

Sent: Wednesday, April 10, 2019 3:31 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Genesis 37

"The steps of a good man are established by the Lord, and He delights in his way. When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, because the Lord is the One who holds his hand!" (Psalm 37:23-24, NAS)

Last nite we dwelt with the opening lesson of the "Joseph narrative" which, according to Constable, "sets the stage for the masterfully-told story of betrayal, suspense and intrigue--including the events in Joseph's life that lead up to the formation of Israel as a nation--but, more than that, illustrating how God is at work in the lives of those who truly trust Him, even though their experiences are painful but not without redemptive value"!

Our lesson begins, in Genesis 37:2--in the land of Canaan--with Joseph, at seventeen years of age, "pasturing the flock (of sheep) with his brothers" (drawing our minds to later passages about the shepherd-boy David). But the narrative quickly turns "sour" for his brothers when Joseph gives a "bad report" about them to his father Jacob! And it's only compounded when they see all too clearly that their father (here notably named "Israel") "loved Joseph more than all his sons," and demonstrated it, for all to see, by making him a "coat of many colors"--a "robe," Arnold notes, more commonly reserved for royalty than for a 17-year old boy"! One which Joseph apparently never hesitated to "flaunt" before them!

We can all understand, in a way, the feelings of Jacob for Joseph, as the long-awaited son of his "favorite" wife, Rachel, whom he had lost some years before! Perhaps one, in his older years, who realized how he had failed in many ways as a father for his older sons and now became overly protective of, and wrapped around, his fair-haired Joseph, who sought to do everything his father asked!

But this "favoritism" shown within the family circle only led--as it always does--to jealousy and disdain for the one overly favored! Genesis 37:4 says Joseph's brothers "hated him and couldn't (even) speak to him on friendly terms"! (And so, jealousy and sibling rivalry continued to mark the Genesis account, starting with Cain and Abel, and certainly characterized by the Patriarchal families! James 3:16 says: "For where there is jealousy and strife, there is disorder and every evil thing!")

But there's more! The "two dreams" Joseph had--and shared, perhaps innocently, but naively and insensitively--with his family! The first (in vs. 5-8) involving "sheaves" he and his brothers were "binding" in the field, with theirs bowing down to his! The second in vs. 9-11, "beholding the sun and moon and eleven stars (representing guess who?) bowing down to him"! This second one even perplexed his father! (The dreams, it turns out, were actually revelations from God, confirming His choice of, and divine plan for, Joseph--in some ways a "type" of Christ--although not understood, or revealed, at that point, to any of them!)

Well, you know the rest of the story! How the brothers "plotted to kill Joseph--and just happened to be given that opportunity when, one day, Jacob--again so seemingly naive and without understanding--sent Joseph, wearing his coat of many colors, out to Shechem, some fifty miles to the north, to "see about the welfare of your brothers"! Turns out that they had actually taken their sheep to greener pastures in Dotham, about 15 miles still further north! And Joseph

was only able to find them, verse 15 says, after "a man found him" and directed him to Dotham! (Can you see God "providentially" working through all this?)

The brothers "saw from a distance the dreamer coming," and planned to kill him and "throw him into one of the pits"! Then, they said, "we'll see what will become of his dreams"! (How ironic! If they only knew!) But, interestingly, Reuben, the oldest brother (who would be the one to have to give an account to Jacob) insisted that they "shed no blood," but simply throw him into the pit and let him die!" (If they just threw him into the pit alive, he would return to rescue him, and "restore him to his father," or so he thought!)

At some point, after Reuben was apparently given an update on events that had transpired, and re-joined in the conspiracy, Judah conjured up the idea of selling him to Ishmaelite (or Midianite) traders (who just happened to be part of the extended Abrahamic family), who "just happened" to be passing by in a caravan route, which "just happened" to be headed to where else? Egypt! (Can you now see God's "providential plan" in all this?) And that's what happened! Joseph was "sold" for 20 shekels of silver--the "going rate" for a slave at the time!

But the brothers needed an explanation, and alibi, for Jacob! And so, Genesis 37:30 says, they "slaughtered a male goat and dipped the tunic (Joseph's "coat of many colors") in the blood...and brought it to their father"! And, with great deceit and feigned feelings of sadness, asked whether it just might be the tunic of Joseph!

A grieved and heart-broken, and totally deceived, Jacob, fell for the story--"tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days...refusing to be comforted!" (As Constable notes, Jacob, who had deceived his own father with the "skin of a goat" (in Genesis 27:16) was now deceived by his own sons with the "blood of a goat"! Showing again that "what goes around comes around!")

How ironic, as again Constable notes, that "by selling Joseph into Egypt, his brothers actualized the dreams they sought to subvert!" (But again, all in the "providence" of God!)

And so, Joseph is taken to Egypt (just where God placed him!) and there sold to "Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard" (vs. 36). All in accordance with the plan of God, understood only in retrospect for those who now know the rest of the story! And can grasp a little bit more of how God has worked throughout the book of Genesis, and throughout the entire Bible, and throughout all of history--and continues to work in our world! And, believe it or not--whether we see it or not--in our very lives! Today!

O the "providence" of God! Psalm 103:19: "The Lord has established His throne in the heavens; and His sovereignty rules over all!" Here's another: "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things! To Him be the glory forever! Amen."

And so, go with God this week, men, and remember that "the steps of a good man are established by the Lord--and He delights in His way...!"

Lowell