

Additional notes for teachers:

Many of the notes comprise deeper matters which have arisen in the course of preparation of the Students Notes. Other material has been appended for the purpose of providing background, explanations or interesting detail.

TEACHERS NOTES

LESSON 14

1. INTERVENING EVENTS - Genesis 34 and 35

If time permits some detail (or else references for private reading by scholars) could be given of intervening history. Dinah's adventures – a lesson in separateness (Gen. 34), the images (Gen. 35:2-4) and Rachel's death (Gen. 35:19), when Benjamin is born.

We know that Jacob at last (after about 50 years) rejoined Isaac who was living at Mamre (or Hebron) in the south of Canaan. The family's influence must have been strong as, notwithstanding the events of Gen. 34, their sheep could graze so far from home in Hebron (Gen. 37:14). Gen. 35:5 offers an explanation.

Both Joseph and Benjamin are styled sons of Jacob's old age (Gen. 37:3, 44:20). Joseph was up to 11 years older than Benjamin. The description of Benjamin is rather odd when we find that he was then about 30 years old, the father of 10 sons (Gen. 46:21) when he went down into Egypt.

2. IMPORTANCE OF JOSEPH'S HISTORY IN THE PURPOSE OF GOD

It will be noted that the remaining fourteen chapters of Genesis (with one exception) are concerned with the story of Joseph and the bringing of the family of Jacob into Egypt to be sustained during the years of famine and afterwards by Joseph. This is an indication of the importance of those events in the divine purpose. This migration of the sons of Jacob into Egypt was no matter of chance; it had been fore-ordained and declared by God years previously, to Abraham when God made His covenant with him: "know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them ... and afterward shall they come out with great substance" (Gen. 15:13,14).

In the selling of Joseph as a slave to be taken to Egypt, in his rise to fame and great power, and in the transference of the family of Israel to Egypt, we see the first stage of God's prediction being fulfilled. The later stage was left to the coming of Moses to carry out.

Older scholars, to whom generally the story is quite familiar, are able to appreciate the deeper aspects of the history of Joseph and find in his character much that they are able to approve and seek to apply in their own lives – his courage and perseverance in adversity, his fidelity to his master, his patience and cheerfulness even in depressing circumstances, his purity of life, his great-heartedness in his treatment of his brethren, and above all his trust in God and his recognition of the divine over-ruling which marked the various stages of his life.

As Bro. Robert Roberts says; "No more single illustration of the ways of Providence is to be found in the whole of the Scriptures than the case of Joseph. It is not merely that great results came out of unpromising experiences ... the whole case is declared to be a case of divine manipulation".

3. ISHMAELITES AND MIDIANITES

Apparently Ishmaelites passed by (Gen. 37:25,27) which prompted the decision to sell Joseph. They were followed by Midianites (Gen. 37:28, 36) to whom the sale was made. Perhaps they were all one company for see Gen. 39:1.

TEACHING METHODS

1. Develop predominantly the moral and “providential” side of Joseph’s life, recognising the senior scholars will know most of the story.
2. Point out how the innocent often suffer through the hatred of the wicked (Joseph persecuted by his brothers).
3. Show that Joseph was not left alone, his strength of character was rewarded for God helped him (in interpreting dreams etc.).
4. Leave the quality of Joseph’s character firmly impressed on scholars’ minds to help and inspire them.