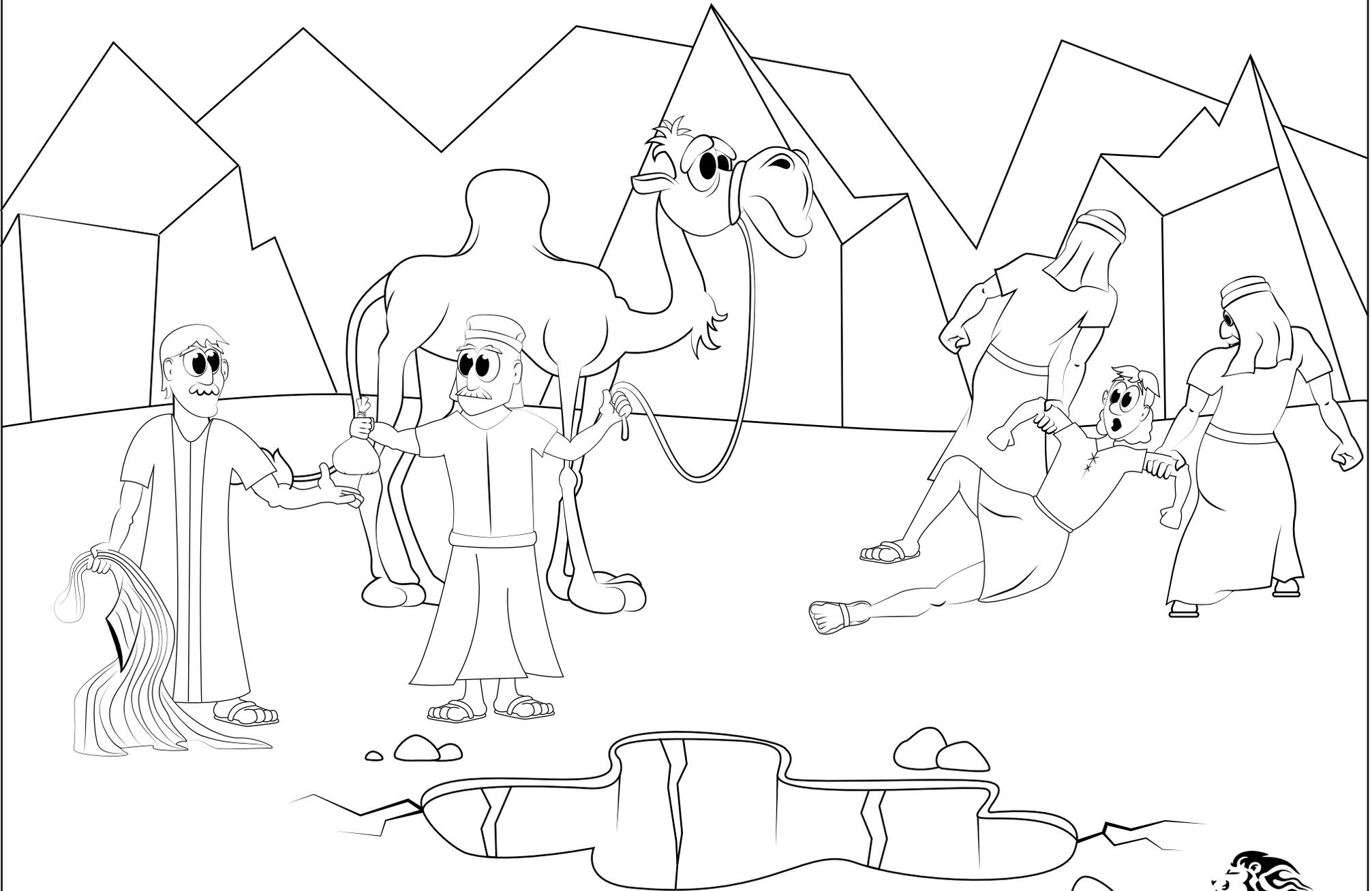


Joseph was a young man from a large family of shepherds. He had ten older brothers and one younger brother. Out of all those boys, Joseph was the favorite. His father, whose name was Jacob, loved Joseph so very much! It made the other brothers jealous because they knew their father loved Joseph the most.

One day Jacob decided to give Joseph a very wonderful present! It was a special coat that he had made just for Joseph. It was the most spectacular coat ever, made of very fancy fabrics with every color possible!

Joseph tried on his new coat and loved it! It made him feel so important, proud and special. Most of all it was a great reminder of how much his father loved him.



Joseph's ten older brothers took their flocks of sheep out to graze. In order to find good, green pastures, they had to travel quite a far distance from home. Jacob, the father, asked Joseph to travel out and check on his brothers, then come back and report on how they were doing.

Those older brothers had gotten very tired of Joseph, because sometimes Joseph was a bragger and a tattletale and he would get them all in trouble. Plus, his beautiful coat only served as a reminder that Joseph was loved the most by their dad. This made them jealous and angry.

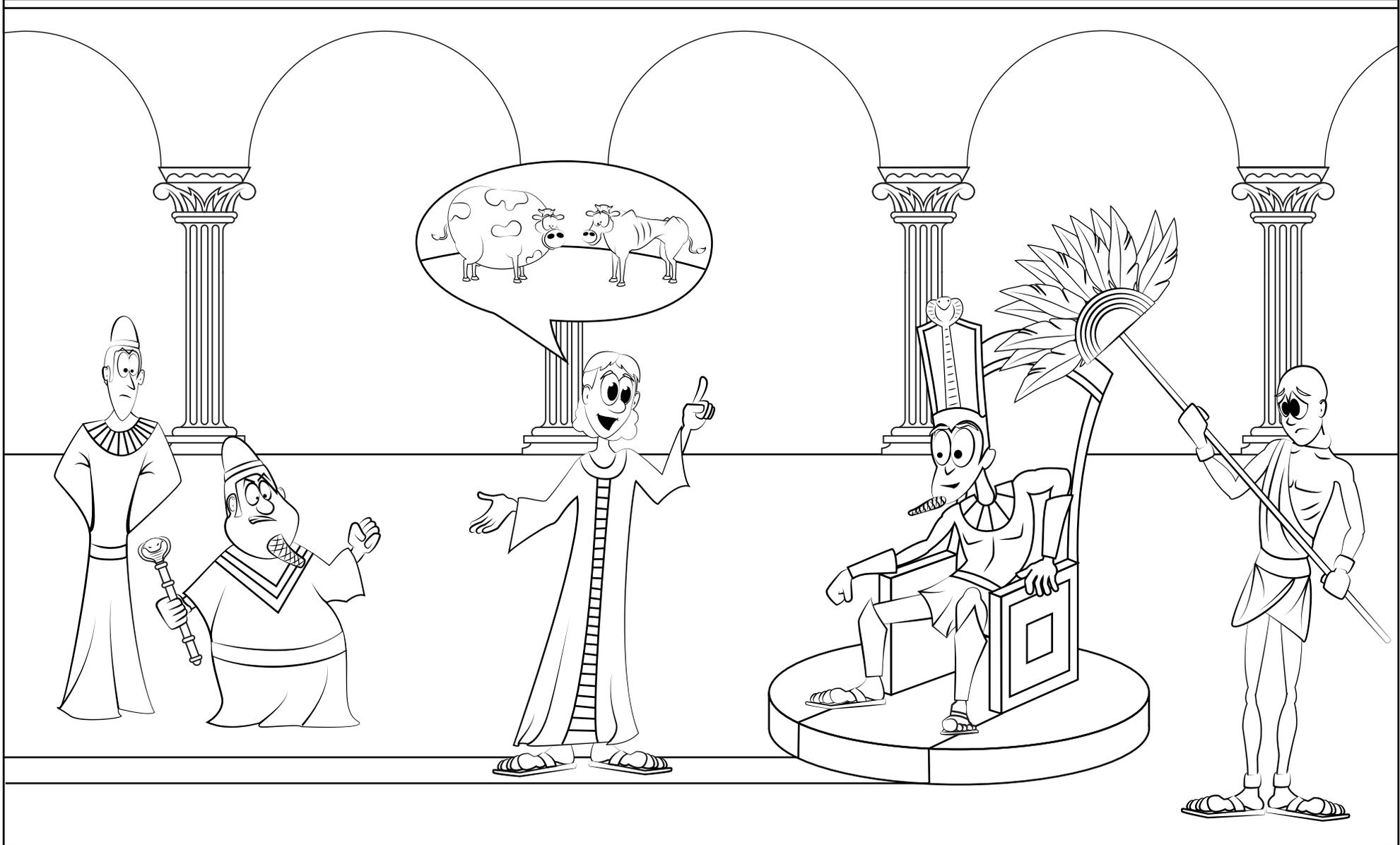
While the brothers were all out in the field, they saw Joseph approaching. He was still far off, but they could tell it was Joseph because they recognized his coat. Instantly they felt that anger and jealousy rise up, and decided to dump Joseph into an empty well.

They were going to throw him down there and leave him behind! Suddenly, a band of traveling merchants appeared. They were Ishmaelites, men from a far country, passing by on their way to Egypt.

"Hey!" said one of the brothers, "Why don't we sell Joseph to them? We could make some money and they would take him far away to Egypt. He will finally be out of our hair!" Joseph was soon sold into slavery by his brothers and found himself on the way to Egypt, far away from home!

Joseph's cruel brothers kept that beautiful coat. They now needed to create a lie to tell their father, so they ripped it up and got it all dirty. They planned to tell their father a big lie - that Joseph was gone because a wild animal caught him and ate him.

This made their father Jacob extremely sad and brokenhearted, and he mourned for many days. Meanwhile, Joseph found himself traveling through the desert with these merchant strangers. He didn't know it then, but God still was keeping watch over him, and God had a plan!



Joseph found himself in Egypt, without his father or family. He didn't know anyone, but God was with him so he was not afraid. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, noticed that Joseph was strong and a good worker, so he gave Joseph a job in the palace. One night, Pharaoh had two dreams that woke him up out of a sound sleep.

Confused and bothered by these dreams, Pharaoh called for the wisemen and magicians of the palace to come and interpret the meaning of these dreams. Not one of them was able to figure out what these dreams meant, and this left Pharaoh very upset. Finally, a servant remembered that Joseph was a man who knew how to hear from God. He suggested that Pharaoh ask Joseph, maybe Joseph would have the answer!

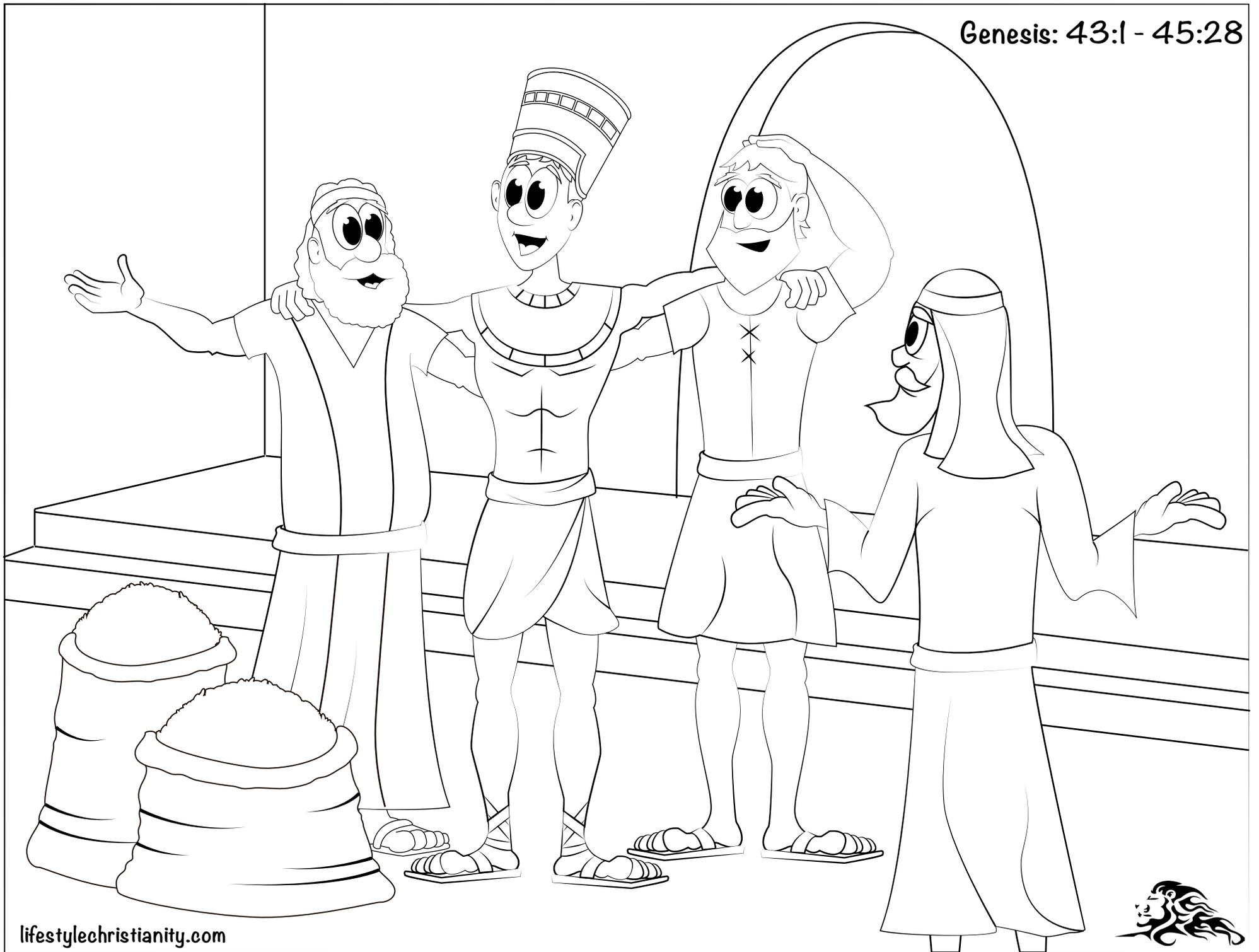
Joseph came before the king and heard the dreams. He said, "Oh Pharaoh, I don't know the answers, but God does, and He has told me what they mean." Joseph went on to explain that God was sending a message through those dreams. There would be seven years of great blessing and wealth in the kingdom. Then there would be seven very difficult years of lack where the crops would not grow and there would be no food.

Joseph recommended that it would be wise to save grain and supplies during the seven blessed years, so that they would have enough during the seven difficult years of lack.

Pharaoh was very pleased and relieved to know the meanings of these dreams, and liked Joseph's idea to save and prepare for the years ahead. He was so happy with Joseph, he promoted him to the highest level of leadership in the kingdom, second only to himself.

God blessed Joseph with great wisdom and he became a wonderful leader for all the people.

Genesis: 43:1 - 45:28



Things began to happen just as Pharaoh's dreams had described. There were seven years of great harvests and abundance of grain and food. Then, during the next seven years, all the crops failed and food became very scarce. The people began to feel afraid and cried out to Pharaoh for food.

"Go to Joseph," Pharaoh instructed, "He has a plan and no one needs to go hungry." Soon the people from near and far came to Joseph to buy food, and everyone had enough.

Now, Joseph's father and brothers still lived far off in the land of Canaan. They were experiencing a severe famine too, so Jacob sent his sons to Egypt so that they could bring home the food they needed. The brothers traveled to Egypt and came before Joseph.

Joseph recognized his brothers right away, but his brothers did not realize this was Joseph - the little brother they had sold into slavery so many years ago! He pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly with them so that they wouldn't know it was him. The brothers traveled between Egypt and their home a few times to buy food, never once realizing they were dealing with Joseph, their long-lost brother.

Finally the day came when Joseph could not contain his secret any longer. He finally told the brothers who he really was! The brothers were terrified! They remembered how badly they had treated Joseph when he was a little boy, and now Joseph was the most powerful man in Egypt - second only to Pharaoh himself! Surely he was going to punish them now!

"No," Joseph told them, "Don't be afraid, and don't feel badly for what you did all those years ago! You might have meant to do evil, but I'm not angry. See, God had a plan all along and He used it for good! God has used me to preserve the people from starving! Now, go back home and tell our father, then bring him back to me so that I can see him again!"

The brothers quickly traveled back home to Canaan and told Jacob, their father. He was shocked and overjoyed and left for Egypt right away! Soon, the whole family was reunited and God blessed them mightily.