

Joseph is sold



Genesis 37:12–36

Jacob sent Joseph to his brothers who were tending the flocks in Shechem. When Joseph joined his brothers, their envy and hate flared up anew. Blinded by anger, they took away Joseph's beautiful new coat and threw him into a dried-up well. Shortly thereafter they sold him to passing traders who were on their way to Egypt. They dipped Joseph's coat in animal blood and sent it to their father in Hebron to deceive him into thinking that Joseph had been killed. Jacob believed that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. He was inconsolable. In the meantime, the traders had sold Joseph as a slave in far-off Egypt.

The children realize that envy and hate can have terrible consequences. They learn that the Lord allows incomprehensible things to happen. But he is always close to those who trust in him.

Joseph often plays with his younger brother Benjamin. These two get on very well. One day Jacob calls his son Joseph and says: "Joseph, I am worried. You know that your brothers have gone far away. They are tending the herds at Shechem. I have not heard from them for a long time. Please go there and see how they and the animals are faring. But when you have found them come back at once to tell me!" "I will gladly do so, Father," replies Joseph.

Early the next morning, Joseph gets ready to leave. He is looking forward to seeing his brothers in Shechem. His father embraces him, gives him some sound advice for his journey and stands looking after him proudly. Joseph turns round once more and waves to his father. He makes good headway, but it is not easy to find his brothers. He searches around fruitlessly in different fields for a long time. He looks for them everywhere. Finally he meets a man who tells him that his brothers have already left Shechem and have travelled a little further. Shortly afterwards Joseph finds his brothers.

When they see him coming from afar, they say to each other: "Look, here comes the dreamer!" One of them says: "Yes, here comes the booster and braggart!"

"Look, he is wearing his multi-coloured coat!" calls another. Suddenly one of them says: "Now we've got him—let's make him pay!"

"We'll kill him, strangle him, and throw him down a pit and then say that a wild animal has eaten him."

"Then we'll see what his wonderful dreams are worth!" Blinded by rage and hate the brothers thus plot to kill Joseph. Only one does not allow himself to be carried away by all this talk. "No, never!" Reuben exclaims. He is the eldest of the brothers. "Don't kill him! Throw him into a pit alive." The brothers agree to do as Reuben suggests. Reuben thinks to himself that when evening falls and it becomes dark, he can secretly help Joseph out of the pit and bring him back to their father.

Joseph is happy that he has finally found his brothers. He has scarcely reached them, however, when they surround him threateningly. Joseph is afraid. Before he can say anything, one of his brothers grabs him and throws him to the ground. The others tear off his coat, drag him away and throw him down a well. Everything happens very quickly. Luckily the well is dry. Joseph cries and wails. The walls of the well are high and smooth and Joseph cannot get out by himself. Does not one of his brothers have pity on him?

1

The brothers now sit down near this well and start eating.

God protects his own – Joseph

Only Reuben has distanced himself from them. He goes out into the field and waits for nightfall. He wants to help Joseph under cover of darkness. Shortly afterwards the brothers make out a caravan in the distance. These strangers are on their way to Egypt with many camels. The camels are carrying huge sacks on their backs filled with trading goods. When Judah sees the caravan, he thinks of a plan: Joseph could be sold to these strangers. That way they do not have to kill Joseph, but will still be rid of him and get some money as well.

Joseph is hauled out of the well. The traders give the brothers twenty pieces of silver and tie Joseph's hands together with some twine. All his lamenting, crying and pleading is futile. They tie him onto one of the camels and take him to a distant land. That evening Reuben comes to an empty well. He immediately suspects that something terrible must have happened. He rushes off to his brothers and shouts: "Joseph is not in the well

any more. What have you done with him? What will our father say?"

"He will not suspect us," says one of the brothers. They have already decided on a plan. They kill a kid and soak Joseph's coat in its blood. A servant then takes the coat to their father and tells him: "We have found this coat. Please look at it carefully. Is it not Joseph's coat?" Jacob recognizes it immediately. "It is the coat of my beloved Joseph! A wild animal has killed him!" Jacob cries. He is inconsolable.

2/3



Jacob sent Joseph to his brothers. The brothers took away his beautiful coat and threw him into a deep, dried-up well. Then they sold him as a slave. They deceived Jacob into thinking that Joseph had been killed by wild animals.

- 1 We try to place ourselves in Joseph's position. What could he be thinking? What could he possibly do? What might he be hoping for?**
- 2 What do the brothers keep from their father? The children retell the whole story using the picture as aid. We explain to the children that the Lord cannot always spare his own from misfortune. But he comforts and protects them in times of need.**
- 3 What happened to Joseph? Things went badly for him as his brothers had sold him. But the Lord was always close to him even if Joseph did not always feel this to be so. The traders took Joseph to a foreign country and sold him as a slave. The Lord wanted to protect Joseph and bless him. We will see this in the next lesson.**