

SALT Church

Genesis 37

“Seeing the Unseen”

October 14, 2026

“In the Beginning”

RECAP:

- Chapter 36 was the line of Esau
- It was a reminder of how bad decisions can change generations
- It was a reminder that the sins of a father can be passed down to the third and forth generations.
- It was a warning to not allow the bitter root of anger into your heart for it will not only destroy you but it could destroy everyone you love.

Now we transition back to Jacob (Israel) and his son Joseph

37 So Jacob settled again in the land of Canaan, where his father had lived as a foreigner.

- This was where God wanted Jacob to be and we can only imagine the trouble he could have saved himself and his family if he had just obeyed God in the first place.

² This is the account of Jacob and his family. When Joseph was seventeen years old, he often tended his father’s flocks.

- Moses through the power of the Holy Spirit gives us a time stamp in Josephs age (17).
- Don’t miss the fact that so many of God’s men are shepherds.

He worked for his half-brothers, the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah. But Joseph reported to his father some of the bad things his brothers were doing.

- It doesn't surprise me that his brothers are up to bad things.
 - Sadly Jacob had passed those traits to his sons, but not to all of them.
 - I know of no scriptures that have anything negative concerning Joseph.

³ Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age.

- We have learned so much about the danger of showing favoritism
- Israel spent a good number of his days dealing with the sin of showing favoritism.
- I also believe there is a value to getting older
 - You tend to learn the value of life, meaning you care less about things and care more about people.
 - Growing old is a gift and it is meant to be enjoyed and not dreaded.

So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph—a beautiful robe.

- This is not a sin
- But it is wise to remember that what you do for one you probably should do for all.

4 But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them.

They couldn't say a kind word to him.

- Jealousy will do that.
 - I can't say that I blame them
 - They had worked hard for their father
 - They had supported him and now there is the new kid who is getting all of the attention.

NOW THINGS ARE GOING TO GET WORSE!

5 One-night Joseph had a dream, and when he told his brothers about it, they hated him more than ever.

- I don't think Joseph knew how to read a room.

6 "Listen to this dream," he said. 7 "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!"

- In Joseph's eyes this was a fantastic dream
- In his brother's eyes it was something completely different:
 - The tattletale, the chosen one, was saying that one day his brothers would bow before him.
 - We don't give much value to dreams but in Joseph's day they had heard how God communicated with Jacob through dreams.
 - In their mind Joseph was just making it up so that he could get more attention.

- But you and I have the benefit of knowing the truth and the truth is that one day his brothers will bow but the cost of this dream will be great.

⁸ His brothers responded, “So you think you will be our king, do you? Do you actually think you will reign over us?” And they hated him all the more because of his dreams and the way he talked about them.

- We know what is coming
- But we can also understand why his brothers react the way they do.
 - It’s kind of like how we see the nation of Israel today.
 - We don’t agree with all that they are doing but we know that God has a plan and a covenant promise to fulfil with them so we accept who they are while we watch God refine them.

⁹ Soon Joseph had another dream, and again he told his brothers about it.

- Don’t miss what is happening here
- God is feeding Joseph’s soul while at the same time He is feeding the jealousy of Joseph’s brothers.
 - Joseph had been chosen by God to save the nation of Israel.
 - Joseph’s brothers may not have liked it but each one of them would be chosen through their descendants to do certain things in the future as well.
 - They cannot see the unseen but we can.

“Listen, I have had another dream,” he said. “The sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed low before me!”

- Some people do not know how to read a room, Joseph was that kind of man.
- He will in the future but for now he can't see the anger and the jealousy of his brothers.

¹⁰ This time he told the dream to his father as well as to his brothers, but 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?”

- Jacob heard and understood what Joseph's dream meant
- It is interesting to me that Jacob knew exactly who each character was in the dream.

¹¹ But while his brothers were jealous of Joseph, his father wondered what the dreams meant.

- Jacob recognized the hand of God in Joseph's life and wondered what the future held.
- This will also confuse Jacob when he learns of his sons death.

¹² Soon after this, Joseph's brothers went to pasture their father's flocks at Shechem.

- Shechem is 50 miles from where Jacob lives.
 - With sheep it is a five-day journey.

¹³ When they had been gone for some time, Jacob said to Joseph, “Your brothers are pasturing the sheep at Shechem. Get ready, and I will send you to them.”

“I’m ready to go,” Joseph replied.

- Again we see the unseen at work as Joseph is ready to get out of the house and travel some five days to see his brothers.
- Five days away from the protection of his father.

¹⁴ “Go and see how your brothers and the flocks are getting along,” Jacob said. “Then come back and bring me a report.”

- Keep in mind that we were told at the beginning of this chapter that Joseph had brought a bad report about his brothers while they were away from their father.
- Jacob believes he can trust his son and his son believes that his brothers like him
 - both underestimate the hatred that has grown from Jacobs favoritism.

So Jacob sent him on his way, and Joseph traveled to Shechem from their home in the valley of Hebron.

- 50 miles

¹⁵ When he arrived there, a man from the area noticed him wandering around the countryside. “What are you looking for?” he asked.

- Don’t miss this!
 - This is God’s provision of protection for Joseph

- This is Canaanite territory and they would have no issue killing Joseph and taking the provisions sent by his father.
 - So, God sends a man to help him find his way and not Canaanites.

16 “I’m looking for my brothers,” Joseph replied. “Do you know where they are pasturing their sheep?”

17 “Yes,” the man told him. “They have moved on from here, but I heard them say, ‘Let’s go on to Dothan.’” So Joseph followed his brothers to Dothan and found them there.

- Dothan is another 14 miles north of Hebron
 - Joseph and his brothers are now 64 miles from Jacob

18 When Joseph’s brothers saw him coming, they recognized him in the distance. As he approached, they made plans to kill him.

- Joseph and his coat of many colors was easy to spot in the desert.
 - The Hebrew word used to describe his coat can mean shiny or sparkly.
 - The point is simply this, they knew him from a great distance.

19 “Here comes the dreamer!” they said. 20 “Come on, let’s kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns. We can tell our father, ‘A wild animal has eaten him.’ Then we’ll see what becomes of his dreams!”

- Wow!

- This is not what you would expect from the chosen people of God.
- Some scholars believe this is the voice of Simeon, the one who lead the charge to kill all of the men in Shechem.

²¹ But when Reuben heard of their scheme, he came to Joseph's rescue. "Let's not kill him," he said.

- Who is Reuben?
 - The oldest son who slept with his father's wife
 - He's the one in charge,
 - The one that is responsible
 - He wants no more trouble with his dad
 - So he steps in

²² "Why should we shed any blood? Let's just throw him into this empty cistern here in the wilderness. Then he'll die without our laying a hand on him." Reuben was secretly planning to rescue Joseph and return him to his father.

- Only God would know this detail
- So, Moses under the power of the Holy Spirit adds this note
 - I think Rueben regretted what he had done and he loved his younger brother.

²³ So when Joseph arrived, his brothers ripped off the beautiful robe he was wearing.

- The Hebrew word used here is stronger than what is translated
 - They attacked him and tore his clothing off of him.
 - Especially his special jacket

²⁴ Then they grabbed him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

- Historically this cisterns were 10, 20, or 30 feet deep.

²⁵ Then, just as they were sitting down to eat,

- Couple of things here
 - They most likely were eating the food that Joseph had brought
 - It doesn't say it here but later there is a confession that while they were eating, they heard Joseph's cries for help.

Genesis 42:21

²¹ They said to one another, "Surely, we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us."

- Keep in mind they carried that memory for decades

they looked up and saw a caravan of camels in the distance coming toward them. It was a group of Ishmaelite traders taking a load of gum, balm, and aromatic resin from Gilead down to Egypt.

- It is interesting to me that they are distant relatives of Joseph.

²⁶ Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain by killing our brother? We'd have to cover up the crime. ²⁷ Instead of hurting him, let's sell him to those Ishmaelite traders. After all, he is our brother—our own flesh and blood!" And his brothers agreed.

- What a strange rationale
 - It's not okay to kill him because he is our brother

- It is okay to beat him and throw him into a cistern
- It is okay to sell him as a slave and lie to their father about what happened to him.
 - What in the world!
 - Sin will mess up rational thought!

²⁸ So when the Ishmaelites, who were Midianite traders,

- Double 1st cousins!
 - The Midianites were descendants of Abrahams union with Keturah

²⁸ So when the Ishmaelites, who were Midianite traders, came by, Joseph's brothers pulled him out of the cistern and sold him to them for twenty pieces of silver. And the traders took him to Egypt.

- This is so messed up!

²⁹ Sometime later, Reuben returned to get Joseph out of the cistern.

• Reuben must have been out scouting for the next place to graze. When he discovered that Joseph was missing, he tore his clothes in grief. ³⁰ Then he went back to his brothers and lamented, "The boy is gone! What will I do now?"

- There is always more pressure on leaders
- The other guys didn't care because they knew that Reuben would be the one that would stand before Jacob
 - Reuben feels the weight of their decision and he is broken.

- Don't miss the unseen
 - God was in the removal of Joseph and Reuben would not allow it to happen so Reuben suddenly left.
 - God was in all of it!

31 Then the brothers killed a young goat and dipped Joseph's robe in its blood. 32 They sent the beautiful robe to their father with this message: "Look at what we found. Doesn't this robe belong to your son?"

- So sad!!!
 - In some way this was reaping what you sow
 - Jacob had fooled Isaac with a goat
 - He fooled his father into believing that he was his brother with the help of a goat.
 - I wonder if Jacob ever realized that truth?

33 Their father recognized it immediately. "Yes," he said, "it is my son's robe. A wild animal must have eaten him. Joseph has clearly been torn to pieces!"

- I'm sure the boys rested in the fact that they never said it was Joseph's blood
- They rested in the fact that Jacob created the story and the lie
 - But they knew what they had done and before the Lord they were guilty.

34 Then Jacob tore his clothes and dressed himself in burlap. He mourned deeply for his son for a long time. 35 His family all tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. “I will go to my grave mourning for my son,” he would say, and then he would weep.

- Jacob had lost the love of his life in Rachael now he was dealing with the loss of their precious son.

36 Meanwhile, the Midianite traders arrived in Egypt, where they sold Joseph to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Potiphar was captain of the palace guard.

- And so God's unseen plan is in effect
 - What these boys had done in evil God had meant for good.