



The Bible tells us Jacob received a new name from the Lord: Israel. Israel had a very large family – 12 sons – that’s a lot of boys! But one son in particular was Israel’s favorite: Joseph. In today’s story we learn about Joseph and some very sad things that happen to him. But as we learn more about Joseph, we see that God doesn’t forget Joseph and that God does not forget the promises He has made.

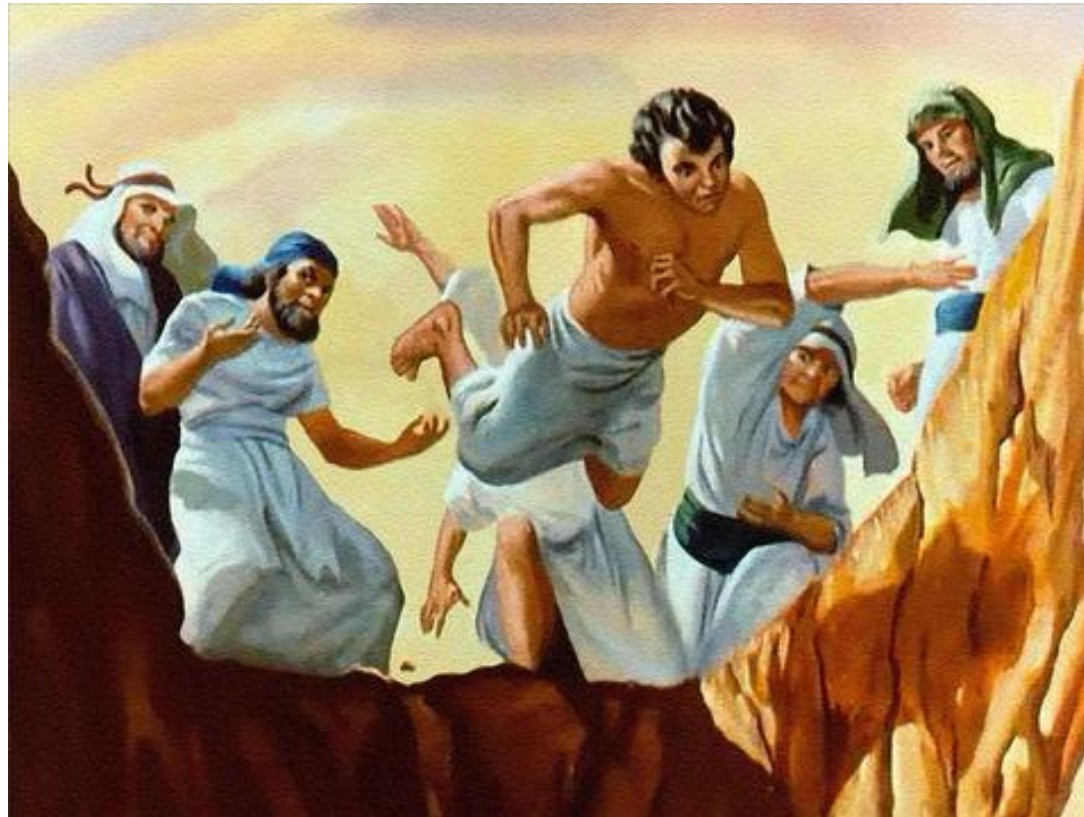


The Bible tells us that Israel and his family lived in the land of Canaan. Israel had a very large family, and we see in Genesis 37 that he has 12 sons. Joseph, however, was Israel's favorite son. Most of Joseph's brothers were older than him, and he had one brother who was younger. Israel had Joseph when he was very old and he loved Joseph's mother, Rachel, very much. Joseph was a reminder to Israel of Rachel and how much Israel had loved her. But making Joseph the favorite was a sin that caused much unhappiness for the whole family. To show Joseph how much he was loved, Israel gave his son a coat. It was a very special coat. The coat was made with many beautiful colors. Upon seeing the coat, Joseph's brothers were quite upset. When they saw Joseph in it, they knew their father had given it to him. Because of this special gift, Joseph's brothers hated him.



Joseph the Dreamer

It was God's plan that one day Joseph would be a great leader. To show this, God gave young Joseph a dream. The dream was that the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to Joseph. The dream meant that all his brothers and even his mother and father would one day come before Joseph and bow down to him. Joseph told his brothers and his father about the dream. That made the brothers angrier than before. "Does Joseph think we will bow down to him?" they said to each other. The Bible tells us the brothers were very jealous. They did not want God to give Joseph those dreams. The brother's hatred for Joseph grew. They did not like what God had in store for Joseph.



In the Pit

One day, Joseph's brothers had taken the sheep far away to find good green grass for them. Joseph had not gone with them. Later that day his father asked Joseph to go find the brothers and see if everything was okay and then to come back. The brothers saw Joseph coming from far away. At that moment, the brothers started to make a plan. "Here comes that dreamer!" the brothers said to each other. "Let's kill him." "No," said Reuben who was the oldest brother, "Do not kill him. Let's just throw him in this pit." The pit was a big deep hole in the ground and would fill up with water sometimes, but the pit was empty. When Joseph got close to his brothers, they grabbed him, tore off his beautiful coat, and threw him into the pit. This was an awful thing. Joseph cried out to his brothers to lift him out, but they ignored him. The Bible says they just sat down and ate their lunch.



Joseph the Slave

While the brothers were eating lunch, off in the distance they could see a group of people riding camels. There were lots of things packed on their camels like spices, cloths, and other things they were taking back to Egypt. One of the brothers named Judah said, “Instead of leaving Joseph in that pit, why don’t we sell him? These people will take him far away to Egypt and we’ll make some money!” So, the brothers quickly pulled Joseph from the pit and sold him to the men with the camels for 20 pieces of silver. The strangers took Joseph far away to Egypt.



Joseph's brothers would need to explain what happened to Joseph. So, they made up a big lie. They took Joseph's coat and ripped it, and then put blood all over it to make it look like he was attacked by a wild animal. The brothers went back to their father and showed Israel the ripped, bloodied coat. The Bible tells us Israel cried and was sad for a very long time.



In the Prison

Joseph was taken to Egypt and sold to a very important person in Egypt named Potiphar. Joseph worked hard for Potiphar. But one day, Potiphar's wife did a terrible thing and lied about Joseph. This made Potiphar very angry! Potiphar had Joseph thrown in prison. The Bible tells us that "the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison." Joseph was put in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Importantly the Bible tells us "the Lord was with Joseph."



While in prison, Joseph met two men. One was a cupbearer. A cupbearer is responsible for bringing the Pharaoh something to drink. The other man was a baker who made delicious breads and sweets for Pharaoh. Both men had made mistakes in serving Pharaoh and were now in prison! The Bible tells us that one night both men had different dreams. Both men told Joseph their dreams. The cupbearer told his dream, and Joseph told the cupbearer what the dream meant. “The three branches are three days. In three days, Pharaoh will take you out of prison and make you his cupbearer once again.” Then Joseph asked the cupbearer for a favor in return. “When you are free, remember me. Be kind to me. Tell Pharaoh about me so that I can get out of this prison.” When the baker heard what Joseph said was good news, he told Joseph his dream, “I also had a dream. I dreamt there were three bread baskets on my head. In the top basket there were all kinds of baked food for Pharaoh. But the birds were eating this food out of the basket on my head.” Joseph answered, “I will tell you what the dream means. The three baskets stand for three days. Before the end of three days, you will die.” And in three days, just as Joseph had said, the baker died.

The Bible tells us that the cupbearer did not remember Joseph.



In the Palace

The Bible says after two whole years had passed, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt had a dream. In his dream Pharaoh was standing by the river when seven cows came walking out of the river. These cows were chunky and healthy. They went to the edge of the river and started eating some of the tall plants that grew there. After those seven cows, seven more cows came walking out of the river! These cows were very scrawny and sick. Then, in Pharaoh's dream, the sick-looking cows went over to the healthy cows and ate them! And then Pharaoh woke up.

In the morning, Pharaoh woke up and he was worried. He did not know what his dreams meant. Pharaoh called wise men to come to his palace. Pharaoh wanted the wise men to help him understand what his dreams meant. All the wise men of Egypt came. Pharaoh told them about his dreams, but no one could tell him what they meant. Then the cupbearer remembered Joseph.



Once Joseph heard Pharaoh's dreams, he quickly revealed what they meant. There will be seven years of plenty in Egypt. Plenty of food and things to eat, but after the seven years of plenty are up, there will be seven years of famine. That means there will not be a lot of food to eat. Upon hearing Joseph's explanation, Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of food and planning for all of Egypt. This was a very, very important job. Joseph left the prison and moved to the palace.



God helped Joseph to come up with a plan. The people in Egypt were to bring all their extra food to Joseph and he would store it very carefully. Then when there were no crops growing and no more food during the years of famine, the people in Egypt could use the extra food that had been stored away.



Joseph the Ruler

The seven years of plenty came and went. Joseph worked hard to make sure there was plenty of food put away for the seven years of famine, and now that time had come. Egyptians would come from all over to get their food. Even people from other countries would come to buy food from Joseph in Egypt. There was no food anywhere! People from everywhere were very hungry. One very special group of people that made their way to Egypt to buy food were Joseph's older brothers.



They made their way to Egypt and came before Joseph to ask to buy some food. But they did not recognize him. A lot had happened to Joseph. Unlike his brothers, Joseph looked very different than he had 20 years earlier. Now he looked and acted like an Egyptian. He did not have a beard. His face was clean-shaven. He did not wear clothes like the shepherds in Canaan. Instead, he had a beautiful white linen robe with a big gold necklace and on his finger was the king's signet ring. And he sat on the throne!

Joseph looked at his brothers and thought, "I wonder if they are as mean as they used to be? I wonder if they are sorry that they treated me as poorly as they did so long ago." God had helped Joseph forgive his brothers, but he decided to find out if his brothers had changed or if they were the same mean men as they were long ago. Joseph's brothers came before him and bowed down to honor him. They did that in respect for Joseph's position. They did not know they were bowing down to their brother. This was just like the dream Joseph had where the sun, moon, and stars bowed down to him.



Joseph was about to see if his brothers had changed. Joseph said to his brothers, “You are enemies of Egypt and you have a plan to hurt us!” The brothers were scared and promised they were only shepherds trying to buy food. Joseph told them to prove they were not enemies of Egypt; one of the brothers must stay in Egypt while they went back to Canaan and got the youngest brother.



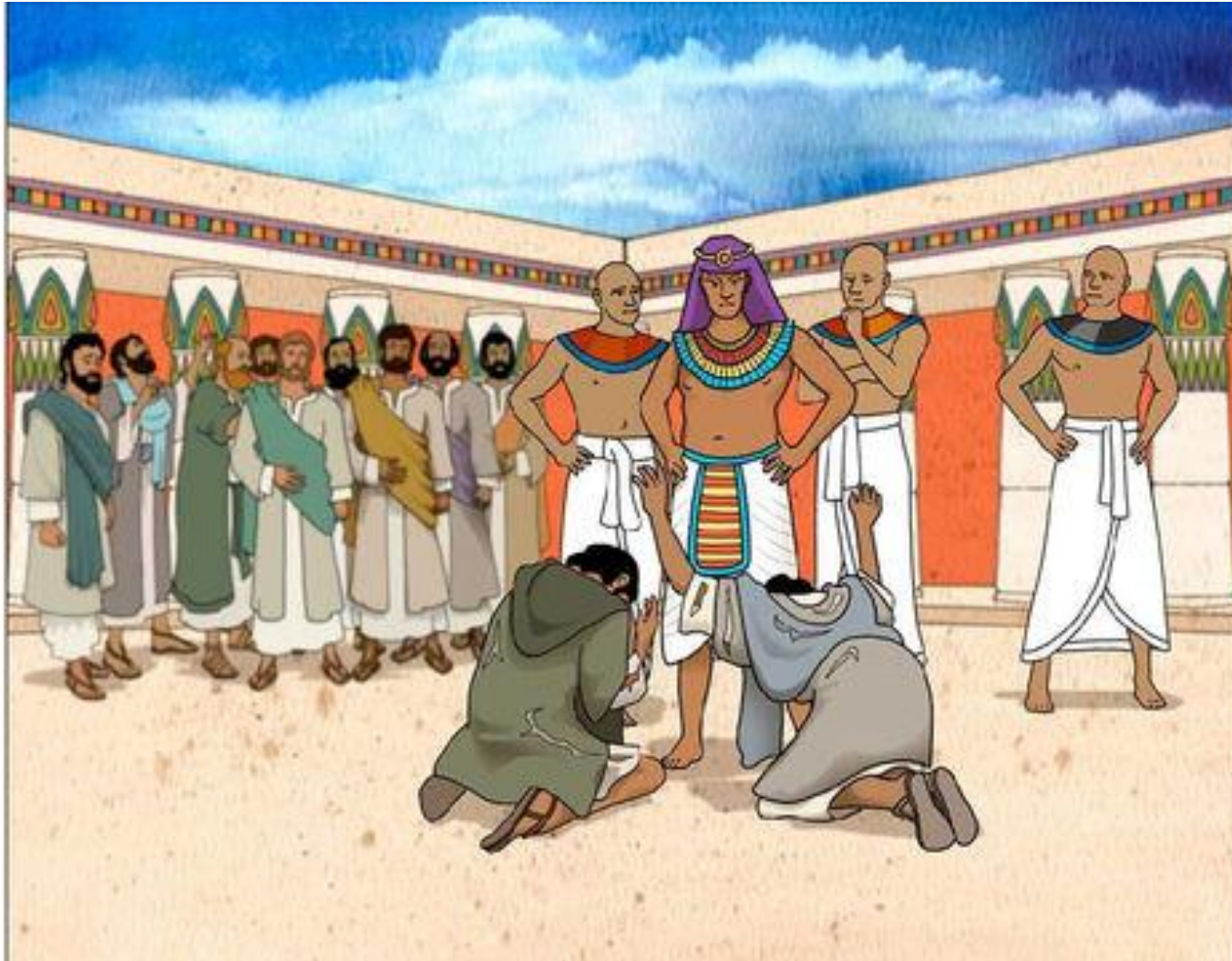
Nine of the brothers took the food they bought and went back to Canaan. They would have to bring Benjamin, the youngest brother, back to Egypt. Once Israel heard what had happened in Egypt, he became worried. “I will not let you take Benjamin to Egypt. He had no choice but to let his sons return to Egypt. Maybe the governor, the person in charge of the food, would be kind. So once again, the brothers started off for Egypt, but this time Benjamin went with them.



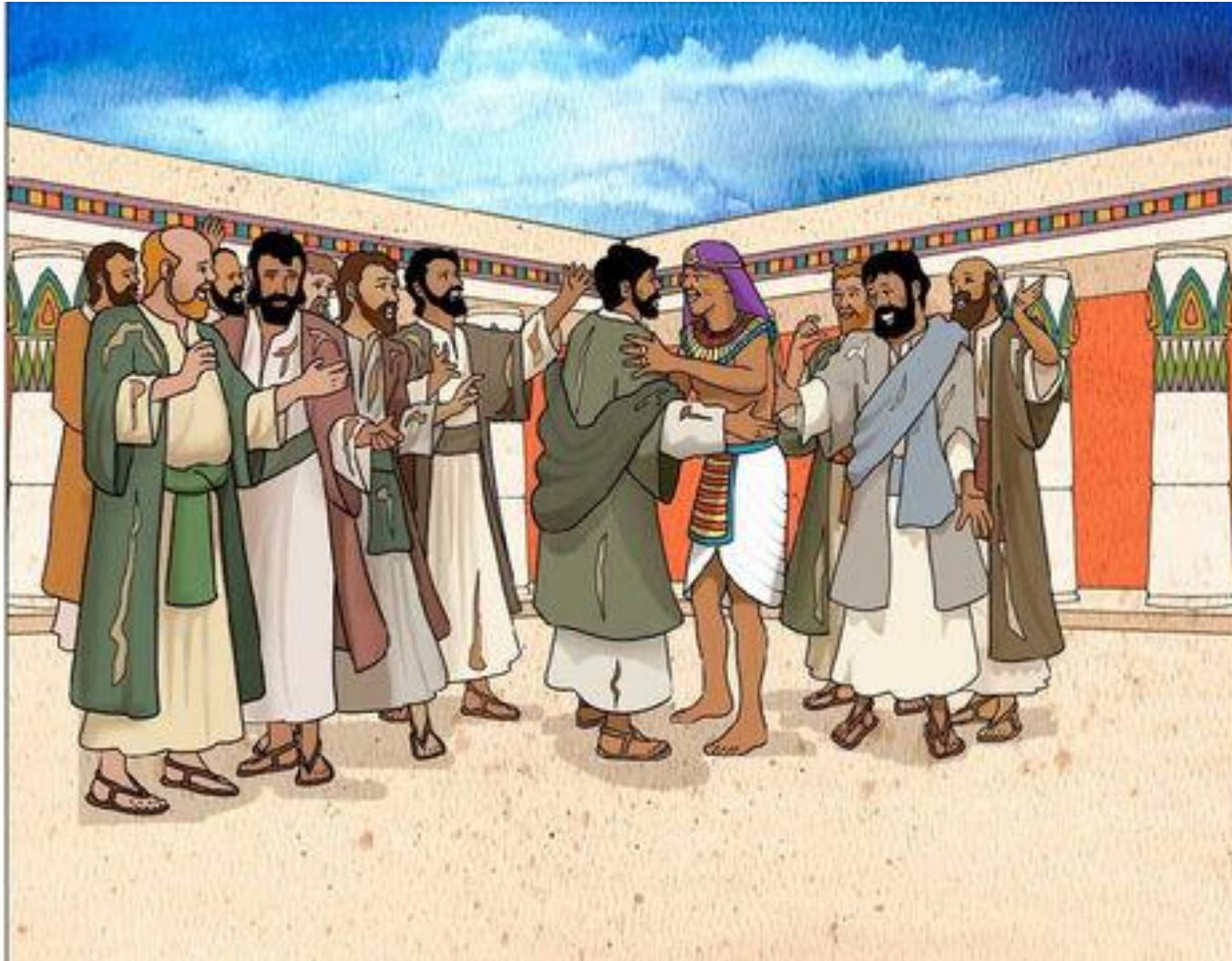
A Second Meeting with Joseph

The brothers arrived in Egypt and went straight to buy more grain and food. When Joseph saw his brothers coming with Benjamin, as he had told them to do, he told a servant to take them to his house and to prepare a big dinner. When Joseph came home, the brothers bowed down before him. And Joseph saw Benjamin. Joseph commanded the servants to serve the food. After the meal, Joseph had his servants fill all the brother's sacks with food. Then, when the brothers weren't looking, Joseph put his own silver cup inside Benjamin's bag. But before the brother's left, they searched the bags and found Joseph's silver cup in Benjamin's bag. Joseph told them that Benjamin must stay in Egypt and be his slave. The oldest brother Judah begged to switch places with Benjamin.

Judah would be Joseph's slave instead of Benjamin.



Now Joseph knew that his brothers had changed. They had shown that they cared about their father and each other. Joseph told his servants to leave the room. Then Joseph started to cry loudly as he said, “I am Joseph! I am your brother!” The brothers were shocked, then they became afraid. “What would Joseph do with them? Would he punish them for throwing him in the pit and selling him as a slave?” they wondered.



“Come, close to me. Don’t be afraid. I will not hurt you. Do not be angry with yourselves for selling me. It was really God who sent me to Egypt. Hurry home and tell my father that I am alive. Then come back with him and live in Egypt where I can care for you.” Joseph had the donkeys and carts loaded with food and gifts for his brothers to take back to Canaan.



As the sons arrived home, they announced to their father that Joseph was alive. Israel could hardly believe it. Israel, his sons, their families, and servants packed up all their things to go to Egypt. The Bible tells us there were seventy people in Israel's family. Before they left, Israel wanted to be sure that God wanted him to go to Egypt. Israel prayed to God, and God answered his prayer: "I am God. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you." God was going to keep His promises to Israel, as He had done with Abraham and Isaac.



Once they arrived near to Egypt, Israel and his family settled in a place called Goshen. Joseph heard that his father and family were in Goshen and he went out to meet them. The Bible tells us Joseph and Israel hugged for a very long time and cried many tears of joy. Israel did not think he would see his son again, but he was very much alive. Israel and his family lived in the land of Goshen and grew very large. Israel and his family worshipped God there for a very long time.

Questions for Review

Have the kids answer “Yes” if it is true, or “no” with the correct answer if it is false.

- Joseph told his brother about his dreams. (Yes)
- Joseph was not his father’s favorite son. (No! He was his favorite.)
- Israel, Joseph’s father, gave him a beautiful coat. (Yes)
- Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery. (Yes)
- Joseph went to Florida. (No! Joseph was taken to Egypt.)
- Joseph told his Pharaoh what his dreams meant. (Yes)
- Joseph made sure plenty of food was stored for the 7 years of famine (Yes)
- Joseph’s sisters came to Egypt to buy food. (No! His brothers.)
- Joseph’s brothers recognized him immediately. (No! They did not recognize him.)
- Joseph put a toy in Benjamin’s sack. (No! He put a silver cup.)
- Joseph’s father could not come to Egypt because his wheelchair broke. (No! He came to Egypt.)
- God was faithful to Joseph, Israel, and their whole family. (Yes)
- God was with Joseph the whole time and never left. (Yes)

Scripture Memory and Hand Motions for Summer:

“The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.” Exodus 14:14

- **The Lord** (point upwards)
- **Will fight** (punch the air or shadow box)
- **For you; you** (point towards audience)
- **Need only to be still.** (stand completely still or frozen)

