

# **STRANGER THINGS IN THE BIBLE**

## Encounters of Jacob

This is one crazy story all wrapped up in mystery. I call this place in scripture a stranger things Bible story. Read verses 1-2 of Genesis 32 “*Jacob also went on his way, and the angels of God met him. 2 When Jacob saw them, he said, “This is the camp of God!” So, he named that place Mahanaim.*” That’s it! The rest of the Bible does not tell us a thing about who these angels are. We don’t get to know why they were there. What did Jacob see that caused him to recognize angels and call it a God camp? The first chapters of the Bible tell us so little about creation. David the King of Israel just appears on the scene. Jesus’ in his youth is a mystery for the most part. The strange stories in the Bible are such directly because we don’t get enough explanation.

Look at the word Mahanaim that Jacob called this place. It means two camps in Hebrew. I spent a little time in this area. If you could take a bird’s eye look at several of the strange stories of the Bible (like Sodom and Gomorrah) you will notice that they happen within a certain region. I think this area surrounding Jerusalem is a spiritual hotbed. A place where God meets people, the Devil, and Bible history. There is Mt Nebo, The Dead Sea, the pillars of Salt, Jesus’ baptism, and more. All probably within one hundred miles. Why did Jacob think they were in God’s camp? This was God’s arena for fighting Spiritual warfare.

I am not that big on Biblical commentaries because they don’t seem to tell you much. This chapter commentaries talk about Jacob coming of age. He had spent his whole life, to this point, trying to be his own captain. Who could he steal from or lie to? Jacob was his own man.

Yet, he was on the run from an uncle and brother that he had deceived. Where do you find God? It's in the wilderness. Jacob was lost in the wilderness. What did he find? It was God camping in a stranger things story.

In the previous chapter Jacob was confronted by his estranged uncle. They made a pact to live in peace. Yet, his wife had kept the idols she had stolen. There was still a ton of distance between Jacob and his God. Then in chapter 32 we find Jacob sending out an apology letter to his brother who wanted to kill him the last time they met. Jacob then enters the hotbed of Spiritual land. Look at verse 10 *"I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two camps."* There is a bunch of strange things going on here. He sees God and calls it two camps. Then he splits up his camp into two hoping to find peace with his brother Esau. Then he prays to God to rescue him. Go through the preceding chapter of this Jacob story. He does not pray to God. All along he is scheming and devising his own plans.

It's time in the desert. God hears Jacob's prayer. What does God do? We get a stranger things Bible story. Jacob separated himself from everything he had gained in deception. He was alone in the desert. Then a strange man appears and he wrestles with Jacob all night. They say he was wrestling with God. Yet, God is powerful, but Jacob wins the match. The man then touches Jacob's hip and injures it. Then the man changes Jacobs name to Israel. Jacob then demands to know the man's name. We are not told it. Then verse 30 says *"So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."* This is a strange story.

When you really meet Jesus for the first time you are changed. I decided to change my name from Pat to Patrick. I never used to use my original name. I wanted to symbolize my change with Jesus. Some people say that the man in this story was the pre-incarnate Jesus.

Regardless, this Jacob story is about change. This is the place where the Hebrews turn into the Israelites. A place where Jacob has to rely on God now. God saves him from his brother. God saves Jacob's children from famine later on in this story. We can see that God saves Israel from the former ways of Jacob.

These stranger things stories do not give all the answers. Did Jacob see God? Was it Jesus' wrestling Jacob? Why did he injure Jacob? It's amazing that uncle Laban let Jacob live. I suppose it was amazing that Esau let Jacob live. Maybe we could even say it's amazing that Jacob wrestled with God and lived to talk about it. Interestingly enough, this man and his family survived the harsh desert. This is a redemption story. One man needed to run from who he thought he was. To become the man God needed him to be. This is a strange but equally great story.