

# Joseph in Egypt

## Genesis 39 - 41

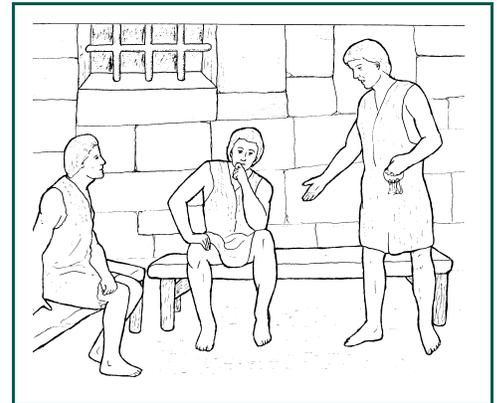
*Have you ever had troubles in your life?*

*Are there times when you feel alone, as though your friends have deserted you?*

*What do you do for help and comfort at these times?*

*Have you wondered why these things happen?*

*Joseph suffered many hardships while he was in Egypt, but God did not forget about him. God had a plan for him. We, too, realize that God is always with us and has a plan for us as well.*



### Prayer

Dear Lord, As we study today about Joseph's experiences in Egypt, help us to understand Your reason for it by seeing how Joseph and all of Your children benefited from his situation. Help us also remember that You are constantly our Guide. Amen.

### The Story - Genesis 39 - 41 A Paraphrase

When Joseph arrived in Egypt with the traveling merchants, he was sold to a man named Potiphar. Potiphar was a Captain for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. He became Potiphar's slave; he had to do everything that Potiphar told him to do.

At first Joseph was just another servant in Potiphar's house. But it did not take long for Potiphar to notice that there was something special about Joseph. Potiphar saw that Joseph believed in God and that He was with Joseph in all that he did. Everything that Joseph did for Potiphar turned out well. Potiphar thought, "The one Joseph calls Lord is with him. His Lord makes Joseph successful in all that he does."

Potiphar gave Joseph more jobs to do in his house. Finally he made Joseph in

charge over all of his house and all that he had. Potiphar trusted Joseph with everything.

Potiphar's wife, however, was a wicked woman. She noticed that Joseph was a very handsome young man and sinful desires came into her heart. One day she asked Joseph, "Come, be like a husband to me."

Joseph told her "No," at once. He said, "My master put me in charge over his whole house. He trusts me, and you are his wife. I cannot do this thing with you. How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

But Potiphar's wife kept on trying to make Joseph sin with her. Each time she asked him, Joseph would say, "No." Finally one day as Joseph was doing his work and



no one else was nearby, Potiphar's wife caught hold of his robe and begged him to sin with her. Joseph immediately ran out of the house and left his robe in her hand.

Potiphar's wife was very angry with Joseph because he dared to say "No" to her! She then called the other servants together and told them a lie. She told them that Joseph had tried to make her sin with him! When Potiphar came home, she told him the lie and showed him Joseph's robe.

Potiphar was very angry when he heard his wife's story. He had Joseph thrown into prison. Joseph was sent to a special prison where officers of Pharaoh were sent when they had done some crime while they were serving him.

### **Joseph in Prison**

Joseph had to stay in the king's prison. This did not mean that God had forgotten all about Joseph. The keeper of the prison liked Joseph very much and he trusted him. He eventually made Joseph his helper. That meant that Joseph had the job of looking after the other prisoners. It was in this way that God was blessing Joseph while he was in prison.

One day two of the Pharaoh's officers were put into that same prison because they had done something wrong against Pharaoh. One of these men was the chief butler and the other man was the chief baker. Joseph was also in charge of these two prisoners.

It happened that one night both of these prisoners had dreams. Joseph noticed the next morning that they looked sad and confused. He asked them what the problem was, and they said, "We have had dreams, but there isn't anyone that can tell us what these dreams mean."

Joseph told them that it was God's business to explain dreams, but he asked them to tell him about their dreams.

The chief butler told his dream first. He said, "In my dream I saw a vine sprout, and it grew three branches. The branches then sprouted and blossomed and then bunches of ripe grapes appeared on the branches. I was holding Pharaoh's cup in my hand, and I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup. I then gave the cup of juice to Pharaoh to drink."

Joseph said, "This is the meaning of your dream. The three branches stand for three days. In three days Pharaoh is going to let you out of prison and make you his chief butler again." Joseph also added, "But remember me when this happens. Please be kind and tell Pharaoh about me. I was taken out of my country and I have done nothing wrong for which I should be put in prison."

The chief baker was happy to hear the meaning of the chief butler's dream so he told his dream to Joseph. He said, "In my dream I saw myself with three baskets of baked goods on my head. But the birds came and ate the bread out of the baskets."

Joseph then told him, "The three baskets also stand for three days. In three days the Pharaoh will cut off your head and hang your body on a tree. The birds will eat the flesh off your bones."

Three days later Pharaoh had a birthday and had a big celebration. He had his men bring the butler back to the palace and he was given his job back. But Pharaoh had the chief baker hanged on a tree just as Joseph said he would.

The chief butler, however, forgot all about Joseph and didn't tell Pharaoh all of the things that Joseph had asked him to say.

### **Joseph Made Ruler**

Two years passed and Joseph was still in prison. It was then that Pharaoh himself had a dream. He dreamed that he was near the Nile River, and he saw

something very strange. Out of the river came seven very fine, fat cows that began eating the rich grasses by the river. After that seven very skinny, hungry-looking cows also came out of the river and stood beside the seven fat cows. The skinny cows then ate the healthy cows. Then Pharaoh woke up. He soon fell asleep again and had another very strange dream. In a field he saw a stalk with seven plump, full heads of grain. Then seven more heads grew out of the stalk. These grains were dry and shriveled. The thin heads then swallowed up the plump heads! Then Pharaoh woke up, and he was very troubled about these two dreams.

Pharaoh called all of his magicians and wise men and told them about his dreams, but none of them could tell him what the dreams meant. It was then that the chief butler remembered Joseph. He told Pharaoh, "When I and the chief baker were in prison, we too, had dreams that troubled us. There was a young Hebrew man there who was the helper in the prison. He explained to us the meaning of our dreams, and everything came true just as he had told us it would."

Pharaoh called for Joseph right away. After Joseph had shaved and had changed his clothes, he was brought before the king.

Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had dreams, but there is no one that can tell me what they mean. I heard that you can explain dreams."

Joseph answered, "I do not have that kind of power, but God will give you the answer to these dreams."

Pharaoh told his two dreams to Joseph. Joseph then told Pharaoh, "Both of your dreams have the same meaning. Through these dreams God has shown what He will do here in Egypt. The seven good cows and the seven good heads of grain stand for seven good years. More

than enough food will grow during these seven good years. The seven skinny cows and the seven shriveled heads of grain stand for seven bad years. After the seven good years, there will be seven bad years. The famine will be so bad that hardly anything will grow."

"God sent these two dreams for a good reason. God wants you to know that He had decided to do this, and it will happen soon. You should get ready for the seven bad years. You should choose a very wise man to be in charge of gathering food from all over Egypt. Have men from all over the country help with this. Let them store up food in the cities during the seven good years so that there will be plenty of food on hand during the seven bad years. You and your people will not starve and die during the famine."

Pharaoh thought that this plan was a good one. He chose Joseph to be that man in charge of storing up food in Egypt. He said, "Since God has shown you the meaning of the dreams, there is no man as wise as you are in all of Egypt. You will be the most important ruler in Egypt. Only I, Pharaoh, will be higher than you." He then gave Joseph his special ring which showed that he had the power to rule. He also gave Joseph fine clothes and had him ride in one of his chariots so that the Egyptian people would know that he was to be honored as a ruler in Egypt.

The seven years came and plenty of food was saved in storehouses all over Egypt. Then the seven bad years came, just as God had said it would. Pharaoh had the hungry people go to Joseph, and he made sure that food was passed out to them. But the famine was everywhere around Egypt as well, and people from other countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain so that they would not starve and die.

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## Outer Aim - God watched over and blessed Joseph's life.

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**What the Story Tells Us** - Discuss with your class how God used these apparent hardships in Joseph's life to prepare him for life as a ruler.

1. Joseph is sold as a slave to Potiphar.
2. Joseph is wrongly accused of a sin and placed in prison.
3. The chief butler forgets about Joseph and he remains in prison for an additional two years.
  - ▶ *Joseph was able to give witness to God in these situations, and he remembered to give all glory to God.*
  - ▶ *Joseph also continued to serve his Lord, even in the face of adversity.*
  - ▶ *Joseph didn't despair and forget God.*
  - ▶ *Joseph also learns that God's timing is perfect.*

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**Inner Aim - As God guided and blessed Joseph's life, so our Lord does for us. Our God watches over and blesses the lives of His children. God guides our lives for our good.**

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**What the Bible Tells Us** - Look up the following passages. Discuss how these passages apply to Joseph and his experiences in Egypt. Then explain in a few sentences each how these passages also apply to us today in our lives. Share these applications with your class.

Romans 8:28 -

Acts 17:28a -

## Passages

1 Corinthians 10:31 - Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Philippians 2:13 - For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

## Hymn - TLH #457, v. 1-3

What a Friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
Ev'rything to God in prayer!  
Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh,  
what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry  
Ev'rything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged, Take it  
to the Lord in prayer.  
Can we find a Friend so faithful  
Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our ev'ry weakness – Take it to  
the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden,  
Cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Savior, still our Refuge –  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?  
Take it to the Lord in prayer;  
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,  
Thou wilt find a solace there.

## Prayer

Lord Jesus, I know You are always with me, guiding me, protecting me, and making all things work out for my good. Please give me strength to overcome temptation, for without You I am helpless against the attacks of the devil. Please help me to give all glory to You for the gifts and abilities with which You have blessed me. Please forgive me all my sins and keep me forever as Your child and heir. In Jesus saving name. Amen.