

# Joseph the rescuer



Genesis 41:53-57; 42

Everything was fulfilled as had been foretold. The good years were followed by a great drought. Because sufficient stocks had been laid up, no one in Egypt had to go hungry. Even in the neighbouring countries the harvests were poor. Thus need also drove Joseph's brothers to Egypt. They bowed down before Joseph and asked whether they could buy some corn. They did not recognize Joseph, and he did not make himself known to them. He kept Simeon in Egypt while his brothers had to fetch Benjamin who had stayed home with his father.

The children are shown that the Lord fulfils his promises.

**T**

he seven good years have passed quickly. The rich harvests have been stored in numerous store-houses by Joseph and his many helpers. The eighth year commences. Mercilessly the sun burns down upon the earth. No clouds or rain bring relief to the parched land. All plants wither. The fields are soon parched and barren, the trees bare. Many springs and wells dry up, aridity is visible everywhere. Severe famine threatens. Then Joseph opens the granaries which were filled in the good, fruitful years. He sells the grain, but takes great care to apportion it wisely as these supplies must last for seven years. In Egypt nobody needs to go hungry. The people see Joseph as their saviour.

Many people come from neighbouring countries to buy corn. In Canaan, where Jacob and his family live, no rain has fallen for a long, long time. Finally Jacob calls his sons together and says: "Our food supply is almost finished. I have heard that grain is being sold in Egypt. Go there and buy some so that we need not starve."

The men set out on their journey, but Jacob does not permit Benjamin, his youngest son, to go with them. He loves him especially and fears something might happen to him on such a

long and arduous journey.

The brothers finally reach Egypt and are taken to a rich and distinguished-looking man. They have no idea who he is. They bow before him.

**1**

It is Joseph supervising the sale of the grain. He sees to it that it is done smoothly and fairly. Joseph recognizes his brothers immediately, but he does not yet tell them who he is. He speaks to them through an interpreter: "Where do you come from?" They answer: "We come from the land of Canaan to buy grain." Sternly and harshly Joseph replies: "You are spies and want to see how you can harm our land!"

"No, Sir, we have only come to buy grain. We are twelve brothers. Our father is Jacob. Benjamin, our youngest brother, has remained at home with him, and another brother has disappeared."

"I do not believe you!" insists Joseph. "I am sure that you are spies." He has them all locked up.

Three days later they are brought before Joseph once more. He says to them: "If you wish to remain alive, you have to do the following: Take the grain home and return with your youngest brother. Then I will believe that you have spoken the truth. But one of you will have to remain behind as hostage." He orders Simeon to be chained before their eyes and then sends

## God protects his own – Joseph

the others away.

Joseph has to turn his back on them quickly and leave the room so that no one will see the tears in his eyes.

2

The brothers undertake the return journey. During the long, wearisome trip they stop to rest. Then one of the brothers finds the money he had paid for the grain in his sack. The others also open their sacks to check. To their amazement they find that each sack contains the money they have paid for their wares. They are very puzzled.

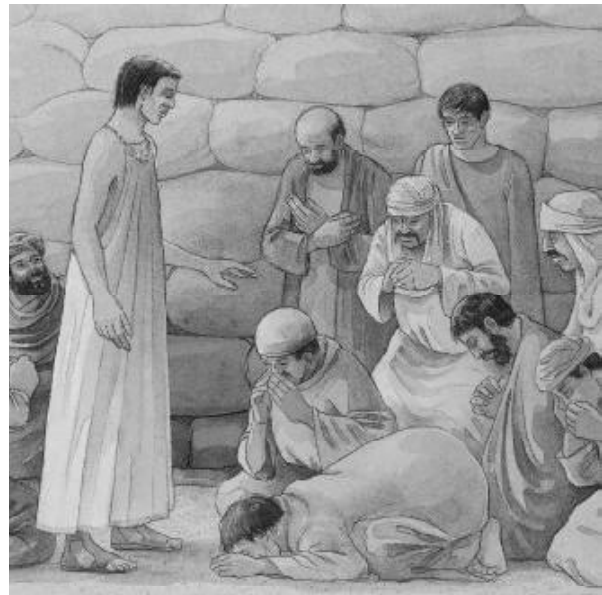
On arriving home they tell Jacob everything they have

experienced in Egypt, and that the high-ranking Egyptian demands that they return with Benjamin.

Jacob protests: "Must I lose all my sons? Joseph did not return. Simeon did not return. Now you want to take Benjamin from me. Under no circumstances may Benjamin go! If something were to happen to him, I would be desolate for the rest of my life." The brothers try to persuade their father to change his mind.

3

*After seven good and fruitful years followed the first lean year. There was no harvest. Joseph opened the storehouses so that the people had to eat. The land in which his father and brothers lived was also affected by the drought. The brothers came to Egypt to buy grain. They bowed before Joseph. Without telling them who he was, he sent them back with the grain and ordered them to return with Benjamin.*



1 We look at and describe the picture. We remind the children of Joseph's first dream, which is now being fulfilled. (The sheaves which his brothers had bound, bowed before Joseph's sheaf.) The dream was an indication from God.

2 Why does Joseph cry? What is he thinking?

3 We place ourselves in the brothers' position. Will they succeed in persuading their father to allow Benjamin to go to Egypt with them?