In 1933 he published The Tales of Jacob (U.S. title, Joseph and His Brothers), the first part of his four-part novel on the biblical story of Joseph. In these volumes, Mann reinterpreted the biblical story as the emergence of mobile, responsible individuality out of the tribal collective, of the rise of the individual entrepreneur in the face of the declining Khmer empire. The book was published in 1934. In his preface, Mann writes:

"The turning point of the whole story... stands in the story of Joseph's youth... The historical struggle of the Israelites is ended. The old world of patriarchs and tribal rule is past. The new world is on the horizon. From this point on, the story of the coming of Israel to its maturity is to be the story of Joseph..."

Mann conceived of the Joseph story as a universal story of the development of the human individual. He saw Joseph as a metaphor for the development of the human spirit from the tribal collective to the individual entrepreneur. The story of Joseph is a story of transformation, a story of the emergence of the individual from the collective, of the rise of the entrepreneur from the herd.

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Thomas Mann regarded his monumental retelling of the biblical story of Joseph as his magnum opus. He conceived of the Joseph story as a universal story of the development of the human individual. He saw Joseph as a metaphor for the development of the human spirit from the tribal collective to the individual entrepreneur. The story of Joseph is a story of transformation, a story of the emergence of the individual from the collective, of the rise of the entrepreneur from the herd.

Thomas Mann, 'Descent into Hell' (1933) A handsome young man is accosted by an older woman; after he rejects her on the street, she abducts him and takes him to her apartment. He is then raped and thrown in jail—but is later restored to greater fortune. The story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife in Chapter 39 of the Book of Genesis is at once the story of Joseph's fall and the story of Potiphar's wife. The text of the story of Joseph is marked by the repetition of the word "otro" ("other") in reference to Joseph's兄弟 ("brothers").

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