

# The Story of Prophet Joseph (pbuh), Part 2

We continue the story of Joseph, peace be upon him (pbuh), a remarkable figure whose life is chronicled in both the Qur'an and the Bible. The story of Prophet Joseph (pbuh), like that of other revered prophets, bridges the two scriptures with shared events and deep spiritual meaning. In the Qur'an, his entire narrative is beautifully preserved in Surah Yusuf (Chapter 12), a chapter named after him. It unfolds as a seamless, unified story with a clear beginning, dramatic climax, and meaningful resolution. In contrast, the Bible presents Joseph's life across Genesis chapters 37 to 50, woven into the broader patriarchal history of Israel (Jacob (pbuh)). This biblical account is interspersed with other narratives, such as the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38, resulting in a more segmented storytelling structure.

The Qur'an begins the story of Joseph (pbuh) with a vivid and symbolic dream. He tells his father, Jacob (Ya'qub, pbuh): "O my father, indeed I have seen [in a dream] eleven planets, and the sun and the moon; I saw them prostrating to me." (Qur'an 12:4). A natural question arises: how could Joseph (pbuh) have seen eleven planets, when our solar system currently has only eight (formerly nine, including Pluto)? When I thought about this question, I could come up with the following explanation. Joseph's vision wasn't a literal astronomical observation – it was a

metaphor. The eleven "planets" symbolized his eleven brothers, while the sun and the moon represented his father and mother. Out of refined manners and deep respect, Joseph (pbuh) chose metaphorical language to convey the dream to his father, rather than directly stating that his family would one day bow before him. This reflects the exceptional character and noble upbringing of Joseph (pbuh), consistent with Islamic belief that all prophets are raised in purity, integrity, and the highest moral standard from an early age. In Islam, no Prophet had ever sinned, let alone moral sins.

Jacob (pbuh) immediately understood the meaning of his son's dream. With wisdom and foresight, he advised Joseph (pbuh) not to share the vision with his brothers, warning him that it might stir jealousy and deepen their resentment. "He said, 'O my son, do not relate your vision to your brothers or they will contrive against you a plan. Indeed Satan, to man, is a manifest enemy.'" (Qur'an 12:5). The Bible adds a familial detail not mentioned in the Qur'an – that Jacob had two wives, which played a role in the family dynamics. In contrast, the Qur'anic narrative omits such specifics, focusing instead on the spiritual and moral lessons. This is consistent with the Qur'an's style of highlighting what serves the religious purpose and ethical reflection, avoiding unnecessary details



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that do not contribute to the overarching message of the story.

Unfortunately, Joseph's brothers had a plan. In the Qur'an, the scene of Jacob and his son closes. Another opens on Joseph's brothers plotting against him. "Truly, Joseph and his brother are loved more by our father than we, but we are a strong group. Really, our father is in plain error. (We) Kill Joseph or cast him out to some other land, so that the favor of your father may be given to you alone, and after that you will be righteous folk (by intending repentance before committing the sin). One from among them said: "Kill not Joseph, but if you must do something, throw him down to the bottom of a well; he will be picked up by some caravan of travelers." (Qur'an 12:8-10). According to the Old Testament, Joseph shared his dream with his brothers, which further inflamed their jealousy (Genesis 37:5-11). However, the Qur'an does not mention that Joseph (pbuh) ever revealed the dream to them. From an Islamic perspective, it is understood that he did not disobey his father's instruction. As a Prophet, Joseph (pbuh) would have upheld the command of his father, Jacob (pbuh), especially given the prophetic

traits of obedience, wisdom, and restraint. This distinction is significant – it portrays Joseph (pbuh) as someone who not only possessed moral excellence, but who also respected parental authority, a key virtue in Islamic teachings.

Nevertheless, his brothers were already consumed by envy and resentment, especially toward Joseph and his younger brother. Their hearts had become so hardened by jealousy that they began plotting to remove Joseph altogether – a dark turn that marked the next stage of this deeply human and spiritually instructive narrative. Had Joseph told them, they would have mentioned his dream in their talk. One of them asked: "Why does our father love Joseph more than us?" Notably, the Qur'an does not specify which of Joseph's brothers initially suggested killing him. This omission is meaningful – it reflects that the desire to get rid of Joseph (pbuh) was shared among them, pointing to a collective guilt. Their jealousy had clouded their judgment to the extent that murder was on the table. However, the idea of throwing him into a well gradually gained traction as a less violent and more "practical" alternative. It was suggested that if Joseph were left in a remote well, passing caravans might eventually discover him and take him far away. This plan, though still cruel, was seen as safer and less direct than murder. Thus, the plot to kill Joseph was set aside, and the

brothers settled on a plan to kidnap and abandon him in a distant place, hoping this would rid them of him without bearing the weight of his blood on their hands. Smartest of ideas! The brothers' discussion scene closes.

Their next move unfolds the third dramatic scene – this time, between the brothers and their father, Jacob (pbuh). Seeking to carry out their plan, they approached him with carefully chosen words: "O our father! Why do you not trust us with Joseph, when we are indeed his well-wishers? Send him with us tomorrow to enjoy himself and play, and verily we will take care of him." (Qur'an 12:11). Their voices masked their intentions with false affection and promises of protection. Jacob, however, remained deeply uneasy. He replied with the tenderness of a concerned father: "Truly, it saddens me that you should take him away. I fear lest the wolf should devour him while you are careless of him." (12:13). Ironically, Jacob's concern about a wolf – which had not featured in the brothers' original plot – offered them the very excuse they would later use to cover their betrayal. Still, they insisted: "If the wolf devours him while we are a strong group, then surely we are the losers." (Qur'an 12:14). With continued persuasion and emotional pressure, Jacob reluctantly allowed Joseph to go, his heart heavy with worry, unaware of the betrayal that

would follow.

With their father's reluctant consent, Joseph's brothers were elated – they believed the moment had come to rid themselves of their younger brother and reclaim the affection they felt had been denied to them. Fueled by envy, they set out with Joseph (pbuh), disguising their intentions behind smiles and feigned cheer. Upon reaching a distant location, they headed straight to the well as planned, under the pretext of stopping for water. Suddenly, one of them grabbed Joseph tightly, catching him off guard. One pulled off his shirt, and together they lifted the young boy and cast him into the deep, dark well. At that moment – when betrayal struck and innocence was thrown into the shadows – Allah revealed to Joseph, who was still only a child between seven and nine years old, a comforting promise: he would one day confront his brothers and remind them of their deed. This divine reassurance calmed his heart. Meanwhile, the brothers sought to cover their crime. They slaughtered a sheep and soaked Joseph's shirt in its blood, forgetting, in their haste, to even tear the garment – an oversight that would later betray their lie. The third scene closes, and the fourth one starts.

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