

Overview**Jealousy of the brothers****The plot to kill Yūsuf****Acting on impulse despite knowledge of evil action****Seeking negative attention**

Sūrat Yūsuf

Verses 7-9

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي يُوسُفَ وَإِخْوَتِهِ آيَاتٍ لِّلسَّائِلِينَ

Certainly, in Yūsuf and his brothers there are signs for the inquirers.

إِذْ قَالُوا لِيُوسُفُ وَأَخُوهُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيْنَا مِنَّا وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ إِنَّ أَبَانَا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

When they said: Surely Yūsuf and his brother are dearer to our father than we, though we are a (stronger) group; most surely our father is in clear error

اقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ أَوْ اطْرَحُوهُ أَرْضًا يَخْلُ لَكُمْ وَجْهُ أَبِيكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا مِن بَعْدِهِ قَوْمًا صَالِحِينَ

Slay Yūsuf or cast him out to some land, so that your father's regard may be just for you, and after that you can be a righteous people.

Questions For Reflection:

1. Do the brothers think that the father is mistaken to love Yūsuf more than them? (The brothers think love should be based on physical strength)
2. Why did the brothers feel no love or compassion for Yūsuf?

Commentary

The brothers discussed how they thought their father loved Yūsuf more than them. They did not take into consideration the fact that he was younger and that his mother was not alive, thus making him needy of a display of affection by the father. They felt their father should love them more as they were stronger and more able to run affairs

for their father. They assumed that was the criteria for love. They judged their father and declared that he was wrong in what he was doing.

The veils of jealousy and hatred covered their minds and did not allow them to see things clearly. They could not see another perspective on the matter. That is what happens to the human being when they only think of their own gains and are concerned only about themselves. They need to step out of self-love and the ego to see things the way they are.

These verses show the serious effects of jealousy. It can lead to the killing or harming of a brother. It is like a fire that burns within the heart, burning up the person as well as others around him. When we see that someone has a blessing, we can wish that we have it too without wanting to take it away from the other person. This is envy. This can be positive for it can lead to efforts to achieve a similar blessing. It creates progress in the individual and in society. However, when we wish to take it away from the other person this is known as ‘hasad’ or jealousy, which is a major sin. Imam Al-Sādiq *‘alayhis-salām* says: *A believer can envy but will not be jealous and a hypocrite will be jealous and will not envy.* Imam Ali (a) has said: *Jealousy does not bring with it except harm and anger that weakens the heart and makes the body sick.*

The brothers did not think the father was wrong in his belief and faith. They knew he was a Prophet. But they blamed him for being unfair in his love for his sons.

The brothers came up with a plot to either kill Yūsuf or leave him in a faraway land. They knew that it was an evil action. But they justified it wrongly by saying they would be righteous after that. It was as if they would be able to erase the huge wrongdoing by becoming better afterwards. They had some fear of God and wanted to repent after the sin. But thinking of forgiveness and repentance (*tawba*) even before committing the sin is just a deception of the soul and is not true regret at the sin. True Tawba is an intense regret that comes after committing a sin, not knowingly doing it and saying I will repent later.

They hoped to get their father’s attention if Yūsuf was not there. They say they would get his ‘regard’. They do not mention that they would get his love, knowing that it would be difficult for the father to forget Yūsuf and love them more.

Lessons

- 1) Stay away from jealousy
- 2) True repentance counts when a sin is committed unknowingly
- 3) Refraining from sin is better than regretting later

Practical Implementations

1. At the first jealous thought seek refuge in God from Shaytān and ask Him for help to overcome such negative thoughts. Counter it by understanding that the blessing the other person has, is from God. If you pray and work for it, God can give it to you too. It is all in His hands.
2. When inclining towards an evil action, pause and think of the possibility of regretting later. Is there a guarantee you will get an opportunity to repent?

Cross Reference Verses

Envy/Seeking Allah's Grace – 4:32

Repentance free from pretense and hypocrisy – 66:8

Story of Muhammad and Ibrāhīm, sons of Muslim bin 'Aqīl.

Connecting Topics

Sibling Rivalry

Seeking Negative Attention

Useful Links

Abstaining from sins – <https://www.erfan.ir/english/62040.html>

Sibling Rivalry - <https://muslimmatters.org/2010/01/04/lessons-from-surah-yusuf-%E2%80%93-part-1-sibling-rivalry/> (not a shi'a website)