

# Jacob Comes Face to Face with God

Dramatic reading based on Genesis 32: 1–32

Rev. Sandy Dodson

*Arrange for actors to sit in a semi-circle and present the script as readers theatre. Readers theatre is a style of drama in which the actors use only vocal expression to present the story, which emphasizes the written text. Memorization, intricate movement, sets and costumes are not needed.*

**NARRATOR:** This story is mostly about a man named Jacob and his large family returning to Jacob's homeland. This means returning to the land of his twin brother. Jacob and his brother weren't exactly friends.

**JACOB:** Okay, everyone, time to get moving. Pull up those tent stakes and pack our bags.

**NARRATOR:** Jacob's family, servants, plus many goats, sheep and camels, formed a caravan. They trekked for many days. Nearing the end of their long hike, the family, servants and livestock once again made camp. That night, there were visitors.

**ANGEL:** Jacob! Hey! We have a message from God.

**JACOB:** This can mean one of two things. Something good is about to happen, or something very bad. Hello! Welcome to my campsite. Make yourselves at home. What brings you here?

**ANGEL:** We have a message from God! Your brother Esau is coming to meet you. And he has 400 men.

**JACOB:** Uh-oh. He's coming to kill me! Let me sit down a little while. I have to think this through. There isn't much time. Hmmm. Esau is coming. He is a prince. He is powerful. And he is on his way, with 400 people! This could get ugly.

**NARRATOR:** Jacob came up with a plan to communicate peace, not war. He sent messengers on ahead.

**JACOB:** I want you to say this to my brother, "Your servant Jacob has been living with Uncle Laban many years. God has blessed him. He comes to you with many cattle, donkeys, sheep, and servants. He sends this message and asks that you accept him and his family."

**NARRATOR:** The messengers went ahead. When they came back, they said,

**ANGEL:** Your brother is coming to meet you, and he has about 400 with him!

**JACOB:** Uh-oh. He's coming to kill me!

**NARRATOR:** Jacob's plan grew. He divided his household into two groups. That way if Esau attacked one group, the other group would be saved. And then Jacob prayed to God.

**JACOB:** God of my ancestors, Abraham and Sarah, please hear my prayer! When I left the home of my father and mother, you told me to travel to the land of my relatives and that you would make everything go well for me. I arrived at my Uncle Laban's with nothing but a walking stick, and now, look at me. You have made me rich! I am not worthy of all

the kindness you have shown me. I am afraid. My brother is coming to kill us all! Remember me, your faithful servant. Remember that you promised that my children would be as many as the sands of the seashore.

**NARRATOR:** Jacob spent another night pondering what to do. At daybreak, he walked among his herds and chose animals to be gifts for his brother. Jacob divided his gifts into groups that set out one after the other toward Esau and the 400 who were with him.

**JACOB:** Now, listen carefully. I am putting you each in charge of a herd of animals. Keep some space between the herds. My brother will meet the first servant. He will ask you, "Whose servant are you? Where are you going? Whose animals are these?" And you will answer, "These animals belong to your servant Jacob. He sent them as a gift to you, my master, Esau. And Jacob is also coming behind us."

**NARRATOR:** Jacob ordered the second, third, and all the other servants to do the same.

**JACOB:** I sure hope this plan works. Maybe Esau will forgive me when he sees the many gifts I have for him.

**NARRATOR:** That night, Jacob and his family came to a small stream. Jacob sent his family across the stream to make camp, but he stayed on the other side. Jacob was afraid. He felt like running away. He built a small fire and crouched beside it, his head in his hands.

**JACOB:** What am I going to do?

**NARRATOR:** And that's when a stranger stepped out from the darkness. Was Jacob dreaming, or was he awake?

**JACOB:** What do you want?

**STRANGER:** You asked for my help.

**JACOB:** Go away! Leave me alone! My uncle hates me, my wives can't get along, and my brother is coming to kill me. Go away, I said! I don't need your help.

**NARRATOR:** The two wrestled, neither letting go of the other.

**JACOB:** Leave me alone!

**NARRATOR:** The stranger loosened his grip.

**JACOB:** No! Wait! You can't leave me here all alone! Why would you want to help me? I have been a liar and cheat all my life. I don't deserve your help.

**STRANGER:** You need me.

**Jacob:** No, I don't. I don't want your help!

**NARRATOR:** The wrestling continued through the night. Jacob did not let the stranger go, and the stranger did not let Jacob go. Finally, the sun began to creep across the eastern sky.

**JACOB:** I won't let you go until you bless me.

**NARRATOR:** After the struggle, Jacob had a new name. Israel, which means God-wrestler.

**JACOB:** I have seen God face to face and lived to tell the story.

