

Genesis 37

Jacob owned many sheep, goats and cattle, but he was fortunate to have a lot of help with his flocks and herds. Jacob had twelve sons, ranging in age from grown-up Reuben down to baby Benjamin. Jacob had one son that he loved more than any of the others; this was 17 year old Joseph. Joseph was a kind and loving son who cheerfully obeyed his father's wishes. This caused trouble in the family because the other sons were jealous of Joseph.

Do you know what it means to be jealous? It means to feel angry or unhappy because we think someone has better things or is liked better than we are. The more we are jealous of someone, the more we dislike them. Do you think it is pleasing to God to be jealous over something someone else has? No, for God gives us what we need and we know he takes care of us. We should feel happy for a brother, sister or friend if they get something we don't, or if they seem to get more attention at times than we do. We know that if we do what's right, try to be cheerful and helpful and kind that we will get the attention we deserve, won't we?

Joseph's brothers had another reason to dislike him. Sometimes they would cheat or steal from their father. When selling the sheep perhaps they would keep the money and say a wild animal killed that sheep, or perhaps they would keep a healthy calf and put it in with their own animals instead of reporting it to their father. Joseph saw what his brothers did and told his father about the wrong. This made the brothers hate Joseph all the more.

One day Jacob decided to give Joseph a special gift to thank him for all that Joseph did for him. Jacob bought some soft, warm, material and he worked for many days, sewing beautiful colored threads into designs on a long robe or coat for Joseph. There was no other coat like this anywhere around and it showed great honor. A robe like this was often worn by the head of a house or a priest or even a king.

Joseph was just a young man, not a king or priest but owning this robe showed how much his father honored Joseph, more than all his other sons. This wasn't very good for the family as it made the brothers even more jealous.

However, Joseph was very pleased with his new robe and he wore it everywhere!



One night Joseph had a strange dream and when he woke up he told his father and brothers about it. "Listen to my dream, I dreamed my brothers and I were in the wheat field and each of us were tying up bundles of wheat and standing them upright. Suddenly, all my brother's bundles of wheat bowed down to my bundle of wheat!"

"WHAT?" His brothers cried, "Do you think that WE would EVER bow down to YOU!" and they angrily stomped off. "What did I do wrong?" Joseph asked, "All I did was tell them the dream, it's not my fault I had that dream." It seemed like poor Joseph couldn't ever do anything to please his brothers.



A few nights later Joseph had another strange dream. This time he dreamed about the sun and moon and stars. In the dream Joseph was standing looking up to heaven when the sun, moon and stars all bowed down to him. Joseph didn't know what this meant and he went to his father and brothers again and told them the dream. This time even his father was angry



"The sun represents the head of the house, that's me," his father said. "The moon represents the woman of the house, that's your mother and the stars would represent all your brothers." Then his father frowned and told Jacob, "Do you really think that your mother and I and your brothers will all bow down to you?" Joseph hung his head and slowly walked off. He didn't dream these things on purpose, but he probably decided never to tell anyone about his dreams from then on.

Jacob and his sons didn't know that these dreams were sent from God and they really WOULD come true one day. We'll learn about his parents and brothers bowing to Joseph in a later story, though.

Joseph's brothers began to mock him and call him "the dreamer." "Hey dreamer, what did you dream today? Are the goats to bow down to you?" Then they would laugh or hit out at Joseph. Joseph's brothers grew to hate their young brother and were being cruel to him, so one day their father sent the brothers to a pasture that was far away from home but he kept Joseph nearby.

Sometimes bad thoughts can grow and grow until they cause all kinds of trouble. Joseph's brothers grew to hate Joseph, not because of anything he did but because they became jealous. They became mockers and cruel to their brother and finally they saw Joseph as an enemy that they wanted to get rid of. Joseph wasn't their enemy but this is how they thought of him. The Bible tells us that if we have enemies we are to forgive them and show love to them, even if they aren't very lovable. In **Matt.6:14** Jesus tells us:

"If you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

Learn this verse for your memory verse. When you know it put an X in the box.



If the brothers had only forgiven Joseph and showed him kindness, God would have forgiven their cruelty, but instead the brothers sinned even more and as a result hurt not only themselves but everyone around them.

The ten sons had been gone for a long time and their father was beginning to worry about them. Why didn't they send word to him? He wondered how the flocks and herds were doing and where they were finding pasture and water by now. One morning Jacob sent for Joseph and asked him to pack a donkey with some food and water and go see how his brothers were. The last he heard, the brothers were close to a town called Shechem. Joseph put on his special robe and loaded the donkey with some bread and cheese and a large skin of water. It took Joseph a couple of days to reach Shechem but his brothers and the sheep and cattle weren't there. Joseph asked a man who lived close by if he had seen his brothers. The man said he heard them say they were going to an area near the town of Dothan, so Joseph traveled on. Finally Joseph saw a large herd of animals and his brothers tents in the distance. He shouted and waved happily to them.

"Here comes that dreamer," one of the brothers said. Another brother said, "I hate him, let's kill him and tell our father that a wild animal killed him."

Reuben, the oldest brother said, "let's not kill him, let's just throw him into that old, dry well and leave him there."

Reuben was afraid of his other brothers but he meant to go back later and rescue Joseph.

"Yes, let's throw him in the well," the other brothers said.



As Joseph ran up to them, the brothers grabbed him, tore his beautiful robe off and dragged him over to the well. Joseph cried out and begged them to let him go, but his brothers tossed him down into the dry well and went off laughing. Meanwhile Reuben took the sheep out to water planning to get Joseph out later on. He wasn't too worried about Joseph and probably thought it would do him good to suffer a little before he rescued him. Reuben probably thought that Joseph would be sure to tell his father how good Reuben was; then his father would love Reuben the most.

Poor Joseph had scratches and bruises and a bump on his head from being attacked, dragged on the ground and thrown down into the dark, muddy well. He wondered if he would really be left to die in this dark, awful place. Joseph prayed for God's help and God was watching over Joseph and took care of him, even though Joseph couldn't see it at the time. Sometimes we don't understand why bad things happen to good people, but we should always know that God will care for us. We don't always see it at the time but later on we will see how God directs things to work out for the best; we will see that in Joseph's story. It seemed like God had abandoned Joseph but what happened to him was part of a wonderful plan God had for Joseph. At times we might feel like God has forgotten us, but God will always be with us and things that happen work for the good of those who love God. The Bible tells us this!



While Reuben was gone, along came a large Midianite caravan with many camels and donkeys loaded with spices, medicines and perfumes. The Midianites came into the brother's camp where they were invited to rest and eat. The caravan was headed to Egypt where they would sell the spices and other goods. As the people in the caravan sat down to eat with the brothers one of the brothers named Judah said, "what good will it do to just let Joseph die in the well...if we sell him as a slave to these Midianites we can each divide the money and we won't have to worry about killing Joseph!" This sounded like a great idea to the other brothers. The Midianites were always glad to get strong, young men for slaves as they sold for much money in the slave markets, so the Midianites counted out 20 pieces of silver and paid the brothers for Joseph. When the brothers threw down a rope and pulled Joseph out of the well, he thought he was saved, but then he learned they had sold him as a slave. Poor Joseph cried and begged to be set free, but his brothers quickly tied him up and gave him to the Midianites.

When Reuben returned and discovered Joseph was no longer in the well, he cried, "Where is the boy, what has happened?" Reuben asked. When the brothers told Reuben they had sold Joseph, Reuben was very upset, "Now what will I tell our father?" he cried. The brothers decided to say they had found Joseph's robe covered with blood and say a wild animal must have attacked Joseph. They killed one of the sheep and dipped Joseph's beautiful coat in the blood and carried it home to their father. Poor Jacob wailed and cried, "My son, my son," Jacob tore his clothes and sat in rough sackcloth for days and days, refusing to eat anything. The brothers couldn't do anything to comfort their father. Perhaps they had thought with Joseph gone their father would love them more now. What they didn't think about was that Jacob always would have loved them if they had been kind and obedient and loving sons. By letting their hatred rule their actions they had lost their father's respect and love.

Meanwhile Joseph was also feeling very sad; it was terrible to realize how much his brothers hated him. Joseph missed his father and his home very much. He had to swallow many lumps in his throat to keep from crying. Joseph also was afraid of what the future would bring. What kind of man would buy him and how cruel would his new master be? As they traveled along Joseph prayed to God and felt much better knowing God would hear his prayers. Joseph always believed in God, and he trusted in God to watch over him now.

Even though he was very lonesome and sad, Joseph couldn't help being interested in the new country he was seeing as they approached Egypt. Joseph was used to the hills and streams and rolling green pastures of his own home, this new land was flat and hot and dry. There were mighty temples where false idols were worshipped, there were crowded, noisy streets and in the distance tall pyramids reaching into the sky. Clattering along the streets were shiny chariots pulled by beautiful horses and everywhere huge crowds of people speaking a foreign language. Soon they reached the slave market where men, women and even children stood in chains waiting for someone to buy them. Joseph was also put in chains and stood waiting in line, with his heart pounding.

When it was Joseph's turn, several people bid on him as he was young, and strong and would make a good worker. However a rich man named Potiphar, bought Joseph and took him to his home to be his slave. We'll learn more about Joseph in Egypt in our next lesson.



1. How many sons did Jacob have? Who was Jacob's favorite son?
2. What special gift did Jacob give his favorite son to show how much he honored him?
3. What does it mean to be jealous?
4. Name two reasons why Joseph's brothers were jealous and angry at him
 - 1.
 - 2.
5. What was the first dream that Joseph had?

Write T or F in the blanks to show if the following statements are True or False

1. ___ in the 2nd dream the Sun represented the head of the house - Joseph's father.
2. ___ Joseph ran away from home to join his brothers in Dothan.
3. ___ Joseph's brothers were glad to see him and told him to come eat with them.
4. ___ Joseph's brothers let their jealousy grow into hate and they threw him in a dry well.
5. ___ A wild beast tore Joseph's robe.
6. ___ Reuben wanted to get Joseph out of the well but couldn't find him.
7. ___ Joseph's brothers repented of their bad thoughts and set Joseph free.
8. ___ The Midianite caravan was carrying spices and perfumes and lipstick to Egypt

Circle the correct answer below

1. What did Jacob do when he saw the bloody robe? (a) went to kill the wild beast
(b) washed the robe (c) tore his clothes and mourned for his son
2. What should we do if we think someone mistreats us? (a) think about it for awhile
(b) forget about it and forgive them (c) get even with them
3. Why wasn't Joseph killed by his brothers but instead sold as a slave (a) he was lucky
(b) he was too clever for them (c) God had a plan for Joseph and watched over him
4. What should the brothers have done to be loved by their father? (a) be kind and obedient
(b) give gifts to their father (c) take better care of the sheep and goats
5. Who bought Joseph at the slave market? (a) Pharaoh (b) Potiphar (c) Peter

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Can you design a special robe of honor like Jacob made for Joseph? There are some designs on the side of the picture to give you some ideas, or make up your own design and colors



Can you unscramble the letter below to find out the names of Jacob's twelve sons? After you have tried to unscramble all of them, If you have trouble with one or two, look up their names in the reference beside the name.

B E U R E N _____ Gen.49:3

M E O N S I _____ Gen.49:5

V I E L _____ Gen.49:5

J H U A D _____ Gen.49:8

Z E N U L U B _____ Gen.49:13

C H A R I S S A _____ Gen.49:14

A N D _____ Gen.49:16

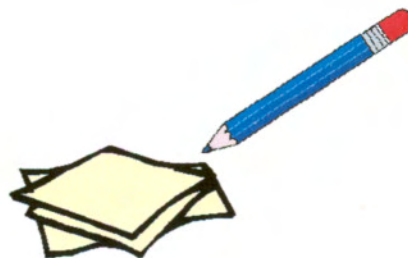
D A G _____ Gen.49:19

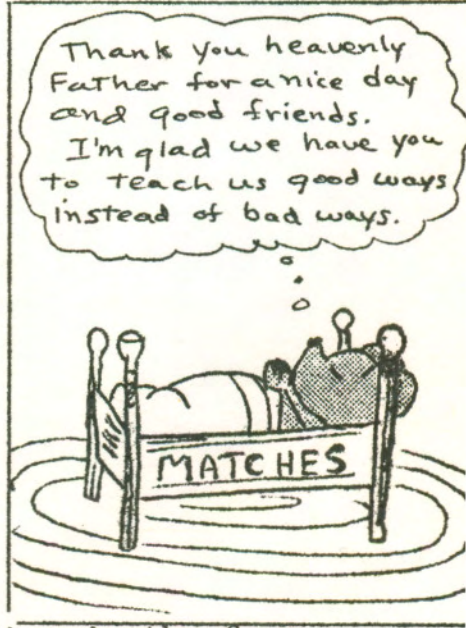
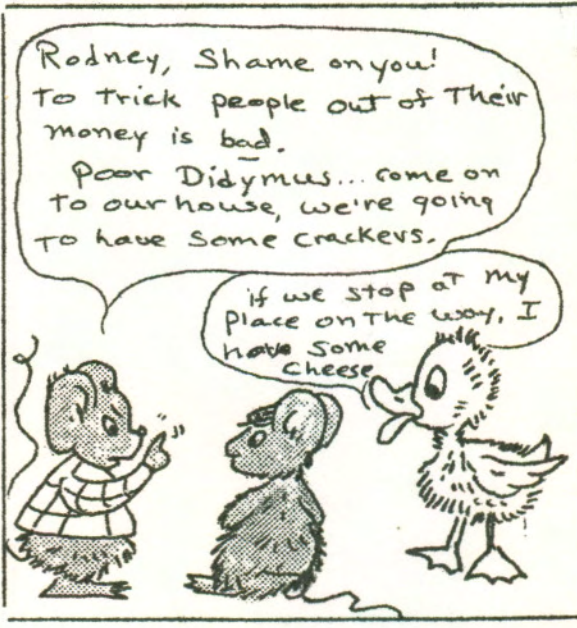
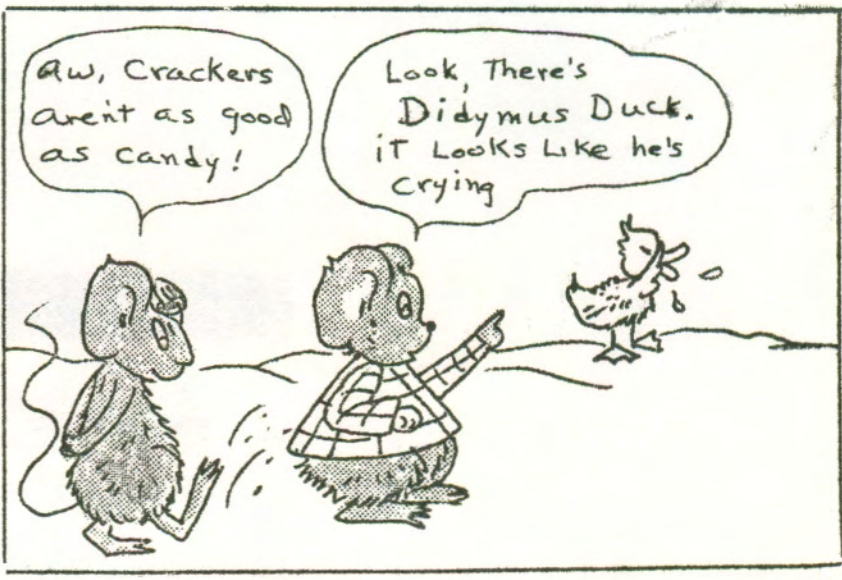
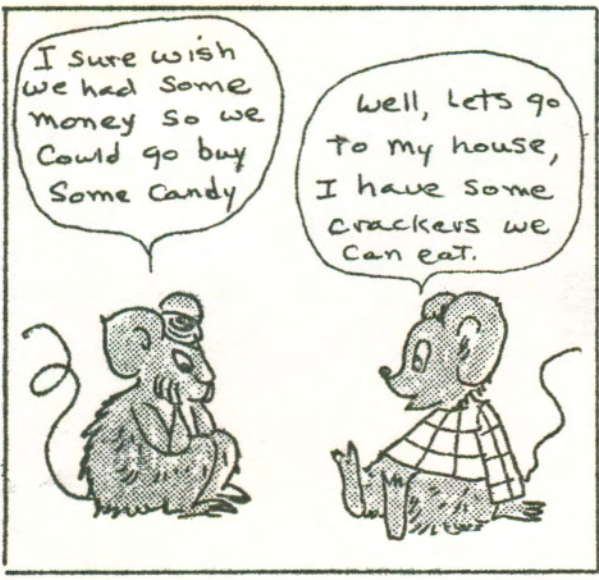
R A S H E _____ Gen.49:20

P H A T N A L I _____ Gen.49:21

S E P H J O _____ Gen.49:22

B J E N N I M A _____ Gen.49:27





"Let not thine heart envy sinners; but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long." Proverbs 23:17