

July 1, 2007 (LS)

**A NEW BEGINNING, A NEW MAN  
GENESIS 37.2-11**

***A. Exalted Joseph and revelation for the future (2-11).***

**1. JOSEPH: THE NEW ADAM (2-4)**

***The faithful young shepherd (2b):*** Why do you begin a section on the ‘generations of Jacob’ with the introduction of Joseph?

(1) Pattern of Genesis. The progenitor is listed and then, in the discussion his ‘generations,’ the story focuses on the seed. Creation ⇒ Adam; Adam ⇒ Seth; Terah ⇒ Abraham; Isaac ⇒ Jacob

(2) Joseph as the “seed/replacement.” He is born of the younger, barren sister. He is the replacement for the firstborn sons (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah) born to the firstborn wife (Leah).

“Younger son” (v. 2). 17 years of age. He is also a “lad,” a young man, with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah (possibly grouped with these children age-wise).

Associating Joseph with the sons of the second-class wives of Jacob may also be a foreshadowing of what is to come. Remember, when son of the “slave wife” must be separated from the son of the free woman. The older brothers will separate from him.

Joseph is a shepherd/guardian. Shepherds in the Bible are kings; or at least precursors to being kings. E.g., David; cf. also 2Sam 5.2; 7.7; Ezek 34.23; 37.24. All the sons of Israel are shepherds. They are all to be rulers.

Contrast: faithful v. unfaithful shepherds.

Joseph brings a bad/evil report concerning his brothers. The report that Joseph brings to his father is obviously about the way his brothers are acting with regard to their responsibilities. No clue as to specifics. But older brothers did have character problems.

***The “robing” of Joseph (3):*** Couple of things to notice: (1) Joseph’s father = *Israel*, not Jacob as listed in “generations” formula.

Israel is the one who wrestles with God and man and prevails (32.28). He has been granted position and has the authority to grant authority.

Also, the one who receives his authority must also wrestle with God and man; something that Joseph will do.

(2) Israel loved Joseph more than all of his other children because he was the son of his old age. Being the child of Israel’s old age links the Israel/Joseph relationship up with the Abraham/Isaac relationship. Gen 21.2 & 7 specifically use this type of language in speaking about Sarah bearing Isaac to Abraham. Isaac was a son born to Abraham in his old age.

What does this have to do with Israel loving him more than all of his other children? Remember: Isaac’s love for Esau and Rebekah’s love for Jacob. This has to do with where loyalties are in relation to God’s word/covenant.

Joseph is more faithful than all his brothers. Israel loves him because Joseph is a faithful son while his other sons are not regarding God’s covenant and their responsibilities to it as they ought.

The tunic. From the way the text is laid out, this giving of the tunic to Joseph is based upon Joseph’s bringing the report of his brothers and Israel’s love for Joseph.

Israel is giving Joseph a status of authority in the house over all of his brothers. The tunic = office. Joseph is exalted to be the vice-regent of the house. He is lord of the house only subject to Israel himself.

More on the tunic. Specific phrase “coat of many colors” is rare. Used only exactly like this in 2Sam 13.18.

Elsewhere the word translated “tunic” is used mainly to refer to priestly garb. That is, when priests were brought into service, they were given special attire that reflected their office. The priests of the Tabernacle/Temple were guardians of God’s house. They were the ones called to protect God’s house, God’s garden. They were to do with God’s house what Adam was to do with the Garden of Eden: “tend it and guard it.”

Adam // Joseph. Joseph is shown to be a faithful guardian. He has tended and protected the garden.

His brothers will be characterized as “wild beasts” (37.33) who attacked and tore Joseph to pieces, leaving only a bloody and shred tunic. Joseph warned his father that there are “wild beasts” in the Garden—i.e., his brothers—when he gave him the evil report.

This is something Adam should have done. When the beast came into the Garden, Adam should have gone to his Father. He didn't. But Joseph does. Joseph is a faithful guardian of the Garden, a new Adam who works and protects the sanctuary-house of God.

***The brothers' response to the exaltation of Joseph (4):*** How did the brothers *see* that Israel loved Joseph more than them? Israel had made him their master. He had invested Joseph with authority, his own authority, over them.

Entrusting him with this type of position in the home meant that Joseph was replacing all of the firstborn children. He would receive the double blessing of the firstborn. He stood to gain the inheritance of the firstborn.

Because of this they *hated* Joseph. Cp. 24.60 the blessing pronounced upon Rebekah by her family was that her seed would possess the gates of those who *hate* them; i.e., their enemies. Leah is *hated* (29.31). She is a rejected wife, counted as an enemy.

To hate = to count as an enemy. Joseph's brothers did not consider him a brother. They counted him as an enemy and, consequently, treated him as such.

They could not speak peaceably to him. The openly rejected his authority. (But that meant that they were rejecting Israel's authority as well because it was his authority given to Joseph.)

## **2. JOSEPH: THE DREAMER (5-11)**

***Dreams (5):*** The dreams here are revelation from God. Cf. 41.25 (cp. also 20.3ff., Dan 2)

Two dreams = a double witness (cf. 41.32)

***The sheaves (6-8):*** (1) this is the fruit of the ground (whatever it might be) and it corresponds to men.

Men are made out of the ground. Plants, trees, vegetation, etc. come out of the ground, and one represents the other. Grain is used for sacrifices representing man and his work. Cf. also Psa 1. Cf. also Jesus' parables about men as plants.

Brothers don't need interpretation. “Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?”

(2) Type of vegetation not mentioned. These are sheaves. That is, they are the products of labor. Plants don't grow in sheaves. They must be harvested and put in sheaves. Sheaves are the product of dominion, developing the creation.

Joseph is the new Adam *working* and guarding the Garden, his work will eventually lead to his exaltation. And his exaltation because of his work will be honored by them. Joseph is the faithful son, the faithful Adam. His faithful work in obedience to his father will cause him to be exalted over all his brothers.

***The sun, moon, and stars (9-11):*** The second dream has to do with the “governors in the heavens,” the sun, moon, and eleven constellations bowing down to Joseph.

Fourth day of creation. They were governors of the earth setting times, seasons, and festivals. The stars to which Joseph is referring are the constellations. The twelve tribes of Israel were associated with the twelve constellations. Some of these constellations are mentioned in Scripture as being created by God; e.g., Orion, Pleiades and the Bear/Ursa (cf. Job 9.9; 38.31; Amos 5.8).

But this also has fuller meaning for us as we move into God's covenant with Abraham. God promised Abraham that his seed would be as the “stars in the heavens.” They would be numerous and they would rule the earth. Joseph is telling his family that he will be the preeminent ruler within the family that will rule in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. This is what God has revealed.

(1) There is a difference between gossip and giving a report to the proper authorities. (2) To despise the Son who is given authority by the Father is to despise the authority of the Father. (3) We need to be careful to respond appropriately—i.e., in faithful submission—to the revelation of God.