

Overview**The dreams of the youth****Inner beauty of Nabī Yūsuf *'alayhis-salām*****Types of dreams****The dream of the Holy Prophet *sallal-lāhu 'alayhi wa-ālihi wasallam***

Sūrat Yūsuf

Verse 36

وَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ السِّجْنَ فَتَيَانٍ ۖ قَالَ أَحَدُهُمَا إِنِّي أَرَانِي أَعْصِرُ خَمْرًا ۖ وَقَالَ الْآخَرُ إِنِّي أَرَانِي أُحْمَلُ
فَوْقَ رَأْسِي خُبْرًا تَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْهُ ۖ نَبِّئْنَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ ۗ إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And two youths entered the prison with him. One of them said: I saw myself [in a dream] pressing wine. And the other said: I saw myself carrying bread on my head of which birds ate. Inform us of its interpretation; surely, we see you to be from those who do good.

Questions for Reflection

1. What is a dream? Does it always have a message?
2. How did the two young men know that Nabī Yūsuf (a) might know the interpretation of their dreams?
3. What had he done that they thought he was from those who do good?

Commentary

The prison in which Nabī Yūsuf (a) was kept was a general one housing many other inmates. In the prison there were two young men who had been workers in the palace of the King of Egypt. One of them was in charge of the cellar of drinks in the palace and the other was the head of the kitchen. Their enemies had spread false talk about them and they were accused of trying to poison the King. They were in prison awaiting their sentence.

One of them had a dream that he was making wine from grapes. The other man had a dream in which he saw birds eating bread which was on top of his head. Both of them come to Nabī Yūsuf (a) to ask for an interpretation of their dreams.

According to Tafsir Nabī Yūsuf (a)'s manners and behavior had impressed the two men. They realized that this was a noble person with dignity and piety. He also helped and looked after those who were in prison with him and had earned a good reputation. It is also possible that Nabī Yūsuf had talked to his prison inmates about dream interpretation and hence they came to him to ask about their dreams.

Muhsinīn is one who does Ihsān, or good. The word Ihsān means good or beautiful. It includes: - inner beauty rather than just outer beauty - beautiful thoughts, words and actions Ihsan is part of human perfection and raises the human being to high levels. Imām 'Alī (a) says; The value of each person is according to the good he does. (*Nabjul Balāgha*, hadith #81)

Dreams are of many types and do not always have an important message. The Quran talks of some important dreams like that of Nabī Ibrāhīm (a). Sometimes a dream is a prediction or a warning. But often dreams are just wanderings of the soul that don't carry much meaning. When a person sleeps the soul wanders around. It has been likened in hadith to the stretch of the rays of the sun while it still remains in the sky.

A hadith of Imām al-Sādiq (a) says; Dreams are of three types - good news from Allah for the Believer, a caution against the Satan, and confused dreams. (*Al-Kāfī*, v 8, H 61)

Related Story

Prophet Muhammad *sallal-lāhu 'alayhi wa-ālihi wasallam* sees a dream:

The Holy Prophet (s) once saw a dream that he entered Makkah with his companions and they performed the tawaf around the Ka'bah. His companions were delighted when he told them about it. They all loved Makkah and yearned to do tawāf there. The Muhājirūn had a lot of affection for Makkah. They had been born there and had grown up in the city. They loved it deeply but had been driven away from it. When the Prophet told them of his dream, they started to prepare for the journey to Makkah. No one wanted to stay behind. Excitedly, the Muslims wore their Ihrām, took their animals for sacrifice and set off for Makkah.

When they reached Makkah, the Quraysh would not allow them in. They had to sign a peace treaty with them which allowed them to return the following year. They agreed on peace between the two parties which was a huge blessing for the Muslims after many years of conflict. The Muslims returned to Madīnah. Some of the Muslims began questioning the Prophet about his dream. Allah revealed the verse; Certainly, Allah had shown to His Messenger the vision with truth: you shall most certainly enter the Sacred Mosque, if Allah pleases, in security, (48:27). The dream came true

the following year when thousands of Muslims entered Makkah and performed the tawaf.

Lessons

- 1) You can do good in any situation, with whatever you have. Nabī Yūsuf (a) was able to do good while in prison.
- 2) You can affect people with your character and behavior even while in difficult or lowly circumstances. All types of people respect good character and dignified behavior.
- 3) When you are a good doer people will trust you with their secrets.
- 4) When you do good to others you can win them over. Then they will listen to what you have to say.

Practical Implementation

- Set a standard for yourself of good behavior and never allow yourself to stoop below that.
- When faced with a challenge, stop and think if the situation justifies a negative reaction.

Cross reference verses

Allah loves the Muhsinīn - 3:148

Allah enjoins doing of good and forbids indecency – 16:90

Connecting Topics

Spiritual beauty

Consistent good character

Useful Links

<https://www.al-islam.org/message-thaqalayn/vol-15-no-4-winter-2014/inner-and-outer-beauty-islam-introduction-alireza/inner#spiritual-beauty>

<https://www.aconsciousrethink.com/16359/inner-beauty-vs-outer-beauty/>

Activity Ideas

Discuss inner beauty. What does it look like? How is it different from outer beauty?
Show pictures of inner vs outer beauty. Play a game or let students write/draw on
inner versus outer beauty