

desired her). Then, added to the 'hamm' or thought of Zulaikhā was the word of emphasis: لَقَدْ (*laqad*). With the 'hamm' or thought of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, the emphasis of the letters: لام (*lām*) and: قد (*qad*) is not there. This tells us that, through this particular expression, the purpose is to emphasize that the 'hamm' or thought of Zulaikhā was of some other nature while that of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, of some other.

According to a Ḥadīth in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, when this test was faced by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, the angels submitted before Allah Ta'ālā: This sincere servant of Yours is thinking of sin, though he knows its curse fully well. Allah Ta'ālā said: You wait. If he commits this sin, write what he has done in his Book of Deeds. And if he abstains from committing it, do not record it a sin, instead, enter a good deed in his Book of Deeds - because, he has surrendered his desire only out of fear for Me (which is doing good at its best) (Qurṭubī)

To sum up, it can be said that the thought or tilt generated in the heart of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was simply at the level of a non-voluntary scruple, which is not included under sin. Then, by acting against this scruple, his rank with Allah Ta'ālā rose much higher.

At this stage, some commentators have also pointed out to another construction of the verse. According to them, the statement: لَوْلَا أَنْ رَأَىٰ بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ (Had he not seen the proof from his Lord) which succeeds is really supposed to precede, in which case, the verse would mean that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام would have also desired her had he not seen the proof from his Lord - but, because he had seen the proof from his Lord, he remained safe from this 'hamm' or thought. Thematically, this too is correct. But, some other commentators have declared this construction as contrary to the rules of the Arabic grammar. Thus, considering this aspect, the first Tafsīr is weightier as it makes the Taqwā and chastity of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام rise to much higher levels since he, despite the human instinct, managed to stay safe from sin.

As for the statement: لَوْلَا أَنْ رَأَىٰ بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ (Had he not seen the proof from his Lord) at the end, its principal clause is understood and it means: Had he not seen the proof from his Lord, he would have remained indulged in that thought, but after having seen the proof from his Lord, that non-voluntary thought and scruple too was eliminated from his

heart.

The Holy Qur'an does not clarify as to what was that 'burhān' or proof from his Lord which appeared before him. Therefore, statements of commentators differ in this matter. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, Mujāhid, Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رَضِيَ اللهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُمْ and others have said that Allah Ta'ālā made the face of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb رَضِيَ اللهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ appear miraculously before him in that private quarter showing him with his finger in his mouth and warning him. Some commentators say that it was the face of the 'Azīz of Miṣr which was presented before him. Some others have said: When Sayyidnā Yūsuf رَضِيَ اللهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ looked towards the ceiling, he saw the following verse of the Qur'an written there: لَا تَقْرُبُوا الزَّوْجِيَّ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا that is, do not go (even) near adultery because it is a grave act of immodesty and a very evil way (for human society). Some other commentators have said that Zulaikhā had an idol in her house. When she threw a curtain on this idol, Sayyidnā Yūsuf رَضِيَ اللهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ asked the reason for it. She said: This is my object of worship. I cannot dare commit sin before it. Sayyidnā Yūsuf رَضِيَ اللهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ said: My Rabb, the object of my worship certainly deserves that far more modesty be shown before Him for no curtain can stop His seeing. Finally, there are commentators who have said that the station of the prophet he was on and the knowledge of the Divine he had was itself the proof from his Lord.

After reporting all these sayings, what has been said by the Imām of Tafsīr, Ibn Jarīr, has been adjudged authoritatively as most-favoured and doubt-free. And he has said: As much as the Holy Qur'an has to tell should be what has to be considered sufficient. In other words, Sayyidnā Yūsuf رَضِيَ اللهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ saw something which made the scruple in his heart go away. To determine this precisely, there could be all those probabilities mentioned by the commentators - but, none of these can be held as certain absolutely. (Ibn Kathīr)

At the end of the verse it was said: كَذَلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ السُّوءَ وَالْفَحْشَاءَ إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِينَ (This We did to turn away from him evil and lewdness). Here, the word: السُّوءَ (as-sū' : evil) means minor sin (Saghīrah) and: الْفَحْشَاءَ (al-fahshā' : lewdness) means major sin (Kabīrah). (Maḥzarī)

Noteworthy here is that the text mentions 'turning away evil and lewdness from Sayyidnā Yūsuf رَضِيَ اللهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ - and not 'Sayyidnā Yūsuf رَضِيَ اللهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ from

evil and lewdness.' The hint implied here is that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was, because of his great station of prophethood, already removed from this sin as far as he was personally concerned, but evil and immodesty had encircled him. So Allah broke that trap apart. These words of the Holy Qur'ān are also a testimony proving that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did not succumb to even the minor-most sin and the thought which went across his heart was not included under sin, otherwise the relevant expression would have been: 'We saved Yūsuf from sin' - and not: 'Turn away from him evil and lewdness.'

Said in the last sentence is: إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِينَ (Surely, he is among Our chosen slaves). The word: مُخْلَصِينَ (*mukhlaṣīn*) is the plural of *mukhlaṣ* which means chosen. It means that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is among the chosen servants of Allah who has been appointed to the mission of prophethood to work for the betterment of the creation of Allah. Such people have Allah's own security shield around them so that they would not fall a victim to any evil. The Shayṭān has himself admitted that he cannot touch the chosen servants of Allah. He said: فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ That is, by Your honour and power, I shall put all those humans on the wrong track, except Your servants, the ones chosen by You - 15:40.

In some readings (Qira'āt), this word has appeared as: مُخْلِصِينَ (*mukhliṣīn*) as well. *Mukhliṣ* means a person who obeys and worships Allah with *Ikhlaṣ* (for which there is no word in English. The nearest is sincerity which must be genuine, unalloyed, pure and totally honest). *Ikhlaṣ* means that, in this obedience to Allah and in this worship of Him, there should be no intrusion of worldly or personal desires, interests, love of recognition and office and things like that. If so, the verse would mean: Whoever is *mukhliṣ* (absolutely sincere) in his 'Amal (deed) and 'Ibādah (worship), Allah Ta'ālā will help him in remaining safe from sins.

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has chosen to use two words: سُوءَ (*sū'*) and: فَحْشَاءَ (*fahshā'*). Literally, *sū'* means evil and it refers to minor (*saghīrah*) sins. And *fahshā'* means lewdness or immodesty and refers to major (*kabīrah*) sins. This tells us that Allah Ta'ālā kept Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام protected from both kinds of sins, *saghīrah* and *kabīrah*.

Also clarified here is that the 'hamm' or thought attributed to Sayyid-

nā Yūsuf عليه السلام in the Qur'an was simply a 'hamm' or thought at the level of non-voluntary scruple, which is included neither under Kabīrah sin, nor under Saghīrah - in fact, is excused.

Verses 25 - 29

وَاسْتَبَقَا الْبَابَ وَقَدَّتْ قَمِيصَهُ، مِنْ دُبُرٍ وَأَلْفِيَا سَيِّدَهَا لَدَا الْبَابِ ط
 قَالَتْ مَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ أَرَادَ بِأَهْلِكَ سُوءًا إِلَّا أَنْ يُسْجَنَ أَوْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ
 ﴿٢٥﴾ قَالَ هِيَ رَاوَدْتَنِي عَنْ نَفْسِي وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا ؕ إِنْ كَانَ
 قَمِيصُهُ، قُدَّ مِنْ قُبُلٍ فَصَدَقَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَإِنْ كَانَ
 قَمِيصُهُ، قُدَّ مِنْ دُبُرٍ فَكَذَبَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ فَلَمَّا رَأَى قَمِيصَهُ،
 قُدَّ مِنْ دُبُرٍ قَالَ إِنَّهُ، مِنْ كَيْدِ كُنَّ ط إِنْ كَيْدُ كُنَّ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾ يُوسُفُ
 أَعْرَضَ عَنْ هَذَا سَكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرِي لِذَنْبِكِ ؕ إِنَّكَ كُنْتِ مِنَ الْخَاطِئِينَ
 ع
 ﴿٢٩﴾

And they raced towards the door, and she tore his shirt from behind, and they found her master by the door. She said, "What can be the punishment of the one who intended evil with your wife except that he be imprisoned or (given) a painful chastisement?" [25] He said, "It was she who sought to seduce me." And a witness from her family observed that if his shirt was torn up from the frontside, then she is true and he is a liar; [26] and if his shirt was torn up from behind, then she is telling a lie and he is truthful. [27]

So, when he saw his shirt torn up from behind, he said, "This is certainly a guile of yours, O women. Great is the guile of you women indeed. [28] O Yūsuf, ignore this matter, and you (O woman) seek forgiveness for your sin. Surely, you were of the sinners." [29]

Commentary

Described in the previous verses was the time when the wife of the Azīz of Miṣr was busy enticing Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام into sin, and he, on his part, was trying to stay away from it. But, there was the natural

struggle with that non-voluntary thought too. So, to help his honourable prophet, Allah Ta'ālā showed a miracle, made something appear before him which drove even that thought out from his heart - whether that 'thing' be the face of his father, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, or some verse out of the Divine revelation.

Told in the present verse (25) is that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, once he saw this 'proof from his Lord,' ran away from that private enclave and dashed for the door to get out from there. The wife of the 'Azīz of Miṣr ran after him to hold him back and, by grabbing his shirt, she tried to stop him from getting out. But, when he did not stop - being determined not to - the shirt was torn from behind him. However, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did come out of the door, and so did Zulaikhā behind him. Historical accounts mention that the door was locked from the inside. When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام ran and reached the door, this lock opened up by itself and dropped down.

When they both came out of the door, they saw the 'Azīz of Miṣr standing face to face. His wife was unnerved. In order to wriggle out of the awkward situation, and to put the blame on Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, she said: What can be the punishment of the one who intended evil with your wife except that he be imprisoned, or (given) a painful chastisement?

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, because of his prophetic gentleness, may not have, perhaps, disclosed her secret. But, when she took the first step and presented a charge sheet of false accusation against him, he was compelled to tell the truth: هِيَ رَاوَدَتْنِي عَنْ نَفْسِي (It was she who sought to seduce me).

The matter was dense and delicate. For the 'Azīz of Miṣr, it was difficult to decide as to who should be taken as being true. That was no occasion for evidence and proof. But, Allah, great is whose majesty, has His own ways of saving His honourable servants from sin and keeping them unaffected and protected from it. He would do the same for them during their worldly life when He would arrange to save them from being disgraced, even if it would take a miracle to do that. Usually, on such occasions, infant children have been chosen to unfold truth, infants who are not expected to talk customarily. But, by giving them power of speech mi-

raculously, Allah Ta'ālā would arrange for the acquittal of His favoured servants from accusations levelled against them. This happened when people started accusing Sayyidah Maryam falsely. Allah Ta'ālā gave a day old infant, Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ, the ability to speak and it was through his tongue that He had the sanctity of his blessed mother manifested - a very special manifestation of His power indeed. Similarly, when another accusation of this nature was made under the umbrella of a major conspiracy against Jurayj, a pious elder among the Banī Isrā'īl, it was a new-born child who testified to his innocence. When Pharaoh got suspicious about Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ, the small daughter of the personal lady hair-styler of the wife of the Pharaoh was given the power of speech and it was she who saved Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ during his childhood from being hurt by the Pharaoh.

Similarly, in this event relating to Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, according to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and Abū Hurairah ؓ, Allah Ta'ālā bestowed that power of speech upon a small child - and that too in one of the finest ways of wisdom. This small child was lying in a cradle in this house. There was no way it could have occurred to anyone that this child would have watched their movements and understood what they were doing - and then, would be able to even go on to describe it in some manner. But, Allah is absolutely powerful. When He decides to highlight the greatness of those who strive in the mission of their obedience to Him, He is quite capable of demonstrating before the whole world that every particle of this universe works as His secret service which knows every criminal inside out and keeps a record of his or her crime and when the time comes, it speaks out the truth. Think of the Resurrection, the awesome plain of the Ḥaṣhr when, at the time of the accounting of deeds, human beings will, goaded by their old worldly habit, refuse to admit their crimes, then, their very hands and feet and skins and surroundings will be called upon to stand as witnesses against them. Each such witness shall lay each and everything done by them bare before the unimaginably huge multitude gathered together on that fateful day of Al-Maḥshar. That would be the time when human beings will find out that their hands and feet and the walls and doors of their homes inside, and the security arrangement outside these, none of them, not even one, were their own. In fact, all of them were secret agents of Al-

lah, the Rabb of all Power.

In sum, this small child, who was lying in the cradle oblivious of everything in the world around him, was made to speak out - as a miracle of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام - precisely at the time when the 'Azīz of Miṣr, being on the horns of a dilemma, did not know what to do.

Furthermore, if this child could have only said that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is free of any blame and it is Zulaikhā who is at fault, then, even that much would have been no less than a miracle, and a formidable proof of the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. But, Allah Ta'ālā had this child say something farsighted which would separate truth from falsehood decisively. What the child said was: See the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. If it is torn up from the front, then the word of Zulaikhā is true and that of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام could be otherwise. And if the shirt is torn up from the back, then there remains just no other probability but that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was running away from her and Zulaikhā wanted to stop him.

Apart from being a miracle of speech manifested by a child, this was something which could be understood by everyone around on its own. So, when the direction was followed, it was observed that the shirt was torn up from the back. Thus, the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام stood proved openly from physical signs as well.

The explanation of the 'shāhid' or witness of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام given here - that he was a small child blessed with the power of speech as a miracle - stands proved from a Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This Ḥadīth has been reported by Imām Aḥmad in his Musnad, Ibn Ḥibbān in his Ṣaḥīḥ and Ḥākim in Mustadrak. They have rated this Ḥadīth as Ṣaḥīḥ (sound). In this Ḥadīth, it is said: 'Allah Ta'ālā has blessed four children the power of speech while still in their cradle.' These four are the same as mentioned earlier. (Maḏharī) However, in some narrations, other explanations of 'shāhid' or witness have also been reported. But, Tafsīr authorities such as Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Kathīr and others have declared the first Tafsīr to be the weightier one.

Injunctions and Rulings

The following rules and guiding principles have been deduced from the verses cited above:

1. From verse 25 beginning with the words: **وَاسْتَبَقَا الْبَابَ** (And they raced towards the door ...), we learn that a place where there is a danger of getting involved in sin must be abandoned outright - as was practically demonstrated by Sayyidnā Yūsuf **عليه السلام** by running away from there.

2. In matters requiring obedience to Divine injunctions, one should not, to the best of one's ability, let his efforts in that direction taper off - even if a tangible result from them does not seem to be coming out. Results rest in the hands of Allah Ta'ālā. One's job is to channel and devote his or her effort and ability in the way of Allah - and proving one's identity as a servant of Allah is the purpose. This is what was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf **عليه السلام**. All doors were closed, even locked, as reported in historical narrations. Yet, he spent out his maximum strength in running towards the door. In a situation like that, help and support from Allah *jalla thana'uh* is witnessed frequently when a servant of Allah has done his best, it transpires that He would also arrange the causes for His servant to succeed. However, should the situation be otherwise and one fails to achieve formal success as we know it, then, for a devoted servant of Allah, even this failure is no less than success (for this is the preference of his Lord).

It is said about a righteous elder confined to prison that he would, on every Friday take his bath, wash his clothes, get ready for Jumu'ah prayer, walk upto the door of the prison, and once there, he would say: 'Yā Allah, this much was what was within my power. What is beyond that is in Your control.' Who knows, given the limitless mercy of Allah Ta'ālā, his spiritual yearning would have caused the prison gate to open with the command of Allah and he would have been enabled to perform the Ṣalāh of Jumu'ah. But, Allah, in His wisdom, bestowed upon this righteous devotee such high spiritual station as would pale out a thousand workings of the supernatural (*karāmah*). The gate of the prison did not open because of his continuous effort to offer his Ṣalāh of Jumu'ah. But, he did not lose heart. He kept doing the same thing every Jumu'ah. This is spiritual fortitude called by Ṣūfī masters as superior to Karamah.

3. It stands proved (from verse 26) that, should a person be accused falsely by someone, speaking out in defence is the way of the prophets (the Sunnah of the Anbiyā'). Remaining silent at that time, and letting oneself be declared to be a criminal, is no act of piety or trust in Allah

(*tawakkul*).

4. The fourth problem concerns the word: شاهد (shāhid) (in verse 26). When this word is used in common juristic matters and cases, it denotes a person who relates an event as seen by him in a disputed case. In this verse, the person who has been referred to by the word, 'shāhid,' has not related any event, or any personal observation about it - instead of that, what has been hinted at is a sort of device to arrive at a decision. Technically, that could not be called a 'shāhid' or witness.

But, it is obvious that all these terms have been employed by later scholars and jurists for the convenience of understanding and teaching. They are neither the terms of the Holy Qur'an, nor is it bound by them. The Holy Qur'an has called this person a 'shāhid' (witness) in the sense that the way the statement of a 'witness makes it easy for a judge to arrive at a decision, and proves that one of the parties in the case is in the right, the same benefit became available through the statement of this child. Initially, his miraculous speech itself was sufficient proof to absolve Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from the blame. Then, there were the signs given by him. In the ultimate analysis, they too are nothing but the proof of the absolvment of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from the blame. Therefore, saying that he appeared as a witness in favour of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام will be correct - though, he did not declare Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to be true, rather, had mentioned both probabilities. And, in addition to that, he had even supposedly taken Zulaikhā to be true in a situation in which the likelihood of her being true was not certain - in fact, there existed the other probability too, because the possibility of the shirt being torn from the front existed in both situations. And then, he had admitted the truthfulness of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام only in a situation wherein there could have been no other probability other than this. But, finally, the outcome of this strategy was but to prove the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام.

5. In arriving at judgements of disputed cases, circumstantial evidence can be taken into consideration - as was demonstrated here when this 'shāhid' declared that the shirt torn from the backside was an evidence that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was running and Zulaikhā was trying to stop him. In this matter, there is an agreement of all jurists that signs and indicators should definitely be used to determine the truth, as was

done here. But, besides that, only signs and indicators cannot be given the status of sufficient proof. In this event relating to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام too, that which really proves the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is the miraculous speech of the child. As for the signs and indicators which have been mentioned there, they serve to confirm the matter.

In the last two (28 & 29) of the verses cited above, it has been stated that the 'Azīz of Miṣr had already realized by having heard the child speak in the manner he did that some special supernatural situation was there to demonstrate the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. After that, according to what the child had said, when he saw that the very shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is really torn up from the back, he became certain that it was Zulaikhā who was at fault and it was Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام who was innocent. So, first he addressed Zulaikhā and said: **إِنَّهُ مِنْ كَيْدِكُنَّ** that is, all this is a guile of yours whereby you wish to pass on your wrongdoing to someone else. Then he said that great is the guile of women for it is difficult to understand and not easy to get out from. The reason is that they outwardly give the impression of being soft, delicate, even weak. A non-discerning onlooker is likely to believe in what they say. But, given a lack of wisdom and honesty, that could be a web of deception. (Maẓharī)

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه appearing in the Tafsīr of Al-Qurṭubī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: The guile of women is stronger than the guile of Shayṭān - because, about the guile of the Shayṭān, Allah Ta'ālā has said that it is weak: **إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطَانِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا** (4:76); and about the guile of women, it was said: **إِنَّ كَيْدَ نِسَاءٍ عَظِيمٌ** (great is the guile of you women - 12:28). And it is obvious that not all women are meant here. Instead, meant here are only those of them who are involved in practicing guiles and excuses. So, after having pointed out to Zulaikhā her error, the 'Azīz of Miṣr said to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: **يُوسُفُ أَعْرِضْ عَنْ هَذَا**: 'O Yūsuf, ignore this matter' - that is, do not speak about it before others so there be no disgrace because of this. Then he addressed Zulaikhā and said: **وَاسْتَغْفِرِي لِذَنْبِكِ إِنَّكِ كُنْتِ مِنَ الْخَاطِئِينَ** (and you [O woman] seek forgiveness for your sin. Surely, you were of the sinners). This obviously means that she should seek forgiveness from her husband. And it could also mean that she should seek forgiveness from Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام for it was she who made the error and put the blame on

him.

Special Note

At this point, it is very surprising that a husband, who finds out an open proof of such immodesty and breach of trust on the part of his wife, would not be agitated, rather, go on talking with perfect peace of mind - unusual indeed, given the compulsion of human nature in such circumstances. Imām Al-Qurṭubī has said that one of the reasons for this may be that the 'Azīz of Miṣr was someone lacking that kind of a sense of shame. And it is also possible that the way Allah Ta'ālā supernaturally arranged to save Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ first from sin and then from disgrace - in the same way, it was also a part of this arrangement that He did not let the 'Azīz of Miṣr become all agitated in anger. Otherwise, as customary, this would have been an occasion where one is likely to go to physical assault without bothering to investigate first, not to say much about verbal aggression, which would be rather elementary. If the 'Azīz of Miṣr, affected by common human response, were to be enraged, it is possible that he might have committed something, physically or verbally, something which would have been against the august status of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ. These are the wonders of Divine Power which openly prove how those who stand steadfast in obedience to their most true Lord are protected at every step they take in His way. And the honour of creating what is there at its best goes only to Allah.

In the verses which will follow, mentioned there is another event which is connected with the story narrated earlier. There it has been said that this event, despite the effort to keep it concealed, spread around among women in the families of the courtiers. These women started blaming the wife of the 'Azīz of Miṣr. Some commentators have said that these were five women, all wives of officials close to the 'Azīz of Miṣr. (Qurṭubī, Maḏharī)

These women were talking among themselves. They were saying: Look, how regrettable it is that the wife of the 'Azīz of Miṣr, despite enjoying a status so high, had become enamoured with her young slave and was looking for the fulfillment of what she wanted from him. In this, we think, she is in a grave error. The word used in the verse (30) is: فَتَاهَا (*fatā hā*: translated as 'her youthful slave'). *Fatā* denotes someone youthful. In customary usage, a boy slave when small is called a *ghulām*. If in his

youth, the boy is called *fatā*, and the girl, *fatāh*. Here, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has been referred to as the slave of Zulaikhā either because that which is owned by the husband is also customarily called as that which is owned by the wife; and/or because Zulaikhā had taken Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from her husband as gift. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 30 - 35

وَقَالَ نِسْوَةٌ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ امْرَأَتُ الْعَزِيزِ تُرَاوِدُ فَتَاهَا عَنْ نَفْسِهِ ۖ قَدْ شَغَفَهَا حُبًّا ۗ إِنَّا لَنَرَاهَا فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٣٠﴾ فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ أَرْسَلَتْ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مُتَكًا وَآتَتْ كُلَّ وَاحِدَةٍ مِّنْهُنَّ سِكِّينًا وَقَالَتِ اخْرُجْ عَلَيْهِنَّ ۖ فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُ أَكْبَرْنَهُ وَقَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ وَقُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا هَذَا بَشَرًا ۗ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٣١﴾ قَالَتْ فَذَلِكُنَّ الَّذِي لُمْتُنَّنِي فِيهِ ۖ وَقَدْ رَاوَدْتُهُ ۖ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ فَاسْتَعْصَمَ ۗ وَلَئِن لَّمْ يَفْعَلْ مَا أَمَرُهُ لَيَسْجُنَنَّ وَلَيَكُونَا مِنَ الصَّغِيرِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ السِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ ۖ وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّي كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُنُ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ فَصَرَفَ عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ ۗ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٣٤﴾ ثُمَّ بَدَأَهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا رَأَوْا الْآيَاتِ لَيْسَجُنَّهُ ۗ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٣٥﴾

And women in the city said, "The wife of the governor is seducing her youthful slave. The love for him has arrested her. Surely, we see her in open error." [30] So, when she heard of their crafty comments, she extended an invitation to them and arranged for them a comfortable place (to sit and dine) and gave everyone a knife and said (to Yūsuf): "come in before them." So when they saw him, they found him great and (were so bewildered that they) cut their hands and said, "Oh God! He is no human being. He is but a noble angel." [31] She said, "This is he you blamed me for. Yes, I seduced him, but he abstained. And should he not follow my command, he shall be imprisoned and will be disgraced." [32] He said,

"My Lord, the prison is dearer to me than what these women invite me to. And unless You do not turn their guile away from me, I shall get inclined towards them and shall be among the ignorant." [33] So, his Lord accepted his prayer and turned their guile away from him. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. [34] Later on, even after having seen the signs, they deemed it proper to imprison him for a time. [35]

Commentary

Having explained the linkage of verse before the beginning of the present verses, we can now turn to the explanation of individual verses.

Said in verse 32 was: فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ أَرْسَلَتْ إِلَيْهِنَّ (So, when she heard of their crafty comments, she extended an invitation to them).

Here, Zulaikhā refers to the talking of women as their 'makr' or craftiness - though they had obviously planned no trick against her. But, since they spoke ill about her secretly, it was identified as 'makr.' As for the expression: وَأَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مَتَكًا which follows immediately and has been translated as 'and arranged for them a comfortable place' is inclusive of the comfort of special pillows for hand and back rest placed there for relaxation.

Then, it was said: وَأَنْتَ كُلُّ وَاحِدَةٍ مِنْهُنَّ سِكِّينًا (and gave everyone a knife). It means when these women came in and sat down, different foods and fruits were served, some of which needed a knife to peel and cut, therefore, also given to each one of them was a sharp knife. The obvious purpose of this was to cut fruits. But, concealed in her heart was what comes next - that is, these women will lose their senses at the sight of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and would go on to cut their hands with the knife.

After having made all these arrangements, to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, who was in some other quarter of the house, Zulaikhā said: وَقَالَتْ أَخْرِجْ عَلَيْنَهُ (come in before them). Since, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was not aware of her vain intention, he came out into this sitting.

That which happened then has been described in:

فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُ أَكْبَرْنَهُ، وَقَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ وَقُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا هَذَا بَشَرًا ۖ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ

'So, when they saw him, they found him great and [were so

bewildered that they] cut their hands [that is, when cutting their fruit, they saw this object of wonder, the knife unconsciously ran over their hand - as it occasionally happens when one's thought is diverted to something else] and said, 'Oh God! He is no human being. He is but a noble angel.' [by which they meant that one exuding such light can only be an angel].'

Then, in verse 32, it was said:

قَالَتْ فَذَلِكُنَّ الَّذِي لُمْتُنِّي فِيهِ ط وَقَدْ رَاوَدْتُهُ عَنِ نَفْسِي فَاسْتَعْصَمَ ط وَلَئِن لَّمْ يَفْعَلْ مَا
أَمْرُهُ لَيَسْجُنَنَّ وَلَيَكُونَا مِنَ الصُّغَرِينَ

'She [Zulaikhā] said: 'So, [see] this is the one you blamed me for. Yes, I seduced him, but he abstained. And should he [in future] not follow my command, he shall be [surely] imprisoned and shall be disgraced [too].'

When Zulaikhā realized that her secret lay disclosed before those women anyway, she started threatening Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام right before them. At that time, according to some commentators, all these women too started telling Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that Zulaikhā was their benefactor, therefore, he should not oppose her.

And some words of the Holy Qur'an which appear later (33) also support it, for example: *yad'unani*: these women invite me) and: *kaidahunna*: their guile) where the statement of some women has been mentioned in the plural form.

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام saw that these women were also supporting Zulaikhā and there remained no other visible way to stay safe against their guile, he turned to his ultimate resort, to Allah *jalla thanna'uh*, and before Him, he said:

رَبِّ السِّجْنِ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ ۖ وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّي كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ
وَأَكُنُّ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ

My Lord, the prison is dearer to me than what these women invite me to. And unless You turn their guile away from me, I shall get inclined towards them and shall be among the ignorant.

Here, the statement of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that 'the prison is dearer to me' does not reflect any desire or wish to be detained in a prison, instead of that, it is an expression which shows that he would find it easier

to face this temporal hardship as compared to that of falling in sin. According to some narrations, when Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was confined to the prison, a revelation from Allah Ta'ālā told him: You have put yourself into the prison by what you yourself had said: *السِّبْحُنْ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ* (the prison is dearer to me) and had you asked for well-being ('*āfiyah*), you would have been blessed with perfect well-being. From here we come to know that, to stay safe from a major hardship, saying in prayer that one better be subjected to some minor hardship in lieu of it is not appropriate. Instead of doing that, one should, when under the threat of any hardship, problem or distress, pray to Allah Ta'ālā for nothing but '*āfiyah* (well-being). Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ prohibited a man from praying for *ṣabr* (patience) saying that *ṣabr* is done when one faces distress and hardship. So, rather praying to Allah for *ṣabr*, pray for '*āfiyah*. (Tirmidhī) The uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضي الله عنه asked him: Teach me a prayer I should make. He said: Pray for '*āfiyah* (well-being) from your Rabb. Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضي الله عنه says when he, after a period of time, once again asked him to be advised of some *du'ā'* he should be making, he said: Pray to Allah Ta'ālā for '*āfiyah* in *dunyā* and '*ākhirah*. (Maḏharī from Ṭabarānī)

As for the saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: 'And unless you do not turn their guile away from me, I shall get inclined towards them,' this is not contrary to the concept of the 'Ismah of prophethood (a prophet's state of being Divinely protected from sin) - because the very outcome of 'Ismah is that Allah Ta'ālā would, by arranging to keep a person safe from sin as a creational imperative, protect him from falling into it. Though Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had this desired cover by virtue of his being a prophet, yet he was compelled to make this *du'ā'* because of the great awe he had for Him in his heart. This also tells us that no one can, without the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā, stay safe from sin. And it also makes it clear that every act of sin is caused by ignorance (*jahālah*), the opposite of which is knowledge (*ilm*), and 'Ilm (knowledge) demands abstention from sins. (Qurṭubī)

After that, said in verse 34 was:

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ، فَصَرَفَ عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُمْ، إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

So, his Lord accepted his prayer and turned their guile away

from him. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

To protect him from the guile of these women, Allah Ta'ālā made his own wise arrangements. Though the 'Azīz of Miṣr and his inner circle was already convinced of the great spiritual qualities of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, his piety, fear of Allah and chastity, but rumours of the incident had started circulating in the city. To put a check on this, they found it expedient to confine Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام into the prison for a certain period of time so that there remains no source of any doubt in the concerned family, and that the talk of the town too dies out in due course. So, said at the end of the verse (35) was:

ثُمَّ بَدَأَ لَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا رَأَوُا آيَاتِ كَيْسَجْنَتِهِ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ

Later on, even after having seen the signs, they [the 'Azīz of Miṣr and his advisers] deemed it proper [or expedient] to imprison him for a time.

Thus, to the prison he was sent.

Verses 36 - 42

وَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ السِّجْنَ فَتَيْنِ ۖ قَالَ أَحَدُهُمَا إِنِّي أَرَانِي أَعْصِرُ خَمْرًا ۗ
 وَقَالَ الْآخَرُ إِنِّي أَرَانِي أُحْمَلُ فَوْقَ رَأْسِي خُبْرًا تَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْهُ ۖ
 نَبِّئْنَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾ قَالَ لَا يَأْتِيكُمَا طَعَامٌ
 تُرْزَقْنِيهِ إِلَّا نِبَاتِكُمَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمَا ۚ ذَلِكُمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِي رَبِّي ۖ
 إِنِّي تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾
 وَأَتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ آبَائِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ۚ مَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نَشْرِكَ
 بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۚ ذَلِكُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ
 النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ يُصَاحِبِي السِّجْنَ ۗ أَرَبَابٌ مُتَفَرِّقُونَ خَيْرٌ أَمْ
 اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿٣٩﴾ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا
 أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ ۚ إِنَّ الْحُكْمَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ۚ أَمَرَ

۞ ﴿٤٠﴾ يَا صَاحِبِي السِّجْنِ أَمَا أَحَدُكُمْ مَا فَيَسْقَى رَبَّهُ، حَمْرًا ۖ وَأَمَا الْآخَرُ
 فَيُصَلَّبُ فَتَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْ رَأْسِهِ ۗ قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ الَّذِي فِيهِ تَسْتَفْتِينَ
 ۞ ﴿٤١﴾ وَقَالَ لِلَّذِي ظَنَّ أَنَّهُ نَاجٍ مِّنْهُمَا اذْكُرْنِي عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ۗ فَأَنسَهُ
 الشَّيْطَانُ ذِكْرَ رَبِّهِ فَلَبِثَ فِي السِّجْنِ بِضْعَ سِنِينَ ۞ ﴿٤٢﴾

And two men entered the prison with him. One of them said, "I have seen myself (in dream) pressing wine." And the other said, "I have seen myself carrying bread on my head of which the birds are eating. Let us know its interpretation. We see you are a man of good deeds." [36]

He said, "No food provided for you shall come to you, but I can give you its description before it comes to you. This is the knowledge my Lord has given me. I have abandoned the way of those who do not believe in Allah, and who are deniers of the Hereafter, [37] and I have followed the way of my fathers, Ibrāhīm, Ishāq and Ya'qūb. It is not for us that we associate any partners with Allah. All this is of the favour of Allah upon us and upon the people, but most of the people are not grateful. [38] O my fellow prisoners, are different gods better or Allah, the One, the All-Dominant? [39] Whatever you worship, other than Him, are nothing but names you have coined, you and your fathers. Allah has sent down no authority for them. Sovereignty belongs to none but Allah. He has ordained that you shall not worship anyone but Him. This is the only right path. But most of the people do not know." [40]

O my fellow prisoners, one of you will serve wine to his master, while the other will be crucified and birds will eat from his head. Destined is the matter you are asking about." [41]

And he (Yūsuf) said to the one whom he believed likely to be released out of the two, "Mention me before your master.' Then, the Satan made him forget to mention him to his master. So, he (Yūsuf) remained in prison for a few years. [42]

Commentary

Mentioned in the verses cited above is a supplementary event relating to the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. It has been repeatedly stressed that the Holy Qur'ān is no book of history, or of stories and tales. When a story or historical event is mentioned in it, the sole objective is to provide some lesson, good counsel or crucial guidance on various facets of human life. In the entire Qur'ān and throughout the events relating to many prophets, it is the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام alone which has been described by the Qur'ān continuously - otherwise, it has considered it sufficient to mention some necessary part of an historical event wherever appropriate.

If you would look at the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from the beginning to the end, there are hundreds of lessons to learn, good advices to heed to and important elements of guidance to follow during various stages of human life. This supplementary story too has its graces of guidance in abundance.

The event as it took shape was that, despite the complete absolution of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from the blame, and the strong establishment of his moral integrity, it was to put an end to the disgrace of people talking about them that the 'Azīz of Miṣr and his wife decided to send Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to the prison for some time - which, in reality, was the fulfillment of the *du'a*' and wish of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, because, for him, it had become extremely difficult to defend his chastity while living in the home of the 'Azīz of Miṣr.

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام arrived at the prison, two other sentenced criminals were also admitted there. One of them was the cup-bearer of the king while the other was a cook. Citing major Tafsīr authorities, Ibn Kathīr has written that these two were arrested on the charge that they had tried to poison the king through food or drink. The case was under investigation, therefore, they were kept in prison.

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام came into the prison, it was because of his prophetic morals, mercy and affection that he used to show concern about all of his fellow inmates and took care of them whenever needed. If anyone became sick, he would call on him and do whatever had to be done for him. For anyone he found sad or distressed, he would have ap-

appropriate words of comfort. To lift his spirits, he would gently tell him to observe patience and made the hope of freedom come alive into his heart. He would think of bringing comfort to others at the cost of his own discomfort. For whole nights he would remain engaged in the 'Ibādah (worship) of Allah Ta'ālā. Seeing his endearing ways, all inmates of the prison became convinced of his high spiritual status. Even the officer-in-charge of the prison was impressed. He said: Had it been in my power, I would have let you go. Now, this much I can do that you will face no inconvenience here.

Some Notes to Wonder About

When the officer-in-charge of the prison, or some of the inmates, told Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that they loved him very much, he said: For God's sake, do not love me - because whenever I have been loved by anyone, I have suffered one way or the other. When I was a child, my paternal aunt loved me. As a result, I was blamed for theft. Then, my father loved me. This made me do a term of detention in a well at the hands of my brothers, then came slavery and expulsion from home country. When the wife of the 'Azīz loved me, I landed into this prison. (Ibn Kathīr, Maḥzarī)

These two prisoners who went to the prison alongwith Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said to him one day that they thought he was a man of piety and good deeds, therefore, they would like to ask him to give an interpretation of their dream. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه and some other leading authorities in Tafsīr have said that they had really seen these dreams. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه has said that there was no dream. They had simply made it up to test the spiritual excellence and veracity of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام.

However, one of them, that is, the royal cup-bearer, said: 'I have seen myself (in dream) pressing wine,' and the other, that is, the cook, said: 'I have seen myself carrying bread on my head of which the birds are eating.' Then, they requested him to interpret the dreams for them.

Here, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has been requested to interpret the dreams. But he, before answering this question, and following his intrinsic prophetic way, begins with the task of Tablīgh and invitation to believe and have faith. And by following the principle of Da'wah and by acting wisely, he first tried to create in their hearts a base of confidence in

him. To achieve this, he talked about his particular miracle through which he tells them about the food which they receive from their homes, or from somewhere else, and much before it arrives, he is able to tell them the kind, the taste, the quantity and the time of arrival of the food - and that the food turns out to be exactly as predicted: *ذَلِكُمْ مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِي رَبِّي* (This is of the knowledge my Lord has given me). He is saying that this has nothing to do with the art of divination through computation of figures and lines (*‘ilm al-jafr* and *‘ilm al-raml* - not Jafar and Ramal, sooth-saying or any other occult act of conjuring). Instead of all that, this is what my Rabb tells me - and I pass on the information. And this was an open miracle which is proof positive of prophethood and a major cause of confidence. After that, he declares his abhorrence for disbelief and his disengagement from the community of disbelievers. Then, with it, he also stresses that he is a member of the House of Prophets and it is their Community that he adheres to and that he is a scion of the House of Ibrāhīm, Iṣḥāq and Ya‘qūb عليهم السلام. We mentioned confidence a little earlier. Customarily, this kind of inherited nobility, a common family trait, is also a source of creating confidence in a person. After that he said: And it is not for us that we associate any partners with Allah. Then, he said that the Taufiq of following a true religion (‘the favour of Allah upon us and upon all people’) was nothing but the Faḍl or grace of Allah Ta‘ālā, for it was He who, by giving proper understanding, made the acceptance of truth easy on us. But, most of the people do not appreciate this blessing and do not show their gratitude for it. After having said that, he asked the same prisoners to tell him if it was better that human beings should be worshipping many gods, or was it better that one becomes a servant of one Allah alone - whose subduing power is all-dominant. Then he referred to idol worship from a different angle. He told them that their fathers and forefathers have taken some idols as their Lord. As for them, they are no more than a lot of names which they have coined on their own. They have no personal attributes which could become deserving of assigning to them the least fund of power - because all of them are inert. This is something one can see with one’s own eyes. The only other method through which they could have been taken as true objects of worship would be that Allah Ta‘ālā sends down specific injunctions or commandments to worship them. So, in that case, even if observation and reason had not been willing to accept their godhood but, because of the Divine

command, we would have left our observation and reason aside and would have obeyed the command of Allah. But, this is not there either - because Allah Ta'ālā did not send down any argument or proof for their worship. Instead of that, what He said was but that Law and Sovereignty belonged to Allah Ta'ālā with no one having a right in it; and the command He gave was no other but that we should not worship anyone or anything other than Allah. Finally, he said: 'This is the only right path - which was bestowed on my forefathers by Allah Ta'ālā, but most of the people do not know this reality.'

After having made his call to truth, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام turned to the dreams mentioned by two of his prison mates declaring that one of the two of them will get his release, return to his job and keep serving wine to his master. As for the other, the crime against him will stand proved and he will be crucified and birds will eat from his head.

An Example of Prophetic Compassion

Ibn Kathīr has said: Though the dreams of both these prisoners were separate, and fixed was the interpretation of each, and also fixed was the fate that the royal cup-bearer will be acquitted and return to his job and the cook will be crucified. But, because of his prophetic compassion and clemency, he did not specifically mention as to who among the two will be hanged so that the person concerned may be spared from becoming obsessed by the very thought of it right from that time. Instead of that, he made a general statement saying that one of them will be released and the other will be crucified.

At the end, he told them that the interpretation of their dreams given by him was not arrived at by conjecture. It was Divine decree which cannot be averted. Commentators who have called the dreams described by these people as false and made-up, they have also said: When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام interpreted their dreams, they came up with the remark that they had just not seen any dream. They had simply made it up. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ الَّذِي فِيهِ تَسْتَفْتِينَ (Destined is the matter you are asking about). In other words, it would mean: Whether you saw this dream, or did not, now the event will come to be as described - the purpose of which is that this is the punishment of the sin, of making up a false dream, committed by you, a punishment which has been identified in the interpretation of the dream.

After that, to the person about whom Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had gathered from the interpretation of his dream that he would be released, he said: When you are released from the prison, mention me before your master as the innocent person who is still languishing in the prison. But, once released, this person forgot about this message of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, as a result of which, his freedom was further delayed and he had to stay in prison for a few more years. The word used in the Qur'an is: بضع سنين (bid'a sinin: a few years). This word holds good for a figure between three to nine. Some commentators have said that he had to live in the prison for a period of seven more years.

Injunctions and Rulings

Worth pondering on are many Ahkām, Masā'il, useful lessons and elements of guidance that emerge from the verses under reference. They are as given below:

1. Consider the confinement of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام into a prison which is the notorious turf of criminals and bad characters. But, he treated them too with his characteristic good morals and social graces, as a result of which, all of them became enamoured with him. This tells us that it is the duty of reformers that they should, by dealing with sinners and criminals with compassion and concern, bring them closer, let them become familiar, connected, and reliant on them. Also necessary is that they should not betray any attitude of hatred or distaste for them at any step.

2. From the statement: إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (We see you are a man of good deeds), we find out that the interpretation of a dream should be sought particularly from persons one trusts in as righteous, good in deeds and sympathetic.

3. The third thing we learn here is about the ideal conduct of those who carry the *da'wah* of truth and serve people by working for their moral and social betterment. In this connection, their first duty is to bring round people created by Allah to put their trust in them through their good morals and conduct, and their intellectual and practical excellences - whether they have to unfold and express some of those excellences, as was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام on this occasion when he not only talked about his miracle but also mentioned his being a member of

the House of Prophets. Such a statement of personal excellence - if it is based on the intention to serve people to become better and not to prove one's personal rank - will not be considered as the 'self-praise' which has been prohibited in the Holy Qur'an: فَلَا تُرْكُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ that is, do not talk about the purity of your own self. (Tafsīr Mazharī)

4. Pointed to here is an important principle of communication and correction (Tablīgh and Irshād). It is the duty of the carrier of a Call (Dā'ī) and reformer (Muṣliḥ) that he should, at all times and under all circumstances, keep his constant mission of Da'wah and Tablīgh come first of all he does. In other words, if someone comes to him for something, he should not forget his real mission - as was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام when these prisoners came to him to ask for an interpretation of their dreams. At that time, before answering their request for the interpretation of their dreams, he gave them the gift of right guidance through his Tablīgh and Irshād. Please do not take Da'wah and Tablīgh as something which takes place in a conference, or on a pulpit or stage alone. This job is done far more effectively through personal contacts and private exchanges.

5. Another aspect of this very effort of telling people what is right and seeking their betterment through it (Irshād and Iṣlah) is : Whatever is said in this connection should be said with the strategy of wisdom in a way that it goes into the heart of the addressee. This is how it was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. He succeeded in showing to them that the excellences he had were the direct outcome of his disengagement with disbelief and adoption of Islam as his faith. After that he described the drawbacks and shortcomings of Kufr and Shirk in a soft manner which appeals to the heart.

6. Another problem resolved here is about how bad news should be handled. If, that which has to be communicated to an addressee happens to be painful or repugnant, yet it be necessary that it be disclosed, then, it should be presented before the addressee, as far as possible, in a way that it brings the least discomfort to him. This is as it was when the death of one person was destined as interpreted on the basis of his dream, but Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام kept it ambiguous. He did not make it precise and fixed by telling him that he will be the one to be hanged. (Ibn Kathīr, Mazharī)

7. It will be recalled that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had sought his release from the prison when he asked the acquitted prisoner: Mention me before your master. This tells us that making someone a medium of effort in order to get out of some difficulty is not against the principle of Tawakul (Trust in Allah).

8. Another view of this problem is that Allah Ta'ālā does not like His great prophets making efforts to achieve everything permissible and go on to make a human being the medium of their release. This is so because the absence of any medium between them and Allah Ta'ālā spells out the true identity of prophets. Perhaps, that was why this prisoner forgot about the message given by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which made him stay in the prison for many more years. In a Ḥadīth too, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has pointed out in this direction.

Verses 43 - 50

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ إِنِّي أَرَى سَبْعَ بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعُ عِجَافٍ
وَسَبْعُ سُنبُلَاتٍ خُضْرٍ وَأُخَرَ يَبِيسٍ ۗ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ أَفْتُونِي فِي رَأْيَا
إِن كُنْتُمْ لِلرُّءْيَا تَعْبُرُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾ قَالُوا أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ ۚ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَأْوِيلِ
الْأَحْلَامِ بِعَلَمِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِي نَجَا مِنْهُمَا وَادَّكَرَ بَعْدَ أُمَّةٍ أَنَا
أُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِتَأْوِيلِهِ فَأَرْسِلُونِ ﴿٤٥﴾ يُوسُفُ أَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيقُ أَفْتِنَا فِي سَبْعِ
بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعُ عِجَافٍ وَسَبْعِ سُنبُلَاتٍ خُضْرٍ وَأُخَرَ
يَبِيسٍ ۗ لَعَلِّي أَرْجِعُ إِلَى النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾ قَالَ تَزْرَعُونَ
سَبْعَ سِنِينَ دَابَّاهُ ۚ فَمَا حَصَدْتُمْ فَذَرُوهُ فِي سُنْبُلَةٍ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِمَّا
تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾ ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ سَبْعُ شِدَادٍ يَأْكُلْنَ مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ
لَهُنَّ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِمَّا تَحْصِنُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ عَامٌ فِيهِ
يُغَاثُ النَّاسُ وَفِيهِ يَعْصِرُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ أَتُورِنِي بِهِ ۚ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ
الرَّسُولُ قَالَ ارْجِعْ إِلَى رَبِّكَ فَسئَلُهُ مَا بَالُ النَّسْوَةِ الَّتِي قَطَعْنَ

أَيِدِيَهُنَّ إِنَّ رَبِّي بِكَيْدِهِنَّ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

And the king said, "I have seen (in a dream) seven fat cows being eaten by seven lean ones, and seven ears of grain which are green and (seven) others which are dry. O people, tell me about my dream, if you do interpret dreams." [43] They said, "(It seems to be) a mishmash of dreams, and we do not know the interpretation of dreams." [44]

And said the one who was released out of the two and recalled (Yūsuf) after a long time, "I shall tell you its interpretation. Just send me (to Yūsuf)." [45]

"Yūsuf, O the truthful one, tell us about seven fat cows eaten by seven lean ones, and seven ears of grain which are green and (seven) others which are dry, so that I may go back to the people, that they may know." [46]

He said, "You will grow crops for seven years consecutively. So, what you have harvested, leave it in its ear, except a little which you eat. [47] Then there shall come after that seven hard years which shall eat up what you have stored for them, except a little which you preserve (to sow). [48] Then there shall come after that a year in which people shall have rains and in which they shall extract juices." [49]

And the king said, "Bring him to me." So, when the messenger came to him, he said, "Go back to your lord and ask him, 'What about the women who cut their hands?' Surely, my Lord knows their guile well." [50]

Commentary

After that, say the verses cited above, Allah Ta'ālā created through the workings of what is unseen (Al-Ghayb), a particular way out for the release of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. This made the king of Egypt see a dream which caused him great anxiety. He assembled the known dream interpreters and soothsayers of his state and asked them to interpret his dream. None of them could understand the dream. The answer they all gave was: 'أَضْعَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ ۖ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَأْوِيلِ الْأَحْلَامِ بِعَالِمِينَ' : '(It seems to be) a mishmash of dreams, and we do not know the interpretation of dreams.' The word: *أَضْعَاثُ* (*adghāth*) is the plural form of: *ضِفْثٌ* (*dighth*) which literally refers to a bundle of chaff or husk separated from grain while threshing and is a collection of different kinds of waste material. The sense of their say-

ing was that this dream was somewhat muddled, confused and an admixture of many thoughts and things, and they did not know how to interpret such dreams. Had it been a regular dream, they would have had interpreted it.

While watching the proceedings of this event, that released prisoner recollected the message given by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, though after the passage of a long time in between. He stepped forward and said that he may be able to tell him the interpretation of this dream. At that time, by mentioning the spiritual excellence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, his expertise in dream interpretation, and his detention in the prison despite his innocence, he submitted that he be allowed to meet him in the prison. The king arranged that for him. He came to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. To describe this entire episode, the Holy Qur'an has used only one word: *فَارْسِلُونِ* (*fa arsilūnī*).

It means: Just send me (to Yūsuf). Things like the introduction of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, the official permission to see him and then the final arrival in the prison are parts of the event which can be understood contextually. Therefore, they were not described specifically, instead, the story was initiated as follows.

This begins with the address: *يُوسُفُ أَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيقُ* (Yūsuf, O the truthful one ...) in verse 46. It means that this person reached the prison and described his intent in a manner that he first confessed to the truthfulness of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in word and deed, and then requested him to give an interpretation of a dream. The dream he related was: The king has seen that seven fat cows are being eaten by seven lean ones; and he has seen that there are seven ears of grain which are green and seven others which are dry.

After having related the dream, this person said: *لَعَلِّي أَرْجِعُ إِلَى النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ* (so that I may go back to the people, that they may know). It means: If you tell me the interpretation, it is possible that, when I go back to the people and report the interpretation to them, it is likely that, in this way, they get to know your excellence and expertise.

According to Tafsīr Maḥzarī, the format of events present in the world of autonomous images is what one sees in dreams. In that world, these images have particular meanings. The edifice of the art of inter-

preting dreams solely depends on knowing what a particular autonomous image in that world means. Allah Ta'ālā had blessed Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام with perfection in this art. As soon as he heard the dream related, he knew that seven fat cows and seven green ears denote seven years during which crops will grow well as usual - because animal-driven ploughing to level land and grow grain has a distinct role in it. Similarly, seven lean cows and seven dry ears of grain mean that, after the first seven years, there will be seven years of severe famine. As for the seven lean cows eating the seven fat ones, it means that the grain stored during the first seven years will all be eaten up during those years of famine - remaining there will be some grain needed for sowing.

Obviously, the dream of the king had told him only about seven years of good crops followed by seven years of famine. But, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام also added to it that, following the year of drought, there will be an year of good rains and crops. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام came to know about it either because the total number of years of famine were no more than seven whereby, as the customary practice of Allah would have it, the eighth year would be that of rains and crops. According to early commentator, Qatādah, Allah Ta'ālā had Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام know about it through a revelation so that the amount of information they receive could be over and above that which was to be interpreted through the dream - so that the spiritual excellence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is further enhanced to become the cause of his being released. Then, another factor was added to this. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did not consider it sufficient to limit himself to the technical interpretation of the dream only. The fact was that he also gave them a good counsel based on wisdom and fellow-feeling. He advised them to keep the extra produce yielded during the first seven years within the ears of the crop of wheat, so that it may not be affected by bacteria when old. It is borne by experience that grain while in ears is not affected by bacteria.

Said in verse 48 was: **ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ سَبْعَ شِدَادٍ يَأْكُلْنَ مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ لَهُنَّ** (Then there shall come, after that, seven hard years which shall eat up what you have stored for them). Since, seen in the dream was that seven lean cows ate up the seven fat ones, therefore, while giving his interpretation of the dream, he considered it appropriate to say that the years of the famine will eat up what they had stored over the past years. Though, an

year is no eatable, the sense is that the people and animals will eat up during the time of famine whatever grain was stored up during past years.

The context of the story shows that this person, after having found out the interpretation of the dream, returned to the king and told him about it. He was pleased with it and convinced of the intellectual and spiritual excellence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. But, the Holy Qur'ān has not considered it necessary to mention all these things because they are self-explanatory. What transpired later was described by saying: وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُونِي بِهِ (And the king said, 'Bring him to me.'). It means that the king gave the order that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام be taken out of the prison and be produced before him in his court. So, some emissary of the king arrived at the prison with the message of the king.

Obviously, this was an occasion which should have been welcomed by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. He had been in the prison for a long time, restricted and helpless. He wished to be released. When the message of the king arrived at the prison that he was wanted by the king, he should have welcomed it and got himself ready to go. But, Allah Ta'ālā bestows upon His Messengers a very high moral station which other people just cannot comprehend.

The answer he gave to the emissary of the king was:

قَالَ ارْجِعْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَسَأَلُكَ مَا بَالُ الْيَسُورَةِ الَّتِي قَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ إِنَّ رَبِّي بِكَيْدِهِنَّ عَلِيمٌ

'Go back to your lord and ask him, 'What about the women who cut their hands?' Surely, my Lord knows their guile well.'

Here, by asking this question, the objective is to find out if he is still held in doubt about what had happened then and if he is still taken to be at some fault in that matter.

Also noteworthy at this stage is that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is, in the present context, talking about the women who had cut their hands - he has not mentioned the wife of the 'Azīz who was the main cause of what had happened. In this conduct of his, there was consideration for the right of his master's house where he lived and where he was brought up, something elementally respected by a person of natural gentleness in him. (Qurṭubī)

Then, not any less important was his real purpose, the need to be exonerated from blame conclusively. If proof was needed, it could have come from those women as well. And it would have not brought much of a disgrace on them. Had they confessed to what was the truth, they would have been, at the most, charged for having given false advice only. This would have been contrary to the case of the wife of the 'Azīz for, if she was made a target of the investigations, it would have proved far more disgraceful for her. And, along with this, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: *إِنَّ رَبِّي بِكَيْدِهِمْ عَلِيمٌ* (Surely, my Lord knows their guile well). He said this so that the king too will get to know the truth of the matter - which is a delicate approach to register his innocence in it.

On this occasion, reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and the Jami' of Tirmidhi, following a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه, there is a Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in which he said: If I had been in a prison for so long, as Yūsuf عليه السلام had been, and had I then been summoned for release, I would have accepted it immediately.

And in a report from Imām al-Ṭabarī, the words are: The patience, forbearance and many other noble traits of his character are astonishing. When he was asked to give an interpretation of the dream of the king while still being in prison, had I been in his place, I would have, before giving the interpretation, placed a condition that I should be taken out of the prison before I could give an interpretation of that dream. Again, when the emissary of the king brought in the message of his release, had I been in his place, I would have immediately started walking towards the gate of the prison. (Qurtubī)

It should be noted that the purpose in this Ḥadīth is to praise the patience, forbearance and the many noble traits of the character of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. But, by comparing the response of Sayyidnā Yūsuf in the present situation which he supposedly attributed to himself, he seems to be saying that had he been there in his place, he would have not elected to delay his release. If this is taken to mean that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is calling the conduct of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام better and, in the case of his own august person, he is saying that had he been in his place, he would have not been able to match that preferred conduct, rather, would have settled for the less preferred, it is obviously not upto the station of the one who is called the foremost among prophets, may peace

be upon them all. To answer that, it may be said that he is, no doubt, the foremost among prophets, but the precedence of some other prophet in a certain part of his conduct would not be considered contrary to it.

In addition to that, as said in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, it is also possible that the *modus operandi* employed by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is an outstanding proof of his patience, forbearance and noble traits of character - and is highly commendable at its place. But, the pragmatic method of doing things which the Holy Prophet ﷺ attributed to himself was particularly appropriate to and better for educating his community and offering to its teeming masses the best course of action likely to bring nothing but good to them. The reason in the present setting is that the temperament of kings changes. Placing trust in them is not a wise thing to do. On an occasion such as this, putting conditions or delaying the process is not the appropriate thing to do for common people. The probability remains that the king may change his opinion and one is left to rot in that prison, as it had long been the practice. As for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, he is a prophet of Allah. As such, he could have been given to understand by Allah Ta'ālā that the delay he would cause would not go against his interest in any way. But, others do not enjoy that degree of closeness to Allah. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was mercy for all the worlds. In his temperament and taste, he had an elemental rapport with the entire creation of Allah. He always preferred to make things easier and better for the great masses of people. To him this was more important. Therefore, he said: If he had the opportunity, he would have not delayed. Allah knows best.

Verses 51 - 52

قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمْ إِذْ رَأَوْتُنَّ يُوسُفَ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ ط قُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا
 عَلِمْنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ سُوءٍ ط قَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ الْعَزِيزِ الثَّنِ حَصْحَصَ الْحَقُّ أَنَا
 رَأَوْتُهُ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٥١﴾ ذَلِكَ لِيَعْلَمَ أَنِّي لَمْ أَخُنْهُ
 بِالْغَيْبِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي كَيْدَ الْخَائِنِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾

He (the king) said, "What was your case, O women, when you seduced Yūsuf?" They said, "God forbid, we know of

no evil in him." The governor's wife said, "Now the truth has come to light. I did seduce him, and he is of the truthful." [51] (Then Yūsuf said,) "That was because he (the governor) may know that I did not betray him in his absence and that Allah does not lead the guile of betrayers to success." [52]

Commentary

When the royal emissary delivered to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام the order of his release and invited him to see the king, he asked him to first have his case investigated through the women who had cut their hands. His approach was based on many wise considerations. Allah Ta'ālā bestows on His prophets a perfect faith, He also gives them matching intelligence and insight into matters and conditions they have to face. From the tenor of the royal message, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had deduced that the king of Egypt was going to confer some honour on him after his release from the prison. At that time, wisdom demanded that the reality of the misconduct for which he was blamed and because of which he was confined into the prison must become fully clear before everyone concerned and no one remains in doubt about his innocence. If this was not done, the outcome would be that people would stop talking for a while because of the royal honour bestowed on him, but these doubts would keep ticking in their hearts making them think that he was the person who had violated the honour of his master. That such conditions could emerge in royal courts and the king becomes influenced by such popular thoughts is not a possibility too far out. Therefore, he considered it necessary that this matter should be straightened out and cleaned up before his release. In the second (52) of the two verses cited above, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has himself pointed out to two considerations implied in the way he acted and in the option of delaying his release.

The first consideration was: ذَلِكَ لِيَعْلَمَ أَيُّ لَمْ أَخْتَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ It means: I delayed my release so that the 'Azīz of Miṣr comes to know for sure that I did not betray him in any way during his absence.

He was so concerned about making the 'Azīz of Miṣr become assured of his innocence because he thought it would be terrible if the 'Azīz of Miṣr continues to harbour doubts in his heart against him and suffer more from them when unable to say much after the royal honour has been conferred on him. If so, he would be displeased with the honour

given to him and far more painful would be the silence he would have to maintain. Since, he had been his master when he lived with him, his pain was too much to bear for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, intrinsically gentle as he was. Then, it was equally obvious that once the 'Azīz of Miṣr came to believe in his innocence, people will stop talking by themselves.

The second consideration he mentions is: *وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي كَيْدَ الْخَائِبِينَ*, that is, he asked for investigations to be made in order that people may know that Allah does not lead the guile of betrayers to success.

This statement could be taken to mean that an investigation would expose the betrayal of the betrayers and people would stand warned that betrayers are finally disgraced leaving a lesson for others to stay away from doing things like that in the future. Also possible here is another meaning, that is, had Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام received the royal honours in the same climate of doubt, it may have occurred to all watchers that it was not impossible to betray and be honoured at the same time. This would have distorted their faith in fidelity and would have driven away the distaste for betrayal from their hearts. However, it was because of these two considerations that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did not favour his leaving the prison immediately after having received the message of his release. In fact, there was a touch of royal elegance in his manner when he demanded that his case be investigated first.

A gist of this appears in verse 51: *قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمْ إِذْ رَأَوْتُمْ يُوسُفَ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ* that is, the king called for the women who had cut their hands and asked them: 'What was your case, O women, when you seduced Yūsuf?' This question of the king tells us that he, on his part, had become certain that the party at fault was not Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. He took those women to be at fault, therefore, he said: 'when you seduced Yūsuf.' After that, the answer given by the women appears as follows:

قُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا عَلِمْنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ سُوءٍ ۗ قَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ الْعَزِيزِ الْقَنْ حَصْحَصَ الْحَقُّ أَنَا رَأَوْتُهُ عَنِ نَفْسِهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ

They said, 'God forbid, we know of no evil in him.' The governor's wife (also present there) said, 'Now, the truth has come to light. I did seduce him, and he is of the truthful.'

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had not named the wife of the governor, the 'Azīz of Miṣr, as part of the investigations, but that is how things happen

when Allah *jalla thana'uh* decides to honour someone - people would rise and speak up, come forward and tell the truth, without let or hinderance or demur. So it was on this occasion. The wife of the governor found the courage. She herself proclaimed the truth.

Upto this point, in what you have heard about Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, there is good guidance for our lives and solutions of many problems as well. Eight of such rulings have appeared under our comments on Verses 36-42. An additional six which come out from the present verses are being given below.

Rulings:

9. Allah Ta'ālā Himself manages things for His favoured servants by releasing unseen arrangements which help them achieve their objectives - for He does not like them to become indebted to anyone else created by Him. This was the reason why the message of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام given to the prisoner-to-be-released in which he was asked to mention him to the king was made to be forgotten. Later, in its place, a very special arrangement was made through the workings of the unseen which was designed to serve two objectives at the same time, that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام would not become indebted to anyone's favour to start with, and that the main purpose of his release from the prison would stand achieved with full honour and dignity waiting for him.

To set this unseen plan in motion, the king of Egypt was made to see a disturbing dream, the interpretation of which proved to be beyond the abilities of the experts he had at his court. So, driven by need, recourse had to be made to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. (Ibn Kathīr)

10. Prophetic conduct is a mirror of high morals. Consider the behaviour of the prisoner who was released. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had simply asked him to mention his name to the king. But he was unable to do even this much for him. As a result of his neglect, he had to spend seven more years in the prison. Now the same prisoner returns to him after seven years carrying a job of his own, that of finding out the interpretation of the same king's dream, the king to whom he had been asked to mention Sayyidnā Yūsuf's name and which he did not. In a situation like that, it was natural that he should have admonished him, even become angry at him for not having done something so insignificant. But, Sayyid-

nā Yūsuf عليه السلام acted in accord with his prophetic morals when he, not to say much about an admonition, did not even mention the episode itself. (Ibn Kathīr & Qurṭubī)

11. Anbiyā' and 'Ulamā' have a dual duty. They should naturally be concerned about the attitude of people towards their 'Ākhirah. They have to help them out with good counsel in this crucial matter by shielding them from deeds which will become their punishment in the 'Ākhirah. Then, along with it, they should also keep a constant watch on the economic condition of Muslims so that they do not suffer - as was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. On this occasion, he did not consider it sufficient to simply give the interpretation of the dream. Instead, he gave a wise and well-meaning advice as well. He suggested to them that they should leave the entire wheat crop in the ears only taking out what was needed so that the grain so stored would not go bad in later years.

12. An 'Ālim whose guidance is relied upon by Muslims should also watch out that he is not suspected by people - even though such a suspicion be totally unfounded. Efforts should be made to stay safe from this too - because suspicion, whether from ignorance or misunderstanding, does interfere with the work of *da'wah* and teaching they carry out, and goes on to lighten the effect of what is said. (Qurṭubī) The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: Stay away even from places and occasions of blame. It means that one should try to stay away from places and occasions where and when someone gets an opportunity to put a blame on the next person. This rule applies to Muslims generally. Those who are prominent among them, the 'Ulamā' particularly, they have to observe twice as much precaution. The example of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is before us. He was Divinely protected from all defects and sins. He too made a point to observe this precaution. Once, when one of his blessed wives was passing by a small side-street of Madīnah with him, some Companion appeared before them. While he was still some distance away from them, the Holy Prophet ﷺ told him that such and such wife of his was with him. He did this so that the onlooker does not fall into some doubt that the lady going there was a stranger. In the present situation, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, despite orders for his release and the invitation to see the king, tried well before his release that any doubts people may have should be removed.

13. If someone is obligated to a person, because of his rights on him and is, as such, deserving of respect, then, should there come a situation in which, under inevitable circumstances, some sort of action has to be taken against that person, in that case too, giving due consideration to the right and respect of that person, to the best of one's ability, is the duty of a thorough gentleman. This is as it was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to secure his absolvment from the blame. It will be recalled that while referring his matter for investigations, he had not named either the 'Azīz of Miṣr, or his wife. He had simply mentioned the women who had cut their hands. (Qurṭubī) - because, he could still achieve his objective.

14. Taught here are the highest and noblest traits of character. We can see that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had suffered the loss of his freedom for seven or twelve years in the prison but, when he was released, the taking of revenge was a far cry, he did not even bear by the idea that someone would be put to the least inconvenience on his account - as particularly taken into consideration in the verse: لِيَعْلَمَ أَيُّ لَمْ أَخْتَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ (so that he may know that I did not betray him in his absence - 52).

Verses 53 - 57

وَمَا أْبْرَأُ نَفْسِي ۚ إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ ۗ إِلَّا مَرَحِمَ رَبِّي ۗ إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُونِي بِهِ أَسْتَخْلِصُهُ لِنَفْسِي ۚ فَلَمَّا كَلَّمَهُ قَالَ إِنَّكَ الْيَوْمَ لَدَيْنَا مَكِينٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ قَالَ اجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ ۗ إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلَيْمُ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ يَتَّبِعُونَ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ ۗ نُصِيبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَشَاءُ وَلَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَلَا جَزَاءُ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

"And I do not absolve my inner self of blame. Surely, man's inner self often incites to evil, unless my Lord shows mercy. Certainly, my Lord is the Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful." [53]

And the king said, "Bring him to me, and I shall make him (work) for myself alone." So, when he (the king) talked to him (Yūsuf), he said, "To day you are with us firmly accomodated and trusted." [54] He said, "Appoint me to (supervise) the treasures of the land. I am indeed a knowledgeable keeper." [55]

And thus We gave Yūsuf power in the land. He could settle there wherever he wished. We extend Our mercy to whomsoever We will, and We do not waste the reward of those who are good in deeds. [56] And the reward of the Hereafter is surely better for those who believe and keep fearing Allah. [57]

Commentary

Claiming Purity for one's own Self is not proper except under special Conditions

Stated in the previous verse (52) was the statement of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that he did not favour his release from the prison before he has been exonerated through a full investigation of the blame imputed to him so that the governor and the king of Egypt can arrive at full certainty that he was not guilty of any betrayal and that the blame was totally unfounded. In this statement, the reference to his freedom from blame and his purity of conduct was being made as based on an inevitable necessity - which outwardly gave the impression of a pronouncement of personal integrity and purity - and that was something not welcome in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā as is proved from the words of the Holy Qur'ān where it is said: *أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يَزْعُمُونَ أَنفُسَهُمْ بِاللَّهِ يُزَكِّي مَنْ يَشَاءُ* (Have you not seen those who claim sanctity for themselves? In fact, Allah sanctifies whomsoever He wills - 4:49). Again, in Sūrah An-Najm, it was said: *فَلَا تُزَكُّوْا* *فَلَا تُزَكُّوْا* *أَنْفُسَكُمْ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَى* (Do not claim sanctity for your selves; He knows best who it is that guards against evil - 53:32).

It was for this reason that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has, in the present verse (53), not allowed his plea of innocence in this matter to remain unqualified. As evident, he has stressed upon the reality that by saying what he is saying he has no intention to claim any piety or purity for himself. The truth of the matter is that human self, by nature, keeps pulling everyone to what is bad - except those who are blessed with mercy from the Lord who would make them immunely pure against the evil instigations of their self. They are the blessed prophets. The Qur'ān

calls such immunized selves: *نفس مطمئنه* (the self or soul at peace) (Al-Fajr: 89:27). Thus, the substance of what Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said was: In a trial of such magnitude, my remaining safe from sin was no personal achievement of mine. In fact, this was a result of the mercy and help of Allah Ta'ālā alone. Had He not removed evil desires from my heart, I would have become like the rest of human beings who would be prone to surrender before their desires.

According to some narrations, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said this sentence because a kind of 'thought' did, after all, emerge in his heart - though, limited to a non-voluntary scruple - but, was an unwelcome slip anyway considering the elegant station of prophethood with which he was blessed. Therefore, he expressly confessed that he did not totally absolve his inner self from blame.

The Three States of Human Self

In this verse (53), a problem which needs to be considered is that it declares every human self as often inciting to evil: *أَمَارَةٌ بالسُّوءِ* (*ammāratum-bis-sū'*). This is as it appears in a Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have asked the Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم: What do you think about a companion who, if you treat him nicely, feed him, clothe him, still he would throw you in all sorts of troubles - and if you insult him, and keep him hungry and naked, he would do what is good for you? The Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم said: *Yā Rasūl Allāh*, there just cannot be a companion worse than him in this whole world! He said: By Him in whose hands rests my life, your self inside you is such a companion. (Qurṭubī) And it appears in another Ḥadīth: Your greatest enemy is your own self which not only disgraces you by getting you involved in evil deeds, but also makes you run into all sorts of troubles.

However, the cited verse and Ḥadīth narrations given above tell us that human self does usually demand the doing of what is bad from us. But, in Sūrah Al-Qiyāmah, this very human self has been given the honour of being called by the sobriquet: *لوامه* (*lawwāmah* : reproaching) placing it at a level that the Lord of All Honour has sworn by it: *لَا أُقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَامَةِ* (I do swear by the day of Judgement and I do swear by the reproaching self - 75:1,2). Then, in Sūrah Al-Fajr, by calling this very human self: *نفس مطمئنه* (*muṭma'innah*: at peace), glad tidings of Jannah have been given: *يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ* (O self at peace, come back to

your Lord ... 89:27,28). Thus, the human self has been called as inciting to evil at one place, as reproaching at another, and as being at peace at yet another.

To explain, it can be said that the human self when on its own does incite to evil deeds and is called: Ammārah. But, when one does not follow its dictates because of the fear of Allah and 'Ākhirah, his or her self becomes Lawwāmah, that is, hates evil deeds, repents from them and seeks forgiveness - as is true in the case of the righteous people of the Muslim Ummah at large. And when someone keeps striving hard against his or her self, and brings it to a state where the very urge to turn to evil deeds does not remain there anymore, then, that self becomes what is called: Muṭma'innah (the self at peace). Righteous people can arrive at this state through spiritual strivings. Still, there is no certainty that this state will continue for ever. But, the prophets of Allah, may peace be upon them all, are Divinely blessed with such self at peace without any previous striving - and it always remains constant at that state. Thus, it is in terms of three states of human self that three kinds of acts have been attributed to it.

At the end of the verse (53), it was said: إِنَّ رَبِّي لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (Certainly, my Lord is the Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful) which has a hint in the word: غفور : Ghafūr: Most-Forgiving. When the self that incites to evil deeds (Ammārah) is ashamed of its doings, repents, corrects and becomes the reproaching self (Lawwāmah), then, certainly great is the forgiveness of Allah - He will forgive. The word: رحيم (Raḥīm : Very-Merciful) indicates that a person who is blessed with a self at peace (Muṭma'innah), that too is nothing but a result of the mercy of Allah.

In the next verse (54) which begins with the words: وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُونِي بِهِ (Bring him to me ...), it has been said, when the king of Egypt investigated about the event, as requested by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, Zulaikhā and all other women concerned with it confessed to the truth. The king, then, ordered that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام be brought to him so that he can appoint him as his personal adviser. According to the royal order, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was brought with full honours from the prison to the royal court. When he got an idea of his full potential by talking to him, the king said: 'Today you are with us firmly accomodated and trusted.'

Imām al-Baghāwī reports: When the emissary of the king arrived again at the prison to convey the invitation of the king to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, he prayed for all inmates of the prison, took a ritual bath and donned a new dress. When he arrived at the royal court, the *du'ā'* he made was:

حَسْبِي رَبِّي مِنْ دُنْيَايَ وَحَسْبِي رَبِّي مِنْ خَلْقِهِ عَزَّجَارُهُ، وَحَلَّ ثَنَائُهُ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُهُ،

For me sufficient is my Lord against my world and, for me, sufficient is my Lord against the whole creation. Mighty is he who comes under His protection; and most sublime is His praise; and there is no deity worthy of worship other than Him.

When he reached inside the court, he turned to Allah again, prayed again in the same spirit and greeted the court in Arabic saying: *السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ* (Peace on you and the mercy of Allah). For the king, the prayer he made was in Hebrew. The king, though he knew many languages, was not aware of Arabic and Hebrew. It was Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام who told him that the *Salām* was in Arabic and the *Du'ā'*, in Hebrew.

It also appears in a narration that the king talked to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in many different languages and Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام replied to him in the language spoken by him, adding Arabic and Hebrew as two additional languages which the king did not know. This episode greatly increased respect for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in the heart of the king.

After that, the king wished to hear him give the interpretation of his dream directly before him. In response, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام first described before him particular details of his dream which he himself had not told anyone about, and then told him the interpretation as he had wished.

The king was astonished. Though, it was not so much about the interpretation given. What made him really wonder was how could he find out all those details. After that, the king sought his counsel on what should he do next. The advice given by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was: During the first seven years of expected heavy rains, you should have arrangements made so that cultivation and crops yield their highest. This could be done by giving incentives to people to make sure that their maximum land areas come under cultivation and crops turn out plentiful

- and let them keep storing one fifth of their total produce with them. Thus, the people of Egypt would have stored with them enough for the seven years of famine and you would not have to worry on their account. Keep whatever supply of grains comes to the government through fixed taxes or state lands stored for those coming from outside the country - because, this famine will be wide-spread. People living in adjoining countries would need your help. At that time, you may come to the help of many a deprived people around you by giving it to them. Even if you were to put an ordinary price on it, you can be sure of collecting in the government treasury the amount of wealth that had never been there. The king was immensely pleased with this advice, but did wonder how would such a stupendous plan be managed, and who would do that. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: *اجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلِيمٌ* that is, 'appoint me to the treasures of the land (which includes the produce of the land) for I am indeed a knowledgeable keeper (fully capable of conserving and guarding it, and aware of where to spend and how much to spend). (Qurṭubī & Mazharī)

In the two words appearing here (*ḥafīẓ* and *'alīm*), Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has combined together all functional virtues a genuine Finance Minister should have. To make it simple, it can be said that the chief trustee and manager of a national treasury needs to do two things: (1) He should not allow government property to be wasted, in fact, should collect, conserve and protect it fully. Then, he should see to it that it is not spent on non-deserving people, or on false heads of expenditure. (2) Then, he should not fall short in spending what has to be spent and where it has to be spent and, at the same time, he should not spend more than the quantum of the need. Thus, the word: *حَفِيظٌ* (*ḥafīẓ* : keeper) is the full guarantee of the first need, and the word: *عَلِيمٌ* (*'alīm* : knowledgeable), that of the second.

Though the king of Egypt was personally attached to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام because of his many excellences, honesty and wisdom, but he did not actually hand over the office of the Finance Ministry to him. However, he did make him stay with him as his honoured guest for a year.

After the passage of one year, not only that he appointed him to be the Finance Minister, but also entrusted to him the management of the rest of his state affairs. Perhaps, he thought that giving such major of-

fice to him without first getting acquainted with his manners, morals and habits by keeping him close to him at his house was not appropriate.

Some commentators have written, when Qiṭfir (Potiphar), the husband of Zulaikhā died during this period, the king of Egypt arranged her marriage with Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Then, he said to her: Is it not better than what you had wished? Zulaikhā confessed to her being at fault, giving her excuse for having done what she did.

Allah *jalla thana'uh* granted them a life full of honour and comfort. According to historical narrations, they were also blessed with two sons, named Ifrā'im and Manshā.

According to some narrations, after the marriage, Allah Ta'ālā had put in the heart of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام more love for Zulaikhā than she ever had for him. So much so that there came a time when Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام complained to her: Why is it that you do not love me as much as you did before? Zulaikhā told him: Through you I am now blessed with the love of Allah Ta'ālā. With this in view, other relationships and thoughts seem to have dimmed out. This episode has been described, along with some other details, in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī and Mazharī.

Many teachings and guidelines which appear as part of the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, and are good for all human beings, have been talked about earlier. Some others are being mentioned as follows:

Rulings and Guidelines

1. In the saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: وَمَا أْبْرَأُ نَفْسِي (And I do not absolve my inner self of blame - 53), there is good guidance for the servants of Allah who fear Him and are righteous, pious and abstaining. They should realize that they should not, when they have the Taufiq of remaining safe from some sin, wax proud about it, never taking those involved with sins as low and inferior. Instead of that, they should ponder over the saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, let it go into their heart and become its fixed response - that is, 'this is no personal achievement of ours; it is only Allah Ta'ālā whose grace stopped our inner self, which incites to evil, overcome us - otherwise, this self of man would often pull him towards deeds which are evil.'

Seeking a Government Office is Not Permissible - Except under Particular Conditions

2. From: *اجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ* (Appoint me to (supervise) the treasures of the land - 54), we learn that the seeking of an office or position with the government is permissible under particular conditions - as was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام when he sought to be appointed to supervise and manage the treasures of the land.

But, in the light of details regarding this matter, when it is known about a particular office that no one else would be able to manage it well - and one's honest self-assessment indicates that he will be able to discharge the responsibilities of that office well enough, and that there is, in it, no danger of getting involved in some sin - then, this would be a situation in which taking the initial step of seeking the office is also permissible, subject to the condition that the reason for doing this should not be the love of recognition, power and wealth. Instead, the main purpose behind this should be to serve Allah's creation genuinely and to carry to them their rights with justice and equity - as it was with Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام whose sole purpose was no other but this. But, wherever such a situation does not prevail, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited the seeking of any government office on one's own. And he did not give an office to anyone who himself made a request for it.

It appears in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to Sayyidnā 'Abd-ur-Raḥmān ibn Samurah رضي الله عنه: Never seek an office (of authority or responsibility) because even if you get it by asking for it, the support of Allah Ta'ālā, through which you could stay safe from slips and errors, will not be there. And if you get an office without the asking and seeking, help and support of Allah Ta'ālā will be there, because of which, you will be able to fulfill the rights of that office as due.

Similarly, according to another Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, someone requested the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he be appointed to a certain office. To him, he said:

إِنَّا لَنْ نُسْتَعْمَلَ عَلَى عَمَلِنَا مَنْ أَرَادَهُ

'We would not give our office to a person who asks for it.'

The Seeking of Office by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was based on a Wise and Benign Consideration

But, the case of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is different. He knew that the king of Egypt is a disbeliever. So is his staff. The country was going to be hit by a famine. At that time, selfish people would have no mercy for the creation of Allah and millions would die of hunger. There was no one around who could be relied upon to do justice with the rights of common people. Therefore, he himself made a request for that office of responsibility - though, he had to support his request by pointing out to some areas of his expertise, as a matter of necessity, of course, so that the king becomes satisfied and entrusts the office with him.

Even today, if someone feels that there is an office of government for which there is no one available, specially someone who would discharge the responsibilities of that office as due - and his honest self-assessment assures that he would be able to discharge the responsibilities of that office as due - then, it is permissible for him, in fact, it is obligatory (*wājib*) on him to seek that office. But, this will not be to satisfy his own desire for recognition, power or wealth. Instead, it has to be for the purpose of serving people, a mission which relates to the intention and plan in the heart, something which is all too open before Allah Ta'ālā. (Qurṭubī)

That the rightly-guided Khulafā', may Allah be pleased with them all, assumed the responsibilities of the office of Khilāfah was because they knew that no one else would be able to discharge that responsibility at that time as due. The differences attributed to Sayyidnā 'Alī, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah, Sayyidnā Ḥusain, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr and others رضي الله عنهم were all based on that conviction. Everyone of them thought that he would be the one to discharge the responsibilities of Khilāfah at that time with more wisdom and strength and better than others. None of them was motivated to seek recognition, power or wealth as his principal aim.

Is It Permissible to Accept an Office of a Kāfir Government?

3. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام accepted to serve under the king of Egypt, though he was a disbeliever. This tells us that accepting an office of government headed by a disbelieving or sinning ruler is permissible under particular conditions.

But, Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ, while commenting on the verse: **فَلَنْ أَكُونُ ظَهِيرًا**

لِلْمُجْرِمِينَ (never shall I be a help to those who sin - 28:17), has written: In the light of this verse, it is not permissible to help the unjust and the disbelieving. And it is obvious that, accepting an office in their government amounts to becoming a part of their function and providing help to them. Such help has been declared as Ḥarām (forbidden) in many verses of the Holy Qur'ān.

As for the position of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in this matter, not only that he accepted the office, in fact, asked for it. According to the respected Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid, the reason for this was that the king of Egypt had become a believer, a Muslim, at that time. Since there is no proof in the Qur'ān and Sunnah which could support this proposition, the majority of commentators have given another reason for his action. According to them, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had already found out about the king of Egypt that he would not interfere in the performance of his duties. He will not compel him to enforce laws contrary to his faith. He will give him full rights to act in accordance with his discretion and in line with the law of truth. With such rights and powers in hand when one is not compelled to obey a law counter to his Shari'ah, it is possible that one may serve under someone unjust and disbelieving - though, the repugnance of having to help and cooperate with that unjust and disbelieving person remains where it initially was. But, there are circumstances in which it is not possible to remove such a person from the office of power held by him. Then, on the other hand, if there be a strong apprehension that by not accepting the office under that person, rights of many servants of Allah will be wasted, or that they may be oppressed, then, this would be a situation of compulsion, and there is this much room for cooperation in the matter. This stands proved from the conduct of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which is covered by the provision that one would not have to commit something which goes against the Shari'ah one believes in - because, this will not be helping him in his sin, though, it may do so as a remote cause. But, as for the remote causes of help, there is room in the Shari'ah under given conditions. Details have been described by Muslim jurists. Many righteous elders among the Ṣaḥābah and Ṭabi'in have faced such conditions and it stands proved that they, under such conditions, have accepted to work on offices given by oppressive rulers. (Qurtubī & Mazharī)

‘Allāma Al-Māwardī, in his book about the political implications of religious law has said: Some commentators, on the basis of what Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did in this matter, have ruled the accepting of office with rulers who do not believe and are unjust as permissible, subject to the condition that one does not have to do anything against the Sharī‘ah. Other commentators have ruled that it is not permissible even with this condition attached, because this too supports and promotes people who are unjust and oppressive. They give many interpretations of what Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did. The substance is that this conduct of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was particular to his person, or to his Sharī‘ah. Now, it is not permissible for others. However, the majority of Muslim scholars and jurists have gone by the first proposition and ruled it as permissible. (Qurtubī)

According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, when it is known that, should the learned and the righteous refuse to accept such office, rights of people will be wasted and justice will not be done, then, accepting such office is permissible, in fact, it is an act of *thawāb* - subject to the condition that, while working on it, one is not compelled to do things which are against the Sharī‘ah.

A Functional Statement of Some Personal Ability is Not Included under Self-Sanctification prohibited by the Holy Qur‘ān

4. The saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: **إِنِّي حَفِيزٌ عَلِيمٌ** (I am a knowledgeable keeper) proves that mentioning some personal qualities, expertise or ability when there is a need to do that is not included under self-sanctification which has been prohibited in the Holy Qur‘ān - of course, subject to the condition that such mentioning is not prompted by pride, arrogance or boastfulness.

The Objective of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was to Establish the Dīn of Allah

Said in verse 55 was:

وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ يَتَّبِعُونَ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ ۗ نُصِيبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَشَاءُ
وَلَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And thus We gave Yūsuf power in the land. He could settle there wherever he wished. We extend Our mercy to whomsoever We will, and We do not waste the reward of those who are good in deeds.

For details, it can be said that, after an experimental period of one year, the king of Egypt arranged a special celebration in his court to which he invited all officials and dignitaries of the state. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was brought into the gathering with a crown on his head. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was given, not simply the charge of the state treasury, but the charge of virtually the whole state. Having done this, the king himself retired from active involvement with the affairs of the state. (Qurṭubī, Maḏharī and others)

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام managed the affairs of the state with such ability that no one had any reason to complain. The whole country loved him. Peace and prosperity prevailed all over. Even Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام himself faced no problems or pains in executing the many responsibilities of the government.

Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid, has said: Since Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, under the surface grandeur of his rule over the country, aimed at nothing but that the command of Allah Ta'ālā be carried out there and that the faith given by Him becomes firmly established. Therefore, he never lost sight of his basic objective, that is, inviting the king of Egypt to faith and Islām. As time passed, his efforts bore fruits by the grace of Allah and the king of Egypt too became a believing Muslim.

Shun Sin, Have Faith, Keep Fearing Allah: The Reward of the Hereafter is Yours Too

At the end, verse 57 declares:

وَلَا جَزَاءَ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ

And the reward of the Hereafter is surely better for those who keep fearing Allah.

It means that Allah had already blessed Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام with temporal power, wealth and an ideal state - waiting for him were the high ranks of the 'Ākhirah as well. Then, it has also been made clear that the rewards and ranks of the present world and the world-to-come were not restricted to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. This was an open invitation to everyone who elects to believe, abstain from evil and keep fearing Allah.

During his tenure of rule, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had accomplished great projects designed to bring peace and comfort to the masses of his people. Their parallel would be hard to find. When, according to his interpretation of the dream, seven years of prosperity passed by and the famine set in, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام abandoned eating to his fill. People said: You have the treasures of the land of Egypt in your possession, yet you go hungry? He said: I do this so that the feeling for the hunger of my common people does not disappear from my heart. He even took an administrative step in this matter. The royal cooks were ordered to prepare only one meal a day, at lunch time, so that the residents of the royal palace too could somehow share in the mass hunger of their people!

Verses 58 - 62

وَجَاءَ إِخْوَةُ يُوسُفَ فَدَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَعَرَفَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾
 وَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُم بِجَهَّازِهِمْ قَالَ أَتُنُونِي بِأَخٍ لَكُمْ مِّنْ أَيْكُمُ ۚ أَلَا تَرَوْنَ
 أَيُّ أَوْفَى الْكَيْلِ وَأَنَا خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾ فَإِن لَّمْ تَأْتُونِي بِهِ فَلَا كَيْلَ
 لَكُمْ عِنْدِي وَلَا تَقْرُبُونِ ﴿٦٠﴾ قَالُوا سُرَّادُ عَنْهُ أَبَاهُ وَإِنَّا لَفَاعِلُونَ
 ﴿٦١﴾ وَقَالَ لِفَتْنِهِ اجْعَلُوا بَضَاعَتَهُمْ فِي رِحَالِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْرِفُونَهَا إِذَا
 انْقَلَبُوا إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

And came the brothers of Yūsuf and appeared before him. He recognized them, while they were not to recognize him. [58]

And when he equipped them with their provisions, he said, 'Bring to me your step brother from your father's side. Do you not see that I give full measure and I am the best of hosts? [59] Still, if you do not bring him to me, then you deserve no measure from me, nor shall you come even close to me.' [60]

They said, "We shall persuade his father about him and we will certainly do it." [61]

And he (Yūsuf) said to his boys, "put their capital in their camel-packs. Perhaps they will recognize it when they are back in their family. Perhaps they will come

back." [62]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was how Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was blessed by Allah Ta'ālā with full control over the country of Egypt. Described in the verses cited above is the coming of the brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to procure foodgrains. As a corollary, it was also mentioned that the brothers who came to Egypt were ten in number. The younger brother, the real brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was not with them on this trip.

The details of the story in between were not given by the Qur'an since they can be understood contextually.

The details described by Ibn Kathīr with reference to Tafsīr authorities, Suddiyy, Muḥammad ibn Ishāq and others, even if borrowed from historical and Israelite reports, may be acceptable in a certain measure since indicators in this direction are available in the sequential arrangement of the Qur'an itself.

The authorities cited above have said that following the ministerial authority of Egypt having come into the hands of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, the first seven years were, true to the interpretation of the dream, years of great prosperity and well-being for the entire country. Crops were abundant and matching were the efforts to produce and conserve. After that, the second part of this very dream unfolded itself. Came the famine which continued for full seven years. Since, at that time, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام knew in advance that this famine will continue for seven years without any break, therefore, he made arrangements to have the stock of grains present in the country stored very carefully during the initial year of the famine and saw to it that it remained preserved and protected fully and satisfactorily.

As for the local people of Egypt, foodgrain sufficient for their need was stored with them well ahead of the time. When famine spread and people living in areas around Egypt started coming there, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام set up a working system of selling grains to them according to which he would not give to one person more than one camel-load of grain. Its quantity, according to al-Qurṭubī, was one Wasāq, that is, sixty Ṣā' which, according to our weight, comes to approximately 1,953

grams.

Such was his concern for this responsibility that he himself used to oversee the sale of foodgrains. As said earlier, this famine was not limited to Egypt only. It was spread out to areas far away. The land of Can'aan, a part of Palestine - the homeland of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام with one of its cities still surviving by the name Khalīl, known for the resting places of blessed prophets Ibrāhīm, Ishāq, Ya'qūb and Yūsuf عليهم السلام - even this could not escape the ravages of the famine. Naturally, the family of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام became anxious. That was a time when news had gone around that Egypt was the place where foodgrains could be procured on payment. Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had also come to know that the king of Egypt was a man of mercy and would let those who needed it have it. So, he asked his sons too to go and get some grains from Egypt.

And as they had also come to know that one person is not given more than a camel-load of grains, it was decided to send all sons on the trip. But, the youngest brother, Benyamin, the real brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام with whom Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had become very attached since the disappearance of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was held back by the father for his comfort and care.

Traveling from Can'aan, the ten brothers reached Egypt. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام appeared in his royal robe as the master of the land before his brothers who had sold him as a seven year old child to the people of the caravan - an event over which, at that time, according to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, forty years had passed. (Qurtubī, Maḏharī)

It is obvious that the passage of such a long time would cause great changes in the looks of a person. It could have never occurred to them that a child once sold as a slave could become the king or minister of some country. Therefore, the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did not recognize him. But, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did. Therefore, this is what the expression: فَعَرَفَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ (He recognized them, while they were not to recognize him - 58) appearing in the opening verse means - for in the Arabic language, the real meaning of the word: إنكار (inkār) is 'to take as stranger.' Therefore, the word: مُنْكَرُونَ (munkirūn) in the text comes to mean 'unable to recognize.'

About the recognizing of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, Ibn Kathīr has said, on the authority of Suddiyy: When these ten brothers reached the court, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام interrogated them as is done with suspicious people so that they would state the truth clearly. First of all, he asked them: You are not residents of Egypt. You speak Hebrew. How did you get here? They said: There is a great famine in our country. We have heard about you, therefore, we are here to get some grain. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام asked again: How do we know that you are telling the truth, and that you are not an enemy spy? Then, all brothers said: God forbid, we can never do that. We are the sons of the Prophet of Allah Ya'qūb عليه السلام who lives in Can'aan.

The purpose of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in asking these questions was to make his brothers open up and relate events fully. So, then he asked: Does your father have any child other than you? They said: We were twelve brothers out of whom one of the younger brothers disappeared in the forest. Our father loved him most. After him, he became attached to his younger real brother and that is why he did not send him along with us on this trip so that he can be a source of his comfort.

After having heard what they said, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام gave orders that they be lodged as royal guests and given grains according to set rules.

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had established a standing rule of procedure while distributing grains. He would not give more than one camel-load of grains to one person at one time. But, once this was consumed as calculated, he would allow it to be given a second time.

Having found out all those details from his brothers, it was only natural that he would think about a second visit by them. For this purpose in sight, one obvious arrangement he made was to tell his brothers:

اَتْتُونِي بِإِخْلَافٍ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَيْدِيكُمْ أَلَا تَرَوْنَ أَنِّي أَوْفِي الْكَيلَ وَأَنَا خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِينَ

Bring to me your step brother from your father's side. Do you not see that I give full measure and I am the best of hosts? - 59

And, along with it, he gave them a warning as well:

فَإِنْ لَمْ تَأْتُونِي بِهِ فَلَا كَيْلَ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي وَلَا تَقْرَبُونِ

Still, if you do not bring him to me, then you deserve no measure from me [because it will prove that you have lied to me, and thus], nor shall you come even close to me. - 60

Then, he made a secret arrangement as well. He ordered his young workers on the job to collect the cash, jewelry and any other articles paid by his brothers as the cost of the grains, and tie it up secretly with their supplies in the camel-packs in a way that they should remain unaware of it while there - so that, when they open their packs after having arrived home, and find their cash and jewelry back in their hands, they may have a reason to return for grains once again.

Ibn Kathīr has described several possibilities as to why Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام acted the way he did: (1) It occurred to him that, perhaps they may not have anything other than the cash and jewelry they had brought. If so, they would be unable to come for the grains again. (2) Perhaps, he could not bear by the idea of taking the price of foodstuff from his father and brothers, therefore, he paid the amount due from his pocket and had it deposited in the royal treasury, and returned their cash and jewelry back to them. (3) He knew when their cash and jewelry is found in their supplies back home and his father learns about it, then he, being a prophet of Allah, would consider what has been thus found to be a trust of the Egyptian Treasury and would certainly have it returned, therefore, the return of their brothers would become more assured.

However, it can be said briefly that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام made all these arrangements so that his brothers could keep coming to him in the future and that he could also meet his younger real brother.

A Ruling:

From this event relating to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, we learn that, should the economic condition of a country worsen to the limit that the failure of the government to check the decline may cause people to become deprived of the basic necessities of life, then, the government is justified in taking over the regulation and control of such supplies and it could also fix an appropriate price of foodgrains. Muslim jurists have explained this provision in details.

A Special Note:

There is something which strikes as unusual in this story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. We see that his exalted father, the prophet of Allah, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was so affected by his separation that constant weeping made him lose his eyesight. Then, on the other hand, we have Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, a prophet and messenger of Allah like him, one who naturally loved his father and knew his rights on him fully well. But, during this long period of forty years, how was it that it did not occur to him even once that his father must be missing him miserably and that it would be nice to let him know about his well-being through some source. The sending of such information was not too far out a proposition even when he had reached Egypt as a slave. Then, once he was in the home of the 'Azīz of Miṣr, he had the freedom, comfort and time to do that. It was not so difficult to send a message to his home through some source. For that matter, this could have been done when he was in the prison as well. Who does not know that messages from inside those walls can be delivered anywhere, near or far? Then, came the time when Allah Ta'ālā took him out of the prison with all honours and the authority over the land of Egypt became his own. That was a time when he should have presented himself before his father as his primary task. And had it been against some state consideration, he could have at the least sent an emissary to comfort his father, something ordinary given the status he had.

But, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has not been reported to have even intended to do that. Not to say much about his intention, when his brothers came to procure foodgrains, he sent them back without telling them about the real situation.

These are conditions which cannot be imagined about an ordinary human being. How was it possible for an exalted messenger of Allah to bear by this situation?

The only answer to this surprising silence which kept returning to me was that may be Allah Ta'ālā, in His infinite wisdom, had stopped Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from exposing himself. This was found authentically clarified in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that Allah Ta'ālā had, through a Waḥy (revelation), stopped Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from sending any news about himself to his home.

It is Allah alone who knows the workings of His infinite wisdom. To comprehend it all is humanly impossible. But, once in a while, there may be something one could see through. Here too, as it appears, the real consideration of wisdom was to complete the trial of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام. This was the reason why, at the very initial stage of the event, when Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had realized that his son, Yūsuf, was not eaten up by a wolf but that it was some trick of his brothers, the natural demand of the situation was that he should have visited the place of the reported incident and made necessary investigations. But, as Allah Ta'ālā would have it, he was unable to think on those lines. Then, after a long passage of time, he also said to his brothers: 'Go and search for Yūsuf and his brother.' When Allah Ta'ālā wills to do something, this is the way He would put all its causes together.

Verses 63 - 66

فَلَمَّا رَجَعُوا إِلَىٰ أَبِيهِمْ قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا مُنِعَ مِنَّا الْكَيْلُ فَأَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا آخَانَا
نَكَتِلْ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَفِظُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ قَالَ هَلْ أَمْنُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا كَمَا أَمِنْتُكُمْ
عَلَىٰ أَخِيهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۖ فَالَهُ خَيْرٌ حِفْظًا ۖ وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّحِيمِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾
وَلَمَّا فَتَحُوا مَتَاعَهُمْ وَجَدُوا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ رُدَّتْ إِلَيْهِمْ ۖ قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا
مَا نَبْغِي ۖ هَذِهِ بِضَاعَتُنَا رُدَّتْ إِلَيْنَا ۖ وَنَمِيرُ أَهْلَنَا وَنَحْفَظُ آخَانَا
وَنَزِدَادُ كَيْلَ بَعِيرٍ ۖ ذَلِكَ كَيْلٌ يَسِيرٌ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ لَنْ أُرْسِلَهُ مَعَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ
تُؤْتُونِ مَوْثِقًا مِنَ اللَّهِ لَتَأْتُنَّنِي بِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يُحَاطَ بِكُمْ ۗ فَلَمَّا آتَوْهُ
مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَا نَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ ﴿٦٦﴾

So, when they returned to their father, they said, "O our father, the (required) measure (of grain) has been withheld from us, therefore, send our brother with us, so that we may receive our full measure. And, of course, we are his guards." [63]

He said, "Shall I trust you about him as I trusted you earlier about his brother? Well, Allah is the best guardian and He is the most-merciful of all the merciful." [64]

And when they opened their baggage, they found their capital given back to them. They said, "Our father, what else do we want? Here is our capital given back to us, and we shall bring food to our family, protect our brother and add the measure of one camel more. That is an easy measure." [65]

He said, "I shall never send him with you until you give me a pledge in the name of Allah that you will definitely bring him back to me, unless you are overpowered (by circumstances)." So, when they gave him their pledge, he said, "Allah is watchful over what we say." [66]

Commentary

The verses appearing above carry the remaining segment of the event, that is, when the brothers of Yūsuf returned home with foodgrains from Egypt, they told their father about what had happened there, specially about the condition imposed by the 'Azīz of Miṣr that they would receive foodgrains in the future only if they would bring their younger brother with them. So they requested their father to let Benjamin also accompany them in order that they may receive foodgrains in the future as well. Then, they would be there to protect this brother of theirs at its best with assurance that they would see to it that he faces no inconvenience during the trip.

Their father asked them if they wanted him to trust them with Benjamin as he had done before with their brother, Yūsuf. The drive of his remark makes it obvious that he did not trust their word. He had trusted them once, and suffered - for they had promised in the same words spoken earlier that they would guard him.

This much was an answer to what they had said. But, he had the need of the family in sight, and because he was blessed with the quality of trust in the Divine dispensation of matters, he talked about the reality as he knew it saying, in effect, that man has no control over his gain or loss unless Allah Ta'ālā Himself so wills. And when He wills it, it cannot be diverted or averted by anyone. Therefore, it is incorrect to place one's trust in the created beings of Allah in this matter and equally inappropriate is the dependence on their complaints to settle it.

Therefore, he said: **فَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ حَفِظًا** (Well, Allah is the best guardian - 64), that is, he had already seen the outcome of their guardianship earlier,

now he was placing his trust in Allah Ta'ālā alone as his guardian. Then, he added: وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّحِيمِينَ (and He is the most merciful of all the merciful - 64), that is, only from Him, he could hope that He would look at his old age and the sorrows he was surrounded with and would not let more shocks shake him.

In short, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did not rely on apparent conditions and on the pledges given by his sons, but did agree to send his youngest son with his brothers solely because he had now placed his trust in Allah Ta'ālā.

At this stage, verse 65 opens with the words:

وَمَا فَتَحُوا مَتَاعَهُمْ وَجَدُوا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ رُدَّتْ إِلَيْهِمْ قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا مَا نَبْغِي هَذِهِ بِضَاعَتُنَا
رُدَّتْ إِلَيْنَا وَنَمِيرُ أَهْلَنَا وَنَحْفَظُ أَخَانَنَا وَنَزِدُّكَ ذِكْرًا كَيْلَ بَعِيرٍ ذَلِكَ كَيْلٌ يَسِيرٌ

And when they opened their baggage, they found their capital given back to them. They said, "Our father, what else do we want? Here is our capital given back to us, and we shall bring food to our family, protect our brother and add the measure of one camel more. That is an easy measure."

It will be noticed that, prior to this verse, the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were talking about what had happened to them on their journey, before they had opened their baggage. After that, when they opened the baggage and saw that their entire capital with which they had paid for the foodgrains was present inside the baggage, they realized that this was not done by mistake, in fact, their capital had been returned to them. Therefore, they said: رُدَّتْ إِلَيْنَا (given back to us). Then, to their father they said: مَا نَبْغِي (what else do we want?) that is, 'the grains are here and what we paid for it has also been returned to us. Now we should definitely go back there in peace with our brother because the way we have been treated shows that the 'Azīz of Miṣr is kind to us. We should have no apprehensions. It is the time that we go and bring foodgrains for the family and take care of our brother too. That we shall get an additional load of grains in the name of our brother will help - because, whatever we have brought in the present trip is much less than our needs and is likely to be consumed soon.

One sense of the sentence: مَا نَبْغِي (*mā nabghī*) spoken by the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is practically the same as given immediately

above, that is, 'what else do we want?' And if, in this sentence, the letter: \bar{m} (*mā* : not) is taken in the sense of negation, it could also mean that the sons of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام told their father: Now that we have the price of the grain with us, we do not want anything from you. You just send our brother with us.

After hearing what they said, their father answered: $\text{لَنْ أُرْسِلَهُ مَعَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ تُؤْتُونِ مَوْثِقًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ لَتَأْتِنَنِي بِهِ}$ (I shall never send Benjamin with you until you give me a pledge in the name of Allah that you will definitely bring him back to me - 66). But, could someone with the ability to see reality ever miss to realize that man, no matter how strong he may be, is, after all, dependent and helpless before the all-pervading power of Allah *jalla thanā'uh* - how then, and on what basis, would he give a pledge to bring back someone safe? The reason is that he does not have the absolute power and control to accomplish it. Therefore, when Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام asked his sons to give him a pledge, he added an exception to it by saying: $\text{إِلَّا أَنْ يُحَاطَ بِكُمْ}$ 'unless you are overpowered (by circumstances).' Early Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid explains it as: unless all of you are killed. Another early Tafsīr authority, Qatādah says that it means: unless you become totally helpless and overpowered.

In the last sentence of verse 66, it was said: $\text{فَلَمَّا آتَوْهُ مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَا نَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ}$ (So, when they gave him their pledge, he said, "Allah is watchful over what we say"), that is, when his sons gave the pledge as desired on solemn oaths to satisfy their father, then, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام told them that the giving and taking of solemn oaths being undertaken by them is something which ultimately rests with Allah Ta'ālā alone. It is with His *taufīq* only that one person can keep the other protected and thus become enabled to fulfill his pledge. Otherwise, man is helpless. He has nothing under his personal control.

There are many elements of guidance and injunctions for people in the verses explained above. Please take note of them and keep them in mind.

Notes of Guidance

1. If children make mistakes, relations should not be cut off with them. One should, rather, think of ways to reform their conduct. The mistakes made by the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were serious.

They were sins, major and grave:

- (1) They lied to their father and made him agree to send Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ for an outing with them.
- (2) They gave a pledge to their father, then broke it.
- (3) They treated their young and innocent brother cruelly.
- (4) They caused extreme pain to their father and did not care much about it.
- (5) They conspired to kill an innocent human being.
- (6) They sold a free human being forcibly and unjustly.

These were extreme and severe crimes which demanded that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ, once he had understood that they had lied and wasted the life of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ knowingly, should have severed his relationship with these sons, or turned them out of his house. But, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ did not do that, rather, let them keep living with him, even sent them to Egypt to bring back foodgrains from there. On top of this came the situation when they had another opportunity to prevail upon their father once again in the case of their youngest brother and on this occasion too he yielded to them and allowed them to take his young son with them.

This tells us that should one's children fall into sin or make mistakes, it is the responsibility of the father to seek their correction through appropriate education and training, and as long as there is hope of betterment, let him not sever his relationship with them. This was what Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ did - and finally, all of them were ashamed of their wrongdoings, turned away from sins and lived a reformed life. However, should there remain no hope of betterment in their condition, and parents realize that maintaining relationship with them poses a danger to the religious upbringing of others, then, under that condition, severing relationship with them is more appropriate.

2. Promoted here are two great qualities of character, good dealings and good manners - of which Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ was a mirror. Despite such serious crimes committed by his sons, he kept dealing with them in a manner that they faced no qualms of conscience when they