

2287a יִשְׂרָאֵל (yisrā’el) Israel.

The verb *sārā* limits itself to contexts which discuss the struggle of Jacob as he wrestled with the Angel of Yahweh at Peniel in Transjordan, upon his return from Mesopotamia to Canaan c. 1900 b.c. (Gen 32:24 [H 25]; Hos 12:4 [H 5]). The form in the latter passage, *wayyāśar*, might suggest a root *śūr*. But since biblical Hebrew includes no word with this meaning, it should probably be repointed to *wayyiśer*, apocopated from *yisreh* (BDB, p. 975), the normal imperfect of *sārā*. The importance of *sārā* lies in its derived noun, Israel.

The name *yisrā’ēl* was bestowed upon Jacob by the Angel of Yahweh (q.v.) himself, after he had wrestled with him all night (Gen 32:24 [H 25]). Jacob’s struggle was spiritual, in prayer (Hos 12:4 [H 5]), as well as physical. And in it the patriarch “prevailed.” Not that Jacob defeated God, but that he finally attained God’s covenantal requirement of yielded submission (dramatically signalized by his injured thigh, Gen 32:25 [26]). And he persisted in refusing to let the Angel go until he had blessed him (v. 26 [H 27]). The Lord then declared, “Your name shall no longer be Jacob, *ya ‘āqōb* “supplanter” (q.v.), but *yisrā’ēl* “Israel”; for you have striven, *sārītā* (KJV, for as *sār* “prince”) with God and with men and have prevailed” (v. 28, NASB).

יִשְׂרָאֵל (*yisrā’ēl*). **Israel.** Means “he contends with God” (Gen 32:28 [H 29]; contrast KB, p. 407). The noun *yisrā’ēl* appears 2507 times in the ot (plus its adjectival forms, *yisrā’ēlī* and *yisrā’ēlīt*), first as a name of honor for the patriarch Jacob, then for the nation Israel that descended from his twelve sons, then after 930 b.c. for the kingdom of Ephraim (the ten northern tribes) as opposed to the southern kingdom of Judah, and finally for the southern kingdom after the northern kingdom had fallen.

yisrā’ēl continued to be used as an alternate name for Jacob after his death (Ex 6:14; 32:13). But even as the phrase *bēnē yisrā’ēl*, “sons of Israel,” moved from the literal designation of his twelve sons (Gen 42:5; Ex 1:1) to the more metaphorical description of his descendants in general (Gen 32:32 [H 33]; Ex 1:7), so “Israel” came to mean the Hebrew nation (Ex 3:18). It appears in secular history on the Merneptah stele, c. 1230 b.c. As in the case of Jacob, the name emphasizes Israel’s covenant-election (Ex 19:5; Isa 41:8; Ezk 20:5). Yet many of God’s people proved unfaithful (Amos 3:1), an apostasy climaxed in their rejection of Jesus Christ at his first coming (Jn 1:11); “for they are not all Israel [God’s elect] who are descended from Israel” (Rom 9:6, NASB). But Yahweh “will again choose Israel. …[Indeed,] strangers will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob” (Isa 14:1), a prediction fulfilled, some would say, first in the engrafting of gentile believers into the true Israel of Christ’s church (Rom 11:17; Gal 6:16; Phil 3:3) and in any case at his second coming, when the Jews accept him whom they pierced (Zech 12:10) and all believers will find restoration in the Land of Israel (Isa 14:1).

Bibliography: Payne, J. B., *Theology of the Older Testament*, Zondervan, 1971, pp. 179–83, 475–78, 484–87. Rad, G. van, et al., “Israel,” in TDNT, III, pp. 356–91.¹

BDB Brown, Driver, Briggs, *A Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1905

KJV King James Version of the Bible

NASB New American Standard Version of the Bible

KB L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*, 2nd ed., Eng.-Ger., 1958

NASB New American Standard Version of the Bible

¹ Payne, J. B. (1999). [2287 שָׂרָאֵל](#). R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr., & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed., p. 883). Chicago: Moody Press.

יִשְׂרָאֵל (“contender,” “soldier of God,” from יָזַר to fight, and אֶל, Gen. 32:29; 35:10; compare 12:4)²

3478. יִשְׂרָאֵל Yisrael (975b); from 8280 and 410; “God strives,” another name of Jacob and his desc.:—Israel(2485), Israel’s(13), Israelites(5), Israelites*(1).³

Compound roots i.e. ‘struggle’ and ‘god.’ Why? And He said, ^z“Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but ⁹Israel; for you have ^astruggled with God and ^bwith men, and have prevailed.”⁴

And he saith unto him, ‘What *is* thy name?’ and he saith, ‘Jacob.’ ²⁸And he saith, ‘Thy name is no more called Jacob, but Israel; for thou hast been a ⁹prince with God and with men, and dost prevail.’⁵

Jacob lived up to his name lit. “supplanter” but was given a new name indicative of both striver and prevailer for Jacob strove and won (see comments highlighted above). Another Hebrew term is affirmed i.e. sarita, with the root sar meaning prince. There may still be ambiguity in the preposition and this may be intended. Some lexicons state e.g. “soldier of God” and others “contender with God.” There is no ambiguity regarding the root words for God, prince, and contend. However, Gen. 32:27 is a bit cryptic. How did a deceiver prevail over YHWH? He paradoxically prevailed in submitting to God. We struggle *with* God and when we yield, we are blessed and then we contend *for* God. I’ve emphasized the prepositions.

Practically speaking it is good to contend with God in earnest inquiry. Even Jesus prayed in Gethsemane that His appointed cup be taken from him. And on the Cross, He exclaimed My God, why have you forsaken me? So even Jesus struggled with God and prevailed for God. The nation Israel was the prototype of struggle and prevailing of God’s son (cf. Hos. 11:1) and Jesus is the actualization of God’s struggling and prevailing Son! Who else but Jesus is God’s contender/soldier/warrior? And who else but Jesus is God’s Prince/prevailor? The entire New Testament is testimony that Jesus has risen from the grave – has ascended on high (even at his death cf. Isa. 53:9; Mat. 27:57-60) after atoning for our transgressions. He now reigns from

² Gesenius, W., & Tregelles, S. P. (2003). *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* (p. 370). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

desc. descended, descendant(s)

* An asterisk (*) indicates that the key word represents two or more Hebrew or Aramaic words. Refer to the English concordance listing of the key word for the additional Hebrew or Aramaic word numbers.

³ Thomas, R. L. (1998). *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

^z Gen. 35:10; 1 Kin. 18:31; 2 Kin. 17:34

⁹ Lit. *Prince with God*

^a Hos. 12:3, 4

^b Gen. 25:31; 27:33

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ge 32:28). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ Young, R. (1997). *Young's Literal Translation* (Ge 32:27–28). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

“Israel”

heaven on earth through His organic Temple of priests who are people of all tribes, nations, and tongues. True Israel, therefore, has always been God’s chosen people who have chosen to follow Him and participate in His everlasting Kingdom.

Israel:

- Bush – Vine (Isa. 5; Jn. 15), Olive tree (Rom. 11).
- Building – Temple: where humanity and divinity meet. Portable tabernacles (1 Pet. 2).
- Body – a living Temple of many parts contributing to one purpose (Eph. 4).
- Bride – Jer. 2:2; 3:14; 31:32; Ezek. 16; Hos. 1-3; Eph. 5:32; Rev. 21:1-3.

The true Israel of God is the organic (bush) dwelling place (building) of united believers (body) who are betrothed to God (bride). True Israel are those who have been born from above (God’s Spirit) via the cleansing / life source of Messiah’s righteous person and work. Ezek. 36:22ff. cf. Jn. 3 and Jn. 7:37-39.