

References for *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*

MAY 4-10

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | GENESIS 36-37

“Joseph Becomes a Victim of Jealousy”

(Genesis 37:3, 4) Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his other sons because he was the son of his old age, and he had a special robe made for him. ⁴ When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they began to hate him, and they could not speak peaceably to him.

w14 8/1 12-13

“Please Listen to This Dream”

The Bible answers: “When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they began to hate him, and they could not speak peaceably to him.” (Genesis 37:4) Their jealousy may be understandable, but Joseph's brothers were unwise to give in to that poisonous emotion. (Proverbs 14:30; 27:4) Have you ever found yourself seething with envy when someone received attention or honor that you wanted? Remember Joseph's brothers. Their jealousy led them to commit deeds that they would come to regret deeply. Their example serves to remind Christians that it is far wiser to “rejoice with those who rejoice.”—Romans 12:15.

Joseph surely sensed his brothers' animosity. So did he stash his fancy robe out of sight when his brothers were near? He might have been tempted to do so. Remember, though, that Jacob wanted the robe to be a sign of favor and love. Joseph wanted to live up to his father's trust in him, so he loyally wore the garment. His example is useful for us. Although our own heavenly Father is never partial, he does at times single out his loyal servants and favor them. Furthermore, he asks them to

stand out as different from this corrupt and immoral world. Like Joseph's special robe, the conduct of true Christians makes them different from those around them. Such conduct sometimes incites jealousy and animosity. (1 Peter 4:4) Should a Christian hide his true identity as a servant of God? No—no more than Joseph should have hidden his robe.—Luke 11:33.

(Genesis 37:5-9) Later Joseph had a dream and told it to his brothers, and they found further reason to hate him. ⁶ He said to them: “Please listen to this dream that I had. ⁷ There we were binding sheaves in the middle of the field when my sheaf got up and stood erect and your sheaves encircled and bowed down to my sheaf.” ⁸ His brothers said to him: “Are you really going to make yourself king over us and dominate us?” So they found another reason to hate him, because of his dreams and what he said. ⁹ After that he had still another dream, and he related it to his brothers: “I have had another dream. This time the sun and the moon and 11 stars were bowing down to me.”

(Genesis 37:11) And his brothers grew jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

w14 8/1 13 ¶2-4

“Please Listen to This Dream”

The dreams came from Jehovah God. They were prophetic in nature, and God meant for Joseph to pass along the message they contained. In a sense, Joseph was to do what all the later prophets did when they related God's messages and judgments to His wayward people.

Joseph tactfully said to his brothers: “Please listen to this dream that I had.” His brothers understood the dream, and they did not like it one

bit. They answered: “Are you really going to make yourself king over us and dominate us?” The account adds: “So they found another reason to hate him, because of his dreams and what he said.” When Joseph related the second dream to his father as well as his brothers, the reaction was not much better. We read: “His father rebuked him and said to him: ‘What is the meaning of this dream of yours? Am I as well as your mother and your brothers really going to come and bow down to the earth to you?’” However, Jacob kept thinking the matter over. Might Jehovah be communicating with the boy? —Genesis 37:6, 8, 10, 11.

Joseph was neither the first nor the last servant of Jehovah to be asked to relay a prophetic message that would prove to be unpopular and even lead to persecution. Jesus was the greatest of such message bearers, and he told his followers: “If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” (John 15:20) Christians of all ages may learn much from the faith and courage of young Joseph.

(Genesis 37:23, 24) So as soon as Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped Joseph of his robe, the special robe that he wore, ²⁴ and they took him and threw him into the waterpit. At the time the pit was empty; there was no water in it.

(Genesis 37:28) And when the Mid'i-an-ite merchants were passing by, they lifted Joseph up out of the waterpit and sold him to the Ish'ma-el-ites for 20 pieces of silver. These men took Joseph into Egypt.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Genesis 36:1) This is the history of E'sau, that is, E'dom.

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Edom

(E'dom) [Red], **Edomites** (E'dom-ites).

Edom was the secondary name or byname given to Esau, Jacob's twin brother. (Ge 36:1) It was applied to him because of his selling his birthright for the *red* stew. (Ge 25:30-34) Coincidentally, Esau at birth had had a very red color (Ge 25:25), and a similar color prevailed in parts of the land he and his descendants later inhabited.

(Genesis 37:29-32) Later when Reu'ben returned to the waterpit and saw that Joseph was not in the waterpit, he ripped his garments apart. ³⁰ When he returned to his brothers, he exclaimed: “The child is gone! And I—what am I going to do?” ³¹ So they took Joseph's robe and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the robe in the blood. ³² After that they sent the special robe to their father and said: “This is what we found. Please examine whether this is your son's robe or not.”

it-1 561-562

Custody

When a shepherd or herdsman said he would keep or guard a flock or herd, he was indicating legal acceptance of the custody of these animals. He was guaranteeing the owner that they would be fed and not stolen, or else compensation would be paid. However, his responsibility was not absolute, for the above law absolved the guardian of liability in the case of an occurrence beyond normal human control, such as attack by wild beasts. To be relieved of the responsibility of custody, though, he had to submit evidence to the owner, as, for example, the torn carcass. The owner, on examination of such evidence, was bound to return a verdict of innocence on the part of the custodian.

The same principle applied in general to any entrusted property, even in family relationships, for example, the oldest brother was considered the legal guardian of his younger brothers and

sisters. Hence, we can understand the concern that Reuben as an eldest son had for Joseph's life, as recorded at Genesis 37:18-30, when the other brothers spoke of killing him. "He said: 'Let us not strike his soul fatally.' . . . 'Do not spill blood. . . . do not lay a violent hand upon him.' His purpose was to deliver him out of their hand in order to return him to his father." And when Reuben discovered Joseph's absence, his anxiety was so extreme that "he ripped his garments apart" and exclaimed: "The child is gone! And I—where am I really to go?" He knew that he could be held accountable for the loss of Joseph. To escape responsibility, the brothers shrewdly fabricated evidence to the effect that Joseph had been killed by a wild beast. This they did by soaking Joseph's striped garment in goat's blood. They then submitted this evidence to Jacob, their father and patriarchal judge, who absolved Reuben of any responsibility because, on the basis of Joseph's blood-soaked garment that his brothers presented as evidence, Jacob concluded that Joseph had been killed.—Ge 37:31-33.

Bible Reading

(Genesis 36:1-19) This is the history of E'sau, that is, E'dom. ² E'sau took his wives from the daughters of Ca'naan: A'dah the daughter of E'lon the Hit'tite; and O-hol-i-ba'mah the daughter of A'nah, the granddaughter of Zib'e-on the Hi'vite; ³ and Bas'e-math, Ish'ma-el's daughter, the sister of Ne-ba'ioth. ⁴ And A'dah bore El'i-phaz to E'sau, and Bas'e-math bore Reu'el, ⁵ and O-hol-i-ba'mah bore Je'ush, Ja'lam, and Kor'ah. These are the sons of E'sau, who were born to him in the land of Ca'naan. ⁶ After that E'sau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, all the members of his household, his herd and all his other beasts, and all the wealth he had accumulated in the land of Ca'naan and he went to another land some

distance away from Jacob his brother. ⁷ For their goods had become too many for them to dwell together, and the land where they were residing was not able to sustain them because of their herds. ⁸ So E'sau took up dwelling in the mountainous region of Se'ir. E'sau is E'dom. ⁹ And this is the history of E'sau the father of E'dom in the mountainous region of Se'ir. ¹⁰ These are the names of the sons of E'sau: El'i-phaz the son of A'dah, E'sau's wife; Reu'el the son of Bas'e-math, E'sau's wife. ¹¹ The sons of El'i-phaz were Te'man, O'mar, Ze'pho, Ga'tam, and Ke'naz. ¹² Tim'na became the concubine of El'i-phaz, E'sau's son. In time she bore to El'i-phaz, Am'a-lek. These are the sons of A'dah, E'sau's wife. ¹³ These are the sons of Reu'el: Na'hath, Ze'rah, Sham'mah, and Miz'zah. These were the sons of Bas'e-math, E'sau's wife. ¹⁴ These were the sons of O-hol-i-ba'mah the daughter of A'nah, the granddaughter of Zib'e-on, E'sau's wife, whom she bore to E'sau: Je'ush, Ja'lam, and Kor'ah. ¹⁵ These are the sheikhs of the sons of E'sau: The sons of El'i-phaz, E'sau's firstborn: Sheikh Te'man, Sheikh O'mar, Sheikh Ze'pho, Sheikh Ke'naz, ¹⁶ Sheikh Kor'ah, Sheikh Ga'tam, and Sheikh Am'a-lek. These are the sheikhs of El'i-phaz in the land of E'dom. These are the sons by A'dah. ¹⁷ These are the sons of Reu'el, E'sau's son: Sheikh Na'hath, Sheikh Ze'rah, Sheikh Sham'mah, and Sheikh Miz'zah. These are the sheikhs of Reu'el in the land of E'dom. These are the sons by Bas'e-math, E'sau's wife. ¹⁸ Finally these are the sons of O-hol-i-ba'mah, E'sau's wife: Sheikh Je'ush, Sheikh Ja'lam, and Sheikh Kor'ah. These are the sheikhs of O-hol-i-ba'mah the daughter of A'nah, E'sau's wife. ¹⁹ These are the sons of E'sau, and these are their sheikhs. He is E'dom.

MAY 11-17

**TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | GENESIS
38-39**

“Jehovah Never Abandoned Joseph”

(Genesis 39:1) Now Joseph was taken down to Egypt, and an Egyptian named Pot'i-phar, a court official of Phar'aoh and chief of the guard, bought him from the Ish'ma-el-ites who had taken him down there.

w14 11/1 12 ¶4-5

“How Could I Commit This Great Badness?”

“Now Joseph was taken down to Egypt, and an Egyptian named Potiphar, a court official of Pharaoh and chief of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there.” (Genesis 39:1) In those few words, the Bible account helps us to imagine the humiliation of a young man as he was sold once again. He was mere property! We may think of Joseph following his new master, an Egyptian court official, through bustling city streets crowded with bazaars as they head toward Joseph's new home.

Home! It was a far cry from anything Joseph had ever called home. He had grown up in a nomadic family who dwelled in tents as they moved frequently and tended their flocks of sheep. Here, such wealthy Egyptians as Potiphar lived in elegant, brightly painted houses. Archaeologists report that the ancient Egyptians were fond of lush, walled gardens with shade trees and quiet pools for growing papyrus, lotus, and other water plants. Some houses sat secluded within gardens, with porches for enjoying the breeze, high windows for ventilation, and many rooms, including a large dining room and quarters for servants.

(Genesis 39:12-14) Then she grabbed hold of him by his garment and said: “Lie down with me!” But he left his garment in her hand and fled outside. ¹³ As soon as she saw that

he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, ¹⁴ she began to cry out to the men of her house and to say to them: “Look! He brought to us this Hebrew man to make us a laughingstock. He came to me to lie down with me, but I began to cry out at the top of my voice.

(Genesis 39:20) So Joseph's master took him and gave him over to the prison, the place where the prisoners of the king were kept under arrest, and he remained there in the prison.

w14 11/1 14-15

“How Could I Commit This Great Badness?”

We know little of what Egyptian prisons were like in those days. Archaeologists have found the ruins of such places—great fortresslike structures with cells and dungeons. Joseph later described the place with a word that literally means “the pit,” which suggests a lightless and hopeless place. (Genesis 40:15, footnote) In the book of Psalms, we learn that Joseph was subjected to further torment: “With fetters they bound his feet; his neck was put in irons.” (Psalm 105:17, 18) The Egyptians sometimes put prisoners in restraints that pinioned their arms behind them at the elbows; others bore iron collars clasped at their necks. How Joseph must have suffered to be so mistreated—when he had done nothing to deserve it!

What is more, this was no brief setback. The account says that Joseph “remained there in the prison.” He spent years in that terrible place! And Joseph did not know if he would ever be released. As those first shocking days dragged into weeks, then months, how did he keep from falling into hopelessness and despair?

The account gives us this reassuring answer: “Jehovah continued with Joseph and kept showing loyal love to him.” (Genesis 39:21) No prison walls, no fetters, no lightless dungeons can keep Jehovah's loyal love from reaching his ser-

vants. (Romans 8:38, 39) We may well imagine Joseph pouring out his agony to his dear heavenly Father in prayer and then receiving the kind of peace and calm that only “the God of all comfort” can provide. (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4; Philippians 4:6, 7) What else did Jehovah do for Joseph? We read that he kept granting Joseph “favor in the eyes of the chief officer of the prison.”

(Genesis 39:21-23) But Jehovah continued with Joseph and kept showing loyal love to him and granting him favor in the eyes of the chief officer of the prison. ²² So the chief officer of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners in the prison, and everything that they were doing there, he was the one having it done. ²³ The chief officer of the prison was looking after absolutely nothing that was in Joseph’s care, for Jehovah was with Joseph and Jehovah made whatever he did successful.

w14 11/1 15 ¶2

“How Could I Commit This Great Badness?”

The account gives us this reassuring answer: “Jehovah continued with Joseph and kept showing loyal love to him.” (Genesis 39:21) No prison walls, no fetters, no lightless dungeons can keep Jehovah’s loyal love from reaching his servants. (Romans 8:38, 39) We may well imagine Joseph pouring out his agony to his dear heavenly Father in prayer and then receiving the kind of peace and calm that only “the God of all comfort” can provide. (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4; Philippians 4:6, 7) What else did Jehovah do for Joseph? We read that he kept granting Joseph “favor in the eyes of the chief officer of the prison.”

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Genesis 38:9, 10) But O’nan knew that the offspring would not be considered his. So when he did have relations with his brother’s

wife, he wasted his semen on the ground so as not to give offspring to his brother. ¹⁰ What he did was bad in the eyes of Jehovah, so he also put him to death.

it-2 555

Onan

(O’nan) [from a root meaning “generative power; dynamic energy”].

A son of Judah, his second by the Canaanite daughter of Shua. (Ge 38:2-4; 1Ch 2:3) After Onan’s childless older brother Er was put to death by Jehovah for wrongdoing, Onan was told by Judah to perform brother-in-law marriage with Er’s widow Tamar. If a son was produced, he would not be the founder of Onan’s family, and the firstborn’s inheritance would belong to him as an heir to Er; whereas if no heir came, Onan would get the inheritance for himself. When Onan had relations with Tamar, he “wasted his semen on the earth” instead of giving it to her. This was not an act of masturbation on the part of Onan, for the account says “when he did have relations with his brother’s wife” he spilled his semen. Apparently it was a case of “coitus interruptus,” in which Onan purposely prevented ejaculation of his semen into Tamar’s genital tract. For his disobedience to his father, his covetousness, and his sin against the divine arrangement of marriage, not for self-abuse, Onan, himself also childless, was put to death by Jehovah.—Ge 38: 6-10; 46:12; Nu 26:19.

(Genesis 38:15-18) When Judah caught sight of her, he at once took her for a prostitute, because she had covered her face. ¹⁶ So he turned aside to her by the road and said: “Allow me, please, to have relations with you,” for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. However, she said: “What will you give me that you may have relations with me?” ¹⁷ To this he said: “I will send a young goat from my herd.” But she

said: “Will you give a security until you send it?” ¹⁸ He continued: “What security should I give you?” to which she said: “Your seal ring and your cord and your rod that is in your hand.” Then he gave them to her and had relations with her, and she became pregnant by him.

w04 1/15 30 ¶4-5

Questions From Readers

Judah acted wrongly in that he did not give Tamar to his son Shelah as promised. He also had relations with a woman he thought was a temple prostitute. This was contrary to God’s purpose, which was for a man to have sexual relations only in the marriage arrangement. (Genesis 2:24) In reality, though, Judah did not have relations with a harlot. Rather, he unwittingly took the place of his son Shelah in performing brother-in-law marriage and thus fathered legal offspring.

As for Tamar, her course was not an immoral one. Her twin sons were not considered to be the sons of fornication. When Boaz of Bethlehem took the Moabitess Ruth in brother-in-law marriage, the elders of Bethlehem spoke favorably of Tamar’s son Perez, saying to Boaz: “May your house become like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, from the offspring that Jehovah will give you out of this young woman.” (Ruth 4:12) Perez is also listed among the ancestors of Jesus Christ.—Matthew 1:1-3; Luke 3:23-33.

Bible Reading

(Genesis 38:1-19) About that time Judah left his brothers and pitched his tent near an A·dul’lam·ite man named Hi’rah. ² There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Ca’naan·ite named Shu’a. So he took her and had relations with her, ³ and she became pregnant. Later she bore a son, and he named him Er. ⁴ Again she became pregnant and bore a

son and named him O’nan. ⁵ Yet again she bore a son and named him She’lah. He was in Ach’zib when she bore him. ⁶ In time Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Ta’mar. ⁷ But Er, Judah’s firstborn, was displeasing to Jehovah; so Jehovah put him to death. ⁸ In view of that, Judah said to O’nan: “Have relations with your brother’s wife and perform brother-in-law marriage with her and raise up offspring for your brother.” ⁹ But O’nan knew that the offspring would not be considered his. So when he did have relations with his brother’s wife, he wasted his semen on the ground so as not to give offspring to his brother. ¹⁰ What he did was bad in the eyes of Jehovah, so he also put him to death. ¹¹ Judah said to Ta’mar his daughter-in-law: “Dwell as a widow in the house of your father until my son She’lah grows up,” for he said to himself: ‘He too may die like his brothers.’ So Ta’mar went and stayed in her own father’s house. ¹² Some time passed, and Judah’s wife, the daughter of Shu’a, died. Judah kept the mourning period, and then he went to his sheepshearers in Tim’nah with his companion Hi’rah the A·dul’lam·ite. ¹³ Ta’mar was told: “Here your father-in-law is going up to Tim’nah to shear his sheep.” ¹⁴ With that she removed her widow’s clothing and veiled herself and covered herself with a shawl and sat down at the entrance of E·na’im, which is on the road to Tim’nah, for she saw that She’lah had grown up and yet she had not been given to him as a wife. ¹⁵ When Judah caught sight of her, he at once took her for a prostitute, because she had covered her face. ¹⁶ So he turned aside to her by the road and said: “Allow me, please, to have relations with you,” for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. However, she said: “What will you give me that you may have relations with me?” ¹⁷ To this he said: “I will send a

young goat from my herd.” But she said: “Will you give a security until you send it?” ¹⁸ He continued: “What security should I give you?” to which she said: “Your seal ring and your cord and your rod that is in your hand.” Then he gave them to her and had relations with her, and she became pregnant by him. ¹⁹ After that she got up and went away and removed her shawl and clothed herself with her widow’s clothing.

MAY 18-24

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD | GENESIS 40-41

“Jehovah Delivers Joseph”

(Genesis 41:9-13) At that the chief cupbearer spoke with Phar’aoh, saying: “I am confessing my sins today. ¹⁰ Phar’aoh was indignant at his servants. So he committed me to the jail of the house of the chief of the guard, both me and the chief baker. ¹¹ After that we each had a dream on the same night. He and I each had a dream with its own interpretation. ¹² And there with us was a young Hebrew man, a servant of the chief of the guard. When we related them to him, he interpreted for us the meaning of each dream. ¹³ It happened exactly as he had interpreted to us. I was restored to my office, but the other man was hanged.”

w15 2/1 14 ¶4-5

“Do Not Interpretations Belong to God?”

The cupbearer may have forgotten Joseph, but Jehovah never did. One night, he sent Pharaoh a pair of unforgettable dreams. In the first, the king saw seven fine-looking, fat cows emerge from the Nile River, followed by seven ugly, thin cows. The thin ones devoured the fat ones. Later, Pharaoh dreamed that he saw a stalk of grain sprouting seven choice ears. But then

another seven ears, wind-parched and sickly, sprouted up and devoured the choice ones. In the morning, Pharaoh awoke deeply agitated over the dreams, so he called on all his wise men and magic-practicing priests to interpret them. They all failed. (Genesis 41:1-8) Whether that means that they were dumbfounded or that they came up with a variety of conflicting ideas, we do not know. At any rate, Pharaoh was let down—yet he was more desperate than ever to find an answer to this puzzle.

Finally, the cupbearer remembered Joseph! His conscience stung him, and he told Pharaoh about the remarkable young man in prison who two years earlier had correctly interpreted his dream and that of the baker. Immediately, Pharaoh had Joseph summoned from prison. —Genesis 41:9-13.

(Genesis 41:16) At this Joseph answered Phar’aoh: “I need not be considered! God will speak concerning Phar’aoh’s welfare.”

(Genesis 41:29-32) “There are to be seven years of great abundance in all the land of Egypt. ³⁰ But seven years of famine will certainly arise after them, and all the abundance in the land of Egypt will certainly be forgotten, and the famine will exhaust the land. ³¹ And the previous abundance in the land will not be remembered because of the famine afterward, for it will be very severe. ³² The dream was given twice to Phar’aoh because the matter has been firmly established by the true God, and the true God will soon carry it out.

w15 2/1 14-15

“Do Not Interpretations Belong to God?”

Jehovah loves humble, faithful people, so it is no wonder that he gave Joseph the answer that had eluded the wise men and priests. Joseph explained that Pharaoh’s two dreams had the same meaning. By repeating the message,

Jehovah was signifying that the matter was “firmly established”—absolutely sure of fulfillment. The fat cows and the healthy ears of grain represented seven years of plenty in Egypt, while the lean cows and the sickly ears of grain pictured seven years of famine that would follow the years of plenty. That famine would devour the land’s abundance.—Genesis 41:25-32.

(Genesis 41:38-40) So Phar’aoh said to his servants: “Can another man be found like this one in whom there is the spirit of God?”³⁹ Phar’aoh then said to Joseph: “Since God has caused you to know all of this, there is no one as discreet and wise as you.”⁴⁰ You will personally be over my house, and all my people will obey you implicitly. Only in my role as king will I be greater than you.”

w15 2/1 15 ¶13

“Do Not Interpretations Belong to God?”

Pharaoh was as good as his word. Joseph was soon clothed in fine linen. Pharaoh gave him a gold necklace, a signet ring, a royal chariot, and full authority to travel through the land and put his plan into effect. (Genesis 41:42-44) Within the space of a day, then, Joseph went from prison to palace. He awoke a lowly convict, and he fell asleep as the ruler second to Pharaoh. How clear that Joseph’s faith in Jehovah God was justified! Jehovah saw all the injustices that his servant had suffered through the years. He addressed those issues at just the right time and in just the right way. Jehovah had in mind not only correcting the wrongs done to Joseph but also preserving the future nation of Israel. We will see how that was so in a future article in this series.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Genesis 41:14) So Phar’aoh sent for Joseph, and they brought him quickly from the prison. He shaved and changed his clothes and went in to Phar’aoh.

w15 11/1 9 ¶1-3

Did You Know?

Why did Joseph shave before seeing Pharaoh?

According to the Genesis account, Pharaoh ordered that the Hebrew prisoner Joseph be quickly brought before him to interpret his troubling dreams. By this time, Joseph had been imprisoned for a number of years. Despite the urgency of Pharaoh’s summons, Joseph took the time to shave. (Genesis 39:20-23; 41:1, 14) That the writer mentions this seemingly insignificant detail at all shows that he was familiar with Egyptian customs.

Letting one’s beard grow was the norm among many ancient nations, including the Hebrews. In contrast, “the ancient Egyptians were the only Oriental nation who objected to wearing the beard,” says McClintock and Strong’s *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*.

Was shaving limited to the beard? The magazine *Biblical Archaeology Review* suggests that some Egyptian ceremonial customs required a man to prepare to appear before Pharaoh as he would to enter a temple. In such a case, Joseph would have had to shave all the hair of his head and body.

(Genesis 41:33) “So now let Phar’aoh look for a man who is discreet and wise and place him over the land of Egypt.

w09 11/15 28 ¶14

Displaying Good Manners as Ministers of God

¹⁴ Godly parents in Bible times made sure that their children learned basic points of courtesy in the home. Consider the polite way in which Abraham and his son Isaac addressed each other at Genesis 22:7. The good training from his parents was evident also in the case of Joseph. When imprisoned, he was courteous even to his fellow prisoners. (Gen. 40:8, 14) His words to Pharaoh show that he had learned the proper

way to address a person of high office.—Gen. 41:16, 33, 34.

Bible Reading

(Genesis 40:1-23) After these things, the chief cupbearer of the king of Egypt and the chief baker sinned against their lord, the king of Egypt. ² So Phar'aoh grew indignant at his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, ³ and he committed them to the jail of the house of the chief of the guard, to the place where Joseph was a prisoner. ⁴ Then the chief of the guard assigned Joseph to be with them and to take care of them, and they remained in jail for some time. ⁵ The cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, each had a dream on the same night, and each dream had its own interpretation. ⁶ The next morning, when Joseph came in and saw them, they looked dejected. ⁷ So he asked the officers of Phar'aoh who were in custody with him in his master's house: "Why are your faces gloomy today?" ⁸ At this they said to him: "We each had a dream, but there is no interpreter with us." Joseph said to them: "Do not interpretations belong to God? Relate it to me, please." ⁹ So the chief cupbearer related his dream to Joseph, saying to him: "In my dream, there was a vine before me. ¹⁰ And on the vine, there were three twigs, and as it was sprouting shoots, it blossomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes. ¹¹ And Phar'aoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and squeezed them out into Phar'aoh's cup. After that I put the cup in Phar'aoh's hand." ¹² Then Joseph said to him: "This is its interpretation: The three twigs are three days. ¹³ Three days from now, Phar'aoh will bring you out, restoring you to your office, and you will put Phar'aoh's cup into his hand as you did before when you were his

cupbearer. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, you must remember me when things go well with you. Please show me loyal love and mention me to Phar'aoh, in order to get me out of this place. ¹⁵ I was, in fact, kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and I have not done anything here for which they should put me in prison." ¹⁶ When the chief baker saw that Joseph had interpreted something good, he said to him: "I too was in my dream, and there were three baskets of white bread on my head, ¹⁷ and in the top basket, there were all sorts of baked goods for Phar'aoh, and there were birds eating them out of the basket on top of my head." ¹⁸ Then Joseph answered, "This is its interpretation: The three baskets are three days. ¹⁹ Three days from now, Phar'aoh will behead you and will hang you on a stake, and the birds will eat your flesh from you." ²⁰ Now the third day was Phar'aoh's birthday, and he made a feast for all his servants, and he brought out both the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in the presence of his servants. ²¹ And he returned the chief cupbearer to his post of cupbearer, and he continued to hand the cup to Phar'aoh. ²² But he hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had interpreted to them. ²³ However, the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph; he kept forgetting him.

MAY 25-31

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | GENESIS 42-43

"Joseph Shows Great Self-Control"

(Genesis 42:5-7) So Israel's sons came along with the others who were coming to buy, because the famine had extended to the land of Ca'naan. ⁶ Joseph was the man in authority over the land, and he was the one who sold grain to all the people of the earth. So Joseph's brothers came and bowed low to

him with their faces to the ground. ⁷ When Joseph saw his brothers, he immediately recognized them, but he concealed his identity from them. So he spoke harshly with them and said: “Where have you come from?” to which they said: “From the land of Ca’naan to buy food.”

w15 5/1 13 ¶1

“Am I in the Place of God?”

What about Joseph? He recognized his brothers right away! What is more, when he saw them there bowing before him, his thoughts flew back to his boyhood. The account tells us that “Joseph immediately remembered the dreams” that Jehovah had given him when he was but a boy, dreams foretelling a time when his brothers would be bowing low before him—exactly as they now were! (Genesis 37:2, 5-9; 42:7, 9) What would Joseph do? Embrace them? Take revenge?

w15 5/1 14 ¶1

“Am I in the Place of God?”

You are not likely ever to find yourself in that unusual position. However, strife and division within the family are common in today’s world. When we face such challenges, we may tend simply to follow our heart and act on our imperfect impulses. It is much wiser to imitate Joseph and try to discern how God wants us to handle matters. (Proverbs 14:12) Remember, as important as it is to make peace with family members, peace with Jehovah and his Son is even more vital.—Matthew 10:37.

(Genesis 42:14-17) However, Joseph said to them: “It is just as I said to you—‘You are spies!’ ¹⁵ By this you will be tested: As surely as Phar’aoh lives, you will not leave this place until your youngest brother comes here. ¹⁶ Send one of you to bring your brother while you remain in bondage. In this way, your words may be tested out to see if you are telling the truth. And if not, then, as surely as

Phar’aoh lives, you are spies.” ¹⁷ With that he put them together in custody for three days.

w15 5/1 14 ¶2

“Am I in the Place of God?”

Joseph launched into a series of tests designed to reveal who his brothers were at heart. He started by speaking to them harshly, through an interpreter, accusing them of being foreign spies. To defend themselves, they told him about their family—including the key fact that they had a younger brother still at home. Joseph tried to hide his excitement. Was his little brother really alive? Now Joseph knew how to proceed. He said: “By this you will be tested,” and then he told them that he must see this youngest brother. In time, he agreed to let them return home to fetch the youngest if one of them would agree to remain behind as a hostage.—Genesis 42:9-20.

(Genesis 42:21, 22) And they said to one another: “We are surely being punished on account of our brother, because we saw his distress when he begged us to show compassion, but we did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us.” ²² Then Reu’ben answered them: “Did I not say to you, ‘Do not sin against the child,’ but you would not listen? Now his blood is certainly being asked back.”

it-2 108 ¶4

Joseph

In view of these developments, Joseph’s half brothers began to sense divine retribution on them for having sold him into slavery years earlier. In front of their brother, whom they still did not recognize, they discussed their guilt. On overhearing their words reflecting repentance, Joseph was so emotionally overcome that he had to leave their presence and weep. On returning, he had Simeon bound until such time as they would come back with their youngest brother.—Ge 42:21-24.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Genesis 42:22) Then Reu'ben answered them: "Did I not say to you, 'Do not sin against the child,' but you would not listen? Now his blood is certainly being asked back."

(Genesis 42:37) But Reu'ben said to his father: "You may put to death my own two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Give him over to my care, and I will return him to you."

it-2 795

Reuben

Some of Reuben's good qualities displayed themselves when he persuaded his nine brothers to throw Joseph into a dry well instead of killing him, Reuben intending to return secretly and deliver Joseph out of the well. (Ge 37:18-30) More than 20 years later when these same brothers reasoned that the spy charges against them down in Egypt were due to their mistreatment of Joseph, Reuben reminded the others that he had not shared in their plot on Joseph's life. (Ge 42:9-14, 21, 22) Again, when Jacob refused to let Benjamin accompany his brothers on their second trip to Egypt, it was Reuben who offered his own two sons as surety, saying: "You may put [them] to death if I do not bring [Benjamin] back to you."—Ge 42:37.

(Genesis 43:32) They served him by himself and them by themselves, and the Egyptians with him ate by themselves, for the Egyptians could not eat a meal with the Hebrews, because that is a detestable thing to the Egyptians.

w04 1/15 29 ¶1

Highlights From the Book of Genesis—II

43:32—Why was eating a meal with the Hebrews detestable to the Egyptians? This may largely have been because of religious prejudice or racial pride. The Egyptians also detested shepherds. (Genesis 46:34) Why? Shepherders may simply have been near the bottom in the

Egyptian caste system. Or it could be that since the land available for cultivation was limited, the Egyptians despised those seeking pasture for flocks.

Bible Reading

(Genesis 42:1-20) When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons: "Why do you just keep looking at one another?" ² He added: "I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may stay alive and not die." ³ So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. ⁴ But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with his other brothers, for he said: "Perhaps a fatal accident may befall him." ⁵ So Israel's sons came along with the others who were coming to buy, because the famine had extended to the land of Ca'naan. ⁶ Joseph was the man in authority over the land, and he was the one who sold grain to all the people of the earth. So Joseph's brothers came and bowed low to him with their faces to the ground. ⁷ When Joseph saw his brothers, he immediately recognized them, but he concealed his identity from them. So he spoke harshly with them and said: "Where have you come from?" to which they said: "From the land of Ca'naan to buy food." ⁸ Thus Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. ⁹ Joseph immediately remembered the dreams that he had dreamed about them, and he said to them: "You are spies! You have come to see the vulnerable areas of the land!" ¹⁰ Then they said to him: "No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food." ¹¹ We are all sons of but one man. We are upright men. Your servants do not act as spies." ¹² But he said to them: "Not so! You have come to see the vulnerable areas of the land!" ¹³ At this they said: "Your servants are

12 brothers. We are the sons of but one man in the land of Ca'naan, and the youngest is now with our father, whereas the other one is no more.” ¹⁴ However, Joseph said to them: “It is just as I said to you—‘You are spies!’” ¹⁵ By this you will be tested: As surely as Phar'aoh lives, you will not leave this place until your youngest brother comes here. ¹⁶ Send one of you to bring your brother while you remain in bondage. In this way, your words may be tested out to see if you are telling the truth. And if not, then, as surely as Phar'aoh lives, you are spies.” ¹⁷ With that he put them together in custody for three days. ¹⁸ Joseph said to them on the third day: “Do this and live, for I fear God. ¹⁹ If you are upright, let one of your brothers remain in bondage in your house of custody, but the rest of you may go and take grain to alleviate the famine in your households. ²⁰ Then bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words will be found trustworthy and you will not die.” And they did so.