

Open Wounds

Gen. 37:34-35; 42:36; 46:29-30

I. Wounded - Initial Grief Gen. 37:34-35

a. Public Despair

i. Tore his Clothes

1. In general, the tearing or removal of one's garments publicly displayed despair (Gen 37:29), mourning
2. Shame, humiliation, powerlessness, or outrage result when one is stripped of one's dress

ii. Sackcloth-

1. Loins- the strong set of muscles binding the abdomen to the lower limbs, the outer lumbar region
2. the wearing of mourning clothes (2 Sam 14:2), and not wearing jewelry or cosmetics (Exod 33:4; Isa 61:3;
3. Scruffy "sackcloth" (*śak*) was worn (here, lit., "on his loins") by mourners to inflict on themselves biting discomfort (e.g., 2 Sam 3:31; Joel 1:8; cp. Ps 30:12).

iii. Mourned- to **observe mourning rites**

1. mourned" refers to the public display of grief after death. It is "clearly a technical term for all of these customs together that might be observed in case of a death" (*TDO'T* 1:45).
2. It includes loud lamentation (50:10; 2 Sam 19:1-4; Esth 4:3),
3. The term "mourn" (*'ābal*) usually describes laments for the dead (also *'ābēl*, v. 35), which are often accompanied by emotional and physical demonstrations, such as weeping, fasting, wearing mourning clothes, removal of cosmetics, heaping up dirt and ashes, and tearing of garments (e.g., 2 Sam 14:2; 19:1; Neh 1:4; Esth 4:3; Jer 6:26; Ezek 24:17).

iv. Refusal Comfort

1. Refused -to comfort does not mean to sympathize but to encourage
2. But Jacob refused to stop mourning for Joseph despite the entreaties of all his sons and daughters
3. That Jacob refused his children's consolation was uncommon, revealing the intensity of his grief (cf. Isa 22:4), for his rejection of comforters meant the most aggravated anguish (e.g., Ps 69:20[21]).

v. For Many Days- and mourning "many days," underline the intensity of his grief.

1. Typically, a period of mourning would be appointed (e.g., 27:41; 50:4; Deut 34:8), but in Jacob's mind no end to his sorrow is possible (e.g., Isa 51:19); therefore he believes he will die "in [the state of] mourning"
2. Jacob will wear the mourner's garb till his death, so that in the underworld his son may know how deep his grief had been

¹*TDOT Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren

b. Down to Sheol

- i. Sheol- there is no praise of God Ps 6:6 Is 38:18, there is no work or thought or knowledge (wisdom) in Sheol

1. Several terms are used to denote the abode of the dead in the Hebrew Bible, and they often occur in parallelism to one another. The words *śaḥat* and *bôr* both refer to the abode of the dead as the “Pit.” Hebrew *’ăbaddôn* is another poetic name for the underworld usually translated “Perdition” or “(place of) Destruction
2. He would grieve publicly for Joseph until he died; he declares, “I shall indeed go down to Sheol in mourning.” Sheol is the place of the dead in the OT, where the spirits of the departed continue in a shadowy and rather unhappy existence (cf. Isa 14:14–20) and where relatives could be reunited with each other (cf. 2 Sam 12:23). Though Sheol is not beyond God’s power (Amos 9:2), the psalmists pray for deliverance from Sheol, and it is possible that the OT believer hoped for something better than life in Sheol in the world to come (cf. Pss 16:10; 30:4 [3]; 49:16 [15]). The catastrophe of losing Joseph may be seen by Jacob as proof of divine judgment that will lead him to go down with the wicked to Sheol
3. referring here simply to the grave, the abode of the dead (also 42:38; 44:29, 31; 1 Kgs 2:6, 9). That Jacob anticipates meeting his son once again indicates that he expects some form of life after death

II. Scarred 42:36

a. He Alone is Left

- i. His explanation for his refusal was forcefully stated and reasoned, though no doubt stinging to Reuben. “My son” and “his brother” sound the closed circle of Rachel’s two sons and their father.
- ii. reveals that Benjamin, Rachel’s second son, is now as precious to Jacob as her first son, Joseph, once was and reminds his other sons of the grief they caused their father by selling Joseph.
- iii. The Joseph incident continues to haunt the brothers, who have no convincing answer to their father’s fears

b. Grey Hair Down to Sheol

- i. Grey Hair - ay hair” (*śēbātī*) is a metonymy of adjunct, indicating the patriarch’s old age (e.g., 15:15)
- ii. Sorrow - Sorrow” (*yāgôn*) describes the mental torment that he as a bereaved father would experience (e.g., Ps 13:2[3]). The future of a father was lodged in his sons’ prospects (cp. a father’s “grief”
- iii. **But Jacob** refused to let Benjamin go. He said if something happened to his youngest, he would sorrow the rest of his days, just as he had said when he heard of Joseph’s “death” (37:35)

III. Healed - Reunited 46:29-30; 1 Thess. 4:13

a. Fell on his neck and Wept

- i. finding relief only in meeting his deceased son “in Sheol” (v. 35, “grave,” NI²V). But God had a better outcome for Jacob because “many days” (v. 34) proved to have an end—twenty-two years until they were reunited (cf. 41:46; 41:3; 45:6)
 - ii. By God’s superintending grace, these confinements led to this momentous reunion of father and son
 - iii. The last time Joseph saw his father was when Joseph was 17 (37:2).
- b. Now Let me Die
 - i. You are Still Alive -Jacob’s hopeless lament, “I shall indeed go down to Sheol mourning” (37:35; cf. 42:38; 44:29), is at last turned into a tranquil. The purpose of his journey is fulfilled (cf. 45:28), and he is ready to die in peace
 - ii. “I am ready to die”
 - 1. expresses the final relief of his heart-wrenched desire (cf. Luke 2:29–32). Any parent who has lost a child by abduction lives with an open wound; not knowing a child’s fate makes the trial’s sorrow unspeakable. The possibility of seeing Joseph again (“still alive,” from *’ôd hāy*) was the chief reason that Jacob had lived, and likewise Joseph had worried that Jacob might not “still be alive
 - 2. Jacob was satisfied to see his son **alive**, for he was the one designated as the heir, the one whom God had chosen to rule over the family. So this was more than a family reunion; it was a confirmation that God’s promised blessing was intact.
- c. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 There is hope for a reunion