

Overview**The reluctance of one of the brothers to kill Yūsuf****An alert/awake conscience****The alternative suggestion****The courage to speak up against wrong****A responsibility to save your peers from committing a sin****Assisting the oppressed**

Sūrat Yūsuf

Verse 10

قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِنْهُمْ لَا تَقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ وَأَلْقُوهُ فِي غَيَابَتِ الْجُبِّ يَلْتَقِطُهُ بَعْضُ السَّيَّارَةِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
فَاعِلِينَ

A speaker from among them said: Do not slay Yūsuf and cast him down into the bottom of the well if you must, some caravan of travellers will pick him up.

Questions For Reflection:

- 1) What made this brother different from the other brothers?
- 2) What does it take to speak up when those around us intend to do wrong?

Commentary

One of the brothers was not happy with the two proposals and had another suggestion. According to some narrations this brother's name was Levi.

This brother was against (i) the idea of murdering Yūsuf (ii) or the plan to send him to a faraway land, since there was the fear that he might die in the process. Instead, he came up with an idea of casting him in the bottom of a well such that he is not hurt and remains alive. This way, there were chances that he would be rescued by a passing caravan. Eventually, they will get rid of Yūsuf without having to kill him.

This brother was reluctant with the original plan of murdering their brother Yūsuf and came up with an alternative plan as a suggestion only if they do have to get rid of

Yūsuf as the verse says: *if you must do this*. Sometimes a person knows something is wrong and would not like to do it, but he still goes ahead with it on account of pressure of colleagues and friends; this is known as giving into peer pressure. The Tafsīr tells us his conscience was more awakened than the rest of his brothers.

Our scholars of akhlāq say that in every human being there is a potential of having three types of forces within himself: (i) a commanding force that leads to evil actions (*Nafs al-'Ammāra*), (ii) a self-critical force that advises against the evil (*Nafs al-Lawwāma*) and (iii) a force that reaches the height of peace and tranquility (*Nafs al-Mutma'inna*).

The self-critical soul is contrasted to the commanding soul and the soul at peace. According to Muslim scholars, know that a person has only one identity. When he or she follows the God given reason, then his self-critical soul takes over, and when they act against reason, the same self is taken over by the commanding soul. On the other hand, when a person follows reason and taqwā (God awareness) his soul achieves peace and tranquility. The self-critical soul has also been identified as the “conscience” which blames one’s own self after committing a wrongdoing, leading to guilty or troubled conscience. (https://en.wikishia.net/view/Al-Nafs_al-lawwama)

In the case of Nabī Yūsuf’s brother who offered an alternate suggestion, it seems he could not bring himself to accept the idea of killing his brother. He therefore offered a solution in which Nabī Yūsuf would be kept away from his father with the hope that Nabī Ya‘qūb would give more attention to the older brothers.

Lessons

- 1) Be aware of your conscience when it clearly reproaches you to not do the wrong thing
- 2) Do not be intimidated by others when you know they are doing wrong. A strong person speaks out and refuses to follow the crowd.

Practical Implementation

- 1) When a friend or the group you belong to is inclined towards doing wrong, reason with them by sharing stories of others and the possible repercussions.
- 2) Seek help from Allah by praying to Him directly and secretly
- 3) Talk to elders or colleagues who do things with wisdom
- 4) Change your social circle (where possible) if all other attempts fail.

Cross Reference Verses

Nafs al-‘Ammara – Q 12:53

Nafs al-Lawwāma – Q 75:1-2

Nafs al-Mutmai’nna – Q 89:27

Connecting Topics

Peer Pressure

Following the Herd Mentality

Standing up for the oppressed

Useful Links

<https://choices.scholastic.com/pages/news/are-you-following-the-herd-.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lEp45b3n4F0>

<https://academyofislam.com/reflection-no-627-on-q-872-assisting-the-oppressed/>