

THE BEIT MIDRASH WAY - UNIT 5: “Fake News” or Uncovering the Truth?

From Joseph and his brothers through Jefferson and Hamilton to Today

Ibayau Lehu (a question was asked in the beit midrash):

When is negative reporting “fake news,” and when is it simply uncovering the truth?

Text Study 1

Witnessing the Shared “Facts” of the Biblical Story of Joseph’s Evil Report About His Brothers

Study the following verses in *havruta* (study partners). Note the differences in these translations. List all questions you have on these verses, focusing on verse 2.

Text 1

Genesis 37:2–4 (The New JPS)

2 *This, then, is the line of Jacob: **At seventeen years of age, Joseph tended the flocks with his brothers, as a helper to the sons of his father’s wives Bilhah and Zilpah. And Joseph brought bad reports of them to their father.*** 3 Now Israel loved Joseph best of all his sons, for he was the child of his old age; and he had made him an ornamented tunic. 4 And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of his brothers, they hated him so that they could not speak a friendly word to him.*

בראשית לז:ב-ד

(ב) אֵלֶּה | תְּלִדוֹת
יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף בֶּן־שֶׁבַע־
עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה הָיָה
רֹעֵה אֶת־אֶחָיו בְּצֹאן
וְהוּא נֶעַר אֶת־בְּנֵי
בְּלָהָה וְאֶת־בְּנֵי
זִלְפָּה נְשֵׁי אָבִיו וַיִּבֵּא
יוֹסֵף אֶת־דִּבְרֵיהֶם
רָעָה אֶל־אָבִיהֶם: (ג)
וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל אֶהָב אֶת־יוֹסֵף
מִכָּל־בְּנָיו כִּי־בְן־זָקֵנִים
הוּא לוֹ וַעֲשָׂה לוֹ כְּתֹנֶת
פָּסִים: (ד) וַיִּרְאוּ אֶחָיו
כִּי־אֹתוֹ אֶהָב אָבִיהֶם
מִכָּל־אֶחָיו וַיִּשְׂנְאוּ אֹתוֹ
וְלֹא יָכְלוּ דַבְּרוֹ לְשָׁלוֹם:

Bereishis 37:2–4 (Artsroll/Stone Edition)

2 *These are the chronicles of Jacob: **Joseph, at the age of seventeen years, was a shepherd with his brothers by the flock, but he was a youth with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives; and Joseph would bring evil reports about them to their father.*** 3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons since he was a child of his old age, and he made him a fine woolen tunic. 4 His brothers saw that it was he whom their father loved most of all his brothers so they hated him; and they could not speak to him peaceably.**

MAHLOKET MATTERS

HOW TO DISAGREE CONSTRUCTIVELY



The 9Adar Project
Jewish Week of Constructive Conflict
WWW.9ADAR.ORG

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Exercise 1 - Writing My 'Intuitive Tweet'

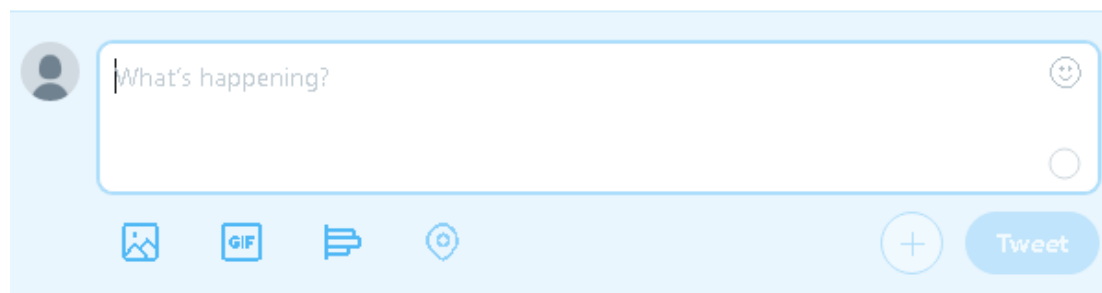
Background

One pillar of the Beit Midrash Way is the ability to be aware of our own bias, or our own '49' that leads us to interpret a particular text or conflict the way we do. Today, very often people write these intuitive interpretations on social media thus contributing to the 'texts' of the conflict.

Instructions

If you had heard Joseph's negative report of his brothers, what would you tweet about it? What kind of person, or "reporter" was Joseph? How do you understand what was motivating him to report what he did?

Compose New Tweet



Reply Tweet

Consider exchanging your 'intuitive tweet' with your *havruta* or someone sitting near you and writing a positive or critical reply tweet. Then pass it back.

Personal Reflection

To what extent would you define your 'intuitive tweet' as more "anti-Joseph" or more "pro-Joseph"? Explain why.



Text Study 2

Understanding the 49 vs 49 Conflicting Interpretations of the Facts of the Biblical Story

How did the following commentaries understand what was motivating Joseph to report what he did?

Understanding the First 49

Text 2.1

Rashi, Genesis 37:2

(Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, 1040–1105, France)

And he was a lad: He behaved childishly, fixing his hair and touching up his eyes so that he would appear handsome.

Evil tales about them: Any evil he saw in his brothers, the sons of Leah, he would tell his father: 1) that they ate limbs from living animals, 2) that they demeaned the sons of the handmaids by calling them slaves, and 3) that they were suspected of illicit sexual relationships. For these three [tales] he was punished: For [the report that his brothers ate] limbs from living animals, "they slaughtered a kid" (Gen. 37:31) when they sold him, and did not eat it alive. For the report that he told about them that they called their brothers slaves, "Joseph was sold as a slave" (Ps. 105:17), and concerning the illicit sexual relationships that he told about them, "his master's wife lifted her eyes, etc." ([Gen.39:7 - See Genesis Rabbah 84:7 (Supplementary Text 2.1.1)].

Tales about them: Heb. דִּבְתָם (dibatam) Every expression of דִּבָּה (diba) denotes parlediz in Old French, gossip, slander. Whatever evil he could tell about them he told.

רש"י, בראשית לז:ב

והוא נער - שהיה עושה מעשה נערוֹת, מתקן בשערו ממשמש בעיניו, כדי שיהיה נראה יפה:

את דבתם רעה - כל רעה שהיה רואה באחיו בני לאה היה מגיד לאביו, שהיו אוכלין אבר מן החי, ומזלזלין בבני השפחות לקרותן עבדים, וחשודים על העריות. ובשלתן לקה. על אבר מן החי (לעיל פסוק לא) וישחטו שער עזים במכירתו, ולא אכלוהו חי. ועל דבה שספר עליהם שקורין לאחיהם עבדים, (תהלים קה יז) לעבד נמכר יוסף. ועל העריות שספר עליהם, (להלן לט ז) ותשא אשת אדוניו וגו': דבתם - כל לשון דבה פרלידי"ץ בלע"ז [רכילות] כל מה שהיה יכול לדבר בהם רעה היה מספר:



https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8232/jewish/Chapter-37.htm#showrashi=true

Image courtesy of Sinai Publishing.

Understanding the Other 49

Text 2.2

Rashbam, Genesis 37

(Rabbi Samuel ben Meir, 1085–1158, France)

2. *Hayah ro'eh (was a shepherd): Tended the flocks with his brothers: i.e. with Leah's sons. Common usage dictates that "brothers" refers to them, not to the concubine's children.*

2. *Vehu' na'ar 'et bene bilha...(but he was a youth with the sons of Bilhah...): His youthful activities and reveling were commonly with Bilhah and Zilpah's children. As a result, his brothers, Leah's children, began to hate him.*

2. *'Et 'ehav (with his brothers): He tended the flocks with his brothers but, when it came to youthful pleasures, he left them and was commonly with the concubines' children, not with them. (The word na'ar does not imply immaturity; it simply means that] he was like any youth, as it is written (Hos. 11:1) "When Israel was a youth (na'ar)," (II Sam. 2:14), "Let the young men (ha-ne-'arim) come forward and sport before us." The text now continues to list a number of different factors that led to the brothers' hatred of Joseph. Joseph also brought to his father bad reports of them: i.e. of his brothers [Leah's sons]. In this way, my interpretation is a variation on that of the midrash aggadah (Genesis Rabbah 84:7 - See Supplementary Text 2.1.1). Joseph said to his father as follows: "They scorn the concubine's children; I, however, treat them respectfully and spend time with them." Other exegetes who attempt to explain the plain meaning of Scripture missed the true sense of this text.*

רשב"ם, בראשית פרק לז

ב. היה רועה את אחיו בצאן - בני לאה לפי דרך ארץ קורא אחיו ולא בני השפחות:
ב. והוא נער את בני בלהה וגוי - נערותו ורגילותו ומשתאיו היו עם בני בלהה ובני זלפה. ומתוך כך התחילו אחיו בני לאה לשנוא אותו:

ב. את אחיו - עם אחיו רועה, ובשמחת נערותו היה נבדל מהם ורגיל עם בני השפחות ולא עמהם כמו נער, כדכתי כי נער ישראל. וכתי יקומו נא הנערים וישחקו לפנינו. הולך ומונה כל מיני עניינים שגרמו לשנוא אותו. וגם יבא יוסף [את] דבתם רעה, את דבתם של אחיו רעה, כמדרש אגדה לפי פרושי, שאמר לאביו כך מבזים הם בני השפחות אבל אני מכבדם ואני רגיל אצלם. פשטנים אחרים לא עמדו על העיקר:



Martin I. Lockshin, Rabbi Samuel Ben Meir's Commentary on Genesis: An Annotated Translation, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, 1989, pp. 246-248.

Image courtesy of the Abraham Schwadron Collection at the National Library of Israel.



Exercise 2 – Writing the 49 vs 49 Faces of the Book

Background

Another pillar of the 'Beit Midrash Way' is the ability to understand contradictory interpretations of texts as well as ideological and political issues today. This has been referred to in short as the '49 vs 49' and more precisely in rabbinic literature as the 49 *panim* or faces (מֵיט פְּנִיִּם) why a matter may be understood in contradictory ways. In this exercise we will connect between these multi-dimensional contradictory 'faces' of the Book, with the too often singular-dimension, simplistic nature of Facebook.

Instructions

Write two Facebook posts about the biblical story, one for Joseph and one for his brother, Simeon, with each post telling over the story from a different perspective. Feel free to be creative, drawing upon both your own interpretations and the interpretations of the biblical commentaries.

<p>Joseph</p> 	<p>Simeon</p> 
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Personal Reflection

To what extent do you feel you portrayed each side's perspective in a manner that the conflicting biblical characters would "like" your post? Explain why. Which post do you identify with more? Explain why.

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Text Study 3 – Historical Precedents

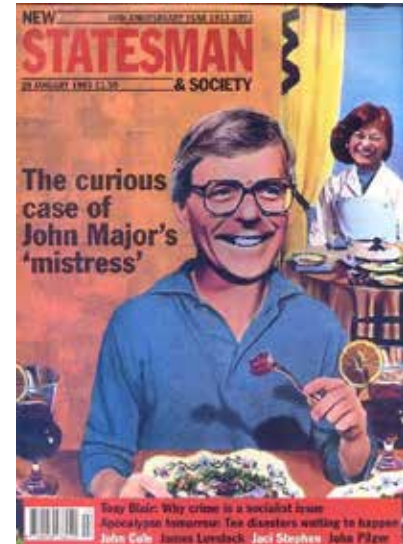
Can you think of examples of when this question has come up in history? How may the following historical events relate to the disagreement between the commentaries on our story?

3.1. UK PM John Major vs. New Statesman

Text 3.1

British Premier Is Suing Two Magazines for Libel, By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, Friday, January 29, 1993.

(Britain's Prime Minister, John Major, claimed libel and sued two newspapers for reporting on a rumored affair. It ended in a settlement.) See <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/01/29/world/british-premier-is-suing-two-magazines-for-libel.html>



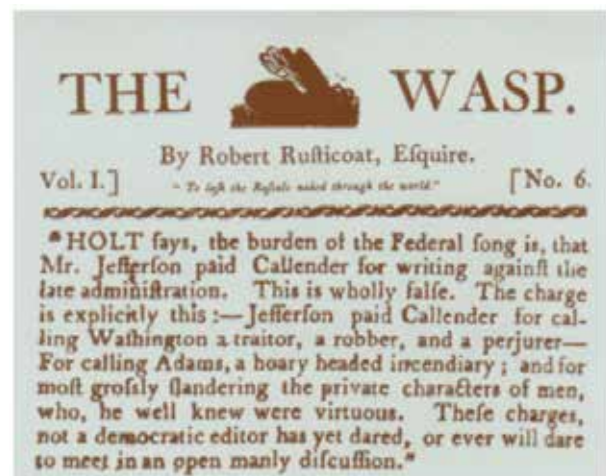
For more about this case: <https://antagonise.wordpress.com/2012/11/23/a-brief-history-of-libel-part-1-john-major/>

3.2. President Jefferson vs. Harry Crosswell

Text 3.2.1

Robert Rusticoat, esquire (alias for Harry Crosswell), *The Wasp*, Vol. I, No. 6 (September 9, 1802)

HOLT (Charles Holt, editor of The Bee) says, 'the burden of the Federal song is, that Mr. Jefferson paid Callender for writing against the late administration.' This is wholly false. The charge is explicitly this: - Jefferson paid Callender for calling (President) Washington a traitor, a robber, and a perjurer - For calling Adams, a hoary headed incendiary; and for most grossly slandering the private characters of men, who he well knew were virtuous. These charges, not a democratic editor has yet dared, or ever will dare to meet in an open manly discussion.



<http://www.courts.state.ny.us/history/academic-center/documents/HSNYC%20CROSWELL%20DOCS%20&%20PLANS.pdf>

Text 3.2.2

People vs. Croswell, 3 Johns. Cas 337, (1804), Document 28.

An indictment was found against the defendant on a libel, at the general sessions of the peace in Columbia county, which was removed, by certiorari, into this court, in January term, 1803, and the issue of traverse thereon was tried, at the Columbia circuit, in July, 1803, before Mr. Chief Justice Lewis. The indictment was as follows, to wit: "At a court of general sessions of the peace, holden, &c. It is represented that Harry Croswell, late of the city of Hudson, in the county of Columbia aforesaid, printer, being a malicious and seditious man, of a depraved mind and wicked and diabolical disposition, and also deceitfully, wickedly, and maliciously devising, contriving and intending, Thomas Jefferson, Esq., President of the United States of America, to detract from, scandalize, traduce, vilify, and to represent him, the said Thomas Jefferson, as unworthy the confidence, respect, and attachment of the people of the said United States, and to alienate and withdraw from the said Thomas Jefferson, Esq., President as aforesaid, the obedience, fidelity, and allegiance of the citizens of the state of New York, and also of the said United States; and wickedly and seditiously to disturb the peace and tranquility, as well of the people of the state of New York, as of the United States; and also to bring the said Thomas Jefferson, Esq., (as much as in him the said Harry Croswell lay) into great hatred, contempt, and disgrace, not only with the people of the state of New York, and the said people of the United States, but also with the citizens and subjects of other nations; and for that purpose the said Harry Croswell did, on the ninth day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and two, with force and arms, at the said city of Hudson, in the said county of Columbia, wickedly, maliciously, and seditiously, print and publish, and cause and procure to be printed and published, a certain scandalous, malicious, and seditious libel, in a certain paper or publication, entitled 'The Wasp;' containing therein, among other things, certain scandalous, malicious, inflammatory, and seditious matters, of and concerning the said Thomas Jefferson, Esq., then and yet being President of the United States of America, that is to say, in one part thereof, according to the tenor and effect following, that is to say: Jefferson (the said Thomas Jefferson, Esq., meaning,) paid Callender (meaning one James Thompson Callender) for calling Washington (meaning George Washington, Esq., deceased, late President of the said United States,) a traitor, a robber, and a perjurer; for calling Adams (meaning John Adams, Esq., late President of the said United States,) a hoary-headed incendiary, and for most grossly slandering the private characters of men who he (meaning the said Thomas Jefferson) well knew to be virtuous; to the great scandal and infamy of the said Thomas Jefferson, Esq., President of the said United States, in contempt of the people of the said state of New York, in open violation of the laws of the said state, to the evil example of all others in like case offending, and against the peace of the people of the state of New York, and their dignity."

http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/amendI_speechs28.html

Text 3.2.3

Alexander Hamilton, Closing Argument in *People vs. Croswell*, February 14, 1803, Supreme Court, Albany NY.

Truth cannot be dangerous to government, though it may work partial difficulties.... It is evident that if you cannot apply this mitigated doctrine for which I speak, to the cases of libels here, you must for ever remain ignorant of what your rules do. I never can think this out to be; I never did think the truth was a crime; I am glad the day is come in which it is to be decided; for my soul has ever abhorred the thought, that a free man dared not speak the truth; I have for ever rejoiced when this question has been brought forward.



The Complete Speeches, reprinted in 1 Julius Goebel & Joseph Smith, *The Law Practice of Alexander Hamilton* (Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 815. See *Judicial Notice*, A Periodical of New York City Court History, Issue 7, Summer 2011, p. 16.
<http://www.courts.state.ny.us/history//programs-events/images/Judicial-Notice-07.pdf>

Image: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:John_Trumbull_-_Alexander_Hamilton_-_Google_Art_Project_\(499056\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:John_Trumbull_-_Alexander_Hamilton_-_Google_Art_Project_(499056).jpg)

Alexander Hamilton

Exercise 3 - Studying Today's News 'The Beit Midrash Way'

Can you think of examples of where this unit's question comes up today either in politics or in your personal life? To what extent do you feel you understand the 49 vs 49 of this issue?

Background

The final pillar of the Beit Midrash Way is the interpretive skill of identifying key textual ambiguities, as well as understanding the conflicting interpretations of the commentaries of these textual ambiguities. These same interpretive skills are critical for reading both biblical verses and the news today. Below is an example of where this unit's question comes up in the news today according to previous Mahloket Matters participants. Feel free to use other examples of current events for the following exercise.

Instructions

1. Read in *havruta* the two articles brought below both reporting on the New York Times Op-Ed article, "I am part of the resistance inside the Trump administration", from September 5, 2018.
2. What are the shared facts mentioned in both articles?
3. What facts and interpretation of facts are unique to each article?
4. With which article do you identify with more, why?
5. What did you learn from reading each article and from reading the news in general this way?

Stabbing and Shooting in Hebron, October 22, 2018

Anonymous Op-Ed in New York Times Causes a Stir Online and in the White House

See <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/05/business/media/new-york-times-trump-anonymous.html>

WH official pens anonymous NY Times op-ed calling Trump 'anti-democratic,' 'petty and ineffective'

See <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/wh-official-pens-anonymous-ny-times-op-ed-calling-trump-anti-democratic-petty-and-ineffective.print>

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NY Times Op-Ed “I am part of the resistance inside the Trump administration”, September 5, 2018		
Article 1		Article 2
Additional Facts/ Interpretation of Facts	Shared Facts	Additional Facts/ Interpretation of Facts
<input type="checkbox"/> I identify more with this article because: <input type="checkbox"/> I identify less with this article, but still learned:		<input type="checkbox"/> I identify more with this article because: <input type="checkbox"/> I identify less with this article, but still learned:



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Concluding the Beit Midrash Way

The following was said by the Maggid of Vilna before entering in to mediate between two great rabbis who were in conflict in a Beit Midrash. What is the relationship between interpreting biblical conflict stories and mediating actual conflicts according to the Maggid?

Text C.1

Barukh Epstein, My Uncle the Netziv [translation of Mekor Barukh, vol. 4]; (Brooklyn: ArtScroll Mesorah, 1988), p. 28, "Between Holy and Holy."

This invitation reminds me of a recurring problem I encounter at the same time every year...My problem is this. You know, as the official Maggid of Vilna, one of my functions is to sermonize every Sabbath on the Torah portion of the week. One of the secrets of being a magid is to highlight the conflicting sides in every story. First I find the 'good side' and in an eloquent way show how good, kind, and righteous that side is. Then I take the 'bad side' and show how terrible and evil it is. Every possible good is emphasized about the hero of the week and every possible evil attributed to the villain...But then I come to (the Torah portion of) VaYeshev and Miketz and I'm in a real bind. I sit down to prepare my sermon, trying to figure out whom to praise and whom to condemn, and find myself forced to choose between Yosef and his brothers. I have to deal kindly with one and harshly with the other. But how can I make this choice? I love both of them so dearly...How can I follow my usual method of heaping praise upon one and shame upon the other? Thus, the prospect of sermonizing during these weeks fills me with a dread that only lifts when we finally come to Shemos, and I can contrast the Jews and Pharaoh, Moshe and Pharaoh...I feel exactly the same way about the mission that lies before me...I have been called to mediate between two holy people – between holy and holy – between Rav Naftali Zvi and Rav Yosef Ber, between a gracious spirit and a precious soul. I feel lost. I can't use my normal method because I love them both, hold them both in equal esteem. The Jewish people desperately need both of them and the different talents and approaches with which God has blessed them...But, still, there was no way I could refuse an invitation to a meeting of such crucial importance to the Torah's honor and to peace among students who carry its banner. My heart is lifted to heaven that God should show me the proper path to mediate between these two giants, for their benefit and for the good of all Jews, to enhance the glory of the Torah!

When do we choose to interpret opposing sides in conflict as "Holy and Profane" and when do we see them as "Holy and Holy"?



Left image: Image: https://he.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%A7%D7%95%D7%91%D7%A5:Y_D_Soloveitchik.jpg

Middle: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volozhin_yeshiva#/media/File:Volozhin_yeshiva.jpg

Right: Image courtesy of the Abraham Schwadron Collection at the National Library of Israel

Supplementary Sources

Supplementary Sources for Text Study 2

The following Midrash is the source of Rashi's commentary (Text 2.1). What changes did Rashi make in quoting this midrash? Were Joseph's evil reports true or false?

Text 2.1.1

Genesis Rabbah 84

(6th century, Land of Israel)

7. 'Joseph, being seventeen years old' etc. He was seventeen years old, yet you say 'Being still a lad'! It means, however, that he behaved like a boy, penciling his eyes, curling his hair, and lifting his heel.

'And Joseph brought evil report of them' etc. R. Meir said: [He told Jacob]: Thy children are to be suspected of [eating] limbs torn from the living animals. R. Judah said: They insult the sons of bondmaids [Bilah and Zilpah] and call them slaves. R. Simeon said: They cast their eyes on the daughters of the country. R. Judah b. Simon said: With respect to all three, A just balance and scale are the Lord's (Prov. 16:11). The Holy One, blessed be He, rebuked him [Joseph]: 'Thou didst say, "They are to be suspected of eating a limb torn from a living animal"; by thy life, even in the very act of wrongdoing they will slaughter ritually; 'as it says, And they killed a he-goat (Gen. 37:31). 'Thou didst say, "They insult the sons of the bondmaids and call them slaves", - Joseph was sold for a slave (Psalms 105:17) 'Thou didst say, "They cast their eyes upon the daughters of the land": I will incite a bear against thee' - His master's wife cast her eye upon Joseph, etc (Gen. 39, 7). 9. 'And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him' (37:4). R. Ahava b. Ze'ira said: From the very disgrace of the tribal ancestors you learn their virtues. Elsewhere it says, And Absalom spoke unto Amnon neither good nor bad (II Samuel 13:22), keeping in his heart what he felt in his heart. Whereas here, 'And could not speak peaceably unto him' - what was in their heart was on their tongues.

בראשית רבה (תיאודור-אלבק) פד

ז. [יוסף בן שבע עשרה וגו' - בן י"ז שנה ואת אמרת והוא נער, אלא שהיה עושה מעשה נערות משמשם בעיניו מתקן בשערו מתלה בעקבו.] *ויבא יוסף את דבתם וגו' - ר' מאיר א' חשודים בניך על אבר מן החי, ר' יהודה א' מזלזלים הם בבני השפחות וקורין אותן עבדים, ר' שמעון א' תולים עיניהם בבנות הארץ, ר' יהודה בר' סימון א' על תלתייהו פלס ומאזני משפט ליי" (משלי טז יא), אמר לו הקב"ה אתה אמרת חשודים הם על אבר מן החי, חייך אפילו בעת הקלקלה שוחטים הם וישחטו שעיר עזים (בראשית לז לא), אתה אמרת מזלזלים בבני שפחות וקורין אותם עבדים 'לעבד נמכר יוסף' (תהלים קה יז), אתה אמרת 'תולים עיניהם בבנות הארץ' אני מגרה בך את הדוב ותשא אשת אדוניו וגו' (בראשית לט ז). ט. "ויראו אחיו כי אתו אהב אביהם מכל אחיו" א"ר אהבה בר זעירא מתוך גנותן של שבטים אתה יודע שבחן להלן (ש"ב יג, כב): "ולא דבר אבשלום עם אמנון למרע ועד טוב" די בליביה בליביה ברם הכא "ולא יכלו דברו לשלום" די בליביהו בפומהו:

Midrash Rabbah Genesis II, Soncino Press, London, 1951, p. 774-776.

According to the following two modern commentaries, were Joseph's evil reports true or false?

Text 2.1.2

Nechamah Leibowitz, *Studies in Bereshit (Genesis)*, WZO, Jerusalem, 1972, pp. 430–431.

Rashi echoes a Midrash "Whatever evil he could speak of them, he retailed." Though the Biblical expression "to bring an evil report" implies that the talebearer says nothing but the truth, it is still regarded as obnoxious and slanderous, since it is inspired with evil intent – to disparage the victim. The one who "brings forth" (motzi dibba) an evil report belongs, of course, to a different category, since that expression, in contradistinction to the "bringing of an evil report" actually implies the invention of falsehood. Both however are blameworthy.

Text 2.1.3

Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 2, Genesis 16–50*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1994, p. 350.

37:2 It is not clear whether Joseph's report about his brothers was true or not, but the term דְּבָרָה "tales" is always used elsewhere in a negative sense of an untrue report, and here it is qualified by the adjective "evil" (cf. Num. 13:32; 14:36–37). So it seems likely that Joseph misrepresented his brothers to his father, his father believed him, and his brothers hated him for his lies. If his account was true, it would doubtless have enraged his brothers, especially since their father had never held them in high regard anyway.

How did the following commentators interpret the biblical story differently from Rashi (Text 2.1) and Rashbam (Text 2.2)?

Text 2.3

Iben Ezra Genesis 37:2
(Rabbi Abraham Iben Ezra, 1089–1167, Spain)

And he was a lad with the children of Bilah and the children of Zilpah. Since he was young, the children of the maidservants placed him to serve them, for if he was placed to serve his brothers, the children of the mistress (Leah), there would be nothing wrong about it, and this is what it means, "evil report." And the reason of "flesh from a live animal" is a drash (a non-simple reading of the text) because Scripture does not mention his brothers other than as the children of the maidservants.

אבן עזרא בראשית לז:ב

והוא נער את בני בלהה ואת בני זלפה בעבור היותו קטן שמוהו בני השפחות שמש להם, כי אם ישרת אחיו בני הגבירה לא היה דבר רע, וזאת היא דבתם רעה. וטעם אבר מן החי דרש הוא, כי הכתוב לא הזכיר מאחיו חוץ מבני השפחות:

Text 2.4

Ramban, Genesis 37:2 (Rabbi Moses b. Nachman, 1194 Spain – 1270 Land of Israel)

In my opinion... The verse thus states that because he was a lad he was constantly with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, never being separated from them on account of his youth, for their father had commanded them to watch over him and serve him, not the sons of the mistresses, and he brought an evil report concerning them to their father. It was for this reason that these four sons hated Joseph. Following that, the verse says that his father loved him. Now when the other brothers saw that their father loved him more than all, they became jealous of him and they hated him. Thus Joseph is found to be hated by all: the sons of the mistress (Leah) were jealous of him because Jacob loved him more than them although they were also sons of a mistress as he was, and the sons of the handmaids, who would otherwise not have been jealous of his superior position over them, hated him because he brought their evil report to their father.

רמב"ן, בראשית לז:ב

והנכון בעיני יאמר כי הוא נער, והוא עם בני בלהה ועם בני זלפה נשי אביו תמיד, לא יפרד מהם בעבור נערותו, כי להם צוה אביהם שישמרוהו וישרתוהו, לא לבני הגבירות, והוא מביא מהם דבה רעה אל אביהם, ולכן ישנאוהו אלה הארבעה האחים. ואחר כן אמר כי אביו אהבו, ויראו אחיו האחרים כי אותו אהב אביהם יותר מכולם ויקנאו בו וישנאוהו, נמצא שנאו מכולם, בני הגבירות יקנאו בו למה יאהב אותו מהם והם בני גבירה כמוהו, ובני השפחות אשר לא יקנאו בזה למעלתו עליהם, ישנאו בו בעבור היותו מביא דבתם אל אביהם.

Ramban Commentary on the Torah, Translated and Annotated, by Rabbi Dr. Charles B. Chavel, 1971, p. 448–449.

Text 2.5

Testament of Gad, Chapters 1 and 2 (200 BCE)

(Chapter 1)1 The copy of the testament of Gad, what things he spake unto his sons, in the hundred and twenty 2 fifth year of his life, saying unto them: Hearken, my children, I was the ninth son born to Jacob, 3 and I was valiant in keeping the flocks. Accordingly I guarded at night the flock; and whenever the lion came, or the wolf, or any wild beast against the fold, I pursued it, and overtaking [it] 4 I seized its foot with my hand and hurled it about a stone's throw, and so killed it. Now Joseph my brother was feeding the flock with us for upwards of thirty days, and being young, he fell sick 5 by reason of the heat. And he returned to Hebron to our father, who made him lie down near him, 6 because he loved him greatly. And Joseph told our father that the sons of Zilpah and Bilhah were slaying the best of the flock and eating them against the judgement of Reuben and Judah. 7 For he saw that I

had delivered a lamb out of the mouth of a bear, and put the bear to death; but 8 had slain the lamb, being grieved concerning it that it could not live, and that we had eaten it. And 9 regarding this matter I was wroth with Joseph until the day that he was sold, And the spirit of hatred was in me, and I wished not either to hear of Joseph with the ears, or see him with the eyes because he rebuked us to our faces saying that we were eating of the flock without Judah. For whatsoever things he told our father, he believed him. (Chapter 2) 1 I confess now my sin, my children, that oftentimes I wished to kill him, because I hated him from 2 my heart. Moreover, I hated him yet more for his dreams; and I wished to lick him out of the land of the living, even as an ox licketh up the grass of the field. 3 Therefore I and Simeon sold him to the Ishmaelites [for thirty pieces of gold, and ten of them we hid, and showed the twenty to our brethren] 4 And thus through covetousness we were bent on slaying him. 5 And the God of my fathers delivered him from my hands, that I should not work lawlessness in Israel. (Chapter 3) 1 And now, my children, hearken to the words of truth to work righteousness, and all the law of the Most High, and go not astray through the spirit of hatred, for it is evil in all the doings of 2 men. Whatsoever a man doeth the hater abominateth him: and though a man worketh the law of the Lord, he praiseth him not; though a man feareth the Lord, and taketh pleasure in that which is 3 righteous, he loveth him not. He dispraiseth the truth, he envieth him that prospereth, he welcometh evil-speaking, he loveth arrogance, for hatred blindeth his soul; as I also then looked on Joseph.

The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Vol. 2, Charlesworth Edition, Doubleday, New York, 1985, pp. 137–138.

Text 2.6

Nahum Sarna, The JPS Torah Commentary, Genesis 37, 1989, p. 255.

2. tended:... with his brothers Hebrew *ro'eh 'et* may carry a subtle suggestion of what is to follow since it can also be translated, "he used to lord it over his brothers" [See Samuel II 5:2 and 7:7]. Bad reports of them: This is the first of the several causes of enmity between Joseph and his brothers. The nature of the "reports" is not given.