

# **TAFSEER OF SURAH YUSUF**

## **LECTURE 4: THE REALITY OF DREAMS**

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Verse 4 of Surah Yusuf says:

"When Yusuf said to his father, Oh my father, Indeed I have seen (in a dream), eleven stars and the sun and the moon; I saw them prostrating to me."

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To this statement of Prophet Yusuf (a.s), the reply of Prophet Ya'koob (a.s) is captured in verses 5 and 6 which says:

"He said: 'Oh my son, do not relate your dream to your brothers or they will contrive a plan against you. Indeed satan is the manifest enemy of man."

"And thus your Lord will choose you and teach you the interpretation of narratives (dreams) and complete His favour upon you and upon the family of Ya'koob, as he completed it upon your fathers before you, Ibrahim and Ishaq. Indeed your Lord is All-Knowing and All-Wise."

From here the story of Yusuf (a.s) basically starts which was in the form of a dream.

## **DEFINITION OF DREAMS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE**

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Many scholars have written detailed books on the phenomenon of dreams but in summary its explanation can be categorized into two:

1. Materialists explain dreams purely in material terms in that they say dreams are reflections of what you desire and seek, or are a result of past experience that is in your sub-consciousness. So someone who is thirsty may dream of water or someone who is hungry may dream of food. Others say dreams are result of fear which thus manifest as a nightmare.

2. Spiritualists believe that human beings consist of a material body and a spiritual reality. They believe that when someone sleeps, that one's soul becomes "semi-free" from one's physical body and consequently is capable of seeing something beyond this world and that is what a dream is.

Philosophers have divided the worlds into three worlds:



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By way of example, this can be compared to someone who has a strong "satellite TV" antenna whose reception is very clear and thus has a perfect picture on his TV.

Sometimes souls are weak and thus it is as if their "antenna" is weak and thus see a very blurry picture in their dream and forget 90% of what they saw.

So even though the "signal" from the world of Realities is available to access, the "reception capacity" of most people are weak and thus see very little thereof.

Dreams can be understood by way of the above mentioned example.

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On the other hand philosophers do agree that there are dreams which are purely meaningless and could relate to bad eating habits that result in nightmares!

Prophet Muhammad (sawa) says: "Dreams are of three types: They are either glad tidings from Allah, or they are the influence/stress from satan or they relate to something in one's sub-consciousness that you then see in your sleep."

Thus dreams have great value in principle as it is a reflection of our access to the world of Realities (Aalam tajarrud).

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This world of Realities is a world where things have been decided before the time.

Ibn Abbas narrates in his tafseer of verse 4 that Prophet Yusuf (a.s) saw this dream on the night of Jumuah which was on the night of Qadr which is the night of Destinies wherein Destinies are decided.

Thus those who have strong souls like Prophets, Imams, Awliyaa, etc. naturally have access to that world of Realities and can manage to see things as they are.

**NORMAL PEOPLE CAN ACCESS WORLD OF REALITIES THROUGH DREAMS**

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Besides the above mentioned categories of people who can access the world of Realities through dreams, normal people have also many times accessed it.

Thus the material explanations of dreams are unacceptable.

Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi in his tafseer narrates a dream from Mullah Ali Akhund Hamadani who narrates from another scholar who lived in Samarra when the Hawza was based there. He says that his family in Shomal in Iran used to send him 100 Toman every year to cover his expenses while studying. One year he received news indicating that there was drought and no income and thus he will not be receiving any money during that year from his family.

Then one day he says he was sleeping and he saw Prophet Muhammad (sawa) in a dream who



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said to him to "go open that pot, there is 100 Toman in it for you." Naturally, he was looking for 100 Toman, so if a materialist were to explain this dream he would say it was due to his psychological condition that he dreamt something like that.

He then says that the next morning a messenger came to his home from Mirza Shirazi, who was the head of the hawza in Samarra summoning him to meet him. When he went to see the Marja, Mirza Shirazi said to him "go into that back room where you will find a pot in which is 100 Toman which belongs to you and please take it."

And there are many such examples that one can quote.

Consequently nobody can challenge the fact that certain dreams are true and that one's soul flies and has access to the world of Realities.

### PROPHET YUSUF(a.s)'s DREAM

At the beginning of this lecture we quoted the actual verse 4 which refers to the dream of Prophet Yusuf (a.s).

Prophet Yusuf (a.s) had 11 brothers of which 10 brothers were step-brothers. His full brother was Bienyamin. The sun in the dream refers to Ya'koob and the moon in the dream means the mother of Prophet Yusuf (a.s) whose name was Rakheel.

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The hadith narrations indicate that he was 9 years old when he had this dream (while some narrations refer to 7 or 12 years old) and he was the youngest child. It's amazing that such a young child narrates such a dream and the amazing response of his father.

The wording of verse 4 indicates that Prophet Yusuf (a.s) narrates the dream with a great deal of confidence when he says "Indeed I saw eleven stars and the sun and the moon." Thereafter the Quran quotes his words as having added emphasis to his first words when he repeats himself saying "I saw them prostrating to me."

By repeating himself he is thus saying it was not just a dream, but a Reality that he saw. His use of the pronoun "hum" refers to "them" (as in I saw them) that is used for people with intellect that have intellectual capacity. It is not commonly used to refer to the sun, moon or stars. But by referring to the planets which prostrated to him as "hum" or "them" he is indicating that their prostration was made with full knowledge and free will regarding why they prostrated to him.

The deeper understanding of Quran teaches us that everything in the heavens and earth make tasbeeh of Allah and thus do have life and thus the prostration to Prophet Yusuf (a.s) by the planets was with full knowledge.

Sajda is an expression of humility where you surrender to Allah who ordered you to prostrate to Prophet Adam (a.s) in one incident or to Prophet Yusuf (a.s) in this incident.

### **FIRST RESPONSE OF PROPHET YA'KOOB (a.s) TO THE DREAM OF PROPHET YUSUF (a.s)**

Prophet Ya'koob (a.s)'s first response is to lovingly say to his son "do not narrate this dream to your brothers" as they will plot against you as Satan is the open enemy of mankind.

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This response of Prophet Ya'koob (a.s) indicates that he immediately knew what the dream means and thus wanted to protect Prophet Yusuf (a.s).

"Do not narrate" teaches us the importance of the principle of secrecy in our life and not to always inform others about everything we know. Ahlul Bait (a.s) have taught us that we should only speak about a portion of what we know, but in reality our problem is that we usually speak about much more than we actually know. That is often the source of disasters.

The other reason for insisting on secrecy is that everyone does not have the capacity to understand what you are thinking and thus Prophet Muhammad (sawa) is reported to have said "speak to people according to their intellectual capacity."

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Ayatullah Taqdiri used to say that a nice tasting kabaab cannot be fed to a three month old baby as it does not have the capacity to eat it.

There is a fascinating hadith which says "If Abu Thar knew what is in the heart of Salman, he would kill him." How is that possible? Contemplate on this and it will teach you a life lesson in your interaction with people. Abu Thar, who is a great companion without doubt, would not have been able to digest the level of Tauheed which was in the heart of Salman who is the only one from outside the Ahlul Bait (a.s) who was called "from us Ahlul Bait (a.s)" and would thus have killed him out of ignorance of considering Salman being a mushrik.

Thus our Imams insist that keeping secrets are from among the core qualities of a believer. There is a well-known hadith saying that a "believer should have three qualities, one should be a quality from Allah, one should be a quality from Prophet (sawa) and one should be a quality from the Imams. The quality from Allah is 'how to keep a secret', and the quality from Prophet (sawa) is 'to get along with people' and the quality from the Imams is to 'have patience during difficulties and hardships.'"

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Prophet Ya'koob (a.s) wanted to say that in a close family, where Yusuf (a.s) had eleven brothers who were good people in principle and children of a Prophet, it's not always possible to even share secrets with them! And since this dream proves to be a special position for Prophet Yusuf (a.s), it opens the door for jealousy and suspicion if he speaks about it openly. This is due to the fact that Satan always attempts to interfere and intervene in one's life when one is in a vulnerable situation, so one should always be conscious to prevent incidents that could allow satan to interfere in one's life. One should consciously block the influence of satan before the time and sometimes there is the need to keep secrets even within the family to ensure this.