

BAND of BROTHERS

SPRING SERIES 2023 – WEEK 6

Genesis 37-38: A Tale of Two Brothers

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

– Romans 8:28 NLT

- **Last week**

- Jacob and Esau
 - The *gôy* versus the *gôyim*
 - The *nation* versus the *nations*
 - The descendants of Abraham through **Isaac** and **Jacob**
 - Not through **Ishmael** or **Esau**
 - But God told Abraham regarding Ishmael:

“As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will make him extremely fruitful and multiply his descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac...” – Genesis 17:20-21 ESV

- And God told Rebekah concerning Esau:

“The sons in your womb will become two nations. From the very beginning, the two nations will be rivals. One nation will be stronger than the other; and your older son will serve your younger son.” – Genesis 27:23 NLT

- God chose Isaac over Ishmael
- He chose Jacob over Esau
- The mysterious ways of God

...when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who

*calls— she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” As it is written, “**Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.**” – Romans 9:10-13 ESV*

*What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means! For he says to Moses, “**I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.**” – Romans 9:14-15 ESV*

*He is the Rock; **his deeds are perfect.** Everything he does is just and fair. He is a faithful God who does no wrong; how just and upright he is! – Deuteronomy 32:4 NLT*

- The stories of the patriarchs are proof
 - In isolation, they don’t always make sense
 - But together, they are a powerful reminder

“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts.”

“And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.”

“...my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.” – Isaiah 55:8 NLT

- **The generations of Jacob** – Genesis 37

- Review

- “These are the generations of...” – vs 2*

- Appears 13 times in Genesis
 - Sometimes followed by a genealogy
 - generations – **tôwledâh** – descendants, results, generations

- “This is what happened next...”*

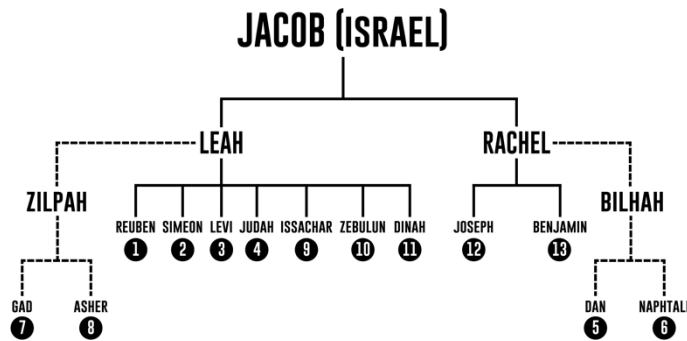
- Notice how chapter 37 begins:

- These are the generations of Jacob. **Joseph**, being seventeen years old... – vs 2*

- Chapter 36 – *what happened to...Esau*
 - Chapter 37 – *what happened to...Jacob*
 - But through his son, **Joseph**
 - Chapter 38 – *what happened to...Jacob*
 - But through his son, **Judah**

- **Another dysfunctional family**

- Jacob had learned nothing from his own experience with favoritism
 - He has fathered 13 children from four different women
 - But he favored one over all the others



- Oh, brother!
 - Two sons will be highlighted: Joseph and Judah
 - Both will endure great suffering
 - Joseph: undeserved
 - Judah: self-inflicted
 - Both: according to God's sovereign will
 - Brothers: a recurring theme in Genesis
 - Cain and Abel (sons of Adam)
 - Shem, Ham, and Japheth (sons of Noah)
 - Abraham, Nahor, and Haran (sons of Terah)
 - Isaac and Ishmael (sons of Abraham)
 - Jacob and Esau (sons of Isaac)
 - From these "brotherly" relationship came the...
 - ...Edomites ...Canaanites
 - ...Ammonites ...Ishmaelites
 - ...Midianites ...Moabites
 - They all became enemies of the Israelites
- **When dreams turn into nightmares** – Genesis 37:5-11
 - Joseph seems to be a bit spoiled and clueless
 - He is oblivious to his brothers hatred for him
 - So, he shares with them his two dreams

*"We were out in the field, tying up bundles of grain. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles all gathered around and **bowed low before mine!**"* –Genesis 37:7 NLT

*"Listen, I have had another dream," he said. "The sun, moon, and eleven stars **bowed low before me!**"* – Genesis 37:9 NLT

- This didn't go over well

And they hated him all the more because of his dreams. – Genesis 37:8 NLT

...his father scolded him. "What kind of dream is that?" he asked. "Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow to the ground before you?" – Genesis 37:10 NLT

- Joseph was only doing his father's will
 "Wear this coat" "Go to Shechem"
 "Bask in my favor" "Report on your brothers"
- But he became a victim of his brothers' jealousy

- **Let US rule!** – Genesis 37:18-24
 *"Here comes this dreamer. Come now, **let us kill him** and throw him into one of the pits. – Genesis 37:19-20 ESV*
 - This was the solution to their perceived problem
 - These were the sons of **Israel**
 - Their father's name meant "Let God rule!"
 - But they weren't interested in God's will or ways
 - They weren't bowing down to anyone
 - They dared to play God
 ...they conspired against him... – vs 18
 ...they stripped him... – vs 23
 ...they threw him into a pit... – vs 24
 ...and sold him to the Ishmaelites... – vs 28
 - As a result...
 ...Joseph **went down** to Egypt
 ...Jacob **went down** to Sheol (an expression of mourning)
 ...Judah **went down** to Chezib

- **Let JUDAH rule!** – Genesis 38
 Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua. He took her and went in to her... – Genesis 39:1-2 ESV
 - Judah...went down, turned aside, and went into
 - He was doing His own will
 - He was in the wrong place
 - He married for the wrong reason
 - He fathered in the wrong way
 - And his decisions proved costly
 - His wife bore him three sons: Er Onan, and Shelah
 - Judah took a wife for Er: Tamar
 - But God took the life of Er
 - So, Judah gave Tamar to Onan
 - He was to provide his dead brother an heir
 - But Onan decided to "let Onan rule"

But Onan was not willing to have a child who would not be his own heir. So whenever he had intercourse with his brother's wife, he spilled the semen on the ground. – Genesis 38:9 NLT

- What Onan did was wicked in God's eyes
 - So, God took Onan's life
- Driven by fear, not faith

Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, "Remain a widow in your father's house, till Shelah my son grows up"—for he feared that he would die, like his brothers. So Tamar went and remained in her father's house. – Genesis 38:11 ESV

 - Judah had no intentions of keeping his word
 - He wasn't going to lose another son
 - So, he deceived his twice-widowed daughter-in-law
 - Leaving her without an heir and with no hope
- **Desperate times – desperate measures** – Genesis 38:12-23

[Tamar] saw that Shelah was grown up, and she had not been given to him in marriage. – Genesis 38:14 ESV

 - "Let Tamar rule"
 - Tamar deceives her father-in-law
 - And exposes his duplicity and immorality
 - He unknowingly fulfills the Levirate vow
- **The sovereign will of an all-knowing God** – Genesis 38:24-30
 - These two chapters contains two sad and sordid stories
 - But they will both have a happy ending
 - Two more brothers are born

When the time came for Tamar to give birth, it was discovered that she was carrying twins. – Genesis 38:27 NLT

 - She gives birth to Perez and Zerah
- Matthew 1:1-6

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.
*Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and **Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar and Perez the father of Hezron**, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.*

 - Perez appears in the family tree (genealogy) of Jesus
 - God redeemed...
 - ...the wickedness of Er and Onan
 - ...the deceit of Tamar

- ...and the immorality of Judah
 - What they meant for evil, God intended for good

- **Discussion questions**

Share a time when God redeemed your unrighteous actions for your own good and His glory.

How could belief in God's sovereignty over all things change the way we view the circumstances of life?

Read Romans 8:28. How do these two stories support the claim Paul makes in this passage?



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SPRING SERIES 2023 – WEEK 7 HOMEWORK

WEEK 7 – Genesis 39-40: A Living Nightmare

Joseph, the dreamer of dreams, will find himself living a nightmare. Sold by his brothers to Midianite slave traders, he will be taken to Egypt and sold as a slave to a powerful and influential Egyptian dignitary in the court of Pharaoh. And this innocent young man will experience a roller-coaster ride of extreme ups and downs as his life goes from blessing to cursing and back again in record time. Yet, through it all, the hand of God will be evident in his life and clear to all those who know him.

- Read chapters 39-40. Take special note of all the ups and downs of Joseph's life recorded in these two chapters, and write them down here.
- Now read pages 129-144 of Ken's Devotionary™ on Genesis Part II.
- How do verses 1-6 of chapter 39 seem to indicate that things are looking up for young Joseph?
- How do verses 7-20 paint an entirely different picture?

Read 1 Peter 3:8-13. What do you do with these verses in light of what happened to Joseph? Do they appear contradictory?

Joseph has done nothing wrong and yet he has been sold into slavery by his brothers and is now in prison accused of a crime he didn't commit. How is that fair?

Now, read 1 Peter 3:14-17. What comfort do you find in these verses and how could you apply them to the life of Joseph?

Read Genesis 39:21-23. How do these verses support the words of Peter and substantiate the doctrine of God's sovereignty?

- Chapter 40 finds Joseph still in prison, where he is joined by two officials from Pharaoh's court. These two men are put under Joseph's care. How is this another proof of God's sovereign will?

In verses 5-19, the two men share their dreams with Joseph and he interprets them. There is no indication that Joseph has ever interpreted dreams before. Where do you think he got this unique ability? What does he attribute it to in verse 8?

- Read verses 20-23. Then read the following quote from Ken's Devotionalary™ on Genesis.

"...through it all, God was speaking, leading, working, and orchestrating every facet of Joseph's complicated and highly conflicted life. Nothing escaped His attention. No one was outside His range of influence. Even the dreams of men were subject to His sovereign authority. The cupbearer and the baker were in the prison because of their own crimes, but the timing and the place of their captivity had been completely up to God. The slowly unfolding story of Joseph's life continues to point to the faithfulness and omnipotence of God." – Ken Miller, *Devotionalary™ on Genesis*

How have you seen the faithfulness and omnipotence of God in your own life?

Why do you think it is important that we recognize that nothing escapes God attention or lies outside His range of influence?