



GENESIS 34-37 DINAH IS DISHONORED; JOSEPH'S INCREDIBLE LIFE

With this study, we basically end the story of Jacob and begin the life of Joseph—who was the last of the four main figures in Genesis—besides Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

God has patiently been developing Jacob's character through his many trials so he can become one of the Bible's men of faith and one day be in His kingdom. Jacob has learned to rely much more on God, but is still making serious mistakes. God mentions these errors so we can learn from them and avoid their costly consequences (1 Cor. 10:11).

In this study we will learn the importance of fellowshiping with brethren and staying away from worldliness. This is especially true for young girls, who should always be accompanied with friends or relatives when visiting strange or worldly places. We will also see the results of not controlling one's anger, of parental favoritism, and of not being envious of someone who has a better performance.

Dinah is raped

The first mistake Jacob made when entering the Promised Land is having settled next to a Canaanite town, Shechem. He should have continued on to Bersheeba, where his parents lived and where they could worship God more freely and better protect their children. But they settled next to Sheshem, and one day, Dinah the teenager decided to see this worldly town for herself, despite knowing the Canaanites propensity for immoral behavior. What were the results? "Now Dinah...went out to see the land. And when Sheshem...saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her" (Gen. 34:1-2).

Although this young man then wanted to marry her and make amends, when her brothers found out about the rape, they were outraged. They wanted vengeance, especially two of her full brothers, Simeon and Levi, who let hate enter their hearts.

Since Shechem was willing to do anything to marry her, some of the brothers saw a chance to kill Sheshem. They spoke "deceitfully" to him, requiring all the males of the town to be circumcised if he wanted to marry her. The brothers probably imagined the Shechemites would refuse, but to their surprise, they agreed. Yet it was not out of the goodness of their hearts that they were willing to be circumcised but what they could get out of it.

Hamor, Shechem's father and the local ruler, told the populace: "Will not their livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs *be ours*?" (Gen. 34:23). So, there was treachery on both sides.

As Vernon McGee mentions, "That outward rite could not make the Shechemites true Israelites; and yet it does not appear that Jacob's sons required anything more. Nothing is said of their teaching the people to worship *the true God*, but only of their insisting on their being circumcised; and it is evident that they did not seek to convert Shechem, but only made a show of religion—a cloak to cover their diabolical design. Hypocrisy and deceit, in all cases vicious, are infinitely more so when accompanied with a show of religion....Here the sons of Jacob are saying, "If you'll go through the rite of circumcision, it will make everything all right" (*Thru the Bible*). But it certainly did not.

For, true religion is based on far more than just carrying out a ritual. The Old Testament shows true circumcision had to be accompanied by a repentant heart and obedience (Dt. 10:16). The principle also applies to baptism. If it is only done outwardly and not because of truly being repentant of sins and of *desperately* wanting to obey God's laws, then baptism, just as circumcision, is invalid. It is only an outward appearance and not from the heart—a reason why many do leave the faith (1 John 2:19).

The treachery of Simeon and Levi

So, Simeon and Levi lost control of their tempers and only thought of vengeance. The Bible says, "On the third day when they were in pain [from the circumcision], that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males. And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out. The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled" (34:25-2).

When Jacob found out, he was horror-struck. He was sure the Canaanites would unite and slaughter them all. Later, Simeon and Levi would pay dearly for what they did, for when Jacob blessed his sons, they were penalized (Gen. 49:5-7). The Canaanites thought of attacking Jacob's camp, but God again

intervened. He told Jacob to flee from Sheshem and go to Bethel, where he would protect them.

Out of gratitude, Jacob consecrated himself more fully to God. He now realized he had to purge his camp of any household gods that would offend God, who does not accept any rivals and rejects magical charms. Jacob said, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone...So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods...And they journeyed, and *the terror of God was upon the cities* that were all around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob" (35:2-5).

Next come three successive deaths. The first was Deborah, Rebekah's beloved nursemaid, who died at Bethel. Here is an example of God looking at the heart of the person and honoring them, no matter what the job is. As *The Explanatory Commentary* mentions, "Old nurses like her were not only honored, but loved as mothers; and, accordingly, her death was the occasion of great lamentation."

Then, as Jacob traveled south to Bethlehem Rachel dies while giving birth to Benjamin. Before she does, she named him *Ben-Oni* which means, "child of my sorrow." But since this would remind him of his beloved's death, he renamed the child *Benjamin*, which signifies "Son of my right hand." Her lament would later fulfill a prophecy spoken by Jeremiah about infants being killed in Bethlehem, where Herod tried to kill Jesus (Matthew 2:18).

Lastly, Isaac dies at the ripe old age of 180. Evidently, man's life span had not yet descended to the 120 years of maximum time that is still the case today. Isaac is then buried by both Jacob and Esau.

Esau's descendants

Next, chapter 36 deals with Esau's descendants since they would have much to do in Israel's history and prophecy as deadly rivals. God is not a respecter of persons, and Isaac did bless Esau, but not as much as Jacob. Esau had also greatly prospered, and to avoid problems with the grazing rights of his brother Jacob, he departed from Canaan, settling in an area south of the Dead Sea that would be named after him--Edom. Their capital would be called *Sela* the "rock," (*Petra* in Greek)

and would be the scene of many important prophecies then as now.

Esau's descendants became completely pagan--worshipping multiple gods, were extremely proud, violent, and immoral—a tendency first seen in Esau and now increasingly in his progeny. From here would descend the ruthless Amalekites, one of Israel's worse enemies. As they became powerful, they chose hereditary titles that created pride and vanity. McGee points out: "In the book of Obadiah we see *Esau unveiled*. One little Esau has now become about *one hundred thousand Edomites*...It is like putting Esau under a microscope; he is greatly enlarged. What do we see? We see a nation *filled with pride*. God said to Edom: 'The *pride of thine heart* hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence *will I bring thee down*, saith the Lord' (Obad. 1:3-4). The pride of their heart was a declaration of independence, a person that says it can live without God and does not have a need for God. That is Esau. In the last book of the Old Testament God says, 'Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated.' God never said that until over one thousand years after these men lived, but God knew the heart of Esau at the beginning. After they worked their way out in history, it is obvious to us all that God was accurate" (*Thru the Bible*).

Joseph's incredible life

In chapter 37, Joseph the teenager now becomes the center of the remaining narratives in Genesis. Why such prominence? First, because he would be a prophetic figure--God would carry out the promise He had made to Abraham about his descendants living four generations in Egypt through Joseph. Secondly, Joseph is a model for any teenager in the church, and an example of what Philipians 4:8 describes, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." God is giving us a wonderful model for teenagers to emulate. Joseph's first trial came because of his deep sense of responsibility. Although so young, he took his job very seriously

and had seen some of his brothers grossly neglecting their duties and hurting the family business. The Bible says, "Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers...and brought a bad report of them to his father" (37:2). Throughout his life, Joseph would show he was a loyal, courageous, hard working, educated, spiritual, and resourceful person. Truly he followed the seven biblical laws of success.

Unfortunately, he is the type of person many people love to hate—because without wanting to, shows other's mediocrity. Joseph's brother were very envious of him. The Bible explains, "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him" (37:3-4). "They did not say 'peace be to you' (Gen. 43:23), notes *The Explanatory Commentary*, "the usual expression of good wishes among friends and acquaintances. It is deemed a sacred duty to give all this form of salutation; and the withholding of it is an unmistakable sign of dislike or secret hostility."

Jacob should have known better than having a favorite child. He should have remembered all the problems he had because his father Isaac had chosen Esau as his favorite son, but now, he made the same error—so, "like father, like son."

To compound the problem, Joseph innocently told his family of two dreams he had. The first was of sheafs of wheat where his sheaf stood up and all the rest bowed to him. The second dream was that the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowed down to him. The Bible says, "So he told it to his father and his brothers, and his father rebuked him and said, 'What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?' And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind" (37:10-11).

"In ancient cultures," notes *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, "these astronomical symbols represented rulers. The dream, then, symbolically anticipated the elevation of Joseph over the whole house of Jacob (Joseph's father, the sun; his mother, the moon; his 11 brothers, the stars, v. 10). "God's sovereign choice of a leader often brings out the jealousy of those who must submit.

Rather than recognize God's choice, his brothers set on a course to destroy him. Their actions, though prompted by the belief that they should lead, shows why they should not have led. Here are the first six parallels about Joseph and Jesus Christ:

- The birth of Joseph was miraculous in that it was by the intervention of God as an answer to prayer. The Lord Jesus is virgin born. His birth was certainly miraculous.
- Joseph was loved by his father. The Lord Jesus was loved by His Father, who declared, "This is My beloved Son."
- Joseph had the coat of many colors which set him apart. Christ was set apart in that He was "separate from sinners."
- Joseph announced that he was to rule over his brethren. The Lord Jesus presented Himself as the Messiah. Just as they ridiculed Joseph's message, so they also ridiculed Jesus. In fact, nailed to His cross were the words: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.
- Joseph was sent by his father to his brethren. Jesus was sent to His brethren -- He first came to his own, the house of Israel..
- Joseph was hated by his brethren without a cause, and the Lord Jesus was hated by His brethren without a cause."

So, instead of recognizing Joseph's natural leadership and profiting by it, his older brothers plotted his death. They almost succeeded in killing him when he visited them in far away Dothan.

Thanks to Reuben, they only threw him in a pit instead of killing him. Then, some Ishmaelites tribes came, and they sold him for 20 shekels of silver, the price of a slave during that time but not later, as archaeology has confirmed. It is important historical evidence of the accuracy of this biblical account.

Then, the brothers took his multicolored coat and dipped it in some goat's blood and showed it to their father, saying a wild beast had killed him. We see that Jacob, the onetime deceiver, is again deceived by his family. Yet God is bringing all of this for good--so instead of letting Joseph die, God sends him to Egypt to fulfill his prophetic role of saving Israel from future destruction.