

Section 8: Yusuf Measures Out Corn to His Brothers

Surah Yusuf – Verse 58

وَجَاءَ إِخْوَةُ يُوسُفَ فَدَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَعَرَفَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ

58. “And the brothers of Yusuf came and entered unto him, then he knew them but they did not recognize him.”

Eventually, as had been predicted, during the first seven consecutive years, agriculture in Egypt thrived due to the abundance of rainfall and water in the Nile River.

After the harvests, Yusuf had ordered the people to reserve the required amount for their needs for themselves and sell the rest to the government, thus the grain stocks were high and the storehouses were filled with food supplies.

Those seven years of affluence and blessings went by, and then famine and drought reared their ugly heads.

The little rain that fell from the sky was not enough to quench the thirst of the palm trees, and the suffering of the people began grew greater and greater as their stockpiles began to run out.

At this point, Yusuf sold them grain on the basis of the schedule which he had preplanned for this emergency and in this way he adequately met all their food requirements.

This drought did not affect Egypt alone; it had affected the countries neighboring Egypt as well, devastating large areas. Thus the people of Palestine and the land of Kan'an northeast of Egypt, where

the House of Ya‘qub was established, were also affected by the drought.

It was for this reason that Ya‘qub decided to send all his children to Egypt to purchase food supplies except Benjamin who stayed with his father. They joined a camel caravan going to Egypt and according to some sources, arrived there after 18 days of travel.

According to historians, foreigners who entered Egypt had to report to the authorities on their arrival, who would inform Yusuf about them. When they reported the arrival of a camel caravan from Palestine, Yusuf quickly recognized his brothers’ names among the arrivals and ordered them summoned to his court without letting anyone know who they were.

The verse says:

“And the brothers of Yusuf came and entered unto him, then he knew them but they did not recognize him.”

Thirty to forty years had passed since the time they had thrown him into well. The possibility of him remaining alive was remote, and the last time they had come to Egypt had also been forty years before. It is not surprising, therefore, that they would not have recognized their brother when they saw him. Moreover, they did not have the slightest idea that he had become a great ‘Aziz of Egypt.

Surah Yusuf – Verse 59

وَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُمْ بِجَهَّازِهِمْ قَالَ أَتُنُونِي بِأَخٍ لَّكُمْ مِّنْ أَبِيكُمْ أَلَا تَرَوْنَ أَنِّي أُوفِي الْكَيْلَ وَأَنَا خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِينَ

59. “And when he provided them with their provisions, he said: ‘Bring unto me a brother of years from your father. Do you not see that I give full measure, and (that) I am the best of hosts?’”

Yusuf was very compassionate and kind towards his brothers. When he was speaking with them, they told him that they were ten brothers from a single father named Ya‘qub, the grandson of ‘Ibrahim al Khalil, the great prophet of Allah.

They told him that had he known their father, he would have had more respect for them, but their aged and venerable father was greatly saddened and depressed.

On asking them why their father had been so grief stricken, they replied that he had had a son whom he loved very much and who was the youngest of all his sons. This son had gone hunting and playing with them in the fields and when they had neglected him a wolf came upon him and killed him. Since then, their father had been weeping and grieving for him.

Some commentators have narrated that Yusuf was in the habit of not selling more than one camel load of grain per person, and as the brothers were ten, he sold them ten loads of grain.

On receiving the grain, they said that their father, because of intensive grief, could not travel, as well as a younger brother who had stayed with him to serve him and keep his company, so they asked for a share for those two as well.

Yusuf ordered his men to add to their share, then turning towards them he told them to bring along the younger brother with them as a sign the next time they came back.

The holy Qur'anic says:

“And when he provided them with their provisions, he said: ‘Bring unto me a brother of years from your father...’”

Then Yusuf added:

“...Do you not see that I give full measure, and (that) I am the best of hosts?”

Surah Yusuf – Verse 60

فَإِنْ لَمْ تَأْتُونِي بِهِ فَلَا كَيْلَ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي وَلَا تَقْرُبُونِ

60. “But if you do not bring him to me you shall have no measure (of corn) from me nor shall you (even) come near me.”

After words of encouragement and showing his affection and hospitality, he warns them of the consequences; if they did not bring their brother with them the next time, they would get no wheat from him and they would not even be able to get close to him, for bringing their brother would be a proof of good faith in their dealings.

The verse says:

“But if you do not bring him to me you shall have no measure (of corn) from me nor shall you (even) come near me.”

This was the perfect pretext to get the brothers to bring Benjamin to him. Incidentally, these interpretations make it clear that the buying and selling of grain in Egypt was not commonly done by weight but by volume; and also this shows that Yusuf was, in all respects, a hospitable person.

Surah Yusuf – Verse 61

قَالُوا سَنُرَاوِدُ عَنْهُ أَبَاهُ وَإِنَّا لَفَاعِلُونَ

61. “They said: ‘We will seek to get him from his father; and verily we certainly will do (it)’.”

In answer to him, the brothers of Yusuf replied him as follows:

“They said: ‘We will seek to get him from his father; and verily we certainly will do (it)’.”

They were assured that they could penetrate in father from this point of view and attract his agreement; and it should be so. While they were able to get Yusuf out of the hands of their father by persuasion and insistence, how would they not be able to separate Benjamin from him?

In this regard, they called on their father frequently, begging him and sought to deceive him.

However, the Arabic term /murawidah/ means: frequent referring to someone, accompanying with surge and plot.

Surah Yusuf – Verse 62

وَقَالَ لِفِتْيَانِهِ اجْعَلُوا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ فِي رِحَالِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْرِفُونَهَا إِذَا انْقَلَبُوا إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

62. “And he told his servants to put their merchandise (with which they had bartered) into their saddle-bags, so that they may recognize it when they return to their family in order that they might come back (again).”

Hadrat Yusuf (as) whose name is synonymous with words such as honesty, generosity and sincerity, would definitely not have given money from the treasury to his father or his brothers. It is highly probable that he had given them back the money for the grain from of his own share and out of his own pocket.

He returned the money to them so that lack of money would not hinder them from coming back. In addition, returning the money was a sign of sincerity, of having no evil intentions with regard to bringing the brother to him, and placing the money among the goods might have been to protect them from theft or robbery and that action can be a sign of non-indebtedness.

Why did not Yusuf introduce himself to his brothers? What prevented him from introducing himself so

that his brothers could recognize him more quickly and make it possible for him to return to his father sooner and relieve him of the grief and misery that he had suffered all those years?

Some commentators say that Allah did not allow Yusuf to do this because this separation was a trial for Ya'qub and he was compelled to successfully undergo this period as was ordained by Allah. Before the end of this test, Yusuf was not allowed to introduce himself.

Moreover, if he had immediately introduced himself to his brothers, undesirable reactions might have resulted, among them was that they might have become so fearful that they would not have come back at all presuming that he would take revenge upon them for the past.

Surah Yusuf – Verse 63

فَلَمَّا رَجَعُوا إِلَىٰ أَبِيهِمْ قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا مُنِعَ مِنَّا الْكَيْلُ فَأَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا أَخَانَا نَكْتَلْ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

63. “So, when they returned to their father, they said: ‘O our father! The measure was denied to us, therefore send our brother with us that we may get our measure; and verily we will certainly guard him’.”

Yusuf’s brothers then returned to Kan’an rejoicing and well supplied although they were worried that if their father did not give his consent to send Benjamin back with them, the new ‘Aziz (Yusuf), would not receive them and no share would be allocated to them.

Thus, on their return to Kan’an, they told their father that the condition for receiving future supplies of grain would be for him to send Benjamin with them to Egypt.

The above holy verse says:

“So, when they returned to their father, they said: ‘O our father! The measure was denied to us, therefore send our brother with us that we may get our measure; and verily we will certainly guard him’.”

Surah Yusuf – Verse 64

قَالَ هَلْ ءَأَمْنُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا كَمَا أَمْنُتُكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَخِيهِ مِن قَبْلُ فَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ حَافِظًا وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

64. “He said: ‘Shall I trust you with him save as I trusted you with his brother before? But Allah is the best guardian, and He is the Most Merciful of the merciful ones’.”

The father, who had never forgotten the memory of Yusuf (as), was overwhelmingly upset when he heard these words. Turning to them, he wanted to know whether he could have trusted them as he had trusted them before with Yusuf.

The verse says:

“He said: ‘Shall I trust you with him save as I trusted you with his brother before? But Allah is the best guardian, and He is the Most Merciful of the merciful ones’.”

Question: In view of the bad record which Ya‘qub’s sons had, why did he agree to send Benjamin along with them?

Answer: Fakhr Razi has dealt with a number of different possibilities, each of which can eventually provide some kind of justification for Ya‘qub’s consent.

Firstly, the brothers had not achieved their primary objective which consisted of winning their father’s favor.

Secondly, they were less jealous of Benjamin than of Yusuf.

Thirdly, perhaps drought and consequently famine had forced them to make another journey.

Fourthly, decades had passed since the affair with Yusuf and hence it was regarded as something forgotten.

Fifthly, Allah, the Almighty, had inspired Ya‘qub with certainty regarding the safety and protection of his son.

And finally, trusting in Allah, Ya‘qub once again entrusted Benjamin to his brothers.

Surah Yusuf – Verse 65

وَلَمَّا فَتَحُوا مَتَاعَهُمْ وَجَدُوا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ رُدَّتْ إِلَيْهِمْ قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا مَا نَبْغِي هَذِهِ
بِضَاعَتُنَا رُدَّتْ إِلَيْنَا وَنَمِيرُ أَهْلَنَا وَنَحْفَظُ أَخَانَا وَنَزِدَادُ كَيْلَ بَعِيرٍ ذَلِكَ كَيْلٌ يَسِيرٌ

65. “And when they opened their baggage, they found their merchandise had been returned to them. They said: ‘O our father! What (more) can we desire? This is our merchandise (that) has been returned to us. We shall get provision for our family, and guard our brother. And we shall

obtain an extra camel's load. That is an easy measure'.

The Arabic term /namiru/ is derived from the term /mir/ which means food supplies and the phrase /namiru ahlana/ means: 'we provide our family with food'.

One can infer from the sentence ***"We shall obtain an extra camel's load"*** that the share of each person had been limited to a camel load which would have been allocated to the person (Benjamin) only if he himself had been present.

Once the brothers unloaded their goods, they found that their capital had been returned to them, i.e., all of what they had paid the 'Aziz, was found among their goods.

The verse says:

"And when they opened their baggage, they found their merchandise had been returned to them..."

Feeling that this discovery was decisive evidence to support their proposal, they used it to convince their father to send Benjamin with them, what else could they want? Their capital had been returned to them and the prospect of adding an extra camel load to their goods was an easy matter for the generous 'Aziz.

The verse continues saying:

"...They said: 'O our father! What (more) can we desire? This is our merchandise (that) has been returned to us. We shall get provision for our family, and guard our brother. And we shall obtain an extra camel's load. That is an easy measure'."

Surah Yusuf – Verse 66

قَالَ لَنْ أُرْسِلَهُ مَعَكُمْ حَتَّى تُؤْتُونِ مَوْثِقًا مِنَ اللَّهِ لَتَأْتِنِي بِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يُحَاطَ بِكُمْ فَلَمَّا
ءَاتَوْهُ مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَا نَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ

***66. "He said: 'Never will I send him with you until you pledge a solemn covenant to me, in Allah's name, that you will surely bring him back to me, unless you are surrounded in (an evil accident).'
And when they had sworn their solemn pledge, he said: 'Allah is Guardian over what we say.'"***

The Arabic term /muiq/ here means that which generates reliability and wins the confidence of the opposite side, it might take the form of a commitment, making an oath or making a sacrifice.

Ya'qub, despite all these incentives was not willing to send his son Benjamin along with them. But their insistence, which was coupled with sound logic, persuaded him to submit to their proposal.

So he finally gave his conditional approval to Benjamin going with them. But they had to swear in Allah's name to return Benjamin to him unless they were rendered powerless in fulfilling their commitment due to death or other unforeseen events.

The verse says:

“He said: ‘Never will I send him with you until you pledge a solemn covenant to me, in Allah’s name, that you will surely bring him back to me, unless you are surrounded in (an evil accident).’...”

The purpose of this oath (a divine pledge) has been the very covenant and oath which invoked the Divine Name. Only then was he prepared to release Benjamin to them, for it now meant that Allah (s.w.t.) was Guardian and Witness to what they pledged.

The verse says:

“...And when they had sworn their solemn pledge, he said: ‘Allah is Guardian over what we say.’”

Surah Yusuf – Verse 67

وَقَالَ يَا بَنِيَّ لَا تَدْخُلُوا مِنْ بَابٍ وَاحِدٍ وَادْخُلُوا مِنْ أَبْوَابٍ مُتَفَرِّقَةٍ وَمَا أُغْنِي عَنْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنَّ الْحُكْمَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ

67. “He also said: ‘O’ my sons! Do not enter by one gate, but enter by separate gates. Yet I cannot avail you anything against Allah. Judgment belongs no one but Allah. In Him do I put my trust, and in Him let all that trust put their trust’.”

After winning the approval of their father, the brothers got ready to go to Egypt for the second time taking their younger brother along with them.

Ya'qub advised them that they should not all enter by one gate to avoid drawing the attention of the jealous minded and those who did not wish them well, instead, they should enter Egypt through different gates, and thus be safer from the evil intentions of people.

The verse says:

“He also said: ‘O’ my sons! Do not enter by one gate, but enter by separate gates...”

Nevertheless, he was quick to point out that in the final analysis, it was Allah that was the final Guarantor and Judge, and in Him and only Him should we put our trust, and from Him we must seek help, even when we take precautions.

The verse continues saying:

“... Yet I cannot avail you anything against Allah. Judgment belongs no one but Allah. In Him do I put my trust, and in Him let all that trust put their trust’.”

Surah Yusuf – Verse 68

وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَهُمْ أَبُوهُمْ مَا كَانَ يُغْنِي عَنْهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا حَاجَةً فِي نَفْسِ يَعْقُوبَ قَضَاهَا وَإِنَّهُ لَدُوٌّ عَلِيمٌ لِمَا عَلَّمْنَاهُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

68. “And when they entered in the manner their father had enjoined them, it availed them nothing against Allah; but (it was) a need in Jacob’s soul which he so satisfied; and verily he was possessed of a knowledge for that We had taught him, but most people do not know.”

The brothers set off from Kan’an and, after covering a long distance, they arrived in Egypt. On their arrival, they acted according to the instructions of their old father and entered through different gates.

The verse says:

“And when they entered in the manner their father had enjoined them...”

This behavior, however, did not have any influence on the Divine will. The only effect mentioned here was that Ya‘qub’s wishes had been fulfilled.

The verse continues saying:

“...it availed them nothing against Allah; but (it was) a need in Jacob’s soul which he so satisfied;...”

Allusion is made to the fact that its sole effect was that it provided comfort for father for he was far away and isolated from all of his sons. He was also concerned about those who would be jealous of them and those who harbored ill will towards them, and being confident that they would put his recommendations into practice, he felt more at ease.

The verse says:

“...and verily he was possessed of a knowledge for that We had taught him, but most people do not know.”

Explanations

1. Bitter experiences educate man, and as a result, he is more inclined to take the words of great men seriously.
2. Even correct calculations and planning are only effective if they are in accordance with the Divine will, once they run contrary to the will of Allah they cannot come into effect.
3. Ya‘qub was aware of some secrets and subjects which he did not deem fit to disclose.
4. The prayers of the men of Allah are always accepted and their needs fulfilled.
5. The knowledge of the prophets has its origin in the Divine knowledge.
6. Most people are only aware of the means and the causes of events and are ignorant of Allah’s authority and the need for putting all their hopes and trust in Him.

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