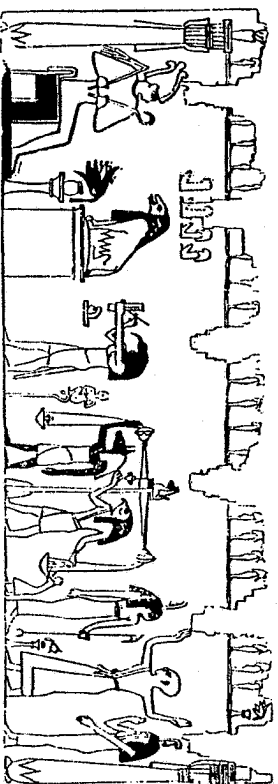


the sacks were filled with corn, the money was put back into the sacks and Joseph's silver cup was put into Benjamin's (which made him look like a thief). Joseph told his steward to follow the brothers and to bring them back as thieves. Benjamin was to become Joseph's slave.

The brothers begged for mercy, still not recognising Joseph and told him of poor Jacob alone and how precious Benjamin was. When Joseph saw how the brothers had changed he couldn't pretend any more and told them who he really was. He forgave them for what they had done to him so many years before and told them to bring Jacob to Egypt. Ten donkeys were sent with presents. So Jacob, who was old now, went to see his son Joseph before he died. How happy he must have been to see Joseph riding to meet him in his chariot. He even went to meet Pharaoh. Jacob lived in Egypt for seventeen years and saw his son rule wisely. When he was dying he asked to be buried back in Canaan. The Children of Israel settled in Egypt and Joseph ruled for many years.

The story of Joseph is written in the Bible to help us understand more about the Lord Jesus. Joseph is a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus in so many ways. He was despised by his family; he was sold for money; he returned good for evil; he carried out God's will despite the people around him; he saved the life of others; ended up ruler over the whole country and all the people, including his brothers, bowed before him.



BIBLE HEROES: 4

THE LIFE OF



JOSEPH

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Many years ago there lived a rich shepherd prince called Jacob. He had twelve sons called Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Naphthali, Issachar, Asher, Dan, Zebulun, Gad, Benjamin, Judah and Joseph. Jacob's favourite sons were the two youngest, Joseph and Benjamin, but most of all Joseph. Benjamin and Joseph were the sons of his dear wife Rachel, who had died. The brothers all worked as shepherds in the fields.

When Joseph was seventeen his father gave him a "coat of many colours". Now this made his brothers full of envy. Then Joseph had a dream. In the dream his brothers had sheaves of corn and their sheaves had to bow down to Joseph's sheaf of corn. This made the brothers more angry and when Joseph told them of another dream where they were eleven stars, mother and father were the sun and moon and that they all had to bow down to Joseph they became furious, but his father was very thoughtful.

Some time later Jacob, who was also called Israel, asked Joseph to go to Shechem to find how his brothers were doing. He looked for them at Shechem but they had gone to Dothan, which was on an important caravan route for travellers from Damascus going to Egypt. The brothers hated Joseph and when they saw him all alone they decided to kill him. However, the eldest Reuben warned them not to, so instead Joseph was thrown into an empty pit which was used to collect water in those days. When a band of Ishmaelites came by they sold Joseph to them for twenty pieces of silver. The brothers killed a goat and dipped Joseph's coat in blood. They let Jacob think that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal.

Meanwhile, Joseph was sold as a slave in Egypt to a man called Potiphar but although Joseph was so far from home God was with him. Sadly, Potiphar's wife told wicked lies about Joseph and he was thrown into prison. Still Joseph trusted in God. In the prison with Joseph were the King's butler and baker. They both had a dream but

didn't understand it. The chief butler dreamed of a vine with three branches. Pharaoh's cup was in his hand and he squeezed the grapes into the cup. Joseph told the butler that in three days he would get his job back. Then the King's baker told how he had three baskets of bread and how birds had eaten the bread. When asked the meaning, Joseph sadly said that in three days time the baker would die. Joseph asked the butler to think of him when he had his job with Pharaoh back and speak of him to Pharaoh, but he forgot Joseph.

Two years later, Pharaoh had a dream one night which troubled him. Seven fat cows came down to the river Nile to feed. They were followed by seven thin cows who ate up the fat cows. Then Pharaoh had another dream where seven fat ears of corn were eaten up by seven thin ears of corn. Nobody could explain the strange dreams but the butler remembered Joseph and the prisoner was called before Pharaoh. Joseph said that God would help him to explain the dreams. There were to be seven good harvests (the seven fat cows and seven fat ears of corn) followed by seven bad harvests (the seven thin cows and seven thin ears of corn). When Pharaoh asked what to do, Joseph said that corn must be stored up during the seven plentiful years so they could eat this during the seven years of famine that would follow. Pharaoh decided to put Joseph in charge; he became the second most important person in Egypt. Pharaoh gave Joseph his ring and dressed him in fine robes. A gold chain was hung about his neck and when he rode through the streets a runner would go ahead of the chariot telling everyone to bow down before him. Joseph was now thirty years old and there were seven years of plenty. Then seven years of famine came.

In Canaan where Jacob and his sons lived the famine was so bad that Jacob sent his sons to buy corn in Egypt. Only Benjamin stayed behind. Jacob didn't want to lose Benjamin as well as Joseph. The brothers didn't recognise Joseph who decided to teach them a lesson. Simeon was put in prison whilst the others were sent back home to bring Benjamin. Also, Joseph's servants were ordered to put money in the sacks of corn. Eventually they had to return to Egypt. Again, when