

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

Gen. 37:2 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.

This chapter picks back up with the story of Jacob and his descendants. Jacob had stayed in Canaan like his father before him. Then we jump right in with the story focusing on Joseph at the age of 17. He was tending the flocks with some of his brothers (Dan, Napthali, Gad, and Asher) and felt they weren't doing a good job, so he came home and told daddy.

Gen. 37:3 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.

Gen. 37:4 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.

Joseph was daddy's favorite. (It says because he was born in Jacob's old age, but he was also Rachel's son.) Jacob had made Joseph a special robe, which I have been taught was a tunic with sleeves. Jacob was so obvious in his preference that the other brothers were naturally jealous; it made them hate Jacob so much that they couldn't even carry on a civil conversation with him.

Gen. 37:5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told *it* his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

Gen. 37:6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

Gen. 37:7 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.

Gen. 37:8 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.

Joseph fed this hatred even more when he decided to tell his brothers a dream he had. (It makes you wonder if Jacob was simply naïve or loved goading his brothers or what.) He dreamed that they were binding sheaves of grain in the field. All of a sudden Joseph's sheaf stood upright, and his brother's sheaves gathered round his and bowed down to it. It was obvious to all of them that this meant he thought he would rule over them one day. His brothers hated him even more.

Gen. 37:9 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.

Gen. 37:10 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?

Gen. 37:11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

Joseph has another dream and again tells his brothers and even his father. This time his father rebuked him. He had dreamed that the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to him. Jacob took the sun and moon to represent he and Rachel and the eleven stars as his brothers. (Even though Rachel was dead, she would be represented as bowing in her position of submission to her husband as well as in her participation through that of her descendants.) His brothers were jealous of him but Jacob “observed the saying” (the Hebrew indicates that he was keeping it in remembrance). I’m not sure, but Jacob could have been thinking about how God doesn’t always act/choose according to what we think is right. Even in his own life—God had chosen him over Esau. What might He have in the plans for Joseph?

Thoughts – A friend asked me a question last night that got my brain going, and I liked the ideas that God gave me. God has not made us robots. Our every move is not predestined, but the fulfillment of His plan is—whether for our life or that of a nation. God’s choice is one man for one woman. Abraham and Sarai were doing fine until Sarai’s lack of faith in God’s promise caused her to take matters into her own hands and give Abraham her maid, Hagar, to obtain a son. (Abraham was complicit mind you.) God’s plan was always to use Isaac. Ishmael coming on the scene didn’t change that plan, and the result of that sin is still being felt today in the Middle East. Could Abraham have chosen to wait on God—yes!

Isaac and Rebekah knew that God had said that the elder would serve the younger of their sons. Again, because of lack of faith in my opinion, Rebekah intervened and even made her son a party to her sin. Would God’s plans to use Jacob have been thwarted if they had not intervened—No! The result—Rebekah lost her favorite son, because according to the story in the scripture, she’s already out of the picture when Jacob comes home twenty years later.

Now to Jacob—His desire and heart is set on Rachel. The deceiver gets his just reward when he is deceived himself. He planned on one wife, I think, but was tricked into having two—by his uncle no less. This one is a little trickier since Leah was the mother of Judah, the tribe that would produce the Messiah. I think God would have protected Jacob from Laban’s deceit if he had not helped his mother deceive his own father to get his blessing. Anyway, I think God compensated Leah so to speak for being the “unloved” one by giving her more children. Then Rachel gets jealous since she is barren and gives Jacob her handmaid—just like Sarai before her—instead of accepting whatever the Lord might have planned for her. So the jealousy cycle is continued when Leah gives Jacob her maid too when Rachel has her own children. Could Jacob have avoided much of the future problems among his children by changing some of his choices along the way—Yes! Did he change God’s plan—No. I think he just changed how God accomplished His purpose. I think Jacob’s choices affected the nation of Israel with its inner conflicts for hundreds of years to come.

The Jews today determine “Jewishness” (used as inclusive of all Israel) through the maternal line. It would appear in God’s economy that fact is determined through the paternal line.

Gen. 37:12 And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

Gen. 37:13 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*.

Gen. 37:14 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.

Gen. 37:15 And a certain man found him, and, behold, *he was* wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou?

Gen. 37:16 And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed *their flocks*.

Gen. 37:17 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.

Joseph's brothers had taken the flocks to Shechem to graze. Although no time frame is given, they had been gone long enough that Jacob wanted to know how they were doing and that everything was OK. Joseph obediently set out to check on his brothers for his father. When he came to Shechem, he couldn't find them. A man (unidentified) saw him wandering around and asked him what he was looking for. Joseph told him that he was looking for his brothers who were grazing their flocks. (Note – No mention is given of further identification.) The man told Joseph that he had heard them speak of going to Dothan. Joseph proceeded to Dothan and spotted his brothers. (I can't help but wonder if the man was an angel.)

Gen. 37:18 And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.

Gen. 37:19 And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.

Gen. 37:20 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.

Gen. 37:21 And Reuben heard *it*, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him.

Gen. 37:22 And Reuben said unto them, 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.

Gen. 37:23 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;

Gen. 37:24 And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit *was* empty, *there was* no water in it.

His brothers saw him coming from a distance and decided that this would be the perfect chance to get rid of him. They decided to kill him, throw him in a cistern, and say that a wild animal had killed him. Then they wouldn't have to hear any more of his dreams. Reuben quickly scrambled to think of a way to spare Joseph's life. He convinced his brothers not to kill him—just throw him in the cistern in the desert. He hoped to be able to rescue him later. When Joseph reached his brothers, they stripped him of his special robe and threw him in the empty cistern.

Gen. 37:25 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.

Gen. 37:26 And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit *is it* if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?

Gen. 37:27 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.

Gen. 37:28 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.

Afterwards, as they sat down to eat, they spotted a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. They were headed to Egypt to sell spices, balm, and myrrh. Judah got an idea. Why not sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites, then they wouldn't have the blood of their brother on their hands and they could make a little profit as well. So they sold him for 20 shekels of silver.

Gen. 37:29 And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph *was* not in the pit; and he rent his clothes.

Gen. 37:30 And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child *is* not; and I, whither shall I go?

Gen. 37:31 And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood;

Gen. 37:32 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.

Gen. 37:33 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.

Evidently Reuben was away checking the animals or something, because when he came back and found Joseph gone, he tore his clothes in a passion. He went to his brothers and screamed that Joseph was gone. What were they going to do?

Note – This is the first time I ever noticed that no explanation was ever given to Reuben of what the brothers had done. They must have realized that he would probably have gone after him to rescue him and take him home.

So, they took Joseph's robe and dipped it in the blood of a slaughtered goat. Then they took the robe home to their father.

(9/06) I think it is significant to note that reference is made to "thy son" in verse 32—not to "our brother."

Several thoughts begin to whirl through my mind. I keep thinking that the prevalence of sin has to be worse today than ever. But as I read through the scripture, I realize that many of the things that horrify me the most now have happened all throughout history. It's just hard to imagine that a brother would be so cruel to his own brother and then to his own father—all because of jealousy. How selfish can you get!

Also, God's plan keeps moving forward. I'm not sure how Joseph would have ended up in Egypt if his brothers had loved him, but I know he would have. Since He knew what the brothers would do, God arranged a caravan of Ishmaelites for Joseph's rescue and transport to Egypt. God is always several steps ahead of us because of His foreknowledge of our choices—not because we are programmed dummies.

Gen. 37:34 And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

Gen. 37:35 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.

So they take Joseph's robe home to their father and say they found it and wondered if it was Joseph's. He recognized it immediately and assumed the worst. Then Jacob tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and mourned for his son for many days. We are told that ALL of his sons and daughters tried to comfort him. (What hypocrites!) But he refused to be comforted. Jacob vowed to go to his grave in mourning for his son, and he wept in sorrow.

Gen. 37:36 And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard.

In the meantime, Joseph was in Egypt and had been sold to Potiphar, the captain of the guard under Pharaoh.

(9/06) Wayne Walter, in his article on 9th Sedrah at www.lampresource.com, clarifies that "captain of the guard" specifically refers to "the chief of the executioners."

(7/09) Verse 36 indicates that the Midianites sold Joseph to Potiphar. It would seem that the Midianites/Ishmeelites describe one group of merchantmen. Reuben was obviously absent from the camp when Joseph was sold.