

MA'ĀRIFUL-QUR'ĀN

By

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(Sūrah Yūsuf, Al-Ra'd, Ibrāhīm, Al-Ḥijr,
Al-Naḥl, Banī Isrā'īl, Al-Kahf)

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TRANSLITERATION SCHEME

Arabic Letter	Name of Letter	English Transliteration
ا	الف -- Alif	a
ب	باء -- bā	b
ت	تاء -- tā	t
ث	ثاء -- thā	th
ج	جيم -- jīm	j
ح	حاء -- ḥā	ḥ
خ	خاء -- khā	kh
د	دال -- dāl	d
ذ	ذال -- dhāl	dh
ر	راء -- rā	r
ز	زاي -- zā	z
س	سين -- sīn	s
ش	شين -- shīn	sh
ص	صاد -- ṣād	ṣ
ض	ضاد -- ḍād	ḍ
ط	طاء -- ṭā	ṭ
ظ	ظاء -- ḏā	ḏ
ع	عين -- 'ayn	'
غ	غين -- ghayn	gh
ف	فاء -- fa	f
ق	قاف -- qaf	q
ك	كاف -- kaf	k
ل	لام -- lam	l
م	ميم -- mīm	m
ن	نون -- nūn	n
ه	هاء -- hā	h
و	واؤ -- wāw	w
ء	همزة -- Hamzah	'
ي	ياء -- yā	y

Short Vowels

: Faḥah

a

: Kasrah

i

: Dammah

u

Long Vowels

ا : Shortened Alif

ā

آ : Maddah Alif

ā

ي : Maddah Yā

ī

و : Maddah Wāw

ū

Diphthongs

اي : Alif and Yā

ay (also ai in some cases)

او : Alif and Wāw

aw (also au in some cases)

SŪRAH YŪSUF

[Joseph]

Sūrah Yūsuf was revealed in Makkah and it has 111 Verses and 22 Sections

Verses 1 - 6

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

الرَّافِدُ تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ ﴿١﴾ إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْءَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢﴾ نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ ﴿٣﴾ إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِي سَاجِدِينَ ﴿٤﴾ قَالَ يَبْنَى لَأَتَقُصُّ رُءْيَاكَ عَلَى إِخْوَتِكَ فَيَكِيدُوا لَكَ كَيْدًا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿٥﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ يَجْتَبِيكَ رَبُّكَ وَيُعَلِّمُكَ مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ وَيُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ آلِ يَعْقُوبَ كَمَا أَتَمَّهَا عَلَىٰ أَبَوَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَاسْحُقْ ط إِنَّ رَبَّكَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٦﴾

Alif Lām Rā. These are verses of the enlightening Book.

[1] We have sent it down, an Arabic Qur'an, so that you may understand. [2]

We narrate to you the best narrative by revealing this Qur'an to you, and surely before this, you were among the unaware. [3]

(It happened) when Yusuf said to his father, "My father, I have seen eleven stars and the Sun and the Moon; I have seen them all prostrating to me." [4]

He said, "My son, do not relate your dream to your brothers lest they should devise against you a plan. Surely, Satan is an open enemy for mankind. And in the like manner your Lord will choose you and teach you the interpretation of events, and will perfect His bounty upon you and upon the House of Ya'qūb, as He has perfected it, earlier, upon your father, Ibrāhīm and Ishāq. Surely, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing." [5-6]

Commentary

With the exception of four verses, Sūrah Yūsuf is wholly a Makki Sūrah. In this Sūrah, the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has been described with continuity and order. Then, the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام appears in this Sūrah alone. It has not been repeated anywhere else in the whole Qur'an as such (with the exception of Sūrah Al-An'am - 6:84 - and Sūrah Al-Mu'min or Ghāfir - 40:34 - where only the name of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has been mentioned as a Messenger of Allah, in appropriate context). This is particular with the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, otherwise the stories and events concerning all blessed prophets have been introduced in the entire Qur'an with great wisdom, part by part, and repeatedly too.

The truth of the matter is that world history and past experiences teach human beings what to do with their lives in the future. These have a natural effect of their own which acts better on minds and hearts as compared to the pull of formal education. This effect is deeper and fairly effortless. Therefore, in the Holy Qur'an, which has been sent for all peoples of the world as their last testament, a marked portion of the entire history of the peoples of the world - a portion that serves as the master prescription for the betterment of the present and ultimate human condition - has been taken up electively and pragmatically. Furthermore, even this portion of world history has been introduced by the Holy Qur'an, with its unique and unimitable style, in a manner that its reader simply does not get the impression that he or she was reading some book of history. In fact, whatever part of a certain story serves the need of driving home a lesson or tendering a good counsel on any given occasion, it is just that part which finds mention in that setting. And should

there be the need to allude to that particular part once again on some other occasion, it was repeated. Therefore, consideration was not given to sequential order in the narration of events in the story. At some places the earlier part of the story comes later, and the later part finds mention earlier. This special style of the Qur'ān carries a standing rule of guidance that reading or remembering world history and its past events is not an end by itself. Instead of that, the purpose of every human being should be to draw some lesson from every story and to cull and deduce some good advice from every information.

It is well-known that the human speech is classified into two forms: Descriptive (*khabar*) and imperative (*inshā'*). According to the knowledgeable scholars, it is the later form (i.e. imperative) that is the essential objective. Description in itself is not an end. A wise man ought to learn an imperative from every description, and make use of it for correcting and reforming himself.

That the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ has been narrated in a sequence could be because historiography is a discipline. It has particular rules of guidance for its practitioners. For instance, the narration should not be so brief as to make its understanding impossible, nor should it be so long as would make reading and remembering it difficult - which becomes clear from the Qur'ānic treatment of this story.

According to some narrations, another reason for this could lie in what the Jews had said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. To test him, they had asked him: If you are a true prophet, tell us why did the family of Ya'qūb move from Syria to Egypt and what had actually happened to Yūsuf ﷺ? It was in answer to that that this whole story was revealed. It was a miracle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and certainly a great proof of his prophethood - for he was simply an Ummiyy, one who was not taught by anyone, who had never read a book and who had lived in Makkah practically his whole life, yet, he narrated all events mentioned in the Torah correctly. In fact, he told them of what was not mentioned in the Torah. There are many injunctions and instructions which emerge from these narrations which will appear later in this commentary.

In the first of the set of verses cited above, the words: آلر 'Alif Lām Rā' are isolated letters (*al-Ḥurūf al-Muqatta'āt*) of the Holy Qur'ān. About

these, it is the universal verdict of the majority of Ṣaḥābah and Ṭabi‘īn that they are a secret between Allah Ta‘ālā, the speaker, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the addressee - which a third person cannot understand, nor is it appropriate for one to exert and insist on finding it out.

After that it was said: *بَلِّغْ أَيْتَ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ* (These are the verses of the enlightening Book). That is, these are verses of the Book which delineate the delimitations and restrictions of what is lawful and unlawful, including those of other things in all departments of human life, and thus gives people a simple, straight and moderate system of living, as promised in the Torah, and as already known to the Jews.

The statement made in verse 2 following immediately is: *إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ* (Surely, We have sent it down, an Arabic Qur‘ān, so that you may understand).

It is indicative of the situation that those who had asked to be informed of what had happened to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were the Jews of Arabia. So, Allah Ta‘ālā revealed this story in their language so that they may ponder over it and attest to the veracity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and tune their lives in the light of the injunctions and instructions which emerge from this story.

This is the reason why the word: *لَعَلَّ* (*la‘alla*) has been brought in here in the sense of ‘so that’ because the mindset of these addressees was already known - that they would, despite having the benefit of very clear verses before them, still doubt and delay their acceptance of truth.

In the third verse, it was said: *نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ* (We narrate to you the best narrative by revealing this Qur‘ān to you, and surely before this, you were among the unaware).

This is to chasten the Jews that they had tried to test the Messenger of Allah which proved to be in vain, for its effect turned out to be just the reverse of what they had intended. It only went on to prove the excellence and authenticity of the Messenger of Allah in a far more evident manner. From this it became clear that he was already an Ummiyy and had no knowledge of world history. Now that he came to know of this needs an explanation and there can be no explanation for this except

that he was Divinely educated and blessed with revelation as a prophet of Allah Ta'ālā.

Moving on the verse 4, the text takes up the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which opens with the following words: إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِي سَاجِدِينَ (It happened) [when Yūsuf said to his father, 'My father, I have seen eleven stars and the Sun and the Moon; I have seen them all prostrating to me.']

This was the dream seen by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام interpreting which Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said: 'The eleven stars meant the eleven brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام; and the Sun and the Moon meant his father and mother.'

According to al-Qurṭubī, though the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had passed away from this mortal world before this event, but in her place, his father was wedded to her sister. A maternal aunt already has love and concern for her sister's children as their natural mother would normally have. Now when she, after the death of her sister, comes to be the wife of the father, she would customarily be referred to as the mother.

The response given by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام appears in verses 5 and 6 in the following words: قَالَ يَبْنَؤُا لَآتَقْضُصُ رُءُ يَاكَ عَلَیْ اِخْوَتِكَ فَيَكِيدُوْا لَكَ كَيْدًاۗ اِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لِلْاِنْسَانِ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ 'He said, 'My son, do not relate your dream to your brothers lest they [by finding out your greatness to come] should devise against you a plan. Surely, Satan is an open enemy for mankind ...' [for He seduces people to take such action for the sake of worldly wealth and power].'

Worth mentioning here are some religious issues which emerge from these verses:

The Nature of Dreams: Status and Kinds

First comes the nature of dreams and the status of events and information released by them. In Tafsīr Maḥzarī, Qāḍī Thanā'ullāh رحمه الله تعالى has said: 'The reality of a dream is that, when the human self - as a result of sleep or unconsciousness - is freed from the management of the active body, it comes to see some shapes through the faculty of imagination. This is what a dream is. Then, it has three kinds, two out of which

are totally false, having no substance and base - while one, in terms of its being, is correct and true. But, even in this correct kind, some other contingents may occasionally intermingle and thereby make it defective and unreliable.

To explain this in detail, it can be said that the different shapes, images, situations and events one sees in a dream come in two modes. Sometimes, what one sees while awake returns to him transformed in a dream. And sometimes, it so happens that the Satan would make his input, introducing some forms, situations and events into a person's mind which would either be pleasing or terrifying. Both these kinds are false. They have no substance or reality, nor can they be interpreted in any actual sense. Out of these two, the first kind is Self-Suggestion (Ḥadīth An-Nafs) and the other, The Seductive Input of the Shayṭān (Taswīl Ash-Shayṭān).

The third kind, correct and true, is a kind of 'Ilhām (mode of inspiring) which is activated to warn a servant of Allah or to give him glad tidings. In other words, out of His unseen treasures, Allah Ta'ālā would put things in one's mind and heart.

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: 'The dream of a believer is a dialogue in which he has the honour of talking to his Rabb.' This Ḥadīth has been reported by al-Ṭabarānī with a sound chain of authorities. (Maḏharī)

Explaining this, Ṣufis say that everything, before it comes to exist in this world, has a particular form in another universe called '*ālam-al-mithāl*',* a universe where, not only the substantial objects and physical realities, but also the attributes and noncorporeal meanings, have particular shapes and forms. When the human self is freed from the concerns of body management while dreaming, it sometimes gets connected to the universe of '*ālam-al-mithāl*'. There one would see the representative forms. Then, these forms are shown from the universe of the Unseen. At times, it would so happen that temporary disturbances would cause false imaginings mix up with the real, therefore, it becomes difficult for the interpreters to interpret the dream soundly. However, when free of discordant elements, they are real. But, even among these, some dreams

*. 'The world of autonomous images' - Henry Corbin.

cannot be interpreted because the actuality of the event is not clear. In such a case too, should the interpretation be wrong, the event itself ends up being different. Therefore, only those dreams will become a true 'Ilhām (inspiration) from Allah, and a proven reality, which originate from the command of Allah with the condition that no discordant elements have intermingled with them and that it has been interpreted correctly too.

All dreams of the blessed prophets are like that. Therefore, their dreams too have the status of Waḥy (revelation). The dreams of common believing Muslims are not free of many a probability. Therefore, they are not a binding argument or proof for anyone. Sometimes, their dreams get mixed up with temperamental or self-oriented elements. On other occasions, the after effects of sins overtake a true dream in the form of dark and murky silhouettes making it unreliable. Then, there could be occasions when it becomes difficult to spell out a correct interpretation from given parameters.

The three kinds of dreams mentioned here have been reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He said that there are three kinds of dreams. (1) The Satanic in which the mind sees forms and shapes released by the Shayṭān. (2) That which one keeps seeing while awake. These present themselves before one in a dream. (3) The third kind, which is correct and true, is the forty-sixth part of the ingredients of prophethood (Nubuwwah), that is, it is an 'Ilhām (inspiration) from Allah Ta'ālā.

The Meaning of Dream being a part of Nubuwwah:

An Explanation

In this kind, which is true and correct and which has been declared to be a part of prophethood in authentic prophetic Traditions, the narrations of Ḥadīth differ. In some, it has been identified as the fortieth part, while in some others, the forty-sixth. There are other narrations as well in which its being the forty-ninth, fiftieth and seventieth part has been reported. All these narrations have been compiled together in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī where, following the investigative judgement of Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, it has been established that there is no contradiction among them, in fact, each narration is correct in its place. As for the numerical variation in determining the parts, it depends upon the different attending conditions of those seeing the dream. Whoever is armed with the

quality of truth, trust, honesty and is perfect of faith shall be the one whose dream will be the fortieth part of Nubuwwah. And whoever ranks somewhat lesser in these qualities, his will be the forty-sixth or fiftieth part of it, and whoever is still lesser, his dream will be the seventieth part of Nubuwwah.

Worth pondering here is what does a true dream being a part of prophethood mean? Tafsīr Mazḥarī has explained it by saying that the process of revelation to Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ as a Prophet of Allah continued for twenty three years. During the first biannual, this Divine revelation kept coming to him in the form of dreams. During the remaining forty five biannuals, it was communicated to him through the angel, *Jibra'īl al-Amīn*. Accounted for in this manner, true dreams turn out to be the fortieth part of the prophetic revelation. As for narrations where numbers vary on the lower or higher side, they either carry approximative statements, or stand dropped for lack of sound authority.

Imām al-Qurṭubī explains this by saying that there are occasions when one sees things in dreams which do not lie within his control. For example, one may see that he is flying high in the skies, or he may see things from the Unseen having access to which was not within one's control. If so, this cannot become possible through any means other than Divine support and inspiration itself - which, in reality, is an intrinsic attribute of prophethood. Therefore, it was declared to be a part of prophethood.

Refuting the Deception of the Qādiyāni Dajjāl [Imposter]

What has been stated above has led some people to run into a miserable error because they have taken the survival and continuity of this 'part' of prophethood in the world as the very survival and continuity of prophethood itself! This is against definite, categorical and absolute statements of the Holy Qur'ān and against countless sound and authentic Aḥādīth, and squarely against the collective belief of the entire Muslim Ummah in the finality of prophethood (the 'Aqīdah of Khatm Nubūwwat). In this exercise in deception, they have failed to realize that the presence of a part of something does not mean the presence of that thing in full. If there is a single nail or strand of hair belonging to a person present anywhere, no sane human being can say that the person is present here. Think of the many parts of a machine. If someone has one part, or

a screw of that machine present with him and he goes about declaring that he has such and such machine with him, the whole world would dismiss him as a liar or fool.

True dreams, as expressly explained in Ḥadīth, are, without any doubt, a part of Nubuwwah - but not Nubuwwah itself. What we know as Nubuwwah or prophethood has already ended with the Last of Prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ.

It appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

لَمْ يَبْقَ مِنَ النَّبُوءَةِ إِلَّا الْمُبَشِّرَاتِ

That is, (in future) no part of the Nubuwwah will remain except Al-Mubashshirāt.

When the noble Ṣaḥābah asked for the meaning of Al-Mubashshirāt, he said: 'True dreams.' This proves that there is no Nubuwwah or prophethood of any kind or form for anyone anymore. What remains of it is only a small part which is called Al-Mubashshirāt or true dreams.

The Dream of a Sinning Disbeliever may also be True at times

It stands proved from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, and from experience, that sinners, even disbelievers, could see dreams which are true. In the Sūrah Yūsuf itself, mentioned there are the dreams of two prison mates of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which were true, and similarly, the dream of the king of Egypt which was true - though, the three of them were not Muslims. This was in the Qur'ān. Mentioned in the Ḥadīth is the dream of Kisrā (Cyrus) who had dreamt about the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ; that dream turned out to be true, though Kisrā was not a Muslim. The paternal aunt of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, 'Ātikah, had seen a true dream about the Holy Prophet ﷺ while she was still a disbeliever. In addition to that, the dream of the disbelieving King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, which was interpreted by Sayyidnā Dāniyāl (Daniel) عليه السلام was a true dream.

This tells us that the simple instance of someone seeing a true dream and the event taking place as seen cannot become a proof of the dreamer being pious and righteous, even Muslim. However, it is correct to say that this is how the customary practice of Allah operates - that the dreams seen by true and good people are generally true. The dreams

seen by sinners are generally from the category of self-suggestions and Satanic inputs - but, occasionally, the opposite could also happen.

In short, true dreams, as made clear in Ḥadīth, have no place in the lives of Muslims at large except that they can be either glad tidings, or warning, for them. They are no binding argument in any matter, neither for their own selves, nor for others. Some people, unaware of this truth, fall a victim to all sorts of scruples after having seen such dreams. Some of them would start taking these as a sign of having become a saint or something like that. Others would tend to give what they get out of these dreams the status of the injunctions of the Shari'ah. All these approaches are baseless. Specially so, when we already know that there is every likelihood that both kinds of imaginings, self-suggested or Satan-induced, can get profusely intermingled with true dreams.

Relating Dreams to Everyone is not Correct :

RULINGS

1. In verse 5: ... قَالَ يٰٓبُنَيَّ (He said, 'O my son ...'), Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام has prohibited Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from relating his dream to his brothers. This tells us that a dream should not be related before a person who is not a well-wisher, nor before a person who is no expert in the interpretation of dreams.

According to Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: A true dream is one of the forty parts of Nubūwwah. And a dream stays in suspension until related to someone. When related, and interpreted by the listener, it actualizes as interpreted. Therefore, one should not relate the dream to anyone, except to a person who is knowing and wise, or is, at least, a friend and a well-wisher.

As also referred to earlier, it appears in Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: A dream is of three kinds: (1) Glad tidings from Allah; (2) self-suggestions; (3) Satanic inputs. Therefore, should a person see a certain dream about which he feels good, then, he can relate it to others, if he wishes to do so. And, should he see something bad in it, let him not tell anyone about it. Instead, he should rise and offer Ṣalāh. The Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim also says: If one sees a bad dream, he should blow his breath three times towards his left side and seek the protection of Allah against its evil and tell no one about it. If this is done,

the dream will not cause any harm. The reason is that some dreams are composed of Satanic seductions. They will stand removed with this action. And, if the dream is true, the evil part of it - it can be hoped - will also be eliminated through this action.

2. As for the sense of the interpretation of a dream remaining hinged to it, Tafsīr Mazḥarī explains it by saying that some matters of destiny are not absolutely pre-decided, instead, they remain in a state of suspension, that is, if something was done, the impending misfortune will go away - and if it was not done, it will come. This is known as contingent or conditional destiny. In a situation like that giving a bad interpretation makes things turn bad while a good interpretation makes it come out good. Therefore, in the Ḥadīth from Tirmidhī mentioned above, relating a dream to a person who is not wise, or a well-wisher, has been prohibited. And there could also be another reason for this. When someone hears a bad interpretation of the dream seen, one finds himself overwhelmed by the thought that he is going to be hit by some misfortune. And it appears in Ḥadīth that Allah Ta'ālā said: *أَنَا عِنْدَظَنِّ عَبْدِي بِي* that is, 'I am with the opinion of My servant about Me.' In other words, 'whatever a servant of Mine believes Me to be, just that I become for him.' So, when one ends up believing that misfortune is going to come from Allah Ta'ālā, then, true to the customary practice of Allah, the coming of that misfortune becomes due against him.

3. Regarding the instruction given in the verse that something suggesting pain and misfortune seen in a dream should not be related to anyone, Ḥadīth narrations seem to indicate that this is not a legal prohibition. It is only an advice based on affection and sympathy. This should not be taken as something made unlawful by the Sharī'ah. Therefore, if related to someone, this will be no sin - because it appears in authentic Aḥādīth that the Holy Prophet ﷺ - at the time of the Battle of Uḥud - said: I have seen in a dream that my sword, Zulfaqār, has broken and I saw some cows being slaughtered, the interpretation of which was the Shahadah of Sayyidnā Hamzah ؓ and many other Muslim *mujāhidīn*, a grave misfortune indeed. But, he had related this dream before the Ṣaḥābah. (Qurṭubī)

4. This verse also tells us that it is permissible to disclose the evil trait or intention of a person about to cause harm to a Muslim. Being an

effort to offset an evil design, this action is not included under Ghībah or backbiting. For example, if a person finds out that A is planning to commit theft in the house of B, or intends to kill him, then, he should forewarn B. This does not fall under the purview of Ghībah which is Ḥarām. This is what was done by Sayyidnā Ya‘qūb عليه السلام when he had disclosed to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that there was a danger to his life at the hands of his brothers.

5. If a person is blessed by Allah, and he apprehends that his addressee will be jealous against him, he should not mention the blessings of wealth, status, and things like that before that person. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

To make your objectives succeed, seek help from keeping them secret - because, every holder of blessing is envied in this world.

6. From this verse and from the later in which the plan and execution of killing or throwing Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in a well has been mentioned, it becomes evident that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were no prophets or messengers of Allah, otherwise, they would have not stooped to the act of conspiring to kill him, then to put him out of their way by lowering him down in a desolate well, and ultimately, to disobey their father - because, the blessed prophets عليهم السلام have to be free of all sins, and protected from them. Their reference as ‘prophets’ in the book of al-Ṭabari is not correct. (Qurṭubī)

Expertise in the Interpretation of Dreams is Bestowed by Allah on whom He wills

In the sixth verse, Allah Ta‘ālā has promised some blessings for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: (1) كَذَلِكَ يَجْتَبِيكَ رُبُّكَ (And in the like manner your Lord will choose you ...) that is, He will choose him for His blessings and favours, something which manifested itself when wealth, recognition and power came into his hands in the country of Egypt. (2) وَيُعَلِّمُكَ مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ (and teach you the interpretation of events ...). The word: الاحاديث : ‘al-aḥādīth’ here means the dreams of people. It means that Allah Ta‘ālā will teach him how to interpret dreams. This also tells us that interpreting dreams is a standing area of expertise which is bestowed by Allah Ta‘ālā on a chosen few - everyone is not fit to have it.

Ruling:

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that ‘Abdullāh ibn Shaddād ibn al-Had said that the interpretation of this dream of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام actualized after forty years. This tells us that an instant actualization of an interpretation is not necessary either.

(3) As for the third promise: **وَيُتِمُّ بِعَمَّتِهِ عَلَيْكَ** (and will perfect His bounty upon you), it refers to the bestowal of Nubūwwah (prophethood) upon him. And this is what has been alluded to in the later sentences: **كَمَا آتَمَّهَا** عليه السلام **عَلَىٰ أَبِيكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَأَسْحَقَ** (as He has perfected it, earlier, upon your father, Ibrāhīm and Ishāq). That which has been said here also indicates that the skill of interpreting dreams as given to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was also taught to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Ishāq, peace be on them both.

At the end of the verse, it was said: **إِنَّ رَبَّكَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ** (Surely, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing). So He is. For Him, teaching an art to someone is not difficult, nor does He, as His wisdom would have it, teach this art to just anyone. Instead of that, He elects someone, in His wisdom, and lets him have this expertise.

Verses 7 - 20

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي يُوسُفَ وَإِخْوَتِهِ آيَاتٍ لِّلسَّائِلِينَ ﴿٧﴾ إِذْ قَالُوا لِيُوسُفُ
وَإِخْوَهُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيْنَا مِنَ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَهُمَا صَالِحُونَ ﴿٨﴾ يَا أَبَانَا
لِمَ كُنَّا كَالصَّخْرَةِ الْيَسُورِ ﴿٩﴾ إِنَّا نَحْنُ وَإِخْوَتُنَا صَالِحُونَ ﴿١٠﴾
قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ لَا تَقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ وَالْقَوْهَ
فِي غَيْبَتِ الْجُبِّ يَلْتَقِطُهُ بَعْضُ السَّيَّارَةِ إِن كُنتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ ﴿١١﴾ قَالُوا
يَا أَبَانَا مَا لَكَ لَا تَأْمَنَّا عَلَىٰ يُوسُفَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَنَصِحُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ أَرْسَلَهُ
مَعَنَا غَدًا يَرْتَعُ وَيَلْعَبُ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَفِظُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ قَالَ إِنِّي لِيَحْزُنُنِي
أَنْ تَذَهَبُوا بِهِ وَأَخَافُ أَنْ يَأْكُلَهُ الدِّيبُ وَأَنْتُمْ عَنْهُ غَافِلُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ قَالُوا
لَنْ يَأْكُلَهُ الدِّيبُ وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ إِنَّا إِذًا لَّخَسِرُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوا بِهِ

وَأَجْمَعُونَ أَنْ يَجْعَلُوهُ فِي غَيْبَتِ الْجُبِّ ۚ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ لَتُنَبِّئَهُمْ
 بِأَمْرِهِمْ هَذَا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَجَاءَ وَآبَاهُمْ عِشَاءً يَبْكُونَ ﴿١٦﴾
 قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّا ذَهَبْنَا نَسْتَبِقُ وَتَرَكْنَا يُوسُفَ عِنْدَ مَتَاعِنَا فَأَكَلَهُ الذِّئْبُ
 ۚ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ لَنَا وَلَوْ كُنَّا صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَجَاءَ وَعَلَى قَمِيصِهِ
 بَدَمٌ كَذِبٌ ۗ قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْراً ۗ فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيلٌ ۗ
 وَاللَّهُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَى مَا تَصِفُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَجَاءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ فَأَرْسَلُوا
 وَارِدَهُمْ فَأَدْلَى دَلْوَهُ ۗ قَالَ يَبِشْرِي هَذَا عُلْمٌ ۗ وَأَسْرُوهُ بِضَاعَةَ ۗ
 وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ ۗ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍ بَخْسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُودَةٍ
 ۚ وَكَانُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الزَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾ ۚ

Surely, in (the story of) Yūsuf and his brothers, there are signs for those who ask [7] when they said, "Yūsuf and his brother are dearer to our father than we are while we are a powerful group (for him). Surely, our father is in clear error. [8] Kill Yūsuf or throw him in some land , so that your father's face may be your's alone, and after that you may become a righteous people." [9]

One of them said, "Do not kill Yūsuf, rather, cast him into the bottom of a pit, so that some wayfarer picks him up, if you are going to do something at all." [10]

They said, "Our father, why is it that you do not trust us with Yūsuf while indeed, we are his well-wishers. [11] Send him with us tomorrow, that he may eat and play, and of course, we are his guards." [12]

He said, "It makes me sad that you should take him away and I fear lest a wolf should devour him while you are heedless of him." [13]

They said, 'If the wolf eats him while we are a strong group, we are then losers indeed.' [14]

So, when they went with him and were determined to put him in the bottom of a pit (which they did). And We revealed to him, "You will (one day) tell them of this

deed of theirs while they will not recognize (you)." [15]

And they came weeping to their father at nightfall. [16]
They said, "Father, we went running races and left Yūsuf with our belongings and the wolf ate him up. And you will never believe us, even though we are telling the truth." [17]

And they came with fake blood on his shirt. He said, "Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something. So, patience is best. And it is Allah whose help is sought against what you describe." [18]

And there came some wayfarers and sent one of them to go for water. So, he let down his bucket. He said, "What a good news! Here is a boy." And they kept him hidden as merchandise, while Allah was aware of what they were doing. [19] And they sold him for a paltry price, for a few silver-coins, and they were disinterested in him. [20]

Commentary

In the first of the fourteen verses cited above (7), a notice of warning has been served to the effect that the story of Yūsuf, peace be on him, should not be taken as a common story - because, in it, there are great signs of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā, and His instructions, both for those who have asked and for those who would seek guidance through it.

The statement made here could be explained by saying that the signs referred to here are for the Jews who had put the Holy Prophet ﷺ to test by asking him to relate this story to them. When, according to a narration, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was in Makkah al-Mu'azzamah, the news about him reached Madīnah. The Jews living there sent a group of their men to Makkah to make investigations and test his claim to prophethood. Therefore, the question they asked of him was put in a somewhat vague manner, that is, 'if you are a true prophet of Allah, tell us about the prophet one of whose sons was taken from Syria to Egypt, an event which had caused his father to become blind due to constant weeping during his absence.

The Jews had chosen to ask about this event because it was not widely known, nor did anyone in Makkah was aware of it. That was a time when there was no member of the people of Book living in Makkah, one

from whom some part of this story as appearing in the Torah and Injil could be ascertained. So, it was following this very question that the entire Sūrah Yūsuf was revealed, a Sūrah which relates the whole story of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb and Yūsuf عليهما السلام - and does it in such details as do not appear even in Torah and Injil. Therefore, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ described it, it was an open miracle shown at his blessed hands.

Alternately, this verse could also mean that this event in itself - aside from the question asked by the Jews - was full of great signs of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā and that, in it, there were major elements of Divine guidance, and instructions and injunctions. One could imagine the destiny of a child who was thrown in a pit when the power of Allah took over, carried him from one stage to the other guarding him all along, from his childhood to his youth. Then, Allah Ta'ālā has blessed him with a divine colour as He would do with His special servants for he stood steadfast as His servant against trials which would make obedience difficult. It is all the more difficult when one is young and challenged by opportunities. But, here is he, armed with the fear of Allah. He holds his ground, controls his self from desiring the undesirable and walks out clean from the stranglehold of temptation. Then, the story tells us how Allah rewards a person who takes to righteousness and fear of Allah as his conscious and determined way of life, how He makes him rise higher than his adversaries in power and recognition, and how they stand subdued before him finally. These are lessons and truths, all pointing to the great signs of the Divine power which can be realized by anyone who would care to look and find out. (Qurtubī & Maẓharī)

This verse mentions the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. The reference is to the twelve sons of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, including Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Every son from among them had their children. Their families prospered. Since the title by which Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was known was Isrā'īl, therefore, all these twelve families were identified as Banī Isrā'īl (the children of Isrā'īl).

Out of these twelve sons, the eldest ten were from the first blessed wife of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, Sayyidah Layya, daughter of Layyān. After her death, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام married her sister, Rāḥīl * (Rachel). She became the mother of his two sons, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and

*. See editorial note on page 156.

Benyāmin (Benjamin). Therefore, Benyāmin was the only real brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. The rest of the ten were his half-brothers from the father's side. Rāḥīl, the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, had died during his childhood at the time of the birth of Benyāmin. (Qurṭubī)

From the second verse (8), begins the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which tells that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام saw that their father, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام loved Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام unusually more than them who were older than him. Therefore, this made them envy him. And it is also possible that they had somehow found out about the dream of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which may have led them to become uncomfortable at the prospect of his coming rise in status, and which may have made them envious of him. They talked about it among themselves: We see that our father loves Yūsuf and his brother Benyāmin much more than us, although we are ten of us and older than them. We have the ability and group strength to manage the affairs of the family while they both are small children who cannot do much. Our father should have noticed this and we are the ones he should have been loving more. But, what he is doing is open injustice. Therefore, you should either kill Yūsuf, or throw him away into some far out spot of land from where he could not come back.

In this verse, these brothers have referred to themselves as: *عُصْبَةٌ* (*uṣbah*). This word is used in the Arabic for a group from five to ten. As for their remark about their father: *إِنَّ أَبَانَا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ* (Surely, our father is in clear error), the word: *ضَلَالٌ* (*ḍalāl*) appearing here lexically means the error of straying. But, at this place, *ḍalāl* or error does not mean religious error. If so, such a connotation would have made all of them Kāfirs (disbelievers) - because, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام is an exalted prophet of Allah Ta'ālā and such a thought in his case is an absolute Kufr.

And about the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, it has been mentioned in the Qur'ān itself that they, later on, admitted their crime and requested their father to pray for their forgiveness which he accepted to do. This makes it obvious that their mistake was forgiven. Now, this can become possible only when all of them are believers - otherwise, the prayer for the forgiveness of a disbeliever is not permissible. This is the reason why there is no difference of opinion about their being believers, although 'Ulamā' do differ about these brothers being prophets. This tells

us that the word: ضَلَّال (ḍalāl: error) has been uttered at this place in the sense that he does not treat brothers equally in the matter of their rights.

The third verse (9) describes how the brothers exchanged opinions among themselves. Some suggested that Yūsuf be killed. Others opted for throwing him into a desolate pit so that the thorn in their side could be removed and they could thus become the sole recipients of their father's attention. As for the sin they would be earning for themselves by killing or throwing him in a pit, that was something which could be taken care of later when they could repent for what they did and thus become righteous. This is the meaning of the sentence: وَتَكُونُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ قَوْمًا صَالِحِينَ (and after that you may become a righteous people) according to some reports. And the verse could also be taken to mean that things will come out right for them after the killing of Yūsuf because that focus of the father's attention on Yūsuf will not be there anymore, or that they would, once they have apologized to their father after the killing of Yūsuf, become normal as they were.

This proves that these brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) were not prophets because, in this case, they had committed many major sins, such as, the intention to kill someone innocent, disobedience to their father and causing pain to him, contravention of pledge, conspiracy, and things like that. Such sins, according to the Muslim consensus, cannot be committed by the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all, even before they are ordained to be one.

Mentioned in the fourth verse (10) is that, hearing this whole conversation, one of these brothers advised that Yūsuf should not be killed. If something has to be done, let him be thrown into some pit of a well where he could remain alive so that when wayfarers stop at this well, they would take him out and away. Thus, it would serve their purpose while they would not have to take the trouble of traveling with him to some far out place. Some caravan passing this way would itself do this for them by taking him away to some distant destination.

The giver of this advice was their eldest brother, Yahūdā (Judah). Some narrations report that Ruebel (Rueben) was the eldest and it was he who gave this advice. And this is the same person mentioned later,

that is, he was the one who, when Benyāmin, the younger brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was detained in Egypt, came forward and said: How am I going to face my father when I go to him without him with me, therefore, I am not going back to Can'aan.

The expression used in this verse is: عَيَابَةُ الْحُبِّ (ghayābatil-jubb: bot-tom of a pit). Literally, *ghayābah* means everything which hides something in or makes it disappear. Therefore, a grave is also called *ghayābah*. And *jubb* refers to a well without raised sidings.

Another word: يَلْتَقِطُهُ (yaltaqiṭhu) appearing in the next sentence: يَلْتَقِطُهُ بَعْضُ السَّيَّارَةِ (so that some wayfarer picks him up) needs explanation. This word: التَّقَاطُ (iltiqāṭ) is a derivation from: لُقْطَه (luqṭah). The word: لُقْطَه (luqṭah) refers to something left or dropped which is found by someone without having the desire to have it. If it is inert, it is called *luqṭah*, and if it is live, it is identified as *laqīṭ* (لَقِيطٌ) in the terminology of Muslim jurists. A human being will be called a *laqīṭ* when he or she is a child, not rational and pubert. It is from this word that Al-Qurṭubī proves that, when Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was thrown in the pit of a well, he was a non-pubert child. In addition to that, the saying of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام that 'I fear lest a wolf should devour him (13)' also indicates his being a child - because, the likelihood of being eaten up by a wolf can only be imagined in the case of a child. As reported by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Shaybah, the age of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was seven years at that time.

Some rules about the disposal of something owned by an unknown person (*luqṭah*)

At this place, Imām Al-Qurṭubī has given details of Islamic legal injunctions relating to '*luqṭah*' and '*laqīṭ*' for which this is not the appropriate occasion. However, it is necessary to understand a matter of principle operative in this connection. Islam has a system of its own in which the protection of the life and property of common people, the upkeep and cleanliness of walkways and streets, and similar other civic duties, have not been left in the sole charge of the departments of the government. Instead of that, it has made everyone obligated to the duty of keeping them safe and clean. The Ḥadīth has sternly warned those who make things difficult for passersby by crowding or lingering or depositing or throwing their belongings on public walkways and streets. It says: 'The Jihād of a

person who blocks or clogs the passageway of Muslims is not acceptable.' Similarly, there is the instance of thorns or nails or broken glass or rocks and things like that which may be lying on walkways and which pose a danger of hurting others. Islam has not made their removal from public thoroughfare the sole responsibility of a city council or municipal board. Instead of that, it has made every believing Muslim responsible for it. Of course, it does that in a mode of persuasion and great reward and *thawāb* has been promised for those who do so.

If, on this principle, the property lost by a person is found by someone, his Islamic legal responsibility does not remain simply limited to not stealing it - it goes much beyond that. In fact, it also becomes his responsibility that he must pick it up as an article of trust, keep it safe, make an announcement, look for the owner and, when he finds him and his description of the lost property before him makes him sure that the lost property does belong to him, then, he should give it to him. And when, despite his announcement and search, the owner remains untraced and, given the general valuation and status of the lost property, one becomes convinced that its owner is not going to look for it anymore, then, one has two choices. If he himself is poor, he may use it personally; if not, he should give it in charity to those poor and needy. However, in both these situations, the lost property thus used shall be taken as *ṣadaqah* (charity) from the owner. The *thawāb* for it shall reach the owner - as if, it was deposited in his name in the Treasury of the Heavens.

These are golden principles of public service and social self-help. The responsibility of putting them in regular practice has been placed on every individual of an Islamic society. Only if Muslims would understand their religion and start acting in accordance with it, they will be noticed by the whole world with surprise as to how do they accomplish things so easily and so effectively, things which big departments of governments fail to accomplish at the cost of millions and billions.

Appearing in the fifth (111) and sixth (112) verse is the request of these brothers before their father in which they wondered why he would not trust them with Yūsuf, although they wished him fully well. So, they pleaded, he should send him along with them to enjoy himself freely by eating and drinking and playing with them and that they all shall be there to take care of him.

The tone of the very request made by the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام indicates that they had already made such a request earlier too which was not accepted by their father. Therefore, in the present request, they seem to have tried to assure their father with added effort and insistence.

Permissibility of a trip for pleasure

In this verse, the permission sought from Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام is to go for an outing and have the freedom to enjoy eating and playing together. This was something Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did not disallow at all. He only showed his reluctance in sending Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام with them, which will appear in the next verse. From here we find out that going out to enjoy and play is allowed under permissible limits. Authentic Aḥādīth too seem to indicate its justification. But, the condition is that in this activity of fun and games, there should be no transgression of the limits set by the Sharī'ah, nor should it be mixed up with any act not permissible there. (Qurṭubī & others)

When the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام requested their father that he should send Yūsuf with them on a recreational outing, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام told them that he did not favour sending him out for two reasons: (1) He remains uncomfortable without him in sight and (2) he apprehends that, in the wilderness out there, it might so happen that they become neglectful at some time and a wolf might eat him up.

The apprehension of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام may have been caused either due to the abundance of wolves in Can'aan, or because he had seen in a dream that he is standing on top of a hill and Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is there on the slope downhill. All of a sudden ten wolves surround him and try to attack him. But, one of the wolves came forward to rescue him from the rest. Once released, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام took refuge inside the terrain.

The interpretation of that dream manifested later when it turned out that the ten wolves were these ten brothers and the wolf which defended Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and saved him from being killed was his elder brother, Yahūdā (Judah). And the depth of the pit was the interpretation of his hiding under the land.

In a narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, it has been re-

ported that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, because of this dream, felt the danger of an unfortunate situation coming at the hands of these brothers. Thus, in fact, they were the ones he had alluded to as wolves - but, in consideration of his wisdom, he did not lay the truth bare. (Qurtūbī)

After hearing what Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام said, those brothers countered it by saying that his apprehension was strange in view of the presence of a strong group of the ten of them to protect Yūsuf. If a wolf could be expected to eat up Yūsuf despite their being there to guard him, it would render their very presence around him totally senseless. If so, they could not be taken as good for anything.

Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, acting with the elegance of a great prophet he was, did not say it plainly before his children that it was they about whom he feared a foul play because, firstly it would have been a painful statement to make against all of them and, secondly, there was the danger that such a statement from the father would have increased the enmity of the brothers to higher proportions - that is, if they somehow abandoned their idea of killing him now, they might have done so at some later occasion under some other excuse. For this reason, he allowed them to go. But, he did make sure that the brothers give him a solemn pledge that they would see that no harm comes to Yūsuf. As added precaution, he entrusted him with his elder brother Ruebel (Rueben) or Yahūdā (Judah) so that they specially take care of his needs there and see that he returns soon and safe. The brothers lifted Yūsuf up on their shoulders, and kept doing so one by one. Sayyidnā Ya'qūb followed them upto a certain distance to bid them farewell.

When these people, as described by Al-Qurtūbī following historical narrations, disappeared from the sight of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, the brother on whose shoulders Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was perched threw him down on the ground. He started walking by himself. But, being too small, he could not keep pace with them and tried to seek help from another brother. He remained cold. So did every brother he went to for help. They told him that he better call for help those eleven stars, the Sun and the Moon he had seen prostrating to him - they should help him.

From here, Al-Qurtūbī concludes that the brothers had somehow

found out about the dream of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. That dream became the cause of their extreme hostility.

Finally, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام appealed to Yahūdā as his elder brother telling him about his plight. He was weak and small and needed protection, at least for the sake of their old father to whom they had given the pledge to help him. Yahūdā was moved and he told him that until he was alive, he would not let these brothers hurt him.

Thus, when Allah Ta'ālā put mercy in the heart of Yahūdā and the ability to do what was right, he told the other brothers of his that killing someone sinless was an extremely grave sin, therefore, they should fear Allah and take the innocent child back to his father. However, to make things easy on them, they could take a pledge from him that he would not complain to him in any way about their behaviour.

The brothers told Yahūdā: We know what you mean. You wish to rise higher than us in the sight of our father. So, you better listen to us. If you do anything to resist our intention, we shall kill you too. When Yahūdā realized that he alone could do nothing against his nine brothers, he told them: Well, if you have decided to get rid of this child, then, listen to me carefully. There is an old well nearby with a lot of wild growth in it and now a home for many lethal crawlers. Put him in that well. If a snake or scorpion bites and kills him there, you shall have what you are looking for. Thus, you shall remain free of the blame of shedding his blood by your own hands. And, in case, he still remains alive, then, may be there comes a caravan this way, lowers its bucket to draw water from it and finds him instead. It is likely that they would take him away with them to some other country in which case too you would have achieved your objective.

To this, all brothers agreed - as stated in the ninth of the present verses (15) cited above in the following words:

فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوا بِهِ وَاجْتَمَعُوا أَن يُجْعَلُوهُ فِي غَيْبَتِ الْحُبِّ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ لَتُنَبِّئَهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِمْ هَذَا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

'So, when they went with him and were determined to put him in the bottom of a pit (which they did). And We revealed to him (Yūsuf), 'You will (one day) tell them of this deed of theirs while they will not recognize (you).'

Here, the word: وَأَوْحَيْنَا (And We revealed) is the principal clause of the preceding conditional clause: فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوا (when they went). The letter: وَا (and) at this place in the former is *zā'idah* i.e. has no meaning (Qurtubī). The sense is: When the brothers did finally decide to throw Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام into the pit of the well, Allah Ta'ālā revealed to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام words of comfort for him in which he has been given the glad tidings that some time in the future he will meet his brothers and that it will be a time when he would be free of any need of help from these brothers, rather, would have an upperhand over them. And by virtue of these changed circumstances, he would be in a position to take account of their unjust treatment meted out to their younger brother while they themselves would be unaware of the whole matter.

Imām Al-Qurtubī says that there could be two possible situations in this connection: (1) That the revelation came to him after he was thrown in the pit of the well and that it was to give him comfort in that state and to give him the good news that he would be delivered soon from this ordeal. (2) That Allah Ta'ālā had, much before he was thrown into the pit of the well, oriented Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام with conditions and events he would face through a revelation in which he was also told that he would come out of this death-trap safely and that particular conditions will unravel when he would have the opportunity to admonish these brothers who would not even recognize him at that time as their own brother, Yūsuf.

According to Tafsīr Mazharī, this revelation which came to him during the time of his childhood was not the commonly recognized *wahy* or revelation sent to prophets - because, that is conferred on them at the age of forty. In fact, this was a revelation similar to that which was sent to the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. The usual channel of revelation as received by prophets started when Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had reached Egypt and attained maturity - as stated in the Qur'an: **وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ، آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا** (And when he reached at the prime of his age, We gave him wisdom and knowledge - 22). And Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and others have taken this revelation to be nothing but prophetic, though in an exceptional way, as was the case of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام who was invested with prophethood during his childhood. (Mazharī)

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has said: 'After he had reached

Egypt, Allah Ta'ālā had forbidden Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) through a revelation that he should not report his circumstances back to his home. (Qurtūbī) This was the reason why a prophet of Allah like Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) did not - even after having been released from the prison and later having the reins of the government of Egypt in his hands - make an effort to find a way through which he could have provided relief to his old and afflicted father by sending to him a message that he was safe and set.

Who knows or could know the wisdom of Allah *jalla thana'uh* hidden behind this arrangement? Perhaps, of the many considerations, it may also be His will that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (عليه السلام) be sounded out that such boundless love for someone other than Allah was not ideally favour-worthy - and that by making those brothers come to Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) in need, the purpose may be to mildly censure him too for his conduct.

At this point, Imām Al-Qurtūbī and other commentators have described the event of the lowering of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) into the pit of the well. When his brothers started doing that, he clung to the outer edge of the well. They took his shirt out and tied his hands with it. At that time, Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) pleaded for mercy from his brothers once again. But, once again, he got the same answer: Call those eleven stars who prostrate to you, let them help you. Then, they put him in a bucket and lowered him down into the well. When he was down as far as half the depth of the well, they cut off the rope releasing the bucket for a free fall. But, Allah being the protector of His prophet, saved him when he remained unhurt as he fell into the water. There was a protruding rock close to him. Safe and sound, he sat on it. According to some narrations, a command was given to Sayyidnā Jibra'īl (عليه السلام) who put him on the rock.

Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) remained in that well for three days. Hiding away from others, his brother, Yahūdā, brought food and water for him every day and lowered it down to him through a bucket.

As in verse 16: *وَجَاءَ آبَاَهُمْ عِشَاءً يَبْكُونَ* : They came weeping to their father at nightfall. Hearing the sound of their crying, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (عليه السلام) came out and asked: What has happened? Was the flock of your goats attacked by someone? And where is Yūsuf? The brothers, then, said:

يٰۤاَبَانَا اِنَّا ذَهَبْنَا نَسْتَبِقُ وَتَرَكْنَا يُوسُفَ عِنْدَ مَتَاعِنَا فَاكَلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَمَا اَنْتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ
لَنَا وَلَوْ كُنَّا صٰدِقِيْنَ

Father, we went running races and left Yūsuf with our belongings and the wolf ate him up. And you will never believe us, even though we are telling the truth.

Some rules about racing

In Aḥkām al-Qurʿān, Ibn al-ʿArabī has said: Running races against each other is legitimate in the Shariʿah. It is a good habit which comes handy in Jihād. Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ, as proved by authentic Aḥādīth, has personally participated in such running of races. Also proved is making horses run against each other (not to be confused with institutionalized horse-racing with bets, as clarified later). Out of the noble Companions, Sayyidnā Salamah ibn al-Akwaʿ ﷺ ran a one-on-one race against a person and won it.

That the racing of horses as such is permissible stands proved from the verse under reference and from Ḥadīth reports cited above. In addition to the racing of horses, mutual competition in racing and archery and in other fields is also permissible, and equally permissible is the giving of awards from a third party to the winner in this mutual competition. But, fixing an amount of money in a bilateral agreement that the loser will pay it to the winner is gambling or Qimār which has been declared Ḥarām or unlawful by the Holy Qurʿān. Today, none of the prevailing forms of horse racing is free from gambling and Qimār. Therefore, all of them are Ḥarām, impermissible and unlawful.

Mentioned in the previous verses was that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام), after talking to each other back and forth, finally put him down in a desolate well and returned to their father telling him that he has been eaten up by a wolf. From verse 18, the story onwards has been taken up in the following words: وَجَاءُوْا عَلٰى فِئْصِمِهٖ بِدَمٍ كٰذِبٍ (And they came with fake blood on his shirt) that is, the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) came back with his shirt they had smeared in fake blood so that they could make their father believe that he has been eaten up by a wolf.

But, Allah Taʿālā had His way of exposing their lie. He made them neglect something else they should have done besides smearing the shirt with fake blood. Had they also torn the shirt, it would proved his being

eaten up by a wolf. Here they were coming with an intact shirt smeared with the blood of a kid goat and trying to deceive their father. After seeing this shirt totally unscratched, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام said: My sons, certainly wise was this wolf who ate Yūsuf in a way that his shirt was not torn from anywhere.

Thus, their deceit was exposed before Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام and he said:

بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْراً فَصَبِرْ حَمِيلاً، وَاللَّهُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَى مَا تَصِفُونَ

Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something. So, patience is best. And it is Allah whose help is sought against what you describe.

Two Rulings:

1. Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام has used the intact shirt as evidence to establish that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were lying. This tells us that a Qāḍī or judge should also keep an eye on circumstantial evidence alongwith the claims and arguments of the parties concerned (Qurtubī).

Al-Māwardī has said: The legendary shirt of Yūsuf is a wonder of the world in its own way. Three great events of prophetic annals are connected with his shirt: (I) The first event relates to the smearing of the shirt with fake blood, cheating a father and the evidence of the shirt which established the lie. (II) The second event relates to Zulaikhā in which it is the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which appears as the conclusive evidence. (III) The third event relates to the return of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb's eyesight in which it is the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which stands out as the cause of that miracle.

2. Some 'Ulamā have said that the comment: بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْراً (Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something - 18) made at this time before his sons was also made at the time when Benyāmin, the real brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, was detained in Egypt having been charged with theft. When his brothers reported this incident to Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, he said: بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ (Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something - 83). Worth pondering here is that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had made both these comments as based on his opinion. The first of them turned out to be true; the other was not - because, in this,

the brothers were not to be blamed. This tells us that a wrong personal opinion is possible even from prophets initially - though, later on, they are not left to stand by that wrong opinion by means of Divine revelation.

According to Al-Qurṭubī, it proves that an error of opinion can be committed by the highest of the high. Therefore, every man or woman of opinion should take his or her opinion as suspect, and should not become so rigid about it as not to be ready to listen or entertain what others have to say.

There is No Chance or Accident in Divine Arrangements

It is said in verse 19: *وَجَاءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ فَأَرْسَلُوا وَارِدَهُمْ فَأَدْلَى دَلْوَهُ* (And there came some wayfarers and sent one of them to go for water. So, he let down his bucket). The word: *سَيَّارَةٌ* (*sayyāra*) means wayfarers or a caravan. *Wārid* (وارد) is a person who moves ahead of the caravan as its vanguard. Such a person is responsible for taking care of the needs of the caravan, water being one of them. *Idlā'* (إدلاء) means to lower the bucket into the well to draw water. The sense is that a caravan passed by this part of land by chance. According to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, this caravan was coming from Syria on its way to Egypt. Having lost its bearing, it strayed into this desolate place and sent some of his men to bring water from the well.

That the Syrian caravan lost its regular route, reached that exact spot and decided to send their water-carrier to that deserted well is a sequence of events which is referred to by people as accidental. But, the knower of the secret of the creation knows that all these events are chains of a system which is breathtakingly coordinated and formidable. It is but the Creator of Yūsuf, and his Protector, who moves the caravan away from its set route and brings it here and sends its men to this deserted well. This is a mirror of all other states and events which common people see as accidental happenings - and philosophers as contingents - all of which is based on an unawareness of how the system of the universe really works. Otherwise, in creation, there is no chance or accident (which Einstein, though no formal believer, did concede: 'God does not play dice!'). However, the most true Creator of the universe is known by the majesty of His unique state of being. He is, as the Qur'ān declares:

فَعَمَّا لَمَّا يُرِيدُ

Doer of what He intends - 85:16

His wisdom works in unimaginable ways when He creates conditions and circumstances which do not seem to synchronize with the obvious sequence of events. When this happens, one fails to comprehend the reality, and takes what he does not understand as something accidental.

However, their man whose name has been identified as *Mālik ibn Du'bar* reached that well, lowered his bucket which *Yūsuf* saw as Divine help coming down. He took hold of the rope. Up it came with no water but with the shining face of someone whose instant mystique of beauty and signs of forthcoming spiritual excellence were no less impressive than the real greatness he was going to achieve in the future. Intrigued, surprised and flushed with delight, the man looked at this young, handsome and promising child coming suddenly face to face before him emerging from the depths of a well and making him exclaim: *يُبَشِّرُنِي هَذَا غُلَامٌ* (What a good news! This is a boy). In the *Ḥadīth* concerning the Night of *Mi'rāj* (the Ascent to the Heavens) appearing in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of *Muslim*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: 'When I met *Yūsuf* عليه السلام, I saw that Allah *Ta'ālā* has blessed him with half of the beauty of the whole world, while the other half has been spread over the rest of it.'

Following immediately after is the statement: *وَأَسْرُوهُ بَضَاعَةً* (And they kept him hidden as merchandise). It means that *Mālik ibn Du'bar*, when he first saw this boy, did exclaim taken by surprise. But, an afterthought over the matter made him decide not to let this be known. Instead, he thought, he would keep him hidden from others so that he could sell him for good money later. He did not want the caravan to know about it for the whole caravan would then be claiming a share in the money so acquired.

However, the expression could also mean that the brothers of *Sayyidnā Yūsuf* عليه السلام, by concealing the truth of the matter, themselves made him into merchandise. This is as it appears in some narrations where it is said that *Yahūdā* used to carry food to *Sayyidnā Yūsuf* عليه السلام every day while he was in the well. On the third day, when he did not find him there, he returned to his brothers and told them about it. Together, they

went there, made investigations, and found him with the people of the caravan. They told them: This boy is our slave. He has escaped and you have done something bad by detaining him in your possession. Mālik ibn Du'bar and his companions were scared lest they be taken as thieves. Therefore, they started talking about a deal to purchase him from the brothers.

Thus, the verse would come to mean that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ themselves made him into merchandise and sold him out. After that it was said: وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌۢ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ (while Allah was aware of what they were doing). The sense is that Allah Ta'ālā, in His perfect knowledge, was fully aware of what the legendary brothers of Yūsuf would do, and also that which will be done by the people of the caravan who would buy him. Allah Ta'ālā had all power to undo the designs of both, but it was under His own wise considerations that He let these designs carry on.

In this sentence, according to Ibn Kathīr, there is an element of guidance for the Holy Prophet ﷺ as well. It tells him that nothing his people are doing to him, or will do in the future, is outside the scope of Allah's knowledge and power. He could, if He so willed, change everything and everyone outright. But, wisdom demanded that they be allowed to show their power at this time. Finally, by making him overcome them, it will be truth itself seen triumphant over them - as was done in the case of Yūsuf ﷺ.

Verse 20 begins with the words: وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍ بَخْسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُودَةٍ (And they sold him for a paltry price, for a few silver-coins, and they were disinterested in him). In Arabic, the word: شِيراً (*shira'*) is used for buying and selling both. The probability of both meanings exists here. If the pronoun is reverted back to the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, it will mean selling - and if applied to the people of the caravan, it would mean buying. Thus, the sense would be: 'the brothers of Yūsuf sold him - or, the people of the caravan bought him - for a paltry price, that is, for a counted few *dirhams* in return.'

Al-Qurṭubī says: The Arab traders used to transact deals involving big amounts by weight while, for amounts not more than forty, they would go by count. Therefore, the word: مَعْدُودَةٌ (*ma'dūdah*: few) used with:

دَرَاهِمِ (*darāhim*: plural of *dirham*: silver-coins) tells us that the count of *dirhams* was less than forty. Ibn Kathīr, citing the authority of Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه, has written that the deal was closed at twenty *dirhams* which the ten brothers had divided among themselves at the rate of two *dirhams* per person. As for the exact amount of *dirhams*, reported there are other narrations as well which put them as twenty two and forty. (Ibn Kathīr)

In the last sentence of the verse: وَكَانُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الزَّاهِدِينَ (and they were disinterested in him), the word: الزاهدين (*az-zāhidīn*) is the plural of *zāhid* which is a derivation from *zuhd*. Literally, *zuhd* means indifference, disinterestedness. In usage, the lack of interest in and the avoidance of wealth and property in worldly life is referred to as *zuhd*. The meaning of the verse is that the brothers of Yūsuf were really not interested in any financial gain for themselves in this matter. Their real purpose was to separate Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from their father. Therefore, they struck a deal for a very few *dirhams*.

Verses 21 -23

وَقَالَ الَّذِي اشْتَرَاهُ مِنْ مِصْرَ لِمَرْأَتِهِ أَكْرَمِيْ مَثْوَاهُ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَنْفَعَنَا
 أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ، وَكَذَا ۖ وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ وَلِنُعَلِّمَهُ، مِنْ
 تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَالِبٌ عَلَىٰ أَمْرِهِ ۖ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ
 لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ ۖ وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ، آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا ۗ وَكَذَلِكَ
 نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾ ۖ وَرَأَوْدَتُهُ الَّتِي هُوَ فِي بَيْتِهَا عَنْ نَفْسِهِ
 وَعَلَّقَتِ الْأَبْوَابَ وَقَالَتْ هَيْتَ لَكَ ۗ قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ رَبِّي أَحْسَنَ
 مَثْوَايَ ۗ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

And the one who bought him from Egypt said to his wife, "Make his stay graceful. He may be useful for us. Or, we may adopt him as a son." And thus We established Yūsuf in the land, so that We should teach him the interpretation of events. And Allah is powerful in (enforcing) His command, but most of the people do not know. [21]

And when he reached the prime of his age, We gave him wisdom and knowledge, and this is how We reward those good in deeds. [22]

And she, in whose house he was, seduced him away from his (resisting) self and bolted the doors, and said, "come on!" He said, "May Allah save me. Surely, he is my master. He has given me a good lodging. Surely, the wrongdoers do not prosper." [23]

Commentary

Described in the previous verses was an early account of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام as to how the people from the caravan took him out of the well, and how his brothers made him out to be their escaped slave and traded him for a few *dirhams*. First of all, they did not know the value and station of their great brother. Secondly, their real purpose was not to make money by selling him - they wanted to remove him away from his father. Therefore, they did not stop at simply selling him because they felt the danger that the caravan may somehow leave him behind as a result of which he may somehow reach their father and tell him all about their conspiracy. So, according to a report from Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid, these people waited for the caravan to leave with him for Egypt. When the caravan actually departed, they went with the caravan upto a certain distance warning them on the way that he is in the habit of running away, therefore, they should not leave him free to move around, better still, they should tie him up. Thus, the caravan, unaware of the precious 'merchandise' they were carrying with them, took him in that condition as far as Egypt. (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

The part of the story as taken up onwards in the present verses shows the eloquent brevity of the Qur'ān when sections of the story which can be understood independently have not been necessarily described. For instance, the trip of the caravan through various stages en-route Egypt and the actual selling of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام there. All this has been skipped. Stated from here is:

وَقَالَ الَّذِي اشْتَرَاهُ مِنْ مِصْرَ لِمَرْأَتِهِ أَكْرَمِي مَثْوَاهُ

And the one who bought him from Egypt said to his wife, 'Make his stay graceful ...'.

According to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, when the caravan reached Egypt and

offered him for sale, people vied with each other with increasing bids which rose to gold, to musk and to silk equal to his weight.

But, Allah Ta'ālā had destined this human treasure to go to the most powerful authority of the time in Egypt, the 'Azīz of Miṣr. He beat all the bids and bought Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام.

As we already know from the statement of the Holy Qur'ān, all these things happening were nothing accidental. Instead, they were parts of the formidable plan put into action by the most exalted Lord Himself. That Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام will be bought in Egypt by the highest of the high in that country was certainly a call of destiny. According to Ibn Kathīr, this man who bought Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in Egypt was what we may call the Finance Minister of Egypt. His name has been cited as Qiṭfir, or 'Iṭfir. The King of Egypt at that time was Ruiyyān ibn Usayd, an Amalkite (who, later on, embraced Islam at the hands of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام) and died as a Muslim during the lifetime of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام (Maḥzarī). The name of the wife of the 'Azīz of Egypt who had bought him has been given as Ra'eel, or Zulaikhā. So, the 'Azīz of Miṣr, called Qiṭfir (Potiphar), instructed his wife to provide good lodging for Yūsuf, not to treat him like common slaves and see that good arrangements are made for him.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه said: 'Three men turned out to be the best physiognomists of the world: (1) The 'Azīz of Miṣr who discovered the inner excellence of Yūsuf عليه السلام from his outer appearance and gave those instructions to his wife; (2) the daughter of Sayyidnā Shu'ayb عليه السلام who told her father about Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام: *يَا بَتِ اسْتَأْجِرْهُ إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ اسْتَأْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ* (O my father, retain him on wages. Surely, the best one for you to employ is the one who is strong and trustworthy - 28:26); (3) The third person is Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه who chose Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه to be the Khalīfah after the Holy Prophet ﷺ. (Ibn Kathīr)

The next sentence of the verse is: *وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ* (And thus We established Yūsuf in the land ...). Given here is the good news of what would happen in the future, that is, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام who has entered the House of the Azīz of Miṣr at this time as a slave shall soon be the highest ranking man in the country of Egypt when the power of governance comes into his hands.

In the statement which follows immediately after, that is: **وَلِنُعَلِّمَهُ مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ** (so that We should teach him the interpretation of events), if the letter **واو** (*wāw*) appearing at the beginning of the sentence is taken as: **عطف** ('*atf* : conjunctive), a sentence will be considered as understood which will mean that 'We established Yūsuf in the land so that he brings forth peace in the world through equity and justice, works towards the economic and social betterment of the people of the country, and so that We teach him to put things right where they belong. The general sense of the later is something which is inclusive of the comprehension of Divine revelation, its implementation in practice, and the acquisition of all supportive areas of knowledge, and the correct interpretation of dreams as well.

Verse 21 ends with the statement: **وَاللَّهُ غَالِبٌ عَلَىٰ أَمْرِهِ** (And Allah is powerful in (enforcing) His command ...). In other words, it means that Allah Ta'ālā is powerful and fully in control over what He wills and when He does so will, all outward chains of causes in this world start falling in line with His will - as said the Holy Prophet ﷺ in a Ḥadīth: 'When Allah Ta'ālā intends to do something, He makes all worldly causes ready to act accordingly.' But, says the last part of the sentence: **وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ** that is, most of the people do not understand this reality. They have their eyes on obvious causes. These they take to be everything and keep going after them all the time. That there is the Causer of all Causes and the Holder of Absolute Power over everything is a thought they would seldom pay heed to.

In the first sentence of the second verse (22), it is said: **وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا** (And when he reached at the prime of his age, We gave him wisdom and knowledge ...).

At what age did he reach the prime of his age? In this, commentators differ. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, Mujāhid and Qatādah رحمهم الله تعالى say that his age was thirty three years. Ḍaḥḥāk رحمه الله تعالى puts it at twenty, and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى at forty. However, all of them agree that the bestowing of wisdom and knowledge upon him referred to at this place means the bestowal of Nubūwwah, the station of prophethood. This also tells us that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was invested with Nubūwwah much later than his arrival in Egypt - and the Waḥy (revelation) sent to him while he was in the depth of the well was not the Waḥy(reve-

lation) technically identified with Nubūwwah. Instead of that, it was a revelation in the literal sense which can also be sent to non-prophets - as it has appeared in the case of the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, and about Sayyidah Maryam.

In the second sentence of the second verse (22), it was said: *وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ* (and this is how We reward those good in deeds). The sense is that delivering Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from elimination and making him reach the office of power and honour was an outcome of his righteousness, fear of Allah and good deeds. This was something not restricted to his person alone. In fact, whoever acts the way he did, shall receive the blessings of Allah in the same fashion.

Moving to verse 23, the words of the text are:

وَرَأَوْدَتَهُ الَّتِي هُوَ فِي بَيْتِهَا عَنْ نَفْسِهِ وَعَلَقَتِ الْأَبْوَابَ وَقَالَتْ هَيْتَ لَكَ

And she, in whose house he was, seduced him away from his (resisting) self and bolted the doors, and said, 'come on!'.

From the first verse, we know that this woman was the wife of the 'Azīz of Miṣr. But, at this place, the Holy Qur'an has elected to bypass the possibility of mentioning her by a brief expression as the wife of 'Azīz. Instead, it has chosen to use the expression: *الَّتِي هُوَ فِي بَيْتِهَا* (in whose house he was). The hint given here is that the efforts of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to save himself from falling into sin were further complicated by the fact that he lived in the house of this very woman, under her protection, and as such, disapproving and discarding her verbal advance was no easy task.

The Strongest Defence Against Sin is the Seeking of Protection from Allah Himself

How was he able to do that? There was an outward cause to this. When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام found himself surrounded from all sides, he took the ultimate recourse. So, like a prophet he was, first of all, he sought the protection of Allah. He said: *قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ* (May Allah save me!). We see that he did not place his sole trust in his determination and resolve to hold out against the invitation to sin - he sought the refuge of Allah first. And it is obvious that anyone who enjoys the protection of Allah can never be moved away from the right path by anyone. It was only after having that coverage, that he started acting as a prophet

would, with wisdom and earnest good counsel. Addressing Zulaikhā directly and personally, he advised her that she too should fear Allah and give up her intention. He said:

إِنَّهُ رَبِّي أَحْسَنَ مَثْوَايَ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ

Surely, he is my master. He has given me a good lodging. Surely, the wrongdoers do not prosper.

As obvious, it means: Your husband, the 'Azīz of Miṣr is my master who has raised and supported me and has given me a good home to live in. He is my benefactor. How can I even think of violating his honour? This is great injustice and those who commit injustice never prosper. Implied therein was a lesson for Zulaikhā too who was told: When I know his rights on me for having been my master and caretaker for a lesser time than you, then, being his wedded wife of years, you should certainly know his rights on you much more than I do.

At this place, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has called the 'Azīz of Miṣr his Rabb - though, it is not permissible to use this word for anyone other than Allah Ta'ālā. The reason is that words like this create either a suspicion of Shirk, or a resemblance with those who commit Shirk. Therefore, the use of such words has been prohibited in the Sharī'ah of Islam. It appears in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 'Let no slave call his master his Rabb and let no master call his slave his 'abd or servant.' But, this is a unique characteristic of the Islamic Sharī'ah where, alongwith the prohibition of Shirk, everything else in which there is the least doubt that they may become the conduits of Shirk has also been prohibited. In the religious codes of past prophets, though Shirk has been strictly blocked but there was no restriction placed on the sources and inlets of Shirk. This was the reason why depiction of images was not prohibited in past religious codes. But in the Sharī'ah of Islam, being valid upto the Last Day, full attention was given to protect it from being affected by Shirk. So, the sources and mediums of Shirk, such as, image and words - which arouse suspicion of Shirk were also prohibited. However, the saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام : إِنَّهُ رَبِّي (Surely, he is my master), was correct in its place.

And it is also possible that the pronoun in: إِنَّهُ (innahū) reverts to Allah Ta'ālā which would mean that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had called

Allah his Rabb and it was He who, in the real sense, gave him good lodging, and that disobedience to Him was the greatest injustice, and that the unjust never prosper.

Some commentators, Suddīyy, Ibn Ishāq and others have reported that during the course of this privacy, Zulaikhā started praising his looks with the purpose of softening his resistance. She said: How beautiful are your hair! Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: After death, these hair will be the first to part away from my body. Then, she said: How beautiful are your eyes! He said: After death, they will become water and flow down my face. Once again, she said: How beautiful is your face! Thereupon, he said: All this will be eaten up by the earth below. He was looking ahead. This was his concern for the 'Ākhirah. Allah Ta'ālā had set it upon him in the prime of his youth and that made all charms of mortal life turn into dust before him. It is true that the concern for 'Ākhirah is something which can keep every human being protected from every evil wherever he or she may be. May Allah bless us all with this concern.

Verse 24

وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهِ ۖ وَهَمَّ بِهَا لَوْلَا أَنْ رَأَىٰ بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ ۗ كَذَلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ
عَنهُ السُّوءَ وَالْفَحْشَاءَ ۗ إِنَّهُ مِنُ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

And she certainly desired him. And he had desired her - had he not seen the proof from his Lord (he could have indulged). This We did to turn away from him evil and lewdness. Surely, he is among Our chosen slaves. [24]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verse was the great trial and test of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in that the wife of the 'Azīz of Miṣr bolted the doors and tried to invite him to sin assembling together in that effort all circumstantial temptations to attract and to make him become indulgent. But, Almighty Allah kept this righteous young person standing steadfast in such severe trial. The details of what transpired have been given in this verse. Said here is that Zulaikhā was busy persuing her obsessive thought any way, but emerging in the heart of Sayyidnā Yūsuf too, there was some non-voluntary tilt towards her as would be the natural conse-

quence in such a situation. But, it was exactly at that time that Allah Ta'ālā brought before Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام His argument and proof, because of which, that non-voluntary tilt, rather than increase, actually died out totally - and, beating the pursuit, he ran.

In this verse, the word: *هَمَّ* (*hamm* : thought) has been attributed to Zulaikhā and Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام both as in: *وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهِ وَهَمَّ بِهَا* (And she desired him. And he had desired her). And we know that the 'hamm' or thought of Zulaikhā was that of sin. This could have raised a doubt that the 'thought' of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام may also have been of a similar nature - and this is, based on the consensus of the entire Muslim Ummah, contrary to the great station of a Nabīyy (prophet) and Rasūl. The reason is that the majority of the Muslim Ummah holds the standard belief that the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all, are protected against all sorts of sins, minor or major. As for a major sin, it can neither be committed by them intentionally, nor is it possible through inadvertance or mistake. However, the probability that a minor sin could be committed through inadvertance or mistake does exist - but, on this too, the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all, are not allowed to remain - instead, they are warned and made to move away from it. (*Musāmarah*)

Besides the fact that this question of the 'Iṣmah of Anbiyā' (the state of being under Divine protection with which prophets are blessed) stands settled and proved under the authority of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, it is also necessary, rationally too - because, should there remain the probability of a committal of sin by the Anbiyā' عليهم السلام, there remains no way one could place trust in the Dīn (religion) and Waḥy (revelation) brought by them, and that their very coming into the world with a Divine Book revealed to them becomes totally fruitless. Therefore, Allah Ta'ālā has kept every prophet of His totally *ma'ṣūm* from every sin (*ma'ṣūm*: technically, sinless or infallible; literally, protected by Allah).

So, speaking generally, it stands established that the 'thought' which crossed the mind of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was not a thought to be counted in the degree of sin. For details, we should understand that the word: *هَمَّ* (*hamm*: thought) in the Arabic language is used to convey two meanings: (1) Intend and be determined to do something; (2) a simple scruple in the heart or the appearance of a thought beyond one's control. In the first situation, it is included under sin, and is accountable. Howev-

er, should someone, after having made the intention, were to leave off this sin at his own choice just because of the fear of Allah, then, according to the Ḥadīth, Allah Ta'ālā replaces the sin and enters a good deed in his or her Book of Deeds. And in the second situation - that is, in the event there comes a simple scruple and non-voluntary thought, without any intention to put the thought into practice, for instance, a normal turn of thought towards cool water during the fasts of summer which is natural and experienced by almost everyone, though there is no intention there to go about drinking water while fasting. So, a thought like that is neither within one's control, nor is there any accountability and sin in it.

In a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: 'Allah Ta'ālā has forgiven the scruple and thought of sin for my Ummah - if not put into practice.' (Qurṭubī) And in the Ṣaḥīḥayn (the two Ṣaḥīḥs, that is, Al-Bukhārī and Muslim), it has been reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurayrah ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Allah Ta'ālā says to the angels: When My servant intends to do good, write a good deed in his or her Book of Deeds just because of that intention. And when he or she has completed this deed, write down ten good deeds. And if a servant intends to do a sin, then leaves it off due to the fear of Allah, write one good deed in his or her Book of Deeds in lieu of that sin. And if he or she does fall into that sin, write it as one sin only.' (Ibn Kathīr)

Al-Qurṭubī has, in his Tafsīr, proved the use of the word: *هَمٌّ* ('*hamm*': thought) covering both these meanings through evidences from Arab usage and poetry.

This tells us that the word: '*hamm*' appearing in this verse has been attributed to both Zulaikhā and Sayyidnā Yūsuf ؑ but there is a big difference between the '*hamm*' or thought of both. The former is included under sin while the other has the status of a non-voluntary scruple which is not included under sin. The descriptive style of the Holy Qur'ān is itself a testimony to this - because, had their '*hamm*' or thought been identical, it would have been sufficient to say it in a dual form, such as: *وَلَقَدْ مَتَّأْنَا*, that is, the two of them desired, which was brief too. But, leaving this option aside, the '*hamm*' or thought of both was described separate from each other: *هَمَّتْ بِهِ وَهَمَّ بِهَا* (And she certainly desired him. And he had