

**Purpose**

-To learn about Joseph

**Background Information**

## JOSEPH

Jacob had twelve sons, but he favored Joseph above all the others. Remember he really loved Rachel and Joseph was her first son. Rachel has died and Jacob, the father, is raising them all. All of the brothers are at odds with Joseph because he is his father's favorite. One of the things that the brothers resented was a coat that Joseph had. The coat was very long and colorful. It also had very long sleeves. This was unusual in that day because it was expensive. Most coats had no sleeves. This was called a "coat of many colors". Joseph was also gifted in interpreting dreams and that really upset his brothers because he was usually right.

Several of the brothers were out tending one of the large herds of sheep for their father when Joseph came along to check up on them. Jacob had sent him. Often Joseph just wandered around and didn't have to work. They saw Joseph coming and plotted to kill him and make it look like he was killed by animals. Instead Reuben, one of the brothers, persuaded them to put him in a pit, alive, and sit down to eat. Reuben intended to come back later and save Joseph. However, some traders came along and the brothers agreed to sell Joseph to the traders for 20 pieces of silver. The brothers dipped the coat into animal blood and took it back to the father claiming that Joseph had been killed. Joseph grieved over his loss of Joseph for many years. The brothers could not console him no matter what they did.

Imagine how devastated Joseph was. He went from being the favorite of all his brothers to a servant boy. Joseph was eventually sold to Potiphar, who was captain of the guard of Pharaoh. He was considered an official of Egypt. Potiphar was the officer in charge of forces that offered special service and protection to the Pharaoh. Joseph quickly proved how valuable he could be to Potiphar. Potiphar came to trust him completely. Potiphar's wife pursues Joseph and he rejects her. She falsely accuses him of something so that Potiphar will become angry with Joseph and throw him into prison. While in prison Joseph proves he can be trusted so they trust him to operate the prison. The chief cupbearer and the chief baker for Pharaoh have offended Pharaoh and he throws them into jail. (These 2 manage the entire household of Pharaoh) Joseph interprets dreams for them stating that the chief cupbearer will be released from prison and restored to his job. Joseph told the chief baker that he would be put to death. Both predictions come true. In Bible times people put great stock in dreams and what they mean. Because Joseph could interpret these dreams he was greatly respected.

The Pharaoh has 2 dreams that he cannot understand and he shares them with the cupbearer. The cupbearer suddenly remembers that Joseph correctly interpreted his dream and he tell Pharaoh all about Joseph. The Pharaoh quickly calls for Joseph and asks him to interpret his dreams. Joseph does so. Joseph tells Pharaoh that God is directly giving Pharaoh the message by 2 dreams that Egypt will face seven years of unusually prosperous times and bounty. That will be followed by seven years of famine. He also advised Pharaoh on how to meet the coming calamity. During the 7 years of prosperity food and goods should be stockpiled to be used during the 7 years of famine. The Pharaoh immediately puts Joseph in charge of the preparation. Joseph is even given Pharaoh's signet ring and other signs to show that Joseph has authority second only to Pharaoh.

Joseph does as he says should be done. Goods are stored up so that when the lean years came the people's need were met. It became known throughout all the land about the wisdom of the man Pharaoh had in charge of preparations. Jacob has heard of the prosperity in Egypt so he sent his sons to Egypt to buy grain. On that trip Joseph immediately recognized his brothers. Joseph is still so bitter that he wants revenge. Joseph accuses the boys of being spies and only pretended to come for food. To prove their truthfulness Joseph requires that one brother return to Judah and brings the youngest brother to Egypt. The other brothers must stay in prison in Egypt. He later changes the requirements and says that Simeon (the one who tied him up) must stay in prison while the other brothers travel to Judah and bring back Benjamin. Joseph orders that the brothers be given the grain they asked for; he also secretly returns their money. When the brothers return home they discover that the money is in the sacks of grain. At first Jacob refused to let Benjamin go back to Egypt, but later he agrees when the famine becomes so severe that there is nothing to do but risk the loss of Benjamin or all will die.

This time Jacob sends double the amount for the grain and also delicacies from the land of Judah to soften the overseer's heart. When Benjamin and the brothers arrive in Egypt Joseph released Simeon and arranges a banquet for all of them. Benjamin is obviously favored during the banquet. This makes the brothers question what is going on. After the grain is secured the brothers leave for home. Secretly Joseph's silver cup is slipped into Benjamin's bag. After the brothers depart the steward overtakes them and accused Benjamin of stealing. Judah (one of the brothers) offers to take Benjamin's place in prison so that Jacob will not be upset. This touches Joseph so that he breaks down and identifies himself to his brothers. Joseph sends them all home with many riches. After Jacob hears about what has happened and that his son is alive he travels to Egypt to see his son. Joseph reminds the brothers that God's has worked good out of bad. God not only saved Joseph's life, he used Joseph's talents to save the lives of thousands.

Joseph died in Egypt in about 1805 B.C.

### **Procedure**

- 6-1, 6-2
- 6-3 and 6-4 for fun