

JOSEPH AND THE BROTHERS

Written by Ted Swartz

Characters: Joseph, Reuben, Judah

Scripture text: Genesis 42-45

Props: Benjamin's bag (cloth will work) with cup inside (placed on stage at the start)

Length: 7 minutes

Setting: Joseph's receiving room. Several comfortable chairs if you wish.

*(JOSEPH is in his receiving room. He is confident, authoritative, a man used to leadership—
JUDAH and REUBEN have been brought to JOSEPH.)*

JOSEPH: Gentlemen—back so soon? It seemed you were only just here.

REUBEN: Yes.

JUDAH: We were stopped.

REUBEN: Kept from leaving.

JOSEPH: That's unfortunate.

REUBEN: Your men ... your men stopped us, and took Benjamin.

JOSEPH: Benjamin?

JUDAH: Our youngest brother.

JOSEPH: Oh, yes, Benjamin. I liked him, sat right next to me. Good manners. Big appetite.

REUBEN: Where is Benjamin?

JOSEPH: It seems you have lost him.

JUDAH: We can't lose Benjamin. It'll kill our father.

JOSEPH: Yes, you told me about him.

JUDAH: He can't take losing another son.

JOSEPH: You lost another brother?

REUBEN: Yes.

JUDAH: NO.

JOSEPH: Are you not sure?

JUDAH: He was killed. He's been dead for 17, 18 years.

JOSEPH: Tell me about him.

JUDAH: He's dead.

REUBEN: Our father thinks he was killed by wild animals.

JOSEPH: What do you think?

REUBEN: *(Pause.)* We ... I don't know.

JOSEPH: Ah. This brother, who may or may not have been killed by wild animals, you were close?

REUBEN: Why?

JOSEPH: Humor me.

JUDAH: *(Pause.)* He was...

REUBEN: ...difficult.

JUDAH: He was a pain in the ... He was difficult ... sir.

JOSEPH: *(Eyebrows up.)* He might still be alive?

JUDAH: Yes.

JOSEPH: How old would he be?

JUDAH: 35 or...

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REUBEN: Thirty-seven. He'd be 37.

JUDAH: *(Turns to Reuben.)* Reuben?

REUBEN: He'd be 37.

JUDAH: You're so sure?

REUBEN: Yes. I'm sure.

JOSEPH: Do you recognize this bag? *(Tosses it to the ground in front of them.)*

REUBEN: *(Softly.)* Benjamin.

JOSEPH: I asked you a question!

REUBEN: Yes, my lord, of course we know the bag.

JUDAH: Where is he?!

JOSEPH: You may not speak to me in that way!

JUDAH: Where is he?! Is he alive?

JOSEPH: Silence! *(They fall silent.)* I trusted you ... trusted you. You ate at my table. You were my guests. You come to me—I have no need to see you. You need food to survive; I have no need to help you. But I do, I give food so that your people will live. I give ... And this is your thanks. Did you not think I would find out? *(Tosses the "stolen" cup at their feet, or places it on the table.)*

JUDAH: Sir, we don't understand.

JOSEPH: My cup. Not just the one I drink from, but the one I use to see the future.

JUDAH: Sir...

JOSEPH: In this bag.

REUBEN: Sir, we didn't know that was in his bag.

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JOSEPH: Yes ... Benjamin ... sat next to me ... we had a connection ... but looks can be deceiving, can't they? I suppose I have to put him to death.

REUBEN: Wha...?

JUDAH: Please—no!

JOSEPH: Too much? Perhaps not death—but the boy, Benjamin will stay here as a slave to me.

REUBEN: Sir, you can't do that.

JOSEPH: Really? I can't?

JUDAH: Master ... before, when we were here before, when we were at your table you asked us about our father—if he was still alive—we told you, yes, he is alive. But he is a very old man. His wife Rachel gave him Benjamin when he was an old man. Please sir, I am your slave, let me stay here in place of him.

JOSEPH: His wife, Rachel?

JUDAH: Yes ... not our mother ... but...

REUBEN: His favorite. (*A look from JUDAH.*) She was. Anyone could see that.

(*Pause.*)

JOSEPH: His favorite?

REUBEN: Yes.

(*Pause.*)

JOSEPH: Benjamin stays.

JUDAH: No...

JOSEPH: He stays, and you ... go. Leave me.

JUDAH: No.

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JOSEPH: No?

JUDAH: Not without Benjamin.

JOSEPH: This is not for you to decide!

JUDAH: He didn't steal from you, did he?!

REUBEN: Come on, Judah.

JUDAH: I want him to tell me why— why is he doing this?

REUBEN: Judah ... we need to go.

JUDAH: He's lying. Look at him.

REUBEN: Yes, I know he's lying.

JUDAH: Look at him.

(REUBEN turns to look at JOSEPH—He sees something, a longer pause.)

REUBEN: Sir ... how old are you?

JOSEPH: Thirty-seven. *(A start of a smile.)*

JUDAH: What?

REUBEN: Judah, really look at him. *(JUDAH turns again to look at him.)*

REUBEN: I'll bet he has a curved scar on his knee.

JOSEPH: From an angry ram.

REUBEN: A ram he tormented with a slingshot. Tell me sir, do you dream?

JOSEPH: All the time.

(Pause.)

JUDAH: Joseph?

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(JOSEPH'S smile grows.)

REUBEN: You rat.

JOSEPH: *(Now starts to laugh out loud.)* That sounds like the Reuben I remember.

JUDAH: *(Still stunned.)* Joseph?

JOSEPH: *(Laughter is building.)* I got you ... I got you. Oh, the look on your face just now...

JUDAH: I don't understand.

REUBEN: It's Joseph, Judah.

JUDAH: But Joseph is dead.

(JOSEPH is now laughing and crying at the same time.)

JOSEPH: In a way, yes.

JUDAH: Joseph!

REUBEN: Yes, Judah.

(JOSEPH spreads his arms.)

REUBEN: How?! How did you get here? How did you get HERE?

JOSEPH: It was God—God sent me here—it wasn't you, you were just the messenger ... it wasn't you.

JUDAH: And Benjamin?

JOSEPH: Can go as he pleases—or stay as he pleases. *(Pause.)* And how's Father?

REUBEN:/JUDAH: Father!!!! Oh my God, we have to tell Father.

JOSEPH: Yes!! You do...

REUBEN:/JUDAH: We have to go...

JOSEPH: You have to go...

REUBEN:/JUDAH: We have to tell...

JOSEPH: *(Speaking over REUBEN and JUDAH.)* You have to tell Father ... you have to go.

(The two older brothers run out, wait a beat and REUBEN runs back in, stops short of JOSEPH.)

REUBEN: Joseph ... I'm...

JOSEPH: I know Reuben, I know ... Go! Go! Bring our father here to me.

(A last grin and embrace from REUBEN and he runs out.)

END

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