Jacob had nine sons, one of whom was Joseph. Joseph saw a dream and related it to his father: "Father," he said, "in my dream I saw eleven stars gesturing to me."

His father warned him and said, "Son, there are people jealous of you. Be careful." Joseph was Jacob's favorite son, and he preferred this son to his other sons who were born by a previous wife. His brothers were jealous of Joseph, and this jealousy led them to treachery.

One day they said to their father, "Father, Joseph seems to be bored. Would you let him come with us when we go to herd the flock..."

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1 This tale is included because it is as much a folktale as it is the Koranic account of Joseph. There will be notes following that indicate significant divergences from Chapter XII of the Koran, the chapter (sura) in which the account of Joseph is given.

The title Hazreti is maintained here simply because there is no exact equivalent in English. Most Turkish-English dictionaries define Hazreti as Excellence; Saint, also sometimes given, is a closer definition. It was a religious honorific given to the early caliphs, and it is now used with the name of many different great religious figures of the past. Biblical and Koranic characters are often given the term Hazreti. Perhaps His Reverence or His Holiness would be a good rendering of the intent of the term.
today? It will be a change for him." Jacob gave them the permission. However, as soon as they left the house, his brothers began to beat Joseph. Then they threw him in a pit. A caravan happened to be passing by, and the oldest brother sold Joseph to the caravan leader for one akche. The caravan leader took Joseph to Egypt.

When the brothers returned home, they said to their father,

"A wolf came and carried away Joseph before we could save him. All we have left is this bloody shirt." They showed Joseph's bloody shirt to Jacob. The grief-stricken Jacob became blind from weeping for his lost son.

In Egypt the caravan leader delivered Joseph to the Pharaoh. In the palace Joseph received a good education, and this education enabled him to interpret dreams. Joseph was so handsome that whenever he looked in the mirror he used to think, "I wonder how much my good looks would be worth if they were to sell me as a slave?"

The Pharaoh's wife, Zeliha, became infatuated with the handsome man and said to him, "Lie with me." Joseph refused, but as he was going out of the room, Zeliha held him by the shirt and tore off the back of the shirt. At this moment the Pharaoh and his uncle came and witnessed the scene. Zeliha said, "What punishment is

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2 The narrator has here upgraded the position of the woman who makes advances to Joseph. In the Biblical account (Genesis) it is the wife of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. In the Koran it is the Governor's wife. The woman is given no name in the Koran, but in a later Arabic tradition she is called Zulaykhah. —See Watt's Companion to the Qur'an.
given to a man who rapes a woman?" Without waiting for an answer, she added, "He must be thrown in the dungeon." The law called for death in the case of rape. Zeliha's love for Joseph would not suffer him to be killed, so she suggested that Joseph be put in dungeon.3

It was several days later that Joseph's punishment was imposed. In the meantime, the gossip concerning the Pharaoh's wife and Joseph spread throughout the palace. Zeliha invited the gossiping women to tea. Along with tea, she served them fruit. As the women were peeling the oranges, Joseph walked in with coffee on a tray.4 The women were dumbfounded when they saw the handsome young man. In their confusion, the guests accidentally cut their fingers. Upon this, Zeliha said, "You cut a finger when you saw him once. Be my judge and appreciate the way I feel when I see him around me every day."

The gossip about this incident hastened the day of Joseph's imprisonment. In the dungeon Joseph befriended two prisoners: the Pharaoh's cook and a beverage maker. They were both accused of attempting to poison some high officials in the palace. One night the cook had

3The Koranic account differs from both the Biblical story and from this folktale. In the Koran Joseph's innocence of approaching the woman is established by deduction. Since the cloth was torn by the woman from the back of his shirt, it must have been taken when he was trying to get away from her. It is because of this establishment of innocence that Joseph is, at first, not thrown into prison.

4The anachronism of having coffee served at a social gathering is obvious.
Joseph interpreted the dream and said, "My friend, I'm afraid you will be executed—I'll lose your head."  

The beverage maker said, "I saw a dream too. In my dream I was squeezing oranges and making orange juice."

"You will be set free," Joseph interpreted the dream.

The next day the cook and the beverage maker were tried. When the food the cook had prepared was given to some dogs, the animals died. But when some dogs drank the juices made by the beverage maker, they survived. The judges decided that it was the cook, not the beverage maker, who had attempted to poison the high officials. The cook was executed, but the beverage maker was set free. Before the beverage maker left the prison, he thanked Joseph and said, "You interpreted my dream very well, indeed."

Then Joseph said, "Please recommend me as a dream interpreter to the people in the palace."

Seven years later the Pharaoh had a dream in which he saw seven

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5 Simit—a crisp, tasty biscuit covered with sesame seeds. About six inches in diameter, it is circular, with a hole in the center. A biscuit ring would be a good English translation. They are relished by Turks and visitors to Turkey. They are sold not only in bakeries but on the street by hawkers who carry large trays of them on their heads.

6 In the Koranic interpretation of the cook's dream, Joseph tells the man that he will be crucified and birds will peck on his head.

7 In the Koran it is grape juice that he dreams he is squeezing.
lean oxen devour seven well-fed oxen. Since he had seven provinces under his rule, he feared that the dream foretold some catastrophe. He wanted somebody to interpret his dream.

The beverage maker said, "Sir, Joseph, who has been in prison for so long, is an excellent dream interpreter. Why don't you consult him?"

Joseph was called before the Pharaoh. Before he interpreted the dream, he pleaded with the Pharaoh and said, "I will interpret your dream if you set me free." The Pharaoh agreed to set Joseph free. Then Joseph interpreted the dream in a very refined language. In summary, this was the interpretation: "There will be seven years of abundance in Egypt followed by seven years of famine. It would be wise to store grain during the seven years of good crop and when the seven years of famine begin, sell grain to the people." The Pharaoh was so pleased with this interpretation that he made Joseph his vizier.

As Joseph had predicted, after seven years of abundance, famine began. People over the kingdom came to get grain in return for money.

In the Koranic version Joseph wants not only to be set free but also to be exonerated from the charges against him by his master's wife and the women who cut their hands in excitement over Joseph. Since they had demonstrated the same weakness for the handsome youth, Joseph, as had his master's wife, they too lodged charges against him, and so he was eventually jailed. In the Koran, the king questions the women and the wife of the Governor, and they admit their false accusations; the Governor's wife admits that she approached Joseph, not he her.

Again, the word vizier is an obvious anachronism.
or some goods. One day Joseph's eight brothers came to the palace to buy grain. Joseph recognized them, but they did not recognize him. They bought some grain, and before they left the palace, they asked Joseph, "May we come back to get some more grain?"

"On one condition you may. Next time bring your youngest brother."

When they needed more grain, the brothers had to get their father's permission to take their youngest brother along with them. At first Jacob hesitated to give them permission. "What will I do if you let something happen to this boy too?" he argued.

The oldest brother, however, pleaded, "I'll deliver the boy to you safely, at the risk of my own head."

Joseph gave his brothers more grain. Before they left, he stealthily put the palace scales in the camel bags of the youngest brother. After his brothers left, he summoned the palace guards and said the royal scales were missing. He ordered the men to search all the camel bags. The scales were found in the camel bags of Joseph's youngest brother.

All the brothers were brought to the palace.

The brothers protested, "This is injustice. We are not thieves."

Joseph answered, "It is injustice, I grant you. However, I had

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10 The narrator has confused his own count of the brothers. Earlier he had stated that Jacob had nine sons. Here, with Joseph and Benjamin not present, the other brothers number eight. According to the Biblical account Jacob had twelve sons, each a founder of one of the tribes of Israel.
to take such measures to make my identity known to you. I am your brother Joseph." The brothers rejoiced when they heard this. Then Joseph said, "Take my shirt to my father. He will regain his sight when he rubs this shirt on his eyes."

By a miracle, Jacob sensed that his long-lost son was still alive. When Joseph removed his shirt, Jacob said to his wife, "I smell the scent of the body of my son Joseph. He is still alive." When he rubbed Joseph's shirt on his eyes, his eyes, through the power of the shirt, once more saw daylight.

Sometime later the Pharaoh died. The Pharaoh's wife wanted to marry Joseph, and he agreed. After they were married, she asked, "Why didn't you want to have me when I was much younger and prettier, Joseph?"

Joseph answered, "If I had made love to you then, I would have committed adultery and become a slave of my passions. By being patient and exercising will power, I have become a ruler of my passions and of the people."11

11 The conclusion of this folktale has no basis in either the Biblical or Koranic accounts. In the Bible, Joseph marries an Egyptian girl named Asenath, and they have two sons. Here he marries the Pharaoh's wife after the Pharaoh dies, becoming himself now the ruler. In explaining to the woman why he marries her now but would not become her lover when she was young and beautiful, Joseph is given a very moralistic and didactic speech. This changes the point of the story from what it was in both the Bible and the Koran.