

0 Introduction

0.1 Key Idea

The story of God saving Joseph and his family teaches us that God rescued Joseph and his family from death.

0.2 Creedal Verse

“And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household.” Acts 7:9-11

0.3 Metanarrative Summary

The eternal God created all things in six days. He made a good and perfect world. He made humans in his image to fill the earth and rule over creation. But humans rebelled against God and ruined God’s creation. God set to restore his world through his promise. God made a covenant with Abraham. He promised to bless all nations through Abraham. God kept his promises across the generations. God provided Abraham with a promised child, Isaac. God gave Isaac a wife and she bore twins, Jacob and Esau. God blessed Jacob and his sons, and the blessing continued to the next generation. God rescued Joseph, one of Jacob’s sons, and used him to rescue his family.

0.4 Open Bible Story: God Saves Joseph and His Family

08-01

Many years later, when Jacob was an old man, he sent his favorite son, Joseph, to check on his brothers who were taking care of the flocks.

08-02

Joseph's brothers hated him because their father loved him most, and because Joseph had dreamed that he would be their ruler. When Joseph came to his brothers, they took him captive and sold him to some slave traders.

08-03

Before Joseph's brothers returned home, they tore Joseph's robe and dipped it in goat's blood. Then they showed the robe to their father so he would think that a wild animal had killed Joseph. Jacob was very sad.

08-04

The slave traders took Joseph to Egypt. Egypt was a large, powerful country located along the Nile River. The slave traders sold Joseph as a slave to a wealthy government official. Joseph served his master well, and God blessed Joseph.

08-05

His master's wife tried to sleep with Joseph, but Joseph refused to sin against God in this way. She became angry and falsely accused Joseph so that he was arrested and sent to prison. Even in prison, Joseph remained faithful to God, and God blessed him.

08-06

After two years, Joseph was still in prison even though he was innocent. One night the Pharaoh, which is what the Egyptians called their kings, had two dreams that disturbed him greatly. None of his advisors could tell him the meaning of the dreams.

08-07

God had given Joseph the ability to interpret dreams, so Pharaoh had Joseph brought to him from the prison. Joseph interpreted the dreams for him and said, "God is going to send seven years of plentiful harvests followed by seven years of famine."

08-08

Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph that he appointed him to be the second most powerful man in all of Egypt!

08-09

Joseph told the people to store up large amounts of food during the seven years of good harvests. When the seven years of famine came, Joseph sold the food to the people so they would have enough to eat.

08-10

The famine was severe not only in Egypt, but also in Canaan where Jacob and his family lived.

08-11

So, Jacob sent his older sons to Egypt to buy food. The brothers did not recognize Joseph when they stood before him to buy food. But Joseph recognized them.

08-12

After testing his brothers to see if they had changed, Joseph said to them, “I am your brother, Joseph! Do not be afraid. You tried to do evil when you sold me as a slave, but God used the evil for good! Come and live in Egypt so I can provide for you and your families.”

08-13

When Joseph’s brothers returned home and told their father, Jacob, that Joseph was still alive, he was very happy.

08-14

Even though Jacob was an old man, he moved to Egypt with all of his family, and they all lived there. Before Jacob died, he blessed each of his sons.

08-15

The covenant promises that God gave to Abraham were passed on to Isaac, then to Jacob, and then to Jacob’s 12 sons and their families. The descendants of the 12 sons became the 12 tribes of Israel.

A Bible story from: Genesis 37-50

1 Biblical Interpretation: Observing the Details of the Story

After reading the crafted biblical story, answer the following questions to familiarize yourself with the details of the story.

1.1 Observation Questions

Answer the following observation questions to gain a basic understanding of the the story. Read the story as a community and answer these questions as a group.

08-01 What did Jacob think of his son Joseph?

Jacob considered Joseph his favorite son.

When Jacob was an old man, what did he send his son, Joseph, to do?

When Jacob was an old man, he sent Joseph to check on his sons who were taking care of the flocks.

08-02 Why did Joseph's brothers hate him?

Because Joseph was Jacob's favorite son, and because Joseph had dreamed he would be their ruler.

What evil thing did Joseph's brothers do to him?

They took him captive and sold him to some slave traders.

08-03 How did Joseph's brothers explain his disappearance to Jacob?

They tore Joseph's robe and put goat's blood on it so that Jacob would think a wild animal had killed him.

How did Jacob feel about what his sons' said about Joseph?

When Jacob heard what his sons said about Joseph, Jacob was very sad.

08-04 Where did the slave traders take Jacob?

The slave traders took Joseph to Egypt.

What kind of place was Egypt?

Egypt was a large, powerful country located along the Nile River.

What did Joseph do in Egypt?

Joseph served as a slave to a wealthy government official. Joseph served his master well

Did God abandon Joseph in Egypt?

No, in everything Joseph did, God blessed him.

08-05 What did the wife of Joseph's master do to Joseph?

The wife of Joseph's master tried to sleep with Joseph.

Why was Joseph sent to prison in Egypt?

Joseph refused to sleep with his master's wife, so she falsely accused him.

What was Joseph's faith like in prison?

Even in prison, Joseph remained faithful to God. God blessed him.

08-06 How long was Joseph in prison?

Even though he was innocent, Joseph was in prison for two years.

While Joseph was in prison, what happened to Pharaoh?

One night Pharaoh had two dreams. No one was able to tell the meaning of the dreams.

08-07 What ability had God given Joseph?

He gave him the ability to interpret dreams.

Who did Pharaoh use to interpret his dreams?

Pharaoh brought Joseph out of prison to interpret his dreams.

What was the meaning of Pharaoh's dream?

God was going to send seven years of plentiful harvests followed by seven years of famine.

08-08 How did Pharaoh reward Joseph after Joseph interpreted his dream?

He made Joseph the second most powerful man in Egypt.

08-09 How did Joseph prepare for the famine?

Joseph told the Egyptians to store up large amounts of food during the seven good years, and then he sold the food to the people during the seven years of famine.

08-10 How severe was the famine?

The famine was very severe. It not only affected Egypt but the place where Joseph was from, Canaan.

08-11 Where did Jacob send his older sons?

Jacob sent his older sons to Egypt to buy food.

Why did Joseph's brothers come to Egypt?

They came to buy food because the famine was severe in Canaan also.

What happened when the brothers met Joseph again?

The brothers did not recognize Joseph. Joseph did recognize his brothers.

08-12 Before Joseph told his brothers who he was, why did he test them?

He tested them to see if they had changed.

What did Joseph tell his brothers?

He told them not to be afraid of him. He explained that what they meant for evil, God used for good. He also told them to come to live in Egypt so he could provide food for them and their families.

How did God cause good to come from Joseph's brothers selling him as a slave?

Joseph became a powerful ruler in Egypt, and God used him to provide food for his family and many other people during the famine.

08-13 After the brothers returned home and told their father Joseph was still alive, how did Jacob respond?

Jacob was very happy when he heard that his son Joseph was still alive.

08-14 What did Jacob do after he found out that Joseph was alive?

He moved his whole family to Egypt.

What did Jacob do before he died?

Jacob blessed each of his sons before he died.

08-15 After Jacob died, who received the promises that God gave to Abraham?

The 12 sons of Jacob received them.

What did the descendants of the 12 sons of Jacob become?

They became the 12 tribes of Israel.

1.2 Translation Questions

Use the following translation questions to understand specific details of the passage. Discuss how you might translate these specific elements of the story.

08-01 Many years later, when Jacob was an old man This begins a new event in the story. This story happens many years later when Jacob has become an old man. How would you express **Many years later, when** Jacob was an old man to mean that this story takes place many years later when Jacob has become an old man?

his favorite son This phrase refers to a social relationship—the favorite son who was born to him. Joseph was the son he loved more than any of his other children. This does not mean Jacob hated his others sons. It means that Jacob loved Joseph most of all, more than his other sons. How would you express **his favorite son** to mean Joseph was the son he loved more than any of his other children?

check on This means that Joseph is to go and see if everything is all right with his brothers. Jacob sent Joseph to see about his brothers' well-being. How words in your language mean **check on** as in to go see if everything is all right and learn about one's well-being?

08-02 because their father loved him most The word because tells the reason Joseph's brothers hated him. One reason the brothers hated Joseph was the fact that Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons. How would you express **because their father loved him most** to mean one reason the brothers hated Joseph was Jacob loved Joseph more than his others sons?

because Joseph had dreamed The word because tells another reason Joseph's brothers hated him. Another reason the brothers hated Joseph was the fact that Joseph dreamed that he would be their ruler. How would you express **because** Joseph had dreamed to mean another reason the brothers hated Joseph was Joseph dreamed that he would be their ruler?

When Joseph came The word When indicates the order of events. After Joseph came the brothers took him captive and sold him. How would you express **When Joseph came** to mean the brothers took Joseph captive and sold him after Joseph came to check on them?

slave traders These were people who made a business of buying people from one owner and selling them as slaves to another owner. What words in your language mean **slave traders** as in those people who buy people from one owner and sell them as slaves to another owner?

08-03 Before Joseph's brothers returned home The connecting word **Before** indicates the order of events. Joseph's brothers tore his robe and dipped it in blood. Then they returned home. How would you express **Before Joseph's brothers returned home** to mean Joseph's brothers returned home only after they tore his robe and dipped it in blood?

goat's blood This blood is from the goat. The brothers wanted Jacob to think that the blood on the clothes was Joseph's blood but it was the blood of a goat. How would you express **goat's blood** to mean blood that came from a goat?

so he would think that a wild animal The word so connects the reason (showing Jacob the torn robe dipped in blood), with the desired result (Jacob thinking a wild animal killed Joseph). How would you express **so he would think that a wild animal** to mean the desired result of showing the torn and bloody robe to Jacob was that he would think Jacob was killed by a wild animal?

08-04 Egypt was a large, powerful country located along the Nile River This is background information about the country of Egypt where the slave traders took Joseph. How would you express **large, powerful country** to mean Egypt was a big and strong nation? How would you express **located along the Nile River** to mean Egypt was the land where the Nile River flowed?

a wealthy government official This was a person who was part of the Egyptian government. He was a leader in Egypt's government. How would you express **a wealthy government official** to mean a rich leader in the Egyptian government?

served his master well Joseph fulfilled his duties as a servant. He followed the orders of his master. Joseph's master was pleased with him. How would you express **served his master well** to mean Joseph fulfilled his duties as a servant?

08-05 tried to sleep with Joseph The master's wife tried to seduce Joseph to have sex with her. To sleep with is a way of expressing this in order not to be crude or offensive. How would you express **tried to sleep with Joseph** to mean the master's wife tried to seduce Joseph to have sex with her? How would you express this in a way that is not rude or offensive?

sin against God It is against God's law for people to have sex together if they are not married to each other. Joseph did not want to sin by disobeying God's

law. How would you express **sin against God** to mean an act that would disobey God's command?

Even in prison The word Even indicates a contrast. You would expect Joseph to become bitter in prison but, instead, he continued to be faithful and God continued to bless him. How would you express **Even in prison** to mean Joseph behaved in prison in a different way than one might expect?

remained faithful to God Even though Joseph was in prison, he continued to obey God. How would you express **remained faithful to God** to mean Joseph continued to be loyal and devoted to God?

08-06 even though he was innocent The word even indicates a contrast. You would expect that only guilty people are put in prison. But Joseph was innocent and did not deserve to be in prison. He was innocent. How would you express **even though he was innocent** to mean that Joseph was not in prison for the reason one would expect (being guilty)?

disturbed him greatly This means that the king felt very afraid and confused (because of what he had seen in the dreams). How would you express **disturbed him greatly** to mean the dreams upset the king and caused the king to be very afraid and without peace?

advisors These were men with special powers and knowledge who could sometimes tell what dreams meant. Some translations refer to them as 'wise men.' What words in your language mean **advisors** as in wise men who had ability to tell what dreams mean?

the meaning of the dreams People in Egypt believed that dreams were messages from the gods telling them about what would happen in the future. God used Pharaoh's dreams to tell him what would happen. How would you express **the meaning of the dreams** to mean the importance or significance of the dreams?

08-07 God had given God enabled Joseph to interpret dreams. This was an ability God had already given to Joseph prior to this time. This was not the first time God enabled Joseph had interpreted dreams. How would you express **God had given** to mean God had already Joseph the ability to interpret dreams prior to this moment?

to interpret dreams To interpret is to tell what something means. So Joseph was able to tell people what their dreams meant. How would you express **to interpret dreams** to mean to explain the meaning or significance of dreams?

Pharaoh had Joseph brought to him Pharaoh ordered his servants to bring Joseph to him. How would you express **Pharaoh had Joseph brought to him** to mean Pharaoh instructed his servants bring Joseph to him?

God is going to send God was planning on doing something in the future. The dream told what God was going to do in the future. This event did not happen yet. How would you express **God is going to send** to mean God would send the years of plenty and years of famine sometime after the time Joseph interpreted the dreams?

famine The gardens and fields would produce so little food that people and animals would not have enough to eat. What words in your language mean **famine** as in a time where there is not enough food to eat?

08-08 Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph Pharaoh was amazed by Joseph's wisdom and felt respect for him; he trusted Joseph to make wise decisions that would benefit the people. How would you express **Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph** to mean Pharaoh was amazed by Joseph's wisdom and had respect for him?

the second most powerful man Pharaoh made Joseph a very powerful and important ruler over all of Egypt. Only Pharaoh was more powerful and important than Joseph. How would you express **the second most powerful man** to mean Joseph was placed in a very powerful and important position of leadership of which only Pharaoh was more powerful and important?

he appointed him to be the second most powerful man in all of Egypt! This is a strong statement that emphasizes how unusual it was for a slave to be so honored by the Pharaoh. How would you state **he appointed him to be the second most powerful man in all of Egypt!** with emphasis to show that it was unusual for a slave to be honored the way Pharaoh honored him?

08-09 to store up large amounts of food From the abundant harvests, they took food to the cities and stored it there. The food then belonged to Pharaoh. How would you express **to store up large amounts of food** to mean to gather large quantities of food for future use?

sold the food During the years of famine, Joseph gave people the food in exchange for payment. How would you express **sold the food** to mean Joseph gave the food to the people in exchange for payment?

08-10 severe The famine was very bad. There was very little food and many people outside of Egypt were starving. What words in your language mean **severe** as in a very bad famine where there is little food and people were starving?

Egypt, but also in Canaan The famine was severe in the land of Egypt and also in the land of Canaan. The word but also explains how many people the famine affected. The famine was not only severe in Egypt. It also was severe in the land of Canaan, a land which was far away. How would you express **Egypt, but also in Canaan** to mean the famine was so severe that it even affected those people living in the land of Canaan?

08-11 So, Jacob sent his older sons to Egypt to buy food The word So tells the result of the famine being so severe. The result of the famine also being severe in Canaan was Jacob sent his sons to buy food in Egypt. How would you express **So, Jacob sent his older sons to Egypt to buy food** to mean the reason Jacob sent his sons to buy food in Egypt was because the famine was also very severe in Canaan?

recognize To **recognize** is to know what something really is or to know who someone really is. The brothers did not know that the man was their brother,

Joseph. Joseph knew that they were his brothers. What words in your language mean **recognize** as in to know who someone really is?

But Joseph recognized them The connecting word **But** indicates a contrast relationship. It contrasts Joseph's brothers not recognizing him with Joseph recognizing them. Joseph knew things opposite/different from his brothers. Joseph knew he was speaking to his brothers. His brothers did not know they were speaking with Joseph. How would you express **But Joseph recognized them** to mean that Joseph recognizing his brothers was the opposite/different to his brothers (they did not recognize Joseph)?

08-12 testing his brothers Joseph placed his older brothers in a difficult situation to see if they would respond correctly. Joseph wanted to see if his brothers had changed. By seeing what his brothers did in the difficult situation, Joseph knew they had changed. How would you express **testing his brothers** to mean Joseph put his older brothers in a difficult situation to see if they changed and would act correctly?

if they had changed Joseph tested his brothers to see if they were different than they used to be. Years ago Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. Joseph wanted to find out if they would now do what was right. How would you express **if they had changed** to mean Joseph wanted to see if his brothers were different than they used to be when they sold him into slavery?

Do not be afraid Joseph gave this command to his brothers who were afraid because they had greatly wronged Joseph. Now, as a great ruler, he had the power to punish them. Joseph could refuse to sell them food, or could even put them in prison or kill them. He was telling his brothers that they did not need to fear any punishment from Joseph. How would you express **Do not be afraid** as a command that tells someone not to fear?

evil for good Joseph's brothers did an evil thing when they sold Joseph as a slave and he was taken to Egypt. But God allowed this so that Joseph could save thousands of people, including his own family, from starving during the famine. This was a very good thing. How would you express **evil for good** to mean God caused the evil of the brothers selling Joseph into slavery to turn out to be good by causing the whole family to survive the famine?

08-13 still alive Joseph was not dead as Jacob had thought. How would you express **still alive** to mean that Joseph was not dead as Jacob had thought?

08-14 Even though Jacob was an old man, he moved to Egypt The word **even** suggests that something happened that is different than what normally would happen or something that is expected to happen. Egypt was a great distance away from Canaan, and it would have been difficult for an elderly man to walk or ride a cart that far. How would you express **Even though Jacob was an old man, he moved to Egypt** to emphasize that Jacob moved to Egypt despite being old and despite the fact that Egypt was far away?

Before Jacob died The word **before** tells something that happens prior to something else. Jacob died in Egypt. He did not get to return to Canaan, the land God had promised to give to him and his descendants. How would you

express **Before Jacob died** to mean Jacob blessed each of his sons prior to his death?

08-15 The covenant promises Long ago God made an agreement with Abraham and promised him that he would give him many descendants; they would possess the land of Canaan and become a great nation. God also promised that all peoples would be blessed through Abraham's line. How would you express **The covenant promises** to mean the promises that God gave when he made his covenant with Abraham?

were passed on to The covenant promises continued to future generations. God's promise to Abraham was also for Abraham's children, grandchildren and all the rest of his descendants. How would you express **were passed on to** to mean the covenant promises given to Abraham continued to Isaac, Jacob, Jacob's twelve sons, and their families?

2 Theological Dialogue: Discussing the Meaning of the Story

Take time to explore the meaning of this story together as a community. Use the following discussions as a way to grasp what truth the story teaches.

2.1 Discourse Questions

Use the following discourse questions to understand the meaning of the story. Pay attention to how the story itself addresses each question or theme.

What kind of evil was done to Joseph? (08-01, 08-02, 08-03, 08-04, 08-05, 08-07) Joseph was Jacob's favorite son. His favoritism made the brothers jealous. (08-01, 08-02)

Joseph's brothers hated him. They sold him to slave traders. Jealousy caused the brothers to mistreat Joseph. (08-02)

Joseph's brothers lied about Joseph being killed by a wild animal. The brothers deceived their father. (08-03)

Joseph was sold to Egypt as a slave. Egypt was a large and powerful country. Joseph became a slave in a foreign country. (08-04)

Joseph's master tried to seduce Joseph to sleep with her. Joseph was only a servant. It would have been hard to refuse his master's wife. However, Joseph did not sleep with her. He did not give in to her request or his own desires. (08-05)

The master's wife false accused Joseph. Joseph did not sleep with her but she accused Joseph of wrongdoing. Joseph was innocent and he was placed in prison. Joseph was was not treated fairly or justly. (08-05)

Joseph spent two years in prison. He was innocent. He was not guilty of any crimes. The mistreatment against Joseph lasted a long time. (08-07)

What kind of life did Joseph live? (08-01, 08-04, 08-05, 08-07, 08-09, 08-12) Joseph obeyed his father. Jacob told Joseph to check on his brothers. Joseph listened to his father's instructions. (08-01)

Joseph served his Egyptian master well. Even though he was a slave in a foreign land, Joseph worked hard as a servant and worked to please his master. (08-04)

Joseph followed God above all. When the master's wife tried to get Joseph to sleep with him, Joseph refused to sin against God. Joseph did what would please God. He followed God's commands before the commands of anyone else (08-05)

Even though Joseph was innocent, he was put in prison. While he was in prison, Joseph did not stop trusting God. Joseph continued to be faithful to God even in prison. (08-05)

Joseph used his ability to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. (08-07)

Joseph was a very wise leader. During the years of plenty, he had the people store large amounts of food. (08-09)

When the famine came, Joseph sold the food so the people would have enough to eat. This made Egypt gain money and provided food for the people. (08-09)

Joseph did not take revenge on his brothers. He tested them to see if they changed. Then, he told them to come to Egypt so he could provide food for his family. (08-12)

How did God cause good things to happen to Joseph and his family through bad/difficult situations? (08-02, 08-04, 08-05, 08-06, 08-07, 08-08, 08-10 08-11, 08-12, 08-13) Youngest Will Rule: Joseph's was the youngest brother. God gave him a dream that said he would be ruler over his old brothers. Normally, older brothers would be in charge of younger brothers. God was doing the opposite of what humans normal think. God was showing that his choice is most important. (08-02)

Slave of Important Official: Even though Joseph was a slave in Egypt, God made him a slave to a wealthy government official. God was arranging the situation so that Joseph would be put in a position of authority. Even though Joseph was a (08-04)

Blessed as Slave In Egypt: Even though Joseph was a slave in a foreign land, God blessed Joseph. (08-04)

Blessed as Prisoner: God blessed Joseph when he was in prison. God caused things to go well for Joseph even when he was wrongly sent to prison. (08-05)

Prisoner to Interpreter: God gave Joseph the ability to interpret dreams. Pharaoh's advisors/wise men could not interpret the dreams. God used Joseph to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. Pharaoh had Joseph taken out of prison to interpret his dreams. (08-06, 08-07)

Predicting Future Events: God used Joseph to tell Pharaoh what God was going to do. God was going to cause seven years of plentiful harvests to be followed by seven years of famine. (08-07)

Powerful Leader: Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph that he made him the second most powerful man in Egypt. Joseph was a slave and prisoner and now was the second most powerful leader in Egypt. (08-08)

God used the famine to cause Jacob and his family to come to Egypt. (08-10, 08-11)

Changed Brothers: Joseph tested his brothers to see if they changed. The brothers who once hated him had become different than they were before. (08-11)

Forgiveness and Reconciliation: God brought reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers. Joseph did not take revenge on them. He told them not to be afraid. (08-12)

Belief: Joseph believed that God used the bad things that people intended to bring about good things. (08-12)

Sadness to Joy: Jacob's sadness was turned to joy when he learned that Joseph was alive. (08-13)

How did keep his covenant promises to the next generation? (08-14, 08-15) Jacob moved his whole family to Egypt. God protected this family by Joseph providing food for them during the famine. (08-14)

Before he died, Jacob blessed each of his sons. Jacob spoke his intent that God would cause good things to happen to each of them. (08-14)

God continued his covenant promises from Jacob to his twelve sons. The covenant promises continued even after Jacob died. (08-15)

2.2 Theological Questions

Answer the following theology questions as a community. Discuss what truths this story teaches.

1. What are some of causes of suffering and hardship? How does the story of Joseph teach us about suffering and hardship in the world?
2. What does it look like to trust God and live faithfully in hardship? How does Joseph provide an example of faithful living before God?
3. How does God use evil things to bring about good things? How does the story of Joseph show us God bringing good things out of hard circumstances?

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3 Personal Reflection: Following the Teaching of the Story

Take a moment to allow this story to evaluate your own life and to consider how God would have you respond. After this reflection, use the quality checking questions to check your translation draft among the translation team.

3.1 Journal Reflection

Prayerfully think about the following personal reflection questions. Write/Record your answers and/or discuss them as a group.

1. What kind of suffering have you experienced in life? How can you relate to Joseph's experiences?
2. How might you have responded if you were in Joseph's situations? How does his faithful example show areas of your life in which you need to grow?
3. What broken relationships are in your life? How can Joseph's story teach you how to reconcile (be at peace) with those who have wronged you?
4. How can you trust God more with your life?

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