

LESSON 7: THE STORY OF JOSEPH

from Genesis 37:1 to 50:26

After Jacob left home, he married and had 12 sons and 1 daughter. His favorite children were his two youngest, Joseph and Benjamin. He gave Joseph special gifts, including a colorful coat.

Joseph told his brothers about dreams that he had. In the dreams, Joseph's brothers always bowed down to Joseph.

His older brothers were jealous. They did not like Joseph. One day when the older brothers were taking care of sheep far away, their father sent Joseph to check in on them.

When the older brothers saw Joseph coming, they decided to kill him. They threw him in a hole in the ground. Then some travelers came. The brothers pulled Joseph out of the hole. They took off his special coat and sold him to the travelers for 20 pieces of gold.

The brothers ripped up the coat and put goat blood on it. They took it to their father and said, "Look, a wild animal killed Joseph." Jacob was very sad and cried for his son.

The travelers took Joseph to Egypt where they sold him to an important man named Potiphar. Joseph was a slave who worked very hard for Potiphar. The Lord was with him. Potiphar's wife told lies about Joseph, so Joseph was put in prison.

In prison, the Lord was with Joseph. He worked hard and soon was put in charge of the other prisoners. In prison with him were some of the servants of the king. When they had dreams, Joseph told them what the dreams meant, and what would happen to the servants. Everything happened just as Joseph had said. One of the servants was released from prison to serve the king again.

Later, when the king had dreams, the servant remembered Joseph and told the king that Joseph could tell him what the dream meant. The king sent for Joseph. Joseph told the king that there would be seven years with lots of crops and seven years with no crops. He suggested that the king save food during the good years, so there would be food for the bad years.

The king put Joseph in charge of the crops for the whole country. Joseph was almost as important as the king. When the bad years came, people ran out of food. They came to Joseph to get the saved food.

Joseph's brothers came to get food but they did not recognize Joseph. They bowed down to him, just like in Joseph's dreams when he was a boy. Joseph told them who he was and forgave them. He told them to go back and bring their father.

When Jacob found out that Joseph was still alive and an important man in Egypt, he did not believe them at first. But then he went with them to see Joseph in Egypt. The whole family moved to Egypt where there was food. The family was together again.

1. Joseph's older brothers did not like him. Why?

2. It was not fair that his brothers sold him and that Potiphar's wife lied about him. How did Joseph respond?

3. When Joseph worked in Potiphar's house and when he was in prison, who was with him?

4. In Egypt, Joseph could have been mean to his brothers for what they did to him. Instead, what did he do?

EXTRA QUESTIONS (Lesson 7)

5. Read Genesis 50:15-21, especially verse 20. Read Romans 8:28. Look for a word that is in both readings.

Even though evil things happen in our lives, God works them out for

6. Joseph did the right thing, but others were mean to him. Can you think of any other people in the Bible (or other saints) who did the right thing, but were not treated well? Who?

7. Turn to Matthew 1, which includes a list of Jesus' ancestors. (The word "begot" means "had a child.") In verse 2, you will see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom we have talked about in previous lessons. Judah is one of Joseph's brothers. Now read verse 16. There is another Jacob and another Joseph. This Joseph is the husband of Mary, the Theotokos, who gave birth to Jesus! Joseph in today's story was the great-great- great- great- (and a whole bunch more greats) uncle of Jesus.

If Joseph in today's story had not given food to his brothers in Egypt, or had killed Judah, the rest of the people in the list would not have been born! His decision to forgive is important to the history of Jesus' family.

8. If you come to the Bridegroom Matins service on Holy Monday, the week before Pascha, you will hear how Joseph's name. "Joseph was betrayed by his brothers, thrown into a pit, and sold into slavery by them. In the same way, our Lord was rejected, betrayed by His own, and sold into the slavery of death." (from www.antiochian.org/1175027131). Both stories had happy endings. What happened to Joseph? What happened to Jesus?
