

Joseph in Egypt — Sons of Jacob

17.—Joseph in his Father's House.

1. Jacob had twelve sons, of whom Joseph was the best. His father loved him above all his brothers; and when they saw the coat of many colors which his father made for him, they were filled with rage and envy. One day, while they were tending their flocks, his brothers committed a grievous fault. Joseph told his father, and by this only the more were his brothers enraged against him.

2. On another occasion Joseph told his brothers a dream he had had. He appeared, he said, to be binding sheaves with them in the field, when suddenly his sheaf rose up, and theirs, standing round about, bowed down to his. His brothers asked him, "If he wished to be their king?" So they only hated him the more.

3. Joseph had another dream, in which the sun and the moon and eleven stars seemed to worship him. This time his father asked him, "Whether he expected that he and his mother and his brothers should worship him?" But then, reflecting upon the whole matter, Jacob thought God might have great things in store for his son.

18.—Joseph Sold into Egypt. [B.C. *1800]

1. Some time after this Jacob sent Joseph to see his brothers, who were feeding their flocks at Sichem, that he might bring him back word how they were. But when the brothers saw Joseph coming to them, they determined to kill him and cast him into a pit that was near by. When Ruben, the eldest brother, heard this cruelty of his brothers, he persuaded them to let him down alive into an empty cistern that was there. This he did hoping he might rescue the boy out of their hands.

2. As soon as Joseph arrived he was stripped of his coat of many colors and cast into the empty cistern. Whilst his brothers were eating, they saw some Ismaelite merchants passing on their way to Egypt, their camels carrying their merchandise. Then Judah advised his brothers not to kill Joseph—for he was their brother—and it would be better to sell him; so they drew him out of the cistern and sold him to the Ismaelites for twenty pieces of silver.

3. Ruben was absent when Joseph was sold, and, returning shortly after, sought the boy, and, not finding him, went, in much trouble, to the others to know what they had done with him; but they were indifferent to his inquiries.

Then the brothers killed a kid, and dipping Joseph's coat in its blood, sent it to their father, pretending they had found it. Jacob knew the coat at once, and concluded a wild beast had killed his son. Rending his garments and putting on sackcloth, he would not be comforted.

4. In many respects Joseph's life was a picture of the life of Jesus Christ. Joseph was hated by his brothers because of his great virtues; Jesus was hated for His doctrines and the prophecies that foretold His greatness. Joseph was betrayed, sold, and calumniated; so was Christ. Joseph triumphed in the end; so did Jesus Christ. Joseph was made governor over Egypt; Jesus is King of heaven and earth. Joseph saved his brothers; Jesus Christ redeemed and saved mankind.

19.—Joseph in the House of Potiphar.

1. When the Ismaelites came into Egypt, they sold Joseph to Potiphar, the chief officer in Pharaoh's army. God was with Joseph, so that whatever he undertook succeeded. Soon he was placed in charge of Potiphar's house.

2. After some time Potiphar's wife strove to persuade him to commit a grievous sin, but he would not. However, she continued to press her wishes, until one day, when she was more pressing than usual, Joseph fled, leaving his cloak in her hands.

3. Finding she could not succeed, her love was turned into hatred, and, seeing Joseph's cloak in her hands, resolved to ruin the innocent young man. Then, with well-affected horror, she began to cry out against Joseph; and when Potiphar came home, repeated her falsehoods and calumnies. Her husband believed her story, and, seeing the cloak, became very angry and cast Joseph into prison.

20.—Joseph in Prison.

1. Joseph soon found favor with the keeper of the prison. Here, as before with Potiphar's house, Joseph was placed in charge of the other prisoners.

Two of Pharaoh's officers, the cup-bearer and chief baker, were also cast into prison.

2. On the same night they had each a dream that made them very sad. In the morning Joseph noticed their sorrow, and, asking why, they told him of their dreams, and that no one could interpret them. Joseph bade them tell them to him.

3. The cup-bearer said: "I saw before me three branches of a vine, which, by degrees, grew and blossomed, and at length brought forth grapes. I took the grapes and pressed them into the king's cup, and gave him to drink." When Joseph heard this, he answered: "The three branches are yet three days, when the king will restore you to your former dignity, and you shall present the cup as heretofore. Remember me, and speak to the king for me, for though cast into prison, I am innocent."

4. Then the chief baker said: "I carried on my head three baskets of meal. In the uppermost were all kinds of pastry, of which the birds came and eat." Joseph answered: "The three baskets are three days, when the king shall cut off your head, and hang your body on a gibbet, where the birds shall eat your flesh."

5. Three days after, everything happened as Joseph had foretold: the king restored the cup-bearer, and he presented the cup as before, but the baker he hanged on a gibbet. The cup-bearer, however, in his prosperity, forgot Joseph.

21.—Joseph's Greatness.

1. After two years Pharaoh had a dream. He seemed to stand on the bank of the Nile, while seven fat kine came up and fed in the marshes; then there came up seven other kine, lean and ill-favored, that devoured the fat kine. After this the king awoke.

2. Pharaoh slept again, and dreamt another dream: he saw seven ears of corn, full and fair, growing upon one stalk; then he saw seven other ears grow up, thin and blasted, and these eat up the first. So Pharaoh awoke. In the morning the king sent for all the wise men and soothsayers of Egypt, to whom he related his dreams, but no one could interpret them,

3. Then the cup-bearer remembered Joseph, and told the king how, in prison, Joseph had interpreted both his and the chief baker's dream. Immediately Joseph was sent for. When the king related his

dreams to him, Joseph told the king their interpretation depended not on him but on God.

4. "This," said Joseph, "is the interpretation of your dreams: the seven fat kine and the seven full ears are seven years of plenty; the seven lean kine and the seven blasted ears are seven years of famine, which will follow and eat up all the abundance of the seven years of plenty. The famine shall be in all the land. Let, therefore, the king choose a wise man, and make him ruler over Egypt; and let him, during the years of abundance, gather the crops into public granaries, that there may be food against the seven years of famine."

5. This counsel pleased Pharaoh, and, admiring the wisdom and prudence that appeared in Joseph, he chose him. Then he took the ring from his own finger and put it upon Joseph's, and, putting upon him a silken robe, and round his neck a chain of gold, made him go up into his second chariot, while a herald went before, crying aloud: "Let all the people bow their knee before Joseph, who is made governor of Egypt." Pharaoh also changed Joseph's name, and called him "*Saviour of the world*," Joseph was then thirty years of age.

22.—Joseph's Brethren go into Egypt.

1. During the seven years of plenty, Joseph stored up great quantities of wheat. As he had foretold, the famine came, and the people demanded bread from the king; but he sent them to Joseph, who opened the granaries and gave out wheat.

2. The famine passed also into the land of Canaan. Jacob, hearing there was wheat in Egypt, sent ten of his sons thither, that they might buy; but Benjamin, the youngest, he kept at home, lest any harm should befall him on the way. In time the brothers arrived in Egypt, and, coming to Joseph, humbly bowed themselves before him. He knew them, but they did not know him.

3. Joseph began to charge them with being spies, but they declared their innocence, and how they had come only to buy wheat. They also told him that, originally, they were twelve brothers; that the youngest was at home with their father, but the other was not living. Joseph, that he might further try them, threatened to cast one of them into prison until the others should return and bring their younger brother, that he might see if they were men of truth or no.

24.—Joseph's Silver Cup.

4. When the brothers saw themselves so harshly treated, they began to speak one to the other, not thinking that Joseph understood what they said, as he had spoken to them only through an interpreter. In their trouble they remembered how they had treated him, and acknowledged that their present treatment was a just punishment for their former cruelty to their younger brother. When Joseph heard this, going out, he wept.

5. Then Simeon was cast into prison, while the sacks of the others were filled with corn, and their money put secretly in each man's sack; provisions were also given them for the journey. When all was ready, the brothers loaded their asses and went their way.

6. Coming to their father, they told him all that had happened; and, emptying their sacks, each found the price of his corn. Great fear came upon them. When Jacob heard what had happened, he began to lament his sad lot—how they would rob him of his children; Joseph was not, Simeon was a prisoner, and now they would take Benjamin away.

23.—Benjamin goes down to Egypt.

1. When their wheat was all eaten, Jacob ordered his sons to go again into Egypt; but Judah said it was useless unless they took Benjamin with them. After considering the matter well, Jacob at length consented. Taking with them Benjamin, and double money, they started again.

2. When they arrived in Egypt, and Joseph saw Benjamin, he commanded his steward to bring them into the palace, that they might dine with him. The steward did as he was ordered. They, seeing what was done, became frightened, and began to think it was because of the money they had found in their sacks; but the steward told them not to fear, and, going, brought Simeon to them.

3. When Joseph came in to see them, they bowed down before him and presented the gifts they had brought. He saluted them kindly and asked for their father: if he yet lived, and if he were well. Having answered him, he turned to Benjamin, and, blessing him, went out and, for joy, wept.

4. Washing his face, he returned and ordered dinner. When he seated them each in the order of his age, they wondered exceedingly. To each he gave a share, but Benjamin's was five times larger than that of any other. So they eat and drank and made merry with Joseph.

1. Joseph would again prove his brothers, to see if they were as jealous and hard-hearted towards Benjamin as they had been to himself; so, when the feast was ended, he bade his steward fill their sacks with corn, to put each man's money back into his sack, and his own silver cup into the sack of the youngest. The order was obeyed, and in the morning they departed.

2. But scarce were they gone when Joseph sent his steward after them, charging them with returning evil for good in having stolen his master's silver cup. When the sons of Jacob heard the accusation, they were overwhelmed with fear, and declared that with whomsoever the cup would be found, he should die. Hastening, they opened their sacks, and the cup was found in Benjamin's. Confounded, they gazed on each other, and, rending their garments, returned to Joseph.

3. They cast themselves at his feet, and Judah, in their name, said they had no excuse to make; that they were thus justly punished for their sins; and that hereafter they would be his slaves. Joseph, however, declared that only he with whom the cup had been found should be his slave; the others would be free to go.

4. When Judah heard this, he drew near to Joseph and told him how much it had cost their father to let Benjamin go, how he had pledged himself for the return of the boy, and how, if they returned without Benjamin, he feared it would kill their aged father; then Judah offered himself to be slave instead of his younger brother Benjamin.

5. Joseph could no longer restrain himself, but, bursting into tears, said to his brothers, "I am Joseph." They could not answer him, so great was their fear; but he spoke kindly to them, assuring them that all they had done to him had been directed by God. Then he asked how his father was, and commanded his brothers to hasten and tell him of his son's glory to come down to Egypt, for there were yet five years of famine.

When Pharaoh heard the news, he promised to give Jacob of the fat of Egypt. Then Joseph dismissed his brothers, sending with them chariots and provisions, costly robes and silver.

25.—Jacob goes down to Egypt.

1. When Joseph's brothers came to their father and told him the news,—how his son yet lived, and was governor of Egypt,—Jacob awoke as from a dream. At first he could not believe what he heard, but when he saw the chariots of the king, and received the rich presents sent by his son, his spirits revived, and he was satisfied, now that Joseph lived, to go down to Egypt, that he might see him before he died.

2. Jacob gathered together all his possessions and, accompanied by his sons and their wives and their children,—in all to the number of seventy,—began his journey. When he came to the borders of the land of Canaan, the Lord appeared to him and told him to fear nothing, for He would go down with him, and would yet make of him a great nation, and in time would bring him back again.

3. Judah went on before to tell Joseph that his father was coming. Joseph hastened to meet his father, and, seeing him, fell upon his neck and wept. "Now I die in peace." said Jacob, "since I see your face."

In the same manner spoke the aged Simeon, seventeen hundred year afterwards, when, in the Temple of Jerusalem, he saw the true Joseph, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

4. When Joseph presented his father to the king, he asked him his age. The old man said, "I am a hundred and thirty years of age; yet I am not as old as my fathers."

Joseph gave his father and his brethren possessions in Gessen, because there was there great abundance of grass for their flocks.

26.—The Death of Jacob and Joseph.

1. Seventeen years after his arrival in Egypt, Jacob fell sick. When Joseph heard this he took his two sons, Ephraim and Manasses, and hastened to visit his father. When Jacob saw the two boys, he blessed them.

2. Then he called together his sons, and told them God would yet lead them back to their own country; but he charged them to bury him in the land of Canaan. Then he blessed them, foretelling what would happen in the latter days.

To Judah he gave the greatest blessing, saying: "Yon shall rule over your enemies; the sons of your father shall bow down to you, and the sceptre shall not pass from Judah till He cometh that is to be sent, *the Expectation of Nations.*"

3. This celebrated prophecy, that so clearly marked the time when the Messiah would come, was accomplished when Herod, the first stranger, ruled over Judea. In him the sceptre passed from Judah.

4. When Jacob was dead, Joseph threw himself on his father's face, weeping and kissing him. Then he ordered the physicians to embalm the body, and when, according to the custom of the Egyptians, he had mourned for seventy days, he, with his brothers and an immense multitude, carried the body into the land of Canaan. Thus was Jacob buried at Hebron.

5. Joseph lived to the age of a hundred and ten years, and saw his children's children to the third generation. When he saw his end drawing near, he called his brothers to him, and told them they would have trouble after his death; to fear nothing, however, as God would surely lead them back to the land He had promised to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then, having charged them to take his bones up with them, he died, and his body was embalmed and laid in a coffin.

27.—The Patience of Job.

1. Contemporary with the patriarchs there lived in Arabia a man named Job. He had seven sons and three daughters; for possessions he had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred asses, besides many servants. He was much esteemed on account of his great wealth, but much more so for his piety.

2. On a certain day God said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, how there is none like to him on the whole earth?" Satan replied that it was easy for Job to serve God, that he was rich and blessed in all his actions; but, "Touch him," said Satan, "and he will curse you and abandon you." God gave Satan permission, only not to touch his person.

3. Soon after this, while the sons and daughters of Job were eating and drinking together in the house of their eldest brother, there came a messenger to Job to tell him how the Sabeans had taken his oxen and his asses, and slain his servants. The

messenger had hardly finished when there came another, telling how fire had fallen from heaven and consumed his sheep and his shepherds. There came still a third, saying the Chaldeans had taken his camels and slain his servants. And while he was yet speaking there came a fourth with the sad news that the house in which his children were feasting had been blown down by a wind and all were killed.

4. When Job heard these things, rising up, he rent his garments, and, falling down, adored God. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away," said he; "blessed be the name of the Lord." So Job sinned not, and God rejoiced in His servant.

5. Satan again appeared before the Lord and said, if God would but touch Job's person, He would see Job would curse Him. God put Job in Satan's power. Then Satan struck Job with a grievous ulcer, so that he was covered with sores from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot. Job scraped his sores with a potsherd.

6. Job's wife, seeing this, came and upbraided him for his folly. But Job answered, "If we have received good from the hand of God, why will we not receive evil?" So again Job sinned not.

7. When Job's friends heard what had befallen him, three of them came to condole with him. Seeing him, they wept, and, sitting down, for seven days and seven nights no one spoke, for they saw how great was his grief.

8. At length Job opened his mouth and began to lament his suffering; but his friends only reproached him with his faults. Job would not confess that he was guilty, but stoutly maintained his innocence and his confidence in God.

9. This confidence was not misplaced, for Job was delivered from his afflictions, and had possessions twice as great as before. Again he had seven sons and three daughters, and after this lived a hundred and forty years, and saw his children's children to the fourth generation. He died an old man, full of joy and happiness.

10. Job is a figure of Jesus Christ, who, bruised from the top of His head to the sole of His foot, and scorned as a man covered with iniquities, complained not. We see also in Job's case how far sometimes God permits the devil to exercise his powers.

*NOTE: Dates at head of lessons prefixed by an * are approximate.*