

Some issues to consider in interpreting Genesis 37-50

1. **What is it called:** “the story of Joseph” or “the story of Jacob’s family”? Does it matter?
2. **How does this section fit** with the rest of Genesis?
3. **When and where was it written?** Why?
4. **Do the pieces fit together in a coherent whole** or do we need to separate out some sections as “later additions” (e.g., Judah and Tamar in ch. 38)?
5. What is the **relationship** between Genesis 37-50 and the beginning of **Exodus** which follows?
6. What is the **relationship** between Genesis 37-50 and “**the David story**” or, more broadly, “the **monarchy story**” (e.g. 2 Kings 25.8-30)?
7. What is the **relationship** between Genesis 37-50 and **Daniel 1-6** (both work for an imperial king and interpret dreams)?
8. **Where is YHWH/God** in all this? Can we or should we trust characters in attributing divine power/authority to the unfolding events? What about the narrator?
9. The **character of Joseph:** is he
 - a) a “wisdom” figure;
 - b) a “model” of piety;
 - c) an example of personal transformation
 - d) a cautionary example of working with “empire”
 - e) something else? All or some of the above?
10. The **character of Pharaoh/Egyptians:** is it “humane”? Sympathetic?
11. The **character of Jacob:** how is he portrayed similarly or differently from what we’ve seen already?
12. The **character of the brothers:** how do they differentiate among them? How do they change? What about Benjamin?
13. **The plot:** do we see this as **ending happily, tragically, or even ironically?**