

Lesson I.

JOSEPH SOLD INTO EGYPT

October 6, 1901

Genesis 37: 12-36. Only vs. 23-33 printed, as recommended by the International Lesson Committee. Commit to memory vs. 20-28. Read Gen. 35: 1-15; 37: 1-36.

23 And it came to pass, when Jo'seph was come unto his brethren, that they stripped Jo'seph out of ² his coat, *his coat of many colours that was on him*;

24 And they took him, and cast him into ³ a pit: and the pit was empty, *there was no water in it*.

25 And they sat down to eat bread; and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a ⁴ company of Ishmaelites came from Gil'ead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry *it* down to Egypt.

26 And Ju'dah said unto his brethren, What profit *is it* if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?

27 Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he *is* our brother ⁵ and our flesh. And his brethren ⁶ were content.

28 ⁷ Then there passed by Mid'ianites merchantmen;

Revised Version.—Omit out; ² The; ⁴ Travelling company of Ishmaelites; ⁵ Omit and; ⁶ Hearkened unto him; ⁷ And there passed by; ⁸ He-goat; ⁹ Not; ¹⁰ Torn.

and they drew and lifted up Jo'seph out of the pit, and sold Jo'seph to the Ishmaelites for twenty ⁸ pieces of silver; and they brought Jo'seph into Egypt.

29 And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Jo'seph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes.

30 And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child *is* not; and I, whither shall I go?

31 And they took Jo'seph's coat, and killed ⁹ a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood;

32 And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought *it* to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it *be* thy son's coat or ¹⁰ no.

33 And he knew it, and said, *It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Jo'seph is without doubt ¹⁰ rent in pieces.*

EXPLANATION

Connection—Jacob and Esau met as kind brothers (ch. 33: 1-16). Then Jacob sojourned in succession at Succoth (v. 17), Shechem (v. 18), and Bethel (35: 1), where God again appeared to him (v. 9). Here Benjamin was born. Finally he took up his residence at Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac lived before him (v. 27). Here jealousy arose in his family because of Jacob's partiality for Joseph and because of certain dreams that Joseph had (37: 3-11).

12-17. Joseph's brethren having gone about 70 miles north to Shechem "to feed their father's flocks," Jacob sends him, a mere lad, but trusty, to see how it fares with them. Arrived there, he learns that they have gone on to Dothan, twelve miles further, where he found them. Dothan means "two wells."

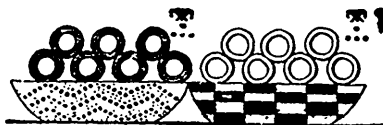
18-20. It was a long and lonely journey for one so young, and Joseph was doubtless rejoiced to see his brothers. But so soon as they saw him, "even before he came near unto them, they conspired to slay him." His dreams that he would be greater than they (vs. 5-12) had made them very bitter against him. Their plan was to cast his dead body into a "pit" or empty well, and then tell his father that a wild beast had devoured him. They would deceive their father as he had deceived Isaac (27: 18-23).

21, 22. Reuben only, of all the brothers, had compassion on the lad and shrank from the horrible crime. He persuades them not to murder him, but to cast him alive into the pit, hoping to find a way to rescue him and to take him back to his father again.

23, 24. His coat of many colors; the mark of his father's special favor (v. 3); "a long garment with sleeves" (Margin, Rev. Ver.) adorned with fringes and embroideries. They cast him into a pit; that he might die. The pit was empty. It was a dry well or cistern such as are still found there, the mouth so narrow that a single stone would close it up, but widening like a bottle or demijohn below, a prison from which there was no escape.

25-28. They sat down to eat bread; to feast, whilst Joseph lay heart-broken and terrified in his slimy prison. A travelling company of Ishmaelites (Rev. Ver.); called also Midianites, vs. 28, 36. They were descendants of Ishmael, Isaac's brother.

From Gilead; to the north and east. Dothan was and is on the great caravan road to Egypt. **Spicery and balm and myrrh;** spices used in Egypt for embalming the dead. **What profit is it if we slay our brother?** Let us sell him. Judah is a true father of the bargaining Jew. **They sold Joseph . . . for twenty pieces of silver;** "probably in rings,



Gold and Silver Rings in Baskets

and each was a shekel, or a little more than half an ounce in weight, and worth about fifty-five cents." (Peloubet.)

29, 30. Reuben returned. He had been absent during the sale, and had now in compassion gone to see how it fared with Joseph in the pit. **He rent his clothes;** the sign of great grief. He wished to spare Joseph, and, as the eldest of the family, he is responsible for Joseph to his father.

31, 32. They . . . dipped the coat in the blood; so as to deceive their father into the belief that an evil beast had devoured him (v. 33). There is a refinement of cruelty in the method taken to deceive Jacob—the coat of many colors, the father's gift to his favorite son. But sin is heartless.

33, 34. It is my son's coat. What a world of grief is crowded into these few words! **Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins.** Gave expression to the deepest mourning. (2 Sam. 3: 31; Neh. 9: 1; Esther 4: 1.) He mourned till he heard that Joseph was alive (ch. 45: 28).

35, 36. Jacob's sons and daughters "rose up to comfort him." So far as the sons were concerned they were adding base hypocrisy to their former cruelty and deceit and lying. But the father's heart was broken. Meanwhile, the lad Joseph was being carried down into Egypt, where he was sold as a slave to Potiphar, a high officer in Pharaoh's body guard. Joseph's life in Egypt was stirring and eventful.