

Overview**Bridging the story from the well to prison (verses 19-20)****The new chapter in the life of Nabi Yusuf *'alayhis-salām*****Imprisonment upon false accusation****Protection from sin**

Sūrat Yūsuf

Verses 19-20

وَجَاءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ فَأَرْسَلُوا وَارِدَهُمْ فَأَدْلَى دَلْوَهُ قَالَ يَا بُشْرَىٰ هَذَا غُلَامٌ ۚ وَأَسْرُوهُ بِضَاعَةً ۚ وَاللَّهُ
عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ

And there came travellers and they sent their water-drawer and he let down his bucket. He said: O good news! this is a youth; and they concealed him as an article of merchandise, and Allah knew what they did.

وَشَرُّوهُ بِثَمَنٍ بَخْسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُودَةٍ وَكَانُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الزَّاهِدِينَ

And they sold him for a small price, a few pieces of silver, and they showed no desire for him.

Nabi Yūsuf was thrown into the well by his brothers. It was a difficult time for him. He felt sadness at what his brothers had done to him and was uncertain of what would happen to him now. What kept him strong was his faith that Allah was with him and would save him from the present situation. After some time (2 or 3 days, according to some commentators), a group of travelers approached the well to get some water. The person in charge of drawing water from the well lowered his bucket into the well. Nabi Yūsuf saw the bucket and heard the voices coming from above. He made the most of this opportunity and held on to the rope with which the bucket was lowered. The water drawer felt his bucket had become very heavy. When he was able to bring it to the ground he saw Nabi Yūsuf had come out of the well with it.

His surprise is manifested in the word ‘O good news’. It was good news because he and his friends could sell Nabi Yūsuf as a slave and pocket the money. They hid him from others so they could benefit from the sale themselves. They sold him off quickly and did not try to get a good price for him as they were afraid of being caught. It could also be that they did not understand his value as they had just got him easily and had not struggled to get him. The Quran says they sold him for a small price.

Sūrat Yūsuf

Verse 35

ثُمَّ بَدَأَ لَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا رَأَوْا الْآيَاتِ لَيْسَجُنَّهُ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ

Then it occurred to them after they had seen the signs that they should imprison him till a time.

Questions for Reflection

- 1) Why was Nabi Yūsuf imprisoned?
- 2) What are some similarities/differences of being imprisoned with the time he was in the well?

Commentary

This verse begins a new chapter in the life of Nabi Yūsuf. He is imprisoned and the stay in prison leads to being called by the King to interpret his dream and eventually becoming his minister. It was difficult to be in prison but it was part of the plan of God for Nabi Yūsuf, a necessary stage before his eventual success and the raising of his status.

In the house of the minister Nabi Yūsuf was invited to commit a sin. He was God conscious and refused to give in. It became clear that he was a pure and virtuous person who would not disobey his Lord. The signs were very evident that he was not an ordinary person. He had high morals and a strong conscience. No-one could persuade him to sin. The ‘Azīz decides to put him away in prison so that they do not have to face him at home, or that people should forget about him. Some commentators say it was to show people that Nabi Yūsuf was guilty of wrongdoing. The plan was to keep him in prison for a while.

Nabi Yūsuf himself is okay with being in the prison. He says the prison is better for him than a place where he would be led into sin. He gives up the comfort of the Minister's home rather than disobey God. This is how believers are. They would rather face difficulty than risk displeasing God.

Story

Making the best of a negative situation – Imām al Kādhim *'alayhis-salām* in prison. For a period of time, Imām Kādhim was imprisoned in Basra under a guard called 'Īsa. The guard wrote a letter to the Abbāsīd Caliph Harūn al-Rashīd. In the letter, he wrote, "It has been a while that Mūsa ibn Ja'far is in my jail. I have been watching him all the time and I have put some guards to look over him; however, he has done nothing but worship. I assigned someone to listen to his prayers, but he was never heard cursing us. As for himself, he asked for nothing but forgiveness and mercy from Allah. I request that you send someone to take Mūsa ibn Ja'far from me; otherwise, I will set him free, since I cannot keep him in jail anymore." The guards who watched the Imām reported having heard him constantly uttering the following words in his prayer, "O Allah! You are aware that I had asked for a private place to worship You, and You have provided me with such a place; praise shall only be to You'. Imām praised God for giving him the free time in prison to worship Him. He did not complain about the prison, rather he saw the positive part of being in prison.

Lessons

- 1) Never give up your values, no matter who invites you to give them up. Even if they have power or authority, are higher in status than you, hold on strongly to your faith and principles.
- 2) It is better to be alone, lonely, uncomfortable than to be disobedient to the One who created you and loves you so much.

Practical Implementation

- a) Create two columns in your head – one that reads 'pleasure of God' and another 'pleasure of the people'. Determine where each of your action falls into.
- b) Explain the choice of your action to others if necessary, you may end up guiding others and influencing them positively.

Cross reference verses

The promise of God for those who keep up their faith – 24:55

Connecting Topics

Embracing God's plan

Activity Ideas

- do an art or language activity showing life in a prison. What are some difficulties faced by prisoners?
- let students write a diary entry for Nabi Yusuf about his days in prison.
- Imagine a prison guard in Nabi Yusuf's prison. What conversation would he have with him? What would the guard tell the other officials of the prison about him? How was he different from other prisoners.
- Break Free game: Divide the class into four groups. Each team is given a color. The teacher has clues that are coded clues. Each team solves one clue at a time and as they solve a clue they give it to the teacher to get the next clue. The clues should be from Sura Yusuf example 'In the darkest of nights it all came to him as a dream. who was he and what did he see?', 'the best of stories is this many verses long', 'I am the emotion that drives people to plot against one another', 'Unscramble USFYU REDAM TRBOEHSR' The first team to solve all clues 'breaks free' and wins.