



Church of God Sunday School

JOSEPH, THE FAVORITE SON

Genesis 29:30 — 37:11

After many years of being away from home and family, Jacob, the son of Isaac and the

brother of Esau, returned to the land of Canaan. There Jacob was reunited with his family. Jacob had left home with only a staff, but he returned with a very large family. God had blessed Jacob greatly!

Years before Jacob's return, his father-in-law Laban had tricked Jacob into marrying two sisters, Leah and Rachel. (The law of that time permitted a man to have more than one wife, but God did not approve of that. There was often much trouble, as we will see.)

Right from the beginning of those marriages, Rachel and Leah were at odds with each other. Leah was jealous of Rachel because Jacob loved Rachel more than her. Rachel was jealous of Leah because Leah could have children, and she could not.

This trouble continued through the years. When Leah had her first son, she called him Reuben, which means "see a son!" Sometime after that, Leah had another son, Simeon. Later, Leah had a son named Levi. Then Leah had another son and called him Judah. Four sons! Oh, Rachel was jealous! Leah thought Jacob would surely love her more than he loved Rachel, because she had borne all those sons for him!

The sisters plotted and schemed to gain Jacob's favor. Rachel felt she would die if she did not have children. Finally, after Jacob already had ten sons and one daughter, Rachel did have a son. "She called his name Joseph." He was Jacob's eleventh son. Rachel said, "The LORD shall add to me another son."

It was easy for Jacob to love little Joseph: he was the son of the wife he loved best, and he was born when Jacob was getting old. It was not long until everyone, including Joseph's brothers, knew that Joseph was Jacob's favorite son.

As Jacob and his family were traveling back to the land of Canaan to meet Jacob's family, Rachel had the second son that God had promised her. Her first son

Joseph was about six years old. Rachel died in childbirth with her second son. Jacob called him Benjamin, which means "son of my right hand." He was Jacob's twelfth and last son.

(These twelve sons were the beginning of the nation of Israel [the name given to Jacob in Genesis 32:24-28; 35:9-10]. Today people of this nation live throughout the world, but many still live in the land that was promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They have been called Israelites and Jews, and today we call them Israelis.)

At the age of seventeen, Joseph was helping his brothers care for the flock of sheep. Joseph brought an "evil report" to his father of what was truly going on with his brothers. Naturally, his brothers did not like him for doing that.

Jacob gave Joseph "a coat of many colors," or pieces. This was a special coat! It was made differently from any of the coats belonging to Joseph's brothers. It meant that Jacob was honoring Joseph above them. When Joseph's brothers saw that their father Jacob loved Joseph more than them, they hated Joseph.

Joseph also had two dreams that did not please his brothers. In the first dream Joseph and his brothers were binding sheaves of wheat in a field. Joseph's sheaf stood up and all his brothers' sheaves bowed down to his sheaf. The dream had a special meaning: it meant that someday Joseph's brothers would bow to him as a ruler over them.

The older brothers did not like the idea of having to bow down to a younger brother, especially to one who was favored above them. They asked Joseph, "Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?"



Joseph dreamed a second dream, and he told it to his father and brothers. In this dream the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars all bowed to him. This dream meant that one day not only would Joseph's brothers bow to him but also his father and his mother (Leah, since Rachel had died).

Although Jacob rebuked Joseph, he thought very seriously about the dream. But Joseph's brothers hated him still more. Perhaps they thought he was bragging and boasting.

In this story you read of several people allowing the feelings of jealousy to work in their hearts. Leah and Rachel were jealous of the attention each received from their husband Jacob. Then, years later, Joseph's brothers were jealous because he was their father's

favorite son. Both times, jealousy caused these people to make bad, hurtful choices.

Do you ever have jealous thoughts try to come into your mind? Jealousy is feeling bitter or angry because someone has something that you don't. If you let those thoughts come into your mind and stay, they will only cause you trouble. If you have a problem with jealousy, ask Jesus to help you.

~~~~~  
**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him . . ."*  
—Genesis 37:4  
~~~~~