

Joseph and His Brothers

Part 1: The Coat of Many Colours

Copyright © 2015, Sara Saunders



You are free to make commercial use of this work. You are free to adapt, remix, copy, distribute, and transmit this work. You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author.

Joseph and His Brothers

Part 1: The Coat of Many Colours

adapted from the Bible by Sara Saunders

Once upon a time there was a man named Jacob. Jacob lived in the wilderness with his animals and his family. His family was big! Jacob had four wives. The wives were named Leah, Rachel, Bilhah and Zilpah. He had twelve sons and one daughter. The sons' names were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin. The daughter's name was Dinah.

Jacob loved one wife the most. Her name was Rachel. Rachel could not have children for many years. It made her very sad. Finally after the other wives had given Jacob ten boys and one girl already, Rachel got a baby boy! He was named Joseph. Jacob loved Joseph more than all the other children.

Some years later Rachel got another baby boy, too! He was named Benjamin. But then a very sad thing happened. When Benjamin was born, Rachel died. Jacob's heart was broken. Now he loved Joseph and Baby Benjamin even more.

"Joseph and Benjamin are all I have left of Rachel!" said Jacob.

Joseph's ten older brothers felt bad.

"Father loves Joseph more than us," they said. "It's not fair. We are his sons, too."

One day Jacob made a special coat just for Joseph. The coat had many beautiful colours. The other brothers did not get new coats like Joseph. They felt worse.

Joseph felt very special with his new coat. He also felt very special because he had special dreams.

One time Joseph dreamed that he was in the wheat fields with his brothers. Every brother had a sheaf of grain he was harvesting. Then the sheaves of Joseph's eleven brothers all bowed down to his sheaf.

Another time Joseph had a dream that he was looking at the sky. Then the sun, the moon and eleven stars all bowed down to him.

Joseph told his father and his brothers his dreams.

"What do you think your dreams mean?" they asked him, "Do you think we will all bow down to you?"

Joseph's brothers were angry. Now they really hated Joseph.

One day Jacob said to Joseph, "Your older brothers are all out in the wilderness taking care of the sheep. They have been gone many days. I want you to take this food and go visit them. Then come back and tell me how they are doing."

"Yes, Father!" said Joseph. He wore his beautiful coat and set off to carry the food to his brothers and check on them.

Joseph's brothers saw him coming while he was still far away. They began to complain about him.

"Here comes that dreamer!" said Levi.

"I hate him!" said Dan.

"Me, too!" said Judah.

"Let's kill him!" said Simeon.

"Wait, we can't kill him!" said Reuben, "I hate him, too. But we can't kill our own brother!"

Some of the brothers agreed with Reuben. Some agreed with Simeon.

When Joseph came close his angry brothers grabbed him.

"Did you come to spy on us? Did you come for us to bow down to you?"

"No!" yelled Joseph, "Let me go!"

"Let's throw him in that old dry well!" said Reuben. "He can die there without us actually killing him!" But Reuben was really thinking that he could save Joseph later.

Joseph's brothers ripped his beautiful coat off his back. They threw Joseph into the old dry well.

"No!" screamed Joseph.

Joseph hit the rocks at the bottom of the old dry well. He got cuts and bruises from the rocks. "Brothers!" he shouted, "Help me get out! Please!"

"Should we really leave him to die?" asked Issachar.

"If we let him out now, he will tell father and we will have a big mess!" said Asher.

"Of course we can't let him out!" said Simeon, "I still say we should kill him now!"

"We can't kill a brother!" said Reuben. He stomped away angrily.

"Reuben is right," said Judah, "We can't kill a brother."

"But if he dies in the well, won't it still mean we killed him?" said Gad.

"I'll think of something..." said Judah.
"Give me some time."

From the bottom of the old dry well Joseph was screaming, "Brothers! Let me out!"

All night Judah tried to think of a plan. All night Simeon sharpened his knife and looked for big stones. All night Joseph fought scorpions in the bottom of the old dry well and screamed, "Brothers! Let me out!"

In the morning Zebulun said, "Look! I see someone coming! Who is it?"

The brothers watched the people coming closer. They were some men and some camels with big loads on their backs.

"They must be Ishmaelite traders going to Egypt," said Naphtali.

"Perfect!" said Judah, "They are the answer to our problem. We can sell Joseph to them. They can take him to Egypt and sell him as a slave. He will be gone forever, but without killing him!"

"Okay," said Simeon. "Gad and Asher, help me pull the dreamer out of the well."

Ropes were thrown down to Joseph. Joseph grabbed them and the brothers pulled Joseph out of the old dry well. He was bruised and scratched and hungry and tired and dusty. "Finally!" he said, "I was beginning to be afraid that I would really die down there!"

Judah waved and shouted to the Ishmaelites, "Cousins! We have a trade for you!"

The Ishmaelites and their camels came close to the brothers. "What trade do you have for us?"

"We will sell you this boy for 30 pieces of silver," said Judah.

The oldest Ishmaelite looked at Joseph. "I'll give you 15."

"Twenty." said Judah.

"Done." said the oldest Ishmaelite. He gave Judah the money. The Ishmaelites grabbed Joseph's arms and began to tie his hands together.

"Brothers! No!" shouted Joseph, "Don't sell me! Please! Let me go! I promise I won't tell Father anything!"

But Joseph's brothers turned away and did not answer him. The Ishmaelites set off again, this time with Joseph.

Just then Reuben came back. He was carrying a rope. He went to the well when the other brothers were not looking.

"Joseph!" he whispered, "I've come to save you!" But there was no answer.

"Where is the boy?" Reuben shouted to his brothers.

"You're too late," said Simeon, "We already pulled him out and sold him! It's done!"

"You sold him?!" asked Reuben, "What will we tell father now?! What will I do?!" He tore his clothes and cried.

Judah said, "I have an idea. Help me kill one of the sheep and collect the blood."

The brothers killed one of the sheep and collected the blood. Then they took Joseph's coat and ripped it and smeared it with the blood. Then they went home to their father.

At home the brothers told Jacob, "Father, see what we found in the wilderness on our way home. Is it really Joseph's coat?"

Jacob took the coat and fell to his knees crying. "My son, Joseph! A wild animal has killed him! Noooo!" He poured ashes on his head and tore his clothes.

The brothers felt bad. But they could not undo what they had done. So they were quiet and watched their father cry.

Meanwhile, Joseph was in the desert, being taken to Egypt tied behind a camel. He was crying, too.

Joseph looked up to heaven and prayed, "God of my father and grandfather and great grandfather, I believe you are my God, too. Why are you letting this bad thing happen to me? But whatever happens I promise to follow you, even in the land of other gods. Please take care of me. And please take care of my father."

What was going to happen to Joseph? Read Part 2 and find out.

Questions:

1. Why did Joseph's brothers hate him?
2. What did Joseph dream?
3. What do you think Joseph's dreams meant?
4. What do you think will happen to Joseph now?
5. If you were a friend of Joseph, what would you have told him to do when his brothers hated him?
6. If you were a friend of Joseph's older brothers, what would you have told them to do when they hated Joseph?

