

How to Become Boss

A Case History

Book 1 of 2

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First, he's in prison in his own country in a well pit. Then, he's in prison in Potiphar's jail. Now, he's in prison again. What is God trying to teach Joseph? What is He trying to do with him? He's put in a prison, then given authority and rulership as he had in Potiphar's house. Could it be that being put in prison again he may be learning something as he did in the well pit - that he is being prepared for a greater work? Is it possible, that even though he's in prison he has enough insight to see that God really is in control - that God really is preparing this man to be ruler over a great and mighty land?
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Introduction

I stand before a Sunday school class and see faces, and I'm sure hearts, that are tired and discouraged. They're really wondering if God is in control. They're really wondering if there is any sense - rhyme or reason to all of this. They are people who have heard God's promises, have been taught to pray and believe on Him, but still, day after day, more problems come. Satan gets the victory. As we go to the Word, we know there is strength and encouragement, yea all that we need, found in its pages, if we come to it in the right spirit.

We read about the accounts of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Paul and all of the famous patriarchs. We read the stories over and over and tell the stories to our children. And yet, there is still a lacking therein. The people don't seem real. They are figures in a Bible story. They are a grown-up version of the Bible storybooks that we have read for so many years. As children, we think them to be fantasy.

We never consider that these patriarchs; these famous Bible characters, were real flesh and blood people whom we're going to meet some day in Glory. Yet, unless we take a different look at the Word of God and the accounts of their lives, we're not going to recognize them in heaven because we'll still think they are characters in a fairy tale.

This book is meant to put flesh and blood on a man by the name of Joseph, the little fellow with the coat of many colors. The intent is that we recognize that Joseph was a real flesh and blood man, just like you and I. He had a tough time at work. He had a tough time with his family. He had a tough

time with his children. He had a tough time getting the bills paid, just like you and I.

Somehow or other we get the impression that God gave special preparation, special favor, pampered if you will, these famous Bible characters, such as Joseph. We think God gave them an edge on becoming famous and powerful leaders, valiant soldiers in God's army. And for that reason we don't really have any hope of reaching the heights these mighty men of God have attained. We think we can't be like them because God favored them with special handling.

We are going to find in the following pages that that wasn't true. They were dedicated to God Who doesn't favor any one person over another, but wants all of us to draw close to Him. He desires that we correct things in our lives, confess our shortcomings to Him and just cling to Him as we would to a loving parent whom we know would die for us to provide for our needs.

DEDICATED TO:

Jesus Christ the Creator
and Sustainer of All

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"And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, that she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out. And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home. And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out."

God's lost control again, right? Just when we thought things were going to work out, God lost control! Let's continue. Verse 19:

"And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled."

It says Potiphar's wrath was kindled. Who was Potiphar mad at? Was he mad at Joseph? I don't think so. Joseph had already proved himself to be faithful to his own God to the extent that when God looked at his heart and the reasons he did these things, that He blessed Joseph and Potiphar's house, also. So, who is he mad at? I think maybe his wife. Verse 20:

"And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison."

Remember he started off blaming his parents and his brothers. "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God". Down in that pit Joseph realized Who he was working for, in Whose hands he was placed, and Whose plan he was following. That's why, when he was placed in this crucible - in this examining dish by Potiphar's wife - he had the right reference when he said, *"How can I do this great wickedness against God?"*

Now, sometimes it's kind of easy to say no to temptation and sin. Look at verse 10:

"And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her."

Sin must be a real dog because it hounds us, doesn't it? God wants to see if we really mean business with Him or if it's some kind of reflex action or quick determination to yield to sin or not. He allows Satan to bug us day by day. I wonder if it's possible when we realize that we can't stop yielding to temptation without His strength and help, if that's meant to drive us to Him day by day? God is quite a parent, isn't He? Verses 10-12:

"And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her. And it came to pass about this time that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out."

Sounds like a good time to get out. Verses 13-18:

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[My Notes]

opportunity to show our self, Him, and others what we have learned.

Now, a crucible is a very shallow dish, almost like a lens out of a flashlight that scientists put little pieces of ore, dirt, or minerals in. They hold this crucible over a flame and heat it extremely hot. The different parts of the minerals separate and can then be examined under a microscope. Determination can be made as to the quality, the purity, and what kind of materials make up that specimen. Well, Joseph is about to be put in a crucible starting in verse 7:

"And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me."

Don't forget about the kind of background Joseph came from. Remember that he had a father that shared a bed with four women. His oldest brother went to bed sexually with one of the handmaids. His own sister was raped. Look at the crucible God puts Joseph into. His master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said lie with me. In verses 8-9 it says:

"But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

He doesn't say 'against Potiphar'. That's interesting. Instead he really says 'against God'. What do you suppose this young fellow learned down in that pit? Is it that all the arrangements and all the circumstances he finds himself in are relationships between only him and other human beings?

"And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field."

God is blessing Joseph so much it's running over and spilling onto the people around him.

I'd love to be in Joseph's position, faithful to the Lord and serving Him where I am; being faithful with each and every thing He has given me; talent or tool and blessing me so much that it spills over to the people around me. Now that is blessing! In verse 6 we read:

"And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favored."

That means that Potiphar, the captain of the guard, trusted this prisoner so much that he gave control and rule over all that he had. Potiphar didn't even know what he owned - didn't even know what belonged to him or what went on except for the food that was on his table at that moment to eat.

Now, here comes an important truth that we all need to learn. Joseph has been in prison and supposedly was to have learned some things down in the bottom of that pit. Of course he is thrown into another prison in Egypt. He has become ruler over that prison, at least over the captain's house. The truth is this - wherever we have a prison situation and God tries to teach us something, God then puts us in a crucible - in an

Chapter 1 – Who's Mom are You ?

I have an apple tree that I've just picked some pears from." Have you ever heard anyone say that? Well, certainly not. The law of stability in nature, if you want to call it that, is one of the laws enacted back in Genesis, when God created the heavens and the earth. Not only is it true in nature that you get apples off an apple tree and pears off a pear tree, but it's also true: you raise children most often to be just like their parents. So in learning about Joseph we'll see what kind of family he had.



Your statement could certainly be, "Well, Joseph became a mighty man of God because God favored him with a special mom and dad. His mom was a missionary. His dad was a preacher. They carried around big Bibles all the time and went to church four times a week." Let's see just what kind of a family this man Joseph really came from. Let's see how he was "favored" (or not) in becoming the mighty man that we would like to be.

The story of Joseph really begins in Genesis 29:1-2 where we read:

"Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east. And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone was upon the well's mouth."

And we see in verses 9-11 as Jacob has been talking with some of the men at the well:

“And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep: for she kept them. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother’s brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother’s brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well’s mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother’s brother. And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.”

In verse 13 we read:

“And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister’s son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things.”

After Jacob worked for Laban about a month in verses 15-20, God's Word says:

“And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what shall thy wages be? And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah was tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured. And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me. And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.”

in our first aid kits that said "AND THE LORD IS WITH YOU"? Wouldn't that be a comfort? Well that's what we have in verse in the verse we just read.

Joseph lived in the house of Potiphar. Now, that is usually customary because the prisons back then were part of the jailor's house. Verse 3:

"And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand."

Isn't that interesting? Maybe God hasn't lost control of this whole situation. Sure Joseph is in Egypt and he didn't want to be down there. Sure he's in jail and doesn't want to be there. But verse 2 says that the Lord was with Joseph. What happens when the Lord is with us? Wherever we are on the face of the earth, whether in the jungle or maybe a jungle of a metropolitan city and the Lord is with us, can we expect that God would do the same with us as He did with Joseph? Verse 4:

"And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand."

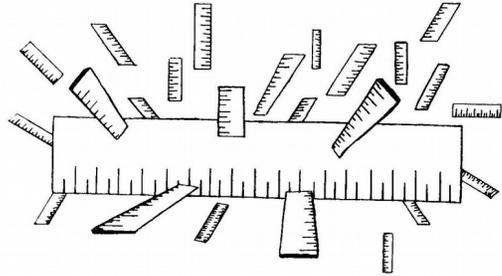
Joseph is already learning how to be a ruler down in Egypt. Is it possible that God really does have control of all this? Maybe this is just some kind of training ground. Maybe Joseph really is going to be a ruler some day. He needs to learn how to be a ruler; how to be faithful in small things first. That's only logical. Don't we give our children a small tool or toy first so we can see that they use it and take care of it properly and then move on to larger things? Maybe God does have control of this. Verse 5:

courage, hope and determination to want to do our best within the hands of God to carry out His plan.

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Chapter 4 – Big Rulers from Little Rulers

In chapter 39 of Genesis we read further about our main character, Joseph. Verse 1:



"And Joseph was brought down to Egypt! and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither."

We need to realize that this captain of the guard, Potiphar, was also in charge of the executioners, if he was not an executioner himself. It's an interesting situation for this young fellow who had been promised by God in dreams that he'd be a ruler and that he'd also rule over his brothers. But, the next verse gives us a clue. Chapter 39, verse 2 says:

"And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian."

The Lord was with Joseph. Isn't that a comfort? We have first aid kits, emergency evacuation plans and all sorts of remedies, materials and techniques in dealing with unexpected situations. Wouldn't it be something to put a card

What a love there must have been there. Working seven years for his bride-to-be and it seemed but a few days. My, wouldn't it be something if our children were as concerned about the spouse they were to take, and if we were to see them have the dedication and love for that spouse to serve seven years? Boy, I think the marriages would certainly be different, wouldn't they? Verses 21-25 says:

"And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her. And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her. And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid for an handmaid. And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?"

Joseph is saying to Laban, "What have you done to me? You've switched women on me. You switched daughters! I served seven years for my beautiful Rachel, but you've put Leah in her place." Jacob wanted to know why he had been beguiled. Verse 26 says:

"And Laban said, "It must not be so done in our country..."

"Leah needs to be married before Rachel. That's why I did that." My, my, the excuses we can use for breaking a vow; breaking a vow to a friend; breaking a vow to our children; breaking a vow to God. Isn't it something how we can twist rules and use half truths. It's happened here. In verse 27:

"Fulfill her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years."

It was a sneaky trick of Laban, Rachel's father, to get an extra seven years of free labor from this man, Jacob. In verse 28:

"And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also."

[Note: It takes careful study to understand the very special circumstances that God allowed multiple wives in those days. Those rules that spoke harshly against adultery could result in death for the transgressor. It's this author's opinion that the marriage arrangement begun in the Garden of Eden is God's all-time preference – especially in these days and land in which we live.]

Look at that word “also” –ALSO.

Already we see Joseph's family tree headed for problems.

Read in Genesis 29:29-31:

"Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid. And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years. And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren."

One small fact that we need to bring out here, that we are going to see repeated later on, is found in verse 30:

"...and he loved also Rachel more than he loved Leah."

going to happen. Isaac is about to die because his own father Abraham is standing over him with a knife to destroy him.

I believe that Joseph, down in that pit, looking up at the sky, realized that he was in the same kind of fix as others before him. In that impossible situation, Joseph remembered his Grandpa Isaac, whom God had truly blessed. God showed His people that He is a God of provision, He can provide and protect, and that His plan will not be stopped by anyone.

As Joseph laid down in that pit, at first, angry at the world and blaming everyone around him, including God, his hands were made bloody by banging his fists against those stones. I believe that in the clouds and stars of the lowly night, Joseph realized that God never, never, never loses control. Nor does He have to change His plan for the creatures He has created to have dominion over the stones - over the well pits - over the animals and over all of His creation.

God never loses control! I believe there were Bible lessons learned in the bottom of that pit that Joseph couldn't, in a lifetime, have learned at the knee of his mother nor at the side of his father. Sometimes the only way we can learn special, important lessons is at the bottom of a pit. If that's true, let's think about our own lives and the pits in which we have found ourselves.

Sure we have shaken our fists at our moms and dads and blamed them. We have blamed our brothers and sisters, the friends around us, and certainly we have shaken our fists in the face of God and blamed Him for losing control. Having lost control, we find ourselves in this prison, this pit of despair. Is it possible that by remembering what God has done for His people in the past that we would be given

It had probably been a very long day or several days that he was down in the pit. He was tired, frustrated and discouraged as he lay in the bottom of the pit. He looked from left to right, from front to back and all he saw were rocks and dirt. The walls of his prison. Then he looked up and saw the clouds going across the sky. That's whose fault it is. It's God's fault. God has the power to make and to destroy. He has the power to change people's minds and hearts. "It's God's fault I'm down in this pit."

God's lost control again! Have you ever said that? God doesn't really have the power to maintain His program or His plan. I believe there was a lot of learning achieved in the bottom of that pit. I think Joseph named all the people he could blame for the situation he was in and got all this blaming and hurt out of his system. Its quite possible some other memories came back. He had memories of some stories he'd heard while sitting on the floor with his chin on his mother, Rachel's knee about what God had done with people before. While he's in the pit I think he's remembering some of those stories.

I think one story is about his Grandpa Isaac as he remembers her telling it. Grandpa Isaac is lying on a flat surface, looking up at the sky, just like Joseph is doing. It looks like all is coming to an end. God has lost control. Why is Grandpa Isaac lying flat looking up at the sky? He's on an altar. Who put him on an altar? The very person who should have loved him more than anyone on the face of the earth, his daddy Abraham.

God's lost control! God had promised to bless the whole world and each person on it, thru the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren of Abraham. God's lost control. It's not

Remember our trees - getting apples off apple trees and pears off pear trees? We're going to see this favoritism repeated. Already the family is headed for trouble. Why? Because we have two wives in the same house. As if that isn't bad enough, we have two handmaids. So, we have four women helping around the house, supposedly working in unity in doing all the things that are needed in the house, plus raising children who will be coming shortly. I can see trouble on the way. In verses 32-35 we read:

"And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the Lord hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because the Lord hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi. And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the Lord: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing."

Now remember, we have four women in the same house. One of the wives of Jacob just bore four children; four sons. Now look at chapter 30, verses 1-2:

"And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?"

First we had Jacob showing favoritism toward Rachel; then we have Rachel's envy in verse 1, followed in verse 2 by her

anger. Well, nevertheless, we have Rachel, Jacob's second wife, jealous because she can't bear any children, especially when her competitor, Leah, just bore four sons. So the only thing Rachel can think to do in this situation is to get a pinch-hitter for herself. So in verses 3-4 we read:

"And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her. And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her."

What a family situation. Now we've got Jacob, the man of the house, the one who should be responsible for the spiritual stability, the spiritual maturity of the family, going to bed with a third woman that's not even his wife. How can God ever expect to build strong families when we circumvent His laws in our families, the very first association that God ever made for man, the family. Verses 5-7 states:

"And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son. And Rachel said, God hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan. And Bilhah Rachel's maid conceived again, and bare Jacob a second son."

She named him Naphtali. Well, we've got two wives in this family and each have a handmaid. Since they already experienced some favoritism and the envying that brought on anger, then why not continue it? I believe Leah looked at Rachel and said, "Well, Rachel has given her handmaid, Bilhah, to Jacob to go to bed with and have children with, so if it's good enough for her, it ought to be good enough for me."

control of the family situation when mom and dad aren't around. We can always depend on them to keep things under control. In verse 22 Reuben had said:

"...shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him..."

Is that what he should have said? Certainly not. He should have called sin, sin. He should have told the brothers they needed to go before God and ask forgiveness for even contemplating this thing, let alone trying to carry it out. But he didn't. He settled for half-action if you want to call it that; just doing half what he should have done to right a wrong. If there's anybody in the entire world who should watch over you and me it should be our brothers and sisters. Who put Joseph in the pit? It was his brothers.

How about in your local assembly, those you worship with, those that you sing hymns with? They should be the ones to love you the most, protect and watch over you, encourage you to draw close to the Lord, confess sins and be right with Him. Is that the way it usually is? It certainly wasn't the situation with Joseph.

Had we been able to look in on him in the pit, this is what we may have seen and heard: "It's mom and dad's fault that I'm down here" and he'd slam his fist into the side of that well pit because he was mad. Maybe he threw some rocks from one side to the other saying, "It's mom and dad's fault. It's also my brother's and sister's fault! They should have stopped this." He probably slammed his fist against the wall again; angry because he felt it was someone else's fault.

his name Onan. And she yet again conceived, and bare a son; and called his name Shelah: and he was at Chezib, when she bare him. And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar. And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord slew him."

Wouldn't you wonder why he did this? How patient can God be with the ones He created to be in fellowship with Him and yet who, generation after generation, rebel against the guidelines of one man for one woman for one lifetime. In Numbers 23 we read, "be sure your sins will find you out." I just wonder if part of that revealing isn't done through our children. If Mr. Israel were still alive, I think he'd see that God hadn't forgotten the transgressions that he'd made between Leah, Rachel and the two handmaids.

We need to go back for just a moment and take a little bit closer look at this pit that our star character, Joseph, was put in. We said it was a well pit, certainly deep, with sides smooth enough so he couldn't get out. But, put yourself in Joseph's place. You are 17 or 18 years old, and are down in this pit, cold, hungry and thirsty. But worse than that, you have time to think. Sometimes that thinking time is the most painful, the most difficult and sometimes the most rewarding.

If you were Joseph and down in that pit, what would you be thinking right now? "Why am I down in this pit? God's lost control of this situation. I tell you, if my mom and dad had acted like they should have, this wouldn't have happened. It's my parents fault I'm in this fix." Ever hear yourself say that before?

Then, there is Reuben. Wonderful Reuben, the oldest of the brothers. The older brother and sister are supposed to keep

So Leah gave her handmaid, Zilpah, to Jacob to conceive and bear children. That's just what she did in verse 11. She called this son Gad. And the event was duplicated. Another son was born to Zilpah and his name was Asher.

Don't you wonder what these brothers, these sons born to Jacob, thought about a marriage like this? What kind of a family structure are you going to have? One woman, Leah, has four sons. That's no problem. But, then a maid in the family, Bilhah, has two children - Dan and Naphtali. Are those two fellows brothers? Not really, other than that they have the same dad. Are they half brothers? Well, not really because Bilhah isn't married to anyone. What a horrible family structure to finally bring Joseph from, this mighty man who was used of God. Well, let's continue. It gets worse, believe me!

I think that Leah might have become a little bit jealous, or at least concerned that her handmaid, Zilpah, has been able to bear two children to Jacob. Maybe to prove she still had the ability or that she still had what it takes, Leah went in unto Jacob and had three more children - Issachar, Zebulon and the only daughter in this whole - I was going to say marriage. Do you call it a marriage or a mess? Whatever, Dinah was born to Leah, the last child that Leah was to have.

Now look at verse 22. Isn't it precious in the midst of problems, in the midst of trouble, in the midst of this crazy mixed-up world and some of the messes we get ourselves into, that something happens, as verse 22 explains - "*and God remembered*". If we could only be the kind of parent that God is. "*And God remembered.*" And the verse says:

"And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach: And she called his name Joseph."

We're going to be hearing that name a lot, in times of prosperity and excitement, in joy, in times of grief, desperation, and discouragement. Don't you kind of get the feeling as we read words like "God remembered" that He really is in control? He's never let loose of those He loves, or of the exciting opportunities that He has put into our futures.

But, one other thing that needs to be remembered is that Joseph was born when Jacob and Rachel were very old. You might even consider that they were past the normal age of childbearing. So, out of all the sons who were born between Jacob and Leah; Jacob and Zilpah; Jacob and Rachel; and Jacob and Bilhah, this Joseph was special above all the rest. Special because he was born with the aid of a miracle. Jacob and Rachel were past the age of bearing children. Don't you suppose he was special above all of the other children? This is the first child who was born to Jacob through the woman that he had chosen first to be his wife, Rachel.

Remember, we read a little earlier that one was favored over the other? Let's continue. Let's see how this favoritism works out again. To complete the family tree and get all the rest of the brothers and sister together, we have to skip over to chapter 35, verses 16-19:

"And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt

"And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go? And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him."

Before we continue with Joseph, let's look at the first few verses in chapter 38 and we'll see another interesting situation involving one of Joseph's brothers. In verses 1-3 we read:

"And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her. And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his name Er."

Shuah's family was not Jewish. Without any arrangements of marriage, without any consideration, planning or following in obedience to the law that we have seen disobeyed, Judah goes to bed with this Canaanite, this non-Jewish woman. Verses 3-7:

"And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his name Er. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she called

the planets are going to collide. Let's see if He's lost control in Joseph's life. In verses 25-27 we read:

"And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content."

Isn't that nice of those brothers? They're going to sell him as a slave to a bunch of foreigners so they won't be killing their brother. Isn't that something to be proud of they're not going to kill their brother, but sell him into slavery. I'm so proud of those brothers!

Isn't it something how we justify some of our actions? We begin by pondering a deep heavy sin. Then we contemplate yielding to this gross temptation. Yet, we begin to feel that is wrong. And then what we do is yield to a lesser temptation and wind up being proud of ourselves. Well, doesn't it say in Genesis that he (Satan) was subtler than any other creature? That's true! Verses 28-29:

"Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt. And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes."

Isn't it something that when we yield to sin and don't treat our brother as we should, it backfires on us. Verses 30-35:

have this son also. And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem."

The Bible gives many references to honoring one's own mother. The most well known was written in stone twice by the finger of God. A special distinction of honoring parents was the first of the ten commandments to contain a promise as referenced in Ephesians 6. It seems so much more difficult to honor your parents in Joseph's family and the dysfunctional families of today. From all this two principles take deeper root in my mind:

1. As I look around me the more reasons I see to search out God's written promises for me and share them with others.
2. God doesn't choose and use polished and perfect people and families for His Will. He does, however, require faithful servants to keep their sights on the Lighthouse of Truth that shines across the centuries.

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Chapter 2 – Dinah's Dilemma

So we have twelve brothers and one sister. There are rather interesting relationships between these brothers since there were so many different mothers in the same family,



with the same father. Did God really bless Joseph; pamper him in his background or in his home situation so that he would become the powerful, spiritual giant? No, He certainly didn't. They were amid circumstances like you and I and those to whom we need to witness.

Well, let's continue to find out a little bit more of this family tree involving these brothers. There is something we need to note at this point. In turning to Genesis 32, we read in verses 24-25:

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him."

Some other events happened. The point we want to make is in verse 28:

"And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."

This word "Israel" is used several different ways in the Bible, and we need to set some guidelines so we don't become confused. First of all we see the name Israel used here as the name of the father of these 12 brothers and sister. We also need, whenever we refer to Jacob by calling him Israel, to call him Mr. Israel so that we will always know that we are really talking about Jacob as the father of all these boys. Now, later on we'll be considering the nation that these 12 boys inhabited, that being Israel. The land was divided up into 12 tribes. We will call that Israel 12. So now we have Mr. Israel

"And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it."

Now, if we consider the effort that God has gone to, to preserve His Word through all the ages up to this point and He left in these words: "and the pit was empty, there was no water in it", that must be important. Well, it is important. The pit was a well pit. Ordinarily, there would have been water in it. This became Joseph's prison. Wait a minute! We're talking about Joseph being in a prison.

But God had revealed to Joseph, through dreams, that he would be a ruler. It's interesting that he was going to be a ruler over his own brothers. But, God has lost control of this thing, hasn't He? He has deemed this man Joseph, the 17-year-old boy, to be a ruler, and here he is in a pit, about to die. God has lost control! Doesn't it look that way to you?

Let me ask you - Can you look around and see situations that really look like God has lost control? Pick up your newspaper. Read through the headlines. This war, this skirmish is going on in this country. These rebels are rioting over here. This company is going defunct because of unrealistic demands by the Union. This father has gone to bed with his 12-year-old daughter. Doesn't it look like God has lost control? Sure it does.

Pick up any newspaper you want to. Turn your radio to any news station. Turn the television to any program. In fact, many of what we deem typical television programs have the insinuations, the sexual overtones, and the nudity. God's lost control! What happens if God loses control? Could He have lost control of nature? In Noah's day, mankind was almost totally destroyed by a flood. Had God lost control? Maybe

Remember the sequence: favoritism, then envy, and then anger. Isn't it interesting how that theme keeps surfacing all the time! Verses 19-22:

"And they said one to another, Behold this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams. And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again."

There's an interesting thing here. "Cast him into a pit." Certainly, that's sin. Verse 20 says:

"...we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him..."

Isn't it interesting those sinful acts come in pairs? As we yield to sin and contemplate sin once, if it's not dealt with and taken before God, the second sin will follow right behind it. Verse 23 says:

"And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him."

This was the coat that threw his position up into his brothers' faces every time they saw it. Hey, this brother is favored. Daddy loves him more than he loves us. Verse 24:

and Israel 12. The third designation that we will make is when there was a disagreement between two factions.

There were two factions in the nation of Israel 12 that split. They split between the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom was called Israel. We're going to call it Israel 10 because now in that nation there are only 10 tribes. The other 2 tribes became what we think of and refer to as the land of Judah. So we have Mr. Israel, Israel 12, and Israel 10.

Now we need to get back to taking a look at Joseph's family tree and the 'wonderful' (??) background God blessed this man with! At least we thought He did to make him into the spiritual giant that we know him to be. Well, we need to go to chapter 34. We're going to read about the only sister to all of these 12 brothers. In chapter 34, verses 1-2, we read:

"And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her."

I might say that the Bible says nothing about Shechem considering any marriage arrangements or anything at all in that direction. We don't get any indication that it was her choice at all. If you want to call it rape, you can. I do. Now we have a situation where twelve brothers have a sister who has just been raped. In verses 4-5 of chapter 34 we read:

"And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife. And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter: now his sons were with his cattle in the field: and Jacob held his peace until they came."

Now, we are going to find in the following verses that Shechem now tries everything he can to make amends, to straighten out this situation between this woman he has gone to bed with and her parents. The twelve brothers all explain some requirements that Shechem is to abide by. In verses 10 and 11 of chapter 34 we read:

"And ye shall dwell with us: and the land shall be before you; dwell and trade ye therein, and get you possessions therein. And Shechem said unto her father and unto her brethren, Let me find grace in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give."

In verses 19-21 we see:

"And the young man deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter: and he was more honorable than all the house of his father. And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city, saying, These men are peaceable with us; therefore let them dwell in the land, and trade therein; for the land, behold, it is large enough for them; let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters."

Shechem and his relatives were told what they would have to do, as dictated by the 12 brothers. This they agreed to do. But in verses 25-26 it says:

"And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males. And they slew Hamor and

the fellow who got into an interesting arrangement with the only sister of these 12 brothers. Worse than that, in trying to straighten out the situation, two of the brothers, Simeon and Levi, dealt treacherously with Shechem. Remember Mr. Israel considered his reputation to stink in this land. Now we find that these 11 brothers are in this land feeding their sheep. In chapter 37, verses 13-17:

"And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, here am I. And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan."

Oh my goodness! First, we have a son who is favored above the other brothers by the father. Next, we find this favorite brother has been given some enlightenment as to God's plan for the future and that continues to anger the brothers. Thirdly, the brothers have been given the task of feeding and caring for the flock in Shechem. But when the favorite brother is sent to check on the other 11 brothers, they run off. They are goofing off. They were to be in Shechem, but are now in Dothan. I can see this brotherly relationship getting worse and worse. Verse 18 says:

"And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him."

only special privileges, but also special authority. Sometimes that needs to be done, but is done with great tact and in a way that the rest of the family is made to feel very important too.

Verse 4:

"And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."

Remember, in chapter 1, we saw the favoritism that Jacob had for one wife, Rachel, over Leah. Then it turned into envy and then into anger. It's happening again. Verse 5:

"And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more."

God was revealing His plan - this fantastic, exciting sequence of events that you couldn't put together if you were the most qualified mystery writer of all times. These dreams that God revealed to Joseph brought about a truth, a future truth that the 11 brothers would be ruled over by their brother, 17-year-old Joseph, who had this special coat his father had given to him.

In the family of God, more specifically, in the local church family, we are reminded in God's Word that we're to treat each person equally, to make each person feel the importance of his involvement. No matter how capable or incapable he thinks he is, God has given him a talent and he needs to be faithful with it. Certainly the pastor is not to single out any one person and play favorites with him.

Well, the brothers at this point in time are tending their flock of sheep in Shechem. Remember about Shechem? He was

Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out."

That's a wonderful way to treat someone isn't it? First of all, Shechem had trespassed in going to bed with Dinah, but he confessed his sin and willingly followed through with the requirements to amend the situation. But, still they were destroyed. Isn't it wonderful that our God doesn't treat us that way? Would to God we could learn the patience, the passion and the understanding of a sinful man, realizing there is no hope or good thing in him; and he reaches out to the only One who has the ability to cleanse every stain, our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Well, how does Jacob feel about all of this? In chapter 34 and verses 30-31 it says:

"And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house. And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?"

Mr. Israel is in a real fix isn't he? Do you think any of this could have been traced back to the permissiveness of Jacob and Rachel? Good chance isn't there? God reminds Jacob again in verses 10-12:

"And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out

of thy loins; And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land."

My goodness, the powerful position that God has put the father of Joseph into. Isn't it interesting that even though Mr. Israel defied God's law of one wife for one man for one lifetime, God still blessed him? Even though he played favorites between wives, God still blessed him.

One other thing that we need to add here is that even though God loves Mr. Israel mightily in spite of his sin or his multiple marriages, we still have to add in one little point found in chapter 35, verse 22:

"And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve."

The oldest son, Reuben, goes to bed sexually without any consideration for marriage or anything like that, with the mother of one of his brothers. That must have made for an interesting arrangement. If something doesn't come to pass shortly, it looks like everybody is going to bed with everyone else. We read that God still blessed Jacob.

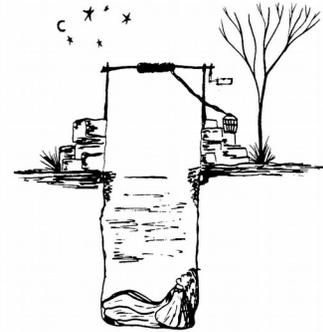
How about your family and your background? I think we can say now that regardless of how our family situation presents itself, whether our parents or brothers and sisters are faithful, diligent Christians, or whether they are badly in need of a Savior's saving power and repentance in their lives, it really doesn't make any difference as far as our having an excuse for transgressing against God in His laws. We are each held accountable regardless of what our background is or what our

family tree looks like. We are each individually responsible to God, to His saving power, and His moving in our lives.

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Chapter 3 – Stones or Stars

The following events begin the most unusual mystery I have ever heard in all my life. We see our star character, Joseph, entering from stage-right. In chapter 37 of Genesis, verse 2 we read:



"These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report."

Oh no, we have a tattletale! One of the 12 brothers is a tattletale. I can see trouble coming already. Now verse 3:

"Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours."

How sad! Here we go with the favoring of one of the family over the other again. Not only did he favor him, but also, he made a big show of it. "He made him a coat of many colors." It was like a badge. Anyone who saw this coat of many colors realized that this young fellow was favored above any other child in the family and was given special privileges; and not