

Church of God Sunday School

JOSEPH, SOLD BY HIS BROTHERS

Genesis 37:12–36

Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob (also known as Israel), was given an important job. His brothers had taken the flocks of sheep to feed in Shechem (*SHEE-kuhm*). Jacob wanted Joseph to go and see if everything was going well with his brothers and with the flocks. Although this was a journey of many miles, Joseph obeyed his father.

When Joseph came to Shechem, he learned that his brothers had gone to Dothan (*DOH-than*), so he had to travel there. He must have been tired when he finally found them.

When the brothers saw Joseph coming, wearing his special coat, they decided to kill him—they hated him that much! They said, "Behold, this dreamer cometh." (They were making fun of Joseph's dreams.) Then they planned to kill Joseph and throw his body into a pit. They planned to say, "Some evil beast hath devoured him."

But Reuben (the oldest son) did not want Joseph killed. He said, "Let us not kill him." Reuben told his brothers just to cast Joseph into a pit in the wilderness. Reuben really wanted to save Joseph and return him to Jacob, their father.

As soon as Joseph came near enough to his brothers, they grabbed him, tore his coat from him, and threw him into a deep, empty pit (possibly an old well). Reuben left, and the rest of the brothers sat down to eat. They did not seem to be troubled about the terrible thing they had just done!

As the brothers were sitting and eating, they looked up and saw a company of traders and their camels traveling down the road. These traders were on their way to Egypt to sell their spices and other goods.

Suddenly, Judah had an idea! He said: "What will we gain if we kill our brother and hide his death? Let's sell



him to these Ishmaelites. Then we will not be guilty of killing our own brother. After all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood" (*International Children's Bible*). His brothers agreed to that idea. They pulled Joseph out of the pit, and although he begged his brothers for mercy (Genesis 42:21), they would not listen to him. They sold Joseph to the traders for twenty pieces of silver.

When Reuben came back to the pit and found that Joseph was gone, he tore his clothes (a sign of deep sorrow). Since he was the oldest, he probably

thought his father would hold him responsible for whatever had happened to Joseph.

Now what would the brothers tell their father? How would they explain what had happened to Joseph? They decided to kill a goat and dip Joseph's coat in its blood and show the coat to their father Jacob. What a terrible thing to do to their own father!

When Jacob saw the coat, his sons told him that they had found it. They asked him if it was Joseph's coat or not. Jacob knew it was Joseph's coat. He said, "An evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent [torn] in pieces." Jacob mourned for Joseph for many days. When his family tried to comfort him,

Jacob said that he would mourn until he died, so great was his grief!

Meanwhile, Joseph was taken to Egypt where he was sold as a slave to Potiphar (*POT-uh-fahr*), an officer of Pharaoh and the captain of the guard.

When Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, no doubt, they hoped to never see Joseph again. They said, "We shall see what will become of his dreams." They must have thought that those dreams would never come true. Joseph would never rule over them, now that he was a slave in a far-off country.



Even down in Egypt, God was with Joseph. God would take care of him. But how could Joseph's dreams come true if he were a slave? God had a plan for Joseph's life. His brothers thought to do him evil, but God used it for good. God would use Joseph in a wonderful way in the years to come.

Joseph's brothers let their feelings of jealousy and hatred grow and grow until they did something unthinkable—they sold their own little brother into slavery! They also brought great grief to their father. Later, they would reap much sorrow because of their sins.

How much better it would have been if they had taken those feelings to God. Do you ever have bad thoughts of jealousy, envy, anger, or even hatred try to come into your heart? Tell God about it. Don't be like Joseph's brothers who allowed those feelings to grow until they did something very hurtful to their brother and to their father.

~~~~~  
**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil." —Psalm 37:8*