**SDG – Lesson #21**

**Genesis – Chapter 37**

1. What is meant by the term “sojournings?” Why is this significant?

The Hebrew word translated as sojourning is also translated as “stranger” or “alien.” Therefore, Jacob lived in the land where his father was a stranger or alien. By stating this, Moses indicates that Isaac did not adopt the practices of the Canaanites nor did he enter into any relationship with therm. He kept himself separate from them.

2. This chapter also brings us to the last section of Genesis. How many times has the phrase, “these are the generations of,” been used? Which generation will the book of Genesis focus on for the final 14 chapters (7 lessons!)?

The phrase has been used 10 times. Genesis will focus on the generation or family of Jacob.

3. Bonus Question! Where was the phrase, “these are the generations of,” previously used and who was the focus of those generations?

2:4 - The heavens and the earth

6:9 - Noah

10:1 - The sons of Noah

11:10 - Shem

11:27 - Terah

25:12 - Ishmael

25:19 - Isaac

36:1 - Esau

36:9 - Esau

37:2 - Jacob

4. Where did Joseph fit into the line of Jacob’s son? Who was his mother?

Joseph was the second youngest, the first son of Rachel.

5. Who was Joseph pasturing the flock with?

Joseph was with the sons of Bilhah (Rachel’s maid): Dan and Naphtali and the sons of Zilpah: Gad and Asher.

6. What was the result of Joseph being with these brothers? (vs. 2)

He brought back a bad report to his father, Jacob.

7. What do we learn about Joseph’s relationship with his father? Why was this so? What does this mean?

Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other sons. The text records that this was because Joseph was the son of his old age. The actual Hebrew says, “the son of old age.” There are two possible explanations for this:

1. The most common explanation is that Joseph was born in Jacob’s old age. However, eleven of the sons, including Joseph, were born in a six-year period. Benjamin was the one who was born later.
2. This could mean that Joseph thought like a person of older age; Joseph was more mature and exhibited wisdom. This would fit in very well with the events of this chapter. Joseph was with four of his brothers at the beginning of this chapter as an overseer or foreman. When Jacob sends him to check on all the brothers later in the chapter it would again be done as a foreman or overseer.

8. What do you notice about Jacob for the first time in Genesis as you read vs. 3?

For the first time, Moses refers to Jacob as Israel.

9. What are the two possible translations concerning the robe that Jacob gave to Joseph? What was the significance of the robe? Why would his brothers hate Joseph? How great was this hatred?

The robe can be translated as:

1. A robe of many colors. This is the translation that was used in the Septuagint, so this is the most commonly used translation because it goes back the furthest.
2. A robe with long sleeves. This is how the same phrase in the Hebrew is translated in 2nd Samuel 3:18.

The robe was probably given to Joseph to set him apart from the other brothers. Anyone who saw him would naturally think that he was the boss. While his brothers would be displeased that Joseph got something that they didn’t their hatred was probably a result of having Joseph in a position of authority over them. This was normally reserved for the first-born. Their hatred was so great that they couldn’t even speak to Joseph in a civil manner.

10. Joseph had two dreams. It is unique that both his brothers and parents knew exactly what the dreams meant. What was the meaning of both dreams? How did the brothers react to the dreams? Jacob?

The basic meaning of the dreams was that Joseph would become a ruler over all his family. The result was that his brothers hated him even more. Jacob kept the saying in mind. In other words, he pondered them because they were clearly from God. Jacob watched and waited to see how the dreams may have been fulfilled.

11. Why did Jacob send Joseph to Shechem? What did Joseph find there? What was the result of his finding?

Jacob sent Joseph to check up on his brothers who were pasturing the flocks in the area around Shechem. This fits in well with the meaning of the robe as that of the owner or as a foreman. Joseph found that his brothers had headed north to Dothan. Dothan was on the trade route from the east to Egypt. This sets the stage for the rest of the story.

12. How did the brothers react to the sight of Joseph? How might this give credence to the idea that the robe was made of many colors? What did they call Joseph? What is the significance of this?

The brothers’ immediate reaction was to make a plan to kill Joseph. The fact that they could tell who he was from “afar” or at a great distance gives credence to the robe being made of many colors. The colors would really make Joseph stand out. They called him, “this dreamer.” The Hebrew phrase actually means “master of dreams.” It was said with utter contempt and sarcasm.

13. What was the original plan of the brother? (vss. 18-20) Why?

The original plan was to kill Joseph, throw his body in a pit and say that he was eaten by a ferocious animal. They wanted to kill him as a sign that his dreams would not come true.

14. Who saved Joseph from this original plan? What was his intent? Why? (Consider 37:29-30 and 49:3)

Reuben stepped in and stopped his brother with the intent of rescuing Joseph and restoring him to his father. Reuben may have been doing this to mend the relationship with his father that he had ruined when he slept with Bilhah his father’s concubine.

15. Consider the words, “let us not take his life.” What did the brothers do to Joseph? How does this fit with not taking his life?

The brothers took the robe off of Joseph and put him in a pit or well that had no water in it. They weren’t going to kill him; he was going to die of thirst.

16. Who were the Ishmaelites / Midianites?

The Ishmaelites were descendants of Abraham’s first son, Ishmael, by Hagar. The Midianites were the descenants of Midian, Abraham’s son through his second wife Keturah. Since the names are used interchangeably, twice each, we can safely assume that the two groups had an alliance, worked together and intermarried. They were cousins of the brothers.

17. What or Where is Gilead? (Jeremiah 8:22; 46:11)

Gilead was the mountainous region east of the Jordan River Valley. It was known for aromatic spices which were used in perfumes, lotions and balms.

18. What did Judah propose to do with Joseph? Why?

Judah proposed to sell Joseph. All that we are told is that he proposed to do this because the brothers could profit financially from it. Some contend that he did this out of compassion and wanted to save Joseph. This seems unlikely since nothing is said in this regard and the next chapter shows Judah to be lacking in morality.

19. What do we know about the deal with the Ishmaelites / Midianites? (See also 42:21)

Joseph was sold for 20 pieces of silver. He pleaded with his brothers not to sell him.

20. How did the brothers try to cover up their actions in regards to their father?

The brothers dipped Joseph’s robe in the blood of a slaughtered goat and sent it to their dad. It appears that they did not personally present it to Jacob. Their message asked Jacob to identify the robe.

21. How did Jacob react to the robe?

Jacob tore his garments, a sign of extreme grief and then put on sackcloth and mourned for Joseph for many days.

22. How did the brothers react to this?

The brothers tried to console their father, but he would not be consoled.

23. Carefully read vs. 35. What new information do we learn about Jacob?

Vs. 35 mentions Jacob’s daughters. Previously only Dinah was mentioned. Jacob must have had other daughters.

24. What is meant by the term “Sheol?”

Sheol is the place of the dead. It is not a word that means grave. There is a separate Hebrew word for grave. It is a reference to an afterlife. Jacob would not be consoled until he saw Joseph again in the afterlife.

25. What did the Ishmaelites / Midianites do with Joseph?

They sold Joseph to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard.

**Chapter 38**

26. This chapter contains an account that seems out of place until we consider the structure of Genesis. Look back at question #2 of this lesson. How is the book of Genesis divided or organized?

Genesis follows the genealogies of the main characters.

27. What is the significance of Judah? (49:3-7)

After the grievous sins of Reuben, Simeon and Levi, Judah is next in line for the birthright. This sets the stage for the person in the lineage leading to the Messiah and the fulfillment of the Covenant. It also accounts for a major change in Judah’s life.

28. What did Judah do after the Joseph episode and Jacob’s display of grief?

Judah separated himself from his brothers and left the family.

29. Who / What was Hirah?

Hirah was a man from the Canaanite city of Adullam. He became a close friend of Judah. The way these verses are written suggests that Hirah replaced Judah’s brothers as his closest relations.

30. Who / What was Shua?

Shua was a Canaanite who was the father of Judah’s wife.

31. What were the names of Judah’s sons? What do we know about them?

Judah’s sons were:

1. Er - he was wicked and God killed him.
2. Onan – he was also wicked but in a deceitful way, he was also killed by God.
3. Shelah – he was the youngest and Judah wanted to protect him.

32. Who was Tamar?

Tamar was the wife of Er.

33. What did Judah do when his son Er died? Why?

Judah told Onan to fulfill the custom of a levirate marriage. This would continue the family name of Er.

34. Why would Onan not want to fulfill his father’s wishes in regards to Tamar?

If he fathered a child with Tamar, that child would be considered Er’s and entitled to the birthright. If Tamar had no sons the birthright would pass to Onan.

35. How did Judah react to the death of Onan? Why?

He told Tamar to remain a widow until Shelah was old enough to fulfill the duties of a levirate marriage. He did this to deceive Tamar and protect Shelah from Tamar. Obviously Judah saw Tamar as a black widow who was responsible for his sons deaths.

36. What do we learn about Judah’s wife in verse 12?

She died.

37. Why did Judah go to Timnah? What is the significance of this?

He went to Timnah to shear his sheep. This was usually time of celebration. This was the culmination of a year’s worth of work and pay.

38. What did Tamar do when she heard that Judah was going to Timnah? Why?

Tamar:

1. Took off her widow’s clothes and dressed with a veil over her face – Judah wouldn’t recognize her
2. She sat at the entrance to Euaim on the road to Timnah – this is where prostitutes would sit and wait for those who wanted to celebrate with their earnings from the shearing.
3. She acted the role of the prostitute – this was to hopefully get pregnant and secure a future for herself since Judah was not following through on his word.

39. What was the significance of the signet, cord and staff of Judah?

The signet was the family seal; it was worn around the neck with a cord. The staff probably had the family seal engraved on it. Together they were three pieces of identification that was accepted in Canaanite custom and court.

40. What do we learn about Canaanite religion in vs. 21?

At least one of the Canaanite gods was worshipped through cult prostitutes.

41. Judah sent a goat to Tamar. Who did he send it with?

He had Hirah take the goat.

42. Why did Judah say, “or we shall be laughed at?”

To continue to search for a prostitute was embarrassing. It was seen as a sign that you could not attract any women.

43. How did Judah react to the initial news that Tamar was pregnant? Why? (Leviticus 21:9)

Judah acted enraged and played the religion card by calling for Tamar to be delivered to be burned. This would rid him of his obligation to send Shelah to her.

44. How did Tamar extricate herself from this situation?

She showed Judah his signet, cord, and staff. If he wanted her to be killed for immorality, she could reveal that he was guilty of fornication and worshipping a pagan god.

45. How did Judah react to Tamar’s action?

Judah noted that Tamar was more righteous than he was. He also acknowledged that he had been wrong. He did not know her again but obviously took her into his house.

46. Tamar had twins. Who was the first born? What is significant about this child? (Matthew 12:3)

Perez is part of the lineage of Christ.

47. What became of Tamar? (Ruth 4:12 & Matthew 1:3)

Tamar became a heroine of the Bible. Spoken of in a blessing (Ruth) and one of the few women in the lineage of Jesus.