

Overview**A strong telepathy between a father and a son****Nabī Ya‘qūb (a) expresses himself****Dismissing the intuition of Nabī Ya‘qūb (a)****Hope in Allāh for relief following distress**

Sūrat Yūsuf

Verses 94-95

وَلَمَّا فَصَلَتِ الْعِيرُ قَالَ أَبُوهُمْ إِنِّي لَأَجِدُ رِيحَ يُوسُفَ ۗ لَوْلَا أَن تَفَنَّدُونَ

And when the caravan had departed their father said: Most surely I can sense the smell of Yūsuf, although you may think I am foolish (**weakened in my mind; senile**)

قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ إِنَّكَ لَفِي ضَلَالِكَ الْقَدِيمِ

They said: By Allah, you are still in your old state of error

Questions for Reflection

1. How could the father smell the scent of Yūsuf?
2. Nabī Ya‘qūb has not given up hope after all this time? What does this say about his relationship with God? About his love for Yūsuf?
3. Why is he afraid to say what he says? But he still says it anyways.
4. What is the attitude of the listeners? Why is there no respect for an old man, or compassion for a grieving father?

Commentary

The brothers of Nabī Yūsuf left Egypt with the shirt he had given them. They were happy and excited. They looked forward to telling their father that Yūsuf was still alive and they would take him to Egypt to meet him. In the house of Nabī Ya‘qūb (in Palestine or Kana‘ān) however the mood was still sad and gloomy. But just when the caravan left Egypt Nabī Ya‘qūb somehow had a feeling that Nabī Yūsuf was found. He was far away but he said he could actually smell the fragrance of his son. He knew that his family who were with him would think him silly and consider him a foolish old man. But he still told them what he felt. He told them that their sad days were

over and their household would now have happy days ahead with the whole family united.

History tells us that Nabī Ya‘qūb had his sons’ families with him at that time; their wives and children. They rejected what he said and were firm in their belief that it was his old age that had weakened his mind and made him expect his son back. It had been so long since Yūsuf had disappeared, he had probably died. How was it possible to smell him from a distance? They dismissed it as the rantings of an old man whose love and grief for his son had made his mind unstable. They told him to stop imagining things and get back to reality.

Note that the word ضَلَّال in verse 95 refers to being mistaken and being astray, not in belief but in thinking on a particular matter.

The words spoken to Nabī Ya‘qūb show disrespect and lack of love and understanding. They were unaware of the purity of the heart of Nabī Ya‘qūb and his status with God. They thought of him according to their own dark thoughts and hardened hearts. That is the mistake many people do in their relationships. They consider others to be like themselves, not allowing for superiority of thought and wisdom in the other person. Even if the person is really mistaken, it is wrong to speak to someone like that, especially an older person, a father/grandfather of the family. Islām emphasizes that old people must be treated very respectfully. There is a lot to learn from their wisdom and experience. Although they may not have modern knowledge, they are a treasure house of old and valuable knowledge. They have seen much which the younger generations can learn from.

It is possible that the scent of Yūsuf mentioned in these verses is not an actual fragrance but the coming of news about Yūsuf. This news was traveling from Egypt and would reach the home of Nabī Ya‘qūb. It was a telepathic message relayed to Nabī Ya‘qūb due to the high level of his faith and his hope in Allāh. Those who are very close to someone can sense something about them even if they are far away.

Nabī Ya‘qūb had never lost hope. After all these years had passed, he did not think it strange to be expecting to see Yūsuf again. One who believes in God believes that all things are possible for Him and it is easy for Him to change things around. Hope lives forever in such a heart.

Lessons

- 1) Pure and sincere people can sense things which other people cannot.
- 2) When we can't see what someone sees it does not always mean they are wrong. We could be wrong.
- 3) Do not be harsh with someone, even if you think they are wrong.
- 4) Life of a pure and learned person is difficult when he is surrounded by people who cannot understand him.
- 5) Never give up hope in Allāh.

Practical Implementation

- a) Treat an old person with a lot of respect and sensitivity.
- b) Give a chance to people. Think about what they say even if you don't agree with it.

Cross reference verses

Hope in Allāh – Q3:139

Stages of human life Q30:54

Hadīth

- 1) *One of the ways of respecting the Almighty is to respect an elderly believer.*
Holy Prophet (s) Al Kāfi, Vol.2, pg 165

The Prophet (s) also said; *The presence of an old person among you is the source of an increase of the grace of the Lord and the spreading of His blessings.* Nahj al Fasāha, Hadīth#1110

- 2) *People are the enemies of what they do not know.* Imām 'Alī (a)
[The family rejected what Nabī Ya'qūb was saying because they did not know the truth of the matter. Imagine their surprise when they found out].
- 3) *Whoever does not hope for anything from people and relies on Allāh for all his affairs, Almighty Allah will answer him in all things.* Imām Sajjād (a) Al Kafi, Vol.2, pg 148

Connecting Topics

Treating the elderly with respect

Hope in Allāh

Useful Links

<https://www.al-islam.org/a-divine-perspective-on-rights-a-commentary-of-imam-sajjads-treatise-of-rights/right-n-43-right>

Activity Ideas

- Divide the children into groups. Let one person be an old man in the group. The others react to what he says. Discuss how the old person felt when others reacted positively/negatively to what he said. How can the children be more understanding and show respect to the elders in their families and communities.
- Another activity to emphasize respect for the elderly would be for each child to define an older person positively. Share stories about grandparents. Check out Islamic fiction on grandparents (Our Grandma by Zaynab Dawood . .)

Sources:

Āyatullāh Nāsir Makārim Shirāzī (ed), Tafsīr-e Namūneh

Āghae Muhsin Qarāati, Tafsīre Nūr