

Joseph(1)

April 21, 2022

The subject of our current study is Joseph, who was a son of Jacob. The goals are to learn what the Bible says about Joseph, what we can learn from his life, and to see how he fit into God's eternal plan. The record of Joseph is provided in Genesis 37 – 50, which attests to his significance.

Background

- Joseph was a son of Jacob, who was a son of Isaac, who was a son of Abraham (Genesis 21:1-3; 25:21-26; 30:22-24).
- His great grandfather, grandfather, and father were the patriarchs of the nation of Israel (Exodus 3:1-6, 13-17; Acts 3:11-13; 7:32).
 - Jacob's name was changed to Israel by the Lord God (Genesis 32:24-28; 35:9-12).
 - The Lord God's covenant with Abraham regarding being the father of a nation of God and whose seed (Christ) would be a blessing to the nations (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-7; Galatians 3:16) was reiterated (confirmed) with Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 26:1-5; 28:14-15).

Jacob's Sons

Joseph was one of twelve children of Jacob, aka Israel (Genesis 35:23-26). Therefore, his family and descendants were one of the twelve tribes of Israel. His mother was Rachel. Jacob's sons were as follows:

- Of wife Leah: Reuben (Jacob's firstborn), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun
- Of wife Rachel: Joseph, Benjamin
- Of Rachel's maid Bilhah: Dan, Naphtali
- Of Leah's maid Zilpah: Gad, Asher

Leah and Rachel were Jacob's wives and, according to Genesis 37:2, Bilhah and Zilpah were also considered to be his wives—all at the same time. God's intent from the beginning was for a man to have one wife (one at a time, anyway—Genesis 2:24; I Timothy 3:2, 12), but the nature of men led to polygamy. God allowed this (Scripture never says that it is right, however), but apparently there was always strife in those relationships. Leah and Rachel were jealous of each other (Genesis 29:1 – 30:24).

Joseph's Youth

Joseph was a shepherd along with his brothers (for their father's flock) and apparently didn't agree with how they were doing their job, so he reported them to his father (Genesis 37:1-2); he may have been asked to report to his father about his brothers (see Genesis 37:12-14). Jacob (Israel) loved Joseph more than his other sons because he was the son of his old age; therefore, he made a multicolored coat or robe for him (Genesis 37:3). His brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him the most (Genesis 3:4).

Joseph then had two dreams that were interpreted to mean that not only his brothers but also his parents would bow down to Joseph. He shared these dreams with his brothers, who hated Joseph even more, and with his father who rebuked him but kept what Joseph had said in his mind (Genesis 37:5-11). Later, his brothers plotted to kill Joseph, but Reuben (the oldest son) persuaded his brothers to throw

him alive into a pit so that he could rescue Joseph later. His brothers removed Joseph's coat and threw him into a pit to leave him to his death (Genesis 37:12-24).

Judah came up with a new plan with his brothers (except Reuben) when a caravan of Ishmaelites (descendants of Isaac's half-brother Ishmael, so related to Jacob's family) was passing by. Instead of leaving Joseph to die and thus be responsible for his death (and having to lie about it), they decided to sell him to the Ishmaelites. Joseph was sold to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt (Genesis 37:25-28).

Reuben went back to the pit to rescue Joseph but found the pit empty. As the firstborn son, Reuben was responsible for Joseph and reporting back to their father. They conspired to make it look like Joseph had been killed by a wild animal by dipping his coat in the blood of a goat (Scripture doesn't say if Reuben was told that Joseph was sold). Israel believed their report and the evidence and mourned greatly. Meanwhile, Joseph had been sold in Egypt to Potiphar, who was the captain of the Pharaoh's guard (Genesis 37:29-36).

Takeaways

There are several lessons from this part of Joseph's life, including:

- The favoritism that Jacob openly showed toward Joseph led his other sons to be jealous of, and despise, Joseph. Because of our tendency to be jealous, we need to be careful how we treat other people so as not to encourage jealousy (Romans 12:3, 16; Philippians 2:3-8).
- Joseph seemed clueless about how he came across to his brothers. Perhaps this is excusable because of his young age (17) as he was trying to please his father (in his mind, therefore, he was doing the right thing). However, this is a lesson to us about how our own words or actions, though seemingly innocent, can adversely impact others (Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 4:6).
- The jealousy of Joseph's brothers led to hatred, a planned and attempted murder, selling him, and lies to cover up their actions. We are not to be jealous (a form of coveting) or hateful, nor are we to be murderers or liars (Matthew 15: 18-19; Galatians 5:19-21; I Timothy 1:9-11).

We will see that all of these things worked out according to God's purpose, despite the sinfulness of everyone involved. However, we can't use sinful thoughts or actions to justify an end result. Recall that Christ's death for our sins (and His resurrection) were part of God's eternal plan for our salvation; however, God still held His people (and the Romans) responsible for killing Christ (Acts 2:22-24; 3:13-15; 4:23-28).