

Cindy Cottone

The Bible Corner



Joseph's dream comes true

Jacob sat with his back to the door, gazing out the window. He was an old man. Ten of his sons were all grown with families of their own, and he had many grandchildren. God had kept the promise He had made to Jacob long ago: "I am going to make you the father of an entire nation."

Still, after all this time, the loss of his son, Joseph, weighed heavily on his heart. These days, he was filled with an overwhelming sadness that he carried with him always. "I wonder what Joseph would have become," he thought sadly to himself.

Benjamin hesitated for a moment before entering the room. "Father," he said softly as he came near, "you are sad today. It's Joseph, isn't it?" Benjamin guessed his thoughts. "Tell me about my brother again."

"Joseph was a fine boy," Jacob began, "quite a bit like you, Benjamin." His expression brightened as he continued. "He was a great comfort to me. I think it was because the older boys were always so independent and sure of themselves. Joseph would come and talk to me for hours. He was always telling me his dreams."

"What dreams?" Benjamin questioned.

"Joseph used to have strange dreams. I think it was God's way of talking to him. But his brothers never understood, and they were jealous of Joseph," Jacob said, frowning. "One time, Joseph had a dream about his brothers all working out in the fields together. They were binding up the wheat in sheaves. Suddenly, Joseph's sheaf stood up and his brother's sheaves bowed down to it."

"That certainly was a weird dream," Benjamin laughed. "I wonder what kinds of dreams Joseph would have today. There's no wheat left out in the fields, and our grain is nearly gone."

"I know," Jacob replied. "The drought has hit hard everywhere."

"Father, let me help our family," Benjamin proposed. "I've heard that there is grain for sale in Egypt. I'll go there and bring back food for us all."

"No. Never," Jacob replied. "I will never allow it. Don't you understand yet? If I hadn't sent Joseph off to check on his brothers, he might still be alive today. Benjamin, if something happened to you, I couldn't bear it."

"But, father, you can't go on blaming yourself. It wasn't your fault," Benjamin pleaded. "We must do something soon, or we will all starve to death."

In the end, it was the 10 eldest brothers who went off to Egypt, while Benjamin stayed at home with Jacob. It was several days' journey before they finally arrived. As soon as they reached Egypt, they inquired as to where the grain was being sold.

"You must go and present yourselves to the prime minister," they were told. "This man is second in command in all of Egypt. Only Pharaoh has more power."

When Jacob's 10 sons entered the palace, they were somewhat surprised to see a man younger than themselves as prime minister. He was dressed in a fine linen robe with an Egyptian headdress. Not one of his brothers recognized this man as Joseph.

For his part, Joseph immediately knew his family, but he said nothing. As his 10 brothers came before him and bowed low in respect, Joseph suddenly remembered his dream of long ago. Still, he said nothing.

Instead, he spoke to them sternly in Egyptian, and a servant translated what he said to his brothers. "Why are you here and where have you come from?" Joseph demanded.

"We have traveled from the land of Canaan," answered Reuben, the eldest. "We have come to buy grain."

"I don't believe you," Joseph challenged. "I think that you are all spies, sent to see what the famine has done in Egypt. Then your armies can come back to attack us."

"No, please, sir," Judah spoke this time. "That's not true at all. We are all brothers and we are all honest men. Back home, all of our food has run out. If you won't help us, our families and our livestock will certainly die."

Joseph softened for a moment. "Tell me about your family back in Canaan. Is your father still living?"

"Yes, he is," Judah replied. "Our father and our youngest brother are anxiously waiting for us to return."

"We were 12 brothers once," Dan added. "But one of our brothers is dead."

Joseph felt strange when he heard Dan speak of him as being dead. He was also glad to hear that his father was still alive. But even then, he didn't tell his brothers who he was.

"All right," Joseph said to them. "If you do speak the truth, then your story will survive my test. Decide which one of you will go back to Canaan and bring the youngest brother back. The rest of you will remain here in Egypt in prison."

Because they couldn't decide who would go back home, Joseph put them all in prison for three days. Then, unknown to his brothers, he stood nearby listening to their conversations. Speaking among themselves, they said, "God is punishing us for what we did to Joseph long ago. We heard him crying out to us from the well and we ignored him."

"You wouldn't listen to me," Reuben said angrily. "I told you not to do it. And now we will probably all die because of this great sin."

When Joseph heard this, he went back to his private chamber and wept. He worried about his father and Benjamin, back in Canaan with no food. So a short time later, he returned to the prison, and speaking through an interpreter, said, "I have decided that only one of you will remain here, while the

rest of you may go back to Canaan. As soon as you bring the youngest brother back, I'll know that the story is true about your family. Who will be the one to stay?"

None of his brothers could decide, so Joseph selected Simeon. Then he ordered his servants to fill each of the brothers' sacks with grain, but he also gave a secret instruction, too. Joseph told his servants to put each brother's payment for the grain at the top of each sack. After Joseph had given them provisions for their journey, he ordered them to leave.

Back in Canaan, Benjamin was keeping a daily watch for his brothers. One day he finally spotted them."

"Father," he shouted. "They are coming. Hurry. My brothers are home at last."

"Benjamin," said Jacob, "I am an old man, and my eyesight fails me. But I think that I only see nine sons heading toward us."

When the nine sons arrived, Reuben told Jacob and Benjamin all that had happened to them in Egypt. When they emptied the grain and discovered the money, they were all filled with terror.

"Father," Benjamin said calmly, "don't worry, I'll be okay. I must go back to the prime minister with the money. It's the only way."

"No. Enough," Jacob cried. "How much can one father bear? First Joseph is killed, now Simeon is gone, and you want me to risk losing Benjamin, too? Never."

Not one of Jacob's sons could change his mind. Meanwhile, back in Egypt, Joseph and Simeon both waited.

For discussion:

1) Joseph was 16 when he was sold to the Ishmaelites. He entered Pharaoh's service at 30 years of age. The seven years of plenty had now passed, and there were five more years left of the seven years of famine. How long had it been since he had last seen his brothers?

2) Do you think that Joseph forgave his brothers?

For further reading:

1) Joseph's 10 brothers travel to Egypt: Genesis, Chapter 42.

2) Joseph's strange dream about his brothers: Genesis, Chapter 37: 5-7.

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