

Joseph and Esther

Lesson 2 (Joseph)

Genesis 37

Joseph and His Brothers' Hatred

What word describes the way Joseph's brothers felt about him? (See verses 4,8,11,18-20) _____. There were at least three reasons for this bitter attitude:

1. They hated Joseph because he brought an evil report.

How old was Joseph when the events of this chapter took place (Genesis 37:2)? _____ [By this time Rachel, Joseph's mother, had died and Benjamin, Joseph's brother was a very young child.]

Joseph tended the flock with brothers who were the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah. Apparently these brothers were guilty of some wrongdoing and Joseph brought to Jacob a truthful report of their evil conduct. As you can imagine, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah were not overjoyed with what Joseph had done. Joseph did not follow the crowd to do evil (Exodus 23:2), and he refused to participate in their sin. He also refused to "cover up" what his brothers had done. This truthfulness on the part of Joseph is in sharp contrast to the way his brothers later refused to tell their father of an even greater crime (Genesis 37:31-35)!

Joseph was not being a tattler. Tattling tries to get someone in trouble. Proper telling tries to keep someone out of trouble. Tattling tries to make me look good and the other guy look bad. Proper telling comes out of concern for doing right and out of concern for the other person.

2. They hated Joseph because their father, Jacob, loved him more (verses 3-4).

Joseph's brothers were very jealous over Joseph's favored position in

the family. As they saw Joseph's beautiful long tunic they wished that they could have such a robe. They wanted **equal rights**! Their envy (compare Genesis 37:11) became so great that whenever they saw Joseph dressed in his ornamented coat they could not even speak _____ to him (37:4). That is, they were not able to ask him how he was or offer the usual greeting, "Peace be with you."

Have you ever been so filled with hatred or bitterness towards someone that you could hardly speak to him or even say, "hello"? This sin of envy moved Joseph's brothers to do what terrible deed (Acts 7:9)? _____

3. They hated Joseph because of his two dreams (verses 5-11).

The trouble that resulted when Joseph told the report to his father (verse 2) was nothing compared to the trouble that resulted when Joseph told his dreams to his brothers (verse 5,11)! The first dream involved sheaves in the field. A sheaf is a quantity of stalks or ears of grain bound together in a bundle. The brothers seemed to understand the meaning of the dream. They said to him, "Shalt thou indeed _____ over us? Or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?" (Genesis 37:8). Even though Joseph had been given a favored position in the family, the brothers couldn't imagine their little brother ruling over them! Was this dream actually fulfilled (Genesis 42:6,9)? _____

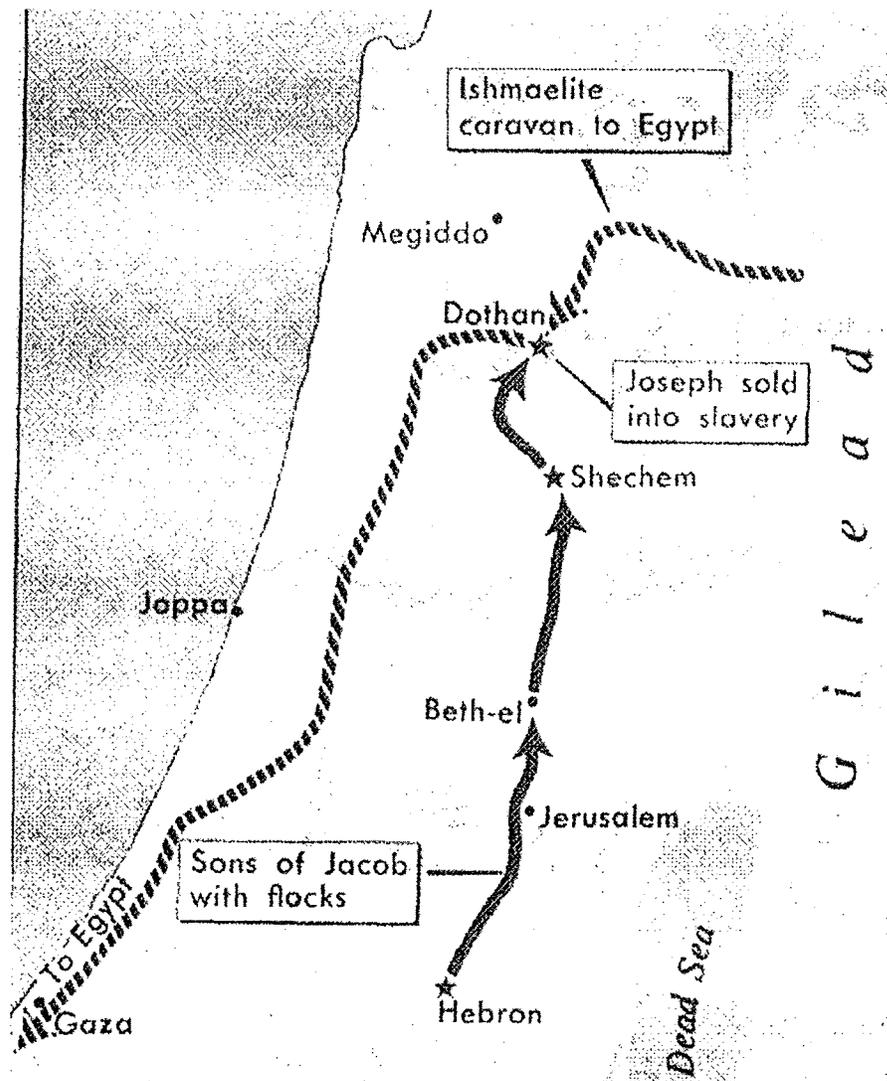
Jacob understood the meaning of the second dream. He believed the dream was saying that Joseph's entire family would someday B_____ D_____ to him (Genesis 37:9-10). [Based on this passage, it makes sense that the "woman" referred to in Revelation 12:1 refers to Israel.]

Dreams played an important part in Joseph's life (see Genesis 40:5-19; 41:1-32). The Lord sometimes chose to communicate with men by means of dreams. Did God speak to the "Joseph" of the New Testament by way of dreams (Matthew 1:20,24; 2:12,19)? _____

God used dreams (**Numbers 12:6**; compare 1 Samuel 28:6,15, etc.), but there is a much better way in which God communicates with men (see **Numbers 12:7-8**; Hebrews 1:1-2). Today, if you want God to speak to you, you should not go to sleep; you should open your eyes and open your Bible. Today we are able to awake to God's Word (the completed 66 books of the Bible) and to God's outworking of His best for our lives!

What about dreams today? Can I count on them? Can I control them?
Must I be governed by them? Should I be bothered by them?

Joseph and His Brothers' Sin



[The above map was taken from *The MacMillian Bible Atlas* by Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah (map #47). The only problem with the above map is that it places the sons of Jacob with flocks between Hebron and Jerusalem, but in Genesis 37:13 Joseph's father told him that the brothers were with the flock in Shechem. When Joseph reached Shechem he then learned that his brothers had moved on to Dothan (37:17)]

The distance from Hebron to Shechem was about 50 miles.

The distance from Shechem to Dothan was about 15 miles.

Jacob was concerned about his sons in Shechem. There had been trouble between the people of Shechem and the sons of Jacob before (Genesis 34:25-30). Joseph was only a young teenager, but

his father sent him on a dangerous journey about fifty miles from home on foot. Joseph had a willing obedience (see Exodus 20:12; Eph. 6:1-2; Col. 3:20) although he did not know the things that awaited him. He ended up much farther from his home than his father could have imagined—first in Dothan, then in Egypt!

Another Father sent His beloved Son into a dangerous and hostile world, filled with sin. This world was made by Him, but the people in this world refused to receive Him. Do you know this Father? this Son? Have you received Him? (See John 1:10-12.)

The Sins of Joseph's Brothers

When sin is not dealt with in God's way, it leads to more sin! Sin begets or breeds sin! One sin leads to another and another. Joseph's brothers added sin upon sin, until they became so deep in sin that they were actually in a worse pit than Joseph! Look in Genesis 37 and trace their downward path of sin. Find the correct verse from chapter 37:

| Verse (from Genesis 37) | The Sin of the Brothers |
|-------------------------|---|
| Verse _____ | Envy (Jealousy) |
| Verse _____ | Hatred |
| Verse _____ | Intense Hatred |
| Verse _____ | Conspiracy (compare Genesis 50:20--"thought evil against me") |
| Verse _____ | Intent to Murder (Simeon and Levi were already skilled at shedding blood--see Genesis 34:25-26) |
| Genesis 42:21 | Refusal to listen to Joseph's cries for help (merciless treatment of their own brother) |
| Verse _____ | Sold their own brother into slavery |
| Verse _____ | Deception (Jacob who once deceived his father with a goat's skin, is now deceived with a goat's blood.) |
| Verse _____ | Lying |

The Brothers' Horrible Guilt
(See Genesis 42:21–22; 44:16; 50:15–17)

For about 22 years Jacob's sons lived a lie (a terrible cover-up)! They never told their father the truth! Also they painfully carried with them the awful guilt for the crime which they had committed. Indeed, even at the death of Jacob (50:15–17), nearly forty years later, they were still filled with this guilt. However, Joseph reassured them of his forgiveness and reminded them of God's amazing ability to use the wrath and sin of men for the outworking of His good plan. Joseph was only in the pit a few hours; his brothers were in a pit of guilt for nearly 40 years! It all began with a "little" sin of jealousy (read Galatians 6:7 and Numbers 32:23).

You can also trace the downward path of sin in the lives of other men—Cain (beginning with the sin of bringing the wrong offering, Genesis 4:3); David (beginning with the sin of lust, 2 Samuel 11:2); Peter (beginning with the sin of not staying awake, Matthew 26:40) and others.

We have seen how the children of Israel treated Joseph. How did they treat the Lord Jesus 2000 years later? Did they envy Him (Matthew 27:18; Mark 15:10)? Did they hate Him? Did they conspire against Him? Did they seek to get rid of Him? Did they murder Him? If we truly follow the Lord can we expect similar treatment, even from family members, friends, schoolmates, and others (John 15:18–21; 1 John 3:13)? _____

Joseph in the Waterless Pit

Joseph's brothers had three plans for getting rid of Joseph so that his dreams would never come true (Genesis 37:20).

What was plan number one? (Genesis 37:19–20)

What was plan number two? (Genesis 37:21–24)

[Note: Why did Reuben want to rescue Joseph? Was he really concerned for his brother or for himself (verse 30)? Remember, he was the oldest son and the one most responsible to his father.]

What was plan number three? (Genesis 37:25–28)

This pit was a large cistern or well. It was a manmade pit cut into impervious (watertight) clay or rock. The purpose of a cistern was to collect water during the rainy season and store it during the dry season. Some of these pits were very deep (even 100 feet deep). Often the larger cisterns were pear-shaped or bottle-shaped which made them very useful for dungeons (see Zechariah 9:11; Jeremiah 38:6–13). The pit in Genesis 37 stored no water (37:24) but it was very useful as a prison for storing Joseph!

Bible scholars say that the name Dothan probably means "two wells." Joseph became well acquainted with one of them!

How should we act and react when people mistreat us? What does Romans chapter 12 teach us about overcoming evil?

What did the Lord Jesus Christ do when people mistreated Him? Did He fight back? What did He do when men spit upon Him, punched Him, slapped Him, and mocked Him? See 1 Peter 2:22-23.

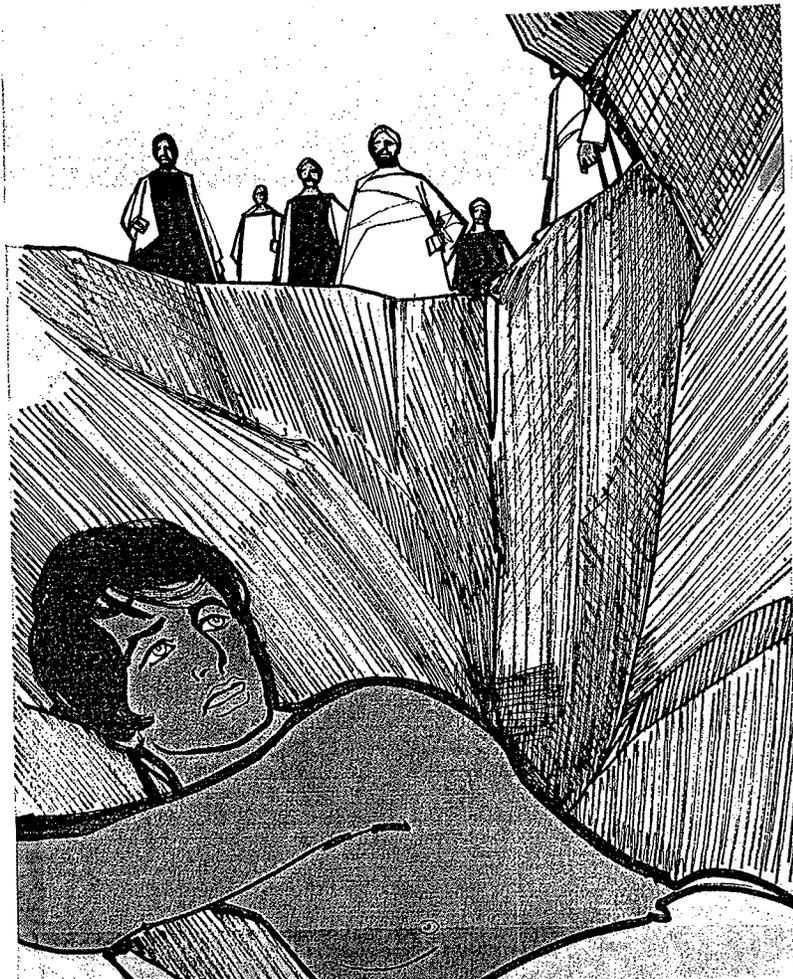


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