

Options for the identity of the wrestler and problems with each

God

What about the physical body?

How could a human “prevail” over God?

Why would God need to hide at daybreak (cf. Genesis 18-19)?

Why would God not identify God’s self as in previous encounters?

Angel

Elsewhere in Genesis (e.g. 19.1; 32.1), “angels” (Hebrew, *mal’achim*) are identified as such. Why not here?

Esau

How could Esau suddenly appear out of nowhere?

Why would Esau need to ask Jacob’s name?

Why would Esau want to rename Jacob “Israel”?

Jacob’s inner self

If the experience is solely internal, how did Jacob get injured?

Why would Jacob claim “I have seen God face to face” if he was wrestling with his inner self?

A river spirit/demon

Why would the writer suddenly introduce a kind of figure not seen elsewhere in the Bible?

Why would such an entity want to hinder Jacob from crossing the river?