

PROPHET YŪSUF (AS): THE ARCHETYPE OF CHASTITY

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ABSTRACT

When Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) was asked about the noblest person on earth, he responded: “The noble, son of the noble, son of the noble, son of the noble, Yūsuf bin Ya‘qūb bin Ishāq bin Ibrāhīm.”¹ Born into a house of prophets and messengers—Yūsuf (AS) was destined to carry on the blessed legacy of his noble forefathers. Unlike any other *sūrah* in the Qur’ān, *Sūrah Yūsuf* contains the longest sustained story revolving around one personality—Yūsuf (AS). Stories of prophets and messengers are found throughout the Qur’ān, but the story of Yūsuf (AS) is concentrated entirely in this *sūrah*. In addition, the story is presented in a chronological manner highlighting major events in Yūsuf’s (AS) life—from youthhood to prophethood to government. It is important to note that the *sūrah* contains timeless lessons for all age groups and dynamics. The research adopts descriptive, historical and analytical approaches while presenting the model of Prophet Yousuf for the youths of today. The research presents Yūsuf (AS) as the archetype of chastity and further presents practical lessons for contemporary youth from his noble example.

Keywords: Prophet Yūsuf, the Archetype, Chastity, Youth.

INTRODUCTION

Sūrah Yūsuf was revealed after the year known in the books of *sīrah* as the “Year of Sorrow.” It was in this year that Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) experienced incredible amount of grief. He lost his beloved wife Khadījah (RA) and his uncle Abū Ṭālib—both of whom supported him till their last breaths. This was in addition to the bitter encounter he had with the people of Ṭā’if—who pelted him with stones and humiliated him. It was a very painful time in the life of the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions. The Quraysh’s aggression continued to escalate, and it became more and more unbearable. It was a very hostile environment filled with overwhelming sadness and anguish for the Muslims. The *sūrah* was revealed to raise the spirits of the believers and to lift their morale amidst great suffering.

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¹ Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Riyadh: Makataba Dar-us-Salam, 1997), *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb Aḥādīth al-Anbiyā’, Bāb 18, no. 3382, vol. 4, 367.

When analyzing the theme of the *sūrah*, we are able to see a parallel between the lives of Prophet Yūsuf (AS) and the life of Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH).² It emphasizes the concept of patience and perseverance for the sake of Allāh (SWT). It raises the spirits of the believers—in that good ending are for those who are mindful of Allāh (SWT). It mirrors the animosity of the brothers of Yūsuf (AS) with the animosity of the Quraysh towards their very own brother and nephew—Muḥammad (PBUH). It mirrors Yūsuf's (AS) authority with the Prophet's glory days to come wherein he would be given authority and eventually full victory. It mirrors Yūsuf's (AS) compassion and forgiveness towards his brothers who wronged him with the Prophet's mercy and pardoning of the Quraysh who wronged him. In essence, the *sūrah* gave hope and served as a source of solace for the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions. It will continue to serve as a source of upliftment and motivation for all those feeling demoralized, down, depressed, and so forth until the end of time.

The *sūrah* begins by stating:

﴿نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنَ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ
قَبْلِهِ لَمَنِ الْعَقِيلِينَ﴾

We relate to you 'O Prophet' the best of stories through Our revelation of this Qur'ān, though before this you were totally unaware 'of them'.³

This was the first time the Prophet (PBUH) learned about the story of Yūsuf (AS). It was through divine revelation that Muḥammad (PBUH) and his followers learned about the tale of Yūsuf (AS) and his brothers, otherwise, it would not have been known.⁴ The *sūrah* begins with a declaration that this is the *best* story to be narrated. The Qur'ānic claim cannot be denied and without doubt there are numerous benefits and morals for anyone who reads the story—and this is ultimately the purpose behind the presentation of stories in the Qur'ān. In his youth, Yūsuf (AS) saw a dream where he saw eleven stars, the sun, and the moon prostrating to him. He shared this dream with his father, Prophet Ya'qūb (AS).

² Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding the Qur'ān*, trans. Zafar Ishaq Ansari (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 2004), vol. 4, 144-145.

³ Qur'ān, *Yūsuf*: 3.

⁴ Muhammad Shafi, *Ma'āriful Qur'ān*, trans. Muhammad Shamim, (New Delhi: Farid Book Depot., 2010), vol. 5, 166.

﴿إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ
لِي سَاجِدِينَ﴾ قَالَ يَبْنَى لَا تَقْصُصْ رُؤْيَاكَ عَلَى إِخْوَتِكَ فَيَكِيدُوا لَكَ كَيْدًا إِنَّ
الشَّيْطَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿٥﴾

'Remember' when Joseph said to his father, "O my dear father! Indeed, I dreamt of eleven stars, and the sun, and the moon—I saw them prostrating to me!" He replied, "O my dear son! Do not relate your vision to your brothers, or they will devise a plot against you. Surely Satan is a sworn enemy to humankind."⁵

The relationship between father and son was very deep and affectionate. The young son disclosed the details regarding the profound dream that he had to his father. Lovingly, Prophet Ya'qūb (AS) advised his son to not share the dream with his brothers lest they become envious. Ya'qūb (AS) treasured Yūsuf (AS) dearly and understood from the dream that great honor was in store for his son.

An interesting parallel could be made with Prophet Ibrāhīm (AS)—the father, who shared his dream with his son Ismā'īl (AS) and Yūsuf (AS)—the son, who shared his dream with his father Ya'qūb (AS) exhibits the closeness and tight-knit-bond between both pairs of father and son. The art of fatherhood and sonhood is displayed so wonderfully in the Qur'ānic presentation of their respective dialogues. The level of trust and comfort they had in each other to confide and share dreams is a level that all parent-child relationships should strive to reach. The manner in which both sons readily embraced their fathers' vision or interpretation is exemplary for all sons and daughters. In the current day and age, parents struggle to connect with their children; young people find it challenging to link with their parents—but when we examine the model of Yūsuf (AS) and his father, we find that their lines of communication were wide open.

Youth of today should make a concerted effort to connect with their parents and elderly and appreciate their wisdom and experience. It is commendable if they consider their valuable advice and feedback. Perhaps there might be a cultural gap, or a communication gap, or a generational gap, and the message might not always seem to resonate right there and then—but the advice should be appreciated as it generally comes from a very sincere place and from lived experience. On the other hand, parents should genuinely advise their sons and daughters in a way that would leave a resounding impact. Perhaps it might take them some time—days, months, or even years to fully appreciate the advice. Elders should

⁵ Qur'ān, *Yūsuf*: 4-5.

not lose hope as precious advice to the young usually lingers around in their minds and by the will of Allāh (SWT), it will resurface at a time when they would most benefit from it.

Prophets and messengers have been granted special wisdom and farsightedness. Prophet Ya'qūb's (AS) understanding of young Yūsuf's (AS) dream portrays the abilities that Allāh (SWT) blessed His prophets with. We see towards the end of the *sūrah*, how Yūsuf (AS) realized the advice of his father i.e., regarding the dream that he had during his youth. After going through all that he went through; after so much time and hardship; it was when he was the minister, and his brothers came to him pleading for assistance—that is when he saw the manifestation of the dream.

When he was young, Yūsuf (AS) had a dream where he saw eleven stars, the sun, and the moon prostrating before him. Qur'ānic commentators state that the eleven stars indicated his brothers while the sun and the moon indicated his parents.⁶ One can only imagine how awestruck a young person might have been seeing such kind of dream. Yūsuf (AS) related the dream to his father who concluded that his son would reach a very high station and position in this world and in the hereafter. Ya'qūb (AS) advised him to remain silent about the dream and to not share it with his brothers—in case they become jealous and create a plan to harm him. For this reason, it is said in some *athār*: “Seek help in fulfilling your needs by hiding it from others. Because every person who possesses a bounty is envied.”⁷

It is vital for young people to understand that sharing your blessings could actually harm your blessings and potentially even lead to you losing your blessings. In a social media dominated world, too often, youth get into the hype of sharing their blessings with others—which many a times lead to very negative results. This issue is not only limited to young people, but people of all ages in general. In addition, sharing of blessings is not only restricted to social media platforms, the internet, or any other form of technology—but it also applies to day-to-day interactions i.e., by way of conversation, speech, etc. Any person can become envious of your good whether it is intentionally or unintentionally. For the evil minded, it gives them an opportunity to come up with strategies to prevent a person from acquiring the blessing. Moreover, what is even worse is if they plot to cause some kind of harm upon the person. Yūsuf (AS) did not share the dream with his brothers yet they devised a nasty plot to get rid of him. What would have been the situation if he did share his dream with them? Additionally, we learn from the verse that Allāh (SWT) was going to select Yūsuf (AS), teach him the interpretation of dreams, and complete His favors upon him and the family of Ya'qūb (AS) just as He completed it before for his fathers—Ibrāhīm

⁶ Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'il ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* (Riyadh: Makataba Dar-us-Salam, 2003), vol. 5, 136-137.

⁷ Ibid., 248.

(AS) and Ishāq (AS). This was a special honor Yūsuf (AS) received and indeed Allāh (SWT) chooses from among His creation whom He wants to honor.

﴿... اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهُ...﴾

...Allāh knows best where to place His message.⁸

Tests and Trials

The brothers of Yūsuf (AS) were envious of their father's love and affection towards Yūsuf (AS) and his younger brother. Instead of trying to understand his soft spot for their two younger brothers, they became so hostile and criticized their father for being in error.

﴿إِذْ قَالُوا لْيُوسُفُ وَأَخُوهُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيْنَا أَيْبَانَا مِنَّا وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ إِنَّ أَبَانَا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ﴾

'Remember' when they said 'to one another', "Surely Joseph and his brother 'Benjamin' are more beloved to our father than we, even though we are a group of so many.¹ Indeed, our father is clearly mistaken.⁹

They devised a wicked plan to throw Yūsuf (AS) in the depths of a well and cover the truth by telling their father that a wolf ate him. Ya'qūb (AS) was reluctant to let them take Yūsuf (AS) out to "play" but eventually they managed get their way. Thereafter, they went ahead with their evil plot and threw young Yūsuf (AS) inside a well. They then reported to their father crying and falsely stating that a wolf had eaten him. After he heard this terrible news, Ya'qūb (AS) declared that he would exercise beautiful patience:

﴿...فَصَبِرْ جَمِيلٌ ۖ وَاللَّهُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَىٰ مَا تَصِفُونَ﴾

So 'I can only endure with' beautiful patience! It is Allāh's help that I seek to bear your claims."¹⁰

Yūsuf (AS) was just a young boy when his brothers carried out the heartless act of throwing him inside a well. He had no idea what Allāh (SWT) had in store for him. From face value it was a deep, dark, and lonely place, but what it truly was, was a gateway to the bounties of Allāh (SWT). Young people encounter all kinds of hardship and tests, and it is during those difficult moments that *Sūrah Yūsuf* can serve as a source of solace and hope. He had no one to help him and be by his side except Allāh (SWT). Allāh (SWT) was with

⁸ Qur'ān, *al-An'ām*: 124.

⁹ Qur'ān, *Yūsuf*: 8.

¹⁰ Qur'ān, *Yūsuf*: 18.

the youth when they retreated in the cave, He was with Ibrāhīm (AS) when he was cast in the fire, and He certainly was with Yūsuf (AS) when he was thrown in the well. This was the outlet to the extraordinary events that were destined to unfold in the life Yūsuf (AS).

Yūsuf (AS) was picked up from the well by a passing caravan that was headed to Egypt. It was in Egypt that he was sold as a slave for a very low price. One of the king's minsters bought Yūsuf (AS) and told his wife to treat him well and with honor.¹¹ The minister oversaw the finances of Egypt. Naturally, he was a person of high rank in society. It was exposure to such kind of personality and work that Yūsuf (AS) acquired special abilities in managing state treasures. Allāh (SWT) established Yūsuf (AS) in the land and taught him interpretation of events. Whatever He wills, is bound to happen. When He wills for something to happen, He ordains the causes for the events in order that it may occur the way that He chooses.

Yūsuf (AS) went through various tests and trials from a tender age—from the dark well he ended up in the home of Egypt's finance minister. All throughout the different tests that he underwent, noble young Yūsuf (AS) remained patient and relied upon his Lord. It was Allāh (SWT) that protected him and granted him relief from his hardships. Thus, is the nature of this worldly life—wherein tests and tribulations surround us as a way to examine our faith, purify ourselves, erase our sins, grant us opportunities to earn rewards, and to rise in honor and station. Despite being separated from his beloved father and homeland, Yūsuf (AS) remained patient in the decree of Allāh (SWT). Further, he made the best out of the situation that was in. When he reached maturity, Allāh (SWT) blessed him with wisdom and knowledge.

﴿وَقَالَ الَّذِي اشْتَرَاهُ مِنْ مِصْرَ لِامْرَأَتِهِ أَكْرِمِي مَثْوَاهُ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ وَلَدًا ۚ وَكَذَٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلِنُعَلِّمَهُ ۖ مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ غَالِبٌ عَلَىٰ أَمْرِهِ ۚ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۖ وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ ۖ ءَاتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا ۚ وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ۖ﴾

The man from Egypt who bought him said to his wife, “Take good care of him, perhaps he may be useful to us or we may adopt him as a son.” This is how We established Joseph in the land, so that We might teach him the interpretation of dreams. Allāh's Will always prevails, but most people do

¹¹ See *Tafsīr ibn Kathīr*, vol. 5, 150-151.

not know. And when he reached maturity, We gave him wisdom and knowledge. This is how We reward the good-doers.¹²

Ibn Kathīr, comments that this verse clearly indicates that all that happened to Yūsuf (AS) up until he reached maturity was prior to him turning forty years old. It is at the age of forty that Allāh (SWT) sends down revelation to His prophets.¹³

It is essential for youth to realize that we are not judged for the end-results but for our efforts. When there are certain things that happen in life that are beyond our control—we must be mindful that these are tests. Perhaps Allāh (SWT) wants to see how patient we will be; perhaps He wants to see how grateful we will be; perhaps He wants to see how reliant we will be; perhaps He wants to see if we will turn to Him, and so forth. What is critical for young people is to make the most of their given circumstances. Different situations bring different opportunities to learn and grow. Challenges may be hard to overcome, but it is along the process of overcoming that we acquire something beneficial that we otherwise might not have acquired. Whether it is a new skill, experience, knowledge, relationship, etc. – these are things that might be of great benefit at some point or another. No experience—difficult or easy—should be underestimated for it was sent our way to teach us something beneficial. The upbringing and training that Yūsuf (AS) had in the minister's palace paved a way forward for him to one day become Egypt's finance minister.

Yūsuf (AS) was granted half of beauty as mentioned in the *ḥadīth* of *Al-Isrā' Wa' Al-Mi'rāj* narrated by Anas bin Mālik.¹⁴ He was the most handsome and charming young man that anyone has seen. It is very difficult to imagine what he might have looked; this is something that is not possible for the ordinary human being to even attempt. However, we have adequate knowledge from the Qur'ān and Sunnah indicating the extraordinary beauty of Yūsuf (AS). Over the course of time, the minister's wife developed a burning desire for Yūsuf (AS). She was deeply attached to him and devised a plot so that he may be follow through with her passion. It is important to note that the minister's wife was a woman of beauty, status, and wealth—as this was the norm of high-ranking officials back then and even in today's world. The minister had ample wealth and power, not needing to worry about any restrictions on his end—allowing him to marry any woman of his choice. It is natural for one to assume that a personality of high status would wed a woman of beauty, status, and wealth. It was such a woman that attempted to start an affair with her and her husband's slave.

¹² Qur'ān, *Yūsuf*:21-22.

¹³ Ibn Kathīr, *Stories of the Prophets*, 255.

¹⁴ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, trans. Nasiruddin al-Khattab (Riyadh: Makataba Dar-us-Salam, 2007), Kitāb al-Imān, Bāb 74, no. 162, vol. 1, 259.

Yūsuf (AS) had served the minster and his family for an extended period of time, fulfilling his responsibilities with excellence. He was protected by Allāh (SWT) from the very start and knew that Allāh (SWT) would safeguard him from any harm that would come his way. Yūsuf (AS): A young unmarried man, living in a distant land, away from his family, working as a slave for a top-level minister, was invited by the minister's wife to engage in illicit relations while in total seclusion with her in the palace with all the doors locked and no one in sight. This test is among the severest of all tests for any young person living in any given time and place.

﴿وَرُوْدُهُ اَلَّتِي هُوَ فِي بَيْتِهَا عَنْ نَفْسِهِ ۚ وَغَلَقَتِ الْاَبْوَابَ وَقَالَتْ هَيْتَ لَكَ ۚ قَالَ مَعَاذَ
اَللّٰهِ ۚ اِنَّهُ رَبِّيْٓ اَحْسَنَ مَثْوٰى ۖ اِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ۝ وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهٖ ۖ وَهَمَّ بِهَا لَوْلَا
اَنْ رَّآ بُرْهٰنَ رَبِّهٖ ۚ كَذٰلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ السُّوْءَ وَالْفَحْشَآءَ ۚ اِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا
الْمُخْلِصِيْنَ ۝ وَاسْتَبَقَا الْاَبَابَ وَقَدَّتْ قَمِيصَهُ مِنْ دُبُرٍ ۖ وَالْفَيَّا سَبَدَهَا لَدَا الْاَبَابِ ۚ قَالَتْ
مَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ اَرَادَ بِاَهْلِكَ سُوْءًا اِلَّا اَنْ يُسْجَنَ اَوْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ۝﴾

And the lady, in whose house he lived, tried to seduce him. She locked the doors 'firmly' and said, "Come to me!" He replied, "Allāh is my refuge! It is 'not right to betray' my master, who has taken good care of me. Indeed, the wrongdoers never succeed." She advanced towards him, and he would have done likewise, had he not seen a sign from his Lord.¹ This is how We kept evil and indecency away from him, for he was truly one of Our chosen servants. They raced for the door and she tore his shirt from the back, only to find her husband at the door. She cried, "What is the penalty for someone who tried to violate your wife, except imprisonment or a painful punishment?"¹⁵

The Archetype of Chastity

Prophet Yūsuf (AS) is the archetype of chastity for all people until the end of time. He is the epitome of *hayā* and *iffah*. The noun *hayā* or "modesty" is derived from "life." Ibn Taymiyah explains that if one's heart is alive, then its owner is also alive—and if this is the case, then surely it contains modesty, which prevents it from performing evil and despicable

¹⁵ Qur'ān, *Yūsuf*: 23-25.

actions, because in the modesty of the heart lies its immunity from these types of actions.¹⁶ The great trial that Yūsuf (AS) faced and passed by the help of Allāh (SWT) speaks to the embodiment of *ḥayā'* in the heart and life of Yūsuf (AS). This great trial is illustrated in the *ḥadīth* referring to a man who is seduced by a woman of position, wealth, or beauty, and refuses to engage in the prohibited by saying: “Surely, I fear Allāh.” For this reason, Ibn Kathīr and others state that Yūsuf (AS) is the prime example in their interpretation of the following *ḥadīth*:

The Prophet (PBUH) said, seven (people) will be shaded by Allāh by His Shade on the Day of Resurrection when there will be no shade except His Shade. (They will be), a just ruler, a young man who has been brought up in the worship of Allāh, a man who remembers Allāh in seclusion and his eyes are then flooded with tears, a man whose heart is attached to mosques (offers his compulsory congregational prayers in the mosque), two men who love each other for Allāh's Sake, a man who is called by a charming lady of noble birth to commit illegal sexual intercourse with her, and he says, ‘I am afraid of Allāh,’ and (finally), a man who gives in charity so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given.¹⁷

When Yūsuf (AS) was in that volatile situation, he ran towards the locked doors seeking Allāh's (SWT) protection. Youth must be aware that if there is ever a moment in life where we find ourselves being lured to the forbidden, it is absolutely critical to seek the protection of Allāh (SWT) and to find an escape—even if it means to race towards locked doors. It is no doubt easier said than done but certainly not impossible. To reach this state of spiritual and moral fortitude it takes time and years of mental and physical training. If one constantly entertains thoughts pertaining to a certain matter—forbidden or otherwise—chances are that they will be more inclined to let it materialize if that thought goes uncontrolled and if the opportunity presented itself. Ghamidi states:

It is clearly evident from what ensued between Prophet Yūsuf (AS) and the royal lady of Egypt that even before being designated as a prophet, if a situation arises in which it becomes difficult for him to shield himself, the Almighty does so with his special *burhān* (sign). This *burhān* is the divine spark which is found in every human being. However, according to a divine law, in people who do duly honor it and accept its guidance in the vicissitudes of life, it becomes stronger and brighter and in all delicate circumstances

¹⁶ Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm ibn Taymiyah, *Diseases of the Hearts and their Cures*, trans. Abū Rumaysah (Birmingham: Daar us-Sunnah Publishers, 2006), 82.

¹⁷ Al-Bukhari, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Ḥudūd, Bāb19, no. 6806, v. 8, 86.

glitters and sparkles even more to light up the darkness that might come before the eyes. The result is that they are able to persevere on what is right.¹⁸

In the contemporary context, this timeless lesson from the example of Yūsuf (AS) can be applied when a young person is online and an immoral advertisement appears and invites them to click; or when they have the urge to visit an obscene website, or consume any kind of filthy content, or when a non-*maḥram* person initiates a conversation and tries to setup a meeting that is contradictory to the guidelines outlined in the *Shari'ah*—it is vital for one to seek the protection of Allāh (SWT). Without the help of Allāh (SWT), it becomes extremely difficult to steer clear from any kind of immorality—this is the general tendency of human beings. Possessing desires itself is not blameworthy as it has been ingrained in human beings by the Creator Himself, but it is the action that must be channeled according to the dictates of Allāh (SWT). Indeed, it is from the mercy of Allāh (SWT) that He does not hold one to account for their wandering thoughts or imaginations. If he were to judge us based on every single thought we had, we would surely have been in an enormous predicament.

Yūsuf (AS) was saved from the trial of the minister's wife and the cunningness of the ladies in society. These ladies from the minister's wife's friends circle also fell in love with him once they were exposed to his angelic presence. Yūsuf (AS) preferred being in prison over the lewdness that these women were immersed in. Imprisonment was also a way for the minister's wife to show her husband that Yūsuf (AS) was guilty as well as serve as a solution for all the gossip and chattering on the attempted affair to die down in society.

﴿قَالَ رَبِّ السِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ ۖ وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّي كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُن مِّنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ۖ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ ۖ فَصَرَفَ عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ﴾

Joseph prayed, “My Lord! I would rather be in jail than do what they invite me to. And if You do not turn their cunning away from me, I might yield to them and fall into ignorance.” So, his Lord responded to him, turning their cunning away from him. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, All-Knowing.¹⁹

From this we are able to deduce that sometimes blessings come in different forms. A difficulty can be a relief in disguise for the believer. Perhaps one may realize it on the

¹⁸ Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, *Islam: A Comprehensive Introduction*, trans. Shehzad Saleem, 2nd ed., (Lahore: Al-Mawrid, 2014), 139.

¹⁹ Qur'ān, *Yūsuf*: 33-34.

spot and perhaps they might realize it later in their life. Yūsuf (AS) experienced yet another trial in a series of trials that have been occurring since his younger years. Despite the different tests that came his way he remained steadfast and patient as the trials carried on.

The pattern continued as he was imprisoned for an indefinite period of time. It was in prison that he called people to Allāh (SWT) and helped inmates interpret dreams. After years in prison, Yūsuf (AS) found himself in front of the King of Egypt who summoned him. Yūsuf (AS) was cleared of all the defamation made against him and his character and released as an innocent man.²⁰ He stood by his principles and did not just want to leave prison based on the King needing his service for dream interpretation. This is a profound lesson for young people as we should be virtuous and grounded with principles like Yūsuf (AS). Character and honor were extremely important to him, and he went to great lengths to ensure that it was not tarnished in the slightest manner. The King realized that not only was Yūsuf (AS) incredibly skilled and talented, but that he was also honest and reliable. He realized that Yūsuf (AS) could not be tempted or corrupted by the enticement of beautiful and wealthy women. This led to Yūsuf's (AS) appointment to the position of finance minister during which his brothers came from Palestine seeking food and support.

After several episodes, Yūsuf (AS) disclosed his identity to his brothers who were extremely humble and sought forgiveness for their wrongdoing. Yūsuf (AS) reunited with his beloved father, Ya'qūb (AS), who remained patient and hopeful that he would be together with his beloved son again. The *sūrah* concludes the story of Yūsuf (AS) with the interpretation and manifestation of the dream that was at the start of the *sūrah*.

﴿وَرَفَعَ أَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَخَرُّوا لَهُ سُجَّدًا ۖ وَقَالَ يَا أَبَتِ هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُؤْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ
قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي حَقًّا ۖ وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِي إِذْ أَخْرَجَنِي مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَجَاءَ بِكُمْ مِنَ الْبَدْوِ
مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ نَزَغَ الشَّيْطَانُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ إِخْوَتِي ۚ إِنَّ رَبِّي لَطِيفٌ لِمَا يَشَاءُ ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ
الْحَكِيمُ﴾

Then he raised his parents to the throne, and they all fell down in prostration to Joseph, who then said, O my dear father! This is the interpretation of my old dream. My Lord has made it come true. He was truly kind to me when He freed me from prison and brought you all from the desert after Satan had ignited rivalry between me and my siblings.² Indeed my Lord is subtle in fulfilling what He wills. Surely, He 'alone' is the All-Knowing, All-Wise.²¹

²⁰ See *Tafsīr ibn Kathīr*, vol. 5, 179.

²¹ Qur'ān, *Yūsuf*: 100.

It was a very beautiful ending where the entire family reunited. Yūsuf (AS) displayed immeasurable love and hospitality to his parents and his brothers. He gave all the credit to Allāh (SWT):

﴿رَبِّ قَدْ ءَاتَيْتَنِي مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِي مَا تَأْوِيلُ الْأَحَادِيثِ ۚ فَاطِرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
أَنْتَ وَلِيَّ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآٰخِرَةِ ۚ تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّٰلِحِينَ﴾

My Lord! You have surely granted me authority and taught me the interpretation of dreams. 'O' Originator of the heavens and the earth! You are my Guardian in this world and the Hereafter. Allow me to die as one who submits¹ and join me with the righteous.²²

Mahmood Shakir Saeed encapsulates some of the key points to take away from the example of Yūsuf (AS):

Yūsuf (AS) is an example of a patient youth who has raised himself above carnal desires and temptations of *Shayṭān*. His example is an example one for a young caller to the way of Allāh (SWT). He worked tirelessly, day and night to spread the truth. He took advantage of all occasions so that he could introduce people to Islam. Additionally, he also took advantage of what Allāh (SWT) endowed him with from the knowledge and skills of dream interpretation and knowledge of management.²³

CONCLUSION

The story of Prophet Yousuf shed clear examples for the youth today. His noble upbringing, raising among jealous brothers, being thrown to the well, being sold as a slave, getting blessed with the enormous blessings of Allah always show an epitome of noble character for the youth. In order to reach a noble ending, patience and perseverance is required. To acquire success, years of hard work and struggle is required. To experience a strong spiritual state, overcoming struggles and tests are vital. These are several of the key lessons found in *Sūrah Yūsuf*—which gave the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) hope that victory is imminent, and it shall come over time. With the multifaceted challenges that youth in the contemporary world face on a daily basis—if we can remain hopeful and optimistic in the decree of Allāh (SWT), that all of this is worthwhile and the years to come are years for us

²² Qur'ān, *Yūsuf*: 101.

²³ Mahmood Shakir Saeed, *A Model for a Muslim Youth in the Story of Yūsuf (AS)*, trans. Khalid Ibraheem Al-Dossary (Riyadh: World Assemble of Muslim Youth, 1997), 2.

to reap the benefits of our struggles and sacrifice. The endings are hoped to be rewarding and fruitful by the will of Allāh (SWT).

﴿تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ ۖ مَا كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنْتَ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَٰذَا ۖ فَاصْبِرْ ۚ إِنَّ الْعَقِيبَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

This is one of the stories of the unseen, which we reveal to you 'O Prophet'. Neither you nor your people knew it before this. So be patient! Surely the ultimate outcome belongs 'only' to the righteous.²⁴

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²⁴ Qur'ān, Hūd: 49.

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