

JOSEPH SOLD INTO SLAVERY

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Lesson: Genesis 37

We are told in the Word in the book of Genesis that Jacob had twelve sons, but he loved Joseph, the next to youngest, best of all. Now Joseph was not perfect to begin with, and he may have been a “tattle-tale” sometimes, because he used to tell his father about what his brothers were doing when they were bad, perhaps just to get them into trouble, and not to be useful and helpful to his father. This made the brothers hate Joseph. And when Jacob made Joseph a coat of many colors and did not give his brothers anything, they hated Joseph much more. They thought that their father should have given them something as well, and they were very jealous of Joseph.

Then Joseph dreamed about some stalks of wheat. His were much higher than his brothers’ and his father’s. When he told his brothers about the dream, they hated him so much for telling them that they decided to kill him.

One day, when his father sent him out into the countryside to see how his brothers were caring for the flocks, his brothers grabbed Joseph and threw him into a pit. Reuben, the oldest, asked the other brothers not to kill him, because he was going to free Joseph. But Reuben went away for a while. Then some Ishmaelites came by, and Judah, the fourth son, said that they could sell Joseph to them, because he didn’t want to kill Joseph either. So Joseph was then taken to Egypt as a slave. When Reuben heard about what had happened he was sad.

The brothers killed a goat kid and sprinkled the blood all over Joseph’s coat of many colors and went back to Jacob. Jacob thought that a ferocious animal had eaten Joseph up, and he was very sad.

A while ago, we talked about Esau and Jacob. You may remember that Jacob stands for truth in the stories of the Word, and what is needed by all of us to do the things that we should in the best way. Today we are talking about Joseph. Joseph also stands for true things, but he also stands for the Lord, who gives and teaches the truth that we need to be really good. And Joseph stands for the truth that the Lord gives to the angels high up in the middle of heaven who guide us and help us to learn about the Lord and to love our neighbor.

Did you notice in the story that the way Joseph’s brothers treated him was something like how the Jews treated the Lord during much of His life on earth

and when they had Him killed? And also that the ones who sold Joseph and who sold the Lord for pieces of silver were the ones they should have been able to trust?

If we borrow something from someone else, then we should return it soon. It may be a neighbor's wagon or bicycle or book. If we have kept it too long, a little present besides might be a good idea, because we have been trusted to keep something of someone else's and to keep it safely while we have it. And if someone trusts our promise and is counting on us to do something which helps others, then we should try hard to see that we do it. These would be things like taking out the trash or shoveling snow, making a project for school or Sunday school, being a guide for the boys or girls club, or doing something for a sick friend or someone who is unhappy.

Doing the things that we are counted on to do, because we know that we should and wish to do as we should, is something like having a coat of many colors that Jacob made for Joseph. The colors stand for our love for others and for good things that we know to do and *do*.

But sometimes there are children who are jealous of others in their family or in school who get to do more things or who get more gold stars, or who seem to be more favored than *they* are. And there are those who are tempted to say bad things about others, or to gang up on them and hurt them after school, or to injure their things in some way. If they do that, they are tempted by evil spirits that come from a dark black hell, just as Joseph's brothers were when they sold him into slavery to the Midianites who were on their way down into Egypt.

When such children, as have very often let evil spirits tell them what to do grow up, then worse spirits may tempt them. These worse spirits try to get them to say things bad about the Lord and about heaven and to do things in their lives that their parents and others would be very much ashamed of and very sorry about. But if we are like Reuben, and have faith in and love the Lord, we will turn our minds away from bad thoughts of hating and being jealous of others, do the things that we should, and let the high angels also meant by Joseph lead us.

Do you know that these angels are always trying to help us to get out of bad ruts or pits that we may be in and to help us to see the wonderful and colorful things that the Lord has put into our minds for our use in this life? These things are certain skills and ideas; for inventions and writing things; for caring for others; for building things that are useful; for protecting our country and helping to produce more food for people; for helping others learn about the Lord and many things in creation; and also for making many things that others will appreciate and be helped by and be made happier by.

All of these things are like what Reuben and perhaps Judah would have liked to do later—to lift Joseph up out of the pit. And instead of selling him into slavery, they may have wanted to give him back the coat of many colors, which his father Israel had given to him because he loved Joseph the most of all. And we remember that in spite of all of the trouble that Joseph had with many people who were led by evil spirits, he became like a king in Egypt. And he was given many wonderful things to wear that were resplendent with marvelous bright colors, and all because he loved the Lord and followed Him and did many things for his fellow-men. *Amen.*