

Sura Yusuf, Verse 36

وَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ السِّجْنَ فَتَيَانٍ ۖ قَالَ أَحَدُهُمَا إِنِّي أَرَانِي أَعْصِرُ خَمْرًا ۖ وَقَالَ الْآخَرُ إِنِّي
 أَرَانِي أَحْمِلُ فَوْقَ رَأْسِي خُبْرًا تَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْهُ نَبِينًا ۖ بِتَأْوِيلِهِ ۖ إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ
 الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And two youths entered the prison with him. One of them said: I saw myself [in a dream] pressing wine. And the other said: I saw myself carrying bread on my head of which birds ate. Inform us of its interpretation; surely we see you to be from those who do good.

Reflections

- how did the two young men know that Nabi Yusuf (a) might know the interpretation of their dreams? What had he done that they thought he was from those who do good?
- What is a dream? Does it always have a message?

Tafsir

The prison in which Nabi Yusuf (a) was kept was a general one housing many other inmates. In the prison there were two young men who had been workers in the palace of the King of Egypt. One of them was in charge of the cellar of drinks in the palace and the other was the head of the kitchen. Their enemies had spread false talk about them and they were accused of trying to poison the King. They were in prison awaiting their sentence.

One of them had a dream that he was making wine from grapes. The other man had a dream in which he saw birds eating bread which was on top of his head. Both of them come to Nabi Yusuf (a) to ask for an interpretation of their dreams.

According to Tafsir Nabi Yusuf (a)'s manners and behavior had impressed the two men. They realized that this was a noble person with dignity and piety. He also helped and looked after those who were in prison with him and had earned a good reputation. It is also possible that Nabi Yusuf had talked to his prison inmates about dream interpretation and hence they came to him to ask about their dreams.

Muhsinin is one who does *Ihsan*, or good. The word *Ihsan* means good or beautiful. It includes:

- inner beauty rather than just outer beauty
- beautiful thoughts, words and actions

Ihsan is part of human perfection and raises the human being to high levels. Allah says in the Holy Quran; *Surely Allah loves the Muhsinin.* (3:148). Imam Ali (a) says; *The value of each person is according to the good he does.* (Nahjul Balagha, hadith #81)

Dreams are of many types and do not always have an important message. The Quran talks of some important dreams like that of Nabi Ibrahim (a). Sometimes a dream is a prediction or a warning. But often dreams are just wanderings of the soul that don't carry much meaning. When a person sleeps the soul wanders around. It has been likened in hadith to the stretch of the rays of the sun while it still remains in the sky. A hadith of Imam Sadiq (a) says; *Dreams are of three types - good news from Allah for the Believer, a caution against the Satan, and confused dreams.* (Al Kafi, Vol.8, H#61)

Important Lessons

- 1) You can do good in any situation, with whatever you have. Nabi Yusuf (a) was able to do good while in prison.
- 2) You can affect people with your character and behavior even while in difficult or lowly circumstances. All types of people respect good character and dignified behavior.
- 3) When you are a good doer people will trust you with their secrets.
- 4) When you do good to others you can win them over. Then they will listen to what you have to say.

Ideas

- discuss inner beauty. What does it look like? How is it different from outer beauty? Show pictures of inner vs outer beauty. Play a game or let students write/draw on inner versus outer beauty.
- let students speak/act out the conversation in prison. Students can read their lines from the Quran. Repeating this with various groups of students helps students to absorb the verse and learn the message in it.

Related Story

The Prophet (s) sees a dream:

The Holy Prophet (s) once saw a dream that he entered Makkah with his companions and they performed the tawaf around the Ka'bah. His companions were delighted when he told them about it. They all loved Makkah and yearned to do tawaf there. The *Muhajirun* had a lot of affection for Makkah. They had been born there and had grown up in the city. They loved it deeply but had been driven away from it. When the Prophet told them of his dream, they started

to prepare for the journey to Makkah. No one wanted to stay behind. Excitedly, the Muslims wore their Ihram, took their animals for sacrifice and set off for Makkah.

When they reached Makkah the Quraysh would not allow them in. They had to sign a peace treaty with them which allowed them to return the following year. They agreed on peace between the two parties which was a huge blessing for the Muslims after many years of conflict. The Muslims returned to Madinah. Some of the Muslims began questioning the Prophet about his dream. Allah revealed the verse; *Certainly Allah had shown to His Messenger the vision with truth: you shall most certainly enter the Sacred Mosque, if Allah pleases, in security, (48:27).* The dream came true the following year when thousands of Muslims entered Makkah and performed the tawaf.