

Sura Yusuf, Verse 37-38

قَالَ لَا يَأْتِيكُمَا طَعَامٌ تُرْزَقَانِهِ إِلَّا نَبَّأْتُكُمَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمَا ۚ ذَلِكُمَا مِمَّا
عَلَّمَنِي رَبِّي ۚ إِنِّي تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ

I will inform you both of its interpretation before any food comes to you; this is what my Lord has taught me. Surely I have moved away from the ways of a people who do not believe in Allah and they deny the Hereafter.

وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ آبَائِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ۚ مَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نُشْرِكَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۚ
ذَلِكَ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ

And I follow the religion of my fathers, Ibrahim and Ishaq and Yaqub. Never do we attribute partners to Allah; this is by Allah's grace upon us and on people, but most people do not give thanks.

Reflections

- Before interpreting the dreams, Nabi Yusuf talks about God and discusses his own beliefs. Why did he do that?
- The prisoners did not know Nabi Yusuf very well. What would they learn about him through these words?
- What are the first things you would tell about yourself to someone who did not know you?

Tafsir

When the two prisoners come to Nabi Yusuf and ask him to interpret their dreams, he sees it as a good opportunity to tell them some important truths about God and life. He wants to do that for their own good, so their minds open up to higher forms of truth. He starts by promising that very soon he will tell them the interpretation (before their food comes). He knows they are eager for his answer so they will listen to him. It is a chance to pass on God's message. All human beings are God's deputies on earth and when an opportunity comes up to do God's work they should spread good words about Him. A believer does not miss an opportunity. Imam Ali (a) says: *An opportunity passes the way clouds drift away.* It is important though to first recognize a good opportunity, and second to not misuse it.

Nabi Yusuf identifies himself as having knowledge of dream interpretation. He says it is a gift granted to him by God. This introduction shows him to be a servant of God who is humble and grateful. He acknowledges that what he has is not his own, or from his own cleverness, but a blessing from God. God did not grant him the blessing at random but because he showed his sincerity and worthiness by moving away from the ways of those who rejected God. He is referring to the people around him in Egypt or in Kan'an where he was before, where most of the people worshipped idols and indulged in wrong practices.

Nabi Yusuf showed himself worthy of receiving the gift from God. Note that he has self-confidence and determination. He does not just follow the ways of others without thinking. He is not afraid to be his own person when he knows he is on the right.

Nabi Yusuf introduces himself as the follower and descendant of a pure and noble family, beginning with Nabi Ibrahim who was his great-grandfather and is known as the father of all monotheists. His upbringing and noble family would not allow him to follow a wrong path. His ancestors received revelation from God and their teachings were ingrained in him. A noble and spiritual family is a source of honor and dignity. A believer's inner nature along with outer family circumstances are two factors that help him on his journey towards God.

This may have been the first time that Nabi Yusuf identifies his family ancestry in the prison. It showed the people in prison that like many of them Nabi Yusuf was a pure man and was imprisoned under false charges.

The blessing of nobility and guidance is a gift from God not just for Nabi Yusuf's family but for all of mankind. Allah has placed an inner instinct inside the human being that is inclined towards purity and belief. He then strengthened it with outer guidance in the form of Divine leaders and revelation. It is great grace from God that He guided the human being so he would achieve happiness and satisfaction in both the worlds. Most people however do not recognize or acknowledge God's favors.

These verses demonstrate the practice of *Tabarri* (moving away from the path of the idol worshippers) and *Tawalli* (following the path of his pure ancestors).

Important Lessons

- 1) A strong self-identity is important. It is okay to introduce yourself positively and show the abilities you have so long as you acknowledge it is a gift from God. You need to know your own strengths to be effective.
- 2) Make use of an opportunity to spread good words or do good deeds. You can have an impact on others.
- 3) Do not be afraid to be different from those who you know are on a path disliked by God. God will open other paths for you.

Ideas

- have an activity on self-identity. Examples:

a) children write or answer questions about themselves

b) children identify positive traits in each other. See - *another activity I did to help build friendships and unity among our Laurel class* - <http://thetomfarnsworthfamily.blogspot.ca/2012/03/youth-activities.html>

c) Other ideas: <https://www.pinterest.com/oshieltirzah/health-and-self-identity-ideas/>

- discuss or act out opportunities of identifying oneself as a Muslim. What would you say? How would you say it? Teach children to seek help from God and then not be afraid of anyone else. It is important to be humble and gentle.

Related Story

Imam Muhammad Taqi (a): Confidence and self-identity

Once when our 9th Imam, Imam Taqi (as) was only nine years old, he was walking down a street of Baghdad, when Mamun al-Rashid and his soldiers came by. All the other children on the street ran away but Imam Taqi (as) did not.

Noting this, Mamun al-Rashid stopped his carriage and asked, "Young man, why did you not run away like the other children?"

Imam Taqi (as) replied calmly, "Neither had I committed a crime, nor was I blocking the way. Why should I have run away or be afraid? And I also know that you will not cause any unnecessary trouble when your way is not blocked."

Mamun al-Rashid was surprised with this mature reply and asked, "What is your name?"

"Muhammad," came the reply. Whose son are you? asked Mamun al-Rashid. "Son of Imam Ali Ridha (as).