

TAFSEER OF SURAH YUSUF

LECTURE 5: STORY OF YUSUF (a.s) IS FILLED WITH SIGNS FOR THOSE WHO SEEK ANSWERS

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After having listened to the narration of the dream of Prophet Yusuf (a.s) and advising him to keep it a secret, Prophet Ya'koob (a.s) gives Prophet Yusuf (a.s) glad tidings that Allah will:

1. Choose him to be a Prophet;

2. Teach him the interpretation of dreams. While certain dreams are clear and easier to understand like the dream of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) slaughtering his son, other dreams appear in the form of signs that need to be decoded and thus Yusuf (a.s) will be taught this skill; and

3. Complete His favour upon him and the Family of Ya'koob (a.s).

Often people have difficulty to understand our emphasis on the Family of Prophet Muhammad (sawa), but do not realise that it is a Quranic trend as shown above in case of the Family of Ya'koob and in other cases the Family of Ibrahim (a.s) is blessed or the Family of Imraan. Though the companions of Prophet Muhammad (sawa) are important, the completion of Allah's favours appear on the Family of the Prophet.

YUSUF (a.s)'s STORY HAS SIGNS FOR THOSE WHO ASK

Verse 7 says "Certainly in (the story of) Yusuf and his brothers there are signs for those who ask."

This verse emphasizes the fact that too many lessons are present throughout this narrative.

Verse 8 says "When they said 'Yusuf and his brother are more beloved to our father than we, while we are a clan. Indeed our father is in clear error.'"

Though their father was a Prophet, the brothers of Yusuf (a.s) said to each other that their father was misguided!

Verse 9 then narrates how they weigh up their options to deal with this supposed problem when it quotes them saying:

"Kill Yusuf or cast him out to (another) land; the face of your father will (then) be only for you, and you will be after that a righteous people."

It was the assumption of the brothers that once they got rid of Yusuf (a.s), then they could simply make tauba for having done a short term evil but then live like righteous people thereafter.

In response to this rather extreme suggestion, the Quran then quotes one of the more level headed brothers who suggests an alternative approach to achieving the same purpose of getting "rid" of Yusuf (a.s) which is captured in Verse 10 as follows:

"Do not kill Yusuf, but throw him into the bottom of the well; some travellers will pick him up - if you would do this act."

In the deserts which are very dry areas, there were caravans traveling and these deserts normally have wells for the caravans to replenish their water supplies. Inside the well there is usually a type of window through which you get to the well. By throwing Yusuf (a.s) to the bottom of the well, he would not remain there forever but would be picked up by passing caravans and they would thus get rid of him without killing him.

REASON FOR PROPHET YA'KOUB (a.s)'s LOVE FOR YUSUF (a.s)

While the brothers of Yusuf (a.s) complained about their father loving him too much, it must be noted that Prophet Ya'koob (a.s) was fair to all of them. However, the reasons for his special love for Yusuf (a.s) were:

1. Yusuf (a.s) and Bienenamin were from one mother, Rakheel, who, according to certain narrations passed away and thus Prophet Yusuf (a.s) did not have a mother and thus closer attention was paid to him;
2. They were the youngest children and thus needed more attention than the other brothers who were already adult; and
3. Yusuf (a.s)'s future was to be a Prophet and this motivated Prophet Ya'koob (a.s) to pay closer attention to him so that he would be supported for his future role.

MEANING OF "USBA"

This refers to a "clan" or a group of people who, together are considered powerful. Since they were ten people they felt they were powerful and felt aggrieved that they did not receive the care that they deserved due to their supposed power.

CAUSE OF THE DESPICABLE ACTIONS OF BROTHERS OF YUSUF (a.s)

The root cause of the despicable actions of the brothers of Yusuf (a.s) towards him was an inner disease of the heart called "hasad" or "jealousy." This disease is so destructive that it can destroy one's entire faith.

Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (sawa) indicate that "Hasad destroys Imaan or faith like fire burns down dry wood."

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Often we consider sins to be the obvious major external sins like drinking or gambling and appear to look like pious people who pray and act holy, yet could suffer from an inner disease like hasad that completely destroys our faith.

Thus the ahadith say that the challenge which face ulamaa (who normally do not commit open sins in public) is hasad. And to understand its evil consequences, the story of Yusuf (a.s) even shows that people would be willing to kill you due to hasad as jealousy makes one blind. This is a day to day challenge.

If Allah gives someone some good in their life, others tend to react to that person's success in four ways:

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1. They are happy with your success and then wish the same success for themselves. This approach is acceptable and even recommended in that you become motivated to achieve the same success by working hard for it. This is called ghibta;
2. They hate the fact that you are successful and even pray and strive for that person's destruction. This is hasad and is condemned;
3. They question why you became successful and while they themselves are unsuccessful they believe that you should both be unsuccessful. This is called bukhil or stinginess; and
4. They are happy with the success of others and wish it for themselves as well and when they become successful, they wish their success for others and dedicate their success to others. Such a person has no ego and such success which is dedicated to others is called "Ithaar" or "sacrifice."

Of the above mentioned approaches, the fourth approach is the most praised. In Surah Hashr Verse 9 it says "they give preference (to others) over themselves; though poverty may afflict

them." Though they may lose materially, they gain spiritually.

This theme of hasad is the common fiber that manifests in this Surah.

INTENTION OF BEING PIOUS AFTER FIRST COMMITTING SIN

This is a common problem. Jealousy pushed the brothers of Yusuf (a.s) to commit a despicable crime but their conscience was bothering them. At this stage satan intervenes to rationalize the problem of their conscience which bothered them by suggesting that it would be a once off sin and thereafter they would be fine by simply repenting and living a pious life.

This way of thinking occurs in our daily life when satan deceives us. And we are deceived to often take extreme approaches to solving problems by simply getting rid of the one who seems to be the cause of the problem instead of considering other more sane ways of dealing with problems like dialogue, etc.

ADVISE TO PARENTS

It often happens that in a family of a few children, each one is on a different level. Maybe one child is more inclined to religion compared to another or academically better than others and so on. But parents should always treat their children equally even if they love one child more than another for a good reason but should never express it. Though Ya'koob (a.s) never acted unequally to his children, his mere extra care for Yusuf (a.s) caused the brothers to become jealous.