

"I am Jacob!" Jacob answered.

But that's not who Jacob was anymore. He was not a Cheater anymore. Now Jacob knew that everything he had came from God, and not from his own doing. And so God gave him a new name, a princely name.

"You shall be called Israel, which means 'I have wrestled with God'."

And then God blessed him, saying,

"I am with you always. In all that you do, and you shall be blessed. Your children shall be as many as the stars in the sky, and the land I promised to your fathers, you shall possess."

That night, Jacob learned the most important lesson of his life.

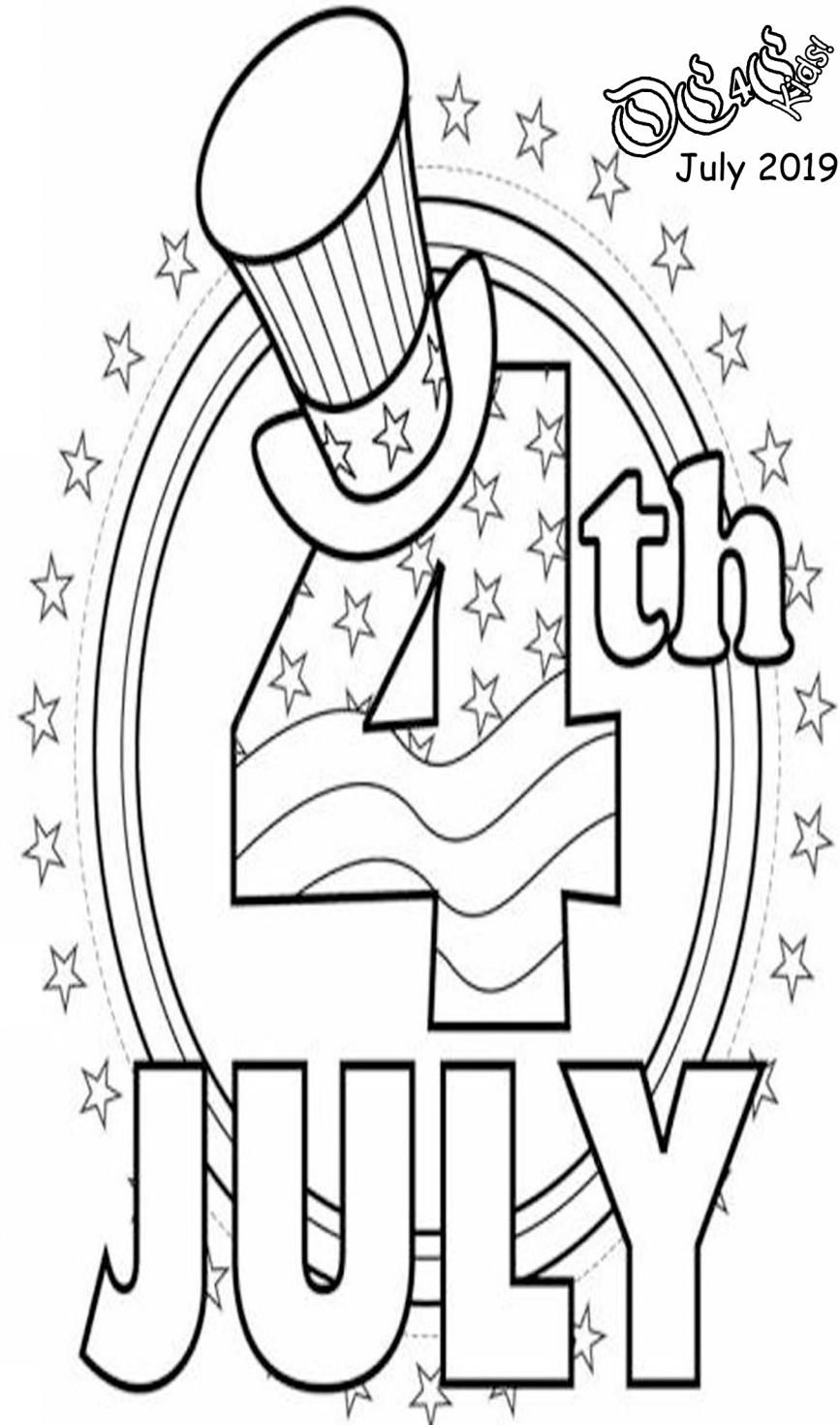
Grab hold of God, and never let him go.

G L E A R S I J G B Y J O M B
B O T D T V S E E M B P L S L
K J D K O O R B N K U N L U A
E B L E S S H A U A N S M M N
F Z D E L T S E R W M A C D W
J Z A J F D M W W M D E R L J
S K N Q A S D L D W R U S H E
O C R R Y V S Z W U C O Z L S
C E C A F O T E C A F D F S U
K N A M B O C A J F N E P V M
E T P I Y M V X Y I R H G R O
T I I L O A O P P X G C K C I
P R E V A I L E D G N U B M T
T O Q S F Z J J Z Y G O U L E
E D E P M I L H W P Z T H I P

BLESS
BROOK
FACE TO FACE
GOD
HIP
ISRAEL

JACOB
LIMPED
MAN
MUSCLE
NAME

PREVAILED
SHRANK
SOCKET
TOUCHED
WRESTLED



UNDER A STARRY SKY

JACOB WRESTLES WITH GOD

By Paul Dallgas-Frey

... Continued.

Jacob divided his gifts into groups, one in front of the other, and sent them on ahead of him. He told the shepherd of each herd, "When you meet my brother, say to him, 'These are a gift from your servant Jacob. He is coming right behind.'"

That way, Jacob hoped that Esau would forgive him.

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.

He was afraid. He felt like running away.

Under a starry sky, he sat next to a small fire, with his head down in his hands. "What am I going to do?" he said.

And that's when a stranger stepped out from the darkness.

"What do you want?" Jacob said to the stranger.

"You asked for my help," the stranger said.

"Go away! Leave me alone!" Jacob said. Somehow, Jacob knew the stranger was the angel of God. It was God himself, in the form of a man.

"My uncle hates me, my wives can't get along, and my brother is coming to kill me. A lot of help you have been!" Jacob said, and he tried to push the stranger away. But the stranger grabbed a hold of Jacob's robe.

"Go away! I don't need your help!" Jacob said, and the two of them began to wrestle to the ground. The stranger wouldn't let Jacob go.

"But without me, you have nothing at all," the stranger said as they struggled back and forth.

"I don't care, just leave me alone!"

"All right then," the stranger said, and he began to pull away (but he didn't let go of Jacob's robe).

"No! Wait! You can't leave me here all alone!" And now Jacob was grabbing a hold of the stranger, and he wouldn't let him go.

"Why would you want to help me? I have been a liar and cheat all my life. I don't deserve your help." Jacob said as the two rolled in the sand. "You won't help me anyway! You have caused me nothing but trouble!!!" (which, of course, wasn't true at all!)

But the stranger just held on all the tighter.

"You need me," the stranger said.

"I don't need you! I don't want your help!" Jacob said. But deep down inside, deep in his heart, he knew that that was what he needed most. He tried to push the stranger away, but he couldn't let him go.

And so they wrestled back and forth, on and on, all night long. Jacob wouldn't let the stranger go, and the stranger wouldn't let Jacob go.

Finally, the early light of morning began to creep across the eastern sky.

"I won't let you go until you bless me!" Jacob finally said, and he wrestled with the stranger all the more. In his heart he was crying out,

"Don't let go! Don't ever let go!"

And he wouldn't let God go.

At last, God struck Jacob on the hip and put it out of joint. Jacob walked with a limp from that day on. It would always remind him of the night he wrestled with God.

And then God said to Jacob, "What is your name?" A strange question to ask after all of this!

"You know who I am!" Jacob said.

God certainly did know. Remember, 'Jacob' meant 'Cheater.'