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Jacob Become Israel.

BY BISHOP E. R. HENDRIX, D. D., LL. D.

Jacob become Israel, the "supplanter" become a "Prince with God," is a real case of leopard changing his spots. But the change was wrought by the same divine power that changed Saul the persecutor into Paul the slave of Jesus Christ. Jacob was as much a trophy of grace as was the dying thief taken home to Paradise by his Lord to show how captivity itself could be taken captive.

Jacob is none the less a sinner because Israel is so a saint. Each character is perfectly consistent with itself and with its name. It is only grace, and grace abounding to the chief of sinners, that makes it possible to identify in both Jacob and Israel one of the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah. But we need to study Jacob by himself before we study Israel by himself.

His mother's boy, inheriting her energy and the craftiness that belonged to herself no less than to her brother Laban, Jacob, like some animal, and a very strong one; what change has Jacob against him save in his wits? Rebekah will see to it that her favorite son, apparently her constant companion, shall not only be taught to cook, but that his very skill in making the red pottage shall some day prove as valuable as Esau's skill in the chase. She remembers, even if Isaac has forgotten it, in his desire to bless Esau, that the strange prenatal struggle was attended by the assurance that the elder shall serve the younger. Jacob so completely fills the heart of Rebekah that she is prepared to go to great lengths, even against her husband and her elder son, to advance his fortunes.

There is nowhere in the Holy Scriptures any countenance of Jacob's early sins. His mother, who prompted the grossest of them, suffers in consequence, living to have her son an exile from home to escape his brother's curse, and never permitted to see his face again. Jacob not only merited Esau's hatred, but our own, for his covetousness and his meanness. Possibly only Judas, the traitor, is more despised than Jacob, the traitor.

The deceiver is himself deceived, as the veiled, weak-eyed Leah is given him in place of his beloved Rachel, with her gazelle-like eyes; can Jacob forget that he himself donned a strange attire to deceive blind Isaac in that darkened room? Did he lie unto his aged father, and use a kid of the flocks to deceive him? Years afterwards his own crafty sons go to the flocks for the means of deceiving aged Jacob, when their covetousness has put a price on Joseph's head. The bitter cry of Esau which smote his unheeding ears and his selfish heart, is to be echoed when Jacob rends his garments and puts sackcloth upon his loins and mourns for his son, whose cries for pity were unheard and unheeded by his cruel brothers. He had bereaved Esau of his birthright, but "we have ye bereaved of my children." No wonder he tells Parash, in memory of such experiences and his unrealized hopes from ill-gotten gains, "few and evil have been the days of the years of my life."

Jacob no more pleases men than he pleased God; Israel pleases men because he pleased God. He prevails with men by the same qualities with which he prevailed with God. There is a growth for the better with the younger son, despite his early meanness and despicable selfishness, but there is a deterioration in Esau from the frank, openhanded hunter, inconstant though he be, until we find him the would-be murderer who allows the sons of twenty years to go down on his implacable wrath. "Cursed be his anger for it was fierce," as Esau came against Jacob, and four hundred Edomites with him. But there are no weapons in Jacob's hands, even of cunning. All his devices so skillfully planned the night before Jacob met Esau near the brook Jabbok have not stopped the oncoming of the angry and injured brother.

Jacob he hates, and Jacob he will slay. But is that really Jacob yonder, bowing himself to

the ground seven times, until he comes near his brother? He would fain pay back out of his twenty years of hard labor the birthright which he wanted but never had gotten from Esau as the eldest son. That is very unlike Jacob to pay what he does not owe. That is true repentance, when one is sorry for sins that he wanted to commit but lacked only the opportunity, when the intended robber hands his victim the goods that he would have stole if the officers of the law had not come so soon, even though he has worked for twenty years to be able to make this strange restitution.

Always free-handed, Esau declines the gift. "I have enough, my brother, let that thou hast be thine." But no, since Jacob had seen God he can prevail even with Esau. The proffered gift is left in the hands of Esau, who calls him brother once more, to tell us that he who has won the favor of God can win the favor of men, even though once deserving his anger.

A new force has come into Jacob's life which enables him to be called a son of God, so that the very man who once despised him must confess the change. Esau turns his hand of robbers toward the desert, where other caravans may be attacked, and leaves Jacob, or rather Israel, to go on his way in peace.

Even Jacob is hereforth "well spoken of by them who are without." Dull as are his moral perceptions, Esau knows a true man when he meets him. Jacob had been created anew in Christ Jesus. An heir with Abraham of the same promise, his name is to appear on the calendar of saints both as Jacob and Israel.

The self-conquered man is God's prince. He is an Israel, an Israelite indeed, who prevails with God and men. Jacob was to learn that it was not his energy, his tireless industry, any more than his early cunning, that was to give him success. All these may be the slaves of an unholty ambition that cannot abide God's time to keep the divine promise. It was not these qualities which won the blessing. Jacob had what Esau lacked—an appreciation of spiritual things. The unseen world was real to him. Nay, it was the most real of all; only he sought to win it by sinful means. It was more than the elder brother's double portion that Jacob sought. It was precedence, authority after his father's death, and even the domestic priesthood, all of which Esau despised or looked away from as unworthy of the man who lived wholly in the seen. Jacob in winning what he esteemed, and what possible association with Abraham during the last fifteen years of the old patriarch's life taught him to esteem, needed to learn that there is no true love of God or of spiritual things which is consistent with a selfish heart that ignores the rights of man.

"If, therefore, thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Religious blessings can wait on righting wrongs done to our fellow man. God is the champion of the wronged. Jacob never really saw the face of God until he had made all possible restitution to Esau. Even spiritual blessings must be rightly won. As the principles of right control a man's own soul he has power with God and with men.

God became so real to Jacob that all the wrongs that had ever done Esau or Isaac are lost sight of in the far greater sin against God. He had sought Esau's pardon, but he needed God's. More than reconciliation and peace with God. No shallow repentance can avail, no patched-up peace with an injured fellow man; God must be reckoned with. What an antagonist is God when He calls men to account! It was then that Jacob knew himself, all his littleness and meanness, his falsehood, his treachery. How he hated himself as Esau had never hated him! How he longed to leave himself behind, unwilling to be left alone with himself after that night vision.

God's Providence.

During the retreat of Alfred the Great at Athelney in Somersetshire, after the defeat of his forces by the Danes, a beggar came to his castle there and asked alms. When Alfred was told that there was only one small loaf remaining, which was insufficient for themselves and their friends who were gone to seek food, though with little hope of success, the king replied, "Give the poor man half of the loaf. He who could feed five thousand with five loaves and two fishes can surely make the other half of the loaf more than enough for our present needs." Accordingly the poor man was relieved, and this noble act of charity was soon rewarded by a providential store of fresh provisions with which his people returned.

As Thy Day.

As this my day! O promise blest!
Sweet words of comfort, words of rest!
No more with hoding fear I wail
To real to-morrow's hidden fate,
Whither its toils, whatever its tears,
Whate'er its perils, pains, and fears,
While sin and stars and worlds endure
The old, sweet promise standeth sure.
The Hand that holds the world upbears
My weary heart with all its cares,
The Eye that slumbers not has seen
My graveyard monuments with grasses green.
My Father's pitying love has read
The pain behind the tears I shed,
How comforting His words to me,
"Child, as thy day thy strength shall be."

As this my day! my little day;
My broken, troubled, thwarted day;
The day whose tosete morning bloom
Was quenched and darkened into gloom,
The morn of grief! The noon of loss!
The lengthening shadow of the Cross!
Once more, my Father, say to me,
"Child, as thy day, thy strength shall be."

—MRS. MARY H. FINN.

Sin.

Disheartened by the dangers of their position, a Russian army resolved upon retreat. The general expostulated in vain. Carried away in a panic, they faced round. They were forcing a mountain pass where the road, between huge rocks on one side and a foaming river on the other, was but a footpath broad enough for the step of a single man. As a last resource, the general laid himself down there, saying, "If you will retreat, it is over my body you shall go, trampling me to death beneath your feet." The flight was arrested. The soldiers could not trample their general under foot. They wheeled round and resumed their march. But for us who have renounced sin to turn back to its pleasures is a greater crime. Jesus, as it were, lays Himself down in our path. None can become backsliders from the ways of holiness without trampling Him under their feet.

Seed Thoughts.

The reward of one duty is the power to fulfill another.—George Eliot.

God estimates us not by the position we are in, but by the way in which we fill it.—Edwards.

It is a good rule never to do for the sake of gain what one wouldn't do for the sake of love or duty.—Edward Garrett.

The nobleness of life depends on its consistency, clearness of purpose, quiet, and ceaseless energy.—Ruskin.

Cheerfulness throws sunlight on all the paths of life.—Jean Paul Richter.