

## A Tried and Robust Faith



ELPIS ISRAEL  
an Exposition of the  
KINGDOM OF GOD  
with reference to  
THE TIME OF THE END  
and THE AGE TO COME

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*The second chapter of the Josephine parable begins with Joseph in the house of Potiphar. Being there the victim of a false accusation, he was immured in the State-prison. But even here he found favour, as he had in Potiphar's house before; for Joseph was a righteous man, and God was with him. He had been in prison two full years, when the king of Egypt had his dreams of the kine, and the ears. — Elpis Israel, p. 276.*

**A**S Joseph's life unfolds in the pages of scripture, the presentation of this faithful man as a type of Christ becomes more apparent and perceptible.

Judah (Gr. Judas) suggested "selling" Joseph to a group of Gentiles (see December issue), and the dastardly deed was duly settled for "twenty pieces of silver" (Gen. 37:28). The Midianites, who purchased Joseph for this price, eventually sold him "into Egypt," thereby continuing the type in that Christ was to become "a light to the Gentiles" (Isa. 42:6; 49:6, etc; cp. Lk. 2:23).

Deceitfully, the wicked brethren provided a cover for their iniquitous betrayal. They slew the kid of a goat, soaking Joseph's special garment in its blood. Their servants were sent to present the gory apparel to Jacob. He gazed upon the garment, horrified and distraught. Though Jacob was deceived by the mendacity of his sons, they had forgotten that nothing can be hidden from Yahweh. "The eyes of Yahweh run to and fro throughout the whole earth... All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (2Chr. 16:9; Heb. 4:13).

A garment dipped in blood is symbolic for the victorious sacrifice of Christ. "I saw [the political] heaven opened, and behold a white horse: and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire... And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God..." (Rev. 19:11-13).

### Joseph, Rich in Faith

Overshadowed by the Hand of Providence, Joseph was sold as a slave to Potiphar. An official at Pharaoh's court, Potiphar was more than "captain of the guard." Young's Literal Translation renders: "head of the executioners." Rotherham has: "chief of the royal executioners." The NEB has a footnote: "or executioner." This is in harmony with the Hebrew text. Potiphar was therefore highly placed in the State prisons system; a man of considerable authority and influence.

Falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, Joseph's life underwent another extreme transformation. From being a highly trusted servant in Potiphar's house, Joseph found himself consigned to prison. Throughout these bewildering and shattering experiences he never permitted himself to give way to despair. His faith remained firm and resolute. In Genesis 39 it is four times stated that "Yahweh was with him."

All who seek to gain the kingdom will be influenced in matters of faith by Joseph's remarkable dedication and determination. Joseph was numbered among those who "continued" in "the things" which he had "learned" and of which he had become "assured" (2Tim. 3:14). He knew that "without faith, it is impossible to please" God (Heb. 11:6). As a man of faith, Joseph remained "steadfast: and "unmoveable" in his trust in Yahweh (1Cor. 15:58). Despite all the pressures and vicissitudes of life, those who would earnestly seek the kingdom will strive to emulate the faith of Joseph.

The key element in Joseph's spiritual well-being was that his faith was matched by divine blessings. "Yahweh was with him."

#### Faith in Action

Through personal experience, David was to learn to live by the same standards of faithfulness as had Joseph and many others before him. He found that, despite the trials and pressures of life, "Yahweh heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." From these experiences David concluded: "The angel of Yahweh *encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them*. O taste and see that Yahweh is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him. O fear Yahweh, ye His saints: *for there is no want to them that fear Him...*" (Psa. 34:6-9).

Because he possessed this same robust and virile faith, Paul turned his mind back to the promises of the past. He cites the words of Moses when he encouraged Israel, and Yahweh's heartening words to Joshua: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." And upon this basis Paul pronounced: "So we say with confidence, The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Heb. 13:5-6, AV and NIV). The first part of this quotation is

taken from Deu. 31:6 and Josh. 1:5; but to these references he adds the words of David in Psa. 118:6.

Faith is not simply a belief and a conviction. Faith is how a person lives their life *because of what they believe*. Faith is a living manifestation of an inner conviction. And the over-seeing eye of Providence will most certainly be with all who are numbered among His true saints who are earnestly persuaded of this disposition.

Joseph and the other worthies of old, provide grand examples of faith *in action*, their lives dedicated to manifesting Yahweh's Word in flesh.

Concerning this period of Joseph's life, Brother Thomas comments: "Even here [in prison] he found favour, as he had in Potiphar's house before; for Joseph was a righteous man, and God was with him. He had been in prison *two full years* when the king of Egypt had his dreams of *the kine and the ears*. The report of his correct interpretation of the chief butler's and the chief baker's dreams, while in durance, caused him to be brought before Pharaoh to interpret his. It was then believed that 'interpretations belong to God'; that is, when He causes men to dream prophetically, He reserves the interpretation to Himself" (p. 276). To this conclusion it may be added that Yahweh doubtless exercises considerable control over whatever it may be that fills the dreams of such men.

#### Joseph's Example of Fidelity

"Joseph was brought down to Egypt" (Gen. 39:1). This typified Christ being taken down into Egypt by Joseph, that it might be fulfilled: "out of Egypt have I called My son" (Mat. 2:13-15; cp. Hos. 11:1). Having been sold to Potiphar, he displayed such an impressive demeanour that his new master "saw that Yahweh was with him" — a most remarkable and telling

statement, in view of the circumstances (v. 3). Because of Joseph's presence in this abode, "Yahweh blessed the Egyptian's house, for Joseph's sake" (v. 5). This is not to be wondered at, inasmuch as "the eyes of Yahweh are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry" (Psa. 34:15; cited 1Pet. 3:12).

Recognising outstanding qualities in Joseph's character, Potiphar raised him to a position of trust and authority within his house. It may have seemed that Joseph had now been released from the worst of his trials; but this did not prove to be the case. Potiphar's wife endeavoured to corrupt the faithful young man. However, he understood the moral demands the Truth made upon him, and refused to "sin against God" (v. 9). What of today? Most young people in the world have little comprehension of, or respect for, such words as *morality* and *sin*. They know little or nothing of God or His Word. The present evil and degenerate age is ripe for judgment and destruction. How essential it is that young folk growing up in a Christadelphian environment are thoroughly instructed in the *moral* principles of the Truth, that they should not become defiled through the wicked influence of a godless and depraved generation.

Joseph's integrity and faithfulness cost him dearly, for a time. The scheming of Potiphar's wife resulted in him being cast into prison. He was placed in fetters of iron (Psa. 105:18), and doubtless treated with harsh brutality. This was a further incident in Joseph's life wherein was typified the scourging and death of Christ (cp. Mat. 27:26). What would Joseph's thoughts have been at this time? Just as he seemed to be coming through his trials to more pleasant times, he once again found himself cruelly misused. Had Yahweh deserted him? By no means. And there is no evi-

dence to suggest that his faith failed him under this duress. Yahweh's faithful saints should understand, as did Joseph, that "the trial of their faith, though it be tried with fire" will ultimately be found not to have been a fruitless process (1Pet. 1:7).

Again, Joseph's exemplary character was apparent to all. Joseph soon found that Yahweh was still "with him." He was raised to a position of trust within the prison. He was placed in charge of all the prisoners.

#### A Further Test of Faith

The well-known incident involving the butler and the baker and their respective dreams, took place during this period. The Hand of Providence was again at work. Joseph's interpretation of their dreams proved to be totally accurate.

The butler and baker became notable types. They typified the two thieves who were crucified, one on either side of the Lord — one of whom was forgiven!

Once again Joseph's faith was put to the test. Assuring the butler that he would be pardoned by Pharaoh and restored to his position, Joseph asked him to "show kindness" to him by remembering him after his release (v. 14); but with typical fleshly indifference the butler forgot the plight of Joseph.

What thoughts would have passed through Joseph's mind at this time? Perhaps he allowed some hours for the butler to bathe and change his clothing; a few more hours for him to rest and

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await his summons into the presence of Pharaoh — and then his plea to the monarch on behalf of Joseph. All told, perhaps he could anticipate his release within six to eight hours? Perhaps ten or twelve, at the most? Such was not to be. Joseph languished in prison for *two full years*. The type is again clear: “He [Christ] rose again the *third day*” (1Cor. 15:4).

Would not such a trial in an individual of lesser conviction have caused faith to take flight and vanish? Quite likely. But throughout those many long days and even longer nights Joseph remained close to his God, calmly convinced that the Hand of Providence had a purpose in all that was happening, and that he would see that Hand revealed in some way, in due course.

His faith was not misplaced.

#### **Providence at Work**

Pharaoh dreamed his two dreams. The first concerned kine; the second, ears of corn. The dreams could not be explained by the magicians and “wise” men of Egypt. Pharaoh was deeply perplexed and frustrated, as he was sure the dreams were of some significance. At this point (the Hand of Providence prompting him strongly) the butler suddenly experienced a rush of recall. *Joseph!* How could he have forgotten him? Pharaoh was informed concerning Joseph’s astonishing ability to accurately interpret dreams. Word was immediately sent to the prison. Joseph was to be released and summoned into the presence of Pharaoh.

Thus another door opened in the life of Joseph, and in the unfolding of Yahweh’s grand purpose.

Joseph interpreted the dreams to Pharaoh’s satisfaction. Pharaoh acknowledged that Joseph was “a man in whom the spirit of God is.” Once more, Joseph’s qualities of character were recognised. Pharaoh saw the wisdom in elevating him to a position of honour and authority, second only to himself.

Events continued to unfold; all under the all-seeing eye of Providence and in accord with His determination. When Joseph was thirty-seven years old, “the famine began in Egypt. It extended to all the surrounding countries, and was sore in the land of Canaan” (p. 277).

The outcome of these circumstances was that Jacob sent ten of his sons down into Egypt to seek corn. This journey was to bring them face to face with the brother whom they had concluded would, in all probability, now be dead. But the Elohim were at work in all these developments — even as they are today, not only to prepare the earth for the coming kingdom, but to act as “public serving spirits, sent out for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation, to minister to their needs” (Heb. 1:14; Diag., TCNT).

Like Joseph, faithful saints are ever aware of the divine presence, and constantly present their supplications to Yahweh, trusting implicitly in His grace and mercy.

— John Ullman.

**Adversity has often developed strength, energy, fortitude and persistence that prosperity could never have produced. Self-support begins when props are taken away.**

**That love is stronger than hate, kindness than selfishness, forgiveness than vindictiveness, need not be questioned; but love must be genuine, not counterfeit; the kindness must be unfeigned; the forgiveness must be from the heart; and with those who obey God only can this be.**