

To Strive with the Divine and the Human



Joe Baumgartner

Genesis 32:22-31

32:22 The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.

32:23 He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had.

32:24 Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak.

32:25 When the man 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.

32:26 Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me."

32:27 So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob."

32:28 Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed."

32:29 Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him.

32:30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved."

32:31 The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip.

Midrash On Genesis 32

Jacob was tenacious (from the Latin , tenare, to hold), if nothing else. He knew how to hold on to what he wanted and to do so fiercely. For twenty years he held on to Rebecca, when his uncle Laban, tricked him into 14 extra years of service in exchange for her hand in marriage. (Talk about karma!) For all this time, he held on to the birthright that he stole from his brother. The dude knew what he wanted, how to go for it, and how to hold on to it once he got it. And now is the day of reckoning. He has held on for dear life in exile from his home country, and now his brother Esau is waiting on the other side of the river Jabbok. He has no idea what awaits him on the other side. He knows that his brother is greeting him with a party of 400 men. He fears for his life.

Ever the strategist, he prepares a gift from Esau and sends it ahead hoping that it might soften him up. He divides his possessions into two, and separates them, figuring that if Esau comes and destroys half of his possessions, he won't be utterly wiped out. Jacob, the survivor.

Jacob, Man of Courage

I respect Jacob. In fact, I could use a little of his survivor and strategist instinct. His resilience is remarkable. These are early evolutionary instincts that serve us well under certain life conditions. After sending his family and all his possessions ahead of him, Jacob is alone to face the night. That dark night of the soul includes coming to terms with he and his mother's discernment that Esau wasn't the man to carry and enact his father's vision. Esau was a good man, but abiding by convention (the first born male inherits the birthright) needed to be set aside. Anybody who has ever made a choice to go beyond the limits of convention and risk the rejection of friends, family, and society, knows of Jacob's courage. My own take on this story is that everybody colluded in the original theft, including Isaac and Esau, who relinquished the birthright way too easily not to be complicit.

Still, there is a cost, and the fork of the river Jabbok is the place where it all catches up with Jacob, and with all who transgress for the sake of a higher vision.

In this Corner...

A "man" comes to him, an antagonist, with whom Jacob will wrestle all night. We're not told anything about the man, except that he's a representative of G_d, if not G_d himself ("You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for *you have striven with God* and with humans, and have prevailed.") The wrestling results in a draw, but the tenacious one refuses, once again, to let go until he has received a blessing. The blessing he receives is a new name, Israel, "one who has striven (or wrestled) with God and with man" (sic) and prevailed." Being named as one who has truly wrestled with God and with what it means to be human is maybe as good as it gets for many of us.

Russian theologian, Nicolas Berdayev, wrote a book called *The Divine and the Human* (1949), an entire treatise on the



struggle of humanity to honour both G_d and the human, without conflating the two. Christian theology has attempted to see in Jesus the presence of both in one person, while each remaining distinct. But this is a paradox that is hard to hold to. The tendency has been to resolve the struggle in a way that makes one

or the other predominant. In the one case, it's all G_d, and humans are subsumed as mere vessels through which G_d is self-expressing. Much mystical literature reads like this. On the other hand, atheists tend try to eliminate G_d and by doing so unconsciously turn humans into G_d-Neitzche's "superman", for example.

As humans we're called to struggle as best we can with our evolution into truly Human beings. And we do this in the context of the Great Mystery of existence, struggling to know how to relate to the Source and how this Source inspires and *re-Sources* our humanity. This has literally been a life-long struggle for me.

I wonder if the "man" in this story is an archetype of the God/Human, which also came to Ezekiel in a vision, and which inspired Jesus to call himself "the son of the Man". Maybe this mysterious figure has had his way with me (and you?), and this is what keeps us wrestling with the mystery of our "now-I-have-it, not-I-lost it" lives. Maybe our life is a wrestling match with this mysterious archetype. Maybe this mysterious Human has been our evolutionary antagonist all along and we did not know it. Only the lucky ones awaken and consciously engage.

The Blessed Wound

Perhaps, we're called simply to be in the wrestling match. And

what the reading tells us is that there is no blessing without the wound. I suspect that the blessed wound is unique to each of us. How would you describe your particular wound?

Right now, in my own life, my blessed wound feels like an unknowing, whereby I feel like after a lifetime of being in this struggle, I don't know nuthin', for sure, but I feel like I'm "should" know something. Or maybe the wound is this gap between what I know I'm/we're capable of, and manifestation. But then Jacob didn't know how it would all turn out either. All that's left is the courage to muster up the wherewithal to cross the river, limping, unknowing, to face our day of reckoning.

Seeing as there are so various families buying online and likewise exploring the internet market place, it has grow increasingly famous to purchase medications online. So the next question is where can you get information that is reliable. You can find useful info fleetly and conveniently by going online. The most common sexual problems in men are erectile malfunction and ejaculation disorders. A lot of doctors think about "[levitra cost](#)". Did learned something about "[buy levitra online usa](#)"? Other matter we are going to is "[buy generic levitra online](#)". In effect, a medic reviews found that up to three quarters of people on such drug experiment side effects. Luckily, most cases of sexual malfunction are treatable, so it is momentous to share your concerns with your partner and physician. Today, there are many options for men who suffer from erectile dysfunction. Get emergency help if you have any of these signs of a side effect to this therapy. Talk to your soundness care provider to see if it's sure to make the switch.