

Genesis 37 – Introduction to Joseph

Read Genesis 37:1-11

V. 1-2 Notice who Joseph (the son of the much loved wife: Rachel) is working with. These are the sons of the "lesser" wives (35:25,26). Is Joseph, at the age of 17, supervising their work?

Vs 3-4 After Reuben, the firstborn to Leah, was disgraced (35:22), Joseph as the firstborn to Rachel may have properly been the next in line. Read 1 Chronicles 5:1-2. What did Jacob's favor cost him with his brothers?

V. 5-9 God also shows favor to Joseph. Why does God reveal the future to Joseph in this way? They are the first dreams in Genesis without verbal communications. They are symbolic only, requiring interpretation. The brothers had no difficulty interpreting the symbolism. How do you think Joseph answered the questions in 37:8?

Is it sometimes appropriate to keep God's message to ourselves? Is God part of Joseph's popularity problem? Look up: Romans 14:19-23

V. 10-11 –Was Jacob insulted by the dream? What about Jacob's life made it possible for him to "keep the matter in mind? How do the brothers' reaction of hate help justify God's choice of Joseph? The lessons are timeless:

- God will choose a faithful, righteous person for a position of leadership in spite of the jealousy of others.
- Those whom God chooses for positions of leadership may encounter jealous hatred from others.
- Those who are called to submit to others, even though they might feel more qualified to lead, must not let their jealousy turn to cruel hatred. Ephesians 4:30-32

Read Genesis 37:12-30

V. 12-14 -When Jacob asked Joseph to "bring word back to me," do you think he was sending Joseph to report on the "quality of the work" of his brothers?

Joseph's older brothers had successfully been herding their father's flocks for some time. Jacob's wealth and flocks had increased. Do you think that it was possible that Jacob was asking Joseph to see if "all is well" with his brothers, or perhaps he was asking Joseph to "see if they need anything"?

Consider how this situation is similar to 37:2?

This is the family from which God's chosen people will arise? What kind of men are these?

Note the two brothers who were against killing Joseph. Reuben counseled them against killing him, but suggests throwing him into a cistern, empty of water, which would have meant his death if left there. Although he may have meant to rescue him (to regain Jacob's approval?), Reuben is not careful to watch over Joseph (perhaps leaving to do something for the flock). Judah suggests another option, presenting it as more profitable and more merciful, on the ground that Joseph was their flesh and blood. That more "merciful" option is to sell him into slavery.

If either of these two brothers had stood up for what was right, would Joseph have been harmed? Look up: James 4:17

Read Genesis 37:31-36

The ornamented robe could also have been sold, but they kept it, ripped it, smeared it with blood and showed it to their father. The robe and its symbolism was the focus of their anger, and it was Jacob who had given it.

What do you think Joseph felt about his dreams while he was being taken as a slave away from his home and father? Joseph is sold to Potiphar. Anyone familiar with the story of Joseph is reminded, at the end of the account of his being sold, that God was still with him: Joseph is not sold to just any Egyptian, but to the captain of the guard of Pharaoh. Far from preventing the fulfillment of the dreams, the brothers have become the agents of fulfilling them.