

Joseph Sold By His Brothers



Scripture Reference: [Genesis 35:23-26; 37:1-36](#)

Suggested Emphasis or Theme: We should love and appreciate our siblings and try to live at peace with them.

Memory Work: Memorize the names of the twelve sons of Jacob—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Gad, Asher, Dan, Naphtali, Joseph, Benjamin.



Background
Study



Story
Introduction



Telling
the Story



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Story Overview:

Jacob had twelve sons but his favourite was Joseph. Joseph's brothers were jealous so they conspired together and sold him as a slave to some traders heading for Egypt. They told their father that Joseph was dead.

Background Study:

Jacob (or Israel, as his name became) had a very large family! Twelve sons and one daughter! These twelve sons and their descendants would develop into the great tribes in the Jewish nation.

Israel's family life was quite a drama with his wives fighting over him and vying to bear him children. They each bore him children and then had their handmaidens bear him children on their behalf.

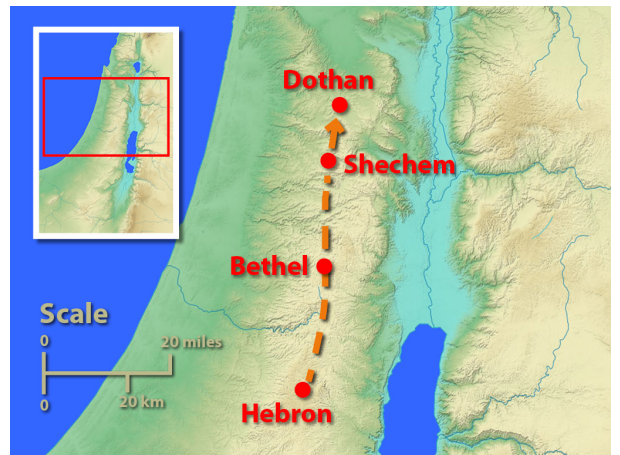
One would have thought that with the memories he had of his parents playing favourites between himself and Esau, that Jacob would have treated his children equally. Instead he favoured the sons of the wife that he loved the most. Rachel's death while giving birth to Jacob's last son, Benjamin, seems only to have made Joseph even more obsessed with Rachel's sons, Joseph and Benjamin ([Genesis 35:16-20](#)).

([Genesis 37:1-11](#)) Joseph was obvious in showing favour to Joseph over his other sons. He even gave Joseph a richly ornamented coat as a special gift. This provoked resentment and jealousy in the brothers.

As a youth, Joseph also seemed to do little to endear himself to his older brothers. Reporting back to his father and giving bad reports certainly didn't make them love him. And, to top it off, he had dreams of being the leader of the family and went on to share those with his brothers.

- The dream of the sheaves of grain: He dreamed he and his brothers were working in the field cutting and binding sheaves of grain. In the dream, all of his brother's sheaves bowed down to his sheaf.
- The dream of the night sky: In this dream the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed down to him. It was obvious that the eleven stars were his brothers. Even his father rebuked him for talking about his father and mother (the sun and moon) also bowing to him.

([Genesis 37:12-28](#)) It is not surprising that Joseph's brothers were annoyed with him but this was a deep jealousy that turned to hatred.





Joseph was at home in Hebron while his brothers were tending Jacob's flocks. Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers. First he searched in the usual places near Shechem and then he went on to where they were in Dothan. Seeing him coming towards them sent the brothers into a rage that led them to conspire to kill him. The oldest brother convinced them to throw him in a pit instead. But, in his absence, Judah led the brothers in selling Joseph as a slave to a passing caravan going towards Egypt.

([Genesis 37:29-36](#)) On Reuben's return all of the brothers agreed to deceive Jacob into thinking his son had been killed by wild animals. They killed a goat and soaked Joseph's beautiful coat in it. When shown the torn and bloodied coat, Jacob couldn't be comforted. Even at that point the brothers could have told the truth and gone in search of Joseph. But even while watching their father suffer and grieve they would not admit their sin.



Meanwhile, Joseph's pain was of a different sort. Added to the knowledge that his own brothers had sold him into slavery was the reality of going from pampered son status to slave status. Joseph's story will be continued in the Bible lessons [Joseph in Egypt](#) and [Joseph Saves His Family](#).

- [What happened before this story?](#)

-  [What happens after this story?](#)
-  [List of all Bible stories and themes on this website.](#)

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Way to Introduce the Story:

Ask each student to draw a picture of their family. Let each one stand up and explain their picture. Let everyone count to see how many children in each family. Who has the most/least sisters, brothers, etc? Note things that are different and things that are the same. Do you and your brothers/sisters ever argue? "In today's story we are going to learn about a family that had twelve boys and one girl. The twelve boys did not get along very well."

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The Story:

In families fathers should love each of their children equally and all of the children should love each other. This is not what happened in the family in today's story.

Jacob had twelve sons but Joseph was his favourite. Joseph was the son of his favourite wife, Rachel. Everyone knew that Jacob loved Joseph the most. He even gave his favourite son a beautiful coat. Joseph's brothers were very jealous!

Joseph also used to tell his father when he thought his brothers did bad things. Joseph's brothers thought he was a "tattle-tell" and did not like him very much.

Then Joseph told his brothers about the dreams he was having. He said that he dreamed all twelve brothers were working in the grain fields together tying the sheaves of grain. In the dream Joseph's sheaf of grain rose up and all of his brother's sheaves of grain bowed down to his. "What?" they asked, "Do you think we are ever going to bow down to you?"

The brothers were getting angrier at Joseph and were even beginning to hate him.

Even though they were angry Joseph kept having more dreams and telling his brothers all about them. He dreamed he saw the sun, moon and eleven stars bow down to him.

His brothers had had enough! And even his father, Jacob, told Joseph off for this dream. "Joseph, are you saying that the sun and moon represent your father and mother and that even WE will bow down to you?"

Sometimes Joseph's brothers would travel very far taking care of their father's sheep. Joseph had stayed at home so his father told him to go and find his brothers and check on them. Joseph traveled all the way to Shechem because he thought his brothers were there. But someone told him that his brothers were in far away Dothan. Joseph set out to find them.

When his brothers saw Joseph coming in the distance they said, "Here comes the dreamer!" They began thinking about how much they hated him. They hated him so much that they even wanted to kill him. Reuben, the oldest brother, said, "No, we should not kill him. We should just throw him into that old cistern to teach him a lesson." So all of the brothers grabbed Joseph and threw him into an old, dry cistern.

Later, when Reuben was gone, a caravan heading for Egypt passed by. Judah, one of the brothers, thought of a way they could get rid of Joseph for good and also earn some money. "Let's sell him to the men in the caravan as a slave!"

So Joseph's brothers sold him to the men on the caravan and they took him all the way to Egypt to be a slave there.

When Reuben came back and found out what his brothers had done he was very upset. "What will we tell our father?" he cried.

So the brothers took Joseph's beautiful coat and they soaked it in blood from a goat. When they went back home and showed their father he believed that Joseph had been killed by wild animals.

Jacob was so, so sad! He cried and even tore his own clothes because he was so sad. And, even though they watched their father cry and miss Joseph, the eleven

brothers did not tell their father the truth. They just decided to act like it had never happened.

All of this was happening back home but, meanwhile, Joseph was on his way to Egypt. What do you think will happen to Joseph there?

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download the slideshow](#) or [click here to download the pictures to print](#). Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

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Review Questions:

1. How many sons did Jacob (Israel) have? 12
2. What two dreams of Joseph's made his brothers angry? Their sheaves of grain bowing down to his and the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowing down to Joseph.
3. Joseph's brothers wanted to kill him. Instead what did they do? Sold him as a slave.
4. What did the brothers tell their father about Joseph? They dipped Joseph's coat in goat's blood and told Jacob that they had found it. Jacob thought that a wild animal had killed Joseph.

Song Suggestions:

- Jacob lived in Canaan
- Sons of Jacob
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- Use coloured chalk and draw Joseph's coat on a chalkboard or footpath.
- Let class define "tattling" and give examples.
- Snack Idea: Sprinkle multi-coloured decorator's candy (ie. "Hundred's and Thousands") on buttered bread or cookies. While you are doing this talk about how Joseph's father favoured him by giving him a coat of many colours. [Simple cookie recipe at http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/old-fashioned-sugar-cookies-recipe2/index.html.](http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/old-fashioned-sugar-cookies-recipe2/index.html)
- Discuss [Romans 12:15](#) and apply it to Joseph and his brothers.
- List ways we can get along with our siblings.
- Help the children learn the names of the 12 sons of Jacob. [Click here for ways to do this.](#)

Crafts:

- Younger children could use finger paint to paint Joseph's coat.
- Have the class draw a cartoon strip depicting the story.
- Make a Joseph puppet.

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for "Joseph Sold By His Brothers" printables to print \(A4 paper\)](#)

[Click here for "Joseph Sold By His Brothers" to print \(Letter size-USA\)](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [The sons of Jacob colouring page and puzzle worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Activities about Jacob's name being changed to Israel \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page \(Moody Publishing\)](#)
- [Joseph Sold By His Brothers activities \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Printable pattern for coat of many colours \(Toddler Activities\)](#)
- [Coat of many colours melting crayon craft \(Christian Preschool\)](#)
- [Old Testament worksheets \(HubPages\)](#)

Note: Also see the [Joseph in Egypt Story](#) and the [Joseph Saves His Family Story](#) on this site. Some of the resources relate to this lesson.

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