

11. The Ethos Of Prophet Joseph

Introduction

Prophet Joseph is the son of Prophet Jacob who was born of a mother by the name of Raheel (Rachel) 3556 years after the Fall of Adam. Joseph metaphorically means an increase in blessings. Raheel died in Bethlehem and Joseph was brought up by his aunt. After the death of his aunt, Joseph came to live with his father, Jacob who was more kind to him than the rest of his brothers. This was painful for the brothers. Joseph was at the age of 12 when, one Friday night, saw in his vision that the sun, the moon and eleven stars had come down to prostrate before him. When he woke up, he told his father about the dream.

"When Yusuf said to his father: O my father! Surely I saw eleven stars and the son and the moon – I saw them making obeisance to me." (12:4)

إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِي سَاجِدِينَ

Jacob said: Do not relate your vision to your brothers. However his brothers came to know about it later and said: Yusuf and his brother, Benjamin are dearer to our father than we. So they asked their father to let them take Joseph out. They took him out, beat him and threw him into a well. When Joseph came to at the bottom of the well, Gabriel came to him saying: Don't worry, you will reach a high position.

Three days later, a caravan heading for Egypt from Madyan arrived in Jordan and halted near the well. The water drawer let down his bucket in the well and on the order of Gabriel, Joseph sat in the bucket and came out of the well, the water-drawer said:

"O good news! This is a youth." (12:19)

يَا بُشْرَىٰ هَذَا غُلَامٌ

The head of the caravan rejoiced over the incident but Joseph's brothers came to know about it hence they hurried to Jordan saying: This is our slave who has escaped. They forced Joseph to admit or he would be killed. Joseph too admitted.

"And they sold him for a small price." (12: 19)

وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍ بَخْسٍ

The caravan arrived in Egypt and after three days of rest, they took Joseph to market, put him on a stool in the middle of the market and began calling: Who is going to buy this lovely slave? Finally the king of Egypt bought him and told his wife, Zoleikha to take care of him.

But one day, he was involved in a difficulty because of Zoleikha's love for him. She took him to a room and closed all the doors on him. Joseph escaped from Zoleikha towards the closed doors which opened to him. At this moment, the king arrived. Zoleikha went forward saying: What is the punishment for one who betrays you? A young child in cradle witnessed to Joseph's innocence saying: Joseph's shirt is a proof of his innocence, for it has been torn from behind showing that he had intended to escape from Zoleikha and that she had tried to catch hold of his shirt.

Women in Egypt started reproaching Zoleikha. So she sent for them, gave each of them a knife and said to Yusuf to come forth. Seeing Yusuf, the women cut their hands in amazement saying: This is not a mortal but a noble angel. Zoleikha said: This is he for whose love you reproached me. The women gave the right to Zoleikha for they themselves had the same desire toward him. Joseph said:

"My Lord! the prison house is dearer to me than that to which they invite me." (12:33)

قَالَ رَبِّ السِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ

"There upon his Lord accepted his prayer." (12:34)

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ

Zoleikha started speaking ill of Joseph and called on the king to put him in jail. And Joseph was imprisoned for seven years.

One night the king of Egypt had a terrible dream. In the morning, he called all interpreters of dreams telling them about his dream. The interpreters said:

"Confused dreams, and we do not know the interpretation of dreams." (12:44)

أَضْعَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ ۚ وَمَا تَحْنُ بِتَأْوِيلِ الْأَحْلَامِ بِعَالَمِينَ

Eventually they referred to Joseph in prison to come to the king. Joseph said: I will not leave prison unless my innocence is proved. Ask the women who cut their hands about the story. When they took the women to the king, they all witnessed to Joseph's innocence Zoleikha too confessed to her plan and she was divorced. Joseph was released from prison and went to the king's palace.

Joseph interpreted the king's dream which indicated an imminent famine. He offered a solution and was so favored that he became ruler of Egypt. Rayyan who embraced Islam through Joseph asked the hand of Essent the daughter of Fozifarah in marriage for Joseph. Mensi and Efrain are the names of Joseph's children. After the passing away of Rayyan, Joseph remembered Zuleikha's distress hence he married her and thanks to Joseph's favor, she became young again. Because of Famine, the children of Jacob came to Egypt to seek help from Joseph. Joseph recognized them and after a long story which can not be included in this short space, they took Joseph's shirt for Jacob who said:

"Most surely I perceive the scent of Yusuf" (12:94)

إِنِّي لَأَجِدُ رِيحَ يُوسُفَ

To sum up, Judas cast it on Jacob's face, he regained his sight.

One day, Jacob arrived in Egypt in full ceremonies and was warmly welcomed by Joseph. They embraced each other and wept till they became unconscious. They about 3666 years after the fall of Adam, at the age of 120.

His Modesty

One day Zoleikha said to Joseph: Raise your head, open your eyes and have a look at me. Joseph said: I am afraid of going blind. She said: How beautiful your eyes are! He said: These two are the first things decaying in my grave. She said: What a good scent you have! He said: You will escape from me if you smell my scent three days after my death. She said: Why don't you come near me? He said: I hope to be near my Lord. She said: My carpet is silk. Then rise up and fulfill my desire. He said: I am afraid that I lose my share of Paradise. She said: I will have you Jailed and tortured. He said: My Lord will suffice me.

قَالَتْ يَوْمًا: ارْفَعْ طَرْفُكَ وَاَنْظُرْ إِلَيَّ قَالَ: أَخْشَى الْعَمَى فِي بَصْرِي، قَالَتْ مَا أَحْسَنَ عَيْنَيْكَ! قَالَ: هُمَا أَوَّلُ سَاقِطٍ عَلَيَّ خَدِّي فِي قَبْرِي، قَالَتْ: مَا أَطْيَبُ رِيحَكَ، قَالَ: لَوْ سَمِعْتَ (شَمَمْتَ) رَائِحَتِي بَعْدَ ثَلَاثِ مِنْ مَوْتِي لَهَرَبْتَ مِنِّي، قَالَتْ: لِمَ لَا تَقْتَرِبُ مِنِّي؟ قَالَ: أَرْجُو بِذَلِكَ الْقُرْبَ مِنْ رَبِّي، قَالَتْ فَرَشِي الْحَرِيرُ فَقُمْ وَأَقْضِ حَاجَتِي، قَالَ: أَخْشَى أَنْ يَذْهَبَ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ نَصِيبِي، قَالَتْ: أَسَلِّمُكَ إِلَى الْمُعَذِّبِينَ قَالَ: إِذَا يَكْفِينِي رَبِّي

فَلَمَّا وَقَفَ بِيَابِ الْمَلِكِ قَالَ: حَسْبِي رَبِّي مِنْ دُنْيَايَ، حَسْبِي رَبِّي مِنْ خَلْقِهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُهُ وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُهُ

When Joseph Came To The King Of Egypt

Just before coming to the king of Egypt, Joseph said: O God! I ask You what is good to you from his good and seek refuge to You from his evil and evil of others.

فَلَمَّا دَخَلَ عَلَى الْمَلِكِ قَالَ: اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ بِخَيْرِكَ مِنْ خَيْرِهِ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّهِ وَشَرِّ غَيْرِهِ

He Did Not Eat Fill During His Reign

It has been reported that Joseph did not eat fill during his reign. It was said to him: Will you remain hungry while the treasure of the earth is in your hand? He said: I am afraid that I forget the hungry ones if I eat fill.

وَرُوي أَنَّ يُوْسُفَ كَانَ لَا يَشْبَعُ مِنَ الطَّعَامِ فِي تِلْكَ الْأَيَّامِ فَقِيلَ لَهُ أَتَجُوعُ وَبِيَدِكَ خَزَائِنُ الْأَرْضِ، فَقَالَ: إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ شَبِعْتُ أَنْ أَنْسَى الْجَائِعَ

Prison Or Sin?

When Zoleikha came to know about what the women said of Joseph and her, she sent for them and prepared for them cushions to lean against, gave each of them an orange and a knife to peel the orange with. Zoleikha asked Joseph who was sitting in another place to come forth. So when they saw him, they deemed him great, they cut their hands in amazement and said: Refuge with Allah! This is not a mortal; this is but a noble angel.

When that happened, they came to realize that they were in error. Zoleikha said: This is he with respect to whom you blamed me, and certainly I sought his yielding himself to me, but he abstained, and if he does not do what I bid him, he shall certainly be imprisoned, and he shall certainly be of those who are in a state of ignominy. Therefore, Joseph preferred prison to sin saying! My Lord! the prison house is dearer to me than that to which they invite me.

وَتَحَدَّثَتِ النِّسَاءَ بِأَمْرِ يُوْسُفَ وَامْرَأَةَ الْعَزِيزِ، وَبَلَغَ ذَلِكَ امْرَأَةَ الْعَزِيزِ، فَأَرْسَلَتْ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَاعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مَتَكًا يَتَكُنَّ عَلَيْهِ [مِنْ] وَسَائِدَ، وَحَضْرَنَ وَقَدَّمَتْ إِلَيْهِنَّ أُتْرُجًا وَأَعْطَتْ كُلَّ وَاحِدَةٍ مِنْهُنَّ سِكِّينًا لِقَطْعِ الْأُتْرُجِ وَقَدْ أَجْلَسَتْ يُوْسُفَ فِي غَيْرِ الْمَجْلِسِ الَّذِي هُنَّ فِيهِ وَقَالَتْ لَهُ: اخْرُجْ عَلَيْنَهُ، فَخَرَجَ فَلَمَّا رَأَيْتُهُ أَكْبَرْتَهُ، وَأَعْظَمْتَهُ، وَقَطَعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ بِالسَّكَاكِينِ وَلَا يَشْعُرُونَ، وَقُلْنَ: مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ، مَا هَذَا بَشَرًا، إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ

فَلَمَّا حَلَّ بِهِنَّ مِنْ قَطْعِهِنَّ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ وَذَهَابِ عُقُولِهِنَّ وَعَرَفْنَ خَطَأَهُنَّ فِيمَا قُلْنَ أَقَرَّتْ عَلَى نَفْسِهَا وَقَالَتْ: فَذَلِكَ الَّذِي لُمْتُنِّي فِيهِ وَلَقَدْ رَاوَدْتُهُ عَنْ نَفْسِي فَاسْتَعْصَمَ، وَلَئِن لَّمْ يَفْعَلْ مَا آمَرُهُ لَيَسْجُنَنَّ وَلَيَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الصَّاعِرِينَ.

فَاخْتَارَ يُوسُفُ السِّجْنَ عَلَى مَعْصِيَةِ اللَّهِ، فَقَالَ: رَبِّ السِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ

His Invocation In Well

When Joseph was thrown into well, it was said to him: Take off your shirt. While weeping, Joseph said: O my brothers, do you make me bare? One of the brothers drew a knife, attacked him and said: If you do not take off your shirt, I will kill you. He took off his shirt and the brothers threw him into the well and went away. Turning to God, Joseph said: O God of Ibrahim, Ishaq, and Yaqub, have pity on my weakness, for I am helpless and underage.

وَلَمَّا الْقَوْهُ فِي غِيَابَةِ الْجُبِّ قَالُوا لَهُ انزِعْ قَمِيصَكَ، فَبَكَى فَقَالَ يَا إِخْوَتِي تُجَرِّدُونِي؟! فَسَلَّ وَاحِدٌ مِنْهُمْ السِّكِّينَ عَلَيْهِ وَقَالَ: لَئِن لَّمْ تَنْزِعْهُ لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ، فَانزَعَهُ، فَدَلَّوهُ فِي الْجُبِّ وَتَنَحَّوْا عَنْهُ، فَقَالَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ فِي الْجُبِّ:

(يَا إِلَهَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ارْحَمْ ضَعْفِي وَقَلَّةَ حِيلَتِي وَصِغْرِي)

Marrying Zoleikha

When the king of Egypt passed away during the years of famine, Zoleikha became poor and needy. People said to her: You should sit on the way of king of Egypt (Joseph). Zoleikha said: I am ashamed of him, but people insisted so much that she sat on the way of Joseph. At this time, Joseph came to pass with all his glory. She rose up and said: Thanks God who made king servants because of sin and made slaves kings due to their piety. Joseph said to Zoleikha who was then an old woman: Aren't you who did such and such to me? Zoleikha said: O Prophet of God! Do not blame me, for I was afflicted with three things no one was afflicted with:

- 1- There was no equal to you.
- 2- There was no equal to me in beauty and wealth in Egypt and
- 3- My husband was impotent.

Joseph said: Now, tell me what can I do for you? She said: I want you to pray to God to give me back my youth. Joseph invoked the same. Hence Zoleikha became young. Joseph married her while she was a virgin.

وَلَمَّا مَاتَ الْعَزِيزُ وَذَلِكَ فِي السَّنِينَ الْجَدْبَةِ. افْتَقَرَتْ امْرَأَةُ الْعَزِيزِ وَاحْتَاجَتْ حَتَّى سَأَلَتْ، فَقَالُوا لَهَا لَوْ قَعَدْتَ لِلْعَزِيزِ، وَكَانَ يُوسُفُ، فَقَالَتْ أَسْتَحْيِ مِنْهُ فَلَمْ يَزَالُوا بِهَا حَتَّى قَعَدَتْ لَهُ.

فَأَقْبَلَ يُوسُفُ فِي مَوْكِهِ، فَقَامَتْ إِلَيْهِ وَقَالَتْ: الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الْمُلُوكَ بِالْمَعْصِيَةِ عِبِيدًا وَجَعَلَ الْعَبِيدَ بِالطَّاعَةِ مُلُوكًا، فَقَالَ لَهَا يُوسُفُ وَهِيَ هَرِمَةٌ أَلْسَتْ فَعَلْتِ بِي كَذَا وَكَذَا؟ فَقَالَتْ يَا نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ لَا تَلْمَنِي فَإِنِّي بُلَيْتُ بِثَلَاثَةِ لَمْ يَبَلْ بِهَا أَحَدٌ.

قَالَ: وَمَا هِيَ؟ قَالَتْ: بُلَيْتُ بِحُبِّكَ وَلَمْ يَخْلُقِ اللَّهُ لَكَ نَظِيرًا، وَبُلَيْتُ بِحُسْنِي بَأَنَّهُ لَمْ تَكُنْ بِمِصْرَ امْرَأَةً أَجْمَلُ مِنِّي وَلَا أَكْثَرُ مَالًا، وَبُلَيْتُ بِأَنَّ زَوْجِي كَانَ مَحْصُورًا بِفَقْدِ الْحَرَكَهَ، يَعْنِي عَيْنًا.

فَقَالَ لَهَا يُوسُفُ مَا حَاجْتُكَ؟ قَالَتْ تَسْأَلُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُرِدَّ عَلَيَّ شَبَابِي فَسَأَلَ اللَّهُ فَرَدَّ عَلَيْهَا، فَتَزَوَّجَهَا وَهِيَ بِكْرٌ.

In the book, Kamel by Ibn -Atheer, it is written that God gave two sons by the name of Efraim and Mensha to Joseph and Zoleikha.

We can infer from this story that one of the praiseworthy acts of human beings is to help the needy and fulfill their desire in the same way that Joseph forgot all the wrong doings of Zoleikha and fulfilled her desire.

Joseph's Meal In Prison

It has been reported on the authority of Imam Sadeq that Joseph was in prison, he had only bread as a meal. Hence, he complained to God asking for a stew. This request was made while there were pieces of dried bread with him. God told him to put the bread in a pot, add water and salt to make a pleasant food. He did so hence water and salt became his stew.

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَالَ: إِنَّ يُوسُفَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ لَمَّا كَانَ فِي السِّجْنِ شَكَاَ إِلَى رَبِّهِ أَكْلَ الْخُبْزِ وَحَدَهُ وَسَأَلَ أَدَامًا يَأْتِدُمُ بِهِ وَقَدْ كَانَ كَثُرَ عِنْدَهُ قِطْعُ الْخُبْزِ الْيَابِسِ، فَأَمَرَ: أَنْ يَأْخُذَ الْخُبْزَ وَيَجْعَلَهُ فِي إِجَانَةٍ وَيَصُبَّ عَلَيْهِ الْمَاءَ (وَالْمِلْحَ فَصَارَ مَرِيًّا وَجَعَلَ يَأْتِدُمُ بِهِ ع)

One Who Is Not Stranger (Lonely)

When Joseph came out of the well and was sold, someone said: I advise you to treat this stranger kindly. Joseph One who is with God is no stranger (Lonely).

لَمَّا أُخْرِجَ يُوسُفُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ مِنَ الْجُبِّ وَاشْتَرِيَ قَالَ لَهُمْ قَائِلٌ: اسْتَوْصُوا بِهَذَا الْغَرِيبِ خَيْرًا، فَقَالَ لَهُمْ يُوسُفُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ مَنْ كَانَ مَعَ اللَّهِ فَلَيْسَ لَهُ غُرْبَةٌ.

The Result Of His Patience And Piety

When Joseph became the treasurer of the earth, the wife of the king of Egypt said to him O Yusuf! Greed and lust make the kings slaves whereas patience and piety make the slaves kings.

قَالَتْ امْرَأَةُ الْعَزِيزِ لِيُوسُفَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ بَعْدَ مَا مَلَكَ خَزَائِنَ الْأَرْضِ يَا يُوسُفُ إِنَّ الْحِرْصَ وَالشَّهْوَةَ صَيَّرَ الْمُلُوكَ عِبِيدًا وَإِنَّ الصَّبْرَ وَالتَّقْوَى صَيَّرَ الْعَبِيدَ مُلُوكًا.

Joseph Feeds The Poor And Is Kind To Orphans

It was said to Prophet Jacob said: In Egypt, there is a man who feeds the poor and is kind to orphans. He said: He should be a member of our household. When they made an inquiry, they found out that it was his son Joseph.

قِيلَ لِيَعْقُوبَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ إِنَّ بِمِصْرَ رَجُلًا يُطْعِمُ الْمَسْكِينِ وَيَمْلَأُ حَجَرَ الْيَتِيمِ. فَقَالَ: يَنْبَغِي أَنْ يَكُونَ مِنَّا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ فَتَنْظُرُوا فَإِذَا هُوَ يُوسُفُ.

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