



Willem de Fesch

(1687 - 1761)

Joseph

L'oratorio Joseph est en trois parties, chacune divisée en récitatifs, arias (airs), duos ou chœurs. Il est basé sur l'histoire biblique de Joseph et ses frères dans la Genèse.

Il a été créé à Londres en 1745. Comme dans de nombreux oratorios de l'époque, le texte est en anglais (Joseph a été écrit pour le public londonien, où De Fesch travaillait après avoir été actif à Amsterdam et Anvers).

Rôles

Joseph , fils de Jacob, victime de ses frères, puis gouverneur d'Égypte	(Contre-ténor, mezzo)
Jacob , père de Joseph	(basse)
Reuben , frère de Joseph, jaloux mais hésitant	(ténor)
Simeon , autre frère de Joseph, dur et railleur	(basse)
Benjamin , plus jeune frère de Joseph, innocent et fidèle	(soprano)
Potiphar , officier du Pharaon, chef des gardes	(basse)
La femme de Potiphar , séductrice de Joseph	(soprano)
Un général égyptien	(ténor)
Un Ismaélite , marchand d'esclaves	(ténor)
Chœurs (peuple, voix collective des frères)	

Argument

L'œuvre suit les principaux épisodes de la vie de Joseph, fils de Jacob, centrés sur sa trahison, son ascension en Égypte et la réconciliation avec sa famille.

Acte I - La jalousie et la trahison

Joseph, jeune et favorisé par son père, partage ses songes prophétiques qui annoncent son avenir glorieux.

Mais ses frères, envieux et irrités par ce qu'ils prennent pour de l'arrogance, nourrissent contre lui une haine grandissante.

Tandis que Reuben hésite entre jalousie et compassion, Siméon incite à l'action. Finalement, lorsque des marchands ismaélites apparaissent, les frères saisissent l'occasion : Joseph est vendu comme esclave et emmené en Égypte.

L'acte s'achève sur l'abandon du jeune homme, victime de la jalousie fraternelle.

Acte II - L'épreuve et la vertu de Joseph

Arrivé en Égypte, Joseph garde sa confiance en la Providence.

Sa droiture attire l'attention, mais aussi le désir : la femme de Potiphar cherche à le séduire.

Malgré ses avances insistantes, Joseph résiste, fidèle à sa foi et à sa vertu. La tension dramatique culmine dans un duo où l'un implore et l'autre repousse.

Humiliée, la femme de Potiphar l'accuse faussement, et Joseph se retrouve injustement condamné.

Pourtant, loin de se révolter, il accepte l'épreuve comme une étape voulue par Dieu.

Acte III - La réconciliation et le pardon

Grâce à son don d'interprétation des songes, Joseph est appelé auprès du Pharaon, dont il explique la vision : sept années d'abondance suivies de sept années de famine.

Reconnaissant sa sagesse, le Pharaon élève Joseph au rang de gouverneur.

Lorsque la famine frappe Canaan, ses frères viennent en Égypte pour obtenir du blé. Ils ne le reconnaissent pas, mais Joseph voit leur détresse et leur repentir. Déchiré entre émotion et prudence, il finit par se dévoiler.

Plutôt que de chercher vengeance, il pardonne leur trahison, affirmant que tout cela faisait partie du plan divin. L'oratorio se conclut par un chœur triomphal qui célèbre la Providence et la réconciliation familiale.

Livret

Overture

Act I

[scene 1]

Jacob

Be ware You Talk no More of these
Your Idle Slumbers
which to Your Kindred give offence
but rather Show that tho'Your Dreams are of Command
your waking Thoughts are Prone to Service

Joseph

my Filial Duty & Fraternal Love
give Swiftnefs to my Feet & Mind

Jacob

Charming reply from almost infant lips!
tho'l Restrain thee from Remark
on these Celestial Visitations
I full well Forsee Thour't one Day
to perform Gods High Behests

HappyYouth HappyYouth
to whom kind Heav'n has such Early favours Giv'n
Daily shall grow up with thee
Valour wisdom Chastity

Chorus

Happy Youth Happy Youth
to whom kind Heav'n has such Early favours Giv'n
Daily shall grow up with thee
Valour wisdom Chastity

Jacob

But Hark the Host of Cherubims! There Voices join with my Prophetick Lays
in Confirmation of my Song

Chorus

Happy Youth Happy Youth
to whom kind Heav'n has such Early favours Giv'n
Daily shall grow up with thee
Valour wisdom Chastity.
full of Virtue full of Grace
born to blefs our Hebrew Race

[scene 2]

Joseph

Alas my Eager Haste to Shew my fond Obedience
made meforget to take my Sire's Instructions
I fear this Path Mistaken
Sure I'm Wander'd Towards the Desart
Dreadfull Call'd from its Inhabitants the wolves &Tigers
whence this Surprising Courage that o'th Sudden
so warms my Heart
sure tis from Heav'n

I'll the Lion Dauntlefs meet prefs
the adder with my Feet
Somewhat whispers in my Ear
trust in God and banish fear

and See where sent by Providence a Guide arrives
so wish'd for by my Erring Footsteps
Stranger, leads this way to the Vales
where Jacobs Sons feed their Rich Flocks!

Stranger

No Gentle Youth, widely you've mifs'd YourTrack:
But Mark the Nodding Plumage of Yon Goodly Cedars
keep them upon Your Left, You Cannot Err again. Farewell

Joseph

Thanks for this Timely Aid

Let me hasten away

for by this Delay
my Brethren Offended may Prove
No More will I Name
my Heavenly Dream
least thereby I forfeit their Love

[scene 3] The Sons of Jacob as at Work

Reuben

Surely did not our faintnefs Tell
this world's Great Eye & Soul' is sunk
from its Meridian Height
I wonder much that our Refreshments Come not
let us repose ourselves till their arrival

Underneath this plantane Shade
we the Sultry Heat evade
while the Gentle western Breeze
gives our Languid Spirits ease

Simeon

See in a Lucky Moment Comes the Hated Dreamer with our Cates'
at once to satisfy our Hunger& Revenge
let us Mow Down thisTall prophetick Sheaf
that is to overlook its Fellows with its PrideBlown Crest
Seize on him

Joseph

Ah me, what Violence
my Father sent me Early forth But...

Simeon

But knew not he sent forth his Fatted calf to Slaughter.
he Cannot save thee now from the Uplifted knife

Joseph

Alafs! you will not slay me
too Cruel a Return to him
who Brought you Sustenance
to Comfort Yours,
to Take his Life away

Reuben

His Tender Pleadings Melt my Very Soul
Stay Brethren, lets Consider

Joseph

If You Consider Iam Safe
Consideration Never did so Fell an Act..

Tremble Shudderat the Guilt
Should my Harmlefs Blood be Spilt
You'd feel the pangs of Cursed Cain
like him repent your Crimes in vain

Reuben

with what intrepid Air & Reason Argues he let us be advis'd
Let not his Blood be on us
Throw him into Yonder Pit
so left to Chance, nought more shall we hear of him
at our Fathers house
[aside] Heav'n prosper this Deceit to Save the Innocent
Till my Return

The Sons of Jacob

Let it be so
but first lets take
his Pageant Vestment.

Simeon

There, Saucy Vanter
Sleep Your Fill

Dream again of Sun and Moon
Dream Your Brethren Shall Bow Down
Boast of Your Exalted Sheaf
number Stars o'er in Your Grave

[scene 4]**Joseph**

oh Barbarous Effect
of Jealous pride and Hatefull Rage,
But let me not Complain
Rather let me Blefs all [-] Bounteous Heav'n,
that by Mirac'lous means has order'd
No water should pofsefs this Pitt
to Cause my Instant Suffocation
Yet why should I approve Life
when its Duration nothing else must be
but one continual Scene of Misery
Surely Some pois'nous Dank annoy's my Brain
& to my Fathers Gathers me

Take me Dying, Silent Grave
best Relief Sad Wretches Have,
There no wrath, no pains affright
all is Silence all is Night

[scene 5]**Simeon**

But a Few paces Farther and we'll find him,
Here, Take him.
Render us the price agreed
no Matter whither you convey him

Joseph

Alafs where am I going?

Ishmaelite

that we Can't Tell
unknowing who may prove the Highest Bidder

Joseph

Sure You'll let me to my Dear Father's House return
to cheer his aching Heart
He'll well Reward...

Ishmaelite

Not so we part with property what we Buy, we Sell again

Joseph

ah me!
do you for Your Species Traffick as for Beasts?

Ishmaelite

O'er the Desarts, O'er the Main
we Still Roam in quest of Gain
and that fav'rite game in View
Scorning Dangers we pursue
Those this Hardy Life who Share
Strangers to Compulsion are
to Compulsion Strangers are

Fine actus Prima**Act II****[scene 1]****Reuben Solus**

These Thorns & Brambles I Remark'd Surround the Horrid pit
Oh ere it is
Dear Boy, I come to set thee Free,
to give thee Life and Liberty
But Ha! no quick Reply! all Hush as Night!
for Certain he is Dead O. fatal Lofs!
perhaps he sleeps; I'll Search him with my Staff,

the Pit is not too Deep;
Too Deep Alas! for him by art or strength t'escape
but he is Surely Gone, Ah me the Day!
by Some wild Beast Devour'd:
why Interpos'd I not with Force
against my Cruel Brethren?
Force had been Vain O'er [-] Number'd So:
I thought my Artfull Aequiescence Safest:
how weak is human wisdom in
the all [-] Seeing Eye of the Supreme
but Surely actions Expected are, by Righteous Heav'n
proportion'd to the Talents Giv'n.

O Gracious Lord, O Lord of Israel
Hear Thy prostrate Servant's Humble prayer
Thou Seest the Secrets of my Heart
which in this Bloodshed had no part
Let not thy Vengeance Fall on me
Since both my Hand and Heart are Free

[scene 2] Jacob and his Sons

Jacob

Unheard of Carelefsnefs or Dastard Cowardice
have ye our flocks so oft protected from Savage Wolves
and Could not Save my Pretty, Tender Lamb

All

Take Comfort Father take Comfort

Jacob

Talk not to me of Comfort
Dark despair Surrounds me

Simeon

we'll Make a Further Search

Jacob

too well this Bloody Vest Informs
all Search is Vain

All

Take Comfort Father take Comfort

Jacob

for Ever Lost, my Darling Son
these weeping Eyes no more shall See
but I to thee will Hasten on
Since thou canst not return to me

[scene 3]

Joseph Solus

How wisely Providence Bechequers still our Pilgrimage
Seas'ning with Good our Evil Lot
'tis Surely done to set before us
that our Dependance¹³ is on our preserver
and not in our own Skill and Prowefs
Could Human thoughts have Once Imagin'd
when in the Noisome Pit
that God intended to Bring me to this Happynefs
(if ought this world affords Can be Call'd Such)
and prosper all I undertake

Let me Ever look to Thee
Author of all Good to me.

I with thankfull heart declare
wonderfull thy Blessings are

[scene 4]

but Still one Dread remains
not in the least of my own Frailty
but another's
Let me rest Content
he that is strong Resolv'd to do no Evil
Need not fear Any
My Cause of fear Approaches

Potiphar's Wife

why how now, Hebrew Youth
so Strict in meditation
thy Blooming Years Demand more lively Hours

Joseph

Much honour'd Lady
my Deep Contemplation
(having first made my Orisons to Heav'n)
was Fix'd upon the wealth & welfare
of my Right Noble Lord

Potiphar's Wife

Think no More
thy Lord is Rich Enough to possess Thee.

Such a Lovely prudent Youth
with such Modesty and Truth
sure kind fate appointed You
to Bless your Lord and Mistress too
This Aspect so Reserv'd give O'er
This awful Distance keep no More
Behold a Grateful friend in Me
Esteeming Your Fidelity

Joseph

Too well, I Dread, I Understand her
But I must Dissemble
Madam I Greatly fear
my Absence from Diligent O'er [-] Spectation
of the Numerous Troop that people Your Enamell'd Mead
May Much Redound to Disadvantage of My Honour'd Lord.

The Mower Calls with Cheerful Note
warbling from his Artful Throat
and the Damsels Trip along
Chanting forth the Rustick Song

She [Potiphar's Wife]

Sure I in absence of the Lord
may be Obey'd as his Vice-Regent.

Tempt not the Scorching Sun to kifs
that Dimpl'd Cheek

He

I Must be gone

She

may then I say
You Shall Not

Duetto

She

You See what I dare not Say

Joseph

I See what I dare not Say

She

Love Commands and You Must Stay

Joseph

Virtue Calls, I must away

[scene 5]

Potiphar's Wife

Furies! Death and Torture
Slighted thus my Charms & Love
no Comfort now is Left me But Revenge
The only Solace for a woman Scorn'd
& that I'll have recourse to

Dark and Dismal thoughts remove,
remove Ev'ry trace of Suppliant Love
in his Turn the Slave Shall know
part of what I undergo
ah! me, the Task is too severe
the Charmer from my Heart to Tear
Fondnefs and Rage in Equal Strife
Distract, Consume this wretched Life.

[scene 6]

and see where Opportunely Comes
the Injur'd Venger of my Injury
So Sir, You've wisely done
to bring a Hebrew Slave to Mock Your Honour.

Potiphar

what means my Love?

She

let this Garment, my Blushes Sparing, Tell,
which from the Flying Shoulder of the Ravisher
my Shrill Screams Exacted
I Cannot bear it

Potiphar

No, nor Shall ye.

Duetto**She**

Revenge inspires me

He

Honour Fires me

Both

Let the Impious Villain Dye
Thus Disgrac'd let us haste
to Chastize such Treachery

Fine Atto Secondo**Act III****[scene 1]****Joseph Solus**

what Strange Revolutions Yet, all [-] Gracious Heav'n
am I ordain'd to prove!
For some, AEtherial Being still attends me Minist'ring Comfort
the Lord who from the Murd'ring knife
Screen'd and Snatch'd me into Life
Redeem'd me when I was a Slave
will not Leave me in the Grave.

General

where is the pris'ner so renown'd
by the Almighty Gifted
with such wond'rous Skill of Solving Dreams
our Eastern Magi all so far Excelling

Goaler

Lo where he Lays
and Marvells has periorm'd in his Confinement

General

Such high Talents might deserve a better situation!
Behold the Royal Signature,
whose Ears his fame has reach'd,
for his Releasement
Come, Sir, on, with me

Honour, wealth & Power too
Shall for Your Reward be Due
If with wisdom You are Bles'd
to Relieve a Monarch's Breast

[scene 2]

Reuben

Oh Racking Torment
How shall we longer bear
this pinching Famine's Short Allowance?
No Gleaming Ray of Hope or Comfort
to illumine our Desponding Souls
but still the Horror of a Shorter Yet before us

Simeon

How e'er Severe upon the General
Just are thy Judgements, Lord, on us
for our poor Joseph's Bondage
But let's united be in our Repentance ;
what Can't Repentance do?

Reuben

Let us the Mournfull Ashes and the Humble Sackcloth wear
[The sons of Jacob]
Prostrate on the Earth we'll
say be our Offences done away

Reuben

with Contrite Heart & weeping Eyes
We'll Deprecate our Misery

Simeon

to our Contrition let us add Obedience
as our Father has Ordain'd.
Haste to the AEgyptian Land.

[scene 3]

Chorus

Blow the Fife with Chearfull Noise
Sound the Trumpet's Brazen Voice
Sing th'inspir'd Seer's praise
to such wisdom Trophys Raise
with gay flowers strew the Ground
let the Virgins dance around
Thro' the Streets in Triumph Bring
the Hero Honour'd by our King

General

thus by our Sovereign's Command
we leave Your Highners in Porsersion of this Pallace
the Sole Vice Roy of this Eastern quarter of this Domain

Joseph

For these Exalted Honours
let my Most Humble Thanks be Render'd

Ye Lofty Columns, Guilded Roofs
Dazzling Arches, Vistas Superb
How Vain Your Splendorto Relieve an Aking Heart
that pines once more to See
my Lov'd and Loving Father
& pretty prattling Partner
of My Mother's fond affection

but Biers my Eyes! what Object Strikes 'em?
my once Cruel Brethren.
I hope my Gorgeous Garb this Courtesy at least
will do me, to hide mefrom their Sight

General

Most Mighty Lord
as Posted on my Guard, these Strangers I have Seiz'd
unknowing their Intent, have brought 'em
toYour Highners's Examination

Joseph

Vile Hostile Spies
but we have Racks & Irons for'em

Simeon

All Hail great Prince
thy Servants are of Israel's Tribe
& drove by Famine Come in hopes of Buying Sustenance

Joseph

This well invented Story Boots ye not at all
Wisdom with its poignant" Eye
Sees thro' Basest Treachery
Art the Sooner makes Descry'd
what it was Employ'd to hide

Away with 'em
Get the Most Marsy Gyves
and Deepest Dungeons ready
[aside] Ah painful Counterfeit

Simeon

Sublime Disposer of Our Fate
permit us before your Dreaded Sentence
pafs to Execution
on our Knees to Tell the Truthfull Narrative
of our Afflicted Family:
we are all Brethren, one Man's Sons
our Father by another Partner had two more
one of those Sons was [-] lost
the other is too Young, his Sire too old,

to Yield each other the Minutest Service
So please You take our Lives away
Theres tooYou Take,
who your High Judgement knows are Guiltlers

Joseph

well have you pleaded and I have Fix'd
on a Criterion ofYour Veracity:
let Your Infant Brother Soon be Brought before me

Simeon

we fear our Father-

Joseph

one word of Hesitation More, ye Dye

Simeon

we haste with swift Compliance

Joseph

SeeYou take Hostages fortheir Return
& well supply 'em with Refreshment
ere their Departure
and D'ye Hear?

General

I Shall Obey
[Exeunt]

[scene 4]

Joseph

How heav'n Show'rs its Blelsings on me
with such profusion, My Aking Brain
can Scarce Endure it

Blood, this hasty Course give O'er
Flutter my Fond Heart no more
Reason Mitigate the Joy
Or th'excels wil soon Destroy

I must within Repose my Self to calmnefs
Good providence protect me.

[scene 5]

Simeon

We're now upon AEgyptian Ground
a little Farther Guides us to the palace
let us haste

The Howling wolf at Midnight Roams
by Hunger prefs'd with Fury Foams
Snuffs up the Air, the Bait he winds

by Fatal Scent the Morsel Finds
Intrepid leaps into the Snare
tho' certain death Attends him there

[scene 6]

Joseph

bring in the Strangers
so Ye have well approv'd Your Selves to be
the persons ye wou'd pafs for.
think ye because ye stole my Cup, Sacred to Divination,
ye therefore stole my pow'r of Discernment
that I might mistake Evil for Good
as you have made Return for a Requitall
of your kind Reception;
Stealing the Gold with which you purchas'd Corn?

Benjamin

Great Prince our Lives are in your Hands
but let not your Greatnefs Divest its self of Justice.

we are Innocent, unknowing
how either Cup or Corn Came there

Joseph

[aside] Oh Charming Spokesman!
So this is Your Brother whom ye told me of

Simeon

My Lord it is

Joseph

Early Practitioner in Artifice & Flattery
[aside] oh my Heart!

Benjamin

Let me find favour to Relate
our Undisguised Tale

Feeding Flocks upon the plain
we a Harmlefs Life Sustain
by our Birth and Nature Free
from such Guilt or Robbery

All

In Your all [-] Discerning Mind
Let Your Servants Mercy Find

Joseph

I can withhold no Longer
The Gush of this Salt Humour must Relieve me
all Arise
Come hither Lad

All

what Sudden Change is this?

Joseph

Whilst my Rapture I Conceal
Swelling Sighs my heart Reveal
Only Heav'n Could bestow
the ExtacythatStrikes me now

they do not Yet Discover me
let methis Brilliant Circle of my Diadem put off
my Open front must surely make me known

All

O heav'ns our Brother
Pardon us Lord

Joseph

I pray ye rise
talk not of Pardon
Rather with this Embrace accept myThanks
that ye have been the happy Instrument of Heav'n
to Convey me Good

Simeon

Can You forgive our Cruelty

Joseph

no more, I do beseech ye
to the Noble Soul the most Consumate Joy is
to have power of conferring Our forgivenefs
which Joy increases as the Injury is Greater
How Much Oblig'd then are we
to those that do us wrong

Simeon

Generous Sentiment

Joseph

But how fares our Father?
Lives he, is he well?

Simeon

In Perfect Health, Saving his Grief
for his imagin'd Lofs of you, my Lord

Joseph

Enough. My Dreams Accomplish'd
No longer Lord, once more Your Brother
Nothing is wanting but his Presence here
to make our happynefs Compleat
which Your Goodnefs will, with utmost haste,
procure. Meanwhile This Treasure leave
With me

Duetto**Joseph**

O Delight beyond Exprefsing

Simeon

ounutterable Blersing

Joseph

After all my flowing Tears

Simeon

after all my Chilling Fears

Both

to Embrace You once again

all my mourning You returning

Ends in pleasure with out Measure

vanish'd now is Anxious pain

Chorus

Let us our Gratefull voices raise

Sound all your instruments of praise

Blefs the Great Jehovah's Name

to the Heathen tell his Fame

Thro'the Universe be known

the Mighty wonders he has Done

Fine
