

## **HERE BEGINNETH THE HISTORY OF JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN, WHICH IS READ THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT**

*Caxton added this life to his edition of the Golden Legend, but it was not a part of Voragine's original.*

**J**oseph when he was sixteen years old began to keep and feed the flock with his brethren, he being yet a child, and was accompanied with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, wives of his father. Joseph complained on his brethren, and accused them to their father of the most evil sin. Israel loved Joseph above all his sons for as much as he had gotte son a long time. All his sons gathered them together for to comfort their father and assuage his sorrow, but he would take no comfort, but said: I shall descend to my son into hell for to bewail him there. And thus, he abiding in sorrow, the Midianites carried Joseph into Egypt, and sold him to Potiphar, eunuch of Pharaoh, master of his knights.

Thus was Joseph led into Egypt, and Potiphar, prince of the host of Pharaoh, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of Ishmaelites. Our Lord God was always with Joseph, and he was wise, ready, and prosperous in all manner of things. He dwelled in his lord's house and pleased so well his lord, that he stood in his grace that he made him upperest and above all other, and betook him the rule and governance of all his house, which well and wisely governed the household and all that he had charge of. Our Lord blessed the house of Egypt for Joseph's sake, and multiplied as well in beasts as in fields all his substance. Joseph was fair of visage and well favoured.

### **POTIPHAR'S WIFE**

**A**fter many days the lady, his master's wife, beheld and cast her eyes on Joseph, and said to Joseph, "Come and sleep with me," which anon refused that, and would not attend ne listen to her words, ne would not consent to so sinful a work, and said to her: Lo! hath not my lord delivered to me all that he hath in his house? and he knoweth not what he hath, and there is nothing therein but that it is in my power and at my commandment except thee, which art his wife. How may I do this evil and sin to my lord?

Such manner, or semblable words, he said daily to her, and the woman was the more desirous and grievous to the young man, and he always forsook and refused the sin.

It happed on a day that Joseph entered into the chamber about certain needs that he had to do, and she caught him by his mantle, and held it fast, and said to him: "Come and lie with me," who anon would not agree to her, but fled forth out of the doors, and left his mantle behind him in her hand.

And when the lady saw that she was refused, and his mantle in her hand, she cried and called the men of the house and said to them: Lo! this Hebrew is come to my chamber and would

have enforced and have lain by me, and when I cried, he fled out of the chamber and left for haste his mantle that I held, behind him.

And into witness of truth she showed to her husband the mantle when he came home, and said: Thy servant the Hebrew, whom thou hast brought into this house, is entered into my chamber for to have lain by me, and when I cried, he left his mantle that I held, and fled away.

When the lord heard this, anon he gave faith and believed his wife, and being sore wroth, set Joseph in prison where the prisoners of the king were kept and he was there fast set in. Our Lord God was with Joseph, and had mercy on him, and made him in the favour and grace of the chief keeper of the prison, in so much that he delivered to Joseph the keeping of all the prisoners, and what he did was done, and the chief jailor was pleased with all. Our Lord was with him and directed all his works.

### **JOSEPH IN PRISON**

**A**fter this it fell so that two officers of the king's trespassed unto their lord, wherefore he was wroth with them and commanded them to the prison whereas Joseph was. That one of them was the butler, and that other the baker; and the keeper betook them to Joseph to keep, and he served them. After a while that they had been in prison they both saw on one night a dream of which they were astonied and abashed [amazed], and when Joseph was come in to serve them, and saw them heavy, he demanded them why they were heavier than they were wont to be, which answered: We have dreamed and there is none to interpret it to us.

Joseph said to them: Suppose ye that God may not give me grace to interpret it? Tell to me what ye saw in your sleep. Then the butler told first and said: Methought I saw a vine had three branches, and after they had flowered the grapes were ripe, and then I took the cup of Pharaoh in my hand, and took the grapes and wrang out of them wine into the cup that I held, and presented it to Pharaoh to drink.

Joseph answered: The three branches be yet three days, after which Pharaoh shall remember thy service and shall restore thee into thy foremost office and gree, for to serve him as thou wert wont to do. Then I pray thee to remember me when thou art at thine above, and be to me so merciful to sue unto Pharaoh that he take me out of this prison, for I was stolen out of the land of Hebrews and am innocently set here in prison.

Then the master baker saw that he had wisely interpreted the butler's dream; he said: Methought that I had three baskets of meat upon my head, and in that one basket that was highest methought I bare all the meat of the bakehouse and birds came and ate of it.

Joseph answered: This is the interpretation of the dream; the three baskets be three days yet to come, after which Pharaoh shall smite off thy head and shall hang thee on the cross, and the birds shall tear thy flesh. And the third day after this Pharaoh made a great feast unto his children, and remembered him, among the meals, on the master butler and the master baker. He restored his butler unto his office, and to serve him of the cup, and that other was hanged, that

the truth of the interpreter was believed and proved. Notwithstanding the master butler in his wealth forget Joseph his interpreter.

### **THE PHARAOH'S DREAMS**

**T**wo years after Pharaoh saw in his sleep a dream. Him thought [It seemed to him that] he stood upon the river, from which he saw seven oxen ascend to the land which were fair and right fat, and were fed in a fat pasture; he saw other seven come out of the river, poor and lean, and were fed in places plenteous and burgeoning. These devoured the other that were so fat and fair. Herewith he started out of his sleep, and after slept again, and saw another dream. He saw seven ears of corn standing on one stalk, full and fair of corns, and as many other ears void and smitten with drought, which devoured the beauty of the first seven.

In the morning Pharaoh awoke and was greatly afeard of these dreams, and sent for all conectors and diviners of Egypt, and wise men; and when they were gathered he told to them his dream, and there was none that could interpret it. Then at last the master butler, remembering Joseph, said: I knowledge my sin, on a time the king being wroth with his servants, sent me and the master of the bakers into prison, where we in one night dreamed both prodigies of things coming. And there was a child of the Hebrews, servant to the jailor, to whom we told our dreams and he expounded them to us and said what should happen; I am restored to mine office and that other is hanged on the cross.

Anon, by the king's commandment, Joseph was taken out of prison and shaved, bathed, and changed his clothes, and brought tofore Pharaoh, to whom he said: I saw a dream which I have showed unto wise men, and there is none that can tell me the interpretation thereof.

To whom Joseph answered: God shall answer by me things prosperous to Pharaoh. Then Pharaoh told to him his dreams, like as is tofore written, of the seven fat oxen and seven lean, and how the lean devoured the fat, and in likewise of the ears.

Joseph answered: The king's dreams are one thing which God hath showed to Pharaoh. The seven fat oxen and the seven ears full, betoken seven years to come of great plenty and commodious, and the seven lean oxen, and the seven void ears smitten with drought, betoken seven years after them of great hunger and scarcity. Lo! there shall come first seven years of great fertility and plenty in all the land of Egypt, after whom shall follow other seven years of so great sterility, barrenness, and scarcity, that the abundance of the first shall be all forgotten. The great hunger of these latter years shall consume all the plenty of the first years. The latter dream pertaineth to the same, because God would that it should be fulfilled. Now therefore let the king provide for a man that is wise and witty, that may command and ordain provosts and officers in all places of the realm, that they gather into garners and barns the fifth part of all the corn and fruits that shall grow these first seven plenteous years that be to come, and that all this wheat may be kept in barns and garners in towns and villages, that it may be made ready against the coming of the seven scarce years that shall oppress by hunger all Egypt, to the end that the people be not enfeamed.

This counsel pleased much to Pharaoh and to all his ministers. Then Pharaoh said to his servants: Where should we find such a man as this is, which is fulfilled with the spirit of God?

And then he said to Joseph: Forasmuch as God hath showed to thee all that thou hast spoken, trowest thou that we might find any wiser than thou or like to thee? Thou shalt be uppermost of my house, and to the commandment of thy mouth all people shall obey. I only shall go tofore thee and sit but one seat above thee.

Yet said Pharaoh to Joseph: Lo! I have ordained thee above and master upon all the land of Egypt. He took a ring from his hand and gave it into his hand, and clad him with a double stole furred with bise; and a golden collar he put about his neck, and made him to ascend upon his chair; the second trumpet crying that all men should kneel tofore him, and that they should know him uppermost provost of all the land of Egypt.

Then said the king of Egypt to Joseph: I am Pharaoh, without thy commandment shall no man move hand nor foot in all the land of Egypt. He changed his name and called him in the tongue of Egypt: The saviour of the world. He gave to him a wife named Asenath, daughter of Poti-phera, priest of Eliopoleos.

### **JOSEPH'S MANAGEMENT OF THE KINGDOM**

Joseph went forth then into the land of Egypt. Joseph was thirty years old when he stood in the favour and grace of Pharaoh. And he went round about all the region of Egypt. The plenteousness and fertility of the seven years came, and sheaves and shocks of corn were brought in to the barns; all the abundance of fruits was laid in every town. There was so great plenty of wheat that it might be compared to the gravel of the sea, and the plenty thereof exceedeth measure. Joseph had two sons by his wife ere the famine and hunger came, which Asenath the priest's daughter brought forth, of whom he called the name of the first Manasseh, saying, "God hath made me to forget all my labours, and the house of my father hath forgotten me." He called the name of the second son Ephraim, saying, "God hath made me to grow in the land of my poverty."

Then passed the seven years of plenty and fertility that were in Egypt, and the seven years of scarcity and hunger began to come, which Joseph had spoken of tofore, and hunger began to wax and grow in the universal world; also in all the land of Egypt was hunger and scarcity. And when the people hungered they cried to Pharaoh asking meat [food], to whom he answered: Go ye to Joseph, and whatsoever he saith to you do ye.

Daily grew and increased the hunger in all the land. Then Joseph opened the barns and garners, and sold corn to the Egyptians, for the hunger oppressed them sore. All provinces came into Egypt for to buy meat to them, and to eschew the hunger.

### **JACOB'S OTHER SONS GO INTO EGYPT**

Jacob, father unto Joseph, heard tell that corn and victuals were sold in Egypt, and said to his sons: Why be ye negligent? I have heard say that corn is sold in Egypt; go ye thither and buy

for us that is necessary and behoveful, that we may live, and consume not for need.

Then the ten brethren of Joseph descended into Egypt for to buy wheat, and Benjamin was left at home with the father, because whatsoever happed to the brethren in their journey. Then they entered into the land of Egypt with other for to buy corn. There was great famine in the land of Canaan, and Joseph was prince in the land of Egypt, also by his commandment wheat was sold unto the people.

Then when his brethren were come and had adored and worshipped him, he anon knew them, and spake to them, as to strangers, hard words, demanding them saying: Whence be ye? bring with you your youngest brother that I may know that ye be none espies and that ye may receive this brother that I hold in prison, and then forthon what that ye will buy ye shall have licence.

And this said, each of them poured out the wheat, and every man found his money bounden in the mouth of every sack. Then said Jacob their father: Ye have made me without children. Joseph is gone and lost, Simeon is bounden in prison, and Benjamin ye will take away from me, on me come all these evils.

To [Jacob] Reuben answered: Slay my two sons if I bring him not again to thee; deliver him to me in my hand, and I shall restore him again to thee. The father said: My son shall not go with you, his brother is dead and he is left now alone, if any adversity should hap to him in the way that ye go into, ye shall lead my old hairs with sorrow to hell.

### **THE BROTHERS' SECOND JOURNEY INTO EGYPT**

**I**n the meanwhile famine and hunger oppressed all the land greatly. And when the corn that they brought from Egypt was consumed, Jacob said to his sons: Return ye into Egypt and buy for us some meat, that we may live.

Judah answered: That man said to us, under swearing of great oaths that: Ye shall not see my face ne come into my presence but if ye bring your youngest brother with you. Therefore if thou wilt send him with us, we shall go together and shall buy for us that shall be necessary, and if thou wilt not we shall not go. The man said as we oft have said to thee, that if we bring him not we shall not see his visage.

Israel [Jacob] said to them: This have ye done into my misery, that ye told to him that ye had another brother.

And they answered: The man demanded of us by order our progeny, if our father lived, if we had any brother. And we answered him consequently after that he demanded, we wist not what he would say, ne that he said bring your brother with you. Send the child with us that we may go forth and live, and that we ne our children die not for hunger. I shall receive thy son, and require him of my hand. If I lead him not thither and bring him again, I shall be guilty to thee of the sin ever after. If there had been no delay of this, we had been there and come again by this time.

Then Israel their father said to them: If it be so necessary as ye say, do ye as ye will; take with you of the best fruits of this land in your vessels, and give ye and present to that man gifts, a little raisins, and honey, storax, stacten, terebinthe, and dates, and bear with you double money, and also the same money that ye found in your sacks, lest there be any error therefore; and take with you Benjamin, your brother. My God, that is almighty, make him pleasant unto you, and that ye may return in safety with this your brother and him also that he holdeth in prison; I shall be as a man barren therewithes, without children.

Then the brethren took the gifts and double money and Benjamin, and went forth into Egypt, and came and stood tofore Joseph; whom when he had seen, and Benjamin, he commanded to the steward of his house that he should do slay sheep and calves and make a feast, “for these brethren shall dine with me this day.” He did as he was commanded and brought the men into his lord’s house.

Then were they all afeard and said softly together: Because of the money that we had in our sacks we be brought in that he take us with the default, and shall by violence bring us and our asses into servitude.

Wherefore they said to the steward of the house, in the gate of the house ere they entered, saying: We pray thee to hear us: the last time that we came to buy victual, which when we had bought and departed, and were on our . . . .

[Lacuna in the text]

. . . him from themward, for he was moved in all his spirits and wept on his brother, and went into his bedchamber. After this he washed his visage and came out making good countenance and commanded to set bread on the board, and after that he set his brethren in order, each after their age, and ate together, and Joseph sat and ate with the Egyptians. For it was not lawful to the Egyptians to eat with the Hebrews. And each of them were well served, but Benjamin had the best part, and they ate and drank so much that they were drunken.

Then Joseph commanded the steward of his house to fill their sacks with wheat as much as they might receive, and the money of the wheat put it in to every man’s sack, and “take my cup of silver, and the money of the youngest, and put that in his sack.”

And all this was done. And on the morn betimes they were suffered to depart with their asses. And when they were gone out of the town and a little on their way, then Joseph said to his steward: Make thee ready and ride after, and say to them, “Why have ye done evil for good? The cup that my lord is accustomed to drink in, ye have stolen, ye might not do a worse thing.”

He did as Joseph had commanded and overtook them, and said to them all by order like as he had charge, which answered: Why saith your lord so, and doth to us his servants such letting? The money that we found in our sacks we brought again to thee from the land of Canaan, and how may it follow that we should steal any gold or silver from the house of thy lord? Look! at whom it be found of us all thy servants, let him die.

Which said to them: Be it after your sentence, at whom that it ever be found he shall be my servant and the others shall go free and be not guilty.

Then he hied and set down all their sacks, beginning at the oldest unto the youngest, and at last found the cup in the mouth of the sack of Benjamin. Then they all for sorrow cut and rent their clothes, and laded their asses again, and returned all into the town again. Then Judah entered first with his brethren unto Joseph and all they together fell down platte to the ground.

### **JOSEPH CONFRONTS HIS BROTHERS**

**T**o whom Joseph said: Why have ye done thus? Know not ye that there is no man like to me in the science of knowledge?

To whom Judah answered: What shall we answer to thee, my lord; or what shall we speak or rightfully desire? God hath found and remembered the iniquity of us thy servants, for we be all thy servants, yea, we and he at whom the cup was found.

Joseph answered: God forbid that I should so do, whosoever stole the cup shall be my servant, and go ye your way, for ye shall be free and go to your father.

Then Judah approached near him and spake with a hardy cheer to him and said: I beseech thee my lord to hear me thy servant that I may and that thou wilt not be wroth to thy servant. Thou art next to Pharaoh; my lord, thou demandedst first of us thy servants, "Have ye a father or brother?" And we answered to thee, my lord, "Our father is an old man and we have a brother a young child which was born to him in his old age, whose brother of the same mother is dead, and he is an only son whom the father loveth tenderly." Thou saidest to us thy servants, "Bring him hither to me that I may see." We told to thee my lord for truth, "Our father may not forego the child; if he forego him certainly he shall die." And thou saidest to us, thy servants, "But if ye bring him with you, ye shall no more see my visage." Then when we came to our father and told him all these things, and our father bade us to return and buy more corn. To whom we said: "We may not go thither but if our youngest brother go with us, for if he be absent we dare not approach, ne come to the presence of the man." And he answered to us, "Ye know well that my wife brought to me forth but two sons, that one went out, and ye said that of wild beasts had devoured him, and yet I heard never of him ne he appeared not. If now ye should take this my son and any thing happened to him in the way ye should bring my hoar bair with sorrow to hell." Therefore if I should come home to my father and bring not the child with me, sith the soul and health of my father dependeth of this child, and see that he is not come with us, he shall die and we thy servants should lead his old age with wailing and sorrow to hell. I myself shall be thy proper servant which have received him upon my faith and have promised for him, saying to my father, "If I bring him not again I shall be guilty of the sin to my father ever after." I shall abide and continue thy servant for the child in the ministry and service of thee my lord. I may not depart, the child being absent, lest I be witness of the sorrow that my father shall take. Wherefore I beseech thee to suffer this child to go to his father and receive me into thy service.

Thus said Judah, with much more; as Josephus, *Antiquitatum*, rehearseth more piteously, and saith moreover that the cause why he did do hide the cup in Benjamin's sack, was to know

whether they loved Benjamin or hated him as they did him, what time they sold him to the Ishmaelites.

Then this request made, Joseph might no longer forbear, but commanded them that stood by to withdraw them, and when all men were gone out sauf he and his brethren, he began to say to them weeping: I am Joseph your brother, liveth yet my father?

The brethren were so afeard that they could not speak ne answer to him. Then he debonairly [gently] said to them; Come hither to me.

And when they came near him he said: I am Joseph your brother that ye sold into Egypt; be ye not afeard nor think not hard unto you that ye sold me into these regions. God hath sent me tofore you into Egypt for your health. It is two years since the famine began, and yet been five years to come in which men may not ear, sow, ne reap. God hath sent me tofore you that ye should be reserved on the earth, and that ye may have meat to live by. It is not by your counsel that I was sent hither, but by the will of God, which hath ordained me father of Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and prince in all the land of Egypt. Hie you, and go to my father, and say ye to him: “This word sendeth thee thy son Joseph: God hath made me lord of the universal land of Egypt, come to me lest thou die, and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen. Thou shalt be next me, thou and thy sons and the sons of thy sons, and I shall feed thy sheep, thy beasts and all that thou hast in possession. Yet rest five year to come of famine, therefore come lest thou perish, thy house, and all that thou owest.” Lo! your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that my mouth speaketh these words to you. Show ye to my father all my glory and all that ye have seen in Egypt. Hie ye and bring him to me.

This said, he embraced his brother Benjamin about his neck and wept upon each of them. After this they durst better speak to him.

### **PHARAOH ORDERS THAT JACOB AND HIS SONS BE INVITED TO EGYPT**

**A**non it was told and known all about in the king's hall that Joseph's brethren were come. And Pharaoh was joyful and glad thereof and all his household. And Pharaoh said to Joseph that he should say to his brethren: “Lade [Load] ye your beasts and go into the land of Canaan, and bring from thence your father and kindred, and come to me, and I shall give you all the goods of Egypt, that ye may eat the marrow of the earth.”

“Command ye also that they take carriages of this land of Egypt, for the carriage of their children and wives, and say to them: “Take your father and come as soon as ye may, and leave nothing behind you, for all the best things shall be yours.”

### **JACOB TAKES HIS FAMILY TO LIVE IN EGYPT**

**T**he sons of Israel did as they were commanded. To whom Joseph gave carriages after the commandment of Pharaoh, and meat to eat by the way. He commanded to give to every each two garments. To Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, with five garments of the best, and also he sent clothing to his father, adding to them ten asses which were laden with all

riches of Egypt, and as many asses laden and bearing bread and victual to spend by the way. And thus he let his brethren depart from him saying: "Be ye not wroth [angry] in the way." Then they thus departing came into the land of Canaan to their father, and showed all this to their father, and said: "Joseph thy son liveth and he lordeth in all the land of Egypt."

When Jacob heard this he awoke as a man had been awaked suddenly out of his sleep, yet nevertheless he believed them not, and they told to him all the order of the matter. When he saw the carriage and all that he had sent, his spirit revived and said: It sufficeth to me if Joseph my son yet live, I shall go and see him ere I die. Then Israel went forth with all that he had and came to the pit where tofore he had sworn to God; and slew there beasts to make sacrifices to the God of Isaac his father. He heard God by a vision that same night saying to him: "Jacob, Jacob," to whom he answered: "I am here all ready."

God said to him: I am strongest God of thy father Isaac, dread thee not, but descend down into Egypt. I shall make thee to grow there into great people. I shall descend with thee thither, and I shall bring thee again when thou returnest. Joseph soothly shall put his hands upon thine eyes.

Jacob then arose on the morn early, and his sons took him with their children and wives and set them on the carriages that Pharaoh had sent to bring him and all that he had into the land of Canaan. And so came into Egypt with all his progeny, sons and children, etc.

These be the names of the sons of Israel that entered with him into Egypt. The first begotten Reuben with his children four. Simeon with his seven sons. Levi with his three sons. Judah and his sons three. Issachar and his four sons. Zebulon and his sons three. These were sons of Leah that Jacob gat in Mesopotamia, and Dinah his daughter. All these sons and daughters were thirty-three. Gad also entered with his children seven. Asher with his children five and of his children's children two. These were sons of Zilpah, in number sixteen. The sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin. Joseph had two sons in the land of Egypt by his wife Asenath, Manasseh and Ephraim. The sons of Benjamin were ten. All these children that came of Rachel were in number fourteen. Dan entered with one son, and Naphtali with four sons. These were the children of Bilhah; they were in number seven. All the souls that were issued of his seed that entered into Egypt with him, without the wives of his sons, were sixty-six. The sons of Joseph that were born in Egypt twain. *Summa*: of all the souls of the house of Jacob that entered into Egypt were in all seventy.

Jacob sent then tofore him Judah unto Joseph, to show to him his coming. And he came to Joseph in Goshen, and anon Joseph ascended his chariot and went for to meet his father, and when he saw him, he embraced him meekly and wept. And his father received him joyously and embraced also him. Then said the father to Joseph: Now shall I die joyously because I have seen thy visage.

Then said Joseph to his brethren and to all the house of his father: I shall go and ascend to Pharaoh and shall say to him, that my brethren and the house of my father that were in the land of Canaan be come to me, and be men keeping sheep, and can the manner well for to keep the flocks of sheep, and that they have brought with them their beasts, and all that ever they had.

When he shall call you and ask you of what occupation ye be, ye shall say: “We be shepherds, thy servants, from our childhood unto now, and our fathers also.” This shall ye say that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen, for the Egyptians have spite unto herdmen of sheep.

Then Joseph entered tofore Pharaoh and said to him: My father, my brethren, their sheep and beasts be come from the land of Canaan, and be in the land of Goshen. And he brought five of his brethren tofore the king, whom he demanded of what occupation they were of. They answered: We be keepers of sheep, thy servants, we and our fathers, we be come to dwell in thy land, for there is no grass for the flocks of sheep of us thy servants, the famine is so great in the land of Canaan. We beseech thee that thou command us thy servants to dwell in the land of Goshen.

Then said the king to Joseph: Thy father and thy brethren be come to thee, the land of Egypt is at thy commandment, make thou them to dwell in the best place, and deliver to them the land of Goshen. And if thou know them for conning [skill], ordain they to be masters of my beasts.

After this Joseph brought his father in, and made him stand tofore the king which blessed him, and was demanded of the king how old he was. He answered: The days of the pilgrimage of my life be an hundred and thirty years, small and evil, and yet I am not come unto the days of my fathers that they have lived. And he blessed the king and went out. Then Joseph gave to his father and brethren possession in Egypt in the best soil of Rameses like as Pharaoh had commanded, and there fed them, giving to each of them victual.

### **JOSEPH MAKES PHARAOH OWNER OF ALL THE LAND AND PEOPLE**

**I**n all the world was scarcity of bread, and hunger and famine oppressed specially and most, the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan. Of which lands Joseph gat all the money for selling of wheat, and brought it into the king's treasury. When all people lacked money, all Egypt came to Joseph saying: Give us bread, why die we to the lacking money.

To whom he answered: Bring to me your beasts and I shall give you for them victuals, if ye have no money: which when they brought, he gave to them victuals and food for horses, sheep, oxen and asses, and sustained them one year for changing of their beasts.

Then came they again the second year and said: We hide not from thee our lord that our money is failed and also our beasts be gone, and there is nothing left but our bodies and our land. Why then shall we die in thy sight? And we ourselves and also our land shall be thine, buy us into bondship and servitude of the king, and give us seed to sow lest the earth turn into wilderness.

Then Joseph bought all the land of Egypt, every man selling his possessions for the vehement hunger that they had. He subdued all unto Pharaoh, and all his people from the last terms of Egypt unto the utterest ends of the same, except the land longing to the priests, which was given to them by the king, to whom were given victuals openly out of all the barns and garners, and therefore they were not compelled to sell their possessions.

Then said Joseph to all the peoples: Lo, now ye see and know that Pharaoh oweth and is in possession of you and of your land. Take to you seed and sow ye the fields that ye may have fruit. The fifth part thereof ye shall give to the king and four parts I promise to you to sow, and for meat to your servants and to your children.

Which answered: Our health is in thine hand, let our lord only behold us and we shall gladly serve the king. From that time unto this present day, in all the land of Egypt the fifth part is paid to the king; and it is holden for a law, except the land longing to the priests which is free from this condition.

## **THE DEATH OF JACOB**

**T**hen Israel dwelled in Egypt in the land of Goshen, and was in possession thereof. He increased and multiplied greatly, and lived therein seventeen years. And all the years of his life were an hundred and seven and forty years. When he understood that the day of his death approached, he called to him his son Joseph and said to him: If I may find so much grace in thy sight, do to me so much mercy as thou promise and swear that thou bury me not in Egypt, but that I may rest with my fathers, and take and carry me from this land, and lay me in the sepulchre of my forefathers.

To whom Joseph answered: I shall do that thou hast commanded.

Then said he, "Swear to me," and so he swore. And then Israel adored and worshipped our Lord, and turned him towards his bed's head. Then this done, anon after it was told to Joseph that his father was sick and feeble; who anon took his sons Manasseh and Ephraim and came to his father.

Anon it was told to the father: Lo thy son Joseph cometh to thee, which then was comforted, and sat up in his bed. And Joseph entered in, and Jacob said: Almighty God appeared to me in Luz which is in the land of Canaan, and he blessed me and said: "I shall increase thee and multiply thee into tourbes [crowds] of peoples, I shall give to thee this land and to thy seed after thee in sempiternal [perpetual] possession, therefore thy two sons that be born to thee in this land of Egypt tofore I came hither to thee, shall be my sons Ephraim and Manasseh, they shall be reputed to me as Simeon and Reuben. The other that thou shalt get after them shall be thine, and shall be called in the name of their brethren in their possessions.

Then he, seeing Joseph's sons, said to him: Who be these children? Joseph answered: They be my sons which God hath given to me in this place.

Bring them hither, said he, to me that I may bless them. Israel's eyes were dimmed and might not see clearly for great age. He took them to him and kissed them and said to Joseph: I am not defrauded from the sight of thee, and furthermore God hath showed to me thy seed.

Then when Joseph took them from his father's lap, he worshipped him kneeling low to the earth, and set Ephraim on his right side, and on the left side of Israel, and Manasseh on the

right side of his father Israel, which took his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim the younger brother, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh which was first born.

Then Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph and said: God, in whose sight walked my fathers Abraham and Isaac, God that hath fed me from my youth unto this present day, the angel that hath kept me from all evil bless these children, and my name be called on them, and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and grow they into multitude upon earth.

Then Joseph seeing that his father set his right hand upon the head of Ephraim the younger brother took it heavily, and took his father's hand and would have laid it on the head of Manasseh, and said to his father: Nay father, it is not convenient [fitting], that ye do, this is the first begotten son, set thy right hand on his head.

Which renied [refused] that and would not do so, but said: I wot, my son, I wot what I do, and this son shall increase into peoples and multiply, but his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall grow into Gentiles, and blessed them, saying that same time: In thee shall be blessed Israel, and shall be said: God make thee like to Ephraim and Manasseh.

And he said to Joseph his son: Lo! now I die and God shall be with you, and shall reduce [bring back] and bring you again into the land of your fathers; and I give to thee one part above thy brethren, which I gat and won from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow. Then Jacob called his sons tofore him and said to them: Gather ye altogether tofore me, that I may show to you things that be to come, and hear your father Israel.

And there he told to each of them his condition singularly. And when he had blessed his twelve sons he commanded them to bury him with his fathers in a double spelunke which is in the field of Ephron the Hittite against Mamre in the land of Canaan which Abraham bought. And this said he gathered to him his feet and died. Which anon as Joseph saw, he fell on his visage and kissed him. He commanded to his masters of physic and medicines, which were his servants, that they should embalm the body of his father with sweet spices aromatic; which was all done, and then went they sorrowing him forty days.

The Egyptians wailed him seventy days, and when the wailing was past, Joseph did say to Pharaoh how he had sworn and promised to bury him in the land of Canaan. To whom Pharaoh said: Go and bury thy father like as thou hast sworn.

Which then took his father's body and went, and with him were accompanied all the aged men of Pharaoh's house, and the noblest men of birth of all the land of Egypt, the house of Joseph with his brethren, without the young children, flocks and beasts, which they left in the land of Goshen. He had in his fellowship chariots, carts and horsemen, and was a great tourbe and company, and came over Jordan where as they hallowed the exequies [funeral rites] by great wailing seven days long.

And when they of the country saw this plaint and sorrowing they said: This is a great sorrow to the Egyptians. And that same place is named yet the bewailing of Egypt. The children of Israel did as they were commanded, and bare him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in

the double spelunke which Abraham had bought. Then when Jacob the father was buried, Joseph with all his fellowship returned into Egypt.

Then his brethren after the death of their father spake together privily, and dreading that Joseph would avenge the wrong and evil that they had done to him, came to him and said: Thy father commended us ere he died that we should say thus to thee; We pray thee that thou wilt forget, and not remember the sin and trespass of thy brethren, ne the malice that they executed in thee. We beseech thee that thou wilt forgive to thy father, servant of God, this wickedness.

Which when Joseph heard he wept bitterly, and his brethren came to him kneeling low to the ground and worshipped him, and said, We be thy servants. To whom he answered: Be ye nothing afeard ne dread you not, ween ye [do you expect] that ye may resist God's will? Ye thought to have done to me evil, but God hath turned it into good, and hath exalted me as ye see and know, that he should save much people. Be ye nothing afeard, I shall feed you and your children.

And comforted them with fair words, and spake friendly and joyously to them. And he abode and dwelled still in Egypt with all the house of his father, and lived an hundred and ten years, and saw the sons of Ephraim in to the third generation. After these things he said to his brethren: "After my death, God shall visit you and shall do you depart from this land unto the land that he promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When that time shall come, take my bones and lead them with you from this place," and then died. Whose body was embalmed with sweet spices and aromatics and laid in a chest in Egypt.

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The [iconography of Joseph](#) is available at the [Christian iconography website](#).

For other saints, see the [index to this Golden Legend website](#).

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