

Overview

The king summons Nabī Yūsuf *'alayhis-salām* to him

Nabī Yūsuf's way of communicating impresses the king.

The king honors Nabī Yūsuf

Nabī Yūsuf identifies/reveals his talent and offers to help.

Planning for the wellbeing of the country

Related story

Sūrat Yūsuf

Verses 54-55

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُونِي بِهِ اَسْتَخْلِصْهُ لِنَفْسِي ۖ فَلَمَّا كَلَّمَهُ قَالَ اِنَّكَ الْيَوْمَ لَدَيْنَا مَكِينٌ اَمِينٌ

The King said, bring him to me, I will make him my special one. Then when he spoke to him, he said Indeed from today you have an honorable and trusted position with us

قَالَ اجْعَلْنِي عَلَىٰ خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ ۚ اِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلَيْهٖم

He said, put me in charge of the store houses of the land, Indeed I am a good guardian, well informed.

Questions for Reflection

1. Why did the King want to make him a special person even before he saw him?
2. What was it about Nabī Yūsuf that impressed the king after he spoke to him?
3. Nabī Yūsuf praises himself in verse 55. Is that okay to do? When is it okay to praise yourself?

Commentary

By now, it was established that Nabī Yūsuf was innocent of any wrongdoing. The only thing that had landed him in prison was his God consciousness and his purity. Once that was confirmed he was released. The King was very pleased that Nabī Yūsuf had been able to interpret his dream so well and show him what was in store for his country. From the interpretation, and from what the man who served him wine told him about his experience in prison, the King knew that Nabī Yūsuf was a knowledgeable and wise man. He was eager to meet him.

When Nabī Yūsuf came to the King, and they talked together the King was even more impressed. His speech revealed that he was wise and intelligent, had sound judgment and possessed many skills. The King realized that this is a very special person, and he took an instant liking to him. The King was ready to offer him a high position in his court. This is how, Almighty God helps His special servants, and more so to a Prophet.

They discussed the future of the land of Egypt. The King knew that there would be hard times ahead and the leaders of the country would need to plan well so people would not suffer. He thought that Nabī Yūsuf would be the best person to oversee this planning. Nabī Yūsuf suggested that he be put in charge of the store houses where they would store grain for the first seven years and then give it out in measured amounts to people during the seven years of famine. It would need planning and organizing. It would also need trustworthiness so there would be no misuse and corruption.

Nabī Yūsuf may have thought that a lot of wrong and oppression can take place in the economic administration of the country. Now that they needed him and had come to him, he wanted to take this opportunity to set some things right. He saw this as a God given duty, to introduce fairness and justice in the society. His position would allow him to help the oppressed and decrease the racism in the country which gave the rich and noble people a high status and looked down upon certain groups in society. He could transform the country through the skills and talent that God inspires His special servants.

Nabī Yūsuf described the qualities that made him suitable for the position he had suggested for himself. He could be a good guardian of the stores of grain as he was trustworthy, skilled and knowledgeable. He put forward these qualities about himself not to boast – boasting is disliked by Allah – but to inform the King that he had the necessary qualities. It is necessary for us know our abilities and limitations, to know the good and bad in us, and acknowledge that when necessary. Nabī Yūsuf wanted to help the people and save them from dying of hunger during the famine that would come. He was brave, confident and had full trust in Allah (swt). So, he took the huge responsibility of managing the store houses during the challenging time of drought and famine.

It is narrated that after getting this position Nabī Yūsuf worked hard to make sure that grain was stored during the seven years when there was plenty of rain. He advised people to use less and refrain from wasting food. In the following seven years of famine, he arranged for distribution of grains and encouraged people to only use what

was necessary. He often went hungry so he would not forget the pain of the people who had no food.

An interesting story on how a Shi'ah worked for a caliph

Ali bin Yaqtīn

‘Ali bin Yaqtīn was a close companion of Imām Mūsā al Kāzim (a) who worked as a minister for Hārūn Rashīd, the Abbasside Caliph. He did not openly show that he was a follower of the Imām. He used his position in the government to help the Shi'ah who were oppressed at that time. Ali once sought the permission of Imām to leave and resign from this position, but the Imām responded: ‘Do not do that. We feel close to you, and your brothers [in faith] have a position through you; may Allah give peace through you to a heart-broken one or break through you the flame of hate of the enemies of His friends.’ One day Hārūn sent some robes to Ali bin Yaqtīn to honour him. Among them was a black woolen cloak adorned with gold like the robes of kings. Ali bin Yaqtīn sent all the robes to Imām Mūsā Al-Kāzim (a) along with some other gifts. When that reached Imām he accepted everything but returned the woolen cloak. He wrote to him: ‘Keep this cloak and do not let it leave your hands. An event will occur to you, when you will have the need of it.’ Ali bin Yaqtīn wondered what Imām was referring to. After some time, a servant of Ali bin Yaqtīn left his service and reported his love for the Imām to Hārūn. Hārūn was angry that a worker of his would be a follower of the Imām. The servant told him about the special robe he had given Ali as a gift which Ali had given the Imam. Hārūn at once sent for Ali bin Yaqtīn and asked him about the robe. Because he still had it, Ali bin Yaqtīn was able to bring the robe and show it to Hārūn. This calmed Hārūn and he concluded that the servant was just trying to get Ali bin Yaqtīn in trouble with Hārūn.

Lessons

- 1) The reputation of a person is built on interactions with others. Even when people assume wrong of you, build a good reputation by virtuous and good behavior with others. It spreads far and can have long term effects.
- 2) Your words reveal the type of person you are. Imām Ali (a) says; Man is hidden under his tongue. As soon as you begin talking people can know how you really are inside. So be careful of what you say and how you say it.
- 3) When an opportunity comes when you can set some things right in society take it with confidence and strength.
- 4) It is important to have both skills (knowledge) and good character. One without the other is not of much use. Nabī Yūsuf had both and that is why he was so special

and got an honorable position. If he had knowledge but was not trustworthy the King would not have been able to rely on him. And if he was good but lacked knowledge that too would have been a problem. Progress in life demands both.

Practical Implementation

When an opportunity to do good and benefit others arises, set aside past hurts, grudges and rise up to prove yourself.

Cross reference verses

Honor belongs to Allah/Good words, good actions ascend to Him – Q 35:10

Work/Effort is recognised – Q 9:105

Connecting Topics

Building a good reputation

Recognizing Personal Talents

Being useful to society

Useful Links

<https://islamonline.net/en/ihsan-goodness-and-perfection/>

(The verses about Nabī Yūsuf is also mentioned in this article)

Note: it's not a Shī'ā website