أحسن القصص

The BEST STORY



Darussunnah Latifia New York

5. The Prophet Yusuf

A wonderful dream

Yusuf was a young boy, both handsome and intelligent. He had eleven brothers. His father Ya'qub loved him more than any of his other sons.

One night Yusuf had a wonderful dream. He saw eleven stars and the sun and the moon all bowing down to him. He was quite amazed by the dream. What did it mean? How could the stars, the sun and the moon bow down to a man? Young Yusuf went to his father Ya'qub and told him about his dream.

He said, *'Father, I saw eleven stars, the sun and the moon in a dream. I saw them bowing down to me.'* (12: 4)

Ya'qub was a Prophet and understood. He was very happy about this dream. He said, 'Allah has blessed you, Yusuf. Something great will happen to you. This dream contains the good news that you will be given knowledge and prophecy. Allah blessed your grandfather, Ishaq, and He blessed your ancestor, Ibrahim. He will bless you and He will bless the family of Ya'qub.'

Ya'qub was an old man who knew about human nature. He knew how Satan can confuse and overcome people.

He said: 'My son, do not tell any of your brothers about your dream. They will envy you and become your enemies.'

The brothers' envy

Yusuf had another brother by the same mother. His name was Benyamin. Ya'qub loved them both very much. He did not love anyone as much as he loved them.

The brothers were jealous of Yusuf and Benyamin and were very bitter. They would say: 'Why does our father love Yusuf and Benyamin more than us? Why does he love them when they are young and weak? Why doesn't he love us as much, when we are strong young men? This is very strange indeed.'

Yusuf was young and innocent. He told his brothers about his dream. The brothers got very angry indeed when they heard about it, and became even more jealous.

One day the brothers got together and said: 'If we kill Yusuf or drive him away to some distant land, then we will have our father's love all to ourselves and he will love only us.'

One of them said: 'No! Throw him into a well beside the road. Then some travellers will take him.'

Finally, the brothers agreed to that plan.

A delegation to Ya'qub

Then, the ten brothers went to Ya'qub. Ya'qub was very afraid for Yusuf. He knew that the brothers were jealous of him and did not love him, so he would not allow Yusuf to go away with them. Yusuf used to play with his brother Benyamin but he did not go far away. The brothers knew this, but they had decided to do something wicked.

They said: 'Father, why won't you allow Yusuf to come with us? What are you afraid of? He is our dear, little brother. We are the sons of the same father. Brothers

always play together, so why don't we? *Send him with us tomorrow to frolic and play. We will watch over him.'* (12: 12)

Ya'qub was an old man, intelligent and wise, and patient. He did not want Yusuf to go far away from him because he was very much afraid for him. He told his sons, *'I fear that the wolf may eat him while you are neglecting him.'* (12: 13)

They said, 'Never! How can the wolf eat him while we are there? How could it eat him when we are strong young men?'

In the end Ya'qub gave Yusuf permission to go with his brothers.

To the wilderness

The brothers were very happy when Ya'qub gave Yusuf permission to go with them. They took Yusuf into the wilderness and threw him into a well there. They showed no mercy to little Yusuf. They showed no mercy to their father Ya'qub either.

Yusuf was all alone in the deep, dark well. But Allah told him: 'Do not be sad. Do not be afraid. Allah is with you. Something great will happen to you. Your brothers will come before you and you will tell them what they did.'

After the brothers had thrown Yusuf into the well, they got together and said: 'What shall we tell our father?'

One of them said: 'Our father said, "I fear that a wolf may eat him." We will tell him, "You were right, father, a wolf did eat him."' The brothers agreed: 'Yes, we will tell him, "Father, the wolf ate him."'

One of the brothers then asked: 'But what proof will we have for that?' The others answered: 'Blood will provide evidence.'

The brothers caught a ram and killed it. Then they took Yusuf's shirt and dipped it in the blood. They were very pleased with themselves. They said: 'Now our father will believe us.'

Before Ya'qub

They came weeping to their father in the evening. They said: 'Father, we went running races and left Yusuf with our bags and the wolf ate him.' (12: 17)

They brought his shirt with false blood on it. (12: 18) They said: 'This is Yusuf's blood.'

Their father Ya'qub was a Prophet and an old man, much wiser than his sons. Ya'qub knew that when a wolf eats someone, it rips his clothes.

Yusuf's shirt was whole, it had only been dipped in blood. So Ya'qub knew that it was not Yusuf's blood and that the story about the wolf had been made up. He told his sons: 'This is a story that you have made up. *Patience is good.'* (12: 18) Ya'qub was sad indeed about Yusuf, but he had plenty of patience.

Yusuf in the well

The brothers had returned home, leaving Yusuf in the well. They had eaten and now slept in their beds. Yusuf, all alone in the well had neither slept nor eaten. The brothers forgot about Yusuf. But Yusuf did not sleep and he did not forget anyone.

Ya'qub kept thinking about Yusuf and Yusuf kept thinking about Ya'qub. It was a terrible time for Yusuf in that deep well, out in the wilderness, hidden far down in darkness.

From the well to the palace

A group of people were travelling to Egypt through that wilderness. They were thirsty and looking for water. They saw the well and sent a man to it to bring them some water.

The man came to the well and let down the bucket. He pulled the bucket up and there was a boy in it! Surprised, the man called out: *'Good news! Here is a boy!'* (12: 18)

The people hid Yusuf among their merchandise until they had travelled out of the area. When they got to Egypt, they stood in the market shouting: 'Who will buy this boy? Who will buy this boy?'

The Aziz* of Egypt bought Yusuf for a few silver coins. The merchants who sold him did not recognize the worth of Yusuf. The Aziz took him to his palace and told his wife: 'Treat Yusuf well. He is an intelligent boy.'

Faithfulness and trustworthiness

The wife of the Aziz was attracted to Yusuf. But Yusuf refused her advances and said: 'No! I will not break my master's trust. He has been good to me and he has treated me well. I fear Allah.'

The wife of the Aziz became angry and complained to her husband, but he knew that she was lying. He knew that Yusuf was trustworthy. He told his wife: *'You are one of those who are in error.'* (12: 29)

Yusuf was well-known in Egypt for his good looks. When anyone saw him, they would say, *'This is no mortal! He can only be a noble angel!'* (12: 31)

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*'Aziz' signified a mighty person, a king etc., and was the title given to those who ruled Misr and Alexandria.

The wife of the Aziz became very angry indeed when Yusuf kept refusing her and she said to him: 'Then you will go to prison!'

Yusuf said, *'I prefer prison.'* (12: 33)

A few days later, the Aziz decided it was better to send Yusuf to prison. He knew that Yusuf was innocent, but even so Yusuf went to prison.

The warning in the prison

The people in the prison knew that Yusuf was a noble young man with great knowledge and a merciful heart. They loved and respected him.

Two other prisoners told Yusuf about their dreams. *One of them said: 'I dreamed that I was pressing grapes.' The other said: 'I dreamed that I was carrying bread on my head and the birds were eating from it.'* (12: 36)

They asked Yusuf to tell them the meaning of their dreams. Yusuf knew the meaning of dreams since he was a Prophet.

In Yusuf's time, people worshipped things other than Allah. They said: 'This is the lord of the earth. This is the lord of the sea. This is the lord of crops. This is the lord of rain.'

Yusuf would hear all that nonsense and weep for the ignorance of the people. He wanted to call people to the worship of Allah.

Allah wanted that to happen also in the prison. Did not the people in prison deserve to be warned? Did not they deserve mercy too? Are not the people in prison slaves of Allah, are not they too sons of Adam?

Even in prison Yusuf was free and brave in spirit. He was poor but generous and open-hearted. The Prophets

proclaim the truth everywhere because the truth is a blessing, and the Prophets are generous with blessings in every time and place.

Yusuf's wisdom

Yusuf said to himself: 'Need has driven these two men to me. The person who is in need is more open and humble. The person who is in need hears and obeys. If I teach these men something now, they will listen, and the people of the prison will also listen.'

So Yusuf did not rush to answer their questions. He said: *'I will tell you its interpretation before your food is brought to you.'* (12: 37)

The two men sat down and were calm. Then Yusuf said to them: 'I know how to interpret dreams. *That is part of what my Lord has taught me.'*

The men were content to wait and listened patiently. Yusuf began his warning.

The warning of *tawhid*

Yusuf said: *'That is part of what my Lord has taught me.* But Allah does not give His knowledge to everyone. Allah does not give His knowledge to an idol-worshipper. Do you know why my Lord has taught me? Because I have left the path of idol-worship *and I have followed the religion of my fathers, Ibrahim, Ishaq and Ya'qub. It is not proper for us to associate anything with Allah.'*

Yusuf said: 'This *tawhid* does not belong only to us. It is for all people. *That is part of Allah's bounty to us and to mankind, but most people are not thankful.'* (12: 38)

Here Yusuf stopped and asked them: 'You say: "The

Lord of the earth and the Lord of the sea and the Lord of crops and the Lord of rain." We say: "Allah, the Lord of the Universe."

'Which is better, many different gods or Allah, the One, the All-Powerful? (12: 39)

'Where is the Lord of the earth, the Lord of the sea, the Lord of crops and the Lord of the rain? *Show me what they have created in the earth or do they have any share in the heavens?*

'Look at the earth and at the heaven. Look at man. *This is the creation of Allah. Show me what these others have created.*

'How can there be a Lord of the earth, a Lord of the sea, a Lord of crops and a Lord of the rain? *They are only names you yourselves have named, you and your fathers.*

'Judgement belongs to Allah. The Kingdom belongs to Allah. *The earth belongs to Allah. The command belongs to Allah.*

'Worship Him alone.

'That is the right religion, but most people do not know.' (12: 40)

The meaning of the dreams

When Yusuf finished warning them, he told them the meaning of their dreams. He said, *'As for one of you, he will pour wine for his lord. As for the other, he will be crucified and the birds will eat from his head.'* (12: 41) Then he said to the first man: *'Mention me in the presence of your lord.'* (12: 42)

The two men left. The first became a wine-bearer to the King. The other man was crucified. The wine-bearer

forgot to mention Yusuf in the presence of the King, so Yusuf remained in prison for several years.

The King's dream

The King of Egypt had a strange dream. He saw in the dream seven fat cows eaten up by seven thin cows. The King also saw seven green ears of corn, then seven withered ears.

The King was puzzled by this strange dream and asked his companions what it meant. But they only said: 'It is nothing. When someone is asleep, he sees many things which are not real.'

But the wine-bearer said: 'Not so. I will tell you the meaning of this dream.'

The wine-bearer then went to the prison and asked Yusuf the meaning of the King's dream. Yusuf was noble and generous, kind and understanding to Allah's creatures. He not only explained the meaning of the dream, he also explained what should be done about it. He said: 'You should plant your crops for seven years and leave the grain you harvest in the ear except for a little which you eat. After that will come a drought of seven years. After that help will come and the people will have plenty.'

The wine-bearer went to the King and told him the meaning of his dream.

The King sends for Yusuf

When the King heard all that, he was very relieved and happy. He asked: 'Who told you the meaning of the dream? Who is this noble man who has given us this advice and shown us what to do?'

The wine-bearer said: 'It is Yusuf the truthful. He is the one who told me that I would be a wine-bearer to my master, the King.'

The King wanted to meet Yusuf and sent for him. He said: *'Bring him to me! I would attach him to myself.'* (12: 54)

Yusuf asks for an inquiry into his case

The messenger came to Yusuf and gave him the King's summons. But Yusuf was not ready to leave prison in that way. People would say: 'This is Yusuf! He was in prison only the other day. He was unfaithful to the Aziz.'

Yusuf was proud and firm, intelligent and wise. Not many people in his place could have been so. If they had been, as Yusuf was, in prison for many years, and then a messenger from the King had come to them and said: 'The King has summoned you and is waiting for you,' they would have rushed to leave the prison.

But Yusuf told the King's messenger: 'Before I leave prison I want an inquiry into my case.'

The King ordered an investigation into Yusuf's case and this proved that Yusuf was innocent. So Yusuf left prison an innocent man. The King received him with honour.

Yusuf the ruler in charge of Egypt's grain storehouses

Yusuf knew that some people were not trustworthy, that they cheated a lot. In Egypt there were many storehouses for grain, but there was no grain in them. They were empty because the people who ran them were not trustworthy, they did not fear Allah. Their dogs would eat

while the common people had nothing. Their houses would be smartly decorated while the common people had nothing to wear.

The common people could never benefit from Egypt's grain storehouses unless a guardian with knowledge was put in charge of them. A guardian without knowledge would not know how to run them wisely. Someone who had knowledge but was not an honest guardian would cheat the people and use the storehouses for his own benefit.

Yusuf was an honest man and he had knowledge. He did not want to see the authorities ignoring the people's rights any more. He could not bear to see people starve.

Yusuf was not ashamed of the truth. He told the King: *'Set me over the treasuries of the land. I am a knowing guardian.'* (12: 55)

That is how Yusuf was put in charge of the grain storehouses of Egypt. The common people were very relieved and praised Allah.

Yusuf's brothers come

Just as Yusuf had foretold, there was indeed a famine in Egypt and Palestine. The people of Palestine heard that there was a merciful man in Egypt, a generous and noble man, in charge of the storehouses of the land, someone to whom people could go and get food. So Ya'qub sent his older sons to Egypt with money to buy food.

Benyamin stayed with his father because Ya'qub loved him very much. He did not want to be far from him. Ya'qub was afraid for him as he had been afraid for Yusuf.

Yusuf's brothers set out to meet the noble man of Egypt, not knowing that he was their own brother, Yusuf.

They thought that Yusuf was dead. How could he not be dead when they had thrown him into that deep, dark well, way out in the wilderness.

Yusuf's brothers came and went to him. He knew them, but they did not know him. (12: 58)

Yusuf remembered how they had thrown him into the well, how they had wanted to kill him. But Allah had saved him. Yusuf did not say anything to them. He did not disgrace them.

Yusuf and his brothers

Yusuf spoke to the brothers for a time and then asked: 'Where are you from?'

'From Canaan,' they replied.

He asked: 'Who is your father?'

'Ya'qub, son of Ishaq, son of Ibrahim, peace and blessings be upon them.'

He asked, 'Do you have another brother?'

'Yes,' they replied. 'We have a brother whose name is Benyamin.'

He asked: 'Why didn't he come with you?'

'Because,' they explained, 'our father would not let him. He does not like him to be far from him.'

Yusuf asked: 'Why won't he let him go? Is he a very young child?'

'No, but he had a brother named Yusuf. He once went with us and we went to run races and left Yusuf with our bags. A wolf ate him.'

Yusuf laughed to himself, but he did not say anything. He longed to see his brother Benyamin.

Allah had prepared another test for Ya'qub, the father of all the brothers.

Yusuf ordered that they be given food. Then he told them, *'Bring me your brother from your father.* (12: 59) If you do not bring him, you will not get any more food.'

Then Yusuf had their money secretly put back in their bags.

Ya'qub and his sons

The ten brothers went back to their father and told him the news. They said to him: 'Send our brother Benyamin with us. If you don't, we will not get any more food from the Aziz.' They told Ya'qub, *'We will watch over him.'* (12: 63)

Ya'qub said: *'Shall I entrust him to you other than the way I entrusted to you before?* (12: 64) Have you forgotten the story of Yusuf? Will you watch over Benyamin the way you watched over Yusuf? *Allah is the best watcher. He is the most Merciful of the Merciful.'* (12: 64)

The brothers then found their money in their bags and told their father: 'The Aziz is a generous man. He has given us our money back. He did not charge us anything! Send Benyamin with us and we will also get his share.'

Ya'qub told them: 'I will not send him with you until you make a pledge by Allah that you will bring him back unless you are overcome.'

They made a pledge by Allah. Ya'qub said: *'Allah is the Guardian over what we say.'* (12: 66)

Then Ya'qub advised them: *'My sons, do not enter by the same gate. Enter by separate gates.'* (12: 67)

Yusuf meets his brother Benyamin

When the brothers returned to Egypt to buy more

food, they entered by separate gates as their father had told them to do.

When Yusuf saw Benyamin, he was very happy and had him stay in his house. Yusuf said to Benyamin: *'I am your brother.'* (12: 69) Benyamin was very happy to meet his brother who he believed had died many years before. Yusuf remembered his mother and father, his home; his childhood returned to him in awakened memories.

Yusuf wanted Benyamin to stay with him so that he could see him and speak to him every day and ask him about his home. But how could he make that happen when Benyamin was going back to Canaan the next day, when the brothers had made a pledge by Allah that they would take him back with them? How could Yusuf keep Benyamin with him for no reason? People would say, 'The Aziz has detained a Canaanite for no reason. This is a great injustice.'

But Yusuf was intelligent and clever.

He had a precious drinking cup placed secretly inside Benyamin's bags. Then, when the brothers left the next day, some of Yusuf's people went after them. Yusuf himself followed a little later. When they caught up with the brothers, they proclaimed: 'You are thieves!'

The brothers were surprised and asked: 'What are you missing?'

They said: 'We are missing the King's cup. Whoever brings it will have a camel's load in return.' (12: 72)

The brothers said: *'By Allah, you know that we have not come to make trouble in the land. We are not thieves.'* (12: 73)

They said: *'What will its repayment be if you are liars?'* (12: 73–4)

The brothers said: *'Its repayment will be the person in whose saddle-bag it is found. That is how we repay wrongdoers.'* (12: 75)

The cup was found in Benyamin's saddle-bag. The brothers were ashamed, but they were without shame when they said: 'If Benyamin stole, a brother of his stole before.' Yusuf, who had now reached the others, heard this lie, but he was silent and did not get angry. He was noble and patient. The brothers appealed to him.

They said: 'O Aziz! He has an aged father who is very old. Take one of us in his place. We see that you are one of those who do good.'

He said: 'Allah forbid that we should take anyone except the one in whose possession we found our goods. If we did so, we would be wrongdoers.' (12: 78–9)

So Benyamin stayed behind with Yusuf. The two brothers were happy. Yusuf had been alone for a very long time without seeing any of his family. Allah had sent Benyamin to him. So why should not he keep his brother with him so that he could see him and talk to him?

To Ya'qub

The brothers were confused. How could they go back to their father without Benyamin? The brothers thought about what they could tell their father. They had made him suffer over Yusuf. Could they now make him suffer over Benyamin?

The oldest of them refused to go back to Ya'qub. He told his brothers: *'Go back to your father and say, "Father, your son stole. We only testify to what we know. We are not guardians of the Unseen."'* (12: 81)

When Ya'qub heard their story, he knew that Allah

had had a hand in it, and he understood that Allah was testing him. He had been made to suffer over Yusuf before, now he was made to suffer over Benyamin. Allah would not impose two afflictions on him. Allah would not make him suffer over both Yusuf and Benyamin.

Allah had a hidden hand, and a hidden wisdom, in it. In such ways He tests his slaves and then He makes them happy and blesses them.

Also, the oldest son had stayed behind in Egypt, refusing to return to Canaan. Would Ya'qub be made to suffer over a third son when he had already been made to suffer over two sons? It could not be so!

Finally, when Ya'qub was calm again, he said: *'Perhaps Allah will bring them all to me. Allah is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.'* (12: 83)

The secret disclosed

Yet, Ya'qub was, after all, a human being, with a soft, human heart in his breast. He did not have a piece of stone there. So, when he remembered Yusuf, his sorrow came flooding back again. He said: *'O my sorrow for Yusuf!'* (12: 84)

His sons were annoyed and said: 'You will keep on mentioning Yusuf until you die.'

Ya'qub said: *'I complain of my grief and sorrow to Allah. I know from Allah what you do not know.'* (12: 86)

Ya'qub knew that despair is disbelief. He had great hope in Allah. He sent his sons back to Egypt to look for Benyamin and Yusuf and to try hard to bring them home. Ya'qub forbade them to lose hope in Allah's mercy.

The brothers arrived in Egypt for the third time. They went to Yusuf and complained to him about their

poverty and affliction. They asked him to be charitable to them.

Sorrow and love rose up in Yusuf. He could no longer bear to listen to the sons of his own father, the sons of Prophets, complaining about their poverty and affliction to one of the kings! He thought: How long can I conceal the truth from them when they are in need? How long can I go without seeing my father? Then, he said to them: *'Do you know what you did to Yusuf and his brother when you were ignorant?'* (12: 89)

The brothers knew that this was a secret known only to themselves and to Yusuf, so they knew that this Aziz was Yusuf.

Glory be to Allah! Could Yusuf be alive? He had not died in the well! Could Yusuf be the Aziz of Egypt, the famous man in charge of the storehouses of the land, the one who provided food for them?

They had no doubt that the one who had spoken to them was Yusuf, son of Ya'qub. *They said: 'You are Yusuf.'* (12: 90)

He answered: *'I am Yusuf and this Benyamin is my brother. Allah has been good to us. Whoever fears Allah and is patient, Allah will not let the wage of those who do good go to waste.'*

They said: 'By Allah, Allah has certainly preferred you above us and we have been in error.' (12: 90–1)

Yusuf did not blame them for what they had done. He said: *'May Allah forgive you. He is the Most Merciful of the Merciful.'* (12: 91)

Yusuf sends for Ya'qub

Yusuf longed to meet Ya'qub. How could he not

long to see him when they had been apart for such a long time? Why should he be patient now when the secret had been disclosed? How could he enjoy food and drink when his father was not enjoying food or drink or even sleep?

The secret was revealed, all was made known. Allah wanted to delight Ya'qub.

When Yusuf heard that Ya'qub had gone blind because of his great weeping and sorrow, he said: *'Take this shirt of mine and throw it over my father's face. He will recover his sight. Then bring me all of your family.'* (12: 93)

Ya'qub with Yusuf

As the messenger, ahead of the others, was carrying Yusuf's shirt back to Canaan, Ya'qub sensed Yusuf's scent on the air. He said: *'I smell the scent of Yusuf.'*

Those around him said: *'By Allah, you are in your old error.'* (12: 95)

But Ya'qub had spoken the truth. *When the bearer of good news came, he placed (the shirt) over Ya'qub's face and he saw once again. He said: 'Didn't I tell you that I know from Allah what you do not know?'* (12: 96) Now the brothers understood.

They said: 'Our father, ask forgiveness for us for our wrong actions. We have been in error.'

He said: 'I will ask my Lord to forgive you. He is All-Forgiving, All-Merciful.' (12: 97–8)

Then Ya'qub journeyed to Egypt and Yusuf received him. Their joy and happiness were great. It was a memorable and blessed day in Egypt.

Yusuf placed his parents on the throne. They all fell down prostrate before Yusuf, who said: *'This is the*

interpretation of my dream of long ago. My Lord has made it true. (12: 100) *I saw eleven stars, the sun and the moon. I saw them bowing down to me.'* (12: 4)

Yusuf praised Allah greatly. He was very thankful for what had happened.

Ya'qub and his family stayed in Egypt for a long time. Ya'qub and his wife died in Egypt.

A good end

Although he was a ruler, with great power and authority, this did not distract Yusuf from Allah. It did not change him. He remembered Allah, worshipped Him and feared Him. He gave judgement according to the judgement of Allah. He carried out Allah's commands.

Yusuf did not want to die the death of a king. He did not want to be gathered with the kings. He wanted to die the death of a slave of Allah and to be gathered with the righteous.

This was Yusuf's prayer:

My Lord, You have given me a kingdom and taught me the interpretation of dreams. Creator of the heavens and the earth! You are my Guardian in this world and the next world. Make me die a Muslim and join me with the righteous. (12: 101)

Allah made him die a Muslim and joined him with his fathers, Ibrahim, Ishaq and Ya'qub, may Allah bless them and the Prophet Muhammad and grant them peace.