

On the Beginning

35. Joseph Sold By His Brothers

NOTE ESPECIALLY Genesis 37

Chapter 37 brings the narrative of Genesis back to the family of Jacob and the ancestral line of Christ. The focus, however, of the rest of the book is on Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob rather than on Jacob himself. Genesis 49:9-12 will tell us which son of Jacob is in the line of Christ, and it's not Joseph! However, Joseph and the two tribes he produced are very important to the history of the nation Israel.

1. Jacob's **Favor.**

The first four verses of Genesis 37 tell us that Joseph was the favored son of Jacob. This was for two reasons: a good one and a bad one. The bad reason was just because Joseph *"was the son of his old age."* Like his father before him, Jacob picked a favorite son (See Genesis 25:28). The good reason was Joseph's loyalty to his father. Verse 2 says that he reported to Jacob the disobedience of the sons of the handmaids (who seemed to have been the really bad boys). Verses 13-17 indicate his own faithful obedience to his father. Certainly children ought to respect, obey, and be loyal to their parents.

2. Joseph's **Dreams.**

Genesis 37:5-11 tell about the famous dreams of Joseph, and their effect. The dreams obviously came from God, and that would mean that they were given for good reasons. However, they deepened his brothers' hatred for Joseph. Yet they served to enlighten their father and perhaps encourage Joseph. Remember that the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) were given divine revelation about great things in their future in the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3, 13:14-18, 22:15-18, 26:1-5, 28:10-14). Dreams and promises were given apparently to encourage God's servants in regard to the meaning and importance of their lives! Joseph would certainly need the encouragement of his dreams during the hard days ahead of him.

3. The Brothers' **Conspiracy.**

Beginning in verse 12, "the plot thickens." The brothers of Joseph are sent to oversee the flocks of Jacob at Shechem (Remember that place?). Then Joseph is sent to check on them. But they are not in Shechem, but have gone way past that area far to the north at Dothan (check a Bible map). When Joseph finds them, they are undoubtedly considering the consequences of his bringing their father another *"evil report"* (Note verses 18-20 and remember verse 2). First they plot to kill him. Then Reuben persuades them to put him into a pit out of which he could not escape (vs. 21-24). When, for some reason, Reuben left them for a while, the brothers drew Joseph out of the pit and sold him as a slave to a caravan going to Egypt (vs. 25-28). This was Judah's idea (who also was not a good man). When Reuben returned, he was upset that Joseph had been sold because he had planned to rescue him from the pit. But his weakness of character had again involved the eldest son of Jacob in great evil (See Genesis 35:22 and 49:3-4). The lack of courage to

stand up and do right will always bring sin into a person's life. There is no "easy way" to stay on the right path!

4. **Jacob's** Mourning.

Now see how the chapter ends (verses 31-36). The sons lie to their father and cause him to think Joseph is dead. What did Jacob do when he received this false news? He not only mourned for Joseph, but also "*refused to be comforted.*"

"And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him." (Verse 35)

This was willful depression, and it lasted for over twenty years. Look up Genesis 42:29-38 and 44:18-34 to see Jacob's perpetually gloomy attitude. The reason for Jacob's depression was a lie, but the real reason for it was a deliberate choice on his part not to be comforted! Even without the true story, Jacob could have received comfort in the goodness of God and the idea of God having a purpose for everything He allows (See Genesis 50:20). There is always comfort for a servant of God, if he will have it (Matthew 5:4). But Jacob refused to be comforted. Are you living in deliberate depression? Have you refused the comfort of God's Word, God's Spirit, and God's people, and preferred a life of bitterness and gloom? Come back to the sunlight today by another deliberate choice. Choose to let God comfort you (John 14:16-18, Romans 15:4, II Corinthians 1:3-5 and 13:11).