

Summary Handout**“How Can I Do This Great Wickedness?”**

Lesson
11
Summary

Genesis 34; Shechem defiles Dinah—Hivites seek to arrange marriage with Jacob’s family—Many, being circumcised, are slain by Simeon and Levi—Jacob reproves them.

Genesis 37; Jacob loves and favors Joseph, who is hated by his brothers—Joseph dreams that his parents and brothers make obeisance to him—His brothers sell him into Egypt.

Genesis 38; Judah has three sons by a Canaanite woman—Er and Onan slain by the Lord—Tamar, as a harlot, bears twins by Judah.

Genesis 39; Joseph, prospered by the Lord, becomes ruler of Potiphar’s house—He resists the advances of Potiphar’s wife, is falsely accused, and cast into prison—Keeper of the prison commits its affairs into Joseph’s hands.

**Supplemental
Holy Land and
Jewish
insights:**

Joseph, Known and Unknown: The account of ancient Joseph is truly a chiasmas paralleled by the modern story of Joseph. It is a prefiguring of the Savior’s mission. The next two lessons cover Joseph’s life as he is chosen by his father and then rejected by his brothers. In slavery, his identity is really unknown, yet he serves and saves those around him. Later, he serves and saves his brothers before identifying himself. In the next lesson we read how the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 3) connects the symbolism of the ancient Joseph with a latter-day Joseph.

Power “Handed” to Joseph: Ancient Joseph was blessed and authorized by his father Jacob when Jacob laid his hands on Joseph’s head. “In the same way that priests lift their hands in blessing, so parents place their hands on the heads of their children when they bless them. (For example, in the Bible, Jacob blessed his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, by placing his hands on their heads.) Placing the hands on another person is symbolic not only of transferring blessing but also of passing on authority. In talmudic times, scholars received their rabbinic ordination through the symbolic act of placing of the hands (known as semikhah).” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Modern-day “Favored” Joseph can Learn from the Past: In modern Judaism, there is a powerful cultural and legendary history of Joseph and his future role. Some of these excerpts can give “modern Joseph” a little insight to what the Jews are still anticipating. “Based on the famous story of Joseph and his brothers, the Talmud warns against favoring one child over another . . . Jealousy is considered such a serious evil that it is mentioned in the Ten Commandments where the tenth commandment is an outright prohibition of envy: . . . the rabbis of the Talmud developed the philosophy that a truly rich man is one who is happy with his portion in life and does not envy others.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Latter-day Messiah Preceded by a Joseph Messiah? “According to the Talmud, the Messiah will be a descendant of the House of David and will be preceded by a secondary Messiah, from the House of Joseph . . .” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*) When the Chief Rabbi, Avraham HaKohen Kook was appointed in Palestine in the 1920’s, he was asked if the Jews could now build the Temple (destroyed since year 70 A.D.). His response was that the priestly rights were gone and referred to the great 12th century rabbi Moses Maimonides. Maimonides said, in effect, “We are waiting for a Messiah Ben-Joseph, to him will be given the keys of the gathering of Israel, he will restore Temple worship.”

Saving Without Revealing Identity: The chiasmas shows that ancient Joseph saved his family and they did not know who he was. Latter-day Joseph is saving his brothers again, (more foreign aid goes to Israel from the U.S.A., the land of Joseph, than from all other countries combined) and they don’t know that it is “Joseph.” In the meridian of times there was “One” who saved us all - and still most people don’t know it.

Jewish Reflections on Gentile Laws: In reflecting on ancient Joseph's high standards and principles, we read of the modern Jewish attitude for themselves and others (non-Jews) on sexuality and morality. "Gentiles were expected to practice at least the seven Noachide Laws. These were considered by rabbinic tradition to be the minimum moral duties enjoined on all men and were derived from divine demands addressed to Adam and Noah. The laws consisted of prohibitions against idolatry, blasphemy, bloodshed, sexual sins, theft (including the taking of booty in war and dishonesty in economic life), and eating flesh from live animals, as well as the command to establish a legal system, presumably to enforce the prohibitions. The gentile was not obliged to acknowledge God, but was at least obliged to abandon the worship of false gods. Unlike Jews, Noachides were not required to suffer martyrdom rather than break the law against idolatry; they were, however, required to choose martyrdom rather than shed human blood. In some instances gentiles were also required to observe Sabbath and the festivals, and to fast on the Day of Atonement." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Turning Drives into Power for Good: "Feelings of hatred, envy, self indulgence, sexual drives, greed are woven into man's nature as God created him. But these impulses can be redirected by the *yezer ha-tov*, (the good inclination) guided and disciplined by the laws of the Torah, so that instead of destructive forces they become creative powers for good." "Detailed legislation concerning sexual behavior can be found in the Bible as well as in the Talmud and subsequent rabbinic literature. Celibacy (complete abstinence from all sexual activity) is discouraged as an unnatural state and detrimental to the human personality." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Within Marriage: "The primary restriction of sexual activity in Jewish law is that it should take place within marriage, as an expression of love between husband and wife as well as out of a desire to fulfill God's commandments. An element of holiness is added by the laws of *niddah* (separation during the period of menstruation;) which ensure that the couple does not indulge in sex on impulse but rather directs the act to holiness." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Chastity and Modesty: "In general, moderation and self-control in sexual activity are encouraged. Chastity, the goal to be aimed for, does not mean the avoidance of all sex but of illegal sex. This includes adultery, incest, sodomy, rape and seduction." "Judaism encourages modesty as one of the means to chastity. Thus the Jewish woman is enjoined to dress and act modestly at all times. Furthermore, a man is forbidden to be alone with a woman with whom he is not permitted to have sexual relations from considerations of both chastity and modesty." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

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