

Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending his father's flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah, Zilpah, two of their father's wives, when Joseph brought their father, Jacob, a bad report about their work.

Now Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because Joseph had been born to him in his old age; and Jacob had made an ornate robe for Joseph.

When his brothers saw that their father loved Joseph more than any of them, they hated him, and could not speak a kind word to him.

Then Joseph had a dream, which he told to his brothers, and they hated him even more.

"In the dream," Joseph told them: "we were binding sheaves of grain out in the field, when suddenly my sheaf rose, and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."

His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him even more.

Then Joseph had another dream, which he also told his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

When he told his father this dream, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your brothers, and your mother and I actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

Now Joseph's brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, and Jacob sent Joseph saying, "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks; and bring word back to me."

So, Joseph went in search of his brothers, but when they saw him in the distance, they plotted to kill him.

"Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. "Come, let's kill him and throw him into one of these empty cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."

When his brother, Reuben heard this, he plotted to rescue Joseph from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said. "Don't shed any blood, just throw him into the cistern here in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben was planning to come back to rescue Joseph and take him back to his father.

When Joseph met his brothers, they stripped him of the ornate robe that his father had given him, and they took him and threw him into the empty cistern. And as they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh that they were taking to Egypt.

Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother? Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites. Let's not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." So, his brothers agreed. And when the Ishmaelite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was gone, he tore his clothes and went back to his brothers and said, "The boy isn't there! Where can I turn now?"

They got Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. Then they took Joseph's robe back to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it to see if it is your son's robe."

Jacob recognized it and said, "It is my son's robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him, and he has surely been torn to pieces."

Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on a sackcloth and mourned his son for many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "No," he said, "I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave." So, his father wept for him.

Meanwhile in Egypt, the Ishmaelites sold Joseph to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, who was the captain of the guard.