

## Genesis 37:3-8, 17b-22, 26-34; 50:15-21

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

### Genesis 37:3-8

<sup>3</sup> Now **Israel** loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves. <sup>4</sup> But when his brothers saw that *their father loved him more than all his brothers*, **they hated him**, and could not speak peaceably to him.

<sup>5</sup> Once Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, **they hated him** even more. <sup>6</sup> He said to them, "Listen to this dream that I dreamed. <sup>7</sup> There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright; then your sheaves gathered around it, and bowed down to my sheaf." <sup>8</sup> His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to have dominion over us?" So **they hated him** even more because of his dreams and his words.

### Genesis 37:17-22

[One day Israel sent Joseph to catch up with his brothers watching the flocks in the fields.] <sup>17</sup> So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. <sup>18</sup> They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. <sup>19</sup> They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. <sup>20</sup> Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams." <sup>21</sup> But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." <sup>22</sup> Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father.

### Genesis 37:26-34

<sup>26</sup> Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? <sup>27</sup> Come, 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 agreed. <sup>28</sup> When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the **ISHMAELITES** for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

<sup>29</sup> When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, **he tore his clothes**. <sup>30</sup> He returned to his

This story of Joseph finishes out the book of Genesis (beginnings). It relates how the descendants of Abraham end up in Egypt as slaves; setting up for the story of the Exodus: the definitive revelation of the God of the Bible in the First Testament.

**Israel** : The three patriarchs (and their wives – don't forget the ladies!) are the trunk from which grows the tree of Israel: Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob (who becomes Israel) and Leah (one of his wives). Jacob was named by his mother Rebekah at his birth. His name means "the supplanter" because when he was born he was holding on to Esau's heel, as if attempting to overtake him. (Genesis 25: 24-26). Later Jacob wrestles with God, demanding God's blessing in the contest of strength. God changes his name to Israel "he who struggles/wrestles with God" in Genesis 35:10 In the following books of the First Testament Israel (the nation, descended from Jacob/Israel goes through many hardships and even persecution and yet through out all of these hardships; Israel seems to "prevail" by virtue of coming back to God or crying out to God (He who prevails with God). The testimonies of Genesis point to these truths about life, identity and how God moves in the world, interacting with us.

*their father loved him more than all his brothers*, **they hated him**,: throughout the stories of the Bible we encounter people that actually aren't that different than us. You could say that Jacob was a worst-case scenario father, who had dysfunctional relationships since his youth as a momma's boy who tried to steal his older brother's inheritance through trickery, to this point when we see what his blatant favoritism among his children leads to greater dysfunction and destruction, and paradoxically eventually to their salvation in a time of famine. שָׂנֵא  
Sane in Hebrew, means "to hate" associated with notions of revulsion, enmity, to turn against, it's more of an intense feeling/position than a passing feeling.

**ISHMAELITES** : the descendant of Ishmael, the half-brother of Isaac, born of Abraham's union with his wife's servant Hagar (Genesis 16). Historical records tell us that they lived throughout Palestine and the Middle East.

**tore his garments**:: this was a common cultural expression of great grief, mourning and horror; similar to what we express when we say that one falls uncontrollably to the ground sobbing. In 37:29 it points to the concern of Reuben who out of love for his father anticipates the father's grief. But obviously he didn't love his brother enough to protect him. In 37:34 the expression points to the utter devastation that Israel feels and communicates at the news of the loss of his favorite son.

brothers, and said, “The boy is gone; and I, where can I turn?”<sup>31</sup> Then they took Joseph’s robe, slaughtered a goat, and dipped the robe in the blood.<sup>32</sup> They had the long robe with sleeves taken to their father, and they said, “This we have found; see now whether it is your son’s robe or not.”<sup>33</sup> He recognized it, and said, “It is my son’s robe! A wild animal has devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces.”<sup>34</sup> Then Jacob **tore his garments**, and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

*Genesis 50:15-21*

<sup>15</sup> Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph’s brothers said, “What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?”<sup>16</sup> So they approached Joseph, saying, “Your father gave this instruction before he died,<sup>17</sup> ‘Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.’ Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father.” Joseph wept when they spoke to him.<sup>18</sup> Then his brothers also wept, **fell down before him**, and said, “We are here as your slaves.”<sup>19</sup> But Joseph said to them, “**DO NOT BE AFRAID!** Am I in the place of God?<sup>20</sup> Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today.<sup>21</sup> So **HAVE NO FEAR**; I myself will provide for you and your little ones.” In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

#### **Matthew 6:25-34**

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[Jesus taught saying,]<sup>25</sup> “Therefore I tell you, do not **worry** about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?<sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?<sup>27</sup> And can any of you by **worrying** add a single hour to your span of life?<sup>28</sup> And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin,<sup>29</sup> yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.<sup>30</sup> But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?<sup>31</sup> Therefore do not **worry**, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’<sup>32</sup> For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.<sup>33</sup> But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

<sup>34</sup> “So do not **worry** about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring **worries** of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

**Genesis 50.** Between Genesis 37 and this chapter Joseph has been sold into slavery in Egypt where he is a faithful servant to his owners, but encounters problems because of his good looks, fierce honesty, and authenticity. Imprisoned by false accusation, he uses the gifts God has given him for foresight and dream interpretation, gaining both the attention and eventually the favor of co-prisoners, the warden and eventually the Pharaoh. Joseph is vindicated and eventually charged with preparations for all of Egypt in anticipation of a great famine. Once that calamity arrives, many nations and tribes come looking for food, among those foreign refugees are the brothers of Joseph who arrive in supplication but don’t recognize their now elevated brother who they thought dead. Joseph plays with them, maybe out of vengeance?; and then seeks out to save them all and bring them to a new home: his.

**fell down before him:** this physical stance is one of respect, veneration and supplication. It expresses both their reverence for Joseph as leader, and also their confession of sin and evil-doing as they recognize that Joseph has loved them when they harbored no love for him.

**HAVE NO FEAR ::** this is the typical greeting used throughout the Gospel and Hebrew Scriptures by angels or messengers. It invokes the steadfast love, unshakeable presence and transformative wisdom of God. *“You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off”; do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand. - Isaiah 41:9-10*

**worry:** μεριμνάω (merimnaō) in Greek is an old verb for worry and anxiety – literally, to be divided, distracted. It is in opposition to notions of wholeness, a disturbing division or going to pieces which is opposed to what God wants and intends.

#### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. Love is at the root of Joseph’s story of radical reversal of fortune. He is both the most loved and hated in his family. Why? How does he choose love over bitterness, hatred and vengeance?
2. Jesus teaches a way of love based in unity and wholeness. If worry is the division of our person and feelings, our love; how is Jesus calling us to love and be love-ers present in our world?