**Joseph’s Brothers Go to Egypt**

**A Bible Story From**

**Genesis 42:1-38**

**Bible Story Number: 1010390**

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**Bible Story**

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**Background**

Abraham was the father of Isaac and grandfather of Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons.

Joseph was Jacob’s favorite son, and he gave him a richly ornamented robe. Joseph also had dreams that he would one day rule over his brothers. They hated him and plotted to kill him. They sold Joseph as a slave to some traveling merchants and led their father to believe a wild animal killed him.

The merchants took Joseph to Egypt where he was sold to Potiphar as a slave. Everything under Joseph’s care prospered and Potiphar put him in charge of everything he owned. Potiphar’s wife falsely accused Joseph of trying to seduce her. Potiphar was very angry and had Joseph put in prison. God was with Joseph and He gave him favor with the warden. Joseph was put in charge of the prison. Everything he did prospered.

**Story from the Bible**

**Genesis 42:1-38**

This is what the Bible says.

The famine was widespread and included Canaan, the area where Jacob and his family were living. Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt and sent ten of his sons to purchase grain. Jacob did not send Benjamin because he was afraid something might happen to him.

Joseph had become the second most powerful man in all of Egypt. He was in charge of selling the grain Egypt had stored up during the years before the famine. So when his brothers arrived to buy grain, they bowed down to him. Jacob recognized his brothers; however, they did not recognize him.

Joseph pretended not to know them and spoke harshly to them. He spoke through an interpreter and asked them where they were from. Joseph accused them of being spies and said that they had come to see where Egypt was unprotected. They said they were not spies. He interrogated them. They told him they were brothers, the sons of one man. There were twelve brothers in all; the youngest was with their father and one had died.

Joseph maintained that they were spies and indicated that they would be tested. They would have to bring their younger brother to Egypt to prove they were telling the truth. He told them that one of them would be sent to bring back their younger brother and the others would be kept in prison. Then he put them all in prison for three days.

On the third day, Joseph told them to do what he said and they would live. He told them that he feared God. He told them that only one of them would stay in prison while the rest could go back and take grain to their starving families. They were to return with their youngest brother in order to prove that they were telling the truth.

The brothers began to talk among themselves. They said that this was punishment for what they had done to their brother (Joseph). They talked about seeing how distressed Joseph was when he pleaded for his own life. Reuben told the others that he had warned them not to sin against the boy.

They did not realize that Joseph could understand what they were saying because he was using an interpreter. Joseph turned away from them and began to weep. He turned back to them and had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes.

Joseph had his men fill their bags with grain. He also had his men put the silver each one had used to purchase the grain back into the bag. He had his men give them provisions for the journey.

The nine brothers loaded up their donkeys and headed for home. When they stopped for the night, one of them opened his bag to get some grain to feed the donkeys and found the silver in his bag. He told the others and their hearts sank. They asked, “What is this that God has done to us?”

When they reached their father’s camp in Canaan, they told Jacob all that had happened. They told him how they were accused of being spies. They explained that the man in charge had questioned them about their family. They told him how the man demanded to see their younger brother as proof that they were not spies and that Simeon was being held in prison. They told Jacob that if they went back with Benjamin, Simeon would be freed and they could trade in the land.

As they unloaded their sacks, they each found the silver they had used to purchase the food in their sacks. When they and their father saw the money pouches, they were frightened.

Jacob was distraught. He accused them of depriving him of another son. He refused to allow them to take Benjamin back.

Reuben told his father that he would take full responsibility. He even offered his two sons as a guarantee. He promised he would bring Benjamin back safely.

Jacob did not change his mind. He told them that Benjamin would not go down to Egypt with them. He told them he was the only one left. (Benjamin was the last of the two sons from his favorite wife, Rachel.) He told them that if harm came to Benjamin while they were on the journey, it would bring his gray head down to the grave in sorrow.

That concludes this story from the Bible.

**Retelling the Story**

Let’s review this story by retelling it as a group. We want to retell it as faithfully as we can to the story from the Bible. We do not want to add to it or leave out anything important. Who will get us started?

**Questions**

* Why did Jacob send ten of his sons to Egypt?
* Did Joseph recognize his brothers?
* Why did his brothers not recognize Joseph?
* What did Joseph accuse his brother of being?
* What proof did Joseph require of his brothers?
* What indications does the story include that demonstrate that Joseph felt compassion toward his brothers?
* Did Jacob agree to allow Benjamin to go back to Egypt with his brothers?
* What did you like about this story?
* What did you not like about this story?
* What did you learn about God from this story?

**Prayer**

Prayer is more than a way to end the session. It is time to talk to God. Public prayer is a model for others. Boldly ask God to guide participants to use the Bible story with others. Ask God to give you and the participant’s insight and understanding as you think about this biblical event.