

Keeping Faith in Your Dreams

Gen 37:1-11

Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.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. NKJV

As we come to a study of Joseph it is good that this month has 5 Sundays in it. Of all the characters in Genesis the life of Joseph takes up the most space.

And of all the characters that we have studied this year Joseph seems to be the purest in heart and soul. There is so much about this young man's youth that we do not have all the details. But we can rightly assume that some very significant things.

He was unlike the other boys. They were older while he was the son of Jacob's old age.

He was the first son of the favorite wife. The wife that Jacob worked for for 14 years and yet "they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her" Gen 29:20 NKJV.

So it would seem obvious that Joseph would be the favorite son.

But there were some other things that tell us about the other boys. They were older and were born in the troublous times of Jacob's first years of marriage. You remember the strife that was present in those days. Jacob had worked for Laban, Rachel's father for 7 years and then on the night of the wedding, Laban switched Rachel with Leah, her older sister. Then Laban forced Joseph to work for Rachel again another 7 years, but he was allowed to marry her just one week

after he married Leah.

The girls went into full competition for the affection of Jacob and both eventually gave their handmaids to Joseph so that each might have more children. So within just a few years the older sons were born and raised in the most unhealthy family we can imagine.

Also during this time Jacob was very busy rasing sheep and goats for Laban as he worked off his years to Laban. Beside that he had to provide for his quickly growing family, he had 11 children in seven years. Can you imagine what that was like. And I doubt that he had the time to spend with the boys as they were growing up. So they would have been raised in a family without much fatherly direction and by four women who are constantly fighting among themselves for the affection of their common husband.

We can see the fruit of all this in that later two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, kill and entire village while Ruben, the eldest goes to bed with Bilhah, Rachel's maid.

To make matters worse, Jacob has decided to give the oldest son of the beloved wife the place of the firstborn, and has given him a special coat to symbolize Joseph's future position. ¹

“What more natural than to bestow the privilege on the first-born of her whom Jacob had intended to make his only wife? At any rate, the result was that "his brethren hated him," till, in the expressive language of the sacred text, "they could not get themselves to address him unto peace," that is, as we understand it, to address to him the usual Eastern salutation: "Peace be unto thee!"” Bible History Old Testament Edersheim.

But 10 years have passed since they left Haran and Laban. Joseph is now 17 years old while Ruben is about 24 with the rest of the brothers falling in between except for Benjamin, the youngest.

So what has happened in that intervening 10 years. I think that Jacob has spent considerable time with Joseph. They have talked of all the old family stories, back to Abraham, and Isaac. When they had come up to the land of Canaan he and Rachel his mother had seen the difference in Jacob after he had wrested with God before meeting his brother Esau. And while Joseph was only 8 or 9 they had visited Bethel, the place where Jacob had seen his own dream of angels and the ladder to heaven.

As a matter of fact I think that everyone in the family understood that these dreams were from God. And they not only envied Joseph because of the nature of the dreams but because God had chosen to give the dreams to Joseph and not to them.

So let us look at these dreams and how they almost ended the life of Joseph had God not

¹ This garment was only worn by persons exempt from manual labor and by those of rank and wealth. This coat also marked Joseph as one who would succeed his father as chief of the tribe. Genesis Workbook, N.E. Constance
. . . it betokened to Joseph's brothers only too clearly, that their father intended to transfer to Joseph the right of the first-born. Bible History Old Testament. Edersheim

intervened.

- I. Joseph's dreams were from God and not just regular dreams.
 - A. Many people are chasing dreams but they are not God's dreams.
 1. Each of Joseph's brothers no doubt wanted what God had reserved for Joseph.
 2. This is what made them envious.
 - a. Do we become envious when we see how God is blessing others while we do not seem to have the same as they do?
 3. And their envy turned to hatred.
 4. And their hatred turned to murder.
 - a. Two of the older brothers had killed before, wiping out all the men of a village because one of them had raped their sister.
 - b. Killing for them was not a hard thing but an easy thing.
 - c. They had learned back in Haran that if you want something you just take it and no one had better get in your way.
 - d. Listen to how Jacob describes them on his death bed, Gen 49:5-7 5 "Simeon and Levi are brothers; Instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place. 6 Let not my soul enter their council; Let not my honor be united to their assembly; For in their anger they slew a man, And in their self-will they hamstrung an ox. 7 Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob And scatter them in Israel. NKJV
 - B. But essentially God has a dream for everyone.
 1. Now He does not give all of us the same dreams.
 2. Each one receives his own calling.
 3. But the important thing is that we not desire the dreams of another.
- II. Joseph never let go of what God had shown him in his teens.
 - A. When his brothers hated him for it, he knew that it was still from God.
 - B. It will be a full 14 years before Joseph even comes close to his dream but he never lost faith in the revelation of God.
- III. Joseph shined brightly even on the cloudiest day.
 - A. The reason is that his faith never wavered.
 1. Not when he was sold into slavery in Egypt.

2. At that point most people would have given up their dream and given in.
 3. But Joseph could not give up what he knew to be true.
 4. For a number of years he serves Potiphar faithfully and where does it get him.
 5. When Potiphar's wife tries to seduce him he remains faithful but where does it get him.
 6. It gets him thrown into prison.
- B. But then after years there as well he gets a lucky break.
1. Here is Pharaoh's baker and the cup bearer (same word as used in Neh 1:11)
 2. They could speak to the king about his plight so he asks the cup bearer to do so.
 3. But he forgets for 2 full years.
 4. But Joseph keeps waiting patiently.
- C. Joseph understood that the world would be working against him.
1. John 15:16-19 (NKJV) 16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. 17 These things I command you, that you love one another. 18 "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.
 2. Just like God had chosen Joseph over his brethren so God has chosen us that we might shine for him.
 3. 1 Peter 2:9-10 (NKJV) 9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

You can chase after your own dreams or you can take the dream God has for you.

Maybe you have gave up on the dream God gave you. It is not too late. God can still bless you even when you have faltered.

God's dream for Sampson was that he might destroy the enemies of God but he got side tracked with his own dreams. But at the end of his life he was able to do more that he had done in the rest of his life. So can you.