

**In The Beginning: Session 46: Meeting Joseph**

בְּרֵאשִׁית

- Summer reading book: *God Meant It For Good*, by R.T. Kendall
- Missed classes can be found at: [www.htchurch.com/genesis](http://www.htchurch.com/genesis)

Moses begins to introduce us to Joseph. There are three ways to look at his story:

- As just the story of a loving father, a spoiled son, jealous brothers, a crafty wife, and an international famine.
- As a story as with deep theological implications.
- We will see Joseph as an illustration of Jesus.

**Joseph Dreams of Greatness**

*<sup>1</sup>Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. <sup>2</sup>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.*

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*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.*

- Moses makes it a point to note that he is with the brothers of Jacob’s concubines, Bilhah and Zilpah.
- Joseph comes home the tattle-tale and spills the beans on his older brothers!
- Jacob continued to show favoritism toward Joseph.
- Moses mentions this tunic or coat “of many colors.”
- Joseph’s brothers couldn’t stand him, were very jealous and resentful, and didn’t speak nicely to him.

### **The First Dream**

*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.*

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*<sup>9</sup> 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.” <sup>10</sup> 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?” <sup>11</sup> And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.*

- Joseph can't help himself and pours out the first dream he has been given to his brothers.
- Joseph has a second dream and tells it again to his brothers.
- The hand of God was clearly orchestrating something in Joseph's life.

### **Joseph Sold by His Brothers**

*<sup>12</sup> Then his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. <sup>13</sup> And Israel said to Joseph, “Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.” So he said to him, “Here I am.” <sup>14</sup> Then he said to him, “Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me.” So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem.*

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*<sup>15</sup> Now a certain man found him, and there he was, wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying, “What are you seeking?” <sup>16</sup> So he said, “I am seeking my brothers. Please tell me where they are feeding their flocks.”<sup>17</sup> And the man said, “They have departed from here, for I heard them say, ‘Let us go to Dothan.’” So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan.*

Jacob sends Joseph to check on his 10 older brothers and their herds, but this is an interesting scenario for a few reasons:

- Hebron is 20 miles south of Jerusalem and Shechem is 30 miles north.
- Consider that Simeon and Levi have a recent bloody history with Shechem, why would the brothers keep their sheep so close to that city?
- Why would Jacob send Joseph alone, wearing his fancy coat?
- He arrives at Shechem and wanders around looking for his brothers.
- A man finds Joseph wandering around.

*<sup>18</sup> Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. <sup>19</sup> Then they said to one another, “Look, this dreamer is coming! <sup>20</sup> Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, ‘Some wild beast has devoured him.’ We shall see what will become of his dreams!”*

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*<sup>21</sup> But Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, “Let us not kill him.” <sup>22</sup> And Reuben said to them, “Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him”—that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father. <sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup> Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it.*

- The brothers see Joseph coming and immediately huddle up to decide his fate.
- Reuben, who doesn't need to invoke any more of Jacob's anger, somehow stands up for Joseph and asks for his life to be spared.
- The brothers stripped Joseph of his coat.

*<sup>25</sup> And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt. <sup>26</sup> So Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?*

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*27 Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh.” And his brothers listened. 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.*

- The callousness of the brothers is in evidence here since they sat down to eat a meal.
- The brothers saw these merchants passing nearby and Judah comes up with the hare-brained scheme of selling Joseph as a slave
- These Midianite traders are also referred to as Ishmaelites, a nod to rivalry and strife between siblings.
- 20 shekels of silver was the going rate for a young male slave.

*29 Then Reuben returned to the pit, and indeed Joseph was not in the pit; and he tore his clothes. 30 And he returned to his brothers and said, “The lad is no more; and I, where shall I go?” 31 So they took Joseph’s tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood. 32 Then they sent the tunic of many colors, and they brought it to their father and said, “We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son’s tunic or not?”*

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*33 And he recognized it and said, “It is my son’s tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces.” 34 Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. 35 And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, “For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning.” Thus his father wept for him.*

*36 Now the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard.*

- Reuben had obviously tried to get away from this whole mess.
- It is possible that Reuben’s plan all along had been to rescue Joseph
- The brothers bloody Joseph’s coat and send it home to Jacob.
- Jacob’s reaction is not surprising.
- Jacob insists he will mourn for the rest of his life.
- There is bitter irony here in what was done.
- Finally, we see that Joseph ends up in Egypt.

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