

Joseph, the interpreter of dreams



Genesis 39:20–23; 40

While in prison, Joseph greatly impressed the jail keeper. This man trusted in Joseph and committed all the other prisoners to his care and supervision. The Lord was with Joseph and blessed him.

Among the prisoners were also the Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker. One day these two men told Joseph their dreams. Joseph interpreted them. What Joseph foretold these two officers, soon happened. The baker was hanged; the chief butler was pardoned. The butler promised to put in a good word for Joseph with the king, but he forgot his promise. Joseph had to remain in prison for two more years.

The children perceive that God is with his own also in times of need.
Even in difficult circumstances we should place our trust in him.

1

Joseph is imprisoned quite innocently. He has no opportunity to defend himself. He is unhappy and very, very sad, but he does not despair. He remains calm, for he feels that the Lord is with him. Joseph experiences that in difficult days, yes, even on days when he is very sad, the dear Lord is very close to him.

Whilst in prison, Joseph is noticed by the chief jail keeper. This man is surprised at how calm and patient Joseph is. He does not appear to be bitter or angry at all. He recognizes that Joseph is a talented man. The jail keeper trusts him and gives him a task in the prison. "Joseph, I have been observing you. You are different to the other prisoners. I have also heard that you worked well in Potiphar's house. I want you to take over the care of the prisoners." Joseph is very happy to be given this new task and the Lord helps him. Joseph has a friendly word for every prisoner. Many of them confide in him.

One morning Joseph speaks to two very special prisoners; both were officers at the court of Pharaoh. One was the king's chief butler, who had to taste and pour the king's wine. The other was the king's chief baker. These two are now in prison because they have offended the king who is extremely annoyed with them. Dejected and sad, they await his verdict. "Why are you so sad?" Joseph enquires of them. "We have both had strange dreams and do not know what to make of them," they reply. "Tell me what you have dreamt," urges Joseph. The butler speaks first: "In my dream I saw a beautiful vine on which grew three branches. The vine became green, grew and blossomed and its grapes ripened. I had the king's cup in my hand. I took the grapes, pressed them into the cup and handed the cup to the king."

2

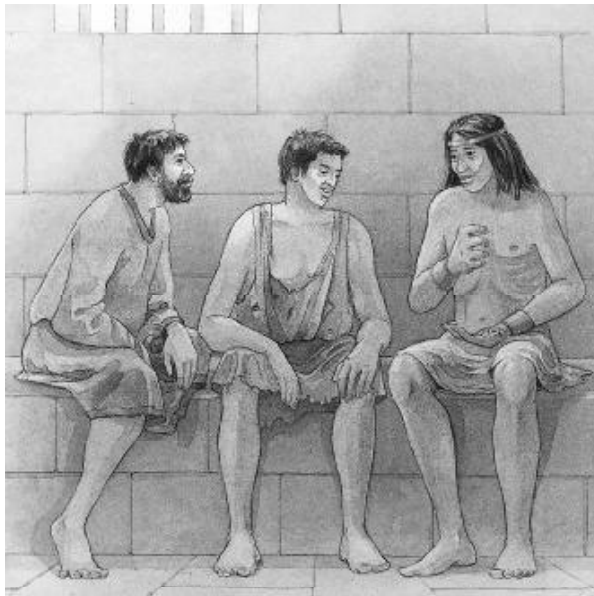
With God's help, Joseph interpreted the dream for the butler: "Three branches are three days. In three days you will be free again. The king will release you and you will be his butler again." The butler is overjoyed to hear this. "When you are released, please remember me. Ask the king to free me too as I am innocently imprisoned here," Joseph pleads.

God protects his own – Joseph

The butler gladly promises to do so.

When the baker hears this positive interpretation of the butler's dream, he recounts his dream as well: "I dreamt that I carried three white baskets on my head, one on top of the other. In the uppermost basket I had delicious cakes and pastries for the king, but birds came and ate them all." Sadly Joseph looks at the baker and says: "Three baskets are three days. In three days the king will have you killed." The baker cries out in horror: "No, I cannot, I will not believe that! I shall continue to hope!"

Three days later it is the king's birthday. He orders a great



feast to be prepared and also orders his verdict concerning the butler and the baker to be proclaimed. Everything happens exactly as Joseph has foretold.

Overjoyed, the butler takes his leave of Joseph. He is free and returns to the palace. "Please remember me," Joseph reminds him once more. "I will ask the king to pardon you," promises the butler. But his promise to Joseph is forgotten as soon as he is released.

Joseph waits and waits. He realizes that the butler has forgotten him. But one thing Joseph is completely sure of: "The Lord has not forgotten me." Patiently he waits until things change for the better and the Lord helps him.

3

The Lord is close to Joseph in prison too. Two high officers of the king recount their dreams to him. Joseph interprets them. His prophecies are fulfilled. But Joseph still has to remain in prison.

- 1 Referring to the two pictures depicting "Joseph with Potiphar" and "Joseph in prison", we revise the previous lessons and then continue with the story.
- 2 We look at the picture once more. The children name the people depicted there. They retell the dream and guess as to what it could mean.
With God's help, Joseph can interpret the dream.
- 3 We discuss experiences and events in the children's own lives where they have had to wait patiently for something to change or are, perhaps, still waiting for this. It may seem to us as if the Lord has forgotten about us sometimes, but the Lord does not forget any of his children. He is close to us and cares for us. But now and again he tests our patience.
The children make a drawing of themselves in a situation requiring patience.