

Overview**Nabī Yūsuf confronts his brothers****Truth is revealed****The stunning moment for the brothers****Nabī Yūsuf displays gentleness and a positive attitude****Nabī Yūsuf reminds others about God during a sensitive moment****Related story**

Sūrat Yūsuf

Verses 89-90

قَالَ هَلْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ بِيُوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ جَاهِلُونَ

He said: Do you know how you treated Yūsuf and his brother when you were ignorant?

قَالُوا أَأِنَّكَ لَأَنْتَ يُوسُفُ قَالَ أَنَا يُوسُفُ وَهَذَا أَخِي ۖ قَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا ۗ إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

They said: Are you really Yūsuf? He said: I am Yūsuf and this is my brother; Allāh has indeed been kind to us; Surely he who is God conscious and patient, Indeed Allāh does not waste the reward of those who do good

Questions for Reflection

1. Why does Nabī Yūsuf say they did what they did to him when they were ignorant?
2. How must the brothers have felt when they recognised Nabī Yūsuf?
3. What favors is Nabī Yūsuf speaking of in the verse?
4. How would you describe the attitude of Nabī Yūsuf?

Commentary

When the brothers come to Egypt with a letter from their father, Nabī Yūsuf takes the letter and kisses it. He is overcome with emotion to see something from his

father. He weeps and cannot hide his secret anymore. He turns to the brothers and asks them about what they did to Yūsuf and his brother when they were ignorant.

Note how magnanimous Nabī Yūsuf is in the way he asks his brothers. He indicates that it was done in the past when the brothers were ignorant, implying that they are now different. They are not ignorant any more. It becomes easier for someone to accept their mistake when the opportunity is given to them to show they have changed. Saying that it was due to their past ignorance gives the brothers an excuse and maintains their dignity.

Nabī Yūsuf mentions that wrong was done to him and his brother. It shows that Benjamin also suffered from the actions of the brothers. It is possible that he had narrated this to Nabī Yūsuf while he was with him in Egypt.

To soften his words Nabī Yūsuf smiled as he spoke. The brothers looked at him and were surprised at the resemblance they could see to the brother they had. That, along with Nabī Yūsuf's emotion at seeing his father's letter and then his question about their actions, all made the brothers realize that this really must be Yūsuf himself. Hesitatingly they ask if he actually is Yūsuf himself.

There were a few moments of silence. Would Nabī Yūsuf admit the truth or would he continue to keep it a secret? Nabī Yūsuf knew it was time to tell the truth. He identifies himself. He tells them he is Yūsuf and that with him is Benjamin his brother. It was a stunning moment that left the brothers speechless. They felt ashamed of what they had done and were ready to seek forgiveness.

Nabī Yūsuf continues and thanks God for His favors. It was through His grace that Nabī Yūsuf had been able to achieve much. This is the sign of a true believer. Any blessing or any event that happens is due to the planning and strength of God. Nabī Yūsuf says that patience and God consciousness ultimately bear fruit. Allāh will reward that in both the worlds. Even at such a sensitive moment when there was a lot of family emotion Nabī Yūsuf reminds others about God. This is also what he did in the prison. It shows his strong connection with God and his true belief that the real controller of all things is God.

Hadīth

Imām Sādiq (a) says: *Surely in the coming of al Qāem there is a practice from the life of Nabī Yūsuf. People will not recognize him until God gives him permission to identify himself.* (Bihārul Anwār, Vol. 12, pg 283)

Imām 'Alī (a) says: *Pardon [and overlooking mistakes] is the crown of all noble qualities.*

Related Story

Pardon of Mālik al Ashtar

Mālik al Ashtar was a respected companion of Imām ‘Alī and the commander of his army. But on the normal days, he looked a poor man. He wore simple clothing. He walked humbly. Thus, most people did not know him.

One day, while Mālik al Ashtar was walking in the street, a foolish person was eating some dates and throwing the stones. Mālik al-Ashtar passed before the foolish person. He threw a stone at Mālik al-Ashtar. The stone hit him on the back. The foolish person began laughing at him. A man saw the foolish person. He said to him: What are you doing? Do you know that man? The foolish person answered: No, who is he? He's Mālik Ashtar commander-in-chief of Imām ‘Alī's Army!

Mālik Ashtar went on walking. He did not pay attention to the foolish person. He remembered how the polytheists treated Prophet Muhammad (saw) in Makkah. They threw dust and rubbish at him but he kept silent.

Mālik Ashtar came into mosque. He began praying for Allāh to forgive the foolish person. The man ran quickly. He came into the mosque. He embraced Mālik Ashtar apologizing and saying: I want to apologize to you for my bad behavior! So, accept my apology. Mālik Ashtar answered with a smile: Brother, don't worry. By Allāh, I've entered the mosque to pray for Allāh to forgive you.

Note: Other stories that can be used are how the Prophet dealt with the Muslims who apologized after the battle of Uhud, at the conquest of Makkah, Imam Husayn (a) and Hurr bin Yazid al-Riyahi, etc.

Lessons

- a) Be understanding of the mistakes people make.
- b) Always recognize the hand of God behind all that you achieve in life.

Practical Implementation

- When you have a conflict with someone do not remind them about the details later. It only creates anger and bitterness on both sides. Instead try to make an excuse for them so they don't feel so bad about it.
- Use an opportunity to talk about God even in awkward and sensitive moments.

Cross reference verses

Excusing faults & enjoining good - Q7:199

Graceful forbearance – Q15:85

Connecting Topics

Overlooking faults

Useful Links

Apologizing to others and accepting an apology - <https://www.al-islam.org/ethical-discourses-volume-2-naser-makarem-shirazi/discourse-35-apologizing-others-and-accepting>

Etiquette of correcting mistakes - <https://learn-islam.org/term2-etiquette-class8>
(Please note that this is not a Shia site)