

JOSEPH

Illustrated by Mike Eagle

Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them (Genesis 45:15).

Joseph's brothers resented the fact that he was their father's favorite son, the firstborn of his wife Rachel. "Now Israel (their father, Jacob) loved Joseph more than all his children, . . . and he made him a coat of many colours." The brothers disliked Joseph so much that "they could not speak peaceably unto him."

To make matters worse, Joseph dreamed a dream, and then another, that showed that he would one day reign over his brothers. They as well as his father were upset with him when he told them.

One day Joseph's ten older brothers were sent to Shechem to feed their father's flocks. Later Jacob sent Joseph out to them to see if all went well. When his brothers saw him coming, they decided to slay him. His oldest brother, Reuben, persuaded the others not to kill Joseph, so instead they threw him into a pit, then sold him for twenty pieces of silver to some merchants who were going to Egypt. Afraid of what Jacob would say about what they'd done, the brothers took Joseph's fine coat, dipped it into the blood of a young goat, and told their father that "an evil beast hath devoured" his favored son. Jacob wept.

When the merchants arrived in Egypt, Joseph was sold again, this time to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard. Because Joseph was a righteous young man, the Lord blessed him. His master saw that "the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand." As a result, Joseph was given great responsibility and was made an overseer in Potiphar's house.

Joseph served honorably and well, but when he was falsely accused of doing wrong by Potiphar's wife, he was thrown into prison. Even there his great merit was recognized, and the keeper of the prison put him over all the other prisoners. "That which he did, the Lord made it to prosper."

Two years later Pharaoh dreamed two unusual dreams. He asked the magicians and wise men in his land to interpret them. When they could not do it, his butler, who had been in prison with Joseph, remembered that

he had been able to interpret dreams. Pharaoh sent for Joseph.

Pharaoh's first dream was of seven fat and healthy cows, anciently called kine, being eaten up by seven lean and sickly cows. In his second dream, seven full and good ears of corn were devoured by seven withered and thin ears. With the Lord's help, Joseph explained that both dreams meant the same thing. Egypt could expect seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine.

When Pharaoh asked what to do, Joseph said to store food during the seven good years, then sell it to the people during the seven lean years. He was put in charge of the project and given great authority, and when the seven lean years arrived, the people of Egypt did not go hungry.

The famine extended as far away as Israel, and people there heard of the storehouses of Egypt. One day Jacob called his ten older sons to him and sent them to Egypt to buy food for their families. When they appeared before Joseph and asked to buy food, they didn't recognize him. But he knew at once who they were.

At first he accused them of being spies. In order to prove they were not, he commanded them to leave Simeon there while they took the food to their families, then come back to Egypt with their youngest brother, Benjamin, which they did.

This time when Joseph filled their bags with food, he hid a silver cup in Benjamin's bag. Then he sent his servant after them to accuse them of stealing the silver cup. When it was found in Benjamin's sack, Joseph said that Benjamin had to stay and serve him as punishment. Judah pleaded with Joseph to let him stay, instead, because the loss of Benjamin would kill their father.

When Joseph saw that his brothers were not willing to have Benjamin or their father harmed, he made himself known to them. The reunion was sweet as he kissed his brothers and wept and forgave them. Jacob and all his family were sent for so that Joseph could feed them and care for them during the remainder of the famine.

(See Genesis 37, 39-46.)

