



LEVEL 4
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LESSON 3

Imperial Academy Bible Lessons



Joseph in Egypt

Joseph in Egypt

While Jacob was working for his uncle Laban, God blessed him with 11 sons and a daughter named Dinah.

Jacob's 11th son, Joseph, was the firstborn from his favorite wife, Rachel. After Jacob moved his family back to Canaan, Rachel delivered a second son. But something went wrong and she died while giving birth to the baby. Jacob named the baby boy Benjamin, meaning "son of my right hand."

Because Joseph was the firstborn son of Jacob's favorite wife, Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons. This was a serious mistake. Joseph's elder brothers saw that their father favored Joseph more than them, and they became jealous and began to hate him.

As Joseph grew into a teenager, he began receiving extraordinary dreams from God about how his older brothers would someday bow down to him. Joseph foolishly told his brothers all about these dreams, which made them even more jealous. They allowed their anger to grow so much that they actually decided to get rid of Joseph.

When Joseph was about 17 years old, Jacob sent him to check up on his brothers while they were herding sheep several days' journey away from home. When his brothers saw him coming, some of them suggested that they should kill him, throw his body in a pit, and tell their father a wild beast had eaten him.

But Joseph's oldest brother, Reuben, convinced the brothers to spare Joseph's life. Instead, they took him alive and threw him into an empty well. Of course, Joseph's brothers were very evil to treat their own brother like this and to actually want to kill him. Reuben should have put a stop to it, but he was afraid of his angry brothers and weakly compromised with them.

SOLD INTO SLAVERY

After the brothers threw Joseph into the pit, Reuben left to watch the sheep. While he was gone, a caravan of slave traders passed by on their way to Egypt. Judah said, "What good is it if we kill our brother and hide his blood? Let us sell Joseph to the slave traders, and let us not kill him, for he is our brother."

So the brothers sold Joseph into slavery for 20 shekels of silver.

Reuben came back and saw Joseph was gone. He tore his clothes in distress. Reuben knew Jacob would be furious when he found out they had sold Joseph to be a slave. So the brothers killed a goat, dipped Joseph's coat in its blood, and went home to tell Jacob a lie: that Joseph must have been killed by a wild beast.

Meanwhile, the slave traders took Joseph to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, a prominent officer who was the captain of Pharaoh's bodyguard. Joseph had gone from being a favored son who received dreams from God to being a slave in a foreign land!

But even though things were going so badly for him, Joseph still trusted God. And because he trusted God and worked

hard, God blessed him. Potiphar saw that Joseph was an honest and successful worker, and he decided to put Joseph in charge of his household and all his property. God blessed Potiphar's estate because Potiphar promoted Joseph.

However, Potiphar's wife started to like Joseph more than she liked her own husband. She repeatedly tried to get Joseph to kiss her, but Joseph knew God's law forbids this, so he always refused to let her close to him.

"My master has kept back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife," Joseph told her. "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

One day, when Joseph was alone, Potiphar's wife grabbed him by his coat and demanded that he kiss her. But Joseph slipped out of his coat and ran. Potiphar's



Joseph's jealous brothers surround him.

wife was angry that Joseph still rejected her, so she decided to get revenge.

She showed Joseph's coat to her husband and said, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to the house to shame me. But as soon as I screamed, he ran out of the house and left his coat behind." Potiphar believed his wife's lie and threw Joseph into jail.

Joseph had gone from being a favored son to a young slave to a trusted servant—and now to an innocent prisoner!

Still he trusted God and obeyed God's laws. And because he trusted God and continued to work hard in prison, God blessed Joseph even in this terrible circumstance. The keeper of the prison

saw that Joseph succeeded in everything he did, so he actually put Joseph in charge of the prison. As Joseph managed the prison, God blessed his efforts to run it honestly and justly.

After a while, the butler and the chief baker of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, were thrown into the same jail: Someone had tried to kill Pharaoh, and Pharaoh thought it might have been one of them. One night, each of them had a strange and troubling dream.

When Joseph saw the men the next morning, he asked why they seemed worried. They said, "We have had very strange dreams, and there is no one to interpret them."



Joseph waits to be sold at an Egyptian slave auction.

Joseph told them, “God can interpret dreams. Tell me what you dreamed.”

The men shared their dreams, and God gave Joseph the ability to interpret what the dreams meant. The butler’s dream meant that he would be freed from jail and returned to his duties as butler for the king. But the baker’s dream meant that he would be hanged for trying to kill Pharaoh.

Both of these interpretations came true!

Before that happened, Joseph had asked the butler to remember him when he was a free man. “Mention me to Pharaoh,” he said, “and help me get out of prison.” But the butler forgot about Joseph. Joseph remained in prison two more years. But

he did not become bitter against God. He continued to believe and obey Him.

Then Pharaoh himself had an unusual dream. The butler remembered his own dream in prison, and he told Pharaoh that he knew a man who could interpret dreams. The Pharaoh sent for Joseph and brought him out of the prison.

JOSEPH BECOMES A RULER

“I have had a dream and there is no one who can interpret it,” Pharaoh told Joseph when he arrived. “But I have heard that you are able to interpret dreams.”

“I cannot interpret dreams,” Joseph told Pharaoh, “but there is a God in heaven who will give Pharaoh an answer.”



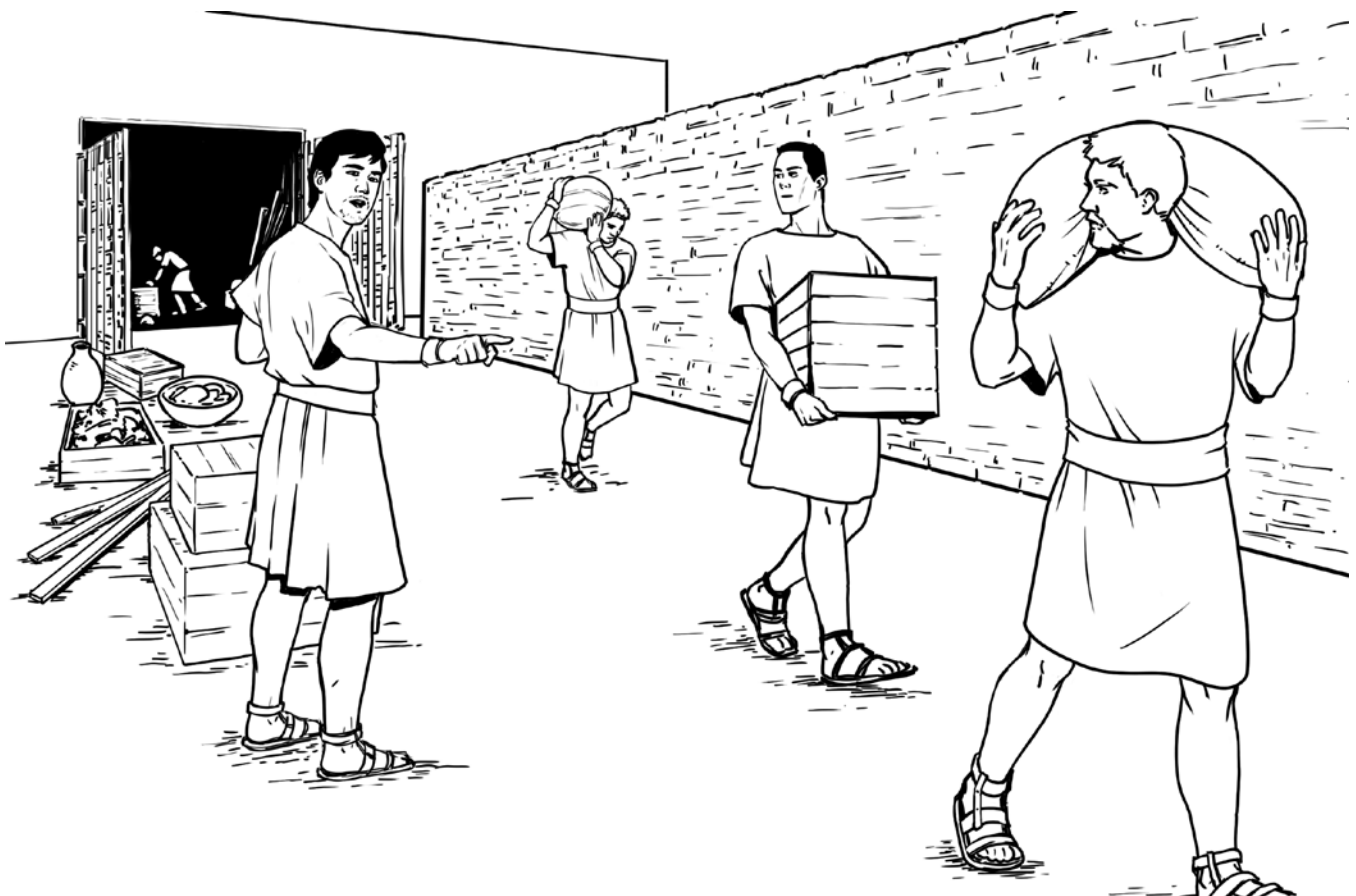
Joseph runs from Potiphar’s wife.

Pharaoh described his dream: He was at the bank of the Nile River. First he saw seven fat cows. Then he saw seven skinny cows come out of the water and eat the fat cows. Yet the skinny cows remained skinny. In the second part of his dream, Pharaoh saw seven ears of wheat growing on one stalk. Then a withered stalk of wheat with seven diseased ears sprang out of the ground. The withered stalk swallowed up the healthy stalk, in the way that the skinny cows had eaten the fat cows.

God revealed to Joseph what both parts of the dream meant. “God has revealed to Pharaoh what He is about to do,” Joseph said. “The seven fat cows are seven years, and the seven good ears of wheat are

seven years. The seven skinny cows are seven years, and the seven diseased ears of wheat are also seven years. So there will be seven years of plenty throughout Egypt, followed by seven years of famine.”

Pharaoh was happy to hear about the seven years of abundant food, but he was worried about the seven years of famine. Joseph advised him to store away one fifth of all the crops that would be harvested during the years of plenty. That way the Egyptians would have enough food to survive the seven years of famine. Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph’s wisdom that he appointed Joseph to be the chancellor of Egypt. In one day, Joseph went from being a foreign slave prisoner trusting that



Joseph directs the prisoners under his charge.

God would save him to the second-highest leader in the Egyptian empire!

SEVEN YEARS OF FAMINE

The interpretation of Pharaoh's dream was true. Seven years of abundance came. The soil was well nourished and well watered, and it produced abundant fruits, vegetables, grains, grasses and other foods for people and for animals.

But then the famine came. Plants withered without enough nutrients and water. Many of them died. Animals and people had less and less food to eat, and began to become thin.

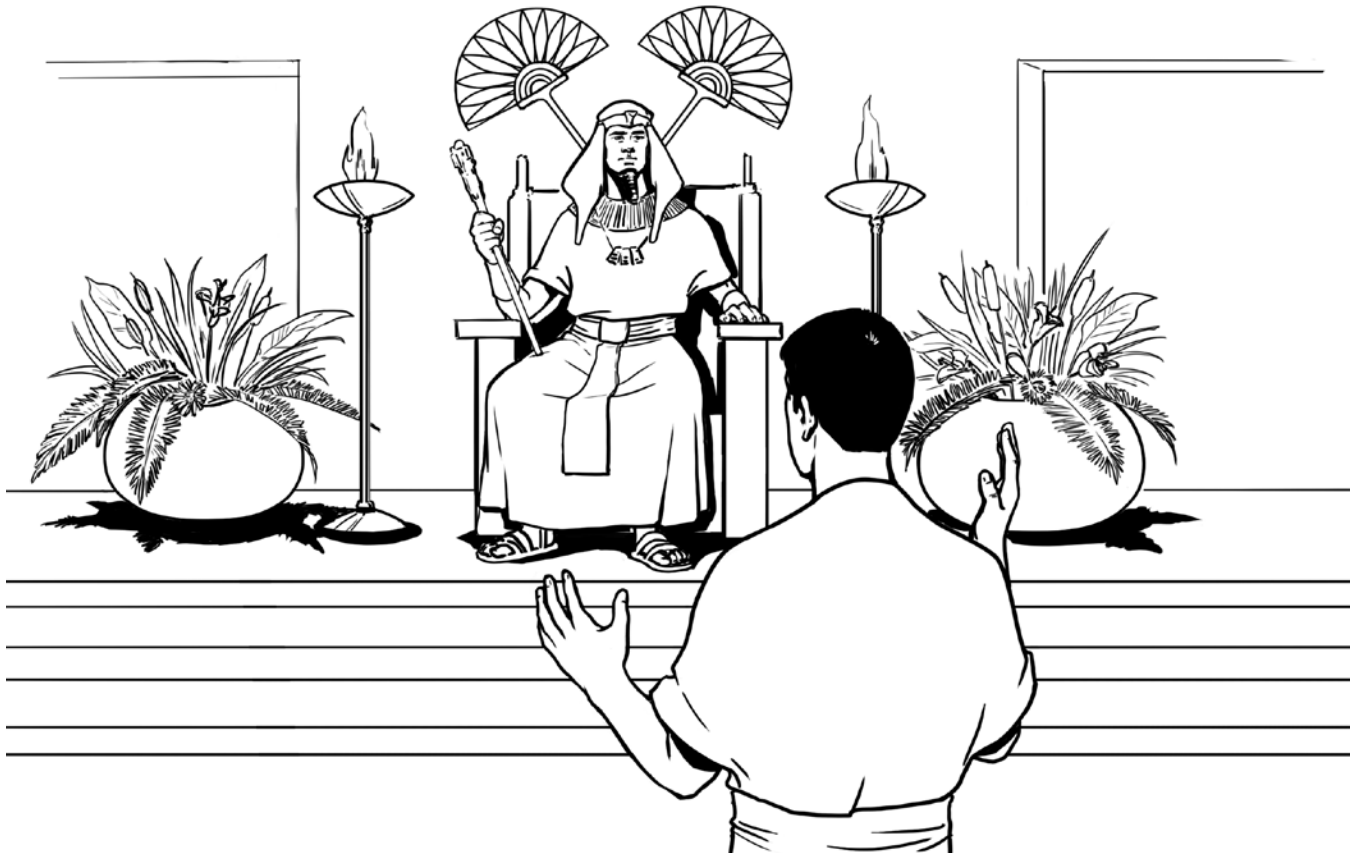
The famine affected not only Egypt but also the neighboring territory of Canaan,

where Joseph's father, Jacob, and his brothers still lived. Because of the famine, they also began to run out of food.

When Jacob heard that the Egyptians had stored away extra food, he sent his sons there to try to buy some grain. When they arrived in Egypt, they encountered the chancellor.

They did not realize that he was their brother, but Joseph recognized them.

Joseph had not seen his brothers since the day they ganged up on him and sold him to strangers. He did not tell them that he was their lost brother. Instead, he accused them of being spies. He said he would not believe that they were innocent brothers who just wanted



The pharaoh summons Joseph to interpret his dream.

to buy food unless they brought their youngest brother, Benjamin, to Egypt.

Benjamin was special to Jacob, because he was Rachel's only other son besides Joseph. The 10 older brothers were afraid to ask their father to let Benjamin go to Egypt. They spoke to each other in Hebrew and admitted, "We are guilty of selling Joseph into slavery. We saw how scared he was and how he begged us to spare him, but we didn't listen." Then Reuben said, "Didn't I tell you not to do this evil thing to Joseph? But you would not listen, and now God is punishing us."

The brothers did not know that the chancellor was actually Joseph, and that he understood everything they were saying, because he too spoke Hebrew. But

Joseph pretended not to understand and used an Egyptian interpreter to speak with them.

Joseph ordered that his brother Simeon be thrown into jail, saying that he would not be released until the brothers brought Benjamin to Egypt to prove they were not spies. Then Joseph let the rest of the brothers go home. But he took the money they had paid for the grain and hid it inside their grain sacks. On the way home, the brothers discovered the money. This made them very afraid: They thought that the Egyptians would accuse them of stealing.

The famine continued year after year and got worse. Jacob's family eventually had to buy more grain, and he very



Joseph's brothers kneel before him.

reluctantly allowed Benjamin to go with his brothers to Egypt. Joseph was thrilled to see his brother Benjamin, but he still did not tell his brothers who he was.

Once again he told his staff to hide the brothers' money in their grain sacks. He also ordered that his personal silver cup be placed inside Benjamin's sack. After the brother's left, Joseph sent Egyptian soldiers after them to arrest them for theft.

When the brothers were brought before Joseph, they were afraid he would never let Benjamin go and that their father would die in sorrow. They bowed before Joseph and begged for mercy, just as Joseph had seen in his dream when he was a teenager. At that moment, Joseph could not hold it in any longer!

"I am Joseph!" he said. "Does my father live?"

The brothers were shocked and greatly troubled. They could not believe it at first, but then they realized it was true: The young brother they had sold into slavery was now the second-most powerful man in the world! They feared that he wanted revenge for what they had done to him.

But Joseph was kind and forgave his brothers, because he focused not on himself or on them, but on what God was doing.

Joseph then sent his brothers to bring Jacob and the rest of the family to Egypt.

ISRAEL BECOMES A NATION

Jacob almost fainted when he learned that Joseph was still alive. But he was afraid to travel to Egypt to see his long-

lost son. God appeared to Jacob in a dream and told him not to be afraid to go to Egypt, because it was in Egypt that He would make Jacob's descendants into a great nation.

When his father arrived, Joseph embraced him and wept with emotion. Jacob said to Joseph, "Now I can die, since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive."

Pharaoh welcomed Joseph's family and gave them land in Goshen, the most fertile land in Egypt. There they became herders and shepherds, and Pharaoh chose some of them to manage his own cattle.

Joseph introduced Pharaoh to his father. Jacob told Pharaoh that he was now 130 years old, and he had lived a long and hard life. His deceit in tricking his father Isaac and taking the birthright and blessing from his brother Esau had not paid off in a comfortable, easy life free of heartache and suffering. But he did believe and obey God, and God continued to work with and bless him. God passed on to Jacob and his 12 sons the promises He had made to Abraham and Isaac.

Through these great-grandsons of Abraham, his descendants would eventually become a nation.

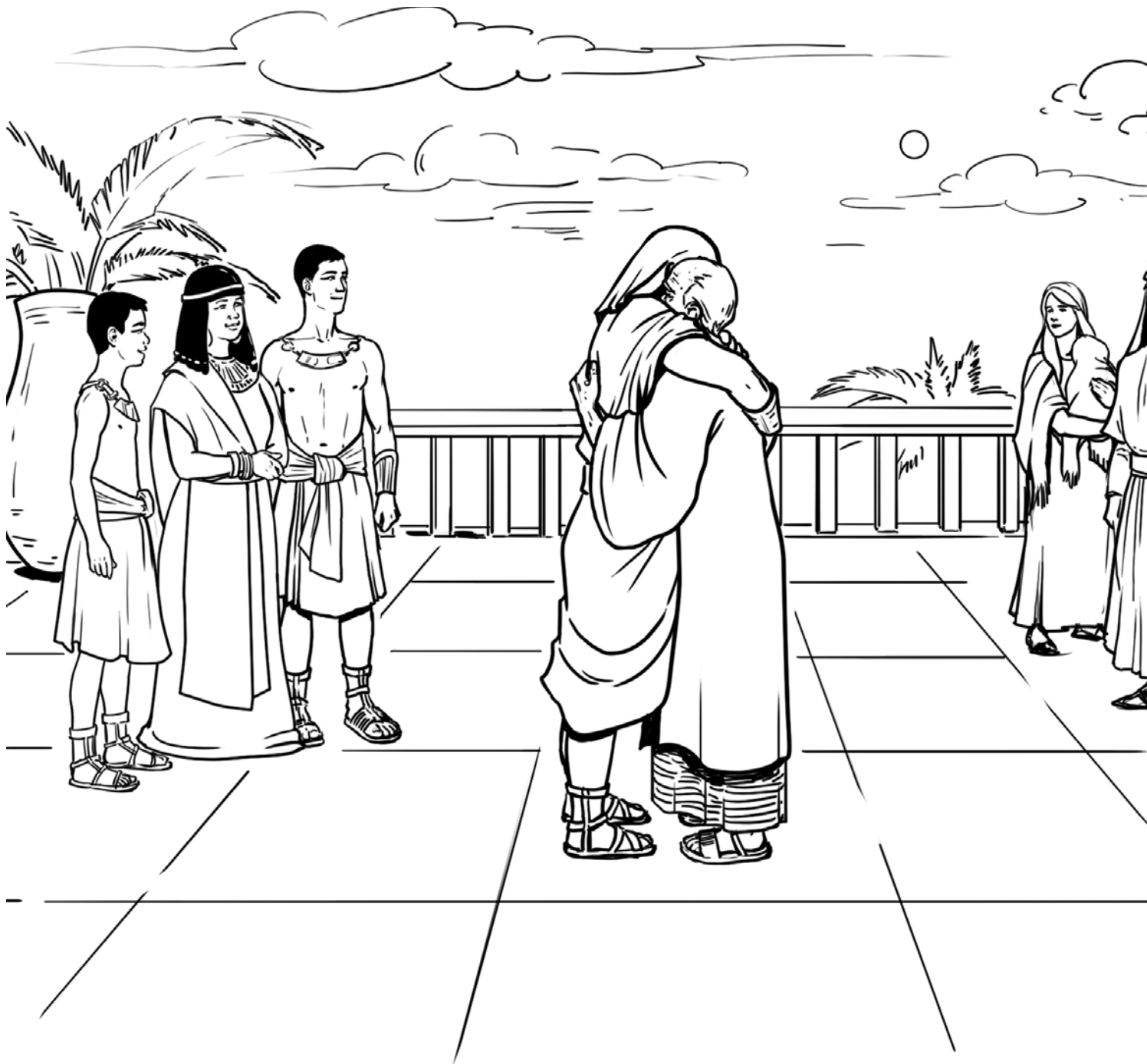
Over the years, the 12 sons of Jacob had children, and their children had children, and so forth until there were thousands of descendants from each tribe. Since the tribes traced their ancestry back to Jacob, and because God had changed Jacob's

name to Israel, these tribes became known as the 12 tribes of Israel.

Long after Joseph and his brothers had died, the 12 tribes of Israel grew into a huge multitude of millions of people. They still lived in Egypt, with no homeland of their own, only the land that Pharaoh had given them.

But that pharaoh died, and a new pharaoh took the throne. He feared that Egypt's enemies might ally with the Israelites against Egypt.

“The people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us,” he told his advisers. “Let's deal with them so they do not join our enemies and fight against us and



Jacob travels to Egypt and reunites with Joseph.

escape from the land.” Pharaoh decided to turn them into slaves.

The Israelite slaves suffered hard lives. They were mistreated by the Egyptians and forced to spend their days building Pharaoh’s cities. In slavery, the Israelites forgot much of their heritage. Many or most of them forgot the faith and

obedience to God’s laws that Abraham’s example had set. They forgot the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. They began to believe in the false pagan religion of Egypt.

For more than 100 years, the descendants of Abraham lived with minimum freedom and maximum hard labor. The Egyptians turned the Israelites into property that they could buy, sell, overwork, abuse and even murder!

Yet the more the Egyptians oppressed the Israelites, the more children the Israelites had. Eventually, Pharaoh decreed that all Israelite baby boys be killed. During this terrible time, a baby boy was born to an Israelite slave woman named Jochebed. She did not obey Pharaoh’s decree. She hid him from the Egyptians in the hut where she lived for three months. But then the boy was too big and too noisy to hide.

Jochebed made a basket out of reeds and pitch, placed her baby in it, and floated it down the Nile River. Now this baby’s life was in the hands of the only one who could save him: the God of Abraham. Jochebed probably did not know that her baby would grow up to be powerfully used by God to save the Israelites!



BIBLE MEMORY **Sons of Jacob**

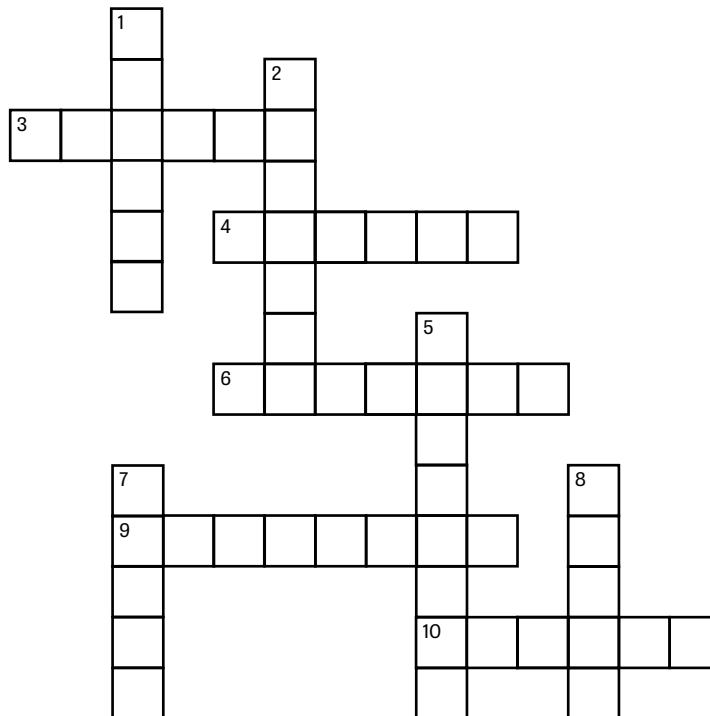
Reuben Gad
Simeon Asher
Levi Issachar
Judah Zebulun
Dan Joseph
Naphtali Benjamin

Published by the Philadelphia Church of God and produced in cooperation with Imperial Academy.

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Gerald Flurry

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Joseph Crossword



ACROSS

3. Jacob's favorite son
4. God revealed these to Joseph
6. Joseph sold for 20
9. His wife tried to tempt Joseph
10. Another name for Jacob

DOWN

1. The land Pharaoh gave Joseph's family
2. King of Egypt
5. 'Son of my right hand'
7. The brothers were accused of being _____
8. Jacob's uncle