

# Joseph and his Wonderful Coat

Jacob, Isaac's son, was a rich farmer who lived in Canaan. He had twelve sons and, although he loved them all, he loved his son Joseph most of all. He gave Joseph a wonderful coat. Joseph strutted around in it, thinking himself very grand. His brothers were jealous. They hated him because Joseph said he dreamed he would be much more important than them.

One day, Jacob sent Joseph out to a far valley to his brothers and their flocks of sheep and goats. When his brothers saw Joseph coming, one said, "Let's kill him. We could tell our father that a wild animal has eaten him."

But another brother said, "We mustn't kill him. Let's put him into that pit." Just then, some merchants passed by on their way



The merchants took Joseph to Egypt and sold him as a slave to Potiphar, the captain of the King's guard. Joseph worked hard and soon Potiphar put him in charge of his household. For a time, all went well, but Potiphar's wife wanted to make trouble for Joseph. She told Potiphar, "That Joseph has been very rude to me."

It wasn't true, but Potiphar was angry with Joseph. He had him put in prison. God had made Joseph very good at telling people what their dreams meant and he explained the other prisoners' dreams to them.

After Joseph had been in prison for two years, the King of Egypt had a strange dream. He asked his wise men what it meant, but no one could explain it. Then someone remembered that Joseph was good at dreams. He was brought to the King. The King told Joseph his dream.



Joseph said, "Your dream means that for seven years there will be good harvests with lots of food for everyone. But then there will be seven years when the harvests are bad and many people will be hungry, even starving."

The King was so pleased with Joseph, he put him in charge of all the stores of food in Egypt. For seven years, there were good harvests and Joseph made sure the extra grain was stored away. When the seven bad years came, Joseph had plenty of food to sell to the people.

Far away in Canaan, Joseph's father and brothers grew short of food. Jacob said, "You must go to Egypt to buy grain. They have plenty". Ten brothers began the journey, leaving the youngest, Benjamin, behind.

In Egypt, the brothers asked the governor if they could buy food. They didn't know he was their brother Joseph, but Joseph knew at once they were his brothers. He spoke sternly and asked them about their father and Benjamin.



He said, "I'll sell you food but when you come again, you must bring Benjamin with you. I'll keep your brother Simeon here until you come back."

The brothers started for home. On the way, they opened the sacks of grain they had bought and found the money they had paid to Joseph. They were very frightened. "God is punishing us for selling Joseph," the brothers said. They didn't know Joseph had told his servants to put it there.

After a while, Jacob and his sons had eaten all the grain. They had to go back to Egypt to buy more, but this time they took Benjamin with them. Again, they asked Joseph to sell them food and still they didn't know he was their brother. Joseph ordered his servants to give them a meal, making sure Benjamin had plenty to eat.

The next morning, the eleven brothers started for home.





On the way, Joseph's guards caught up with them and opened the sacks of grain. In Benjamin's sack was Joseph's silver cup. Joseph had told his guards to hide it there. He wanted to test his brothers.

The guards marched the scared brothers back to Egypt and took them to Joseph. "You may go home," he said, "but you must leave Benjamin here with me."

The brothers were very upset. "Please let us take Benjamin with us," they begged. "Our father has already lost one son. If he loses Benjamin, it will break his heart. Let one of us stay here instead of Benjamin." Joseph knew then that his brothers had changed and were sorry for what they had done to him long ago.

"I am Joseph, your brother whom you sold as a slave," Joseph cried. "But it was God who sent me to Egypt so that I could save you from dying of hunger. God promised Abraham that the nation he founded would be safe. Go back to my father and bring him here, with all your family and your animals. I will give you good land and we will all live well and happily in Egypt."

## Moses in the Bulrushes

Many years after Joseph died, Egypt had a new King who was very cruel to Joseph's family, the Hebrews, who lived in Egypt. He made them work as slaves. They were forced to make bricks of mud to build great cities and temples for the King and to work on the land.

The Hebrews worked hard from early morning until late at night, watched over by Egyptian guards, and they were beaten if they tried to rest.

There were so many Hebrews in Egypt by this time that the King was frightened they would rebel against him and seize his throne. So he made a new law and ordered his soldiers to kill all the Hebrew baby boys as soon as they were born.

One Hebrew mother managed to hide her new baby son, called Moses, until he was three months old. But as he grew older, she was afraid the Egyptian soldiers would hear him crying, find him and then kill him.