

The Jealous Brothers of Joseph

Jacob returned to the land of Canaan where his father Isaac and grandfather Abraham had lived many years ago. God had blessed Jacob and his wife Rachel with a large family of twelve sons. Now God appeared again to Jacob and blessed him. God said: "You will no longer be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name. Many nations and kings will come from you. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give to you and to your children after you."

Soon after this, Jacob's father Isaac died, at the age of 180 years old, and Jacob and his brother Esau buried their father.

The sons of Israel (Jacob) were shepherds, so they spent much time living far away from home in the fields where they could find plenty of grass and water for their flocks of sheep. One day, Israel sent his younger son Joseph out to see how they were doing. He gave Joseph a beautiful coat to keep him warm during his journey.

When Joseph's brothers saw him they were jealous. They knew how much their father loved Joseph, and how many gifts he had given to him. Joseph also had dreams that seemed to say he would be the leader of the brothers someday. Now the brothers plotted to kill him, but Reuben, the oldest, said "No! Don't harm him. Put him into the pit, but do not kill him," for Reuben planned to rescue Joseph and bring him back to Jacob.

When Joseph came closer, the brothers took off his robe and threw him into the pit. They ignored his cries for help until a caravan of traders passed by on their way to Egypt. The brothers decided to sell Joseph to the traders, who later sold Joseph as a slave to Potiphar, the captain of the Pharaoh's (the King's) guard.

Potiphar trusted Joseph and put him in charge of the Pharaoh's household, but Potiphar's wife deceived Joseph and had him put into jail. Later, when the King wanted someone to interpret his dreams, he was told that Joseph could tell him what they meant. Joseph told the Pharaoh that there would be seven good years of harvest; after these good years, there would be seven years of bad crops and famine. There would not be enough food to feed the people.

Joseph told the Pharaoh to store up food during the good years so there would be enough to feed the people during the bad years. Pharaoh was so impressed that he put Joseph in charge and made him the most powerful man in Egypt, next to himself!