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## Editor's Notes

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## Editors' Notes

D'Esta Love and Stuart Love

The story of Joseph has long fascinated all of us who treasure the book of Genesis. It opens simply, "This is the story of the family Jacob" (37.2). Joseph is then depicted as a young man of seventeen living with his father and older brothers in the valley of Hebron. Presenting Joseph as his father's favorite and his brothers' envy, the novella moves forward largely in events tied to dreams. There are two prophetic dreams about Joseph interpreted and deprecated by his father and brothers. There are the dreams of the court baker and cupbearer in prison that Joseph interprets with precision. Finally, Pharaoh has a double dream that only Joseph successfully interprets, resulting in his rise to power and privilege in a foreign land, the reuniting of the family, and setting forth the occasion for Israel dwelling in Egypt as a backdrop to the book of Exodus.

The dreams are important but the story moves forward by means of a well-turned plot marked by deep psychological and social knowledge of Egyptian ways. The narrator artfully arranges the succession of scenes and dialogues with an ever-increasing tension. Finally, there is the role played by God. While his presence is explicit and frequent in chapter 39, for the most part God's action is characterized by "radical secrecy, distance, and unrecognizableness" as noted by German theologian Gerhard von Rad. This mystery is broken in dramatic fashion in 45.5–8 and 50.20. All that happens, God meant for good. Thus, the providence of God, no matter how surreptitious, is fundamental to Joseph's story, Israel's history, and for Christians who cherish Jesus's story.

So much more could and needs to be said, but hopefully our appetites are sharpened to probe the story more carefully. We are grateful that **MINDI THOMPSON**, an Old Testament teacher and scholar at Abilene Christian University, has consented to be our guest editor. Carefully, she has chosen authors to write on a number of topics described in her introduction. We commend her to you, our *Leaven* readers.

Keep praying for Leaven. We will open 2017 with articles primarily from the 2016 Pepperdine University Lectures. John Barton and Mark Love continue their preparatory work to lead the journal beginning in 2017. Plan to attend the *Leaven* Symposium and the *Leaven* luncheon at this year's Pepperdine Lectures that will mark the beginning of their public leadership.

## Guest Editor's Introduction

Mindi Thompson

We are a people fascinated by stories. Whether it's a quick human interest piece on the 5 o'clock news or the latest bestseller-turned-blockbuster movie, we love immersing ourselves in the lives of others. Perhaps it's an escape from our humdrum reality for an hour or two. Or perhaps it's an overgrown obsession with what goes on behind closed doors. Whatever the reason, stories are one of the most effective ways to change someone's perspective in order to affect their behavior. Don't tell me I need to do this or that—tell me about an ordinary person who overcame incredible odds to achieve a long-anticipated goal. And if that goal just so happens to be something you wanted me to do, then so much the better! Our stories today may be more complex than Aesop's fables from long ago but they accomplish the same purpose. Stories inspire, motivate, and unite.

I think that's why we are so fascinated by the *Joseph novella* (Genesis 37–50). These chapters provide a glimpse into a family as complex as any TV drama or reality show. Joseph and his brothers are complicated characters. Their struggles, full of both triumphs and failures, echo the challenges we all face. There's jealousy, sibling rivalry, betrayal and a cover-up . . . and that's just in the first chapter! No wonder artists, writers, and composers have been retelling these tales ever since. We've even got a Broadway-style musical about the Joseph novella that is dedicated to the dreamer in all of us—“*Any dream will do.*”

There's no song and dance in these articles, but the authors are all just as fascinated by the story as I am. **ANDY WALKER** provides a close reading of the novella as a whole, focusing on themes present in Genesis and beyond, including the introduction of the suffering servant. **JOHN WILLIS** examines God's presence with Joseph, comparing other texts with this Immanuel (“God with us”) promise. **DANNY MATHEWS** then compares Joseph and Moses as royal figures for their leadership at different points in Israel's history, followed by **KILNAM CHA** examining Joseph's economic policies as second-in-command in Egypt, comparing his unjust actions to biblical texts dealing with the poor and needy. **STUART LOVE** shifts the focus to Judah, reminding us that there are other characters in the novella whose actions provide a moral to the story. **MARK MANGANO** continues with Judah's role in the narrative as a story of redemption, while **RODNEY ASHLOCK** brings Judah and Joseph together as a case study in good leadership. Shifting focus again, I contribute a unique perspective on the female characters in the novella. Concluding our scholarly examination of Joseph's story, **GLENN PEMBERTON**'s annotated resource guide reminds us that the point of studying God's work in the life of these characters is to see how God might be at work in our lives. Finally, **SARAH DANNEMILLER**'s poem reminds us that sometimes dreams turn into nightmares on the way to “happily ever after.”

**MINDI THOMPSON** SERVES AS BOTH ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF OLD TESTAMENT AND DIRECTOR OF DISTANCE EDUCATION FOR THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AT ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY IN ABILENE, TEXAS (MELINDA.THOMPSON@ACU.EDU).

