

that the Egyptian put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed his house for Joseph's sake, so that the blessing of the LORD was upon everything that he owned, in the house and outside. ⁶He 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.

⁷After a time, his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph and said, "Lie with me." ⁸But 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. ⁹He wields no more

אֹתוֹ בְּבֵיתוֹ וְעַל כָּל-אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלֹו וַיְבָרֶךְ יְהוָה אֶת-בֵּית יוֹסֵף בְּגִלְל יוֹסֵף וַיְהִי בְרִכַּת יְהוָה בְּכָל-אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלֹו בְּבֵית וּבְשָׂדֶה: ⁶וַיַּעַזֵּב כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-לֹו בְּיָדֵי-יוֹסֵף וְלֹא-יָדַע אֶתוֹ מֵאוֹמֶה כִּי אִם-הִלָּחֵם אֲשֶׁר-הוּא אוֹכֵל וַיְהִי יוֹסֵף יִפְהֶה-תָּאֵר וַיִּפְהֶה מְרָאֶה:

שָׁרִי ⁷וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַתִּשָּׂא אִשְׁתּוֹ אֲדֹנָיו אֶת-עֵינֶיהָ אֶל-יוֹסֵף וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁכַבָּה עִמִּי: ⁸וַיֹּמַאן | וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-אִשְׁתּוֹ אֲדֹנָיו הֵן אֲדֹנִי לֹא-יָדַע אֶתִּי מִהַבְּבֵית וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-יִשְׁלֹו נָתַן בְּיָדִי: ⁹אֵינֶנּוּ גְדוֹל

quently referred to in Egyptian texts as "controller" (*mer-per*).

5. the LORD blessed God brought great prosperity to the master.

in the house and outside Literally, "in the house and in the field." The phrase is a figure of speech that combines two contrasting elements to express totality.

6. in Joseph's hands Joseph has now reached the pinnacle of his career as a servant.

the food that he ate Egyptians did not eat with strangers (43:32). Thus early commentators understood the phrase as a euphemism for "wife."

well built and handsome No other male is so described in Scripture. Its insertion here serves solely to introduce the next episode.

THE ATTEMPTED SEDUCTION (vv. 7-20)

7. After a time Sufficient time has elapsed

for Joseph's high position to be accepted by him as normal and routine.

his master's wife She remains nameless.

cast her eyes upon With longing, lasciviously. There is irony here. The mistress of the house has become a slave to her lust for her husband's slave.

Lie with me There are no preliminaries, no words of love. Her demand reflects her awareness of Joseph's slave status.

8. he refused Sexual promiscuity was commonplace in all slave societies, and an ambitious person might have considered that the woman was presenting him with a chance to advance his personal interests.

He said to his master's wife Joseph explains his personal reasons for refusing her advances. First he points to the abuse of trust that would be involved, then to the violation of the husband's proprietary rights over his wife, then to the religious and moral nature of the offense.

6. Joseph was well built and handsome He inherited his good looks from his mother, Rachel, who is described in identical Hebrew terms in Gen. 29:17. The Midrash pictures Joseph as immersed in vanity and concerned with his appearance. This prompted God to say, "Your father is grieving and you comport yourself thus!" Immediately, his good looks get him into trouble and cause him to be cast into prison (Tanh.).

8. The Sages imagine Joseph about to yield

to the enticements of Potiphar's wife when the image of his father appears before him and strengthens his resolve to say no (BT Sot. 36b). Although Jacob had schemed and cheated when he was young, he never was guilty of sexual impropriety. The cantillation note for the word translated as "but he refused" (*va-y'ma-en*) is the rare note "*shalshelet*," which appears only four times in the Torah. It is a wavering, back-and-forth note, suggesting indecision and ambivalence on Joseph's part.