

# Biased Love

Genesis 37:2-11, 23-24, 28  
SS Lesson for 09/06/2020

**Devotional Scripture:** James 2:1-9

## OUTLINE

### LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

*Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

*Key Verse: Gen 37:11*

*Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary*

### MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

#### STARTED WITH DREAMS (GEN 37:2-11)

##### *Issues with favoritism (2-4)*

- Don't show partiality (Job 13:10)
- Be humble instead of boasting (Luke 18:11-14)
- All Christians are one in Jesus (Gal 3:27-28)
- God has no distinction between Christians (Rom 10:12)
- There is no partiality with God (Rom 2:11)

##### *Dreams of ruling (5-9)*

- When dreaming of ruling, remember that it means being judged more strictly (James 3:1)
- When dreaming of ruling, one should always ensure one can serve as well (Rom 2:18-21)
- When dreaming of ruling, remember that when much is given, much is demanded (Luke 12:47-48)
- When dreaming of ruling, remember to be faithful (1 Cor 4:2)
- When dreaming of ruling, remember the accountability that goes with it (Heb 13:17)
- When dreaming of ruling, remember that the true Master is in heaven (Eph 6:9)
- God is against those who lead others astray because of dreams (Jeremiah 23:32)

##### *Rebuke by father (10)*

- Rebuke of discipline (Heb 12:7-11)
- Rebuke that does not lead to death (Ps 118:18)
- Rebuke to learn lessons (Ps 119:71)
- Rebuke to show relationship (Luke 15:25-32)

##### *Brothers envied (11)*

- Envy is manifested in being jealous of others blessings (Matt 20:9-16)
- Envy blinds us to reality (1 John 2:11)
- Envy makes a man unclean (Mark 7:20-23)
- Envy is rot to the bones (Prov 14:30)

#### RESULTED IN SLAVERY (GEN 37:23-24, 28)

##### *God's plan is carried out even during evil*

- God's plans are the only ones that will happen (Prov 16:9)
- God controls all things that happen and therefore no evil plans will eternally succeed (Job 5:12-13)
- God's plans are eternal and can never be overpowered or stopped (Ps 33:10-11)
- God knows the intent of every plan and controls the outcome (Prov 16:1-2)

##### *Deception starts with 'what's in it for me'*

- Selfish ambition comes from Satan and always causes disorder and evil actions (James 3:13-16)
- Pursuit of things that promote our interest only is not sound judgment (Prov 18:1)
- Deception is one of the acts of the sinful nature (Gal 5:19-21)
- Regardless of the motive, if God's work gets done that is the important thing (Phil 1:15-18)

##### *What led to the deception*

- Jealousy (Acts 7:9)
- Envy (Proverbs 14:30)
- Lack of family ties
  - A believer should always take care of family (1 Tim 5:8)
  - The law was made for those who would harm their own families (1 Tim 1:9-11)

##### *Circumstances*

- Many times it is our own malicious planning that gets us into deceitful circumstances (Prov 26:24-27)
- Depending on our own strength starts our deception (Hos 10:13)

##### *Fear of punishment*

- The primary root of fear is punishment (1 John 4:18)

The wicked will always be in fear of punishment for their deeds (Job 15:20-21)

Many times the pre-conception of what will happen causes lack of action because of fear (Luke 19:21)

*Hopefully there will always be a voice of reason*

Sometimes through speaking up (Acts 5:33-40)

Sometimes through action (Acts 21:31-32)

*Deception creates the need for additional sins*

Lies (Luke 22:55-58)

Hurting of others (Matt 18:23-34)

## CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH

*An Evil Plot, An Empty Pit, and an Egyptian Purchase (37:12-36)*

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE ECHOES COMMENTARY

## Lesson Background and Key Verse

### Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Why don't we use the expression "house, sweet house"? A house is just a structure or place of residence. Without a family within, the building can never be a home. Home has much more sentiment attached to its meaning, evoking different emotions based on the family life within the house. A home consists of all that goes on within that structure. It is the place where memories are made. When we consider the family life of the patriarch Jacob in the Old Testament, "home, sweet home" is not the first phrase to cross our minds. "Family feud" seems more appropriate! The strife and hard feelings within that family are seen in today's lesson text.

Joseph was born around the year 1916 BC. In world historical context, this would be near the middle of the Bronze Age, which began around 3000 BC. Other technological and societal advancements made this a time of important, though comparatively slow, change. The struggles with love involving Joseph go back years before Joseph to his father Jacob (about 2007-1860 BC). Jacob was raised in a home where favoritism appears to have been the primary parenting skill of his father and mother, Isaac and Rebekah. Genesis 25:28 tells us all we need to know: "Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob." Such a scenario was bound to produce family conflict. This infighting came to a head when Rebekah learned of Isaac's desire to bless his favorite son, Esau (the older of the two). This would solidify Esau's privileged position, with promises of abundance for the future. She disguised Jacob so that he would feel hairy like Esau in the presence of blind Isaac. The ruse worked, and the blessing intended for Esau was pronounced on Jacob (Genesis 27:1-41). To escape Esau's vengeance, Jacob traveled to Harran, where Rebekah's brother Laban lived (Genesis 27:42-43). There Jacob married the two daughters of Laban, namely Leah and Rachel, and became the father of one daughter and 11 of his eventual 12 sons (29:15-30:24). Joseph was the last son born to Jacob in Harran (30:22-24). On the way back to Canaan, after residing in Harran for 20 years (31:38), Benjamin was born. He and Joseph were the only two sons of Rachel. Tragically, Rachel died while giving birth to Benjamin (35:16-20). Eventually, Jacob settled with his family in Canaan near Bethel (Genesis 35:1), a journey hundreds of miles from Harran. Perhaps he believed that he would enjoy his last years in relative calm, as opposed to all the strife he had experienced thus far. However, some of Jacob's most heartbreaking trials were yet to come, sown from seeds in his own past.

### Key Verse: Gen 37:11

*And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.*

### Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

The story of Joseph in Egypt forms a unique literary unit in the Book of Genesis. The fact that there are repeated elements in the narratives does not prove that the material was handed down in two differing traditions as many critical scholars suggest. Repetition is the hallmark of Hebrew style; it serves to heighten the message, giving it a multiple emphasis. One example of repetition is the analogy between the Jacob and Joseph stories. Both cycles of narratives begin with the father being deceived and the brothers being treacherous (chaps. 27; 37). Both cycles include a 20-year period of separation, with the younger brother in a foreign land. (For Jacob see 31:38. As for Joseph, he was 13 years in Potiphar's house and in prison—from age 17 [37:2] to age 30 [41:46]—and after 7 years of abundance his brothers came to Egypt, 41:53-

54; 42:1-2.) Both conclude with a reunion and reconciliation of the brothers (33:1-15; 45:1-15). As God had worked out matters to a proper resolution with Jacob, He would do the same with his son Joseph. The Joseph stories also were instructive for Israel. As Joseph spent years in bondage in Egypt before being delivered, so the descendants of Jacob would be in bondage there and would then be delivered from it. For Joseph the discipline would test his faith; for the nation the stay in Egypt would be for their preservation and discipline. In the record of Joseph's life are several cycles of events: three sets of dreams, four sets of parallel relationships (Joseph and his family, Joseph and Potiphar's household, Joseph and the prisoners, Joseph and Pharaoh's household), two episodes in a pit-prison that involve false accusation and the use of his clothing for proof, and repeated visits to Egypt by his brothers. These cycles form the structure of the *tôledôt* ("account") of Jacob (37:2). The narratives differ in tone from the preceding material in Genesis. The emphasis here seems to be closely related to the wisdom literature of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, including incidental comments and the major point that Joseph was a wise ruler (Gen. 41:39). The theme of suffering as a test of character is predominant, both for Joseph and his brothers. Though Joseph was righteous he was not kept from suffering. He was preserved by his faith through it. In the end Joseph could acknowledge that God meant it all for good (50:20). The Bible's wisdom literature assures the faithful that God brings good out of evil and suffering. Though the wicked may prosper for a time, the righteous hold fast to their integrity because there is a higher, more enduring principle of life (cf. the Book of Job). The wise recognize that the Lord God is sovereign over nature and the nations, and that He righteously orders the affairs of His people. At times God's ways seem unfair and paradoxical, but if endured by faith they bring blessings to the righteous.

**37:2-4.** After the heading introduces this section as the last *tôledôt*, **the account of Jacob**, the story of Joseph begins. **Joseph** is introduced as an obedient **17-year-old** son who **brought back a bad report about his half brothers** (he did not bring a bad report about his full brother Benjamin). The substance of this report is not given. Though doing this has never been popular, it shows that Joseph was faithful as a servant. Naturally **his brothers... hated him** for this. The lad was also honored by Jacob who gave him **a richly ornamented robe**, probably a multicolored tunic. This seems to signify that Jacob favored him above the rest with the intent of granting him all or a larger portion of the inheritance. For **Joseph** was the firstborn of Rachel, Jacob's loved wife (30:22-24). Yet Jacob should have remembered what parental favoritism does to a family. It had separated him from his loving mother (27:1-28:5), and it would separate Joseph from Jacob.

**37:5-11.** God confirmed Jacob's choice of his faithful son by two dreams. God's revelation was given in different forms in the Old Testament. He used dreams when His people were leaving or outside the land, that is, in the lands of pagans. In a dream God had announced to Abraham the Egyptian bondage in the first place (15:13); in a dream God promised protection and prosperity for Jacob in his sojourn with Laban (28:12, 15); and by two dreams God predicted that Joseph would rule over his family. The **brothers... hated Joseph all the more** (37:5, 8) and were **jealous of him**, but Jacob pondered the matter (v. 11). He knew how God works; he was well aware that God could select the younger to rule over the elder, and that God could declare His choice in advance by an oracle or a dream. The scene of the first **dream** was agricultural (v. 7). There may be some hint here of the manner in which Joseph's authority over his brothers would be achieved (cf. 42:1-3). His **sheaf of grain was upright while their sheaves... bowed down to his**. The scene of the second **dream** was celestial (v. 9). **The sun, the moon, and 11 stars bowed down to him**. In ancient cultures these astronomical symbols represented rulers. The **dream**, then, symbolically anticipated the elevation of Joseph over the whole house of Jacob (Joseph's **father**, the sun; his **mother**, the moon; his 11 **brothers**, the stars, v. 10). Sensing that **Joseph** was to be elevated to prominence over them, the envy and hatred of his brothers is understandable. However, their reaction in contrast with Joseph's honesty and faithfulness demonstrated why Jacob's choosing him was proper. God's sovereign choice of a leader often brings out the jealousy of those who must submit. Rather than recognize God's choice, his brothers set on a course to destroy him. Their actions, though prompted by the belief that they should lead, shows why they should not have led.

**37:12-17.** The occasion for selling **Joseph** came when he obediently went to his brothers **near Dothan** (v. 17) to inquire about their welfare. In spite of the hatred **Joseph** knew they held for him, he complied with his father's wishes. From Jacob's home in **the Valley of Hebron** (v. 14) north to **Shechem** (v. 12) was about 50 miles, and Dothan was another 15 miles north. One may wonder if they had taken their flocks to **Dothan** with the hidden agenda of checking out the land of Shechem, whose ruler had raped their sister Dinah (chap. 34).

**37:18-24.** The brothers devised a plot to kill **that dreamer** in order to prevent **his dreams** from being fulfilled. Before, they plotted to kill many Shechemites in revenge for their sister (34:24-29); now, by

contrast, they plotted to **kill** their own brother! **Reuben**, trying to gain an opportunity to restore **Joseph** to Jacob, persuaded his brothers not to commit such a crime. Reuben suggested they **throw** Joseph alive **into** a **cistern**. Then Reuben thought he could go **rescue him** later. So the **brothers... stripped** the lad of his tunic and threw him into a dry cistern to die.

**37:25-28. Judah** then prompted his brothers to **sell** Joseph to passing **Ishmaelites** on their way **from Gilead... to Egypt**. Ishmaelites were descendants of Abraham by Hagar (16:15) and the Midianites (37:28) descended from Abraham by his concubine Keturah (25:2). The term **Ishmaelites** became a general designation for desert tribes, so that **Midianite** traders were also known as Ishmaelites. **Joseph** was treated harshly by his brothers; but being sold for **20 shekels** (8 ounces of **silver**) and taken **to Egypt**, he was preserved alive.

**37:29-35.** The theme of deception again surfaced in the family; here Jacob was deceived once again—this time by his own sons! The sons **dipped** Joseph's tunic in goat's **blood** to deceive the patriarch into thinking that Joseph was dead, **devoured** by a **ferocious animal**. **Jacob** mourned greatly over the loss of his beloved **son** (tearing one's **clothes** and wearing **sackcloth** [coarse animal skins] were signs of grief and mourning; cf. 44:13; Job 1:20; 16:15) and **refused to be comforted**. Thus everyone shared in suffering for this treachery.

**37:36.** The sad scene in Hebron (cf. v. 14) contrasts with a note that **Joseph** was **sold to Potiphar... Pharaoh's... captain of the guard**. This is a story of hatred and deception. The brothers tried to improve their lot with their father by wicked means. Jacob himself had attempted something similar with his father. The brothers would have to learn, however, as did Jacob, that God does not continue to give His blessings to those who do such things. Their use of goat's blood is ironic, for the skins of a goat were used by Jacob to deceive his father (27:16). Jacob's sin of years before had come back to haunt him. The brothers' attitude would also have to be changed by God, or there would be no nation. Here then is the beginning of the suffering of Joseph, the obedient servant. God would test his character through the things he suffered, so that he could then be exalted.

## Major Theme Analysis

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

### **Started with Dreams (Gen 37:2-11)**

2 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.

3 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.

4 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.

5 Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more.

6 So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed:

7 "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."

8 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.

9 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."

10 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?"

11 And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

### **Issues with favoritism (2-4)**

*Don't show partiality (Job 13:10)*

10 He would surely rebuke you if you secretly showed partiality.

*Be humble instead of boasting (Luke 18:11-14)*

11 The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men — robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' 13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' 14 "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

*All Christians are one in Jesus (Gal 3:27-28)*

27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

*God has no distinction between Christians (Rom 10:12)*

12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,

*There is no partiality with God (Rom 2:11)*

11 For God does not show favoritism.

## **Dreams of ruling (5-9)**

*When dreaming of ruling, remember that it means being judged more strictly (James 3:1)*

3:1 Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

*When dreaming of ruling, one should always ensure one can serve as well (Rom 2:18-21)*

19 if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, 20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— 21 you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?

*When dreaming of ruling, remember that when much is given, much is demanded (Luke 12:47-48)*

47 "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. 48 But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

*When dreaming of ruling, remember to be faithful (1 Cor 4:2)*

2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

*When dreaming of ruling, remember the accountability that goes with it (Heb 13:17)*

17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

*When dreaming of ruling, remember that the true Master is in heaven (Eph 6:9)*

9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

*God is against those who lead others astray because of dreams (Jeremiah 23:32)*

32 Indeed, I am against those who prophesy false dreams," declares the Lord. "They tell them and lead my people astray with their reckless lies, yet I did not send or appoint them. They do not benefit these people in the least," declares the Lord.

## **Rebuked by father (10)**

### *Rebuke of discipline (Heb 12:7-11)*

7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

### *Rebuke that does not lead to death (Ps 118:18)*

18 The Lord has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death.

### *Rebuke to learn lessons (Ps 119:71)*

71 It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.

### *Rebuke to show relationship (Luke 15:25-32)*

25 "Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' 28 "But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. 29 So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. 30 But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' 31 "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. 32 It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'"

## **Brothers envied (11)**

### *Envy is manifested in being jealous of others blessings (Matt 20:9-16)*

9 "The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. 10 So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. 11 When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 12 "These men who were hired last worked only one hour," they said, "and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day." 13 "But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius?' 14 Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. 15 Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' 16 "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

### *Envy blinds us to reality (1 John 2:11)*

11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.

### *Envy makes a man unclean (Mark 7:20-23)*

20 He went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' 21 For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. 23 All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'"

### *Envy is rot to the bones (Prov 14:30)*

30 A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.

## **Resulted in Slavery (Gen 37:23-24, 28)**

23 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.

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

28 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.

### **God's plan is carried out even during evil**

*God's plans are the only ones that will happen (Prov 16:9)*

9 In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.

*God controls all things that happen and therefore no evil plans will eternally succeed (Job 5:12-13)*

12 He thwarts the plans of the crafty, so that their hands achieve no success. 13He catches the wise in their craftiness, and the schemes of the wily are swept away.

*God's plans are eternal and can never be overpowered or stopped (Ps 33:10-11)*

10 The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. 11But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

*God knows the intent of every plan and controls the outcome (Prov 16:1-2)*

1To man belong the plans of the heart, but from the LORD comes the reply of the tongue. 2All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the LORD.

### **Deception starts with 'what's in it for me'**

*Selfish ambition comes from Satan and always causes disorder and evil actions (James 3:13-16)*

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. 16For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

*Pursuit of things that promote our interest only is not sound judgment (Prov 18:1)*

1 An unfriendly man pursues selfish ends; he defies all sound judgment.

*Deception is one of the acts of the sinful nature (Gal 5:19-21)*

19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

*Regardless of the motive, if God's work gets done that is the important thing (Phil 1:15-18)*

15 It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. 16The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. 18But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

## What led to the deception

### *Jealousy (Acts 7:9)*

9 "Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him

### *Envy (Proverbs 14:30)*

30 A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.

### *Lack of family ties*

#### ***A believer should always take care of family (1 Tim 5:8)***

8 If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

#### ***The law was made for those who would harm their own families (1 Tim 1:9-11)***

9 We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, 10for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers-and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine 11that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

### *Circumstances*

#### ***Many times it is our own malicious planning that gets us into deceitful circumstances (Prov 26:24-27)***

24 A malicious man disguises himself with his lips, but in his heart he harbors deceit. 25Though his speech is charming, do not believe him, for seven abominations fill his heart. 26His malice may be concealed by deception, but his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly. 27If a man digs a pit, he will fall into it; if a man rolls a stone, it will roll back on him.

#### ***Depending on our own strength starts our deception (Hos 10:13)***

13 But you have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil, you have eaten the fruit of deception. Because you have depended on your own strength and on your many warriors,

### *Fear of punishment*

#### ***The primary root of fear is punishment (1 John 4:18)***

18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

#### ***The wicked will always be in fear of punishment for their deeds (Job 15:20-21)***

20 All his days the wicked man suffers torment, the ruthless through all the years stored up for him. 21Terrifying sounds fill his ears; when all seems well, marauders attack him.

#### ***Many time the pre-conception of what will happen causes lack of action because of fear (Luke 19:21)***

21 I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.'

## Hopefully there will always be a voice of reason

### *Sometimes through speaking up (Acts 5:33-40)*

34 But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. 35 Then he addressed them: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. 36 Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. 37 After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. 38 Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. 39 But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God." 40 His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

### *Sometimes through action (Acts 21:31-32)*

31 While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul

## Deception creates the need for additional sins

### *Lies (Luke 22:55-58)*

56 A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him." 57 But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said. 58 A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." "Man, I am not!" Peter replied.

### *Hurting of others (Matt 18:23-34)*

23 "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. 26 "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' 27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. 28 "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. 29 "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' 30 "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. 32 "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' 34 In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

## Conclusion and Other Thoughts

### *Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh*

#### **An Evil Plot, An Empty Pit, and an Egyptian Purchase (37:12-36)**

Animosity toward Joseph had continued to build up until the situation was explosive. Now it was only a matter of time and opportunity. That opportunity finally arrived when Jacob sent Joseph to Shechem.

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 (Genesis 37:12-17).

Jacob's concern for the welfare of his family and his flocks was not unfounded. Shechem was the city where Dinah had been taken by force and where Jacob's sons, especially Simeon and Levi (34:30), had slaughtered all of the men. Since Jacob had purchased land there (33:19), it would not be unusual for him to make use of it by sending his flocks there to feed on its rich pastureland under the care of his sons. But there was always the danger of some angry relative of one of those Shechemites who were killed or captured seeking vengeance. This seems to be what Joseph was sent to look into. Only a man with proven skill and wisdom would ever be sent to handle a task as sensitive and volatile as this.

Joseph wandered about the fields of Shechem in search of his brothers. It just so happened<sup>28</sup> that a man found him who had further happened to see Joseph's brothers and overhear them saying they were going on to Dothan. Not willing to give up his search and return to his father without completing his task, Joseph went on to Dothan.

While at a considerable distance Joseph was recognized by his brothers. They immediately conspired in a violent and daring plot which would rid them once and for all of their brother:

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!" 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 (Genesis 37:18-24).

It was probably Joseph's coat that made it possible to identify him so quickly from such a distance. It may also have been that coat which triggered the pent-up feelings of jealousy and hostility toward the beloved son of their father. They saw the great distance from their father and the remoteness of this spot as the ideal opportunity to do away with the threat which Joseph posed. The opportunity for a perfect alibi was also at hand, for wild animals were a threat to life and limb in the open field. They need not even produce a body if they blame Joseph's absence on his being devoured by a wild beast. Only a bloody robe need be presented to Jacob. His imagination would take care of the rest.

Reuben had good reason to hate his brother, for it was Joseph who would obtain the birthright that could have belonged to him. But it seems that Reuben feared facing his father more than he hated Joseph. He was still the oldest of the family. Whether or not he had the rights of the first-born, he was still saddled with the responsibilities. This may be the explanation for Reuben's suggestion and his intention to spare the life of Joseph.

Reuben's actions were hardly heroic. I must admit, however, that I would not have wanted to stand up against these fellows either. They were mean, really mean. These men would make the "nickel defense" of the Dallas Cowboys look like a Boy Scout troop. The slaughter of the Shechemites was only one evidence of their brutal natures. Reuben therefore suggests that they kill Joseph without the shedding of blood. Throw the boy in a cistern and let nature do him in. The idea had some definite advantages, and so the plan was agreed to.

When Joseph arrived, his reception was far from friendly. They tore off his coat, the symbol of all that they rejected, and threw the defenseless young man into a pit. It is significant that this pit was empty, for normally it would have contained water.<sup>29</sup> If this had been the case, Joseph would have drowned before the Ishmaelites caravan had arrived. Even the empty pit was a part of God's providential care of Joseph and his brothers.

The callousness and cruelty of Joseph's brothers is almost unbelievable.

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. 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?" 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" (Genesis 37:25-32).

Having thrown Joseph into the pit, they sat down to eat a meal. There is no loss of appetite, no sense of guilt or remorse. And there is no pity, for they eat their meal probably well within hearing of the cries that were continuing to come from the bottom of the pit. I can almost hear one of the brothers raise his voice over the petitions of Joseph and say to one of the others, "Want to trade a mutton sandwich for a cheese?" Only later would these cries haunt the sons of Jacob:

Then they said to one another, "Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen; therefore this distress has come upon us" (Genesis 42:21).

While they were eating, a caravan of Ishmaelites approached them on their way to Egypt from Gilead (verse 25). This gave Judah an idea which would prevent the shedding of Joseph's blood altogether. Rather than leaving Joseph to die of starvation and exposure, why not sell him into slavery to these traders? This would dispose of their problem, avoid the messy matter of murder, and get rid of any evidence of wrongdoing. Perhaps most appealing, it would provide them with a profit.

I do not see any virtue in Judah's proposal to his brothers. While Reuben sought to return Joseph to his father, Judah is not said to have any such intention. He did not question the ethics or desirability of Joseph's murder, only the benefits. Profit was the one word which best summarizes Judah's motivation. While slavery may seem to be a more humane fate than death, some who lived in such a state of slavery might challenge this fact. Selling a brother as a slave was hardly more commendable than putting him to death. In the end, Joseph was sold to the Midianite<sup>30</sup> traders for twenty shekels of silver, the price which Moses later fixed for a young slave boy (Leviticus 27:5).

Reuben had been gone during the time his brothers sold Joseph to the traders. Very likely this was to distract their attention from Joseph in the hope of their leaving him quickly, so that he could return to rescue Joseph. What a shock it must have been for him to return to the dry cistern and find Joseph gone. Reuben, as the oldest son, is the one who must face his father, and that to him is not a very pleasant thought.

Not only were Joseph's brothers completely aloof to his suffering, but also they almost seemed to delight in the suffering that their report would bring to Jacob. There is no gentle approach, no careful preparation for the tragic news, only the crude act of sending the bloody coat to him and letting him draw the desired conclusion. It was a heartless deed, but one that accurately depicted their spiritual condition at the time.

Like most of us, Jacob jumped to a conclusion, assuming the very worst had happened:

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 (Genesis 37:33-35).

It was, of course, his son's tunic, for there was none other like it. And it was covered with blood. Such a blood-stained garment without a body led Jacob to the conclusion his sons desired: Joseph must have been attacked and devoured by a wild animal. Perhaps the brothers of Joseph prided themselves in the fact that they never said Joseph was dead. They simply "deceived" their father into believing this. Isn't it ironic that this deception involved the killing of a goat, just as the deception of Isaac had (cf. 27:9,16-17,19).

Jacob seemed to have handled the death of Deborah (35:8) and Rachel (35:16-19) with a fair degree of composure, but the death of Joseph simply overcame him. There was no way that his children could comfort him. How hypocritical these efforts must have been anyway. Life for Jacob seemed hardly worth living any longer. The only thing Jacob could look forward to was the grave. For many years Jacob would live with the lie that his son was dead.

In one sense believing this was a gracious thing. Can you imagine the mental torment it would have been for Jacob to know what was actually happening to his son? We have just seen the dramatic conclusion to the hostage crisis in Iran, which lasted less than two years. We know something of the agony of the relatives and friends of these captives, but Jacob would have had to endure such suffering and anguish for over twenty years.<sup>31</sup> How his soul would have been troubled by the knowledge of Potiphar's wife pursuing Joseph day after day (cf. 39:10). What heartache would have been Jacob's had he known of Joseph's imprisonment (cf.

39:19ff.). Ignorance, in this case, was not bliss, but it was better than a blow-by-blow account of Joseph's status.

While Jacob was crying, "Woe is me," God was working all things together for the good of Jacob, Joseph, and his wayward brothers: "Meanwhile, the Midionites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard" (Genesis 37:36).

Joseph, in fact, was not dead, nor was he outside of the providential care of God. By no accident Joseph ended up in the home of one of the most responsible officers of Pharaoh's administration. While years would pass by before God's purposes would become known, the process was under way.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/37-jacob-joseph-jealousy-and-journey-egypt-genesis-361-3736>)

### **Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

Today's tragic episode impresses on us what favoritism can do and has done in families. Jacob's showing favoritism to Joseph created hatred in his older sons that festered and was mixed with envy, finally erupting in violence. Biased love toward one son resulted in the others starving for their father's favor and taking out their neglect on the object of his affection. Still, God's sovereign plan and purpose moved forward under his guiding hand. God had told Joseph's great-grandfather Abraham that his family would sojourn in Egypt for 400 years (Genesis 15:13). Joseph was being sent ahead as a kind of point man for his family. Though Joseph saw only slavery ahead of him, God saw the fulfillment of Joseph's dreams and the blessing he would be to his brothers (45:4-11). In God's providential work through Joseph, we are reminded that God is never thwarted by the evil intentions of human beings. Though we struggle to see God at work in our trials today, he remains the unseen mover in our lives just as he was in Joseph's life. With Paul, we remain confident that, "God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). Truly nothing can separate us from God's love or prevent him from fulfilling the plans he has for us (8:35-39), even our imperfect families.

### **Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary**

Family Issues - Children usually learn about loving relationships within their families. However, this is not always the case. Joseph, Jacob's (Israel's) son, suffered much during his growing up years at the hand of his stepbrothers because of his father's preferential treatment. Jacob fathered 12 sons and one daughter, and he adored the two sons his wife Rachel bore him—Joseph and Benjamin—and noticeably awarded them special treatment, especially Joseph. Sadly, the father's favoritism caused the other boys to be extremely jealous and headed the family down a destructive path. Joseph's siblings also saw him as a tattler. When he worked in the fields with his brothers, he reported their bad behaviors to his father. Scripture uses the word "hatred" to describe the deep bitterness and envy the brothers held against Joseph.

Unwise Family Decisions - When Joseph turned 17, Jacob publicly presented Joseph with a multicolored, long-sleeved tunic, a "coat of many colors," showing him to be the favorite. Then, to add insult to injury, Joseph told his family of two of his mysterious dreams where he acquired a high position, and the rest of his family bowed down to him.

Family Violence - While they were herding sheep one day, Joseph's brothers seized an opportunity to get rid of him. Jacob had sent Joseph to check on them, and when Joseph found them, the brothers tore off his tunic and threw him in a pit. Joseph pleaded with his brothers, but his cries went unheard. Eventually, a band of Ishmaelite traders passed by carrying spices to Egypt. The brothers decided to sell Joseph to the men for 20 pieces of silver.

Important Lessons - Jacob's inclination to love Joseph over his other children opened the door to jealousy, which tore his family apart. This is a valuable lesson to learn: a parent or caregiver who shows preferential treatment of one child over another is asking for trouble.