

Sura Yusuf, Verse 54-55

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُونِي بِهِ اَسْتَخْلِصُهُ لِنَفْسِي فَلَمَّا كَلَّمَهُ قَالَ اِنَّكَ الْيَوْمَ لَدَيْنَا مَكِينٌ
 اَمِينٌ

The King said, bring him to me, I will make him my special one. Then when he spoke to him he .said Indeed from today you have an honorable and trusted position with us

قَالَ اجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ اِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلِيمٌ

He said, put me in charge of the store houses of the land, Indeed I am a good guardian, well informed.

Reflections

- why did the King want to make him a special person even before he saw him?
- what was it about Nabi Yusuf that impressed the king after he spoke to him?
- Nabi Yusuf praises himself in verse 55. Is that okay to do? When is it okay to praise yourself?

Tafsir

It was established that Nabi Yusuf was innocent of any crime. The only thing that had landed him in prison was his God consciousness and his purity. Once that was confirmed he was released. The King was very pleased that Nabi Yusuf had been able to interpret his dream so well and show him what was in store for his country. From the interpretation, and from what the man who served him wine told him about his experience in prison, the King knew that this was a knowledgeable and wise man. He was eager to meet him.

When Nabi Yusuf came to the King and they talked together the King was even more impressed. His speech revealed that he was wise and intelligent, had sound judgment and possessed many skills. The King knew that this is a very special person and he took an instant liking to him. The King was ready to offer him a high position in his court.

They discussed the future of the land of Egypt. The King knew that there would be hard times ahead and the leaders of the country would need to plan well so people would not suffer. He

thought that Nabi Yusuf would be the best person to be in charge of this planning. Nabi Yusuf suggested that he be put in charge of the store houses where they would store grain for the first seven years and then give it out in measured amounts to people during the seven years of famine. It would need planning and organizing. It would also need trustworthiness so there would be no misuse and corruption.

Nabi Yusuf knew that there was a lot of wrong and oppression in the economic administration of the country. Now that they needed him and had come to him, he wanted to take this opportunity to set some things right. He saw this as a God given duty, to reform what was wrong in society. His position would allow him to help the oppressed and decrease the racism in the country which gave the rich and noble people a high status and looked down upon certain groups in society. He could transform the country through the skills and talent that God had given him.

Nabi Yusuf described the qualities that made him suitable for the position he had suggested for himself. He could be a good guardian of the stores of grain as he was trustworthy and also was skilled and knowledgeable. He put forward these qualities about himself not to boast – boasting is disliked by Allah – but to show that he had the necessary qualities. It is necessary to know yourself, know your good and bad qualities, and acknowledge that when necessary. Nabi Yusuf wanted to help the people and save them from dying of hunger during the famine that would come. He was not afraid to take on responsibility and had confidence in himself.

It is narrated that after getting this position Nabi Yusuf worked hard to make sure that grain was stored during the seven years when there was plenty of rain. He advised people to use less and refrain from wasting food. In the following seven years of famine he arranged for distribution of grains and encouraged people to only use what was necessary. He often went hungry so he would not forget the pain of the people who had no food.

Important Lessons

- 1) The reputation of a person is built on interactions with others. Even when people assume wrong of you, build a good reputation by virtuous and good behavior with others. It spreads far and can have long term effects.
- 2) Your words reveal the type of person you are. Imam Ali (a) says; *Man is hidden under his tongue*. As soon as you begin talking people can know how you really are inside. So be careful of what you say and how you say it.
- 3) When an opportunity comes when you can set some things right in society take it with confidence and strength.

4) It is important to have both skills (knowledge) and good character. One without the other is not of much use. Nabi Yusuf had both and that is why he was so special and got an honorable position. If he had knowledge but was not trustworthy the King would not have been able to rely on him. And if he was good but lacked knowledge that too would have been a problem. Progress in life demands both.

Ideas

- act out the conversation of Nabi Yusuf and the King.
- make posters for the qualities that the King describes for Nabi Yusuf and what Nabi Yusuf says about himself. Let children put other words that describe the same qualities. This could be done as an activity where teams go around filling in the poster. They could choose one outstanding quality at the end and discuss how they can attain it and how it would help them in life.
- knowing yourself. Each person is a garden with flowers and weeds. Let children draw and label the garden that represents themselves.

Related story

Ali bin Yaqtin

Ali ibn Yaqtin was a close companion of Imam Musa al Kadhim (a) who worked as a minister for Harun al Rashid, the Abbaside Caliph. He did not openly show that he was a follower of the Imam. He used his position in the government to help the Shiahs who were oppressed at that time.

Ali once sought the permission of Imam to leave and resign from this position, but the Imam responded: ‘Do not do that. We feel close to you, and your brothers [in faith] have a position through you; may Allah give peace through you to a heart-broken one or break through you the flame of hate of the enemies of His friends.’

One day Harun al Rashid sent some robes to Ali bin Yaqtin to honour him. Among them was a black woolen cloak adorned with gold like the robes of kings. Ali bin Yaqtin sent all the robes to Imam Musa Al-Kadhim (a) along with some other gifts.

When that reached Imam he accepted everything but returned the woolen cloak. He wrote to him: ‘Keep this cloak and do not let it leave your hands. An event will occur to you when you will have the need of it.’ Ali bin Yaqtin wondered what Imam was referring to.

After some time a servant of Ali bin Yaqtin left his service and reported his love for the Imam to Harun al Rashid. Harun was angry that a worker of his would be a follower of the Imam. The servant told him about the special robe he had given Ali as a gift which Ali had given the Imam. Harun at once sent for Ali bin Yaqtin and asked him about the robe. Because he still had it Ali bin

Yaqtin was able to bring the robe and show it to Harun. This calmed Harun and he concluded that the servant was just trying to get Ali bin Yaqtin in trouble with Harun.