

Genesis 37

Joseph: His Dreams and His Betrayal

Review of Gen. 37:1-4

- Joseph is 17 years old. (Gen. 37:2)
- He is the favored son of Jacob by Rachel.
- Joseph wears a symbol of favoritism – a cloak of many colors.
- Joseph is the 11th brother and the next to youngest son.
- His “full” brother is Benjamin.

Review of Gen. 37:1-4

- Joseph is honest, trustworthy, and obedient to his father.

The Dream of Sheaves

Genesis 37:5-7 Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more.⁶ He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed:⁷ Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood

The Dream of Sheaves

upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf."

His brother's response:

- **Genesis 37:8** His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign [be king] over us? Or are you indeed to

Truth to Learn

to rule [exercise authority] us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

- **In OT culture, dreams were taken seriously.** God had spoken to Jacob and others through dreams (Gen. 28:12ff; 31:1-1).



Truth to Learn

- **Deuteronomy 13:1** "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, . . .
- Don't trust it if it is contrary to biblical truth.

The Dream of Stars

Genesis 37:9-10 Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." ¹⁰ But when he told it to his father and to his brothers,

The Dream of Stars

his father [Jacob] rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?"

The family response:

Genesis 37:11 And his brothers were

Truth to Learn

jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

- **Jealousy** (envy) – inward pain when we see others succeed. (It is usually accompanied by:)
- **Malice** - inward satisfaction when we see others fail.



Truth to Learn

- **Jealousy and malice** usually generate **slander** and **unwarranted criticism**.
- For professed Christians, these usually hide behind the veil of religious zeal or professed “concern”.

Truth to Learn

- If any of Joseph's brothers had received these dreams, most likely they too would have shared them because divine revelations that involved everyone needed to be shared.
- **Source of dreams?**

Truth to Learn

- **God**
- **Devil** (Jer. 23:25-28)
- Our own emotions / food / trauma

Joseph Sent to His Brothers

Genesis 37:12-17 Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. ¹³ And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." And he said to him, "Here I am." ¹⁴ So he said to him, "Go now,

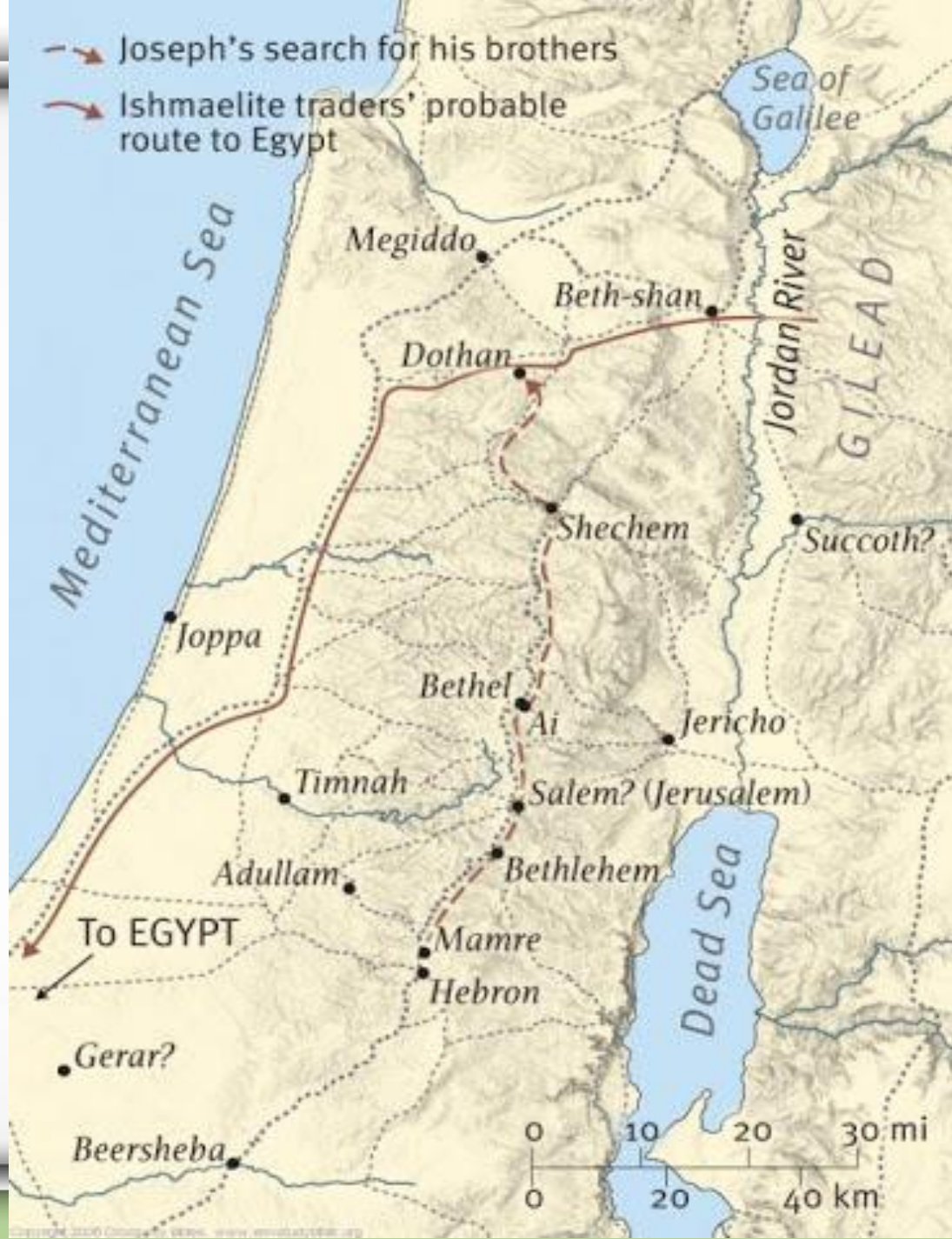
Joseph Sent to His Brothers

see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock, and bring me word." So he sent him from the Valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.¹⁵ And a man found him wandering in the fields. And the man asked him, "What are you seeking?"

Joseph Sent to His Brothers

¹⁶ "I am seeking my brothers," he said. "Tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." ¹⁷ And the man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

- Joseph's search for his brothers
- Ishmaelite traders' probable route to Egypt



Joseph's Journey



Questions to Ponder

- **Why would Jacob send Joseph to check on his brothers when they hated him?**
- Possibly Jacob was not aware of the hatred.
- Why is the herd over 60 miles from home? (a 3 day journey from Hebron).

Truth to Learn

- **What we know for sure?**
- The providential hand of God was working to accomplish His divine purposes for Jacob and his family, and ultimately for the whole world, since the Messiah would come through the lineage of Jacob.

Joseph Put into a Pit

Genesis 37:18-24 They saw him from afar, and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him.
¹⁹ They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. ²⁰ Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce

Joseph Put into a Pit

animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams."

²¹ But when Reuben heard it, he rescued him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." ²² And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness,

Joseph Put into a Pit

but do not lay a hand on him"-- that he might rescue him out of their hand to restore him to his father. ²³ So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore. ²⁴ And they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.



What was the “Pit”?

If it was a “cistern,” it would usually have a small opening in the top, and often covered with a stone. In most cases they would be “waterproofed” with plaster made from burnt and slaked lime.

If it was just a pit, it was deep enough that he could not escape.

Joseph sold to Traders

Genesis 37:25-28 Then they sat down to eat. And looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. ²⁶ Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill

Joseph sold to Traders

our brother and conceal his blood? ²⁷

Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers listened to him.

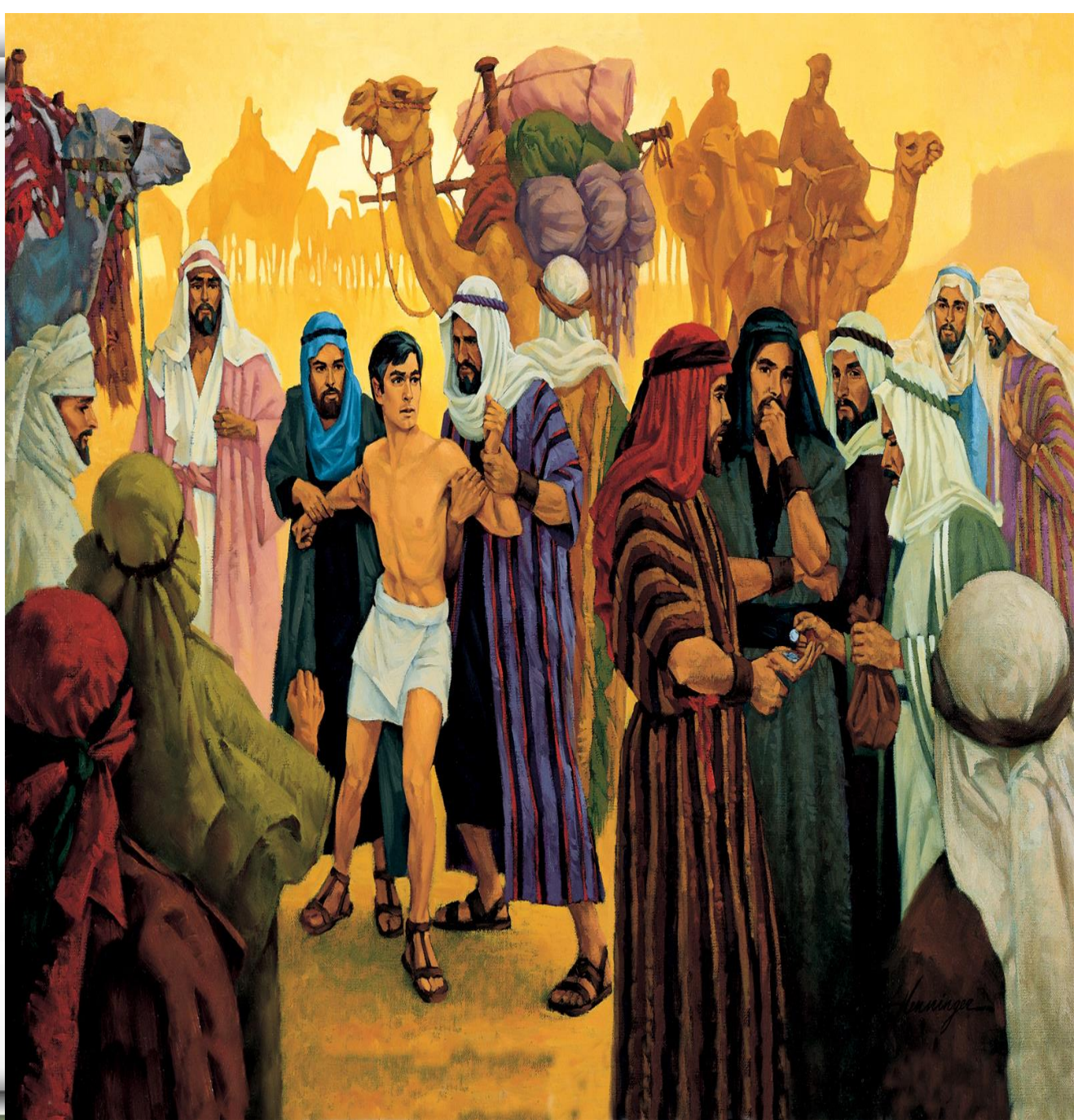
²⁸ Then Midianite traders passed by.

And they drew Joseph up and lifted him

Joseph sold to Traders

out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.

- **Judah** talks his brothers out of killing Joseph. He suggests selling him into slavery.



Truth to Learn

- The brothers plotted to kill their own brother because he was faithful to their father and seemingly destined for greatness.
- Jealousy and hatred are terrible sins!

Reuben Upset

Genesis 37:29 When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes ³⁰ and returned to his brothers and said, "The boy is gone, and I, where shall I go?"

- Reuben is the oldest brother and would be held responsible by Jacob.



Truths to Learn

- Reuben's concern now seems primarily centered on himself.
- We are told that Reuben had secretly intended to rescue Joseph and bring him back to Jacob. (Gen. 37:22)
- Reuben is not a good man.

Truths to Learn

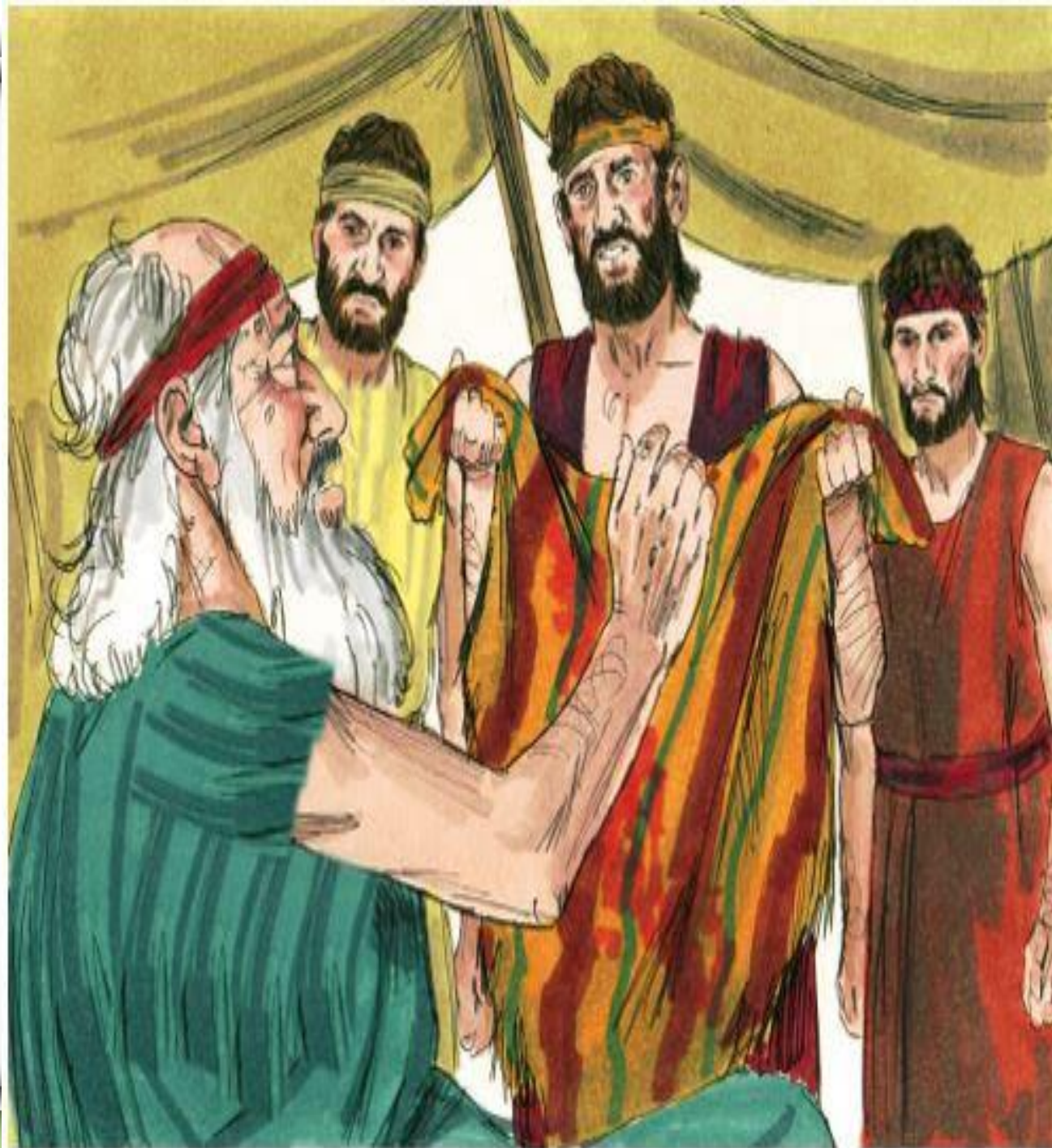
1 Chronicles 5:1 The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's couch, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph [Ephraim & Manasseh] the son of Israel, so that he could not be enrolled as the oldest son;

Jacob Deceived & Mourns

Genesis 37:31-34: Then they took Joseph's robe and slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. ³²
And they sent the robe of many colors and brought it to their father and said, "This we have found; please identify whether it is your son's robe or not." ³³

Jacob Deceived & Mourns

³³ And he identified it and said, "It is my son's robe. A fierce animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces." ³⁴ Then Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days.



Truths to Learn

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

- We reap what we sow.
- We reap at a later time after we sow.
- We reap more than we sow. (Hos. 8:7)
- There is no escaping from reaping – (either good sowing or bad sowing).

Truths to Learn

- A goat was used by Jacob to deceive his father (Isaac).
- A goat is used by Jacob's sons to deceive their father (Jacob).
- It is over 20 years later that Jacob finally discovers the deception.

Joseph sold into slavery

Genesis 37:36 Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard.

Truths to Learn

- Though Joseph was righteous, he was not kept from suffering; he was instead preserved by his faith through it.
- In the end Joseph could acknowledge that God had intended it for good (50:20)

Truths to Learn

- The Bible assures the faithful that God brings good out of evil and joy out of pain, if not in this life, certainly in the life to come.
- Romans 8:28-29 – God promises to work for our good in the midst of all of our life's challenges.
- The “good”? Christlikeness in us.

Truths to Learn

- God never predestines people to do evil deeds. God permits evil people to make evil choices. But God many times works to bring ultimate good out of their evil deeds.
- God allowed this to happen and in the process tested Joseph's faith and positioned Joseph in Egypt.

Truths to Learn

- Just as Jesus learned the cost of obedience through the things He suffered (Heb. 5:8), so also Joseph had to learn the cost of obedience to God through the things he suffered.
- God was preparing Joseph to become a wise ruler in Egypt and to be able to save his family in famine.

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