

# GENESIS 36:1-37:28

## TWO VERY DIFFERENT FAMILIES WITH A LOT IN COMMON

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If you grew up in a small town or a rural community there was probably at least one family that was known for being, shall we say, less cultured than most everybody else? There was at least one family that was known for its rowdy disposition and lack of manners. I can think of some myself. When news would get out about something that happened and it was made known who was guilty, no one would be surprised. They would say, "Well, that's a so and so for you. They're just bad seeds."

Today we will talk about two families. They are actually part of the same extended family, but they go their own ways for a time. Eventually their paths will cross again, but for now they will live independently of each other.

The point is that they are very different families but they have a lot in common. As I said earlier, we all know of families that seem to just be or have some bad seeds, but the truth of the matter is that even with them, we share the common trait of sin and all that it entails.

Today we will cover a lot of ground to see two different parts of one family, with two very different destinies and many of the same human traits.

So let's look at Genesis 36. I won't read every verse due to the fact that there are too many names that are too hard to pronounce, but we will get an overview of chapter 36 before we get into chapter 37.

**Gen 36:1** *Now this is the genealogy of Esau, who is Edom.*

**Gen 36:2** *Esau took his wives from the daughters of Canaan: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite; Aholibamah the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite;*

Esau is the brother of Jacob, now known as Israel. Most of this chapter is a genealogy of his family. It is another one of those chapters that is known as the **toledoth**. This brings the family tree up to date and it is then handed down to the next patriarch in line. This is basically all we have about Esau. His family does not play a major part in the plan of God therefore we only hear about him as he comes into contact with Israel.

Esau took wives from the Canaanites. This was frowned upon. The Canaanites were pagan to the core. Isaac and Jacob took wives from Abraham's family because of this. The Canaanites were the ones from which God would take the Promised Land.

The most notable in this genealogy is the name of Amalek. If you are familiar with your OT this name will be familiar to you.

**b. She bore Amalek to Eliphaz:** From him came the Amalekites, notable enemies of Israel (Exodus 17:8-16; Deuteronomy 25:17-19; 1 Samuel 15:1-8).

. In addition, the names of the descendants of Esau don't reflect a godly heart.

- **Dishon (Genesis 36:21)** means “gazelle”
- **Alvan (Genesis 36:23)** means “wicked”
- **Ithran (Genesis 36:26)** means “advantage”
- **Aran (Genesis 36:28)** means “mountain goat”
- **Baal-Hanan (Genesis 36:38)** - his name embraces the false god Baal. (Or false gods in general)

So that basically gives you an overview of the lineage. They populated Edom. This is now a portion of modern day Jordan. There isn't much there now. Other than the mountain city of Petra, referred to as Mount Seir in this chapter, the place is basically desolate.

Coming out of chapter 36 and moving into chapter 37 we get back to the main branch of the family, that is Jacob's, or Israel's family. The rest of the book of Genesis deals with them.

**Gen 37:1** *Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.*

**Gen 37:2** *This is the history of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father.*

**Gen 37:3** *Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors.*

**Gen 37:4** *But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.*

**We are now in the year 1728 BC** if you are making notes of this in your Bible. We see here that Jacob is living in the land of Canaan. He does not possess much of it. His family will eventually though. It is just not God's time yet.

Jacob's second youngest son Joseph becomes the main character for the remainder of Genesis. We can see that he is his father's favorite. Jacob has even made him a coat of many colors. This coat or tunic was not only colorful but it was also longer than the ones his brothers wore. People's garments, not unlike today say a lot about who and what they are. This tunic due to its length and color caused Joseph to stand out and above his brothers. This caused Joseph's brothers to be jealous. They couldn't stand him at all.

**Gen 37:5** *Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more.*

**Gen 37:6** *So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed:*

**Gen 37:7** *There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf."*

**Gen 37:8** *And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.*

**Gen 37:9** *Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me."*

**Gen 37:10** *So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?"*

**Gen 37:11** *And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.*

Joseph was a dreamer of dreams. Here we have two of his dreams recorded.

In the first dream, sheaves of grain are used as symbols of Joseph and his brothers. It shows that the brothers will at some time in the future bow down to Joseph. This was abnormal due to the fact that Joseph was so young. He was way down the seniority list.

The second dream has the same meaning, but it goes a little further in that it also refers to Joseph's parents bowing down to him.

**Rev 12:1** *Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.*

*Rev 12:2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.*

NOTE: If you are paying close attention, there is something that should stick out to you. We read of the death of Joseph's mother a couple of chapters ago. This shows us that we have some of the story, which isn't in chronological order. I just wanted to make you aware of that in case it stuck out to you. There is a prophetic reason for this.

No one was pleased to hear the dreams. It just made the other brothers hate Joseph even more. Jacob however seemed to file it away for future reference.

That is wise. There are times when things come to our attention that we don't understand. Some people freak out at the thing on face value. Others just file them and mull them over. I think this is wise. **We don't have to understand everything all the time. If we believe that God is in control we should have a peace about things even when we don't understand them. They don't take God by surprise.**

We also get a peak at the character of Joseph. He is a man that God will use mightily but we still see a character flaw. He seems to flaunt his status to his brothers. In verse 2 we see that he was a tattle-tale. Wisdom would say, knowing the already strained relationship between the siblings, that maybe it would be wise not to tell them of the dream. He probably should have told his father in private.

There was no reason to tell them of the dreams. If they are from God they will come true whether the participants know of them or not. **This attitude was a stumbling block to his brothers.** There appears to be very little humility in Joseph at this point in his young life. He was a regular teenager.

*Gen 37:12 Then his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.*

**Gen 37:13** *And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." So he said to him, "Here I am."*

**Gen 37:14** *Then he said to him, "Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me." So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem.*

**Gen 37:15** *Now a certain man found him, and there he was, wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying, "What are you seeking?"*

**Gen 37:16** *So he said, "I am seeking my brothers. Please tell me where they are feeding their flocks."*

**Gen 37:17** *And the man said, "They have departed from here, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan.*

**Gen 37:18** *Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him.*

**Gen 37:19** *Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming!"*

**Gen 37:20** *Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!"*

**Gen 37:21** *But Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, "Let us not kill him."*

**Gen 37:22** *And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him"—that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father.*

**Gen 37:23** *So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colors that was on him.*

**Gen 37:24** *Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it.*

**Gen 37:25** *And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from*

*Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt.*

**Gen 37:26** *So Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?"*

**Gen 37:27** *Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." And his brothers listened.*

**Gen 37:28** *Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.*

Now we have Jacob sending Joseph to work with his brothers out in the field. He eventually catches up to them, but his brothers see him coming and plot against him. We are really beginning to see how dysfunctional the family is. They really aren't any better than the Esau's clan at this point.

So the brothers plot to get rid of Joseph. We have all wanted to hurt our siblings at some point I'm sure, but this goes beyond that.

We are able to see just how bad the older boys hate Joseph. Between Jacob's favoritism and Joseph's smug demeanor, the older boys have no place in their hearts for him.

So they take his coat and throw him into an abandoned well or cistern. Then they just sit down and eat lunch while their little brother cries for them to let him out! Can you imagine this? He probably thought it was just another prank at first, but this went well beyond a wedgie. Then at some point reality set in and he realized that they truly wanted to be rid of him. He probably had never felt so alone.

Reuben, the oldest, tried to step up so they wouldn't kill him, but though he spoke up there was no action behind his words. We should always speak out against injustice, but sometimes words are not enough.

Reuben, being the oldest was in a position to do something about this but he was paralyzed by fear. His inaction didn't help Joseph at all.

While they were enjoying lunch, the boys saw some merchants traveling towards the markets in Egypt. This tells us that they were stopped near a trade route. Goods from the Far East came through Canaan on their way to the Mediterranean markets.

So the brothers get the bright idea to sell Joseph rather than to kill him. That would kill two birds with one stone. His blood wouldn't be on their hands and they would make some money at the same time.

Conclusion:

God chooses people, families, different groups to use not because they are necessarily any better than anyone else, but because **He chooses to use them in His sovereign grace**. None of us have any reason to gloat when God uses us. Joseph did and this hurt his witness. **We should be careful and humble with our gifts.**

Jacob's family is no better in many ways than Esau's.

We can't just be tinkling cymbals and sounding brass about things. We have to be more than just empty words. There has to be action behind our words. **We say we follow Jesus. Therefore we have to act as if we do.** WE can't be like Reuben. **He was in a position to help and didn't because of fear.**

**Jas 2:14** What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?

**Jas 2:15** If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,

**Jas 2:16** and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit?

**Jas 2:17** Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.



**Jas 2:18** But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works."  
Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my  
faith by my works.

**Jas 2:19** You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the  
demons believe—and tremble!

**Jas 2:20** But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without  
works is dead?

In the coming weeks as we go through Genesis I want y'all to see just  
how Joseph handles things and how they work out for everyone's good.

How would you handle being thrown into a well?

Would it make you doubt your dreams or would that event just be way  
to get you to the fulfillment of your dreams?