

GENESIS 37:3-8 “IT’S JUST OBNOXIOUS!”

³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. ⁴ When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

⁵ Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. ⁶ He said to them, “Listen to this dream I had: ⁷ We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it.”

⁸ His brothers said to him, “Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?” And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

“Teacher’s pet;” “Curve-breaker;” “Goody-two-shoes;” “Spoiled brat;” “.” all these names and more must have been used for Joseph by his siblings. And if we were there, we probably would have joined whole-heartedly in the name-calling. As if being “special” was not enough, Joseph has the temerity to share his obnoxious dreams with his older brothers.

In the middle east, even today, dreams are taken seriously. Of course, that is why the brothers were so offended. Today we would just dismiss Joseph as an impractical “dreamer” and not bother paying attention to him. But for his brothers, these dreams were a claim of special prophetic power. Dreams were windows into otherwise invisible realities. It was clear to the brothers that Joseph, the younger half brother, was making a claim of superiority over them.

What role does competition play in our spiritual life? Are we easily driven to jealousy by the giftedness of a brother in the church? Do we think of a person of strong faith as arrogant and self-righteous? Are we quick to dismiss a bold stand by a person of faith as impractical and unrealistic? How do we react when someone’s call is different than our own? How often do we attribute negative motives to those who claim to be acting according to their conscience? Perhaps we should ponder on Joseph’s story so that we do not allow our displeasure to grow into hate and finally result in character assassination.

Am I too practical and competitive for your kingdom, Lord? Make me a dreamer of dreams and respecter of the dreams of others. Change my heart so that I will think the best of others and rejoice in their experience of blessing. May I become an encourager of my brothers and a witness to your love. Amen.