

Overview

Nabī Yūsuf gives the interpretations of the dreams

Nabī Yūsuf's diligence and consideration in interpreting the dreams

The decree of Allāh

Nabī Yūsuf's request to help him get out of prison

Shaytān causes a favor to be forgotten

A scholar's dream

Sūrat Yūsuf

Verses 41-42

يَا صَاحِبِي السِّجْنِ أَمَّا أَحَدُكُمَا فَيَسْقِي رَبَّهُ خَمْرًا ۖ وَأَمَّا الْآخَرُ فَيُصَلَّبُ فَتَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْ
رَأْسِهِ ۗ قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ الَّذِي فِيهِ تَسْتَفْتِيَانِ

O my two companions in prison, as for one of you he will serve wine to his master and as for the other, he shall be crucified and the birds will eat from his head. The matter about which you inquire has been decreed

وَقَالَ لِلَّذِي ظَنَّ أَنَّهُ نَاجٍ مِّنْهُمَا اذْكُرْنِي عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ فَأَنَسَاهُ الشَّيْطَانُ ذِكْرَ رَبِّهِ فَلَبِثَ فِي السِّجْنِ
بِضْعَ سِنِينَ

Then he said to the one whom he knew would be delivered of the two, mention me to your master, but the Shaytān caused him to forget mentioning it to his master so he remained in the prison several years.

Questions for Reflection

1. Why does Nabī Yūsuf say the matter is decreed?
2. How do you think the interpretations effected the two men?
3. What made Nabī Yūsuf ask that the man who would be saved remember him to the King?

Commentary

Note – The word ‘rabb’ is used for someone who has the position of authority. In these verses rabb is used for the King, not for God who is the Lord of all things.

Notice the respect and sensitivity with which Nabī Yūsuf talks to the two men. He addresses them again as my companions in prison, a term he had used for them earlier too. The terms you use to address people help them feel good about themselves and the conversation they are having. The Qurān addresses a believer – O you who believe – showing respect and asking attention. The Holy Prophet *sallal-lāhu ‘alayhi wa-ālihi wasallam* used to address people with various words, O my companions, the delight of my heart (for family). It is important to convey your appreciation for the other person in the way you address them.

The interpretation of the dreams was that the person who saw himself pressing wine would be released after three days and would regain his former job in the palace of the King. His original job was to serve wine to the King. The other one who had been a cook in the palace would be taken out of prison after three days and put to death. He would be crucified and his body would be left in the open for a while such that birds would eat from his head.

Nabī Yūsuf also does not tell them directly that ‘you’ will give wine to the King (i.e. be freed from prison and live) and ‘you’ will be crucified. Instead, he says ‘one of you’ for both interpretations although it is obvious which one will live and which one will not. This is because the news is not very pleasant and he is sensitive to their feelings. He does not point directly at them. Nabī Yūsuf also gives the interpretation that is the good news first. Then he talks about the one that will result in death.

Because he knows they may react negatively to the interpretations and the one who will be crucified will not be pleased with the news, he emphasizes that it is not from himself but a decree of which he has been given ‘Ilmul ghayb. It is not something the prisoners can question or argue about. History says that the prisoner who had dreamt of the birds eating from his head was distressed by the interpretation and responded by saying that he had only been joking, that he had not seen such a dream. He hoped that by denying the dream he could ward off the interpretation. But Nabī Yūsuf assures him that it is decreed and will happen.

Because Nabī Yūsuf knew one of them would be released and work for the King, he asked him to mention his innocence to the King. Nabī Yūsuf was distressed to be in prison and was especially disturbed by the accusations against him. He hoped that the man would be able to convince the King about his purity and innocence. But the man forgot. Although he had been requested, he forgot all about it when he went back to

work for the King. This shows lack of character. A person who receives a favor from someone is always on the lookout for returning the favor and does not miss a chance to repay it. Imām Zaynul ‘Ābidīn *‘alayhis-salām* says in *Risālatul Huqūq*: *The right of him who does a kindly act toward you is that you thank him and mention his kindness; you reward him with beautiful words and you supplicate for him sincerely in that which is between you and God. If you do that, you have thanked him secretly and openly. Then, if you are able to repay him one day, you repay him.*

This incident also shows that when people achieve what they want and are able to live in comfort and ease, they often forget their past and those who need help. Shaytān makes them indulge in their own comfort and distracts them from thinking of others. Of course, it is they themselves who are also responsible for this and Shaytān just makes it justified and fair seeming to them.

Most narrations say that Nabī Yūsuf stayed seven years in prison.

Related story

A Scholar’s dream:

Mullah Muhammad Taqī Al Barghāni who is commonly known as Shahīd ath Thālith or the third martyr related that his father saw a dream in which the Holy Prophet Muhammad *sallal-lāhu ‘alayhi wa-ālihi wasallam* was surrounded by many great scholars of Islām. He saw many ‘Ulemā whom he recognised. They sat in a respectful circle around the Prophet.

However, he saw the son of the scholar called Fahad Al Hilli sitting very close to the Prophet *sallal-lāhu ‘alayhi wa-ālihi wasallam*. He was surprised to see this when there were other scholars who were greater in calibre, knowledge and their service to Islām who were not sitting so close to the Holy Prophet (S).

Mullah Barghāni’s father asked the Prophet *sallal-lāhu ‘alayhi wa-ālihi wasallam* the reason for this, and the Prophet replied that it was because all the scholars surrounding him used to give charity when they possessed something but if they didn’t have anything they would not give to the person who was begging or in need. However, the son of Fahad Al Hilli used to give in charity despite not possessing anything extra. He would give up his personal belongings in order to fulfil other people’s needs. This gave him a higher degree of closeness to the Prophet. (Mardāne ‘Ilm Dar ‘Amal Page 228)

Lessons

- 1) Be considerate about people's feelings when you talk to them, especially if you are going to say something they may not like.
- 2) Self-respect and dignity is important. If people accuse you of wrong seek a chance to prove your worth and purity.
- 3) Do not forget a favor that someone does for you.

Practical Implementation

- a) When you have to reveal something unpleasant to someone, look for an appropriate time/opportunity. When talking, choose words that can ease the discomfort of the person.
- b) When someone does you a favor:
 - mention them to others in addition to displaying direct appreciation in different ways.
 - Try to return their favor whenever possible
 - Keep them in your prayers always.

Cross reference verses

God being there for us – 3:160

Reward of goodness – 55:60

Connecting Topics

God never forgets us

Appreciating and honoring favors

Activity Ideas

- a) God helps in difficult times and never forgets anyone, only people do. Ask students to interview a partner and see how many people they remember from something in the past; a school, a holiday, a country . . . They have forgotten some, or forgotten details. God never forgets.
- b) Making the most of a negative situation. Nabī Yūsuf was in prison, in unpleasant surroundings and in distress due to the accusations against him. But he makes the best of his situation. Many scholars have written books in prison, have changed others while in prison. Do an activity to help children make the best of an unpleasant situation or create something meaningful out of very limited resources.