

## **Prophet Yusuf (as)**

### **The following was taken from Stories of Prophets by Allama Ibn Katheer**

The story begins with a dream and ends with its interpretation. Prophet Yusuf (as) said: *"O my father! Verily, I saw eleven stars and the sun and the moon, I saw them prostrating themselves to me."* (12:4). His father's face lit up and foresaw that Prophet Yusuf (as) would be among the prophets and warned him about the jealousy his brothers *'Relate not your vision to your brothers, lest they arrange a plot against you.'* (12:5)

Prophet Yusuf (as) was eighteen years old, very handsome and robust, with a gentle temperament. He was respectful, kind and considerate. His brother Benjamin was equally pleasant. Their father loved them more than his other children, and would not let them out of his sight keeping them busy with work in the house garden. Due to jealousy it is said: *"One from among them (his brothers) said: "Kill not Yusuf (as), .... throw him down to the bottom of a well ..."* (12:8-10)

The brothers wanted Yusuf to come with them on business but the father was afraid and said *"Truly, it saddens me that you should take him away. I fear lest a wolf should devour him, while you are careless of him."* (12:11-14). When it was accepted, they went directly to the well, one of them put his arms around Prophet Yusuf (as), held him tightly and cast him into the deep well. The brothers returned to their father and said that *'a wolf devoured him'* (12:17). *bringing his shirt stained with false blood.* (Ch 12:18). Deep down Prophet Yaqoub (as) knew that his beloved son was still alive and that his other sons were lying.

Then it follows that a caravan passing by rescued Prophet Yusuf but *'they hid him as merchandise ... and sold him for a low price,'* to the chief, the Aziz from Egypt who bought him said to his wife: *"Make his stay comfortable, maybe he will profit us or we shall adopt him as a son."* (Ch 12:19-21) Prophet Yusuf (as) smiled at his benefactor (the chief), thanked him, and promised to be loyal. He was made the personal attendant of the chief minister's wife. He was obedient and ever-obliging. Allah blessed him with *'wisdom and knowledge'* (12:22).

The chief minister's wife, Zulaikha could not resist the handsome Prophet Yusuf (as), and her obsession with him caused her sleepless nights. She fell in love with him. Allah said that *'she sought to seduce him, she closed the doors and said: "come on, O you." He said: "I seek refuge in Allah (or Allah forbid)! Truly he (your husband) is my master! He made my stay agreeable!'. (12:23)* Prophet Yusuf (as)'s refusal only heightened her passion. As he moved to the door to escape, she ran after him and caught hold of his shirt *'and she tore his shirt from the back. They both found her lord (her husband) at the door. (12:25).* She immediately changed her tone to anger, and, showing the torn piece of the shirt in her hand, asked her husband: *"What is the recompense (punishment) for him who intended an evil design against your wife ... ?"* (12:25). Prophet Yusuf said: *"It was she that sought to seduce me," and a witness of her household bore witness saying: "If it be that his shirt is torn from the front, then her tale is true, and he is a liar! but if it be that his shirt is torn from the back, then she has told a lie and he is speaking the truth!"* So, it was clear that she lied. (12:26-29).

For her defence, Zulaikha prepared a banquet to show that other women could be under the beauty of Prophet Yusuf (as) and *'she gave each one of them a knife (to cut the foodstuff with), and she said (to Yusuf (as)): "Come out before them." Then, when they saw him, they exalted him (at his beauty) and (in their astonishment) cut their hands. ... She said: "This is he (the young man) about whom you did blame me (for his love) and I did seek to seduce him, but he refused.* Prophet Yusuf said that *'Prison is more to my liking than that to which they invite me.'*... That evening, Zulaikha convinced her husband that the only way to save her honor was to put Prophet Yusuf (as) in prison.

In prison, Prophet Yusuf explained the king's dream (*He sees himself on the banks of the Nile river. The water is receding before him, becoming mere mud. The fish begin to skip and jump in the mud. Seven fat cows come out of the river followed by seven lean cows. The seven lean ones devour the seven fat ones*) as: "*There will be seven years of abundance. If the land is properly cultivated, there will be an excess of good harvest, more than the people will need. This should be stored. Thereafter, seven years of famine will follow, during which time the excess grain could be used. After seven years of drought, there will be a year during which water will be plentiful. If the water is properly used, grapevines and olive trees will grow in abundance, providing plenty of grapes and olive oil.*" The cupbearer gave the news to the king which was fascinated by Prophet Yusuf (as)'s interpretation and commanded that Prophet Yusuf (as) be set free from prison. However, Prophet Yusuf (as) refused to leave the prison unless his innocence was proven. Under request of the king, the wife of the chief minister came and boldly confessed that she had lied and he had told the truth.

The king informed Prophet Yusuf (as) that his innocence was established offered him a high position as controller of the granaries a request from Yusuf. Drought followed and famine spread throughout the region, including Canaan, the homeland of Prophet Yusuf (as). Prophet Yusuf (as) advised the king to sell his grain to the needy nations at a fair price. Prophet Yaqoub (as) sent ten of his sons, all except Benjamin, to Egypt to purchase provisions. Prophet Yusuf (as) immediately recognized them and received them warmly and asked them to narrate him their life. When they said that they had another brother, prophet Yusuf asked them to bring him and he would double their rations. As an inducement to return with their brother, Prophet Yusuf (as) ordered his servant to secretly place the purse, with the money they had paid, into one of their grain sacks.

The brothers returned to their father to ask his permission for Benjamin. At first Prophet Yaqoub (as) was reluctant but accepted. When they came again to prophet Yusuf (as), Benjamin was kept 'captive' due to the purse. In brief, the 2 brothers finally met. The brothers returned and said that the youngest son has stolen. The father was deeply hurt. Weeping all those years Prophet Yaqoub (as) almost lost his sight. The other sons returned and pleaded Prophet Yusuf (as). At the end, they begged Prophet Yusuf (as) who said: "*I am Yusuf (as), and his is my brother*" (Ch 12:90). They were forgiven and Prophet Yusuf (as) embraced them, and together they wept with joy. Later on he advised his brothers: "*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.*" (12:93) They headed back for Palestine and reaching there, the father said: "*I do indeed feel the smell of Yusuf (as) ... Then, when the bearer of the glad tidings arrived, he cast the shirt over his face, and he became clear sighted. ...*" (12:94-97). Prophet Yusuf (as) 'betook his parents to himself and said: "*Enter Egypt, if Allah will, in security.*" And he raised his parents to the throne and they fell down before him prostrate. And he said: "*O my father! This is the interpretation of my dream of old! My Lord has made it come true! He was indeed good to me, when He took me out of prison, and brought you all here out of the Bedouin life, after Satan had sown enmity between me and my brothers ...*" (Ch 12:98-100). Before he died, Prophet Yaqoub (as) (pbuh) advised his children to adhere to the teachings of Islam, the religion of all of Allah's prophets.