

time jealousy arose in Jacob's household because of his partiality for Joseph whom he loved very tenderly, and because of the remarkable dreams of Joseph. (37: 3-11.)

I. Conspiracy, 12-22.

V. 12. *His brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.* Jacob had secured land in



Shechem by purchase (ch. 33: 19). Afterwards there had been war, but the enmity of the Shechemites must have now been appeased.

Vs. 13, 14. *Israel said unto Joseph; his favorite and now dead wife Rachel's elder son, whom he kept near him. Come, and I will send thee; unto his brethren.* Jacob may have feared somewhat for the safety of his sons among the Shechemites and wished to learn authentic tidings, so he sent Joseph to see whether it were well with his brethren and with the flocks. Though it was a long way, Joseph hesitated not to go at his father's word.

Vs. 15-18. *He was wandering in the field.* Joseph was seeking whither his brethren had gone with their flocks, and made enquiry so soon as the opportunity offered. *Let us go to Dothan;* about twelve miles north of Shechem in the direction of the valley of Esdraelon. "Just beneath Dothan, which still preserves its name, is the little oblong plain containing the best pasturage in the country and well chosen by Jacob's sons when they had exhausted for a time the wider plain of Shechem." (Tristram.)

Vs. 19, 20. *Behold this dreamer cometh; "this lord of dreams,"* an expression of deep hatred, showing also the chief point of Joseph's offense. (See vs. 5-11.) *Let us slay him and cast him into some pit.* There were many pits or empty cisterns in the neighborhood. *We will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him.* They would have to account for him, especially to their father. To be slain by a wild beast was not improbable. *We shall see what will become of his dreams;* so bring his dreams to nought—expressive of their profound contempt for him.

Vs. 21, 22. *Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands.* As the eldest son, he would be more immediately responsible to his father for Joseph's safety. *Cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness.* Reuben was not cruel, but he was weak and unstable. (ch. 49: 4.) He would not allow him to be slain, yet he did not dare to save him by opposing fully the evil intentions of his brothers. His purpose was to deliver Joseph out of their hands, but lacking decision to oppose the beginning of evil, he compromised, lost his opportunity and defeated his own purpose. A bold front would likely have saved Joseph.

II. Treachery, 23-28.

V. 23. *They stripped Joseph out of his coat . . . of many colours;* a long and rich coat with sleeves was the mark of honor his father had put upon him (v. 3). Richly embroidered coats are described by ancient authors and have been found in Egyptian tombs.

Vs. 24, 25. *They cast him into a pit.* Their cruel intention, no doubt, was to leave him there to die of hunger and thirst, the most appalling of deaths. This would satisfy their malice without their actually embroiling their own hands in their brother's blood. *They sat down to eat bread;* in cold unconcern at Joseph's cries of anguish (ch. 42: 21), and



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feeling satisfied, no doubt, that they had effectually disposed of his dreams. *Behold a travelling company of Ishmaelites* (Rev. Ver.) *came from Gilead;* a caravan of Arabs going down with spicery and balm to Egypt, where