

UPWARD CALL

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but this is my one aim: to forget everything that's behind, and to strain every nerve to go after what lies ahead. I press on toward the finish line, where the prize waiting for me is the upward call of God
IN KING JESUS.

(Philippians 3:13-14)

#04-10102

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August 24, 2010

Israel Shall Be Your Name

When Jacob came out of the womb, he was holding on to the heel of his older (by seconds) brother. He was named *Jacob*, meaning "one who takes by the heel or supplants" (Genesis 25:26). Later, when Esau lost the dominion blessing from his father because of Jacob's deception, Esau said: *Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing* (Genesis 27:36). Thus, *Jacob* means "contender." *Jacob* is his natural name and refers to his natural seed. According to his history, Jacob lived up to his name, and so have some of his descendants, that is, those from his natural seed. However, Jacob was later given another name, the name *Israel*, which was not based on his natural birth but on a spiritual birth, of sorts. *Israel* is his spiritual name and refers to his spiritual seed. He was given this new name after encountering the Lord on two occasions.

The first encounter was when Jacob wrestled with the angel of Lord all night.

And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then he said, "***Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel***, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." (Genesis 32:24-28 ESV [bold italic added])

In this encounter, Jacob named the place *Peniel*, meaning "the face of God," for he saw God face to face and lived (Genesis 32:30). It wasn't that he prevailed over the angel of the Lord or won the wrestling match but that, in the end, he submitted to God. This is why the name *Israel* means "God commands, orders or rules" (footnote in Bullinger's *The Companion Bible*).

This was a prophetic encounter, for it linked the name *Israel* with dominion (i.e., rule). Thus, Israel was given the dominion blessing that was first given to Adam, meaning dominion is associated with Israel, who knows the rule of God, and not Jacob the supplanter who was ruled by the flesh. This is significant in the prophecies Jacob-Israel spoke over his twelve sons.

The second encounter was when God appeared to Jacob and blessed him.

God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." So he called his name Israel. And God said to him, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body. 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." Then God went up from him in the place where he had spoken with him. And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone. He poured out a drink offering on it and poured oil on it. So, Jacob called the name of the place where God had spoken with him Bethel. (Genesis 35:9-15 ESV)

In this encounter, Jacob was again named *Israel*, at which time he named the place *Bethel*, meaning "the house of God," for God had spoken to him. Thus, putting *Peniel* and *Bethel* together, the name *Israel* is associated with seeing the face of God, being alive, hearing His voice, and being in His house. But there is more, for this blessing was actually the fruitfulness blessing given to Adam: *Be fruitful and multiply*. (Genesis 1:28). This speaks of the house of God, for God desires many sons to fill His house, which is what fruitfulness is all about.

Thus, the name *Israel* has two very profound meanings that refer back to the blessings given to Adam. Adam knew God face to face (*Peniel*) and was given dominion over God's earth, and he was called to be fruitful by filling God's house [earth] (*Bethel*) with many sons. Israel had become the beneficiary of these two blessings that he passed on to two of his sons. As his life neared its end, *Jacob-Israel* called his sons together to speak a prophetic word over their lives. At this point, Israel could have passed on the dominion and fruitfulness blessings to one son, just as he possessed them, but instead, he gave dominion to his fourth son Judah and fruitfulness to his eleventh son Joseph. Prophetically speaking, this revealed that God's Son would have two appearances. The first would be to take the scepter of Judah and establish His kingship (dominion): *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples* (Genesis 49:10). The second would be to bring many sons unto glory and establish His kingdom (fruitfulness; sonship): *Joseph is a fruitful bough [ben, meaning "son"], a fruitful bough [son] by a spring; its branches run over a wall* (Genesis 49:22).

Regarding Joseph; notice the Hebrew word for *bough* is *ben*, which means "son." Again, this is what fruitfulness is about, the bringing of many sons unto glory (Hebrews 2:10). Sonship speaks of the coming kingdom of our Lord, for the kingdom of God must have sons (Matthew 13:38).

But there is more, for prior to Jacob-Israel prophesying over his sons, Joseph had heard that his father was sick, so he went to see him. As Joseph visited with his father, Israel adopted Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born of an Egyptian: *Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine* (Genesis 48:5). Then he blessed the lads with his name *Israel*, the name given to him by the angel.

"The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and may my name live on in them, and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." (Genesis 48:16 NASB)

The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's couch, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel, so that he could not be enrolled as the oldest son; though Judah became strong among his brothers and a chief came from him, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph) (1 Chronicles 5:1-2 ESV)

Israel bestowed upon Joseph and his two sons the name *Israel* and, along with it, the birthright and the blessing of fruitfulness. Thus, the name *Israel* became associated with the birthright—the right of a firstborn son, and fruitfulness—the blessing of bringing forth many sons. Whereas Judah brought forth the king at Jesus' first coming, Joseph-Israel will bring forth the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ at Jesus' second coming. As explained elsewhere, Jesus inaugurated both aspects of Judah and Joseph in His first arrival, but He will consummate both His kingship and kingdom of sons through His second arrival.

Here is the good news. We who believe are the true Israel, the spiritual house of God [*Bethel*], whose house we are (Hebrews 3:6; 1 Peter 2:5). And, we will soon know and see our king face to face in immortality [*Peniel*]. In that day, we will be made manifest to the nations. *Israel is our name*.