

Vayeshev
"And He Dwelt"

Torah Reading: Genesis (Bereshit) 37:1 - 40:23

Haftarah Reading: Amos 2:6 - 3:8

Study Questions

1. Why do you think the Torah seems to have so much evidence of the absolute sovereignty of God which can be observed in many of its stories? Why such apparent repetition?
2. What are some of the mistakes Jacob made in raising his sons? How did they influence the outcome of his family's history?
3. What was the significance of the "coat of many colors?"
4. How was Joseph sold into slavery? By whom?
5. Who was Potiphar?
6. How was it that Joseph rose to such heights in Potiphar's household?
7. What role did Potiphar's wife play in God's sovereign plan?
8. What are some practical applications from observing this role which we can make for our lives?

Memory Verse

"The Lord was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did" - Bereshit 39:2a

Study Notes

Outline

- A Father's Mistake
- A Brother's Mistreatment
- A Nobleman's Manservant
- God's Master Plan

A Father's Mistake

- "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all of his sons..." - 37:3
- Joseph had a heavy burden placed on him by his father. Neither Jacob, Joseph, nor the brothers handled it well.
- Joseph walked in God's gifts through the immaturity of youth and carried about him the fruits of favoritism.
- "A man must not make a distinction among his children, for on account of the coat of many colors which our ancestor Jacob made for Joseph: "They hated him." (Bereshit Rabbah 84.7)

The Coat

- The Hebrew text is surprisingly vague. According to BDB is merely a "tunic reaching to the palms and soles".
- The LXX and Targum Jonathan both render the term "a coat of many colors".
- It has been discovered that in the patriarchal age, Semitic chiefs wore coats of many colors as insignia of rulership.
- Therefore, the coat marked Joseph as the chieftan of the tribes at his father's death. This situation could cause many issues in the family.

Joseph's Mistreatment

- His brother's anger must have been great. As at first they intended to kill him.
- Reuben, the firstborn, acted like a firstborn and tried to protect his brother.
- Notice that before they threw him into the pit they stripped him of his coat "the symbol of tribal leadership".

Egypt

- For the first time in our study of Bereshit we are now involved in a culture other than Canaanite or Mesopotamian. It is not just a short tour like Abraham did.
- For the next few centuries the story of Israel will be told in Egypt.

Joseph's Success

- Joseph's conduct was always appropriate and honoring to his faith in God.
- When he does speak he seems to always have his mind on God.
- He cares about those around him. Notice his concern for the sad look on the cupbearer and baker's face.
- The world will try to attribute success to ability. Depending on the type of success you are discussing this may be true. Joseph's success can be attributed to "The Lord was with Joseph and he became a successful man and he remained in the house of his Egyptian master." 39:2

Applying this to our lives

- What if God choose to put you through what Joseph went through to achieve his purposes. How would you feel about it?
- What are some things we can do to slow down and notice what God is doing in our lives?