

TAFSEER OF SURAH YUSUF

LECTURE 20: BIENYAMIN IS ACCUSED OF STEALING

By: Mowlana Syed Aftab Haide
Delivered at Ahlul Bait (a.s) Islamic Centre, Ottery, Cape Town
Ramadaan 1436/2015

After having entered Egypt from the various gates as advised by Prophet Ya'koob (a.s), the following verses narrate the second encounter that the brothers of Prophet Yusuf (a.s) has with him.

PROPHET YUSUF (a.s) INTRODUCES HIMSELF TO BIENYAMIN

Verse 69 says: "And when they entered upon Yusuf, he took his brother to himself; he said, "Indeed, I am your brother, so do not despair over what they used to do [to me]."

Certain translations of the above verse say that in place of "he took his brother to himself", the meaning is "he embraced his brother" and introduced himself to him.

There are many narrations which indicate how Prophet Yusuf (a.s) did this which includes having had a private meeting with Bienyum.

Ramadan 2015 Lecture 20: Bienyamin is accused of stealing

Written by ramadan

Sunday, 12 July 2015 21:57 - Last Updated Sunday, 12 July 2015 22:03

Some narrations say that Prophet Yusuf (a.s) invited his brothers for dinner and arranged the dinner table in a manner whereby they would sit in pairs. Since they were eleven, Bienyamin was left without a partner and thus Prophet Yusuf (a.s) asked him to sit with him and thus separated Bienyamin from them.

When he had an opportunity to speak to him privately, he revealed his identity. This was undoubtedly and emotional moment for both of them as Prophet Yusuf (a.s) was alone on the one hand for so many years, while Bienyamin, though being with his family, still felt very lonely due to his brother's jealousy for him too. This would especially have been the case when they realised that they did not achieve their goal when they got rid of Prophet Yusuf (a.s) as their father's memory of him never faded.

And Prophet Yusuf (a.s)'s message to Bienyamin was one of hope in that he said to him he should not despair with regards to their attitude towards him.

BIENYAMIN IS ACCUSED OF STEALING

Ramadan 2015 Lecture 20: Bienyamin is accused of stealing

Written by ramadan

Sunday, 12 July 2015 21:57 - Last Updated Sunday, 12 July 2015 22:03

Verse 70 says: "So when he had furnished them with their supplies, he put the bowl into the bag of his brother. Then an announcer called out, "O caravan, indeed you are thieves."

So the brothers again obtained their share from Prophet Yusuf (a.s), this time having received eleven portions as Bienyamin had accompanied them.

At this moment Prophet Yusuf (a.s) arranged a gold bowl/cup of the king to be placed into the bag of Bienyamin. Suddenly the people of the palace realised that the gold cup was missing.

Ramadan 2015 Lecture 20: Bienyamin is accused of stealing

Written by ramadan

Sunday, 12 July 2015 21:57 - Last Updated Sunday, 12 July 2015 22:03

So an announcer (muazzin) announced the incident calling the caravan of the brothers of Yusuf (a.s) saying they are thieves!

Verse 71 says: "They said while approaching them, "What is it you are missing?"

This was such a shock to them as they consciously acted very cautiously in the presence of the king who assisted them as they did not want to be in a compromising position like they had been in before. Certain narrations state that they were so cautious that they even closed the mouths of their camels upon entering Egypt as they did not want their animals to eat from another person's grass unlawfully. They thus exclaimed in amazement to the announcer by asking what was missing?

Verse 72 says: "They said, "We are missing the measure of the king. And for he who produces it is [the reward of] a camel's load, and I am responsible for it."

Ramadan 2015 Lecture 20: Bienenjamin is accused of stealing

Written by ramadan

Sunday, 12 July 2015 21:57 - Last Updated Sunday, 12 July 2015 22:03

So they were informed that the king's gold cup was missing. And the reward for finding the gold cup was a whole camel load of food.

Verse 73 says: "They said, "By Allah, you have certainly known that we did not come to cause corruption in the land, and we have not been thieves."

The brothers responded by emphasising their good intention and were very certain that it was impossible that they had stolen anything.

Ramadan 2015 Lecture 20: Bienyamin is accused of stealing

Written by ramadan

Sunday, 12 July 2015 21:57 - Last Updated Sunday, 12 July 2015 22:03

Verse 74 says: "The accusers said, "Then what would be its recompense if you should be liars?"

Prophet Yusuf (a.s) then asked what would happen if they lied and offered them to determine what the punishment should be instead of him saying what the punishment should be.

Verse 75 says: "[The brothers] said, "Its recompense is that he in whose bag it is found - he [himself] will be its recompense. Thus do we recompense the wrongdoers."

Since they were so confident of themselves, they said the one who is guilty should suffer and work for the one that he stole from as that is how they punish such a person (a thief) back home in Qan'aan.

Ramadan 2015 Lecture 20: Bienyamin is accused of stealing

Written by ramadan

Sunday, 12 July 2015 21:57 - Last Updated Sunday, 12 July 2015 22:03

Verse 76 says: “So he began [the search] with their bags before the bag of his brother; then he extracted it from the bag of his brother. Thus did We plan for Yusuf. He could not have taken his brother within the religion of the king except that Allah willed. We raise in degrees whom we will, but over every possessor of knowledge is one [more] knowing.

Prophet Yusuf (a.s) first inspected the bags of his brothers before he inspected the bag of Bienyamin so that it was not obvious that he planned it like that.

EGYPTIAN LEGAL SYSTEM

Ramadan 2015 Lecture 20: Bienyamin is accused of stealing

Written by ramadan

Sunday, 12 July 2015 21:57 - Last Updated Sunday, 12 July 2015 22:03

This was Allah's plan for Prophet Yusuf (a.s) as in terms the existing Egyptian legal system, Prophet Yusuf (a.s) was not able to detain Bienyamin under these conditions.

When Bienyamin met Prophet Yusuf (a.s) privately, he asked him whether he wished to stay with Prophet Yusuf (a.s), to which he immediately responded in the affirmative as this would give him an opportunity to spend time together after so many years. But he then said that this was not possible as his brothers would not leave him alone in Egypt as they took an oath to return him safely to Prophet Ya'koob (a.s).

At this point Prophet Yusuf (a.s) informed him of his plan like he made a plan previously to get Bienyamin to come to Egypt when he returned the merchandise of his brothers during their first trip.

The gold cup was the royal cup used for kings to drink but was also used to measure the grain

Ramadan 2015 Lecture 20: Bienyamin is accused of stealing

Written by ramadan

Sunday, 12 July 2015 21:57 - Last Updated Sunday, 12 July 2015 22:03

and was something valuable.

The Egyptian rules would have resulted in Bienyamin being imprisoned or lashed. However in Qan'aan a thief is not imprisoned but made a slave. Thus since the brothers of Prophet Yusuf (a.s) suggested the punishment, Prophet Yusuf (a.s) was thus going to apply the legal rules of Qan'aan instead of Egypt as Bienyamin was from Qan'aan.

How was it possible for Prophet Yusuf (a.s) to accuse someone of stealing who is innocent?

This was because there was an agreement between Prophet Yusuf (a.s) and Bienyamin to this effect.

Ramadan 2015 Lecture 20: Bienyamin is accused of stealing

Written by ramadan

Sunday, 12 July 2015 21:57 - Last Updated Sunday, 12 July 2015 22:03

We learn from this incident that sometimes to achieve a certain purpose, one can orchestrate a plan! And the verses never say that Prophet Yusuf (a.s) called him a thief, but the announcer called them thieves to say that something was missing.

Through this plan, Bienyamin was going to remain behind to live with Prophet Yusuf (a.s) for a while longer.