

Torah Portion Vayeshev
Genesis 37:1—40:23

Vayeshev in Hebrew means “and he dwelt” or “lived” from the first verse of the parashah.

We find in verse 37:2 that Joseph is now 17 years old and the favorite son of his father, Jacob. Benjamin would probably have been around the age of 4 or so, not quite old enough to have attained to the favorite status like Joseph. Both Joseph and Benjamin came from Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife.

Jacob does not try and hide the fact that Joseph is his favorite son. To make matters worse among the brothers he gives Joseph a special coat. In our English translations we call it a “coat of many colors”. Joseph was the favorite of his father, but not the favorite among his brothers. They were extremely jealous of him. Jealousy is an awful thing. If allowed to fester it brings, among other things; hatred, lies, deception and sometimes murder.

A coat of this kind is mentioned only one other time in the Bible. (II Samuel 13:18-19) It was worn by King David's daughter, Tamar. It states that these type coats were worn by virgin daughters of a king. This type garment was a garment worn by those of prestige and honor. It had long sleeves down to the wrist and it reached all the way down to the ankles. It was not a garment worn by those who were prone to work. The person wearing this garment would live luxuriously, a life of ease. This would have been just another reason for the brothers to be envious of Joseph. No doubt all of the brothers knew that Jacob had intentions of giving Joseph the first born blessing by the time, or soon after, he was born.

The event that happens next doesn't turn out well for Joseph. Jealousy causes the lies and deception. Joseph is stripped of his coat and sold into slavery by his brothers. The coat is dipped in blood and given to Jacob. Jacob assumes after looking at the coat all ripped and bloody that his son is dead. Lies and deception take place and it will take years for the truth of the matter to be revealed.

At the stripping of his garment Joseph would have felt humiliated and betrayed, but the worse would be when they sold him into slavery. At the stripping of his garment, Joseph's life took a spiraling fall.

Joseph is sold to Potiphar. In Potiphar's house Joseph finds himself being stripped of his garment again. (39:11-20) He is accused of a crime that he did not commit. Upon seeing the garment, Potiphar “assumes” that Joseph is guilty. Just as Jacob his father assumed he was dead when he looked upon his bloody coat of many colors, here Potiphar assumes guilt when Joseph's garment is looked upon. Again we see assumptions being wrong. We also see lies and deception taking place in Joseph's life for a second time. This time when he is stripped of his garment, just like the first time, Joseph finds himself spiraling downward again. This time he is thrown into prison.

Poor Joseph. He was young, pampered and perhaps gullible, to some extent because of the favoritism shown him, a boy of dreams; yet he found himself having been twice humiliated by lies and deception and now he was in prison. How far he had fallen from the life of someone who would have worn a “coat of many colors”.

Despite everything that happened to him, scripture never mentions or alludes to any grumbling or complaining by Joseph. Nor does it mention that he makes any assumptions of his own that God is against him. Throughout his whole ordeal he maintains his faith in God and apparently keeps a good

attitude about life. Just maybe his father had instilled something more than just a “spoiling” in his life. Just maybe he had instilled in him the faith of the fathers; Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jacob himself had struggled all of his life; from the womb till the present day.

Joseph never gave up on God and Yahweh never gave up on Joseph.. Verse 39:21 states that Yahweh was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and gave him favor.

Joseph eventually overcame all of the jealousy, lies and deception and saved the lives of his family. In verse 50:15-21 scripture records that Joseph had no ill feelings towards his brothers for what they had done to him. Instead he saw it as a “means to an end”. Yahweh used his faithful life to bring about the salvation of his whole family..

In life we often seem to fall down, spiraling out of control of our lives. Sometimes it is by our own choices but sometimes it could be like that of Joseph; by jealousy, lies and deception. Whatever the reason, as long as there is no personal sin involved, just remember that God sees the whole puzzle. Thankfully, Yahweh never loses control, nor is He sitting on His throne wringing His hands in worry over a situation that arises in your life. The important thing is that we be like Joseph. We must have faith to believe that whatever happens, God has it! He will work it all out for your good if you trust Him! Be faithful and leave the grumbling and complaining behind. When your life seems to be spiraling out of “your” control, just let go and “let God”.

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