

Joseph Sold into Slavery

Joseph's brothers throw him in a pit and sell him to traders headed for Egypt, then deceive their father.

Genesis 37:12-36

CHARACTERS: Joseph, Joseph's brothers, Jacob, Midianite traders

THEMES: Betrayal, Suffering, God's hidden purposes

JACOB SENT JOSEPH to check on his brothers, who were grazing the flocks near Shechem. Joseph found them at Dothan instead. When they saw him in the distance, before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.

'Here comes that dreamer!' they said. 'Let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say a wild animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams.'

Reuben, the oldest, persuaded them not to shed blood. 'Throw him into this cistern in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him.' He planned to rescue Joseph later. So when Joseph arrived, they stripped off his beautiful robe and threw him into an empty cistern.

As they sat down to eat, a caravan of Ishmaelite merchants appeared, heading for Egypt. Judah suggested, 'What will we gain if we kill our brother? Let's sell him instead.' They pulled Joseph out of the cistern and sold him for twenty pieces of silver.

When Reuben returned to the cistern and found Joseph gone, he tore his clothes in grief. But the deed was done.

The brothers slaughtered a goat and dipped Joseph's robe in its blood. They brought it to their father. 'We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe.'

Jacob recognized it immediately. 'It is my son's robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces.' He tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. 'I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave,' he said.

Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard. The brothers thought they had ended Joseph's dreams. They had actually set them in motion.

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