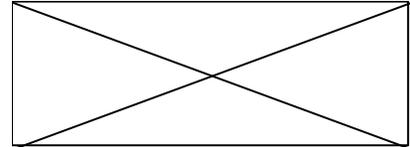


Joseph

Genesis 37



After many long years of waiting, Jacob and Rachel finally had a baby. It was a day of great rejoicing, and they named this son Joseph. Jacob had eleven other sons, but Joseph was his favorite son. So he made Joseph a beautiful coat with all the colors of the rainbow woven into it. One night, Joseph had

an unusual dream. The next day, he told his brothers, "I dreamed we were bundling up wheat. Suddenly, my bundle of wheat rose high in the air, and all of your bundles bowed down before it." "So you must think you're better than we are!" One day, Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers. They were

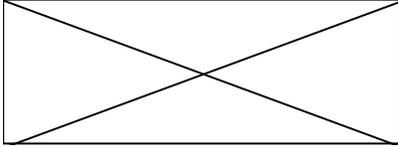
far off, tending flocks of sheep, but they spotted him walking in the distance. "Here comes the dreamer," they said. "Let's kill him!" And they began to plot against him. "No, don't kill him," said the oldest. "Just throw him into this hole." When Joseph arrived, they jumped on him, ripped off his beautiful coat, and threw him down into a deep hole. Then they sat and ate their lunch. When a band of merchants passed by, the brothers sold Joseph as a slave.

They wiped animal blood on Joseph's coat and took it to their father, telling him that Joseph was dead.

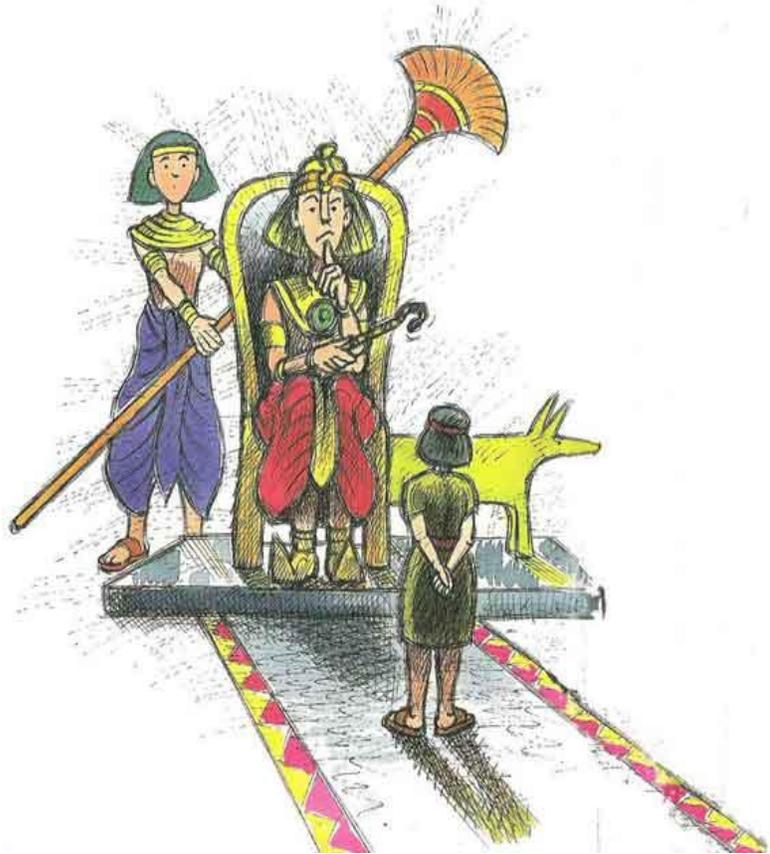


Joseph in Egypt

Genesis 39-41

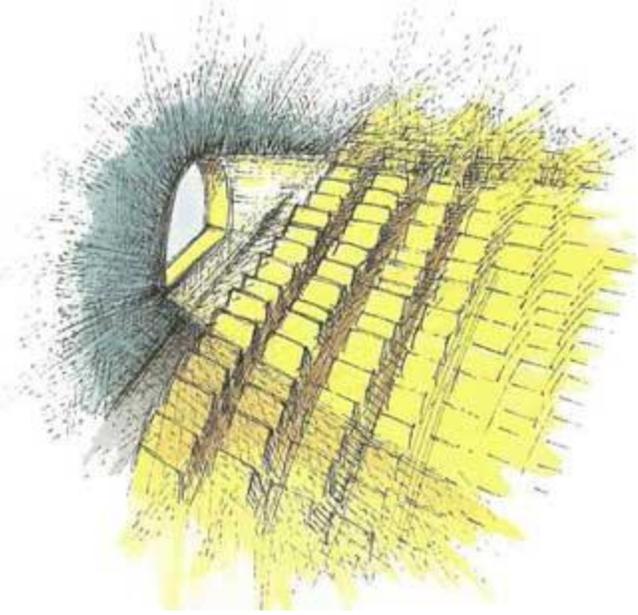


Joseph was taken to Egypt and sold to a man named Potiphar. Joseph worked hard, and soon Potiphar put him in charge of his entire household. But Potiphar's wife was not a good woman, and one day she accused Joseph of betraying her husband. Although her words were false, Joseph was put in prison. But even in prison, he obeyed God. Joseph liked helping people. Soon he was released to help Pharaoh, the leader of all of Egypt.



"Joseph, I've heard you are able to explain dreams," said Pharaoh.

"Only with God's help," replied Joseph.



God showed Joseph what Pharaoh's dreams meant. Joseph said, "God is warning you. After seven years with plenty of food, the rains will stop. Nothing will grow for the next seven years. But if you plan, you can save your people from starving. You must store food during the good years. Then you can feed your people during the bad years."

"You are a wise man, Joseph," said Pharaoh. "You shall be in charge of all this." Joseph worked hard to carry out the plans that God showed him. He made sure that huge amounts of grain were stored. And when the bad years came, Egypt had plenty of food to feed its people.

From Prison to Palace

In explaining the king's dreams, Joseph gave the king the good news and the bad news. Joseph didn't simply tell the king the meaning of his dreams, though. He gave the king good advice and a plan.

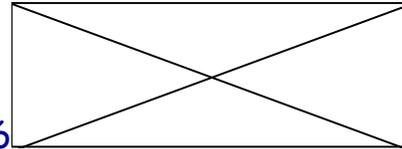
Many people are able to see the problems, but do not offer the workable solutions. Joseph showed that he trusted God to do what he had promised him. The king recognized that God was giving Joseph wisdom, so he made Joseph the second most powerful person in Egypt.

Joseph's promotion came suddenly, and possibly when he least expected it. It is easy for us to think of Joseph as an "overnight success." We tend to forget, however, that God was training Joseph through thirteen years of hardship.

When the time came for Joseph to move to the top, he was prepared. He had learned how to trust God through good times and bad, He had also learned how to be sensitive to the needs of others.

Joseph Helps

Genesis 42-46



People from all over came to Egypt for food. Even

Joseph's brothers came to buy grain. They bowed before the Egyptian governor—not knowing he was Joseph!

"We are the twelve sons of Jacob," they said. "But one brother is dead, and our youngest brother, Benjamin, is at home."

"I think you are spies," said Joseph. "But if what you say is true, then send for this other brother."

They were frightened. Was God punishing them for selling Joseph as a slave? Finally, Joseph allowed them to return to their homeland with food. But he kept one brother, and made them promise to return with Benjamin.



When he heard his sons' story, Jacob sadly agreed to let Benjamin go to Egypt. This time, Joseph invited the brothers into his home, but Joseph still didn't say who he was. Before they left, he hid a silver cup in their things. Then he sent his servant after them. "You've stolen my master's cup!" said the servant. "Now Benjamin must return to Egypt!"

"Please don't take him!" they cried. "Our father lost his son Joseph. It would kill him to lose Benjamin too."

At last Joseph cried out. "I am Joseph! God spared me so I could help you." He sent the brothers back home to get their father. Then he gave them a fine piece of land.

Bad Things Happen to God's People Too

Jacob and his family were not sheltered from the effects of the famine. Their food supply, like that of all their neighbors, ran dangerously low. We are also subjected to natural disasters and other problems. Just because we believe in God doesn't mean we will never be hurt again.

God rarely removes us from the natural calamities that come to both believers and unbelievers. These times are circumstances to show people that we trust God, even when times are tough.

God used the further famine to cause Jacob's family to move to Egypt. In doing so, he was getting ready to fulfill another part of the promise he made many years before to Abraham.