

# Joseph in the house of Potiphar



Genesis 39:1–21

*The traders—Ismaelites—brought Joseph to Egypt. There he became a slave in the house of Potiphar, the captain of the royal guard. The Lord was with Joseph. All the work he undertook proved successful. Eventually Potiphar placed him over all his servants and all his possessions. Thus, with God's help, Joseph became a great blessing in Potiphar's house.*

*Potiphar's wife tried to seduce the young and handsome Joseph. Because she did not succeed, she took revenge. Joseph was thrown into prison.*

The children learn that God blesses and protects his own  
in good and bad days.

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together with the men to whom his brothers have sold him, Joseph arrives in a strange and distant country, Egypt. On the market-place the traders offer Joseph for sale as a slave.

A rich and distinguished man comes and buys Joseph. This man's name is Potiphar. He is a captain of the royal guards. He lives with his wife in a great house near the royal palace. He employs many servants. Joseph becomes one of them. Although he must work very hard, things go well for him. God is with him. Joseph soon learns the Egyptians' language. At night, when he lies on his mat and cannot sleep, he often thinks of his father and his brother Benjamin.

Potiphar notices that Joseph is a particularly skilful and clever servant—one he can rely on. "This Joseph is zealous and observant. Every task he performs successfully. Why would that be?" Potiphar wonders. Finally he calls Joseph in as he wants to discuss something of great importance with him.

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"Joseph, I am very satisfied with your work. I know I can rely on you. Therefore, from today, you shall be overseer over all my servants and all my possessions." Joseph is overjoyed that his master places such great trust in him. God's blessing clearly rests on his work. Under Joseph's guidance there is peace and joy in Potiphar's house and his fields yield rich fruit.

Potiphar's wife admires Joseph. In fact, she falls in love with him. One day she says to Joseph: "Come and lie with me." But Joseph resists and says: "But Potiphar is your husband. I am his servant. He places great trust in me and has made me overseer over all his possessions. I do not want to disappoint him."

"He is not here now and no one will see us," Potiphar's wife replies.

"But God will see us! How can I do something so wicked before God," Joseph says firmly. Potiphar's wife does not leave Joseph alone, however, she tries over and over again to change his mind.

One day Joseph comes into the house to see to his duties, and she is nearby. No other servants are present. She embraces Joseph passionately and takes hold of his garment. Joseph pulls himself from her grasp and flees from the house. The woman

## God protects his own – Joseph

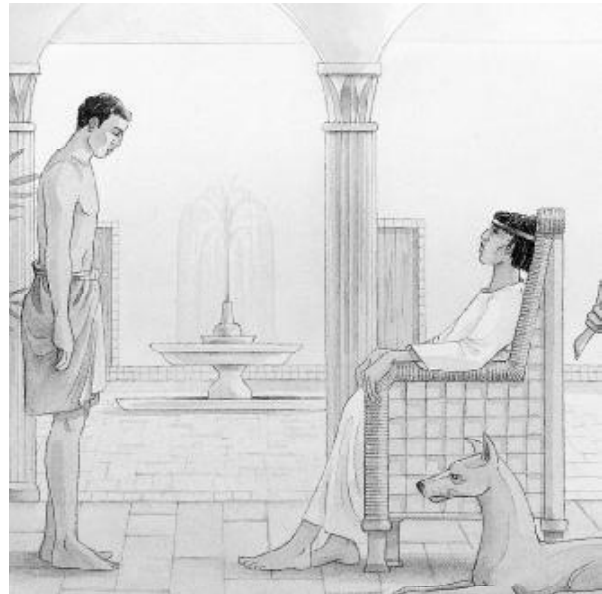
is left standing, holding only Joseph's cloak in her hand. She feels insulted and angry.

Still holding Joseph's cloak, she shouts: "Help, Help!" When the servants come running she says: "This stranger, the one my husband placed as overseer, wanted to embrace me. But when I called out loudly, he fled. Look here, his garment is proof of what I say."

When Potiphar returns home, his wife and the servants accuse Joseph. Potiphar becomes very angry. He finds it hard to believe that this has really happened. However, he believes his wife. He does not notice that she is deceiving him. Potiphar has Joseph thrown in prison.

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*Joseph was brought to Egypt by foreign traders.  
He was bought by the wealthy Potiphar. Joseph became his servant.  
God blessed Joseph's work in Potiphar's house.  
Because of Potiphar's wife, Joseph was innocently thrown into prison.*



- 1 We look at the picture and let the children guess what Potiphar and Joseph are discussing. (The Lord blesses Joseph and his work. Joseph is reliable and successful in everything he does. Potiphar notices this.)**
- 2 We place ourselves in Joseph's position. What is he thinking? What will he do? What does he hope for? We remind the children of his situation in the dried-up well which was similar.**
- 3 We often experience things which we cannot understand. Joseph was despondent and could not understand why he was thrown into prison. But we shall see that God protected and blessed him. How could this story continue?**