

Section 7: Yusuf Cleared of the False Charge

Surah Yusuf – Verse 50

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُونِي بِهِ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ الرَّسُولُ قَالَ ارْجِعْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَسَأَلْهُ مَا بَالُ
النِّسْوَةِ اللَّاتِي قَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ إِنَّ رَبِّي بِكَيْدِهِنَّ عَلِيمٌ

50. “So the king said: ‘Bring him to me.’ Then, when the messenger came to him, he (Yusuf) said: ‘Go back unto your lord and ask him: What was the case of the women who cut their own hands? Verily my Lord is aware of their guile.’”

By interpreting the king’s dream and proposing a precise program of dealing with the future impending famine without attaching any preconditions, Yusuf not only showed in prison that he was an extraordinary person, but he also indicated that he was a knowledgeable and wise man. The verse says:

“So the king said: ‘Bring him to me.’...”

When the messenger came to him, Yusuf did not jump to seize his freedom, instead he requested a reevaluation of his past record, he would not leave the prison just by the king’s permission and forgiveness; yet, he told him that he should go back to the king and ask him about the women who had been at the palace of the ‘Aziz and had cut their hands.

He did not want his freedom to be the result of a royal amnesty. Yusuf wanted his innocence and chastity to be vindicated and get the king to understand that his entire regime was more corrupt and injustice more widespread that he could have imagined. Probably, because he held the ‘Aziz in great respect, he did not mention his wife, and only mentioned the women as a group.

It is mentioned in an Islamic tradition that the blessed Prophet (S) said:

“I am astonished at the patience of Yusuf, whenever the king needed his dream interpreted, Yusuf did not say that he would not do such unless he was freed from prison, but when they wanted to free him, he did not come out until all the charges and accusations against him were refuted.”

Therefore, when the messenger of the king came to Yusuf, instead of being happy that after years of imprisonment he was going to be free, he gave him a negative answer. The verse says:

Then, when the messenger came to him, he (Yusuf) said: ‘Go back unto your lord and ask him: What was the case of the women who cut their own hands?...’

Yusuf did not want to accept the disgrace of the king’s forgiveness, and after freeing from prison to live as a criminal, or at least as an accused one who had been included the royal amnesty. He wanted to perfectly prove his innocence and chastity and then get free honourably.

Then he added implying that if common people of Egypt, and even the people of the royal court, might not know how and by who the plan of his imprisonment was designed, but the Lord was aware of the guile of those women.

The holy verse continues saying:

“... Verily my Lord is aware of their guile’.

Explanations

1. Freedom at any price is often of no value. To prove one’s innocence is more important than one’s freedom.
2. Yusuf (as) first removed all misconceptions from the people’s minds regarding his role in the scandal, then later accepted his release.
3. It is a religious obligation for everyone to guard and defend his reputation.
4. Yusuf made it known to the king that after his release from the prison, he would not regard him as his Allah, or lord and would not consider himself as his slave. On the contrary, he would regard the Almighty as his Lord.

Surah Yusuf – Verse 51

قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكَ إِذْ رَأَوْتَنِّي يَوْسُفَ عَنِ نَفْسِهِ قُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا عَلِمْنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ
سُوءٍ قَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ الْعَزِيزِ الْأَنْ حَصْحَصَ الْحَقُّ أَنَا رَأَوْتُهُ عَنِ نَفْسِهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَمِنَ
الصَّادِقِينَ

51. “He (the king) said (to the women): ‘What was the matter with you women when you sought to seduce Yusuf from his (pure) self?’ They answered: ‘Allah Blameless! We know no evil of him.’ The wife of the ‘Aziz said: ‘Now the truth has become manifest, I (it was who) sought to seduce him from his (pure) self, and verily he is of the truthful ones.’”

The Arabic term /xatb/ means being called or invited for an important matter. The term /xatib/ refers to a person who calls the people or invites them for such a matter.

The Qur’anic term /has–hasa/, which means ‘to come to light’, is derived from the word /hissah/ with the sense of: share, part, and sorting out the ‘true’ from the ‘untrue’.

When the special envoy returned to the king and frankly communicated Yusuf’s proposal to him, he was even more astonished by his greatness of character and lofty aims. Therefore, he lost no time in contacting the women who had taken part in the affair. He had them brought before him and asked them about what happened when they had made their passes at Yusuf.

The verse says:

“He (the king) said (to the women): ‘What was the matter with you women when you sought to seduce Yusuf from his (pure) self?’...”

Their dormant consciences were aroused and all of a sudden, because of the provocative question, they unanimously declared that Yusuf had not been guilty and testified to his chastity and flawless personality. The verse says:

“...They answered: ‘Allah Blameless! We know no evil of him.’...”

The wife of the ‘Aziz, who was attending there, felt the time ripe for her to confess her wrongdoing and reconcile her guilty conscience after several years.

She then bore testimony to Yusuf’s chastity and confessed her guilt especially when she became aware of his greatness and magnitude which, as a result of his message to the king was becoming well known and he had mentioned nothing about her in his message except something secretly pointing to those women of Egypt.

Suddenly, as if a burst occurred in her inside, she exclaimed such the Qur’an says:

“...The wife of the ‘Aziz said: ‘Now the truth has become manifest, I (it was who) sought to seduce him from his (pure) self, and verily he is of the truthful ones.’”

Explanations

1. Whenever there is a knotty and complicated problem, the person in charge should study the evidence

himself and proceed to set up the mechanism to see that justice is done.

2. Accused persons should be invited to defend themselves. In the story even Zulaykha was present when the investigation was taking place.

3. Truth would not always remain hidden, guilty consciences will be aroused one day and they will of necessity, confess. Social pressure and the environmental influences can drive even the stiff-necked to confess. As soon as the wife of the 'Aziz was convinced that all the women had testified to Yusuf's innocence, she also accepted to confess.

Surah Yusuf – Verse 52

ذَلِكَ لِيَعْلَمَ أَنِّي لَمْ أَخُنْهُ بِالْغَيْبِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي كَيْدَ الْخَائِنِينَ

52. "(Yusuf said): "That, so that he (the 'Aziz) may know that I have not betrayed him in secret, and that Allah does not guide the device of the treacherous.""

There are two views concerning this holy verse. Some commentators claim that it is a continuation of the speech of Zulaykha, the wife of 'Aziz. Others attribute these words to Yusuf (as).

However, when we explore the verse in depth, the latter view seems more likely to be correct, for what treason can be greater than sending an innocent man to prison for several years?

If these were the words of Zulaykha, it implies that her confession was made to remind Yusuf that she had not betrayed him in his absence and had not accused him for whatever had transpired. However, she did betray him and leveled untrue accusations against him in his presence.

If, on the other hand, these are the words of Yusuf, that he sent back the messenger of the king asking him to investigate the status of these Egyptian women, it was due to the fact that he wanted the king or the 'Aziz to know that he had never betrayed the latter in his absence concerning his wife; for Allah does not guide traitors when they engage in their double dealing.

The verse says:

"(Yusuf said): "That, so that he (the 'Aziz) may know that I have not betrayed him in secret, and that Allah does not guide the device of the treacherous.""

Explanations

1. A sublime person does not seek vengeance rather he searches for the truth and seeks to protect honor and respect.

2. The sign of true belief is abstaining from betraying others secretly.
3. Having evil intentions towards other people's spouses is considered as being treacherous to their husbands themselves.
4. A traitor does not achieve his objectives and his end is not easy. Of course, once we are pure and truthful Allah does not allow the wicked to damage our reputation.
5. Yusuf (as) endeavored to draw the king's attention to the fact that Allah's Will and Divine Providence always play a decisive role in occurrences and events.

Surah Yusuf – Verse 53

وَمَا أُبْرِئُ نَفْسِي إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

53. “And I do not absolve myself, verily the (human) soul enjoins to evil, save that whereon my Lord has mercy; verily my Lord is the Forgiving, the Merciful.”

There are several descriptions throughout the Qur'an of the self or soul; some of them are pointed out here:

- 1) The despotic soul which leads one to commit evil and vicious acts. If it is not controlled by faith and reason, it results in man's sudden fall.
- 2) The reproaching soul. This self or ego is active when a guilty person blames and scolds himself. In this case, he tends to seek repentance and is apologetic for the sin or crime which he has committed.
- 3) The peaceful soul which is found in only the prophets, and those truly trained by them. Once they find themselves surrounded by unbridled passion and ignorance, they seek the help of Allah to be extricated from it. They owe everything to Allah who loves them very much.

Yusuf (as) sees Allah's grace and favor as the reason for his unscathed honor and the absence of treachery from his heart, since man with a human nature replete with frailties cannot excuse himself of the evil tendencies that are present in his soul.

The verse from the tongue of Yusuf says:

“And I do not absolve myself, verily the (human) soul enjoins to evil, save that whereon my Lord has mercy; verily my Lord is the Forgiving, the Merciful.”

Many Islamic narrations have pointed out the dangerous qualities present in the soul, regarding giving

excuses for its evil tendencies, self satisfaction and self gratification as the results of corrupt reasoning which are counted among the greatest of the traps laid by the Satan.

Explanations

1. One should never admire himself immaculate and free of blame, excusing oneself of faults.
2. Only Allah's grace is the source of salvation. Once man is left to himself, he will collapse.
3. The dangers that are engendered by the self are very grave, do not regard them as simple.
4. Despite all the dangers which may be surrounding you, do not despair of Allah's grace.
5. One of the conditions of perfection is that one should not consider himself perfect although everyone else might regard him as such.

In Hadrat Yusuf's (as) case, everybody bore witness to his perfection, they included his brothers, the wife of the 'Aziz, the king's witness, Satan, as well as all the prisoners, nevertheless, Yusuf himself asserts that he was not perfect by saying:

"I do not absolve myself. ..."

Surah Yusuf – Verse 54

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ أَتُونِي بِهِ أَسْتَخْلِصَ لِنَفْسِي فَلَمَّا كَلَّمَهُ قَالَ إِنَّكَ الْيَوْمَ لَدَيْنَا مَكِينٌ
أَمِينٌ

54. "And the king said: 'Bring him to me. I will attach him to my person.' Then when he had spoken with him, he said: 'Verily today you are of high standing in our presence, a trusted one'."

In Lisan-ul-Arab, an Arabic dictionary, it is said that once a person confides in another person and involves him in his affairs, he applies the phrase: /'istaxlis-hu/ i.e.

'I will attach him to my person, or take him into my confidence'.

When Yusuf was in prison, the prison had been depicted as: 'the grave of the living, the house of grief and sorrow, the place of trial for the friends, and the blow upon the faces of the foes.'¹

As the king realized that Yusuf was reliable and sincere and found no treachery ascribable to him, he took him into his confidence.

The verse says:

“And the king said: ‘Bring him to me. I will attach him to my person.’...”

Were Allah not to find any betrayal on the part of the servants, what would He do? Certainly, He would also bring him closer to Himself. That is why that the Qur’an contains such an interpretation and such references for the prophets such as:

“And I myself have chosen you...”²

or

“... Verily I have chosen you above the people by My messages and by My speaking...”³

By using the word /*ladayna*/ the king declared that Yusuf had a high position in the hierarchy of his administration requiring all other authorities to obey him. Therefore, if Allah wants to appoint yesterday’s prisoner as today’s commander He can do so.

The verse says:

“... Then when he had spoken with him, he said: ‘Verily today you are of high standing in our presence, a trusted one.’”

Explanations

1. Private consultants in the hierarchy of the administration of every country must be men of virtue, good thinkers, able planners and reliable people. (All of which characterized Yusuf).
2. One’s defects and vices, as well his virtues, remain secret until he opens his mouth.
3. It is often useful to conduct a personal interview in the selection for every type of job.
4. Give authorization to only those in whom you have confidence.
5. The unbelievers and polytheists are also equally bent on achieving kinds of spiritual perfection. Seeking perfection is an inherent value embedded in human nature.

Being authorized without the necessary qualifications is not possible, because the two are interdependent.

This is because, if one is reliable but is not given any authorization, he would be unable to do anything, while, on the other hand, if one has authorization but lacks honesty and reliability, the interests of the entire public will be jeopardized.

Surah Yusuf – Verse 55

قَالَ اجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلَيْم

55. “He (Yusuf) said: ‘Set me over the storehouses of the land. Verily I am a knowing guardian.’”

The ‘Aziz offered Yusuf (as) the choice of assuming any position in the government he should take the reins of the important affairs to improve them. Yusuf (as) proposed his appointment as the minister responsible for treasures of the country, because he was a trustworthy custodian since he knew that economic injustice was one of the major causes of social disruption.

The verse says:

“He (Yusuf) said: ‘Set me over the storehouses of the land. Verily I am a knowing guardian.’”

With political power in his hands to affect economic programming, Yusuf would be more able to manage the impending food shortage and could also help the oppressed by reducing their suffering as much as he could, he could reclaim their rights and put an end to the economic mismanagement and anarchy which prevailed in the country.

The Qur’anic sentence: ‘**Verily I am a knowing guardian**’, shows that administration and administrative ability should be accompanied with faithfulness, and also shows that mere purity and faithfulness are not enough for accepting a sensitive social post, but besides them knowledge, expertness and administrative ability are necessary, too.’

Here are some examples of questions and answers worth noting:

Question: Why did Yusuf (as) make a proposal for a governmental post?

Answer: He discovered that the dream of the king foretold that an imminent danger and hardship was facing the people and he knew that he would be able to prevent it, as well as the undesirable economic events, so he asked for the relevant governmental portfolio in order to carry out this task.

Question: Why did Yusuf (as) utter words of praise for himself? Does not the Qur’an say that one should not praise himself?

The Qur’an says:

“Do not praise yourself.”⁴

Answer: Yusuf did not praise himself, he was simply mentioning his suitability for the immense task

ahead, which was regulating the dreadful effects of famine and drought. It was not because of ambition or the vain desire to abuse public office.

Question: Why did Yusuf (as) cooperate with an infidel government? Is it not the case that this is forbidden in the Qur'an ?

Answer: Yusuf did not accept this responsibility for that end. On the contrary, he did it to relieve the people from the pressures associated with the period of the famine. He never praised or flattered the regime.

According to the Tafsir f i Zilal il Qur'an, in such hard times, politicians usually abandon their people and flee at the time of danger, but Yusuf stayed to protect the people. If one is unable to overthrow an oppressive regime, or reform it, one must stop degradation and oppression as far as he can, which might include being active in public affairs.

Observing the law of priority in both reason and religion is a basic principle. It might not be admissible to participate in the administrative hierarchy of a government of unbelievers; nevertheless, it is far more desirable if it is a means saving a nation from famine.

According to Tafsir Tibyan, Yusuf (as) did not accept this political position in order to assist an oppressor; neither did he accept a military post, which might make him shed blood illegitimately. He only accepted an economic post in order to rescue the nation from famine.

Imam Rida (as) said that when it was necessary for Yusuf to become the custodian of the treasure in Egypt, he proposed his readiness for the position himself. 5

Ali ibn Yaqteen also became a minister in the court of the Abbasid Caliphate on the advice of Imam Kazim (as). The mere presence of such men of Allah can be a great haven for the oppressed. Imam Sadiq (as) said:

"The atonement for a governmental deed is to fulfil the needs of (religious) brothers".6

Imam Rida (as) was asked why he accepted to be a successor to the caliphate of Ma`mun. He replied that Yusuf (as), who was a prophet, joined a pagan administration, but the Imam himself, who was the successor to the Prophet (S), had joined the system of someone who claimed to be a Muslim.

His acceptance had been done under duress, while Yusuf's (as) was voluntary because of the importance of the matter.7

As soon as Yusuf (as) took office, he did not seek to see his parents, for visiting parents was an emotional matter while rescuing people from famine was a social responsibility.

Imam Sadiq (as) addressing a group of seemingly pious people called them to lead a life of

abstemiousness, he said:

*“Inform me as to what you think about Yusuf the prophet, who told the king of Egypt: “Set me over the storehouses of the land.” His responsibility extended far and wide including as far as the Yemen... At the same time, we do not know of any one who found fault with this engagement of his.”*⁸

It has been narrated from Imam Rida (as) that Yusuf gathered and stored the wheat during the first seven years.

During the second seven years, when the famine happened, he gradually and carefully distributed them among people for their daily consumption saving the entire country of Egypt from a potential catastrophe in this way.

Throughout those seven years of famine, Yusuf never ate to his fill, lest he might forget those who were nearly starving.⁹

Both the Tafsirs, Majma‘ ul Bayan, and Al Mizan say that during the first year of the famine, Hadrat Yusuf (as) exchanged wheat for gold and silver. In the second year, he exchanged wheat for gems and jewels.

During its third year, he would exchange wheat for four footed animals, in the fourth year he would exchange wheat for slaves, in the fifth year he exchanged wheat for houses; in the sixth year he exchanged wheat for farms and fields and finally, in the seventh year he exchanged wheat for labor.

When the seventh year came to an end, he addressed the king of Egypt, saying:

“All the people’s properties are at my disposal. However, I call Allah to testify and you to bear witness that I liberated all the people and I shall return all their properties to them, I shall also give you back your palace, the throne and your seal. Holding this administrative position was a means for me to save the people and nothing more. You must deal with them with justice.”

On hearing these words, the king was so profoundly humbled in the face of such spiritual magnitude that he suddenly uttered the following words:

“I bear witness that there is no Allah but Allah and that you are His messenger. Verily, you are of high standing in our presence, a trusted one.”

We must remember that the Qur’anic criteria in selecting individuals do not only include the attributes of guardianship and knowledge, but that we must also take into consideration such attributes as: **Faith**, when the Qur’an says:

“Is he then, who is a believer like him who is a transgressor? They are not equal.”¹⁰

Background: about which the Qur’an says:

“And the foremost are the foremost.” “These are they who are drawn nigh (to Allah).”¹¹

Migration: The Qur’an says:

“...and those who believed but they did not migrate, you have not any friendship towards them until they migrate....”

Mental and bodily ability:

“And He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and stature”¹²

Nobility in lineage:

“...your father was not a bad man,”¹³

Holy struggle: the Qur’an states:

“Allah has raised the strivers with their wealth and lives in rank above those sitting back.”¹⁴

Explanations

1. One must volunteer for sensitive positions whenever it is necessary.
2. Eligibility and potential are not incompatible with trust in Allah, piety, and honesty.
3. Out of the attributes which the king used to describe Yusuf (as) saying: high standing, and ‘a trusted one’, and those two attributes which Yusuf uses to describe himself as ***‘knowing’ ‘guardian’***, one can deduce that these qualities are the main attributes of the eligible administrators.

They are: ability, reliability, guardianship, and specialization.

4. The position of prophecy practically is not separate from government and politics, because religion is not to be separated from politics.
5. Citizenship is not to be regarded as the principal criterion for governmental administration. Yusuf was not an Egyptian, however he was given the post of an administrator of Egypt, (nationalism of any kind is not acceptable).
6. We must plan ahead for consumption, and in supervision we must always economize and preserve the share belonging to future generations.

Surah Yusuf – Verses 56 – 57

وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَتَّبِعُ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ نُصِيبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَشَاءُ
وَلَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

وَلَأَجْرُ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ

56. “And thus did We give power to Yusuf in the land, to make his dwelling there wherever he wished. We reach with Our mercy on whomsoever We please, and We do not waste the reward of the righteous.”

57. “And certainly the reward of the Hereafter is (much) better for those who believe and are constant in keeping from evil.”

In the above two verses, Yusuf (as) has been described as a righteous, pious and true believer.

Throughout this Surah the Divine Will is constantly juxtaposed against the will of man, the latter which, when it goes contrary to the Divine will, always fails in achieving its objective, for example, Yusuf’s brothers had decided to humiliate him by throwing him into the well and getting him enslaved, however, the ‘Aziz recommended that he be held in high esteem.

The wife of the ‘Aziz intended to seduce him and make him commit sins, but Allah, on the contrary, kept him pure and unblemished. The aristocracy sought to break and destroy him, but Allah granted him a high position in the government of Egypt.

It is for this reason that the Qur’an says:

“And thus did We give power to Yusuf in the land, to make his dwelling there wherever he wished. We reach with Our mercy on whomsoever We please, and We do not waste the reward of the righteous.”

Even if it might seem a long time, Allah will ultimately reward the righteous for He does not disregard any decent act nor allow it to slip into oblivion.

However, besides the reward of this world, the righteous will enjoy some better rewards in Hereafter.

The verse says:

“And certainly the reward of the Hereafter is (much) better for those who believe and are constant in keeping from evil.”

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1. Majma'ul-Bayan, the
 2. Surah TaHa, No. 20, verse 13
 3. Surah Al-'A'raf, No. 7, verse 144
 4. Surah An-Najm, No. 53, verse 32.
 5. Tafsir Nur-ul-Thaqalayn
 6. Wasa'il ush-Shi'ah, vol. 12, p. 139
 7. Wasa'il ush-Shi'ah, vol. 12, p. 146
 8. Tafsir Nur-uth-Thaqalayn
 9. Tafsirs: Majma' ul Bayan.
 10. Surah As-Sajdah, No. 32, verse 18.
 11. Surah Al-Waqi'ah, No. 56, verses 10-11
 12. Surah Baqarah, No. 2, verse 247.
 13. Surah Maryam, No. 19, verse 28.
 14. Surah Nisa, No. 4, verse 95.

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