



## LESSON 16

*God delivers Joseph*

GENESIS 39:1-50:26



God uses evil for good.



*“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today” (Gen 50:20).*

## Supporting Truths

1. God causes evil to work for good.
2. God is with us in hard times.
3. We respond to God’s providence by trusting Him even when it is hard.
4. All good things come from God.
5. Even during trouble, God is faithful to keep His covenant of salvation.

## Objectives

1. Identify one bad thing that happened to Joseph that turned out for good.
2. List two times God was with Joseph when things were hard for him.
3. Explain three ways Joseph showed he believed God was in control.
4. Determine whether Joseph and Jacob gave God the credit He deserves.
5. List three promises (a Savior, a great nation, and promised return.) God was fulfilling by bringing Joseph’s family to Egypt.



## Lesson Summary

God was with Joseph even when life was full of trouble. After 13 years of bondage, God established him as second in command over all of Egypt. Through Joseph God brought repentance and peace to his family, and through Joseph God saved them from starving and gave them a place to grow into a nation. As a result, God preserved the line of the Messiah, turning all the evil Joseph endured into a blessing for the entire world.

## Spotlight on the Gospel

God preserved the line of the Messiah through Joseph. Just as God saved His people through the suffering of one man, Joseph, so now God is saving His people through the suffering of the one Man, Jesus Christ. Just as Joseph became ruler to provide life to his brothers, so Jesus is exalted as King to provide life for those who become His brothers by faith.

LAST WEEK



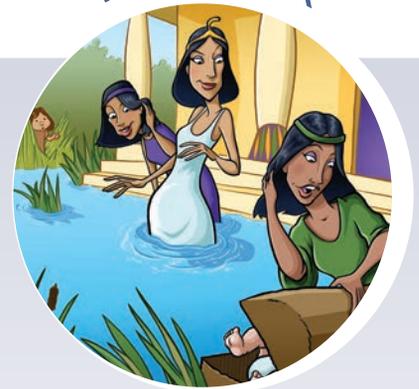
God preserves Joseph  
*Genesis 37:1–36*

THIS WEEK



God delivers Joseph  
*Genesis 39:1–50:26*

NEXT WEEK



God prepares Israel  
for deliverance  
*Exodus 1:1–2:25*

# Lesson Commentary

## *God uses evil for good.*

It appeared that God was absent when Joseph was thrown into a pit and sold into Egypt. But even though God is not mentioned in this portion of the story, it is clear that God was at work, using evil to accomplish good. God was quietly directing Jacob's family to Egypt just as He had foretold to Abraham (Gen 15:13). God planned to use Joseph to rescue his whole family (and many others) from starvation, to reconcile the divided family, to bring them to a safe place to grow into a nation, and through all this to preserve the line of the Messiah. As this story unfolds, it removes all doubt that God, in His providence and faithfulness to His promises, was directing all the events. Joseph responded to the changing circumstances by faith, proving to be a model of perseverance, integrity, diligence, forgiveness, and kindness.

### **God gave Joseph success through hardship in Egypt (39:1–41:57)**

After Joseph was sold to Potiphar, we are told three times in a row that the LORD was with him and made him prosper (39:1–3). The name “LORD” (Yahweh) is used here to emphasize God's special love toward Joseph. Even Potiphar recognized the LORD's presence in Joseph's life, promoting him to authority over all except his most private matters (39:4–6). As a result, the LORD also blessed Potiphar, consistent with God's promise to Abraham to “bless those who bless you” (12:3).

But God had bigger plans for Joseph. This household slave would one day be a ruler in Egypt, and God used the evil of Potiphar's wife to prepare Joseph for his eventual promotion (cf. Rom 8:28). When she first approached Joseph, he refused, displaying integrity rooted in his faith in God (Gen 39:7–9). How could he sin against God when God had blessed him so much (cf. Mal 1:6)? When she tried again, he ran (Gen 39:10–12), rather than sin. Then he suffered for his obedience, as Potiphar's wife used his cloak to blame Joseph, and Potiphar threw him in prison

(Gen 39:13–20). At this point it might seem that obedience is not always worth it.

But again the LORD was with Joseph, and “LORD” is again repeated three times. The LORD showed him “steadfast love”, which is the special love and loyalty God shows on the basis of His covenant.

As a result, even though Joseph was in prison, he was again entrusted with everything, including two high ranking prisoners: the chief cupbearer and the chief baker (Gen 39:21–40:4). These two men had political influence and prestige because their jobs required being near the Pharaoh regularly. But now they were in jail and troubled by dreams (40:5–7). He interpreted their dreams accurately, but not before giving all the credit to God (40:8–22; cf. Ps 115:1).

In God's providence, Joseph had to wait another two years in prison because the cupbearer forgot to mention him to Pharaoh (Gen 40:23). By now Joseph had either been a slave or a prisoner for thirteen years (cf. 37:2; 41:46). Even though God shows kindness to His people, He often uses long periods of trouble and waiting to prepare those He intends to use, just as Abraham waited twenty-five years for Isaac, or Jacob struggled for twenty years with Laban. Such waiting seems pointless according to the human way of progress, but God is interested in shaping character. Though Joseph's wait was long, his transition to power was short. God promoted Joseph from a slave in prison to Egypt's second in command in one day. Though man plans his way, God is the One who gives success (Prov 16:9).

Joseph's promotion came when Pharaoh had a dream that none of his wise men could interpret, even though they had made an elaborate art of interpreting dreams (Gen 41:1–13). Joseph was called, interpreted the dreams, and boldly gave

**THINK ABOUT IT**  
God tenderly cares for His people even in times of crises (Ps 23:4).



# STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

God delivers Joseph • Genesis 39:1–50:26



Pharaoh advice about what to do (41:14–36). But as before, Joseph gave credit to God (41:16). He knew that God was in charge and that God is the One who reveals mysteries (Dan 2:28). God used Joseph, and later Daniel, to announce His plan to foreign kings, just as God would use the people of Israel to communicate His Scriptures to the world (Rom 3:2).



**THINK ABOUT IT**  
God used the circumstances of Joseph's life to rescue countless nations from starvation (Gen 41:56–57).

By revealing to Pharaoh the years of plenty and the years of famine, and by placing Joseph over all of Egypt (Gen 41:37–45), God continued to work out His providential plan, using evil for good. When Joseph named his two sons, he confirmed God's hand at work: Manasseh meant that God had wiped away the memory of his suffering, and Ephraim meant that God had made him fruitful. Then, as one who trusted God's providence, Joseph proved himself faithful, skillfully gathering during the plentiful years and then selling when the famine began (41:46–57). Believing in God's providence does not cause us to do nothing; rather, it gives us courage to act, knowing that God will use our actions to further His kingdom.

## God reconciled Joseph's broken family (42:1–45:15)

Joseph was now in a position to save his family from starvation, but first God would use him to save his family from the divisions that threatened to ruin them spiritually. Motivated by hunger, Joseph's brothers came to him in Egypt (42:1–5). They bowed before him, unknowingly fulfilling the dreams they had hated (42:6). Joseph recognized them, but since it had been twenty years since they had seen Joseph, and since he was now dressed like an Egyptian, they did not recognize him (42:7–8).

Joseph tested them by treating them as spies (42:9). When they denied it, Joseph eventually decided to let nine of his brothers go back with food, imprisoning Simeon until the others returned with Benjamin (42:10–20). The brothers interpreted this as punishment for their sin against Joseph, and they admitted to each other that they had done wrong to Joseph (42:21–22). Confession of guilt is the first step toward reconciliation (Prov 28:13). However, Joseph still needed to know if they had repented—if they had given up their old way of life. So even though Joseph overheard, he added to the test by putting their money back in the sacks to see if they would return it with integrity (Gen 42:25). When the brothers saw the money, for the first time they spoke of God; they were beginning to recognize that God was at work in punishing them for their sin (42:28).

Jacob was too afraid to let them take Benjamin with them, even though Benjamin was a man with sons of his own by this time (42:36; cf. 46:21). Reuben foolishly vowed that Jacob could kill his two sons (Jacob's own grandsons) if he did not bring Benjamin safely back, but Jacob still refused. Eventually, the food ran out (42:1–2). This time Judah successfully persuaded Jacob to send Benjamin, arguing that they would all die if he did not, and promising to be personally responsible for Benjamin with his own life (42:3–10). Where Reuben failed as the firstborn, Judah took over, and the tribe of Judah would take the lead for the rest of Israel's history.

The brothers returned with the money, proving their integrity (43:18–22), but it was the sight of his brother Benjamin that most moved Joseph (43:29–30). Joseph used Benjamin to test the brothers a second time. He showed obvious favoritism toward Benjamin, giving him five times as much food as his brothers (43:34). Rather

**THINK ABOUT IT**  
Reconciliation happens when foes become friends, when that which was separated is brought back together.



than getting jealous, the brothers enjoyed Joseph's hospitality together without resentment.

They had integrity, and they were not jealous, but would they be loyal? Joseph tested them a third time by putting a silver cup in Benjamin's sack (44:1-2). He sent out his steward, who pretended that they had taken a special cup of divination and demanded that the one who took it must become Joseph's slave (44:3-10). But when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack, Judah, acting as the leader, took responsibility instead of trying to hide sin as they had done before. He realized that God uncovers sin (44:16). Out of love for his father, Judah then offered himself in Benjamin's place (44:17-34).

When Joseph saw Judah's love—the complete opposite of what Judah had done to Joseph 22 years earlier—Joseph wept (45:1-2). He revealed himself to his brothers, who were terrified when they realized who he was (45:3). But because Joseph knew God was providentially in control, he

**forgave** them (45:4-8). He let go of the blame and did not hold their sin against them. He could have seen his life as a series of unfair offenses, but he chose to see it from God's perspective. God was using every event, even the painful ones, for good.

Those who believe that God is in control are quick to forgive and do not take offense (Matt 5:38-45). Because the brothers truly **repented**—they admitted their sin with sorrow and turned from sin toward righteousness—and because Joseph forgave, the family finally had peace after 22 years. Peace comes only through repentance and forgiveness. Also, those who have been forgiven ought to forgive others (Matt 18:23-35), so Joseph told his brothers not to quarrel on their return journey (Gen 45:24).

### God blessed Jacob's family in Egypt but

### promised their return to Canaan (45:16-50:26)

Joseph sent his brothers back to bring Jacob and the rest of the family to live in Egypt (45:16-28). On the way, Jacob stopped at Beersheba, offering a sacrifice at the place where Abraham and Isaac had built altars. God spoke to Jacob, encouraging him to go to Egypt and promising that he and his family would one day return to the land of Canaan (46:1-4). This was important because Abraham had acted poorly in Egypt (12:10-20), and Isaac had not even been allowed to go there (26:2). Looking to Egypt for help was a sign of unbelief (Isa 31:1), but this time God blessed Jacob's journey.

So Jacob came to Egypt, and Pharaoh let his family live in the land of Goshen (Gen 46:5-47:6). This was a perfect place for the nation of Israel to grow. It was a fruitful land, suitable for flocks and herds, to keep them alive during famine. Also, it was the northeast part of Egypt, allowing the Israelites to remain separate from the Egyptians. They were further isolated because the Egyptians despised foreigners. As a result, the Israelites were kept from intermarrying and losing their national identity, and they were protected from the wicked idolatry common among the Canaanites. So over the course of 400 years the nation of Israel was able to grow strong—from 68 men to over 600,000 men (46:8-27; Num 1:46).

After spending 17 years in Egypt, Jacob concluded his life by looking to the future. First he made sure that he would be buried in the land God had promised him (Gen 47:30). He then blessed Ephraim and Manasseh, including them in God's covenant to Israel (48:3-20). In this blessing, Jacob recognized that God had been his shepherd, caring for him all his days (48:15). This is the first time God is called a shepherd, and it shows that Jacob has become mature in faith. He saw that despite his short and pain-filled life (47:9), he lacked nothing, for God was caring for him (cf. Ps 23:1). So by **faith**, by confident

**THINK ABOUT IT**  
Repentance is the only doorway to true reconciliation.



**THINK ABOUT IT**  
Judah is the first human substitute in Scripture,

illustrating the sacrificial love the Messiah would one day display for the whole world (1 Pet 3:18)

# STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

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trust in God, his shepherd, Jacob then blessed his own sons (Gen 49:1–28; Heb 11:21). He divided the firstborn privileges between Judah and Joseph. Judah received the firstborn's position as leader, the tribe from whom Israel's Messiah would come (Gen 49:10). Joseph received the firstborn's double portion through his two sons, so Jacob gave him the longest blessing (Gen 49:22–26).

After Jacob died and was buried with Abraham and Isaac in Canaan, Joseph's brothers wondered if Joseph might now take his revenge. But Joseph trusted God's providence and would not usurp God's place (50:19). God had used man's evil to

accomplish His good plan, to save many people (50:20). Not only did God use Joseph to save many people in Joseph's time, but through Joseph God preserved the line of the Messiah, eternally saving all who turn to Him. Like Jacob, Joseph also finished his life looking forward by faith to Israel's return to Canaan (50:24; Heb 11:22).

So even though Genesis began with new life and ended with death (Gen 50:26), there is yet bright hope because of God's promise. The patriarchs lived and died, but God continues. God is the main character, and the story is about His plan to restore His image in mankind. The story of Joseph is just a part of that story, and both Jacob and Joseph knew that the greatest blessings were yet to come.



## THINK ABOUT IT

When Jacob trusted in himself he lived with strife but when Jacob trusted in God he lived with peace.

# Lesson Outline

*God uses evil for good.*



## AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE

1. God helped Joseph do a good job as a slave and a prisoner (39:1–23).
2. God showed Joseph the meaning of dreams and put him in charge of all Egypt (40:1–41:57).
3. God used Joseph to help his brothers repent of their sin against him (42:1–45:15).
4. God used Joseph to save his whole family from starving so that they could become a great nation (45:15–50:26).



## AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE

1. God gave Joseph success through hardship in Egypt (39:1–41:57).
  - The LORD caused Potiphar to trust Joseph because of Joseph's successful work (39:1–20).
  - The LORD caused the prison warden to trust Joseph because of Joseph's trustworthy conduct (39:21–40:23).
  - The LORD caused Pharaoh to trust Joseph by showing Joseph the meaning of dreams (41:1–57).
2. God reconciled Joseph's broken family (42:1–45:15).
  - Joseph tested his brothers' integrity by treating them harshly (42:1–38).
  - Joseph tested his brothers' contentment by showing favoritism to Benjamin (43:1–34).
  - Joseph tested his brothers' loyalty by threatening Benjamin (44:1–17).
  - Joseph and his brothers were reconciled (44:18–45:15).
3. God blessed Jacob's family in Egypt but promised their return to Canaan (45:16–50:26).
  - Jacob and his whole family reunited with Joseph in Egypt (45:16–47:12).
  - Joseph successfully led Egypt through the famine (47:13–26).
  - Jacob blessed Ephraim, Manasseh, and all his sons (47:27–49:32).
  - Jacob died and was buried in the promised land (49:33–50:14).
  - Joseph believed God would bring them back to the promised land (50:15–26).





## Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



### Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

- 1. Was God with Joseph when he was a slave and a prisoner?**  
Yes. God was with him even when bad things were happening.
- 2. Who showed Joseph the meaning of Pharaoh's dreams?**  
God did.
- 3. Who came to buy grain from Joseph in Egypt?**  
Joseph's brothers came to him.
- 4. How did Joseph save his family?**  
Joseph showed them their sin which led them to repent. He saved them from starving by giving them food.



### Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

- 1. Why did Potiphar trust Joseph with all that he owned?**  
God was with Joseph and caused everything Joseph did to succeed.
- 2. Did Joseph deserve to be thrown into prison?**  
No. He was thrown into prison because he did the right thing and made Potiphar's wife angry.
- 3. How did Joseph go from being a slave in prison to 2nd in command over Egypt?**  
God showed Joseph the meaning of three dreams: the cupbearer's, the baker's, and two years later, Pharaoh's.
- 4. How did Joseph test his brothers?**  
Joseph tested them by treating them harshly and putting money back in their sacks. Then he tested them by showing favoritism to Benjamin. Finally, he tested them by threatening Benjamin.
- 5. How did Joseph's brothers respond?**  
With Judah leading the way, the brothers admitted their sin, and proved their integrity, contentment, and loyalty—the opposite of the deceit, jealousy, and betrayal they had shown to Joseph 20 years before.
- 6. Why did Joseph forgive his brothers?**  
Joseph believed in God's providence. He knew that God was in charge and had used his brothers' evil plans in order to save his family and many more people from starving. God saved the line of the Messiah, allowing salvation to come to the whole world through Jesus.
- 7. What did Jacob do before he died?**  
Jacob blessed Ephraim, Manasseh, and his own sons and made sure he would be buried in Canaan. Jacob believed God's promise to make a great nation out of his family and to give them the promised land.
- 8. What was special about Judah's blessing?**  
Although Jacob gave Joseph the double portion of the firstborn, he gave Judah the leadership role of the firstborn. The kings of Israel would come from Judah, especially the one great King, the Messiah.

# Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

## STAMPS AND TEMPERA PAINT

Pharaoh had a very special ring that could make a stamped design on paper. His stamp would mean the same thing as if he had written his name. Let the children experiment with one or two stamps, overlapping them or using one or two colors to come up with a design to represent their names. Let them try several different ideas and choose their favorite one. Tell the children that in today's Bible lesson, the Pharaoh gives his special ring to Joseph, and this gives Joseph power over the whole land of Egypt.

## TAPE THE CEREAL IN THE MOUTH

Draw a face with an open mouth on a large piece of butcher paper on the wall. Let blindfolded children tape pieces of cereal onto the mouth. Talk about what a famine is like and the fact that there can't be any cereal if the grain doesn't grow.

*Bee Humble*  
See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1



ILLUSTRATE

## DRESS LIKE JOSEPH

Put on a beautiful robe, a gold necklace, and a ring when you come to the part of the story where Joseph is elevated to second in command of all Egypt.

## FEAST AND FAMINE

Bring two burlap sacks, one empty and one full of grain or rice. Show the full sack when you talk about Joseph selling grain to the people. Show the empty sack when you talk about the famine.



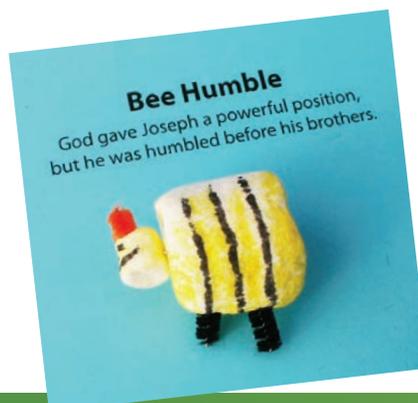
APPLY

## BEE HUMBLE

See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1.

**Materials:** Craft sheet, scissors, large and small marshmallows, glue, yellow markers, black markers, pipe cleaners, and construction paper.

**Directions:** Why was Joseph able to forgive his brothers? One reason is that he was humble. God gave him a powerful position, but he was humble before his brothers. Construct Mr. Bee Humble using one large marshmallow for the body and one mini marshmallow for the head. Glue these two body parts together, and use a yellow marker or poster paint to color the entire shape yellow. Draw black stripes around the bee's body, and draw a face on his head. Attach short pieces of black pipe cleaners for the legs and brown pipe cleaners for the antennae. Glue the completed bee on the "Bee Humble" half sheet copied on construction paper.



# TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

## MY FAVORITE ACTIVITIES

Have each child draw a picture of his favorite activity. Talk about how God gives us our abilities and energy. When we score the winning point, play the perfect piece at the recital, or hike to our favorite lake, who gets the credit for our efforts? In this morning's Bible lesson, we will see how Joseph went from prison to the palace and gave all the credit to God.

## INTERPRETATION

Have two teachers demonstrate what it means to speak through an interpreter. One teacher should speak (or pretend to speak) in a different language. Have him introduce himself and ask the children what they have been learning in Sunday School. Then the other teacher will interpret. Have the children talk to the "foreign" guest through the interpreter. Have fun with this! (E.g., if a child asks a question, have the guest give a very long answer, but then have the interpreter give a two-word interpretation.) In our Bible lesson today, Joseph will speak through an interpreter even though he really knows both languages. Why does he do this?



ILLUSTRATE

## TWO DREAMS

Bring three baskets full of grapes, muffins, and plastic glasses to class. Describe the butler and baker's dreams to the children, and illustrate the dreams using the props. For fun at snack time, let the children eat the muffins and drink white grape juice from the plastic glasses.

## FORGIVENESS

Joseph forgave his brothers. Ask the children if they know what it means to forgive. Explain that forgiveness is not holding someone's sin against them. Joseph's brothers had threatened to kill him and then sold him into slavery, but Joseph didn't punish his brothers for their sin. Instead, he chose to forgive them and treat them as if they never sinned against him. Joseph did this because he believed that God was in control, using his brothers' sin to accomplish His perfect plan.



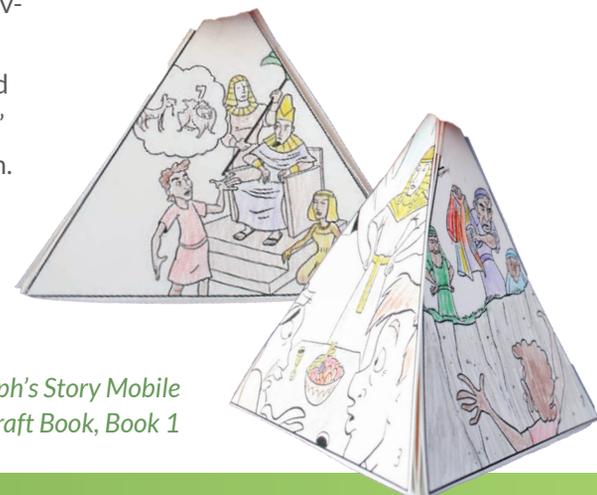
APPLY

## JOSEPH'S STORY MOBILE

See *Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1*.

**Materials:** Craft sheets, yarn, scissors, crayons, tape, and glue.

**Directions:** Have students cut out the triangle template. Help students to form a pyramid from the template and tape the edges together. Students should then color the three triangle pictures of Joseph. Have the students cut out the triangle shaped pictures and glue them to the sides of the pyramid. Attach yarn to the top of the pyramid with tape and make a knotted loop in the top of the yarn so that it is able to hang.



Joseph's Story Mobile  
See *Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1*

AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

### “GIRL REUNITED WITH FAMILY”

*The Huffington Post, 8/08/2014*

Jannah was just 4 years old when she and her brother were swept from their parents in the massive Indian Ocean tsunami... In June of this year (2014), however, Jamaliah’s brother encountered a girl in a nearby village who bore a strong resemblance to Jannah.... On Wednesday, nearly a decade after they were ripped apart, Jannah (now 14) was finally back in her mother’s arms (See complete article: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/08/girl-reunited-parents-tsunami-ten-years\\_n\\_5659530.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/08/girl-reunited-parents-tsunami-ten-years_n_5659530.html))

### RINGS

Show the children a wedding ring and a class ring. Explain that rings often tell us something about the person wearing them (wedding ring = married; class ring = school and graduation year). Today we will learn about a signet ring given to Joseph by Pharaoh. This ring told all of Egypt that Joseph had the authority to rule.



ILLUSTRATE

### SIGNIFICANT REPETITIONS

Ask the children to listen for repeated phrases in Genesis 39 that show how God was with Joseph in Egypt. List the phrases (with references) on the board. Explain to the children that they need to pay careful attention when phrases are repeated throughout the Bible because God usually is making an important point to the reader. Repeated phrases:

The Lord was with Joseph (Gen 39:2, 21, 23)

Lord made all he did to prosper (Genesis 39:3, 23)

Found favor (Genesis 39:4, 21)

### FAMINE IN THE LAND

Ask the children if they have ever missed a meal? What about two? What’s the longest anyone has gone without eating? Experts believe that it’s possible to survive for around 60 days without food. The 7 year famine experienced by Jacob and his family was a severe trial that threatened their lives and the lives of their animals. However, God used the circumstances of Joseph’s life to rescue his family (and countless others) from starvation.



APPLY

### “THREE TRIPS TO EGYPT”

*See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1.*

Joseph’s brothers made three trips to Egypt. As a class, use the “Three Trips to Egypt” work sheet to briefly review how these trips fit into the story. Which trip is being described? Indicate this with the numbers 1, 2, or 3.

Answers: 1, 2, 3, 3, 1, 2, 2, 1, 2, 3, 3, 2, 3, 2, 2, 3, 2.