

## **Day 34 - FRIDAY: November 25th**

### Genesis 37

Genesis 37:1-36 NKJV

Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. This is the history of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father. 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. Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more. So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf." And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me." So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "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. Then his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." So he said to him, "Here I am." Then he said to him, "Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me." So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem. Now a certain man found him, and there he was, wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying, "What are you seeking?" So he said, "I am seeking my brothers. Please tell me where they are feeding their flocks." And the man said, "They have departed from here, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.' " So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan. Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming! Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!" But Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, "Let us not kill him." And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him"—that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father. So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colors that was on him. Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites,

coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt. So Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." And his brothers listened. Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt. Then Reuben returned to the pit, and indeed Joseph was not in the pit; and he tore his clothes. And he returned to his brothers and said, "The lad is no more; and I, where shall I go?" So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood. Then they sent the tunic of many colors, and they brought it to their father and said, "We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son's tunic or not?" And he recognized it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces." Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, "For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning." Thus his father wept for him. Now the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard.

### **Daily Deep Dive:**

Here in Genesis 37 we come to the much beloved story of Joseph.

Verse 2 – Sometimes we don't know how old someone was when events happen (sometimes in our minds we make them much younger or older than they are), here we find out that Joseph is 17 years old when this story begins. How will he act like a teenager? How will he start to become a man?

We aren't told what kind of "bad report" he brought and there are a variety of ideas out there, some very strange, of what the brothers were doing that they shouldn't have been doing. Either way, the Bible doesn't say, but we can understand that it's a part of the reason for why Joseph and his brothers have tension.

Verse 3 – Tells us that Joseph was the "son of his old age". We know Benjamin was born after Joseph and Benjamin is described in a similar manner later in Genesis 44:20. Here however, it seems it's simply a statement that Joseph was born to Jacob at an old age, Jacob being 91 years old when Joseph was born (John Gill commentary). This favoritism brings extra problems to Joseph and his brother's relationship.

Tunic of *many* colors – Jamieson–Faucet–Brown commentary states "formed in those early days by sewing together patches of colored cloth, and considered a dress of

distinction” We see this also in 2 Samuel 13:18 where we are told the virgin daughters of the king wore them (this one specifically telling us that Tamar was wearing one when she was raped by Amnon).

Verse 36 – Potiphar is called “an officer of Pharaoh, and captain of the guard”. This word for “officer” is more commonly translated “eunuch” in the Bible because it comes from the word “to castrate” (Strong’s).

[saris](#), סַרִּיס Adam Clarke’s commentary says this: “The word translated officer, signifies a eunuch; and lest any person should imagine that because this Potiphar had a wife, therefore it is absurd to suppose him to have been a eunuch, let such persons know that it is not uncommon in the east for eunuchs to have wives, nay, some of them have even a harem or seraglio where they keep many women, though it does not appear that they have any progeny; and probably discontent on this ground might have contributed as much to the unfaithfulness of Potiphar’s wife, as that less principled motive through which it is commonly believed she acted.” [END]

A wife can be unfaithful without her husband being a eunuch, but I thought this was worth sharing the possibility.

Captain of the guard – “Captain” meaning “a head person”, could be a captain, chief, general, governor, etc...

“Guard” properly means “a butcher” (Strong's). Again, here's what Adam Clarke's commentary states about this title:

“chief of the butchers; a most appropriate name for the guards of an eastern despot. If a person offend one of the despotic eastern princes, the order to one of the life-guards is, Go and bring me his head; and this command is instantly obeyed, without judge, jury, or any form of law.

Potiphar, we may therefore suppose, was captain of those guards whose business it was to take care of the royal person, and execute his sovereign will on all the objects of his displeasure.” [END].

We will finish today with the UCG reading program:

“Chapter 37 of Genesis details the story of how Joseph's brothers became jealous and sold him into slavery. Jacob's favoritism of Joseph is the obvious cause of this jealousy, and the many-colored tunic he gives to Joseph is not well received by the others at all (verse 4). But what seems to be

the final straw for the brothers is Joseph's recounting of his dreams, perhaps with some haughtiness. Not only are the *brothers* incensed at Joseph, but even his father rebukes him.

As the story eventually unfolds, the dreams come true and Joseph's family is eventually subject to him. And since the dreams come true, we know that they are no ordinary dreams—they are sent by God as prophecies. Yet the dreams are not only significant for the specific events they foretell, but for their instigation of further circumstances leading to one of the most renowned events in history. For these dreams of Joseph serve as a catalyst that sets in motion events that will not culminate until more than 250 years later with the Exodus from Egypt.

Remember Genesis 15. There God conveyed a prophecy regarding the descendants of Abraham—still called Abram at the time. God told Abram that his descendants would be strangers in a land that was not theirs and, further, that for a time they would be made slaves and afflicted (verse 13). So not only will Joseph's dreams set in motion events that will enable the family of Israel to survive a future famine, but these same events will provide the means for bringing Israel and his sons to Egypt, where their descendants will

eventually be made slaves, become a large nation, and ultimately be delivered in great miraculous power.

So here in Genesis 37, we get a glimpse of how God does His work and how He brings prophecy to pass. He takes an existing situation (Jacob's favoritism and the resultant family jealousy) and then introduces a new element (Joseph's dreams) to steer events toward His ultimate plan (Israel to Egypt and the Exodus). In this way, He brings prophecy about, all the while allowing those involved to make their own decisions along the way. It is truly amazing to see His power in action.

Incidentally, though there appears to be some confusion in the chapter as to whether Joseph is sold to Midianites or Ishmaelites, a simple explanation is given in the *Jamieson, Fausset & Brown Commentary's* note on verse 25: "a company of Ishmaelites—They are called Midianites (vs. 28), and Medanites, *Hebrew* (vs. 36), being a travelling caravan composed of a mixed association of Arabians."

Also of note concerning this passage are facts uncovered by archaeology that argue against the idea that early Bible stories like that of Joseph were made up many hundreds of years after they were supposed to have occurred, as the biblical "minimalists" argue. Notice this from a recent book



titled *Is the Bible True?* by a writer for *U.S. News & World Report*, Jeffery Sheler:

In Genesis 37:28... Joseph, a son of Jacob, is sold by his brothers into slavery for twenty silver shekels. That, notes [professor Kenneth] Kitchen, matches precisely the going price of slaves in the region during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries BCE, as affirmed by documents recovered from ancient Mesopotamia and from Mari, in what is now modern Syria. Other documents show the price of slaves rising steadily during later centuries. By the eighth century BCE, the price of slaves, as attested in ancient Assyrian records, had risen to fifty or sixty shekels, and to ninety to 120 shekels during the Persian Empire in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. If the story of Joseph had been dreamed up by a Jewish scribe in the sixth century, as some skeptics have suggested, argues Kitchen, “why isn’t the price in Genesis also ninety to one hundred shekels? It’s more reasonable to assume that the biblical data reflect reality.” (1999, pp. 73–74)” [END]