WRESTLING WITH THE ANGEL
(Gen. 32:25 – 33)

He slept alone in his camp that night,
But was awakened by a fearful sight:
An angelic warrior stood close by,
With a menacing look in his eye.

Jacob rose and the two locked arms—
Fighting, wrestling, straining palms;
Pulling, wrenching shoulder and back,
With the thrust and parry of each attack.

The whole night long, in struggle and tussle,
They pummelled each other
And stretched every muscle;
The angel couldn't subdue his foe,
So, he retreated an instant, feigning to go;
Then, just as Jacob lowered his guard,
His assailant lunged with a blow so hard
That it dislocated Jacob's thigh—
Though he still clung on
With a muffled cry.

Observing that day had almost dawned,
He was struck with fear for he'd been warned
By the angel Michael that he mustn't delay,
But return on high in time to pray:

'Let me go. I must sing
The Lord's praise,'
He begged, with arms
Submissively raised.

'If you are all Esau can muster,
Then I'm not impressed by all your bluster!
Confirm me in the firstborn's right,
And confer its blessing on me this night.'

The angel, thereupon, asked his name;
Proclaiming him no longer the same
Jacob who'd grasped his brother's heel,
But now as the father of 'Israel'—
The one who wrestles with God and man;
And prevails in a way no other can.

Jacob called the place, 'Peniel,'
Meaning, 'Face of God,'
So that his offspring might remember
This episode most odd.

For, when he tried to move from there,
He limped in his stride;
Hence, Hebrews won't eat, of an animal,
The thigh muscle of that side.

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