

The Answerer

Answering children's questions

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The Bible and Three Nations

A brief summary by
'theanswerer'



THIS IS NOT A QUESTION - BUT IS AN EXPLANATION OF BIBLE BASICS

An unusual 'Soap Opera' in which Israel, Christianity & Islam begin.

Much of this story is in Genesis, Chapter 12 to chapter 50.

This true story tells of the *beginning* of the three 'Nations' (religions) and it sure has some unexpected turns. Read on:

After the Creation of our world (as told in Genesis Ch.1), human beings, all living creatures, and what we live in (our environment) and after 'Noah's flood' - a man named Abram believed there was a real but unseen God who created the world and everything in it.

That was unusual then - but God recognised him as 'special' and spoke to him one day saying that he (Abram) would be the father of a great nation and that his offspring (children) - countless millions of them would be a great nation. (Gen.15:1-21). Also, God said: "I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you; and the entire world will be blessed because of you." (Gen.12:3 TLB)

*This is a very powerful statement from God! No other tribe or race has ever received a promise like that ... **from a God who speaks.** God even gave him a new name!*

Abraham and his 'seed'- his children and their descendants, would be God's 'Chosen people' forever and ever. They have vastly increased in numbers since then but many have been their faults and failings - **but as soon as they seek God - HE IS THERE TO BLESS THEM.** (I have been ripped off by a shady business run by two Jews, and the shop was exposed on TV as crooks) but God will never abandon them as His 'Chosen people'. BUT, be assured, hundreds of thousands, maybe millions of Jews have contributed to other people's welfare by business philanthropy, (giving money) rulers of governments and culture and scientists (e.g. Albert Einstein) etc. They do not stand up and shout 'I am a Jew' they just get on with leading a good life - in spite of other Jews doing wrong. For an Australian example see: <http://myerfoundation.org.au/>

From that man Abraham, came the Hebrews (Israel), Jesus (Christians) and much later Muhammad (Muslims).

God changed his name to from Abram to Abraham, because Abram means 'Exalted Father', and Abraham means 'Father of Nations'. Abraham had no children because his wife was barren (unable to have any children) but several men (later referred to as Angels in the Bible text) visited him socially to tell him that he would have a son and they left after a social chat and a meal. (Gen 18:1-19)

Well some years passed and as no son came so Sarah, Abraham's wife said: 'It seems that those visitors must have been wrong as I am not pregnant - you better have a child with my servant girl Hagar.' *That* was not unusual in those days - men needed sons!

The servant girl **Hagar**, did have a son to Abraham. God told Hagar: "... name him **Ishmael**, he will be a wild one, free and untamed as a wild ass (donkey). He will be against everyone, and everyone will feel the same towards him. But he will live near the rest of his kin (relatives)" (Gen.16:1-12 TLB) These children from Ishmael would later become the **Muslim nations** & they do seem to fight a lot these days. Ishmael had 12 sons but: "They were constantly at war with one another." (Gen.25:18 TLB)

Abraham was now over 96 years old and his wife over 85 years old and Hagar did have a son for Abraham - but God was right and several years later when Abraham at 100 years old - and his wife 90 years old, they had a son and named him **Isaac**, as the 'visitors' told him to.

Isaac grew up, married **Rebecca** and she gave Isaac two sons, **Esau** and **Jacob**. Now the nation building bit starts. Esau was not the leader of God's choice - Jacob was the one to carry on God's plan for the future.

At about 40 years old Jacob was sent away by his father Isaac to 'Get a wife from our people' the Hebrews. He was tricked by his **uncle Laban** and actually finished up with two wives and twelve sons. He lived there 14 years and became quite rich with lots of sheep and goats. Jacob loved one of Laban's daughters very much and she (**Rachel**) gave Jacob two sons: **Joseph** and **Benjamin** but very sadly, Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin. (Gen. Chapter 29 and Chapter 35)

Rachel's son Joseph was chosen by God and this is his story which marks the beginning of the **Hebrews**, which later became modern **Israel (Jews)** and from them came **King David** and later **Jesus Christ** and **Christianity**.

Because Jacob loved the two sons of the wife he loved (Rachel) the older brothers – the sons of his other wife Leah - began to hate Joseph.

They were older, ten or more years older and the hate became very bad when Joseph became a teenager and Jacob gave Joseph a **very expensive coat**. It cost about ten times normal price and was very richly embroidered, had long sleeves and could keep you warm on winter nights if necessary. His older brothers realised that Joseph was Jacob's favourite son now - and he would get the 'Lion's share' (the biggest share) of their fathers estate when their father died. They hated Joseph more.

Andrew Lloyd Webber has made this story into a musical operetta stage show called **'Joseph and His Amazing Technicolour Dream Coat.'** It is this story put to a musical stage show that has been enjoyed by many people.

To make matters worse Joseph had two important **dreams**.

In those days God communicated quite often by dreams - as we shall see later in the **Pharaoh** of Egypt's two dreams that made Joseph famous.

The first dream was that Joseph and his brothers were harvesting the wheat crop. This was done by cutting an armful of wheat stalks with a scythe, (a large and heavy curved knife) then tying many armfuls together with string. Many of these were stacked together, upright, in a 'Stook' (I have seen them on farms) and later taken into a shed to be threshed and the wheat stored away - and the stalks cut up into chaff for horses and other animals.

Joseph's dream was that his brothers sheafs bowed down to Joseph's sheaf. Joseph did have a 'big mouth' and told his brothers his dream. **"You dreamt that we bow down to you?"** they demanded. Bowing down in Bible times meant that the person bowing down was very much inferior to the 'Big Wheel' that they were bowing down to.

"Yes." Joseph replied. They were all furious at such a thought and hated him more. But it gets worse for Joseph – as he then had a second dream.

In this dream, he told his brothers: "The sun, moon and eleven stars bowed down to me." (Gen. 37:1-11). Wow!! That was too much and the hate got worse. Jacob too said: "You mean that I, your mother (Leah) and brothers will bow down to you?" And he wondered what it all meant.

One day Jacob told Joseph (now age 17) to go out – quite a few miles distant – to take some food to his brothers who were watching over the sheep and see how they were getting along. **Now the trouble starts!**

"Ah." said one, "Here comes the dreamer; let's kill him and tell our father that *some wild animal killed him.*" All except Reuben agreed. He said: "No, let's not kill him - let's put him down this dry well where he'll die but we will not have his blood on our hands." (Reuben planned to go back and pull Joseph out of the well and send him home) It did not happen!!

As his brothers were getting ready to have tea, a camel caravan of Ishmaelite traders came along. (Traders would travel in groups for safety from robbers).



They were going to Egypt with spices, salt and things to sell in Egypt. "Hey, let's sell that dreamer (Joseph) and then see what happens to his dreams."

Well they pulled him out of the well and sold Joseph to the traders, for them to sell him as a slave in Egypt. *Slaves were bought and sold in those days. (see the painting/picture)*

So, what do you think Joseph was thinking as he walked away from his home, his little brother Benjamin and his father - to slavery in Egypt? A very sad teenager indeed!

Joseph was bought at the slave market in Egypt by **Potiphar**, the 'Captain of the Guard' in the Palace of the Pharaoh (King) of Egypt and was his chief executioner!

Joseph proved himself a very good and honest slave and Potiphar recognised that: "...the Lord was with Joseph in a special way." He was a good and reliable slave. He later put Joseph in charge of everything he owned – his farm, vineyards, servants and house. Joseph was now about 20 years old and the Bible says: "Joseph was now a handsome, well built young man."(Gen:39:1-6)

More trouble now! Potiphar's wife took a liking to Joseph and invited him to "...come to bed with me (for sex)." Joseph refused: "How could I do such a wicked thing - it would be a great sin against God." But she kept pestering him and Joseph did his best to avoid her.

However, one day when both of them were in the house and no servants around, Potiphar's wife grabbed his jacket saying: "Come and lie with me." Joseph struggled to get away from her and in the process she tore his jacket off – and Joseph fled.

"Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." (scorn is contempt or derision) is a very old and true saying. Men mostly would like to have sex with a woman - especially if the woman offers herself to him. But she can get very angry if the man refuses - like "Am I not pretty enough?" So, this woman got very angry & screamed: "Help - that Hebrew slave tried to rape me, but I got away & I have his jacket as proof." Wow! What a whopping lie she told Potiphar her husband when he came in that night after work. Potiphar sent Joseph to jail. God had planned all this. (Gen 39:7-21)

Before long, the chief of the jail put Joseph in charge of the jail because he recognised that somehow Joseph was 'good' and could be trusted. Later, in came two new prisoners. *God's ways can be mysterious and unknown at the time - to those involved.*

The prisoners were the Pharaoh's wine taster (his butler) and the Pharaoh's baker, because Pharaoh believed they were trying to poison him. Life continued in the prison for a while. But, one morning **the butler and the baker** came out with very sad faces. "What on earth is the matter with you." said Joseph.

They replied: "Oh, we both had dreams last night and we have no idea what they mean." "Tell me your dreams," said Joseph, "The God who made earth and whom I worship will tell me the meaning of them."

The butler (wine taster) went first: "I was out in the fields and a grape vine sprang up, grapes appeared and ripened so I took a bunch of ripe grapes, squeezed the juice into Pharaoh's cup and he drank it." Joseph told him: "In three days Pharaoh will restore you to your old job."

The baker thought it a good answer and told Joseph that he dreamed that as he was walking across the palace yard with three baskets of bread and pastries on my head but the birds came and ate them up. "Oh, that means that in three days Pharaoh will take you and hang you and the birds will eat your flesh."

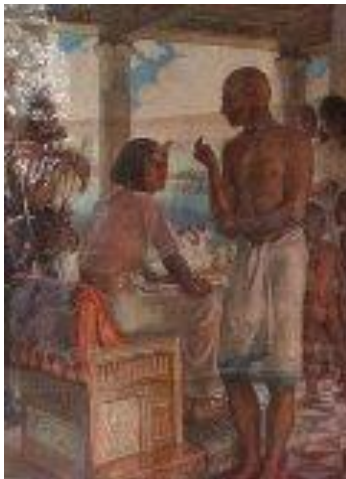
Three days later the **Pharaoh** called for the two prisoners and dealt with them just as Joseph had told them. As they were going out of jail, Joseph called out to them: "Please tell Pharaoh that I am innocent and to remember that I have been here three years."

Well the butler resumed his job and quickly forgot all about Joseph and the baker was killed.

NOW ... the Pharaoh has two dreams!!

One morning he woke up very disturbed (worried) over what the dreams meant. He had two dreams involving the number seven.

He quickly called in all his 'wise men': the astrologers, sages, magicians etc. but they were all stumped. They had no idea what the two dreams meant and in a drinks break the butler hears of the Pharaoh's dream problem. *"Oh – now I remember my sin!" he said. "Pharaoh will remember when he put me and the baker in jail. Well we both had a dream on the same night and the Hebrew slave down there told us what it meant – and it turned out exactly as he told us it would."*



"Well fetch Joseph quickly from the jail," the Pharaoh said - and after a quick shave and clean clothes Joseph stood before the Pharaoh. (see the painting/picture)

What a scene it must have been. In the Pharaoh's palace by the Nile River with all the 'Wise men' standing around and the Hebrew slave standing before the Pharaoh. I wonder what Joseph thought?

Pharaoh said to Joseph: "I understand you can interpret dreams." "No, I cannot do it by myself, but if you tell me your dream the God I worship will tell me the meaning." Joseph said.

Pharaoh: "Last night while I slept I dreamt that I was standing by the Nile River when seven fat, well fed **cows**, came up out of the river and began eating the grass beside the river. Then seven skinny cows came out of the river - I have never seen such poor specimens in my life. These skinny cows ate up the fat ones - but they still looked just as skinny as before. Then I woke up."

"I slept again, and again I dreamed that I was standing by the Nile River. I saw seven **corn plants** - tall with many good heads of grain on them. Then seven withered, poor looking corn plants grew and ate up the seven healthy ones. Then I woke up. Now none of my wise men can tell me the meaning."

Joseph spoke: "The meaning is plain. God has shown you in two dreams - so it will surely happen. The seven fat cows and the seven well grown corn plants mean that there will be seven years of wonderful crops and bountiful harvests."

"The seven skinny cows and the seven withered corn plants mean that after the seven bountiful years there will be seven years of drought and famine. The famine will be so bad that the seven good years will be forgotten."

Joseph added: "I suggest that the Pharaoh find the wisest man in all Egypt and put him in charge of buying and storing all the excess (left over) grain: corn, wheat, lentils etc. and make storehouses and save all the grain - otherwise Egypt will starve to death when the famine comes." After discussion with his advisors, Pharaoh said: "Who could do it better than Joseph. For he is a man who is obviously filled with the Spirit of God."(v.38)

Pharaoh came to Joseph and said "You are the wisest man in all Egypt. I am making you my Governor (Prime Minister) and only I will outrank you (be more important) in all Egypt and everyone will obey you."

Pharaoh put on Joseph a gold chain, his own cygnet ring - showing supreme (highest authority) in Egypt after Pharaoh, and gave Joseph the chariot of his 'Second in command' (like the Rolls Royce of chariots). Everyone bowed down to Joseph wherever he went. (Gen.41:1-50 TLB)

Pharaoh gave Joseph a name meaning: "He has the god-like power of life and death." Pharaoh also gave Joseph a wife, **Asenath**, the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of Heliopolis and she had two sons for Joseph and he named them **Manasseh** and **Ephraim**.

So, for the next seven years Joseph travelled up and down the Nile floodplain (the good land beside the river) which was about 1,500 miles long, gathering in all the excess grain and storing it in storehouses. (we call them storage silos today). He did this until at the end of the seven good years, there was so much grain stored that: "...they stopped counting it." (v.49) **Then came the END of seven bountiful years.**

The eighth (8th) year came and the River Nile did not flood - so the farmers did not plant any crops. The hard times began. Most people had some reserves (home stores) of food and soon they came pleading with Pharaoh for food. "Go to Joseph." they were told and they did.

Joseph opened up the storehouses and *sold* them grain - he did not give it to them - and put the money in Pharaoh's treasury.

Meanwhile, over in Canaan Jacob and his sons were suffering drought and famine too. Jacob said to his sons: "I hear that there is corn in Egypt - take money and donkeys and sacks and go and buy some grain or we shall all starve." The Bible does not say so but I wonder if they thought they might see Joseph - and it was now over 19 years since they had sold him as a slave. (A shock is soon coming for them). They had to travel for about three weeks, about 300 miles, to get to Egypt.

The brothers came to the entrance to Egypt and along with many others and waited their turn to go in. Joseph was there and noticed his brothers there, but pretended not to. "***They bowed down to Joseph with their faces to the earth and Joseph remembered his dream so long ago.***" (Gen.42:6-7) "Who are you and where do you come from," He demanded. Remember, Joseph was now 38 years old, dressed in fine clothes, spoke Egyptian and his very special chariot was nearby.

"We are all brothers and come from Canaan to buy food." They told Joseph. (Benjamin was not with them).

Joseph: "No you're not, you are spies, come to see if we are weak so you can invade us." "Oh no Sir, we are honest men seeking food. We have a little brother at home with our father." they said.

"No." Joseph told them, "I know you are spies and I am going to put you all in jail until you can prove you are not spies."

In a group now, Joseph heard them talking: "God is punishing us for what we did to Joseph." "Yes." **Rueben** said: "I told you not to do it and now God is punishing us." Joseph heard it all!

Later that day Joseph relented and told them that only Reuben will be kept in jail. The rest of them can take food home but: "You must bring back the little brother you spoke of & then I will know you are telling the truth." Again there was talk of how God was punishing them & that Jacob would never allow Benjamin to go to Egypt. Phew!

They all got home with the life-saving grain. Jacob was distressed to hear how roughly they had been spoken too - and "No! Benjamin will never go to Egypt." Jacob said: "Joseph has been killed by some wild animal and I will never allow Benjamin to go to Egypt."

But, the famine continued and the food ran out. "Go and get more grain." Jacob told them but Judah told Jacob again: "The man told us not to return unless you have your little brother with you."

Jacob wept at the thought of Benjamin going away - but finally, death faced them all and Jacob agreed to let Benjamin go. "Take these almond and pistachio nuts and gifts, and maybe I shall see him return."

So off they went to Egypt again and to bow down to Joseph.

Joseph met them as before and said: "And this is the little brother you spoke of before - how are you my son, may God be with you." Then Joseph had to rush to his room as he was very emotional at seeing Benjamin again. There he wept and then composed himself. He had told his servants to prepare a meal for all these men. "They will eat with me today."

The 'Grain loaders' had been told by Joseph to put his (Joseph's) silver drinking cup, in the sacks to go on Benjamin's donkey.

Soon it was dinner time. More amazement - and a bit of fear - Joseph had them all sit down where he told them and it was a line from the eldest to the youngest. They all looked at one another - wondering how he knew.

The food was served and some wine made them merry ... then they left for home.



They had been gone about 30 minutes when Joseph called his senior slave telling him to go after them on a fast horse and say: "Have you stolen my master's cup after he was so kind to you?" Well he did as Joseph had told him to. "What! We are not thieves, we do not do such things." "Well let's have a look in your bags." And there was the silver cup in Benjamin's sack. How the nine brothers tore their clothing in anguish. (see the painting/picture) then they went back to Joseph's house.

"What do you think you were doing - stealing my silver cup?"
"Oh Sir what can we say - we have no idea how it got there."

"Well the one in whose sack it was found shall be my slave - the rest of you can go home to your father." Sheer anguish (frustration and fear) seized them all. Then **Judah** stepped forward and made the speech of his life: Judah went over all that had happened to their brother and how Jacob loved the son of Rachel - and that he would die in misery and sorrow if Benjamin did not come home. "Please sir - allow me to be your slave - but please, let the lad go home to his father." (Gen.44:18-34)

Joseph ordered all his Egyptian servants to leave. Then he began to cry and weep loudly - then he said speaking in Hebrew: "I am Joseph, your brother Joseph whom you sold into slavery - but do not blame yourselves, God planned it all." They were all stunned to silence and unable to speak for a while. Joseph called them over: "I really am your brother Joseph - God planned for me to be counsellor to Pharaoh. Come close and see." Joseph was speaking in Hebrew now and with much weeping, crying and hugging they celebrated the reunion.

The servants had heard Joseph crying and went and told Pharaoh. He was pleased and called for Joseph. The Pharaoh was really pleased that Joseph had a family and told him to: "Take my carts and a load of gifts and the good things of Egypt, and go - bring all of your family here. I will look after them all here, for there are six more years of famine to go."

Pharaoh was really indebted (owed a lot) to Joseph for understanding the two dreams and storing up all the food and saving Egypt from disaster.

So, after much surprise, amazement and joy the brothers began their journey home. Joseph - remembering how his big brothers were prone to often arguing among themselves over many things sent a parting shot (joke) to them: "Hurry - and don't argue along the way." (*I think it was a marvellous joke from Joseph who was always trusting God and not quarrelling like his older brothers did*). (Gen.45:24)

When they got near home one of them hurried ahead to tell Jacob the good news: "Joseph is alive and is Governor of all Egypt." But Jacob's heart was like stone and he would not believe it.

Later, when Pharaoh's wagons and all the gifts came along, Jacob's heart lifted and he believed it and said: "It must be true, I will, go to Egypt and see my son Joseph."

Well, the brothers gathered up all their possessions along with all their wives and children, the sheep and animals and left for Egypt. (What a sight it must have been) All together there were seventy (70) people who 'left all behind' and began the 300 mile journey to Egypt.

When they got near Egypt one of them hurried ahead to tell Joseph that his father was coming. Joseph jumped into his chariot and hurried out to greet his father. And what a great and emotional meeting it was too. *Reader - please understand; in those Bible times an old man who had grown up and raised a large family was very much respected by his family and the whole community.*

Such men very often had to deal with fights, wars, family arguments and disputes over many years - but still hold his family and 'possessions' together. Possessions were mostly sheep, donkeys, camels, oxen, goats as well as growing crops for food and so on.

There was little of value in brick and tile houses, cars, and such things. There were also marauding thieves and robbers - life could be tough indeed with no organised police and laws to keep - and very few good roads as we know them today.

The Pharaoh asked to meet Jacob, Joseph's father, and Joseph respectfully brought his father to meet the Pharaoh. They had a talk – *and Pharaoh asked Jacob to bless him. Wow! And Jacob did bless him.*

Pharaoh told Joseph: "Your family must have the best, so go and live in the land of Goshen. It is a good land and plenty of feed for your animals." So they settled in the land of Goshen - all seventy (70) of them, where they all lived well.

Eventually Jacob died and in true tradition he would be buried next to his father, Isaac, his mother Rebecca, Leah his other wife and his Grandfather Abraham and his wife Sarah - so many years ago. Many high Egyptian officials went to Canaan to be a part of the procession – to pay true respect to Jacob. The official mourning time was seven days. Jacob's body had been embalmed on Joseph's orders. The Egyptians were experts at embalming (preserving) bodies of the dead.

Note by The Answerer: Much respect was paid by the Egyptians to Joseph and his family - but it seems not to have entered their mind to inquire about the God of Joseph and Jacob. "Who is he - how can he tell of dreams – and the integrity and truth of Joseph?" After all, God had told Joseph the meaning of dreams by Pharaoh and the Butler and the Baker - which had stumped all the 'Wise men' of Egypt but they never said : "How come your God can do these things?" They worshipped Ra, the sun god. (Look Ra up on the WWW to find out more.)

The Hebrews (Jews) actually lived there for four hundred (400) years and increased in numbers to around two million (2,000,000,000) people.

Trouble comes...but there will be the nation of Israel. God's promise!

Later when the bad years of famine had been forgotten there came a Pharaoh "...who knew not Joseph" and what he had done for Egypt.

It bothered this Pharaoh that 2 million people who were not Egyptians could, maybe, turn against him and join a foreign invader and take over Egypt. What to do, because they were hard workers and prosperous (had money).

This new Pharaoh decided to make them work – to make mud bricks and build two cities for the Pharaoh. It got worse as he made slaves of them, setting taskmasters with whips over them. *They had quotas (fixed numbers of bricks) to make every day.* But still they increased in numbers - and they complained about the hard work and slavery. So Pharaoh made them work harder by making them collect their own straw. (Straw is put into mud bricks). This can be seen in the [movie THE TEN COMMANDMENTS](#) by Cecil B De Mille. It is considered an all-time classic movie. (See many versions of this movie on the WWW.)

Those 2 million people – whose Patriarch (respected Grandfather and Great Grandfather or ancestor) was Abraham, are the group of Hebrews or Jews who went on to become the nation of Israel. It began more than three thousand (3,000) years ago. Abraham is also the Patriarch of the Muslims because of Abraham's son Ishmael. Christianity later came from Jesus and the twelve disciples.

BEFORE HE DIED, Joseph told his children: "Do not bury me here in Egypt but put my body in a metal casket and take it to the 'Promised land', the land '...flowing with milk and honey," that God had promised to them once they had left Egypt. (Ex 3:8)

When that promise was made, God put no timetable on it. The time things happen is God's business always - because He knows the future.

How they escaped slavery and from Egypt and travelled to 'The Promised Land.' is another story. Watch out for it on this website - **Part two coming soon.**