GENESIS 37

Joseph's Dreams

1 So Jacob lived in the land of Canaan. This was where his father lived as a foreigner. **2** These are the generations of Jacob.

When Joseph[i] was 17 years old, he was tending the flock with his family. Once, he was with the sons of Bilhah and with the sons of Zilpah. They were the children of his father's wives. Joseph brought a bad report about them to his father.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children because he was the son of his old age.[ii] So he made him a coat[iii] of many colors. **4** Now when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him. They could not speak peaceably to him.[iv]

5 One night, Joseph dreamed a dream. When he told the dream to his brothers, they hated him even more. **6** He said to them, "Please listen to the dream that I have dreamed. **7** I saw that we were binding bundles of grain in the field. Suddenly, my bundle got up and stood upright. Then I saw that your bundles stood around my bundle and bowed down to it." **8** But his brothers said to him, "Do you really think that you will have dominion over us? Do you really think that you will rule over us?" So they hated him all the more for his dreams and for his words.[v]

9 He even dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers as well. He said, "Look. I have dreamed another dream.[vi] I saw that the sun, and[vii] the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me."[viii] **10** After he told it to his father and the rest of his family, his father scolded him. He said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Will I, your mother, and your family indeed come to bow ourselves down to the earth before you?" **11** And his brothers envied[ix] him, but his father remembered what he said.

12 One day Joseph's brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem, **13** Then Israel said to Joseph, "Aren't your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come. I will send you to them." And Joseph said to him, "Here am I!"

14 And he said to Joseph, "Please go and see how things are going with your brothers and with the flocks. Then come back and give me a report." So Israel sent him out of the Valley of Hebron. Eventually, Joseph came to Shechem.[x]

15 A certain man found him as he was wandering in the field. The man asked him, "Who are you looking for?" **16** And Joseph replied, "I am looking for my brothers. Please tell me where they are feeding their flocks."

17 And the man answered, "They left here, for I heard them say,

'Let's go to Dothan.' "

So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan.

Joseph Sold As A Slave

18 When they saw him a long way off, even before he came close to them, they made plans to kill him. **19** They said to each other, "Look. Here comes this dreamer. **20** Now is the time. Let's kill him and throw him in some pit. We will say that some wild beast ate him. Then we will see what will become of his dreams."

21 But when Reuben heard it he delivered him out of their hands. He said, "Let's not kill him."

22 And Reuben said to them, “Don’t shed any blood. Simply throw him into this pit here in the wilderness
and don’t hurt him.” He planned to rescue him later and return him to his father again.

23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colors that
was on him. 24 Then they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty and there was no water in
it.[xi] 25 Then, as they sat down to eat, they looked up and saw a company of Ishmaelites. They were coming
from Gilead with their camels bearing spices, balm, and myrrh. They were carrying their goods down to
Egypt.

26 So Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is it for us if we simply kill our brother and cover up his
death?[xii] 27 Come. Let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not harm him. After all, he is our brother and our
flesh.”

And his brothers agreed. 28 When the Midianite[xiii] merchantmen passed by the brothers, they pulled Joseph
out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites for 20 pieces of silver. The Midianites then brought Joseph
to Egypt.

29 When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes. 30 Then he
went back to his brothers and said, “The child is not in the pit. Where can I go?”[xiv]

31 So they took Joseph’s coat, killed a young goat, and dipped the coat in the blood. 32 Then they took the
coat of many colors and brought it to their father. They said, “We found this covenant[xv] coat. Do you
know whether it is your son’s coat or not?”

33 Israel recognized it and said, “It is my son’s coat. A wild beast has eaten him. Joseph has certainly been
torn in pieces.” 34 Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth around his waist, and mourned[xvi] for his son
many days. 35 All his sons and all his daughters tried to comfort him, but they could not comfort him. He
said, “I will go down to the grave mourning for my son.” So he continued to weep for him.

36 Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh’s officer, and captain[xvii] of the
guard.

---

i Joseph is a type of Jesus. A.W. Pink, *Gleanings in Genesis*, lists over 100 ways that Joseph is a type of Jesus. In the introduction, Pink says “Joseph is the most complete of all the personal types of Christ.” See https://grace-ebooks.com.

ii Joseph was the first son of Rachel, the wife Jacob truly loved. Everyone knew this. It generated jealousy and hatred.

iii Likely a long coat reaching down to the ankles (2 Sam 13:18). Whatever it was, it was a coat of honor. It separated him from the rest of his brothers.

iv The family is slowly splintering. Tamar will play an important (but unspoken) part in keeping the family together. So will the furnace of affliction in Egypt.

v So, the children of three mothers have a common enemy — the beloved son of the loved wife. The cost of this false unity is very high and short-lived.

vi The doubling of a dream tells us of its certainty (Genesis 41:25-26, 32; Daniel 2:45).

vii The literary technique of Polysyndeton uses multiple “and”s (or other conjunctions) in a series. It slows the reader and gives emphasis to each person — even his mother.

viii Genesis 42:6.

ix The Hebrew קָנָא means zealous. Synonyms include jealous, passionate, intense, envious, envy, anger, and watchful.

x This is a long distance of over 50 miles. That trip would take several days.

xi They ignored his fervent pleas (Genesis 41:21).

xii The Hebrew דָּם means blood.

xiii The Midianites were Ishmaelites (Judges 8:24).

[xiv] This is a Hebraic idiom expressing personal crisis or helplessness. It carries the idea of what now? Where can I turn? What can I do? How can I face this? Reuben knows that he is the oldest sons, the one responsible. He has no good excuse.

[xv] The Hebrew זֹאת is a Zayin-**Aleph**-**Tav**. Its basic meaning is to cut, either as a blessing or a judgment. This translation routinely renders this 3-letter word in terms of covenant. See the article "The **Aleph**-**Tav**."

[xvi] Joseph was the firstborn son of his favorite wife.

[xvii] The Hebrew שַׂר means captain, chief, ruler, or warden.