

## Joseph sees his family again (Genesis 42 – 46)

*Joseph's father and brothers lived in the land of Canaan where they were suffering from a terrible shortage of food. Joseph had 11 older brothers called Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun and a younger brother Benjamin. Joseph's father was called Jacob. They were all very hungry and worried.*

Jacob gathered his sons around him and said, "I have heard that there is food to spare in Egypt. Go to Egypt and buy some or we will starve". So, his 10 oldest sons, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar and Zebulun, packed up what they would need, loaded their bags on their donkeys, said goodbye and went off to Egypt to buy corn. Benjamin stayed with Jacob.

The brothers arrived in Egypt and they were taken to Joseph, who was in charge of the food supplies. They didn't recognise that this important man with expensive clothes was their brother Joseph. They bowed before him. Joseph didn't let on that he knew who they were. When his brothers bowed before him, he remembered his dream.

Joseph decided to test his brothers. He accused them of being spies, called the guards and had them thrown in prison for three days. Then Joseph told them they could go back home on two conditions - they must leave Simeon in prison in Egypt and they must bring Benjamin back with them.

The brothers agreed and sadly they said goodbye to Simeon and set off on their donkeys on the long journey home. Joseph called the guards and gave orders to fill the brothers' bags with corn and put their money back in their bags. On the way home, they stopped for the night and found the money back in their bags. They didn't know why it was there and they were frightened that there would be trouble. They rested, then they continued on their journey.

When they got home, they told Jacob what had happened. Jacob wouldn't let Benjamin, his youngest son, go to Egypt because he was afraid what might happen to him. He thought he had already lost Joseph and Simeon and would now lose Benjamin. So, for a while, they stayed in Canaan.

In time, the famine got worse in Canaan and they were in desperate need of food but they didn't dare go back to Egypt without taking Benjamin. One of the brothers, Judah, went to his father Jacob and promised that he would bring Benjamin back safely. They packed money and they set off again for Egypt with Benjamin.

When they arrived, Joseph invited them to have dinner with him. They thought that they were in trouble because their money had been returned on the first visit. They went to Joseph's assistant and told him about finding the money in their sacks and offered to return it but he told them not to worry. He said that it must have been a gift from their God because he had taken the payment he needed for the corn and he set Simeon free. They joined Joseph for the meal. All 12 brothers were together again. They still didn't know it was Joseph but they probably wondered why Joseph asked about their father and their home.

The 11 brothers set off back to Canaan again on their donkeys, probably very relieved that it had all gone so well, but, before they had gone very far, Joseph's assistant came running after them accusing them of stealing. The brothers said that they hadn't stolen anything but the assistant checked their luggage and a silver cup was found in Benjamin's sack (Joseph had made that happen). They were taken back to Joseph. When the assistant told Joseph what had been found in Benjamin's sack, Joseph said he would keep Benjamin as his slave. Oh no – they mustn't leave their little brother, Benjamin, behind! Judah stepped forward and said to Joseph, "I will stay behind in place of Benjamin". Judah was willing to take the punishment for someone else. Many years earlier it had been Judah who had the idea to sell Joseph as a slave, but Judah had changed.

This was the moment Joseph had been waiting for. He told them who he really was. When they heard that this important man was Joseph, the brother they had treated so badly, they were terrified - but Joseph reassured them, saying that God had sent him there to Egypt to save lives. Joseph gave his brothers a message for Jacob that the son he thought was dead was in fact alive in Egypt. Joseph gave his brothers gifts and they went back to tell Jacob the good news. Then the whole family – Jacob and all his children and their families – went back again to join Joseph in Egypt and to live there.