



Chapter 37 - Answers

These final chapters in the book of Genesis describe for us the character and personalities of the 12 sons of Jacob. These 12 sons are the future of the world.

Here they are in the order of their birth:

Reuben	1
Simeon	2
Levi	3
Judah	4
Dan	5
Naphtali	6
Gad	7
Asher	8
Issachar	9
Zebulun	10
Joseph	11
Benjamin	12

Chapter 37:

1. :1-4 Name three reasons the sons of Jacob hated Joseph. - I found 5.
 - a. He was the son of the favorite wife, Rachel.
 - b. He was the youngest, and born when his father was already old, therefore the favorite...the spoiled one.
 - c. He was a tattler-tale. He brought a bad report of his brothers to their father.
 - d. He was loved the most by their father. Not a secret.
 - e. He was made a special coat by his father because he was loved the most.
2. :5-11 Were Joseph's dreams going to come true? What did they show about Joseph? Should he have kept them to himself? Was he persecuted for having a close walk with God....or was he vain?

Joseph had 2 dreams. One of his brother's sheaves of grain bowing down to his sheaves. And then another of the sun, moon and stars bowing down to him. Both of these dreams had the same theme - that Joseph would be the one who was in authority over his brothers and even over his parents. Verse 10 shows that Joseph's father understood the 2nd dream to say that Jacob (the father) was the moon, Rachel (the mother) was the sun, and the brothers the stars.

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What did these dreams show about Joseph? Were they proof positive that Joseph was a self-centered boy? Or did they show that Joseph was actually a prophet?

The reason I say that is because the dreams did come true. In the closing chapters of Genesis we see how perfectly they were fulfilled. Joseph did end up being the one in authority over the family...and Joseph, in fact, saved the whole family from extinction.

Joseph was a prophet in 2 ways: One, the family did end up bowing down to him. And two, the description he gave of his family - the sun, moon and stars - is one that is repeated in the book of Revelation. (Revelation 12:1) And Joseph's dream helps us understand what Revelation is referring to. Interesting....the dream of a young boy (probably spoiled) prophet, dreamed about 4,000 years ago, helps us understand today a part of scripture which was written in 100AD. Wow. Do you ever doubt that every word of the Bible was directed by God, and that it is relevant for today? This story in Genesis, alone, should convince you of the truth - God wrote every word of the Bible, and every word is true and relevant, even today.

2nd Peter 1:21 ... for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

2nd Timothy 3:16 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Should Joseph have kept these dreams to himself? I don't think so. I think when God gives you a message you have no choice but to speak it, no matter what the consequences.

Did Joseph expect open arms from his brothers after these two anger-producing dreams? I don't know...but I do know he was going to walk through a really rough time because he was willing to speak about the dreams the Lord had given him. The lessons he would learn from his approaching suffering would mold him into the man he needed to be in order to fulfill those dreams.

We're going to see, over and over again in the next few chapters of Genesis, that what looked uncommonly unfair in Joseph's life was actually shockingly valuable...to the family...to Joseph...and to the world.

3. :12-20 How could their hatred of their brother be so intense that they would want to kill him?

Hatred is so strong. So powerful. The only thing more powerful is love.

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Hatred usually starts out as envy. Or jealousy. Or pride. Or lust. Or desire. Or greed. Or even "like". Or self-interest.

But when all those "little" sins are nursed and encouraged and fed, they grow and can become hate. And hate is way, way strong. Hate can easily make you want to hurt or kill someone.

The only thing more powerful is love.

That's why Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead.

He was hated by those who at first were just jealous of Him. He was hated by those who "liked" Him, but didn't want to admit He was God and bow their knee to Him. He was hated by those who were interested in bettering their lives, and He wasn't making things better.

He chose to love those who hated Him, instead of hating them back.

"For God so loved the world He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Love wins.

4. :21-22 Why did Reuben try to save him from death?

Reuben apparently had a conscience, perhaps not as far gone in hate as some of the other brothers. He had a plan - pretend to go along with the brothers, but not to the point of killing Joseph. Why?

Remember, Reuben was the oldest. It's real possible he felt that "oldest child" pressure to keep the peace in the family. Whatever his reason, he is to be commended that he saved Joseph's life. He suggested that the brothers cast Joseph into a deep pit so he could be dealt with later. Reuben's plan was to go secretly and save Joseph out of the pit and take him back home to their father.

5. :23-28 What other brother spared him from death? Why?

Judah also was part of saving Joseph's life. Did he have compassion on Joseph, or did he just think it would be better for Joseph to die by someone else's hands? We don't know.

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6. :29-36 Who was harmed the most by this violent act of jealousy? Joseph? Jacob? The brothers?

They were all deeply scarred by the violence that came from their hatred. We will see in the chapters to come what great suffering and probably despair Joseph went through. We will also see Joseph's father, Jacob, reeling so much from the shock of hearing of his son's "death" that he never was the same again. And the brothers - even the ones who tried to prevent Joseph's death - their lives began to fall apart immediately.

Hatred never has a good ending.

But love wins.

7. How can a person stop being jealous?

The Bible has lots to say about sin. It has lots to say specifically about jealousy and hatred. I think it can all be summed up this way:

- Romans 6:23 says the end result of sin is death. Irreversible. *"The wages of sin is death."*
- Romans 3:24 says the solution to the guaranteed death sentence is that Someone else has taken the death sentence for us *"...being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"*
- John 3:36 makes it very clear what we must do - believe that Jesus took the death sentence for us. *"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life: and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."*

So does becoming a believer in Jesus mean you will never struggle with jealousy or hatred again?

- No - but here is God's help for us after we have believed in Jesus and received the wonderful gift of His love and forgiveness: Fill your life with God's truth, and turn away from the sin you still desire to commit. *"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."* Ephesians 4:30&31