

JOSEPH

Joseph's story is chronicled in **Genesis 37-50** and reveals a man of the Hebrew family who overcame much adversity to become a ruler in Egypt, hundreds of years before Moses would lead the Israelites out of slavery to the promised land. His is a story of trust, faith, compassion, forgiveness, and triumph.

Into Slavery

Joseph was the son of Jacob and Rachel, and highly favored by his parents among many half-brothers. He was especially beloved by Jacob, who fathered him in his old age. Jacob gave his shepherd son, Joseph, an ornate robe, fostering a sense of hatred for Joseph by his brothers (**Genesis 37:3-4**), a hatred that would only deepen when Joseph shared his dreams of ruling over his family one day in the future (**Genesis 37:5-11**).

His brothers plotted to kill him. When the eldest, Reuben, objected, the plan was revised to throw Joseph into a cistern and abandon him (it was Reuben's plan to return and rescue him). In Reuben's absence and before they could carry out their plan, the brothers sold Joseph to merchants and into slavery. The brothers took Joseph's special robe, daubed it with goat's blood, showed it to their father, and deceived him into thinking Joseph was slain by wild beasts. Jacob mourned bitterly (**Genesis 37:18-35**).

The merchants sold Joseph to an Egyptian official of high rank, Potiphar. As Joseph excelled in his duties and became Potiphar's most trusted servant, he was promoted to supervisor over the household. His future brightened.

Into Prison

Joseph's good fortune ended when Potiphar's wife repeatedly tried to seduce him. When Joseph refused her advances, she got a piece of Joseph's robe and accused him of attempted rape. Potiphar felt betrayed and put Joseph in prison (**Genesis 39:7-20**).

The Lord was with Joseph despite his incarceration. His kindness and administrative skills gained Joseph favor with the prison's warden who put him in charge of prison

affairs. The Lord blessed Joseph and gave him great success in his new role, so much so that the trusting warden did not even supervise him (**Genesis 39:21-23**).

With the anointing of God, Joseph interpreted dreams for some of his prison mates. One of them, the king's cupbearer, was released from prison but failed to speak to the king about Joseph. When the king himself had some troubling dreams, the cupbearer remembered Joseph's abilities and told the king. Joseph was summoned and the king shared his dreams about hardship for Egypt. Joseph interpreted the dreams to mean that Egypt would realize seven years of abundance followed by seven years of harsh famine and advised the king to store up grain for the coming hard times. For his wisdom, Joseph was released from prison, promoted to Egyptian ruler (second only to the king), and given charge of preparing for the famine. Abundance and famine played out just as Joseph had foretold. With abundant provisions, many surrounding countries came to Egypt to buy grain (**Genesis 40:1-41:57**).

Reunion With His Family

Canaan was one of the countries hit hard by the famine. Jacob sent his sons to buy grain but kept his youngest, Benjamin, behind. In Egypt, the brothers met Joseph whom they had sold into slavery years before. Joseph recognized them but they did not recognize him. To test them, Joseph accused them of being spies and put them in jail for three days, after which he released all but one (Simeon), sending them with grain to their family in Canaan and indicating he would release the other brother if they returned with their youngest brother, Benjamin.

At home, the brothers shared what had happened with their father. Jacob mourned Simeon's loss and remembered anew his loss of Joseph. Fearful of losing more sons, he refused to send Benjamin. Eventually in desperation because of the severe famine, Jacob relented and sent them back to Egypt with Benjamin, choice fruits and double the money for the grain (**Genesis 42:1-43:14**).

Upon their return, Joseph had a great feast prepared for his brothers and released Simeon to them. After the feast, Joseph agreed to let them return home but tested them again by placing a silver cup in Benjamin's sack. After they departed, Joseph's steward was sent after them to feign anger and threaten Benjamin's death. All of them were taken back to Joseph in Egypt. The brothers pleaded with Joseph about the situation. Seeing a change in their hearts, Joseph revealed himself to them and forgave them, saying that everything that transpired happened at the direction of God for his family's welfare. Joseph sent his brothers to Canaan to have the entire household

return to Egypt. Jacob and his family came to Egypt, there was a poignant reunion, and the family settled in the land (**Genesis 43:15-46:34**).

Egypt Before the Exodus

When Joseph informed the Pharaoh that his family was in the land, the Pharaoh allowed them to live in the best part of the land, an area called Goshen. Jacob (Israel) and his descendants settled and flourished there. Before his death, Jacob pronounced a blessing on each of his twelve sons (**Genesis 47:1-50:26**).

In time, all of them would die in Egypt and, eventually, succeeding generations would fall into slavery under a Pharaoh who knew nothing of Joseph. Slavery would be their lot in life until God freed them from captivity under the leadership of Moses and took them to the land promised Abraham many years before (the books of **Exodus through Joshua**).

Closing Thoughts

Faced with envy and hatred by his brothers, Joseph was an overcomer in the goodness of the Lord. He did not become discouraged or lose faith, knowing that God was in control of all things (**Genesis 45:5, 8**). He was a blessed man of faith, forgiving his brothers and playing a key role in the sovereignty of God for the Hebrew family, the Israelites, who eventually found freedom and blessing in Canaan.

This is an introduction on the subject of **Joseph**. Here are a few other resources you may wish to explore:

[Who was Joseph in the Old Testament? | GotQuestions.org](#)

[The Bible Story of Joseph - Verses & Meaning \(biblestudytools.com\)](#)

[Joseph in the Bible - 3 Things You Didn't Know About His Story & Life \(crosswalk.com\)](#)