

Genesis 37: 12-36

Joseph Goes to Egypt

It was God's special plan for Joseph to go to Egypt! Joseph was an exceptional young man, the favorite son of Jacob's favorite wife, in a mixed family with 12 boys and 4 mothers. There was incredible rivalry and jealousy, even hatred. Notice that going to Egypt was NOT Joseph's idea! God had BIG plans for his life and for the protection of his family!

“Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, and Jacob [his father] said to Joseph, ‘As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them. Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me.’ Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron. So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.

‘Here comes that dreamer!’ they said to each other. ‘Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams.’ When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. ‘Let's not take his life,’ he said. ‘Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him.’ Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.

So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing—and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it. As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their

way to take them down to Egypt. Judah said to his brothers, ‘What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.’ His brothers agreed.

So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels [about 8 ounces or 230 grams] of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt. When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes [an act of mourning]. He went back to his brothers and said, ‘The boy isn’t there! Where can I turn now?’

Then they got Joseph’s robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. They took the ornate robe back to their father and said, ‘We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son’s robe.’ He recognized it and said, ‘It is my son’s robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces.’

Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. ‘No,’ he said, ‘I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave.’ So his father wept for him.

Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard.”

New International Version (NIV)

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In this family, Jacob had two wives, each of which had a servant who also served as concubine, bearing more children to Jacob. So there were a total of 12 boys (plus

girls) born of 4 mothers in this very mixed family, which sounds worse than most soap operas on television today! Joseph was already the favorite son of Jacob's favorite wife, but when he started sporting his special coat and spouting dreams of superiority, that was just too much for the brothers. When Joseph visited them in the field, the brothers hated him and plotted to kill him. Two of these brothers, Reuben and Judah, were mentioned in this true story by name. Reuben, the first-born of Jacob, tried to save Joseph by putting him in a cistern instead of killing him. This noble effort was foiled when Judah and the rest of the brothers successfully sold Joseph to a passing caravan that was headed for Egypt.

The full story here is that God wanted Joseph, from this dysfunctional family, to be in Egypt, because a famine was coming to their homeland. Please stay tuned to the rest of this miraculous story from Genesis 39 and continuing into Exodus.

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Dr. Robert J. Rapalje, Retired
Seminole State College of Florida
Altamonte Springs Campus
Email: rapaljer@mathinlivingcolor.com