

The Brothers of Joseph Gen. 37:1-36

Introduction:

When we look at the life of Joseph, we often notice the providence of God. We take special note of how God took care of Joseph in all things, even when Joseph was in prison. However, one thing that we often do not notice is why Joseph ended up where he did. (It is not our goal to diminish the will or plan of God in this story, but rather to see how the jealousy of the brothers of Joseph impacted his life.) Today, we will look at the jealousy that Joseph's brothers had for him; and we will see how that same kind of jealousy can impact our lives today.

In this chapter, we read of the brothers of Joseph being envious of him. The original Hebrew term "qana" (kaw-naw') is translated both as envy and jealousy. For the purpose of this lesson, we will look at both envy and jealousy as the same thing.

I. Notice the context of the jealousy (otherwise known as the reason for their hatred of Joseph) of the brothers of Joseph (37:1-11).

- A. Joseph "brought a bad report...to their father" about the work that his brothers were doing (37:2).
- B. Jacob loved Joseph more than his other children (37:3-4).
 1. Jacob gave Joseph "a tunic of many colors."
 2. This showed Jacob's favoritism to Joseph.
- C. Joseph also had two dreams that added to the brother's hatred of him (37:5-11).
 1. The sheaf of Joseph stood upright (37:6-8).
 - a. The sheaves of the brothers bowed down to Joseph's sheaf.
 - b. The brothers asked, "Shall you reign over us?" (37:8)
 - c. There is more hatred of Joseph because of this dream.
 2. The sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed down to Joseph (37:9-11).
 - a. Jacob rebuked Joseph, saying, "Shall you mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?" (37:10).
 - b. The brothers envied him because of these things, while his father kept these things in his mind (37:11).

These are three of the reasons that the brothers of Joseph hated him.

II. Notice what the brothers of Joseph did because of their jealousy (37:12-36).

- A. Joseph goes to find them in the field in Shechem (37:12-17).
 1. He cannot find them in Shechem.
 2. A certain man saw Joseph and asked him what he was doing.
 3. This man tells Joseph that he heard them say they were going to Dothan.
 4. Joseph goes to Dothan and finds his brothers.
- B. Joseph's brothers make plans to kill Joseph (37:18-22).

1. When Joseph comes to his brothers, even while he is far away from them, they make plans to kill him (37:18-20).
 2. Reuben, the oldest brother, convinces the others to throw him into a pit instead of killing him (37:21-22).
 3. The ultimate plan of Reuben was to come back later and rescue his brother and bring him back to his father (37:22).
- C. When Joseph came to them, they put their plan into action (37:23-24).
1. They took this colorful tunic (the coat of many colors) and ripped it off of him.
 2. They threw Joseph into a dry, empty pit.
- D. It is one thing for siblings to threaten each other or to take some sort of small revenge on each others, but the events that take place after this are truly mind-boggling (37:23-24).
1. The brothers, with Joseph in the pit, “sat down to eat a meal” (37:25).
 - a. Their conscience was so seared with jealousy that they could eat, even with their brother in a pit.
 - b. But their jealousy does not end there.
 2. As they were eating, a “company of Ishmaelites” came past them on their way to Egypt (37:25).
 3. Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? {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" (37:26-27).
 4. The brothers listened to Judah; and they sold him for 20 shekels of silver (37:27-28).
 - a. These Ishmaelites took Joseph to Egypt with them.
 - b. Because the brothers were so jealous of Joseph, they sold him, their own flesh and blood, into slavery.
 5. This is extreme jealousy.
- E. When Reuben returned to the pit, he noticed that Joseph was missing (37:29-36).
1. Reuben tears his clothes and goes to his brothers, asking about Joseph (37:29-30).
 2. In order to deceive their father, the brothers take a kid from the goats and kill it (37:31).
 3. They dip the coat of Joseph in the blood and take it back to their father (37:32-35).
 - a. Jacob recognizes the coat and believes that his son was killed by wild animals.
 - b. Jacob mourned many days for his son.
 - c. He was not able to be comforted by any, but rather said that he would “go down into the grave to my son in mourning” (37:35).
- F. Notice again what the brothers did to Joseph because of their jealousy.
1. They made plans to kill Joseph.
 2. When they are talked out of that plan, they take Joseph and throw him into a dry pit.

3. They bring him out of the pit and sell him to the Ishmaelites, thinking that they would never see him again.
4. They allow their father to believe that his son was killed by wild animals.
5. All these things they did because of jealousy.
 - a. They were flat-out heartless because of their jealousy.

III. If nothing else, we can learn from this story that we need to be careful not to let jealousy rule our lives.

- A. The brothers of Joseph did all of these things to him because of jealousy and envy.
 1. It cannot be stressed enough.
 2. A very young man was ripped from his family because of jealousy.
- B. We need to make sure that we are not jealous of others and the things that they have.
 1. Jealousy leads us to do things that we normally would not do.
 2. Several times, envy is listed amongst many other sins.
 - a. Rom. 1:20-32
 - b. Gal. 5:19-21
- C. In fact, we need to get away from envy and jealousy.
 1. I Pet. 2:1 - Therefore, laying aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking,
 2. We should not be jealous of someone else's money, possessions, abilities and talents, social rank, or anything else.
 3. We need to treat envy and jealousy as the sin that it is.
- D. We need to understand that our God is a jealous God.
 1. Ex. 20:4-6 - You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; {5} you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, {6} but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.
 2. Ex. 34:13-14 - But you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images {14} for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God),
 3. Deut. 4:24 - For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.
 4. Simply put: God gets really upset when we serve something besides Him.
- E. It was because of envy that our Lord was killed on the cross.
 1. Mt. 27:18 - For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.
 2. Envy kills.

Conclusion: