* is the name of a Canaanite Deity, the Father of Baal. It is also a generic Hebrew word for God that is usually found in the plural, *Elohim*.]

What does it mean to be Israel, One Striving with God?
For God? Against God?

for you have striven with God and with humans*, and have prevailed.”

[* That is, with *elohim* and with *'iysh*.]

What does “and with humans” add to the meaning of the term Israel?

²⁹ Then Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name.” But he said, “Why is it that you ask my name?”

In other words, none of your business. Or, don't ask.

Why does Jacob want to know the being's name?

Why is that a stupid question at this point?

And there [the being] blessed [Jacob].

The familiar terms of the blessing are spelled out in the Priestly version of Jacob's name change (34:10-12):

¹⁰ God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; no longer shall you be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." So he was called Israel. ¹¹ God said to him, "I am God Almighty [Heb. *El Shaddai*]: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall spring from you. ¹² The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you."

³⁰ So Jacob called the place Peniel, [That is, *The face of God*] saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved."

Why is Jacob surprised that he is still alive?

³¹ The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip.