

Genesis 37:1-11

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

²These 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.

³Now 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 colors.

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

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

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

⁷For, 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.

⁸And 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.

⁹And 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.

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.

JOSEPH REVEALS HIS DREAMS

For the next several weeks, I want to turn to the Old Testament and consider how God used one man, who listened to Him, to bless many. We will trace five important lines of thought brought out in the life of Joseph.

(1) God watches over an individual who trusts Him.

This is a recurring theme in the Bible, and it's clearly demonstrated in Joseph's life. Despite being sold into slavery by his brothers, Joseph never lost faith in God. He trusted God's plan for him, and God watched over him, guiding him through trials and tribulations. This ultimately led to his rise to power in Egypt, where he was able to save many lives during a famine.

(2) God's promises and predictions are always perfectly fulfilled.

God gave Joseph dreams that predicted he would rise to a position of power and that his brothers would bow down to him. Despite the seemingly impossible circumstances, these predictions came true. This shows that God's promises are reliable and will always come to pass, no matter how unlikely they may seem.

(3) Joseph is a type of Christ.

In Christian theology, Joseph is often seen as a foreshadowing, or “type,” of Christ. Like Jesus, Joseph was betrayed by those closest to him, suffered unjustly, but ultimately his suffering led to the salvation of many. His forgiveness and reconciliation with his brothers can also be seen as a symbol of Christ’s message of forgiveness.

(4) The lives of the brothers show the plan of salvation.

The story of Joseph and his brothers can be seen as an allegory for the plan of salvation. The brothers represent humanity, who have sinned and fallen short. Joseph represents Christ, who, despite being wronged, offers forgiveness and salvation.

(5) God works out His purposes.

Despite the evil intentions of Joseph’s brothers, God was able to use their actions to fulfill His purpose. This is a powerful reminder that God can bring about good from even the worst situations. It’s a testament to the overarching sovereignty of God in working out His divine plan.

Good came to Joseph, Jacob, his brothers, and Israel. Pharaoh and the Egyptians shared in that as well.

Not only is Joseph a type of Christ, but he can be compared to David. David was held in contempt by his brothers. David was chosen to deliver the Israelites from their enemies, the Philistines.

Just as Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers out of jealousy, David was also despised by his brothers, especially when he was chosen by Samuel to be the future king. Despite their initial hardships, both Joseph and David rose to positions of power; Joseph

became the governor of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh, and David became the king of Israel.

Moreover, both Joseph and David showed great mercy and forgiveness towards those who wronged them. Joseph forgave his brothers and saved them from famine, while David spared King Saul's life twice, even though Saul was trying to kill him.

In their respective roles, both Joseph and David were instrumental in saving their people. Joseph saved Egypt and his family during the seven years of severe famine by wisely storing up grain during the seven years of plenty. Similarly, David, as a young shepherd, saved Israel from the Philistines by defeating Goliath, and later, as a king, he united the kingdom and expanded its territories.

Furthermore, both Joseph and David are significant figures in the lineage of Jesus Christ. Joseph is a type of Christ in that his life mirrors the betrayal, suffering, and exaltation of Jesus. David, being a direct ancestor of Jesus, is also a type of Christ as the promised Messiah was to come from the line of David.

Genesis 37:1-4 And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. ²These 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. ³Now 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 colors. ⁴And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

Jacob loved Joseph more because he was a son of his old age and the son of his favorite wife, Rachel. Possibly, Joseph was more humble and obedient than his brothers. This, along with the fact that Joseph carried to his father reports of his brothers' evil ways, caused his brothers to hate him. God often uses things that are despised ("foolish things") to "confound the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).

Jacob's favoritism towards Joseph was evident in his actions, such as when he gifted Joseph a coat of many colors, a symbol of distinction and honor. This further fueled the resentment of his brothers. Despite their animosity, Joseph remained steadfast in his character, embodying virtues of patience, forgiveness, and faithfulness. His dreams, which were prophetic visions of his future leadership, were seen as arrogance by his brothers, but were actually manifestations of God's plan. Joseph's life serves as a testament to the biblical principle that "God chose the weak things of the world to confound the wise." His story is a powerful reminder that even in the face of adversity and hardship, one can rise above through faith and perseverance.

Genesis 37:5-8 ⁵And 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: ⁷For, 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. ⁸And 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 dreamed a dream. Dreams are common, but this dream was unusual in its source and content. God sent the dream. We know this because later it came true. The dream plainly predicted Joseph's supremacy over his brothers. His brothers understood and hated him yet more. In relating the dream, Joseph was not trying to exalt himself. God was revealing His secrets to His humble servant.

Looking back on these events in history, we see how God used the brothers' hatred and jealousy to take Joseph (and later all of Israel) to Egypt. This was necessary so that the future bondage of Israel in Egyptian slavery would provide a type of the bondage of a sinner in sin.

Indeed, Joseph's dream was not just a dream, but a divine revelation. It was a foreshadowing of the future, a glimpse into God's grand plan. The dream was a seed planted by God, which would eventually grow into a tree of destiny, not just for Joseph, but for his entire family and the generations to come.

Joseph's brothers, blinded by their jealousy and resentment, failed to see the bigger picture. They saw the dream as a threat to their pride and status, not realizing that it was a part of a divine plan that would eventually lead to their salvation.

The journey to Egypt, though filled with hardship and suffering, was a necessary path that Joseph and his brothers had to tread. It was through this journey that they were molded into the people they needed to be, to fulfill the roles they were destined to play in God's plan.

The bondage of Israel in Egypt served as a powerful metaphor for the bondage of sin. Just as the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt, so are sinners enslaved by their sins. But just as God delivered the

Israelites from their physical bondage, He also provides a way for sinners to be freed from the bondage of sin.

In retrospect, we can see how intricately God orchestrated every event, turning even the most adverse circumstances into stepping stones towards the fulfillment of His divine plan. This story serves as a reminder that God's ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. Even when we cannot see the full picture, we can trust that He is in control and is working all things together for good.

Genesis 37:9-11 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.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.

God sent another dream to Joseph. This touched his father, Jacob, more closely and drew his rebuke. The dream revealed the brothers, father, and mother all would be made to bow down before Joseph. His father observed the saying. He pondered over it. Is not this in accordance with the attitude of Mary, the mother of Jesus, when it is spoken of her that she "pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19), things her Son spoke to her of which she did not understand? Jacob did not understand the dreams, but he kept them in his mind. Things that we do not understand today are our food for tomorrow.

God used the evil attitudes of Joseph's brothers to bring about His good purposes. This does not mean it is right to hold sinful feelings

and do sinful acts. It just shows that God can turn anything to suit His plans. Sin is always sin, and we are individually held accountable for all we do, regardless of the outcome.

God's sovereignty is such that He can use even the sinful actions of humans to fulfill His purposes. However, this in no way justifies the sin. Sin is a rebellion against God's holy character and His perfect law, and it always brings with it destructive consequences.

Yet, God in His infinite wisdom and power can bring good out of evil. This is not an endorsement of sin, but rather a testament to God's ability to redeem and restore. It's a demonstration of His grace, mercy, and love.

When we choose to live righteously, we align ourselves with God's will and purposes. Our righteous actions, guided by love and obedience to God, can be used by Him in powerful ways to bring about His good and perfect will. This is a call to live righteously, knowing that our actions matter and can be used by God for His glory and the good of others.

Remember, God doesn't need our sin to accomplish His purposes. He desires our love, obedience, and righteousness. When we choose what is good and right, we are partnering with God in His work and reflecting His character to the world. This is the highest calling and the greatest privilege. So, let us strive to live righteously, trusting that God can and will use our lives for His glory and the advancement of His kingdom.

If God can turn a sinful act to His advantage, how much more can He use a righteous one? Do all dreams come from God? No. Are all dreams a form of prophecy? No. God has given us tests by which we

may judge our dreams or those told us. A dream sent by God is a message from Him, hence a form of prophecy.

So, with that said, let's look at these God-given tests:

(1) Does the dream come to pass? **Deuteronomy 18:22** says “²²When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.”

(2) Does it lead toward or away from God? Does it agree with the teaching of the Bible? If not, even though it comes to pass, we must not follow it. **Deuteronomy 13:1-5** says “ If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder,² And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them;³ Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.⁴ Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.⁵ And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.”

(3) How does the dreamer or prophet live or cause others to live? Is his life a pure, holy, God-filled one, and does he lead others to such

a life? If not, he does not have God's message. **Jeremiah 23:22** says “**But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.**”

Jeremiah 23:13-14 says “¹³ **And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err.¹⁴ I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness; they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.**”

God sent dreams in the Old Testament dispensations, and He sends them in this New Testament time. **Acts 2:17** “**And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:**” However, dreams coming from God must pass these three tests. Most dreams mean nothing.

If Joseph and his family were living in our day, would not the attitude of the father (showing a difference in love, giving the coat of many colors to Joseph) provoke jealousy and envy in the other children? Was it wise for Jacob to show partiality to Joseph? It made Joseph's life more difficult. Yet, this was only the beginning of the ultimate end planned for Joseph by God.

Certainly, if we were to transpose the story of Joseph and his family to our contemporary society, the dynamics would likely be similar. The favoritism shown by Jacob towards Joseph, symbolized by the gift of the coat of many colors, could indeed provoke jealousy and

envy among the other children. This is a common reaction in situations where there is perceived inequality in parental affection or attention.

However, it's important to note that wisdom, in this context, might be subjective. From a certain perspective, Jacob's actions could be seen as unwise because they created discord within his family and made Joseph's life more challenging. On the other hand, these events set the stage for the fulfillment of God's plan for Joseph, leading him to a position of great authority in Egypt and ultimately saving his family from famine.

In our modern context, this story could serve as a reminder of the potential consequences of favoritism and the importance of treating all children with equal love and respect. It also underscores the idea that even in the face of adversity and hardship, larger plans could be at work, shaping one's destiny in unexpected ways. However, it's crucial to remember that each individual's journey is unique, and what was true for Joseph might not apply universally.

Genesis 37:1-11 is a significant passage in the Bible that marks the beginning of the story of Joseph, a key figure in the Old Testament. Here are some insights that can be drawn from this passage:

1. **Joseph's Character:** Joseph, at seventeen years old, is depicted as someone who never complained or compromised, regardless of the circumstances¹². He is seen as a symbol of the triumph of faith¹².
2. **Jacob's Favoritism:** Jacob, also known as Israel, favored Joseph over his other children because Joseph was the son of his old age¹². This favoritism led to animosity among his brothers¹².

3. **Joseph's Dreams:** Joseph had two dreams in which he was given a position of dominion over his brothers³. In the first dream, his brothers' sheaves bowed down before his sheaf, and in the second dream, the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed down before him³.
4. **Family Dynamics:** The family dynamics were complex, with sons from four different mothers, leading to much rivalry and competition¹². Despite these challenges, Joseph's story furthered God's great plan².
5. **Joseph as a Foreshadowing of Christ:** Joseph's life is seen as a powerful picture of Jesus Christ¹². His experiences of being loved and hated, favored and abused, tempted and trusted, exalted and abased, all while keeping his faith in God, mirror the life of Christ¹².

Closing

In conclusion, Genesis 37:1-11 is a powerful passage that sets the stage for Joseph's remarkable journey. It introduces us to Joseph, a young man favored by his father but envied and despised by his brothers. The dreams that Joseph has, symbolic of his future rise to power and the bowing of his brothers before him, further fuel their animosity. Yet, these dreams are not merely figments of a youthful imagination, but prophetic visions that foretell God's plan.

As we reflect on this passage, let us remember that, like Joseph, we may face trials and tribulations, misunderstanding, and even hostility from those around us. However, these are often part of a larger divine plan that we cannot fully comprehend at the moment. Let us, therefore, hold steadfast in our faith, trusting in God's sovereignty and His ability to use all circumstances for our good and His glory.

In the grand tapestry of life, each thread, no matter how seemingly insignificant, plays a crucial role in the overall design. Joseph's story is a testament to this. His dreams, initially a source of strife and discord, eventually served as a beacon of hope and deliverance for an entire nation.

This passage serves as a reminder that our lives are not dictated by random events, but are part of a divine orchestration. The trials we face are not meant to break us, but to shape us, to mold us into the individuals we are meant to be. They are the refining fire, purifying us and preparing us for our destiny.

Joseph's story encourages us to look beyond the immediate, to see the unseen, and to trust in the divine plan. It teaches us that even in the midst of adversity, we can find hope and assurance in the knowledge that we are part of a larger narrative, a narrative that is ultimately guided by the hand of God.

So, as we navigate through the ups and downs of life, let us take heart from Joseph's story. Let us embrace the journey, with all its challenges and triumphs, knowing that like Joseph, we are part of a divine plan, a plan that is unfolding one day at a time, leading us towards our destined purpose. And in this journey, let us always remember to trust in God's sovereignty, His wisdom, and His unfailing love for us. For He is the master weaver, and we are but threads in His hands, being woven into a masterpiece of His design.

Just a thought for today: Keep your words soft and sweet, because one day, you may have to eat them.