

“Extreme Home Break-Up” (Genesis 37:2-36)

A story as intriguing as the one found in Genesis 37 does not need an introduction. Beginning with 37:2a, Moses writes: “**These are the records of the generations of Jacob**”¹ (37:2a). While the next 14 chapters of Genesis include Jacob,² the storyline focuses on Jacob’s sons.³ And of his 12 sons, special interest is spent on Joseph.⁴ This means ¼ of the book of Genesis is devoted to this one man.

Moses writes, “**Joseph, when seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers while he was still a youth, along with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives**” (37:2b). Notice that Joseph is 17 and is “**still a youth.**” This demonstrates that it’s possible to be 17 and godly (1 Tim 4:12). Age is not the determining factor when it comes to godliness. The reality is there are only two classes of people in the church: mature and immature. Teenagers who have a great love and passion for the Lord are putting many adults who have been saved for decades to shame. Thus, we must judge spirituality not by age and knowledge but by maturity and obedience.

Joseph is tending his father’s flock “**with his brothers,**” the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah (i.e., Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher, cf. 35:25-26). He is learning one of the lessons of leadership: You do not become somebody until you become nobody! If you want to become a leader, you must first be a servant. Only then will you follow in Jesus’ example and one day become a servant-leader (Mark 10:45; John 13:3-17). This description also prefigures Joseph’s later shepherding role in relation to his brothers, after they became dependent on him.⁵

Moses concludes 37:2 with these words: “**And Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father.**” The reference to the “**bad report**”⁶ is not very specific. Elsewhere, the word “**report**” (*dibbah*) is always used in the negative sense of an untrue report. It denotes news slanted to damage the victim (Prov 10:18). Thus, some scholars suggest that Joseph misrepresented the facts and maligned his brothers. Likely, his report was essentially true, but not perfectly so—due to exaggeration or inaccuracies. So young Joseph, in effect, became a tattler.⁷ This did not bode well for young Joseph.⁸

In 37:3, Moses writes: “**Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age**”⁹; **and he made him a varicolored tunic.**” Jacob loved Joseph “**more than all his sons**” because he was born to Jacob when he was old. Joseph made Jacob feel virile and masculine. (There’s smoke in the engine: “I may be old, but I’m not dead yet.”) As a result, Jacob threw gasoline on the fire by giving Joseph a special robe. Now anytime a father attempts to dress his teenage son, something is wrong...very wrong. The “**varicolored tunic**” was probably a long robe extending all the way down to the wrists and ankles; as opposed to the ordinary, shorter one with no sleeves that working men wore.¹⁰ It was a garment that distinguished its wearer as a person of special distinction, who was not required to do the ordinary work of laborers. It marked Joseph as a “white collar worker,” while his brothers were mere “blue collar workers.” Joseph’s brothers hated this garment and what it symbolized, for their first act of violence was to strip his coat from him (37:23).¹¹

In 37:4, Moses goes on to say, “**His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms.**” Favoritism has a long history in Jacob’s family (Isaac’s preference for Esau, Rebekah’s for Jacob, and Jacob’s preference for Rachel). In every case it created major problems. Jacob, of all people, should have understood this. His father loved his brother more than him. While Jacob should have been sensitive to favoritism, he repeats the sin of his parents. Parents, learn from the mistakes of Jacob’s family: Do not show favoritism toward any of your children (see Jas 2:1, 9). Favoritism in a home is deadly. It will change the entire dynamics of your home and will affect your children for years to come.

Let me make some suggestions to parents. In order to convey our love to our children:

- We must look for the praiseworthy attributes of our children and then celebrate those traits. In other words, talk about and be proud of who God made them to be and what they do well.
- We must affirm an unconditional love that is not based on whether or not our child “produces.”
- We must be alert to those sensitive areas in our children and be careful not to attack them in those areas when we are angry with them.
- We must strive to be consistent from one child to the next.
- We must present adverse consequences of misbehavior ahead of time and then follow through if tested. (Sometimes the best way to say, “I care” is to discipline...to not discipline is to be seen as not caring.)

I hope this passage encourages you to build a relationship with a child, grandchild, niece, or nephew that may feel unloved. These suggestions may help you to do that.

- Write them a note telling them what you appreciate and cherish about them...be specific.
- Give them a call and tell them you were thinking about them. One of the best things we can do for our children is to let them know that we love them.
- Ask them about their life and look them right in the eye while they are talking to you!
- Spend a day together doing something with them.
- Let them hear you pray for them.¹²

Maybe your parents made (or are now making) some mistakes in dealing with you. You can get mad and bitter at them (or even at God) for all the wrongs they’ve done. You can blame them for not protecting you from things that damaged your life or for showing favoritism to your brothers and sisters or for being passive parents. Or, you can trust that God has sovereignly placed you in your family. Even though you don’t understand everything taking place, you can thank God because you know that He will use all these hardships for ultimate good (Rom 8:28). You can ask Him to take away your bitterness and make you the channel of His love. But no matter what our family background or circumstances, we’re responsible to obey the Lord. Even if you come from an appalling background, God expects you to deal with your sin by confessing and forsaking it as you obey Him in response to His grace and love as shown to you in Christ.¹³

Tragically, the brothers don’t express their concerns to Dad; instead, they hate Joseph.¹⁴ This should not be...their real problem is with their father. They need to deal with him. It is important to recognize that the growth of conflict between the brothers was rooted in the problems within the marriage. The same results are seen in 1 Sam 1, where polygamy produced inevitable competition and conflict between the wives. Of course, polygamy is not necessary in order for conflict to occur. Any breakdown in the husband and wife relationship has serious spillover effects on all the relationships in the home.¹⁵ This is why it is so very important that spouses prioritize their relationship with each other over their relationships with their children. Even if you spend gobs of time with your kids and love them unconditionally, if there is not harmony in the home, your children will suffer. Husband, love your wife; wife, respect your husband.

Our story continues in 37:5-11: **“Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. He said to them, ‘Please listen to this dream which I have had; for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf.’ Then his brothers said to him, ‘Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?’ So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, ‘Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and**

eleven stars were bowing down to me.’ He related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, ‘What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?’ His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.” Joseph has two dreams in this section. Dreams in the Joseph narrative come in pairs (Gen 40-41) to show that the matter is firmly decided by God and will come quickly (see 41:32). An isolated dream might be misinterpreted. Two dreams with the same meaning confirm the interpretation.¹⁶ Joseph’s first dream involves sheaves, which subtly points to his future role in overseeing all of Egypt’s grain distribution. Amazingly, 23 years later, in fulfillment of Joseph’s dream, all eleven of his brothers would prostrate themselves in submission to Joseph, on at least five different occasions (42:6-7; 43:26, 28; 44:14-16; 50:18). Joseph’s second dream is far more graphic. It involves celestial imagery bowing down to him.¹⁷ It doesn’t take a Rhodes scholar to interpret this dream!¹⁸ Even the densest of Joseph’s brothers interpret his dream accurately.

There seems to be both faith and foolishness resident in Joseph sharing his dreams. Since God intervened in Joseph’s life and he shared his dreams with his family, there is evidence of faith. Joseph took God’s revelation that involved other people and shared it with them. He is being faithful to God’s initiative to reveal the future to his brothers. By boldly relating his dreams to his family, he demonstrates his faith that God revealed these dreams to him. Yet most Bible students argue that Joseph is guilty of outright foolishness and even sinful boasting.¹⁹ Joseph would have been wise to share his dreams with his dad, receive confirmation from him, and then decide whether or not to share them with his brothers. Both of these suggestions seem to carry some weight.

It is important to recognize that idle or fanciful dreams provide an occasion only for laughter. Under most circumstances, the worst that might be considered would be that Joseph needed to be put into a padded cell for his own protection. But if there were already evidence of Joseph’s authority, leadership, and capabilities, fear of even greater status and power would be acted upon swiftly and harshly.²⁰ Yet, by Joseph sharing his dreams, God extended grace to the brothers. The brothers should have asked what set of circumstances would have to happen for this dream to come to pass.

Unfortunately, jealousy consumed them. Envy and jealousy are extremely destructive character traits. If you don’t resist them and take every thought captive and obedient to Christ (2 Cor 10:5), they have the potential to destroy your marriage, ruin your career, alienate you from friends and family, and strip you of spiritual joy and contentment. What stirs up thoughts of envy and jealousy for you?

- When someone talks about his or her many accomplishments.
- When others show you their new car, boat, computer, etc.
- When someone tells you about a large inheritance received.
- When someone gets an award, recognition, or promotion that you felt you deserved.
- When someone talks about their accomplishment in an area where you want to excel.
- When you hear others talk about the vacation you can’t afford to take.²¹

Envy is the root of almost every sin against believers. Whenever it is harbored, there is an end of all peace, rest, and satisfaction. Proverbs 14:30 says, “A tranquil spirit revives the body, but envy is rotteness to the bones” (cf. Prov 27:4; *NET*). James 3:16 tells us, “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.”

While the brothers burn with jealous rage, Jacob keeps the matter in mind (37:11). Like Mary to come, he pondered in his heart the meaning of what he heard (Luke 2:19). Why would Jacob give such credence to this? Jacob believes Joseph makes honorable decisions. He realizes that Joseph is doing something intentional and very difficult when he speaks to his brothers and parents.

In 37:12-14, Moses writes, **“Then his brothers went to pasture their father’s flock in Shechem. Israel said to Joseph, ‘Are not your brothers pasturing the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them.’ And he said to him, ‘I will go.’ Then he said to him, ‘Go now and see about the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flock, and bring word back to me.’ So he sent him from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem”** (37:12-14). It was not uncommon for shepherds to lead their flocks many miles from home in search of pasture. Shechem was about 50 miles north of Hebron. Jacob owned land there. Yet, the three references to **“Shechem”** are suspicious. Why hammer away at Shechem, when we will discover that the brothers aren’t even there? It is likely to prepare the reader and Joseph for the treachery that lies ahead. (It was at Shechem that Joseph’s brothers perpetrated, in the name of family loyalty, the most heinous deception and murderous rampage.)²² Furthermore, is Shechem a nice town? No! Are Jacob’s sons nice boys? No! Whatever is going on in Shechem is not good! Yet, willingly Joseph obeys his father’s commission. Obedience was the mark of Joseph, no matter what prospects lay ahead of him.²³ In 37:17, we learn that the boys had traveled 15 miles north of Shechem to **“Dothan.”** Clearly, the brothers didn’t want to be followed. They were likely living large and enjoying a Cancun Spring Break.

Why does Jacob send his beloved son to check on his brothers? There’s a clue in 37:14: Jacob wanted Joseph to check on **“the welfare of the flock.”** Apparently, Jacob still struggles with greed. He wants to make sure that his wealth continues (cf. 30:43). However, in doing so he sends his son into a deathtrap...something that will haunt him for many years. The only explanation for why Jacob does this is: He doesn’t really know his sons. Before we condemn Jacob, let’s admit: It’s easy for fathers, especially, to get out of touch with their children. You leave the house early in the morning and don’t get home until dinner. After dinner, the kids are busy with homework and other activities. You sit down with the paper or in front of the TV. And so it goes. Your kids are in their world; you are in yours. You’ve lost touch with the things that are shaping their lives. It’s easy to be right where Jacob was, to be an insensitive parent! But the point is, while Jacob was not right, and while we need to work at avoiding the same mistakes, God is still sovereign, even when parents are insensitive and foolish. Jacob should have been wise enough not to show favoritism to Joseph and to protect him from this explosive situation. He wasn’t; and he was responsible. But God was still in control.

In 37:15-17, we have a very interesting account: **“A man found him, and behold, he was wandering²⁴ in the field; and the man asked him, ‘What are you looking for?’ He said, ‘I am looking for my brothers; please tell me where they are pasturing the flock.’ Then the man said, ‘They have moved from here; for I heard them say, ‘Let us go to Dothan.’ So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.”** Joseph just happens to encounter a man who had overheard the conversation of his brothers and can direct him to them. Otherwise, he most certainly would not have found them (15 miles away), would have returned home, and theoretically saved himself a long tour of duty in Egypt. But instead God brought about a divine appointment! Moses expects the reader to infer from this incident that behind the scenes God is at work. God made sure that Joseph hooks up with his brothers, despite what his brothers are going to do to him.²⁵ There is also great irony in these verses: Joseph, alone and vulnerable, is safer with a Shechemite than with his own brothers.²⁶ The family is not always the safest place on earth. The family can be a very dangerous place. Maybe you’ve experienced this. Nevertheless, God is control of your family and your life.

There is a scene shift at 37:18, when Joseph reaches his brothers. Suddenly the narrative is given from the brothers’ perspective.²⁷ Moses writes, **“When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death. They said to one another, ‘Here comes this dreamer! (lit. “master of dreams” or “dream expert”) Now then, come and let us kill him [4:8] and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, ‘A wild beast devoured him.’ Then let us see what will become of his dreams!’”** **“We shall see what will become of his dreams!”**

Can't you hear the sarcasm in their voices? The brothers saw Joseph coming. They hated him. They ridiculed him. They decided to kill him. Nothing good can ever come from plotting to kill another person. And yet the brothers are plotting to kill Joseph. They concoct a story to explain his disappearance. The brothers revealed the real reason for wanting to murder him. They say, "We shall then see what will become of his dreams." There's a strong warning in the Bible to those who would plot to take another person's life. If you want to read that warning, just read Prov, chapter 1 (esp. 1:10, 11, and 15). The Bible always warns us very carefully about the quality and the value of another life.²⁸

In 37:21-24, Moses writes, **"But Reuben heard this and rescued him out of their hands and said, 'Let us not take his life.' Reuben further said to them, 'Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him'—that he might rescue him out of their hands, to restore him to his father. So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him; and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it."** Reuben was the oldest. He was the firstborn. He was the decision-maker in the family. He was apparently not part of the family group that was plotting to kill Joseph. That consisted probably of sons Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher—the four sons against whom Joseph brought a bad report (cf. 37:2).

If you recall from 35:22, Reuben committed incest with his father's concubine, Bilhah, stripping himself of the privileges of the first-born son. But despite his previous failure, he still felt the weight of responsibility and was compelled to do what he could to rescue his brother. But instead of simply standing up to his brothers and saying, "This is wrong! We can't do this!" he tries a more subtle approach by appealing to the logic and advantage of not shedding Joseph's blood. He planned to free Joseph later and restore him to his father (37:22), perhaps as a way to get back on his dad's good side (after sleeping with his concubine). Once Joseph was in the pit, Reuben went off, perhaps to check on the flocks.

In 37:25a, Moses records these tragic words: **"Then they sat down to eat a meal."** The boys have lunch after they put Joseph in the pit. They are ruthless and cold. All they care about is their stomach. The callousness and cruelty of Joseph's brothers is shocking! There is no sense of guilt, no remorse, not even a loss of appetite. The next time the brothers would eat a meal in Joseph's presence he would sit at the head table (43:32-34). For the next 23 years, Joseph's cries for mercy would haunt them in their dreams and ring in their ears (see 42:21).

Our passage continues: **"And as they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing aromatic gum and balm and myrrh, on their way to bring them down to Egypt. Judah said to his brothers, 'What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come and 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 listened to him. Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled him up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. Thus they brought Joseph into Egypt"** (37:25b-28). God, in His perfect timing, brings this caravan along to preserve Joseph's life and take him where He wants him to be. Judah, like Reuben, did not relish killing Joseph. Yet he was not willing to let him go free either. Probably he dreaded the prospect of Joseph receiving the rights of the first-born since he, Judah, was in line for Jacob's blessing. His suggestion that the brothers sell Joseph implies that he knew slave trading was common in Egypt. The price agreed on for Joseph was the same price that God later specified the Israelites should pay for a slave between the ages of five and twenty years, under the Mosaic economy (Lev 27:5).²⁹ The **"twenty shekels of silver"** is also intended to remind us of how Judas sold out Christ for 30 pieces of silver. This is not happenstance. Joseph's life is designed to point to the life of the Lord Jesus.

In 37:29-30, Moses writes, **“Now Reuben returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit; so he tore his garments. He returned to his brothers and said, ‘The boy is not there; as for me, where am I to go?’”** Reuben comes back to the pit, finds it empty, and panics. At this point we can discern his true motive in wanting to protect Joseph: He really was more concerned about protecting himself. As the oldest, he would have to answer to his father for whatever happened to his little brother. He was already in hot water with Jacob over the matter of sleeping with his concubine. He would have assumed that Joseph had escaped from the pit and fled for home, where he would tell Dad what happened. Joseph hadn’t known that Reuben was planning to rescue him. Now Reuben would be in even more trouble! That’s why when he hears what his brothers did, Reuben is quick to agree to their scheme. If he really was concerned about his brother he could have gone after the caravan and redeemed him.

In 37:31-32, Moses writes, **“So they took Joseph’s tunic, and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the tunic in the blood; and they sent the varicolored tunic and brought it to their father and said, ‘We found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son’s tunic or not.’”** One sin leads to other sins. This becomes one of the most well known cover-ups in the Bible. There is a sad irony in all this. Years earlier Jacob had deceived his father, Isaac, by offering him goat meat (27:16). Now his sons deceive him with the blood of a goat. The brothers undoubtedly prided themselves in the fact that they never said Joseph was dead. They simply “deceived” their father into believing this.

In 37:33-35, Moses records Jacob’s response: **“Then he examined it and said, ‘It is my son’s tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!’ So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, ‘Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son.’ So his father wept for him.”** Jacob felt the panic of losing his child. Imagine doing the funeral of your son. If you lost your child it would be devastating. Families with great sin often don’t say a thing. The boys lived for years without ever telling their father what they did. Had Jacob believed more strongly in God’s revelations in Joseph’s dreams, he might not have jumped to the conclusion that Joseph was dead, and his sorrow might not have been as great (cf. 2 Sam 18:33). Jacob’s fears were groundless, but he did not realize this because he chose, in this instance, to live by sight rather than by faith.³⁰

Our story closes in 37:36 with these amazing words: **“Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh’s officer, the captain of the bodyguard.”** It was not coincidence that Joseph ended up in the home of one of the most responsible officers of Pharaoh’s administration. Hidden from the logic of man’s limited perspective, God was orchestrating His eternal and divine purposes for the preservation and deliverance of the people of Israel. God takes Joseph to Egypt to make him a great nation. But it would be 23 years of nightmare before Joseph’s dream and God’s ultimate plan for his life finally came to pass.

God is never defeated by our deceit. Jacob deceived. Jacob was deceived. The brothers hated. They envied. They plotted. They lied. And when you get to the end of the chapter, God has placed Joseph exactly where he needs to be to accomplish God’s purposes. All of this points to the sovereignty of God. When you and I sin and go against the will of God, we don’t thwart the purpose of God. We thwart ourselves. Our personal progress in the Lord is not all that it should be. Even if those around us do not display character, do not display integrity or honesty or godliness, we’re still to do so. Because it’s only when we have clean hands and a pure heart—it’s only when we are useable to God that we can have a positive impact on those around us. Our job is not to work out the details. Joseph didn’t. Our job is to remain pure and useable. God will work out the details. He did in the case of Joseph. He’ll do it for you too.³¹

God wants to grow you into a fruitful disciple who will impact earth and eternity. However, His plan for your life likely includes tests, trials, and tragedies. Most Christians resist this. We kick against the goads, yet God tends to deeply wound those that He uses greatly. To put it another way: The greater God's plan for us, the greater will be His training. You and I must receive God's sovereign training so that we can progress to be the people He wants us to be. As we submit our life to Him, He will accomplish more than we can ever ask or think.

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Notes

¹ For the tenth and final time, the phrase “the records of the generations of...” is used. This marks the final section in the book of Genesis.

² Joseph is mentioned twice as much as Jacob (133 times to 62 times).

³ See Bryan Smith, “The Central Role of Judah in Genesis 37-50,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162:646 (April-June 2005): 158-74.

⁴ The Joseph story develops the theme of the Pentateuch by showing the gradual fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham in 12:1-3. In particular, it shows how God blesses the nations through the descendants of Abraham [cf. 50:20]. Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Vol. 2: WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1994), 344.

⁵ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Genesis* (<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/genesis.pdf>, 2005), 229.

⁶ Since the story of Joseph is filled with wordplays and reversals, it seems likely that the reference to the “bad [ra`ah] report” in 37:2 foreshadows the brothers’ intended “evil” (ra`ah; NIV, “harm”) spoken of in 50:20. John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*: EBC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), Electronic ed.

⁷ Michael Eaton, *Preaching Through the Bible: Genesis 24-50* (Kent, England: Sovereign World, 1999), 73; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50*: NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 406; R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 437; R.T. Kendall, *All’s Well that End’s Well: The Life of Jacob* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1998), 184; Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 499; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Vol. 2: WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1994), 350.

⁸ Others suggest that Joseph’s first responsibility was to his father and, therefore, he acted properly. The NET Bible Notes state, “The entire Joseph story has some of the characteristics of wisdom literature. Joseph is presented in a good light – not because he was perfect, but because the narrative is showing how wisdom rules. In light of that, this section portrays Joseph as faithful to his father in little things, even though unpopular – and so he will eventually be given authority over greater things.” See also S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., “Joseph: Beloved, Hated, and Sold into Egypt,” *Believers Bible Bulletin*, Genesis Lesson 53: <http://www.believers-chapel.org/bulletins/genesis/genesis.html>, 3; Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988 [2002 ed.]), 598.

⁹ Constable suggests that this phrase means “wise son, or son of wisdom. Joseph was old for his years; he had the wisdom of age in his youth. Joseph was born when Jacob was 91 years old, but he was not Jacob’s youngest son. At least one of Joseph’s brothers was younger than he, Benjamin.” Constable, *Notes on Genesis*, 230.

¹⁰ It is not clear what this tunic was like, because the meaning of the Hebrew word that describes it is uncertain. The idea that it was a coat of many colors comes from the Greek translation of the OT. An examination of cognate terms in Semitic suggests it was either a coat or tunic with long sleeves (cf. NEB, NRSV), or a tunic that was richly embroidered (cf. NIV). It set Joseph apart as the favored one. See NET Bible Notes.

¹¹ While there is considerable conjecture on this matter of the coat, one thing is certain. The term, which is used, for Joseph’s coat in this chapter occurs elsewhere only in 2 Sam 13:18-19. There it is employed for the coat, which was worn by Tamar, the daughter of David. While other things may have been symbolized by this garment (such as virginity), the coat was an evidence of royalty. Robert Deffinbaugh, *Genesis: From Paradise to Patriarchs*. Lesson 37: Jacob, Joseph, Jealousy, and a Journey to Egypt: Genesis 36:1-37:26 (www.bible.org, 1997), 3-4.

¹² Bruce Goettsche, *The Hated Brother* (Genesis 37): <http://www.unionchurch.com/archive/102499.html>.

¹³ Steven J. Cole, *If God is Sovereign, Why am I in the Pits?* (Genesis 37:1-36), 6-7.

¹⁴ Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, 598-99.

¹⁵ Bill Crowder, *Joseph: Overcoming Life’s Challenges* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1998: Radio Bible Class), 6.

¹⁶ Waltke, *Genesis*, 501.

¹⁷ Walton notes, “A curious feature of the second dream (37:9-10) is the symbolic presence of his mother and all eleven brothers. After all, his mother died giving birth to the last brother. The inclusion of his parents is of significance here, because the dream does not just suggest that Joseph will be first among his brothers (in which case it would be similar to the patriarchal blessings found in 9:26 and 27:29). It suggests Joseph’s eventual prominence in the ancestral line, superseding even his parents in significance. This justifies the inclusion of family members living or dead. Another option is that, since Joseph was less than ten when his mother died, Rachel’s handmaid, Bilhah, has been a surrogate mother to Joseph and Benjamin, and the dream refers to her.

John H. Walton, *Genesis: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 664. Waltke, *Genesis*, 501, prefers this latter interpretation.

¹⁸ Davis notes, “Although the text records Joseph’s brothers bowing down to him (cf. 43:26), there is no record in the text of either Jacob or any of his wives (Leah or Rachel) or concubines (Zilpah or Bilhah) literally bowing down to Joseph. Thus, one of several options must be considered relative to the dream and its fulfillment: 1. The dream does not come from the Lord—there is no mention of the name of the Lord in this text—and thus does not need to come true. 2. The dream does come from the Lord, but is not accurate—such a view, of course, has significant ramifications regarding the character of God. 3. The dream does come true, but the author of the text neglects to record anything regarding the bowing down to Joseph of Jacob and of one or more of his wives or concubines. 4. The nature of biblical dreams is such that only figurative fulfillment (rather than literal fulfillment) is required, which is to say, that, in regard to Joseph’s second dream, all that must someday take place is for Joseph to become a ruler over his family. Barry C. Davis, *Genesis* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Biblical Seminary unpublished class Notes, 2003).

¹⁹ Ronald F. Youngblood, *The Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 247.

²⁰ Deffinbaugh, “Jacob, Joseph, Jealousy, and a Journey to Egypt,” 5-6.

²¹ Bob Hallman, *When Dreams Turn Into Nightmares* (Genesis 37:1-36):

http://www3.calvarychapel.com/kauai/teachings/genesis_pdf/gen_37_notes.pdf, 4; Goettsche, *The Hated Brother*.

²² Paul Borgman, *Genesis: The Story We Haven’t Heard* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 180.

²³ Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, 606.

²⁴ The Hebrew word that is translated to “wandering” is generally used of someone who is lost or straying from right path. This same word describes Hagar’s wandering in 21:14. Walton, *Genesis*, 664.

²⁵ Walton, *Genesis*, 690; Waltke, *Genesis*, 502.

²⁶ Waltke, *Genesis*, 502.

²⁷ Bill T. Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 146.

²⁸ Woodrow Kroll, “When Deceivers Are Deceived,” *Back to the Bible Radio*:

<http://www.backtothebible.org/radio/printer.htm/24975>.

²⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 355.

³⁰ Constable, *Notes on Genesis*, 233.

³¹ Kroll, “When Deceivers Are Deceived.”