

Coastal Notes: Genesis 37:29–36 | The Robe Comes Home

INTRODUCTION

Genesis 37 closes with eight verses and three scenes. Not Joseph. The people he left behind.

Reuben returns to an empty pit. The brothers bring a bloodied robe home to their father. And Jacob weeps while Joseph is already in Egypt.

SCENE 1 — REUBEN RETURNS (Genesis 37:29–30)

When **Reuben** returned to the pit
and saw that **Joseph** was not in the pit,
he tore his clothes and returned to his brothers and said,
“**The boy is gone, and I, where shall I go?**””

1. **He** returned to the pit and _____.
2. “The boy is gone, and I, _____?”
3. **Delayed** obedience often becomes _____.

His question is not about location. It is about accountability. There is nowhere for Reuben to go where this is not true.

SCENE 2 — THE ROBE COMES HOME (Genesis 37:31–33)

Then they took **Joseph’s robe**
and slaughtered a goat
and dipped the robe in the blood.
And they sent the robe of many colors
and brought it to their father and said,
“This we have found;
please identify whether it is **your son’s robe** or not.”
And **he** identified it and said,
“**It is my son’s robe.**
A fierce animal has devoured him.
Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces.”

1. The robe: given in love, stripped in hatred, returned in _____.
2. **Jacob** used a goat to deceive _____. His sons use a _____ to deceive him.
3. **Potiphar's** title is captain of the _____.

The deceiver has been deceived. The same object that represented a father's love became the weapon that broke a father's heart.

SCENE 3 — JACOB WEEPS (Genesis 37:34–36)

Then **Jacob** tore his garments
and put sackcloth on his loins
and mourned for his son many days.

All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him,
but **he** refused to be comforted and said,

“No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning.”

Thus, **his father** wept for him.

Meanwhile, the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar,
an **officer of Pharaoh**, the **captain of the guard**.”

1. Jacob refused to be _____.
2. I shall go down to _____ to my son, mourning.
3. Meanwhile, the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to _____.

Jacob is weeping over a son who is alive. God does not wait for us to catch up. He is already there.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Reuben tried to do the right thing in the safest possible way, and the window closed. Have you ever had a moment where you knew what you should do but delayed, and the opportunity passed?

Jacob is deceived using the very method he used to deceive his own father. Have you ever experienced a consequence that felt like a direct echo of something you had done to someone else?

The brothers comfort Jacob knowing they caused his grief. Have you ever been in a situation where you were unable to tell the truth to someone who was suffering because of something you did?

Scripture says Jacob refused to be comforted. Faith and grief are not enemies. Is there a loss or a grief in your own life that you have felt pressure to “get over” when you were not ready?

Joseph is already in Egypt while Jacob weeps in Canaan. God was already at work before anyone could see it. Where in your life right now do you need to trust that God is already working even though you cannot yet see it?

BIBLE NERDS ONLY

The Sins of the Father: Generational Across the Hebrew Bible



One of the most striking features of Genesis 37 is not what the brothers do to Joseph — it is how they do it. They use a goat and a garment to deceive their father.

Jacob had done the exact same thing to Isaac in Genesis 27. The pattern is not accidental. The Hebrew Bible traces this principle across generations: what a father sows into his family, his children often reap back.

Jacob and His Sons — Genesis 27 and 37

Jacob deceived his blind father Isaac using two young goats and Esau's garment. He received a blessing that was not his to take.

Decades later, his sons deceive him using a slaughtered goat and Joseph's robe. The narrator even uses the same Hebrew word for "hairy" that is Esau's name (sa'ir) to describe the goat — the echo is deliberate. Jacob could not teach his children to be honest because he was not honest himself. What he planted in his family eventually came back to him in kind.

David and His Sons — 2 Samuel 11–13

David committed adultery with Bathsheba and then engineered the death of her husband Uriah to cover it up. The prophet Nathan warned him that the sword would never depart from his house. It did not.

His son Amnon sexually assaulted his half-sister, Tamar. His son Absalom murdered Amnon, then led a full rebellion against his own father, publicly taking David's concubines on a rooftop — the same rooftop from which David had first seen Bathsheba. The

categories of David's sin (lust, deception, violence, power abuse) played out in his children's lives in ways he could not stop.

Eli and His Sons — 1 Samuel 2–3

Eli was the high priest of Israel, but he “honored his sons more than God” by refusing to restrain them.

His sons Hophni and Phinehas treated the offerings of the Lord with contempt and slept with women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting. God told Eli directly: you have not disciplined what you should have disciplined.

The result was the death of both sons on the same day, the capture of the ark, and the end of Eli's priestly line. A father's passivity passed its full cost to the next generation.

The Theological Framework — Exodus 20:5 and Galatians 6:7

The law itself acknowledges this pattern: God declares He visits the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Him (Exodus 20:5). This is not a statement of cosmic injustice but an observation about how sin propagates through families and cultures when it is not addressed.

Paul makes the underlying principle explicit in the New Testament: do not be deceived, God is not mocked. What a man sows, that he will also reap (Galatians 6:7).

The good news is that the same law mentions steadfast love to a thousand generations of those who love God and keep His commandments. The pattern can be interrupted. It just requires someone in the family line to do the hard work of repentance, honesty, and change.

The brothers in Genesis 37 do not just betray Joseph. They perpetuate a cycle that Jacob started. The chain breaks when someone refuses to pass it on.

ANSWER KEY

SCENE 1 — REUBEN RETURNS

1. He returned to the pit and **TORE HIS CLOTHES**
2. “The boy is gone, and I, where shall I go?” (**WHERE SHALL I GO**)
3. Delayed obedience often becomes **DISOBEDIENCE**

SCENE 2 — THE ROBE COMES HOME

1. Given in love, stripped in hatred, returned in **DECEPTION**
2. Jacob used a goat to deceive **ISAAC / HIS FATHER**
3. Potiphar’s title — captain of the **BUTCHERS (TABBAKH)**

SCENE 3 — JACOB WEEPS

1. Jacob refused to be **COMFORTED**
2. I shall go down to **SHEOL**
3. Meanwhile, the Midianites had sold him to **POTIPHAR**