

Prophet Joseph (pbuh), Part 3

We are still living with the story of The Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him, pbuh). It is interesting to know that the story of Joseph (pbuh) was mentioned in the Qur'an, mainly in chapter 12 (as the best of stories) and in Genesis chapters 37-50. The core story remains largely the same, yet it differs significantly in the details. In essence, while both accounts tell a tale of betrayal, resilience, and eventual triumph, the Quranic narrative places a stronger emphasis on Joseph's prophetic status, divine intervention at every turn, explicit moral lessons, and the fulfillment of God's promises through a clear, miraculous chain of events. The biblical account focuses more on the human drama, forgiveness, and the unfolding of God's covenant through the lineage of Abraham (pbuh) and the establishment of the Israelites in Egypt.

Continuing the story of Prophet Joseph (pbuh) as narrated in the Qur'an, we encounter a pivotal scene: **"And they came to their father in the early part of the night, weeping"** (Qur'an 12:16). This scene unfolds in the darkness of night, punctuated by the cries of ten adult men. Their father, Jacob, sits in his house. As his sons enter, the literal darkness of night seems to cloak the deceitful lies struggling to emerge. Jacob (pbuh) must have wondered aloud, "What happened?" Cry-

ing, they replied, **"O our father! We went racing with one another and left Joseph by our belongings, and the wolf devoured him; but you will never believe us, even when we speak the truth"** (Qur'an 12:17). The definitive article "the" before "wolf" is noteworthy. It suggests the presence of a specific, known wolf in their vicinity, perhaps one that had previously troubled their flocks. This detail, and their immediate reference to "the" wolf, implies they were living in or very near a desert environment where such wild animals were a recognized threat.

Their fabricated story conveyed several implicit messages: First, they feigned surprise upon returning from their race to find Joseph had been devoured by the wolf. Second, they implicitly claimed, "We did not see him!" Third, they tried to preemptively dismiss Jacob's disbelief by declaring, "You will not believe us, even though we are truthful! We are telling you what happened!" Finally, their core assertion was that the wolf had eaten Joseph.

A question arises: Why did they tell their father that he would not believe them? Psychologically, this suggests that they themselves doubted their lies could withstand scrutiny. They attempted to preemptively refute their father's potential accusations by verbalizing his expected disbelief. To bolster



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their deception, they devised another part of their plot to convince their father. As the Qur'an states, **"They brought his shirt stained with false blood"** (Qur'an 12:18).

The "false blood" on the shirt unequivocally meant it was not Joseph's (pbuh) own. Instead, it must have been a sheep's blood. However, upon seeing the shirt, their father declared: **"Nay! But your own selves have made up a tale. So, for me, patience is more fitting. It is Allah Alone whose Help can be sought against that which you assert"** (Qur'an 12:18).

Many scholars noted that the shirt was not even torn, clearly indicating the wolf's innocence. It is interesting to note that there is an Arabic proverb, "More innocent than Joseph's wolf!", which is used to refute a blatant lie.

We see that deep down, Jacob (pbuh) knew in his heart that his beloved son was still alive and that his other sons were lying. Their faces flushed as he demanded more information, yet each swore by Allah (Allah is the name of God in Arabic and Aramaic. It is pronounced with an emphatic L as in Luck,

not light L as in lamp) that he was telling the truth. The brokenhearted father then burst into tears, knowing that it was a test from Allah and he had to go through it. The father acted wisely by praying for immense patience, a patience free of doubt, and by trusting in Allah for help against their plot targeting him and his son. As this scene fades, the narrative shifts to the well into which Joseph had been thrown.

The next scene takes us to the well. In the dark well, Joseph managed to find a stone ledge to hold onto. Around him was total darkness and an eerie silence. Fearful thoughts entered his mind: What would happen to him? Why had his own brothers turned against him? Would his father know of his plight? His father's smile flashed before him, recalling the love and affection he had always shown him. Joseph began to pray earnestly, pleading to Allah for salvation. Gradually, his fear began to subside. His Creator was testing the young man with a great misfortune to infuse in him a spirit of patience and courage. Joseph (pbuh) surrendered himself to the will of his Lord, an essential act of Muslims.

The narrative then shifts to the vast desert. On the horizon, a long line of camels, horses, and men signaled a caravan making its way to Egypt. The merchant caravan

halted at this well, renowned for its water. A man lowered his bucket into it. Joseph, startled by the bucket hurtling down, grabbed hold of it before it could reach the water. As the man began to haul, he felt an unusually heavy load, prompting him to peer into the well. What he saw shocked him: a young man, nine to twelve years old, was clinging to the rope! He held the rope tightly and shouted to himself, "It looks like I've found real treasure in the well!" His companions rushed to the well and helped him pull out the stranger clinging to the rope. Standing before them was a healthy, handsome youth, beaming with an angelic smile. They immediately recognized him as a valuable prize, for money was all that mattered to them. Immediately, they secretly added him to the goods carried by the caravan and took him along to Egypt, far from his beloved homeland. News quickly spread throughout the Egyptian city that an unusually handsome, robust young slave was for sale. The Aziz, Egypt's chief minister, outbid all others and took Joseph to his mansion. The price paid was not high, a clear indicator that Joseph was almost nine to twelve years old. Not strong enough for hard work, or to work in hard conditions.

The Qur'an describes this scene as follows: "And there came a caravan of

travelers; they sent their water drawer, and he let down his bucket into the well. He said: 'What good news! Here is a boy.' So they hid him as merchandise (a slave). And Allah was the All-Knower of what they did." They sold him for a low price, for a few Dhirhams (silver coins). They were among those who regarded him as insignificant. The man from Egypt who bought him said to his wife: "Make his stay comfortable; perhaps he will profit (benefit) us, or we shall adopt him as a son." Thus did We establish Joseph in the land, that We might teach him the interpretation of events (Qur'an 12:19-21). Notice how Allah the Almighty reveals the essence of this long story from its very beginning: "And Allah has full power and control over His Affairs, but most men know not" (Qur'an 12:21).

The chains of slavery had now closed upon Joseph. He had been cast into the well, deprived of his freedom and his father's presence, then pulled from its depths to be made a slave, sold at the market, and ultimately became the property of the Aziz, Egypt's chief minister. These hardships followed in quick succession, leaving Joseph seemingly helpless.

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