

Joseph

Dreams and Forgiveness



A long road home, and a heart that learned to forgive

Ages 8–12 · Intermediate English

An illustrated retelling · Genesis 37; 39–47; 50:15–21

Dreams beneath the stars



At the edge of Canaan's hills, Joseph watched his father's sheep. Jacob had given him a beautiful robe, a sign of special love. His brothers noticed the favor, and jealousy grew between them.

Then Joseph dreamed of bundles of grain bowing to his bundle. In another dream, the sun, moon, and stars bowed down. He told his family. They wondered what it meant, but his brothers' anger grew. Joseph could not yet see the long road ahead.

PAUSE & WONDER

How might favoritism affect a family?

The road away from home



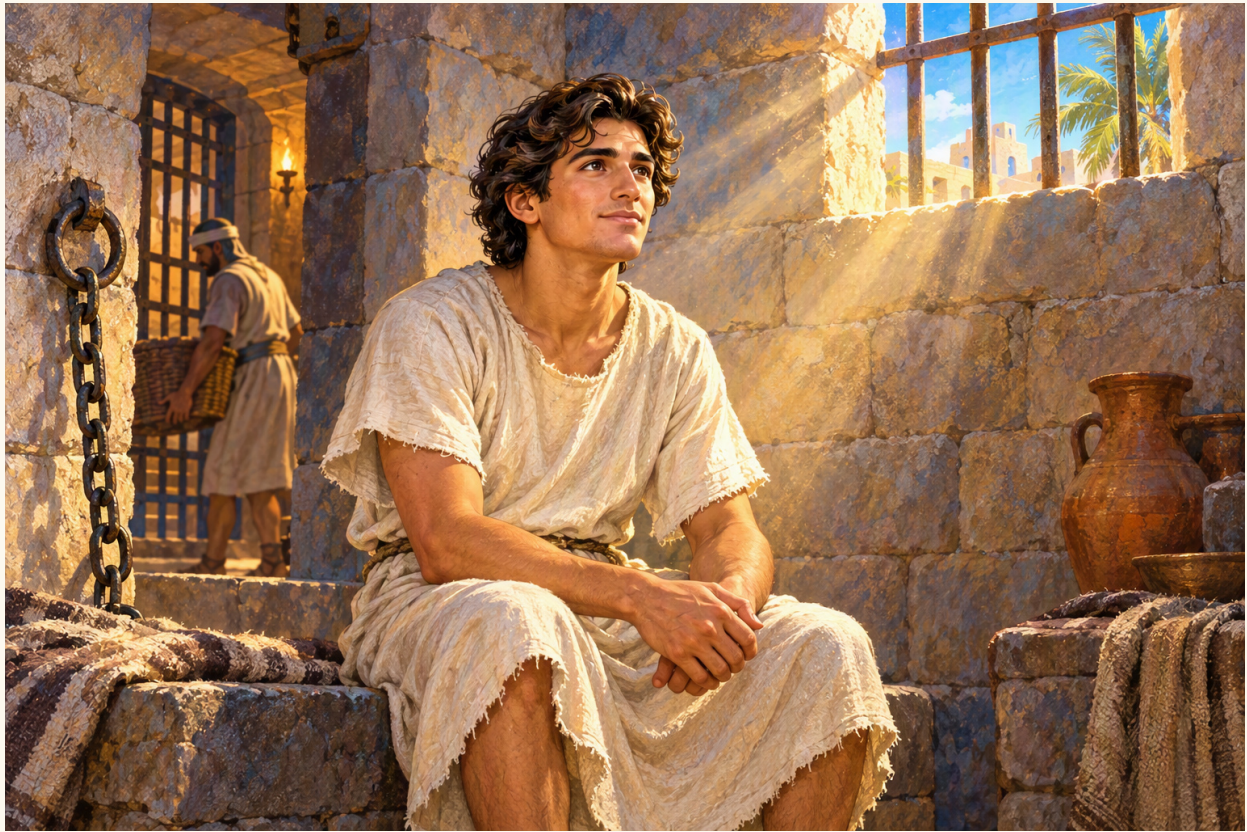
One day, Jacob sent Joseph to find his brothers. They saw his robe coming across the fields. Far from home, they took it from him and put him in an empty pit.

When traders passed, Joseph's brothers sold him, and he was taken toward Egypt. The road grew dusty; the familiar hills disappeared. His brothers let Jacob believe that a wild animal had killed him. Joseph had lost his freedom, but his story was not finished.

PAUSE & WONDER

Which choices caused Joseph and Jacob pain?

Faithful in a hard place



In Egypt, Joseph worked in the house of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. Joseph had little control over his own life. Still, he worked carefully, and Potiphar came to trust him. Genesis tells us that God was with Joseph.

Then Potiphar's wife falsely accused him, and Joseph was put in prison. Once again, someone else's wrongdoing had changed his life. Behind the stone walls, he helped with the work and earned the keeper's trust. Even there, God had not abandoned him.

PAUSE & WONDER

What shows Joseph's faithfulness when life is unfair?

A kindness, then a wait



Two of Pharaoh's servants, a cupbearer and a baker, were held in the prison. One morning, Joseph noticed their troubled faces. Both had dreamed, and neither understood the meaning. Joseph told them that the power to explain dreams belonged to God.

He listened and explained what their dreams meant. Joseph asked the cupbearer to remember him when he returned to Pharaoh's service. The cupbearer returned, just as Joseph had said. But he forgot Joseph. Days became months. Joseph had helped someone, yet he still had to wait.

PAUSE & WONDER

What small act of kindness begins this scene?

Seven years, and seven more



Two years later, Pharaoh dreamed of seven healthy cows swallowed by seven thin cows. He also dreamed of full heads of grain swallowed by thin ones. No one could explain the dreams. At last, the cupbearer remembered Joseph.

Brought before Pharaoh, Joseph gave God the credit. The dreams warned of seven years with plentiful food, followed by seven years of famine. Joseph advised Pharaoh to store grain during the good years. A frightening dream had become a chance to prepare and protect lives.

PAUSE & WONDER

Why was storing food during the good years wise?

Grain for hungry days



Pharaoh placed Joseph in charge of preparing Egypt. The young man who had once been sold now carried great responsibility. During seven generous harvests, workers gathered grain into storehouses. Joseph kept preparing while the fields were still green.

Then the seven years of plenty ended, and the famine began. The famine spread, just as the dreams had warned. Joseph opened the storehouses. People came to buy food, and the grain gathered in plenty helped them through hunger. His work mattered far beyond the palace.

PAUSE & WONDER

Who benefited from Joseph's careful preparation?

Familiar faces at the door



The famine reached Canaan. Jacob sent ten of Joseph's brothers to Egypt to buy food, keeping the youngest, Benjamin, at home. When the brothers bowed before the governor, they did not recognize him. Joseph recognized them.

They knew him only as Egypt's powerful governor, speaking through an interpreter. Joseph asked about their family and said they must bring Benjamin. He kept Simeon in Egypt while the other brothers returned to Canaan with grain. He had not yet told them who he was.

PAUSE & WONDER

Why did the brothers fail to recognize Joseph?

Judah steps forward



When the food ran low, the brothers returned with Benjamin. Joseph welcomed them to a meal. Later, he arranged for his silver cup to be placed in Benjamin's sack. When it was found, Benjamin faced being kept in Egypt.

This time, the brothers did not walk away. Judah stepped forward and offered to stay in Benjamin's place. He could not bear to see their father lose another son. Joseph heard something different from the cruelty of years before: a brother willing to bear the cost of love.

PAUSE & WONDER

How does Judah's choice differ from the brothers' earlier choice?

I am your brother



Joseph could no longer hold back his tears. He asked the attendants to leave, then told the brothers who he was. They stared at him, afraid. The brother they had sold now had the power to punish them.

Joseph invited them closer. He spoke of how God had worked through those terrible years to preserve lives. He embraced Benjamin and wept with his brothers. Then he sent for their father and the whole family. The road that had carried Joseph away could now bring his family together.

PAUSE & WONDER

What could Joseph have done with his power? What did he choose?

Room for forgiveness



Jacob came to Egypt, and Joseph held his father for a long time. Their family settled where there was food. Years passed. After Jacob died, Joseph's brothers worried that he might finally seek revenge.

Joseph reassured them. They had intended harm, but God had brought good from it and preserved many lives. He promised to care for them and their children. He did not call the harm good. He chose to answer it with care. The frightened boy's story had become a story of hope and forgiveness.

PAUSE & WONDER

How can Joseph name wrongdoing honestly and still forgive?

Words to carry with you

jealousy

An unhappy feeling about what someone else has.

In a sentence: Jealousy grew when the brothers saw Joseph's special robe.

faithful

Steady in doing what is right and keeping trust.

In a sentence: Joseph remained faithful in difficult places.

famine

A serious shortage of food over a wide area.

In a sentence: Egypt stored grain before the famine.

prepare

To get ready for something ahead.

In a sentence: Joseph helped Egypt prepare for hungry years.

responsibility

A duty to take care of a task or other people.

In a sentence: Joseph accepted responsibility for the grain stores.

forgiveness

Choosing to release revenge while recognizing the wrong.

In a sentence: Joseph showed forgiveness through care for his brothers.

Explore the story

READ & REMEMBER

1. How did Joseph help people while he was in prison?
2. What did Judah's offer show about his concern for others?
3. How did preparing grain help people beyond Pharaoh's household?
4. Why does forgiveness not mean pretending that harm never happened?

TRY THE LANGUAGE

Find three past-tense verbs in the story. Write their present-tense forms.

Complete: Joseph prepared food because _____. Judah stepped forward because _____.

THINK & SHARE

Write four sentences about a time when someone showed patient care. Describe the difficulty, the choice, and its effect. You may invent an example.

A little help along the way

1. Joseph noticed the prisoners' distress, listened, and explained their dreams with God's help.
2. Judah offered to bear the cost himself so Benjamin could go home to their father.
3. Stored grain fed hungry people from Egypt and surrounding lands.
4. Joseph named his brothers' harmful intent honestly and chose care rather than revenge.
Language examples: sent/send, came/come, took/take. Reflection answers will vary.

A hope that endured

Joseph's story holds sorrow and hope together. God remained at work, and Joseph chose care over revenge.

Where could you practice a small act of forgiveness or faithful care?

An original, abridged retelling of Genesis 37; 39–47; and 50:15–21. Descriptions and dialogue are paraphrased for young readers, not quotations from a Bible translation. Some events are compressed. Joseph is the son of Jacob. His brothers' wrongdoing remains wrong; forgiveness does not make cruelty acceptable.