



Joseph said to them,
"Do not be afraid,
for am I in the place of
God? But as for you,
you meant evil against me;
but God meant it for good,
in order to bring it about
as it is this day,
to save many people alive."

—Genesis 50:19-20

6. How God Saves His People

God gave Jacob a large family, which became the start of a great nation. These people were to become God's chosen nation, one that would love Him and follow Him.

But that nation was still far in the future. God chose one of Jacob's sons to preserve His nation. But before God could use him, this son would have to go through many trials and hardships.



Genesis 35:18; 37:1–4

Jacob lived with his large family in the land of Canaan, in the same place where Abraham and Isaac had once walked. Rachel had another son here: Benjamin. Sadly, Rachel died. Now Jacob had twelve sons, but his favorite wife Rachel was no longer with him.

His oldest sons were already grown, and they cared for the huge herds their father owned. When Joseph grew older, he also helped with the sheep. Joseph became concerned for his brothers because they did not follow God's ways. He told his father about the wrong things his brothers did, and they hated him for this.

Jacob (whose new name was Israel) loved all his sons. But Joseph was especially dear to him, because he had been born to Rachel when Jacob was already old. He cared for Joseph and gave him a coat of many colors, which was a very rich gift. Now Joseph really began to stand out from his brothers.

Joseph's older brothers saw that their father loved Joseph more than he loved them, so they began to hate Joseph even more. They despised him so much that they could not even talk nicely to him.

1. How many sons did Jacob have?
2. Why did Jacob love Joseph more than all his other sons?
3. How did the brothers feel toward Joseph?



Genesis 37:5–11

One night, Joseph had an unusual dream. When he woke up the next morning, he shared it with his brothers. “I dreamed that we were together in the field binding sheaves. Suddenly, my sheaf stood in the middle of the field, and all your sheaves bowed down to it,” he told them.

When the brothers heard that, they were very angry with him. “What are you trying to say? Do you think we are going to bow down to you? Do you think you will become our king?” they asked indignantly. The brothers now hated him more than ever.

Later Joseph had another unusual dream. Again he told it to his brothers and father. “I dreamed that the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed down to me!” he told them. This dream made his older brothers even more angry. Jacob himself said sternly, “What kind of a dream have you dreamed? Do you really think that I, and your mother, and all your brothers will bow down before you?”

Joseph’s brothers hated him even more after this, but his father remembered the dream. Although no one believed his dreams at that time, after many years they came true. But before that, a long, hard road lay ahead.

1. What was Joseph’s first dream?
2. What did Joseph dream in his second dream?
3. How did Joseph’s brothers treat him after his dreams?



Genesis 37:12–22

Joseph's brothers traveled about, tending their father's flocks. They often went so far that they were gone for several days. One time Jacob told Joseph, "Your brothers are tending the sheep near Shechem. Go and see if they are doing well and if the herds are all right. Then come back and bring me an answer."

Joseph obeyed his father. But when he got to Shechem, his brothers were not there. A man met him and asked, "Whom are you looking for?"

"I am looking for my brothers," he answered. "Can you tell me where they are?" The man told him, "They left this place, but I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went to Dothan and found his brothers there.

The brothers saw Joseph coming in the distance. They said among themselves, "Look! Here comes our dreamer! Let's kill him and throw him into a pit. We will tell our father that a wild animal ate him. Then we shall see what will happen to his dreams."

Reuben, the oldest brother, did not agree. He felt responsible for his younger brother. He said, "Shed no blood! Let's just throw him into a pit." Reuben was hoping he could save his brother and return him to his father.

The brothers accepted Reuben's suggestion. They did not know his plans.

1. Where did Jacob send Joseph?
2. What evil thing did the brothers want to do to Joseph?
3. What did Reuben suggest they should do with Joseph?



Genesis 37:23–35

When Joseph came to his brothers, they caught him, tore off his coat of many colors, and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

The brothers had just sat down to eat when they saw a caravan of Ishmaelite merchants. Their camels were loaded with spices to sell in Egypt. Then Judah, one of the brothers, said, “What will we gain by killing our brother? Let’s sell him to these Ishmaelites, and then we will not be guilty of his death. He is our brother!” The others agreed with him. They pulled Joseph up from the pit and heartlessly sold him for twenty pieces of silver. Then the merchants carried him away into Egypt.

Reuben was not with them at the time. When he returned and saw that Joseph was no longer in the pit, he ripped his clothes and cried, “Joseph is gone! What am I supposed to do?”

To cover up their sin, the brothers killed a baby goat and dipped Joseph’s coat into its blood. They brought the bloody coat to their father and told him, “We found this; see if this is your son’s coat or not.”

Recognizing it, Jacob cried, “This is my son’s coat! A wild beast has surely torn him to pieces!” Then he cried a long time for his favorite son, and his children could not comfort him.

1. What did Judah suggest they should do with Joseph?
2. Where did the merchants take Joseph?
3. How did the brothers deceive their father?

