

## Joseph the Dreamer

### Genesis Chapters 30 – 50

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Most people when they hear my name, Joseph, think of my coat of many colors, but there is more to my story than that coat, which incidentally got me into a lot of trouble, and nearly cost me my life. Let me start at the beginning. I was the next-to-last son of my father Jacob, but the first-born son of my mother Rachel. You see, she was childless for many years, while her older, shall we say, less beautiful sister Leah had 6 sons, and gave her handmaid to Jacob so that any children born of that union would also be considered Leah's. Well, that didn't go down very well with my mother, so she gave **her** handmaid to her husband Jacob and they had more sons.

Finally, God heard my mother Rachel's prayers with two sons – me and then Benjamin. The sad part was that she died while giving birth to Ben. My dad took her death pretty hard. I did too. She was his favorite!

So now there was one daughter and twelve sons altogether – including Baby Ben, who arrived just in time. He was my only full brother. All the other brothers resented me because I had a special multi-colored coat. I wore it everywhere. This was before my mother died. My brothers knew I was a special son to both Dad and Mother. I soon wore out something else – my welcome.

And the dreams I had did not make me popular either. One night I dreamed of the sun, moon, and 10 stars and all of them bowed down to my star. Another night I dreamed of 12 sheaves of wheat bowing down to my sheaf. Even my mother and father thought that was too much when I interpreted the dreams to them.

My brothers could not stand it any longer. They started to plot my death. They were away from home – the oldest ten – tending the sheep. Dad sent me to see what they needed and to take them some supplies. I wore my favorite coat, of course. They recognized me when I was a long way off because of the bright colors. They talked among themselves. "This is our chance." Some of them wanted to kill me at once, but Reuben suggested putting me down a dry well until they figured out the best way to handle this. He was planning to rescue me after dark and send me home to Father. They grabbed me when I arrived and threw me into that dry well.

While Reuben was away checking on the sheep, the others saw a caravan of Ishmaelites with their camels loaded with spices headed for Egypt. They thought, instead of killing me, they might as well make a profit [that's spelled p-r-o-f-i-t, not the other kind of prophet.] and sell me to them as a slave and they could sell me as a slave in Egypt and also make a nice profit.

After I was sold and on my way to Egypt, my brothers killed a kid – no, not a child, a baby goat and dipped my good coat in the blood of that animal, and took the coat back to my father and said, “Look what we found. Dad knew right away it was my coat and assumed that a wild animal had killed me. He was grief-stricken.

I was not dead – nosiree – I was going to Egypt – as a slave! There was no time to tell my father or my little brother Ben good-bye.

When I arrived in Egypt I was placed on the auction block and sold for a nice price to none other than Potiphar who was an official in Egypt who managed Pharaoh's household affairs.

God was with me and my master recognized the presence of God in my life and my honesty and hard work. So Potiphar put me in charge of all his personal business. God blessed the home of Potiphar because of my faith and faithfulness.

As time went on, Potiphar's wife fell in love with me and tried to lure me into her bedroom. I refused, of course. I couldn't violate my master's trust in me and sin against God. She pestered me day after day, but I stood my ground. One day I came into the house to do my work and none of the household servants were there. She grabbed me by my cloak and said, “Sleep with me.”

I fled from her and the temptation, but she held onto the cloak. She called her household servants to come and see Joseph's cloak and told them I tried to seduce her and when she screamed, I ran away. None of it was true, of course. She kept the cloak there until her husband came home and told him the same story. So Potiphar had me thrown into prison.

God was with me – even in prison. The head jailer was so impressed with me; he made me manager over the whole jail operations.

Two prisoners had been officials in Pharaoh's palace – the chief baker and the head cup-bearer. While they were in prison, they each had a dream the same night. When I asked them about their sad faces, they told me of their dreams and asked me

what I thought they meant. The cup-bearer told me his dream first. He dreamed of a vine with three branches that budded, blossomed, and produced grapes which he squeezed into Pharaoh's cup and gave the cup to Pharaoh. I explained the three vines meant three days and he would be released from jail and go back to work for Pharaoh. I asked him to remember me to Pharaoh because I did nothing to deserve being in jail.

When the baker saw my encouraging interpretation of the cup-bearer's dream, he told me his dream. He dreamed three wicker baskets were on his head. The top basket was filled with all kinds of pastries and birds were picking at them while it was on his head. I then interpreted his dream for him. The three baskets are three days. Pharaoh will take off your head, impale you on a post and the birds will pick your bones clean.

Sure enough, three days later both men were released by Pharaoh in time for a great feast he had planned for his birthday. He restored the cupbearer to his old job and he handed Pharaoh his cup. But the baker was impaled on a post as I had said would happen. But the cupbearer forgot me in jail.

I tested them by saying "No brother, no grain" and threw them into jail for three days. I let them out after that and told them to prove that they were telling the truth I would hold one of them hostage.

Reuben told his brothers: "Didn't I tell you not to hurt Joseph? But you wouldn't listen to me."

I had been talking to them through an interpreter so they did not know I could understand every word they said. So I had Simon tied up and thrown into jail until they would return with Benjamin. Then I had sacks for each of the remaining brothers filled with food and secretly put their money back into their sacks. They loaded their sacks on their donkeys and started on their journey back home to Canaan.

When they stopped for the night, one of the brothers reached into a sack to feed his donkey and discovered the money in his sack. Each brother then checked his own sack and sure enough all the money they had paid for the grain was in each sack. They were both puzzled and frightened.

When they got home they told their father everything that had happened to them – including leaving Simeon behind until they brought Benjamin back with them. Jacob wept. He said: "Now I have lost two sons and if anything happens to Benjamin, it will cause my own death."

But the famine got worse and worse and they needed more supplies from Egypt. The brothers reminded Jacob – no food unless they brought Benjamin with them. Jacob asked why they told the Egyptian that they had a younger brother? They didn't know the Egyptian would ask them to bring their little brother. Judah finally said he would lay down his life if anything happened to Benjamin. They were almost out of food so Jacob relented and let them take Benjamin with them.

He sent them with balm, spices, perfumes, pistachio nuts, and almonds, and lots of money to pay back double what was hidden in their sacks the last time. They took the goods – and Benjamin and lost no time getting back to Egypt to meet me, not knowing I was their long lost brother. When I saw Benjamin with them, I told the house steward to take them inside and prepare a banquet for them. They thought it was a trap so they told the steward the story of their previous visit and of finding the money they had paid the previous visit tucked inside each of their sacks. But he told them that the God of their father must have given them a bonus because he received the money they gave him.

When I returned home my brothers presented me with the gifts they brought and bowed down low before me. I asked them about their father – “How is he? Is he still alive?” Then I asked if that was their youngest brother Benjamin. When they said that it was, I hurried out of the room, overcome with emotion at finally seeing him again after more than twenty years.

Then I washed my face and returned to my brothers and said: “Let's eat.”

I ate at my private table while they ate at a separate table. I made sure that Benjamin's plate was piled high, but everybody had plenty to eat and drink. I instructed the steward to fill the bags full for the trip home, but to put my silver chalice in the top of Benjamin's sack. Also, put the money they paid in each sack.

Early in the morning they loaded the sacks on the donkeys and started home. They were barely out of town when I sent the steward after them asking “Is this how you treat my master's hospitality by stealing his silver chalice?”

They were dumbfounded. They told the steward: “If anyone has stolen his chalice, let him die, and we will be your slaves.”

They put the sacks on the ground and opened them up for the steward's inspection. The chalice showed up in Benjamin's sack. They ripped their clothes in despair, loaded up the donkeys, and came back into the city.

I was still at home when they returned. They threw themselves to the ground in front of me. I asked them how they could do this. Didn't they know they would get caught? They all offered themselves as his slaves. I told them I couldn't do that to them since only one was guilty. The rest were free to return to their father..

Judah pleaded with Joseph: "Let me take Benjamin's place and become your slave for it would kill our father Jacob if they didn't return with Benjamin."

I could not hold myself in any longer. I sent everyone out of the room except my brothers and me. That's when I broke down and wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard me and reported it to Pharaoh. When I finally composed myself enough to talk, I said to them: "I am Joseph."

My brothers were speechless. They could believe what they were hearing.

I asked them to come closer and asked about our father. I said: I am the brother you sold into slavery into Egypt, but do not feel badly. God was behind it and sent me here ahead of you to save your lives. This famine will continue for four more years. Go get our father. Tell him Joseph is alive and well. Come all of you – your children, grandchildren, your flocks and herds as fast as you can and I will give you a place in the land of Goshen where you will not only survive, you will thrive.

And that's what they did. God took care of us and prospered us as long as Pharaoh lived. Near the end of my life I made them promise to bury me in the land of Canaan that God promised our great-grandfather Abraham.

God took care of me because I trusted Him. If YOU put your trust in God, He will take care of you, too. Amen.