



Gutter to Gold The Rise of Joseph



It seemed like everyone forgot about Joseph.

His brothers wanted to forget about him and get on with their lives. Except they got a guilty conscience every time they saw their grief-stricken father who believed him to be dead. They couldn't exactly confess as to what they had done to him, selling him to some traffickers.

It was true that he had been a right pain but perhaps they had allowed themselves to get too wound up about it and had over reacted, not foreseeing the consequences to those they cared about. Judah couldn't stand it. He moved out. Right out of the area in fact, about 80 miles south, married, had 3 sons. By the time he comes back into the story he has discovered what it's like to lose a son because two of his own had died.

His master, Captain Potiphar whose extensive household he had run so effectively for several years, had chosen to forget about him. He had lost his temper, raged a bit and thrown him in prison before realising that his wayward wife was probably lying. He officially still owned Joseph, but it was rather awkward really. He couldn't be seen to take the side of a slave in preference to his wife so he couldn't reinstate him. He wasn't ruthless enough to have him executed for something he hadn't done. Selling him would be the best option, but it was easier just to put him out of his mind and forget he was there.

Potiphar's wife gloated for only a short while over the way she had got her own back on this young slave who had dared to refuse her. 'Hell has no fury like a woman scorned.' She was soon chasing a new crush.

Even that guy he had so encouraged, the one with royal connections, Pharaoh's head butler he was. Joseph had helped him build his hopes when he dreamed that Pharaoh would pardon him and give him his job back. Joseph just had that God given gift for knowing whether a dream was really from God or not. He'd been right about the baker too, poor guy. Bad job that. They'd all become so friendly, stuck in prison together for so long.

"Put in a good word for me" said Joseph.

"Sure thing" replied his friend. But no! Out of sight, out of mind!

How much longer was he going to be stuck in prison doing the warden's job for him, caring for other people but getting nothing in return? No weekends off, evenings out with the lads, anyone to remember his birthday. He couldn't even chat over the internet, he was so cut off. All he had was some basic work. It was pretty mundane, but it stopped him climbing the walls with boredom.

He'd had such high hopes when he was young. Dreams of glory and power! He was older and wiser now. The one thing that had kept him going was that he knew that his God had been with him, blessing him, helping him, giving him the strength to go on.

Then suddenly out of the blue it all changed. He received a royal summons. Pharaoh was desperately worried over some strange dreams and Joseph's royal contact had suddenly realised that he might be going himself a favour by mentioning Joseph to Pharaoh.

There was just enough time for the 3 s's – shave, shower and...! A quick lesson in protocol and if in doubt keep bowing.

Joseph walked into that palace a slave. He walked out a free man, a gold medal winner – chain around his neck, the most powerful man in the world second only to Pharaoh. Surely that only happens in stories.

The dreams sounded simple enough and the explanation seemed to be only common sense so why all the fuss? Seven fat cows eating up seven skinny cows! Though I had always thought that cows were vegetarian! The one about healthy heads/ears of grain eating shrivelled ears of grain sounded odder but still kind of obvious in its' meaning. Wouldn't it have made more sense to have given Joseph a junior post first to see how he got on? That's how it happens in real life.

The problem was that part of a pharaoh's job description was that he was supposed to be a god and one of his responsibilities was to control the River Nile. If the harvest failed too often, he was not doing his job properly and the ruling classes might decide they could find a better god. Having nightmares about the harvest failing was not unusual for Pharaoh, especially if he'd eaten too much just before bedtime. He needed to know if these dreams were a revelation from one of the gods (he believed in many) or whether it was just him getting evermore paranoid. That was something his existing advisers couldn't tell him, and they didn't dare just guess. If they got it wrong, it could mean execution.

Pharaoh needed someone with insight and a cool head. Here finally, in front of him was someone who not only had the courage to tell him that his worst fears were about to become real, but to offer a solution to the problem. Not only that, but the plan also had the kind of business potential that would have impressed Lord Alan Sugar. And he had a certain presence about him, this 30-year-old. Who could have imagined that he was straight out of prison?

And so, Joseph was given a gold reward. Along with the job went a company chariot, plenty of travel, good salary; a house, a lovely wife and eventually 2 sons.

Looking back, Joseph could see that every problem he had faced had helped him on his way. What can feel like a setback, can in fact be a step up the ladder towards a better life.

And possibly one of his best rewards was yet to come?

