

What is the significance of there being two dreams? Genesis 41:32

Interestingly this is never completely fulfilled. By the time Joseph's brothers do bow down, Rachel is already dead, she never does bow down. We do not know when Benjamin was born, it is possible that he has already been born and that Rachel has already died. (It is only father and brothers that are mentioned) Others believe that he was not born until after Joseph was sold into slavery. What are the dreams of leadership and ultimately that will be the Judah tribe and not the Joseph tribes.



**Was Joseph wrong in sharing his dreams with his brothers?
What would you have done?**

This is usually considered a mark of immaturity on Joseph's behalf he does not know how to handle the promise that God has given him, not the effects that it is likely to have on his brothers. You might read the account to say that Joseph is boastful and full of pride.



God has promised him a great promise. What should Joseph do?

- Demand from his family the position God had given him
- Reject the dream because it was impossible
- Trust God and let Him do it.
- Make plans to force the dream to happen.
- Just forget the whole thing because God would do it all.



**What should you do when God gives you a promise?
What promises has God given you?**

**What are some of the immature things we as Christians should overcome?
If someone was jealous of you how would you handle it?**



**How would you have reacted if you had been one of his brothers?
Is everything that God tells you intended for public disclosure?
When do you tell - when don't you tell?**

There is a problem that is often not taken into account. It also haunts the other two dream instances. In the understanding of the day, a dream by itself meant nothing – it has to be shared and interpreted for it to come true. (Who does interpret the dream?)



**If this is correct what problem does Joseph have?
What is going through his mind when he shares the dream?
With this in mind should Joseph have shared the dream?**

When we read a passage like this we get to choose which character we identify with.
Who do you identify with?

Imagine for a moment that you identified with Israel or one of Joseph's brothers.
**Do you think Joseph would have been easy to live with?
What challenges would you face?**

Joseph was easy to hate.



**Romans 12:9-21 – Consider each verse?
What might we learn from this passage?**

We usually react negatively, but a positive approach, reaching out to the person. Complementing them on the things they do well, finding reasons to praise them, works a lot better. Maybe they are jealous because they feel inferior. Jealous people can be quite dangerous (as the story points out). Best to disarm the jealousy.

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Joseph - The start of the Story



**Read Psalms 105:16-25
What do you know about the story of Joseph?
Do you love it or hate it?
What is the story about?**

Joseph is an easy character to identify with. It is a story that helps people in difficult situations. The story of Joseph covers the quarter of Genesis. It is arguably the longest single story in the bible. It is often called a wisdom narrative. Think Proverbs in story form. As such it is intended to teach us how to live. It is a different kind of literature from what goes before.

The placement of the story in Genesis is strategic as it picks up on some important themes that have been running through the book and ties up a series of loose ends.

As a result, what is the story for? it is a good question to ask. It has obvious and not so obvious answers. Some of which will have to wait until later weeks.

What is the story for?



**For example – Read Genesis 15:13-14
What does God say is going to happen?
What country is He talking about?**

For this promise to be fulfilled Abraham descendants have to end up in Egypt. God can't rescue them from Egypt unless they are there to be rescued. Since the Exodus for Egypt is the most important event in the First Testament. The Cross of Jesus in the New Testament parallels the Exodus. So in this story, God is putting important pieces in place. It is a small start to a big story.

The story of Joseph comes immediately after the story of Jacob, which is also quite long and complex. We are invited to contrast the two characters and their stories.



Read Genesis 37:1-4

In Hebrew culture, sibling order was very important. It was the oldest son who owned the inheritance. Others received only on the goodwill of their father. It was always the oldest son who took precedence and would head the family. The first-born belonged to God and had to be redeemed with silver.

Where was Joseph in the sibling order?

Benjamin was the last of the brothers but he was quite a bit younger than Joseph, effectively Joseph was the youngest.

What would his place be in the family?

**Can you think of any other occasions when God chose the youngest?
Why do you think God chose the youngest?** 1 Corinthians 1:27-29



www.freedom.gen.nz
studies@freedom.gen.nz
Pastor Ray Moxham



What was Israel's (Jacob's) attitude to him and why?

This is a large family with 12 brothers. Jacob has four wives, Leah, Rachel and their servants (secondary wives Bilhad and Zilpah). The sons of each mother seem to stick together sometimes against the others. This is a house divided. Rachel was the love of Jacobs life and dies giving birth to Benjamin. This favouritism is ominous, It was one of the things that caused trouble in Isaac and Rebekah's house. Dysfunctional families is exactly what we expect in Genesis.



Can favouritism still be a problem in families?

What about in church? cf James 2:1-9

Verse 2 immediately separates Joseph from his brothers.

Which brothers? (sons of Bildad and Zilpah Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher)

Why did he bring a bad report about them?

Shepherds away from home had a bit of a bad reputation, we are not told what they were doing, whether the issue was moral or regarding their care for the flocks, only that it was bad.

How do you think they felt about him?



According to verse 4, why did the rest of Joseph's brothers hate him?

Was this fair?

**Analyse their response: Why did they react as they did?
How should they have reacted?**

We can't leave it here because Genesis gives us information on the other sons too.



What did Reuben do?

Genesis 35:22

What did Simeon and Levi do?

Genesis 34:25-30

What did Judah do?

Genesis 38:2, 26

With the exception of Issachar and Zebulon of whom we have no knowledge. All of the family are put in a bad light. This should not surprise us, the same has been true of Abraham and Jacob, both of them learned a relationship with God over a long period, physical journeys that became spiritual journeys.



What kind of journey are you on?

If we are on spiritual journeys too:

What is God trying to achieve in you?

How then should you face your life?

It appears that Joseph was cut from different cloth than his brothers. Right from the beginning of his life, he is different. Faith comes easily for Joseph.

Is this another reason he was preferred by his father?

Joseph is an exception in the book of Genesis. Everyone else is bad turning good Joseph is good staying good.



Which one are you?

How does this work in Church life?

Joseph stays faithful to God throughout his life, he never really changes, but by the end of the story Joseph's brothers have changed, so ironically the story of Joseph is really about how his brothers find faith and transformation.



Read Genesis 37:3

What did Israel give to Joseph?

We all know of Joseph's 'Coat of many colours' but the Hebrew does not describe the striped jacket most of us assume. (this idea comes from the Greek version of the FT, called the LXX.) The NIV translates it richly ornamented robe. This is a good translation. To

die a coat may colours would indeed have been an expensive exercise. The important thing is that it was a token of his father's love and set him apart from his brothers. Maybe it identifies him as the intended heir.

More than this, modern scholars often translate the rather difficult Hebrew here as long-sleeved robe. This might sound odd, but the logic is that shepherds had short-sleeved robes because of the oil transfer from sheep.

So to give Joseph a long-sleeved robe would mean...?

This is a white-collar, blue-collar thing. Joseph is privileged he does not have to work the way the others do. His father sends him out twice in this chapter to check up on his brothers, he is management.



Why did his brothers hate him? v11

How do you think Joseph's brothers would have described Joseph when he was not around?

How do you think this might have affected Joseph?



Again analyse:

Is this his fault?

Why did they react against Joseph?

How could they have reacted?

This raises a question that Genesis addresses multiple times.



What do you do when you don't get what you want?

What do you do when, Isaac, Jacob or God, bless someone else instead of you?

i.e. What do you do when you are not the chosen one?

This account might add:

How do you deal with being the chosen one?



To what extent was Israel to blame for the animosity towards Joseph?

To what extent might Joseph have been to blame?

What would be the best way for him to behave?



Read Genesis 37:5-9

What was the first dream?

Who interprets the first dream?

What do they think it means?

What was the second dream?

What was the meaning of the two dreams?

Who are the stars, sun and moon?

How did his father interpret the dream?

Why does he rebuke Joseph?

He rebukes Joseph for causing trouble not for the dream itself. Does this suggest that Jacob knew it is true?



Does he believe the dreams?

How did his brothers respond?

Is the dream a warning to the brothers? Is it a call for them to change? cf. Genesis 37:10

As a reader we ask how will this dream ever be fulfilled? At this stage we would never guess the answer.

Joseph has two dreams. These are the first of 3 sets of dreams that run through the story and control Joseph's life. (Seven in total Genesis 46:2). You might notice that the same thing happens in Daniel's life with very much the same result.

The other dreams are?