

Genesis chapter thirty-seven marks the beginning of an important change within the book of Genesis. While the last few chapters of Genesis have centered on Jacob and God's role in formulating his character, our attention will now turn to Jacob's son, Joseph, going forward. In fact, Genesis devotes twelve of its last fourteen chapters to a detailed account of Joseph's life. That means his life story will comprise nearly one-fourth of this book.

Joseph lived from about 1905 BC to approximately 1815 BC. He was Jacob's eleventh son and he was the first son born to his favorite wife, Rachel. Joseph [entered the world](#) near the close of Jacob's labor agreement with Laban, and he has grown to become a young man of seventeen years old as our narrative begins.

One commentator prepares us for our look at Joseph's fascinating life...

*"He was loved and hated, favored and abused, tempted and trusted, exalted and abased. Yet at no point in the one hundred and ten year life of Joseph did he ever seem to get his eyes off God or cease to trust him. Adversity did not harden his character. Prosperity did not ruin him. He was the same in private as in public. He was a truly great man."* (1)

***"Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. This is the history of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father."***

***Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors. 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" (Genesis 37:1-4).***

So, much like his brothers before him, Joseph became a shepherd. Unfortunately for Joseph, the first hint of trouble starts near the beginning of this chapter: ***"Joseph... was tending the flocks with his brothers... and he brought their father a bad report about them" (Genesis 37:2 NIV).***

So what had they done to generate that negative report? Perhaps Joseph's brothers had acted irresponsibly, or perhaps they had been mistreating the family's livestock. It's also possible that Joseph's brothers had adopted a disrespectful attitude toward their father, Jacob, given what we'll discover later in this chapter. Or it may be that Joseph simply assumed the role of an annoying little brother and said something that caused them trouble.

While there may be some question about the content of Joseph's report, it clearly led to friction among these brothers. However, their father, Jacob (also known as Israel), had a very different opinion of Joseph...

***"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" (Genesis 37:3 NIV).***

For many, Joseph's enduring legacy involves his association with the robe (or coat) mentioned here in verse three. Depending on the translation, this robe is variously described as, ***"a brightly colored coat" (TLB)***, ***"a tunic of many colors" (NKJV)***, ***"a varicolored tunic" (NASU)***, ***"a coat of many colors" (ASV)***, or ***"a [distinctive] long tunic with sleeves" (AMP).***

Unfortunately, that robe will eventually become a major flash point in Joseph's relationship with his brothers. But why would this single piece of clothing lead to the shocking events that will follow in this chapter? To address that question, it's important to recognize a critical aspect of Joseph's relationship with his brothers: Joseph's coat was not the primary issue; *it was what that coat represented.*

(1) James Montgomery Boice, quoted in Enduring Word. (2025, April 11). *Enduring Word Bible Commentary Genesis Chapter 37.* <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/genesis-37/>

For instance, Genesis 37:3 explains why Jacob crafted that coat for his son: “***Jacob loved Joseph more than all his other sons***” (GNB). That coat served as a clear and undeniable symbol of Jacob’s favoritism towards Joseph. It thus served as an unspoken reminder to Joseph’s brothers that their father loved *him* more than he loved *them*.

Jacob’s attitude toward Joseph likely stemmed from the fact that Joseph was born to Jacob in his old age. However, Joseph was also the first-born son of his wife Rachel, the only woman he ever truly loved. In fact, Joseph probably meant even more to Jacob since Rachel [had earlier passed away](#).

However, Jacob’s experience should have alerted him to the potential harm that might arise if he demonstrated such favoritism among his sons. For [example](#), Jacob’s twin brother, Esau was the favorite of his father Isaac, while Jacob was the favorite of his mother, Rebekah. Those family dynamics eventually led to trouble, and Jacob repeated that same destructive behavior pattern in the lives of his sons.

The most striking and undeniable evidence of that favoritism came in the form of this multi-colored tunic. Unlike the short, sleeveless tunic that characterized a typical laborer of that era, it appears that Jacob gave Joseph a coat that expressed the qualities of privilege, status, and honor. That played a significant role in shaping his brothers’ attitude towards him.

***“When his brothers saw that their father loved Joseph more than he loved them, they hated their brother so much that they would not speak to him in a friendly manner” (Genesis 37:4 GNB).***

Even though these events took place many thousands of years ago, we can still see these negative characteristics at work in modern-day society. The New Testament book of James thus offers a timely reminder...

***“But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice” (James 3:14-16).***

Before we continue with this account of Joseph’s life, we should pause to reflect upon these inter-family relationships. First, we can say that Jacob’s blatant display of favoritism toward Joseph was wholly inappropriate. It also generated a sense of resentment among his family members. Given those circumstances, it’s easy to understand the negative response from Jacob’s other sons.

However, Jacob’s attitude towards Joseph wasn’t Joseph’s fault, and their lack of civility towards him was wrong as well. While Joseph’s brothers had no control over their father’s actions, they *did* have control over their response- and the way they responded to this situation was wrong.

Nevertheless, Joseph made some questionable decisions as well. One such decision caused Joseph’s relationship with his brothers to deteriorate even further...

***“Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more. So he said to them, “Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf.”***

***And his brothers said to him, “Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?” So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words” (Genesis 37:5-8).***

One lesson we can take from Joseph's experience is that it may be unwise to discuss everything we know. For instance, Joseph could have kept quiet about this dream to see if anything further might come of it. Instead, he chose to tell his brothers something that was guaranteed to infuriate them.

This should not be interpreted to mean that we should remain silent in the face of activities that are illegal, immoral, blatantly unethical, or potentially life-threatening. But it does mean that we should exercise discretion and consider the potential effect of our information in the lives of others before we share it.

In addition to Joseph's example here in the book of Genesis, the Old Testament book of Proverbs has much to say regarding this subject...

***"It's stupid to say bad things about your neighbors. If you are sensible, you will keep quiet"***  
***(Proverbs 11:12 CEV).***

***"Smart people keep quiet about what they know, but stupid people advertise their ignorance"***  
***(Proverbs 12:23 GNB).***

***"Whoever controls his mouth protects his own life. Whoever has a big mouth comes to ruin"***  
***(Proverbs 13:3 GW).***

So it seems that Joseph gave little thought to the way the news of this dream might impact the other members of his family. Unfortunately for Joseph, he decided to do that very thing again...

***"Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, 'Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me.'***

***So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?" And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.***  
***(Genesis 37:9-11).***

Given his age, it's possible that Joseph's youth and inexperience led him to make the questionable decision to share these dreams with his family. Unfortunately, this represents a typical oversight that any young adult might make at that stage of life.

One commentator offers the following insight regarding that decision...

***"Joseph dreamed of his preferment, but he did not dream of his imprisonment. Thus many young people, when setting out in the world, think of nothing but prosperity and pleasure, and never dream of trouble."*** <sup>(1)</sup>

Joseph dreamed of the great things that awaited him, but those dreams did not include the challenges that would accompany them. As we'll see, there will be many challenges ahead for Joseph before those dreams became a reality. The same will likely be true of us as well. The Biblical book of Ecclesiastes discusses that balance in the context of youth...

***"It is a wonderful thing to be alive! If a person lives to be very old, let him rejoice in every day of life, but let him also remember that eternity is far longer and that everything down here is futile in comparison.***

***Young man, it's wonderful to be young! Enjoy every minute of it! Do all you want to; take in everything, but realize that you must account to God for everything you do. So banish grief and pain, but remember that youth, with a whole life before it, can make serious mistakes"*** ***(Ecclesiastes 11:7-10 TLB).***

Thus, we should remember that big dreams often bring big challenges, and it pays to be ready for both.

With these things in mind, let's take a closer look at Joseph's dreams...

***"...Listen to this dream I had: 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."***

***"...Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. 'Listen,' he said, 'I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me'" (Genesis 37:6-7, 9 NIV).***

Contemporary audiences may find it difficult to appreciate the ancient imagery within these dreams. For instance, the Old Testament process of harvesting grain typically involved teams of laborers who moved through fields of wheat, barley, or other cereal crops to cut the standing grain. Those laborers were followed by a second group who collected the resulting stalks and bundled them into sheaves for transport. These sheaves were then taken to the threshing area to extract the grain.

Joseph's second dream involved the sun, moon, and eleven stars that bowed to him. We'll examine this dream at greater length shortly. But for now, we can say that the act of bowing down is not normative behavior for inanimate objects like sheaves or celestial bodies.

Thus, it was clear that a symbolic element was present within these dreams. That reality was not lost upon the members of Jacob's family...

***"...His brothers asked, 'Do you really think you are going to be king and rule over us?'" (Genesis 37:8 CEV).***

The act of bowing down before a person or object implies submission to a superior power. So these dreams foreshadowed Joseph's ascendance to a position of authority; or at least that's how his family interpreted them.

We should also note the appearance of grain stalks in one of Joseph's dreams, a detail that will later play a crucial role in his relationship with his brothers. In any event, Joseph's brothers responded with an expression of clear displeasure...

***"So they hated him even more because of his dreams and because of what he said about them" (Genesis 37:8 GNT).***

Joseph's brothers could have dismissed these dreams as two laughable fantasies concocted by their irritating little brother. But they didn't. Instead, their hatred for him grew in intensity. That response suggests that Joseph displayed real leadership potential- and his brothers resented the clear implication that he might eventually rule over them.

Joseph's second dream contained some highly symbolic elements as well. In this instance, the sun, moon, and eleven stars stood for Joseph's father, mother, and brothers. The act of bowing down also established Joseph's position of authority over his parents and siblings in this celestial family portrait.

Considering his brothers' negative reaction to his first dream, Joseph might have been wise to keep any further dreams to himself. Unfortunately, it seems that Joseph was so engrossed in the personal significance of his dreams that he failed to consider their impact on others, including his father...

***"He also told the dream to his father, and his father scolded him: 'What kind of a dream is that? Do you think that your mother, your brothers, and I are going to come and bow down to you?'" (Genesis 37:10 GNB).***

Given the fact that Joseph's mother Rachel had [earlier perished](#) while giving birth to his younger brother Benjamin, what did Jacob mean in referring to his mother?

Well, it's possible that Jacob was simply highlighting the absurdity of the idea that Joseph's entire family might eventually bow to him. Or perhaps Jacob was thinking of his wife, Leah. As Joseph's aunt, she may have taken on the role of a "stepmother" in light of Rachel's passing.

Either way, Jacob found Joseph's second dream to be just as ludicrous as his brothers. However, there was an additional element that was present within the response of Joseph's brothers...

***"And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind" (Genesis 37:11).***

This brings us to the underlying issue in this division between Joseph and his brothers. Joseph's brothers clearly resented his role within their family, especially considering his position as one of the youngest members of their clan. That sense of resentment became the spark that ignited their envious attitude toward him.

However, Jacob responded in a different manner: ***"...his father kept in mind what Joseph said" (NET).*** In other words, Joseph's father wondered if there might be something more to these dreams.

In contrast to his sons, Jacob [knew from his own experience](#) that God might choose to communicate with people in this manner. And as we'll see, Jacob was right to consider the possibility that this was more than just a dream.

***"Then his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, 'Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.' So he said to him, 'Here I am.'***

***Then he said to him, 'Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me.' So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem" (Genesis 37:12-14).***

Shechem was approximately fifty miles (80 km) from Jacob's location during that time. Since Jacob had earlier [purchased some property](#) in that area, he may have sent his sons to put that land to use. But a journey to Shechem might take two or three days, and Jacob was understandably concerned for their well-being.

Shechem was also [the site](#) of a massacre that was earlier perpetrated by two of Jacob's sons. Anyone with a grudge to bear in that area might thus view their arrival as an opportunity to exact revenge. That may also explain why Jacob sent Joseph on this reconnaissance mission.

Nevertheless, Jacob probably should have considered this decision more carefully. For instance, Jacob was surely aware of the animosity his sons harbored for Joseph. Yet he still decided to send Joseph, a seventeen-year-old youth, by himself on this lengthy journey anyway.

Jacob probably didn't make the best choice in this situation. Unfortunately, that single, ill-fated decision will eventually lead to many years of pain and regret.

***"...When Joseph arrived at Shechem, a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, 'What are you looking for?' He replied, 'I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?'"***

***They have moved on from here,' the man answered. 'I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan" (Genesis 37:14-17 NIV).***

Dothan was located approximately fifteen to twenty miles (24-32 km) from Shechem, so Joseph departed from that area to find his brothers. But what Joseph didn't know was that his approach did not go unnoticed...

***“Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. Then they said to one another, ‘Look, this dreamer is coming! Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, ‘Some wild beast has devoured him.’ We shall see what will become of his dreams!’” (Genesis 37:18-20).***

Joseph’s [coat of many colors](#) must have stood out like a multi-hued beacon, because his brothers clearly noted his approach long before he arrived. And since Joseph’s brothers saw him coming from a distance, they had ample time to formulate a plan to eliminate him: ***“Come on now, let’s kill him and throw his body into one of the dry wells. We can say that a wild animal killed him. Then we will see what becomes of his dreams” (GNB).***

So Joseph’s arrival presented his brothers with an opportunity to unleash their hatred, anger, jealousy, and envy. Fortunately, one family member elected to demonstrate some common sense...

***“But Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, ‘Let us not kill him.’ And Reuben said to them, ‘Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him’--that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father” (Genesis 37:21-22).***

Reuben’s plan would allow his brothers to express their anger towards Joseph, but also provide him with an opportunity to return later and spare his life.

As the eldest son, Reuben held a position of authority that was second only to his father’s. But why didn’t Reuben act more forcefully to save Joseph when he simply could have overruled this decision to kill him? A look at the relationship between Reuben and two of his brothers may offer an answer.

As mentioned previously, Reuben’s family included two men (Simeon and Levi) who had once executed the entire male population of a city. It’s possible that Reuben was unwilling to oppose two individuals who were capable of something like that.

So Reuben’s alternate plan would achieve their goal, but allow him to avoid a direct confrontation with his brothers. This was a compelling proposition from their perspective, for it would help prolong Joseph’s suffering while allowing them to evade direct responsibility for his death.

And so, everyone decided to follow his suggestion...

***“So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe — the richly ornamented robe he was wearing — and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it” (Genesis 37:23-24 NIV).***

Joseph’s brothers could have simply tossed him into this cistern and left him for dead. However, there was a certain matter to address first: ***“...they stripped him of his special robe with long sleeves” (GW).*** So before anything else transpired, the first thing that had to go was that coat. Joseph’s multicolored coat, a clear indicator of his father’s preferential treatment, had become the focus of his brothers’ bitter resentment. That’s why it had to be the first thing to go.

So Joseph had now been left to die at the bottom of a water-less well, a condition that would have led to his demise in a very short period. An average human being can live for approximately three minutes without air, a few days without water, or about three weeks without food. At a daytime temperature of ninety degrees Fahrenheit (32 C), Joseph might survive for little more than a week in those conditions. This is the kind of death his brothers sought for him.

***“And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt” (Genesis 37:25).***



So Joseph's brothers enjoyed a pleasant lunch while leaving him to starve to death. But here's something to remember for later: the next time these men sit down to a meal with Joseph in their vicinity, the circumstances will be very, very different.

But while Joseph's brothers seemed content to let him perish, someone came up with another idea...

***“So Judah said to his brothers, 'What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh.'***

***And his brothers listened. Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt” (Genesis 37:26-28).***

This was the *perfect* solution for Joseph's brothers. First, it allowed them to rid themselves of Joseph. It also allowed them to escape the guilt of killing him or leaving him to die. Finally, it eliminated the possibility that Joseph might somehow escape after they departed. If that happened, Joseph would surely tell their father about what they had done, thus leading to further trouble.

In addition, these traders were willing to pay money for Joseph, someone they were planning to kill, anyway. From a business standpoint, it made perfect sense, or so it seemed.

***“When the Midianite merchants came by, Joseph's brothers took him out of the well, and for twenty pieces of silver they sold him to the Ishmaelites who took him to Egypt” (Genesis 37:28 CEV).***

It seems natural to question why these traders were called “Ishmaelites” and “Midianites” in Genesis 37:28. The likely answer is that people used those names interchangeably during that time.

The term “Ishmaelite” identified the nomadic desert tribes that descended from Abraham's son, Ishmael. The “Midianites” were a specific people group from the land of Midian, a region that lay east of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. So Joseph's brothers apparently referred to these traders in general and explicit terms.

As these merchants approached, Joseph's brothers pulled him from the well where he was imprisoned. While Joseph certainly must have been relieved at the knowledge that he was going to escape a long, slow death at the bottom of an empty well, that relief was short-lived. Unfortunately, he quickly came to the realization that the only reason they pulled him out was so they could sell him into slavery.

The standard price to purchase a slave in those days was thirty pieces (or “shekels”) of silver. While [Exodus 21:32](#) set the standard price for a slave at thirty shekels, Joseph was sold for a discounted rate of twenty pieces of silver. There are two likely reasons for this.

First, Joseph's brothers were probably uninterested in holding out for a better price in exchange for someone they had been planning to kill, anyway. From that perspective, any amount they could obtain for Joseph was better than killing him for nothing.

Next, we should remember that these merchants were professional businessmen who had to consider their profit margin when it came time to sell Joseph to someone else. Those factors help explain why Joseph's brothers sold him at a discounted rate.

So the deal was made, and the merchant caravan departed for the next stop on their route. But we're about to find that one of Joseph's brothers was greatly displeased with that decision...

***“Then Reuben returned to the pit, and indeed Joseph was not in the pit; and he tore his clothes. And he returned to his brothers and said, 'The lad is no more; and I, where shall I go?'"***  
***(Genesis 37:29-30).***

It appears that Reuben was absent when his brothers decided to sell Joseph to this group of traveling merchants. So why did he react so negatively while the rest of his brothers agreed with the decision to sell Joseph as a slave? The answer to that question becomes clearer when we consider Reuben's position within the family hierarchy.

As the eldest son, his father Jacob would hold him most accountable for any misfortune that might befall Joseph. However, there was a way for Reuben to escape responsibility and avoid telling the truth about what they had done- *if* he could establish a good “cover story” to explain Joseph's disappearance.

But what kind of story might be convincing enough to explain Joseph's sudden absence? Well, that comes next...

***“Then they got Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood” (Genesis 37:31 NIV).***

The decision to sell Joseph into slavery led to a chain reaction of lies and deceit that ended with a plan to deceive their father into believing that Joseph had perished. The first step in that plan began with the creation of some “evidence” to support their cover story. That's what the goat was for.

Of course, anyone who is familiar with the events of Jacob's life might notice that his sons were embarking on a familiar path. For instance, Jacob was once involved in a plan to deceive his father [in a similar manner](#). That scheme required him to kill a goat and use it to mislead his father into the belief that he was really someone else. Now his sons were using that same approach to deceive him as well.

So Joseph's brothers' added an additional color to his multicolored coat. That color was red, courtesy of the blood that supposedly came from his death...

***“They took the ornamented robe back to their father and said, ‘We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe!’” (Genesis 37:32 NIV).***

It took approximately three days to complete this return trip to Jacob's home. This meant that Jacob's sons had ample time to contemplate their plan to explain Joseph's disappearance.

With this in mind, let's take a closer look at the way Joseph's brothers explained the fact that he was gone. First, they took Joseph's robe to Jacob and said, “*We found this...*” We should note that they never mentioned where they found Joseph's robe, or how they found it. They also neglected to mention the fact that the only reason they had it was because they took it from him.

Next, they said, “*Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe.*” This was a heartless thing to say to their father. After all, Jacob crafted that robe for Joseph- he would have certainly known that it once belonged to Joseph. The act of asking their father to examine the blood stained, handmade clothing that he created for his favorite son demonstrates just how merciless, ruthless, and cruel Joseph's brothers were.

So Jacob was now in possession of the “evidence.” But instead of questioning his sons to ensure they were telling the truth, Jacob immediately assumed the worst...

***“He recognized it and said, ‘It is my son's robe! A wild animal has eaten him! Joseph must have been torn to pieces!’ Then, to show his grief, Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth around his waist, and mourned for his son a long time” (Genesis 37:33-34 GW).***

So Jacob fell right into the deceptive trap that was set for him. In fact, Jacob's sons didn't have to say anything other than, “*We found this robe. Look it over carefully and see if it is your son's robe*” (NCV). Once Jacob saw the blood on Joseph's robe, he immediately assumed that a wild animal had killed his favorite son.



Jacob showed his remorse over Joseph's apparent death in two ways. First, he adorned himself in something called "sackcloth." Sackcloth was a coarse, rough, bag-like material with a texture and appearance that lived up to its name.

Sackcloth was typically constructed from camel or goat hair in the Biblical era. The act of wearing sackcloth symbolized deep emotional distress and indifference to worldly comforts, especially during a time of emotional sorrow.

We're also told that Jacob tore his clothes in despair over Joseph's supposed death. This action was recognized as a culturally appropriate expression of deep personal distress or emotional pain.

***"And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, 'For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning.' Thus his father wept for him. (Genesis 37:35).***

So Jacob went into deep mourning over Joseph's loss. But before we conclude our look at this chapter, we should note the fact that something is very wrong with this scene. For instance, notice that all Jacob's children attempted to comfort him. That presumably included those family members who knew the truth about Joseph's disappearance. If Jacob's sons really wanted to comfort him, the first thing they could have done was tell him the truth regarding their actions.

Even though Joseph's brothers hated him ([Genesis 37:8](#)), they clearly held a deep sense of animosity for their father as well. Their willingness to let Jacob grieve so deeply over a known lie suggests an extraordinary degree of malice towards him.

So this portion of Genesis thirty-seven ends with Jacob's heart-breaking expression of sorrow: "...***in mourning will I go down to the grave to my son.***" In other words, Jacob was fully convinced that he would never see Joseph again for the rest of his life.

However, the final verse of this chapter closes with a seemingly insignificant detail...

***"Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard" (Genesis 37:36 NIV).***

This bit of information will assume greater importance when we pick up Joseph's story again in Genesis chapter thirty-nine.