

JOSEPH SOLD INTO EGYPT

BIBLE TEXT : Genesis 37:1-36

LESSON 33 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us" (Psalm 44:5).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Genesis 37:1-36

37:1 And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.

2 These *are* the generations of Jacob. Joseph, *being* seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad *was* with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he *was* the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of *many* colours.

4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told *it* his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

7 For, behold, we *were* binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

Bible References:

I The Young Man Joseph, Jacob's Most Beloved Son

1 Joseph, the son of Rachel, was the favorite son of his father, Genesis 37:1-3;

Genesis 30:22-24

30:22 And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb.

23 And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach:

24 And she called his name Joseph; and said, The LORD shall add to me another son.

Genesis 33:2

And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.

2 Jacob's partiality causes enmity and animosity between Joseph and his brothers, Genesis 37:4

II Joseph's Dreams and the Resultant Hatred

1 He dreams that his brothers' sheaves bow down to his sheaf, Genesis 37:5-8

2 He dreams that eleven stars, together with the sun and moon, bow down to him, Genesis 37:9, 10

3 The dreams cause the brothers to hate and envy Joseph; the father rebukes him but keeps a fond parental interest in him, Genesis 37:5, 8, 10, 11

III The Crime's Inception and Perpetration

1 Joseph is always an obedient son, Genesis 37:12-17

2 The brothers conspire against him, but Reuben, the first-born, intervenes to spare his life, Genesis 37:18-22

3 Joseph is sold as a slave without Reuben's knowledge or consent, Genesis 37:23-28

4 Reuben grieves when he fails to find Joseph in the pit, Genesis 37:29, 30

5 The brothers deceive their father and cause him great grief, Genesis 37:31-36

Notes:

We now begin the study of the life of Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob, Rachel's first son. An interesting thing about Joseph is that he is one of the few characters of whom a detailed account is given in the Bible but of whom no fault is mentioned. He had a sterling character that was above reproach in all his dealings with others, despite the fact that the favoritism shown him by his father was sufficient to have spoiled an even better than average child. We can say that in many ways he is a type of Christ.

The sons of Jacob, who were to be the tribal fathers of the Israelitish nation, lived with their father in the vale of Hebron. Since Rachel was the one whom Jacob originally chose when he made the offer to work seven years for Laban in exchange for a wife, it is only natural that her children should be the most loved of the family (**Genesis 29:18** And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter).

All the sons, except Benjamin, were born in Haran while Jacob was working for his father-in-law. Benjamin, the youngest and the son of Rachel, was born while the family was journeying from Haran to Canaan. Rachel died when Benjamin was born, so her two sons were especially endeared to the father. They were all Jacob had as a living remembrance of Rachel, whom he dearly loved (**Genesis 37:3** Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his

10 And he told *it* to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What *is* this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

12 And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

13 And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed *the flock* in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here *am I*.

14 And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

15 And a certain man found him, and, behold, *he was* wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou?

16 And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed *their flocks*.

17 And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.

18 And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.

19 And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.

20 Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

21 And Reuben heard *it*; and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him.

22 And Reuben said unto them,

children, because he *was* the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of *many* colours).

The sons of Bilhah were Dan and Naphtali, and those of Zilpah were Gad and Asher. Joseph apparently spent more time with these four than with the rest of his brothers. Because Jacob listened so readily to Joseph, he brought his reports of the evil deeds of these four brothers to the parental ear and, no doubt, caused the brothers to suffer very often because of their misdeeds. This naturally caused a feeling of resentment toward Joseph to exist in the carnal hearts of the four brothers.

There is always danger when the parent shows a decided preference for one child over the others of the family. Much suffering has been brought upon sons through this indulgence on the part of a father or a mother. It is not easy to be a perfect parent and always to do the right thing in bringing up those whom God has entrusted to our care; but partiality shown toward one or two at the expense of others in the family is something that should be guarded against with all the fervor of one's spirit.

Jacob should have known where this course of partiality would lead. He had been the less favored son of his father's house, the greater regard being shown by Isaac for Esau, his elder twin brother. Because of his inferior position in the family and his desire for a greater blessing than was naturally his, he used deceit to obtain that favored benediction. As we found out in our study of that lesson, deceit is never justified and will always bring a harvest of suffering and regret in due time.

Now Jacob again suffers for the sins of his youth, being deceived by his sons in his old age, reaping an unpleasant harvest for those sins (**Genesis 27:18, 19, 24, 35 27:18** And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am I*; who *art* thou, my son? **19** And Jacob said unto his father, I *am* Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. **24** And he said, *Art* thou my very son Esau? And he said, I *am*. **35** And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing). "For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

The incidents in this lesson are the beginning of a long and arduous "training period" for this young man, Joseph. The Lord had chosen him as a man whom He could trust to fill a high position in the plan He had for His people, the Children of Israel.

No doubt Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had wondered just how the covenant promises that God had given were to be carried out. They might have envisioned their descendants gradually increasing in the land of Canaan, the Promised Land, until they overpowered the tribes living there. But God had a different plan. His people were to go down into Egypt; and after suffering in bondage, they were to come out as a nation, by a mighty deliverance for which they could give praise to no one but God. Joseph was the one chosen by God to "spearhead" this movement of the chosen family to Egypt and the one by whom the power of God was to be revealed to that pagan nation (**Genesis 45:5** Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life).

Joseph was hated by his brothers, not only because of the parental favor shown him, but because the Lord gave him two dreams which the brothers interpreted as showing that they and the parents would bow down in reverence to this younger brother, a thing which was unheard of in those Eastern countries. To some it may seem that a lack of tact on the part of Joseph made his way hard, causing his brothers to envy, hate, and ridicule him; but we know that God was directing Joseph's course in life and all this was a part of God's plan for His own chosen people, the Children of Israel (**Genesis 45:5-8 45:5** Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. **6** For these two years *hath* the famine *been* in the land: and yet *there are* five years, in the which *there shall* neither *be* earing nor harvest. **7** And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. **8** So now *it was* not you *that* sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt). The father rebuked him but nevertheless observed the saying, perhaps feeling a sense of parental pride in the fact that this younger, favored son was to be a ruler over them all (**Luke 2:19** But Mary kept all these things, and pondered *them* in her heart), These

Shed no blood, *but* cast him into this pit that *is* in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.

23 And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, *his* coat of *many* colours that *was* on him;

24 And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit *was* empty, *there was* no water in it.

25 And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry *it* down to Egypt.

26 And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit *is it* if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?

27 Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he *is* our brother *and* our flesh. And his brethren were content.

28 Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty *pieces* of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

29 And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph *was* not in the pit; and he rent his clothes.

30 And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child *is* not; and I, whither shall I go?

31 And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood;

32 And they sent the coat of *many* colours, and they brought *it* to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it *be* thy son's coat or no.

dreams were fulfilled to the letter in later years (**Genesis 42:6** And Joseph *was* the governor over the land, *and he it was* that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him *with* their faces to the earth. **Genesis 43:26** And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which *was* in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth. **Genesis 50:15-18 50:15** And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. **16** And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, **17** So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. **18** And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we *be* thy servants.)

Some time later the elder sons took the flocks to Shechem for grazing. Since this was the place that Jacob had bought from the Shechemites and where his sons at one time had committed a horrible slaughter, the aged father might well be solicitous of their welfare. He knew it would not be an uncommon thing if some of the neighboring tribes would attempt to take revenge for the cold-blooded murder of the Shechemites. He sent Joseph to see if all was well with them. Joseph's immediate obedience, even though the journey was probably a hard one since Shechem is thought to be about 60 miles from the vale of Hebron, is an indication of his good character. He found that his brothers had gone to Dothan, probably about eight miles distant, so he journeyed on to them that he might inquire of their welfare and take a report to his father.

The first plan of the jealous brothers, as they saw Joseph approaching, was to kill him outright; but the first-born, Reuben, suggested that Joseph merely be put into a pit to die and in that way they could not be accused of actually taking the lad's life. This was only an excuse of Reuben's, who was certainly no saint, as we can see by past references to his life — but who was eager to save the boy's life so that he could return safely to his father. As the first-born, Reuben was the responsible member of the party. His bosom was not the habitation of cruelty as were the others, who would not only cast their own young brother into a pit, intending to leave him there to die of starvation and exposure, but could immediately sit down and eat a meal. This act forcibly describes the brutish and diabolic nature of their ruthless souls.

Judah later evolved a plan, and secured its acceptance by all except Reuben who was absent at the time, to sell Joseph as a slave to a caravan that was passing on the way to Egypt; and then let their father believe that the young man was killed by a wild beast as he hunted for them in that uninhabited region. He perhaps reasoned; that in that manner they could obtain some financial gain as well as save themselves the guilt that would result from his death.

The plan was carried out without Reuben's knowledge or consent, and Joseph was sold into bondage. When Reuben saw that his own private plan had failed he mourned the loss of his brother but still was content to allow the deception to go on, refusing to reveal the truth of what had happened. He let the aged parent believe that his most loved son had met a terrible death as the result of an encounter with some ferocious beast, when all the time he was alive in a faraway land. One cannot help seeing the terrible lengths to which sin and deception can lead its partakers. These brothers made a farce of trying to comfort the bereaved father; but, to free themselves of his blame and censure, kept from him the news that would have relieved him the most.

We find many parallels between the life of Joseph and that of our Lord. Jesus was the beloved Son of His Father and Joseph was a beloved son of his father. Both were obedient, even unto death (**Philippians 2:8** And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross). Both were the innocent persons whom their brethren sold for a few pieces of silver (**Luke 22:3-6 22:3** Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. **4** And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. **5** And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. **6** And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them

33 And he knew it, and said, *It is* my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.

34 And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

35 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.

36 And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, *and* captain of the guard.

in the absence of the multitude. **Luke 22:47-48 22:47** And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. **48** But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?; **Matthew 27:3-10 27:3** Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, **4** Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What *is that* to us? see thou *to that*. **5** And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. **6** And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. **7** And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. **8** Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. **9** Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; **10** And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me). In Joseph's case this bar-gain was proposed by his brother, Judah (Greek **Judas**), the very name-sake of that disciple and brother who sold his Lord and Master.

Joseph became the means whereby his brethren — and a world of strangers — could be saved from death. Jesus, through His betrayal and death, became the Lord and Savior of His brethren (the Jewish people) and also a world of strangers to the covenant of promise. This happened in both cases by the plots of rejection and destruction.

Another interesting parallel is that both had someone who tried to deliver them from their obvious fate. Reuben conceived a plan to deliver Joseph from the hands of his brothers; and Peter drew his sword to attempt a deliverance from the hands of Jesus' captors. But both schemes failed, since they were merely the results of a natural man's well-intended reasonings. God's great over-all plan for His people depended upon a Joseph in Egypt and a well-beloved Son in a sinful world.

How wonderful is God's plan! How marvelously it is carried out and revealed to mankind! How interested God is in the welfare of men of every time and period in the world's history, in that He sent encouragement to them through His blessed promises, covenants, examples, and prefiguring-types, that they might not be driven to despair but see by means of them the Way, the Truth, and the Life and be rescued from a devil's hell and an eternity of outpoured judgment.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What position did Joseph have in his father's family? What was *his* mother's name?
- 2 What *was* the first cause of the enmity that existed between Joseph and his brothers?
- 3 Describe the two dreams that Joseph had.
- 4 Did the brothers have to ask for the interpretation of the dreams?
- 5 What attitude did the father show toward the dreams?
- 6 Who else, in the Bible, observed the sayings of a young man and pondered them in her heart?
- 7 Did Joseph show signs of being a spoiled child, one who did not know what discipline meant?
- 8 To whom was Joseph sold? Where did they take him?
- 9 What untruth did the brothers tell Jacob?
- 10 Show as many parallels as you can between the life of Joseph and that of Christ.