



The Water Story

When Joseph was a young boy his grandmother would say, “Joseph you must feed the river before you swim in it. If you feed it, the river water people will watch over you. Then you will not drown or get hurt.”

Joseph listened to his grandmother out of respect and took his responsibility seriously. He offered meat, fat and bones to feed the river water people. He would say, “River, watch over me. I am going to swim.”

Joseph’s grandfather watched him and said, “It is good to feed the river so that you are safe, but do not put too much into the river or you will hurt the purity of the water.” Joseph listened to his grandfather out of respect and took what he said seriously. Therefore, Joseph did not offer food to the river the next time he swam.

Unfortunately, as he swam, his ankle was caught by a vine. He struggled to free himself, but he could not. Joseph yelled, “Save me! Save me! I cannot get free.” Joseph’s grandmother was walking in the field next to the river, and she heard Joseph crying. She ran to help him. After she pulled him from the water, she asked him if he remembered he needed to feed the river.

“Yes, but grandfather told me not to feed the river too much, so I didn’t feed it today,” replied Joseph.

Grandmother explained to Joseph, “Your grandfather is right. We must be careful to protect the purity of the river. Living things like birds, fish, plants and animals depend upon the water. Every living thing has water in it, snakes, birds, trees, apples, oranges, flowers, dogs and man. Wherever there is water, there is life. To decide how much to feed the water, think of your own belly. Offer food as a small gift in honor of the river.”

Joseph listened to his grandmother and knew what he needed to do. The next time he went swimming, he offered a small part of the food he had brought. From then on, he was safe as he swam.