

**Overview****Reasoning with the fellow prisoners****Preaching Tawhīd****The right religion****Problems stem from not believing in One God****Tablīgh – a noble duty of all believers**

Sūrat Yūsuf

Verses 39-40

يَا صَاحِبِي السِّجْنِ أَأَرْبَابٌ مُتَفَرِّقُونَ خَيْرٌ أَمْ اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ

O my two companions in prison, are many lords differing among themselves better or Allāh, the One, the Supreme?

مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ ۗ إِنْ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ۗ أَمَرَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ۗ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

You worship nothing besides Him but names which you have named, you and your father. Allāh has not sent down any authority for them. The command is for none except Allāh. He has commanded that you do not worship except Him; this is the right religion but most people do not know

**Questions for Reflection**

1. What is Nabī Yūsuf trying to do here?
2. How would it be if we had different gods whose opinions and commands differed from one another?
3. Why do people make up gods? No Prophet has come from other gods so where do they get the idea from?
4. Why is it that most people don't understand the right path? What stops them?

**Commentary**

Nabī Yūsuf prepared the minds of the two people who come to him with what he has told them about himself and his noble family. Now he begins to make them think about their wrong beliefs. He starts with a question. He is not telling them it is wrong,

but asking them – is it right to believe in many gods who differ from one another? Does that not lead to problems, disagreements, and fights? He wants them to wake up and consider freedom in life, not just in a dream. He wants them to understand that the problems they are facing, the hypocrisy, injustice, evil, is all because the people do not worship one God who is Supreme and in charge. If they did, they would be different people.

Nabī Yūsuf then explains that the gods they worship are just made up. Made up by themselves and their fathers, and people have just followed. There is no Prophet or Book that talks about them. Belief in One God is the true straight path. It guides people to do the right things.

Belief in One God makes people conscious of their duties in life. It unites people and strengthens them. However, most people don't appreciate and understand its value. They are influenced by others who are astray.

People can be of three types regarding their belief;

- 1) Like water, just flowing everywhere. It takes the shape of any bowl or container you put it in. These people do not stand by what they believe in. They are different with different people.
- 2) Like iron, hard and unyielding. They don't bend or change when affected by others. They are firm on their belief and do not budge.
- 3) The third group not only does not change but will try to affect others so they also see the value of belief. They are the leaders, the responsible ones.

Nabī Yūsuf is the third type. He teaches us to speak up and be proud of what we believe in. We should not be reluctant to speak when we get a chance, perhaps people will listen to us. Nabī Yūsuf feels a sense of responsibility even in the prison to help guide others towards the truth. The concept of *Tablīgh*, or spreading the truth, is very important in Islām. It has to be done with wisdom, good advice and reason. Allāh says; *Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice, and debate with them in the best manner.* (Q 16:125) Note how Nabī Yūsuf speaks kindly to them, promises to fulfill their need, asks them to think, and then gives them reasons why their belief is wrong. This is the process of *Tablīgh*.

To tell others about God and the right path is a noble duty for believers. We should take an opportunity when it comes up. It is not necessary to preach or lecture, but just to point out gently. At heart people like good and want to believe in God but outside factors prevent them. When they are reminded, they may listen and follow. Imām Alī

*‘alaybis-salām* says about people who tell others about God; *[they] are the vicegerents of Allāb on His earth and callers to His religion. Oh, how I yearn to see them!* (Nahjul Balāghā, Hadīth no.147)

### Lessons

- 1) When you want to convince others about something ask them to think. Don't just tell them. When they think for themselves and arrive at the correct answer, they will be more convinced about it.
- 2) Talk to others about what you believe in. You will be helping them and pleasing God. Look for opportunities to spread the word of God.

### Practical Implementation

- a) Use reason and gentleness when you try to guide others.
- b) Teach by example. Modelling correct belief in action is more effective than just preaching with words.

### Cross reference verses

Luqmān's advice to his son – Q 31:13

Amr bil Ma'rūf/Nahy 'Anil Munkar Q 3:104,110

### Connecting Topics

Amr bil Ma'rūf/Nahy 'Anil Munkar

Reasoning with others

### Useful Links

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cVSLF7AHHCUC> (animated video on Amr bil Ma'rūf/Nahy 'Anil Munkar)

<https://www.al-islam.org/greater-sins-volume-3-sayyid-abdul-husayn-dastghaib-shirazi/thirty-ninth-greater-sin-neglect-any> (the section of Amr bil Ma'rūf/Nahy 'Anil Munkar)

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2019/jun/30/the-science-of-influencing-people-six-ways-to-win-an-argument>

Activity Ideas:

- Predicting the thoughts of the prisoners: Have students imagine what went through the minds of the prisoners when they listened to what Nabī Yūsuf had to say.
- Practical scenarios of enjoining good and forbidding evil – show some of the possible reactions that one might get when engaging in this act of wājibāt