

CHAPTER 37

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS 37

In this chapter begins the history of Joseph, with whom the remaining part of this book is chiefly concerned; and here are related the hatred of his brethren to him, because he brought an ill report of them to his father, and because his father loved him, and which was increased by the dream he dreamed, and told them of, (^{<01570>}Genesis 37:1-11); a visit of his to his brethren in the fields, whom he found after a long search of them, (^{<01572>}Genesis 37:12-17); their conspiracy on sight of him to slay him, but by the advice of Reuben it was agreed to cast him into a pit, which they did, (^{<01578>}Genesis 37:18-24); and after that, at the motion of Judah, sold him to the Ishmaelites, who were going to Egypt, (^{<01575>}Genesis 37:25-28); this being done, Reuben being absent, and not finding Joseph in the pit, was in great distress, (^{<01579>}Genesis 37:29,30); their contrivance to deceive their father, and make him believe that Joseph was destroyed by a wild beast, which on the sight of the coat he credited, and became inconsolable, (^{<01573>}Genesis 37:31-35); and the chapter concludes with the sale of Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, (^{<01576>}Genesis 37:36).

Ver. 1. *And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger,* etc.] And this stands opposed unto, and is distinguished from the case and circumstances of Esau and his posterity, expressed in the preceding chapter, who dwelt in the land of their possession, not as strangers and sojourners, as Jacob and his seed, but as lords and proprietors; and so these words may be introduced and read in connection with the former history; “but Jacob dwelt”, etc. ^{f1631}; and this verse would better conclude the preceding chapter than begin a new one. The Targum of Jonathan paraphrases the words, “and Jacob dwelt quietly”; or peaceably, in tranquillity and safety; his brother Esau being gone from him into another country, he remained where his father lived and died, and in the country that by his blessing belonged to him:

in the land of Canaan, and particularly in Hebron, where Isaac and Abraham before him had dwelt.

Ver. 2. *These [are] the generations of Jacob*, etc.] But no genealogy following, some interpret this of events or of things which befell Jacob, and his family, particularly with respect to his son Joseph, as Aben Ezra and Ben Melech take the sense of the word to be from (~~3701~~ Proverbs 27:1); but the words may refer to what goes before in the latter end of chapter 35, where an account is given of Jacob's sons, with regard to which it is here said, "these are the generations of Jacob"; the whole of chapter 36, which contains the genealogy of Esau, being a parenthesis, or at least an interruption of the above account, the history of Jacob and his posterity is here reassumed and carried on:

Joseph [being] seventeen years old, was feeding his flock with his brethren; or "in the flock"^{f1632}; he was with them in the pastures, where the flocks were fed, not so much to assist them in it, as to be taught by them how to feed, they being older than he:

and the lad [was] with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: his secondary wives or concubines, called his wives, because their children shared in the inheritance. These sons of theirs were Dan and Naphtali, the sons of Bilhah; and Gad and Asher, the sons of Zilpah; with these Jacob rather chose Joseph should be, than with the sons of Leah; and especially that he should be with the sons of Bilhah, who was the handmaid of Rachel, Joseph's mother, and she being dead, it might be thought that Bilhah and her sons would have the most respect for Joseph:

and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report; for not being able to bear with their evil deeds, and yet not having authority enough, being a junior, to reprove, correct, and check them, he reported them to his father: what the things were reported is not said, perhaps their quarrels among themselves, their contempt of Joseph, their neglect of their flocks, etc. Some of the Jewish writers make them to be abominable acts of uncleanness^{f1633}, others eating of the member of a creature alive, particularly the flesh of the tails of lambs while living^{f1634}.

Ver. 3. *Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children*, etc.] He being the firstborn of his beloved Rachel, and a lovely youth, of a beautiful aspect, very promising, prudent and pious: the reason given in the text follows,

because he [was] the son of his old age; being ninety one years of age when he was born; and the youngest children are generally most beloved,

and especially such as are born to their parents when in years. Benjamin indeed was younger than Joseph, and is described in like manner, (⁽⁻⁰⁴⁴⁰⁾Genesis 44:20); and for this reason one would think had the greatest claim to his father's affections; wherefore some give a different sense of this phrase, and render it, the "son" or disciple of "elders", "senators", i.e. a wise and prudent man: and indeed, if being the son of his old age was the reason of his affection, Benjamin had the best claim to it, being the youngest, and born to him when he was still older; and this sense is countenanced by Onkelos, who renders it,

"because he was a wise son to him:"

and so the reason why he loved him more than the rest was, because of his senile wisdom; though a child in years, he was old in wisdom and knowledge. Abendana observes, that it was a custom with old men to take one of their little children to be with them continually, and attend upon them, and minister to them, and lean upon their arm; and such an one was called the son of their old age, because he ministered to them in their old age:

and he made him a coat of [many] colours; that is, had one made for him, which was interwoven with threads of divers colours, or painted, or embroidered with divers figures, or made with different pieces of various colours: according to Jerom ^{f1635}, it was a garment which reached down to the ankles, and was distinguished with great variety by the hands of the artificer, or which had long sleeves reaching to the hands; and so the Jewish writers ^{f1636} say it was called "passim", because it reached to the palms of the hands: this might be an emblem of the various virtues which early appeared in him; or rather of the several graces of the Spirit of God implanted in him, and of the raiment of needlework, the righteousness of Christ, with which he was clothed, (⁽⁻⁹⁵¹⁴⁾Psalm 45:14); and of the various providences which Jacob, under a spirit of prophecy, foresaw he would be attended with.

Ver. 4. *And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren*, etc.] Which they perceived by various things in his behaviour to him, by his words, his looks, his gestures, and particularly by the coat he had made him, which distinguished him from the rest:

they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him; they not only inwardly hated him, but they could not conceal their hatred, but betrayed it

by their speech unto him; they could not speak to him on any occasion, but in a cross, surly, ill natured manner; they could not salute him, or give him the common salutation, Peace be to thee, as Aben Ezra suggests.

Ver. 5. *And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told [it] his brethren,* etc.] As a dream, in the simplicity of his heart; not understanding it, or imagining there was any meaning in it; he told it not with any design to affront them, but as an amusement, and for their diversion, there being something in it odd and ridiculous, as he himself might think:

and they hated him yet the more; not only because he had carried an ill report of them to his father, and because he loved him more than they, but still more because of this dream; the meaning of which they at once understood, though he did not, which yet they supposed he did, and that he told them it in a boasting manner, and to irritate them.

Ver. 6. *And he said unto them, hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed.*] Hear now, so the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, immediately, directly, lest he should forget it, having perhaps dreamt it the night before; though our version expresses more modesty and submission. The dream follows:

Ver. 7. *For, behold, we [were] binding sheaves in the field,* etc.] So it was represented in his mind in a dream, as if it was harvest time, and he and his brethren were at work together in the field binding up sheaves of corn that were reaped, in order to be carried home:

and, lo, my sheaf arose, and stood upright; it seemed to him, that after he had bound and laid it on the ground, that it rose up of itself, and stood erect:

and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf; the sheaves which his brethren bound up, they also stood upright, and all around his sheaf, and bowed unto it; so it appeared to him in his dream. This was a fit emblem of their coming to him into Egypt for corn, and bowing to him, when their sheaves were empty, and his was full. In an ancient book of the Jews ^{f1637} Joseph's sheaf is interpreted of the Messiah, whom they call the son of Ephraim. Joseph no doubt was a type of the true Messiah, and in this of his exaltation and glory, and of that honour given him by all his saints who come to him, and receive from him all the supplies of grace.

Ver. 8. *And his brethren said unto him*, etc.] After he had told his dream, being highly offended with him, understanding the dream, and the meaning of it, better than he did:

shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shall thou indeed have dominion over us? denying that he ever should, and reprovng him for his vanity, in concluding from hence that he would have the dominion over them. So the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, dost thou think, suppose, or imagine that thou shall rule over us? it looks as if by telling us this dream that such a whim and fancy has got into thine head:

and they hated him yet the more for his dreams and for his words; for it seems by this that he had dreamt, and told them more dreams besides this, and they hated him both for them, and for his telling them to them; though Jarchi thinks the phrase, “for his words”, refers to the ill report he gave of them to his father, (^{QEST}Genesis 37:2).

Ver. 9. *And he dreamed yet another dream*, etc.] Relating to the name subject as the former, and, for the confirmation of it, only the emblems are different, and more comprehensive:

and told it his brethren, and said, behold, I have dreamed a dream more; another dream, and which he told, either as not knowing fully the resentment of his brethren at his former dream, or in order to clear himself from any charge of feigning the dream, or having any ill intention in telling it; seeing he had another to the same purpose, and therefore thought fit to acquaint them with it, that they might more seriously consider of it, whether there was not something divine in it, which he himself began to think there was:

and, behold, the sun, and the moon, and the eleven stars, made their obeisance to me: in his dream it seemed to him, either that he was taken up into the starry heaven, and these luminaries bowed unto him, or else that they descended to him on earth, and paid their respects unto him.

Ver. 10. *And he told [it] to his father, and to his brethren*, etc.] After he had told it to his brethren, he told it to his father a second time in their hearing, that he might pass his judgment on it, and give his sense of it before them:

and his father rebuked him; not as being ignorant of the meaning of the dream, for by what follows he had a clear understanding of it, or as if he

thought it was an idle dream, and would never have any accomplishment: but he thought fit, in his great wisdom and prudence, to put on such an air, partly to check young Joseph, lest he should grow proud, and haughty, and insolent upon it, and behave in a disagreeable manner to himself and to his brethren; and partly to conciliate the minds of his brethren to him, which he perceived were exasperated by his dreams:

and said unto him, what [is] this dream that thou hast dreamed? what dost thou take to be the meaning of it? canst thou imagine that it is of God? is it not a mere whim and imagination of thine own wandering brain in thy sleep? why dost thou tell such an idle dream as this, as if there were something divine in it, when it appears the most absurd and irrational?

shall I, thy mother, and thy brethren, indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? whereby it plainly shows he understood the meaning of the dream, though he would not seem to countenance it. By the “sun” he understood himself, the principal and head of the family, the active instrument of the generation of it, the light, life, and support of it; and by the “moon” his wife, the passive instrument of generation, who had the lesser share of rule in the family, yet contributed much to its good and welfare; by whom is meant not Rachel, the real mother of Joseph, who was dead, unless this is observed to show the seeming absurdity of it, from whence the whole might appear ridiculous; but rather Leah, who was now Jacob’s only true wife, and the stepmother of Joseph; or else Bilhah, Rachel’s handmaid, who since her death was a mother to Joseph; and by the eleven “stars” he understood the eleven brethren of Joseph, who were as stars that receive their light from the sun; and in allusion to the twelve constellations in the Zodiac, to which Joseph and his eleven brethren answered. This had its fulfilment, in some measure, when Jacob sent presents to Joseph when governor of Egypt, though unknown to him, and when he and his family went thither, when, no doubt, Jacob showed a civil respect according to his dignity, and in regard to the office he bore: and so his wife, if he then had any, that went with him, and if not personally, yet in her posterity paid a deference to him, as it is certain all his brethren did. Grotius observes from the Oneirocritics or interpreters of dreams, particularly Achmes, that according to the doctrine of the Persians and Egyptians, that if anyone should dream that he rules over the stars, he shall rule over all people.

Ver. 11. *And his brethren envied him*, etc.] Notwithstanding all the precaution Jacob took to prevent it; they suspecting and fearing that these dreams portended the pre-eminence of Joseph over them, or however served to fill his mind with the hopes and expectation of it:

but his father observed the saying; what Joseph had said in relating his dream; he laid it up in his mind and kept it there, often thought of it, and waited to see its accomplishment.

Ver. 12. *And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.*] Very probably some considerable time after the telling of the above dreams; it was usual to remove flocks from place to place for the sake of pasturage; and sometimes at a great distance, as Shechem was from Hebron, where Jacob now dwelt, said ^{f1638} to be about sixty miles; but this is not so much to be marvelled at as the place itself, whither they went, for though Jacob had bought a parcel of a field in this place, (^{0E39}Genesis 33:19); which might be a reason for their going thither to feed their father's flocks in his own field; yet it was the place where they had committed a most outrageous action in destroying all, the males there, and therefore might fear the inhabitants of the neighbouring cities would rise upon them and cut them off.

Ver. 13. *And Israel said unto Joseph*, etc.] After his brethren had been gone some time to Shechem:

do not thy brethren feed [the flock] in Shechem? this question is put, not as ignorant of it, or doubting about it, but to put Joseph in mind of it, and in order to what follows:

come, and I will send thee unto them; which is pretty much he should, considering the length of the way, sixty miles, the dangerous place in which they were feeding their flocks, and especially seeing his brethren envied and hated him; but Jacob might think that by this time things had wore off of their minds; and it is certain he had no suspicion of their hatred rising so high as to attempt his life; and it is plain he had none concerning them, when his coat was brought to him, but believed it was wild beasts that had devoured him:

and he said unto him, here [am I]; showing his readiness to obey his father, and go on this errand, though it was a long journey, and he to go it alone, and his brethren also bore no good will to him.

Ver. 14. *And he said to him, go, I pray thee*, etc.] Or “now”^{f1639}, directly, immediately, which is more agreeable to the authority of a father:

see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; it having been many days, and perhaps months, since he had heard anything of them; and the rather Jacob might be under a concern for them, because of the danger they were exposed to from the neighbouring tribes and nations of the Canaanites, on account of their having some time ago destroyed the Shechemites; so the Targum of Jonathan, paraphrasing on the preceding part, makes Jacob to say,

“I am afraid, lest the Horites should come and smite them, because of their smiting Hamor and Shechem, and the inhabitants of that city; come, and I will send thee, etc.”

and bring me word again; of their welfare, and of the state of their flocks:

so he sent him out of the vale of Hebron: the same with the plains of Mamre near the city of Hebron, which was built on a hill:

and he came to Shechem: after he had travelled sixty miles.

Ver. 15. *And a certain man found him*, etc.] Many of the Jewish writers^{f1640} say, this was an angel, the angel Gabriel, in the likeness of a man; but according to Aben Ezra, it was a traveller he met on the road; but it is more probable, as Schimidt observes, that it was some man at work in the field that came upon him and took notice of him:

and, behold, [he was] wandering in the field; in some field near Shechem, perhaps the same his father Jacob had purchased, and where he expected to have found his brethren, and was looking out for them, going to and fro in search of them; which the labouring man in the field observed:

and the man asked him, saying, what seekest thou? seeing him walking about, and first looking one way, and then another, concluded he was in search of something, either of some man or of some creature, a sheep or an ox that was lost; and therefore put this question to him, with a view to give him what direction and assistance he could.

Ver. 16. *And he said, I seek my brethren*, etc.] Whom, no doubt, he described to the man, and told him who they were, and to whom they belonged; or otherwise the man would have been at a loss to know who he

meant, and what further to say to him, and without which Joseph would never have made the following request to him:

tell me, I pray thee, where they feed [their flocks]; in what part of the country they are, what field they are in, how far to it, and which the way.

Ver. 17. *And the man said, they are departed hence,* etc.] They had been there, in the field where he and Joseph were, and which was probably the field before mentioned; but for good reasons, perhaps for want of pasture, or in order to find better feeding for their cattle, they were gone from thence, from the fields about Shechem:

for I heard them say, let us go to Dothan; this was, as some say, four miles from Shechem, others eight ^{f1641}; according to Brochardus ^{f1642}, it was a plain country between fruitful hills, contiguous to fountains, was pasture ground, and very fit for feeding cattle; and its very name, as Hillerus ^{f1643} notes, signifies grassy, or a place of tender grass: here, afterwards, was a city built, not far from Samaria, (^{<01613>}2 Kings 6:13); about twelve miles to the north of it, as says Jerom ^{f1644}; it was in the tribe of Manasseh, about forty four miles from Jerusalem to the north, and six miles from Tiberias to the west ^{f1645}:

and Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan; which shows that he had a real desire to see them, and know their state and condition, that he might report it to his father; since he might have returned on not finding them at Shechem, that being the place he was sent to, and would have been sufficient to have shown obedience to his father's commands, though perhaps it might not have come up to his full sense and meaning.

Ver. 18. *And when they saw him afar off,* etc.] They knew him as soon as they saw him, by his stature, his gesture or manner of walking, and especially by his coat of various colours he now had on, (^{<01572>}Genesis 37:23);

even before he came near unto them; the distance he was from them when they first spied him is particularly remarked and repeated, not to show the quickness of their sight, but for the sake of what follows; to observe how soon their passions were raised, how intense and prepense their malice, and which put them upon devising ways and means to destroy him, for it follows:

they conspired against him, to slay him; they entered into a consultation, and devised the most crafty methods they could think of to take away his life, and yet conceal the murder.

Ver. 19. *And they said one to another*, etc.] According to the Targum of Jonathan, Simeon and Levi said what follows: nor is it unlikely, since they were hot, passionate, cruel, and bloody minded men, as appears by the affair of Shechem; and perhaps this may be the reason why Joseph afterwards, when governor of Egypt, took Simeon and bound him, (^{<0424>}Genesis 42:24); which was but a just retaliation for his advice to cast him into a pit when slain:

behold, this dreamer cometh; or “master of dreams”^{f1646}; not of the interpretation of them, but of dreaming them; that had them at his command when he pleased, as they jeeringly flouted him; as if he was a framer and contriver of them, and only pretended to them when he had none, or else that he was frequently dreaming and telling his dreams; this they said in a sarcastic way, and, perhaps, as pleased, and rejoicing that such an opportunity offered to take their revenge on him: this shows that it was on the account of his dreams chiefly that they bore such a grudge against him, that this was uppermost on their minds, and was revived at first sight of him, and from whence their malice sprung.

Ver. 20. *Come now therefore, and let us slay him*, etc.] Agree to do it, and actually do it:

and cast him into some pit; or, “one of the pits”^{f1647}, which were near, and were dug for the collection of rainwater, as was usual in those countries where water was scarce:

and we will say, some evil beast hath devoured him; which would seem plausible, since wild beasts were frequent in those parts, as lions and bears, (see ^{<1134>}1 Kings 13:24 ^{<1124>}2 Kings 2:24);

and we shall see what will become of his dreams; who will be the lord then, and reign, and have the dominion, he or we.

Ver. 21. *And Reuben heard [it]*, etc.] Overheard what they said, not being in the consultation; perhaps knowing his temper and disposition to be more mild and gentle, and being the elder brother, might fear he would overrule matters against them, and therefore Simeon and Levi did not choose to have him in the debate; or he might be at some distance and entirely absent

when the consultation was held, and their intention was reported to him by some of them:

and he delivered him out of their hands; from slaying him; that is, he endeavoured to do it by proposing another scheme:

and said, let us not kill him; or let us not smite the soul ^{f1648}; the dear soul, or take away life.

Ver. 22. *And Reuben said unto them, shed no blood*, etc.] Innocent blood, as the Targum of Jonathan; the blood of a man, a brother's blood, one that had not done anything wherefore it should be shed, and which would involve in guilt, and bring vengeance on them: he seems to put them in mind of the original law in (⁰⁰⁰⁶Genesis 9:6);

[but] cast him into this pit that [is] in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him: which might seem to answer the same purpose, namely, by depriving him of his life in another way, by starving him; but this was not Reuben's intention, as appears by the next clause, and by his going to the pit afterwards, as it should seem, with a view to take him out of it privately; this advice he gave,

that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again; safe and sound, in order, as it is thought by many interpreters, to reconcile his father to him, whose bed he had abused.

Ver. 23. *And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren*, etc.] To the very place where they were, and had, in a kind and obliging manner, asked of their welfare, and related their father's concern for them, who had sent him on this errand:

that they stripped, Joseph out of [his] coat; his coat of [many] colours, that [was] on him; according to Jarchi and Aben Ezra, this was not one and the same coat, but divers, and that the sense is, that with his coat of many colours, and besides that, they stripped him of his lower garment, which was next to his skin, his shirt; so that he was quite naked when they cast him into the pit, and this they did as soon as he came up to them, so cruel and hardhearted were they.

Ver. 24. *And they took him, and cast him into a pit*, etc.] Into the same that Reuben pointed to them, whose counsel they gladly took and readily

executed, supposing he meant the same thing they did, starving him to death:

and the pit [was] empty, [there was] no water in it; only serpents and scorpions, as the Targum of Jonathan; and Jarchi adds, this remark, that there was no water in it, seems to be made either to furnish out a reason why Reuben directed to it, that he might be the more easily got out of it, and not be in danger of losing his life at once, or of being drowned in it; or else to show the uncomfortable situation he was in, having not so much as a drop of water to refresh him; (see ^{3891b}Zechariah 9:11). Dothan is said to remain to this day, and the inhabitants of it show the ancient ditch into which Joseph was cast ^{f1649}.

Ver. 25. *And they sat down to eat bread,* etc.] Not at all concerned at what they had done, nor in the least grieved for the affliction of Joseph, and without any pity and compassion for him in his distress, but joyful and glad they had got him into their hands, and like to get rid of him for ever:

and they lifted up their eyes, and looked, after they had eaten their food, or while they were eating it:

and, behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead; a place of merchandise for spices and balm, and such like things after mentioned. The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan call them Arabians; and the Targum of Jerusalem, Saracens; these were the posterity of Ishmael, who came out of Arabia to Gilead, where they took up their merchandise, at least part of it, and were travelling to Egypt with it, and their way thither lay by Dothan; these travelled in companies, now called “caravans”, partly on the account of robbers, and partly by reason of wild beasts, with both which they were sometimes beset in the deserts through which they travelled:

with their camels bearing spicery, and balm, and myrrh; the first word is general according to our version, and others, and signifies various spices, a collection of them; and so Jarchi takes it; but Aquila translates it “storax”; and Bochart ^{f1650}, by various arguments, seems to have proved, that this is particularly intended; though the Targum of Jonathan renders it “wax” ^{f1651}; and so other versions: and “balm” is by some taken to be “rosin”, since there was no balm or balsam in Gilead, on the other side Jordan, nor indeed any in Judea, until it was brought thither from Arabia Felix, in the times of Solomon; and what we render “myrrh”, is in the Hebrew called “lot”, and is by some thought to be the same with “laudanum”: this their merchandise

was carried on camels, very fit for their purpose every way, as they were strong creatures made to carry burdens, and could travel many days without water, which they were sometimes obliged to do in the deserts:

going to carry [it] down to Egypt; where these things grew not, and were much in use, at least some of them, both in medicines, and in embalming dead bodies, much practised in Egypt; an Arabic writer ^{f1652} makes this merchandise to consist of, nuts, turpentine, and oil.

Ver. 26. *And Judah said unto his brethren*, etc.] In sight of the Ishmaelites, a thought came into his mind to get Joseph sold to them;

what profit [is it] if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? it could be no advantage to them even if they could have concealed his blood from men; and if it was discovered, as it would, in all likelihood, by some means or another, then they must be answerable for it; and if not, God would take vengeance on them, from whom they could never conceal it; and therefore it would be most profitable and advantageous to them to sell him, and not destroy him, or take away his life; and to suffer him to lie in the pit and die was the same thing.

Ver. 27. *Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites*, etc.] For a slave, and that will defeat his dream; and as these were going down to Egypt, where they would sell him, he would be far enough from them, and there would be no probability of his ever being lord over them:

and let not our hand be upon him; to take away his life, either by stabbing or starving him:

for he [is] our brother, [and] our flesh; they had all one father, though different mothers, and therefore, as the relation was so near, some sympathy and compassion should be shown; some degree of tenderness at least, and not savageness and cruelty:

and his brethren were content; they agreed to the motion, inasmuch as they supposed it would answer their end as well, which was to prevent his dominion over them.

Ver. 28. *Then there passed by Midianites, merchantmen*, etc.] The same with the Ishmaelites before mentioned, as appears from the latter part of this verse; for as these were near neighbours, so they might join together in merchandise, and travel in company for greater safety, and are sometimes

called the one, and sometimes the other, as well as they might mix together in their habitations and marriages; and are hence called Arabians by the Targums, as before observed, and so by Josephus, which signifies a mixed people:

and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit: not the Midianites, but his brethren:

and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty [pieces] of silver; for twenty shekels, which amounted to twenty five shillings of our money. The Jews ^{f1653} say, they each took two shekels apiece, and bought with them a pair of shoes, according to (³¹⁸⁶Amos 8:6); but there were but nine of them, Reuben was absent:

and they brought Joseph into Egypt; some think these Midianites were different from the Ishmaelites, and that Joseph was sold many times, first to the Midianites, and then by them to the Ishmaelites, and by the latter to Potiphar. Justin ^{f1654}, an Heathen writer, gives an account of this affair in some agreement with this history;

“Joseph (he says) was the youngest of his brethren, whose excellent genius they feared, and took him secretly, and sold him to “foreign merchants”, by whom he was carried into Egypt.”

Ver. 29. *And Reuben returned unto the pit,* etc.] It is very probable he had pretended to go somewhere on business, with an intention to take a circuit, and come to the pit and deliver his brother, and go home with him to his father. The Jews say ^{f1655} he departed from his brethren, and sat down on a certain mountain, that he might descend in the night and take Joseph out of the pit, and accordingly he came down in the night, and found him not. So Josephus ^{f1656} says, it was in the night when Reuben came to the pit, who calling to Joseph, and he not answering, suspected he was killed:

and, behold, Joseph [was] not in the pit; for neither by looking down into it could he see him, nor by calling be answered by him, which made it a clear case to him he was not there:

and he rent his clothes; as a token of distress and anguish of mind, of sorrow and mourning, as was usual in such cases; Jacob afterwards did the same, (⁰³⁷⁴Genesis 37:34).

Ver. 30. *And he returned unto his brethren*, etc.] From the pit, and whom he suspected had took him and killed him, as was their first design, not being with them when they proposed to sell him, and did:

and said, the child [is] not; not in the pit, nor in the land of the living, but is dead, which is sometimes the meaning of the phrase, (^{צב}Jeremiah 31:15); he calls him a child, though seventeen years of age, because the youngest brother but one, and he himself was the eldest, and also because of his tender concern for him:

and I, whither shall I go? to find the child or flee from his father's face, which he could not think of seeing any more; whom he had highly offended already in the case of Bilhah, and now he would be yet more incensed against him for his neglect of Joseph, who, he might have expected, would have taken particular care of him, being the eldest son: he speaks like one in the utmost perplexity, not knowing what to do, what course to steer, being almost distracted and at his wits' end.

Ver. 31. *And they took Joseph's coat*, etc.] After they had told Reuben what they had done with him, who being willing to make the best of things as it was, joined with them in the following scheme: by this it appears, that when they took Joseph out of the pit they did not put his coat on him, but sold him naked, or almost so, to the merchants:

and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; that being, as the Targum of Jonathan and Jarchi observe, most like to human blood.

Ver. 32. *And they sent the coat of [many] colours*, etc.] Which was what they dipped in the blood of the kid; this they sent to Jacob in such a condition, by the hand of some messenger; the Targum of Jonathan says, the sons of Zilpah and Bilhah; but more probably some of their servants, whom they instructed what to say to their father when they presented it to him; not caring to appear in person at first, lest they be thrown into such commotion and confusion at their father's distress, as might tend to lead on to a discovery of the whole affair:

and they brought [it] to their father, and said, this we have found; that is, the messengers carried to the father of Joseph's brethren, who were sent with it, and taught to say, that they found it in some field in this condition, but found no man near it, only that by itself, and suspected it might be the coat of his son Joseph, if he had sent him out in it:

know now whether it [be] thy son's coat or no; look upon it, see if any marks can be observed in it, by which it may with any certainty be known whether it his or not.

Ver. 33. *And he knew [it], and said, [it is] my son's coat*, etc.] He took it, and examined it, and was soon convinced, and well assured it was his son's coat; read the words without the supplement "it is", and the pathos will appear the more, "my son's coat!" and think with what a beating heart, with what trembling limbs, with what wringing of hands, with what flowing eyes, and faltering speech, he spoke these words, and what follow:

an evil beast hath devoured him; this was natural to conclude from the condition the coat was in, and from the country he was sent into, which abounded with wild beasts, and was the very thing Joseph's brethren contrived to say themselves; and in this view they wished and hoped the affair would be considered, and so their wickedness concealed:

Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces; or "in rending is rent"^{f1657}; he is most certainly rent in pieces, there is no question to be made of it; it is plain, and it must be the case.

Ver. 34. *And Jacob rent his clothes*, etc.] As expressive of his grief and mourning for the death of his son, as he supposed:

and put sackcloth upon his loins; put off his usual apparel, and put on a coarse garment on his loins next to his flesh, as another token of his great trouble and affliction for the loss of his son; which though afterwards was frequently done in times of public or private mourning, yet this is the first time we read of it; whether Jacob was the first that used it, whom his posterity and others imitated, is not certain; however it appears that this usage, as well as that of rending clothes on sorrowful occasions, were very ancient:

and mourned for his son many days: or years, as days sometimes signify; twenty two years, according to Jarchi, even until the time he went down to Egypt and saw him alive.

Ver. 35. *And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him*, etc.] His sons must act a most hypocritical part in this affair; and as for his daughters, it is not easy to say who they were, since he had but one daughter that we read of, whose name was Dinah: the Targum of Jonathan calls them his sons wives; but it is a question whether any of his sons were

as yet married, since the eldest of them was not more than twenty four years of age; and much less can their daughters be supposed to be meant, as they are by some. It is the opinion of the Jews, that Jacob had a twin daughter born to him with each of his sons; these his sons and daughters came together, or singly, to condole his loss, to sympathize with him, and speak a word of comfort to him, and entreat him not to give way to excessive grief and sorrow:

but he refused to be comforted; to attend to anything that might serve to alleviate his mind, and to abstain from outward mourning, and the tokens of it; he chose not to be interrupted in it:

and he said, for I will go down into the grave unto my son, mourning; the meaning is, not that he would by any means hasten his own death, or go down to his son in the grave, strictly and literally taken; since, according to his apprehension of his son's death he could have no grave, being torn to pieces by a wild beast; but either that he should go into the state of the dead, where his son was, mourning all along till he carne thither; or rather that he would go mourning all his days "for [his] son"^{f1658}, as some render it, till he came to the grave; nor would he, nor should he receive any comfort more in this world:

thus his father wept for him; in this manner, with such circumstances as before related, and he only; for as for his brethren they hated him, and were glad they had got rid of him; or, "and his father", etc.^{f1659}; his father Isaac, as the Targum of Jonathan, he wept for his son Jacob on account of his trouble and distress; as well as for his grandson Joseph; and so many Jewish writers^{f1660} interpret it; and indeed Isaac was alive at this time, and lived twelve years after; but the former sense seems best.

Ver. 36. *And the Midianites sold him into Egypt*, etc.] Or Medanites, who sprung from Medan, a brother of Midian, and son of Keturah, (⁽¹²⁴⁾Genesis 24:2); and were distinct from the Midianites, though they dwelt near them, and were now in company with them, and with the Ishmaelites, and were all concerned in the buying and selling of Joseph, and therefore this is sometimes ascribed to the one, and sometimes to the other:

unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh; the word is sometimes used for an eunuch, but cannot design one here, since Potiphar had a wife, and some say a child; but he either was a chamberlain, or however some officer at court, besides what follows:

[and] captain of the guard; of Pharaoh's guard, his bodyguard; some render it, "of the slaughterers"^{f1661}; meaning either cooks or butchers, of whom he was the chief; or rather executioners, he having the charge of prisoners, and the care of executing them, like our sheriffs. Joseph was a most eminent type of Christ, and there are so many things in this chapter which show an agreement between them that cannot be passed over. Joseph was the son of his father's old age, Christ the son of the Ancient of days; Joseph was in a peculiar manner beloved by his father, Christ is the dear son of his Father's love; Jacob made for Joseph a coat of many colours, God prepared a body in human nature for Christ, filled and adorned with the various gifts and graces of the Spirit without measure. Joseph was hated by his brethren, and they could not endure to think he should have the dominion over them. The Jews, of whom Christ was according to the flesh, hated him, and would not have him to reign over them; Joseph was sent by his father a long journey to visit his brethren, and know the welfare of them and their flocks, Christ was sent from heaven to earth to seek and save the lost sheep of the house of Israel; Joseph's brethren, when they saw him come to them, conspired to take away his life, the Jews, who were Christ's own, when he came to them, received him not, but said, this is the heir, let us kill him, and they consulted to take away his life; Joseph was stripped of his clothes, and sold for twenty pieces of silver at the motion of Judah, and Christ, by one of the same name, was sold for thirty pieces of silver, and was stripped of his clothes by the Roman soldiers; Joseph was delivered into the hands of foreigners, and Christ into the hands of the Gentiles; Joseph being reckoned as dead by his father, and yet alive, may be herein an emblem of Christ's death, and his resurrection from the dead.