

Surah Yusuf

SAYYIDUNA YUSUF (PEACE BE UPON HIM) AND THE DREAM

The story of Sayyiduna Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) is described by Allah as 'the best of stories'. Certainly it is one of the most detailed. There are so many wonderful lessons to be learned from it, lessons that still matter in this day and age too.

The story starts when Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) told his father Sayyiduna Ya'qub (peace be upon him) that he saw a dream in which eleven stars, the sun and the moon were prostrating to him. Sayyiduna Ya'qub was a prophet and so was Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon them). Allah often chooses several individuals from one family for prophets. Ya'qub (peace be upon him) himself was the son of Ishaq, who was a prophet too.

Ya'qub told Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon them) not to tell his brothers, lest they feel jealous. But Ya'qub did understand the interpretation of the dream; that Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) would be blessed with a high rank and position in this world and the hereafter.

SAYYIDUNA YUSUF (PEACE BE UPON HIM) AND HIS BROTHERS

Sayyiduna Yusuf's (peace be upon him) brothers (even before they knew about this dream) were already jealous of him. They felt that they were not getting the deserved attention. So they began to devise a plan. Either:

- a. Kill Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him).
- b. Cast him away to a far away land, and then - they said - we will become devoted to our father.
- c. The eldest said that we will throw him into the well, and surely some passer-bys will find him and look after him.

So they approached their father and asked him to allow Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) play with them in the fields. Ya'qub said 'I fear a wolf may eat him when you are unaware.' The brothers gave their assurance this would not happen.

As planned, they threw him into a well. They did not return home till evening, so that it would be dark. They shed crocodile tears and made a weak excuse to Sayyiduna Ya'qub (peace be upon him) that the wolf ate him. Even their wording suggested they were lying (You will never believe us...). Before they threw him into the well, they took off his shirt and dipped it in blood, taken from a goat they had sacrificed earlier. They even forgot to tear the shirt.

SAYYIDUNA YUSUF (PEACE BE UPON HIM) TAKEN TO EGYPT

A caravan of travellers passed by the well and drew Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) out. They hid him as merchandise and sold him for a few dirhams. They were heading for Egypt. A minister of finances bought Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) and said to his wife that he could come handy, and that they could even adopt him.

SAYYIDUNA YUSUF (PEACE BE UPON HIM) AND THE SEDUCTION

Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) was blessed with unparalleled beauty. On the night of al-Isra wa'l Mi'raj, the Prophet (peace be upon him) passed by Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) and commented on his beauty.

The minister's wife was overcome with his beauty. One day she shut the door and said to Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) 'come to me'. Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) sought protection from Allah and ran for the door, and she ran after him. At that exact moment, the minister walked in and enquired what was going on. Keen to defend herself, the wife said 'what is the punishment for someone who tries to seduce the minister's wife?' Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) defended himself. At that moment, a small child spoke up and said, 'If Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) shirt is torn from the front then it means he is guilty. This is because the woman would defend herself in front of the man and try to repel him. And if his shirt is torn from the back, then she is guilty.' The shirt was torn from the back, meaning the wife was guilty.

The minister told Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) to forget the matter, and told the wife that this was the working of women, and for her to seek forgiveness. However the story got out to the women of the town, and they began gossiping about it. They were not even there but started saying that the wife has fallen in love for a slave boy.

SAYYIDUNA YUSUF (PEACE BE UPON HIM) IN PRISON

In response, the wife laid down a banquet for the woman that gossiped against her. The desserts were fruits, that would be cut with knives. As they began cutting the fruit, Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) came in. In sheer awe and astonishment of his beauty, they all exclaimed 'this is not a man, this is an angel!' As they viewed his beauty, they cut their fingers without even knowing.

The wife then asked the women whether she was entirely blameless. She confessed that she tried to seduce him, but he feared Allah and owing to his *Nubuwwa*, was protected by Allah. She then said that if he does not listen to me from now, I will have him imprisoned. Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) had done no wrong but made it clear that he preferred prison. And so he went to prison.

Though he had not committed any crime, Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) went to prison. There he met two youth who were impressed with his manners and piety. They asked Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) to interpret dreams that each one had seen the night before. One said that in his dream, he was making wine. The other said that in his dream, he saw bread on his own head, from which birds were eating from.

Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) here showed his intelligence. Before giving his interpretation, he preached the oneness of Allah. Only then did he give the answer to the questions.

What was the interpretation? One would pour wine for his master, the other would be crucified and birds would then eat from his head. To the one who he told would be saved, Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) asked him to mention his case to the King, that he was still in prison innocently. As soon as he left prison, he forgot to mention it. Therefore Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) spent even longer in prison.

THE KING'S DREAM

Back in the King's court, the King one day told his close aides that he saw a strange dream; that seven fat cows were being eaten by seven thin cows. Also, he saw seven green ears of corn and seven dry ones. He asked his aides to interpret the dream. They said they could not. The boy who spent time in the prison with Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) spoke up and told the King he would find out the meaning from Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him). So he went to the prison and asked Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him).

Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) told him that the dream meant that the country would have seven years of prosperity. During that time they would need to store as much crops as possible, because after that would come seven years of hardship where they would require the stored crops. Then finally, there would be a year of rain and good harvest.

SAYYIDUNA YUSUF (PEACE BE UPON HIM)'S INNOCENCE

The King was impressed by this help and asked for Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) to be brought to him. However, he insisted he would not leave the prison until his name had been cleared properly. The women all affirmed the innocence of Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) and that he was a pious man. Only then did he leave the prison.

The king was impressed and made him a minister, in charge of the country's store houses.

SAYYIDUNA YUSUF (PEACE BE UPON HIM) AS THE MINISTER AND MEETING HIS BROTHERS

As predicted the drought hit Egypt and as a result, the brothers came to Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) asking for provisions. Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) recognised them but they did not recognise him. As they left, Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) told them to bring the youngest brother next time, so that they could get more next time. He told them that if they did not bring him then they would not get any provisions. Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) ordered his servants to hide the money they gave back in their bags either because (i) Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) feared they would not have enough money to return the next year, so he returned it (ii) Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) did not want to charge his own brothers (iii) Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) thought they may return to return the money.

The brothers returned with the provisions and explained to their father that they had been instructed to return with the youngest brother Binyamin next time. Otherwise, they would not get anything. As they emptied their bags, they also found the money had been returned. So they pleaded with Ya'qub (peace be upon him) to allow them to return with Binyamin, so that they could bring more. Ya'qub (peace be upon him) was unwilling for this to happen because Binyamin reminded him of Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) and because the brothers had committed oppression with Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) before. But the brothers begged and begged and eventually, Ya'qub allowed him to go, but only on a solemn promise from them all that they would return him home safe and sound. Ya'qub told them to enter the city through different gates and not one, otherwise they would be perhaps subject to the evil eye (*nazr*).

BINYAMIN MEETS SAYYIDUNA YUSUF (PEACE BE UPON HIM)

When Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) saw the brothers, he took Binyamin to one side. He told him that he was Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him), not to worry about what was about to happen, and not to tell the other brothers either. They received the provisions and as they were about to leave, Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) instructed one of his servants to slip a golden bowl belonging to the king into the bag of Binyamin. They were about to leave when one of the ministers shouted 'Stop! The bowl of the king is missing.' The brothers protested their innocence and said they were happy for their bags to be searched. The authority did so and found the bowl in Binyamin's bag and arrested him. The brothers begged not to arrest him, and even offered their own arrest in their place. But the authority did not listen, since only the criminal should be punished.

The eldest brother was very distressed. Not only had they lost Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) but now Binyamin too. Moreover, they had made a promise to their father to look after the youngest. So he told the other brothers to return to the father and tell them the situation. He reminded the brothers that they were innocent, citing the caravan they saw on their way.

Sayyiduna Yaq'ub (peace be upon him), like before, adopted patience. But his constant crying led to his eyes being affected and thus suffered from temporary blindness. He instructed all his brothers to return to Egypt and try their best to find the rest of the family.

BROTHERS TELL THEIR MISERY TO SAYYIDUNA YUSUF (PEACE BE UPON HIM)

The brothers returned to Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) and begged and pleaded with him that: 'We are poor and hungry and our father yearns to see the rest of the family.' Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) spoke out, 'Do you remember what you did with Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) when you were younger?' At that moment it dawned on the brothers that he was indeed Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him). They immediately sought forgiveness from Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him). Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him), despite all his mistreatment from their hands, accepted their forgiveness.

Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him) instructed his brothers to return home, with his shirt. He told them to wipe the shirt on his father's eyes, and surely his eyesight would return. He also instructed them to return with everyone, parents included.

From three days off, Yaqub (peace be upon him) said to his family 'If I am not very much mistaken, I can smell Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him)' meaning his shirt. When the brothers returned they wiped the shirt on his eyes and he could see again.

THE DREAM COMES TRUE

When they all came to Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him), he sat his parents next to him on the throne and the remaining brothers prostrated to to Sayyiduna Yusuf (peace be upon him). Ya'qub (peace be upon him) then explained that this was the interpretation of the dream he had so many years ago.