

# “Joseph and His Brothers”

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Any of you would be able, when you have looked at the picture who is the youth, and who the men in whose grasp he is struggling, what they are going to do with him, and why.



He is the grandson of Isaac, and the son of Jacob, who had twelve sons. You can see only ten of Joseph's brothers in the picture, for Benjamin, the youngest, is at home with his father.

These men were shepherds, and as they had been away from home for some time with the flocks, their father sent Joseph to see, how they were getting on. But instead of being pleased to see their young brother, and to get news from home, they greeted him with angry looks, and said one to another, “Behold this dreamer cometh!” To understand what they meant by this we must go back a little in Joseph’s history, and see what was the reason why his brethren hated him.

In the first place, Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children. He was not born until his father was quite an old man, and he was the first-born of his dearly beloved wife, Rachel. Besides this, we can see from the purity and faithfulness of his after life in Egypt, he was of a different character from his older brothers, and his gentle and truthful nature made him more dear to his father’s heart, so that “he loved Joseph more than all his children.”

From the way that Jacob treated Joseph, his brothers could easily see that he was the favourite. Some time before this, Jacob had made him “a coat of many colours,” “a costly coat or tunic worn by persons of distinction,” and “when his brethren saw that their father loved Joseph more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.”

Another thing that had made them angry was that Joseph, instead of joining with them in their evil ways, when he was helping them mind the flocks, carried to his father the news of their bad conduct. Remember that Cain killed his brother Abel “because his own works were evil and his brother’s righteous,” and you will not be surprised that Joseph’s brothers soon wanted to get rid of him.

Besides all this, Joseph had had dreams, which he, perhaps foolishly, told to his brothers. We will let him tell these dreams in his own words: “Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: For behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and

lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about and made obeisance to my sheaf.

“And his brethren said to him, shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams and for his words.

“And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brethren and said: Behold I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

“And he told it to his brethren. And his father rebuked him and said: What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him, but his father observed the saying.”

Now you see what they meant when they said, “Behold this dreamer cometh!” And as these words called the dreams to their minds, they grew more and more jealous and angry, until, like Cain, they were ready to take the life of their brother. They said, “Let us slay him and cast him into some pit; and we will say, some evil beast hath devoured him; and we shall see what will become of his dreams.”

But not wishing to shed his blood with their own hands, you see them, in spite of his cries and struggles, thrusting him alive into the pit, where they meant to leave him to perish with hunger.

But help was coming! Look in the distance and you will “a company of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.” It was no chance that they were passing by just then, for God was using the wicked purpose of these sons of Jacob to fulfil the very dreams that they were making a mockery of.

They did not feel at all comfortable with Joseph in the pit; they remembered that he was “their brother and their flesh,” and the sight of the caravan showed them a way out of the difficulty. It would never do to let Joseph go home again, after the way they had treated him, for he would be sure to tell his father the whole story. So they sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver, and he was carried far away from his old home, and his loving father, down into the land of Egypt. His brothers took the coloured coat which they had stripped from Joseph, and dipped it in the blood of a kid. Then they carried it home to Jacob, who thought, of course, that his favourite son had been killed and eaten by some wild beast. The broken-hearted old man “rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.” All his other children tried to comfort him, but “he refused to be comforted,” saying, “I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning for him. Thus his father wept for him.”

See what a terrible thing is jealousy and into what other dreadful sins it leads if one is allowed to lodge it in our hearts. First Joseph’s brethren were jealous of him;

then they hated him; then they agreed to kill him, and they deceived their poor old father into thinking he was dead. Hatred, murder, and deceit, all coming from the bitter root of envy.

But could they stop the plan of God, or in any way hinder it? No; for "He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will," and the life of Joseph's wonderful example of this, as we shall see. All these hard trials were to "work together for good," not only for Joseph, but for the very ones who treated him so badly. God was even then sending Joseph down into Egypt by their hands, so that their lives might be saved when trouble and famine came upon them in the future. Next week we will follow Joseph into Egypt, and see, as his brothers did when they met him there years after, "what became of his dreams."