

RUSSELL SANDERS

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THE LIFE OF JOSEPH – LESSON 3

HIS DREAMS

After Jacob returned to Bethel, Rachel conceived again. Joseph and family then began a journey southward with Rachel in late-term pregnancy. As they came near to Ephrath (Bethlehem), Rachel went into hard labor. She delivered the second son but died in childbirth. We know the child as Benjamin, but he was given two names which carried significance prophetically about JESUS.

Before Rachel expired, she named him Ben-oni, which means “son of sorrow.” This foreshadows the “suffering Messiah” and the “sorrow” He suffered for our sakes.

Jacob re-named him Benjamin which means “son of my right hand.” This speaks of the “suffering Messiah’s” victory when he ascended to the right hand of His Father on the throne of heaven.

Jacob treasured his two sons from his beloved Rachel above his ten older sons, but especially the first born of Rachel, Joseph. His favoritism showed especially when Jacob had a “coat of many colors” made for Joseph, and only for Joseph. This was a very expensive garment. In those times such garments were as highly valued as gold and silver. Plunders of war always included gold, silver, livestock, and garments of high value, material, and color.

This favoritism caused jealousy among Jacob’s older sons. Jacob very obviously loved Rachel’s son above them. Then the jealousy turned into outright bitterness when Joseph revealed two prophetic dreams that God gave him.

In the first dream (Genesis 37:5-8), they all were in the fields harvesting the grain and binding it into sheaves. The brother’s sheaves gathered around Joseph’s sheaf and made obeisance to it (bowing down to it). This infuriated the brothers (half-brothers). They chided him saying in Genesis 37:8b, **“Shalt thou indeed reign over us? Or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?”** Their hate for him intensified. It went against their culture where the eldest held the highest esteem and authority in family matters and the esteem went downward in age order.

Joseph had a second dream which even disturbed his father Jacob this time. In this dream, the sun, moon, and eleven stars made obeisance to Joseph. The sun represented Jacob, the moon his mother Rachel, and eleven stars his eleven brothers. His father rebuked him, asking in v. 10, **“Shall (we all) indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?”** Although Jacob rebuked Joseph, he kept the dream in his heart.

Now there was a “double whammy” against Joseph. First his father’s favoritism had caused jealousy and envy; now extreme hatred over the dreams rose up in the brothers.

These two dreams clearly show us that God had a special plan for Joseph. This plan was formed long before Joseph was born. God had already told Abraham 200 years earlier in Genesis 15:13 that his seed (Israel) would be afflicted 400 years in a foreign land. God would use Joseph as His instrument to preserve Israel in Egypt so that they could grow into a large and powerful nation.

Likewise, God knew you also long before you were conceived. He created you in your mother's womb for a reason. Every unborn child was made for a reason even if it was only in the womb less than six weeks, or maybe six days.

Your purpose might not be as significant as that of Joseph or Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5), but you are still very important to Him regardless of whether or not you "know" His reason.

Let us praise Him every day for the life He has given us and for His great love.