**Walk Through the Bible**

**Lesson Number Twenty Seven**

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**Joseph is sold into slavery and is taken to Egypt. His brothers deceive Israel by dipping Joseph’s coat in goat blood and presenting it to his father. Judah’s two oldest sons are killed by God. Judah sleeps with his daughter-in-law who has twins.**

The Bible deals with REAL ISSUES. It doesn’t hold anything back. Today we are going to talk about some of those real things. If you are offended easily and don’t like talking about sexual issues, it may be time for you to stop reading now.

The last time we met, we talked about Joseph. He was his father’s favorite son and to put it bluntly, he was a “spoiled brat.” He got special favors from his father and he tattled on his brothers when they did something they shouldn’t have. God gave him dreams about the future but if Joseph would have used wisdom, he would have not shared those dreams with his brothers.

God may tell you things, and that DOES happen but, the things He tells you may not be things that others need to hear.

Joseph’s dreams showed that he would eventually be in a position above his brothers. Of course, they did not want to hear that. We see, as Joseph’s life unfolds, that he is put in a position of authority in Egypt and by God putting him there, his whole family was saved when famine came to that part of the world.

**Genesis 37:12-20 (NLT)**

**12**Soon after this, Joseph’s brothers went to pasture their father’s flocks at Shechem. **13**When they had been gone for some time, Jacob said to Joseph, “Your brothers are pasturing the sheep at Shechem. Get ready, and I will send you to them.”

“I’m ready to go,” Joseph replied.

**14**“Go and see how your brothers and the flocks are getting along,” Jacob said. “Then come back and bring me a report.” So Jacob sent him on his way, and Joseph traveled to Shechem from their home in the valley of Hebron.

**15**When he arrived there, a man from the area noticed him wandering around the countryside. “What are you looking for?” he asked.

**16**“I’m looking for my brothers,” Joseph replied. “Do you know where they are pasturing their sheep?”

**17**“Yes,” the man told him. “They have moved on from here, but I heard them say, ‘Let’s go on to Dothan.’” So Joseph followed his brothers to Dothan and found them there.

**18**When Joseph’s brothers saw him coming, they recognized him in the distance. As he approached, they made plans to kill him. **19**“Here comes the dreamer!” they said. **20**“Come on, let’s kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns. We can tell our father, ‘A wild animal has eaten him.’ Then we’ll see what becomes of his dreams!”

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Apparently, Joseph didn’t have to work in the fields with his brothers. That may be another reason they hated him so badly. Jacob didn’t send Joseph to help his brothers as they shepherded the flocks, he just sent him so he could bring back a report of how things were going.

The brothers also **mockingly** called Joseph, “The Dreamer” since they were so upset with him. Their first thought was to kill Joseph.

Genesis 37:21-36 (NLT)

**21**But when Reuben heard of their scheme, he came to Joseph’s rescue. “Let’s not kill him,” he said. **22**“Why should we shed any blood? Let’s just throw him into this empty cistern here in the wilderness. Then he’ll die without our laying a hand on him.” Reuben was secretly planning to rescue Joseph and return him to his father.

In our last lesson, we learned that Reuben had slept with his father’s concubine, Bilhah, who was Rachel’s maiden. Maybe he felt guilty about this and by returning Joseph he would be back in his father’s good graces.

A “cistern” was a pit that was dug to collect rain water. Canaan was a very arid, or dry place. I have an aunt and uncle who collected the rainwater from the roof of their house in Oklahoma. There was a contraption, about the size of a gas pump with a crank on the front of it. It had small cups attached to a chain inside it. As you turned the crank, the cups would bring the water to the surface and the water would pour out of a spout on the side of the thing.

Dry cisterns were frequently used as prisons back in Bible days. Later on in the Bible, we see Jeremiah, the prophet, thrown into a cistern that was half full of mud.

**23**So when Joseph arrived, his brothers ripped off the beautiful robe he was wearing. **24**Then they grabbed him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. **25**Then, just as they were sitting down to eat, they looked up and saw a caravan of camels in the distance coming toward them. It was a group of Ishmaelite traders taking a load of gum, balm, and aromatic resin from Gilead down to Egypt.

**26**Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain by killing our brother? We’d have to cover up the crime.**27**Instead of hurting him, let’s sell him to those Ishmaelite traders (Descendants of Abraham through Hagar and Keturah). After all, he is our brother—our own flesh and blood!” And his brothers agreed. **28**So when the Ishmaelites, who were Midianite traders, came by, Joseph’s brothers pulled him out of the cistern and sold him to them for twenty ***pieces*** of silver. And the traders took him to Egypt.

This was a well-known trade route. Egyptians depended upon Arab traders to provide many of their embalming products and spices. Slaves were also in high demand in Egypt.

We are told that Joseph was sold for **“twenty pieces of silver.”** The word, “twenty” was not in the original manuscripts. In the King James Version of the Bible, any time a word is in italics, it means that it was not in the original manuscripts from where we get our KJV translation. Many other translations of the Bible are translations of the KJV. Because of this, we are not sure exactly what Joseph was sold for. It could have been twenty sheckels of silver which would be around $50.

**29**Some time later, Reuben returned to get Joseph out of the cistern. When he discovered that Joseph was missing, he tore his clothes in grief. **30**Then he went back to his brothers and lamented, “The boy is gone! What will I do now?”

We see, through this, that Reuben was not there when Joseph was sold to the Ishmaelites. Some Bible scholars say Reuben was not guilty of what happened since he was not there but any court in this country would convict him of **guilt by association**!

**31**Then the brothers killed a young goat and dipped Joseph’s robe in its blood.**32**They sent the beautiful robe to their father with this message: “Look at what we found. Doesn’t this robe belong to your son?”

**33**Their father recognized it immediately. “Yes,” he said, “it is my son’s robe. A wild animal must have eaten him. Joseph has clearly been torn to pieces!”**34**Then Jacob tore his clothes and dressed himself in burlap **(sackcloth)**. He mourned deeply for his son for a long time. **35**His family all tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. “I will go to my grave mourning for my son,” he would say, and then he would weep.

**36**Meanwhile, the Midianite traders arrived in Egypt, where they sold Joseph to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Potiphar was captain of the palace guard.

**Rending Clothes**

Ripping clothes is a chief sign of mourning in the East. It is customary to lay aside jewels and fine clothing and to be clothed in sackcloth while making loud wailing. See Josh. 7:6; 1Sam. 4:12; [2Sam. 1:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Sa+1%3A11); [3:31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Sa+3%3A31); [13:31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Sa+13%3A31); 2Ki. 2:12; 18:37; 19:1; Ezra 9:3; Job 1:20. The ceremony of rending clothes requires a knife. Cuts are first made on the right side of the upper garment for brother, sister, son, daughter, or wife, and on the left side for a father or mother. Other garments are cut likewise. Sackcloth is generally made of the hair of goats or camels, and is very coarse and black. The same material was used for straining liquids, and making sacks. Sackcloth could be worn either over or under the outer garments, or instead of them.

Dake's Annotated Reference Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments of the Authorized or King James Version Text.

**Isn’t it interesting that Jacob was deceived by the blood of a “kid” or a young goat and he deceived his father, Isaac, with the skin of a “kid?”**

As we move along into Genesis Chapter 38, we see that Judah, one of the sons of Israel or Jacob, marries a Canaanite woman. This was wrong. God’s people were not supposed to marry outside of their race.

**How many of you thought God’s people in the Bible were perfect?** We see that they are just like everyone else but God had chosen them and given them a promise to be with them and to bless them.

Judah and his wife had three sons, Er, Onan and Shelah.

When Judah was 31 years old, Er was 15 years old and Judah arranged a marriage for Er to a girl named Tamar. The Bible tells us that Er was very evil and God killed him! We talk about God’s love and His mercy but **God has another side that we do not want to cross**!

Praise God for His mercy and His grace that are given to us through our relationship with Christ! The Bible does not go into any more detail about Er’s wickedness or his death.

After Er was slain, Judah told Onan that it was his responsibility to have a child with Tamar in Er’s honor. This became part of the law of Moses and is still practiced in some cultures in the Middle East.

We don’t know much about Tamar but apparently she was another Canaanite and Matthew 1:3 tells us that she was in the Godly line of which Jesus came.

What was Onan’s response to what his father told him to do?

**Genesis 38:9,10 (NLT)**

**9**But Onan was not willing to have a child who would not be his own heir. So whenever he had intercourse with his brother’s wife, he spilled the semen on the ground. This prevented her from having a child who would belong to his brother. **10**But the Lord considered it evil for Onan to deny a child to his dead brother. **So the Lord took Onan’s life, too**.

He was willing to have sex with Tamar but NOT to give her a child.

I have heard ministers say that the “spilling of his seed on the ground” was his sin but it was not. The sin was not honoring his brother.

Let’s look at what Dake says about this:

**Notes For Verse 3**

Er, Judah's firstborn, seems to have been the chosen one in Judah's family through whom the Messiah was to come. Even after his death, Tamar his widow bore a son to Judah whose name (Pharez or Phares) appears with hers (Thamar) in the line of Christ (Mt. 1:3). Er's wickedness may have included despising his privilege to bring forth one in the lineage of Christ (Gen. 49:10; see note, Gen. 38:9).

**It is amazing to me that the Godly bloodline of Christ includes people who weren’t Israelites. It even includes Rahab who was a harlot, or prostitute, in Jericho.**

**Notes For Verse 9**

Onan resented a child of his being born to carry on Er's name. Both were wicked men and may have been bitter enemies; hence, Onan wanted his brother's name blotted out. The firstborn in such cases carried on the dead man's name (Dt. 25:6-10). Furthermore, the devil may have stirred up hatred in Onan for the Seed of the woman who seems to have been intended to come through Er's offspring (see note, Gen. 38:3). Dake's Annotated Reference Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments of the Authorized or King James Version Text.

**The Bible goes on to tells us that Judah was afraid that Tamar would die just like Er and Onan had so he told her to go live with her parents until the youngest brother, Shelah, was old enough to take her as his wife.**

**Genesis 38:12-30 (NLT)**

**12**Some years later Judah’s wife died. After the time of mourning was over, Judah and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went up to Timnah to supervise the shearing of his sheep. **13**Someone told Tamar, “Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep.”

**14**Tamar was aware that Shelah had grown up, but no arrangements had been made for her to come and marry him. So she changed out of her widow’s clothing and covered herself with a veil to disguise herself. Then she sat beside the road at the entrance to the village of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. **15**Judah noticed her and thought she was a prostitute, since she had covered her face. **16**So he stopped and propositioned her. “Let me have sex with you,” he said, not realizing that she was his own daughter-in-law.

“How much will you pay to have sex with me?” Tamar asked.

**17**“I’ll send you a young goat from my flock,” Judah promised.

“But what will you give me to guarantee that you will send the goat?” she asked.

**18**“What kind of guarantee do you want?” he replied.

She answered, “Leave me your identification seal and its cord and the walking stick you are carrying.” So Judah gave them to her. Then he had intercourse with her, and she became pregnant. **19**Afterward she went back home, took off her veil, and put on her widow’s clothing as usual.

**20**Later Judah asked his friend Hirah the Adullamite to take the young goat to the woman and to pick up the things he had given her as his guarantee. But Hirah couldn’t find her. **21**So he asked the men who lived there, “Where can I find the shrine prostitute who was sitting beside the road at the entrance to Enaim?”

“We’ve never had a shrine prostitute here,” they replied.

**22**So Hirah returned to Judah and told him, “I couldn’t find her anywhere, and the men of the village claim they’ve never had a shrine prostitute there.”

**23**“Then let her keep the things I gave her,” Judah said. “I sent the young goat as we agreed, but you couldn’t find her. We’d be the laughingstock of the village if we went back again to look for her.”

**24**About three months later, Judah was told, “Tamar, your daughter-in-law, has acted like a prostitute. And now, because of this, she’s pregnant.”

“Bring her out, and let her be burned!” Judah demanded.

**This reminds me of the story of the woman who had been “caught in adultery” and how she was taken to Jesus to be judged. Jesus told the people who brought her, “Let whoever has never sinned cast the first stone.” Isn’t it odd how even though she was “caught in adultery” they ONLY brought the woman and not the man? It takes two to tango!**

**25**But as they were taking her out to kill her, she sent this message to her father-in-law: “The man who owns these things made me pregnant. Look closely. Whose seal and cord and walking stick are these?”

**26**Judah recognized them immediately and said, “She is more righteous than I am, because I didn’t arrange for her to marry my son Shelah.” And Judah never slept with Tamar again.

**27**When the time came for Tamar to give birth, it was discovered that she was carrying twins. **28**While she was in labor, one of the babies reached out his hand. The midwife grabbed it and tied a scarlet string around the child’s wrist, announcing, “This one came out first.” **29**But then he pulled back his hand, and out came his brother! “What!” the midwife exclaimed. “How did you break out first?” So he was named Perez. **30**Then the baby with the scarlet string on his wrist was born, and he was named Zerah.

**Most of the people in the Middle East in those days followed the code of Hammurabi. Bear in mind, this was before the time of Moses and the law. If you will remember, the Israelites saw that everyone else in the Middle East had laws so they felt like they needed their own law. Well, the laws that everyone else had were from the code of Hammurabi.**

**The code of Hammurabi contained 282 laws, written by**[**scribes**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scribe)**on 12 tablets. Unlike earlier laws, it was written in [Akkadian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akkadian_language" \o "Akkadian language), the daily language of Babylon, and could therefore be read by any literate person in the city. *Wikipedia***

**Death Penalties in the Code of Hammurabi**

1. One who stole from a palace was to be put to death. Such property was held more sacred than life itself.

2. The purchaser of stolen property was to be put to death as a thief.

3. A woman justly accused of adultery was required to throw herself into a river.

4. A woman who neglected her house and belittled her husband was to be thrown into a river.

5. A builder of a faulty house which fell and killed the owner was to be put to death.

6. A poor thief who had nothing to pay back was to be put to death.

7. One who stole property from a burning house was to be thrown into the fire.

8. The man who cheated in selling goods to a neighbor was to be thrown into water to drown.

9. The woman who brought about the death of her husband for the sake of another man was to die.

10. A man who killed a gentleman's daughter would be put to death; but if he killed a poor man's daughter he was only to pay a mina (1 lb.) of silver.

Death penalties were carried out with burning, drowning, and the sword. Other penalties in this code included cutting out the tongue for lying or denying parents; plucking out eyes for hatred of foster parents; cutting off the breast of a nurse who had caused a child to die; cutting off fingers of those who smote parents; cutting off the ears of slaves who struck the master's children; cutting off the fingers of a physician who used brass lancets to open abscesses if the patient died; and the scourging a man with sixty stripes who struck a superior.

In accordance with this code women could be consecrated as the bride of an idol god and used in prostitution for devotees of the idol. In marriage the father had the final say as to whom his daughter should marry. A man desiring a wife was free to make choices, but a woman was not. An unsatisfactory wife could be divorced by her husband simply saying, "I have divorced her," and she would be given nothing when she departed from his house. On the other hand, if he said, "I have not put her away," he could take another wife and the first woman would remain in his house as a maid. If a wife wanted a divorce she had to prove that her husband had injured her reputation; then she could go free.

If a man was in debt he could sell his wife or children, or bind them to work in the house of the purchaser for three years, and then go free. The relation of sonship could be dissolved if there were grounds for such.

The Code of Hammurabi was civil, not ceremonial. There were no admonitions to worship; no directions concerning altars, offerings, and sacrifices; and no doctrines taught. It was the civil law in Babylon, Assyria, and in much of Canaan and Egypt in the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It gives the Bible reader an insight into the laws of that period before the law of Moses.

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Next week, we will talk about Joseph and how he lived his life while in Potphar’s house. We will also see how God turned his being sold into slavery (a bad thing) into Joseph being Pharoah’s right hand man and how God used that to save the Godly line of people from which Jesus would come.