

# Penuel



*Depiction of Jacob Wrestling with the Angel at Peniel, by Eugène Delacroix.*

In the Hebrew Bible, **Penuel** (or *Pniel*, *Pnuel*; Hebrew פְּנִיאֵל) is a place not far from Succoth, on the east of the Jordan River and south of the river Jabbok. It is also called *Peniel* "Face of God" by Jacob:

"It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared." (Gen. 32:30 NIV)

Here Jacob wrestled (Gen. 32:24-32) "with a man" ("the angel", Hos. 12:4) "till the break of day." This episode resulted in God (or the angel) changing Jacob's name to "Israel" (Gen. 32:28) which literally means, "He who struggles with God."

A town was afterward built there (Judg. 8:8; 1 Kings 12:25). The men of this place refused to give bread to Gideon and his 300 men when they were in pursuit of the Midianites (Judg. 8:1-21). On his return, Gideon tore down the tower there and killed all the men of the city.

When the Northern Kingdom of Israel broke away from the United Monarchy c. 930 BCE, Jeroboam, its first

king, established his capital in Shechem. A short time later, he left Shechem and fortified Penuel, declaring it as his new capital (1 Kings 12:25). He and his son, Nadab, ruled there, until Baasha seized the throne in 909 BCE and moved the capital to Tirzah (1 Kings 15:25-34).

Pnuel is a common name given to males in the Assyrian culture.

## 1 Penuel vs. Pniel

Two categories of spellings exists, the *i*-type *Pniel* and *Peniel* and the *u*-type *Pnuel*, *Penuel* and *Pnuël*. The *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*<sup>[1]</sup> prints the *i*-type פְּנִיאֵל; for *Pniel*. The *u*-type is only a minor textual variant written as פְּנוּאֵל for *Pnuel* in the critical apparatus. It appears only in **𐤒** (the Samaritan Pentateuch), **σ´** (Synmachus), **Ⲥ** (the Peshitta) and **Ɑ** (the Latin Vulgate).

Therefore translations like the Luther Bible write *Pnuël* as being directly translated from the Vulgate. So does the KJV, the ESV and the Elberfelder Bibel. But translations like the NIV, the NIV and the Schlachter 2000 write *Peniel* or *Pniel*.

## 2 References

[1] *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 1997, page 53

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