

## Conflict Resolution



Joseph Envied By His Brothers

Have you ever been in a conflict with someone? The question does not bear an answer due to the fact that from an early age every individual has had an occasion of a “competitive or opposing action of incompatibles: antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons) b: mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands” (Webster's):” even if you didn’t know that’s what you were experiencing. If you’re alive, you’ve had conflict.

Our considerations have included political, spiritual, personal, social, and family conflicts. Conflicts may just be from opposing needs, drives, and wishes that are simply matters of opinion, and inconsequential. However, even some inconsequential conflicts become consequential, i.e., even though you may view something as simply a choice, with no sin or transgression, the fella on the other end of the conversation may not see it as such. Our nation is in the throes of a political battle. One individual may view someone’s party of choice as simply that: it’s your choice, no harm, no foul. On the other hand, another individual may view your party of choice as a gross violation, and the conflict is on with the only Resolution being for one or the other to change parties. However, now

you're simply on the other side of the coin, and in conflict with the people you were heretofore in agreement with. Conflicts arise from personal preference to transgression, i.e., my personal preference, pushed too far will result in a conflict of paramount proportions. Within a family, conflict is most disheartening, especially when the conflict is a result of bitter jealousy and faction in the heart. Our consideration in this segment involves such a conflict, which generally came about as a result of favoritism.

You recall our segment regarding Esau and Jacob where Isaac loved Esau, and Rebekah love Jacob? Well, the apple didn't fall far from the tree. As the actions of Rebekah and Jacob created a conflict resulting in Jacob moving to Haran, where he ultimately married Rachel. However, before he married Rachel, Laban, his uncle, deceived Jacob and gave him Leah to wife, lest the younger marry before the eldest. This action set the stage for years of conflict in the house of Jacob. The scriptures revealing that Rachel was loved, and Leah hated.

To these two women, and their handmaids, was children begotten by Jacob: six sons and a daughter of Leah, two sons of Zilpah the handmaid of Leah, two sons of Bilhah the handmaid of Rachel, and two sons of Rachel.

You may recall the circumstances of Jacob's return to Canaan, after twenty years in Haran. When Jacob was anticipating the arrival of Esau, and not knowing how Esau would respond to Jacob's return, Jacob arranged his family into three divisions: "he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost" (Genesis 33:2). This, Jacob had done to preserve that which was most precious and loved: "Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the field of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye say unto my lord Esau: Thus saith thy servant Jacob, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed until now: and I have oxen, and asses, and flocks, and men-servants, and maid-servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in thy sight. And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and moreover he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob

was greatly afraid and was distressed: and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks, and the herds, and the camels, into two companies; and he said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the company which is left shall escape” (Genesis 32:3–8). Jacob’s favoritism toward Joseph is the occasion of our inquiry.

“And Jacob dwelt in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and he was a lad with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought the evil report of them unto their father. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colors. And his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren; and they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him. And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: for, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves came round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? Or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed yet a dream: and, behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren; and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him; but his father kept the saying in mind. And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem” (Genesis 37:1–12).

Between Jacob’s favoritism, and Joseph’s youthful boasting, if that’s what it was, his brothers hatred for him had reached maturity, as the prophet James said, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be

tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man: but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death” (James 1:13–15). Thus, like Ahab “the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of Jehovah: but I hate him; for he never prophesieth good concerning me, but always evil: the same is Micaiah the son of Imla” (2 Chronicles 18:7). So also the brothers of Joseph had their fill of Joseph and his dreams.