

January 21

Scriptures: Read Genesis 36 & 37

Key Verse: “Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children...” (Genesis 37:3)

Overview

We see in the genealogy of Esau that he was indeed blessed and that he himself became the father of a great nation. He could have sat around and sulked because of losing his birthright and blessing to Jacob. But he did not waste his time. He must have worked hard to become very wealthy. Somehow, with time and mainly by the doing of God, Esau's hate for his brother disappeared. He acted honorably when he met Jacob on his return to Canaan, and he again was honorable in that he moved from Canaan (although he was established there first) when the land could not support their combined livestock, in order to allow Jacob to remain in his Promised Land (36:6, 7).

The Lord rewarded Esau for his goodness and blessed him greatly. From his line came a mighty people who had kings even before a king reigned in Israel (36:31). Esau's descendants came to be known as the Edomites. They lived in and around the area of Kadesh, in the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula. Now that Esau's line was recorded, the book of Genesis dismisses him and goes on to conclude about the family of Jacob (now called Israel), and the life of Joseph in particular.

Joseph was Israel's favorite son. He was the son of His most loved wife, Rachel, who conceived after God miraculously opened her womb. Israel gave Joseph a beautiful colored garment which was usually worn by the eldest who had the birthright. His older brothers were obviously very jealous. Possibly Israel had decided to give Joseph the birthright and the blessing, but God had a different plan for Joseph's life.

Joseph was given dreams from the Lord in which he saw his future glory. He was only seventeen when he, perhaps unwisely, told his brothers that in these dreams they bowed down to him. The dreams probably served to comfort Joseph in his later distress. He also angered his brothers because he brought his father's news of the wrong things they had done. Joseph was a righteous son and obedient to his father. His father loved him the most and showed favoritism towards him, so his brothers came to despise him.

The brothers had taken the livestock about 128 Kilometers away, to the area of Shechem. Since that was the area where Simeon and Levi had massacred those in the settlement of Hamor, their father must have worried about them and feared for their safety. He sent Joseph to check on them, and when they saw him coming, wearing his coat of many colors, they had the perfect opportunity to deal with him. Although Reuben, who as the eldest and took responsibility for him, they sold Joseph as a slave to a caravan of Ishmaelite traveling to Egypt. When Reuben found this out, he tore his clothes to express his anguish and worried about what would happen to him when his father found out (37:29, 30). They deceived their father into thinking that Joseph was killed by a wild animal. In those days many large wild animals (lions, or other large cats, or

bears) roamed throughout Canaan. Israel was terribly grieved, almost to the point of death (37:35). Joseph ended up as a slave of Potiphar in Egypt.

God, however, had everything in control, and the terrible things that happened to Joseph were nonetheless all in His plan and purpose. Sometimes we do not understand why we go through difficult times. We cannot see what lies ahead, but God does. When Joseph was sold as a slave, and taken to Egypt, little did he know that one day he would be in charge of the whole country, second only to the Pharaoh himself. For the child of God everything that happens is a part of His plan. We must sometimes patiently endure pain or hardships, but Jesus Christ said that in Him we can have peace for “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world: (John 16:33). There certainly is victory in Jesus!

Prayer

Lord, grant us the gift of grace so that we may trust You for the present and for the future.