

© 2002
Fellowship
Life of Joseph
Lesson 2
The Secret Plot
Genesis 37:12-24
3/24/2

(Note: the two extra verses)

Introduction...Our story takes place 39 centuries ago (@ 1900 B.C.). We have leapt back 14 centuries in time before Daniel and later Esther; 19 centuries before Daniel's 7's "one like the Son of Man" or Daniel 9's "Messiah" (Anointed One; Christ [Greek]) will come.

It is five centuries before Moses will lead the children of Israel out of Egypt and back to their promised inheritance, or Joshua leads them across the Jordan to claim it, and another 9 centuries before David is anointed king of a united Israel and Judah. It is 12 centuries before Israel will fall to the Assyrians and 13 centuries before Judah falls to the Babylonians.

The Great Pyramid in Egypt has been standing almost 6 centuries.

In fact, we are back at the beginning, that was "Genesis" means. So far, the creation has already taken place, as well as Noah's flood. God has called a man named Abraham to across the Fertile Crescent towards its southwest corner, just short of Egypt on the Mediterranean Sea. We call this land the land of Canaan.

God has promised to give Abraham a land, people and to become a blessing (Gen 12). He has given Abraham a son, Isaac and twin grandsons, Jacob (now renamed Israel) and Esau. Jacob has now given his father and grandfather, 12 sons, the next to last, being his young son, Joseph.

God has also told Abraham that now is not the time for his children to fully occupy the Land. The sins of the people already living there, the Amorites, had not reached its full measure. Instead, his children will become strangers in another land and they will become enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years. But then he will bring them back to the land (Gen 15).

In the meantime, God has renewed his promise to Abraham's son, Isaac, and Abraham's grand son, Jacob (Israel).

We now begin to plant the seeds for how the children of Israel came to be slaves in Egypt and how God miraculously freed them and led them back

home under the able leadership of Moses. But that is another story (Exodus; meaning "a way out").

One only has to read the headlines or watch the evening news to see that 39 centuries later (almost 4000 years), Israel still fights to possess her Promised Inheritance.

Last Week's Summary...Joseph's brothers grow deeply jealous of their younger brother because of his father's affection for him as well as Joseph's two dreams in which Joseph's brothers are bowing down to Joseph.

**12 Now his brothers had gone
to graze their father's flocks near Shechem,**

Where is Shechem? How far away? How large was the heard? Why had not Joseph gone with them to begin with?

**13 and Israel said to Joseph,
"As you know,
your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem.
Come, I am going to send you to them."
"Very well," he replied.**

He certainly didn't balk at going to them knowing that they were treating him unkindly. Was he that naive? Did he not suspect anything? Did his dad not suspect anything? Why was Jacob or Israel sending Joseph to them? Was it because they had received a bad report before and it was checking up on them again?

**14 So he said to him,
"Go and see if all is well with your brothers and
with the flocks, and bring word back to me."
Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron.
When Joseph arrived at Shechem,**

Where is Hebron?

15 a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?"

Was he lost as wandering around implies?

**16 He replied, "I'm looking for my brothers.
Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?"**

**17 "They have moved on from here," the man answered. "
I heard them say, `Let's go to Dothan.'"
So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near
Dothan.**

So they had left. That is why he was wandering around. He could not find them. They were not where they were supposed to be. Why did they leave for Dothan? Better grass? How far away was Dothan? Was this a good thing? Was this the kind of thing that was getting them into trouble?

**18 But they saw him in the distance,
and before he reached them,
they plotted to kill him.**

How did they see him in the distance? Was this a quick conversation?

19 "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other.

**20 "Come now, let's kill him
and throw him into one of these cisterns
and say that a ferocious animal devoured him.
Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."**

What is a cistern? A well? A water tank? Were they planning to drown him or just kill him and then throw him into the cistern? Interesting...for a moment, it seems that God's sovereignty is challenged, but as we all know, it only appears that way. God is always still in charge. Maybe by a thread it seems, but by a piano wire.

**21 When Reuben heard this,
he tried to rescue him from their hands.
"Let's not take his life," he said.**

God's piano wire?

**22 "Don't shed any blood.
Throw him into this cistern here in the desert,
but don't lay a hand on him."
Reuben said this to rescue him from them**

and take him back to his father.

Obviously, we know that Reuben is trying to save the boy? Why? And if he takes him back to his father, what will happen to the other brothers? Will they not be chastised? And what about next time?

**23 So when Joseph came to his brothers,
they stripped him of his robe
--the richly ornamented robe he was wearing--**

Why did they take off his robe? What did Joseph think was happening? Was he afraid? Did he cry out?

**24 and they took him
and threw him into the cistern.
Now the cistern was empty;
there was no water in it.**

How deep was the cistern? Did they fall hurt him? Why was it dry to begin with?

Who? his brothers, (Joseph), their father, Israel, a man, that dreamer, Reuben

Where? near Shechem, come, to them, back to me, from the valley of Hebron, wandering around in the fields, where they are grazing, from here, to Dothan, went after his brothers, near Dothan, in the distance, into one of these cisterns, into this cistern here in the desert, back to his father

When? then he sent him, when Joseph arrived, before he reached them, come now, then we'll see what comes of his dreams, when Reuben heard this

What?

- Israel sends his son, Joseph off to check on his brothers who are grazing the flock;
- They turn out not to be where they thought they were, but somewhere else;
- When he eventually finds them, they plot to kill him and throw him into a desert water tank.
- But Reuben, the oldest brother, attempts to thwart the plot by having them only throw the young man into the cistern; then later, he would come back and rescue the boy and take him back to his father.

- So they stripped him of his robe and threw him into a dry cistern.

Why? (What do I learn about God? life? people? myself?)

- Never doubt. God is still in control. Just about the time it looks dark for our hero, God intervenes through his oldest brother, and temporarily spares his life.
- Jealousy, anger, sibling rivalry are very powerful, hateful and destructive weapons which eat away at one's heart and hurt others.
- People can be very naive, as was Joseph and his dad concerning the brothers' hatred and jealousy.
- Reuben intervened. We are to intervene for the poor and helpless, including when it means standing up against the mob mentality.
- Some plots are just made up on the spot and don't have a lot of planning.
- The grass is greener in Dothan, but the well is dry.

So What?

- **My greatest struggles...**God has been very gracious towards me this week. I don't have a lot to complain about...at least for one day.
- **Principle...**No matter what, keep a steel face...don't panic, even in the face of great impending tragedy or disaster. God is still in control, and if it is his will to rescue me this day, then Reuben will stand up and be my advocate. Could be another human being, could be an angel, could be his Holy Spirit, but I can trust God. He has a purpose and plan for my life and my life is committed to uncovering it...even when things look bleak.
- **Application...**I had several events this past week which looked a little bleak for the moment. In both cases, neither problem ever materialized. They just vanished. God took care of them...melted them away. Why did I ever panic or have a few panic feelings? What ever happens with Jordan's baseball game, the same thing applies. Sports has a way of riding an up and down roller coaster. The key is to stay centered and focused. Don't allow the worry of the outcome to begin to affect my play. In other words, don't make a bad situation worse by my reaction. Be impervious to the events around me and stay focused, be it life or watching my child play ball.

So What about You?

- **Struggle?**
- **Principle?**
- **Application?**

So What about your students?

Joseph M Cross,

Scripture quotations, unless noted otherwise, are taken from the *Holy Bible: New International Version*, NIV, Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984, International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers. All rights reserved.