

Year A, Week 35 (July 27, 2008)

Genesis 39: 1-6; 19-21; 41: 1-8, 14-16, 25-31, 37-40

Joseph in Egypt

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

Items Needed:

- Joseph figure
- Potiphar figure
- Blocks to make a jail cell
- Pharaoh
- Optional (not supplied): pictures of cows and grain

Directions: make a square room out of blocks as a jail cell.

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, Isaac. Isaac had twin boys, Jacob and Esau. Jacob had 12 sons, after whom we name the 12 tribes of Israel.

Jacob's favorite son was Joseph, but his brothers grew to hate him because they were jealous and because he told them about dreams in which he would become the boss of all of them. One day, they took an opportunity to sell him as a slave to some traders who were on their way to Egypt. Then they tricked their father into believing that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal.

The trader who bought Joseph took him to Egypt, and he was bought as a slave by an Egyptian officer named Potiphar. (*Place Joseph and Potiphar down.*) Joseph served Potiphar well and Potiphar trusted him a lot. He gave Joseph better and better jobs and put him in charge of a lot of things. And the Lord was with Joseph as things were going well in Egypt.

However, one day, Potiphar's wife told some lies about Joseph. Potiphar became very angry with Joseph and threw him in jail. (*Place Joseph in jail and take Potiphar away.*) And the Lord was with Joseph and loved him while he was in jail.

The jailkeeper liked Joseph a lot – and Joseph was able to help some of the other people who were in jail when they had dreams that they could not understand. Joseph was able to explain what the dreams meant.

A few years later, Pharaoh, the leader of the Egyptians, started having the same dream over and over again. (*Place Pharaoh in center.*) He dreamed that seven fat cows came up out of the Nile

River, and then they were eaten up by seven starving cows. Or seven healthy grains of wheat were eaten up by seven scrawny grains of wheat. (*Set out optional pictures of cows and grain.*)

Pharoah called everyone to his side to explain these dreams -- advisors, magicians, wise men -- but nobody could. (*Shrug shoulders as if you can't understand, either.*)

Then one of the people who had been in prison with Joseph remembered that Joseph was good with dreams.

So they sent for Joseph. (*Place Joseph near Pharoah.*) Joseph explained, "I am not the one who explains dreams, but God will give you an answer." Joseph continued: "Your dream tells us that Egypt is about to have seven years of with lots of food and giant harvests. But after that will come seven years of no food at all. So you need to pick a wise man to make a plan to set aside food during the good years so that nobody will starve during the bad years."

Pharoah was pleased with Joseph's explanation and plan. He said, "There is nobody like you -- who has the spirit of God. You will be the wise man to help us set aside food in the good years so that we will have enough during the bad years. You will be my leader."

Questions without Response:

- I wonder ... if you know that God is with you during your good times?
- I wonder ... if you know that God is with you during your bad times?
- I wonder ... if God is preparing you for some big job, just like Joseph?