

Gen 32:22-32 – Who is Jacob’s Wrestling Partner?

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Introduction

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob_wrestling_with_the_angel

Among Christian interpreters, this incident is sometimes thought to be a [Christophany](#).^a J. Douglas MacMillan suggests that the angel with whom Jacob wrestles is a "pre-incarnation appearance of Christ in the form of a man." [4]

Contextual Verses - Gen 32:22-32

²² And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over **יַבְבֹּק** the ford Jabbok.

Standalone Aleph Tav in Gen 32:23 HSB5

^a **Christophany**, which means “Christ manifested”,

“A Christophany is an appearance, or non-physical manifestation, of Christ. Traditionally the term refers to visions of Christ after his ascension such as the bright light of the Damascus Christophany.[1] Also, following the example of Justin Martyr who identified the Angel of the Lord with the Logos,[2] some appearances of angels in the Hebrew Bible are also identified by some Christians as preincarnate appearances of Christ.[3]” Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christophany>

vai· yik· Kach and took וַיִּקַּח Hu, same הוא bal· Lay· lah that night בַּלַּיְלָהּ vai· Ya· kom And he rose up וַיָּקָם |
 she· Tei and his two שְׁתֵּי וְאֶת־ na· Shav wives נָשָׁיו she· Tei his two שְׁתֵּי -et' אֶת־
 ye· la· Dav; sons יְלָדָיו a· Sar ten' עָשָׂר a· Chad a' אֶחָד ve· 'Et וְאֶת־ shif· cho· Tav, womenservants שְׂפָחֹתָיו
 yab· Bok. Jabbok יַבְבֹּק ma· 'a· Var the ford מַעְבַּר et' אֶת vai· ya· 'a· Vor, and passed over וַיַּעְבֵּר

²³ And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had. ²⁴ And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. ²⁵ And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. ²⁶ And he said, ...

The Man: "Let me go, for the day breaketh."

Jacob: And he said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

The Man: ²⁷ And he said unto him, "What is thy name?"

Jacob: And he said, "Jacob".

The Man: ²⁸ And he said, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince ^b hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."

Jacob: ²⁹ And Jacob asked him, and said, "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name."

The Man: And he said, "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?"

...And he blessed him there. ³⁰ And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. ³¹ And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

³² Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

Does El mean God or Esau? - Gen 32:28

I have been told that some in Rabbinical Judaism say that it was Esau whom Yaakov wrestled with.

This claim comes from the argument that El doesn't have to mean God, but can mean a man who has power over another man. There is also the argument that it is [Esau's Angel](#).

Gen 32:28 HSB5

ye· 'a· Mer shall be called יֵאָמֵר ya· 'a· Ko no more Jacob יַעֲקֹב lo shall no לא vai· Yo· mer, And he said וַיֹּאמֶר
 ki· for כִּי Yis· ra· 'El; but Israel יִשְׂרָאֵל im· but' אִם־ ki for כִּי shim· Cha, Thy name שְׁמֶךָ Od longer' עוד
 E· lo· Him with God אֱלֹהִים im· with' עִם־ sa· Ri· ta for as a prince hast thou power שְׂרִיתָ
 vat· tu· Chal. and hast prevailed וַתּוֹכֵל a· na· Shim men' אֲנָשִׁים ve· 'im- and with וְעִם־

^b See Word-Study-H4951-Misrah-government-Isa-9-6-7-from-H8280-sarah-power-Gen-32-28-and-Hos-12-3, article #637.

The relevant example is how Esau appeared to have power over Yaakov because of the actions that Yaakov made e.g. giving him a bunch of gifts. I presume this Rabbinical Judaism argument is because this sounds too much like Elohim manifesting himself into a man like Y'shua. If this is so then I have some questions to those who believe that Yaakov's wrestling partner was Esau.

1. Why didn't Yaakov's name change to Yisra-Esau or Yisra-Edom, after all that is presumably whom he is wrestling with?
2. Are the proponents of this argument suggesting that all the Hebrew names with El in them could be interpreted as either God or Esau? Emmanuel (God is with us) or Elisheva (My God is oath or sustenance) Eliyahu (Yah is my El). So if I substitute Esau or Edom with God that's ok? That's ridiculous.
3. As I recall from scripture the pattern is that those who change other people's name are ones who are uber righteousness and have favor with Elohim. So my question is presumably we should classify Esau as one of these uber righteousness people? I.e. should Esau/Edom be looked upon by the Sons of Abraham Isaac and Jacob as a great pillar of righteousness?

To be fair to those who make the argument that El means Esau, then one could assume that Yaakov is wrestling with God at a spiritual level, but at the physical level it is Esau who is in actuality in the wrestling match. I say that there is some merit to this because the second half of the 10 commandments is about your relationship with man (which can assuredly at times can be quite a struggle), whereas the first half of the 10 commandments is about your relationship with God and similarly can be a struggle for both parties. The first half is obviously important because it's about God, but it can't be truly expressed if it is not manifested by your actions in the reality that man finds himself i.e. in the realm of earth, therefore the expression of the first half is done by the actions you take with regard to the second half i.e. how you relate to your fellow man.

Your actions speak louder than your words.

To continue, this argument is appealing to me because I hold that in many ways the second half of the 10 commandments are the actual proof that you accept the first half. You can't say that you honor/revere/fear God while at the same time are being disrespectful of your brother which would include Esau. In other words the 10 commandments are echad, if you break one then it's as if you broke them all, or collectively, if you broken parts in the second half, you have broken the first half.

A final question is that Esau must have had quite a humbling moment in this part of his life because what the above proponents (along with my presumed correct analysis) are saying is that Esau is doing the will of God for the exclusive benefit of his chief rival Yaakov. Esau is allowing himself to be used by God as a proxy so as to bless Yaakov. There is a dichotomy relationship of sorts between Esau and God, in Hoshea the prophet states that Yaakov I loved but Esau I hated, yet in Numbers the nation of Israel must respect the land of Edom (Esau) and not go to war with them. To get to the promised land Israel wanted to go through the land of Edom and pay for the privilege of doing so. This proposal was rejected by Edom and Israel had to honor it.

Although I find the "El means Esau" argument interesting I of course believe, at least at the Perez level for sure, that the El in Gen 32:28 is not Esau, but the manifestation of Elohim, as in Y'shua.

Standalone Aleph Tav of Gen 32:22

ToDo: expand on this last paragraph by doing an *dros*h on the standalone Aleph Tav of Gen 32:22

Articles I found after searching for Talmudic references

To enable my article to be better rounded, I have included some articles that other Jewish writers (I presume they are Jewish) have written and that I found interesting.

Wrestling with Angels By [Yanki Tauber](#)^c

Here is the first one in its entirety (except I added some bold letters and underlines).

Perhaps the most mysterious incident in the Torah's account of Jacob's life is the night-long battle described in the closing verses of the 32nd chapter of Genesis.

Jacob is preparing for his encounter with Esau the next day. He ferries his family across the Yabbok stream, but "remained behind alone" (according to the Talmud, he stays to retrieve some "small jars" of his that were left behind). There, "a man wrestled with him until dawn." Jacob is injured in the struggle, but is undefeated. At daybreak, Jacob's combatant pleads with him to let him go. Jacob says: "I will not let you until you bless me." The man accedes and confers upon him the name Israel, "because you have struggled with the divine and with men, and you have prevailed." (Israel, Yisrael in the Hebrew, means "he who prevails over the divine.")

Who is this man with whom Jacob wrestled? According to the Sages, he is the "angel of Esau," and their struggle, which "raised dust up to the Supernal Throne," is the cosmic struggle between two nations and two worlds -- the spirituality of Israel and the materiality of Edom (Rome). The night through which they wrestled is the long and dark *galut* ("exile"), in the course of which Jacob's descendants suffer bodily harm and spiritual anguish, but emerge victorious.

The struggle is conducted on two planes -- "with the divine and with men." It is a struggle with men: in nearly 4000 years of *galut* we have wrestled with the Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Romans, the Spanish Inquisition, Nazi Germany and Islamic terror. These and many others did their worst to destroy us, yet we have prevailed.

It is also a struggle with the soul of *galut*, with its Divine essence and purpose. Thrice daily we plead, protest and contest before the Supernal Throne: How much longer? Yes, it is true that these struggles have roused the highest and deepest potentials of the Jewish soul. Yes, it is true that *galut* has unearthed reserves of faith and wisdom such as would never have been actualized by a tranquil people enjoying a tranquil existence. Yes, it is true that we are fulfilling the cosmic plan in retrieving the Sparks of Holiness buried in the darkest reaches of G-d's creation. But how much longer must we linger over these "small jars"? And surely You, the essence of Kindness and Goodness, could have devised a way to achieve all this without all the evil and pain!

It is a long and difficult struggle till dawn. But in the end we triumph over men and prevail over the divine as well. For this is the essence of Israel.

^c http://www.chabad.org/library/moshiach/article_cdo/aid/3195/jewish/Wrestling-with-Angels.htm

My Comments

1. The first thing I noticed was that he wrestled not with Esau, but Esau's Angel.
 - a. I don't really know what to think about this. Whether it's Esau the man or Esau's Angel, it has problems, like Rabbinical Judaism aversion to Theophany and for sure Christophany. Oh Well.
2. "the cosmic struggle between two nations and two worlds -- the spirituality of Israel and the materiality of Edom (Rome)."
 - a. As priest, we need to deal with two jurisdictions, the Heavenly from which we are "from" and the earthly which we are "in". The spirituality of Israel is not some warm and fuzzy concept but a concept of law in that it identifies this heavenly realm as a jurisdiction. As a redeemed Ephramite, the other thing you need to identify is that we are, in fact, Israel (of House of Israel).
 - b. As ambassadors we need to be careful not to mix these two jurisdictions. It's also our job to fix this problems which will be inevitable from these struggles. But, they need to be fixed in peace, we have no authority to go to war with the World / Esau. In all the words that Y'shua, spoke in what verse does he say to go to war with Rome/Esau?
 - c. My take on the dichotomy described between these two worlds is different than the authors. Thinking from a legal perspective I see an Angel/Mediator representing Esau who operates in the Earthly realm and an Angel/Mediator representing Jacob who operates in the Heavenly realm. If you clam there is an Angel of Esau than they both have must have standing in YHVH's court i.e. standing to make a claim.^d I say this because if they both have standing then you / me who wish to operate as Priests, need to deal with this reality. You can't just blow this off and say Esau is a jerk and he should be thankful he isn't killed. If Esau had a claim, and I think he clearly does, then deal with it sons of Jacob/Israel.

Who did Jacob really wrestle with in the Bible? By Rabbi Dr. Michael Samuel ^e

Here is the second article. In the article there is a recognition that Jacob though initially that maybe it was Esau who was his assailant, but then realized it was "the guardian spirit of Esau". It is argued that 1) ultimately though this is a battle between good and evil and 2) it was a dream/vision. Here are some paragraphs from the article that I found quite interesting...

"God wanted Jacob to know that Esau was not his real enemy, rather, Jacob's himself! The angelic being Jacob wrestled was really a symbolization of himself. Once he learned to resolve his inner conflict, dealing with Esau would prove quite easy."

The moral of the story, is as I have stated before, "Jacob is the proximate cause of his own injury".^f This event is being forced on Jacob by God so as to cause him to look inward and to realize that the first thing he needed to do was "resolve his inner conflict".

^d We know Jacob has spiritual legal representation because of the many encounters with Jacob e.g. Gen 28:12-22, Jacob's ladder.

^e <http://rabbimichaelsamuel.com/2009/03/who-did-jacob-really-wrestle-with-in-the-bible/>

Here are two more paragraphs...

“When the Sages described the mysterious assailant as Satan, they wished to convey an important symbolic lesson. In the Tanakh, Satan is not an enemy of God, nor is he a “fallen angel” — such a notion is a Christian myth. God uses Satan to test the moral caliber of a man, ~~and~~ is in this case.

Again, let me reiterate that God uses Satan to help Jacob realize that his real enemy is none other than himself!”

I find this criticism of Christianity view about satan ^g interesting. I believe the Church wants to blame things

Appendix

For the sake of completeness and FWIW, I added some definitions from Wikipedia for these fancy words Theophany and Christophany.

Theophany: manifestation of God

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theophany>

Theophany in the Hebrew Bible

The Bible states that God revealed himself to man.[9] God speaks with Adam and Eve in Eden (Gen 3:9–19); with Cain (Gen 4:9–15); with Noah (Gen 6:13, Gen 7:1, Gen 8:15) and his sons (Gen 9:1-8); and with Abraham and his wife Sarah (Gen 18).

The first revelation that Moses had of God at the burning bush was "a great sight"; "he was afraid to look" at Him (Exo 3:3, 6); so the first revelation Samuel had in a dream is called "the vision"; afterward God was frequently "seen" at Shiloh (I Sam. iii. 15, 21, Hebr.). Isaiah's first revelation was also a sight of God (Isa. vi. 1–5); Amos had his visions (Amos vii. 1, 4; viii. 1; ix. 1); and so with Jeremiah (Jer. i. 11, 13), Ezekiel (Ezek. i. 1 et seq., viii. 1–3), and Zechariah (Zech. i., vi.), and, in fact, with all "seers," as they called themselves.

Balaam also boasted of being one who saw "the vision of the Almighty" (Num. xxiv. 4). Most vividly does Eliphaz describe such a revelation: "In thoughts from the vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling . . . a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up. He stood still, but I could not discern his appearance; a figure was before mine eyes, a whispering voice I heard" (Job iv. 13–16, Hebr.). The Torah lays stress on the fact that, while to other prophets God made Himself known in a vision, speaking to them in a dream, He spoke with Moses "mouth to mouth," "as a man would speak with his neighbor," in clear sight and not in riddles (Num. xii. 6–8; comp. Ex. xxxiii. 11; Deut. xxxiv. 10).

^f Jacobs-Trouble-1-Gen-27-Jacob-is-the-proximate-Cause-of-his-own-injury, article #141. Jacob has an inner conflict because how he went about getting the double portion inheritance, which was without regard to Torah.

^g See Word-Study-H7853-and-H7854-Satan, article ???.

Claimed examples of Christophanies in the Hebrew Bible

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christophany>

Apart from his role in the Creation (John 1:1-5), the appearance of God "walking in the garden" in the story of Adam and Eve in the Book of Genesis (Genesis 3:8) was regarded by most Church Fathers and medieval commentators as an appearance by the Logos, or pre-existent Christ, [citation needed] and in art God was always given the features of Jesus until about 1400.[7]

A popular Christian understanding of the relationship between Melchizedek and Jesus is that Melchizedek is an Old Testament Christophany.[8] Romanos the Melodist interpreted the figure with whom Abraham spoke in Genesis 14:18-20 as being Christ himself.[9]

J. Douglas MacMillan suggests that [the] angel with whom Jacob wrestles is a "pre-incarnation appearance of Christ in the form of a man."[10]^h

Some church fathers such as Origen and later theologians such as Martin Luther believed another example is the "Man" who appears to Joshua, and identifies himself as "the commander of the army of the LORD." (Joshua 5:13-15). The standard argument that this was in fact Christ is that he accepted Joshua's prostrate worship, whereas angels refuse such worship [1]; see Revelation 19:9-10. Additionally, he declared the ground to be holy; elsewhere in the Bible, only things or places set aside for God or claimed by him are called holy; see Exodus 3:5. Jewish commentators [2] reading the same text do not accept that this figure was Christ (or even Adonai).[11]

Jonathan Edwards identified an example in Daniel 3:25, when the fourth man in the furnace is described as "... and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" or "like a son of the gods." [12] The "Suffering servant", from the Book of Isaiah is believed by many Christians to be Jesus.[citation needed] The vision of Isaiah (Is 6) may be regarded as a Christophany. It appears to have been seen as such by John the evangelist, who, following a quote from this chapter, adds 'Isaiah said this because he saw His glory and spoke of Him' (John 12:41).

^h FN-10: MacMillan, J. Douglas (1991). Wrestling with God: Lessons from the life of Jacob. Evangelical Press of Wales. p. 56.