

### Sura Yusuf, Verse 35

ثُمَّ بَدَأَ لَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا رَأَوْا الْآيَاتِ لَيْسَ جُنَّةً حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ

*Then it occurred to them after they had seen the signs that they should imprison him till a time.*

#### Reflections

- why was Nabi Yusuf imprisoned?
- What are some similarities/differences of being imprisoned with the time he was in the well?

#### Tafsir

This verse begins a new chapter in the life of Nabi Yusuf. He is imprisoned and the stay in prison leads to being called by the King to interpret his dream and eventually becoming his minister. It was difficult to be in prison but it was part of the plan of God for Nabi Yusuf, a necessary stage before his eventual success and the raising of his status.

In the house of the minister Nabi Yusuf was invited to commit a sin. He was God conscious and refused to give in. It became clear that he was a pure and virtuous person who would not disobey his Lord. The signs were very evident that he was not an ordinary person. He had high morals and a strong conscience. No-one could persuade him to sin. The Aziz decides to put him away in prison so that they do not have to face him at home, or that people should forget about him. Some commentators say it was to show people that Nabi Yusuf was guilty of wrongdoing. The plan was to keep him in prison for a while.

Nabi Yusuf himself is okay with being in the prison. He says the prison is better for him than a place where he would be led into sin. He gives up the comfort of the Minister's home rather than disobey God. This is how believers are. They would rather face difficulty than risk displeasing God.

#### Important Lessons

- 1) Never give up your values, no matter who invites you to give them up. Even if they have power or authority, are higher in status than you, hold on strongly to your faith and principles.
- 2) It is better to be alone, lonely, uncomfortable . . . . than to be disobedient to the One who created you and loves you so much.

## **Ideas**

- do an art or language activity showing life in a prison. What are some difficulties faced by prisoners?
- let students write a diary entry for Nabi Yusuf about his days in prison.
- Imagine a prison guard in Nabi Yusuf's prison. What conversation would he have with him? What would the guard tell the other officials of the prison about him? How was he different from other prisoners.
- discuss imprisonment of believers, during the time of the Imams (Imam Musa al Kadhim (a), the Abbasides who imprisoned many Shiahs, the prisons of dictators such as the Shah of Iran, Saddam Hussain . . .)

-Break Free game: Divide the class into four groups. Each team is given a color. The teacher has clues that are coded clues. Each team solves one clue at a time and as they solve a clue they give it to the teacher to get the next clue. The clues should be from Sura Yusuf example 'In the darkest of nights it all came to him as a dream. who was he and what did he see?', 'the best of stories is this many verses long', 'I am the emotion that drives people to plot against one another', 'Unscramble USFYU REDAM TRBOEHSR' The first team to solve all clues 'breaks free' and wins.

## **Related Story**

Making the best of a negative situation – Imam al Kadhim (a) in prison

For a period of time, Imam Kadhim was imprisoned in Basra under a guard called Isa. The guard wrote a letter to the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid. In the letter, he wrote, "It has been a while that Musa ibn Ja'far is in my jail. I have been watching him all the time and I have put some guards to look over him; however, he has done nothing but worship. I assigned someone to listen to his prayers, but he was never heard cursing us. As for himself, he asked for nothing but forgiveness and mercy from Allah.

I request that you send someone to take Musa ibn Ja'far from me; otherwise, I will set him free, since I cannot keep him in jail anymore."

The guards who watched the Imam reported having heard him constantly uttering the following words in his prayer, "O Allah! You are aware that I had asked for a private place to worship You, and You have provided me with such a place; praise shall only be to You'. Imam praised God for

giving him the free time in prison to worship Him. He did not complain about the prison, rather he saw the positive part of being in prison.