

Overview

The hidden agenda of Prophet Yūsuf's brothers

Using the need of play for children to convince Prophet Ya'qūb (a)

Halal recreation permissible in Islam

Example from the life of the H. Prophet (s) on play/leisure

Sūrat Yūsuf

Verses 11-12

قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا مَا لَكَ لَا تَأْمَنَّا عَلَىٰ يُوسُفَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَنَاصِحُونَ

They said, O our father, why do you not trust us with Yūsuf? Surely, we wish him well

أَرْسَلَهُ مَعَنَا غَدًا يَرْتَعِ وَيَلْعَبُ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

Send him with us tomorrow so he can enjoy and play, and we will take care of him

Questions For Reflection:

- 1) Why would the brothers feel that their father will not trust them?
- 2) What are some exaggerated statements made by the brothers to cover up their plot and lie?

Commentary

Once the brothers agreed they would not kill Yūsuf and instead throw him in a well, they had to plan how to convince their father to allow Yūsuf to come with them. They knew he was very attached to Yūsuf and was aware of their jealousy against him. So, they came to him pretending to be concerned for Yūsuf. They pretended how much they cared for Yūsuf and wanted him to enjoy and have fun; they could not understand why the father would not trust them to take him with them. Their address 'O our father' was respectful and loving but it may have motive behind it - seems like even in the past their father had not trusted them with Yūsuf. This was not a first-time experience. If the father was concerned about what they would do to him, they claimed that they have always wished him well. If the father was concerned that the harm would reach Yūsuf, they assured him that being a group brothers they would take care of him and protect him well. In this way they prepared answers to whatever concerns the father might have had.

Often an enemy will not come with outright animosity. He may come under the guise of love and concern and deceive others. Many people fall for such caring words and believe them to be genuine. But it is all a plot to get their way so they can achieve their evil intentions. Shaytān suggests people to pretend and lie to achieve the evil goals. We see in Quran verse 7:21 that Iblīs swore to Adam and Eve that he wished them well, when he asked them to go near the forbidden tree. A believer is careful and cautious about such people and the Satanic whisperings; a mu'min outsmarts the evil plots. He cannot be deceived easily.

The brothers asked that Yūsuf should go with them so he could play and enjoy himself. He could enjoy some fresh air and have fun. Nabi Ya'qūb did not deny that such activities were good for the human being. To be engaged in leisure and recreation that is halal and good is very healthy and fulfills a natural need. The human being is not a machine that can work continuously all the time. It needs rest and rejuvenation. To do something that is enjoyable lifts the spirits and calms the mind. It renews strength and allows the person to then work better with more zeal and enthusiasm. A hadith of Imam Ali (a) says: *The believer's time has three periods: The period when he is in communion with Allah; the period when he manages for his livelihood; and the period when he is free to enjoy what is lawful and pleasant.* (Nahjul Balāgha, Saying 390). Of course, it does not mean the three periods are equal in duration, but there should be a part for each of them.

The Holy Prophet (s) also used to play and race with his companions. Once when returning from the battle of Tabūk they were racing to see who would be the fastest. The Prophet was not on his well-known horse. Instead, Usama bin Zayd was riding it. When the people saw that the Prophet's horse won the race, they shouted that the Prophet had won. But the Prophet corrected them saying it was Usama and not he who had won. It was just that Usama was using his horse. This incident shows that the Prophet also engaged in such playful activities.

Lessons

- 1) Be careful of people who display concern but are wishing harm. These are hypocrites whose danger is worse than that of an open enemy.
- 2) Sports and leisure are necessary to enjoy life and to be more energetic for the work that must be done.

Practical Implementations

1. When you know someone is not genuine, try and reduce your interactions with them or avoid being in their company altogether
2. Pick a sport/hobby you are good at – one at a time and focus on strengthening that skill.

Cross Reference Verses

Tongues and hearts not in sync – Q 2:204

Saying one thing and doing the other – Q 61:2-3

Connecting Topics

Hypocrisy

Identifying fake friends

Discretion in sports/leisure activities

Useful Links

How to identify fake friends

<https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/signs-of-fake-friends>

Questions about Sports in Islam

<https://www.al-islam.org/ask/topics/5853/questions-about-Sports>