

THE STORY OF JOSEPH (PART 7 OF 7): PATIENCE REWARDED

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Description: A stolen child, Joseph revealed and the fulfilment of a dream.

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The golden bowl was found in Benjamin's belongings and his brothers were astonished. They quickly realised the Chief Minister (Joseph) would follow their own law and keep Benjamin as a slave. This upset them greatly. They were afraid of returning to their father without his beloved youngest son. One of the brothers offered to accept the punishment on Benjamin's behalf, but the offer was refused. Another brother, probably the eldest, chose to stay in Egypt while the others returned to their homeland to face their father Jacob. When the brothers arrived home they went immediately to their father and said,

“O our father! Verily, your son (Benjamin) has stolen, we testify not except according to what we know, and we could not know the unseen! And ask (the people of) the town where we have been, and the caravan in which we returned, and indeed we are telling the truth.” (Quran 12:81-82)

Prophet Jacob had heard this all before. When the brothers betrayed Joseph and threw him in the well, they went to their father pleading and crying yet their words were nothing but lies. This time Jacob refused to believe them. He turned away from them saying, **“Nay, but your own selves have beguiled you into something. So patience is most fitting (for me).” (Quran 12:83)** Jacob had spent years grieving for Joseph and trusting in God. When this new sorrow overwhelmed him, his first reaction was to be patient. He knew, without a shred of doubt, that the affairs of his beloved youngest sons were controlled by God.

Even though he trusted God completely, Jacob behaved as any father would in the same circumstances. He was overcome with grief and wept uncontrollably. He remembered Joseph, and wept until he became ill and lost his sight. The brothers were concerned about his pain and sorrow and questioned his constant grief. They asked him, “Will you cry until the day you die?” Jacob answered that he only complained of his grief and sorrow to God and that he (Jacob) knew, from God, things that they did not. **(Quran 12:86)**

Though many years had passed, Jacob had not forgotten his son Joseph. Jacob reflected on Joseph's dream and understood God's plan would come to fruition. Jacob was deeply hurt by the loss of his sons, but his faith in God sustained him, and he ordered his sons to go back to Egypt in search of Joseph and Benjamin.

Joseph revealed

The brothers once again set off on the long journey to Egypt. The famine had taken its toll on the surrounding areas and people were poor and weak. When the brothers stood before Joseph, they too were amongst the poor. Their level of weakness forced them to ask for charity. They said:

“O ruler of the land! A hard time has hit our family, and we have brought but poor capital, so pay us full measure and be charitable to us. Truly, God does reward the charitable.” (Quran 12:88)

Joseph could not bear to see his family in this position, even though these were the men who had betrayed him. He looked at his family and could keep his secret no longer, he said,

“Do you know what you did with Joseph and his brother, when you were ignorant?” (Quran 12:89)

The brothers recognised Joseph immediately, not because of his looks, for they had seen him many times before, however who else could know the true story of Joseph, but Joseph himself.

“I am Joseph, and this is my brother (Benjamin). God has indeed been Gracious to us. Verily, he who fears God with obedience to Him (by abstaining from sins and evil deeds, and by performing righteous good deeds), and is patient, then surely, God makes not the reward of the good doers to be lost.” (Quran 12:90)

The brothers were afraid, their past deeds were grave sins, and they were now in a position of weakness. They stood in fear before the Chief Minister of Egypt no longer a small, beautiful boy named Joseph. Through his trials and tribulations, Joseph, like his father, found comfort in submission to the One God. He understood patience and the qualities of mercy and piety imbedded in true patience. He looked down at his brothers who were trembling in fear and said, **“No reproach of you this day, May God forgive you.” (Quran 12:91)**

Joseph immediately made plans to reunite his family. He requested the brothers return to their father and cast an old shirt of his (Joseph's) over his face. This, he said, would cause him to become clear sighted. Immediately, although the old man was so far away he turned his face towards the heavens and sniffed, believing that he could smell

Joseph in the air. This is one of the miracles, made possible by God, of Prophet Joseph. When the brothers arrived, they cast the shirt over Jacob's face and he became clear sighted. He cried out, **“Did I not say to you, I know from God, that which you know not.” (Quran 12: 96)**

The family of Prophet Jacob gathered their belongings together and travelled to Egypt. Jacob was eager to be reunited with his sons. They went straight to Joseph and found him sitting on an elevated throne. Joseph spoke to his family saying, enter Egypt, if God wills, in security.

The beginning of chapter 12 of the Quran, *Joseph*, began with the young boy Joseph describing his dream to his beloved father Jacob. He said, **“Verily, I saw (in a dream) eleven stars and the sun and the moon, I saw them prostrating themselves to me.” (Quran 12:4)** Quran concludes the story of Joseph in the same way as it began, with the interpretation of the dream. The eleven stars were his brothers, the sun his father and the moon was his mother.

“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 my brothers and me. Certainly, my Lord is the Most Courteous and Kind unto whom He will. Truly He! Only He is the All Knowing, the All-Wise.” (Quran 12:98-100)

The essence of the story of Joseph is patience in the face of adversity and sorrow. Joseph faced every trial with patience and complete trust in God. His father Jacob bore his grief and misery with patience and submission. All the chapters of Quran were revealed at particular times, in response to particular situations. This chapter was revealed to Prophet Muhammad in a time of great sorrow. In fact, the year of its revelation is known as ‘the year of sorrow’. Prophet Muhammad had to bear the death of his beloved first wife Khadijah and his Uncle Abu Talib. Both had provided him with comfort and support. God was advising Prophet Muhammad that the road may be long and difficult but the ultimate victory belongs to those with God consciousness and patience. The story of Joseph is a lesson for us all. True patience, what the scholars of Islam call beautiful patience is a key to the gate of Paradise.

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