

# JOSEPH IN HIS FATHER'S HOME

Genesis 37

## STRUCTURE

**Key-person:** Joseph

**Key-locations:** Canaan and Egypt

**Key-repetitions:**

- Reasons Joseph was hated by his brothers: he tattled on them (Gen 37:2); he was his father's favorite son (Gen 37:3-4); he shared his dreams about ruling over them (Gen 37:5-8, 9-11).
- Clothes (cloak, coat, clothes): Jacob made a coat for Joseph (Gen 37:3-4); Joseph's brothers stripped him of his coat (Gen 37:23); Reuben tore his clothes (Gen 37:29); the brothers dipped Joseph's coat in blood and took it back to their father (Gen 37:31-33).
- Joseph suffering injustice: his father loved him more than he loved his other sons (Gen 37:3-4); his brothers sold him into slavery (Gen 37:12-36).

**Key-attitudes:**

- Jacob's preference for Joseph.
- Young Joseph's arrogance.
- Brothers' hatred for Joseph.

**Initial-situation:**

God promised Abraham that he would give Abraham's descendants the land of Canaan. He renewed his promise to Abraham's son Isaac who had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Jacob deceived his father in order to obtain the blessing promised to his brother Esau. To escape Esau's vengeance, Jacob fled to Laban, his mother's brother. After spending 20 years with Laban, Jacob returned to Canaan with two wives, two concubines, eleven sons and one daughter. God changed Jacob's name to Israel and said that the land promised to Abraham and Isaac would be passed on to Jacob's descendants.

**Initial-problem:**

When Joseph was seventeen years old, he gave his father a bad report on his half-brothers (Gen 37:2).

**Final-situation:**

Israel thought that a wild animal had killed his son Joseph, and Israel refused to be comforted.

## BIBLE STORY

Jacob lived in the land of Canaan where his father Isaac had lived. Joseph was seventeen years old when he tended his father's flocks with four of his half-brothers, the sons of his father's concubines. Joseph reported to his father the bad things his half-brothers were doing (Gen 37:1-2).

Jacob loved his son Joseph more than any of his other sons, because Joseph was the son of his favorite wife Rachel, and Joseph was born when Jacob was old. Jacob made Joseph a brightly colored long-sleeved coat. Joseph's brothers noticed their father's partiality. They hated Joseph and couldn't speak a kind word to him (Gen 37:3-4).

One day, Joseph told his brothers what he had dreamed and they hated him even more. He announced, "Listen to this dream I had. We were binding bundles of grain out in the field. Suddenly my bundle rose and stood up; your bundles gathered around mine and bowed down to it."

His brothers asked, "Do you think you'll rule over us? Will you actually boss us?" They hated Joseph even more because of his cocky attitude when he described his dream.

Joseph told his brothers, "I had another dream. I saw the sun, moon and eleven stars bow down to me!"

His father criticized Joseph, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother, your brothers and I actually bow down to you?" Joseph's brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept wondering about the dream (Gen 37:5-11).

Joseph's brothers went away from home to pasture their father's flocks. A few days later, Israel told Joseph, "Go and see how your brothers and the flocks are doing, and bring word back to me" (Gen 37:12-17).

Joseph tracked his brothers down. They saw him in the distance and said to each other, "Here comes that dreamer! Let's kill him and throw his body into a well and say that a wild animal killed him. We'll see what comes of his dreams."

Reuben intervened to rescue Joseph by saying, "Let's not kill him. Shed no blood. Throw him alive into this dry well, but don't hurt him."

Joseph reached his brothers. They stripped him of his fancy coat and threw him into a dry well.

Joseph's brothers sat down to eat. Looking up, they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites. Judah said, "Brothers, what will we gain if we kill our brother and hide his body? Let's sell him to the Ishmaelites; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood."

The other brothers agreed. They pulled Joseph up out of the well and sold him for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt (Gen 37:18-29).

Reuben wasn't with his brothers when the traders came by. Reuben returned to the well and saw that Joseph wasn't there. Reuben ripped his clothes in despair. Reuben went back to his brothers and said, "The boy isn't there! What am I gonna do?"

The brothers took Joseph's coat, slaughtered a goat and dipped the coat in its blood. They took the fancy coat back to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it. Do you think this is your son's coat?"

Israel recognized the coat and said, "It's my son's coat! A wild animal has torn Joseph to pieces." Israel refused to be comforted and said, "I'll go down to my grave mourning for my son" (Gen 37:30-35).

### GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

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|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. What catches your attention in the story?                  | 5. How did the characters face their problems?                                       |
| 2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand? | 6. How have you faced similar problems?                                              |
| 3. Who are the main characters in the story?                  | 7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you? |
| 4. What problems did the characters face?                     | 8. What does the story tell about God?                                               |

### SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Jacob's (Israel's) actions contribute to conflict among his children?
2. How do parents today contribute to conflict among their children?
3. What were some of the reasons why Joseph was hated by his brothers?
4. Why did Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery?
5. What injustices did Joseph experience?
6. What did you learn from Joseph's story that could help someone face injustice?

### LIFE-LESSONS

1. **A person who is despised and rejected by his own family can be a servant of God.** Joseph was despised by his brothers (Gen 37:2-11).
2. **An individual can bring problems upon himself by provoking others.** Joseph provoked his brothers when he reported his brothers' wrongdoing (Gen 37:2) and by the way he described his dreams (Gen 37:5-11).
3. **God is omniscient and knows our future.** God knew what would happen to Joseph and to Israel's family. Joseph didn't know how his dreams would be accomplished; however, God made it clear that he would be the leader of his family.
4. **One who faithfully serves God may experience difficulties; however, God is in control.** Joseph faced many difficulties: he was despised in his own home (Gen 37:1-11); sold as a slave (Gen 37:12-28); tempted (Gen 39:6-13); falsely accused (Gen 39:14-19); imprisoned because of false accusations (Gen 39:19-20).

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### **Role-playing Drama:**

Have two or three volunteers pretend they are Joseph's brothers talking and justifying to themselves why Joseph deserved to be sold and taken to Egypt.