

Joseph and his brothers



Genesis 37:1–11

Jacob lived in Canaan with his large family. Of his twelve sons he loved Joseph the most. One day he gave him a colourful coat. Joseph's brothers became hostile towards him and no longer had a friendly word for him.

Joseph recounted two dreams to his father and brothers. The dreams implied that his parents and brothers would one day bow down before him. This annoyed his brothers very much. They now started hating Joseph. Jacob scolded Joseph about his dreams, but he could not forget them.

The children learn that God's indications are not always understood.
But they have meaning nevertheless.

1

Jacob is a rich and respected man living in Canaan with his large family. He has twelve sons and several daughters. The sons' names are Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin. The two youngest boys, Joseph and Benjamin, were born when Jacob was already an old man. They are his favourites. But Joseph he loves most of all. Jacob owns many sheep and goats. His sons tend these animals. They protect them against wild animals and lead them to green pastures. Young Joseph must also help with this task although he prefers to stay home with his father and younger brother Benjamin. He likes being at home and feels happy there.

One day Joseph's father calls him and says: "Here, my boy, this is for you. It is a present from me." Jacob hands him a multi-coloured coat with sleeves. "Father, is this beautiful, colourful coat really for me?" exclaims Joseph and immediately puts it on. "I see that it looks very good on you," replies Jacob smiling.

Joseph is overjoyed. He runs out to a nearby watering-place and looks at his reflection in the water so that he can admire

the coat. "I wonder what my brothers will say when they see me in this beautiful coat," he thinks.

That evening the brothers return home feeling very tired. They notice Joseph's new coat straight away, but make no comment—only their eyes betray their envy. From this day on they no longer have a friendly word for Joseph.

2

Some days later Joseph is sitting in the field with his brothers. They are tending the sheep. "You cannot imagine what I dreamt yesterday," Joseph remarks to his brothers. They look up in surprise. "I was with all of you in the corn-field. The corn had already been reaped and we were binding the sheaves. Then the sheaf which I was binding suddenly rose up. Your sheaves came closer, gathered around mine and bowed down deeply before it."

"You really would like to become king and rule over us, wouldn't you, you opinionated dreamer!" the brothers exclaimed scornfully and angrily.

Joseph soon has another dream. He recounts this dream to his father and brothers too. "I dreamt that the sun, moon and eleven stars came and bowed down before me."

"Joseph, now you are going too far! You know perfectly well that the sun and moon are symbolic of father and mother in

God protects his own – Joseph

our dream interpretations. Should I, your mother and your brothers come and fall down before you?" Jacob demands angrily. Even Jacob now scolds his favourite son.

Joseph himself does not really know what to think and how to interpret his dreams. But he has not made them up after all. He knows that he has really dreamt them. The envy and hate of his brothers greatly trouble him. Because his older brothers avoid him, he often chats with his younger brother Benjamin. Jacob keeps thinking about Joseph's dreams. He finds that he cannot forget them. Could they be from God, he wonders, indicating future events.

3/4



Jacob had twelve sons. He gave his favourite son, Joseph, a particularly beautiful coat. His brothers were envious. Later Joseph recounted two dreams to them which made them very angry.

- 1 Before commencing the story, the children look at and describe the picture. We name the people depicted there.**
- 2 What do you think the brothers will say to Joseph that evening? What do they think of their brother?**
- 3 Joseph's dreams were an indication of the future. Much later everything was also fulfilled. God's people have not only received indications but also great promises. The fulfilment of which promises do God's children all over the world await today? (Return of the Lord Jesus, marriage in heaven, thousand-year kingdom of peace.)**
- 4 The children could draw Joseph in his new coat.**