

Overview

A suggestion from the man released from prison earlier

The King allows the man to seek the interpretation from Nabī Yūsuf *‘alayhis-salām*

The dream explained to Nabī Yūsuf *‘alayhis-salām*

Nabī Yūsuf does good to a man who had forgotten his favor

Nabī Yūsuf gives the interpretation of the dream plus an advice

A story about helping others

Sūrat Yūsuf

Verses 45-49

وَقَالَ الَّذِي نَجَّا مِنْهُمَا وَادَّكَرَ بَعْدَ أُمَّةٍ أَنَا أُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِتَأْوِيلِهِ فَأَرْسِلُونِ

The man who had been released from the two prisoners and who remembered him after a long time said, I can tell you of its interpretation so send me to him

يُوسُفُ أَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيقُ أَفْتِنَا فِي سَبْعِ بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ وَسَبْعِ سُنبُلَاتٍ خُضْرٍ وَأُخَرَ يَابِسَاتٍ لَعَلِّي أَرْجِعُ إِلَى النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

O Yūsuf, O truthful one, explain to us the dream of seven fat cows being eaten by seven thin ones and seven green ears of corn and seven others that were dry so I may return to the people and they may know.

قَالَ تَزْرَعُونَ سَبْعَ سِنِينَ دَأْبًا فَمَا حَصَدْتُمْ فَذَرُوهُ فِي سُنْبُلِهِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ

He said, for seven years you will sow continuously, then leave in the ear what you harvest except a little that you will eat

ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ سَبْعٌ شِدَادٌ يَأْكُلْنَ مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ لَهُنَّ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِمَّا تَحْصِنُونَ

Then after that there will come seven difficult years which will eat away most of what you had stored for them, except a little of what you preserve [for seed]

ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ عَامٌ فِيهِ يُعَاثُ النَّاسُ وَفِيهِ يَعْصِرُونَ

Then after that there will come a year when people will be granted relief and given rain.

Questions for Reflection

- 1) Why does the man call Yūsuf ‘O truthful one’? Who else do you know with the same title?
- 2) How must Nabī Yūsuf have felt when he saw the man again?
- 3) Apart from interpreting the dream, what else does Nabī Yūsuf’s conversation with the man include? What does this show about his personality?

Commentary

When the King asks the people of his court to interpret his dream and no-one can, the man who had been in prison with Nabī Yūsuf suddenly remembers him. It had been many years since he had been freed from prison but he now remembered how skilled Nabī Yūsuf was at interpreting dreams. He asks the King to let him go to the prison where he personally can ask Nabī Yūsuf about this dream. The man knew that the purity, knowledge and wisdom of Nabī Yūsuf made him the only person who could properly explain the dream. Note that the man says ‘send me to him’ which could be an indication that the prisoners were not allowed visitors and he needed special permission from the King to meet Nabī Yūsuf.

The courtiers were surprised. They did not think anyone could interpret the dream. But the King was excited. He made arrangements for the man to visit the prison and asked him to come back immediately with the answer.

When the man reached the prison, he went straight to talk to Nabī Yūsuf. Although he had forgotten him for so many years and had not done what Nabī Yūsuf asked him to do, he knew that Nabī Yūsuf was a noble person and would still help interpret the dream. He tells him that he needs to know the answer so he can inform people. It seems that news of the dream of the King had spread to the people and everyone was worried about it.

Nabī Yūsuf listens to him and does not ask any questions. He does not reproach the man nor ask for any reward for interpreting the dream. He begins to explain what he understood from the dream. Not only does he explain it very clearly but he also gives advice on what they can do to deal with the difficult years in the future. He says that

the seven fat cows symbolise years in which there will be a lot of crops. They should store the food and eat only what they need. After that there would be seven years of drought in which there would be no crops. They would then eat from what they had stored. They should also keep a little of it so they can sow again in the year after the dry seven years when they would get rain again.

Nabī Yūsuf gave the interpretation along with a plan and wise advice. It was an intelligent interpretation and showed his caring and compassion for people. The role of Nabī Yūsuf here was not just of a simple dream interpreter. It was the role of a leader planning for his people for the next fifteen years from a lonely place in prison. It would have far reaching consequences, both for his people and for himself.

Related story

Helping others (with wisdom and sensitivity)

Hajj Mirzā ‘Alī Āghā Qāzi was the teacher of ‘Allāmah Tabātabāi (who wrote Tafsīr al Mīzān). He was a very learned and spiritual person. One of his friends described how one day he was walking with the Āghā and they stopped at a small shop selling produce. Āghā wanted to buy some greens. He went into the shop and began selecting greens. He put nice fresh ones on one side, and old withered ones on the other. After some time, he picked up the dry withered ones, put them in a bag, paid for them and tucked the package under his ‘abā. He walked out of the shop smiling.

The friend was surprised. He looked at him and asked, ‘why did you choose the worst of the greens to buy?’ he asked. ‘You could have got some nice fresh ones for the same price’.

Āghā explained. ‘The man who owns the store is a very poor person. I would like to help him but know that he has a lot of dignity and will not accept charity. I also don’t want that he gets used to charity. He sells produce to make his living. Every day I buy produce from him which no one else will buy. I help him in that way’.

Āghā helped the man in a very wise and thoughtful way. He maintained the self-respect of the person, bought produce that would otherwise be wasted and thrown away, and pleased God tremendously. He also ate the produce each day with his family so it would not become completely rotten.

(Source: www.hawzah.net)

Lessons

- 1) Do not undermine or overlook anyone. You never know when you may need them and you can discover amazing inner potential in them.
- 2) Sincere assistance and concern for others can have astounding results. When Nabī Yūsuf first interpreted the dreams of the prisoners, he did not ask for any reward. But it had an effect which came about later. Then when he interpreted the King's dream, he also did not ask for anything. But that also would have an effect.
- 3) If people act wisely and plan properly difficulties can be managed. Instead of stress and despair there should be calmness and good planning.
- 4) Once again the power and control of God over all things becomes so clear. Through a simple dream, a King will have to give in to a Prophet of God and allow him to save his people. It was not a coincidence that the King saw such a dream, that he narrated it when the man from prison was present, and that the man remembered Nabī Yūsuf. It shows the hand of God that controls all things.

Practical Implementation

When you can help someone in any way, do not stop to ask if they deserve it or not. Or do not think of what you will get from it.

Imam Ali al-Ridha (a) says;

Do good to all the people whether they be worthy of it or not. Even if they do not deserve it you should be worthy of doing good.

Source: Wasail al-Shia by Imam al-Sadiq (a)

Taken from: https://imam-us.org/imam-ali-reza-treat-others-positively#_edn1

Cross reference verses

Reward of doing good - Q 10:26

Planning ahead – Q 8:60

Connecting Topics

Doing good to the non-deserving

Planning for a potentially difficult time

Useful Links

<https://psychlopaedia.org/top-tips/tough-times/>

Activity Ideas

- act out the scene in the prison when the man comes to Nabī Yūsuf.
- show students how they can plan well for events in life, how they can anticipate some difficult or stressful things that may happen and be well prepared for it. You could make this into a game, a discussion, an activity . . .