

Genesis Chapter Thirty Seven Notes & Workbook

In Genesis 1-11—we see forfeiture of the Spirit—through human infidelity

In Genesis 37-50—we find destiny—faithful stewardship

Seven main saints in Genesis (Christ is pre-figured in OT)

Adam—represents Headship

Abel—his death

Noah—his work in providing refuge from wrath

Abraham—the Father sacrificing the son and divine election

Isaac—Sonship—receiving a bride

Jacob—the one who wrestles mankind/to point of brokenness—conflict of two natures

Joseph—one of the greatest types—heirship through suffering

It was God's intention—already revealed to Abraham (Gen 15:13-16) to bring the chosen family under foreign domination until 'the iniquity of the Amorites' is complete.

With this story—on through the scriptures—we see the rejection of God's chosen deliverer—through envy and unbelief of the brethren—but rejection helps accomplish deliverance.

The story of Joseph is the longest narrative unit in Genesis. Though Joseph marries in Egypt—there is no strong matriarch in this story and there is the absence of any theophany.

This chapter begins the third patriarchal history.

Genesis 37:1-4

Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan. These are the records of the generations of Jacob. Joseph, when seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers while he was still a youth, along with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic. And his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms.

- Like Isaac and Jacob before him—Joseph is introduced as specially chosen member of the family
- Meaning of name (Joseph)—He has 2 names: Joseph=adding, and Zaphnathpaaneah=revealer of secrets. (Christ accomplishes both—He is the mystery and He alone can add to heaven's inhabitants)
- Consider all the family dynamics in place that already contribute to animosity.
- Favoritism has a long history in this family—Jacob and Esau were each favored by different parents. Jacob favored Rachel over Leah, and now Joseph is the child who finds greatest favor. (Father's love for the Son—shows up in Matt 3:17, Jn 10:17)
- Occupation—shepherd—feeding the flock (Abel, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, and Christ—all shepherds)
- In verses 1-4—we see tale-bearing, favoritism, jealousy, and envy (yet in tale-bearing—he takes a stand against the evil of his brothers and he speaks truth) Take note of Jesus in John 7:7
- These brothers had spent their entire lives watching the preferential treatment of their mothers—and had 17 years of watching Jacob favor one son.
- Description of tunic—RSV calls it a long robe with sleeves—not appropriate for working in—same word occurs in II Sam 13:18/ a description of royal apparel.
- Robes will play a significant role in this story:
 - Gen 37:3—fancy
 - Gen 37:23, 31-33—dipped in blood
 - Gen 39:11-18—seduction
 - Gen 41:14—changes clothes
 - Gen 41:42—garments of linen
 - Gen 45:22—gifts of garments
- Other brothers—working in the fields—while Joseph 'comes to spy'—report (Joseph has a responsibility to his father—which he fulfills)
- Bad report seems to be about sons of Leah

Genesis 37:5-8

Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. And he said to them, "Please listen to this dream which I have had; for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf." Then his brothers said to him, "Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

- Dreams at the outset—show God to be author of this story
- Joseph—upon having dreams—cannot resist telling his brothers
- Brothers respond based upon their perceived interpretation of the dream
- This dream is fulfilled later in the story—when the brothers—not recognizing Joseph—prostrate themselves 4 times in Egypt
- Second dream is not fulfilled in Genesis story—it is fulfilled in Christ
- Dream interpretations are from God—Gen 40:8

Genesis 37:9-11

Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." And he related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?" And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

- Joseph was to enjoy a remarkable future (Consider Jesus: Is 9:6-7, Luke 1:31-33)
- Joseph foretells his future sovereignty—dreams portray in double sovereignty
 - Wheat/field—earthly dominion of the Lord
 - Moon/stars—heavenly dominion of the Lord
- Joseph envied by brothers—Christ also envied (Parable of wicked husbandman—Mk 12:6-7, Jn 12:18-19)
- Your mother –Rachel is dead, so must mean Leah—as senior mother in clan
- Jacob had a different response to the dreams due to his own dealings with God—he understands their potential

Genesis 37:12-17

Then his brothers went to pasture their father's flock in Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them." And he said to him, "I will go." Then he said to him, "Go now and see about the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flock; and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. And a man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field; and the man asked him, "What are you looking for?" And he said, "I am looking for my brothers; please tell me where they are pasturing the flock." Then the man said, "They have moved from here; for I heard

them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.' So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

- Joseph sent forth by father (type of Christ: I Jn 4:10, Heb 10:7)
- Joseph seeks the welfare of his brothers (type of Christ: Jn 1:11, Matt 15:24, Jn 3:17)
- Sent from Hebron to Shechem (type of Christ: Hebron means fellowship/communion/rest. Shechem=shoulder. Jesus leaves the presence of His Father to take the role of a servant and bear our burdens—Phil 2:6-7) Shechem was the place of sin and sorrow.
- Joseph wanders in field (Type of Christ: Jesus came to seek and save the lost—nowhere to lay His head)
- Dothan—suitably remote from Hebron to carry out this conspiracy. Located 60 miles north of Jerusalem.

Genesis 37:18-20

When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death. And they said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer!" Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, 'A wild beast devoured him.' Then let us see what will become of his dreams!"

- Joseph—called dreamer by brothers—actually means 'master of dreams'.
- They plot against Joseph—in part—to keep his dreams from being fulfilled
- Conspiracy to kill brother—similar to story of Cain and Abel
- Joseph conspired against (type of Christ: Pharisees seek to kill Jesus—Matt 12:14)

Genesis 37:21-27

But Reuben heard this and rescued him out of their hands and said, "Let us not take his life." Reuben further said to them, "Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hands, to restore him to his father. So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him; and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it. Then they sat down to eat a meal. And as they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing aromatic gum and balm and myrrh, on their way to bring them down to Egypt. And Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and

not lay our hands on him; for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers listened to him.

- Pit—most likely the shaft of a well that has gone dry
- Reuben does not want to kill—but to 'let die' in this pit—planning to rescue later
- Two possible reasons for Reuben's attempt to save Joseph: 1) he is the eldest son 2) he already has caused great offense with his father—perhaps a way to be restored to his good graces
- Reuben still gets credit for delivering Joseph from death
- Judah will develop in character later—at present—caught with self-interest
- Profit—monetary advantage
- Strip Joseph (type of Christ: Matt 27:27-28)
- Cast in pit (Type of Christ: Zech 9:11, Matt 12:40)

Genesis 37:28-30

Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled him up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. Thus they brought Joseph into Egypt. Now Reuben returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit; so he tore his garments. And he returned to his brothers and said, "The boy is not there; as for me, where am I to go?"

- The way this is worded—it could be that the Midianites found him in the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites—or—and this agrees with vs 36—Midianites approached first and brothers went ahead and sold Joseph to them
- Selling a brother into slavery—Lev 25:46, II Chron 28:8-15
- There is a route from Gilead past Dothan—that ties Damascus to Egypt—trade route
- Midianite—Ishmaelite—could be synonymous
Ishmaelites—descended through Abraham and Hagar
Midianites—descended through Abraham and Keturah
- Twenty shekels—current slave price—see Lev 27:5
- Joseph taken out of pit (Type of Christ: speaks of resurrection)
- Joseph is sold (Type of Christ: Luke 22:3-5)

Genesis 37:31-36

So they took Joseph's tunic, and slaughtered a male goat, and dipped the tunic in the blood; and they sent the varicolored tunic and brought it to their father and said, "We found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son's tunic or not." Then he examined it and said, "It

is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!" So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days. Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, "Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son." So his father wept for him. Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard.

- Brothers refer to Joseph as 'your son' when speaking to their father, rather than by name or as 'our brother'.
- Daughters—plural would imply inclusion of daughter-in-laws/granddaughters
- Pharaoh's officer—oversight of prison
- Brothers deceive Jacob with blood-stained coat—Jacob had deceived Isaac through the death of a goat/use of skins—Gen 27:18-29
- Brothers mingle hypocrisy, deception—with hatred (Type of Christ: Judas—Matt 26:25)
- Joseph's blood stained coat presented to the father (Type of Christ: Jesus is fulfillment of scapegoat)

Genesis Chapter Thirty Seven Workbook

Key Words:

Harmonize:

Read John 1 with this chapter in mind.

Dig:

- 1) Why did Joseph's brothers resent him?
- 2) What effect do dreams have in this chapter?
- 3) What emblem sets Joseph apart from his brothers?
- 4) What reason is given for the brothers wanting to kill Joseph?
- 5) What action does Reuben take?
- 6) What emotions are described in this chapter? By whom? Are any emotions missing in the details?
- 7) Do you see any 'types' in this chapter?

Discuss:

- 1) What is the source of dreams? How can we determine if a dream is from God?
- 2) What is the motive of tattling?
- 3) How would you interpret these dreams? How sensitive are you to spiritual imagery?

Point of Prayer:

Pray for someone you know who experienced rejection while growing up.

Integrate:

What other scriptures come to mind as you read this chapter?

Application:

- 1) Do you have dreams? Are they ever spiritual in nature? What makes them different from the others?
- 2) Do your children ever tattle? What do you do about it?
- 3) Is there anyone you experience envy with? How do you deal with this?
- 4) Do you live with any regrets concerning your siblings?
- 5) How well do you handle 'trusting' God in the midst of a trial?
- 6) In facing great grief, how have you experienced the Holy Spirit as Comforter?
- 7) Have you ever been in a trial that went from bad to worse? How were you able to return to hope?