

LIVING GODS WILL

Vessel of God

JOSEPH



Joseph and the Potiphar's wife by Carlo Cignani

Born: 1916 BC – Canaan

Died: 1806 BC – Egypt (110 years old)

Joseph was the son of **Jacob** and **Rachel**.

Joseph was **sold into slavery** by his half-brothers.

Joseph was given the gift by **God** of **interpreting dreams**.

Joseph came out of prison to become **2nd in command to Pharaoh**.

Joseph was the eleventh son of **Jacob**, his first son through his favored wife, **Rachel**. **Joseph's** story is found in **Genesis 37–50**.

After the announcement of his birth, we see **Joseph** next as a seventeen-year-old returning from shepherding the flock with his half-brothers to give Jacob a bad report of them.

We are also told that Jacob "**loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him**" (**Genesis 37:3**).

Joseph's brothers knew their father loved **Joseph** more than them, which caused them to hate him (**Genesis 37:4**). To make matters worse, **Joseph** began relating his dreams to the family—prophetic visions showing **Joseph** one day ruling over his family (**Genesis 37:5–11**).

The animosity toward **Joseph** peaked when his brothers plotted to kill him in the wilderness. **Reuben**, the eldest, objected to outright murder and suggested they throw **Joseph** into a cistern, as he planned to come back and rescue the boy.

But, in Reuben's absence, some merchants passed by, and **Judah** suggested selling **Joseph** into slavery; the brothers accomplished the task before Reuben could rescue him. The boys took **Joseph's** robe and, after dipping the robe in goat's blood, deceived their father into thinking his favorite son had been slain by wild beasts (**Genesis 37:18–35**).

Joseph was sold by the merchants to a high-ranking Egyptian named **Potiphar** and eventually became the supervisor of Potiphar's household. In **Genesis 39** we read of how **Joseph** excelled at his duties, became one of Potiphar's most trusted servants, and was put in charge of his household.

Potiphar could see that, whatever **Joseph** did, God looked favorably on him and he prospered in all that he did. Unfortunately, Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce **Joseph**. **Joseph** consistently refused her advances, showing honor for the master who had entrusted him with so much and saying that it would be "**a wicked thing and a sin against God**" for him to go to bed with Potiphar's wife (**Genesis 39:9**).

One day Potiphar's wife caught **Joseph** by the cloak and again made sexual advances. **Joseph** fled, leaving his cloak in her hand. In anger, she falsely accused **Joseph** of attempted rape, and Potiphar put him in prison (**Genesis 39:7–20**).

In jail, **Joseph** was again blessed by God (**Genesis 39:21–23**). **Joseph** interpreted the dreams of two of his fellow prisoners. Both interpretations proved to be true, and one of the men was later released from jail and restored to his position as the king's cupbearer (**Genesis 40:1–23**).

But the cupbearer forgot about **Joseph** and failed to speak to **Pharaoh** about him. Two years later, the king himself had some troubling dreams, and the cupbearer remembered **Joseph's** gift of interpretation.

The king summoned **Joseph** and related his dreams. Based on Pharaoh's dreams, **Joseph** predicted seven years of bountiful harvests followed by seven years of severe famine in Egypt and advised the king to begin storing grain in preparation for the coming dearth (**Genesis 41:1–37**).

For his wisdom, **Joseph** was made a ruler in Egypt, second only to the king. **Joseph** was in charge of storing up food during the years of plenty and selling it to Egyptians and foreigners during the years of famine (**Genesis 41:38–57**). During these years of plenty **Joseph** had two sons—**Manasseh and Ephraim** (**Genesis 41:50–52**).

When the famine struck, even Canaan was affected. Jacob sent ten of his sons to Egypt to buy grain (**Genesis 42:1–3**). He kept **Benjamin**, his youngest and the only other son of Rachel, behind (**Genesis 42:4**).

While in Egypt, the men met their long-lost brother, whom they did not recognize. **Joseph**, however, did recognize his brothers. He tested them by accusing them of being spies. He confined them for three days then released all but one, sending with them grain for their households and requiring them to come back with their youngest brother (**Genesis 42:6–20**).

Still unaware of **Joseph's** identity, the brothers were afflicted with guilt for having sold their brother years before (**Genesis 42:21–22**). **Joseph** overheard their discussion and turned aside to weep (**Genesis 42:23–24**). He retained **Simeon** and sent the others on their way, secretly returning their money to their grain sacks (**Genesis 42:25**).

When the brothers later realized the money had been returned, they feared even more (**Genesis 42:26–28, 35**). Once home, they told Jacob all that had transpired. Jacob mourned again the loss of **Joseph** and the added loss of Simeon. He refused to send Benjamin, despite Reuben's promise that, if he did not return with Benjamin, Jacob could kill Reuben's two sons (**Genesis 42:35–38**).

The famine became so severe that Jacob acquiesced. Judah persuaded Jacob to send Benjamin with him, giving his own life as a pledge (**Genesis 43:1–10**). Jacob agreed, sending also choice fruits and double the money for the grain (**Genesis 43:11–14**).

When **Joseph** saw the men, he instructed his servants to slaughter an animal and prepare a meal for the brothers to dine with him (**Genesis 43:15–17**). Afraid at the invitation to **Joseph's** house, the brothers made apologies to **Joseph's** steward for the money that had been replaced the first time. **Joseph's** steward reassured them and brought Simeon out (**Genesis 43:18–25**).

When **Joseph** returned, the brothers bowed to him, fulfilling his earlier prophecy (**Genesis 43:26**). He asked about their family's welfare and again wept, this time removing himself to his chamber (**Genesis 43:27–30**).

When the men sat down for the meal, at a separate table from **Joseph**, they were amazed to be arranged by birth order. Benjamin was given five times the portion the other brothers received (**Genesis 43:31–34**).

Before sending them back to their father, **Joseph** again tested his brothers by returning their money to their grain sacks and placing his silver cup in Benjamin's sack. He let the brothers start on their journey and then sent his steward after them to feign anger and threaten to kill Benjamin.

Back in **Joseph's** presence, Judah pleaded for Benjamin's life, saying that, if Benjamin were to die, so would Jacob. Judah told of Jacob's grief over the loss of **Joseph** and his belief that he could not bear to lose **Joseph's** brother. Judah also spoke of his pledge to Jacob and offered his life for Benjamin's (**Genesis 44**).

Upon seeing this proof of his brothers' change of heart, **Joseph** sent all his servants away and wept openly and loudly enough to be heard by Pharaoh's household. He then revealed himself to his brothers (**Genesis 45:1–3**).

Joseph immediately reassured them, telling them not to be angry with themselves for what they'd done to him and saying that God had sent him to Egypt in order to preserve them (**Genesis 45:4–8**). **Joseph** reaffirmed his forgiveness years later, after the death of his father, saying that, although his brothers intended evil to him, God had intended it for good (**Genesis 50:15–21**).

Joseph sent his brothers back to Jacob to retrieve the remainder of his household to come live in **Goshen**, where they would be near to **Joseph** and he could provide for them (**Genesis 45:9–47:12**).

Jacob did come to live in Egypt with all of his family. Before he died, Jacob blessed **Joseph's** two sons and gave thanks to God for His goodness: "**I never expected to see your face again, and now God has allowed me to see your children too**" (**Genesis 48:11**). Jacob gave the greater blessing to the younger of the two sons (**verses 12–20**).

Later in the history of Israel, **Ephraim and Manasseh**, the tribes of **Joseph**, were often considered two distinct tribes. Jacob's descendants lived in Egypt for 400 years, until the time of **Moses**.

When Moses led the Hebrews out of Egypt, he took the remains of **Joseph** with him, as **Joseph** had requested (**Genesis 50:24–25; cf. Exodus 13:19**).

There is much to learn from **Joseph's** story. As parents, we have warnings concerning Jacob's favoritism and the effects that can have on other children as seen in **Joseph's** youthful pride and his brothers' envy and hatred.

We have a good example of how to handle sexual temptation—run (**Genesis 39:12; cf. 2 Timothy 2:22**), and we have a clear picture of God's faithfulness. He does not forsake His children, even in the midst of suffering: "**The Lord was with Joseph**" (**Genesis 39:3, 5, 21, 23**).

There may be many distressing circumstances we find ourselves in, and some of them may even be unjust, as were those in **Joseph's** life. However, as we learn from the account of **Joseph's** life, **by remaining faithful and accepting that God is ultimately in charge, we can be confident that God will reward our faithfulness in the fullness of time.**

Who would blame **Joseph** if he had turned his brothers away in their need? Yet **Joseph** showed them mercy, and God desires that we exercise mercy above all other sacrifices (**Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:13**).

Joseph's story also presents amazing insight into how God sovereignly works to overcome evil and bring about His plan. After all his ordeals, **Joseph** was able to see God's hand at work.

As he revealed his identity to his brothers, **Joseph** spoke of their sin this way: "**Do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. It was not you who sent me here, but God**" (**Genesis 45:5, 8**).

Later, **Joseph** again reassured his brothers, offering forgiveness and saying, "**You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good**" (**Genesis 50:20**). Man's most wicked intentions can never thwart the perfect plan of God.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE

Gen 37:23 So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colors that was on him. **24** Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it.

Gen 37:26 So Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? **27** Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." And his brothers listened. **28** Then Midianite traders passed by; so, the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.



**Joseph Selling Grain in Egypt
by Claes Cornelisz Moeyaert**