

## Chapter Eight – Joseph and his Brothers

Jacob had twelve sons and each of the twelve sons became the head of one of the twelve tribes of the Israelites, that is, of Israel, the Jewish nation. Rachel died when she gave birth to Benjamin at the place called Ephrath, later called Bethlehem where Jesus was born. As Jacob loved her more than Leah, he also loved her children, Joseph and Benjamin, more than Leah's children. Joseph was his favourite son and he gave him many things including a beautiful long coat. This made the others jealous and they grew to hate Joseph.

Joseph would sometimes tell his father about the poor work attitude of his brothers. His brothers hated him even more when he told them of a dream he had. "Listen," he said, "to this dream I had. I dreamt we were all tying up bundles of wheat stalks in the field and my bundle suddenly stood up and all your bundles bowed to mine."

"What?" they said. "Do you think you will be our king and we will be your subjects?"

Later on he had another dream. "In this dream," he said, "it seemed to me that I saw the sun, the moon and eleven stars bowing to my star." When his father heard it, he scolded him. "What do you mean by this dream? Do you think that I, your mother and your brothers will bow down to the earth before you?" His brothers were angry but his father thought over the story and wondered if the dreams would really come true.

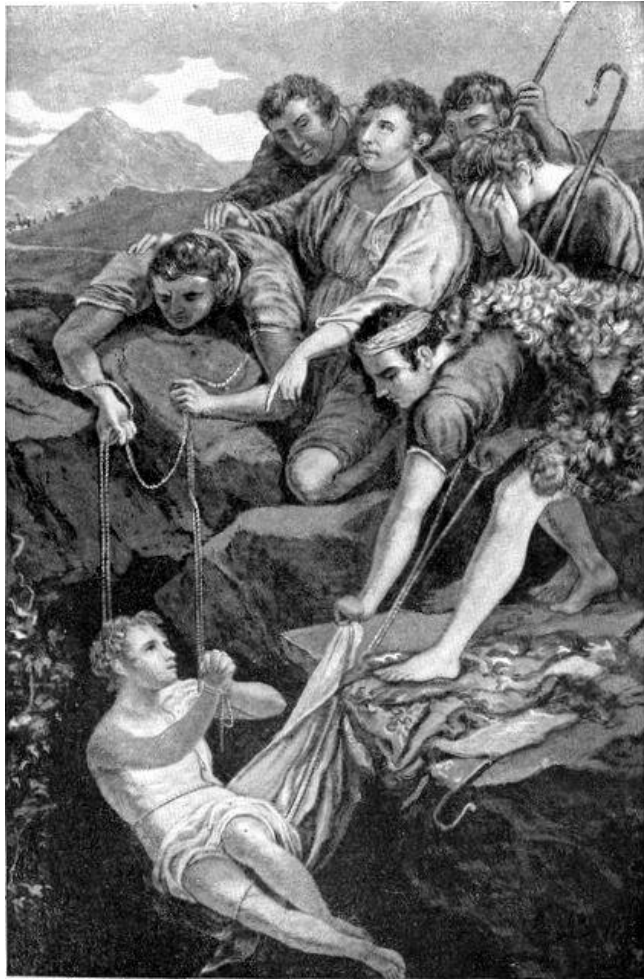
One day when his brothers were away taking care of their flocks, Jacob asked Joseph to check how they were doing. When his brothers spotted him from a distance, they plotted to kill him and throw his body into a well. They would pretend he was killed by a wild beast. However, the eldest brother, Reuben, wanted to save him so he suggested that they should throw him into a well, still alive.

As soon as Joseph came up, they took away his coat and threw him into a dry well. Reuben then went away, hoping to return and pull Joseph out. As the other brothers sat down to take their lunch, they saw a group of merchants heading for Egypt. They agreed on selling Joseph to them as a slave, so they pulled Joseph out of the well and sold him for twenty pieces of silver. When Reuben returned to the well, there was no sign of Joseph.

The other brothers killed a goat and dipped Joseph's coat in its blood. They told their father that he had been killed by some wild animal. Jacob saw the coat and was heartbroken. All his family comforted him but he refused to be comforted.



*Joseph the Shepherd*



*Joseph is thrown into a well by his brothers*

Questions:

1. Why did Joseph's brothers hate him and want to kill him?
2. Did all the brothers hate him equally? Explain your answer.
3. What could Joseph have done to improve the relationship with his brothers?
4. Why do you think the merchants were heading for Egypt?
5. What is jealousy? Give an example from daily life.
6. What can happen when people become jealous?