#

Libretto

~ 2026 ~



Joseph

Down in Memphis Town

A Cappella
Verse Musical
in Two Acts

Zanthym House
Mountain View•AB•CA

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by Susan M. Smith (SMSmith)

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ePublished by Zanthym House
PO Box 115 Mountain View, AB
Canada T0K 1N0

ePublished-1 at www.zanthymhouse.ca - 2019/02/14
ePublished-2 at www.zanthymhouse.ca - 2025/04/25
ePublished-3 at www.zanthymhouse.ca - 2026/08/25

ISBN: 978-1-928083-05-4 (ebook - 2019)
Minor revisions: ebook - 2025
Minor revisions: ebook - 2026

Text Font:	Agfa Shannon™	DO:	1994/05/25
Title Font:	Berthold AG Poppl-Laudatio™	DC:	1994/06/16
Logo Font:	King Tut	DLP:	2025/02/20
		DLR:	2026/08/xx

e: 2025/04

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(*Was an associate member from 1988-2018)

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About the cartouche-logo

The cartouche-logo is not intended to spell the name Joseph. Its purpose is symbolic **only**—to represent:

- his life-saving mission
- his work
- his worship
- his vision of inner things

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Duration

about two & one-half hours
(; includes a *12-minute* intermission ;)
(being a nod to Joseph's 12 years in prison)

Brief Research Note

All events are based on the following sources:

1. Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vols. I-VII. Trans. by Henrietta Szold, 1968.
2. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, vols.* 1-2. Edited by James H. Charlesworth, 1983.
3. *The Book of Jasher*. Pub. by J. H. Parry & Company, 1887.
4. *Josephus, Complete Works*. Trans. by William Whiston, 1960.
5. *The Old Testament*. King James Version

Where versions of the stories differ, selection was by the playwright's preference to unify the story. Almost all events (including Asenath's parentage) have reference in one account or other, except for the dream directing Asenath's abandonment in the desert.

The "Time" span 2500-1100 **BC** covers a "tumult of opinions" *for Joseph's* placement in Egyptian history. This author questions: 1) the chronology constructed by Manetho (circa 200-300s BC); and 2) many present day derivatives/corrections/speculations because of the scarcity of information for many alleged dynasties. An interesing coincidence in the *Book of Jasher* (p. 219) refers to the Pharaoh of the Oppression as Melol who reigned for 94 years, just like Pepi II of the alleged 6th Dynasty. Dating controversies or theories about the number of Pharaohs who reigned during Joseph's tenure should not affect the performance of the musical.

This verse musical is presented to tell a story and may not present Egyptian culture as it was millennia ago, but then much of *history* relies on opinion & interpretation.

The **appendices** are attached with detailed reference notes respecting the various events.

Humor: Although this musical is written, in large part, as comedy, the playwright suggests that performance will prove best if none of the parts are played for comedic effect. Let speech and restraint provide the comedy without buffoonery, stupefying, slapstick, or undue emphasis on the comedic by the actors. Please remember "The Fourth Wall" even when audience members are treated as "Citizens."

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Please include this **Note** in your programs.

Playwright's Note: The events in this verse musical which go beyond the familiar story in Old Testament Genesis have source in *The Legends of the Jews*, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, The Book of Jasher*, and *Josephus*. The playwright hopes this musical of the oft-amusing, yet moving, accounts contained in the old sources will lift your soul. (SMS)

Cast of Characters

(In order of and at first appearance)

	AGE at 1st appearance
GUARDIAN (angel)	ageless
POTIPHAR	early 40's
ZELICAH (wife of Potiphar)	early 30's
JOSEPH	17
SHOPKEEPER(S)	40s-60s
EUNUCHS (5)	20s
ASENATH (foster daughter)	6
ISHMAELITES (4)	various
BABY BROTHER*	newborn to 11-months
SOOTHSAYER (female)	older
WOMEN FRIENDS (3 or 4)	various
CITIZENS (20+)	various
PRIEST-JUDGES (3)	70s-90s
PRISON GUARD	30s-40s
PRISON CAPTAIN	50s
PHARAOH	50s
WISE MEN (4)	various
ASENATH (adult)	18
SUITORS (of Asenath) (4)	20's
PHARAOH'S SON	20
SENTRIES & SLAVES	various

Many parts can be double or triple cast, for example: Eunuchs, Shopkeeper(s), Ishmaelites, Soothsayer, Citizens, Women Friends, Priest-Judges, Prison Guard, Prison Captain, Suitors, Pharaoh, Wise Men, Pharaoh's Son, Slaves, Sentries, etc. (*Baby Brother will be a life-like doll.)

Main Character Descriptions

JOSEPH: at initial appearance, he is a handsome Hebrew / Semite youth of 17, who is committed to protecting his family's name from dishonor and to keeping faith with his God, regardless of the cost to himself. In Act Two, after twelve years in prison, he is 30 years old and still keeping his covenant to God. He is a strong, handsome man of ability, compassion, and unflinching integrity—a heroic figure.

ZELICAH: (zɛl-ee-KAH) wife of Potiphar, is in her early 30s, of the black race, and very beautiful. Her character will be the most difficult to portray with consistency and without caricature. She is not a vindictive, arrogant, egotistical woman. She appreciates her beauty as a simple fact of life and is not insufferable about it. She is an intelligent woman, accustomed to the good life, who flirts at first with temptation only to find herself so caught up and obsessed that she does and says things that would normally be out of character for her. Many of her threats are hollow, borne of obsessive desperation. She always loves her husband and children, but is crazy-in-love with another, wanting both worlds and not knowing how to rid herself of her craziness without satisfying the obsession. She is more a figure eliciting our sympathy / exasperation than our scorn. We like and understand her, despite her *madness*.

POTIPHAR: also of the black race, is in his early 40s, a little plump and mostly bald. He loves his wife and child dearly, but has become obsessed with his work. He is eventually given the position of Priest of On and renamed Pentephres—a good man at heart.

ASENATH: (ah-SƐN-αth) is first encountered as a child of 6. She is of mixed heritage (Semite and Hivite / Hurrite); the dutiful, loving foster-daughter of Potiphar and Zelicah. She is an inquisitive child with a thousand questions. At age eighteen, she is a beauty who loves the Egyptian gods, but who keeps above all the craziness of human love—till she re-encounters Joseph.

GUARDIAN: is an angel (and soapstone or wood carver) assigned to safeguard Joseph. He plays a low-key role, for the most part, and will be unobserved by all cast except for two instances when he reveals himself to Asenath and later Joseph. His dress will be like that of a simple nomadic shepherd.

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***Age of Characters**: Since the play covers a period of about 12-13 years, the ages represent that of first appearance with appropriate aging as the play progresses.

Ethnicities: As Egypt was a hub and beneficiary of ancient trade, learning, and culture, the playwright encourages using a variety of ethnicities when casting those parts not identified with a specific group. Sometimes we imagine that ancient kingdoms were mostly insular, but most research does not bear that out. Eunuchs and slaves were often war captives.

Humor: Again, in the author's opinion, subtle, underplayed humor is far more effective than buffooned humor. Please resist the temptation to buffoon or stupefy any character.

Time & Place

This musical covers an approximate 13-year period in Ancient Egypt from the time Old Testament Joseph arrives in Egypt at age 17 till his ascension to power and marriage at age 30 to Asenath, age 18.

(For brevity, "**P-Z house**" stands for Potiphar's & Zelicah's home.)

ACT ONE

ACT I: Memphis, Egypt

Scene	Time	Place
Preface:	mid-morning	Memphis street / Potiphar's office
1:	same mid-morning	Memphis row-market & streets
2:	immediately following	Potiphar's office
3:	twenty-four days later	a Memphis street
4:	immediately following	Potiphar's office
5:	immediately following	a Memphis street
6:	several days, weeks, months later	office & P-Z house
7:	several days later	garden of P-Z house
8:	immediately following	P-Z house
9:	several days later	streets of Memphis
10:	later that afternoon & evening	garden & P-Z house
11:	next day	Priest-Judges' court
12:	unfolding year	prison

ACT TWO

ACT II: Memphis, Heliopolis and rural areas in Egypt
(NOTE: Potiphar is now known as Pentephres)

Scene	Time	Place
Prologue:	12 years after imprisonment	streets of Memphis
1:	immediately following	prison (Memphis)
2:	same morning & next day	Pharaoh's throne room (Memphis)
3:	immediately following	streets of Memphis
4:	several days later	P-Z house (Heliopolis)
5:	several days later	Pharaoh's throne room (Memphis)
6:	over several days	various rural locations
7:	next morning	road near Heliopolis
8:	later that morning & following week	P-Z house (Heliopolis)
9:	that night	a locked room somewhere rural
10:	two days later	Pharaoh's throne room (Memphis)

Musical Direction

- The a cappella singing and rhythms in this verse musical are intended to be simplistic without elongation as is found in plainsong, chant, and opera. The singing is speech-driven without accompaniment except in the celebratory scenes where rhythm is spontaneous with an unrehearsed flavor using finger cymbals, frame drums, timbrels, clapping hands, traditional vocal warblings, etc., without overpowering the vocals.
- **Introductory Music 1**: Single flute melody: In 2002, playwright D.H. Hwang observed that "So many magnificent scores are trapped in dated books." Likewise many magnificent melodies are trapped in time and tradition. Let us break time and tradition—think outside the box; be deliberately anachronistic(?)—and take Verdi's 1841 Nabucco "Va Pensiero" melody (Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves) back to Joseph's Egypt, but sped up to reflect the hope and strength that often characterizes the songs of slaves (like Joseph was) as they work. "Va Pensiero" is also a nod to what was eventually coming for the Hebrews in Egypt.

Music & Rhythm Synopsis

M / R	page	Act/Scene	
1	3	I-1	Guardian
2	59	I-9	Citizens
3	89	II-Prologue	Citizens
4	104	II-3	Citizens
5	163	II-10	Citizens
6	167	II-10	Curtain Call

Act One

Joseph Summary Notes:

- 11th son of Jacob (Israel) & first-born of his mother, Rachel
- born 2134 **Anno Mundi** ("in the year of the world") - per *Book of Jubilees* chronology (Kindle p. 122)
- 23rd generation from Adam & Eve
- grandparents Isaac & Rebekah;
- great-grandparents Abraham & Sarah
- sold into slavery and taken to Egypt at age 17
- spends 12 years in prison in Memphis, Egypt
- ascends to power in Egypt as 2nd in command at age 30
- marries Asenath

ACT ONE

TIME: somewhere between 2500 and 1100 B.C. depending on the historian. Knowing the exact year is not critical to this story.

PLACE: Memphis, Egypt

AT RISE: a minimal, but composite STAGE remains is darkness arranged as follows: toward Stage Left (SL)– the bed of Joseph, plus a table and chair; to Stage Right (SR)–a row market; at Stage Centre (SC)–an elegant, long table around which much of the action centers (Potiphar's office). The table top contains several piles of scrolls, bundle of keys, purse, etc.; a chair at the table centre and a chair at each table end. There are two or three clusterings of plants framing statues of Egyptian gods. Two pillars supporting a beam with Egyptian nature paintings may form part of the office backdrop (**see p. 171**).

Music 1: (Single wind instrument - *Va Pensiero***)**

Preface

Memphis street / Potiphar's office

Mid-morning

(GUARDIAN enters through audience playing a wind instrument. As HE approaches SC & pauses, the LIGHT rises *to dimly reveal POTIPHAR seated at the table centre inspecting a papyrus-letter. POTIPHAR finishes reading, drops it before him, stares at it, sighs heavily, drums his fingers on the table. GUARDIAN proceeds to SR as the LIGHT follows leaving Potiphar in darkness)*

Scene 1

A row market in Memphis

Same mid-morning

LIGHT widens to reveal a busy market of shopkeepers & several CITIZEN shoppers.

*(*ZELICAH is finishing her shopping as she valiantly tries to control her curiosity about one of the shop assistants: i.e., JOSEPH who seems oblivious to her interest. A EUNUCH, holding a *lotus-leaf fan* stands nearby, two small parcels at his feet. *Four EUNUCHS enter in the distance–*D*SL carrying a curtained palanquin / litter with curtains open. THEY proceed exuberantly to the row market as GUARDIAN exists SR)*

EUNUCHS (4)

There's nothing like a day we say
To spend outside by the Nile,

To leisure, pleasure market's row while
The sun beats down on friend 'n foe,
On king, on slave, on scribe, or nave,
Each gets his lot
For the lordly rays distinguish not.

That's why we say,
It's a perfect day,
When with our mistress of renown
For beauty 'n duty
To family 'n crown—
We can sport the streets of Memphis town.

(As the four EUNUCHS continue singing, the fan-bearing EUNUCH hands his fan off to a litter-bearing EUNUCH as HE helps load ZELICAH and her three parcels into the litter; then closes the curtains as ZELICAH attempts one last subtle peek at Joseph)

Memphis, Memphis,
We say not Sais nor Tanis, but
Memphis.
Fearless, 'n peerless, 'n flawless
That's Memphis.
Timeless, 'n cloudless, 'n boundless
That's Memphis.
Memphis.

That's why we say,
These are perfect days,
While others in less-favored place
Are caught up in the Pharaoh's race,
To haul 'n heave constructing tombs,
White-washing 'n carving 'n,
Chiselling rooms.

(THEY head towards Potiphar's office with the fan-bearing EUNUCH leading the way)

EUNUCHS (5)

That's why we say,
These are perfect days,
To be free from the gloom
Of Pharaonic tomb.
(Too exuberantly for safe carriage of the litter)
From heavin', haulin', sweatin' 'n—pull
Lurchin', luggin' 'n—

ZELICAH

(Exasperated, whips the curtain aside)
AAAA-VASSST, HAAA!
You think I am but cabbage?

EUNUCHS (4)

Uhh, no, no, Ma'am.

ZELICAH

Mere baggage?

EUNUCHS (4)

No, no, Ma'am.

ZELICAH

Then what, what, what?

EUNUCHS (4)

Sorry, sorry, so sorry,
We, sort of, forgot.

ZELICAH

Then, think, think, think.

(Rolls her eyes; tugs the curtain closed. The EUNUCHS proceed homeward with greater care)

EUNUCHS (5)

Most times she is nice.
Once or twice she is not,

LIGHT darkens on row market and rises on Potiphar's office as ...

But you live with your fate
'N what you have got—
More or less.

Scene 2

Potiphar's Office

Immediately following

(The parcels are set near POTIPHAR. ZELICAH steps down from the litter; Four EUNUCHS begin to exit. Fan-bearing EUNUCH remains unobtrusively off to the side, awaiting some order)

EUNUCHS (4)

(Repeat as needed for action and exit with the litter)

Ha-ba-da-heave, heave, ho
Ha-ba-da-la, la, la.
Ha-ba-da-la, la, la.

POTIPHAR

(Indicating the parcels)

Thank you, my love.

ZELICAH

Oh, my good husband,
You look so harried,
So worried, so sadly blue.
I wish, my dearest Potiphar
There was something more
I could possibly do.

POTIPHAR

(Sighs)
'Tis simply life, my sweet Zelicah,
Full of hopes and …
(Hands letter to ZELICAH)
Disappointments.
Perhaps we're born always to struggle.
Perhaps as chief o'r Pharaoh's eunuchs,
I have been eununched to what I aspire.

ZELICAH

But my love, you have me,
And together, I think
We're at the brink
Of fame and fortune.
Honors galore,
Perhaps more.

The Pharaoh likes you—I've seen,
Besides, our darling daughter
Though born upon another's knee
Might prove a favored key.

Her skin so unlike our ebony shades
Might catch his young son's eye.
If they become friends,
There's no reason why

We shall not rank chiefest of the chiefs,
In a year or two; maybe three or four …
Though surely not more.

POTIPHAR
But what of the meantime?

ZELICAH
Of the meantime, my love—
Why not enjoy some sublime-time?
Why can't you fuss over us—
Forget all this stuff
For an hour or two
For we hardly see you
Save you're worried and blue,
Always doing and doing and doing?

POTIPHAR
(Returning to his work)
But there's so much to do.

ZELICAH
I know, my sweet love,
But you treat the king's work
Above your child and wife.
I don't mean to complain
But nothing's the same
Since you've become so obsessed.

Can't you see how we miss you?
Can't you feel when I kiss you—
How my love still abides?
How I'd rather be with you—
How I oft feel denied? …

Please hear what I say—
This can't go on,
This mustn't go on.

POTIPHAR

(To himself)
There is so much to know.

ZELICAH

How do I say …
In the market today
My feelings, were roused in a way …
That I need to forget?

POTIPHAR

There is so much to plan.

ZELICAH

How do I get you to hear—
I can't queue for affection
In line with these things.
I have needs and feelings too,
They've always run to you—
Till today when I saw,
That young, foreign …

POTIPHAR

There is so much to write.

ZELICAH

Can't you hear—
I've always run to you—
But what do I get?
"There is so much to do."
(Insistently to Potiphar)

Please listen, my love,
We need time for each other.
Why not get us more help
For this work, for this worry?—
Let others handle all this hurry.

POTIPHAR

There is just so much …

ZELICAH

Well then, my sweet love,
Perhaps I, too, can do without you.
It's clear you prefer
All this to your wife, …
So don't be surprised
If her life passes you by.
Don't be surprised
At a wandering eye.
Just don't be surprised.

POTIPHAR

I just need to get wiser.

ZELICAH

Listen, my love …
I've just had a brilliant idea
And it's bound to help—
In one way or other.
It concerns a bright lad
In the market downtown.
They call him a slave
But slave I think not
For the market's all abuzz
With the brilliant things
He says and does.

With the sudden great fortune
His new master has got.

He's foreign, but so clever
With Joseph for a name—
A lad stolen for sure.

We should house him—
Protect him
Till his slavery's disproved.
You could train his bright mind
To much of this
And perhaps in the meantime,
We (or I) could divine
Some sublime-time.

POTIPHAR

A bright boy, you say?
With a name—Joseph?—that echoes
In the strangest way.
(With grudging acknowledgement)
Perhaps you are right,
With all I have to do
It might lighten the load.
I'll make some inquiries—
We'll send for his buyer,
(Motions to EUNUCH, who exists)
We'll sort this all out.

LIGHTS dim briefly for time passage.

(The fan-bearing EUNUCH enters to whisper in Potiphar's ear; then two EUNUCHS march a nervous SHOPKEEPER into POTIPHAR'S presence)

EUNUCHS (2)

Right, left, right …
There's no need to fear
Potiph's always right …
Right … right … right.

POTIPHAR

What is this I hear?
Is it true what I've heard?
A lad has been stolen from Canaan way—
That you traffic in free men—
Get rich in their pain?

SHOPKEEPER

Ho ho, my good sir,
Such is perfectly wrong.

POTIPHAR

So soon! —Just like this!
You confess you are—
Ahhh …
'Twere meaning …
'Tis me who is wrong!?

SHOPKEEPER

Ho, no–no
We neither is wrong!
No, no. My t-traffic is s-spices,
Good c-chief number t-three,
(With increasing haste driven by fear)
He belongs to some Ishmaelites,
Not to me
But left in my charge until they return.
He is slave on their word,
He is slave on his own.

I swear this is true.
I confess what is true.

POTIPHAR

What is true? What is true?
I hear he's too brilliant
For your words to be true.
We judge what seems right.
We judge what seems wrong.
And wrong is to steal a free man
For gain. Right is to allot you
A little of his pain.
(Motions to EUNUCHS)
Have him stripped and whipped;
Just enough,
(Flashes back-handed, middle three fingers)
Not too long
To impress right from wrong.
And bring me the lad.

(SHOPKEEPER is escorted out by two EUNUCHS as two other EUNUCHS escort JOSEPH in)

EUNUCHS (4)

(As THEY pass each other)
Right, left, right …
There's no cause to fear
Potiph's always right …
Right … right …

POTIPHAR

Tell me lad of face and form freeborn,
Of face and form
That seems divinely wrought.
Are you slave or are you not?

JOSEPH
I regret to say—a slave. It is true.

POTIPHAR
I think this is wrong.

JOSEPH
I belong to the Ishmaelites.

POTIPHAR
I believe this is wrong.

JOSEPH
They bought me in the land of Canaan
From Midianites.

POTIPHAR
This feels oddly wrong.
Is there nothing right in this matter?

JOSEPH
I regret to say—a slave. It is true—
To Midianites and then Ishmaelites.

POTIPHAR
What is true?
What is true?
Who knows what is true?
We judge what seems right.
We judge what seems wrong.
And wrong is to steal
A free man for gain.
Wrong is to lie
For who knows why?

JOSEPH
(To self)
I can't say,
I can't shame
My brothers who
Soon must regret
This sad thing
They have done.
I can't say,
I can't shame
My dear brothers.

POTIPHAR

(Regretfully, but sternly applies the law)

So you see, we've no choice,
We must impress right from wrong.
We'll just flog once
It won't take long.
Then we'll hold you in prison
Till these so-called Ishmaelites return.

(POTIPHAR sadly motions dismissal while ZELICAH goes into shock)

EUNUCHS (2)

(As THEY exit with JOSEPH)

Right, left, right …
What can we say
He's usually been right …
(Looking alarmed as their left foot comes down on the "right" beat)
Right … right …
(Adjusting their stride)
Right … Right.

ZELICAH

(To Potiphar)

Did I hear what I heard?
You've sent this youth so nobly born—
To weep and to mourn in a prison?

Why not house him, protect him
Till his slavery's disproved?
Why I thought in the meantime—
You and I could divine
Some sublime-time.

POTIPHAR

(Gently explaining)
What is right is right, my love,
And the law is always right—
For liars must be taught
Whether they like it or not.

Besides in all these lies,
We can't do more
Till his title's made clear.
That much is clear.

ZELICAH

What is clear ...
Is the disappointment.

POTIPHAR

I'm sorry, my dear,
But I've done all I could
And I've so much to do.
(Returns to his work)

ZELICAH

Joseph. What a name.
What a face. What a vision.
What a—

No, Zelicah—no no ...
You never meant ...
You went to the market merely to see
What everyone spoke of ...
But now, his face forever before,
And this, feeling.
Somewhere from nowhere this feeling. ...
So, yes, 'twould be nice to have him around,

Just to feel this feeling.
I would ask nothing more,
Just to see him—
To hear his melodious voice.
Perhaps, for the scent of him.
Nothing, nothing more,
Just the scent, the sound, the sight of him.
Like a lily in a pond,
Like a canary in a cage,
Like a painting on the wall.

What can it hurt?
It's only to flirt for a moment
With the sweetness of this feeling.

I will ask nothing more,
(Addresses the idol gods)
I promise, nothing more.
A small divertment
From the monot'ny of everyday.
Why it's just a feeling,
A silly fantasy—
A little dream time.
That's all—
A little dream time.

(ZELICAH sits at the table end–SL with chin in her hands, daydreaming. Young ASENATH enters and stands beside Potiphar)

ASENATH

Papa?

POTIPHAR

More questions, my sweet child?

ASENATH

Papa, I heard in the street today,
Something about me,
So please can I ask? ...
Where did I come from?
Why am I here?
Where am I going?
Will you always be near?
Please can you tell me,
I feel so lost and afraid.
Why did they hide me
And leave me to die?

POTIPHAR

Asenath, my sweet love,
You're too young for such questions—
No one left you to die.
What comes and goes round
These gods and our fates will decide.
For now, let that guide you—
You were meant to be ours.
There are seasons without reasons
Till the season's long past.

ASENATH

But, Papa ...

POTIPHAR

What more can I say?
It's just—we live day upon day,
Though when you are older,
I'll tell as much as I know.
So believe dearest child
There is nothing to fear.

Forever you are ours,
And for always we'll be here.
Go back to your lessons,
Know always you are loved.

(ASENATH hugs Potiphar and exits)

Such questions.
A child left to her fate
And now she is ours.
Such questions,
What is right? What is wrong?
How does she belong?

And who is this Joseph?
Where does he come from?
And why is he here?

Why do I sense
Some connection with him
Toward seasons without reasons
Till the season's long past?
(Softer)
Toward seasons without reasons
Till the season's long past.

LIGHT dims to BLACKOUT. At BLACK-OUT the row market space converts to Zelicah's lounge and garden area.

(POTIPHAR & ZELICAH can remain in the office during the blackout & Scene 3)

LIGHT rises on the "Street."

Scene 3
A Memphis Street
Twenty-four days later

(The distraught SHOPKEEPER enters the stage walking backwards, trying to get the attention of the four advancing ISHMAELITES who are also distraught)

SHOPKEEPER

Please, please, I beg of you,
Rescue me from these persecutions.
Potiphar says I have stolen your slave,
Please, I beg of you.

ISHMAELITES

(Ignoring the Shopkeeper)
What's to be done?
A man's missing his son
Up Canaan way,
And it's all the fault
Of those Midianites!
Those thieving, rotten rats.

They lied, they stole him
And bided time till we bought him,
And if his old father now find us
He will grind us to dust—

Scorch us to nothing
As a wind from the east.
Midianites!
Those thieving, rotten rats.

SHOPKEEPER

Please, please, I beg of you.

ISHMAELITES

Midianites!
How do we explain?
There's nothing to do
But sell him, too—
Get rid of the evidence.

SHOPKEEPER

'Tis way too late,
Already you've been summoned
And he hates to be kept waiting.
So, please, I beg—
Save me from his persecutions.

(Two EUNUCHS escort JOSEPH toward Potiphar's office. The ISHMAELITES intercept them)

EUNUCHS (2)

Left, right, left, right,
There's reason to hope
He might be right … ri—

ISHMAELITES

(*To Joseph*)
What is this we have heard?
A powerful man
Mourns in sackcloth
Up Canaan way.

You are no slave.

JOSEPH

(*To self*)

I don't wish to shame
Brothers who must
Regret this sad
Thing they have done.
(*To Ishmaelites*)
I am a slave.
I can say no different.

ISHMAELITES

Then you must swear
To this Potiphar
How we bought you for money.

EUNUCHS (2)

Left, right, left, right,
We pray with our might
He'll prove to be right …
Right … right …

As LIGHT dims on the Street; rises on Potiphar's office as ….

Scene 4

Potiphar's Office

Immediately following

(The ENTOURAGE bows before POTIPHAR who drums his fingers upon the table. ZELICAH stands beside him)

POTIPHAR

Come, come, I await.
Let me hear what you swear.

ISHMAELITES

We bought him for money.
We swear eight-fold.
(Raisning & flexing eight fists high)

JOSEPH

I attest, as I've said,
They bought me for money.

SHOPKEEPER

I bought nothing but spices—
I am innocent.

ZELICAH

(Aside to Potiphar)
With a fat purse for his innocence.

POTIPHAR

(Pauses, sighs, shakes head)
This boy is no slave,
But the law is the law
Which I regret
Makes it all right in so many oaths
To be terribly wrong.
So I set you all free
To keep him a slave.
But I warn—
You had better take care,
For should he have kin
Find him here in this land,
We'll pluck you like ducks—
We'll sell you as donkeys.
You understand?

ISHMAELITES

Yeah, yeah—we understand.

ZELICAH

(*To Potiphar*)
Those simple naves,
By trafficking in slaves,
Have got in such a bind
They'll sell him.
We must protect him.

ISHMAELITES

Midianites!
Those rotten rats.
Those thieving, rotten rats
We must get rid of him.
We'll sell him.
(*Huddle in consultation*)

ZELICAH

Besides, my sweet love,
It could bring us
Good fortune
In the meantime.
And perhaps too,
Some sublime-time.

(POTIPHAR sighs, nods to ZELICAH, hands her the bag-purse. SHE nods to a EUNUCH, who hurries after the departing ISHMAELITES who take JOSEPH. ZELICAH is not far behind. The other EUNUCHS exit)

LIGHT dims on Potiphar's office; rises on the Street.

Scene 5

A Memphis Street

Immediately following

ISHMAELITES

One boy for sale,
One boy for sale.
Strong and agile,
A foreign male.
He comes from the north
Of somewhere Northeast,
Worth ten of his weights
In gold, at the least.

EUNUCH

Absurd! Such pricings unheard of.
(To Zelicah)
They ask too mush.
Way, waay too much.

ZELICAH

(Handing him the purse; turning her back)
Pay what they ask,
Whatever they ask.

(EUNUCH and ISHMAELITES face each other with fists raised, staring; suddenly all hands flash eight fingers. Amazed at the unanimity, THEY bow to each other)

EUNUCH & ISHMAELITES

Eighty pieces of gold is fair.
We amazingly agree it is fair,
Eighty it is, fair and square.

(EUNUCH hands over eight small sacks from the purse, two to each. As ISHMAELITES joyfully exit, EUNUCH surreptitiously tucks two more into his girdle. HE returns the almost empty purse to Zelicah as HE bows)

EUNUCH

One hundred pieces
Of gold was fair.
We agreed it was fair.
One hundred it was
Fair and square.

JOSEPH

Should I say what I see?
He may regret this sad
thing that he does.
What shames we set
ourselves up to.

(THEY proceed to Potiphar's office; EUNUCH exits)

LIGHT dims on the Street; rises–SC.

Scene 6
Potiphar's office & P-Z house
Several days, weeks, months later

(POTIPHAR is seated at table centre; the other chair is beside him. ZELICAH, seated left end, is watching JOSEPH who is busy—reviewing, sorting, filing things into a new cubby-hole system at or near the right end of the now tidy table. JOSEPH is thorough, confident, respectful, and straight-forwardly honest)

JOSEPH

(To himself, in a low voice as he works)

O Lord of all creation,
Thou art my trust
And my protection.
In Thy sight
And in the sight of this master
Please send me
Thy grace and fine favor.

POTIPHAR

What is this moving of lips?
Cast you a spell upon my house?

JOSEPH

(Without guile or servility; with simple honesty)

Never so, my good master,
I but beseech my heavenly God—
To find favor, I pray
In the eyes of this house
And good master.

(POTIPHAR gives JOSEPH a scroll / bookroll; motions him to sit in the empty chair near him; lays a large bundle of keys on the table next to Joseph. THEY work on, reading / writing / recording "data")

POTIPHAR & ZELICAH

This boy is no slave.
He is worthy of a prince's place.
He is smart. He is wise.
There lies nothing but goodness in him,
I can trust him.

POTIPHAR

With my wife.
To be wise,
With my dealings,
With revealing all
I should ever know.

ZELICAH

With my life.
With my eyes,
With my feelings,
With concealing things
He needn't ever know.

(JOSEPH, nervously aware of ZELICAH'S glances, takes a scroll with him to his bed [as LIGHT rises–SL]. *HE lays down to read. GUARDIAN enters; sits on the chair; takes out his carving)*

POTIPHAR & ZELICAH

(Separately unaware of each other)
He's worthy of a prince's place.
He is smart. He is wise.
There lies nothing but goodness in him.
I can trust him.

He is just. He is true.
It seems he's perfection,
No objection to what he's to do.
He shall study,

He shall learn.
I shall gift him more
Than a slave could ever earn.

He'll handle our affairs—
Shoulder all
Our burdens and cares.
There's goodness in him.
I can trust him.

(POTIPHAR resumes work. ZELICAH resumes her reveries. LIGHT dims–SC; JOSEPH kneels beside his bed)

JOSEPH

O Lord of all creation,
I vow—in this goodly house,
To prove as my fathers proved,
Above all temptation.
In this house of peace and plenty—
I vow—Thou canst trust me.
(Lays scroll beside bed; crawls in; goes to sleep)

GUARDIAN

O Mighty One,
As angel-guardian to this boy,
I find boldness to plead—
Please, take not this prayer
Of just a lad,
As request
For sudden provings,
Consider this—

(A nervous ZELICAH enters Joseph's room. GUARDIAN concludes with a wary eye on her)

Please consider this,
Unwitting wording,
La-men-ta-ble timing.

ZELICAH

Joseph, you are beautiful.
You are wise. You are good and—
I would touch you.
It's not asking that much more,
Just to touch.
It's such a simple thing.
(Does not touch yet, but mimics the touch SHE describes upon herself)
My hand upon yours.
A palm upon your brow.
My fingers twined
In the tendrils of your mind.

Is it such a serious thing
That sight was not enough?
For my feelings now run
To imaginations of you.
(Her conscience works at her)

Oh, Zelicah, Zelicah,
You never meant for this to be.
You went to the market merely to see—
What everyone spoke of.
'Twas just a feeling then.
Somewhere from nowhere, a feeling.

Yet, what can it hurt?
It's just to flirt for a moment with, touch.
It's not asking that much more.
Touch is such a simple thing.

I will ask nothing more,
I promise—nothing more,
Just to flirt for a moment
With the sweetness of touch.

A small divertment
From the monot'ny of everyday.
Why it's just to touch,
A silly fantasy—
A little dream time.
That's all—
A little dream time.

(As ZELICAH smooths Joseph's brow, JOSEPH starts awake and pulls the covers to his chin. HE never looks in her face. In all his scenes HE keeps his eyes downcast in her presence)

ZELICAH

Joseph sweet boy,
I heard your cry
And I couldn't pass by.

JOSEPH

(Confused)
Perhaps 't-twas a dream—
I don't recall, I seem to be fine.
There's no need to stay.

ZELICAH

(A saving idea strikes. For a moment SHE redirects her passion to safer ground)
I'd do the same for a son
I'd comfort a son
Had I a son.

But the gods
Have not granted
My wishes in this
Do you know
How I've wanted a son?

JOSEPH

This is not wise,
This is not good that—

ZELICAH

(Another saving idea)
Perhaps I could adopt you,
Then I would have a son.
Someone to see me,
To need me.

JOSEPH

This is not good that—

ZELICAH

I want a son!
I need a husband!
Is there none to understand?

(JOSEPH slips to his knees with the bed between them; raises eyes heavenward)

JOSEPH

Father, kind Father of all,
Please hear the pleas
Of this woman's heart—
The deep desires of her heart.

GUARDIAN

Amended please—
Not these desires
But merely the plea
For a lawful son.

FEMALE VOICE

(*Like a distant echo*)
Potiphar.

MALE VOICE

(*Like a distant echo*)
Zelicah.

POTIPHAR

What is this I hear?

ZELICAH

What is this I hear?

FEMALE VOICE

Potiphar. Potiphar.

MALE VOICE

Zelicah. Zelicah.

POTIPHAR

Someone calls my name,
A voice—

ZELICAH

Someone calls my name,
A voice—

FEMALE VOICE

Potiphar. Potiphar.

MALE VOICE

Zelicah. Zelicah.

POTIPHAR

Ah, yes, I recognize,
Ah, yes, it's my Zelicah.
Zelicah—where are you?

ZELICAH

Oh, no, I recognize,
Oh, no, it's my Potiphar.

I'm coming.
I'm coming.

*(ZELICAH hurries to meet POTIPHAR as LIGHT rises to twilight—*SC*)*

POTIPHAR

Oh, my sweet love,
I've spent too much time
With my business and dealings—
I've neglected my family,
My duty, your feelings.
Let us dine. Let us wind
Down to pleasures. Let's forget.
Let's pretend we just met.

ZELICAH

Yes, pretend. Let's pretend.
Perhaps this is the cure,
We'll become as we once were.

(ZELICAH & POTIPHAR exit with arms entwined)

JOSEPH

Father, God of all creation,
Wilt thou grant these—a son.

LIGHT dims to signify time passage, then rises only–SL.

(ASENATH enters, cooing to a baby she carries. She finds JOSEPH kneeling beside his bed as usual)

ASENATH

Have you seen my little brother?

JOSEPH

Only twice. He is cute.
It's nice you have a brother.
A son now for your mother.
So now they have you and him.
I think it's all very nice.

ASENATH

Yes, but did you know,
Boys and girls are not the same?
Did you know?

JOSEPH

I sort of … know.

ASENATH

It's all rather strange,
But Papa says,
I have too many questions,
So can I ask you?

JOSEPH

I really don't know that much.

ASENATH

But this I wish to ask …
(Becoming distracted)
Why are you …
Always on your knees?

JOSEPH

Ah! because that is how I pray.
(Rises)

ASENATH

And why do you not eat?
Why do I see, how you send
Your food always and secretly
To the sick and to the poor?

JOSEPH

Because that is how I fast.

ASENATH

What is this—to fast and pray?
Why does one fast and pray?

JOSEPH

There can be many reasons.

ASENATH

What is yours?

JOSEPH

I pray and mourn for one who—
Simply put, ... who seeks
To lead another into wrong.

ASENATH

You mean like those stories
You tell
That speak of two ways?
Of the good and of the bad,
And of the *fight* to be good?

JOSEPH

Precisely so, my little friend,
You are wise beyond your years.

ASENATH

Well, I hope that you win
Because Papa likes you—
As do Mama and I,
And even my best, favorite brother.

(ASENATH exits while cooing to the baby)

JOSEPH

O God of all creation
What is the solution to their mother?
This son has made no difference.
She hassles me in house and field
To yield to her ways—
What more can I say
To dissuade her.

(GUARDIAN rises as JOSEPH moves to sit on the chair, GUARDIAN bags his carving and moves to lay on the bed; closes his eyes. JOSEPH sits down; rubs his head. JOSEPH & GUARDIAN can remain in the darkened SL)

BLACKOUT–SL; LIGHT rises SC.

(ZELICAH & POTIPHAR enter near the centre table)

POTIPHAR

She tells me night and day.
Of Joseph's virtues.
How she trusts him
With her life.
How he's more than
wise and good.
How we could never
be without him.
And it's true.
We've been blessed.
For things have never
been so good.

ZELICAH

I tell him night and day.
Of Joseph's virtues.
How I trust him
With my life.
How he's more than
wise and good.
How we should never
be without him.
And it's true.
We've been blessed.
But things had better
soon improve.
Yes, things had better
soon improve.

(POTIPHAR gathers a few papers and exits)

ZELICAH

I'm sick to bed of this.
I threaten him with death.
I castigate him
With chores of loathsomeness.
I promise him my all.

Morning, noon, and night,
I send him gifts
To adorn himself.
I weep and moan and cry,
And he!
He mourns and fasts and prays
And becomes—more beautiful.

He spouts his holy words
And becomes—more beautiful.
He wears his lowly robes
And remains—so beautiful.
His face is light,
He has a glow,
And I grow
But impassioned for more.

I would die for this,
If just before is bliss for the moment.
I love him—then I hate him.
But forever I think and I dream of him,
And he?
Forever on his knees.

(Angrily, to her gods)
I never meant for any of this.
I went to the market merely to see— …
But now what I need—what must be—

Is just, to have him.
Once or twice or thrice
Perhaps that would suffice.

A casual divertment from the monot'ny
Of everyday.
A passing fantasy—
A little dream time.
That's all.
A little dream time.

There must—
There shall be a way.

LIGHT dims SC; rises SR as …

Scene 7
Starlit garden of P-Z house
Several days later

(ZELICAH passes through her dark lounge area; obtains a hooded cape; goes into the night; sits on the stone bench; gazes upwards at the stars, perhaps tracing out their shapes. ASENATH enters, stands near Zelicah)

ASENATH

Mama?

ZELICAH

(Gently, still stargazing)
Sussssh. Can't you see,
Your mama's busy.

ASENATH

But Mama please,
I need answers.

(ZELICAH sighs; leaves her preoccupations to listen)

My brother has shades of you and papa,
Why don't I look that same way?
Mama, please tell me
Of the way I was found.
Mama, please help me
To know who I am.

Why am I different?—
This voice that's inside.
Why did they hide me
And leave me to die?

ZELICAH

(With loving, deep emotion)
You are beautiful my child—
No one left you to die.
You were left to the gods—
To these stars to decide.
We must let them decide.
And then in the seasons
All the reasons can come.

(An old SOOTHSAYER enters, motions ZELICAH'S gaze starward)

ASENATH

Mama?

ZELICAH

(Still gently)

Sussssh, you must wait.
Our fates hinge here tonight.

SOOTHSAYER

As you have pleased
I'm here to divine—
What the future reads,
In the stars, from their charts,

(With fingers twisting, SHE "pulls" stars into an inner vision; closes her eyes. ZELICAH closes her eyes, also)

From the sky's hidden web—
To the inside eye.
From the stars' hidden myst'ries
To the insid— Whoa!

ZELICAH

(Eyes open, confused)

Whoa? What is whoa?

SOOTHSAYER

Woe ... is me for I see ...
What I've never seen before!
Oohh, what I've never seen before!
'Tis ... oh so bright ...
Revealing thi(ngs) ...
Accusing!? warning!? ... ME, MYSELF!?
Yet ... showing me?!

ZELICAH

(Confused, yet excited)

Showing what?

SOOTHSAYER

There is mist, there is darkness.
There's a great—
(Opens one eye briefly to gaze at Zelicah; shrugs)
Troublemaker.

There is mist, there is darkness.
There's a—eee-aaahh!
A dead be-headed baker! …

ZELICAH

What?

SOOTHSAYER

Wait, wait—there's a—
(Confused)
Dancing, prancing butler?!
Oh, my!

ZELICAH

In the stars?! *My* stars?!

SOOTHSAYER

Wait! there comes more light—

(A curious ASENATH tugs at Soothsayer's sleeve. SOOTHSAYER opens one eye, smiles in recognition, taps her lips, lays a hand briefly on Asenath's head, then down to her shoulder. ZELICAH motions Asenath not to interfere. ASENATH remains where she is)

A beauty so rare.
A beauty so rare.

(ZELICAH sighs, closes her eyes, smiling)

Ah yes! a connection in time.
She is beautiful. She is wise.
She is good.
She shall be favored.
Great fortune shall come. …
It's now showing clear.

It is love.
They'll fall grandly in love.
He is beautiful. She is beautiful.
They are wise. They are good.
They'll come to be one.
A blessing to this house …
Though, the connection is …
(Shakes outstretched hand in an iffy manner)
Yet still a blessing, to this house.
(Pauses; shrugs)
Well, I guess, that appears to be it …
Except! the light says,
"I'm to get no fee?!"
(Her eyes pop open)
And I'm to get me home—

(SOOTHSAYER hurries out. ZELICAH opens her eyes, confused; extends the expected, untaken fee)

ZELICAH

(Shrugs, clasps her chest, sighing)
He is beautiful. She is beautiful—
We were meant to be one.
So what's left to decide—
He has no place to hide
From this path, from the stars.
Yes, it's going to come true,
He has no place to hide.

(To Asenath)
Go my sweet child. See to your brother for
Your mother has great things to do.
It's in my stars. It's been destined.
It's going to come true.

(ASENATH exits. ZELICAH proceeds to Joseph's room where HE is reading at the table as ...)

LIGHT rises SL; dims SR.

Scene 8
P-Z House
Immediately following

(JOSEPH immediately stands up to keep the table and finally the bed between them. As ZELICAH moves, JOSEPH moves warily. GUARDIAN, laying on the bed, reading a scroll, sighs deeply, closes his eyes)

JOSEPH
Why insist you on this?
A hundred no's—
A thousand yet.
What more must I say?

ZELICAH
It's in our stars—
It's been ordained.
Why resist you the bliss?
A little this—a little that,
What difference can it make?

JOSEPH

What is the use of telling—
You do not hear.

ZELICAH

My dearest, I do—
I understand.
For you, I will forsake
The gods of this land.
I'll persuade my husband, too,
If you will—but fulfil my desire.

JOSEPH

I can't believe what you say!
You think my God accepts of this?!

ZELICAH

How dare you disdain
What I've offered!

JOSEPH

I can't believe what I hear!

ZELICAH

Believe you then in this?
I could have my husband killed,
And wed *you* by the law.

JOSEPH

O woman, are you mad?
I would never allow such to be.
I would speak—
My silence would end.
The shame of this
I would shout to the skies.

ZELICAH

(Despairing)
Believe then in this—
Except you yield,
I shall strangle myself.
Maybe jump in a well,
Or a pit—what matters it?
By your coldness
You have shattered my world.

JOSEPH

O God of all, what do I do?

GUARDIAN

Remind her of Asteho.

JOSEPH

Ah, yes! Asteho.

ZELICAH

Asteho!
My husband's concubine
Has nothing to do with this.

JOSEPH

Mistress please, think.
Would you leave
Your children,
Your memory,
To Asteho?

ZELICAH

Oh sweet hope,
In these words you prove
How you care—

In these words, I'll endure
Till your fears are overcome.

JOSEPH

I can endure this no more—
I have much work to do.

(JOSEPH proceeds to Potiphar's office to work [as LIGHT rises SC]. *ZELICAH follows. GUARDIAN deposits his scroll on Joseph's table; goes to sit in the chair at table end–L; takes out his carving)*

ZELICAH

How fair you are.
So exquisite in form.

JOSEPH

The same God hath created all men.

ZELICAH

How beautiful your eyes,
They warm and charm all in Egypt.

JOSEPH

Yet eyes cold and sightless
In the grave I would deserve.
You should think on this.

ZELICAH

How lovely and pleasant your words.
Please sing to me.

JOSEPH

Why can you not hear—
I sing praises only to my God.

ZELICAH

How beautiful your hair—
Here take my golden comb.

JOSEPH

When you persist not as mistress
I speak then not as slave.
You must desist.
You would prove better
In caring for your household.

ZELICAH

Can't you comprehend.
I care for nothing
But you.
I lie awake nights
Aching for you.
My days are consumed
With visions of you.

JOSEPH

Even without more,
I have reason enough
In my master's esteem.
And how you can speak so
In the face of his love,
Is vile beyond words.

ZELICAH

But, you are so clever
With our affairs—
Why should my husband
Really care?

JOSEPH

(Addressing heaven)

What does one say
To this woman.

GUARDIAN

(Heavenward)

How much yet?
He's not much more
Than a child still.

ZELICAH

I've had it up to here.
With your wretched, senseless fear
Of a God you cannot see.
You can weep and fast and pray
You can blister up your knees
Plead a thousand pleas—
But until you yield,
In house, in street, in field—
I care not.
I'll never go away.
I'll never, never …

JOSEPH

(Calmly, as HE works)

I may be forced to hear you
As mistress in this house.
But do I fear you?
No mistress, I do not.

ZELICAH

You think I have not power?
I could bring false accusations
Before Potiphar.

JOSEPH

The Lord of all
Judges for the oppressed.

ZELICAH

I could deprive you of food.

JOSEPH

My God giveth food to the hungry.

ZELICAH

I could have you thrown into prison.

JOSEPH

My God looseth the prisoner.

ZELICAH

I could heap up labors
To bend you down double.

JOSEPH

My God raiseth up them as bowed down.

ZELICAH

I could blind your beautiful eyes.

JOSEPH

My God giveth sight to the blind.

ZELICAH

Blind, blind, blind.
What use are your eyes?
You must look at me.
You drive me to this madness
When you refuse what could be.

What the stars—what the gods decree.
Oh my love,
Please, please, look at me.
I want you—I don't care how.
Whether in love or hate or fear
I don't care how.

JOSEPH

Mistress, I do this not
Now and forever,
For I fear none
But the one God.

ZELICAH

(Flinging her hooded cape over an idols eyes)

How is he or any to see—
Am I not married?
There is none could discover this.
I do not understand.
Am I not beautiful?

(ZELICAH jerks her cape off the idol and sobs into it. In a rare moment, JOSEPH looks at her. HE is not above temptation, but turns away and tries reasoning)

JOSEPH

Once I had a brother
Who lost his place for such as this.
How could I too?
I simply cannot.
And more so
When you know—
My God can see
What we pretend
He does not see.

ZELICAH

Pretend! Pretend!
It is you who pretends not to see.
Am I not beautiful?
Why must you torture so?

(JOSEPH again looks at her; makes a slight motion toward her. She does not see as her head is bowed. GUARDIAN reaches out as JOSEPH checks himself)

GUARDIAN

Joseph!

(JOSEPH abruptly leaves, going to his room. GUARDIAN remains at the table, carving)

(ZELICAH, sobbing, throws herself upon her lounge)

JOSEPH

I do not understand
Why I'm in this land
Where idols abound—
Surrounded
By strange ways
I can never embrace.
I know nothing of love
Yet feelings come.
What am I to do
When feelings come?

LIGHT rises SR as ...

(A huddle of women FRIENDS enter to comfort Zelicah in her sickness)

FRIENDS

(In unison or as individual lines)

Zelicah, dear sister
We miss you at our talks
We miss you at the market
For our long morning walks.

Why keep you so ill
When you have what you will?—
With a husband esteemed
In the sight of the king.
Why keep you so sick
When you have everything?

ZELICAH

Come sit for a small repast
And you shall see
Why my grief and illness last.

(ZELICAH clappers for service; two EUNUCHS enter)

Bring Joseph adorned to serve,
And bring for my friends.

(Several EUNUCHS enter with short stools, silver plates, and oranges for FRIENDS. In his room, JOSEPH is draped in a costly robe by a EUNUCH)

JOSEPH

I do not like this
It causes me concern,
To wait upon her guests
In robes I would not wear.
But I am bound to serve
In every way but sin

For there my conscience guides
But in this I cannot hide.

(A EUNUCH gives JOSEPH a platter of fruit / treats. As HE poceeds, ZELICAH motions HIM to set the platter on the chest. FRIENDS immediately become fixated; ZELICAH motions HIM to leave. FRIENDS stand as if to follow as oranges roll & plates clatter to the floor. JOSEPH hands off the robe to the waiting EUNUCH and goes to sit and work at the office table. EUNUCH exits)

ZELICAH

My ladies, my ladies
What are you doing?

FRIENDS

(As THEY retrieve oranges and plates)
Oh, dear—oh, sorry.
But your slave is—
Soooo beautiful.

ZELICAH

You see him but a moment
Your senses leave.
I see him day upon day—everyday.
So, now you see why,
I am wasting away.

FRIENDS

We deeply fathom your feelings now,
Yet, we don't understand!
With a slave, it seems simple
Confess him your heart.
Why isn't it simple?
Just start with a little charm.

ZELICAH

Daily I persuade.
Daily I plead.
Daily I promise
Things far beyond his needs.
Yet daily he denies me
In the fear of his God.
Thus, daily I cry,
But nothing I've tried
Has done any good.
So now you see why—
I lie in my bed—
Simply wishing to die.

FRIENDS

(As THEY exit, setting the plates on the chest, but taking the oranges with them, THEY stare at JOSEPH as THEY pass, then turn their heads away)

We see indeed her reasons now—
How it's best we not come
To view him again.

(ZELICAH lies motionless. JOSEPH continues work in Potiphar's office. Soon ZELICAH arises and takes the fruit / treat tray to her bed, where she murmurs as SHE pours potions and spices over it. SHE clappers for service; several EUNUCHS enter)

ZELICAH

Take this to Joseph,
And clear away …

(The first EUNUCH takes the platter to JOSEPH and exits. The other EUNUCHS gather the silver plates and stools and exit. As JOSEPH goes to take something,

GUARDIAN places a sword across the food. JOSEPH, startled as if seeing something, draws his hand back)

GUARDIAN

It's laced with magic spells
With potions and spice
To numb that blessed difference
Between men and mice.
You're not above temptation
Though you hide it well—
So don't stack the odds
With her fates and gods.

(GUARDIAN sits again; lays the sword on the table beside him, pauses for a time; then resumes carving)

JOSEPH

(Pushing the plate aside; addressing heaven)
I'm sorry if it seemed I asked for some trial—
But I was young then.
The proofs of my fathers' were grand.

I thought I'd prove
Through actions as they.
I never imagined
My proving might come in—
Non-action.
To hold myself back
In a world that defies understanding.
In this world that thrives
On the drives between tried men and women.

I'm sorry if it seemed
I asked for this.
I shall never so ask again.

Yet for this—
Just for this,
For an end.
I'm not sure
I can fend against the wiles
That besiege on all sides.

Please, that's all that I ask—
Just an end.
Perhaps send me away.
Please—just let this end.

(JOSEPH leans upon the table with his head in his hands. ZELICAH enters and pleads)

ZELICAH

Joseph, please,
Why not eat what I offer?
Why not yield to what I give?
Why not live as others live?
Why torture me so?

(Suddenly ZELICAH throws her arms about the seated JOSEPH in a sideways hug. After a momentary wrestle, HE escapes the chair and HER grasp, keeping the chair between them. THEY are both out of breath)

JOSEPH

If you loved
More than yourself
You would not ask this.
To give
Is for me, not to live.
Can't you comprehend this?

ZELICAH

I comprehend—
That to give, *is* to live.

This too I comprehend—
There is none my peer in beauty.
I decline for a love that is true.
I confer all my honors on you—
For these honors please;
To stay my death
I plead with you.
I plead with you.

If 'tis my husband you fear,
As the king liveth
I shall protect you.

JOSEPH

There is no king, but one.

(JOSEPH exits. ZELICAH proceeds to her lounge)

ZELICAH

'Tis just a matter of time.
He can't hide forever
From what's been decreed.
It's just a matter of time.
(With determination)
But from this day forward
He shall look at me.
I shall collar him
And he shall look at me.

(GUARDIAN exits wearily with sword tip pressed against his forehead; shaking his head)

LIGHT dims slightly on P-Z house; arises on Streets.

Scene 9
Streets of Memphis
(P-Z house visible in dimness)
Several days later

(CITIZENS enter in a festive mood—mingling with the "citizen" audience—in annual celebration of the flooding Nile; a few are playing traditional rhythm instruments. ZELICAH, in her room, will shortly begin to over-robe in princely garments, pulling things from the chest, including a large wrap)

Music 2: (Finger cymbals, timbrels, frame drums, traditional vocal warbling, etc.)

CITIZENS

Come on down to Memphis town
For the grand ol' Nile
Is or'flowing its banks,
Come join these ranks
Of annual renown
Come shout your thanks
For the life-giving rush.

Come see the spill,
Come feel the thrill
While the grand ol' Nile
Is or'washing with gifts

So lift those hands
To the gods above
For there's nothing we love
Like the flooding of mud.

Yes, come on down,
Yes, come on down,
There's nothing but nothing
Like Memphis town.
Every soul will be there
Man, woman, 'n child
There music abounds
With dancing 'n hounds
With wading, parading, 'n frolicking fun
Under life-giving rays of the lordly sun.

So come on down,
Yes, come on down,
For there's nothing but nothing
Like Memphis town.
A place so sublime
'N timeless we pray
With no reason to stay
At home today
Save for the—dying—
'N slaves standing guard.

It's silt that built
This kingdom we say
So join in the way
We repay with our play.
The king will be there
'N foreign guests, too
We're expecting them all
In addition to you.

So come on down to Memphis town
For the grand ol' Nile
Is or'flowing its banks.
Come join these ranks
Of annual renown,
Come shout your thanks
For the life-giving rush.

Come see the spill,
Come feel the thrill
While the grand ol' Nile
Is or'washing with gifts,
So lift those hands
To the gods above
For there's nothing we love
Like the flooding of mud.

Yes, come on down,
Yes, come on down,
There's nothing but nothing
Like Memphis town.
Every soul will be there
Man, woman, 'n child
There music abounds
With dancing 'n hounds
With wading, parading, 'n frolicking fun
Under life-giving rays of the lordly sun.

So come on down,
Yes, come on down,
For there's nothing but nothing
Like Memphis town
(CITIZENS exit as their singing fades)
A place so sublime
'N timeless we pray

With no reason to stay
At home today
Save for the—dying—
'N slaves standing guard.

LIGHT dims on Streets; rises on P-Z house: R–C–L.

Scene 10
Garden & P-Z house
Later that afternoon & evening

(ZELICAH leaves her room; arranges herself on the garden bench with cushions and covers herself to her chin with a large wrap; POTIPHAR enters the office area. GUARDIAN enters, sits, and carves at the table end–L)

POTIPHAR

Zelicah—Zelicah,
It's nearly time for the festival.

ZELICAH

I'm so sorry, my dear,
Would you mind—
Coming out here.

POTIPHAR

Oh, my love,
This lingering affliction worries me.
The doctors despair what to do.

ZELICAH

I feel on the brink of a cure
I think, if I rest today.
This pain in my chest might depart
If I rest today.

So please don't worry—
And don't feel hurried.
I know you have charge
Of many things—
How much you love the festival.
Just give my regards to the king—
I'm sure—everything here will be fine.

POTIPHAR

My love, I dislike to leave you so,
But as you say, I must.
So, please send me word
If there's greater decline—
Otherwise, I'll check back around hour nine.

(As POTIPHAR begins his exit, ASENATH enters near the centre table, wheeling her 11-month old Baby Brother in a carriage, with a scroll protruding)

ASENATH

Papa, I'll stay.
I'll watch over Mama
And the baby today.
And don't be sorry, Papa
I really prefer it this way.
I'd rather read, I'd rather study,
I'd rather ponder on things.
I'll just sit close by,
Yet out of the way.

(To the distant sounds of "Memphis Town" POTIPHAR kisses his children and exits. GUARDIAN watches, smiling as ASENATH arranges herself with scroll and baby in an unobtrusive place amongst the plants. … ZELICAH approaches, decked out with a precious stone headpiece retrieved from the chest. SHE proceeds to perfume everything with cassia, aloes, etc.; returns to lounge on the garden bench. SHE does not observe Asenath or the Baby and, of course, SHE cannot see Guardian, though THEY all watch her with interest. GUARDIAN sniffs some of the scents and feels somewhat alarmed)

GUARDIAN

This is going to be tough.
I pray there's enough memory
To get him through this day.
I can only stand by and whisper in his ear
And pray in hope that he wants to hear.

ZELICAH

Today's the day it's going to be
No more downcast eyes,
No more not seeing me,
Else I swear I'll die, or maybe him,
Depending on the mood that he puts me in.

(JOSEPH enters through the garden, but seeing how Zelicah sits in the way HE turns back. HE is wearing a metal collar that keeps him from lowering his head. ZELICAH is irritated by Joseph's actions)

What ails you?
I merely take sun in my illness,
Go, pass to your work—

I make room.
I shall not touch you.
By all the stars, what ails you?

If you agree to look at me …
You can be free of that.

(JOSEPH passes gingerly to Potiphar's table. His work is made difficult by the collar. Within moments ZELICAH confronts Joseph. HE looks at her directly)

You might as well know—
Nothing has changed.
I've said enough times what I want.
Need I say it again so plain
A child would understand.

JOSEPH

I am not a child.

(THEY stare at one other. As GUARDIAN speaks, JOSEPH closes his eyes)

GUARDIAN

Joseph, think of your mother—
Of your father, too,
Engraving names of honored sons.

JOSEPH

(Turning his head as best he can)

I see—!

ZELICAH

My love
What frightens you?

JOSEPH

I see …
My father's face.

ZELICAH

What is with you?
There is none in this house.
I see nothing but you.

JOSEPH

Truly said—
You have gone beyond perceiving.
But I …
I must remember,
I was born to see.

(JOSEPH moves away, then pauses. ZELICAH stands with hands clasp in waiting anxiety)

Yet, why do I see too—
How beautiful—?

GUARDIAN

She's in a madness.
It's not a nice combination.

JOSEPH

Yet—it is true.
There is none her peer in beauty.

GUARDIAN

To lean to the brink
Of such madness is …
Sorrow.

JOSEPH

I do not understand
Why I'm in this land
Where idols abound.
Surrounded by strangers
I cannot prefer.
I know nothing of love
Yet desires come.
What am I to do
When desires come?

(Despairing, addressing heaven)

Is it really so wrong?
I don't seem to belong,
Any place, anywhere.

GUARDIAN

This seems a bit much
For a lad of eighteen.
He hasn't been around,
He's still a sapling green.

(JOSEPH turns back to face Zelicah)

(To Joseph, pleading)

Joseph, can you hear—
There is no one in the wings
To forge the countless things
That turn upon this moment.

(JOSEPH closes his eyes)

You are here for a reason
For a season to come.

(JOSEPH turns to leave for a final time. ZELICAH grabs his tunic at the chest. JOSEPH stands motionless, eyes still closed. ZELICAH draws a dagger from her sleeve and presses it against Joseph's throat below the collar)

ZELICAH

I vow—
As the king liveth
You die,
If you refuse me.

(JOSEPH opens his eyes. They are raised to heaven. HE twists free and flees, leaving a torn piece of clothing in Zelicah's hands. ZELICAH begins to sob, holding the torn cloth to her face. SHE stumbles to her lounge. ASENATH begins crying and exits with the Baby. GUARDIAN places his lamb carving & rolled note on the table end - L and exits with hand over his heart)

(The WOMEN FRIENDS enter)

[Actor's & Director's Caution: The concerns and fears for the balance of the scene are genuine and serious. Please resist any temptation to play upon or over- emphasize possible humor.]

FRIENDS

Zelicah, dear sister
We missed you at the—
Oh, dear—
You do not look well,
In truth, you look wretched,
What have you to tell?

ZELICAH

There is nothing
Save … I threatened him.
(Showing the dagger)
And he fled.
(Shows the torn piece)
Now, I dread he'll betray me—
Reveal it all.

FRIENDS

(Singly or as a group)
Listen dear friend,
We must figure a plan.
You must manage this damage—
Fend off what you can.

You have too much to lose.
You must carefully choose
All your words—
Perhaps, accuse him first.
Say the worst you can—
We'll back you up true.

ZELICAH

Perhaps this is the way—
Let's say, he bothered
And pestered you, too.

FRIENDS

We'll confess to our husbands
They'll pass on the word:
He's a thief and a crook,
A liar to boot—
Now don't get that look.
He's merely a slave,

That's *not* a fall,
But with you it's quite otherwise—
You've got it all.

ZELICAH

I do not have it all.

FRIENDS

You have enough
To get out of that gown and
Clean up this place.

(Hurrying to remove Zelicah's over-robe & to conceal all evidence in the chest)

ZELICAH

What if he tells?
I'll be terribly shamed.
Where will I go?
How will this end?

FRIENDS

Just feed your husband's wrath,
That's where the truth hides best.
We'll go right now—
We'll get out the word.

(Exit quickly)

LIGHT dims briefly for time passage; arises as …

(POTIPHAR rushes in to find ZELICAH weeping in bed. Two EUNUCHS follow, but stop in the office awaiting orders)

POTIPHAR

My dearest, my love are you hurt—
What has he done?
I heard ...

ZELICAH

(With emotion; mostly from her shame)

'Twas he—seized me,
So I tore his clothes
With a piercing cry,
(Holds up the scrap)
And he fled.
It was too terrible.

(POTIPHAR takes the scrap of Joseph's clothing)

POTIPHAR

There's nothing to fear my love,
I'm now here
And he shall die,
When the flogging is done.
(HE turns to the office area and orders the Eunuchs)
Find that ...
Vile Joseph and ...
Force him to the flogging yard.
Strip him and whip him,
Forty at the least.

(EUNUCHS alarmed, shake their heards in disbelief. POTIPHAR motions, waving the torn cloth in anger)

GO. NOW.
There shall be no delay.
(EUNUCHS hurry out, shaking their heads, mouthing "No, no." POTIPHAR pauses in his own confusion)

Yet ... how can this be?
How could he—
Of all men—
How could he—?
(Casting doubt away, HE girdles the torn cloth and turns back to Zelicah)
My love, do you wish to come and see
His flogging before he die?

ZELICAH

(Fearful, despairing; also self-reflecting)
Ah, my husband, please—
Please, let us pause
Let us do the right thing.
Let us ask—should one die,
Should one make such a forfeit,
For what he only tried?

POTIPHAR

He must never be allowed
Such trusts again.
To ever inflict
Such wrenching pain.

ZELICAH

My love, I hadn't thought this through,
But I'm calmed now with you
And I see, how much he's done,
How blessed we've been,
And I think—perhaps if I just
Kept out of his way.

POTIPHAR

My love, whatever was good in him,
Seems now but vile.

And while he lives
I can't but hate and despise him.

ZELICAH

Listen, please listen.
You know how frugal
I've always tried to be,
Thus I plead,
Even in tears and shame
That he not die
For what he only tried.
Cast him into prison,
And perhaps by and by
We'll try to sell him.

POTIPHAR

Such is too good for him!

ZELICAH

But why pay a price
Greater than we need?
I am calmed—and I see
That his death shouldn't be.

POTIPHAR

What of his life, my love?
All the lies he has lived
To make us love and trust him?

ZELICAH

For lies alone should one die?
Please, just cast him into prison—
(Keep his truths confined.)
Just cast him into prison,
Give yourself time to decide.

POTIPHAR

My order has been given,
His flogging has begun.

ZELICAH

But you've always said,
Deciding in coolness
Is a better way.

POTIPHAR

You are too good, my love, …
Thus, in part, I'll do as you say.
We'll leave his life
For the priests to weigh,
When the flogging is done,
When the day dawn breaks.

ZELICAH

(I never meant for this to be!
I went to the market merely to see
What everyone spoke of.)

POTIPHAR

Come, dry your tears,
I'm going to be here
More than ever I was.
We're going to become
As once we were.

ZELICAH

I never meant for this to be!

POTIPHAR

Hush, my love,
Leave it all to me.

(POTIPHAR sits on the edge of the bed and strokes Zelicah's hair as SHE sobs)

Hush ... hush,
Hush, my love,
My only love.

LIGHT briefly to BLACKOUT to suggest time passage. *ASENATH* with baby carriage enters in the dark.

(When the LIGHT rises, ZELICAH is asleep. POTIPHAR gingerly arises so as not to disturb her. ASENATH is leaning upon the office table-L asleep beside the baby carriage. As POTIPHAR begins his exit past the Baby and sleeping ASENATH, the BABY'S soft voice is heard)

BABY
Lies my mama hath spoken.

POTIPHAR
What, what?!
Who speaks in this quiet?!

BABY
Lies my mama hath spoken.

POTIPHAR
Child is that you?!

(ASENATH awakens)

ASENATH
Papa, did you call?

POTIPHAR

Susssh, my child.
Listen!

BABY

This is the truth.
Mama laid in wait,
A knife to his throat.
He fled.
She feared
And was ashamed.
Lies my mama hath spoken.

POTIPHAR

Does this baby speak?

ASENATH

No, Papa never before.
But I saw, and it's true.
I heard, too, and it's true.
I'm so sorry for you
But it's true.
Oh, Papa, please,
It's not fair
That he bear any harm.

(POTIPHAR hurries out. ASENATH sees the lamb carving and note. Reads note. Strokes carving. Holds it to her cheek. Exits with the baby, carving, & note)

Stage to BLACKOUT. Joseph's room disappears; office converts to a simple Court; Zelicah's lounge may disappear too. LIGHT rises only on the Court.

Scene 11
Priest-Judge's Court
Next day

(Three PRIEST-JUDGES enter with POTIPHAR and GUARDIAN following. JOSEPH, looking disheveled, is marched in between two EUNUCHS)

EUNUCHS (2)
Left, right, left, right
He's gonna get left, left, left
When they rule she is right
Though she's not—
(Stamping right feet)

PRIESTS
What has this slave to say?
Are these the ways of your foreign God?!

JOSEPH
In defense of my God,
I'll reveal what I know.
For too long a time
She desired what was wrong.
Till yesterday, she laid in wait—
I denied her and fled.
She feared and was ashamed.

PRIESTS
Esteemed Potiphar,
As voice for your wife—
Please speak her words
To this alleged crime.

POTIPHAR

I speak her accusing words
At the time.
"'Twas he seized me
So I tore his clothes
With a piercing cry
And he fled."

PRIESTS

What is this—
A tearing of clothes?!
You mean only these clothes
That the slave was wearing?

POTIPHAR

I can but repeat
What she has said.
And to say, of myself
He has forever been
The best I ever knew.

PRIESTS

In full fairness then,
We must examine this tear,
To seek where the truth lies,
Whether he lives
Or whether he dies.

(POTIPHAR provides the torn cloth that was tucked in his girdle. JOSEPH advances toward the beckoning PRIESTS who examine the tear against his clothing)

GUARDIAN

(To Priests)
With the slave so torn
And the mistress so free,
Just answer—
Why would this be?

PRIESTS

(Nodding to each other)
On the weight of this evidence
We've come,
Reluctantly to decide—
(Collective sigh)
'Twas she held him fast as he fled.
(To Potiphar)
We're so sorry to advise—
Usually it, lies the other way.

EUNUCHS

Right, ri—

PRIESTS

(Motioning for silence)
Yet, we feel inclined also to conclude—
This slave is not wholly without blame.
(Softly to each other)
Such face dictates
A hidden place.
(To Joseph)
For unwitting provocations,
You are sentenced—
Not to die,
But to lie in prison
Against the stain that might leak
Upon Zelicah's fair name.

Ten years, at the least—
With our regrets.
Yet, knowing it's best—
How the losses are less,
How the stress is now relieved.

Thus close we this court
With its records under seal.

(The PRIESTS exit—SL with the EUNUCHS escorting JOSEPH to prison. GUARDIAN exits behind Priests)

EUNUCHS

Left, right, left, we were right
He's going to get left, left left,
Far out'a sight
Man, it's not right.

POTIPHAR

I wish I understood
Why this is—
What this means—
Save, I love her.
Without you
She just might recover.

She's not as you think,
Somewhere there's a link
With the fates, with the gods,
With paths we must trod—
But always, she was a good mother.
I hope you'll understand—
Also for the sake of our children—
That they be not shamed in this land.

It's not right. I know it's not right.
Yet somehow, it seems also, not wrong.

LIGHT dims on the Court; begins to rise on the PRISON (with JOSEPH and GUARD) as it comes out of the deep shadows—DSL.

(POTIPHAR moves toward the prison)

What comes and goes round
The gods and our fates will decide.
I wish that could guide you—
For this time you were meant to be ours,
In these seasons without reasons
Till the season's long past.

LIGHT full-up on the prison.

Scene 12
Prison
Unfolding Year

(In a barred cell, JOSEPH is laying on a cot, reading, while a GUARD braids a leather girdle / belt nearby at a rough table. Several scrolls lay near Joseph's cot)

POTIPHAR
(Standing nearby in the shadows to the right)
What more can I say?
It's just—we live day upon day.

And though in passing years, it might seem,
I'll never forget you.
You've changed me—
You've opened my eyes
To wiser things.

And so while your life takes its course
I'll pray evermore—
Please ease his way.

(ZELICAH, wearing a hooded cape, enters quietly and waits in the opposite left shadows)

Please ease his way.

(POTIPHAR exits. ZELICAH quietly sets a coin on Guard's table)

GUARD

His daily visitor is here
And what's the count in here?
(Picks up the coin)
He's just begun his second year.
(HE tosses and catches the coin and happily exits. JOSEPH continues reading)

ZELICAH

This needn't be
If you'd come with me—
If you'd do as I ask.
(Silence)
What good is your fasting
What good are your prayers?
I'm always here.
(Shakes the bars in frustration; then flat, despairing)

I could push so far
Men would hate you.

JOSEPH

What is the use to answer
A thousand times
You do not hear.

ZELICAH

I could sell you into a distant land.
(Silence)
I could whisper, you are strange—
Unnatural.
(Silence)
I could search out your kin,
Shame your good name.
(Silence)
I could make you more happy
Than ...
(Silence. SHE begins to sob)
Do you know, do you care?
You shall never see me again?

JOSEPH

(Earnestly, sits upright on the cot)
You must remember Asteho.

ZELICAH

She is gone.
She is long gone.

JOSEPH

(Stands upright)
Mistress, please—

ZELICAH

Before I go forever
I want you to know,
That despite all I've said—
All I've done,
I always cared for Potiphar.
He always cared for me.

So with tomorrow's sunrise
You can say goodbye to me.

JOSEPH

Mistress, please
Your life is—

ZELICAH

No, please, just listen—
The gods have blessed my Potiphar
Beyond his hopes—
Beyond his dreams—
For you changed his life,
All the things he esteems.

So come the morrow
With the king's great trust,
My husband becomes
The new priest of On.
And I with him,
Say goodbye to Memphis ...

JOSEPH

(Relieved)
Yes, I did hear,
To be named in his newness

As Pentephres
The Priest of ON
In Heliopolis.
This I had heard.

ZELICAH

None does merit more than he—
My loving,
Beloved Potiphar,
My Pentephres.
But I—
How shall I live?

JOSEPH

Perhaps you will find
Your own newness there too.

ZELICAH

How do I?
(Begins sobbing again)
I have come this last time—
Wanting you—
And wanting to be rid of you.
More than I can say—
To be rid of you—
Rid of this madness.

I hate what I have done.
I hate what I have become.
I want to be rid of you.
I want to be as I was—
How do I? How do I?

(ZELICAH sinks to the floor. JOSEPH walks to the bars)

JOSEPH

Hold fast, you've begun.
You'll find the way.
Every day shall improve,
Just be true.
You've begun what to do.

ZELICAH

How do I? How do I?
How do I?

Dim to BLACKOUT &

INTERMISSION



[For a synopsis of the stage setup for Act II, see p. 173-174]

Act Two

ACT TWO

Prologue

TIME: Twelve years after imprisonment
Mid-morning

PLACE: Streets of Memphis, Egypt

BEFORE THE CURTAIN RISES on Act Two, "Memphis Town" begins as the Citizens / Street Advertisers parade through the audience area or foyer gathering any lingering "Citizen" audience to their seats.

Music 3: Traditional spontaneous celebration as in Music 2 (p. 59)

CITIZENS

Come on down to Memphis town
For the grand ol' Nile
Is or'flowing its banks,
Come join these ranks
Of annual renown,
Come shout your thanks
For the life-giving rush.

Come see the spill,
Come feel the thrill
While the grand ol' Nile
Is or'washing with gifts,
So lift those hands
To the gods above
For there's nothing we love
Like the flooding of mud.

Yes, come on down,
Yes, come on down,
There's nothing but nothing
Like Memphis town.
Every soul will be there
Man, woman, 'n child
There music abounds
With dancing 'n hounds
With wading, parading 'n frolicking fun
Under life-giving rays of the lordly sun.

So come on down,
Yes, come on down
For there's nothing but nothing
Like Memphis town.
A place so sublime
'N timeless we pray
With no reason to stay
At home today,
Save for the—dying—
'N slaves standing guard.

It's silt that built
This kingdom we say,
So join in the way
We repay with our play.

The king will be there,
'N foreign guests, too
We're expecting them all
In addition to you.

So come on down to Memphis town
For the grand ol' Nile
Is or'flowing its banks.
Come join these ranks
Of annual renown,
Come shout your thanks
For the life-giving rush.

Come see the spill,
Come feel the thrill
While the grand ol' Nile
Is or'washing with gifts,
So lift those hands
To the gods above
For there's nothing we love
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Yes, come on down,
Yes, come on down,
There's nothing but nothing
Like Memphis town.
Every soul will be there
Man, woman, 'n child
There music abounds
With dancing 'n hounds
With wading, parading 'n frolicking fun
Under life-giving rays of the lordly sun.

CURTAIN RISES

Scene 1
Prison
Immediately following

The cell door is open. Stacks of scrolls are seen in the cell. A table and two chairs occupy the outer area where a large "chess-type" game (not sennet) rests on a game board on top of the rough table.

(AT RISE: we see JOSEPH and CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD watching the tail end of the street procession as the sounds of "Memphis Town" recede and fade)

CITIZENS

So come on down,
Yes, come on down,
For there's nothing but nothing
Like Memphis town.
A place so sublime
'N timeless we pray
With no reason to stay
At home today,
Save for the—dying—
'N slaves standing guard.

(JOSEPH & CAPTAIN turn from being spectators in order to resume their interrupted game)

CAPTAIN

Well, my good man,
This makes it twelve years to the day.
So, it seems you've been forgot
Despite their promises.
I think it's your move.
And I'm sorry they've forgot
Yet I'm not
For in your winning way
You've made my job almost too easy.

JOSEPH

Your move.

CAPTAIN

You've kept our prison books—
Even reformed a crook or two.
And if I don't say so,
No one looks into our dreams quite like you,
Nor brews the prison stew as fine as you.
We've got almost fat.

Yes, I confess,
You've made my job
Almost too easy.
Your move.
Yet to tell the truth,
I never believed what they said you did.
If you ask me, they hid you here
For the shame of it.
Frankly, I've always thought—
Was it not to shift the blame of it?

JOSEPH

Your move.

CAPTAIN

And though you've never said,
I've got a head for such things—
Astute as you know.
'Twould be a rare thing
To spring upon me a surprise.
Your move.
Yes, I'd hate to lose you.

JOSEPH

(Removing two games pieces)
Like your King—and his mate.

CAPTAIN

(Staring in disbelief)
Waaaaa!

JOSEPH

Your mind and your tongue
Were waa-ndering.

CAPTAIN

Waaaaa!

(TWO EUNUCHS of Pharaoh's guard march in)

EUNUCHS (2)

Where's that man
By the name of Joseph,
We need that man,
By the name of Joseph.
Pharaoh's called
Out for lowly Joseph,
Where's that Joseph man.

(At CAPTAIN's motion, THEY hand a good tunic to JOSEPH)

Ah, here you go,
Pharaoh wants to see you.
Bow down low,
Pharaoh's in a foul mood.
Wash up good,
Who'd've ever guessed it,
A slave unrav'ling dreams.

BLACKOUT as prison scene vanishes, replaced by a Throne room with a dais of seven tiers; a throne on top.

Scene 2

Pharaoh's Throne Room (Memphis)

Same morning & next day

(PHARAOH enters the throne room with an entourage of four "WISE" MEN. Two solemn SENTRY standard-bearers precede him and two fan-bearers follow; HE proceeds to sit on the throne in due course)

PHARAOH

No, no, no,
Can't you get it right?
Seven cows, seven cobs,
Seven, seven what?

WISE # ONE

O king, I thin–k it might be coming clear.
Seven daughters are born and they ... die?
Seven kingdoms you win and you ... lose?

PHARAOH

'Tis you who does lose.
It's not like I didn't dream, too
What it means, I just forgot,
So don't you—
I'll know it when I hear it,
And so far, you all lose.

WISE # TWO

Oh, king, we pray we're not wrong—
To say 'tis a warning—how seven strong cities
Fall to seven Canaan ones,
Then those seven strong—

PHARAOH

Always bad news.
All right, who is next?

WISE # THREE

O king, I scarce dare confess,
Of seven royal wives who live and who die.
Of seven good sons falling to … seven bad ones?

PHARAOH

Unless I hear worse—
You are the quite clearly the worst.
Come, come, choose your last guess
And try to be wise.
(Stares at Wise # FOUR)
You there, yes you.

WISE # FOUR

O king, 'twere just a fleeted thought,
I'd rather … not say.
(PHARAOH motions for speech or commands: "SAY")

'Twas just—we four wise ones
May soon ...
May soon ...
(Swallows hard unable to finish)

PHARAOH

I think I've heard enough.
(While drawing a thumb across his throat)
A fitting fate for you all.

(The TWO EUNUCHS escort JOSEPH in. GUARDIAN quietly follows. JOSEPH bows)

EUNUCHS (2)

Here he is,
Here is lowly Joseph.
We brought him calm,
Just like you said, sir.
He's not confused.
We stilled his beating heart, sir,
He's primed to give his views.

PHARAOH

Well, young man,
Old Mirod, my grape man
Tells me you have a keen wit—
That you'll fit meaning to my dreams
As you did for him ...
(Fixes his gaze on the WISE MEN)
And ... a certain careless, headless baker.

Now I say, be clear,
Don't fear, don't flatter,
Tell it true—whether sad or alarming
Just do the right thing. Tell it true.

JOSEPH

O gracious king,
This comes not in me
But if my God wish
He will tell what it means.

PHARAOH

I stood upon the bank of our great river.
And from out of that river
Came seven kine—
Fat-fleshed and well-favored,
To feed upon the hills.

GUARDIAN

(To Joseph)
In the meadow,
To feed in the meadow
He's testing you.

JOSEPH

Perhaps they fed in the meadow?

PHARAOH

(To self)
'Tis true—though I've never yet said—
(To Joseph)
Then from out of that river
Seven poor kine, ill-favored, lean-fleshed
The worst I ever saw,
Standing by the others
In the MEA-DOW.

GUARDIAN

On the brink of the river
He's really testing.

JOSEPH

Perhaps standing together
On the brink of the river?

PHARAOH

(To self)
I think, he's more than good—
(To Joseph)
Then the lean did eat up the fat,
But they remained lean and ill-favored,
And I awoke.
What do you make of all that?

GUARDIAN

There were two dreams
He's still testing.

JOSEPH

Perhaps I should hear
Of the second dream, too.

PHARAOH

(To self)
He could have heard,
Yet I'm quite impressed.
(To Joseph)
I'll tell you the rest
Though it's highly bizarre.
Seven ears of corn came up—
Upon a single stalk, full and good.
Then seven others came,
Withered and blasted by the east wind
And it was, as with the kine.
The blasted did eat up the full and good.
And none can tell me WHY!

(JOSEPH pauses, eyes closed at first; GUARDIAN'S hand rests briefly on his shoulder)

JOSEPH

The dream is one, not two.
God reveals to the king what God will do.
Seven fat kine, seven full ears
Mean seven good years
Of livestock and grain.
Seven thin kine, seven blasted ears
Mean seven bad years
Of famine and wind.

PHARAOH

He's hit it to the head,
It's precisely as he said.
(Gesturing largely)
Yet, what's the use of all this?
I've enough worries without this.

JOSEPH

Take a man, discreet and wise,
Set him up and authorize
A gathering of crops—
One fifth—in every year of plenty.
Store it all, and in the famine
Call upon your stores,
And in the blast of the east wind
Egypt shall perish not.

PHARAOH

(To the Wise Men)
Well, my dear advisers
With your new lease on life,
Give your best advice

And this time be wise.
What would you counsel?
Whom would you choose?
Such that none lose
(Subtle, casual gesture across throat)
Whether sooner or late.

WISE MEN

(Unconsciously protecting their throats)
In full accord, we fully agree—
That what the king thinks best
Is what surely should be.

PHARAOH

I think there is none
So discreet and wise
As this Joseph man.
Thus I think it good
We should set him up in the land
Second to me.
Any questions—you all understand?
YOU wish to hazard again?

WISE # FOUR

Just a small query?
Does not the law say, none shall rule
Save he speaks the seventy tongues of man?
Save he advance to the throne
Step upon step, language upon language?

PHARAOH

What you try is not
Surprising, yet true and good.
Thus we shall test him ...
On the morrow.

(JOSEPH looks a little overwhelmed; the WISE MEN look pleased)

GUARDIAN

Don't worry, faithful friend,
For the ones you've not studied
God will lend you His tongue.

LIGHT dims and rises for time passage to the next day.

(CITIZENS gather in to witness the language testing. As JOSEPH advances to the throne step by step HE speaks seven[ty] languages–phonetically*. The WISE MEN grow in astonishment)*

[NOTE to directors: Languages and dialects change dramatically over time, so the seven languages chosen hereafter represent the oldest in the world, yet with no way of assuring true pronunciation from the time period. If you have access to native speakers, you can improve the latter-day pronunciation by JOSEPH, however even a flawed (yet confident) pronunciation can convey the drama. The words may be sung in unison or, if preferable, JOSEPH can follow GUARDIAN. The translations and English phonetic transcriptions (**EPT**) were provided by Day Translations, Inc. at daytranslations.com. See Appendices, page 196 for an image of their translations and EPTs.]

GUARDIAN	JOSEPH
	(Arabic)
O king of the great Nile,	(see image at p. 196) EPT: /ya malik anni:l alazi:m/
	(Greek)
River of life to parched land,	Ποταμός της ζωής σε καμένη γη EPT: Potamós tis zoís se kaméni gi [´ = accent]
	(Basque)
I offer my strengths	Nire indarrak eskaintzen ditut EPT: /'nire in'darrak es'kaintsen di'tut/
	(Hebrew)
In the name of my God,	(see image at p. 196) EPT: Be'shem Elohai
	(Chinese)
To ever serve in truth and right,	(see image at p. 196) EPT: Yong yuan yi zhen li he zheng que de fang shi fu wu
	(Tamil)
From this great day,	(see image at p. 196) EPT: Indha nalla naalilirundu
	(Lithuanian)
To the setting sun of my life.	Tam, kas skleidžia saulę mano gyvenimui. EPT: Tum, cas sclaidgia saule muno gevianemue

CITIZENS

Come shout his acclaim,
A miracle's hap—

(PHARAOH stops their exuberance; with ceremony places his ring on Joseph's hand, a princely garment on his shoulders, a golden collar about his neck/chest)

PHARAOH

Listen, O people of this land,
This man shall henceforth
Be called Zaphnath-paaneah.
He shall be second in all affairs—
Judge your burdens and cares.
From his hand come your salaries—
To him direct your enquiries.
Now you may rejoice.

LIGHT fades here; rises on the streets.

(As CITIZENS move to the streets; GUARDIAN exits)

Scene 3

Streets of Memphis

Immediately following

Music 4:	**(Finger cymbals, timbrels, frame drums, traditional vocal warbling, etc.)**

(In the marching chaos, spontaneous rhythms sound; the road is perfumed with aloes, etc. CITIZENS bow as the KING & JOSEPH parade in two chariots—or just

walking, depending on your resources; accompanied by SENTRY standard-bearers and fan-bearers)

CITIZENS

Come shout his praises now we say,
A miracle's happened this very day.
He's good, he's wise
He stood the test.
Now all he needs—
Is to do all of the rest.

Some say he's a slave,
But slave he is not
For what he has got
In wits 'n looks,
You wouldn't be finding,
Even in books.

The Pharaoh's declared he's nobly born,
He'll be coming around to inspect the corn.
Long live the king,
May his second live too
He's honest 'n wise 'n good 'n true.
He's pious 'n handsome 'n humble too.

Come drop your gifts in the offering bin,
The king's absolved him of every sin.

(PHARAOH & JOSEPH exit DSR. CITIZENS lineup jubilating till they exit DSL, depositing their gifts)

He's good, he's wise
He stood the test.
Now all he needs—
Is to do all of the rest.

He's been sent by the gods,
Preserved against odds
Been tutored 'n tried,
He's well-qualified.

He knows what it's like
To be hungry 'n poor.
Not more could we wish—
Save long live the king
May his second live too.
He's honest 'n wise 'n good 'n true.
He's pious 'n handsome 'n humble too.
Come drop your gifts in the offering bin
The king's absolved him of every sin.

(JOSEPH enters a Spot—DSR as the last rejoicing CITIZEN exits SL)

JOSEPH

O Lord of all creation
Overwhelmed is the one
Who keeps trust in thee.

BLACKOUT. ... LIGHT rises SR.

Scene 4

P-Z house (Heliopolis)

Several days later

At SR, Asenath's second-story room can be seen off the enclosed courtyard of P-Z house. A window is part

of back wall of Asenath's bedroom. Bed is covered in royal colors; niches contain Egyptian idols; near bed is the lamb carving. Several scrolls are stacked neatly around. Stairs lead down to the courtyard where there are plants and the stone bench from Act I. (See set description, pp. 173, 175)

(ASENATH, now a beautiful young woman of eighteen, is lying on her bed, reading. SHE wears bracelets, neck pieces etc. with the images of her gods upon them. See p. 182. An enraptured SUITOR surreptitiously enters the courtyard to stand below Asenath's room; calls in a whisper tone to avoid discovery)

SUITOR ONE

Asenath, Asenath, Asenath.
Please come to the window.
Is your hair as they say?
Is it loose or entwined?
Is your skin
Like a ray of misted sunshine?
Let my dreams,
Let my wishes come true.

(Three other SUITORS enter in sequence; each glares at each new interloper in turn. ALL will speak in strained whisper tones to avoid discovery. ASENATH tries to ignore them, eventually plugging her ears)

SUITOR TWO

Asenath, exquisite, Asenath.
Please throw me a kiss
'Cause I miss you so much.

SUITOR THREE
Asenath, please come to your window.

SUITOR FOUR
Asenath, won't you come to the window.

SUITOR ONE
I was here first.

SUITOR THREE
Maybe today,
But not yesterday,
Or the day before,
Or the one before that!

SUITOR TWO
Well, you have never seen her.

SUITOR ONE
And what about you?

SUITOR TWO
Well, I intend to.

SUITOR FOUR
Well, I intend to, too.

SUITOR THREE
You want to settle it here and now.
Or are you all just cowards.

(ZELICAH enters with a basket of flowers that she will arrange in the scene)

ZELICAH

Shoo, shoo,
Can't you see
She wants nothing to do
With any of you.
Can't you take a clue.

(The four SUITORS are bustled out)

ASENATH

Thank you, Mama.

ZELICAH

My child, you can't hide forever.

ASENATH

Well, I intend to.

ZELICAH

(To self)
Oh wretched past, I feel
Somehow responsible.

ASENATH

I don't understand why I feel this way,
But I want nothing to do with men.
They're so sappy and women too
When they think they're in love—
So moping and blue.
So besotted
Their thinking's all twisted and knotted.

They can't concentrate
They wait and they wait
In agonized, blissful state.

They hold conversations in their head,
As they lie on their beds
Building pyramids in the air—
It's all just too silly.

I shall forever keep above
All that craziness of love.

ZELICAH

Oh, wretched past.
She was too young
To remember in her mind,
Yet in her heart
She retains the fool
Her mother proved
In breaking every rule.

She schools her feelings—
She reads and studies books
And refuses to look
Into the heart of things,
For fear, for fear
She'll appear as her foster-mother.

Oh, wretched past.
How do I tell her
It's past—it didn't last.
Though it lasted far far, too long.

How do I tell her,
It wasn't him, it was me.
That there are men who can be
As good as he. And men
As great as my Pentephres.

Yet how do I confess,
We left a mess of things.
How do I tell her
It wasn't right—
Yet in the stars it didn't seem wrong.

We would have rescued him—
We wanted too,
But against the stars
Against one's fate
There are things
One must not do,
Though with all our desire
We wanted to.

How do I tell her
How we cried
How we felt to die with joy at the news—
He was freed, he was honored, and cleared.

How do I tell her what I confessed
To the king, when he inquired into everything
That happened those twelve years past.

Would she understand?
Would she despise me?
Does it matter that she know?
Would it make any difference?

ASENATH

Mama, is it true what the servants say,
That a slave now stands next to the king?
How he was imprisoned for a terrible thing,
Yet through cleverness
He, a slave, now rules next to the king?

ZELICAH

She does not remember clear,
She was too young.
He was a slave—just one of many.

Oh, my dear, there are things I must tell
And I will,
In a week or two,
When I return from the estate.

When I figure out what to say.
And I pray—it won't
Complicate things.
(ZELICAH exits)

ASENATH

Oh Mama, when you go
I miss you so,
For when I'm alone,
My memories flow
To my sweet, little brother.

I don't understand,
Why children die.
I don't understand.
I don't understand much of anything.

Yet— yet, I love reading books.
I love looking for answers,

I love the blue sky.
I'd love to fly like the birds.
I love the lotus and the bee,
I love the flowering tree,
The river and the sea.

I love the gods and the stars,
I love looking far into the night
At the twinkling lights.
I love imagining things
Like the olden days
Of the first kings and queens.

I love imagining times to come—
Of even just one who will remember me
And be happy that I lived.
(Strokes the lamb carving)
I love so many things,
I'm just not in love with love.
I don't know why.
I'm just not in love with love.

BLACKOUT–SR; LIGHTS up–SL.

Scene 5
Pharaoh's throne room (Memphis)
Several days later

(PHARAOH & SON enter)

SON
Father, please may I not go to Heliopolis?

PHARAOH
If I have said it once
I have said it a hundred, hundred times—
The answer is no, no, no.

SON
But she is so beautiful.

PHARAOH
And how would you know?

SON
That's what they all say.

PHARAOH
And who is they?

SON
Those who sing at her window.

PHARAOH
She may be beautiful, my son,
But she is not the one for you.
When there are daughters of kings
And kingdoms with designs,
A father thinks things through
Which might not be clear to you.

That's why I insist
The Moabite king's daughter
Be the only one on your list.

SON
I'm not keen for a Moabite queen
I want Asenath.

PHARAOH
Even kings don't always get what they want.

(SON exits in a huff as PHARAOH calls after)

Sometimes not even, the kingdom.
(To self)
Sometimes, not even sound offspring.

(JOSEPH enters from the direction of the son's exit and PHARAOH addresses him with a heavy sigh)

Why do we, keep these children?

JOSEPH

My father once said,
Kings get respect;
But fathers mostly get
Disputing and excuses.

PHARAOH

Who would this
Seasoned father be?
I believe,
I should like him.

JOSEPH

There may come a time,
O king, when my God will allow
The telling.

PHARAOH

I sometimes think—
This sole and lonesome God of yours
Is too full of odd instructions.
Though I suppose I could use
An oracle or two
About my pestering son.
What does one do?

JOSEPH

Well, if it helps,
As my father often said,
Just wed your problems to solutions.

PHARAOH

(A subtle "light-dawns" hand motion)
Listen, my friend,
Let's change the topic to you.
How you haven't yet got yourself a wife,
And I've—
Just had a thought
Pop right to my mind.

JOSEPH

O king, I wish not to offend,
But the God I avow
Must be the God of my wife.

PHARAOH

'Tis hardly to be
In this land, my friend,
So for that, I'll be blunt.
Without fronds to the trunk
Your tree's a dead end
Save you wed one of ours.

JOSEPH

I know it sounds odd
To say I must wait
Till my God provides,
Yet I must.
He always works out
What is best in the end—
I intend no offense.

PHARAOH

You remind me of another,
As our hist'ry reads—
'Twas an old Abram by name.
He was highly strange, too—
Quite a bit like you
With his lonesome God.
But love is love, is it not?

JOSEPH

I've heard much of this Abram, yes,
But I don't know much of love.
Save in envy of a father's love
I was sold as a slave.
For a woman's obsessive love
I spent twelve years in prison.

Thus I think it best,
I should keep above
All the craziness of love.

PHARAOH

Would it help to know—
She confessed it all,
She's truly sorry.
But we reviewed the stars
And as far as we could tell
What happened was to be—
The reasons escape us
But it seemed meant to be.
That's why we move on,
Why we hope for the best.
Why I strongly suggest
On your upcoming tour—
Just in case—

You might keep your eyes open
For more than just corn.

Now I know you're not accustomed
To all this fancy dress,
But it comes with the title
And the people like more than less.
So if it helps, just remember
It's not really you—
It's me. So all I ask is
Please do me up well.

(Motions Joseph away. JOSEPH bows and exits)

Well, God of this Joseph,
Invisible God that you are—
If you are.
He's still far too naive
For all he's been through.
Though I suppose he'll soon learn
How thousands cling to the sleeves
Of fame and power
To achieve their own ends.
Sometimes all the scheming's
Downright hard to believe.

Yet, might I mention?—
That with his noble looks,
His virtue's still highly at risk if
That's still important.

Yes, I confess all this—
From experience.
(Turns to begin HIS exist. Turns back)

Ah yes, one final thought,
Maybe two.
That beautiful maid in Heliopolis—
A meeting or two
Might do the trick—
That's all I ask—
Merely two things.
For my pestering son
That Moabite wife.
And plainly put,
Your long-patient Joseph
Really needs
To get a life.
(PHARAOH exits)

LIGHT fades; rises on tour route-DS.

Scene 6

Various rural locations in Egypt

Over several days

Facades of various rural / village scenes may briefly appear.

(JOSEPH tours the kingdom in a gold chariot pulled by a magnificent white horse or on horseback or as your resources allow. GUARDIAN walks alongside. JOSEPH is accompanied by several EUNUCHS & SENTRIES—two being standard-bearers. This *ESCORT* tries to *protect as best they can. CROWDS of people swarm in and out in enthusiasm. The WOMEN are mesmerized)*

ESCORT

Come join the crowds in Egypt's towns
King number two is making his rounds.
He's measuring, dividing, 'n gathering in,
He's choosing spots for the storage bins.
It's quite the parade at Pharaoh's request—

SEVERAL WOMEN

(Drawn out, breathy: rhymes with woo)

Ooh.

ESCORT

Though oft it seems …

SEVERAL WOMEN

Ooh.

ESCORT

Our fine, honored guest's …

SEVERAL WOMEN

Ooh.

ESCORT

A trifle hard-pressed
With all this fuss 'n lavish to-do,
With all this wooing,
Pursuing 'n ooh-ing

SEVERAL WOMEN

(Same time as Escort above)

Ooh.

(Several SLAVES, bearing gifts, form a line)

SLAVE ONE

O Powerful One,
Just a gift from my mistress
And a small invitation.

JOSEPH

(Private, firm, frustrated—but not arrogant)
I do not accept such invitations,
And the gift you may give to the poor.

SLAVE TWO

O Powerful One
My lady's close to royal—
She's most deserving,
Discreet, and loyal.

JOSEPH

Then may she not spoil
What she already has
In husband and children.

SLAVE THREE

O Powerful One
My mistress sends her undying love
With this sweet, scented glove.

JOSEPH

I have no use for lady's gloves,
Nor rings, nor capes, nor turtledoves.
Give them all to the poor.
(To self with a frustrated sigh)
Perhaps in such giving away,
These ladies shall come
Pestering no more.

CITIZENS & ESCORT

Come join the crowds in Egypt's towns
King number two is making his rounds.
He's pious, he's kind, he's self-controlled
Bold in judgement
His heart's pure as gold.
He's fair, he's impartial,
He can't be bribed
He's trimmed the system 'n simplified.
Invented fair measures
Reformed soil tax.
He's reviewed everything
And cut out the slack.

He talks to slave,
He talks to priest,
It doesn't matter
From the top to the least.

It's all been a shock 'n highly strange,
But we simple folk are loving the change.
So come on we shout,
Welcome the crown,
Our next, scheduled stop, is
Heliopolis town.

JOSEPH

Send runners ahead, please
To Pentephres—the Priest of On.
Say I feel to lodge with him
In the shadow of his house
At the first hour past noon.

(Two EUNUCHS exit DSR. ESCORT sings as THEY & JOSEPH also exit DSR; CITIZENS exit SL waving goodbye)

ESCORT

Heliopolis, here we come,
City of the Sun.
Place of grace and beauty
Of Ra and priestly duty.
Heliopolis, City of the Sun
Great City of the Sun
Here he comes.
Here comes the crown.

LIGHT fades on tour route-SR & SC;
remains on Road-SL.

Scene 7

Road near Heliopolis

Next morning

(PENTEPHRES—formerly known as POTIPHAR—and ZELICAH enter from DSL with two SLAVES who carry baskets of grapes, pomegranates, dates, figs, etc. The SLAVES are loaded, but not unreasonably. As a priest, PENTEPHRES head is shaved)

PENTEPHRES

Can you believe?
He thinks us worthy
To lodge with us
After all that was done by us.
Can you believe?
We must hurry home,
Prepare a great feast.

ZELICAH

(To the Slaves)
Yes, hurry on,
Keep this news, please
But prepare—

(SLAVES exit DSR. PENTEPHRES is clearly joyful as his imagination takes flight)

Pentephres,
We need just a moment,
Please,
To think this through.

ZELICAH

(To self)
I can't believe!
He's not the least worried.
I can't believe
He's so ecstatic,
When I fear, his
Purpose, coming here,
Is emphatic
Pronouncement
That the Priest of On
Will be off to prison
With his wife.

PENTEPHRES

I scarce believe

I do believe!

It's quite clear, his
purpose, coming here!

PENTEPHRES

Zelicah, dear, I've just had a flash
So clear and marvellous,
It's brought shivers to my skin.
Why our darling daughter and this Joseph
Would make a blissful pair,
They're so perfectly akin.

ZELICAH

Pentephres, would you please
Think this through!
How can sudden power
Not revenge itself?
He will not find excuse in *our* stars
For all those prison years and his scars.

PENTEPHRES

Zelicah, dear, there are things
I've never told.
I know you went to see him in prison.
So did I for a time,
For his counsel, for his advice—
Until in guilt I could not face him.

Then I was given Heliopolis by the gods
Where I wouldn't have to see
The everyday of his life
Or the sufferings of you, my dearest wife.

I never believed
You would come with me.
I thought you'd never see
How I loved you.
But you came to the City of Sun,
And day upon day
You became the one you'd once been.

I love him more than I can say,
For the way he honored us.
And I know—in my heart, I know
There's no hate in this man.
There never was with more cause
Than we shall ever know.

He comes to give us peace.
He will say nothing of the past.
The only fear I have is—
I scarse dare even voice it.

ZELICAH

Pentephres, please know,
There is only you.
The madness I nurtured then
Was purged in terrible pain.
I shall never seek such madness again.

But this plan for Asenath?
We'd have to tell of her birth.
Could she accept, it makes
No difference to the worth
She holds in our hearts.

Besides, it's too late.
We've raised her a stranger
To the ways of his God.
Had we only known,
But we didn't know,
So what you propose
Can never be.

PENTEPHRES

Then what is the meaning of that thing
You confessed—
Of an old soothsayer who read in the stars,
There would come through this house
A twining with him.
Perhaps the connections were strange
For she's not really ours.

ZELICAH

(Pauses in amazement)
Such never crossed my mind!
She was maybe seven at the time.
I just came to believe
What that woman spoke was confused.
What a fool I have been!
Pentephres, I'll leave the deciding to you.

And may my quaking heart be stilled
It beats with such shame
To see his face,
To let him see mine.

PENTEPHRES

Don't fret, my love
He comes in peace,
To release us all
From the past.

LIGHT follows them SR & expands.

Scene 8

P-Z house (Heliopolis)

Later that morning and following week

(PENTEPHRES & ZELICAH arrive home; ASENATH rushes down to greet them)

ASENATH

Ah, my wonderful parents
You're back early, I'm so glad.
And oh, such harvest
They've brought.

PENTEPHRES

Asenath, my sweet child—

ASENATH

Yes, my dearest Papa.

PENTEPHRES

Come, sit betwixt us.
We have …
Something to propose.

(PENTEPHRES takes Asenath's *right hand in his right hand and kisses and pats it. HE's uncertain how to best proceed)*

Asenath, beloved child …

ASENATH

My ears are right here
Dearest Papa.

(ASENATH feels growing concern as she listens)

PENTEPHRES

We have wonderful news, my child.
That's why we've returned early.
You may have heard how
Zaphnath-paaneah, the Powerful One—
Second in command—
Comes to Sun City today.
You've heard
How he's chief of the land
How he's planned a way to save us
From a coming famine.

He's a goodly man,
Powerful in wisdom,
His experience is great.
He's self-controlled
He's pure like you,
So what we propose is to ...
(Rushing)
Make you his bride
Forever and ever.

ASENATH

Oh, no! No, Papa, no!

PENTEPHRES

But my child, it feels so right,
It seems meant to be.

ASENATH

I cannot believe—
I will not believe—
You could think to hand me—
Like a c-captive to that slave!

ZELICAH

He's second to the king, dear child.
He was freed and honored.
You need not be distressed.

ASENATH

To me—his titles mean nothing.
He was a slave—
A wretched nave
Caught with his mistress
In a terrible act—
A fact proved in the courts,

Have you not heard?
How his master threw him into the darkness
He deserved?

ZELICAH

Perhaps there are things
You do not—

ASENATH

How can you think this?
He's second only because he reckoned well
In interpreting dreams—
Nothing more than our old women can do.

PENTEPHRES

You must calm yourself, my dear child.

ASENATH

He is less to me than we hear—
Some lowly shepherd's son from Canaan way
Who despises our gods and our ways.
How can you say these things!

(A EUNUCH enters thru the back gate)

EUNUCH

Behold, the king's second is at the gate—

(As ASENATH cries out and flees to her room in tears; collapses on her bed)

He begs your pardon—
(Confused at Asenath's *reaction)*
He's a—
Tri-fle ... late

PENTEPHRES

I should go,
She has never spoken to us so.

ZELICAH

No, my dear, let her be.
She needs time to compose herself,
And we—we have our guest.

EUNUCH

(To Pentephres—low voice)
There's really no cause to fear.
Women—especially wives—
Terrify him.

(The back gate in the wall opens; JOSEPH enters along with GUARDIAN who proceeds unobtrusively to Asenath*'s room to sit in a chair overlooking the courtyard. Two SENTRIES, bearing the standards, take up positions at the gate. PENTEPHRES & ZELICAH bow to the ground. As they rise ...)*

JOSEPH

Come, come, my friends,
I'm merely one of you,
Hungry, thirsty, and hot.
There's always such a lot to do,
I must confess,
I have looked forward, longingly
To some spot of shade.

(JOSEPH hands Zelicah the olive branch loaded with fruit that HE carries)

ZELICAH

(Taking the olive branch)
You are most kind and generous
My gracious lord.

PENTEPHRES

Yes come. We are thrilled
With all that's been done
In these goodly days.

(EUNUCHS bring in three small tables, arrange the chairs, take the olive branch. JOSEPH, PENTEPHRES, and ZELICAH sit in the shade; are served fruits)

JOSEPH, PENTEPHRES, & ZELICAH

(As individuals)
I would never have thought
In a thousand years,
To be sitting here together
In such comfort and cheer.
It seems strangely odd
Like the past never was,
Like those days took place
In some far-off time,
In another space.

Her (My) passion was so fixed
So terribly real
I felt stretched and bound
To a chariot's wheel,
With horses in chaos
With losses assured,
Blurred to a death
I almost pled for.

Yet here we sit as though friends long past
Enjoying this meal,
Breaking our fast.
It's all come to this.
She (He) seems at peace.
I needn't have worried
It's all come to this.

Yet I'm (he's) thirty now,
In this foreign land
I have (He has) no wife,
Nor likely (And little) hope that I (he) can.
I'm (He's) a stranger to their (our) gods
They (We) are strangers to mine (his)
Yet we dine as friends,
Oddly bound in time.

ZELICAH

I shall leave you for this time
To your discussions.

(Deep in thought, SHE starts up the stairs to Asenath*'s room, then sits on the steps; the two MEN engage in "silent" talk)*

Oh, what am I to do
This is all my fault.

If only she'd see him,
She'd know the lies.
She'd recognize
How much has been hid
In her memories dim.

She'd remember his kindness
In her tender years.

How he answered her questions,
How he stilled her fears.
But how do I say—
You remember our Joseph?
I'm not sure I could bear
All the questions.
I'm not sure I have any answers.

ASENATH

(Turns over and sits on edge of bed)

I plead dear gods
If there was ever a time
It is now that I need you.

GUARDIAN

Asenath, please come to the window.

ASENATH

I bow, I offer, I plead, I cry
That my dear father's plan
Be denied this time.

GUARDIAN

Asenath, please come to the window.

ASENATH

I can't wed such a man.
I despise such as he. I—

GUARDIAN

Asenath, please come to the window.

(In spite of herself ASENATH is gradually drawn to the window)

ASENATH
I despise the ugliness of shame.

GUARDIAN
Asenath, come look out the window.

ASENATH
I disdain the mere mention of his name.

GUARDIAN
Asenath, please look out the window.

ASENATH
I wish never to lay eyes on him.

GUARDIAN
Look out ... the window.

ASENATH
(Opens eyes and gradually looks up; then blinks as if trying to clear her vision and memory)
This cannot be the man!
This cannot be the man!

Oh what shall I do—
Wretched fool that I am.
I believed in wicked lies—
I spoke without knowledge.

There comes in him
A light so bright—
So like—
Oh, how can this be!
He cannot be this man.

JOSEPH

(With subtle motions, avoiding the sight of his discomfort; clears his throat)

My dear Pentephres,
I hesitate to raise this
But I'd feel more at ease
If that woman were not …

(Motions upward)

PENTEPHRES

(Seeing Asenath *at the window)*

Oh, blessed stars,
It's going to come true!

JOSEPH

I apologize, but women's staring eyes
Are—

PENTEPHRES

Oh, blessed day!
Do not fear, dearest Joseph—
'Tis but our inquisitive child
Smiled upon by the gods.
Has not our fair Asenath
Grown beyond compare?

(JOSEPH looks up in amazement and joy, but suddenly looks away, smitten by her beauty)

You should know, my good Joseph,
She dislikes every man,
And none has ever seen her for years,
Save now you alone.

(JOSEPH steals another subtle, casual look)

And dare I say, being pure as you—
Might I say, she's no stranger
To you, but like a sister.
And if you will, she'll come
And speak as to a brother.

JOSEPH

I suppose, I guess.
It might be all right.

PENTEPHRES

It's going to come true!
Yes, come down my dear child.

ASENATH

In such light, I fear he shall see
But the darkness in me.
(Leaves her room)

JOSEPH

(To self)
If she dislikes every man
Perhaps, at last—
A woman I can meet,
Without fearing the worst.

ASENATH

(Ascending slowly in fear)
I must forever keep above
All that foolishness of love.

JOSEPH, PENTEPHRES & ZELICAH

I wonder if she remembers me (him)
She was six or maybe seven.
We (They) were like brother, sister then

When she asked so many questions,
Yet I dare not mention it.

PENTEPHRES

Asenath, sweet child, come,
Come greet this Powerful One
Who is pure like you.
He too avoids every strange woman
As you every strange man.
In such you are as kin.

ASENATH

I wish you good cheer, my lord,
And blessings.

JOSEPH

And may the living God
Bless you.

PENTEPHRES

Sweet Asenath, why so reserved?
You may kiss him as your brother.

(JOSEPH stops the reluctant ASENATH with his hand motion)

JOSEPH

Asenath—my dear friends—
In respect of diverse ways
I think it best—

ASENATH

(Grieving and ashamed)

I think I know
Why you despise us so.

JOSEPH

Oh, no my dear friend,
I do not despise
Anyone in this house.

I merely wish to say,
Your gods are not mine
And mine is not yours.
That is a difference
Even as friends
That shapes the course
And end of things.

JOSEPH & ASENATH

I must forever keep above
All the foolishness of love.

ASENATH

I remember you.
You were always on your knees
And never eating.

JOSEPH

I also listened for hours
To the questions of a child.

ASENATH

How sweet I remember those days.

JOSEPH

I too, remember you—
A child of light
And constant wonder.
(Aside)
And may God help me

Forget the sighting
Of my eyes this day.

JOSEPH & ASENATH

I must forever keep above
All the foolishness of love.

ASENATH

Did you know in those days,
I began praying to your God.
But then you went away and—
Things were never quite the same.

JOSEPH & ASENATH

I must forever keep above
All the foolishness of love.

JOSEPH

I feel I should go,
Though I have so enjoyed
These moments of repose.

PENTEPHRES

But there are many days
To do endless things.
And yet a fine meal ...
Why not lodge here today,
Continue your way
Tomorrow—the day after,
Whenever.

JOSEPH & ASENATH

I must forever keep above
All the craziness of love.

JOSEPH

I have s-schedules—
It is best that I go.

JOSEPH & ASENATH

I must forever keep above
All this craziness of love.

PENTEPHRES

Our daughter still
Has many questions—
More than we
Can possibly answer.

JOSEPH & ASENATH

(To himself. SHE, aside, to her father)

It is not wise. It is not good.
That I (he) should stay, I think.

PENTEPHRES

(To everyone)

I think it wise. I think it good.
I, for us, would be delighted.

JOSEPH

(To self)

No, this cannot be.
I must see, this cannot be.

PENTEPHRES & GUARDIAN

At least, why not lodge with us (them)
On your return.
That is not asking so much.

JOSEPH

(Uncertain if he's choosing right)

I suppose, I could …
Agreed then, I suppose,
On the eighth day
When this day returns.

ASENATH

May your God, give you
Blessings and protection.

JOSEPH & GUARDIAN

Sweet Asenath,
May the God of all
Bless you anew
With the light of life.

(JOSEPH and his SENTRIES exit. GUARDIAN remains in Asenath's room, carving)

PENTEPHRES & ZELICAH

My sweet child, dry your tears
He's coming back—for whether
It's in the gods or the stars
Or something beyond,
This must be the reason
For your season with us.
And though we didn't know
And prepared you all wrong,
Perhaps in some way
You'll be found to belong.

(In a daze, ASENATH begins to return to her room)

Asenath, there are things we need to tell.

ASENATH

Mama, Papa, I just want to be alone.
For this time, I need to think,
And be alone.

PENTEPHRES & ZELICAH

But there are things you must know.

ASENATH

Mama, Papa, I know you're not done
At the estate, so please go,
And when you return,
We can talk of the things I don't know.

Just tell the servants, please
I shall want nothing till I call—
Neither food, nor drink, nor company.
I just need to think and be alone.

(ASENATH hurries to her room)

PENTEPHRES

How do we tell her?

ZELICAH

She needs time, my love
As do we …
To let her become
What she was meant to be.

(ASENATH lies weeping on her bed. PENTEPHRES & ZELICAH exit with arms about each other as dusk descends. The child ASENATH appears as memory in Asenath*'s darkening room)*

The sky visible through the window in the back wall of Asenath's room will now begin cycling through NIGHTS and SUNRISES. The cycling should be subtle, yet give evidence that Asenath's confinement in fasting and prayer lasts several days and nights as she struggles with her fears and confusions.

YOUNG ASENATH

Mama, who am I?
Mama, why won't you say.
Mama, please tell me,
Of the way I was found.
Mama please help me,
To know who I am.

Why is there something
That tells me inside,
That I'm here for a reason
For a season to come?

Mama please help me.
Why am I different?—
This voice that's inside.
Why did they hide me
And leave me to die?

GUARDIAN

(Speaking to the adult Asenath*)*

No one left you to die.
They watched from a hill,
They left you with God
Till the man in their dream

Took you up in his arms;
And into this plan
That no one did know.

(Adult ASENATH arises; from the chest removes a black tunic; removes her outer gown; dons the black tunic. SHE is in great distress, pacing, scrubbing the makeup from her eyes, pulling her hair down to cover her face, clutching her head, trembling, beating her chest—but not in excess or violence)

YOUNG ASENATH

Papa, where did I come from?
Why am I here?
Where am I going
Year upon year?
Why can't you tell me
I feel so lost and afraid.
Why did they hide me
And leave me to die?

GUARDIAN

(To the adult ASENATH)

No one left you to die.
They watched from a hill—
They left you with God,
For a plan and a purpose
That soon you will know.

(The child ASENATH vanishes. The adult ASENATH, still weeping, wanders touching her idols.)

The window reveals SUNRISE / DAYTIME. Her room is dimly brighter.

ASENATH

Have I laid my prayers
At the feet of things
Dead and dumb
From which nothing springs?

Have I been too foolish?
Too strangely believing?
Giving to the image
What the living deserved?

GUARDIAN

These are not the gods
Of your birthright.

ASENATH

(Reaches heavenward as if SHE will speak, but turns away sinking to the floor)
O, how dare I speak …
With this mouth of offense.
With a heart that loved …
(Motions to her idols)
That praised …
That blessed …
That ate of the …
How can I possibly speak?
(Looks, motions heavenward; sinks again)

GUARDIAN

You but followed the way
You were taught,
Though it's not like you can't now
Become what you ought—
What you were born to.

(ASENATH drags her cast-off dress–kalasiris–from her bed onto the floor. SHE removes her bracelets, neck pieces etc. that depict her gods and drops them in the centre. SHE collects her idols to drop them there too. SHE considers the lamb carving, but sets it back; then ties the kalasiris by its four corners)

NIGHT has descended.

ASENATH

Do I make myself orphan
In turning from these ways?
Will those who have loved me
Now hate me for this?
How can my changing not hurt
More than it heals?

O where shall I flee?
What shall I do?
How will this end?
Who will ever understand?

GUARDIAN

The God of all—
Already, dear child.

ASENATH

I'm confused with these feelings,
These sudden changings in me.
And he—O good Joseph
Shall he not merely see
The same, subtle plan
Others have tried—
Feigning a new god
To increase the odds of ....

GUARDIAN

It matters not what appears
But what is real.

SUNRISE again.

ASENATH

Are these feelings perhaps revealing
Just the foolishness of love?

GUARDIAN

There's a plan—just trust in the plan
Just do what you can.

ASENATH

Would these feelings be as real
Without my feelings for him?

GUARDIAN

Still a million questions!
Asenath, just remember—
The feelings were real
Those twelve years past,
So why not now?
Just trust in the plan
That's all we ask,
Just trust in the plan.

(ASENATH drops the bundle out the back window)

ASENATH

Just why must this be?
How bizarre it all seems,
All the weavings and schemes
That have brought us to this.

GUARDIAN

Asenath, you are here for a reason,
For a season that has come.

NIGHT descends.

ASENATH

How strange to feel
That same voice again,
(Rubs lamb carving against her cheek)
Easing the pain of things
I have no way to name.

Yet, what shall I do?
I feel the fool for falling in love.
Oh what shall I say?
Will the Living God foregive me
For my wayward heart?

Oh, what am I to do?

GUARDIAN

Flee to His refuge
He invites every soul.

SUNRISE again.

ASENATH

O Father of orphans
Father of Light,
Seven days, seven nights
I have sought ...
Thy way;
To feel Thy ...
(Comes alert, listening; then runs to the window)

I hear ...
O, the birds sing again! ...
I see the morning star. ...
(SHE stares intently than suddenly turns away, dropping to her knees, covering her eyes)
O ...!

GUARDIAN

Asenath, can you see?

ASENATH

(Startled)
Who is here?
My door is locked.
(Slowly uncovers her eyes)
Wh-where did you come from?

GUARDIAN

Fear not, my friend,
I've been sent
From the God of all
To say—
Courage,
Be not afraid.

We have seen your afflictions
These seven days and nights;
But now, 'tis time to rise.
Cast off your grief,
To prepare as a bride.
You've been given to Joseph
And he, given to you,
Now and forever.

ASENATH
Does *he* know who I am?

GUARDIAN
Your foster-parents
Are returning this day
To tell of things
Hard to understand.

ASENATH
Since those early years
I have feared to ask
Who I really am?

GUARDIAN
Don't fear, dear Asenath,
In this light, you're to
Know you were loved
Before your life was ever sown
In the sorrow of this world.

ASENATH
I don't understand.
I don't know who I am.

GUARDIAN
Just know this,
That whatever the sorrows—
The fruition was you.
And you, dear Asenath
Are wondrously good.

ASENATH
What does this mean?
I do not understand.

GUARDIAN

I cannot reveal
What falls to your foster-parents
To reveal—
Save, you were meant from forever
To be this Joseph's wife,
If you both accepted the plan.

ASENATH

… I feel this is true,
I believe it, I do.
So please help him know—
I accept the plan—
That I love him.

GUARDIAN

I've already begun,
Though right now
You're too new
In his thoughts.
He sees you
As one more trial
To overcome.
But that we'll overcome—
Cast off your sorrow.
(Hands the carved/etched plaque to ASENATH)
Begin the House of Joseph.

ASENATH

(Running fingers across the etched words)
The House of Joseph!
(With sudden awareness, she motions towards the lamb carving. HE smiles, parting his hands slightly, then descends the stairs. ASENATH begins to confine her unruly hair, to wash the smears from her face, to

don a white linen tunic. ... PENTEPHRES & ZELICAH enter. ASENATH descends nervously to meet them)

PENTEPHRES & ZELICAH

Child, we are home
We have so much to tell.

ASENATH

Mama, Papa, I, too,
Have things to explain.

PENTEPHRES & ZELICAH

Dear child, please,
Let our story come first.

(THEY sit together on the stone bench)

PENTEPHRES

(After a pause)
One day when riding in the sands
I heard an infant's cry,
And found in swaddling bands
An infant fair and beautiful.
Upon her lay an amulet,
Engraved—a woeful story.
I took the baby up—
An answer to our fervent pleas,
And you are she.
And this—the very amulet.

(PENTEPHRES takes the amulet from his own neck and places it upon Asenath's *neck)*

ASENATH

Did they leave me to die?

PENTEPHRES

I saw an old man and a girl
Upon a nearby dune.
They waited till I took you up
Then turned and weeping left.
They turned and weeping left.

ASENATH

(As SHE strokes the amulet)

Can you tell the words
Of this amulet.

PENTEPHRES

Please forgive me my child
If I tell it straight.
It's a tragic story of passion and hate;
Of grief and of pain
And the violence of men—
When a young prince named Shechem
Took a young girl,
By force.
In his passion he mocked
Her father and brothers,
Till in the dreadful lies
Of both sides
Many died in her rescue.

You, sweet Asenath,
Were the child born
Of that Shechem's mad, tragic passion
For your mama, named Dinah.
Dinah's mother was called Leah
Of the house of one called Jacob.
This is what the amulet tells.

PENTEPHRES & ZELICAH

But please, please know
That whatever your birth.
You have given us more joy
Than can ever be told.

(ASENATH begins to cry. As PENTEPHRES & ZELICAH take her in their arms, GUARDIAN appears in SPOT-LIGHT at SL)

GUARDIAN

Asenath you are loved;
You must know—
Even in bad there comes good.
And you, dear Asenath
Are wondrously good.

Stage to BLACKOUT.

Scene 9

A locked room somewhere in Egypt

That night

(LIGHT reveals GUARDIAN seated at a small table or sitting on a bed–SL. JOSEPH stands / paces near)

JOSEPH

I don't understand
My place in this land
Where idols abound.
Surrounded by paths
I cannot pursue.

I know little of love
Yet love has come;
What am I to do
Now that love has come?

GUARDIAN
I have been trying to tell you.

JOSEPH
This is all too bizarre.
I've endured too much
To allow such thoughts
To distract
From my duties and place.

GUARDIAN
I know you're tired
But the fault lies with you.
If you'd just let me through—
You're being very obtuse.

JOSEPH
I have just got to see,
She cannot be the one
Intended for me.

GUARDIAN
She is not what you think.
How many times, must I say it?

JOSEPH
She's so steeped in her gods.
Why do I seem to forget
What I've lived my whole life

To expect and protect?
I must control my thoughts.
I shall not think such thoughts.

GUARDIAN

Back to square one.
Remember the sweet child
So meek and mild
With her thousand questions.

JOSEPH

I must control
Even my memories.
I must forever keep above
All the craziness of love.

(GUARDIAN becomes silent, staring)

I see her in my head
Whether I'm awake or in bed.
I sleep and I dream.
I awake and it seems I still dream.

This is so alarming.
I, who manage all Egypt
Can't even manage my own mind.

GUARDIAN

Sometimes my good man
You don't have to fight.
Sometimes it all right
Just to go with the flow
Of plans you don't know.

(JOSEPH groans or moans)

Why can't you allow
There might be a plan in all this
That you're missing.

JOSEPH

It feels so right,
But it can't be.
It has to be wrong.
She doesn't belong.

GUARDIAN

Joseph, people change.
God arranges things
We can't conceive.

JOSEPH

Why do I think, she could change
When her idols claim all she knows—
Stone and wood?
Why fall to such tangle
After all these years?

GUARDIAN

(Shrugs heavenward, then to JOSEPH)

Joseph, can you see?

JOSEPH

(Not afraid, but startled)

Where did you come from?
My door is locked.

GUARDIAN

Your God sends this light
So you'll know
She fits the plan—it's all right.

JOSEPH

But how can this be—
She's so steeped in her idol gods?

GUARDIAN

She has turned, dear Joseph
To this path that comes
From a forever time.
It's a good that was shaped
From that crime to young Dinah.
Asenath was the child—
She's of kin with a birthright.

JOSEPH

I knew there was a child!
And a dream to let her go—
But who could have seen
For a day such as this?!

GUARDIAN

None ever could, save One,
And He says—
The plan is all here—
We're simply waiting on you.
Asenath knows, too
She's agreed—
It's all up to you.

JOSEPH

Surely in these years I have seen—
How oft good comes out of bad;
How always light breaks up the night.
How my God sets things right
That seem impossibly wrong.

So if it's all up to me—
And if it's deemed right,
And it feels so right
Then it's yes—my answer is Yes.

GUARDIAN

Overwhelmed is the man
Who lets the plan
Unfold as it will.

BLACKOUT. ... LIGHTS up DSR & SL.

Scene 10

Pharaoh's Throne Room (Memphis)

Two days later

(From DSR, ASENATH enters in wedding attire. At SL, PENTEPHRES helps JOSEPH don his wedding attire)

JOSEPH & ASENATH

I would never have thought
In all these years
That from a slave (child) in that house
I could come to this.
I never understood the feelings dim
In those lonesome days,
In this foreign land
That bound us as kin.

She (He) was a point of light
In the confusion of the night.

She (He) was a place of refuge
In a deluge of doubt.
I loved a dear child (kind friend)
Never imagining the end
That would come
Planned and purposed,
Yet leaving free
To do or die
In the trying.

But now this part's over
Our new life begins
Its celebration.

(ZELICAH enters SR to join ASENATH. At SL, PHARAOH enters with two standard-bearing SENTRIES and two fan-bearing EUNUCHS to join JOSEPH & PENTEPHRES. The two GROUPS proceed to join. A few dignitaries: WISE MEN, PRIESTS, PHARAOH'S SON, & others: PRISON CAPTAIN, EUNUCHS, SHOPKEEPER, & several CITIZENS also enter)

PHARAOH, PENTEPHRES, ZELICAH

Who would have thought
In all that has been,
They would come here together
With forever before?
Who can imagine
What this day begins?
Who can say
What the future holds?

JOSEPH & ASENATH

The future holds ...

(JOSEPH winks at Asenath*; THEY laugh)*

Love.

Together we'll reach for heaven,
We'll seek the blue sky,
We'll fly with new wings,
We'll be lotus and bee,
We'll be the flowering tree,
The river and the sea.

Together we'll be one
Together we've begun
What we dared not ever imagine.

We'll reach for the stars,
We'll gaze far into the night
At the twinkling lights.

We'll remember those gone before.
We'll give life for times to come,
And we'll pray for the ones
The future holds,
All planned and purposed—
Yet, leaving free
To do or die
In the trying.

But for us the past's over
Our new life's begun
Its celebration.

(PHARAOH stands on tier three of the throne dais; JOSEPH & ASENATH stand on tier two, facing him. PHAROAH places his hands on their shoulders)

PHARAOH

May the Lord God Most High
Of Joseph and Abram,
Bless you,
Multiply you,
Magnify and glorify you,
Forever and evermore.

(PHARAOH turns them to face each other; then he brings them "mouth to mouth and join[s] them by their lips." Just before they touch, the two fan-bearing EUNUCHS solemnly drop their fans to hide the kiss; stepping up another tier, PHARAOH raises his arms)

Come join us down
In Memphis town.

(More CITIZENS enter—perhaps some through the "citizen" audience casting memorabilia sachets of dried flower scents—as PHARAOH leads JOSEPH & ASENATH up to sit side-by-side on his throne)

Music 5: (Finger cymbals, timbrels, frame drums, traditional vocal warbling, etc.)

CITIZENS & CELEBRANTS

Come on down
To Memphis town
For the kingly Pharaoh
Has wed this pair.
They're pure,
They're good,
They're uncommonly fair.
There's no other couple
Who'd ever compare.

They’re eyes are aglow,
They don’t even know
Their feet trod the earth
In the worth of each other.

They smile, they nod,
They wink 'n they think
They’re alone in the sands
Just holding hands.

It’s blessed relief from
That pending drought,
All the work 'n worries
That compass about.
That’s why we’re a-shout—
With put on your duds
'N come on down
For a week of wonders
In old Memphis town.

For he’s the best second
We’ve ever had.
He acts awful patient
He doesn’t get mad.

He listens, he talks,
He walks without airs
He does what is fair
We know that he cares.

We love our dear Joseph
'N now his wife,
From what the stars say
They’ll be with us for life.

(PHARAOH descends from the dais to stand beside PENTEPHRES and ZELICAH)

Old Pharaoh's quite pleased
Though the son's pretty peeved.
If he'd bend his back
He'd be better received.
But he doesn't hear well
So what's to tell—
It's all come arranged
This strangest of ways.

So come on down to old Memphis town
For the kingly Pharaoh has wed this pair.
They're pure,
They're good,
They're uncommonly fair.
There's no other two
Who'd ever compare.

(PHARAOH, PENTEPHRES, and ZELICAH join in)

Our thoughts turn to love
We get whirled about—
We could almost forget
That pending drought.
Yet while the cows fat—
In old Memphis town—
It's the grandest place
For furlongs around
Where we're wishing them well
While the sun goes down.

Forever 'n ever
We'll be wishing them well.

We'll be wishing 'n wishing,
'N wishing them well.

Forever 'n ever
Just wishing them well—
'N praying they'll stay
A long lifetime
Tracking 'n cracking
Corruption 'n crime.

He's cleaned up this land
Like you wouldn't believe—
Even the tourists
Refuse to leave.

So come celebrate
This grandest affair
Where king 'n slave
Scribe 'n nave
All stand together
In wishing them well.

So come on down
To old Memphis town.
It's the centre place
Of the world around
It's the grand 'n greatest,
It's Memphis town—
Memphis, Memphis, Memphis town.

JOSEPH & ASENATH

Yes, come on down
Every soul should come down
To this land ... of ...
(ASENATH winks at Joseph; THEY laugh)

Love.

(As JOSEPH & ASENATH hold "love")

CAST

Memphis, Memphis, Memphis town.

CURTAIN CALL

Music 6:	**(Finger cymbals, timbrels, frame drums, vocal warbling, etc.)**



Note re the angel carvings

For those who object to an angel carving a lamb (for a child's toy) because it is an image allegedly in contravention of Exodus 20:4, the playwright's position is that a semi-colon preceding verse 5 defines the meaning as images made for the purpose of idol worship. Children's toys and decor items have imitated nature throughout history as symbols and objects of play, enjoyment, and beauty. Word images are prolific in scripture inviting creativity and manifestation without "giving to the image what the living deserve."

Hebrew Marriages

In the beginning of the Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob legacies, particular attention was given to marrying within the Hebrew bloodline. Here are five examples:

> 26 And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.
> 27 ¶ Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot.
> 28 And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.
> 29 And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah [Sarai / Sarah*] (Old Testament | Genesis 11:26-29).

> 1 AND Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.
> 2 And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:
> 3 And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:

4 But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac (Old Testament | Genesis 24:1-4).

1 AND Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.
2 Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother (Old Testament | Genesis 28:1-2).

34 ¶ And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite:
35 Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah (Old Testament | Genesis 26:34-35).

5 And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Padan-aram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.
6 ¶ When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to Padan-aram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan;
7 And that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Padan-aram;
8 And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father;
9 Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife (Old Testament | Genesis 28:5-9).

* Ginzberg, Louis. *The Legends of the Jews* — Volume 1 (p. 89). Kindle Edition.
"For a period of two years Abraham could devote himself undisturbed to his chosen task of turning the hearts of men to God and His teachings.[41] In his pious undertaking he was aided by his wife Sarah, whom he had married in the meantime. While he exhorted the men and sought to convert them, Sarah addressed herself to the women.[42] She was a helpmeet worthy of Abraham. Indeed, in prophetical powers she ranked higher than her husband.[43] She was sometimes called Iscah, "the seer," on that account.[44]"

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The Appendices are included
as an aid to production.

Sets & Properties Synopses

Sample of Abbreviations

US–C = upstage centre | DS–FL = downstage far-left
MS–R = midstage right | *NIA = nothing in addition
OFF = off-stage in the wings for quick access by actors
ON = something added to the set

ACT ONE

For most of Act One—Scenes 3 thru 10—the stage is a split (simplified) setting of four areas in P–Z house:

1) Potiphar's "office" (US–C)
2) Zelicah's lounge (MS–R)
3) garden area (DS–FR)
4) Joseph's room (DS–L)

A Set Change (MS–R & DS–FR) occurs at the end of Scene 2.

When the musical begins, the stage is set thus:

Preface: **US–C - Potiphar's office**: long table; three chairs; perhaps a backdrop of two pillars and a beam decored with ancient Egyptian symbols; plants; statues of Egyptian gods.

On table: chaos of papers, scrolls, writing tools; bundle of keys; leather purse (with shoulder strap) containing twelve small bags of 10 gold coins each; a short sword concealed by a table leg (left end).

MS–L - Joseph's room: (unseen but in place) nice table, chair, bed & bedding ("nice" for he soon becomes Potiphar's overseer).

MS–R - Row market: (unseen, but in place); 3 or 4 stalls: papyri, spice, leather goods, etc.; trees.

trading items; three parcels in total.

Scene 1: Row Market – *NIA
OFF–R lotus-leaf fan (half-circle).
OFF–L curtained palanquin / litter.

Scene 2: Potiphar's office – *NIA

SET CHANGE: end of Scene 2 (not revealed till Scene 7)

1) **Zelicah's lounge** - **MS**–**R**
chaise lounge; side-table; flat-top chest.

on side-table: bottles / containers of potions, spices, perfumes, etc.; service-clapper (p. 195).
in chest: elegant robe; diadem (headpiece) of precious stones; dagger in arm holster; large blanket-wrap.

elegant lounge coverings; hooded cape.

2) **Garden area** - **DS**–**FR**
plants, trees; stone bench (long enough for Zelicah to stretch out on & later (Act II) seating for three adults; several ornate cushions.

Scene 3: Memphis street – *NIA

Scene 4: Potiphar's office – *NIA

Scene 5: Memphis street – *****NIA

Scene 6: Office & P–Z house
ON: cubby-hole case for scroll-filing.
OFF–L newborn infant in a blanket (doll); scroll.

Scene 7: Starlit garden of P–Z house – *NIA

Scene 8: P–Z house
OFF–R: five or six low stools; silver plates, oranges.
OFF–L: princely robe for Joseph; fruit / treat platter.

Scene 9: Streets of Memphis
finger cymbals, timbrels, frame drums, etc.
Zelicah's lounge in background – *NIA

Scene 10: garden area and P–Z house
OFF–L: 11-month old baby sleeping in wheeled carriage; a scroll tucked in; lamb carving/note.
OFF–R: iron (slave) collar.

SET CHANGE: end of Scene 10
1) Joseph's room vanishes.
2) Office converts to **Priest's Court - MS–C** long riser with three chairs.

Scene 11: Priest's court – *NIA

Scene 12: Prison - DS–L
ON–L barred cell: cot, scrolls / bookrolls.
outside cell: table & chair; leather braiding.
OFF–L: hooded cape; coin for Zelicah.

ACT TWO

Most of Act Two—Scenes 2 thru 10—will occur on a split stage with **three** centres of action:

1) **MS–R&C**: **P–Z house in Heliopolis**
a garden courtyard; stone back wall with iron-plated gate; fruit trees along the wall; stone bench; three chairs; stairs leading to:
Asenath's second-floor room (open window in back wall with blue sky visible); table & chair (from Joseph's room–Act I); bed; Zelicah's chest; Egyptian idols on walls and in niches (for **source descriptions** of these settings, see p. 175 hereafter).

on table: scrolls neatly arranged; lamb carving.
in chest: a black mourning tunic; simple white, sleeved linen dress; wipes for Asenath's face and eyes; hair accessory.

white / lilac / gold bedding, plump cushions.

2) **US–L**: **Pharaoh's throne room**: large dais of seven steps with a throne on top (wide enough to seat Joseph & Asenath); perhaps pillars framing the dais; if necessary this set (see p. 195) can be slid in after the prison vanishes.

3) **DS–L–C–R**: **Tour route**

. . . .

The Prologue will take place mostly off-stage and Scene 1 (Prison) may obscure the throne room set initially.

Prologue: Streets of Memphis – *NIA

Scene 1: Prison–DS–L
ON–L: As in Act I, Scene 12, but more scrolls in cell; a 2nd chair; no leather braiding on the table.

game board on top of the table covered by "chess-type" pieces (perhaps Pharaoh, Queen, obelisks, geese, hieroglyphic-type feet, etc.); this is not sennet, but an imaginary game; game board may have lion feet.
OFF–L: modest coat-tunic for Joseph.

Scene 2: Pharaoh's throne room
OFF–L: two decorative lotus-leaf fans; two royal standards; princely robe; gold neckpiece.

Scene 3: Streets of Memphis
timbrels, cymbals, frame drums, etc.; leather pouches for casting perfumed potpourri & scents; (if possible, two gold chariots; 2 or 4 white horses); metal bin; various gifts for the citizens to cast into the bin.

Scene 4: P–Z house in Heliopolis
OFF–R: basket of flowers.

Scene 5: Pharaoh's throne room – *NIA

Scene 6: Various rural locations in Egypt
two royal standards, one lotus-leaf fan, gifts from the ladies; sweet-scented glove.

Scene 7: On the road near Heliopolis
baskets of grapes, pomegranates, oranges, dates, figs.

Scene 8: P–Z house in Heliopolis
OFF–R: two royal standards; olive branch loaded with fruit; three tray-tables; three small silver plates containing fruits; etched plaque.

Scene 9: locked room somewhere rural – DSL
ON–L: chair & table (or bed).

Scene 10: Pharaoh's throne room (See p. 195 herein)
OFF–L Wedding attire for Joseph, bouquets & sachets
OFF–R: bouquets & sachets.

. . . .

The following descriptions from source are for general ideas. The sets are intended to be minimalist—not overpowering—just to give flavor and understated ambience.

Description of the courtyard in Heliopolis: OTP 2:204-205
And there was a large court surrounding the house, and a wall was around the court, very high, built from big square stones. And the court had four iron-plated gates ... And handsome trees of all sorts and all bearing fruit were planted within the court along the wall. And their fruit was ripe for it was the time of harvest. ...

Composite description of Asenath's chambers: OTP 2:203-204
... paved with purple stones; ... walls faced with colored and precious stones; ... ceiling of gold; ... Egyptian gods (of gold and silver) without number affixed to the walls; ... gold bed laid with gold-woven purple stuff, interwoven with violet, purple, and white.

Description of Pharaoh's throne: *Jasher* p. 145 **(**See p. 195 herein)

Character Grid

Character	Act 1								2 = 2 entrances				Act II									c = Curtain Call (Sc. 10)
Scene	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Guardian	x	x					x		x		x	x				x	x			x		2	x	x
Joseph		x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x		x	x	2		x	x		x	x	x
Zelicah		x	x		x	x	2	x	x	x	x		x					x			x	2		x
Potiphar / Pent.	x		x		x		2				2	x	x								x	2		x
Asenath-child			x				x	x			2											x		c
Asenath-adult																		x				x		x
Eunuchs / Slaves		x	x	x	x	x			x		x	x			x	x	x			x	x	x		x
Shopkeeper(s)		4	x	x	x																			x
Ishmaelites				x	x	x																		c
Soothsayer								x																c
Citizens										x	v			x	x	x	x			x				x
Z-Friends									x		x													c
Priest / Judges												x												x
Prison Grd; Cptn													G	C										x
Pharaoh																x	x		x					x
Wisemen																x								x
Suitors (4)																		x						c
Pharaoh's son																			x					x
Sentries																x	x			x		x		x
Baby boy							x				x													c
Voices (off L + R)							x																	

Costume Guidance

Time: circa 2465 – 2323 B.C. (5th Dynasty)
(See p. vii for explanation re choice of Dynasty)

Place: in and around Memphis & Heliopolis, Egypt

Please resist the temptation to dis-robe the ancient Egyptians for these reasons:

- to respect the comfort level of most audience and cast
- numerous ancient Egyptian wall-painting scenes show full dress for both slaves and upper classes
- many semi-nude scenes are of laborers working—not unlike what we see today on construction sites and in farm fields during hot weather, or when leisuring—think of our beaches—but the clothes return when the work and leisure are done. And if heat is an alleged reason, what of the Bedouins—then and now?
- artists in nigh every culture have been fascinated by the human body—just ask Ruben, Michelangelo, the Greeks, the Romans, the Egyptians, etc.—but using their nudes or semi-nudes as costume reference could misrepresent the general culture
- some scholars feel that the wall paintings depicting Egyptian clothing are idealized imagery
- any distraction, such as unnecessary or exaggerated scenery, sound, costume (or lack thereof), etc., that does not serve purpose, compromises production. All design is meant to give unobtrusive flavor & support to an actor's best performance.

"*These are my [opinions]; if you don't like them, I have others.*"
(;SMS in the words of Groucho Marx;)

This following list is to assist costume designers so every production does not have to "re-invent the wheel." Age, activity, and time are given to help determine when costume changes, accessory enhancements, and so forth, might be needed. (**To experienced designers**: Please do not be offended. This detail is mostly to help time-stressed volunteers of community theatres; but can also be used as a springboard for others.)

GUARDIAN

(angel)	**Ageless**
ACTS ONE & TWO	Calf-length tunic & simple trousers of like fabric; shoulder-strap scrip to carry his carving, square debris cloth, carving knife with scabbard

JOSEPH Hebrew / Semite

ACT ONE	Age **17-18**
Sc: 2–5	shop assistant & 3-week prison term.
Sc. 6, 8	from Potiphar's assistant to Potiphar's overseer covering about one year.
Sc. 10–11	his clothing needs a velcro(?) piece that can be torn off the front chest by Zelicah.
Sc. 12	after one year in prison.
ACT TWO	Age **30**
Sc. 1	after 12 years in prison.
Sc. 2	cleaned up to appear before Pharaoh.
Sc. 3	at end of scene is given a royal robe and gold neck-collar.
Sc. 5	more casual appearance before Pharaoh.
Sc. 6, 8	royal tour of rural Egypt (see p. 184).
Sc. 9	alone and casual.
Sc. 10	his wedding to Asenath.

ZELICAH Black Egyptian – very beautiful

ACT ONE	Age–**early 30s**
Sc. 1-2	at the market and home.
Sc. 4-5	24 days later at home, street, home.
Sc. 6-8	over weeks and months as she hassles Joseph; hooded cape for Sc. 7 & 8; golden comb in her hair for Sc. 8.
Sc. 9-10	elegant robe; bejeweled headpiece.
Sc. 12	hooded cape; nondescript dress to secretly visit the prison.
ACT TWO	Age–**early 40s**
Sc. 4	at home.
Sc. 7–8	several days later, returning from their rural lands & meeting Joseph.
Sc. 10	attending Asenath's wedding.

POTIPHAR Black Egyptian

ACT ONE	Age–**early 40s**
Pr., Sc: 2	at work as one of Pharaoh's chief administrators.
Sc. 4	24 days later—at work.
Sc. 6	at work over several months.
Sc. 10	attending the Nile festival; girdle.
Sc. 11-12	attending court—segueing to prison visit.
ACT TWO	Age–**early 50's**
Sc. 7	returning from estates & immediately segueing into Sc. 8.
Sc. 8	at home, meeting Joseph; oblong "amulet" necklace under clothing.
SC. 10	attending marriage of Joseph and Asenath.

Asenath (child)	Hebrew / Hivite
ACT ONE	Age **6 going on 7**
Sc. 2, 6–7, 10	a child at home.
ACT TWO	Age **7**
Sc. 8	same dress as Act I because Asenath as child appears as a memory.
Asenath (adult)	Hebrew / Hivite – very beautiful
ACT TWO	Age **18**
Sc. 4	a sleeveless, white shift under a kalasiris that can be easily removed (see description & image, pp. 183-185); may need **two** identical kalasiris—one to be used as the throw-away in Sc. 8; jewelry, girdle etc. that reflects her love of Egyptian idols.
Sc. 8	in chest: black mourning tunic; rope girdle; sleeved, white linen dress (will form part of wedding attire).
Sc. 10	wedding attire as described in the OTP source (see p. 187 herein).
EUNUCHS / SLAVES	
ACT ONE	various ages–**20s to 40s**
Sc. 1–5	working for the upper classes.
Sc. 8, 10–11	same.
ACT TWO	
Sc. 1–3, 6–8, 10	same.
SHOPKEEPER(S)	Egyptian
ACT ONE	Age–**mid 50s**
Sc. 1	4 shopkeepers–typical tradesmen.
Sc. 2–4	one as temporary owner of Joseph.

ISHMAELITES	8 Arabs - Bedouin style
ACT ONE	ages–**old to young**
Sc. 3–5	travel-worn.
SOOTHSAYER	
ACT ONE	Age–**mid 60s**
Sc. 7	colorful (but not overdone).
CITIZENS	**30+** Egyptians & Residents
ACT ONE	ages–**old to very young**
Sc. 9, 10(voices)	range of classes & occupations.
ACT TWO	
Pr., Sc.1–3, 6, 10	same as above; if possible, memorabilia sachets to throw during the wedding celebration.
ZELICAH'S FRIENDS	
ACT ONE	Ages–**20s to 40s**
Sc. 8, 10	upper class.
PRIESTS / JUDGES	
ACT ONE	Ages–**50s to 60s**
Sc. 11	in court.
ACT TWO	
Sc. 10	at wedding.
PRISON GUARD	
ACT ONE	Age–**30s**
Sc. 12	at work.
PRISON CAPTAIN	
ACT TWO	Age–**mid 40s**
Sc. 1, 10	Sc. 1–at work; Sc. 10–at wedding.

PHARAOH Egyptian
ACT TWO Age–**mid 50's**
Sc. 2–3 royal events, signet ring (see p. 195).
Sc. 5 more casual, at home.
SC. 10 royal event—performs marriage.

WISE MEN (7)
ACT TWO Ages–**older**
Sc. 2, 10 Sc. 2–at work; Sc. 10–at wedding.

SUITORS (4)
ACT TWO Ages–**early 20s**
Sc. 4 from the upper classes.

PHARAOH'S SON Egyptian
ACT TWO age **20**
Sc. 5, 10 Sc. 5–at home; Sc. 10–at wedding.

SENTRIES
ACT TWO young & strong
Sc. 2–3, 6, 8, 10 at work.

BABY BOY Black Egyptian (doll)
ACT ONE new born
Sc. 6 wrapped in blanket.
Sc. 10 11-months old in a basket with a carrying handle.

. . . .

Tunic: shirt-like garment of linen worn by both men and women. Length: may be ankle-, calf- or knee-length. Longer lengths were more for ceremonial occasions or to indicate status. Sleeve length may be long, medium, short, or sleeveless.

Girdle: Some girdles / belts were of cloth or soft leather; some were bejeweled and decorative, hanging loosely about the waist.

Shifts / Shorts: It is recommended that most costumes, even when not specified, include simple shifts or boxer shorts to facilitate quick costume changes, and for ease, comfort, and freedom of movement.

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(As **reference sources**—see pp. 186-195—may not be readily available to many theatre groups, some partial descriptions of Joseph & Asenath's clothing are produced below.)

Partial description of Asenath's attire
when greeting her parents just before meeting Joseph
from OTP 2:205-206

"[She] dressed in a (white) linen robe [kalasiris] interwoven with violet and gold and girded herself (with) a golden girdle and put bracelets on her hands and feet, and put golden buskins about her feet, and around her neck she put valuable ornaments and costly stones which hung around from all sides, and the names of the gods of the Egyptians were engraved everywhere on the bracelets and the stones, and the faces of all the idols were carved on them. ... and she ... fastened a diadem around her temples ..."

[There may be a temptation in this description to go gaudy, but let us portray Asenath **as tasteful and elegant**, even in her demonstrative love of the Egyptian idols. Understated is preferable.]

See p. 185 for an example of an Egyptian kalasiris that could be easily removed for the onstage costume change in Act II, sc. 8.

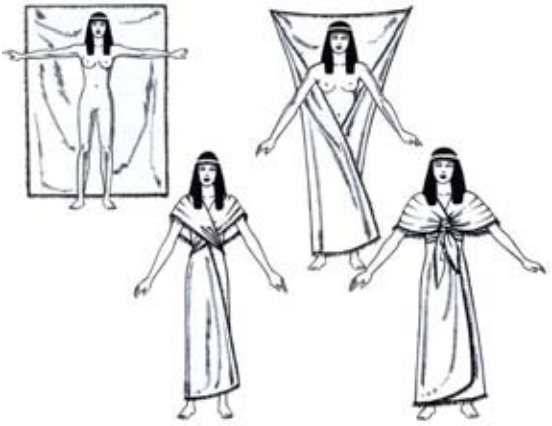
Partial description of Joseph's arrival & attire
when on tour & meeting adult Asenath (Act II–Sc. 6, 8)
from OTP 2:208

"Joseph entered, standing on Pharaoh's second chariot, and four horses, white as snow, and with golden bridles, were harnessed (to it), and the entire chariot was manufactured from pure gold. And Joseph was dressed in an exquisite white tunic, and the robe which he had thrown around him was purple, made of linen interwoven with gold, ... And a royal staff was in his left hand, and in his right hand he held outstretched an olive branch, and there was plenty of fruit on it, and in the fruits was a great wealth of oil."

. . . .

Partial description of Asenath's mourning actions
from OTP 2:216

"And Asenath ... opened her coffer [chest] and took out a black and somber tunic. And this was her tunic of mourning when her younger brother died. In this Asenath had dressed and mourned for her brother. ... / And Asenath hurried and put off her linen and gold woven royal robe and dressed in the black tunic of mourning, and loosened her golden girdle and girded a rope around her, and put off ... the diadem and the bracelets from her hands and feet and put everything on the floor. And she took her chosen robe and the golden girdle and the headgear and the diadem, and threw everything through the window ... to the poor. ... And Asenath ... threw all the idols of the Egyptians through the window ... to beggars and needy (persons)."



Example of one style of Egyptian kalasiris, except Asenath will wear an opaque sleeveless white shift under this for modesty when changing onstage to the mourning tunic in Act II, Sc. 8.

Illustration from Pinterest

. . . .

Partial description of Asenath's wedding attire
from OTP 2:232

"... her first robe, (the one) of wedding, like lightning in appearance ... she girded a golden and royal girdle about (herself) which was (made) of precious stones. ... she put golden bracelets on her fingers ... and precious ornaments she put about her neck ... with a veil, she covered her head like a bride ..."

Note: as Asenath had turned from her idolatry, none of the jewelry / ornamentation reflects her former life. She followed the **instructions of the angel** (OTP 2:227) who said "[N]ow listen to me Asenath, chaste virgin, and dress in your wedding robe, the ancient and first robe which is laid up in your chamber since eternity, and put around you all your wedding ornaments, and adorn yourself as a good bride, and go meet Joseph."

Research Reference

The myths and legends that have evolved around Joseph in Egypt are numerous and often have contradictory elements with some probable embellishments. **In order to present all characters in the best light of struggling humanity, the playwright has selected those aspects that favored their reputations, integrity, and growth through experience and tribulation.**

There is not much recorded in the histories about Potiphar's wife Zelicah after the Act I events, but the records refer to both Asenath's [foster-]parents several times in subsequent events, particularly when Joseph—newly appointed second in command to the Pharaoh—arrives to visit Potiphar / Pentephres in Heliopolis, bearing in his right hand, a heavy-laden olive branch. I took that reference (of peace-making / forgiveness?) to imagine Zelicah in Act II.

Almost all elements in this musical, outside of **1**) the dream to leave Asenath in the Egyptian desert; **2**) Zelicah's final prison appearance at the end of Act I; **3**) the construction of Zelicah's character in Act II; **4**) the "voice-of-fairness" eunuchs; and **5**) the soapstone / wood carving Guardian have source in the records. Even angelic guidance in the various events has some reference. Detailed reference to most elements can be found in the following citations:

Legends = Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, Vols. II, III, V. Trans. by Henrietta Szold, 1968.

OTP = *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Vols. I & II, Edited by James H. Charlesworth,1983.

Jasher = *The Book of Jasher*. Pub. by J. H. Parry & Company, 1887.

Josephus = *Josephus, Complete Works*. Trans. by William Whiston, 1960.

Genesis = *The Old Testament* - King James Version

- References are to volume & page numbers except for Genesis which are to chapter & verse.
- For brevity's sake, **J** = Joseph; **Z** = Zelicah; **A** = Asenath; **P** = Potiphar / Pentephres

. . . .

Legends—**Vol. 2**: 15-23; 38-77; 139; 170-174
(17) J sold by brothers to Midianites; (18-19) Midianites, fearing J has been stolen, sell him to Ishmaelites; (23, 40) P & others concerned that J is stolen; (38) A's birth story and parents: Dinah & Shechem; the amulet and abandonment; discovery and adoption by P and his barren wife; (39-41) J's silence about his brothers & his claim to be a slave; Ishmaelites leave J with a shopkeeper for 3 months; shopkeeper prospers; P's wife learns about J, a probable stolen youth from Canaan, and how the shopkeeper has prospered; Z counsels P to bring J to their house; P interrogates the Shopkeeper, doesn't believe him, and orders him stripped and beaten; P does the same to J when J insists he's a slave to the Ishmaelites; P also orders J to be held in prison till the Ishmaelites return; P is chief of the eunuchs & #3 in official ranking; P's wife protests, but P insists all titles must be made clear first; J is in prison for 24 days till Ishmaelites

return; (42) Ishmaelites hear rumors of a powerful man up Canaan way mourning for a lost son; shopkeeper begs Ishmaelites to rescue him from P's persecutions; they confront J; he testifies again before P; P's wife (later identified as Zuleika, but Zelicah in *Jasher*) sends a eunuch to buy J but he thinks the asking price it too much; Z says to pay what they ask; eunuch is deceitful about purchase price but J keeps silent; (43) P also called Potiphera; J's prayer and P's "What is this moving of lips?"; P decides J is "worthy of a prince's place"; gives all keys into J's hands; J's secret wish to prove his piety; (44) reference to an astrological forecast from the stars; (45) Z visits J at night; engages in subterfuge about wanting to adopt a son; J prays Z can have a son; she soon does; Z entices and threatens J in numerous ways; J fasts and prays and gives his food to the sick and poor; Z praises J's goodness to P; Z asks J to teach her about his God; (46) Z offers to give up her Egyptian gods and to persuade her husband too; Z threatens to kill her husband and wed J by the law; Z tries sending food laced with magic potions and spells; vision warns J against the food; (47) P notices Z's languishing; Z claims a "pain at my heart"; Z threatens suicide by strangling or jumping in a pit; J speaks of Asteho, P's concubine & Z's rival; Z takes his words as proof that J cares for her; Z tries amorous talk and flattery but J replies bluntly; (48) Z lavishes J with gifts and clothes; then with various threats; (49) Z covers the idol's "eyes" claiming God cannot see; J remembers Reuben's sin; (50) Z claims no one could find out; J's words show he is not above temptation; Z becomes grievously sick and the women of Egypt come to visit her; Z arranges for them to see J "arrayed in costly garments" and they are enchanted and lose awareness of their actions; (51) the friends counsel Z to entice J; P and the household remain unaware of the cause of Z's decline; (52) Z hassles J relentlessly for one year; Z attacks J; claims there is none her "peer in beauty"; has an iron shackle

put on J's neck so he must look at her; (53) at the annual Nile inundation festival, Z feigns sickness; arrays herself in princely garments; sets the "stage" and bluntly speaks her desire; J is briefly tempted, but an image in memory of his family checks him; (54) J is tempted again, but a vision of his father's face stops him; Z threatens him with a sword but J flees from her leaving a torn piece of his clothing in her grip; (55) Z fears J will betray her; her friends from the Nile festival stop in to see her; Z confesses to them all that happened; the friends advise her to accuse J first; Z asks them to accuse J also of pestering them; they agree; they help Z change to ordinary clothes; (56) P hearing tales about J hurries home to hear Z's accusations: (57) P has J flogged; God opens the mouth of Z & P's 11-month old baby to say "lies my mother has spoken"; P stops the flogging and brings the matter before the priests' court where J tells his side and P relates Z's account; the priests inspect the torn garment and (58) decide J does not deserve death but will go to prison because of the "stain upon Z's fair name"; Z suggested prison for J and continues to visit and harass him; (59) Z's threats and promises and J's replies; P also maintains contact with J in prison; (60) J given prison responsibilities.

ACT II (*Legends*–61-62) J interprets dreams of the king's butler and baker; (63-66) concerning Pharaoh's dreams and the several attempted interpretations of the "wise men"; Pharaoh claims no interpretation has "hit the nail on the head." (68-69) Pharaoh calls for J and tells messangers not to excite or confuse J; J ascends to the 3rd step of throne riser; Pharaoh claims he dreamed of the interpretation but has forgotten it but he'll know it when he hears it; J claims it is God who will reveal the meanings; (70) in telling the dreams, Pharaoh omits and changes some points to test J; (71-73) Pharaoh decides to choose J to save Egypt from the famine; some officials object and raise the "seventy languages of man" test

as a barrier to J's elevation; Pharaoh sets the test for the next day; angel Gabriel instructs J during the night; officials gather for the test; J speaks the seventy languages as he mounts the seventy steps to the throne; J is make 2nd in command in Egypt; given a signet ring, princely apparel, gold chain [collar], and crown; (74) women and maids of nobility try to capture J's attention; (75) citizens are commanded to give gifts; J called Zaphnath-paneah (revealer of secrets) by Pharaoh; (76) A's lineage, her abandonment, her adoption by P, the amulet and its contents (see also p. 38); A's extraordinary beauty and being hidden away; P known as priest of On; (139) Asenath, daughter of Dinah & Shechem; (170-171) P is magnate of Pharaoh; distinguished for "wisdom, wealth, and station"; noblemen and princes sue for A's hand when she is 18; even Pharaoh's son, but Pharaoh refuses insisting his son prefer the Moabite princess; A rejects all suitors and avoids contact with men; J sends word he will visit P; P is enchanted that it will bring about a marriage between A & J; A is appalled by the plan to marry her to a slave who was imprisoned for trying to violate the honor of his mistress; when A sees J she recognizes her error; J's reaction to being stared at by A because "Egyptian ladies" hassle him so much; J avoids looking at women; remembers the words of his father Jacob "to keep aloof from the women of the Gentiles"; (172-173) P claims J is the first man A ever looked at; J is cautious in meeting A because of her idolatry and refuses to kiss her; A goes into a period of solitude and deep penance for seven days and nights; on the eighth day an angel appears to A and blesses her; (174) the angel tells her she has been given to J as his affianced wife and J to her as husband forever; angel tells A that he is going to J to tell him all things concerning her; wedding takes place in the presence of Pharaoh with a seven day celebration.

Legends—Vol. 3: (286) J's honesty & integrity.

Legends—Vol. 5: Notes (p.336/n97) some legends re Asenath; (p.337/n100) Potiphar / Potiphera same identity; (338/n105) J given opportunity for education of a statesman; (338/n107) wish of pious to prove their piety in temptation; (340/n126) old sources speak of J's inner struggle between passion and virtue; (341/n133) P planned to kill J but Z raised monetary loss in doing so and hoped J would be more tractable in prison; (341/n134) babies speak; (342/n142) J's kindness and wisdom help criminals lead better lives; (361/n339) J was a reformer of soil taxation, inventor of measures, and thus beloved by the Egyptians; (365/n370) J's nobility of character; (369/n400 J speaks of how love (his father's and P's wife) caused him great suffering;

OTP—Vol. 1: *The Testament of Joseph ...* | pp. 819-825
The OTP also repeats many events as in *Legends of the Jews*; (820) J fasts and prays often about his situation and gives his food "to the poor and the ill"; weeps and prays to God "to rescue me from her treachery"; Z's pretense of considering J a son; Z's pretense of wanting to learn the Word of God; (821) J rejoices in prison, glorifying God "because through her trumped-up charge I was set free from this Egyptian woman"; (822) Pentephris' wife had heard from the eunuchs about J and went down in her palanquin to see J; P is third in officers' rank; (etc.)

OTP—Vol. 2: *Jubilees* | pp. 128-130
(128-129) J pestered by Z for one year; J in prison; favored by the chief guard; interprets Pharaoh's dreams; J remembers words of Abraham read to him by his father Jacob: i.e., there is a judgment of death decreed in Heaven for any man who lies with a woman who has a husband; (130) Pharaoh said to his servants: "We will not find a man wise and knowledgeable as this man because the spirit of the Lord is with him"; J becomes ruler in Egypt; everyone loves J including judges

and servants; J walked uprightly, "no pompousness or arrogance or partiality" and no bribery; J marries "the daughter of Potiphar, the daughter of the priest of Heliopolis, the chief of the guard."

OTP—Vol. 2: *Joseph and Asenath* | pp. 177, 202-238, 245
(202) Pentephres is a wise counselor to Pharaoh and priest of Heliopolis, the place known as Sun City; an important centre of the Sun god Rê (footnote e); (203) A is very tall and beautiful "beyond all virgins" whose fame of beauty had spread far and wide; in appearance A was like the Hebrews; there was much wrangling amongst her suitors and attempts to fight one another; she lived in seclusion (footnote 2a) and no man had ever seen her; her *arrogan*ce was against suitors, not others (footnote 2a); (204) her rooms contained many gods that she worshipped; her bed was "laid with gold-woven purple stuff interwoven with violet, purple, and white; a large court surrounded the house with high walls of big square stones with 4 iron-plated gates; (204–footnotes a&b) death of A's brother; (205) various fruit bearing trees lined the courtyard walls; J sends a message to P of his intention to arrive for "lunch"; P speeds servants ahead to prepare while he and Z hurry home from their inheritance field / estate (footnote 3i); P is thrilled with the possibilities of a match between A & J; description of A's dress when she meets her parents (and later J); (206) A comments on the great harvest; she sits between her parents to hear what they have to say; P makes his proposal to give A to J; (207) A replies in anger and rejection just as a servant enters to say J is at the gate; (208-209) A flees to her room; description of J's white linen tunic and purple robe when he visits P & Z & meets A; J offers a heavy-laden olive branch to P & Z; A sees J from her window and is stricken with remorse for her words and judgments; (210-213) J fears A's staring; P assures J of A's virtue—that she's like a sister to him; J decides

it might be alright to meet her; A & J meet; J refuses to kiss A, but prays for her; J is meek and merciful; (214) J agrees to return in 8 days; (215-216) A fasts seven days and nights and weeps; she puts on the somber black tunic of mourning that she wore when her brother died; she smashes and casts away her gods; she casts her goodly clothes and jewelry and statutes out the back window to the poor; (217-224) A's soliloquies of remorse, fear, grief, repentance; A's hair hangs down [thus she does not have a shaven head or wear a wig]; on the eighth day, A hears the birds singing; A sees the morning star and an angel appears in her locked room; (225-231) the angel directs A to put off her mourning tunic and dress in a new linen robe; he blesses and comforts her and pronounces her betrothal to J and instructs her to dress in a wedding robe ... and "put around you all your wedding ornaments, and adorn yourself as a good bride"; tells her he will visit J and tell him about A; (231-234) J & A meet and rejoice; J's wink; (235) Pharaoh performs the marriage placing his hands on their heads and saying: "May the Lord God the Most High bless you and multiply you and magnify and glorify you forever"; he then turned them "face to face and brought them mouth to mouth and joined them by their lips." (245) A's prayer: "Lord my God, who make me alive again / and rescued me from the idols and the corruption of death, / who said to me, 'Your soul will live for ever,'" ... (*Pseudo-Philo*–314) reference to rape of Dinah by Shechem, the Hurrite.

OTP—Vol. 2: *The Fragments of Artapanus* | pp. 897-898 (897) J divided the land and distinguished it with boundaries; made much barren land arable; discovered measurements; and was beloved by the people.

Jasher—pp. 120-124, 128-134, 136-137, 140-147
Jasher repeats most of what is in *Legends of the Jews* so only additional or missed items are noted here; (129-130) J is 18 when he is in P's house; is soon appointed overseer of household; Z is called Zelicah instead of Zuleika; J would never look at Z; Z's enticements, threats, friends; P and household unaware; (131) at annual Nile festival timbrels and dancing; (133, 137) J spends 12 years in prison; J tells baker that Pharaoh "will take off thy head"; (140-142) various "wise" interpretations of Pharaoh's dreams; (142) Merod [or Mirod] is the name of the chief butler who finally remembers his promise to J; (143) description of Pharaoh's throne; (146) both officers and king rejoice that J passed the language test; (147) J was 30 years old when he stood before Pharaoh; everyone loves J.

Old Testament—Genesis | chpts. 37, 39–41
P buys J from Ishmaelites; J made overseer of P's house; P's wife's attempted seductions and false accusations; J's imprisonment; J. interprets dreams of butler & baker; J interprets Pharaoh's two dreams at age 30; J elevated to 2nd in command in Egypt; Pharaoh calls J, Zaphnath-paaneah; J marries Asenath, daughter of Potipherah, priest of On. (Re: Potiphar's changing occupation, see c37:v36 "Potipher, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard"; c39:v1 "Potipher, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard"; with c41:v50 "Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On).

Josephus—pp. 46-49 | chpts. IV–VI
Josephus repeats many events as in *Legends of the Jews* so mostly additional or missed items are noted here; (46) P's wife falls in love with J, in part, because of his "dexterous management of affairs"; (47) J's opposition only increased Z's passion; (48) keeper of the prison makes J's prison life

easier; Pharaoh had the interpretation of both his dreams but had forgotten them; Pharaoh tells J not to fear or flatter, but just tell the truth of the dreams even if unfavorable; (49) J marries the daughter of Petephres, one of the priests of Heliopolis: (49:#2 footnote) "This Petephres, who was now a priest of On, is the same name with him who is before called head cook or captain of the guard, and to whom Joseph was sold.
See Gen. XXXVII. 36, XXXIX. 1, with XLI. 50. They are also affirmed to be one and the same person in the Testament of Joseph, (sect 18,) for he is there said to have married the daughter of his master and mistress."

. . . .

Description of Pharaoh's Throne & Attire
from Jasher–p. 143

42 And the king was sitting upon his royal throne in a princely dress girt around with a golden ephod, and the fine gold which was upon it sparkled, and the carbuncle and the ruby and the emerald, together with all the precious stones that were upon the king's head, dazzled *the eye* and Joseph wondered greatly at the king.
43 And the throne upon which the king sat was covered with gold and silver, and with onyx stones, and it [dais] had seventy steps.

. . . .

Clappers: Various forms of clappers or sound devices were common in ancient Egypt, often used for celebrations or ceremonial purposes. The sistrum was sacred, so probably not use that, but Zelicah needs an easy Egyptian-style summoning device to call the Eunuchs (2x) in Act I: Sc. 8. Maybe even just a brass finger cymbal attached to her lounge or nearby table that can be easily struck with a rod.

Language	Source	Translation	Phonetic Transcription
Arabic	O king of the great Nile	يا ملك النيل العظيم	/ya malik anni:l alazi:m/
Greek	River of life to parched land	Ποταμός της ζωής σε καμένη γη	Potamós tis zoís se kaméni gi
Basque	I offer my strengths	Nire indarrak eskaintzen ditut	/'nire in'darrak es'kaintsen di'tut/
Hebrew	In the name of my God	בשם אלוהי	Be'shem Elohai
Simplified Chinese	To ever serve in truth and right	永远以真理和正确的方式服务	Yong yuan yi zhen li he zheng que de fang 永 远 以 真 理 和 正 确 的 方 shi fu wu 式 服 务
Tamil	From this great day	இந்த நல்ல நாளிலிருந்து	Indha nalla naalilirundu
Lithuanian	To the setting sun of my life.	Tam, kas skleidžia saulę mano gyvenimui.	Tum, cas sclaidgia saule muno gevianemue

Translations and English phonetic transcriptions by Day Translations, Inc. at daytranslations.com

e: 2026/10



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