

## The Dreamer 11-25-07

Genesis 37:1-11

Up to this point in Genesis, we have gone over every passage. I'm going to jump over chapter 36, the lineage of Esau. I debated on bringing you someone else's message on that chapter, as I really had nothing new to share with you about Esau's line. That says more about me than it does about God's word. I decided, instead, to move on to chapter 37. Some of you are wondering if we are ever going to finish Genesis, and I am taking much more than the year I promised. So I welcome you to read chapter 36 on your own and we will begin the *toledot* (account) of Jacob, which is mostly about Joseph.

<sup>1</sup> *Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan.* The end of chapter 35 describes the location. <sup>27</sup> *Jacob came home to his father Isaac in Mamre, near Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed.* Hebron is south 20 miles south of Jerusalem, half way between Jerusalem and Beersheba. It is one of the world's most ancient cities. Abraham had lived there. It is where Sarah died. Jacob moved there before his father Isaac died. The ancestral grave, the cave of Machpelah, is still there to this day.

This first verse is really the end of the Esau account. The Esau account of the last chapter describes how Esau's clan moved to Edom and developed there. By concluding his account with Jacob in Hebron, the author was showing the contrast of the promised seed, Jacob, staying in the Promised Land, and the unspiritual Esau moving out of the land to Edom. In one sense, it is a transitional verse bringing us back to the main theme of Genesis, the background promise and fulfillment. (Genesis 3:15; Genesis 12:3)

The narrative of Joseph is the longest narrative in Genesis. Many consider it to be the most dramatic Biblical story. His story will prophetically picture the life of the nation of Israel, going into bondage, delivered, and coming into a place of their own authority, even offering salvation to the world. The story combines themes that we will see repeated again in the life of Daniel. He demonstrated to the watching world the wisdom of God, was uncompromising, jailed for his obedience to God, interpreted the dream of a king, and became a vice-regent of a foreign realm. You will also be amazed at the many similarities of his life with the life of our Savior whom he foreshadowed.

<sup>2</sup> *This is the account of Jacob. Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.* Now we are back to the account of Jacob. Just as most of Jacob's life was given under the account of Isaac, in the same way most of Joseph's life and the actions of his brothers will be seen under the account of Jacob. This is the last of the nine *toledots* (accounts) of Genesis and includes the rest of this book of beginnings.

**Commented [notes1]:** 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

**Commented [notes2]:** 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Joseph was born to Rachel when Jacob was still serving Laban. (Genesis 30:23-24) It was about 6 years after his birth that Jacob returned to the Promised Land, so they have been in the land for 11 years, adding up to his current age of 17. Since Joseph was the favorite, Jacob apparently used him to keep the other sons honest about their work performance. That was an unfair position to put him in. Notice that it was the sons of the two maidservants that the bad report was about. The sons of Leah were not mentioned. His brother Benjamin was probably too young to be working with the flocks. So the bad (evil) report was on the sons of the concubine wives.

**Commented [notes3]:** 23 She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said, "God has taken away my disgrace."  
24 She named him Joseph, and said, "May the LORD add to me another son."

In some of our inner cities today we have a huge problem with the "Don't be a snitch" mentality. Crimes are committed and the guilty can't be found because no one will talk. People are selfishly putting themselves first because they fear reprisal from the guilty. (Proverbs 29:25) There is no consideration for future victims of the perpetrators. Joseph didn't fear reprisal. He told it like it was. His half-brothers weren't doing their job. We don't know exactly what their failure was. They may have been skimming from the flock or just not making the effort they should have. Their father had a right to know.

**Commented [notes4]:** 25 Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.

There may be the only hint of wrong doing in Joseph's life in the wording of the verse. The word used for "report" in the rest of Scripture is used in regards to a false report. (Numbers 13:32; Proverbs 10:18) The term "bad/evil report/slander" may imply that Joseph was exaggerating the sin of his brothers. If so, it is no wonder the brother's anger was stirred. This was the first thing that would have incited the brothers to turn against Joseph.

**Commented [notes5]:** 32 And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size."

**Commented [notes6]:** 18 He who conceals his hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool.

<sup>3</sup> Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. You would think that after having his father favor Esau, and all the pain that caused him, he would have been careful not to show favoritism. He had done the same thing with his wives, letting them all know that Rachel was clearly number one. Now he repeats the same mistake and demonstrates it with this special gift of a unique robe.

**Commented [notes7]:** 26 If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, return it to him by sunset,  
27 because his cloak is the only covering he has for his body. What else will he sleep in? When he cries out to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.

People of the ancient world used their robe to keep them from the cold, to sleep in, and even for security for a debt. (Exodus 22:26-27) It was one of their most highly valued possessions. Due to the cost and labor involved to produce a robe in ancient times, most people only had one and it was always with them. The term that is used to describe the robe is not understood today. That is why we get so many different interpretations, multi-colored, richly ornamented, and full length. Whatever it was, it was special. That is clear from the next verse. The son who was to receive the double portion as firstborn was marked with a special robe. (consider Luke 15:22) Though Joseph was next to the last to be born, he was the firstborn of Joseph's first choice of wives.

**Commented [notes8]:** 22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.'

<sup>4</sup> When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him. Reason number two for their animosity, Joseph was treated with favoritism and perhaps even destined for a double inheritance. The coat was a constant reminder that he was dad's favorite. Keep in mind that the brothers are up to 13 years older than Joseph. Reuben may have been

30. They are acting like children. You've probably seen this happen in families. Everyone will gang up against the wealthiest, or the smartest, or the most loved by the parents and try to even the score by only talking about them in a negative light. This was the ultimate expression of that animosity. The wording in Hebrew could also be translated that Joseph tried to befriend them but his kind words were not accepted.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. <sup>6</sup> He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: <sup>7</sup> We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." Reason number three to hate Joseph, he had dreams of superiority. It was bad enough that he was a tattletale and dad's favorite, but he was trying to claim that he was God's favorite too. At least that is how they would perceive it.

We might wonder why a shepherd would dream of sheaves of grain, yet this is what brought the dream to fulfillment. The shepherds' need of the grain would bring them to bow before Joseph who had the grain.

We know from the rest of the story that Joseph is quite intelligent. So why in the world did he tell the brothers about this dream? The only thing that seems to make sense to me is that he was truly startled by it. It was such a supernatural event that he couldn't help but talk about it. When people have experiences that are so out of the ordinary, they share it with everyone at first. They don't really think of the consequences. Then, after a few people look at them like they escaped from an asylum, they quit speaking about the experience so freely. I would guess that Joseph was so taken by the vividness and power of the dream that he spoke before thinking about the affect on his brothers.

If you've been following the line of Messiah and the indications that have been given, you might think that this dream indicated that Joseph was the chosen line through whom the Messiah would come. The storyline keeps going back to the promise to Eve, whose son would crush the head of the serpent. We saw the line go through Seth, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but now we have 12 options. This certainly seems like we should look to Joseph, but that isn't the case. He will be a prototype of the ultimate Messiah in many ways, but he is only an intermediate fulfillment. The line went through Judah, the bad guy in the next chapter. Again we have the lesson that it is not about man's ability or performance but God's grace. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

The dream was very counter cultural. He had a lot of brothers who were older and first in line to lead. That is the way one might have interpreted it within that setting. They would have heard it as Joseph claiming his right to double inheritance was ordained of God, but God had something special in mind. It was not about ruling or inheritance but about saving people from death. It was not so much position as it was a calling on the life of Joseph. But that is not how his brothers saw it. <sup>8</sup> His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

**Commented [notes9]:** 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--  
9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

This is the third repetition of their stated hatred. If Joseph provoked them by his slanderous report, and Jacob stirred that by giving him the robe of the firstborn, then God sealed their animosity with a dream they would naturally misinterpret. Why would He do that? The story of Joseph will constantly reminds us that in spite of sin running rampant in the hearts of man, God is behind the scenes bringing His gracious will to pass. (Isaiah 46:10) What we see as utter turmoil and unbridled evil, God is working through to change the hearts of man and reveal Himself to them.

**Commented [notes10]:** 10 I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

We'll see later that Joseph has a gift for interpreting dreams, but the meaning of this dream was beyond what he or his brothers could possibly have foreseen. His brothers and their children would bow before him and his children but not through any effort of his own. (Genesis 45:9) This would be a work that only God could do.

**Commented [notes11]:** 9 Now hurry back to my father and say to him, "This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay."

If those three reasons weren't enough for the brothers to be jealous of him, <sup>9</sup> *Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."* I'm not sure how the sun, moon, and stars could bow, or which mother was pictured, but that is how he understood it. The brothers knew the implications right away. He didn't have to interpret. Again, he must have spoken out without thinking because of the power of the dream. Surely if he had thought about it, he would have kept it to himself. Throughout the Joseph story the dreams from God come in twos. This was the way God confirmed to Joseph that they were indeed divine revelation. (41:32)

**Commented [notes12]:** 32 The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon.

<sup>10</sup> *When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?"* Perhaps he even felt obligated to tell what he saw as a prophetic dream. It irritated his brothers and his father. They all wondered how he could be so arrogant. But it had nothing to do with pride. God was inciting the situation to bring about His will and preserve the family. This dream and its obvious meaning were really breaking the bounds of tradition. One's father would never bow before their child. It was the children who bowed to the parents. (Exodus 20:12)

**Commented [notes13]:** 12 "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you."

<sup>11</sup> *His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.* The brothers have no clue as to the real outworking of the dreams and were just envious of the favor Joseph had with his father. The father, however, is older and wiser, and though he rebuked his favorite son, he *kept the matter in mind*. Jacob had his own supernatural encounters that had no explanation. What kind of reaction do you think he got when he told people that he had wrestled with God? (Genesis 32:30)

**Commented [notes14]:** 30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

Sometimes we don't understand the call of God on our life. If we were just to take what He shows us at face value, just interpret it according to our limited knowledge then we'd come up with something completely different from what God has in mind. But when God brings to pass His purposes for Joseph's life, these dreams will make perfect sense. Ravi Zacharias says it is like looking at the back of a tapestry. There are strings of all colors that look rather chaotic, but flip the tapestry over and a work

of beauty appears. God sees the beautiful side, and you will too when this life is over. But for the time being, we are often left to guess at the underside.

It makes me wonder if these insights into our calling aren't meant so much to guide us as they are to let us know when it happens that God knew all along exactly for what purpose He created you. (Ephesians 2:10) If we didn't have those insights we might think it happened by accident, or even by our own ability and planning. (Zechariah 4:6)

God could have just plainly said, "Joseph! You will one day be second in charge of all Egypt and keep millions of people from starvation. Everyone will bow before you to plead for bread." Joseph would have understood that. His dad would have understood that. Though I don't think most of his brothers could have stood by and tried to understand. But how would that have changed the course of Joseph's story? Would the brothers have sold him into Egypt? Would Joseph have learned the lessons of faith that he needed to learn? He might have joined the next caravan headed toward Egypt and tried to bring it to pass. Isn't that what you would have done? I'd have booked the next flight to Memphis, Egypt and tried to get on Pharaoh's staff. What a mistake that would be! How humbling it is to realize how dependent we are! And so we see why God speaks to us in parables. (Matthew 13:13) It saves us from our own mistaken efforts of trying to bring His will to pass.

Our Maker knows what we need to know and lets us know when it is the best time for us to know it. We just need to understand that He is sovereign and can be trusted. (Psalm 118:8) Then we watch and wonder as He brings it all to pass. When our sins and the sins of others seem to come crashing down on our heads, we can know that God is working through it all. When we can't read the tapestry, when it looks like God has even incited situations against us, we can know the Grand Weaver is orchestrating things in way that will one day cause us to marvel. Can you trust Him? What else are you going to do? You know that trying to run to Egypt and make things happen on your own doesn't work. I think we better trust Him. What do you say? We better trust Him with Kathy's accident. We better trust Him with our evangelism project. We better trust Him with this church and city. We better trust Him with our life. Amen?

Let me close with the lyrics from a song by Babbie Mason:

*God is too wise to be mistaken; God is too good to be unkind. So when you don't understand his plan, when you can't trace his hand, trust his heart, trust his heart. (He alone is faithful and true; he alone knows what is best for you).*

*He's seen the master plan and he holds our future in his hand. So don't live as those who have no hope for our hope is found in him. We see the present clearly but he sees the first and the last, and like a tapestry he's weaving you and me to someday be just like him.*

**Commented [notes15]:** 10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

**Commented [notes16]:** 6 So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty.

**Commented [notes17]:** 13 This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

**Commented [notes18]:** 8 It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.