

# OpenTheo

## Genesis 35 - 37



### Genesis - Steve Gregg

In Steve Gregg's exposition of Genesis 35-37, we see Jacob's return to the Promised Land and the introduction of Joseph as the main character. Jacob fulfills a promise to God at Bethel and purifies his household of foreign gods. Reuben's controversial act of sleeping with his father's concubine puts his inheritance at risk. Genesis 36 lists the descendants of Esau in detail, including the Horites whom Esau conquered. The inclusion of family records indicates historical information rather than mythology. Joseph is favored by Jacob and his dreams of ruling over his brothers make them hate him even more. Eventually, Joseph is sold into slavery by his own brothers but saved from death by Reuben.

### Transcript

Okay, we're now looking at Genesis 35. Very soon we will be focusing on the story of Joseph. Now that Jacob has returned to the Promised Land, there's not too much more that needs to be said about him.

In fact, this chapter, chapter 35, is pretty much the last incident in the life of Jacob apart from the Joseph story. Because when we get to chapter 36, the chapter after this one, it's really just a catalog of Esau's descendants. Not a very essential chapter for us to focus on very deeply.

But then after that we get into the story of Joseph in chapter 37. And while that is interrupted briefly in chapter 38 with the record of how Judah's family got started, the rest of Genesis is essentially going to be about Joseph. So chapter 35, not a real long chapter, is the final chapter that's really just about Jacob.

And God said to Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother. Now this apparently is the first time of his returning there. And when he had been there before, he had set up that stone, remember, and said this will be your house and I'm going to give you a tent and all that.

It would appear that Jacob has not fulfilled that part. He had said you will be my God. That was the first thing he said.

And that has been agreed upon back in chapter 33, verse 20. He made an altar in Shechem and called it God, the God of Israel. So he has at that point fulfilled that promise that he would make God his God.

But there still is the matter of probably the offering of a tent of all to God. So he's got all his livestock and he's going to offer these to God. Now, how are these offered to God? They were sacrificed.

Now, if the man had thousands of head of sheep and goats and so forth, as appears to be the case, I mean, he offered all kinds of bulls and camels and so forth to Esau, which was probably just a pittance compared to his whole flock. Then this would have been quite a barbecue. I mean, we're talking about probably many hundreds, if not over a thousand animals that would be sacrificed on this occasion.

So this is not just a small little let's go to church there today, kind of an outing, but he's got to take all his blocks in his family to Bethel, where he's going to have this protracted sacrificial service. I said barbecue, because that's what really was. Unless he's going to offer all these animals as whole burnt offerings, then usually a portion of the animal would be sacrificed on the altar and then the rest would be cooked and eaten by the participants.

So it would be in most cases would be a great feast as well. God is essentially saying to Jacob, there's one bit of unfinished business that you promised me and you need to go back to Bethel to conduct that business. And Jacob said to his household and to all who are with him, put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves and change your garments.

Now, put away the foreign gods that are among you. May indicate that he had discovered the terrapin among Rachel's things and knew now that she had taken them. But beyond that, remember, they had the women and the children of Shechem who had been taken as captives and who knows how many other servants now were in the household.

He was a wealthy man. He was now no longer running for his life. He had built a house and booths in one place.

He had acquired, obviously, female servants. Through the incident, Shechem and he may have had plenty of he may have purchased a lot of male servants, too. But these would be, of course, not all necessarily worshippers of Yahweh.

Jacob's family was the only family, as far as we know, that were really worshippers of Yahweh. So all these servants would have brought their religious fetishes and so forth with them into the family. And he said, OK, we got a clean house and get rid of all of these things.

We're going to get rid of all your gods and we're going to go worship Yahweh. He says you need to purify yourselves and change your garments. This is also what people did later in the law when they were made unclean, they had to be unclean till sundown or maybe for a week.

And after that, they would wash their garments and wash their bodies and then they'd be purified from their period of uncleanness. So even though the law had not yet been given, these were almost instinctive ways that people practiced a ritual purification. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel and I will make an altar there to God who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone.

So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hands and all their earrings which were in their ears and Jacob hid them under the tarabinth tree which was by Shechem. That would be quite a buried treasure in all likelihood. The earrings would be most likely made of gold or silver.

And if there were a lot of servants, a lot of people surrendering them, that would be interesting to find that tree today. I wonder if archaeologists have discovered that yet. It'd be quite a cache of loot.

So then they journeyed and the terror of God was upon the cities that were all around them and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. This is a reference to what Jacob had feared at the end of the previous chapter. When his two sons had done that atrocity in Shechem, Jacob had expressed fear that the other nations around would then come and retaliate.

And yet that didn't happen. But again, it was not because of anything other than God's intervention. God put the fear of God upon the cities that were around so that Jacob was able to travel without being attacked.

So Jacob came to Luz, that is Bethel, which is in the land of Canaan and all the people who were with him. And he built an altar there and called the place El Bethel. Of course, God, the God of Bethel.

God of the house of God. Because Bethel means house of God. Because there God appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother.

Now, Deborah, Rebecca's nurse, died and she was buried below Bethel under the terabith tree. So the name of it was called Alon Bakuth. Alon Bakuth means the terabith tree of weeping because of the mourning over this nurse.

Now, we have never heard anything about Deborah before this nurse. But what's more peculiar is that she happens to be there. She is Rebecca's nurse.

How did Rebecca's nurse come to be with this group of people? Remember, Jacob had

fled 20 years earlier. Now, probably more than 20 years. He's been back in the land for a while.

We don't know how long. But some 20 years earlier, he had fled, but he didn't take a nurse with him. This was his mother's nurse.

And he lived apparently, you know, he was away from the family for 20 years. Now, we don't know why Deborah, his mother's nurse, came to live with him. It seems very probable that his mother had died and therefore the nurse's services were not needed for her anymore.

And she now probably was a household servant and wouldn't just go job hunting for another job. She now had to find some other duties in the household. And it may be that needing a nurse for Jacob's wives or his children was seen to be the best way for her to be employed so that she had come to be a part of his household.

Now, whether she came during those 20 years when he was in Padnerum, after all, there's no reason why he couldn't have communicated with his home during those 20 years. He could have sent messages and so forth. It's possible that she may have come from his father's home to live with him and his family in Padnerum when his wives began having children and when a nurse's services might have been considered valuable.

Or it's possible that now that he's come back to the Promised Land, he has made a visit, but it's unrecorded. He has made a visit back to the Hold Homestead and found that his mother had died and his mother's nurse was now somewhat available. And so he may have had her join his family at that time.

In any case, it's just interesting that she's mentioned as if we know something about her and we don't. We don't know how she happened to be with the family, but she was not Jacob's or Rachel's or Leah's nurse. She was Rebecca's nurse.

And since she's no longer with Rebecca, it may be that Rebecca had died and no longer could use a nurse. In any case, it would be very strange indeed for Jacob to have come back to the land of Canaan and settled in Sukkoth and then Shechem and not make any effort to go see his own father. Who was still living at the time, I believe, and therefore probably Jacob had gone back to the homestead and maybe had picked up Deborah at that time to be part of his family.

Then God appeared to Jacob again and came to as he came from Padnerum and blessed him. And God said to him, your name is Jacob. Your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name.

So he called his name Israel. This is just a repeat, of course, reaffirmation. And God said to him, I am God Almighty, be fruitful and multiply a nation and company of nations shall proceed from you and kings shall come from your body.

Which, of course, is true. Many Arab kings and many Jewish kings have come. I shouldn't say Arab kings.

They came from Abraham and Isaac, but not necessarily from Jacob. But many Jewish kings came from his body. And.

So the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, I give to you and to your descendants after you, I give this land. Then God went up from him in the place where he talked with him so that God went up from him means that God had come down to him. Probably this was a theophany again.

Probably God appeared to him in like a human form. How strange that must be from our point of view. I mean, it wouldn't be too strange for the patriarchs because God did that from time to time.

They must have gotten used to the fact that God sometimes appears that way. But to think that you could go someplace and God would appear in a human form and talk with you like this is pretty amazing. But it continued to happen even later generations for a while.

So God went up from there and Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, a pillar of stone. And he poured a drink offering on it and he poured oil upon it. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel.

Now, everything here is just a repeat of things that happened earlier, but they were reaffirmed on this occasion. Then they journeyed from Bethel and when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath, which is another name for Bethlehem. Rachel travailed in childbirth and she had hard labor.

Now, it came to pass when she was in hard labor that the midwife said to her, do not fear, you will have this son also. So I wonder if the child was breech because the midwife knew apparently before it was fully born that it was a male. And maybe that's what made the labor so hard.

And so it was as her soul was departing, for she died, that she called his name Ben-Oni, but his father called him Benjamin. Ben-Oni means son of my sorrow. And Benjamin means son of my right hand.

Son of my right hand would mean my, you know, my favorite, my second in command, really, to be at the right hand of a king or the right hand of somebody would be to be their second in command. So this seemed to indicate that perhaps because this was the dying gift that Rachel gave him, that he was going to give special preferential treatment to Benjamin. Although later it does appear that he's giving that treatment to Joseph, who's the older son of Rachel.

So he may have intended at this time to do that for Benjamin. But then maybe as time went by, he tended to prefer Joseph more. So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath, that is, Bethlehem.

And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day. Now, there is a marked spot near Bethlehem today, which is referred to as Rachel's grave, but most scholars believe it's not authentic. And what's interesting is she did not get buried in Machpelah.

Since bodies would rot rather quickly in the sun and there was no way to preserve them after death, it was typical to try to bury the body on the same day of its death. What makes it amazing is that when Abraham died, Ishmael came in from wherever he lived and managed to be present at the burial along with Isaac. And we'll find when Isaac dies that Esau and Jacob are both present, although Esau is living in Mount Seir.

That would mean that information about his father's death would have to have gotten to him and he would have been able to travel back like within a day at the most in order to attend the funeral. Unless to say that they buried him together would mean that there was some memorial afterwards after the burial, after the actual burial, I don't know. And it may be also that these men were known to be dying for some little time before they passed, and then the sons who lived further away came to be present at the death.

But in this case, Rachel died unexpectedly. There was no prior notice and they were not really at Machpelah, not close enough, apparently, to just bury her there with the family. And so she was buried away from the family.

Though Leah later was buried at Machpelah. Then Israel journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the Tower of Edom. And it happened when Israel dwelt in the land that Reuben went in and lay with Bilhah, his father's concubine, and Israel heard about it.

Now, here we have this chapter is kind of just little snippets of various things related to Jacob's story before he passes from the center stage and we begin to focus on Joseph. And it's almost like a little anecdotes. You know, Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin.

Reuben does this, commits an incestuous act with one of his father's concubines. And it says Israel heard about it. Now, why would he do that? Why would he sleep with his stepmom, as it were? I mean, she was not his mother.

Leah was his mother, but the concubine was like one of his dad's wives, too. So like a stepmom to him. And why would he do that? It's not really clear why he did that.

Now, if Reuben had not already been the oldest, of course, even then it might make sense. Absalom slept with his father's wives or concubines because that was a symbolic gesture of seizing the inheritance from his father. And that's generally understood that the son or whoever or the usurper who slept with the previous king's wives pretty much

was declaring himself to be in the place of that king and was in his place.

It's possible that Reuben's act was an act of seizing power. And it may even have been a result of Benjamin having been born and being named son in my right hand, perhaps Reuben, who was the firstborn. And had always thought he would be the heir, began to suspect that maybe Benjamin is intended for that position, given the name son of my right hand.

And maybe he thought he could secure his position more by doing an act like this, which, of course, if that's what he thought, it certainly backfired on him because it was this very action that caused him to be deprived of the birthright. But he may have been thinking like the pagans around him, that this is how you get this is how you seize power in the family or in a kingdom. Jacob's family was something like a kingdom, although they were wandering around living in tents.

They were huge, apparently, and apparently huge enough to rival many of the city states around them. So Jacob's position in the area was sort of like one of these, probably one of these city kings. And so Reuben may have been thinking in those terms that that pagans were thinking of seizing the throne, as it were, being the next in line.

It's hard to know otherwise why he would do so. First of all, Bilhah would be a lot older than him. So it's not as if he'd just be burning with lust for this woman.

After all, they had all the women of Shechem that had been taken captives and they would be available for marriage or for concubines. So, I mean, it's not like it's not like there were no girls around. He had lots of opportunities.

So why would he do this controversial thing? It was quite a risky thing, but he must have felt like by taking this risk, he was gaining some advantage for himself. I don't think it was merely an act of lust and that, you know, he'd always been lusting after this older woman in the family. It no doubt was somehow seen as a political maneuver on his part.

And it would be, in a sense, it would make sense in the context where Benjamin has just been born and that Jacob has deliberately given him a name that may suggest that Benjamin will usurp Reuben's position. It's hard, we just don't know what was going on in Reuben's head, but it certainly backfired on him because while he had been in a position to be the firstborn, he was excluded from the birthright because of this action. Now, the sons of Jacob were 12.

We can give all 12 now that Benjamin has been included. The sons of Leah were Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon and Levi and Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. The sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin.

The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, were Dan and Naphtali. The sons of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant, were Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born

to him in Paddan Aram.

Now, Benjamin was not born in Paddan Aram. Benjamin was born after he came back from Paddan Aram, but obviously that story has just been told so the author knows that this is going to be seen. Benjamin would be an exception to the general statement.

The family was built and 11 of the 12 sons were born in Paddan Aram while he was out of the land. We've just been told that Benjamin was born in the land, so this should not be thought of as a contradiction so much as that the reader is supposed to realize that Benjamin is mentioned because he's part of the family. But he obviously is an exception to the general statement about them being born in Paddan Aram.

Then Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre or Kirjath Arba, that is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned. Now, the days of Isaac were 180 years, so Isaac breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people being old and full of days and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him. So again, Esau rejoined Jacob at this point.

As I said, it's possible that Esau had realized that his father's death was near and therefore had been hanging around in the vicinity so that he'd be present. But the fact that Esau would join Jacob in this indicates that there was reconciliation between Esau and Jacob, just as we have seen apparent reconciliation between Ishmael and Isaac in the burial of their father. Now, as in the case of Abraham's death and a number of other cases that we read of, the death of Isaac is here mentioned not in its chronological place.

Isaac actually lived well into the life of Joseph, even into the time that Joseph was sold into slavery. And so we see here again the pattern of storytelling that once the author has finished talking about one line of story and intends to introduce a different one altogether, he'll sometimes just dismiss the characters that are no longer going to have a role in the future story, even if they live into that time. They're living into it is not significant to the story and therefore at some point you've got to mention their death.

He's not going to interrupt the story of Joseph at the proper time to tell us when Isaac died. So he tells us about it now. A chapter 36, I think, can be skipped over without very much comment because it is essentially a list of names.

Names of Esau's offspring. Not that we won't read any part of it, but it's Esau's offspring. First of all, they're not all that significant for a couple of reasons.

One is they're not the they're not the chosen line. But even more than that, they don't even exist anymore. The Edomites are extinct.

So you're not going to run into any of them anywhere. The Edomites continued as a separate people for centuries alongside Israel, mostly in a hostile state of mind toward Israel. Mostly Israel and Edom were not friendly toward each other.



And sometimes the Edomites were downright nasty. For example, when the Babylonians conquered Judah, the Edomites rejoiced and came and helped plunder the city. When their brother nation, Jacob, had been taken into captivity, the Edomites took advantage of it.

And that was kind of how the Edomites were remembered in later history by Israel. But during the time of the Maccabees. Or shortly thereafter, under the Hasmonean dynasty, after the Maccabean Revolt, this is an intertestamental period, just a couple hundred years before Christ, actually.

The Jews brought the Edomites under their control and kind of incorporated them in their nation. And the Edomites then, or those who had Edomite ancestry, were called the Idumeans after that, Idumeans. And the Herod family in the time of Christ were really the last known family of Idumeans.

The Edomites were not extinct at the time of Christ, but they soon afterwards became extinct with the death of the Herod family. Herod the Great was half Idumean and half Jewish. His sons, of course, were quarter Idumean, and with their passing, we really don't have an Idumean or Edomite race anymore.

Somebody asked recently whether some of the Arabs today could be Edomites, but that would certainly be contrary to what almost all scholars believe. Because historians, as I say, would suggest that Edomites have been extinct since actually the first century and don't exist anymore. But we do have some information about them, some of which is actually problematic.

It says, now this is the genealogy of Esau, who is Edom. Esau took his wives from the daughters of Canaan, Ada, the daughter of Elam, the Hittite, and Ahol-Abama, the daughter of Aena, the daughter of Zibion, the Hivite, and Bazanath, Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebijah. Now, these are the wives.

It's not entirely clear. It looks like there are four wives mentioned here. There are four wives that Esau mentioned earlier.

He first married two Canaanite women and then two Ishmaelite women, we're told. However, the names are not necessarily the same here, and that has given some people problems. I'm going to just suggest that either some of the women were known by more than one name, which is not an uncommon phenomenon in the scripture, or that maybe some of the wives of Esau died childless, and he replaced them with other wives by other names.

We really don't have enough information to know which of these solutions solves the problem, but either one is possible, and so it does not really, it's not worthy of detaining us too much. But we find that among his descendants, there was, for example, in verse

4, Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau. Now, Eliphaz was the name of one of Job's friends, but it wasn't this Eliphaz.

It was a later generation of Eliphaz's, but at least it may have been a family name, and therefore, Eliphaz, who was Job's friend, might have been descended from this Eliphaz, at least could have been Edomite. There are reasons to associate Job with the Edomites in some ways. For one thing, Teman is also in this list, and one of Job's friends was a Temanite.

It says, Now Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, and Basmath bore Ruah, and a whole of Bama bore Jeush, Jealum, and Korah. These were the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan. So before he went to Mount Seir, he had these sons.

Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the persons of his household, his cattle and his animals, and all his goods which he had gained in the land of Canaan, and went to the country away from the presence of his brother Jacob. For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together, and the land where they were strangers could not support them because of their livestock. Sounds like a lot like Abram and Lot.

So Esau dwelt in Mount Seir, and we're reminded that Esau is Edom, which we were also told in verse 1. And this is the genealogy of Esau, the father of the Edomites in Mount Seir. These were the names of Esau's sons. Eliphaz, the son of Adah, the wife of Esau, and Ruah, the son of Basmath, the wife of Esau.

And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, of whom came the Temanites, including one of Job's great friends, Omar, Zepho, Gatham, and Canaz. Now Timnah was the concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son, and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These were the sons of Adah, Esau's wife.

Now Amalek is worthy of note because the Amalekites eventually became a tribe separate in their own right and became a real nuisance. They were the first people to attack Israel when they came out of Egypt in the days of Moses. And God pronounced a curse on the Amalekites, eventually that they would have to be annihilated, wiped out every last man and woman and child.

And that was an order that God gave King Saul at a later time to go wipe out the Amalekites, which he did not really do fully. And there were Amalekites later. The man who brought news of Saul's death to David was Amalekite.

And not all the Amalekites were bad, but they were a bad race that gave Israel trouble. Now it says, verse 13, these were the sons of Rul, Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizah. These were the sons of Basmath, Esau's wife.

These were the sons of Aholobamah, Esau's wife, the daughter of Aenah, the daughter of

Zibion, and she bore to Esau, Jeush, Jealam, and Korah, not the same Korah that was later in the time of Moses. These were the chiefs of the sons of Esau, the sons of Elphaz, the firstborn son of Esau, were Chief Teman, Chief Omar, Chief Zepho, Chief Kenez. Now these sons became chiefs of apparently villages or clans, just as Jacob's sons became the heads of tribes.

There was Chief Korah. We have these names given. I don't suppose we have to read them all again.

There's a lot of same names. Verse 17. These were the sons of Rul, Esau's son, that it gives their names again.

We've read their names previously, and so also through verse 19, then verse 20. These were the sons of Seir, the Horite, who inhabited the land. Now these are not the descendants of Esau, but these are the people that Esau conquered, the Horites and not Seir.

And so we have the names of these folks who are, of course, extinct now and whose names are not worthy of the time it takes to read them, I would think. At least I'm not going to count them as worthy of that. Now verse 31.

Now these were the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the children of Israel. This statement before any king reigned over the children of Israel has thought to be evidence that Moses could not have written the book of Genesis, because when Moses lived, there still were no kings reigning over Israel. In fact, for a good long time after Moses.

There was Moses, then there was Joshua, then there were the judges for 400 years. And it wasn't until after a period of judges that any kings came to Israel. So it seems like it would be an anachronism for Moses to be thought to be writing this statement.

These kings were in Edom before there were any kings in Israel. As if from the writer's perspective, kings in Israel had become a development that really existed at the time. Now there's a couple of solutions that are not difficult at all.

One is that Moses doesn't have to have written every word in order for these to be books of Moses, that they are books of Moses is due to the fact that Moses is their substantial author and the main authority behind them, but that they may have been edited or in some ways in time since and that a later editor might have mentioned just as an explanatory note, these kings in Edom were before there were kings in Israel and that editor may have lived much later during the Jewish monarchy does not impinge upon the likelihood of Moses being the author of the work in general. There's also another suggestion that has been made, although I don't think it's as likely to be true, but it's not impossible, and that is that we know in the book of Deuteronomy. Moses did anticipate a

time when Israel would have kings in Deuteronomy, 17, verse 14.

Moses said, When you come to the land which Yahweh your God is giving you and possess it and dwell in it and say, I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me. Now, he doesn't say he approves of this, but he knows that that's what they're going to do. You shall surely then set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses.

If you're going to insist on a king, make sure God gets to choose the king, and then he goes on and gives laws related to whatever king that they may choose. In other words, Moses anticipates the time will come when Israel has kings, and he might very well have written these words in Genesis that no kings yet reigned in Israel at the time when these kings of Edom existed. Anyway, we have this list of Edomite kings.

In Genesis 36, 32, Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, and the name of his city was Dinheba. And when Bela died, Jobab the son of Zerah, of Bozrah, reigned in his place. Now, some scholars have said that Jobab means one who howls loudly, and it has been suggested that he may be Jobab.

That might be a longer form of the name of Job. I'm not going to insist on it. I don't know how likely it is, but it is an interesting thing that Job is otherwise at least by some of his friends associated with the Edomite line.

Job might not have been an Edomite, but he had Edomite friends. He is said to have been in his day the greatest and most powerful and wealthiest of the men of the east. Well, Edom was east of Israel, southeast, and if Jobab was Job, then he was actually a king and would explain why he was the greatest and most wealthy and so forth.

So there is a possibility, and if Jobab means one who howls loudly, it may well be that that became his name after the events written in the book of Job, sort of as a reminiscence of the trials that he had been through and how he had howled and so forth and cried during his trials. It may be a long shot, but it's not extremely long. Then when Jobab died, Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his place, and when Husham died, Hedad, the son of Dedad, who attacked Midian in the field of Moab, reigned in his place, and the name of his city was Abbas.

When Hedad died, Samia, or Samla, excuse me, of Masraqah reigned in his place, and when Samla died, Saul, not the famous Saul, of Rehoboth by the river, reigned in his place, and when Saul died, Baal-ha-nan, the son of Akbor, reigned in his place, verse 39, and when Baal-ha-nan, the son of Akbor, died, Hedad reigned in his place, and the name of his city was Powel. His wife's name was Mehetabal, the daughter of Matrid, the daughter of Mezahab. Now by the way, these names are extremely insignificant to any later generations that are not in touch with Edomites, and therefore, the presence of this detail can only be explained by the fact that it's true.

Someone writing a mythological history would not burden his pages with the names of people like this who are not significant in any way to the story, you know, the names of the Horites who were displaced by Edom and so forth. It makes, frankly, rather dull reading, but it is, it's a record. It's a record of these families that someone kept, and therefore, it is strong evidence that this is historical information, not mythology, or else why would they include all these details? Verse 40 says, and these were the names of the chiefs of Esau according to their families and their places by their names, Chief Timna, Chief Alba, Chief Jetheth, Chief Aholibama, named after one of the wives, I guess, Chief Ella, Chief Pinnan, Chief Kinez, Chief Timan, Chief Mibzar, Chief Magdiel, and Chief Irim.

These were the chiefs of Edom according to their habitations in the land of their possession. Esau was the father of the Edomites, which is about the third time in this chapter we're reminded of that. And so we come to Joseph, whose story is introduced in chapter 37, but interrupted in chapter 38, but then continued in chapter 39 and occupies the rest of the book of Genesis.

It says, Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger in the land of Canaan. This is the genealogy of Jacob, or that is the Toledot. This is the generations of Jacob.

Introduction to another section. Joseph being 17 years old, was feeding the flocks 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. So he was viewed by these half-brothers as a tattletale. Now it's not likely that Joseph lied about them.

He brought a bad report about them, probably because they were bad men. What were they doing? Were they, you know, molesting the local shepherd women? Were they abusing the flocks? What were they doing? We don't know. I'm not sure how much trouble you can get into when you're out on the hillside watching sheep, but they were doing things that Joseph thought the father would like to know about.

And so he tattled on them. And that did not endear him to these brothers. Now Israel, that is Jacob, 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. Now, Benjamin was even more the son of his old age. But it would appear that Joseph had become the favorite of Jacob, perhaps because he was the oldest son of the only wife that Jacob ever wanted or loved.

And therefore, in Jacob's mind, he might have been his first born. Also, we know that Joseph was a man of unusual integrity and competence. We don't know that thus far, but

we know it from the story later.

He had great integrity. He got him thrown in jail because he would not compromise his integrity. And he had great competence, which caused him even as a slave, be recognized as a superior individual and given charge over all the responsibilities of Potiphar's house and then later over all the responsibilities of the prison house and then later over all the responsibilities of Egypt.

So these. Superior traits in the man, Joseph, may well have been manifested by the time he was 17, and in addition to being Rachel's first born, he may have had certainly his good character and his giftedness that commended him to his father. In any case, his father.

Well, we can say this. We don't know much about Benjamin's character. Almost nothing is said of him, but as far as the 10 older brothers of Joseph, they were all crooks.

They were all liars. They were all cruel. And Joseph wasn't.

So it's not too hard to see why Joseph would be favored by his father over these scoundrels. And so. A tunic of many colors was made for another very expensive garment, for one thing, because colors, they come easy to us.

But in those days, dyes for cloth had to be pounded out of flowers and other herbal things that you find. And out in the desert, there'd be a limited number of these. And even if there were plenty of them, it was a lot of work to create dye for cloth.

And then to have many colors would probably mean that it was sewn together from strips of various cloth that each had been dyed different colors. And therefore, it was quite a piece of work. It'd be expensive.

It'd be rare. And more than that, it was probably symbolic. Most scholars believe that this tunic was intended to be a way of Jacob favoring Joseph with a royal honor, suggesting that by giving him this special robe, this special cloak, that he was saying Jacob is going to be the one who rules this family.

And that is apparently what his brothers were afraid of, too. And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him. So every time they came across him in the house or in the field, they just said snide remarks and sarcastic remarks and tried to get him into an argument.

They couldn't speak peaceably to him. So Joseph was kind of surrounded by older brothers who picked on him all the time. And Joseph dreamed 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 dream. There were there, we were binding sheaves in the field and behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf. And his brother 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.

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 his mind.

In other words, his father realized there may be something to this. He may have had a sense that there was a special hand of God on Joseph because of Joseph's competence and good looks and all things. Joseph, by the way, we were told later, was a very good looking young man.

And that is something that was often taken by parents as a as an opener, a token of God's favor. We know that when Moses was born, it says that his parents hid him because he was a goodly looking child. Apparently, they they had some prescience about him that he was going to be significant because he was good looking.

And, you know, it'd be a little difficult to put together a true biblical theology of good looks, but there really is such a thing. Certainly, the Bible says that beauty is deceitful, that charm is deceitful and beauty is vain. But a woman who fears the Lord shall be praised.

So the Bible makes it very clear that there's a lot of things more important than being attractive physically. At the same time, it was often the case that it is commented that this person or that person were handsome or were beautiful or something. And it was not just sort of a shallow and carnal observation made on the part of the historian.

It was usually to indicate something of their importance. Rebecca, we were told, was a beautiful woman to look upon and Rachel, too. And they became the wives of important men.

And in some case, like in Rachel's case, she didn't have much more to commend her than her her her beauty. But the Bible often mentions a man's or a woman's physical attractiveness as if that is somehow one of the one of the things that sets him apart from others and or her apart from others as someone of significance. But the Bible is also very clear that there are many things far more important than that.

And that it says in First Peter, Chapter three and verse six, that a woman's adorning

should not be the outward adorning of the plating of hair and putting on apparel, but the that of the of the hidden man of the heart of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God at great price. It's not verse six. It's verse three or four.

We see here, it's first Peter three, verse three and four. So the Bible acknowledges. You know that when people are good looking, it's it's there's often some kind of significance attributed to it, but it doesn't mean that they're good people or that the things most important about them are the looks.

But I say this because Joseph was good looking. He was competent. He was a man of character.

And Jacob, in hearing about these dreams, could easily suspect that maybe Joseph will rise above his brothers. He was a little taken aback by the suggestion that Jacob and Joseph's mother would not. Especially since Joseph's mother was dead.

And I think Jacob says that in order to show how unlikely it seems to him that that would happen, but he's not completely convinced that it won't. The brothers hated him and envied him, but the father kept the matter in his mind. Now, God gave Joseph these dreams quite early on, a long time before their fulfillment.

We know that they were fulfilled later in history. But why did God give him those dreams at this time? It may be because he was tending to get discouraged. He's surrounded by older brothers who are always putting him down, always arguing with him, always trying to pick a fight with him.

And he may have felt like the Lone Ranger. You know, he might have felt like an isolated man at the mercy of his brothers. And in order to encourage him, God may have given a vision of the future.

Well, your brothers, these guys who are picking on you, these guys who have all the power now over you, you're going to be having power over them someday. They'll be bowing down to you someday. That could have been meant as an encouragement to him, but perhaps not something he should have told them about.

In his telling the brothers and his father about these dreams, some people feel that Joseph is being boastful and others think he's just being naive and doesn't realize how it's going to affect them. We don't really know. He may have felt that this was a message from God that he should communicate to them, although it did make him look good and then bad.

That may have been not even a factor in his thinking. He may have felt like, I just received a prophetic dream from the Lord. I mean, as they're sitting around at breakfast saying, you know, I had this funny dream last night.



I think it may have been from God. Guess what happened? You know, obviously the dreams placed Joseph in a position above the rest of his family. And we know they were prophetic because that's exactly the position he eventually had.

But he may not have been thinking of it as a boastful thing. They just thought it was a fascinating thing, something that may have been of interest to everybody that God had shown him anyway. Then his brothers went to feed their father's flocks 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.

Now, a certain man found him and there he was wandering in the field and the man asked him, What are you seeking? So he said, I'm seeking my brothers. Please tell me where they're feeding their flocks. And the man said, They have departed from here, for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan.

So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan. Now, when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. And 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 and we shall see what will become of his dream. But Reuben heard it and he delivered him from 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. Now, let's talk about these verses, first of all. Jacob was doing a very stupid thing here.

He knew his sons hated Joseph. He knew some of them were capable of murder because two of them had murdered a whole city just out of indignation. These were murderous, evil men.

They hated Joseph and Jacob sends Joseph to bring back news of how the brothers are doing. Couldn't Jacob have sent a servant to get the same information? It makes no sense. Unless Jacob was trying to rub this in the brothers faces.

After all, he sent Joseph out there wearing the coat of many colors. I mean, he didn't even have him wearing ordinary, you know, traveling clothes. He had him wearing his royal robe as he went out to visit his brothers.

And obviously, he was going to be totally at their mercy. I suppose Jacob underestimated

the murderous nature of these boys or thought that even if a couple of them were murderers, that the others would not permit them to do him any harm. But it would appear that Jacob, by sending Joseph instead of some servant to get the same information and sending him wearing that robe, was putting Joseph very much in harm's way.

But apparently, Jacob may have had some kind of a hostility toward those older brothers and wanted to just kind of irk them, not thinking they'd go as far as they might. It just doesn't make very much sense. Now, if Jacob thought that some of the brothers would not let the others hurt Joseph, he was probably correct in that Reuben apparently was cut of different cloth from them.

He did eventually approve to selling Joseph into slavery. But that might... I take it back. No, he did not.

He was not present when they did that. He approved of putting him in a pit. He said, let's not kill him, let's put him in a pit.

But it says that Reuben intended to come back and deliver Joseph from the pit. So, he saw that Joseph was in mortal danger just coming within proximity of the brothers and he spared him, he gave him like as it were a lease on life by saying, well, let's put him in this pit instead, as it were, maybe he can just starve to death in there. But Reuben intended to come back later and pull him out and take him home to his father.

So, Reuben, the oldest son was not as hostile, even though Reuben, the first one, was the one most threatened by the father's interest in promoting Joseph. Because it would be Reuben whose place Joseph would be supplanting if Joseph would receive the birthright. But Reuben was a man not quite as evil as his brothers apparently.

And yet he was not able to fully deliver him. It would appear that they put Joseph in the pit according to Reuben's instructions. And then Reuben, for some reason, was away from the rest at the time the caravan came and they sold Joseph when Reuben was not there.

And then Reuben returned and found Joseph gone and was distraught. That's what we're going to find. So, it would appear that maybe Jacob felt that Reuben was the kind of man who would protect Joseph if he was in any danger.

But still sending Joseph out there was kind of a crazy thing. Joseph was not even a good, you know, tracker. He was just wandering around lost in the field somewhere.

And he found some guys, he said, you know, I'm looking for my brothers. And the guy said, well, I heard them say they're going to Dauphin. So, he went there and found them.

It's like, it's not even like Joseph was able to easily find his brothers. He's not really an

outdoorsman in all likelihood. And going on this journey was certainly a dangerous journey for him.

And his father should have known better. So, it came to pass when Joseph had come to his brothers that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colors that was on him. Then they took him and cast him into a pit.

And the pit was empty. There was no water in it. Now, these pits are fairly common out there.

They are formerly wells that have dried up. They're pits that were dug deep enough to get some water, but not real deep. But they were kind of, they had a narrow mouth and they opened wider at the bottom.

Which means, of course, that the walls were sloping toward the opening and could not be climbed. If a person was put in one of these pits, he was there for life or for death. He would not get out without help.

Jeremiah was thrown into one of these pits too, but someone helped him out. And these were often used for temporary jails, as it were, during wartime and so forth. If you got prisoners of war, you just stick them in one of these pits and they'd be secure there until you could come back for them.

And so they had, there was a pit like that nearby and they put Joseph in that. 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, myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt.

These spices were probably used for embalming purposes mostly. And the Egyptians were great embalmers. You know, they made mummies out of their dead.

Most cultures did not embalm, but these spices would be used for that purpose. And so these merchants were coming from their land where they grew these things, or probably obtained them, and then they sold them in Egypt. Now, they're called Ishmaelites here.

They're also called Midianites in the story. They are alternately called Ishmaelites and Midianites. And although Midian and Ishmael were different people with different family lines, yet apparently the word Ishmaelite at this time had become much more of a broad umbrella term for various Arab nations, including Midianites, so they could be called by both names.

And now apparently Reuben had slipped away for some reason. Maybe he had to attend to flocks on the other, you know, the flocks may have been spread quite broadly across the field since there have been thousands of them. He apparently was away from the other brothers when these negotiations took place.

It says, 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. Now, Judah seemed to have a bit of a conscience, too.

I mean, he didn't want to kill Joseph and we could say it's just because he wanted the money of selling him. But he did argue, well, he is our brother after all. To kill him would be pretty, a pretty evil thing to do to your own brother.

He did reason with his brothers on the basis of money. Why should we won't get any profit if we kill him? But we can get a profit out of him if we sell him. He knew that that would appeal to his brothers.

But he himself was also moved by the fact that it's wrong to kill your brother. You know, it's also wrong to sell him into slavery. But Judah might have been like Reuben, figured that he if he objected entirely to doing anything to Joseph, that he'd be outnumbered and overpowered by his other brothers.

So he suggested a lesser, a lesser punishment for Joseph than what they were hoping for, and argued that that would make sense and make good business sense for them. Then the Midianite traders passed by. So the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites for 20 shekels of silver.

And they took Joseph to Egypt. This was quite a bargain. A slave usually would sell for 30 pieces of silver.

So the Midianites bought him for 20 because that's wholesale. They wanted to sell him for a profit. And it was only because they got him so cheap that they could be induced to do it.

But there were 10 brothers going to split the profit. So they get a couple of shekels each. Not sure how much a shekel really was at that time.

And they took Joseph to Egypt. Verse 29. Then Reuben returned to the pit.

And indeed, Joseph was not in the pit. And he tore his clothes, which is a Middle Eastern way of showing grief. And he returned to his brothers and said, the lad is no more.

And I, where shall I go? Now, it's not clear whether Reuben knew of this selling of their... They may not have told him about it. All he knew is that the lad is no more. What does that mean? Maybe he assumed the brothers had killed him or whatever.

We don't know whether Reuben on this occasion was told what had happened or whether he remained ignorant of it. Until the time years later when he met Joseph again. But he was not pleased with the disappearance of Joseph because he had hoped to

restore him to his father.

So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats and dipped the tunic in the blood. That was before it was possible to do DNA testing. So could not prove whether this was goat's blood or human blood.

Then they sent the tunic of many colors and they brought it to their father and said, we have found this. Do you know whether it is your son's tunic or not? And he recognized it and said, it is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him.

Without doubt, Joseph is torn to pieces. Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist and mourned for his son many days and certainly would have had a reason to blame himself. For having put his son in harm's way in the first place.

Whether it was a wild beast or his brothers who killed him, you know, sending out their vulnerable. Whether in fact were wild beasts and wild brothers was just a stupid thing to do. And now he's suffered the loss of his son and he can't really blame anyone but himself at this point.

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.

Now, the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an official that is an officer of Pharaoh and a captain of the guard. We're going to get that exact same information repeated in chapter 39, verse one. But there is an interruption in the story in chapter 38 that tells us about Judah's family developing.

One thing we can see is that the hypocrisy of the brothers is such that even when they see their father weeping. And mourning, and they know that they could comfort him. They could say, well, actually, Joseph is not dead.

If we try, we might be able to find him in Egypt in the slave market. You know, we did a really bad thing. But we don't hate to see you grieve like this.

So we're going to do what we can to get him back. Instead, they kept the secret, the ruse, and watched their father grieve and he refused to be comforted. But they tried to comfort him, the hypocrites.

But we take a break now and we come back to talk about Judah's family. And the reason Judah's family is singled out and none of the other brothers' families is, is, of course, because Judah became the ancestor of the Messiah. Which it's interesting that Moses, in writing this, or anyone in the Old Testament writing this, would realize that Judah's family would be significant in that way, other than prophetically.

I mean, if God had not revealed this, then why would anyone single out Judah's family to give the record like this and not the other 11 brothers? But we know that the outcome in the end was that David and the Messiah came from Judah. And therefore, it's good to have this story. This story actually gives us some of the genealogy of Christ.

We'll wait until we come back to talk about that. you