

# Joseph in Captivity: Convene an Interfaith Gathering

## Source Sheet

**How might we overcome our differences and highlight our common values?**

**Please read the following two texts and answer the questions below:**

### Genesis 39 5-40

And from the time that the Egyptian put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, God blessed his house for Joseph's sake, so that the blessing of God was upon everything that he owned, in the house and outside. He left all that he had in Joseph's hands and, with him there, he paid attention to nothing save the food that he ate. Now Joseph was well built and handsome.

After a time, his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph and said, "Lie with me."

But he refused. He said to his master's wife, "Look, with me here, my master gives no thought to anything in this house, and all that he owns he has placed in my hands.

He wields no more authority in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except yourself, since you are his wife. How then could I do this most wicked thing, and sin before God?" And much as she coaxed Joseph day after day, he did not yield to her request to lie beside her, to be with her.

One such day, he came into the house to do his work. None of the household being there inside, she caught hold of him by his garment and said, "Lie with me!" But he left his garment in her hand and got away and fled outside. When she saw that he had left it in her hand and had fled outside, she called out to her servants and said to them, "Look, he had to bring us a Hebrew to dally with us! This one came to lie with me; but I screamed loud. And when he heard me screaming at the top of my voice, he left his garment with me and got away and fled outside."

She kept his garment beside her, until his master came home. Then she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew slave whom you brought into our house came to me to dally with me; but when I screamed at the top of my voice, he left his garment with me and fled outside." When his master heard the story that his wife told him, namely, "Thus and so your slave did to me," he was furious.

So Joseph's master had him put in prison, where the king's prisoners were confined. But even while he was there in prison, God was with Joseph—extending kindness to him and disposing the chief jailer favorably toward him. The chief jailer put in Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in that prison, and he was the one to carry out everything that was done there. The chief jailer did not supervise anything that was in Joseph's charge, because God was with him, and whatever he did God made successful.

Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt gave offense to their lord the king of Egypt. Pharaoh was angry with his two courtiers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, and put them in custody, in the house of the prefect, in

the same prison house where Joseph was confined. The prefect assigned Joseph to them, and he attended them. When they had been in custody for some time, both of them—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—dreamed in the same night, each his own dream and each dream with its own meaning.

When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were distraught. He asked Pharaoh’s courtiers, who were with him in custody in his master’s house, saying, “Why do you appear downcast today?” And they said to him, “We had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.” So Joseph said to them, “Surely God can interpret! Tell me [your dreams].”

Then the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph. He said to him, “In my dream, there was a vine in front of me. On the vine were three branches. It had barely budded, when out came its blossoms and its clusters ripened into grapes. Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, pressed them into Pharaoh’s cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand.” Joseph said to him, “This is its interpretation: The three branches are three days. In three days Pharaoh will pardon you and restore you to your post; you will place Pharaoh’s cup in his hand, as was your custom formerly when you were his cupbearer. But think of me when all is well with you again, and do me the kindness of mentioning me to Pharaoh, so as to free me from this place. For in truth, I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews; nor have I done anything here that they should have put me in the dungeon.”

When the chief baker saw how favorably he had interpreted, he said to Joseph, “In my dream, similarly, there were three openwork baskets on my head. In the uppermost basket were all kinds of food for Pharaoh that a baker prepares; and the birds were eating it out of the basket above my head.” Joseph answered, “This is its interpretation: The three baskets are three days. In three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and impale you upon a pole; and the birds will pick off your flesh.”

On the third day—his birthday—Pharaoh made a banquet for all his officials, and he singled out his chief cupbearer and his chief baker from among his officials. He restored the chief cupbearer to his cupbearing, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand; but the chief baker he impaled—just as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet the chief cupbearer did not think of Joseph; he forgot him.

Genesis 39 5-40

## **In Muslim tradition, the story of Joseph appears in Yusuf, the 12th chapter (Surah) of the Quran:**

And the lady, in whose house he lived, tried to seduce him. She locked the doors firmly and said, “Come to me!” He replied, “Allah is my refuge! It is not right to betray my master, who has taken good care of me. Indeed, the wrongdoers never succeed.”

She advanced towards him, and he would have done likewise, had he not seen a sign from his Lord. This is how We kept evil and indecency away from him, for he was truly one of Our chosen servants. They raced for the door and she tore his shirt from the back, only to find her husband at the door. She cried, “What is the penalty for someone who tried to violate your wife, except imprisonment or a painful punishment?”

Joseph responded, “It was she who tried to seduce me.” And a witness from her own family testified: “If his shirt is torn from the front, then she has told the truth and he is a liar. But if it is torn from the back, then she has lied and he is truthful.” So when her husband saw that Joseph’s shirt was torn from the back, he said to her, “This must be an example of the cunning of you women! Indeed, your cunning is so shrewd! O Joseph! Forget about this. And you O wife! Seek forgiveness for your sin. It certainly has been your fault.”...

She said, “This is the one for whose love you criticized me! I did try to seduce him but he firmly refused. And if he does not do

what I order him to, he will certainly be imprisoned and fully disgraced.” Joseph prayed, “My Lord! I would rather be in jail than do what they invite me to. And if You do not turn their cunning away from me, I might yield to them and fall into ignorance.” So his Lord responded to him, turning their cunning away from him. Surely He is the All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

And so it occurred to those in charge, despite seeing all the proofs of his innocence, that he should be imprisoned for a while.

And two other servants went to jail with Joseph. One of them said, “I dreamt I was pressing wine.” The other said, “I dreamt I was carrying some bread on my head, from which birds were eating.” Then both said, “Tell us their interpretation, for we surely see you as one of the good-doers.”

Joseph replied, “I can even tell you what kind of meal you will be served before you receive it. This knowledge is from what my Lord has taught me. I have shunned the faith of a people who disbelieve in Allah and deny the Hereafter. I follow the faith of my fathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is not right for us to associate anything with Allah in worship. This is part of Allah’s grace upon us and humanity, but most people are not grateful. O my fellow-prisoners! Which is far better: many different lords or Allah—the One, the Supreme? Whatever idols you worship instead of Him are mere names which you and your forefathers have made up—a practice Allah has never authorized. It is only Allah Who decides. He has commanded that you worship none but Him. That is the upright faith, but most people do not know.

“O my fellow-prisoners! The first one of you will serve wine to his master, and the other will be crucified and the birds will eat from his head. The matter about which you inquired has been decided.” Then he said to the one he knew would survive, “Mention me in the presence of your master.” But Satan made him forget to mention Joseph to his master, so he remained in prison for several years.

And one day the King said, “I dreamt of seven fat cows eaten up by seven skinny ones; and seven green ears of grain and seven others dry. O chiefs! Tell me the meaning of my dream if you can interpret dreams.” They replied, “These are confused visions and we do not know the interpretation of such dreams.” Finally, the surviving ex-prisoner remembered Joseph after a long time and said, “I will tell you its interpretation, so send me forth to Joseph.”

Qur'an, Surah 12 (Yusuf) Ayat 23–29, 32-45

## Questions:

- According to each of the texts, what was Joseph's crime?
- What is the difference between the two texts in terms of what led to Joseph's imprisonment?
- Did you ever feel that you were wrongfully accused of something you haven't done?