

Treachery

Long Beach Alliance Church • September 17th, 2006 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**JUDAH SAID TO HIS BROTHERS,
“WHAT PROFIT IS IT FOR US TO KILL
OUR BROTHER AND COVER UP HIS
BLOOD? “COME AND LET US SELL HIM
TO THE ISHMAELITES AND NOT LAY
OUR HANDS ON HIM, FOR HE IS OUR
BROTHER, OUR OWN FLESH.” AND HIS
BROTHERS LISTENED TO HIM.**

~GENESIS 37:26-27 (NASB)

1) An Unexpected Journey

- A) Considering the hatred which Jacob’s sons have for their brother, it is shocking that Joseph is sent to Shechem to “bring word” on his brothers (Genesis 37:12-14).

- B) Simultaneously, considering the history which Jacob’s sons have in Shechem (Genesis 34:25-31), Jacob’s concern for his sons is understandable.

- C) Joseph cannot find his brothers in Shechem (about 50 miles north of Hebron), but continues to Dothan (another 14 miles north) on the word of a mysterious stranger (37:12-17).

2) Jealousy Leads To Treachery

- A) As Joseph approaches, his brothers see him (perhaps because of his colorful tunic), and hatch a plot to kill him (37:18-20).

- B) Only Reuben (his oldest brother) steps in to prevent Joseph's death (37:21). Reuben hoped to deliver Joseph back to his father unharmed (cf. 37:29-30). No reason is given for Reuben's actions, although as the oldest, he would have deeply desired the favor of his father (37:22).

- C) As Joseph arrives, he is stripped of his special tunic and thrown into an empty pit (37:23-24). His brothers are so hardened toward their brother, they eat a meal in the midst of their treacherous treatment of Joseph (37:25a).

- D) It is notable that Joseph says nothing to his brothers or in objection to his treatment. While there is no way to know Joseph's feelings, this forced "bottom of the pit" reversal in Joseph's life left Joseph with only God to which to cling.

3) The Hand Of God Intervenes

- A) A travelling group of traders* headed for Egypt comes upon

* The traders are identified as both Ishmaelites (Genesis 37:25) and Midianite traders (37:28). Some commentators see this clear discrepancy and claim that this is proof of multiple sources for authorship in the Genesis accounts, specifically in the Joseph narrative. However, Judges 8:22-28 clearly states that Midianites and Ishmaelites are overlapping, identical terms. In other words, the two names were used interchangeably to refer to North Arabian caravaneers who branched off through Gilead (37:25) from the main transport route on the way to Egypt. The interchange of "Ishmaelites" and "Midianites" in Genesis 37 suggests that at one time the Ishmaelites were the most prominent confederation of nomads in southern Palestine, and that their name might be linked with other groups. This would mean that "Ishmaelite" in Genesis 37 is not primarily an ethnic designation but is a catchall term for nomadic travelers. Thus "Ishmaelite" is the more generic term (Bedouin nomad), while "Midianite" is the more specific ethnic term. (Collected from various sources, esp. *Genesis (NICOT)*, by Victor P. Hamilton, page 423).

the brothers, when Judah gets the idea of selling his brother, rather than (slowly or quickly) killing him (37:25-27).

- B) While Judah is no hero (his idea was a capital crime in Jewish (Exodus 21:16, Deuteronomy 24:7) and local law), it is notable that Joseph's "deliverance" comes through Judah.
- C) When Reuben returns (from checking the flocks?), he finds that Joseph has been sold (37:30-31). Reuben cries out at the thwarting of his plan, "What will I do?!" (with Jacob)?

4) A Secret Sealed In Blood

- A) The ten remaining brothers create a secret plot to fool their father and be rid of their "dreamer" brother forever (37:31).
- B) The brothers dip Joseph's precious tunic in blood from a goat and present it to Jacob who is convinced of Joseph's death and mourns for Joseph for many days (37:32-34).
- C) Jacob rejects the comforting words of his sons and daughters, rather reasoning to himself that he will proceed to the afterlife[†] (or underworld, literally, "Sheol") in continual mourning for Joseph (37:35).
- D) Yet, the text leads us, the story of Joseph has only begun (37:36), for the LORD is with Joseph (39:2)...

[†] At this point in Hebrew/Israelite history, any idea of spending eternity in the presence of God as His adopted child with Heaven as an eternal home has never been conceived. For Jacob, there is only an afterlife of Sheol, the underworld. Jacob will mourn until he reaches Sheol, where the bitterness of his life will be complete.