

Sura Yusuf, Verse 91

قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ آثَرَكَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا وَإِنْ كُنَّا لَخَاطِئِينَ

They said: By Allah, surely Allah has preferred you over us, and we were certainly mistaken

Reflections

- are the brothers feeling regret?
- they mention Allah. How is what they say different from Nabi Yusuf's mention of Allah?
- what does it take to admit a mistake? Would they have admitted if Nabi Yusuf had not confronted them with it?

Tafsir

When Nabi Yusuf identified himself the brothers felt very ashamed. They could see how much progress he had made in life. It was not only the position he had acquired. He had grown into a mature personality with knowledge, forbearance, wisdom, dedication, and he was respected by all. He was fair and just and worked for the betterment of others. This was an admirable person and the brothers were stunned to know that he was the same brother whom they had mistreated.

Earlier in the story the brothers had thought they were stronger and better than their brother and their father was wrong to love Yusuf more. But now they admit that Yusuf is better than they are. He must have had potential which Allah caused to develop and thus Allah preferred him for growth and service over them. The first thing the brothers admit is that God has preferred Yusuf over them. This shows humility from the brothers which was not evident earlier.

The second thing the brothers admit is their mistake. Again it requires humility to say we were wrong. But they give no excuses and do not deny anything. Acceptance of a mistake or sin is the first step towards forgiveness. When a person admits their mistake it sets the ground for forgiveness and pardon from the other side.

Sometimes mistakes and their consequences serve as a lesson for the people who commit them. It reduces pride, creates humbleness and deflates the ego. Although bitter, it is a good medicine for the soul. The brothers had refused to see the goodness of Yusuf before, due to their jealousy, but now they had to accept it.

Hadith

Imam Ali (a) says:

A sincere confession cancels out the evil effect of sins.

(Biharul Anwar, Chapter 15, H#40)

Important Lessons

- 1) Recognize when someone else has better qualities than you.
- 2) Admit your mistake. It is a sign of humility and lays the ground for forgiveness.

Possible Ideas for activities

- act out the scene when the brothers admit their mistakes. Let each brother speak to convey a specific emotion. Cover a wide range of emotions. Discuss how the emotions can be controlled and channelled in the right way. Students can also do a web or chart of the emotions.
- Play a game on admitting mistakes. Have four scenarios of mistakes – either discuss or make charts around the room. Students come up with possible ways of admitting the mistakes and the results of that.

Sources:

Āytaullāh Nāsir Makārim Shirāzī (ed), *Tafsīr-e Namūneh*;

Aghae Muhsin Qaraati, *Tafsire Nur*

Article on forgiveness and confessing of sins from <http://tebyan-zn.ir>