

Jacob and his twelve sons are reunited and live in Egypt. The eldest brother Joseph is Pharaoh's Overseer of grain, so they prosper through the famine. Jacob now felt that death was near and called for Joseph, saying, "Please do not bury me in Egypt. I want to be buried in my father's land." And Joseph promised him that he would take his remains back to Canaan.

It came to pass that Jacob fell ill. Joseph brought his two sons to sit near his near-blind father. Yisrael (Jacob) summoned his strength and sat up in bed. Yisrael said, "God, the All-Sufficing God, appeared to me in Canaan and blessed me. God said, 'I will make you a congregation of nations. I will give this land to you and your offspring as an eternal possession.'" Then Yisrael noticed two boys and Joseph said, "Father, these are my sons God has given me here. They are ready for your blessings," said Joseph. "Ephraim is on your left and is my youngest son. His name means 'God has caused me to blossom in the land of my affliction'. On your right is my oldest and first-born son Menashe meaning 'God has made all my trouble turn into good'. Bless them father so they can carry on my name and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac.

Jacob said, "I never thought I would see your face and now God has even let me see your children." Jacob placed his hands on them for his blessing so Joseph's youngest son would get the eldest's inheritance. But Joseph saw this error and moved his father's right hand to Menashe, "No, father. This is my first-born."

Jacob said "I know, my son. He, too, will be great but his younger brother will be greater than he and his family will complete the nations." Jacob blessed them. "Through you shall Israel bless their children, saying, 'May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe.'"

Later Jacob gathered together his 12 sons: Reuben, Shimeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Yissakahar, Dan, Gad, Naphtali, Joseph, Joseph, Benjamin – together and gave each a blessing as one of the 12 tribes of Israel. When Jacob died there was mourning throughout the land. With Pharaoh's permission, Joseph went and took the elders with him to bury Jacob in the Cave of Makhpelah with Abraham, Isaac, Sarah, Rebecca and Leah.

With their father dead, the brothers worried that Joseph might hold a grudge against them and punish them for their childhood evil. They offered themselves as slaves but Joseph told them, "Do not be afraid. Even if you meant to do evil, God meant it for good. God meant for everything to happen as it did in order to keep our nation alive. I will provide for you and your children." Years later Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die but God will surely remember you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. When God remembers you, you must bring my bones with you." And Joseph died at 110 and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

**Questions:** 1. What does it mean 'to bless' another person? 2) Make a blessing upon another person. How does that feel? 3) Joseph believed God meant for everything to happen. Are there things you believe God meant to happen to you? What? Why? **Illustration Ideas:** Joseph bringing his son to be blessed by his father Jacob... Jacob blessing the children, sadness after Jacob's death... Joseph forgiving his brothers again...Joseph dying