

Year 1: Session 1 – Getting to know Jacob, a patriarch

Class 3: Genesis 37:1-35 -- *Jacob's sons deceive him*

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Give background on Jacob/Israel leading up to this story
- Note the similarities between this lesson's story and the story of Jacob stealing the blessing from Esau and Isaac.
- Do activity that highlights how information gets passed to us from those who go before us, both intentionally and unintentionally.

Materials needed:

- Movie clip (streaming of clip is available on rfour.org site)
- Electronics that show the movie
- Digital files for "Choose Your Own Adventure" activity. The files are available on rfour.org site for download or click [HERE](#) to download.
 - Note that there are 17 or 18 files in a zipped folder. Once the zipped folder is downloaded, you will need to unzip it. There are a number of ways to do this. I usually create a new folder, name it, and then open the zipped folder, type "ctrl" and "a" keys at same time to select all the files, then type "ctrl" and "c" keys to copy all the files. I then go and open the new folder and type "ctrl" and "v" to paste the copied files into the new folder.
 - In the unzipped folder, simply double-click the "Double Click HERE to begin.html" file. The "program" will open in your browser. Since the files are on your computer, you will not have to be online to run this program.
- A laptop/computer to run the browser files
- A TV/monitor that displays the Choose Your Own Adventure files

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- For the opening question for today's class, I [the teacher] will ask the question, and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.

- Once I answer the question, we'll go around the circle.
- When it's your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- *Here's this week's question:* What's one thing that you and a family member tend to argue about?

REVIEW and TRANSITION to MOVIE CLIP

- In the last 2 lessons, we've learned quite a bit about Jacob.
- First, with the help of his mom, he deceived his old, blind father into thinking that Jacob was his brother Esau, which then meant Jacob received Esau's blessing.
- This created much tension and separation in the family. Esau promised to kill Jacob and Jacob ran away for 20 years.
- When Jacob finally returned, due to God's direction, Jacob was very afraid of seeing Esau again.
- In his angst, he wrestled with God
- In this wrestling, Jacob's hip was permanently injured, his name was changed to Israel, and he received a blessing.
- The next day, Jacob bravely went in front of his family and possessions to meet his brother.
- It was a joyful reunion, and Jacob gave gifts instead of trying to grab at things.
- Jacob acted like a different person – like Israel, one who seeks God's way.
- In today's story, we mostly hear about Jacob's children.
- And sadly, most of them act like sons of Jacob, not like sons of Israel.
- Which means, they don't all get along with each other and they grab at things
- To help us get started, we're going to watch a clip from the movie, "The Incredibles." The Incredibles are a family of super heroes with super-abilities. But guess what? They fight with each other, too.
- Let's see what they fight about

WATCH MOVIE CLIP

ASK/Transition to Bible story

- What did the son tease the daughter about? (a boy)
- And then what happened? (they fought / attempted to solve their differences with violence)
- How did the mom and then the dad attempt to stop them? (not necessarily violently, but still, with a physical approach)
- Did any of these physical approaches stop the conflict? (no, not really)
- What did stop the conflict? (a doorbell which was really a symbol of their fear of their super powers being discovered)
- So in today's scripture story, Jacob's sons have some disagreements.
- Let's see what happens

READ Genesis 37:1-10, 17b-34 (recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse)

Genesis 37:1 1 Jacob settled in the land where his father had lived as an alien, the land of Canaan. 2 This is the story of the family of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. 3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves. 4 But when his brothers saw that

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their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him. 5 Once Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. 6 He said to them, "Listen to this dream that I dreamed. 7 There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright; then your sheaves gathered around it, and bowed down to my sheaf." 8 His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more because of his dreams and his words. 9 He had another dream, and told it to his brothers, saying, "Look, I have had another dream: the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." 10 But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him, and said to him, "What kind of dream is this that you have had? Shall we indeed come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow to the ground before you?"

So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. 18 They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. 19 They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. 20 Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams." 21 But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." 22 Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father. 23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; 24 and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

25 Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels carrying gum, balm, and resin, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. 26 Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? 27 Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers agreed. 28 When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt. 29 When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes. 30 He returned to his brothers, and said, "The boy is gone; and I, where can I turn?" 31 Then they took Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat, and dipped the robe in the blood. 32 They had the long robe with sleeves taken to their father, and they said, "This we have found; see now whether it is your son's robe or not." 33 He recognized it, and said, "It is my son's robe! A wild animal has devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces." 34 Then Jacob tore his garments, and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days. 35 All his sons and all his daughters sought to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and said, "No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning." Thus his father bewailed him.

ASK - Roslyn

- End of verse 2, what does Joseph do? (he tells on his brothers to his dad, "brought a bad report")
- Verse 3 – what son does Israel (remember that Israel is Jacob) love the most? (Joseph)
- Verse 3 – and what did Joseph receive from Israel? (a nice/special coat)
- Verse 4 – how do the other brothers respond to Joseph? (not very well. They can't even speak to him in a civilized manner)
- Verse 5 – 7 and verse 9: Joseph has two dreams – what do the dreams seem to be saying? (that Joseph will someday be in charge of his family)
- Verse 8: And how do the brothers respond to Joseph after he shares his dreams? (they hate him even more)
- Verse 20 – so what do the brothers decide to do? (kill Joseph)
- Verse 21 and 22 – what brother talks the other brothers out of killing Joseph? (Reuben)
- Verse 27 – what do the brothers decide to do instead of killing Joseph? (sell him into slavery)
- Verse 26 – What brother encourages this course of action? (Judah)

- Verse 29 and 30 – Why do you think Reuben is upset? (he may hate Joseph, but he certainly doesn't seem ok with doing irreversible harm to Joseph)
- Verse 31 – what do they slaughter? (a goat)
- From a previous Jacob story, do you remember what animal Jacob and his mother used to trick Isaac? (a goat!)
- Verse 31 and 32 – how do the brothers deceive their father, Jacob/Israel? (they put goat's blood on Joseph's robe and then show the robe to Jacob. Jacob thinks the blood on the robe is Joseph's blood and thinks Joseph has been killed by wild animals)
- Verse 34 – what is Jacob's response to this "news?" (he's very upset)
- Do any of the characters talk to or listen to God in this story? (nope, not a one; it's a godless story)

TELL

- So the first thing to note about this story is that Joseph is NOT a likeable person.
 - He tells on his brothers and he brags about these dreams that he has. Note that there's considerable weight given to the dreams. They are not dismissed out of hand. The people who lived at this time (4000 yrs ago) treated dreams very seriously and believed that dreams were glimpses into the future.
 - Also notice that there is no mention of God giving those dreams to Joseph. It's easy to assume that they are from God since it's a Bible story, but there's no mention of that likelihood in this story.
 - On top of that, Jacob, the father, favors Joseph – gives him this robe, this extravagant gift.
 - Part of this has to do with mothers. Rachel is Joseph's mother, while Leah is the mother of the other sons. And Jacob liked Rachel more than Leah. So in a sense, Joseph is only a half-brother to his brothers. Except that Rachel and Leah are sisters...which makes the brothers more like 3/4ths brothers or something.
 - So the family is a LITTLE MESSED UP.
 - HOWEVER, that does NOT mean that his brothers should have considered killing him or sold him into slavery. But this is what happens when you attempt to solve your disagreements with a physical approach without God – it gets more and more violent.
- The second thing to note about this story is that who Jacob was (the grasper) before he learned some of the things that went with his name change (of Israel) is mostly what has been passed on to his children.
 - Remember how Isaac (Jacob's dad) favored one son, Esau, more than another? Well, now Jacob favors one son more than his other sons.
 - Remember that Jacob's way of functioning (grabbing/grasping – doing whatever he could to get what he wanted) had nothing to do with God and often caused destruction and separation. We see those same things at work in today's story: People are just trying to get what they want; they do not consult/talk to God and it all leads to lots of pain
 - Just like Jacob deceived his father (with the help of a dead goat), so too do Jacob's sons then deceive Jacob (with the help of a dead goat)
 - In both stories (Jacob as a son; Jacob as a father) the enacted deception leads to the family being physically split apart
- The third thing we're going to note about this story is that, as we learn about the beginnings of the family/nation of Israel, we start to see how the grabbing/grasping is learned first (it almost seems innate) and then how the wrestling/holding on to God is then learned later on.

- The reason to note this is because the Jacob/Israel story offers a pretty clear picture that demonstrates, on a personal level, how we first learn to live our own way, which eventually creates situations that are not for the best for us and others. Finally, those less-than-best results might cause us to realize that there is a better way -- God's way -- to living/to life.
- This is one important reason, then, to read and study and know these stories: So that we can learn from the mistakes of others and, if we don't want to make those mistakes ourselves, then we're provided another option/better way to choose.

TRANSITION TO and EXPLANATION OF ACTIVITY

- As a way for us to see and think about how we can learn from other people's mistakes, let's do a "Choose your own adventure" activity.
- In this activity, you are part of an archaeological team that will explore an underground structure together, but the hallways are very narrow. This means, that as a team, you can only progress through the structure in a single file line.
- Whoever is at the front of the line is the team leader and will make the decisions that confront him/her for the entire team. If that person makes a wrong decision and meets an untimely end, then the next person in line will become the team leader.
- Let's see if the team can make it inside the structure and discover what it contains.

DO "Choose Your Own Adventure" ACTIVITY

ASK

There were at least two possible things that you learned as you journeyed through this "Choose Your Own Adventure" activity. What do you think they were? (A number of answers could be given, the two you are listening/looking for, though, are: 1. What the secret to the riddle was and 2. To not pick the same option as the leader who just died.)

TELL

- I like this activity we just did because it really highlights some important aspects about how a faith journey works and about the story that we read today.
- One important way that this activity is like a faith journey is that you are much more likely to be successful if you don't do it on your own. How lucky would you have to be to make it all the way to the end of the activity by yourself with only one life? Super-duper lucky!
- But, because you worked as a team, information was passed from those who went first to those who followed.
- Those who followed were able to learn from the mistakes and sacrifices from those who went first.
- This happened two ways:
 - Unsaid things that were learned sort of automatically (don't click the same link the now dead person just clicked!)
 - Intentionally trying to figure out the riddle.
- Eventually, some of the members of the team made it to the destination and learned the secret to the riddle.
- The same thing happens with us and God.
- God is an amazing and incredible mystery.

- On our own, we're not going to discover very much. We might not even know where to start.
- But, if we understand our faith journey to be a community event, then we can recognize that there are people who went before us/went ahead of us. Some of those people are represented in the stories in the Bible.
- By reading and talking about these stories, we can learn things about life with God and life without God.
- So, for instance, what we've learned about life with and without God from these three Jacob stories is mostly what not to do or, in terms of the activity: We've learned what links NOT to click.
- We see in two out of the three stories that grabbing what we want and living without paying attention to God leads to family dysfunction, separation, hurt, betrayal and fear.
- But in the last lesson, we saw how paying attention to God led to eventual bravery (on Jacob's part) and a happy reunion of him and his brother, Esau
- In our next lesson, we'll start a new session on Joseph and we'll see if Joseph and his brothers will learn anything about God or if they'll just keep randomly clicking links.

CLOSING PRAYER