

Divine Blessing: Holding God's Hand

There are a lot of things about getting older that I don't like. I don't like that I have to wear glasses in order to see. I don't like the fact that some of my hair has given up on me. I also don't like that when I stand up, my bones sound like the percussion line of a marching band. I could go on with a list of things that I do not like about getting older. However, all of the negatives about getting older are outweighed by just one wonderful thing: grandchildren.

I have four grandchildren, and they are amazing. While I learned many things about G-D through my adventures with my children, I have learned much more about G-D's grace, love, forgiveness and mercy through my experiences with my grandchildren. In fact, my grandchildren changed the way I view and understand Scripture. One example of how my grandchildren have changed the way I understand something from Torah can be found in how I view the events of Jacob's wrestling match in Genesis 32. Before we look at Scripture, allow me to share the foundation for this new and different understanding.

One of the things I noticed about my grandchildren is that there are two reasons they want to hold my hand. The first is to demonstrate that they love me and want to be with me. We hold hands when we walk. Sometimes we hold hands when sitting together.

The other time they want to hold hands is when they are scared or insecure: when they hear a loud noise, when they are crossing the street or when they are in an unfamiliar place or situation. It is their holding my hand when they are fearful or unsettled that provided a new and powerful insight into the events we read about in Genesis 32 that I want to point out. I

hope it will not only encourage you in your faith, but also encourage you to reach out your hand when you are scared and in need of strength.



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In Genesis 32, we read about the second time Jacob has a supernatural experience on his journey to and from Canaan. The first took place when he had the vision of the ladder to heaven, and the second happened when he was on his way to meet Esau. It is interesting that both of these supernatural encounters took place at times in Jacob's life when he was in fear-filled situations. The first was when he was running away from Esau's threat to kill him, and the second was when he was preparing to engage with Esau and 400 of Esau's men.

After the first supernatural encounter, Jacob responds by saying what we read in Genesis 28:20-21 (TLV): “If God will be with me and watch over me on this way that I am going, and provide me food to eat and clothes to wear, and I return in *shalom* to my father's house, then *Adonai* will be my God.”

Here, we find Jacob wanting to believe in what G-D promised, but not fully grasping those promises, hence the “if” statement. However, we see something completely different when Jacob is challenged by fear of Esau in Genesis 32. In Genesis 32, once again, Jacob has a supernatural encounter—only this time we read these words: “Then He said, ‘Let Me go, for the dawn has broken.’ But he said, ‘I won't let You go unless You bless me.’”

Up until I had grandchildren, I understood these words to mean that Jacob was wrestling with either G-D or an angel of G-D

and was so strong that “the man” couldn’t get away. Now the truth is that ever since I was a young boy, I had real problems believing that Jacob was stronger than either G-D Himself or an angel. It just didn’t make sense.

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But my interactions with my grandchildren helped me view these words in a way that *did* make sense. Jacob has spent years learning that G-D is faithful in every situation, and he is now about to meet his brother and 400 of his men. His brother, when they were last together, had threatened to kill Jacob. Then Jacob has his supernatural encounter and wrestles with the man. I believe this wrestling match was Jacob wrestling against his fears, and when Jacob says I won’t let go unless You bless me, he was speaking of letting go of G-D in the same way as my grandchildren—when they are afraid—will not let go of my hand until they know with complete confidence that they are safe.

I don’t think Jacob was so strong that a heavenly being couldn’t break away from his grip. I think Jacob was saying, “I am not strong enough on my own, so I will not let go of You until I receive Your blessing,” which should cause us to reread what G-D said to Jacob in Genesis 28:13-15:

Surprisingly, Adonai was standing on top of it and He said, “I am Adonai, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your seed. Your seed will be as the dust of the land, and you will burst forth to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed—and in your seed. Behold, I am with you, and I will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land, for I will not forsake you until I have done what I promised you.”

When you are confronted by your fears, reach out, grab G-D's hand and hold on until He fulfills His promises—because He always will.

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