

THE PROPHET YUSUF (AS)

... He was Our chosen servant. (Surah Yusuf, 24)

... And thus We established Yusuf in the land and taught him to interpret dreams. Allah is in control of all His affairs. However, most of mankind do not know this. And then when he became a full-grown man, We gave him knowledge and right judgment too. That is how We reward all doers of good. (Surah Yusuf, 21-22)

Surah Yusuf, the 12th surah of the Qur'an, comprises 111 verses and is almost entirely devoted to the Prophet Yusuf's (as) life.

From a very early age, the Prophet Yusuf (as) was put to the test by Allah through various incidents. He was a very patient prophet who was sincere in his faith and always told of Allah's existence and His superiority to those around him. His trust in Allah, his devotion and his loyalty to Him, his moderate attitude in the face of events set an example to all of the faithful.

Through a dream he had when he was still a child, Allah gave the Prophet Yusuf (as) the good news that He would give him knowledge and many blessings. The Prophet Yusuf (as) told his dream to his father, the Prophet Ya'qub (as), who interpreted it for him:

Yusuf told his father, "Father! I saw eleven bright stars, and the sun and moon as well. I saw them all prostrate themselves in front of me." He replied, "My son, don't tell your brothers of your dream lest they devise some scheme to injure you: Satan is the sworn enemy of man. Accordingly, your Lord will pick you out and teach you to interpret visions and will perfectly fulfill His blessing on you as well as on the family of Ya'qub, as He fulfilled it perfectly before upon your forebears, Ibrahim and Ishaq. Most certainly, your Lord is All-Knowing and Wise." (Surah Yusuf, 4-6)

The Prophet Yusuf (as) Declared That Allah's

Approval Was Above And Beyond Everything Else

When he was still very young, the Prophet Yusuf's (as) brothers wanted to get rid of him, for they were jealous of the love their father felt for him. They finally threw him into a well. The brothers left Yusuf (as) to die at the bottom of the well and, returning to their father, they lied to him and said, "**A wolf appeared and ate him up.**" (Surah Yusuf, 17) After being left in the well, Yusuf was found by a caravan whose members rescued him from the depths of the well and sold him to an Egyptian Aziz (Treasurer). The Prophet Yusuf (as) remained in his house for many long years. However, when he reached maturity, the lady of the house, the Aziz's wife, wanted to seduce him. But the Prophet Yusuf (as), who had fear for Allah, sought refuge in Allah and reminded the wife of the Aziz, that he had looked after him and treated him well. This is related in the Qur'an as follows:

"Allah is my refuge! He is My Lord and has been good to me and treated me with kindness. Those who do wrong will surely never prosper." (Surat Yusuf, 23)

Unable to have her way, Aziz's wife slandered the Prophet Yusuf (as). Although Yusuf's (as) innocence had been proven through the testimonies of the witnesses and tangible evidence had been produced, he was thrown into a dungeon. However, the Prophet Yusuf (as), who was aware that he was being tested by Allah in every situation, always adopted the attitude that would most please Him. In this incident too, Yusuf (as) expressed that being in a dungeon was dearer to him: He said, "My Lord, the prison is preferable to me than what they call on me to do. Unless You shield me from their guile, it may well be that I will fall for them and so lapse into folly." (Surah Yusuf,33)

As we see in this incident too, one who has an assured faith in Allah, should never lose his moderate attitude when faced with difficulties. He should put his trust in Allah and never forget that the outcome will definitely be auspicious, for Allah promises to help his sincere servants both in this world and beyond. Indeed, regarding this matter, the Prophet Yusuf's (as) life has been recounted in the Qur'an as a striking example.

The Prophet Yusuf (as) Reminded His Cell Mates

That It Was Allah Who Granted Everything

The Qur'an informs us that two other young men were thrown into the dungeon along with the Prophet Yusuf (as), and that they asked him to interpret their dreams. As was true of all the other messengers, the Prophet Yusuf (as) first told them of the existence of Allah and that the knowledge he possessed, in actuality, belonged to Allah:

He said, "No meal to feed you will arrive before I have informed you of what its meaning is. That is part of what my Lord taught me. For I have left the religion of a people who clearly have no faith in Allah and deny the life to come." I hold fast to the creed of my forebears, Ibrahim and Ishaq and Ya'qub. We don't associate anything with Allah. And that is how Allah has favoured us and all mankind, but most men do not give thanks." (Surah Yusuf, 37-38)

This reminder of the Prophet Yusuf (as) calls attention to a fact that believers need to keep in mind: Allah grants to human beings all the attributes they possess, their material benefits and their knowledge and reason. And whenever He wills, He could give more of these blessings or take them back. Keeping this in mind, it is of great importance that people should not feel proud of any of their qualities or possessions.

The Prophet Yusuf (as) Informed His Cell Mates

That The Only God Is Allah, And That They

Should Worship Him Alone

Then the Prophet Yusuf (as) went on to tell them that there was no god but Allah and summoned his cell mates to be servants to Him alone:

"My fellow-prisoners, are many lords better, or Allah, the only One, the Conqueror? What you serve apart from Him are only names which you and your forefathers have made up. There is no mandate for them from Allah. Allah alone is qualified to judge. His order is to worship none but Him. That is in truth the straight and upright religion, but most of mankind simply do not know it." (Surah Yusuf, 39-40)

As we have seen, the Prophet Yusuf (as) did not immediately react to his cell mates, who were obviously ascribing partners to Allah. Instead, he first summoned them to believe in Allah and advised them not to ascribe partners to Him. Not aware of the abject situation he is in, a disbeliever is often unable to decide what his priorities are and he trifles with matters of secondary importance. In this situation, it falls to the believer to identify the attributes of the particular disbeliever and to admonish him in a way to benefit him. It is faith alone which will benefit all people. That is why the Prophet Yusuf (as) first told his cell mates about faith.

Irrespective of the circumstances, the Prophet Yusuf (as) never lost his moderate attitude or his commitment in fulfilling Allah's commands; he communicated Allah's religion even in the dungeon. This attitude is exemplary for all believers.

The Prophet Yusuf (as) Declared That

The Lower Self Enjoins To Evil

The Aziz's wife confessed the truth and thereby Yusuf's (as) innocence was proven. However, despite the truth being out in the open, the Prophet Yusuf (as) did not attempt to deny the vulnerability of his own lower self and revealed another most important truth:

“In this way he may know at last that I did not dishonour him behind his back and that Allah most surely does not guide the deviousness of the dishonourable. Not that I am free from sin: Man's soul is prone to evil—except for those on whom my Lord has mercy. My Lord is Forgiving and Merciful.”
(Surah Yusuf, 52-53)

In order to understand why the Prophet Yusuf (as) did not want to defend his lower self, we need to dwell upon the meaning of “lower self.” We can define the “lower self” as the power within the soul that enjoins to evil. When the wishes of the lower self incur Allah's disapproval, believers never give in to their lower selves. At all times, they strive to earn Allah's approval. Aware of this attribute of the lower self, the Prophet Yusuf (as) said that it would be wrong to nurture it.

The Prophet Yusuf (as) Is Grateful To Allah

For The Blessings He Grants

After his acquittal, the Prophet Yusuf (as) was entrusted as a liable person with the treasures of the country. He thereupon also made his family reunite and told them about his trust in Allah and that he always remembered that He held control over everything:

He raised his parents up on to the throne. All the others fell prostrate in front of him. He said, “My father, truly this is now the interpretation of the dream I had. My Lord has made it all come true; and He was kind to me by letting me out of prison and brought you from the desert when Satan had caused dissent between me and my brothers. My Lord is kind to anyone He wills. He alone is All-Knowing and Wise.” (Surah Yusuf, 100)

The Prophet Yusuf (as), who trusted in Allah when encountered with difficulty, likewise turned to our Lord when he received blessings, and prayed thus:

"My Lord, You have granted power to me on Earth and taught me to interpret dreams. Originator of the heavens and Earth, You are my Friend in this world and the Next. So take me as a Muslim at my death and admit me among the righteous.” (Surah Yusuf, 101)

As seen, the Qur'an describes of the attitudes the Prophet Yusuf (as) assumed in the face of the events he went through. This narrative clearly reveals the Prophet Yusuf's (as) moral excellence, his faith, his submission to Allah and his loyalty to Him. Irrespective of the conditions, he never swerved from moral excellence and never gave up his submissive attitude: he told people around him of Allah's existence and His infinite might.

Despite being a prophet, the Prophet Yusuf's (as) wish to die as a Muslim and to be among the righteous is also a subject upon which to reflect. No one can guarantee his being worthy of being granted Paradise. Aware of this fact, believers fear Allah and, following the example of the Prophet Yusuf (as), they pray to Allah to die as Muslims.

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