



“Why did the writer include this text? What was he trying to get across by relating it? What does he mean to teach by/in it? It’s safe to say that usually the writer’s purpose is theocentric, he intends to communicate something about God, i.e., his character, purposes, demands or ways. Sometimes intention is obvious, right on the surface of the text. Or the writer may suck you into his intention by drawing you into the particular mood of the story. It may be the strange stuff that leads you to his intention.” —Dale Ralph Davis

“Thus Esau despised his birthright.” —Genesis 25:34

“Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, ‘The days of mourning my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob.’”

—Genesis 27:41

“Earnest prayer is no excuse for doing nothing practical.”

—Gordon Wenham

“In the ancient Near East, wrestling had very different associations from the buffoonery of TV bouts in our culture. One way in which a legal case could be settled was by the ordeal of a wrestling match-a trial by combat.” —Edmund Clowney

“We must remember that Jacob fought in his weakness. The paradox continues to instruct. The day of failure through power was over, and the day of success through weakness had begun.” —Kent Hughes

“By divulging his name, Jacob also discloses his character. It is here a confession of guilt. In uttering his name, Jacob admits he has cheated his brother.” —Gordon Wenham

“Jacob had striven with humans his whole life, from striving with Esau in the womb, to later getting his birthright. He had striven with his father Isaac and by deception received the blessing. He had striven with Laban and by trickery had become rich. Jacob has striven with humans and prevailed-unfortunately by deception and trickery. But here at the Jabbok River, Jacob has striven with God himself and, amazingly, he has prevailed. Even with his hip out of joint, he held on to receive God’s blessing. So God gives him a new name: ‘Israel’-‘for you have striven with God.’ This new name reorients Jacob’s character from striving deceitfully in his own strength to striving for God’s blessing. God has turned Jacob around from his deceptive ways. As a deceiver Jacob is not allowed to enter the Promised Land; as Israel he may enter the land and receive it as a gift, an inheritance, from God’s hand.” —Sidney Greidanus

“The new name will forever remind Jacob of his new destiny. The new limp will remind him that Jacob met for the first time one who can overpower him. Jacob’s limp shows that God has knocked out his self-sufficiency.” —Victor Hamilton

“Here the paradox of the human condition is vividly summed up. On the one hand, God allows, even puts his people into, difficult or impossible situations, but it is the same God who delivers us from them.” —Gordon Wenham

**“This text helps smash a ‘graven image’ of God-the passive, waiting, gentlemanly One who waits for you to respond, who never imposes Himself upon you, for He is so democratic and believes in democracy as you do. No, this aggressive God takes the offensive and makes you fight with Him. Sometimes we hear that God will never force Himself upon you. Sorry-He will if He wants to. We do not have a ‘tame’ God. The text teaches that sometimes God in His grace, will oppose you, may ‘cripple’ you, in order to force you to face Him, so that you will have to struggle with Him, hang on for dear life, until you realize that only He can give you what you need. He does not oppose or cripple in order to destroy, crush, or mangle, but to get you to seek only Him.”
—Dale Ralph Davis**