

نبي الله يوسف (ع)

PROPHET Yūsuf [A.S]

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 2

Lesson 1: Prophet Yūsuf

Objectives >>>

Students should:

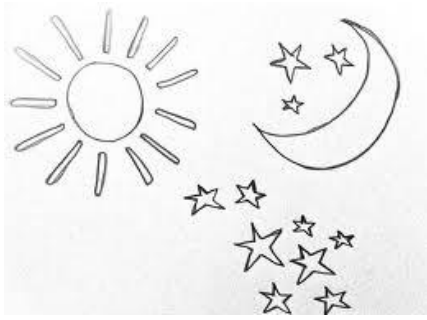
- Discuss the story of Prophet Yūsuf (as)
- Understand that jealousy is an evil thing
- Understand the negative effects of jealousy
- Discuss the importance of love and strong relationships among family members
- Discuss the importance of forgiving family members

Prophet Yūsuf (as) was the eleventh son of Prophet Ya'qūb (as). He was different from his other brothers; not only because he was a prophet but because he was physically beautiful and had a wonderful, loving personality. Ya'qūb loved him dearly and the fact that Prophet Yūsuf's (as) mother did when he was young meant that Ya'qūb (as) showed even more affection to him. Yūsuf's brothers noticed this special affection that their father had toward him and became jealous of Prophet Yūsuf (as).

YŪSUF'S DREAM

When Prophet Yūsuf (as) was about 8 years old; he had a dream that eleven stars and the moon and the sun were prostrating in front of him. Remember that the dreams the Prophets have are different to the dreams that we have; Prophet's dreams always have a deeper meaning to them. After Prophet Yūsuf (as) had this dream, he went to his father Ya'qūb and narrated the dream to him. Prophet Ya'qūb (as) told his dear son not to relate this dream to his brothers as they may become jealous of him. The Holy Qur'an describes this conversation:

“When Yūsuf (Joseph) said to his father: "O my father! Verily, I saw (in a dream) eleven stars and the sun and the moon, I saw them prostrating themselves to me." He (the father) said: "O my son! Relate not your vision to your brothers, lest they arrange a plot against you. Verily! Shaitan (Satan) is to man an open enemy” (12:5)



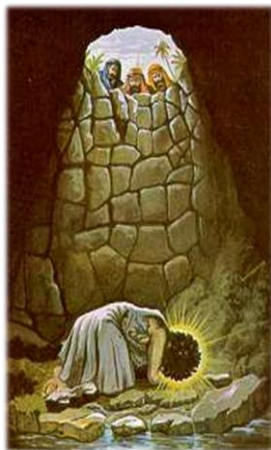
After this incident, the brothers could not take it anymore! Their father was showing a lot more love and compassion to their younger brother Yūsuf and they were starting to become very jealous of this.

They thought to themselves “we are older than Yūsuf and have helped dad so much with his work so we deserve this love more than Yusuf. Why then does he show so much love towards Yusuf and not us?”

These bad thoughts became so strong and affected them so much that the brothers got together and started plotting against Yūsuf. They all discussed the best way to get rid of Prophet Yūsuf (as). Some brothers suggested that they kill him; but others decided against it. Instead, they all agreed on throwing Prophet Yūsuf (as) into a deep well. Allah (SWT) narrates this in the Qur’an:

"Kill Yusuf (Joseph) or cast him out to some (other) land, so that the favour of your father may be given to you alone, and after that you will be righteous folk. One from among them said: "Kill not Yusuf (Joseph), but if you must do something, throw him down to the bottom of a well, he will be picked up by some caravan of travellers." (12: 9-10)

The next day, Prophet Ya’qūb reluctantly allowed the brothers to take Yūsuf with them to play. Yūsuf’s brothers threw him into the well and left him there. He, a young boy who was only eight years old, was left alone at the bottom of the well with no help in sight. We will find out later in the story of exactly how Yūsuf dealt with this situation, what happened to him and what the brothers told the father.



JEALOUSY AND ITS EVILS

Sometimes we see that another person has something good, such as a new toy, new shoes, or a special skill. Jealousy is when we wish that that person did not have that thing. We may not necessarily want it for ourselves, but we wish that the other person loses it. This feeling of jealousy was what the brothers of Prophet Yūsuf (as) had. His brothers wanted their father to stop showing love and affection towards Yūsuf (as)!

Jealousy starts off as just a thought. However, if it is not stopped and a person keeps having jealous thoughts, or acting on them, it make a person do really terrible things.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO ARE JEALOUS?

- *A jealous person will never enjoy this world or the hereafter; unless he repents.*

The brothers of Yūsuf did not enjoy having this feeling of jealousy so they thought if they got rid of Yusuf they would stop being jealous. However, we must remember that we must stop the thoughts of jealousy before it leads to the action! Imam ‘Ali (as) has said:

“The fruit of jealousy is the misery of this world and the hereafter”

- *Jealousy eats away all your good deeds*

Jealousy eats away all our good deeds and leads a person to sin. If we look at the brothers of Yūsuf, we see that they are sons of a prophet and the brothers of a prophet! If Jealousy hadn’t gotten to them, they would have been righteous people. However, jealousy got the best of them, led them to sin and ate away their faith, leading them to throw their younger brother into the well. Imam ‘Ali (as) has said:

“Jealousy consumes faith like the fire consumes wood”

- *Jealousy begins with bad thoughts and leads to bad action*

Jealousy was enough for Yūsuf’s brothers to kill Yūsuf as they had initially intended. Imam ‘Ali (as) has said:

“How capable jealousy is! And how just it is, that it starts off with its perpetrators (the jealous person) and ends up killing him!”

The morals of this story?

So far in this lesson we have learnt that jealousy begins with one bad thought and can lead to terrible actions – just like Yūsuf’s brothers throwing him into a well.

Remember, it is *not* wrong to want something good that a person may have. The wrong thing is to wish for that other person to lose it.

The other main lesson we learnt is that if we do act on our jealous thoughts, we will not be any happier, and we will not end up getting what we actually wanted.



Review Questions

Q1. Prophet Yūsuf was the son of:

- a. Prophet Mūsā
- b. Prophet Muḥammad
- c. Prophet Ya’qūb

Q2. Jealousy means to:

- a. not desire anything good
- b. desiring a blessing that someone else has
- c. not wanting someone else to have a blessing

Q3. Imam ‘Ali (as) said that “Jealousy consumes faith like...”

- a. water extinguishes fire
- b. fire consumes wood
- c. a human consuming food

Lesson 2: Life after the Well

We left the story of Prophet Yūsuf (as) with him having been thrown in the well and left alone by his brothers. The brothers went back and told the father that a wolf had attacked their little brother.



Soon though, a caravan of people passing by the well stopped to draw some water. They were surprised to see Prophet Yūsuf (as) come up holding the bucket. They took him with them as a slave back to Egypt, and there they sold him for a cheap price.

PROPHET YŪSUF (AS) IN EGYPT

Prophet Yūsuf (as) arrived in Egypt at the slave market. The buyers were all attracted by him, because he was a very handsome young man. News of this amazing young man swept through the city. The ‘Aziz (Governor of Egypt), offered a price that none could match. He brought Prophet Yūsuf (as) home and had him work at home for him.

IN PRISON

Sometimes it happens in life that a person is unfairly accused of a crime they did not commit. This is what happened to Prophet Yūsuf (as) when he grew up to be a young man. He was put into prison, even though he had not done anything wrong.

RELEASE FROM PRISON

The Holy Qur'an says:

“The king dreamt that seven lean cows were eating seven fat ones and that there were seven green ears of corn and seven dry ones. He asked the nobles to tell him the meaning of his dream if they were able to. They replied, "It is a confused dream and we do not know the meaning of such dreams.” (12:43-44)

The king was very concerned about the meaning of his dream and even though his wise men thought over it seriously, they could not make sense of it. The king's dream became the way in which Prophet Yūsuf (as) was released from prison. There was a person working in the court of the king who had previously been in prison with Prophet Yūsuf (as). He remembered that Yūsuf (as) had the ability to interpret dreams, and he recommended to the king to call on Prophet Yūsuf (as) and ask him.

Yūsuf (as) interpreted the dream by the power given to him by Allah. He said: ‘For seven years the crops will produce abundant food-grain for the people of Egypt. After that there will be a famine for seven years during which all the food-grain lying in the storehouses will be

finished and people will starve. Therefore, the people should try to grow as much extra grain as possible so that they would have enough during the time of famine". On hearing this very reasonable and sensible interpretation of his dream, the king was delighted. He ordered that Prophet Yūsuf (as) be brought before him so he could make good use of his wisdom in solving his problems.

IN THE ROYAL COURT

When the king met Prophet Yūsuf (as), he found him to be a very smart man. The king made him in charge of all the money and food and ordered everyone to obey him. During the first seven years, Prophet Yūsuf (as) supplied grain to the people according to their needs and stored the rest. However, due to his foresight and planning, when the seven years were over and the famine struck, the country did not face a shortage of food.

The famine had also extended to the lands of Palestine and Kan'ān, where Prophet Ya'qūb (as) lived with his sons. One day he called them and ordered to go to Egypt and ask for supplies. Of course, they did not know what had happened to Prophet Yūsuf (as) since they threw him in the well.

THE MEETING WITH THE BROTHERS

When his brothers arrived in Egypt, Prophet Yūsuf (as) was very pleased to see them. They did not recognise him at all because they did not expect that he was alive.

The brothers introduced themselves and told him about their father and mother. Prophet Yūsuf (as) was relieved to hear that Prophet Ya'qūb (AS) was alive, and he welcomed his brothers sincerely. He provided them with enough wheat for their needs and had their money put back in their bags secretly. He also asked them to bring their other brother the next time as proof that they were speaking the truth about their family.

As time went by, Prophet Ya'qūb's family were out of grain and were impatient to go back to Egypt to get more. However, they could not go back without Benjamin, who was the brother that was very close to Prophet Yūsuf (as). So they tried to convince their father to let him come with them. Prophet Ya'qūb (as) refused to let them take Benjamin, saying that they would do the same thing with

him as they did with Prophet Yūsuf (as). After repeated promises the brothers finally convinced him that they would sincerely look after Benjamin, so he let him accompany them to Egypt.

THE PLAN TO DETAIN BENJAMIN

After Prophet Yūsuf's (as) brothers received the wheat they needed during their second trip, they began to prepare for their journey home. Meanwhile, according to the command of Allah, Prophet Yūsuf (as) put into action a plan to keep his full brother Benjamin with him. When the brothers returned to their father without Benjamin, he was extremely upset, and they were embarrassed. They swore to him that they had not caused Benjamin any harm, but that he had been kept back in Egypt. Their father ordered them to return immediately to Egypt to look for Benjamin. He had also never forgotten about Prophet Yūsuf (as), and in fact had become blind from how much he cried over him.

When the brothers came to Prophet Yūsuf (as) for a third time, he finally revealed his real identity to them. The Holy Qur'an describes this scene:

"They said: "Are you indeed Yūsuf? He said: "I am Yūsuf, and this is my brother (Benjamin). Allah has indeed been gracious to us. Verily, he who fears Allah with obedience to Him and is patient, then surely, Allah makes not the reward of the good-doers to be lost."
(12:89-90)

The brothers were shocked, but soon they realised their mistakes, and how Allah (SWT) had favoured their pious brother over them. In turn, Prophet Yūsuf (as) immediately forgave them.

"They said: "By Allah! Indeed Allah has preferred you above us, and we certainly have been sinners." He (Prophet Yūsuf as) said: "No reproach on you this day, may Allah forgive you, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy! Go with this shirt of mine, and cast it over the face of my father, he will become clear-sighted, and bring to me all your family." (12:91-93)



After getting his eyesight back and hearing the good news of his son, Prophet Ya'qūb (as) decided to proceed to Egypt immediately. Prophet Yūsuf (as) was delighted to meet his whole family and embraced his father and mother.

MORALS FROM THE STORY

Some things we may learn from the life of Prophet Yūsuf (as) are:

- The belief in Allah makes a man's troubles easier for him to handle. Prophet Yūsuf (as) taught us this by his cheerful manner throughout his enslavement and imprisonment.
- Patience in the face of hardship is the best of qualities and results in reward from Allah in this life and the hereafter.
- Above all, this story teaches us that we should forgive and forget the past. When Prophet Yūsuf's (as) brothers came to him in Egypt, they were in a bad condition and would have been helpless against his great power. If he had wished, Prophet Yūsuf (as) could have punished them for the cruel treatment they had given him. Instead he forgave their mistakes and treated them well.

FAMILY RELATIONS

In our families we love, serve, teach, and learn from each other. We share our joys and our sorrows. Family ties may bring us difficult challenges, but they also give us strength and some of our greatest happiness.

While we cannot choose which family we are born into, we can choose each day to make our families stronger and happier.

- Family is a safety net
- Family brings about a sense of belonging and happiness
- Family nurtures and guides you in life



IMPORTANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Forgiving each other, even forgiving our enemies, is one of the most important Islamic teachings. However, it is important to forgive when it comes to our close family members.

In the Holy Qur'an Allah (SWT) has described the believers as:

“Those who avoid major sins and when they are angry they forgive.” (42:37).

Story

There was a servant who owed a king a very large sum of money. He deserved to lose everything that he had to pay the debt, but the king had mercy on him and cancelled the debt.

But this same servant, who had had his debt forgiven, then went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him only a small amount of money. He grabbed him and began to choke him, saying, “Pay back what you owe me.” He demanded that the man be thrown into jail until he could repay him.

When the king heard what had happened, he was angry. He had the first servant put into jail himself. The lesson to be learned is that we need to have mercy and forgive each other, as God is merciful in forgiving us. When we have enmity or a grudge in our hearts, we are like the unforgiving servant. God has forgiven all of our sins and we need to readily forgive others too.

Activity

Prophet Yusuf's brothers were not nice to him. They threw him into a deep well and pretended he was dead. Much later, Prophet Yusuf became a powerful leader in Egypt. When his brothers needed help they went to Egypt. What did Prophet Yusuf do? The answer is in the pyramid below. Use a dark colour to fill in all the bricks in the pyramid that have the letters J, S, P and H. Copy the leftover letters, from top to bottom, onto the spaces below. These letters will spell the answer.