

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GENESIS 37

WE CLOSED GENESIS 35 & 36 LEARNING OF ISAAC'S DEATH AND READING THROUGH THE GENEALOGICAL ACCOUNT OF JACOB & ESAU. NOW THE FOCUS OF OUR READING WILL TURN TO JACOB'S SONS, WITH JOSEPH, HIS FIRST SON THROUGH RACHEL BEING THE LEADING FIGURE.

GENESIS 37:1-4 - JOSEPH

JOSEPH THE SEVENTEEN YEAR OLD SON OF JACOB BECOMES THE FOCUS OF GOD'S STORY. AND HIS INTRODUCTION INTO THAT STORY IS VERY INTERESTING. THE TEXT TELLS US THAT JOSEPH IS LOVED BY HIS FATHER "MORE THAN ALL HIS SONS" (V. 3) AND THAT HIS BROTHERS ALL KNEW THIS. THE MULTICOLORED ROBE WAS ALSO A GIVEAWAY. (DYES AND COLORED WOOLS WOULD HAVE BEEN EXPENSIVE AND SO THIS COAT WOULD HAVE BEEN COSTLY AND RARE).

HERE AGAIN WE SEE THE SINS OF THE FATHERS BEING PASSED ON TO THE SONS. LET'S THINK ABOUT THIS FOR A MOMENT. JACOB WAS THE SON OF ISAAC. REMEMBER THAT ISAAC HAD TWO SONS - ESAU (OLDER) AND JACOB. ESAU WAS A HUNTER AND FAVORED BY HIS FATHER ISAAC.

GENESIS 25:28 - NOW ISAAC LOVED ESAU, BECAUSE HE HAD A TASTE FOR GAME, BUT REBEKAH LOVED JACOB.

AND NOW JACOB IS PASSING ON THIS SAME TRAIT TO JOSEPH! JOSEPH WAS "THE SON OF HIS OLD AGE" AND THE FIRST BORN SON OF JACOB THROUGH RACHEL - HIS FAVORITE WIFE WHO WAS BARREN FOR SO LONG. IT MAKES SENSE THAT JACOB LOVED JOSEPH FOR THIS REASON, BUT FAVORING HIM OVER HIS BROTHERS AND ESSENTIALLY RUBBING THIS FACT IN THEIR FACES WAS NOT KIND OR WISE. YET THE GENERATIONAL DYSFUNCTION CONTINUES.

WE MAY KNOW WHAT THIS IS LIKE, PERHAPS WE HAD A PARENT WHO FAVORED ANOTHER SIBLING OVER US. MAYBE YOUR MOTHER FAVORED THE BOYS OF THE FAMILY OR YOUR FATHER FAVORED THE GIRLS. PERHAPS IT SEEMED LIKE YOUR DIVORCED PARENT(S) FAVORED A NEW SPOUSE OR PARTNER OVER YOU. MAYBE YOUR PARENT(S) RESENTED THE FACT YOU WERE BORN AT ALL BECAUSE OF THE NATURE IN WHICH YOU WERE CONCEIVED. THESE SCENARIOS ALL STING AND SOUR ONE'S HEART AND SENSE OF SELF WORTH.

WHILE THE TEXT DOESN'T SPEAK TO THE EMOTIONAL STATE OF JACOB'S FAMILY, THE CIRCUMSTANCES ARE SURE RIPE FOR THESE KINDS OF WOUNDS TO BE INFLECTED AND THEN GROW. AND ALL OF THIS IS BEFORE WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.

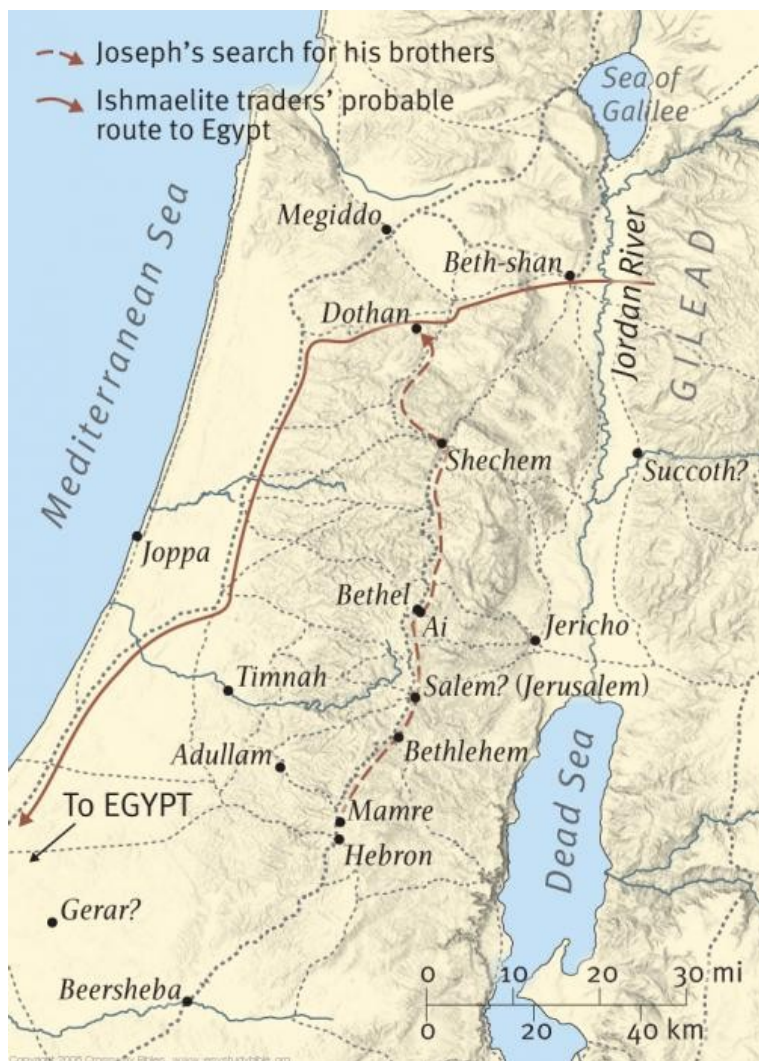
GENESIS 37:5-8 - JOSEPH'S FIRST DREAM

NOT ONLY DOES JACOB FAVOR JOSEPH BUT NOW THE IMPLICATION OF JOSEPH'S DREAMS (AND HIS SHARING THEM WITH HIS FAMILY) IMPLY THAT GOD FAVOR'S JOSEPH TOO! JOSEPH DREAMS ABOUT SHEAVES OF WHEAT IN A FIELD REPRESENTING EACH BROTHER BOWING DOWN TO A TALL BUNDLE OF THIS WHEAT THAT REPRESENTED JOSEPH. WAS JOSEPH INNOCENTLY ASKING FOR HIS OLDER BROTHER'S INSIGHT INTO A DISTURBING DREAM HE HAD? WAS HE AWARE OF THE IMPLIED SYMBOLISM AND RUBBING IT IN THEIR FACES? IT'S HARD TO TELL FROM THESE VERSES ALONE, BUT THE END RESULT WAS MORE HATRED FROM JOSEPH'S BROTHERS TOWARDS THEIR DREAMING LITTLE BRO.

GENESIS 37:9-11 - JOSEPH'S SECOND DREAM

SOME TIME LATER JOSEPH HAS ANOTHER DREAM, THIS TIME WITH SYMBOLIC IMAGERY (SUN, MOON & STARS) WHICH IMPLY THAT NOT ONLY WILL JOSEPH'S BROTHERS WOULD SERVE HIM, BUT ALSO HIS MOTHER (PROBABLY MEANING LEAH AT THIS TIME) AND FATHER JACOB WOULD TOO! JACOB "REBUKES" JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS GET MORE JEALOUS. JACOB FINDS IT SILLY THAT JOSEPH WOULD DREAM ABOUT SUCH THINGS, BUT AT THE SAME TIME TAKES NOT OF IT IN THE QUIETNESS OF HIS HEART. MEANWHILE, JOSEPH IS LEFT STILL TRYING TO SORT OUT WHAT THESE DREAMS MEAN.

GENESIS 37:12-18 - JOSEPH LOOKS FOR BROTHERS, BROTHERS WANT TO KILL HIM



JACOB (NOW REFERRED TO AT TIMES BY "ISRAEL") SENDS YOUNG JOSEPH TO CHECK ON THE WELFARE OF HIS BROTHERS WHO ARE SHEPHERDING JACOB'S FLOCKS FAR FROM WHERE THEY WERE RESIDING IN THE VALLEY OF HEBRON (V. 14). HE FIRST GOES TO SHECHEM (V. 14) AND THEN TRAVELS TO DOTHAN (V. 17).

AT LAST JOSEPH IS ABLE TO LOCATE HIS BROTHERS. REMEMBER THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN TOUGH TO NAVIGATE WITHOUT PHONES AND GPS ETC. SO A LOT OF TIME AND EFFORT IS INVOLVED IN THIS SEARCH. JOSEPH'S BROTHERS SEE JOSEPH'S APPROACH FROM FAR AWAY (PROBABLY BECAUSE WHO ELSE IS WEARING A COLORFUL COAT?) AND BEGIN TO PLOT TO PUT HIM TO DEATH (V. 18)! WOW.

HOW DOES THIS HAPPEN? THIS IS THEIR BROTHER. THESE ARE THE SAME MEN WHO SINNED IN ORDER TO STAND UP FOR THEIR SISTER DINAH WHEN SHE WAS EXPLOITED AND NOW THEY SEE THEIR OWN FLESH AND BLOOD AND LONG TO KILL HIM! JEALOUSY, ANGER, AND HATRED ARE POISONS TO THE SOUL!

JOSEPH IS FAVORED BY JACOB, HAS DREAMS THAT Demean HIS OLDER BROTHERS AND NOW THEY ARE READY TO KILL HIM. YES, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT WE'RE READING BECAUSE THAT IS

EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENS. DAY AFTER DAY WHEN A HUMAN HEART DWELLS ON HOW THEY HAVE BEEN HURT AND OFFENDED, HOW THEY HAVE BEEN EXCLUDED OR PASSED OVER, HOW THEY HAVE BEEN UNLOVED BEGINS TO FILL OUR SOULS WITH POISON AND THIS BITTERNESS, RESENTMENT LEADS TO ANGER, RAGE, AND A DESIRE TO ALLEVIATE THE PAIN AND HURT THAT WE FEEL - OPENING US UP TO CONSIDER AND ENTERTAIN ANY MEANS NECESSARY TO CHANGE OUR SITUATION - EVEN AT TIMES TO DESTROY THE ONE WHO SEEMS TO BE THE REASON WE FEEL THIS WAY.

ADD TO THIS THE EVIL ONE AND HIS FORCES PUSHING HUMANITY AWAY FROM GOD AND WE CAN SEE HOW MURDER HAPPENS, VIOLENCE RETRIBUTION OCCURS, MASS SHOOTINGS CAN BE POSSIBLE AND EVEN DOMESTIC ABUSE EXISTS. IT ALL STARTS IN THE HEART.

JOSEPH'S BROTHERS ARE CRITICIZING HIS RAINBOW JACKET ONE DAY AND TALKING ABOUT KILLING HIM THE NEXT. IT ALL STARTS IN THE HEART.

GENESIS 37:19-24 - THE BROTHERS PLOT TO KILL JOSEPH. REUBEN INTERVIENES. JOSEPH ATTACKED

SURE ENOUGH THE BROTHERS AREN'T JUST MAKING EMPTY THREATS. IF NOT FOR THE ELDEST SON REUBEN'S INTERVENTION (EITHER MOTIVATED BY COMPASSION OR GUILT), THE BROTHERS WOULD HAVE KILLED THEIR YOUNG BROTHER WHEN HE ARRIVED TO CHECK ON THEM. THEY MOCK HIM "*HERE COMES THIS DREAMER*", LITERALLY MEANING "*HERE COMES THE MASTER OF DREAMS*". THEN THEY JUMP HIM, STRIP HIM AND THROW HIM INTO A PIT.

GENESIS 37:25-28 - JOSEPH SOLD TO TRADERS HEADING FOR EGYPT

THE VERY NEXT VERSE AFTER JOSEPH'S BROTHERS ATTACK HIM AND THROW HIM IN A PIT IS GENESIS 37:25 "THEN THEY SAT DOWN TO A MEAL". YIKES! THEY HAVE NO GUILT OR SHAME ABOUT WHAT THEY HAVE JUST DONE! THEY ASSAULT THEIR LITTLE BROTHER AND THEN SAY "PASS THE SALT" AT DINNER!

REUBEN, WHO HAD PLANNED TO SECRETLY SAVE JOSEPH LATER, HAS STEPPED AWAY AND WHILE HE IS GONE THE OTHER BROTHERS CONSPIRE TO MAKE SOME MONEY OFF OF JOSEPH! THEY SEE SOME TRADERS HEADING TO EGYPT AND SELL THEIR BROTHER TO THEM AS A SLAVE. READ THAT AGAIN. JOSEPH'S BROTHERS TAKE HIM UP OUT OF THE PIT AND SELL HIM TO SOME TRADERS HEADING TO EGYPT! (*SEE MAP AGAIN*). AND OFF JOSEPH, THE FAVORED SON OF JACOB, GOES.

GENESIS 37:29-36 - JACOB TOLD JOSEPH HAS DIED

REUBEN RETURNS AND SEES HIS LITTLE BROTHER IS GONE AND IS DEVASTATED WHEN THE OTHER BROTHERS TELL HIM WHAT HAPPENED. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT IS NEARLY AS BAD AS THE ACTIONS THEY HAVE DONE UP TO THIS POINT. THEY TAKE JOSEPH'S COLORFUL CLOAK, RIP IT AND DIPPED IT IN BLOOD. THEY RETURN TO JACOB THEIR FATHER AND LIE TO HIM THAT HIS SON, HIS FAVORITE SON, JOSEPH IS DEAD.

THOUGH WE KNOW JOSEPH IS STILL ALIVE SOMEWHERE, JACOB WILL NOW MOURN IN ANGUISH AND SHOCK THAT HIS SON IS DEAD. PERHAPS HE WILL BLAME HIMSELF FOR SENDING HIM ON THE JOURNEY TO BEGIN WITH? HE MOURNS FOR MANY DAYS AND AS WE WILL SEE GOING FORWARD, LIVES IN FEAR AND IN THE ABUNDANCE OF CAUTION IN HIS DECISIONS TO COME.

AND HIS SONS, THE VERY ONES RESPONSIBLE FOR JOSEPH'S "DEATH" AND DISAPPEARANCE GATHER TO COMFORT THEIR CRUSHED FATHER AND CONSOLE HIM. DISGUSTING.

FOR JACOB, HE IS LIVING IN REAL TIME WITH THE HORRIFIC NEWS OF HIS SON'S DEATH - BUT FOR US, THE CHAPTER ENDS WITH INFORMATION INTO WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT IN THE LIFE OF OUR LEAD MAN JOSEPH. HE'S AFRAID, FAR FROM HOME, AND A SLAVE, BUT HE'S NOT ALONE. WE'LL DISCOVER THE HEART OF THIS MAN AS WE READ ON.

FOR NOW WE WILL PAUSE AND CONSIDER THE MANY EMOTIONS OF THIS CHAPTER. AS WE DISCUSSED ABOVE, JEALOUSY, ANGER AND OTHER EVIL TOXINS POLLUTE THE HUMAN HEART. AT FIRST IT MAY SEEM LIKE THESE FEELINGS ARE INTERNAL, SOMETHING WE CAN HIDE, STUFF, "GET OVER". WE ARE TOLD TO "THINK POSITIVELY", "MOVE ON", "DON'T LIVE IN THE PAST"...YET THESE EVIL THINGS DON'T GO AWAY JUST BECAUSE WE STOP THINKING ABOUT THEM. THIS IS IMPORTANT FOR US TO LEARN AND EMBRACE. HATRED, RESENTMENT, JEALOUSY AND THE LIKE DO NOT GO AWAY JUST BECAUSE THEY ARE BELOW THE SURFACE. PLACED IN THE RIGHT SITUATION, THEY WILL BOIL OVER AND EXPLODE IN OUR LIVES.

IN LIGHT OF THIS MANY PEOPLE STRATEGIZE HOW TO AVOID THE PEOPLE AND SITUATIONS THAT WON'T SET YOU OFF. STAY AWAY FROM FAMILY, STAY AWAY FROM A CERTAIN PERSONALITY, AVOID CONFLICT, AVOID CONFRONTATION, AVOID PEOPLE WHO ASK TOO MANY QUESTIONS, AVOID RELATIONSHIPS THAT MIGHT POKE OR PRY. AND WE THINK WE'RE GOOD BECAUSE WE ARE NOT EXPERIENCING THESE NEGATIVE EMOTIONS AND ACTIONS. BUT REALLY THEY ARE STILL THERE, THEY ARE JUST BELOW THE SURFACE.

THERE WERE SURELY DAYS WHERE JOSEPH'S BROTHERS WEREN'T TICKED OFF ABOUT JOSEPH WHILE THEY WERE DOZENS OF MILES AWAY FROM JOSEPH. THEIR LIVES PROBABLY SEEMED TO IMPROVE WHEN THE CAUSE OF THEIR PROBLEMS, IN THEIR MINDS JOSEPH, WASN'T AROUND. MAYBE THE BROTHERS EVEN VOLUNTEERED TO GO WITH THE FLOCKS JUST TO GET OUT OF TOWN AND HAVE A CHANGE OF SCENERY. BUT REALLY ALL THAT WAS HAPPENING WAS THEY WERE PUTTING THEMSELVES IN A PLACE TO AVOID THE EVIL IN THEIR SOULS TO BE STIRRED UP. AND THEN ONE DAY THEY SAW JOSEPH AND HIS COLORFUL COAT ON THE HORIZON AND EVERYTHING STARTED TO BUBBLE UP AGAIN. SEE IT WASN'T GONE, IT WAS HIDDEN. THEY HADN'T CHANGED, THEY HAD JUST BEEN AVOIDING. THEIR STRATEGY DIDN'T WORK. AS SOON AS JOSEPH CAME BACK INTO THE PICTURE THE SLEEPING SINS AWOKES AND THEY PLANNED TO MURDER AND ULTIMATELY BEAT JOSEPH, SOLD JOSEPH AND LIED STRAIGHT FACED TO THEIR FATHER - DESTROYING HIS WORLD.

HERE'S A BETTER IDEA. INSTEAD OF LIVING A LIFE ON THE RUN FROM THE PLACES AND PEOPLE THAT WILL STIR UP THE EVIL INSIDE OF YOU, SURRENDER TO JESUS CHRIST AND ALLOW GOD TO CHANGE YOUR HEART - IN FACT, HE WANTS TO GIVE US A NEW HEART AND A NEW MIND THAT WORKS AS IT SHOULD. THOUGH WE STILL WILL BE CHALLENGED WITH EVIL AND TEMPTED TO SIN, WE WON'T NEED TO FEAR FACING THE THINGS INSIDE US BECAUSE WE CAN BE FORGIVEN AND FREE FROM ANY AND ALL SIN.

CHRISTIAN, DON'T LIVE A LIFE ON THE RUN, DON'T LIVE A LIFE OF FEAR OR FEELING YOU HAVE TO SUPPRESS AND HIDE - INSTEAD, WE CAN FIND FREEDOM.

HERE'S AN IDEA - LIVE YOUR LIFE IN SECRET, WEARING A MASK, HIDING WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON IN YOUR SOUL, RUNNING FROM PEOPLE AND SITUATIONS THAT WILL CHALLENGE YOU, PRETENDING TO BE "BETTER" WHEN YOU'RE BROKEN. JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT ACTIVELY BEATING PEOPLE UP DOESN'T MEAN THE ANGER IS BURIED IN THE PIT OF YOUR SOUL. IS THAT HOW YOU WANT TO LIVE?

HERE'S A BETTER IDEA - RECEIVE A NEW HEART AND THE COURAGE TO FACE OUR FEARS AND ALLOW GOD TO CHANGE US. THEN, NO MATTER WHAT YOU HAVE TO FACE OR WHO YOU HAVE TO BE AROUND, YOU CAN BE FREE AND COURAGEOUS AND HOLY IN HEART, MIND AND SOUL.

THAT SOUNDS GOOD TO ME.