

He was the son of Ya'qub (Alayhis Salam) and the grandson of Ishaq (Alayhis Salam). He was the next to youngest of twelve sons and a favorite of his father.

One day he had a dream in which eleven planets, the sun, and the moon were bowing down in front of him. When his father learned of this vision, he interpreted it as meaning that Allah would prefer Yusuf (Alayhis Salam), would teach him the interpretation of dreams, and would perfect His grace upon him. But Ya'qub warned Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) not to tell the dream to his brothers, because they would be extremely jealous and might wish to do harm to him.

The older brothers were indeed jealous of Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) and his younger brother. They decided that, with Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) out of the picture, their father would look upon the rest of them with more favor. Some wanted to kill him and some favored abandoning him in some distant land. One of the brothers suggested leaving him in a pit so that some caravan would pick him up and carry him away. That was the plot upon which they eventually agreed.

Yusuf's brothers went to their father and asked if they could take Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) out in the pastures with them on the following day, so that he could play and enjoy himself. At first Ya'qub (Alayhis Salam) dissented, because he feared that Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) would be devoured by a wolf. But the brothers assured him that the wolf would not have a chance against so many of them. Finally Ya'qub agreed to let Yusuf go with them.

The following day, the brothers led Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) away and left him in the bottom of a deep pit. Allah revealed to Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) at that time that one day he would tell them of this deed, when the brothers would not recognize him. After the brothers had left Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) in the pit, a caravan came along and a water-drawer was sent to look for water at the bottom of the pit. He was delighted to find instead a healthy young man. Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) was taken away in the caravan to be sold into slavery. The traders attached very little value to him and sold him for a very small amount of money.

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Meanwhile the brothers stained Yusuf's (Alayhis Salam) shirt with the blood of some animal and returned, weeping and wailing, to their father, concocting a story about how a wolf had, after all, managed to slip past them and devour Yusuf. Their father recognized that their grief was not sincere, and he prayed to Allah to help him bear his own grief over the loss of Yusuf (Alayhis Salam).

The Egyptian who bought Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) from the caravan gave him a position of

responsibility in his household. As Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) grew to full manhood he became extremely handsome and the wife of his master fell hopelessly in love with him. One day, when she was alone in a room with him, she approached him with sinful intentions. As he attempted to flee from the room to avoid her advances, she grabbed his shirt from behind and tore it.

At the door of the room they ran into the master of the household, who demanded to know what was happening. The wife accused Yusuf of chasing her and Yusuf denied it. One of the members of the household suggested a way to determine who was telling the truth. If Yusuf's (Alayhis Salam) shirt was torn in the front, then the wife had been resisting Yusuf (Alayhis Salam). But if the shirt were torn in the back, then the wife had been pursuing Yusuf (Alayhis Salam). Since the shirt had been torn from behind, Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) was shown to be telling the truth.

The master told him to take no further notice of the matter, and he reprimanded his wife for having done something wrong.

Despite the husband's attempt to hush up the whole affair, gossip was soon spreading throughout the city that the wife had fallen in love with her servant. When she heard the malicious talk, the wife invited all the women of the town to a meal and gave each of them a knife to use. She then called Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) into the room. All the women were so overcome by the sight of the handsome young man that they cut their hands with the knives which they held. In this way the mistress of the house showed them why she had sought Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) and she vowed that if he did not yield to her wishes she would have him imprisoned.

Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) was an upright young man, and with the help of Allah he had been able to resist the advances of any woman. But he realized the weakness of his human nature and he knew that if so many women were pursuing him, he might very well yield to temptation. And so he prayed to Allah that he would rather be imprisoned than accept any of their invitations, but he needed Allah's help to turn away their attentions. And Allah heard his plea and turned their attentions from him.

But the men of the city, although acknowledging Yusuf's (Alayhis Salam) innocence, feared the commotion which his presence caused, and thus decided to have him imprisoned. There Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) remained for several years.

Two other young men entered the prison at about the same time as Yusuf (Alayhis Salam). While in prison each of the two men had a dream. One dreamed that he was pressing grapes; the other that he was carrying bread on his head from which the birds were eating. Each was puzzled about the meaning of his dream, and asked Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) if he could interpret it.

Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) promised to interpret their dreams before their next meal was brought to them, but while he had their attention, he took advantage of the opportunity to perform some dawa. He told them about the supremacy of Allah and about belief in the Hereafter. He told them about the futility of worshipping gods other than Allah. He told them of the right religion

about which many people do not know.

Only after he had given his message about Islam did he interpret the dreams. He said that the man who had dreamed that he was pressing grapes would be released and would be serving wine to his master, while the other man would be executed and the birds would eat from off his head. It happened as Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) had foretold, and Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) asked the man who was released to mention Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) to his master, in order that Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) might also be released. But the man forgot and Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) stayed in prison for a few more years.

The king of Egypt then had a dream, in which he saw seven fat cattle being devoured by seven lean cattle. He also saw seven green ears of corn and seven withered ears. None of the chiefs in his court could interpret the dream for him. At this point the king's servant, who had been Yusuf's (Alayhis Salam) cell mate, remembered Yusuf's (Alayhis Salam) ability to interpret the meaning of dreams. So he went to see Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) to ask about the dream.

Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) explained that for seven years the crops would be good, and that much of what had been harvested would be stored away. The seven good years would be followed by seven hard years in which most of what had been stored would be consumed. After that seven-year period of poor harvests, things would improve again.

When the king was told of this interpretation, he asked that Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) be brought to him from the prison. But Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) would not leave until his name had been cleared. The king summoned all the women and they told him that Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) had done nothing wrong. The wife of the chief who had pursued Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) confessed that it was she who had been at fault. When Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) was released, he was relieved that everyone now knew that he had done nothing deceitful. And he was grateful to Allah for forgiving any evil thoughts which he might have had.

The king called Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) to him, and, after they had spoken together for some time, the king was so impressed that he wanted to bestow on Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) a position of trust. Yusuf suggested that he be placed in charge of all the storehouses in the land, for he felt confident of his ability to administer them wisely.

Thus Allah rewarded Yusuf . He had risen from servant and prisoner to a very powerful position in the land of Egypt.

### **Prophet Yusuf meets his brothers**

As Prophet Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) had predicted, seven years of famine followed seven years of good harvest, but the storehouses of Egypt were full because of Prophet Yusuf's skillful management. People from all over flocked to Egypt to buy grain during the famine. Among them were Prophet Yusuf's (Alayhis Salam) brothers.

Prophet Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) knew his brothers at once but they did not recognize him. He gave them the grain which they had come to buy but warned them that they would get no more

unless they brought a brother of theirs to him from their father. They agreed that they would try to convince their father to let them take their younger brother with them the next time they came. Then Prophet Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) had his servants put their money which they had used to purchase the grain back into the saddlebags of their camels so that they would find it when they returned home and would be sure to return for more grain when they saw how generously Prophet Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) had treated them.

Ya'qub (Alayhis Salam), who still felt deeply the loss of his son Prophet Yusuf (Alayhis Salam), was reluctant to let the brothers take his other young son. He made them pledge in the name of Allah that they would bring him back home unless they were made physically powerless to do so. He also cautioned them to enter the city in Egypt by different gates, perhaps so they wouldn't look like a gang of troublemakers. However, he knew that their fate depended on Allah's will and no precautions could go against what was willed by Allah.

When the brothers had returned to Prophet Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) for more provisions, Prophet Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) lodged his younger brother with himself, and revealed his identity to him. But he had to think of a way in which to keep his younger brother with him when the others returned home. Allah inspired him with the following plan.

When the brothers' camels had been loaded with grain, Prophet Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) had a cup placed in his younger brother's saddlebag. Then a cry was raised that someone had stolen the king's cup. The brothers denied that they had stolen anything. When asked what should happen if it were to prove otherwise, they said that they would hand over the person in whose possession the cup was found. A search of the saddlebags revealed the cup in the younger brother's bag. Then the big brothers said that it wasn't really surprising, because the boy's brother (i.e. Prophet Yusuf (Alayhis Salam)) had also been a thief. But still Prophet Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) did not reveal his identity to them. The brothers asked that one of them be allowed to stay in the younger brother's place, so that their father would not grieve, but Prophet Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) replied that it would be unjust to keep back anyone except him in whose possession the cup had been.

The brothers returned to their father with the story of the theft, and his eyes turned white with grief from suppressing his sorrow. He sent them away to search for Prophet Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) and his brother, so they returned to Prophet Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) and asked for more grain, although they had but little money left. Then Prophet Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) revealed his identity to them and forgave them and asked Allah's forgiveness for all the wrong they had done to him and his brother. Then he gave them his shirt to place over his father's face to recover his sight. He told them to go home and return to Egypt with all of their families.

Prophet Yusuf reunited with his family

As their caravan was leaving Egypt, Ya'qub (Alayhis Salam), still at home, smelled the perfume of Prophet Yusuf (Alayhis Salam), but his household said he was getting senile. When the caravan arrived home with the shirt, Ya'qub's (Alayhis Salam) sight was restored. Then the entire family moved to Egypt. Prophet Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) raised his parents up on the throne to sit with him and they all bowed down in obedience to him. In this way, Prophet Yusuf's (Alayhis Salam) childhood vision of the eleven planets and the sun and the moon prostrating

themselves before him came true. This is how the Israelites came to settle in Egypt and lived there for many generations.

The entire story of Prophet Yusuf (Alayhis Salam) can be found in Surah 12 of the Qur'an.