

Joseph Is Sold By His Brothers

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Scene Summary

“Joseph Is Sold By His Brothers” presents the sad story of men who hate their brother. Scenes include: Joseph seeks his brothers to bring news to his father...the brothers plot to kill him...Reuben hopes to rescue his brother...on impulse the men sell Joseph to a trader...the brothers make up a story to tell their father.

Scripture

(Gen 37:13-36 NIV) and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them." "Very well," he replied. {14} So he said to him, "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me." Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron. When Joseph arrived at Shechem, {15} a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?" {16} He replied, "I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?" {17} "They have moved on from here," the man answered. "I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. {18} But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. {19} "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. {20} "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams." {21} When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said. {22} "Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the desert, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father. {23} So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe--the richly ornamented robe he was wearing-- {24} and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. {25} As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt. {26} Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? {27} Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed. {28} So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the

Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt. {29} When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes. {30} He went back to his brothers and said, "The boy isn't there! Where can I turn now?" {31} Then they got Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. {32} They took the ornamented robe back to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe." {33} He recognized it and said, "It is my son's robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces." {34} Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. {35} All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "No," he said, "in mourning will I go down to the grave to my son." So his father wept for him. {36} Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard.

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Players

- **Narrator** – The play's "catechist" or teacher should be a good reader with a clear voice.
- **Jacob** – An older person, showing loving care for son Joseph.
- **Joseph** – The central character, this person is excited about life.
- **Ruben** – Jacob's firstborn son, the elder.
- **Brother 1, 2** – More people can be used here as needed.
- **Caravan leader** – A nefarious looking person with a big smile.

Special Props

- Normal items from the prop box such as cloaks, veils, robes and headdresses.
- A colorful coat.
- Ropes to bind Joseph.

Script – Joseph Is Sold By His Brothers

Jacob: Joseph!

Joseph: Yes father?

Jacob: Your bothers have been away with the sheep for some time. I want you to go and see how they are.

Joseph: [smiling] All right. I'll leave right away.

Narrator: Early the next morning, Joseph tied food, a sleeping mat and a jug of water on his donkey.

Jacob: Be careful son.

Joseph: I will.

Narrator: Joseph started on his long trip to find his brothers. About three days later, Joseph came near to the city of Dothan. He saw the huge flocks on the hills.

Joseph: [to himself] Those are my father's sheep. [smiling] My brothers will be surprised to see me.

Brother 1: [with disdain] Look! [pointing] Isn't that Joseph the dreamer?

Brother 2: [angry] That's him all right. I'd recognize that coat anywhere.

Brother 1: [scowling] Let's kill him. Then we'll know that his dreams about ruling over us will not come true.

Ruben: [with some concern] No, let's just put him in a pit. [to himself] I'll rescue him later and take him home.

Joseph: [smiling and happy] Hello brothers! I brought you some food.

Brother 2: [scowling] So the dreamer has come!

[The brothers grab Joseph]

Joseph: [scared] Why are you doing this to me?

Brother 1: [superior] We'll see if your fancy dreams will come true.

[The brothers take off Joseph’s coat and put him into “the pit”, a place on the floor, surrounded by chairs to make it look like a jail.]

Brother 2: [laughing] He’ll never get out of there.

Narrator: The brothers unpacked the food that Joseph had brought from home and began to eat. Ruben left and went to look after the sheep.

Brother 1: This bread and cheese tastes good!

Narrator: The brothers laughed and joked as they ate.

Brother 2: [looking in the distance] Say, do you see what is coming? It looks like a caravan going south to Egypt.

Judah: [with an idea] They are probably carrying spices and slaves to sell in Egypt. I wonder if they would like to buy another slave?

[The brothers look at each other and shake their heads in agreement]

Brother 1: That dreamer should sell for a good price.

Narrator: Quickly the brothers hurried to the pit. Judah looked down at Joseph.

Judah: [kindly] If you promise to be a good boy, we promise to pull you out.

Joseph: [to himself] What will my brothers do to me now?

Judah: [to the caravan leader] This would make a fine slave! You will get a good price for him.

Caravan leader: [shrugging his shoulders] I will give you 20 pieces of silver for him.

Narrator: Judah took the money and handed over Joseph. The brothers watched as the caravan marched down the road.

Brother 2: [superior] So Joseph thinks he’ll rule over us!

Brother 1: He’ll work hard as a slave now.

Brother 2: [laughing] We got rid of him and made some money too!

[These brothers leave the area and Ruben returns]

Ruben: [looking down into the pit] Joseph?

Narrator: But Joseph was not there.

Ruben: He's gone! What could have happened to him?

Narrator: Ruben went to his brothers and they told him what they had done.

Judah: Now we must decide what to tell father.

Brother 1: Let's put blood on the coat and then when we show it to father and tell him that a wild animal has probably killed Joseph.

Narrator: The brothers all agreed.

The End

Supplemental Information

Soon after Jacob returned from Haran, where he had worked for his uncle Laban and married two of his daughters, he purchased some land at Shechem and later moved to Bethel. Just before his father Isaac died, he moved his family to Hebron.

When pastures became sparse, his older sons took the family flocks fifty miles north to Shechem where there were usually good grasslands. It was to Shechem that Jacob sent Joseph to find out if all was well with the older sons and the flocks. He sent along some food also, probably some cheese and corn, perhaps some grain.

When Joseph arrived at Shechem, he learned that his brothers had moved twenty miles further north to the lush pastures of Dothan. The brothers spotted Joseph's colorful coat while he was still some distance away. It reminded them that Jacob loved Joseph more than all the other sons. This was a princely robe that indicated to everyone that his father did not expect Joseph to work hard like the other sons. They must also have been reminded of Joseph's dreams as they watched him approach, riding the donkey. They remember too, that he often told his father of their wrong doings. They hated Joseph and decided that this would be a good time to get rid of him for good. They plotted to kill him, but Ruben, Jacob's oldest son, must have been somewhat tenderhearted, for while he was angry with Joseph too, he talked the other brothers out of killing him. He suggested that they put Joseph in a nearby pit. Probably lined with stone, the pit may have been bottle shaped, larger at the bottom and narrow at the top. It would be impossible for Joseph to get out without help. Ruben planned to take the boy out secretly and return him safely to his father.

The brothers removed the beautiful coat before they put Joseph into the pit. Ruben probably went off to watch the sheep. Caravans often passed through the region going to and from Egypt, far to the south. They carried spices, perfumes, wool, flax and other products.

While the other brothers were eating, except Ruben, they saw a caravan approaching in the distance. They knew it was headed to Egypt. Judah suggested that they sell Joseph to the traders, who would then sell him as a slave in Egypt. They received 20 pieces of silver for Joseph.

Ruben was very upset when he rejoined his brothers and found out what they had done. He agreed with the other brothers and although he could have gone after Joseph to save him, Ruben decided to lie to his father. The brothers killed a young goat and put some of the blood on Joseph's beautiful coat. They took it back to their father and pretended that they found it. Cruelly, they let their father believe that a wild animal had killed his favorite son.

Joseph was taken to Egypt and sold to Potiphar, a high officer of the Pharaoh, or king of Egypt. Joseph learned quickly. He was pleasant and worked hard. Soon he became the chief steward or the head servant.

Camels

From Old Testament days until long after the time of Jesus, camel caravans traveled from country to country on well-established trade routes. The camel driver rode a donkey at the head of the procession. Camels followed in single file, marching across the dry deserts or following roads near riverbeds.

The Ishmaelites, to whom Joseph was sold, were taking spices from Gilead to Egypt. On their way back, they carried other goods from Egypt to sell in Palestine. Camels can carry heavy loads and walk three to four miles an hour for eight to ten hours a day. They can go without water for long periods. When not carrying a load, they can walk twice as fast. They can run faster than horses, but they like to walk at a steady pace. Their nostrils are like slits, which may be closed to keep out blowing desert sand. Double rows of lashes help protect their eyes from sand also.