



Lesson 1 September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020

## Issues of Love

Study Scripture – Genesis 37

Background Scripture – Genesis 37

### Key Verse:

*His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the sayings in his mind.*

**Genesis 37:11**

### INTRODUCTION

The Study of Love from Scripture is one of the two most painful Studies from Scripture. This is because issues concerning Love affect our character. This character trait of having Love unquestionably marks out the believer. Without that Love, its possession and its continuing development and its increasing influence there really is nothing in whatever we feel about ourselves, what we say, and what we do. **Without Love we are empty.**

We are therefore now dealing with biblical psychology. This means **we are studying** how God deals with weak people.

Nobody in this drama is perfect and it is perfectly clear they all need to be transformed and this is therefore showing us the story of how God transforms people who are steeped in hatred and deception. Remember everybody needs to be changed. Do not forget that there is such a thing as the depravity of the human heart. And because of that the lessons we have to learn will come slowly, over a long period and it will be hard.

We will see how God uses dreams to communicate with Him for He wishes to communicate with the deepest parts of our selves.

We must therefore start by looking at what Love is and what it is not. We can look inside our minds and our hearts and see what we really are.

So we are to focus on **True Love** as opposed to **Fake Love**.

The source of **True Love** and the source of **Fake Love** will help us tremendously in understanding this Study Scripture.

Our Lesson Study highlights this issue for us in stark fashion. We cannot escape its Lessons. We can therefore advise you not to waste time trying to do so. 1 John 1 tells us what to do when we are exposed by the piercing sharp cutting Word of God.

First, we know that there are four types of love noted in Scripture. They are

**Storge**-- empathy bond

**Philia**-- friend bond

**Eros**-- *romantic* love

**Agape** -- unconditional love "God" love.

When we read the Scriptural advices noted above, we will see in them most of the Biblical characteristics of **Love** noted. We repeat some of them to remind you of them:

1. Love is patient
2. Love is kind.
3. It is not envious.
4. Love is humble.
5. Love is respectful.
6. Love is selfless.
7. Love is calm.
8. Love is righteous.
9. Love is honest-truthful-no lies-no deceit-no darkness.
10. Love is trusting.
11. Love protects.
12. Love is very importantly **hopeful**.
13. Love is **persistent-it does not give up easily**.
14. Love banishes fear-anxieties-insecurities-torment of soul and heart.
15. Love loves even those who don't love it.
16. Love comes from God.
17. Love makes great sacrifices-does extraordinary things.
18. Love binds a person's good virtues in perfect unity.
19. Love gives confidence to face the day of the Lord, the end of time.
20. Love leads to true actions-no hypocritical words and deeds.

But let us note however that there is something which one writer calls **Fake Love** and the Book of Proverbs we just studied and the Book of James we just studied told us that we had better learn how to identify it. It really is the opposite of what true love is. We will now list some of what is going to go to us in this regard. The Scriptures warn us that the **Source** of this **Fake love** is Satan.

1. Fake love is only concerned about itself.
2. Fake love hides in the darkness of lies.
3. Fake love is cruel.
4. Fake love is short tempered.
5. Fake love is proud.
6. Fake love doesn't lift people up.
7. Fake love is boastful- it does not admit to its own mistakes.
8. Fake love will never find fulfilment for it has nothing to wish for.
9. Fake love is empty-it is always greedy and unsatisfied.
10. Fake love is filled with envy. It belittles you and does not treasure any gifts you have and is always jealous if people admire you.
11. Fake love is rude.
12. Fake love is always bitter.
13. Fake love is foolish.
14. Fake love does not really care to understand you.
15. Fake love is always full of doubts.



16. Fake love would always cheat you.
17. Fake love is unbelieving.
18. Fake love really hates itself and you.
19. Fake love is something that is sick and toxic. It does not care about relationships.
20. Fake love will die.

Now it is often said by clinical psychologists and the psychologist of the world that emotion is the basis of true love but it is not. Emotions are only a part of it for Love is an act of the will. It therefore is an action. Love cannot be separated from action. Even therefore when you were an enemy of God and cursed Him He still will love you and will take the action of sacrifice to save you.

So let us now with that in mind look at the behaviour of the persons in the drama to see what kind of “love” existed and showed itself in action.

We pray that you will be completely different from those in this drama.

Genesis chapter 37 very interestingly is connected in a strange but important way to Chapter 36 a Chapter which outlines in great detail the progeny of the profane Esau, the father of the Edomites, those relatives of Israel that consistently hated the Lord God of heaven and earth though God blessed them with power and territory. They were relatives of the Hebrews. There was no love there.

The Chapter begins by telling us that Jacob the chosen one is now back in the land of Promise, but living there as a stranger or sojourner. So we know that the promises of God to the Patriarchs have not yet been completely fulfilled and now Jacob is awaiting the fulfillment. Clearly, he would be watching events closely, but understandably he does not know how God will work out His plan; but we still expect that he should be in constant contact with God and be on the lookout for God to reveal His steps.

Jacob is still the major character in the story as Verse 1 and 2 indicates, but now the focus on the surface shifts to his sons and especially to Joseph. We should remember as we read that though we will be reading a great deal about Joseph, God is still focusing on all the sons of **Jacob**, for He had promised to make a nation out of the sons of **Jacob**. Joseph will figure prominently in this process though we note that Jacob is the more important person for he is the person that fathered the 12 tribes.

The lives of the Patriarchs teach us many things. Prominent among these lessons is the observation that being chosen by God does not mean that an easy life will result. The lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph cover a period of about three hundred and forty-five years recorded in chapters twelve through fifty and all through this time, we see that these men had great strengths but also great weaknesses. All of them were molded by God the Master Potter and as a result they ended up in the Hebrews 11 God's “Hall of Faith”. They all had difficult lives.

Abraham went through many dangerous experiences and he learned to trust God rather than to trust himself. When he trusted himself his plans blew up in his face. Abraham's son Isaac also seemed to have had trouble with the inhabitants of Canaan and he had to be on the move constantly. His relationship with his wife was not too happy. His relationship with his two sons left much to be desired. Jacob also lived a difficult life, full of fear and insecurity. His father Isaac did not seem to care much for him. His uncle Laban exploited him for twenty years and



his two wives gave him a hard time. He wrestled with an unknown being when he was in deep dread and feared the worst from his brother Esau. Because of this wrestling match he suffered a dislocated hip. Eventually he had to come face-to-face with his brother Esau whom he had deceived and robbed many years earlier. His life after his fearful meeting with Esau included all kinds of difficult incidents. These are recorded in chapters 34, 35, 37, and 38 and other chapters.

Now we will see that the special son Joseph also experienced tremendous and very painful difficulties in his life. He faced many hardships and suffering. We should note however that in every case there was both suffering and blessing.

It will be helpful for us to see how God works with and manages the daily events of our lives. The image of the 'potter and the clay' is very apt. When we become a spiritual child of God we are like a lump of clay placed on God's the potter's wheel. In love, His hands shapes and molds us into a 'chosen vessel'. Then, just as the potter puts the clay vessel into the fire to produce the completed product, God puts us in the fire to strengthen us and make us useful vessels, fit to carry out his work of reconciliation.

We should be mindful that if we are chosen by God, He promises to give us *"a peace which passes all understanding"*. God promises us that He will deal with our fears and our difficulties in His way.

We will definitely grow in purity and holiness. He has promised that He will always be with us and will never leave or forsake us. But those chosen by God are never promised or guaranteed wealth or prominence, even though this might come to some. He does not guarantee that our bodies will be healthy or beautiful, that our families will live harmonious lives, that those around us will consider us as great, even though some might enjoy these blessings.

Note that dreams figure prominently in the Text. Jacob also dreamed important dreams, now his special son Joseph dreamed important dreams. Of course the source of these dreams are critically important. Be warned that dreams can come from Satan.

## THE TEXT

Verses 1-4. The context of the events that are to follow finds Jacob living in Hebron in the land of Canaan with his eleven sons and one daughter. The bible Dictionary tells us that this city is located in the southwest end of the valley of Eschol, about midway between Jerusalem and Beersheba.

It is therefore in the West Bank southwest of Jerusalem. It is sacred to both Jews and Muslims as the home and burial place of Abraham and to Jews it was highly regarded as it was King David's capital for seven years. It is one of the most ancient cities of the world and it has pretty well all the time always existed under the same name. Because of its location it has been a source of trouble between Jews and Arabs. It was a favourite home place for Abraham. Joseph was his father's favourite, the son of Jacob's favourite wife Rachel. He loved Joseph more than all his other children. One would have thought that having gone through the hassle of favoritism which brought division between his father Isaac and his mother Rebekah and the jealousy between his two wives who were always fighting over who was the favourite, Jacob would have learned the lesson that playing favourites was a dangerous game for a parent or a husband.



He didn't even seem to notice the hostility and antagonism among his sons over his obvious favoritism. Jacob was repeating the sins of his parents. We wonder whether or not he was paying attention to what was going on in his family.

Jacob might have had some reason for favouring Joseph for he seemed to be the only one with much moral integrity but he should have been more sensitive. Favoritism in a home is deadly and changes the entire relationship in the home and can affect the children for practically all their lives. One writer decries favoritism in the home and suggests to us:

**“In order to convey our love toward children:**

- **We must look for the praiseworthy attributes of our children and then celebrate those traits. In other words, talk about and be proud of who God made them to be and what they do well.**
- **We must affirm an unconditional love that is not based on whether or not our child “produces”.**
- **We must be alert to those sensitive areas in our children and be careful not to attack them in those areas when we are angry with them.**
- **We must strive to be consistent from one child to the next.**
- **We must present adverse consequences of misbehavior ahead of time and then follow through if tested. (Sometimes the best way to say, “I care” is to discipline.... to not discipline is to be seen as not caring.)**

One element of tragedy in this whole situation, is that the sons of Jacob didn't tell him what concerned them, but instead hated Joseph, when in fact the real problem they had was with their father. Of course, there was conflict between all the brothers, rooted in the problem with Jacob's marriages. Polygamy always produces competition and conflict between wives. Also, the breakdown in the husband wife relationship has adverse effects in the relationship in any home and it was no different here. That is why spouses must place their relationship with each other over the relationship with their children; for if that is done it will spill over into harmony in the home, produce stability and benefit the children. So the Scriptures warn husbands to love their wives, and wives are warned to respect their husbands. That is the primary recipe for success.

As we study let us note that pretty well every Bible scholar will tell you that the life of Joseph of whom more is told about than any of the other patriarchs is a story of divine sovereignty. It beautifully illustrates divine providence which of course is the expression of divine sovereignty. This episode is also extremely important for history for it is from this that we learn about the early Hebrews and how they began their life in the Euphrates Valley and then finally went down to Egypt where they were put into slavery and then later redeemed.

The story also gave rise to the view that Joseph is a type of Jesus Christ, though not of course a complete type for he had flaws and of course Jesus had no flaws. But it is noted that Joseph became a pattern of rejection. One writer notes:

**“He is a deliverer, but he is rejected by his brethren and though a chosen deliverer and though rejected because of the unbelief of the brethren, their very rejection of him becomes the means by which God brings about restoration and reconciliation of the brethren is a pattern that we see pre-eminently played out in the life of Jesus. And it is true of all the**



**deliverers of the Old Testament that pattern of rejection, but yet God using the rejection in order to bring about one of his designs.**

As mentioned often remember that we are looking at the generations of Jacob and Jacob is a prominent figure in the background because of the Promise to Abraham.

One student of Genesis said and young people should keep this at the top of their minds:

**“In divine Providence we learn that the darkest moments are short corridors leading to sunlit rooms”, and so Joseph must now enter into the short corridor of a dark moment which will lead ultimately to the sunlit room of being the deliverer of his own brethren”.**

We are told in Verse 2 that Joseph was 17 years old and he worked as a shepherd with his brothers. So we know that Joseph was not an idler, but one accustomed to work. On this one occasion we are told he was pasturing the flock with the sons of Jacob's secondary wives Bilhah and Zilpah, whose sons were Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher.

The sons were not very well behaved. Joseph reported their behavior to Jacob, giving him a “bad report”. Joseph obviously felt that by reporting his brothers’ bad behaviour he was faithfully serving his father. Note that we do not see Jacob reacting to this report at all.

It is interesting to note that some point out that the word used for “report” is a word which is sometimes used in a negative sense of an untrue report, slanted to damage the victims (See Proverbs 10: 18). Some believe that Joseph might have misrepresented the facts somewhat. So even though his report might be essentially true, it was nevertheless exaggerated. If this were so, it would be understandable that Joseph was not well regarded for this “report”.

Remember that these men pasturing the sheep of Jacob were a treacherous, murderous bunch of older brothers. One of them Rubén had become involved in an incestuous relationship with one of his father Jacob's wives, and as a result had forfeited the birthright because of this terrible sin. (See Chapter 15). The sons had even tricked and murdered, despite their vows, a man who was in a spousal relationship with their sister. They did not approve of the relationship. These men were not just nice persons at all. Their level of morality was practically nonexistent. It is therefore easy for us to see later on how they consciously and without any regard plotted the murder of their brother.

In any case, even if Joseph's report was somewhat exaggerated, it is clear that that at seventeen he was quite a moral person, obedient to his father's instructions, faithful in doing his work, not reticent about declaring what he thought the will of God was and though somewhat immature, would put us all to shame.

We should pay attention to the fact that we should not judge spirituality by age and knowledge, but by a person's level of maturity and obedience to the word of God. The young often do better in being alarmed at immorality than older persons.

When we see the combination of Jacob loving Joseph more than his other sons, and Joseph telling tales on his less than well behaved brothers we see fuel being added to the fire.

This phrase used to explain Jacob’s favoritism, “*son of his old age*” which led him to give Joseph a special multi-colored coat, is considered by many scholars to indicate something very important about Joseph. It is felt that the coat indicated more than preference or love but meant pre-eminence and superiority of rank. The term used for Joseph's coat is found in 2 Samuel 13: 18-19 and it is used of the coat worn by the daughter of David named Tamar. We do not know exactly what the coat looked like and there is much speculation about that, but



since it is used to describe the coat worn by David's daughter, it could have symbolized virginity, but it also could evidence royalty. It was a coat of privilege and status. It is felt that Joseph's coat was a symbol of the authority that Jacob had granted him over his brothers. Joseph's brothers obviously would have hated the garment for it symbolized his authority. It is to be noted that once the brothers violently attacked Joseph later on, the first thing they did was to strip the coat from him.

It is also to be noted that the birthright, which should have actually been given to the eldest son, was transferred to Joseph. We are not told this until chapter 49, but it is possible that Jacob had expressed his intentions much earlier than chapter 49 to his sons, and then began to give Joseph pre-eminence over his brothers. The sin which precipitated the stripping of the birthright from Reuben, the first born of Israel, was actually recorded in Genesis 35:22. But Joseph's status was mentioned later on.

*"Now the sons of Reuben the first born of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's)".* (1 Chronicles 5:1-2)

Joseph's garment likely identified that he was the possessor of the birthright and this would have further irritated the brothers.

In addition, the phrase *"son of his old age"* actually means wisest son, or son of wisdom. This means that Joseph though young was demonstrating the wisdom of age in his youth. We know that Joseph was not the youngest son and this fact should alert us that the phrase had a special meaning.

So the stage is set. The brothers did not like Joseph lording it over them.

Many people consider Joseph to be an excellent type of Christ for like Jesus, the fundamental issue facing him was that his brethren rejected the authority that the father gave him. He had all the marks of authority and pre-eminence, but the brethren thought that that should belong to them and not to him. His position and status was a blow to the pride of the brethren. Like Jesus he was obedient to the father, hard-working, highly moral and cared for his brothers even though they did not care for him.

We will see how God worked in this situation which had all the hallmarks of a tragedy and turned it around for good. One writer has an extremely important statement in this regard:

**"The theme of the Joseph narrative concerns God's hidden and decisive power which works in and through but also against human forms of power. A 'soft' word for that reality is *providence*. A harder word for the same reality is *'predestination'*. Either way God is working out his purpose through and in spite of Egypt, through and in spite of Joseph and his brothers."**

**Verse 5.** Joseph we are told had a dream, the first of two dreams. This was clearly a dream from God. It is considered to be the first recorded dream in Scripture where God does not speak.

Joseph of course did not have control over what was in the dreams, but he reported to the family about the dream. As we would expect the brothers hated him even more for they interpreted the dream accurately.

There seems to be some foolishness or immaturity in Joseph, as well as faith. Joseph obviously took seriously what was revealed to him as truth from God. He obviously felt that God had



taken the initiative to reveal something very important to him and so he was quite bold in telling his family about his faith in what God had revealed to him.

It might have been wiser for him to share the dream with Jacob, have Jacob discuss how the dream might relate to the Promises of God for the family and then have Jacob help him decide whether or not to share this revelation with the brothers. So we can defend the view that Joseph showed a lack of tact, since he knew how his brothers hated the fact that he was set above them.

**Verses 6-7.** Joseph related the dream, politely entreating his brothers to listen to him. Note that the dream involved bread, or food. It pre-figured Joseph's future role of providing food to save the family. Joseph told them that they were all in the field binding sheaves of grain and his sheaf stood up, a rather strange action and then the sheaves assembled by the brothers also gathered around, stood up and then bowed down to Joseph's sheaf.

**Verse 8.** Given Joseph's authority, leadership and other capabilities, the suggestion that Joseph would have even greater status or power did not sit well with the brothers. They knew perfectly well the meaning of the dream. The dream was saying clearly that one day Joseph would rule over them. They interpreted this dream as Joseph humiliating and ruling them. They were intensely jealous, and their envy and jealousy bubbled over. This was a serious situation. We remember that Proverbs 14: 30 told us: *"A sound heart is the life of the flesh; but envy the rottenness of the bones"*.

James 3:16 also tells us: *"Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing"*.

Note that God was extending grace to Joseph's brothers. God was giving them the opportunity to begin to discuss the kind of circumstances that would have to occur, for the events in the dream to come to pass. This would serve to make them make preparations.

God did not want to make them feel bad, but was actually indicating to them what He intended to do, but given the state of their heart they could not see. That is what envy and jealousy does. It blinds the heart to the truths of God and brings rottenness to the bones, bringing also unnecessary disorder and strife.

**Verse 9.** Joseph's dream came in pairs. This was done to confirm what God had predicted would certainly happen. Dreams occurring in pairs is a pattern repeated in Scripture. The second dream was grander and more pointed. It spoke of the Sun and Moon and eleven stars bowing down to him.

Obviously Joseph was not much of a politician. It is felt that he should have realized that this kind of thought would make his brothers hate him even more. Some writers accuse him of lacking in humility and possibly having a touch of arrogance but this might be overdoing it here. Note also that in his dream the emphasis was on the benefits to him and not of the possible difficulties that he would undergo. Nobody it seems, like to dream of trouble. Joseph seems to have been behaving in a rather simpleminded fashion. In any case we know that Joseph was a chosen instrument of God and God was using the circumstances to achieve salvation for His chosen people.

**Verse 10.** When Joseph reported the dream to his father and his brethren, it certainly indicated his high level of faith in this revelation of God. Joseph was enthusiastic about his revelation. The dream not only elevated him above his brothers, but now clearly placed him over his father and his mother. This was obviously serious business.





It is difficult to know whether Jacob gave any real value to Joseph's dream. We are told now that Jacob actually rebuked Joseph, questioning whether or not he should expect that the entire family would bow down to him, or should bow down to him at any stage in the future. In verse 11 however we are told that Jacob was thinking about the matter with some care. How far this thinking went we do not know. His attitude however was totally different from that of the brothers who now envied Joseph and hated him even more.

It is important to note that the brothers' hatred was rebellion against what was in the dream and the divine power behind the dream. They might of course have known exactly what they were doing. But one might think that they did not and that their blindness somehow is a good excuse for them. But their attitude was certainly not good.

**Verses 12-18.** Jacob obviously did not give much credence to Joseph's dream and did not even pay attention to the raging conflict in his family.

The brothers went to Shechem, about fifty miles north of Hebron to feed their cattle. Jacob had brought land there but had to leave after some of his sons used their notion of family loyalty to deceive the inhabitants and killed many people there in a treacherous fashion. Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers to make sure that his flocks were in good shape. But note that in doing so he set in motion events that would give him much heartache for many years.

We wonder whether Jacob considered how dangerous it was to send Joseph fifty miles away in dangerous country to find his brothers and to report on their activities; given the fact that these were pretty bad fellows and they would know that it was likely Joseph would again make a bad report. He should've known that this possibility would not endear the brothers to Joseph. It would simply excite their hatred.

Joseph did not find his brothers in Shechem and he was wandering around aimlessly in a field when suddenly (by coincidence or by divine appointment?) he ran into a man who had by 'chance' happened to overhear Joseph's brothers talking among themselves and saying that they were going to pasture the cattle in Dothan, about fifteen miles away.

Joseph might never have been able to find the brothers and might have returned home safe and sound, had he not met that man. But evidently God anticipated the treachery of Joseph's brothers and would use this for His own purpose. The fact that the brothers were just coming from their "place of treachery in Shechem" heightens our expectation that treachery would now occur.

God seemed to have made sure that Joseph followed his brothers, even though his brothers were going to do something pretty bad to him. Some writers consider that there is great irony in the fact that in dangerous, pagan Shechem, which still remembered the awful behavior of Jacob's sons, Joseph, though alone and vulnerable, was safer there than with his brothers. One writer states:

**"The family is not always the safest place on earth. The family can be a very dangerous place. Maybe you've experienced this. Nevertheless, God is in control of your family and your life".**

Joseph had no idea what awaited him. He went after his brethren and found them in Dothan. They recognized the "royally" dressed Joseph some ways off and they deliberately contrived evil and conspired against him. They were not about to allow Joseph to give another bad report about them. These brothers were a danger to anyone with whom they would come in contact, they were violent. It was not that Joseph was actually now doing something against them. This



was malice, they thought of killing him in cold blood. They were simply about to do what Simeon and Levi had done previously in Shechem. Only Joseph's blood could appease their anger, jealousy, envy, bitterness of the bones and murderous hearts. This was mob rule mentality.

**Verses 19-20.** So they all agreed to murder. Proverbs 29:10 is perfectly correct when it states: *"The bloodthirsty hate the upright"*. The wicked always seek the blood of the righteous. They will be satisfied with nothing less. They could not think without gnashing the teeth that they might have to one day bow down to Joseph.

Jesus has warned of that hatred in the heart is truly murder. One writer comments:

*"The brothers' hate is therefore a rebellion against the matter contained in the dreams, against the divine power itself, standing behind them, who had given the dreams.*

*The expression usually translated by "the dreamer" (vs. 19) means much more than our English word, namely, the one empowered to prophetic dreams."*

For the brothers this was no fanciful dream. They would put Joseph's dreams to the ultimate test.

In doing so they did not consider that the dreams were really from God. Some believe however that the extreme measures adopted by the brothers to silence Joseph implied that their behavior sprang from more than just jealousy motivated personal hatred. Some think that the brothers very well felt that the will of God was being revealed in Joseph's dream and wanted to do something about it. Others however feel that these men were just evil.

Once they decided on murder they concocted a story to explain Joseph's disappearance. They would kill him, throw the body into some pit and cover up the evil by saying that some wild beast killed him. They felt that this would thwart any possibility of his dreams coming to pass.

**Verse 21-22.** The eldest brother Reuben of course was involved in the incident but didn't really want to kill Joseph. He had good reason to hate Joseph, for he had lost the birthright to Joseph. But it was likely that he was afraid of his father and did not want anything to happen to Joseph. As the eldest son Jacob would hold him responsible for what had happened.

Reuben could have stood up to the brothers at the planning stage and told them this was wrong, but he was either afraid of them or did not want to alienate his brothers. The only good he wanted to do was to stop the killing and bring Joseph back to his father. He was not exactly a hero. But it is clear he did know that these fellows were evil.

So he suggested that they kill Joseph without shedding any blood. His intentions of course was to rescue Joseph from the pit sometime later on. But of course we know that God overruled this attempt, for God had purposed to make Joseph His instrument to save many pagans as well as Joseph's family.

**Verse 23.** Joseph arrived at the camp of his brothers. They unceremoniously grabbed him, pulled his many coloured coat off. This coat was the sign of Jacob's special favor and they would have specially enjoyed tearing this off him.

**Verse 24.** Then they completed the next part of their plan, throwing him into a pit. Normally this pit would be filled with water but God had been caring of Joseph and so this was empty and would remain so until after he was taken out. They did not seem to care whether or not the pit would be filled with water if unexpectedly heavy showers started and he would drown.

**Verses 25-27.** These brothers were callous and cruel. They sat down to eat after throwing Joseph into the pit. There was very little guilt, remorse, or loss of appetite. They heard



Joseph's screams, heard his distress, but did nothing. They admitted as much in Genesis 42:21. It is not that they did not feel some little guilt when Joseph pleaded with them, but with their depraved heart they suppressed that little feeling.

We remember that we often see people who have committed shocking offences, put on an innocent face. So we should remember that the heart is dreadfully deceitful.

Dothan lay on a caravan route from Damascus to Egypt and while they were eating a group of Ishmaelites, merchants who traded in goods but who also traded in slaves passed by.

**Verse 28.** Judah like Reuben did not like the idea of killing Joseph, but since he was the next in line for the birthright did not seem to want to let Joseph go free either.

So he suggested that they sell Joseph to the passing caravan of merchants heading for Egypt. The brothers agreed. God had restrained them from murdering Joseph, and selling him would work to the praise of God and the fulfillment of His plan. This they did and obtained twenty pieces of silver for Joseph. Note that this same Judah was the ancestor of Messiah.

We should also note that selling Joseph as a slave was exposing him to a fate that they knew was probably worse than death. But they did not care.

## CONCLUSION

How could the descendants of Abraham do something so terrible?

We can guess and try to explain why these men were so terrible but note that they were all products of forbidden bigamous relationships by their parents and we all know that that kind of situation does not help. The things that we do as parents will almost always affect our children positively or negatively.

But we know that God is merciful and gracious and because He pities us He often overrule the things of evil that the sons of Adam and Eve are accustomed to doing. We should not fool ourselves that we have not done my things in our past life and will not do bad things in our future. Scripture therefore has to warn us how to live and how to be led by the Spirit of God.

**We do not have to be evil all the time.**

Let us not forget what we learned in the Book of Proverbs, namely, that envy is the rottenness of the bones. There should be no place for envy in the life of those in the congregation of God. We are to want God to fill our lives so that He would be the object of our affection and there will be no place for envy.

Remember therefore that if you are not highly thought of and you have been distressed and humiliated you should not let those things determine the course of your life. You do not really know what God intends to happen. What you do know however is that God will use all things for His honour and glory and that you will have your reward if you stay with Him and be loyal. This story is a sad commentary on the parenting skills of Jacob. He behaved as if he was totally unaware of the mind set and attitude of his children.

But despite all of that note that Scripture tells us clearly that it is possible to be a youth and still be godly.

Jacob had deceived his father with the blood and skins of a goat and now his own sons would kill a goat and use its blood to deceive him. The brothers never actually said that Joseph was dead. They simply implied it. Once Jacob saw the bloody tunic he jumped to the conclusion



that Joseph was dead. His sons just encouraged him to believe what was not correct. But we know that Jacob's fears were really groundless.

Jacob could have spoken to God and asked Him what Joseph's dreams meant. When his mother was experiencing a troubled pregnancy, she inquired of God what that all meant and received an answer. It is likely that God would have explained things to Jacob if he had asked. Jacob would have then saved himself a great deal of sorrow. He did not apparently believe in going to God, but jumped to conclusions about the meaning of the dreams of Joseph and the meaning of the bloody coat. Jacob deceived his father. Jacob's sons deceived him. The brothers envied, hated, plotted and lied, but despite all this evil, God placed Joseph exactly where He wanted him to be.

God is sovereign. The will of God cannot be thwarted. We should not go against the will of God. Even if those around us do not display honesty, godliness, or integrity, Christians must have clean hands and a pure heart.

Our task is to grow in grace, follow the commandments of God, remain useful and let God work out the details. He handled everything perfectly in the case of Joseph, and He will do the same for you.

God has a plan for us. The difficulties in our lives are intended to train us to be wise, to teach us to handle the affairs of life skillfully and progress to be the people that God wants us to be. Do not be afraid of evildoers, God cannot be frustrated. God had already told Abraham in Genesis 15:13-14 that his descendants would be oppressed for four hundred years. God was working His plan. Spiritually Israel and his sons were at a low point. Their relationship with God was poor, not at the standards God wanted. There was no brotherly love, no unity, only self-interest.

One writer pointed to some biblical truths among which he notes:

**“First, we are reminded of the teaching of Scripture on the matter of election. We almost have to pinch ourselves to be reminded that the roots of Israel’s race and religion go back to men such as these brothers, who have conspired to do away with their own flesh and blood. In the ninth chapter of Romans Paul taught that the election is not based upon the works which a person has done or will do in the future (9:6-13).**

**Surely the choice of these sons of Israel illustrates the principle of election. Nearly anyone else in the land of Canaan would have been as qualified or more so than these cruel and wicked men. Most pagans have a deeper sense of family loyalty than this.**

**Furthermore, the doctrine of the sovereignty of God is easily seen in this chapter....**

**God had purposed and promised to bring about the fulfillment of His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through these sons. (35:10-12). Neither Jacob nor Joseph nor Jacob's other sons nor even Pharaoh himself would prevent or even delay the sovereign purposes of the God of Israel. The means which God employed to accomplish His will is seen in the doctrine of the providence of God.**

**In the simplest terms, the providential rule of God is the working out of His plan through sinful and willful men, even when they are actively striving to resist Him and his purposes. All the while, God remains sovereign and in full control. He assumes none of the guilt or responsibility for man's sins; man must bear the full weight of responsibility for his actions.”**



So let us learn the lesson of divine guidance. Let us pay attention to the revealed will of God in His Word. Let us pay close attention to God's eternal purpose and do not miss the will of God by deliberately choosing to disobey what we know is right. Let us be fully assured that God knows of all our sins and our bad behavior and will if we are His, bring us through the hard lessons and experiences into the place of willing obedience.

