

Year A, Week 33 (July 13, 2008)

Genesis 37: 2-11 Jacob Has 12 Sons and Favors Joseph

Hymn suggestions: *Father Abraham* (calmly!); or *Shout to the North and the South*

Items Needed:

- grown Jacob figure
- Two female figures for Rachel and Leah
- 12 male figures, of varying sizes, for the 12 brothers. Make Joseph a smallish but easily recognizable figure.
- Optional: cut a colorful piece of cloth or paper that you can tie to the Joseph figure.

We've been talking about how God made a promise with his people. We learned that God chose Abraham and his wife Sarah. He sent them to a new place called Canaan, and he made a promise – or a covenant – with them. He told Abraham that one day he would have as many descendants as there are stars in the sky or grains of sand at the beach.

God told Abraham, “This is my covenant. I will be your God, and you will be my people.”

Even though Abraham and Sarah were old when God made these promises, they did have a boy, whom they called Isaac. Later, Isaac had twin boys, Jacob and Esau. Last week, we learned that Jacob married two women, sisters named Rachel and Leah. (*Show Jacob, Rachel, and Leah figures.*)

The one Jacob really loved was Rachel. But God felt sorry for Leah, so he helped her to become pregnant with son after son: (*After you say each son's name, put down the son in a circular pattern.*) Jacob had twelve sons in total ... Reuben ... Simeon ... Levi ... Judah ... Dan ... Naphtali ... Gad ... Asher ... Isachar ... Zebulun ... Joseph ... and Benjamin.

These twelve sons will become the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel, and in this family, we begin to see what God meant when he told Abraham that he would have as many descendants as there are stars in the sky.

Just like Jacob loved Rachel better than Leah, he loved Joseph better than all his other sons. He even gave Jacob a special coat of many colors, a long robe with sleeves.

When Joseph's brothers saw how their father favored Joseph, they hated Joseph.

Then Joseph began to have dreams. He told one dream to his brothers, and it made them hate him even more. (*Pick up Joseph figure.*)

He told them, “Listen to my dream! We were all in a wheat field, binding up bundles of wheat. But suddenly, my wheat sheaf stood straight and tall, and all your sheaves of wheat gathered around me and bowed down to mine!”

His brothers said, “Do you really think we're going to bow down to you?”

Another time, he said to his brothers, “Look! I’ve had another dream! In this one, the sun (*point to Jacob*), the moon (*point to Rachel*), and eleven stars (*point to other 11 boys*), all bowed down to me!”

When his father heard this, he said, “What kind of dream is this? Are you saying that your mother and I and your brothers will all bow down to you?”

Jacob thought about this dream, but his other 11 sons heard this dream and were jealous of Joseph.

Questions without Response:

- I wonder ... if you ever feel that someone you know is a little spoiled, like Joseph?
- I wonder ... how the other brothers felt, thinking that their father loved Joseph more?
- I wonder ... why people play favorites when God loves us all the same?