

JOSEPH SOLD INTO EGYPT

BIBLE TEXT: Genesis 37:1-36.

LESSON 33 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you" (Luke 6:27).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Genesis 37:1-36.

¹ And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.

² These 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.

³ Now 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 colours.

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

⁵ ¶ And 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:

⁷ For, 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.

⁸ And 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.

⁹ ¶ And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the

NOTES:

The Boy Joseph

Joseph is one of the most interesting characters of whom we have record on the pages of God's Holy Word. Many chapters are devoted to the account of his life and activities, and never do the writers have to say anything against his conduct. David was a man after God's own heart, yet he had his moments of weakness; Moses, through prevailing prayer was able to change the mind of God, and yet there was a time when he displeased the Lord. Of Joseph, however, we read nothing but good. He lived so blamelessly that the king of Egypt could recognise that the Spirit of God was in him, and said, "There is none so discreet and wise as thou art."

All but one of Joseph's brothers were older than he, and they were busy taking care of the sheep and cattle in the fields. The brothers were not good like Joseph, and sometimes he would tell his father of their wickedness. God does not expect His children to be "tattletales," always running to their parents with big stories about little things that do not amount to much; but if we see sins in the lives of our brothers and sisters, which should be corrected, we owe it to them to report it. If they should go to hell because we helped them cover up their evil, they could point at us on the day of judgement and say, "You were a Christian; why didn't you warn us?"

The child who is living close to God will often suffer ridicule. Some may call him a "goody-goody," or "the parson," or other names, which make fun of his religion; but when they get into trouble they will come to the Christian for help. How disappointed they are when someone who claims to be a Christian fails in His walk with God!

Joseph's Dreams

Jacob loved Joseph more than Joseph's brothers because he was the son of Rachel, and because he tried to please his father. The fact that they both served God created a close bond between them, just as the fellowship of true Christians does today. The brothers were jealous of Joseph because of Jacob's special favour; and it made matters worse when Joseph dreamed that the sheaves of his brothers bowed down to his sheaf. They interpreted the dream correctly when they thought it meant that they would have to bow down to Joseph. The time came when they were very glad to bow down to him.

Joseph dreamed again, and this time even the sun and moon bowed down to his star; and Jacob asked if he, too, would have to bow to his young son. He reproved Joseph, because he did not want him to get proud and lord it over his brothers; and he wanted him to be subject to his parents. But Jacob wondered about the dreams. He knew that Joseph was a child of God, and perhaps thought that God was trying to reveal something through the boy.

The Cruel Brothers

Jacob had great flocks and herds, and his sons who were the shepherds had to keep moving on to new pastures, which sometimes took them far from home. Shechem was about fifty or sixty miles from Hebron, and Jacob wondered how the boys were getting along, so he asked Joseph to visit them. Joseph was quick to answer his father, and started out on that long, lonesome journey. There were few cities along the way, and no signposts to guide him, but as he was wandering in a field near Shechem he met a man who had seen his brothers, and this man told Joseph they had gone to Dothan, about

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.

¹² ¶ And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

¹³ And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I.

¹⁴ And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

¹⁵ ¶ And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou?

¹⁶ And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks.

¹⁷ And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.

¹⁸ And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.

¹⁹ And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.

²⁰ Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

eight miles farther. Poor Joseph had to walk all that way, too, but finally he found his brothers. Were they glad to see him and to hear about home? No. Before he even came to them they were planning to kill him. They remembered the dreams Joseph had had, and they were still angry because they were afraid he was going to rule over them. What a surprise they would have had if they could have looked into the future and could have seen Joseph in the pomp and glory of the Egyptian court, a ruler whose word was law. He was to own everybody's land except that which belonged to the priests, and own all their cattle. When he rode in his chariot, servants were going to run ahead saying, "Bow the knee." Not only the brothers were going to bow to him, but everyone he met.

But Joseph had to suffer before he came into his glory. There are many similarities in the life of Joseph and that of Christ. Jesus suffered humiliation on earth, and great agony during His final days; but, oh, the glory of His resurrection! Conqueror over death, hell, and the grave!

Joseph did not know the success that would come to him in later life, and perhaps he sometimes wondered why such terrible things had to happen to him. His brothers would have killed him if Reuben had not interceded in his behalf. Reuben was the eldest brother and was responsible to his father for Joseph's safety. He suggested that they place him in a pit in the ground. He planned to release him when the other brothers were gone and send him back home.

After Joseph was cast into the pit, the brothers sat down to eat. They were so hard that they did not even feel bad about their sin. But we shall learn later on that they could not forget their evil deed, and their conscience hurt them long afterward. Men may try to forget their sins, but God won't let them. When a child disobeys his parents and then feels bad about it, that is God talking to him, trying to make him sorry for his sin.

While the brothers were eating they saw some Ishmaelites riding on camels on their way to Egypt. They were merchants, and would buy things in one country and take them to another and sell them for profit. They would sometimes kidnap people and sell them for slaves, so they could make money. Judah saw a chance for the brothers to make some money by selling Joseph. They were so hardhearted they did not feel sorry for Joseph as he was led away, suffering anguish because he was going into a strange land, far from all his loved ones, to be a slave.

Reuben had not been near when the deal was made to sell Joseph, and when he came back to the pit to release Joseph, he was shocked to find him gone. He was responsible to his father for Joseph's life, and he wondered how he could face his parent and tell him his favourite son was gone.

The Deceit

Because the country was wild and the distance great that Joseph had travelled, the brothers could easily deceive their father into believing that a wild beast had killed him. They dipped Joseph's coat of many colours, which they knew their father would recognise, into the blood of an animal they had killed, and took it to him. They did not say that Joseph had been killed, but they acted a lie, which is just as bad. Some people think that if they do not actually say the words of a lie they are doing no wrong; but one can act deceitful and be just as guilty before God as if he had lied. God wants His children to be honest and upright, in action as well as in word.

Jacob was deeply grieved at losing his son; no one could comfort him. And still his other sons would not confess their sin. It shows how calloused a person can become when he refuses to listen to the voice of God.

²¹ And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him.

²² And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.

²³ ¶ And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him;

²⁴ And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.

²⁵ And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

²⁶ And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?

²⁷ Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content.

²⁸ Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

²⁹ ¶ And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes.

³⁰ And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?

³¹ And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood;

³² And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have

QUESTIONS

1. Was Joseph the youngest son?
2. Why was he a favourite of his father?
3. What did hatred and envy in Joseph's brothers finally cause them to do?
4. Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver. Who was sold for thirty pieces of silver?
5. In what ways was the life of Joseph similar to the life of Jesus?

we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no.

³³ And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.

³⁴ And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

³⁵ And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

³⁶ And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard.