

## **An Account of Ya'qub and Yusuf**

Abu Hamza Thumali narrates through a correct chain of traditionalists that one day he performed the morning prayers with Imam Zayn al-'abidin in a mosque of Madinah. After the prayers, Imam returned home. Abu Hamza Thumali accompanied the master. When they reached the residence Imam instructed his slave girl, Sakina, that she must serve meals to anyone who came begging to his door as it was Friday. Abu Hamza Thumali says that he asked, "But so may people pass by your house, surely all of them are not deserving?"

"O Thabit!" said Imam, "I fear that (if I am discriminative) I might spurn a genuine destitute. In that case I may be inflicted with the calamity that befell Ya'qub and his progeny. Indeed! We must serve food for the needs of his family. On the eve of a Friday at the time of breaking the fast a needy believer, who was also fasting, approached him with a request for help. He was very pious and had a high status near Allah. He came to the door and begged for food but no one heeded his request.[1] Feeling disappointed and surrounded by the darkness of night he turned and went away saying, "Inna lillaahe wa inna ilaihe Raaje'oon" (Indeed, we belong to Allah and to Him we return). That night he went to bed hungry, and he remained hungry the next day too. But he maintained patient and continued to chant the praise of Allah. Ya'qub and his family ate to satiation that night and in the morning there was food left over from the previous evening. The Almighty revealed to Ya'qub, and said, "You have insulted one of My servants to such a degree that My penalty is to target you. Therefore, expect My retribution for yourself and your family. Ya'qub! The most beloved and respected to me from the Prophets are those who have mercy on the poor and destitute, and one who seats them near himself, and one who feeds them and is a hope of refuge for them. Ya'qub! Why did you have no mercy for My poor servant? He is diligent in worship and satisfied on the little he gets in the world. Last night he came to your door with a request for some eatables to break his fast. You did not offer anything and he complained to Me and

went to sleep hungry. But he recited My praise and again fasted the next day, whereas you and your children went to bed satiated. And the surplus food remained with you.

O Ya'qub! It seems you are unaware that My wrath is more swift for My devotees than on My enemies. My kindness and favors are for My devotees and My deception and tests are for My enemies. I swear by My might that I shall sent a calamity upon you, and make your sons the victims of a disaster. I shall make you involved in sorrow and pain. So be prepared for My wrath and be content with it. Be patient in the calamities.”

Abu Hamza Thumali said, “May I be sacrificed for you! When did Yusuf have the dream?”

“On the same night when Ya'qub and his sons slept satiated whereas the beggar slept hungry,” said Imam. “That night Yusuf had a dream and he related it to his father the next day.”

“O my father! Surely I saw eleven stars and the sun and the moon. I saw them making obeisance to me.” (12:4)

When Ya'qub heard the dream the revelation of the imminent calamity had already descended on him. So, “He said, O my son! Do not relate our vision to your brothers, lest they devise a plan against you;” (12:5) Yusuf did not heed the warning seriously and told his brothers of the dream.”

Imam said that the first calamity to strike Ya'qub and his sons was the envy of the brothers of Yusuf.

On the basis of what Yusuf had related of his dream, and the excessive affection Ya'qub had for Yusuf they hatched a plot among themselves. They discussed that their father loved Yusuf and his younger brother more than he loved them even though they were stronger and deserving.

They served him with all sincerity whereas Yusuf and his brother did not shoulder any responsibility.

When they said: Certainly Yusuf and his brother are dearer to our father than we, though we are a (stronger) company; most surely our father is in manifest error: Slay Yusuf or cast him (forth) into some land, so that your father's regard may be exclusively for you, and after that you may be a righteous people. (12:8-9)

The brothers came to Ya'qub that very moment.

"They said, O our father! What reason have you that you do not trust in us with request to Yusuf? And most surely we are his sincere well-wishers." (12:11)

"Please send him with us tomorrow," they requested, "So that he may partake of the fruits in the forest and enjoy himself. We shall take care of him."

Ya'qub said that when Yusuf was out of his sight he was aggrieved. He could not bear the separation of Yusuf.

"I fear the wolf may devour him," Ya'qub tried to make an excuse fearing that the promised calamity may descend with regard to Yusuf, because Yusuf was his favorite child. But Allah's decree came to pass and Ya'qub failed to obviate Divine trial. He entrusted Yusuf to the brothers in spite of the foreboding. When they left with Yusuf, Ya'qub followed them and took Yusuf and embraced him. Then returned him to the elder brothers. They began to move on quickly lest Ya'qub again follows them and take Yusuf away with him, and took him far away into the forest. The eldest of them suggested that Yusuf need not be slain in order to separate him from his father. He could be cast into a well so that some passers-by may fish him out and carry him away. So they took Yusuf to well and pushed

him inside thinking he would soon drown. When Yusuf reached the bottom of the well the brothers heard a voice, “O sons of Ya‘qub convey my salaams to my father.”

When the brothers heard this they decided not to leave the place until they are sure Yusuf is dead. They waited until late night and returned home lamenting and said, “O father! We had left Yusuf with our belongings and went hunting. When we returned we found that a wolf had carried him off.” “Innalillaahe wa inna ilaihe raajeo‘on, (Indeed we belong to Allah and to Him we shall return)”, said Ya‘qub and began to weep, knowing that the foretold calamity had descended. He maintained patience and resigned to the Divine decree.

He told his sons, “What you say is not true.”

“Nay, your souls have made the matter light for you,” (12:18) “The Almighty would never allow Yusuf to be devoured by a wolf before I witness the realization of the true dream of Yusuf,” he added. Next morning the brothers decided to check the condition of Yusuf. Whether he was alive or dead. When they reached the place, they saw that some travelers had gathered around the well. The group had previously deputed one person to get water. He had tossed the bucket in the well and Yusuf clung to it and was pulled out. When the bucket rose to the surface the traveler was astonished to find a cherubic boy sitting on it. He called his companions and showed them the child.

Yusuf’s brother stepped forward and said, “He is our slave-boy who fell into the well yesterday. We came to pull him out today.” Saying this, they took Yusuf aside and issued a dire warning that if he did not support their claim that he was their slave, they would kill him. Yusuf agreed to save his neck.

The brothers again approached the group of travelers and offered to sell

Yusuf to them. One of them purchased Yusuf for 20 Dirhams. The brothers of Yusuf were same as the travelers. They were unaware of the true value of Yusuf to have sold him for such a paltry sum. The buyer of Yusuf took him to Egypt and sold him to 'Aziz, the Emperor. As the Qur'an says, "And the Egyptian who bought him said to his wife: Give him an honorable abode, maybe he will be useful to us, or we may adopt him as a son." (12:21)

The narrator says that Abu Hamza Thumali asked Imam about the age of Yusuf when he was cast into the well. Imam said it was nine years. Some reports mention seven years and it is considered more likely. The narrator asked about the distance between the house of Yusuf and Egypt. Imam said it was twelve days' travel. Imam also said that no one could equal the elegance and beauty of Yusuf. When he reached maturity the king's wife became infatuated with him and tried to lure him towards adultery. Yusuf explained to her that he belonged to a family that did not indulge in fornication. One day this woman bolted the door and told him not to fear, and she lay down before him. Yusuf disengaged himself from her and rushed to the door. Zulaykha ran after him and pulled at his shirt and tore its neck. The king arrived at that moment and saw them in this condition. Zulaykha tried to shift the blame on Yusuf and said to the king, "What is the punishment of him who intends evil to your wife except imprisonment or a painful chastisement?" (12:25)

When the king decided to punish Yusuf he said, "By the God of Ya'qub (as..)! I never intended any evil with your wife. She herself did cling to me and was persuading me to sin. I ran away from her. You can ask this child which of us was guilty, as he has witnessed the scene." Someone brought an infant to her. The Almighty bestowed him the power of speech and he said, "O King! Check the garment of Yusuf. If his shirt is torn from the front, he went for her and if it is torn from behind, she had been in his pursuit."

When the king saw the infant speaking he became afraid. The garment of

Yusuf was called for and found that it was torn from behind. He told Zulaykha that it was her evil plot.

“Surely it is a guile of you women, surely your guile is great.” (12:26) Then he told Yusuf to ignore the matter and keep it confidential so that no one may come to know of it from him. But Yusuf did not heed the suggestion and the news spread around the town. Some women even taunted that the wife of ‘Aziz is in love with her slave and is trying to woo him.

“So when she heard of their sly talk she sent for them and prepared for them a repast, and gave each of them a knife, and said (to Yusuf): Come forth to them. So when they saw him, they deemed him great, and cut their hands (in amazement), and said, Remote is Allah (from imperfection); this is not a mortal, this is but a noble angel.” (12:31)

Thus instead of cutting the fruit they cut their hands. Zulaykha castigated them of having blamed her and said the attractiveness of Yusuf was responsible for her misdemeanor.

The ladies dispersed from the gathering. Later one of them sent a message to Yusuf and invited him. Yusuf refused and entreated Allah that he preferred imprisonment to a life of sin. He prayed to Allah that if He did not foil the plot of women he might surrender to their overtures and become a sinner. The Almighty saved Yusuf from the guile of the women. When the affair spread among the Egyptians, the king, instead of following the advice of the speaking infant decided to imprison Yusuf. And whatever occurred therein is documented in the Qur’an.

‘Ali Ibn Ibrahim relates from Jabir that Yusuf saw the following eleven stars in his dream: Tarriq, Hawbaan, Zeyaal, Zulkatfain, Wabaab, Qaabis, Amoodaan, Feelaq, Masbeeh, Soo’ zaroogh.

According to an authentic tradition Imam Muhammad al-Baqir was asked

about the dream of Yusuf in which he saw eleven stars, the sun and the moon all prostrating towards him. Imam interpreted the dream and said it forecasted that Yusuf will become the Emperor of Egypt, his eleven brothers stood for eleven stars. The sun denoted his mother, Raheel and the Moon represented Ya'qub. When they reached him they thanked Allah in prostration for having found Yusuf. They prostrated for Allah and not for Yusuf.

Another chain reports the same Imam as saying that Yusuf had fifteen brothers. Binyamin (Benjamin) and Yusuf had the same mother. Ya'qub was known as Israelullah, that means the special one of Allah or the chosen one of Allah or simply "The chosen one." He was the son of Ishaq the son of Ibrahim, the Khalil (friend) of Allah. Yusuf was nine years old when he saw that dream and related it to his father, Ya'qub. He told Yusuf not to mention the dream to his brothers, or they would do something sinister to him." They will try to get rid of you because Satan is an enemy of man. He is about to show his enmity." Then he said, "As you have seen the dream, there is hope in it that your Lord will exalt your status. In the light of Divine Knowledge the dream that you say can be interpreted in a way that the Almighty will bestow the Divine sciences and Prophethood upon you, as bestowed upon your forefathers, Ishaq and Ibrahim. Indeed your Lord is wise and knowing."

Yusuf excelled his contemporaries in elegance and physical beauty. Ya'qub doted on him and preferred him to other children. This caused jealousy to triumph over Yusuf's brothers. They discussed the matter among themselves as narrated by the Almighty in Qur'an: "When they said, Certainly Yusuf and his brother are dearer to our father than we, though we are a (stronger) company, (Imam said it means a group); most surely our father is in manifest error." (12:8)

The brothers planned to kill Yusuf so the affections of Ya'qub will be exclusively for them.

One of them, named Lawi, said it was not necessary to kill Yusuf and they can separate him from his father and hide him where Ya'qub cannot see him. And thus he will transfer his attention to the brothers. So they came to Ya'qub and asked him why he did not entrust Yusuf to him. Even though they were concerned for his safety. They requested that Yusuf be allowed to accompany them the next day, so that he may graze the sheep and play about. They assured that they shall guard him.

The Almighty put the words into the mouth of Ya'qub and he said, "Surely it grieves me that you should take him off, and I fear lest the wolf devour him while you are heedless of him." (12:13)

The brothers said, "Surely if the wolf should devour him notwithstanding that we are a (strong) company, we should then certainly be losers." (12:14)

According to Imam a company (Usbah) consists of two to thirteen persons. Thus they set off with Yusuf and cast him into the well. Allah says, "So when they had gone off with him and agreed that they should put him down at the bottom of the pit, and We revealed to him: You will most certainly inform them of this their affair while they do not perceive (do not recognize you)." (12:15)

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir says that Archangel Gabriel descended while Yusuf was in the well and told him that, (the Almighty says) "We shall make you the Emperor of Egypt with honor and dignity. And shall make your brothers needful to you so that they come to you for assistance and you can tell them what they had done to you. And they will not recognize you at that time."

It is narrated from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq that when revelation descended upon Yusuf in the well, he was seven years old.



'Ali ibn Ibrahim says that when Yusuf was separated from his father, and they decided to kill him, Lawi suggested that instead of killing him, he could be pushed into a well, so that some traveler will pull him out and take him away. They brought him to the well and ordered him to undress. Yusuf began to cry and requested them not to strip him naked. One of them took out a knife and threatened him with it. Ultimately the clothes were removed and Yusuf was thrown into the well. The brothers returned home.

Yusuf began to supplicate to his Lord, "O the Lord of Ibrahim, Ishaq and Ya'qub. Have mercy on my helplessness, weakness, and tender age." Just then, an Egyptian caravan has arrived in the vicinity of the well. One of them was sent to draw water from the well. When he dropped the bucket into the well Yusuf clung to it and when they pulled out the bucket they found a young boy having an attractive physique and elegance as never seen in the world.

The fellow travelers were immediately conveyed the good news of having received a handsome slave. They could sell him and add the proceeds to their capital. When the brothers learnt of it. They came to the caravan and said that it was their slave who had run away. And they secretly warned Yusuf that if he did not support their claim of his slavery, they would kill him. When the people asked Yusuf he said under duress that he was their slave. They offered to purchase Yusuf. The brothers agreed to sell him upon the condition that they will take him to Egypt and never show him in this area again. Thus Yusuf was sold for eighteen Dirhams. The brothers sold him so cheap because they were unaware of the worth and position of Yusuf.

An authentic tradition of Imam al-Ridha says, "Yusuf was sold for twenty Dirham and their value today is 1270 Dinars."

It is quoted from the tafsir of Abu Hamza Thumali that the man who purchased Yusuf was Malik bin Za'ra. From the time he purchased Yusuf

there was prosperity in his economic conditions, he earned more profit during the trip. This continued until they resold him. The increase did not continue after that. Malik was much attracted towards Yusuf and saw in him the traces of nobility and his elegant countenance. One day he told Yusuf to describe his genealogy. Yusuf said he was the son of Ya'qub, son of Ishaq, son of Ibrahim. On hearing this Malik picked him up and began to weep. Then he told Yusuf that he had no children and wanted Allah to bestow him with many sons. Yusuf prayed for this man and he had twelve twins in a row - all males.

'Ali ibn Ibrahim says that when the brothers returned to Ya'qub they smeared the shirt of Yusuf in blood so that they can say that a wolf had torn him apart.

Imam al-Baqir says that they slaughtered a kid and smeared the shirt in its blood. Lawi said, "Brothers! Ya'qub, the Israelullah is the son of Ishaq the Prophet of Allah, the son of Ibrahim the friend (Khalil) of Allah. Do you think the Almighty will conceal this secret from our father." "So what do you suggest?" they asked.

He said, "Come let us perform Ghusl and pray in congregation and invoke Allah that He conceal this matter from our father. Indeed! Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."

They stood up and performed the ghusl. But according to the ritual law of Ibrahim and Ya'qub there was a stipulation of at least eleven persons to form a congregation. They were only ten. They said, "We have no one to preside over the prayer."

Lawi said, "Never mind, we shall regard the Almighty as the Imam of our congregation." They performed the prayers and pleaded to the Almighty to withhold the secret from their father. At the time of going to bed they came lamenting to their father. Brandishing the blood-smeared shirt of Yusuf they said that they were running hither thither and engrossed in

recreation, leaving Yusuf to care for their belongings. The wolf had tore him to pieces. “They said, O our father! Surely we went off racing and left Yusuf by our goods, so the wolf devoured him, and you will not believe us though we are truthful.” (12:17)

“...He said, Nay, your souls have made the matter light for you, but patience is good and Allah is He Whose help is sought for against what you describe.” (12:18)

Then he said, “How vicious was the wolf upon Yusuf and how kind he was on his shirt. He tore apart Yusuf but did not damage his shirt a bit.” Then the travelers took Yusuf to Egypt and sold him to the ‘Aziz (Emperor). When the ‘Aziz beheld the elegance and beauty of Yusuf he told his wife Zulaykha to nurture the boy with love and care so that he may prove useful for them in the future. He decided to adopt him since he had no children of his own. Both of them showered their affections on Yusuf and when he reached maturity, Zulaykha fell in love with him and all the women who saw him became infatuated with him. Even the men were attached to regard him with affection. His face shone like a full moon. Zulaykha tried to entice him for physical relationship and one day she bolted the door when they were apparently alone in a room. Then she urged him to fulfill her wishes as soon as possible. Yusuf sought the refuge of Allah from the vile act that she was forcing him in. “Your husband, the ‘Aziz has reared me and regards me highly. Indeed the Almighty does not bestow salvation on the transgressors,” he reasoned. But Zulaykha clung him passionately. Yusuf saw the face of Ya‘qub in a corner. He was biting one finger with his teeth and saying, “O Yusuf! Your name is included in the list of Prophets in the heavens. Do not perform a misdeed for which your name may be written among the fornicators of the earth.” In another tradition from Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq when Zulaykha decided to have sexual relations with Yusuf, there was an idol in the room. When she

put a curtain on it, Yusuf asked the reason behind it. She said, she was ashamed of the idol.

“You are ashamed of the idol that neither sees nor hears you. Shall I not be ashamed of my Lord who is manifest and informed about everything?” asked Yusuf.

Then he disengaged himself and tried to flee. Zulaykha pursued him and at that moment the ‘Aziz appeared at the doorway. Zulaykha asked him what the punishment was for a person who intended evil with his wife, except imprisonment or a painful punishment.

Yusuf pleaded innocence and said she herself harbored evil intentions on him. There was an infant in the cradle at that time. The Almighty sent a revelation on Yusuf and he suggested to ‘Aziz that he ask the infant who was a witness of all that had passed. “He will tell you that I have not betrayed trust,” said Yusuf.

‘Aziz asked the child and the Almighty gave it the power of speech to testify in favor of Yusuf.

The little child said, “If the shirt of Yusuf is torn from the front, Zulaykha speaks the truth and Yusuf is lying. But if his shirt has a tear at the back, Zulaykha is a liar and Yusuf is truthful.”

‘Aziz inspected the shirt of Yusuf and found that it was torn from behind. He told Zulaykha that it was her evil plot. And the guile of you women is great,” he added.

He requested Yusuf to keep the incident secret and ordered Zulaykha to repent for her sin as she was a guilty one. Then this incident became known and the ladies of the town castigated Zulaykha for her weakness. When Zulaykha learnt of their criticism she invited them and arranged for them a repast. She handed a knife and a tangerine to each of the women

and told them to slice it. The same moment she ordered Yusuf to enter the gathering. When they saw the handsome Yusuf, they could not discriminate between the fruit and their hands and instead of the tangerine they slashed their fingers.

Zulaykha told them excuse her because it were they who had accused her of misdemeanor whereas the unearthly elegance of Yusuf was responsible. She said, "I call him towards me and he refuses. If he does not submit to my wishes, I shall have him imprisoned." The ladies returned home and before the night fell, each of them sent a messenger to Yusuf and inviting him. Yusuf was troubled and pleaded to Allah that prison was better than the predicament he was in. And that which the women were trying to entice him for.

"If You do not fail their attempt I might fall in the trap. I will then be included in the ignorant ones," he prayed.

The Almighty accepted his supplication and nullified the guile attempts of women. Zulaykha ordered that Yusuf be imprisoned. Allah says, "Then it occurred to them after they had seen the signs that they should imprison him until a time." (12:35)

According to Imam al-Baqir the ayats speaks about the testimony of infant and the tearing of Yusuf's shirt and Zulaykha's pursuit of Yusuf. Thus when Yusuf refused to oblige Zulaykha she began to plot against him and her husband decided to imprison Yusuf.

Two young slaves of the king were also convicted with Yusuf. One of them was a baker and one a water-carrier. Another tradition says that 'Aziz appointed two people to guard Yusuf. When the two of them stepped into the prison they asked Yusuf what knowledge he had. He replied that he could interpret dreams. One of them said he had seen himself pressing the grapes for wine. Yusuf told him he would be released and go to become the royal barman and win the king's favor. The baker said he

dreamt of having a bowl of bread on his head and birds were feeding on it. Actually he had not seen any such dream, he was only making it up. Yusuf told him that he would be killed by the king and his corpse shall be hung at the gate where birds would feed on his brain. The man said, “I lied to you. I had no such dream.”

Yusuf said, “Whatever I predicted would surely come to pass.” Yusuf behaved kindly with the prison inmates. He visited the sick, helped the needy and created an amiable atmosphere for his companions. At last the king ordered the release of the man who had seen the dream of grape juice. Yusuf requested him to put a good word to the king regarding Yusuf. But when this man had the opportunity, the Satan enticed him to ignore Yusuf’s request. Thus Yusuf remained in the prison for many years after that.

According to reliable traditions, Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq said that Archangel Gabriel descended to Yusuf when he was in the prison. He told him that the Almighty sends His salaams and says that “I have made you the best of my creations.” Yusuf fell down and putting his cheek on the ground said, “You Alone are my Lord.”

Archangel Gabriel told him, “The Almighty says that He has made you more lovable to your father than your other brothers.” Yusuf touched his cheeks to the ground and said to Allah. “You Alone are my Lord!”

Archangel Gabriel said, “The Almighty says that He brought you out of the well you had been pushed in it and were convinced that you would perish.”

Again Yusuf touched his cheek on the earth and said, “You Alone are my Lord.”

Archangel Gabriel said, “Indeed the Almighty had decreed this punishment for you because you sought the help of someone else. So you remain in prison for some more years.” When the prescribed term was

over, and he was permitted to recite the Dua al-Faraj (Supplication of release) he kept his cheeks on the ground and said, “Allahumma inkaanat d’unoobi qad Akhlaqat wajhi in’ndaka fainni atawajjahoo ilaika be wahje aabaais’ s’aalehe’en - Ibrahim, wa Ishaq wa Ya’qoob.”

(Translation: O Allah if my sins have degraded my face near You, I certainly turn towards You through the faces of my ancestors, Ibrahim, Ishaq and Ya’qub).

The Almighty forgave him and he was released from the prison. The narrator asked Imam if they could also recite the same supplication. Imam told him to recite as follows: “Allahumma inkaanat d’u noobi qad Akhlaqat wajhi in’ndaka fainni atawajjahoo ilaika be nabiyyeka nabiyyar rah’ma. S’allallaaho a’laihe wa aalehi wa Aliyy-waa Faat’emah - wal h’asane-wal-h’osaine wal aaimmah a’laihimus salaam.”

‘Ali Ibn Ibrahim says once the king dreamt that five lean cows were eating five fat cows. And seven dried ears of corn striking to seven green ears of corn and were dominant upon them. He asked his ministers to interpret the dream but they could not understand it. They said it was a nightmare and they did not know the interpretation of this nightmare.

The person whose dream Yusuf had interpreted remembered Yusuf. When he was released Yusuf had requested him to plead on his behalf to the king but he had forgotten it. He was present in the court and seven years had passed since his release. He told the King that he would soon provide the interpretation of the dream if he is permitted to visit the prison. So he came to Yusuf in the prison and said, “O Yusuf! O the truthful one! What is the interpretation of seven lean cows eating seven fat ones and seven dried ears of corn on seven green ones. Tell me so that I may inform the king and his officers. They may realize your special qualities, virtues and understand the interpretation of your dreams.”

Yusuf said, “You should cultivate your lands very carefully during the next

seven years and store as much as you can. Do not thresh the crops to keep them safe from being spoilt with grain beetles. Consume less grain during this period, for, the next seven years there would be a year of plentiful rains. There would also be abundance in crops and fruit cultivation.”

The king’s barman returned to the king and narrated the words of Yusuf. He expressed his desire to meet Yusuf personally and a messenger was dispatched to summon Yusuf from the prison. When the messenger came to Yusuf he told him to ask the king about the women whom Zulaykha had invited for a repast, “When they had seen me they had cut their fingers. Indeed my Lord is aware of their guile! Ask the king to summon those women and ask them about the matter concerning me and about Zulaykha. They were aware of all the cause of my imprisonment, that was due to my refusal to give myself to their desires.

‘Aziz summoned the women and asked them concerning Yusuf and how they had tried to lure him. The women glorified Allah and said they knew Yusuf was blameless. Zulaykha said the truth was manifested, “Actually I had attracted him towards myself while he spoke the truth.” After this Yusuf said that, “I only intended that the king should realize that I have not betrayed trust during his absence. Because Allah does not guide those who betray trust. And I do not acquit myself from evil. Indeed, the soul entices one towards evil a great deal. Except when the Almighty directs His Mercy towards me. Certainly, my Lord is Beneficent and Merciful.”

The ‘Aziz said, “Bring Yusuf to me, I want to appoint him as a close aide.” Yusuf came to him and when he conversed with him the king became aware of the light of guidance, knowledge, wisdom and intellect that shone from his forehead.

“From today,” said ‘Aziz, “You are my confidant and a trustworthy aide. You can ask for whatever you like.” Yusuf told ‘Aziz to entrust him with all the wealth and agricultural products of Egypt. “I assure that I would



manage them with absolute honesty. And I know how it should be deployed.”

The king of Egypt put Yusuf in charge of the revenues and national wealth. The Almighty Allah says, “And thus did We give to Yusuf power in the land — he had mastery in it wherever he liked; We send down Our mercy on whom We please, and We do not waste the reward of those who do good.” (12:56)

Thus, under the directions of Yusuf all the agricultural produce of Egypt was collected in granaries constructed with stone and mortar. All the citizens were rationed grain only sufficient for their needs. The excess of grains were stored without threshing in huge stacks. This process continued for seven years. When the seven years of draught arrived the ears of corn stored in the previous seven years were removed and sold at the rate prescribed by Yusuf. At that time he was of a distance for 18 days’ travel from his father. People from the adjoining areas traveled to Egypt to purchase their requirements from Yusuf. The respected father of Yusuf and his brothers were residents of an area that produced a large quantity of gum. The brother’s of Yusuf used to carry a quantity of gum and barter it with grains of Egypt. Yusuf supervised these transactions in person.

“And Yusuf’s brothers came and went into him, and he knew them, while they did not recognize him.” (12:58)

Yusuf issued food grains to his brothers and gave little more than the measure, then asked them who they were.

They said, “We are the sons of Ya’qub the son of Ishaq son of Ibrahim the Khalil of Allah. The One whom Nimrod had cast into the fire but he did not burn. The Almighty made the fire cool and a safety for him.” Yusuf asked them the well-being of Ya’qub and why he has not accompanied them to Egypt. The brothers said, “He is an old and weak

person.”

“Do you have any other brother?” asked Yusuf. “Yes,” they replied, “We have one more brother from a different mother.”

Yusuf said, “Bring that brother along with you the next time you come for rations. I give a full measure and also some extra quantity. Thus if you do not bring your step-brother I would not be having anything to give you and neither would I allow you to reach me.”

The brothers decided to try their best in persuading their father. Yusuf told his servants to put back the things his brothers had brought back into their luggage without their knowledge so that when they return home unpack their foods they realize our generosity and come back again. The brothers of Yusuf came home and told their father the king of Egypt had ordered them to bring their brother along with them otherwise they would not be entitled to any food stock. “So let us accompany us and assure that we shall take care of him.”

“Shall I entrust him to you, when I had already entrusted you his brother in the past. Verily, Allah is a greater protector and the most Merciful.” When they unpacked their goods they found the commodity they had taken for exchange and told their father, “No one can be more generous than the ‘Aziz who has been so generous for us. He has not even charged us the price. So if you allow we shall take our younger brother with us and take care of him. If we take him with us we can claim for an extra share because whatever we have brought is not sufficient for our needs.” Ya‘qub said, “I will by no means send him with you until you give me a firm covenant in Allah’s name that you will most certainly bring him back to me, unless you are completely surrounded.

“And when they gave him their covenant, he said, Allah is the One in Whom trust is placed as regards what we say.” (12:66)

When his sons prepared to leave, Ya'qub told them that all of them should not enter from the same gate lest they be victims of the evil eye. "And enter by different gates and I cannot avail you aught against Allah; judgment is only Allah's; on Him do I rely, and on Him let those who are reliant rely. And when they had entered as their father had bidden them, it did not avail them aught against Allah, but (it was only) a desire in the soul of Ya'qub which he satisfied; and surely he was possessed of knowledge because We had given him knowledge, but most people do not know." (12:67-38)

When the sons of Ya'qub set out for Egypt, Benjamin accompanied them but did not join them during meals. He also did not talk to them or mix with them. When they all reached Yusuf and saluted, he saw his brother and was delighted. When Benjamin was alone, Yusuf asked why he was sitting separately. He said, "I had a full brother and once these people took him out and did not bring him back. It was said a wolf had devoured him. I have vowed not to participate in any of their affairs until I live."

"Are you married?" asked Yusuf.

"Yes."

"Do you have children?"

"Yes."

"How many?"

"Three sons."

"What are their names?"

"Wolf, garment and blood!"

"Why have you given them such names?"

“So that I may not forget my brother. That whenever I call one of them I am reminded of my brother.”

Yusuf told the brothers to wait outside and retained Benjamin. They left the room. Yusuf called Benjamin near him saying: “I am your brother, therefore grieve not at what they do.” (12:69)

And he said he wanted to keep Benjamin with him. Benjamin said the brothers will not agree to this because at the time of departure they had given an oath to their father that they would bring him back. Yusuf said he would find a solution, and told Benjamin that he should not reveal anything to the brothers regarding whatever he witnessed. After Yusuf provided the brothers with requisite food grains and added some more to it he told one of his servants to hide the gold bowl used as a measure in the pack of Benjamin. The cup was inserted into the luggage of Benjamin without the brothers having any hint of it. When they had packed their foods for departure Yusuf sent a messenger and told them to halt.

An announcer declared: “O Caravan! You are most surely thieves.” They said while they were facing them: “What is it that you miss?”

They said, “We miss the kings cup, and he who shall bring it shall have a camel-load and I am responsible for it.”

They said, “By Allah! You know for certain that we have not come to make mischief in the land, and we are not thieves. They said, “But what shall be the requital of this, if you are liars?” They said, “The requital of this that the person in whose bag it is found shall himself be (held for) the satisfaction thereof; thus do we punish the wrongdoers.”

So he began with their sacks before the sack of his brother, then he brought it out from his brother’s sack.” (12:70-76)

Thus Yusuf had Benjamin arrested.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq was asked how Yusuf ordered the announcement of 'O caravan! You are most surely thieves.' Whereas they had not stolen anything?

Imam replied, "They were not thieves and neither Yusuf make a false statement. What he meant by 'thieves' was due to the fact that they had stolen him (Yusuf) from his father.

"They said, If he steal, a brother of his did indeed steal before; but Yusuf kept it secret in his heart and did not disclose it to them. He said, You are in an evil condition and Allah knows best what you state." (12:77) The brothers were infuriated and yellow liquid oozed from their bodies. They pleaded with Yusuf to release their brother. It was a special characteristics of the sons of Ya'qub that whenever they were angry their hair stood on their ends and protruded from their garments and yellow blood dripped from the tips of their hair.

"They said, O chief! He has a father, a very old man, therefore retain one of us in his stead; surely we see you to be of the doers of good." (12:78) Yusuf said, "Allah protect us that we should seize other than him with whom we found our property, for then most surely we would be unjust." (12:79)

When they failed to secure the release of Benjamin, they prepared to return to Ya'qub. The eldest of them Lawi according to one tradition and according to another tradition Yahooda or Shamoun said, "Do you not know that your father took from you a covenant in Allah's name, and how you fell short of your duty with respect to Yusuf before? Therefore I will by no means depart from this land until my father permits or Allah decides for me, and He is the best of the judges."

“Go back to your father and say: O our father! Surely your son committed theft, and we do not bear witness except to what we have known, and we could not keep watch over the unseen: And inquire in the town in which we were and the caravan with which we proceeded, and most surely we are truthful.” (12:80-82)

Thus the brothers returned while Yahooda stayed back in Egypt to lobby for Benjamin’s release. He came to Yusuf and began to argue his case. Strong words were exchanged and the matter became so serious that Yahooda became very angry. Whenever he lost his temper a hair from his shoulder stood on its end and secreted blood. It continued like this until he was touched by one from the progeny of Ya’qub. When Yusuf saw blood dripping from a strand of his shoulder hair he had an idea. One of his children was playing with a golden pomegranate. Yusuf took it from his hands and threw towards Yahooda. The child ran to retrieve his toy and in the process touched Yahooda. The blood immediately stopped dripping from the end of hair follicle and Yahooda’s anger cooled down and a doubt arose in his mind. The child picked up the pomegranate again. Once more the dialogue between Yusuf and Yahooda became a heated argument. Again Yahooda was enraged and again blood dripped from a hair of his shoulder. Yusuf repeated his trick the second time and Yahooda’s temper returned to normal. The same process was repeated a third time. Yahooda suspected the possibility that a descendant of Ya’qub was in the palace of Yusuf.

When the brothers of Yusuf reached home, they related the incident concerning Benjamin.

“He (Ya’qub) said, Nay, your souls have made a matter light for you, so patience is good; maybe Allah will bring them all together to me; surely He is the Knowing, the Wise.” (12:83)

Ya’qub blamed his sons for Benjamin’s arrest and said they must have

familiarized the 'Aziz with the law that thieves are to be taken as slaves. "And he turned away from them, and said, O my sorrow for Yusuf! And his eyes became white on account of the grief, and he was a repressor (of grief)." (12:84)

Ya'qub became visually impaired and was very unhappy with these sons, but he did not manifest his anger.

Traditions mention that someone asked Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq how much the grief of Yusuf's separation had affected Ya'qub. Imam said, "His grief equaled the combined grief of seventy women whose sons have expired. And Ya'qub was not conversant with the phrase "Inna lillaahe wa inna ilaihe raajao'on (Indeed we belong to Allah and towards Him we shall return), therefore he used to repeat the words, "Waa Asafaa a'laa Yusuf",

(O the sorrow of Yusuf Yusuf's brother pointed out to Ya'qub that he had not despaired due to Yusuf's sorrow until he died or reached the verge of death.

Ya'qub said that he did not complain of his grief and the great sorrow but he was aware of the Mercy and Grace of his Lord in a way his sons were not.

"He said, I only complain of my grief and sorrow to Allah, and I know from Allah what you do not know. O my sons! Go and inquire respecting Yusuf and his brother, and despair not of Allah's mercy; surely none despairs of Allah's mercy except the unbelieving people." (12:86-87)

A good chain of reporters convey a tradition wherein Imam Muhammad al-Baqir was asked, "When Ya'qub told his sons to go and search for Yusuf and his brother, twenty years had elapsed after Yusuf's disappearance, And his eyes turned white due to excessive weeping and were blinded. So, was Ya'qub knowing that Yusuf was alive?"

Imam replied, “Yes, he knew that Yusuf was alive. Because Ya‘qub had invoked the Almighty at dawn and requested Him to send the Angel of death. The Angel of death appeared to him in a beautiful form. “Who are you?” he asked.

“I am the Angel of death, you had requested the Lord to send me to you. What can I do for you?” said the Angel.

“Tell me how you capture the souls? Do you employ assistants for it, or use different means?”

“I use different methods.”

Ya‘qub said, “I request you in the Name of the God of Ibrahim, Ishaq and Ya‘qub, tell me has the soul of Yusuf reached you yet?”

“No,” replied the Angel of death.

From that moment Ya‘qub became sure that Yusuf was alive and he told his sons to go and search for Yusuf and his brother and not to despair of Divine Mercy. Because no one despaired of Divine mercy except the unbelievers.”

According to a tradition reported by ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim, the ‘Aziz of Egypt wrote to Ya‘qub: “I am having your son Yusuf as a slave, whom I had purchased at a little price. As for your other son, Benjamin, a missing object was found in his bag and as a result I enslaved him too.” Ya‘qub was appalled at this message and told the messenger to wait while he composed a reply. He wrote, “In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. This is a letter from Ya‘qub the Israel of Allah, the son of Ishaq the slaughtered one of Allah, the son of Ibrahim the Khalil of Allah. I am in receipt of your message that you have enslaved my sons. Indeed the accursed Nimrod who was a worldly king had cast my grandfather,



Ibrahim into the fire. But he did not burn, the Lord Almighty commanded the fire to cool down and be comfort and safety for Ibrahim. Regarding my own father, Ishaq the Lord Commanded my grandfather, Ibrahim to slaughter him with his own hands. When he complied with Divine Orders the Almighty appointed a large ram as the requital of Ishaq. Indeed, I had a son whom I loved more than I loved anyone. He was the brightness of my eyes and a fruit of my heart. His brothers took him one day and when they returned, they said that a wolf had devoured him. The grief broke my back and due to excessive weeping my eyes became sightless. Yusuf had a brother from his own mother, whom I liked too. He came to you with his step-brothers in order to purchase grains. The elder sons returned and said he had stolen the king's cup and that you have arrested him and enslaved him. We are not from a family that indulges in thievery and greater sins. I request you in the Name of the God of Ibrahim, Ishaq and Ya'qub to release my son and achieve Allah's pleasure."

When Yusuf read the letter, he kissed it, touched it to his eyes, and wept profusely. In another tradition it is mentioned that when Yusuf opened the letter he could not control the flood of tears. He stood up, went home, read the letter and wept much. Then he washed his face and returned to the court. But again grief overpowered him and he could not control his tears. Again he receded into his private quarters and gave a free rein to his tears. When the tears receded he washed the face and emerged from his chamber. He came out addressed his brothers, "Do you know how you treated Yusuf and his brother when you were ignorant?"

They said, "Are you indeed Yusuf? He said, I am Yusuf and this is my brother; Allah has indeed been gracious to us; surely he who guards (against evil) and is patient (is rewarded) for surely Allah does not waste the reward of those who do good.

They said, By Allah! Now has Allah certainly chosen you over us, and we were certainly sinners.

He said, (There shall be) no reproof against you this day, Allah may forgive you, and He is the most Merciful of the merciful. Take this my shirt and cast it on my father's face, he will (again) be able to see, and come to me with all your families. And when the caravan had (hardly) departed (for Ya'qub's home) (that) their father (Ya'qub) said. Most surely I perceive the odor of Yusuf. Unless you pronounce me to be weak in judgment." (12:89-94)

All those who were present said that Ya'qub's old age has affected him. But shortly later the brothers arrived from Egypt and cast Yusuf's shirt on his face.

"...so forthwith he regained his sight. He said, Did I not say to you that I know from Allah what you do not know? They said, O our father! ask forgiveness of our faults for us, surely we were sinners. He said, I will ask for you forgiveness from my Lord; surely He is the Forgiving, the Merciful." (12:96-98)

'Ali ibn Ibrahim narrates that when the messenger of 'Aziz departed with the reply of Ya'qub, he (Ya'qub) raised his hands in prayers and said, Yaa h'asanah Shabate yaa kareemah ma'oonah, yaa khairah aklah. Yaa khairah aataini be rooh'e minka wa farrij min l'ndeka Archangel Gabriel descended and said, "O Ya'qub do you want me to teach a supplication that Allah may open your eyes and return your son to you?"

Then Archangel Gabriel said, "Recite: Yaa man laa ya'lamo aha'dun kaifa huwa illa huwa yaa man saddal huwaa be samaa-e wa laisal arz" a a'lal maa-ewakhtaara le nafsehi ah'sanul asmaa-e aataini be ruh'in minka wa farajin min l'ndeka.

It was not yet dawn of the next day when the shirt was brought and cast upon the face of Ya'qub. He regained sight and was united with his son. According to another tradition when Yusuf was imprisoned by the order

of 'Aziz, the Almighty revealed to him the interpretation of dreams. When the two convicts related their dreams he gave his interpretation and to the one whose release he predicted he said, "Put in a good word regarding me to the king." At this moment his attention was not confined to the Almighty Whose sole refuge he should have sought. As the result the Almighty asked him, "Who has shown you the dream (of stars prostrating)?"

"You, my Lord," said he.

"Who has made you the beloved of your father?"

"You, my Lord."

"Who taught you the method of interpreting dreams?"

"You, my Lord."

"Then how could you seek the help of someone other than me? Why did you not call Me for help?"

Why did you express a wish to one of My creatures? That he put in your word to another of My creatures. One who himself is subservient to My Power? Now, as a requital of this misdemeanor you shall remain in prison for an additional period."

Yusuf entreated Allah by the rights of his forefathers that He may forgive him and save him. The Almighty said that Yusuf's ancestors do not command any right upon Him, Allah said, "If you mean Adam, know that, I created him with My power and made him to dwell in the Garden. I allowed him to partake all the fruits except that of the forbidden tree. But he disobeyed Me. Later, when he begged for forgiveness, I accepted his request. As far as Nuh is concerned, I raised his status among My creatures. They disobeyed him and he prayed for their destruction. I accepted his prayers and drowned his people. I saved him and those who

believed in him through the Ark. Regarding Ibrahim, I made him My Khalil and saved him from the fire. And made the fire of Nimrod cool and safety for him. If you intend to beseech in the name of Ya'qub, I gave him twelve sons and when I took one of his sons away from him, he wept so much that he lost his vision. He sat on the streets and complained about his grief to My creatures. So what rights do your ancestor have upon Me?" At this moment Archangel Gabriel revealed to him to recite the following Dua: "As-aloka be minkal a'z'eem wa ah'saane kal qadeem." (Translation: "I beseech You in the name of Your Great Bounties and Your past Favors.")

When Yusuf recited this Dua, the 'Aziz saw a dream that finally facilitated Yusuf's release from prison.

A reliable tradition from Imam al-Ridha says that the jailer told Yusuf that he was devoted towards him. Yusuf said, "No misfortune befell me, but that it was due to people's devotion towards me. My paternal aunt (father's sister) adored me therefore accused me of stealing. My father loved me and this caused my brothers' jealousy and put me in trouble. Zulaykha was infatuated with me and due to her misadventure, I lie in prison."

Imam says, "Yusuf complained to the Almighty for his misfortune and asked Him for what error did he become liable for this punishment?" The Almighty revealed to him that he had himself chosen imprisonment, when he said, "O Allah I prefer imprisonment to what these women invited me." Why did he not say, "O Allah I prefer Your safety to what these women invite me?"

According to reliable chain of narrators Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq says, "When the brothers of Yusuf threw him in the well, Archangel Gabriel descended to him and asked, "Young man! Who has thrown you into the well?" "My brothers," replied Yusuf, "Because I was the favorite of my father, therefore my brothers were jealous and they pushed me in the well." "As the Lord of Ibrahim, Ishaq and Ya'qub wishes," replied Yusuf.

Archangel Gabriel said the Lord instructed him to recite the following Dua: Allahumma inni as-aloka be anna lakal hamdo laa ilaaha illallaah - Antal hannaanol mannaan. Badiie—Samaawaate wal ardh Zuljalaale wal ikraam Salle a’laa Moh’ammadin wa aale Muh’ammad waja’l min amri farajan warzuqni min h’aetho ah’taseb wa minh’aitho laa ahtaseb. When Yusuf implored the Lord through the above Dua, He saved him from the well and again from the machinations of Zulaykha and made him the Emperor of Egypt. He had never imagined he would be bestowed all this.

In an authentic hadith, Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq says that when Ibrahim was to be thrown into the fire, Archangel Gabriel descended with a garment of Paradise and dressed him with it. It was insulated against heat and cold. When the time of his death approached Ibrahim tied his armband to Ishaq. And Ishaq tied it to Ya’qub. When Yusuf was born, Ya’qub had put this band around his neck. It remained around his neck during all the calamities that befell him. When Yusuf removed the garment from his amulet in Egypt, Ya’qub felt its scent in far off Syrian Palestine and said, “I smell the odor of Yusuf.”

It was that same garment of Paradise. The narrator asked Imam to whom was the garment passed on after Yusuf. Imam said it was inherited by his family and added, “All the knowledge and the personal relics of the Prophets were inherited by the Messenger of Allah and his vicegerents. Ya’qub was in Palestine when the Caravan (of his sons) departed from Egypt and he immediately perceived its scent. The fragrance was brought from Paradise. And it is bestowed upon us in inheritance. It is with us.” Trustworthy channel of hadith has quoted Imam al-Ridha as saying, “The law prevailed among the progeny of Ya’qub that whenever a person was convicted of theft he was enslaved. When Yusuf was a child he lived with his aunt (father’s sister). She adored him much. Ishaq had a waistband that he had given to Ya’qub. This waistband was in the possession of Ya’qub’s sister. When Ya’qub requested her to send back Yusuf to him she was aggrieved and said, “Let it be. I’ll send him later.” Then she tied the waistband under his clothes and sent him back to his father. When Yusuf

came home the aunt also accompanied him and told Ya‘qub that her waistband has been stolen. She began to search for it. After rummaging here and there she lifted the garment of Yusuf and exclaimed, “Here it is! Yusuf had stolen it. I shall take him as a slave.” Therefore on this pretext she secured the custody of young Yusuf. This was alluded to by the brothers of Yusuf when they mentioned he had also committed a theft in the past.”

“They said, If he steal, a brother of his did indeed steal before.” (12:77)  
‘Ali ibn Ibrahim relates that when Yusuf’s brothers brought his shirt and spread it on the face of Ya‘qub, his eyes regained the vision and he told them, “Did I not say to you that I know from Allah what you do not know?”

They said, O our father! Ask forgiveness of our faults for us, surely we were sinners.

He said, I will ask for your forgiveness from my Lord; surely He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.” (12:96-98)

In an authentic tradition Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq says that Ya‘qub delayed the prayers of his sons’ forgiveness until dawn as it was a meritorious time for fulfillment of prayers. According to other traditions he delayed the prayers until Friday eve.

Traditional reports mention that when Ya‘qub and his family entered Egypt, Ya‘qub and the brothers of Yusuf fell down in prostration. Yusuf said, “O my father! This is the significance of my vision (dream) of old; my Lord has indeed made it to be true; and He was indeed Kind to me when He brought me forth from the prison and brought you from the desert after the Satan had sown dissensions between me and my brothers, surely my Lord is benignant to whom He pleases; surely He is the Knowing, the Wise. (12:100)

Reliable traditions mention that some people asked Imam ‘Ali al-Naqi how Ya‘qub and his sons prostrated before Yusuf, whereas they were Prophets? Imam replied, “They did not prostrate for Yusuf. They did so as a gesture of thankfulness of Allah and as a mark of respect for Yusuf. The Angels had similarly prostrated before Adam by the command of Allah. Then Ya‘qub, along with his other sons and Yusuf performed the prostration of thankfulness (Sajdah ash-Shukr) in response to the fact that Allah had united them. “Did you not note how Yusuf remarked in thankfulness, “My Lord! Thou hast given me of the kingdom and taught me of the interpretation of sayings (and dreams): Originator of the heavens and the earth! Thou art my guardian in this world and the hereafter; make me die a Muslim and join me with the good.” (12:101) ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim narrates that Archangel Gabriel told Yusuf to extend his hand. When he did so, a light escaped from between his fingers. Yusuf asked what that was. Archangel Gabriel said it was the light of Prophethood. “The Almighty has removed Prophethood from your loins because you did not arise from your seat to respect your father (when he entered).” Allah removed Prophethood from Yusuf (as..) so that none of his descendants may be conferred Messengership. The Prophethood was transferred to the loins of Lawi, the elder brother of Yusuf. He became eligible for this honor because when the brothers had plotted to kill Yusuf he suggested pushing him in the well instead of murdering him. As Lawi had prevented the murder of Yusuf, the Almighty placed Prophethood in his loins. Secondly when Benjamin was arrested and despite their efforts the brothers failed to secure his release and prepared to return to Ya‘qub. Lawi said he would not leave Egypt until his father permitted or until Almighty, “decides for me, and He is the best of the judges.”

Allah liked this gesture and Prophethood was transferred to his progeny. Consequently the series of The Israelites Prophets were descendants of Lawi. Musa was also from his progeny. He was the son of ‘Imran, son of Baseer, son of Fahith son of Lawi.

Later, Ya'qub asked Yusuf what happened to him when his brothers took him from home. Yusuf requested his father to excuse him but Ya'qub insisted for at least some information. Yusuf said, "The brothers brought me near the well, and ordered to remove my clothes. I told them to fear Allah and not force me to strip. But they flashed a knife and threatened me. I was compelled to undress and they pushed me in the well naked." When Ya'qub heard this, he exclaimed and fell down unconscious. After regaining consciousness he asked Yusuf for more details. Yusuf requested him in the name of Lord of Ibrahim, Ishaq and Ya'qub and excused himself from narrating any of the accidents that befell him. Ya'qub did not press further.

According to narrations the 'Aziz of Egypt died during the period of famine and his wife Zulaykha was reduced to penury. She was so impoverished that she took to begging. Yusuf became the Emperor and people addressed him as "Aziz of Egypt". One day people told Zulaykha to sit in the path of Yusuf so that he might have mercy on her. She replied that she was ashamed of him. But when people insisted she squatted in the path of Yusuf. When Yusuf passed by in company of his entourage she rose up and said, "Pure is the Almighty One Who turns the disobedient Kings into slaves and Who transforms slaves into Kings due to their obedience."

Yusuf recognized her and ordered that she be escorted to his residence. Zulaykha had become a wizened old woman. Yusuf reminded her of her machinations against him. She begged him not to taunt her of her past misdeeds. She further added that she was attracted towards evil due to three factors that afflicted her: She was madly in love with Yusuf who had no equal in elegance.

She was endowed with such a beauty that she had no equal in her nation. She was also the wealthiest woman. Lastly, her husband was impotent.



Yusuf asked her what she desired. She said, “I desire that you pray to Allah to make me youthful once again.”

Yusuf prayed and she became young. Yusuf married her and found that she was a virgin. (The report of ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim reaches this point). Portions of this report are quoted in other narrations but we have refrained from quoting all of them for the sake of brevity.

Ibn Babawayh has quoted Wahab bin Munabbah that he said, “I have seen in some divine scriptures that Yusuf was passing by with his soldiers when he came across Zulaykha. She was sitting in a ruin. When Zulaykha beheld the glory and power of Yusuf she arose and said, “Praise and glory to Allah, who enslaves the disobedient kings and raises slaves to the status of rulers due to their obedience. I am deprived, give me some alms.” Yusuf said that to consider the divine bounties lowly and to deny them becomes a barrier for further bounties. So, turn your attention towards Allah that He may wash the stains of your sins with water of repentance. Indeed the acceptance of prayers is conditional to the circumstances, purity of heart and good actions.

Zulaykha said she had not yet completed repentance and regret as she was still ashamed before the Lord. She couldn’t bring herself to seek divine Forgiveness and Mercy. She had not yet shed tears of regret and had not repented as it was wont to repent. She had also not reached the stage of absolute submission.

Yusuf said, “Seek forgiveness and try to fulfill the necessary conditions with care. The path of actions is yet open. The arrow of supplication reaches its target only as far as one remains alive.” “I too have a firm belief in this,” said Zulaykha. “If you live longer than me, you shall shortly learn of it,” she added. Yusuf ordered her to be gifted a cow-skin filled with gold. Zulaykha said, “Indeed sustenance is allotted from Allah and it reached the creatures. I

do not wish an increase in sustenance and a life of comfort and opulence until I am surrounded by Divine anger.”

When they moved ahead some of Yusuf’s sons said, “Who is that woman. Her plight has torn our hearts due to pity. It has softened our hearts.”

“She is the mid-wife of comfort and luxury. And now she is afflicted with Divine punishment.” Later, Yusuf married Zulaykha and when he consummated the marriage he found her a virgin. He asked how she retained her virginity despite her being married for years. She explained that her husband had been impotent.

Authentic hadith of Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq says that Zulaykha was sitting by the road when Yusuf passed by. He recognized her and told her to return and that he shall make her self-sufficient. Then he sent for her one hundred thousand Dirhams.

According to reliable reports Abu-Basir asked Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq about the supplication recited by Yusuf in the well, that he escaped alive from it. Imam said, “When he was thrown down the well and was almost hopeless he recited, Allahumma in kaanatil khat’aayaa wad’du’unooba qad akhlaqat wajhi l’ndaka falan tarfaa’ lee ilaika s’autan wa lan tastajeeba lee da’watan fainni As-aloka be h’aqqeish shekhe ya’qooba farh’am z”o’fatan wajma’ baini wa bainahu faqad a’lemta riqtahoo a’layya wa shauqee ilaihe.

(Translation: O Allah! If my sins and errors have degraded my face near You. You do not raise a voice near You for me nor do You answer my prayers. Then I beseech You by right of the respected personality, Ya’qub. Have Mercy on his old age and bring us together. You are Cognizant of his attachment for me and my love towards him.)

Abu-Basir says after relating this Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq wept and said, “I recite the following lines in my supplication: Allahumma in Kaanatil khat’aayaa wad’dhunooba qad aqhlaqat wahji l’ndaka fa lan tarfa’a lee s’autan fainni as-aloka beka falaisa kamithlehi shaiy-un wa atawajjaho

ilaika bemuh'ammadin Nabiyyeka nabiyyir rah'mate yaa Allaho yaa Allaho  
Yaa Allaho Yaa Allaho Yaa Allah.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq said, "Recite this supplication and recite it often. I recite it again and again whenever I am in difficulties." In another reliable saying Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq said that Archangel Gabriel came to Yusuf while he was in prison and told him to recite the following Dua thrice after every obligatory prayers. "Allahummaja'l lee min Amri farajan wa makhrajan warzuqni min Haitho ahtasebo wa min h'aitho laa a'h'tasebo."

Shaykh al-Tusi says that Yusuf was released from prison on the 3rd of Muharram and Ibn Babawayh has recorded through authentic chains from 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbas that when famine affected the progeny of Ya'qub he told his sons, "I have heard that food grain is sold freely in Egypt and the owner of food stock does not keep people waiting for long. He gives immediate delivery of grains. So you all go to him and purchase grains. If Allah wills he shall be generous."

Ya'qub's sons packed their luggage and set out for Egypt. They arrived in Egypt and met Yusuf who recognized them while they did not know him. Yusuf asked them who they were. They replied they were the sons of Ya'qub son of Ishaq son of Ibrahim the Khalil of Allah and added that they had come from the mountains of Canaan. Yusuf said, "You are the descendants of three Prophets but you possess neither knowledge nor forbearance. You have no dignity and respect either. I think you are spies of a rival king and have entered my kingdom to spy on me." They said, "O King we are neither spies nor violent people and if you knew who our father is, you would certainly accord us respect. He is the Prophet of Allah and the son of a Prophet of Allah, and he is a grief-stricken person."

"Why is he sorrowful?" asked Yusuf. "He is a Prophet and a son of a Prophet, he has an assured place in Paradise and also has so many healthy

sons like you? So why should he be aggrieved? I think it must be due to your foolishness, ignorance, falsehood and cheating.”

They said, “O king! We are not foolish and idiots and neither is he sorrowful because of us. He had one more son who was younger to us. His name was Yusuf. One day he accompanied us on a hunt and a wolf devoured him. From that time our father is sorrowful and aggrieved and continues to weep.”

Yusuf asked them if they had the same father. They replied in the affirmative but added that they had different mothers. Then Yusuf asked them why their father had sent all of them but retained a son with him. So that he can stay close and confess him. The brothers confirmed it. Yusuf asked them why the father had kept that particular son with him. They said after Yusuf their father preferred him over rest of his sons. Yusuf told them they all should return home except one brother and request Ya‘qub to send his favorite son. He said that he wished inquire from him the well-being of Ya‘qub and also wanted to know the actual reason of his grief, and how he had become prone to premature ageing. And also why he has become usually impaired due to excess weeping.

The brother threw lots among themselves and Shamoun was selected. Yusuf kept Shamoun in his custody and arranged for his lodging and boarding. The rest of his brothers departed. At the time of farewell Shamoun said, “Brothers! You all know my plight! Convey my salutations to father.”

When the brothers reached Ya‘qub they greeted him in a low voice. He asked them why they were so serious. And why he had not heard the voice of his dear son Shamoun.

They said, “We have come from the greatest ruler. We do not know anyone else so wise, intelligent well-mannered and dignified. O father! If there is anyone like you, it is him. But we belong to a family prone to

disasters. The king accused us of lying and said he would not believe us until you send Benjamin to him and convey through him the reason for your grief, sorrow, hoariness and visual disability.”

Ya‘qub suspected this to be a trick for taking Benjamin away from him. He said, “My sons! You have a very bad habit. Wherever you go, one of you disappears. I will not send Benjamin with you.”

When the brothers unpacked their luggage they found the goods they had taken for barter has also been returned to them without they being aware of it. They came back to Ya‘qub in joy and said, “We have not seen a king like him. He abstains from sins more than any other person. He returned our barter for fear of falling into sin. We shall again take our goods and purchase grains for the family. And we shall also take care of our brother. We would take a measure as his share in addition.”

Ya‘qub said, “You know that Benjamin is my favorite son. After Yusuf I have become attached to him. He is a comfort for me among you. I shall not send him with you until you give me Allah’s covenant that you shall bring him back to me. Except if there is something beyond your control.” Yahooda gave his pledge and they set out for Egypt taking Benjamin with them. When they came to Yusuf he asked if they had conveyed his message to their father.

“Yes,” they replied, “And in reply we have brought our brother. You ask him whatever you like.”

“Young man!” asked Yusuf, “What message has your father sent?” “He has sent me to you,” replied Benjamin, “and sent his Salaams and said that he appreciated your asking the reason for his sorrow, premature ageing, weeping and blindness,” He read the father’s message: One who remembers the Hereafter often, weeps more. My pre-mature aging is due to the remembrance of the day of reckoning. The sorrow of my beloved son caused me to weep and blinded my eyes. I have heard

that you too share my sorrow and have inquired of my well-being. May Allah bless you with great reward. The greatest favor you can do for me is to send my son Benjamin back to me as soon as possible. Because, after Yusuf, he is my favorite child. I like him more than my other sons and derive consolation from him in my sorrow. I cure my loneliness by his company.”

When Yusuf heard the message of his father, tears welled up in his eyes. He could not control himself and retired to his private chamber. Inside, he wept bitterly. After a while he emerged from his room and ordered food to be served for his brothers. He suggested that each pair of brothers should sit before each tray of food. All of them paired off but Benjamin was left standing. Yusuf asked him why he had not taken a seat. Benjamin said it was because he had no brother from same mother. Yusuf asked him, “Did you never have a brother?”

“I had,” replied Benjamin.

“What happened to him?”

“These people say a wolf devoured him.”

“How much aggrieved are you, on account of him?”

“I have twelve sons and I have named all of them with a name that reminds me of my brother,” said Benjamin.

“After losing your beloved brother how did you have the heart for such a busy marital life?” asked Yusuf.

“My father is a righteous person, he commanded me for matrimony and insisted that I have many offspring so that they spread the praise of Allah in the lands. (According to another report: that they spread the Kalemah of La ilaaha illallaah on the earth.)”

“All right,” said Yusuf, “come and sit with me for dinner.”

Seeing this the brothers remarked, “Allah always honors Yusuf and his brother over us. So much so that the king invited Benjamin to accompany him for dinner.”

After this Yusuf ordered that a cup should be concealed in the baggage of Benjamin. A search revealed it to be hidden in Benjamin’s bag. Benjamin was arrested. When they returned to Ya’qub and narrated the incident he said, “My son is not a thief. You have played a trick.” He told his sons to return to Egypt and sent with them an appeal addressed to the king for his son’s release.

The brothers came Egypt once more and delivered the letter to Yusuf. When he read the letter and could not control his tears. He rushed to his quarters and wept for sometime. When he came out the brothers said, “O king of Egypt! We are familiar with your kindness and generosity and we are afflicted with famine and hunger. We have less money, so do not think of its less quantity, but give us full measure. And before giving us grains in excess return to us our brother as charity to us. Indeed Allah rewards the generous ones with a good reward.

“He said, Do you know how you treated Yusuf and his brother when you were ignorant? They said, Are you indeed Yusuf? He said, I am Yusuf and this is my brother; Allah has indeed been gracious to us; surely he who guards (against evil) and is patient (is rewarded) for surely Allah does not waste the reward of those who do good.” (12:89-90)

Yusuf told them to return to Ya’qub and gave them his shirt. He told them to put it on the face of Ya’qub and he shall regain his vision. Then they should all come to Egypt with their families and children. At this same moment Archangel Gabriel descended and asked Ya’qub if he wanted to learn a Dua by which he can regain his eyesight.

“Yes,” replied Ya‘qub.

“Then recite the same Dua that your father Adam had recited and through it the Almighty had accepted his repentance,” said Archangel Gabriel.

“It is the same Dua recited by Nuh and it caused his Ark to anchor at Mount Judi,” continued Archangel Gabriel, “It saved Nuh from drowning. Your grandfather, Ibrahim mentioned the same supplication when he was cast into the inferno. By the grace of this Dua, Allah cooled the fire and made it safe for Ibrahim.”

Ya‘qub asked Archangel Gabriel what this Dua was. He said, “Recite: O Allah I ask you by the right of Muhammad and ‘Ali and Fatimah and Hasan and Husayn, unite me with Yusuf and Benjamin and restore my vision.”

Ya‘qub had hardly completed the prayer when his sons arrived and spread Yusuf’s shirt on his face. His vision was restored at once. Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq says that when Yusuf entered prison he was twelve years old. He remained jailed for 18 years. After release he lived for another 80 years. Thus he had a total life span of 110 years. Another reliable tradition says that Ya‘qub wept so much for Yusuf that his eyes perished. At last his sons told him, “All the time you are nostalgic due to Yusuf. You will become sick or die, or reach the verge of death.” Yusuf also wept a great deal in sorrow of being separated from his father. He wept so much that the inmates of prison found it disturbing. They requested him either weep at night and remain quiet during the day or weep during daytime and keep silent at night. We have already mentioned previously on the basis of authentic reports that Yusuf was one of those Prophets who possessed worldly kingdom in addition to Prophethood. Thus his kingdom included Egypt and its desert regions. It did not spread beyond these limits.

Authentic chains say that Ya‘qub and A’is were twins but A’is was born



before Ya'qub. Later Ya'qub was named thus because he was born at the 'aqab' (back) of A'is. Ya'qub is known as Israel (servant of God) because Isra means servant and 'eel' means God. On the basis of another tradition, 'Isra' means strength and 'Israel' means 'strength of Allah.'" Ka'b bin Ahbaar is quoted to have said that Ya'qub was the custodian of Jerusalem. He used to be the first one to enter the shrine and last one to leave it. He was the one who lighted the chandeliers at night and when he came in the morning he found them extinguished. One night he sat inside the shrine to solve the mystery. Suddenly he saw a Jinn blowing out the flames of lanterns. Ya'qub caught him and tied him to one of the pillars of Jerusalem. When it was morning the people found that Ya'qub has arrested a Jinn and tied him to a pillar. This Jinn was named 'eel'. Due to this Ya'qub earned the appellation of Israel.

According to authentic chains of reporters Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq said, "When Yusuf arrested Benjamin, Ya'qub prayed to Allah and said, 'Would You not have mercy upon me? You have taken both my eyes and both my sons.'

The Almighty revealed to him, 'Even if I have caused them to die, I shall enliven them and unite them to you. But don't you remember the ram you slaughtered and fed your family while a hungry, fasting person had to go empty-handed from your door?'

After this Ya'qub made a practice of announcing every morning within a radius of one Parasang if anyone wished to have breakfast he could have it at Ya'qub's residence. Similarly a caller announced in the evening if there was anyone who wanted dinner, he could have it with the family of Ya'qub."

According to a reliable tradition of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, Ya'qub warned Yusuf, "Do not commit fornication. For if a bird commits adultery it loses its plumage."

It mentioned in a authentic tradition of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq that a person came to the Messenger of Allah and said, "O Messenger of Allah I have a cousin who is beautiful and attractive. I like her very much but she is sterile."

The Messenger of Allah said, "Do not marry her. Because when Yusuf asked Benjamin how despite losing Yusuf he found enjoyment in matrimony, he said that his father had ordered him to beget many children, if possible, so that they may establish the praise and glory of Allah on the earth."

Reliable tradition of Imam al-Sajjad says, "People have acquired three qualities from three people: Patience from Ayyub, thankfulness from Nuh and jealousy from the sons of Ya'qub."

In a reliable report some people raised objections against Imam al-Ridha from having accepted the heir-appetency of Al-Ma'mun. Imam al-Ridha justified his stand saying that Yusuf was the Prophet of Allah, yet he asked the 'Aziz of Egypt (who was a disbeliever) to entrust him with royal wealth. As mentioned in the Qur'an: "He said, Place me (in authority) over the treasures of the land, surely I am a good keeper, knowing well." (12:55)

It is quoted in an authentic report of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir that when Zulaykha was reduced to penury and deprivation people advised her to approach Yusuf as now he was the 'Aziz of Egypt and that he would surely help her. Others warned her that he might take revenge from her for the trouble she had caused him. Zulaykha said, "I do not fear the one who fears Allah." She went to the palace and found Yusuf on the throne. Seeing the majesty she remarked, "Praise be to Allah. He alone deserves praise Who made slaves the rulers due to their obedience and reduced the rulers to slavery as a result of their disobedience. Later, Yusuf married her and found that she was a virgin. Then he asked her if it wasn't better

than what she had desired earlier? Zulaykha told him that she was subjected to four conditions in connection with him. First, she was the most beautiful woman of her time, secondly, he was the most handsome youth. Third, she was a virgin and fourth her husband was impotent. When Yusuf retained Benjamin, Ya'qub wrote a letter to him, ignorant of the fact that he was his own Yusuf. The translation of that letter is as follows: In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful. This is a communication from Ya'qub son of Ishaq son of Ibrahim the Khaleelur Rahman to the progeny of 'Aziz and the Pharaoh. Peace be upon you. Indeed I praise that God, barring whom no one deserves divinity. Certainly, I belong to a family engrossed in calamities. My grandfather Ibrahim thrown into the fire due to his obedience of Allah. The Almighty made the fire cool and a cause of safety for him. And the Lord commanded my grandfather to slaughter my father with his own hands. Then Allah bestowed him with whatever He desired. And I had a son who was dearest to me among all the people. He was separated from me. Due to his sorrow my eyes have become blind. He had a brother from the same mother. When the former disappeared I used to remember him and embrace his brother. This comforted me in my sorrow. He too had been arrested by you for theft. I testify to you that I have never stolen anything and I could never have begotten a thief."

Yusuf read the letter and wailed in sorrow. Then he said, "Take this shirt of mine and put it across his face so that he may regain sight. After that, all of you come to me with your families."

Another tradition says when Ya'qub reached Egypt, Yusuf mounted his horse and along with his escorts came to welcome him. He passed Zulaykha on the way. She was praying in a dilapidated house. When she saw Yusuf she recognized him and called in a sad tone, "O traveler! I have suffered a great deal in your love. How meritorious is piety and abstinence that frees slaves and how evil is sin that enslaves free men." Another tradition from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq mentions that Yusuf personally supervised the disbursal of food grains and fixed the daily

prices. He used to specify the rate without using the terms 'price rise' and 'sell heavy' (reduce quantity). When he fixed the daily rate he related it to the previous day and stated the difference that was to be observed. One day he did not fix the rate. The cashier took his leave but after he had gone some distance came back to inquire of the day's fixed price. Yusuf did state any amount but told the officer to start selling the grains. The officer reached the granary and the sale started. The first customer arrived and Yusuf's representative measured out grains. When a measure remained for the previous days quantity the purchaser said, "That's enough! I paid for this much quantity only."

The representative thought the price must have been equal to one measure. So for the next customer he decided to reduce the quantity by one measure. Again when he had one measure remaining the buyer said it was sufficient for the payment he had made. This continued until the grains measured out were reduced to almost half the quantity of the previous day.

Authentic and reliable chains of reporters record from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq that the garment of Paradise sent for Ibrahim was later placed in the village of Naqrah. Anyone who put it on felt elated. When the caravan departed from Egypt, Ya'qub was in Ramla or in Syrian Palestine, whereas Yusuf was in Egypt. Ya'qub said, "I could perceive the scent of Yusuf."

He meant by this remark that he smelt the fragrance of Paradise emanating from his garment.

In reliable tradition of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq, Isma'il bin Tafazzul Hashmi asked him why Ya'qub postponed the prayers of forgiveness for his sons when they requested him for it? Why did he not pray immediately. Whereas when the brothers asked Yusuf for mercy he immediately said, "(There shall be) no reproof against you this day?"

Imam said, "Because the hearts of young people are softer as compared to aged men. Secondly the offence of the brothers was against Yusuf

himself, therefore he took precedence in forgiving them immediately. Whereas Ya'qub was aggrieved indirectly due to the separation of Yusuf. Hence his forgiveness was related to the right of a third party. Consequently he delayed the prayers of forgiveness to the dawn of Friday."

Numerous reliable reports relate from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq that when Yusuf came out with entourage to welcome Ya'qub, Ya'qub dismounted but Yusuf wanted to maintain his dignity (among his subjects), hence he remained on the mount. They had hardly embraced when Archangel Gabriel descended and informed that the Lord of the lords says the Majesty and opulence of Yusuf had been an obstacle for him to respect a chosen servant of Allah. He told Yusuf to spread out his palm. When he did so a brilliance shot out from it (according to another report it came out from between his fingers) and headed for the sky. He asked Archangel Gabriel what that was. Archangel Gabriel said that it was the light of Prophethood and now there shall be no Prophets from Yusuf's seed in retaliation for the disrespect he showed to Ya'qub by not dismounting.[3]

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq says in a reliable tradition that when Zulaykha came to Yusuf and sought the permission to enter, the sentries told her they feared Yusuf might take revenge from her. Zulaykha said she was not afraid of the one who feared the Almighty and she entered. Yusuf asked her about the profound change in her appearance. She said, "I Praise Allah who changed the rulers into slaves because of their sins and raised slaves to the throne due to the barakah (bounty) of their obedience to Him."

Yusuf asked why she had dealt with him in that manner. She said it was due to the unsurpassed beauty of Yusuf.

"What would have been your condition," asked Yusuf "if you had seen the Prophet who shall be raised at the end of time. His name shall be

Muhammad. He is more elegant than I am, and more graceful and generous.”

“You spoke the truth,” said Zulaykha.

“How do you know I speak the truth?” asked Yusuf.

“Because when you pronounced his name my heart was imbued with his love.”

The Almighty revealed to Yusuf that Zulaykha was speaking the truth and that Allah was also pleased with her because she had expressed her devotion for His beloved, Muhammad. And Allah ordered Yusuf to marry Zulaykha.

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq says that the community resembling pigs opposes the belief in the occultation of the al-Qa’im from the Progeny of Muhammad. Indeed the brothers of Yusuf were descendants of the Prophets. They interacted with Yusuf and closed a deal with him but they did not recognize him until he introduced himself.

“Then how do these accursed people question the ability of Allah to conceal His Proof (hujjah) from people whenever He likes? Indeed, Yusuf was the Emperor of Egypt and there was a distance of 18 days’ travel from Egypt to the residence of Ya’qub. If Allah desired He could have made the whereabouts of Yusuf known to Ya’qub. By Allah! After receiving the good news, Ya’qub and his sons reached Egypt in nine days. Then how these people say Allah cannot repeat the process with His Last hujjah? Yusuf used to move about in the markets, he sat among the people but they did not recognize him until the Almighty permitted and until he said, ‘Do you know how you treated Yusuf and his brother when you were ignorant?’”

The same Imam remarks in another authentic hadith that when the

brothers sought permission to take Yusuf with them, Ya'qub said he feared the wolf might devour him. Thus Ya'qub unknowingly suggested an excuse that his sons later used with success.

In another tradition Imam says a Bedouin came to Yusuf. Yusuf gave him food and after he had finished asked where he was going. He said he was going towards a particular district. Yusuf said, "When you reach a particular valley, call out for Ya'qub and a great and elegant gentleman would come to you. Tell him you had met a person in Egypt who sends his salaams to him and tell him that his trust placed in the custody of Allah shall not be wasted." When the traveler arrived at that particular valley he ordered his slaves to look after the camels. Then he went and called out for Ya'qub. A handsome personality with impaired vision came out feeling the walls with his hands. The Bedouin asked him if he was Ya'qub.

"Yes," replied the gentleman.

When he conveyed the message of Yusuf he wailed and fell down unconscious. After regaining consciousness he asked the messenger if he had a wish from Allah.

"Yes," said the Bedouin, "I have married my cousin but do not have any children from her. Pray to Allah that He bestows a son to me." Ya'qub performed the Wudhu' (ablution) and offered two Rak'ahs (units) of prayers. After concluding the prayers he invoked Allah. As a result of this Dua the Bedouin had four sets of twins, all males. After this incident Ya'qub had a feeling that Yusuf was alive and that after his disappearance (ghaibat) he would be united with him. He always told his sons, "I know the extent of Allah's Mercy that you don't know." His sons blamed him for senility and old age. Therefore, when the fragrance of the shirt reached him he said, "I could smell the fragrance of Yusuf and do not accuse me of senility and "weak memory." Yahooda told him that he was the victim of his old error. When the messenger bearing glad-tidings arrived and spread the cloth on Ya'qub's face he regained his

vision and said, “Did I not say to you that I know from Allah what you know not?”

After quoting this tradition Shaykh Ibn Babawayh says the proof that Ya‘qub had knowledge that Yusuf was alive and that the Lord had concealed him from him as an examination, was that when the brothers came to him wailing and he asked them why they wept and why he did not see Yusuf with them. They said the wolf had devoured him and displayed Yusuf’s shirt stained with blood. Ya‘qub told them to place the shirt before him. Then he kept the shirt on his face and swooned. After consciousness he asked them why the odor of Yusuf’s flesh was not apparent and how come the shirt was not torn? “You falsely blame the wolf,” he told them. “My son is a victim of injustice and you have played a dirty trick.” That same night he turned his face away in abhorrence and recited a dirge for Yusuf. He used to say, “My beloved Yusuf, whom I preferred over all my children, has been taken away from me. My beloved Yusuf, in whom I had reposed hopes among all my children has been snatched away from me. My beloved Yusuf on whose head I placed my right hand and on whose face I kept my left hand has been separated from me. My beloved Yusuf, who was my support in loneliness and helper in my sorrow, has been taken from me. My beloved Yusuf, would I know on which mountain they flung you on and in which sea they drowned you. My beloved Yusuf, I wish I was with you to share your afflictions.”

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir is quoted by Abu-Basir that the sorrow of Ya‘qub intensified and his pupils turned white due to weeping for Yusuf. He was grief-stricken and shattered. Twice every year he requisitioned food grains from Egypt for his family. The grains sufficed for their needs during summer and winter. One day he dispatched some of his sons with a caravan heading towards Egypt. He gave them a meagre amount for buying grains. When they reached Egypt, the ‘Aziz had appointed Yusuf in his place on the throne. They beheld the majesty of Yusuf and failed to recognize him. Yusuf recognized them immediately and ordered his servants to measure out grains for them. And he told them to put back secretly the goods they had brought for barter. Then he asked his



brothers, "I have heard you had two more brothers, where are they now?"

"The wolf had devoured the elder one," they replied, "And we have left the younger brother with our father. Father does not part with him because he fears for him a great deal."

Yusuf said, "I desire that when you come again to purchase grains you bring your younger brother along with you. If you fail to do so I will not let you have any food-grains and would not even grant you an audience." When the brothers returned and unpacked their luggage, they were amazed to find the king had given back the good they carried for barter. And the quantity of grain was more than they had purchased. They told their father, "Let us take our younger brother so that we may procure more grains. And we promise to take care of him."

After a passage of six months when the stocks were depleted Ya'qub sent his sons to Egypt. This time Benjamin accompanied them but Ya'qub insisted they take an oath in Allah's name they will bring him back safe and sound as much as it was in their power. When they entered the court of Yusuf he asked where Benjamin was. They said he was with their luggage. Yusuf ordered them to present Benjamin and told them he wanted to speak with him in private. The brothers went out and Yusuf called Benjamin near him. He embraced him and said he was his brother Yusuf.

"Do not be aggrieved," said Yusuf, "By what I have arranged with regard to you and do not pass on this information to your brothers. Do not be afraid or sad."

He sent him back to the brothers and ordered his servants to accept whatever goods they had brought; and to quickly deliver them food-grains. He also told them to hide the measuring cup in Benjamin's bag. After the brothers loaded their caravan and set out with their companions, Yusuf followed them accompanied with his men. He cried, "O (people of) caravan! You are thieves!"

“What do you miss?” they asked.

“The king’s cup is missing and we shall give a camel load of wheat to the one who locates it,” said the servants of Yusuf.

The search ended when the cup emerged from the bag of Benjamin. Yusuf arrested Benjamin and all efforts of the brother to secure his release failed. At last they returned to Ya’qub in a dejected mood. When Ya’qub received the shocking news he said, “Inna lillaahe wa inna ilaihe rajao’on.” (Surely we belong to Allah and to Him we shall return).” Ya’qub was so devastated that his back bent. The people ignored Ya’qub and his sons; and their condition deteriorated. All their food stocks depleted and they were on the verge of starvation. Ya’qub told his sons to go and search for Yusuf and not to despair of Allah’s Mercy. He gave them a meagre sum and sent them to Egypt with a letter addressed to the “Aziz’ requesting mercy for his sons. He instructed his son to give the letter before revealing their barter goods. The letter was as follows: In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

This is a letter to the ‘Aziz of Egypt - one who is known for justice and generosity in filling the measure. From Ya’qub son of Ishaq son of Ibrahim the Khalil, for whom Nimrod collected wood, and ignited a blaze to burn him. But Allah made the fire cool and safe. And He saved him. O ‘Aziz I inform you that I belong to a family that is prone to calamities from the Lord, so that He may test and examine us through bounties and afflictions. We are suffering since last 20 years. First of all, I had a son named Yusuf. He was my consolation among all the children. He was the light of eyes and the fruit (pleasure) of my heart. His step-brothers persuaded me to send him with them for playing and enjoyment. One morning I sent him with his brothers and the same night they returned wailing with a blood-stained shirt saying a wolf had devoured my Yusuf. Hence the loss of Yusuf caused me deep sorrow. I wept so much that the pupils of my eyes turned white. Yusuf had a brother from his maternal

aunt and I loved him too. When I felt nostalgic for Yusuf I embraced his younger brother. It consoled me to some extent. His brothers even took him away from me because you had asked about us and ordered my sons to bring their younger brother to you when they come to collect grains the next time. And you refused to deliver food stocks if they did not obey your request. Thus, I was compelled to send him to you for assured supply of food grain. My sons returned without the younger brother and said he had stolen the king's cup. Although we belong to a family that does not steal, you have arrested him and caused me grief due to his separation. So much so, that my back has bent. This tragedy has surpassed all the calamities that befell me.

Hence, do me a favor and release my son. And also send a greater quantity of wheat. Be generous in fixing the rate of food grains and liberal in weighing. And send back the sons of Ya'qub soon."

Archangel Gabriel descended to Ya'qub and said, "Your Lord asks you how serious was your affliction that you had to complain about it to 'Aziz?"

Ya'qub said, "O Allah You have subjected me to these calamities as requital and punishment."

"Is there anyone except Me to dispel your calamities?" asked Allah. "No, my Lord," replied Ya'qub.

Then why didn't you feel ashamed to complain to someone other than Me?

And why didn't you plead to Me?"

"I regret my action and pray for Your forgiveness. Now I complain to You about my grief and sorrow."

Allah said, "It is the end of punishment for you and your erring sons. O Ya'qub, if you had prayed to me at the beginning of the afflictions I would

have removed them at that time, itself. If you had repented for your mistakes I would have certainly rid you of calamities. Even though I had destined them for you. But the Satan made you thoughtless of Me and You despaired of My Mercy. But I am Ever Forgiving and Ever Merciful God. I love My servants who repent and seek forgiveness and those who repose faith in My Mercy. O Ya'qub, We shall return Yusuf and his brother to you and whatever wealth, blood and flesh you have lost shall be restored to you. I shall restore your sight and straighten your bent back as taut as an arrow, that you may be happy and your eyes brighten. Whatever I decreed for you was a sort of punishment, so accept it as such."

On the other hand, the brothers reached Yusuf while he reclined on his majestic throne. They said, 'O 'Aziz, you are cognizant of our afflictions and know our condition, we have brought a meagre sum but you be generous in giving us more food grains and give us back Benjamin as a form of charity. This is a letter from our father, that he wrote concerning our younger brother. He has implored you to release him.'" Yusuf took the letter and kissed it and put it to his eyes. He wept and wailed so much that his garment became soaked in his tears. Then he introduced himself to his brothers.

"They said, By Allah! Now has Allah certainly chosen you over us, and we were certainly sinners. He said, (There shall be) no reproof against you this day; Allah may forgive you, and He is the most Merciful of the merciful. Take my shirt and cast it on my father's face, he will (again) be able to see, and come to me with all your families." (12:91-93)

Yusuf gave them all the provisions they needed and sent them towards the country of Ya'qub. As the caravan left Egypt, Ya'qub felt Yusuf's fragrance at home. He told his sons that he perceived Yusuf's scent. While his other sons were racing towards him with glad tidings and the news of Yusuf's kingdom and majesty. They covered the distance in nine days and when they came to Ya'qub they put Yusuf's shirt across his face. He

regained sight and asked where Benjamin was. They said he was comfortable and happy in the company of Yusuf and they had left him behind. Ya'qub praised Allah and fell down in prostration of thankfulness. His eyes gained vision and his back became straight once again. He told his sons to prepare for the journey the same day and to set out as soon as possible.

Thus all the wives of Ya'qub and Yaameel the maternal aunt of Yusuf departed for Egypt with Ya'qub and his sons, with their families. They covered the distance in nine days. When they reached Yusuf he embraced his father and wept. He kissed the father's face and seated him and the aunt at the throne. Then he went to his private quarters and anointed himself with scented oil, applied antimony to his eyes and dressed in the royal shirt. When he came out in this manner, his parents and brothers fell down in prostration of thankfulness to Allah and as a mark of respect. Yusuf said: "O my father! this is the significance of my vision of old; my Lord has indeed made it to be true; and He was indeed kind to me when He brought me forth from the prison and brought you from the desert after the Satan had sown dissension between me and my brothers, surely my Lord is benignant to whom He pleases; surely He is the Knowing, the Wise." (12:100)

During those twenty years Yusuf had abstained from using oil, antimony and perfumes. He neither smiled nor approached women.[2] Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq mentions in a reliable tradition that when the 'Aziz ordered Yusuf to be imprisoned, the Almighty Allah taught him the interpretation of dreams. He used to explain the dreams of the prison inmates. When he interpreted the dreams of those two people he thought he might be granted pardon and told one of them to put in a good word for him to the Emperor. The Almighty punished him by prolonging his imprisonment because he had sought the help of someone other than Him. Thus he remained in prison for twenty years. However, a large number of traditions state that he remained in prison for seven years.

According to trustworthy chain of narrators Imam Muhammad al-Baqir was asked if the sons of Ya'qub were Prophets.

“No,” replied Imam. “They were descendants of Prophets and left the world as righteous people. They confessed of their bad deeds and repented.”

Correct chains of hadith reporters state that Husham bin Salim asked Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq the extent of Ya'qub's grief for Yusuf. Imam said it equalled the collective sorrow of seventy women whose sons had died. Then Imam said, “Archangel Gabriel descended when Yusuf was serving his prison sentence and told him that the Almighty has decreed these calamities as a test for him and his father. Allah will save him from the prison if he implore Him for release by the right of Muhammad and the Progeny of Muhammad, Yusuf said, “O Allah! I implore you by the right of Muhammad and the progeny of Muhammad, save me soon. Give me peace and comfort from the misfortune and calamity that surrounds me.” Archangel Gabriel congratulated him saying, “Be happy friend! The Lord has sent me to convey glad-tidings for you. You shall be released within three days. Allah would raise you to the throne of Egypt. The nobles of Egypt would be at your service. You shall be reunited with your brothers and father. You are the chosen servant of Allah and the son of His chosen servant - know that your future is bright.’

The same night 'Aziz had a dream that inculcated fear in him and he related the dream to his companions. However, they failed to provide an explanation. The person who had been released from Yusuf's prison was also present in the assembly. He remembered Yusuf and said, “O king! Let me go to the prison. There is a person there unequalled in knowledge and self-respect. When you had convicted me and another man we had a dream. And this person interpreted our dreams correctly. Thus you had one of us hung from the gate and released the other.’

'Aziz told him to go to the prison and inquire the interpretation of his

dream. He went to the prison asked Yusuf the interpretation of the King's dream. Then he returned to the king with explanation of the dream and also conveyed the message of Yusuf. 'Aziz ordered that Yusuf be summoned. He wanted to appoint him as his close aide. Yusuf sent another message asking how he could rely on the king's word because even though he was cognizant of Yusuf's aversion of sinful acts he had still imprisoned him for so many years. When 'Aziz heard this he summoned the ladies and asked them about the matter concerning Yusuf. They swore they had not seen a single defect in Yusuf's character. 'Aziz deputed the prison warden to bring Yusuf to him. When he came 'Aziz spoke to him at length and realized his unsurpassed intellect and wisdom. 'Aziz asked him about the interpretation of his dream.

Yusuf first related the dream, then explained its significance. 'Aziz asked him who would take the responsibility of storing surplus grains during the first seven years? Yusuf said, 'The Almighty has ordered me to bear this responsibility. And that I shall make arrangements for the years of famine.' 'Aziz agreed and surrendered to him the royal signet, throne and crown. He told him to make arrangements according to his own planning. Yusuf became actively involved in the scheme. He acquired all the surplus food grains during the first seven years and had then stored in royal granaries and augmented the royal treasure. When the famine began he started selling the stored grains. The first year he bartered against gold and silver coins and there hardly remained a single unit of currency with the people of Egypt and surrounding areas. All the cash entered the coffers of Egypt. In the second year Yusuf exchanged grains for gem and jewelry and all the personal treasures entered the royal treasury. The third year the currency were livestock and cattle. Yusuf became the master of all the quadrupeds in Egypt. In the fourth year Yusuf demanded slaves and slave-girls in exchange of food grains and consequently became the master of all the slaves in his kingdom. The fifth year began and food grain was sold in lieu of houses and buildings.

Yusuf became the owner of every property in the country. It was the turn

of land and streams in the sixth year and the agricultural lands and streams of Egypt and the adjoining areas came under royal control. During the seventh year when nothing remained with the people they offered themselves in slavery in exchange of food grains. As a result of this barter all the free men of Egypt became enslaved to Yusuf. At this juncture Yusuf asked the 'Aziz what his opinion was regarding the affair granted by Allah? 'Aziz said he had entrusted everything to Yusuf. He can do whatever he likes. Yusuf said, "I free all the people who had become my slaves and I return all their property that I have received from them. And I also return your signet, your crown and your throne upon the condition that you rule as I had ruled and deal with them as I had dealt. You shall govern them as I did because they were saved due to me.' The king said, 'My religion and the cause of pride is this itself. I witness the Oneness of Allah. He has no partner. And I witness that you are a Prophet sent by Him.' After all this the reunion of Ya'qub and Yusuf occurred." According to correct reports Muhammad ibn Muslim asked Imam Muhammad al-Baqir the period Ya'qub remained alive after he was reunited with Yusuf in Egypt.

"Two years," he replied.

"Who was the hujjah (Proof) of Allah on Earth? Ya'qub or Yusuf?"  
"Ya'qub was the proof of Allah. Yusuf was associated with the throne. When Ya'qub passed from this world, his mortal remains were placed in a coffin and transported to Syria. He was buried in the Jerusalem. After the demise of Ya'qub, Yusuf was conferred the position of hujjahullah (Proof of Allah)."

The narrator asked Imam if Yusuf was a Prophet and a Messenger. Imam said, "Yes, it seems you have not heard that the Almighty says in Qur'an: And a believing man of the Pharaoh's people who hid his faith said, What! Will you slay a man because he says: My Lord is Allah, and indeed he has brought to you clear arguments from your Lord? And if he be a liar, on



him will be his lie, and if he be truthful, there will befall you some of that which he threatens you (with); surely Allah does not guide him who is extravagant, a liar: O my people! Yours is the kingdom this day, being masters in the land, but who will help us against the punishment of Allah if it come to us? the Pharaoh said, I do not show you aught but that which I see (myself), and I do not make you follow any but the right way. And he who believed said, O my people! Surely I fear for you the like of what befell the parties: The like of what befell the people of Nuh and 'Ad and Thamud and those after them, and Allah does not desire injustice for (His) servants; And, O my people! I fear for you the day of calling out, The day on which you will turn back retreating; there shall be no saviour for you from Allah, and whomsoever Allah causes to err, there is no guide for him: And certainly Yusuf came to you before with clear arguments, but you ever remained in doubt as to what he brought; until when he died, you said, Allah will never raise an apostle after him.”[4]

According to reliable reports, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq said that at the time Yusuf was sent to the prison his age was twelve. He remained in prison for eighteen years. After being released from prison Yusuf lived for another eighty years. Thus altogether he lived for 110 years. In another hadith from the same Imam it is mentioned that the Messenger of Allah said that both Ya'qub and Yusuf lived for 120 years. A reliable tradition from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq says that there was a person from the time of the people of 'Ad and was alive right unto the time of the Pharaoh (Ruler of Egypt). During the time of Yusuf the people harassed him very much. They used to hurl stones on him. So he came to the Pharaoh and said, “Save me from the mischief of people and I promise to relate something surprising that I have witnessed in my life. And I shall relate the truth.” the Pharaoh agreed and gave him royal protection. The old man used to relate the past events in the court of the Pharaoh and the Pharaoh began to believe him to a great extent. He had also not heard any falsehood from Yusuf. One day the Pharaoh asked Yusuf if he knew anyone who was better than him.

Yusuf said, "Yes, my father, Ya'qub is better than me. When Ya'qub entered the court of the Pharaoh and saluted him according to royal custom the Pharaoh was much impressed and in turn accorded great respect to Ya'qub. He called him near and honored him more than Yusuf. Then he asked Ya'qub his age. "One hundred and twenty years," replied Ya'qub. The old man from 'Ad said, "This is not true." Ya'qub maintained silence but the Pharaoh was very embarrassed by this. Again he asked, "O respected sir, what is your age?" "One hundred and twenty years," replied Ya'qub again. Again the old man intervened, "He is lying." Ya'qub prayed, "O Allah, if this man is lying make his beard fall on his chest." At that very moment all the hair of the old man's beard dropped on his chest. The Pharaoh was shocked. He said, "You have laid a curse upon the one whom I had given refuge. I request you to pray to Allah that He may give back his beard."

Ya'qub prayed and the old man got his beard back. The man from 'Ad said, "I had seen this man in a particular time in the company of Ibrahim Khaleelur Rahman (Friend of the Beneficent). More than one hundred and twenty years have passed since."

Ya'qub said that the person whom he had seen was not him. "He was Ishaq."

"Then who are you?" asked the old man.

"I am Ya'qub, the son of Ishaq, the son of Ibrahim."

"You speak the truth," confessed the old man, "I had seen Ishaq. "You both speak the truth," said the Pharaoh.

A reliable report mentioned from Abu Hashim Ja'far says that people inquired from Imam Al-Hasan al-'Askari regarding the statement of Yusuf's brothers that if Benjamin had committed theft, it was not surprising, his brother had also committed a theft in the past.

Imam said, “Yusuf never committed theft. But Ya‘qub was in possession of a waistband he had inherited from Ibrahim. Whenever it was misplaced or lost Archangel Gabriel descended and pointed out its location. Anyone found in possession of it became the slave of Ya‘qub. The waistband was in the custody of Sarah a daughter of Ishaq she was named after her maternal grandmother. Sarah was very fond of Yusuf and wished to adopt him. She wrapped the waistband underneath the garments of Yusuf and told Ya‘qub that someone has stolen it. Archangel Gabriel descended and informed Ya‘qub that the waistband was with Yusuf. Sarah claimed that since Yusuf had stolen the band she had a greater right to enslave him. Ya‘qub said Yusuf shall be her slave upon the condition that she would neither sell him nor gift him to someone else. Sarah agreed upon the condition that Ya‘qub will not take him back, and she freed Yusuf that very moment. After freeing him she took him with her.” Abu Hashim says he was pondering on the incidents connected with Ya‘qub and Yusuf and harboured a slight doubt regarding the fact that the two of them remained separated for such a long time. So much so that the pupils of Ya‘qub’s eyes lost their vision. Imam came to know of the thoughts that passed through his mind and said, “O Abu Hashim! I seek refuge from Allah regarding the doubt you harbour in your mind. If Allah had desired He could have removed the curtain from between Ya‘qub and Yusuf and the two of them would have seen each other. However, He had appointed a term for their reunion. And whatever Allah does with His servants is for their own good.”

Authentic narration from Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq says in reply to people’s query regarding the statement of Allah that: ‘Everything was halal (permissible) for the descendants of Ya‘qub except what he had prohibited for himself.’

Whenever Ya‘qub consumed camel meat the lower part of his body developed unbearable pain. Hence he prohibited camel meat for himself. It was at the time when the Torah had not yet been revealed and Musa had not yet prohibited it.”

In another reliable tradition it is mentioned that Yusuf aspired matrimony with a most beautiful woman of his time, but she refused his offer and said that the slave of her king hoped for her hand. Yusuf approached her father but he said the daughter was free to take her own decision. Hence, Yusuf prayed to Allah. Allah revealed that He has decreed the woman for him. Again he sent a messenger to her people requesting they grant him an audience. They accepted and when Yusuf entered, the house lit up with his brilliance. He asked for a glass of water and the maiden rushed to comply with his request. Yusuf took a draught and returned the tumbler. The maiden brought the glass to her own lips, but Yusuf said, “Do not be impatient, you shall achieve your desire soon.” Then he married her. In another tradition Imam says that when Yusuf asked his cell-mate to lobby for him with the king, Archangel Gabriel descended near him and kicked the ground. A fissure developed that reached up to the seventh layer of the earth. Archangel Gabriel said, “O Yusuf take a look at the seventh layer beneath the earth, what do you see?”

“A small stone.”

Then he made a fissure in the stone and said, “What do you see inside?”

“A minute worm.”

“Who bestows sustenance to this worm?” asked Archangel Gabriel.

“The Lord of the worlds,” replied Yusuf.

Archangel Gabriel said, “Your Lord says that when He had not ignored a small worm in the seventh layer of the Earth how could you think that He has betrayed you? Why did you request the man to mobilize support with the King? For this misdemeanor you shall remain imprisoned for many years.”

Yusuf wept so much due to this penalty that the walls and doorways wept with him. The prison inmates became distraught and insisted he weep on alternate days. But on the days he did not shed tears his condition was more severe.

According to a reliable tradition of Imam al-Baqir and Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq the 'good patience' (Sabrun Jamilun) denotes that a person does not complain to anyone regarding his afflictions. The Almighty Allah sent Ya'qub with a message to a pious monk. When the worshipper saw Ya'qub he mistook him for Ibrahim. He stood up in honor and embracing him said, "Khalil of Allah! Welcome!"

"I am not Ibrahim. I am the son of Ishaq and the grandson of Ibrahim."  
"Why have you aged so much?" asked the monk.

"Sorrow and grief has aged me," replied Ya'qub.

He had hardly reached the door after taking leave of the monk when a revelation descended from Allah: "O Ya'qub! You complain my servants regarding Me?"

Ya'qub immediately fell into prostration at the very threshold and prayed, "My Lord! I shall never repeat this error."

Allah said, "I forgive you. But refrain from such an action in future." After this Ya'qub never complained to anyone about his earthly difficulties except the day he said: "I complain for my affliction but to Allah! And I am aware of Allah's Mercy to such an extent that you are not aware, my sons."

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq says in a reliable tradition that when Yusuf was in prison the Almighty asked him through revelation why he had been thrown into the prison. Yusuf confessed his guilt and Allah taught him a supplication: "Yaa kabeero kulle kabeerin yaa man laa shareeka lahu wa

laa wazeera yaa khaleqash-shamse wal Qamaril muneere. Yaa l'smatal muz"t'arriz"z"areere yaa qaas'ema kulle jabbaarin a'needin yaa mugnial ba-esil faqeere yaa jaaberal a'z'mil kaseere yaa mut'leqal kaneelil aseere as-aloka beh'aqqe muh'ammadin wa aale muh'ammadin anna taja'lali min amri h'arajan wa mukhrajani wa tarzuqni min h'aitho ah'tasib wa min h'aitho laa ah'tasebo."

When it was morning the 'Aziz summoned him and set him free. Another authentic tradition says that when 'Aziz abdicated his throne in favor of Yusuf he put on a clean two piece garment and went far away into wilderness. He performed two Rak'ah prayers and at the conclusion raised his hands towards the heavens and said: "Yaa rabbe qad aataitani minal mulke a'llamtani minal taaweel ah'adeethe faat'erassamaawaate wal arz" anta Waliyye fidduniya wal aakherah."

Archangel Gabriel descended and asked him what he desired? Yusuf said he had prayed to Allah that He might allow him to die a Muslim and include him among the righteous ones. This was due to the fact that Yusuf was afraid of corruption and transgression that can remove a person from religion. Thus who can not be afraid of transgression when an exalted personality like Yusuf was?

Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali is quoted to have mentioned that Yusuf entered prison on a Wednesday.

According to reliable sources it is mentioned that people asked Imam al-Ridha how people admired a person who ate detestable food, dressed in coarse garments and put on an outward show of piety. Imam said, "Yusuf was a Prophet and the son of the Prophet, yet he dressed in silken robes with gold buckles. He used to attend the gatherings of Egyptian kings and issued commands. People were not concerned with his dress."

Thalabi has mentioned in the book “A’raaees” that when the king learnt of Yusuf’s explanation and realized the extent of his intellect, wisdom and trustworthiness, he summoned him. When Yusuf emerged from the prison he prayed that the righteous may shower their kindness upon the prisoners. He implored Allah not to conceal the virtues of the inmates. The effect of his supplication was that all the prisoners in every city have something meritorious as compared to other people. Then he inscribed the following words at the entrance. This is a grave of living men and an abode of sorrow. It is a means for the lessons that one derives from friends due to their friendship and the criticism one invites from ones enemies. Then he performed the ritual bath and cleaned his body from the dirt of prison. Put on a clean dress and headed towards the royal court. Upon reaching the entrance he said: “H’asbi rabbi min dunyaya wa h’asbi rabbi min khalqehi a’zza jalaalehi wa jalla thaba-ahu wa laa ilaaha ghairohu.”

When he stepped inside he uttered the following words: Allahumma inni as-aloka min sharrehi wa sharre ghairehi. When the king turned his attention towards Yusuf he saluted him in Hebrew.

“What language is this?” he asked.

“It is the language of my uncle Isma‘il.”  
Then he prayed for the king in Arabic.

“What language is that?” asked he.  
“It is the language of my ancestors.”

The king also knew seven languages and in whichever language he spoke, Yusuf replied in the same tongue. He was impressed by the accomplishments of Yusuf at such a young age. Yusuf was thirty years at that time.

The king said, “O Yusuf! I wish to hear my dream from your tongue.”

“You dreamt that seven grey-eyed fattened white cows came out of the Nile,” narrated Yusuf, “Milk was flowing from the front of their heads. When you saw them you were amazed at their graceful appearance. Suddenly the water of Nile dried up and the bottom showed sand and wet mud. From the muddy bottom emerged seven lean cows. They were covered with mud and their bellies touched their backs. They were not having any udders. Their teeth, nails and hooves were like claws of beasts and they even possessed trunks. The lean cows attacked the fat ones and tore them up. They devoured their meat and even crushed their bones and gulped down the marrow. You were astonished at this sight. Suddenly you saw seven green ears of corn and seven withered ears grow from a spot. Their roots reached to the water. Then a wind blew the dried ears upon the green ones and they withered down.”

“You speak the truth,” said ‘Aziz, “I dreamt exactly as you say.”

Yusuf explained the significance of the dream and ‘Aziz appointed him in charge of the agricultural and treasury departments of his kingdom. Shaykh al-Tusi and others have narrated that the ‘Aziz of Egypt who had imprisoned Yusuf, was Qitfeer. He was the Prime minister of the King. The king was Reyaan Ibn Waleed. The king had seen the dream. When Yusuf was released from the prison the king expelled his Prime minister and appointed Yusuf in his place. He entrusted all the powers to Yusuf and himself retired from administration. He handed over even the seal, crown and throne to Yusuf. During that period Qitfeer died. The king married Yusuf to Raheel the widow of Qitfeer. From her Yusuf had two sons, Afraeem and Yashaeem.

A’raees contains a report that Yusuf called Ibn Yameen to himself and asked his name.



“Yameen”, he replied.

“Why are you named Yameen?”

“Because when I was born my mother was dead. That is I am the child of sorrow.”

“What was your mother known as?”

“Raheel, the daughter of Leyaan.”

“Do you have any children?”

“Yes, I have ten sons.”

“What are their names?”

“I have named them with epithets related to my brother who was killed. We had the same mother.”

Yusuf was surprised, “You loved your brother so much that you named the children after him? Tell me their names.” He said, “Bala’a, Akheer, Ashkal, Ah’yaa, Khair, No’maan, Aawar, Aras, H’eem and Yateem.”

“What is the meaning of their names?” asked Yusuf.

“I named Bala’a because the earth concealed him from me, ‘Akheer’ because he was my mother’s eldest son, ‘Ashkad’ because he was my full brother, ‘Khair’, because he was happy whenever he lived, ‘No’maan’ because he was the beloved of our parents, ‘Aawar’ because he was like a flower in beauty and elegance, ‘Aras’ because his body was like his head, ‘H’eem’ because my father said he is alive, ‘Yateem’, because my eyes brightened when I cast a glance on him.”

Yusuf said, “I wish to become your brother in place of the one who has been killed.”

He said, “Who can get a brother like you! But you were not born from Ya‘qub and Raheel.”

Yusuf heard this, wept, and embraced him and said, “I am your brother, Yusuf. Do not be sad and do not say anything regarding this to your brothers.”[5]

**Notes:**

[1] Actually his entreaty did not reach the ears of Ya‘qub. For it is unlike for a Prophet to hear a request and not fulfill it. It is possible that Ya‘qub had not instructed his servants to feed all those who approach his door, and this resulted in Divine Chastisement. Imam Zayn al-‘abidin however made it a point to instruct even his servants in this regard - Translator.)

[2] Some scholars have considered the above report to be based on Taqiyyah (dissimulation) because it supports the Sunni view. It is possible that Yusuf refrained from dismounting not due to pride or vanity but it may have been for some hidden wisdom due to his position as the supreme ruler of Egypt. Though it still amounted to be Tark al-Awla and a detestable (Makrooh) act.

[3] According to this tradition and other traditions like it, the period of Yusuf’s separation from his father lasted 20 years. But historians and commentators differ among themselves. Some state that there was a gap of 80 years between Yusuf’s dream and his reunion with Ya‘qub. It was 70 years according to others. While another group of scholars thinks it was 40 years. Some even say it was 18 years.

According to hasan Basri, Yusuf was seven or ten years old when he was into the well. His slavery, imprisonment and rulership accounted for another 80 years. After reuniting with his family he lived for another 23 years. Consequently he lived for 120 years. Some Shi‘ah traditional reports mention the period of separation to be more than 20 years. Another fact that emerges from the traditions is that Benjamin was not from the womb of Yusuf’s mother. He was from the womb of his mother’s sister. According to interpreters when the Qur’anic verse mentions that he took father and mother to the throne, it is only metaphorical. The word ‘mother’ stands for his aunt. This is because the maternal aunt is referred to as mother, just as the paternal uncle is addressed as father. Actually Raheel the mother of Yusuf had already expired. Some people claim that the Almighty raised her to life to fulfill the dream of Yusuf. Some even say she was alive until the time of reunion. However, the previous view is stronger.

Thus in a reliable report when people asked Imam al-Riḥā how many sons accompanied Ya‘qub when he was reunited with Yusuf, he said, “Eleven” and when asked whether

Benjamin was from the womb of Yusuf's mother. He said, "No! He was from the womb of his mother's sister."

[4] Surah Mu'min 40:28-34

[5] Many scholars have expressed doubts regarding this strange incident and normally people view it with suspicion. Therefore instead of separate replies it is sufficient if we give standard replies to the common objections that would be sufficient for everyone. Why Ya'qub preferred Yusuf over other children when discrimination is not permitted in this regard. And this dotage almost cost Yusuf his life. Hence discrimination between children is not allowed especially when there is chance of creating a dissension between them. The reply to this objection is Ya'qub's intensive love for Yusuf was not only because he was a son. He preferred him over other sons due to his knowledge and Prophetic status. It is also possible that Ya'qub could not rein his emotions in his love for Yusuf. Another explanation is that Ya'qub may not have expected his preference for Yusuf would cause jealousy to such an extent. Ya'qub wept so much for Yusuf that he became blind. Whereas the Prophets suffered greater calamities with patience and forbearance.

Reply: Sorrow and weeping are emotions beyond ones control. What is prohibited is the uttering of some words that Allah dislikes. And Ya'qub never uttered any such thing. He was absolutely resigned to divine fate. It is possible to be resigned to ones fate and sorrowful for one circumstances at the same time. Just as a person having cancerous limb requests the surgeon to ampute it to prevent its spread to rest of the body. Though he is pained at the loss of his limb he is nevertheless satisfied, or rather grateful to the surgeon for amputation." Thus when Ibrahim the son of the Prophet died, the Messenger of Allah said, "The heart is restless and the eyes weep but I do not wish to say anything that might cause Divine displeasure." The devotees of Allah love Him alone, if they love others it is only because Allah is pleased with their love. They love only those people who are the beloveds of Allah. Because they are the beloved of the beloved (Allah). Similarly they are inimical to the enemies of Allah even though they might be their close companions. They are prepared to slay him with sword and remain aloof from him. On the other hand they have love and regard for a person who loves Allah even though he might be far away from them (in relation or location). It is obvious that Ya'qub's dotage for Yusuf was not due to his physical appearance and worldly aspect. He adored him due to the splendor of guidance and righteousness that emanated from him. Therefore the brothers of Yusuf who were ignorant of these spiritual qualities in Yusuf began to feel jealous of him. They claimed to be more deserving of their father's affection due to their greater strength and because they served him more than Yusuf. Hence, it is obvious that the attachment of Ya'qub to Yusuf and his grief due to his separation did not contradict his love for Allah. It was rather compliment for that love.

3) Why was Ya'qub so much aggrieved for Yusuf even though he knew about the dream (of stars prostrating) and the Angels had also informed that Yusuf was alive?

Reply: The grief of Ya'qub was due to the separation of Yusuf. When people asked Imam al-Sadiq why Ya'qub wept for Yusuf in spite of the fact that Archangel Gabriel had informed him that he would be reunited with him one day, Imam said it was because he had been deprived of Yusuf's company.

4) How is it acceptable that Ya'qub became blind, while such a disability is incompatible with Prophethood?

Reply: According to some scholars he had not become blind. His sight had become weak. Due to excessive weeping a white layer developed on the pupils and this blocked his vision. Another view is that Prophets are not immune of each and every defect. Only those disabilities that people find repulsive are absent in Prophets. And people do not find blindness a repulsive quality. It should not be a cause of reducing their Prophetic abilities. In spite of an impaired vision the Prophets could perceive with their inner eye. Thus there was no such defect in Ya'qub. The last of the reasons seem more acceptable.

5) Regarding the affair of Yusuf, Allah says: "And certainly she made for him, and he would have made for her, were it not that he had seen the manifest evidence of his Lord; thus (it was) that We might turn away from him evil and indecency, surely he was one of Our sincere servants." (12:24) The apparent meaning of the Qur'anic ayah is that Zulaykha intended to commit adultery with him and he would also responded in the like manner if he had not perceived Allah's proof. The Sunni scholars have mentioned disgraceful things in interpreting this verse. One explanation says that Yusuf too embraced Zulaykha and would have gone ahead but he saw the face of Ya'qub in the corner of the room. Ya'qub was biting his fingers in suspense. Seeing this Yusuf felt ashamed and dropped the idea of fornication. Another report says that when Zulaykha covered the idol with a cloth Yusuf felt ashamed. Other foolish interpretations are also mentioned in traditional books. First Reply: The ayah says 'he would have also made for her'. It means that if he had not been a Prophet and not seen Archangel Gabriel and the 'manifest evidence' he would have succumbed to his desires. Since he was already a Prophet the possibility of falling into sin did not arise for Yusuf.

Second Reply: Zulaykha 'made for him' for committing adultery and Yusuf 'would have made for her' to kill her if she forced him further. And it is possible that in that shari'ah it was allowed to kill a person who compels one to sin. The Almighty prevented him from killing her due to hidden wisdom. The Egyptians might have revenged her murder by executing Yusuf. Al-Ma'mun asked about the matter and Imam al-Riḍa said, "If Yusuf had not seen the 'manifest evidence of his Lord' he would have also intended what Zulaykha did. But he was infallible (Ma'soom) and a Ma'soom never makes an intention of committing a sin. Indeed my father has told me from his father (Imam al-Sadiq) that he said Zulaykha 'intended' to commit fornication and Yusuf 'intended' to avoid it." In another reliable tradition when 'Ali bin Al-Jahm asked Imam the interpretation of this ayah, Imam said, "Zulaykha intended to sin and Yusuf intended to kill her because his

intention was very repulsive for him. But the Almighty restrained him from murder and fornication. Allah says, “thus (it was) that We might turn away from him evil and indecency.” (12:24). Allah means to say that He prevented from him evil (Zulaykha’s murder) and indecency (fornication).”

The two reports of Yusuf’s vision of Ya’qub face and Zulaykha covering the idol do not contradict our first reply. Their only deficiency is that they have not elaborated. It is possible that Allah showed him the evidence so that the thought should not arise in his mind even though there was no possibility of it because he was already a Ma’soom. Some of the reports are present due to Taqiyyah.

6) Yusuf commanded his brothers to bring Benjamin with them even though he knew his father would not like it. And when Benjamin was brought to Egypt he arrested him. This made Yusuf responsible for his father’s sorrow. Also, even after being enthroned as the king why did he not inform Ya’qub of his well being, knowing well that he was aggrieved for him. Reply: Whatever he used to do it was according to the commands revealed to him. And whatever calamities afflict the Prophets are by way of Divine test. Allah wishes them to undergo tribulations that they may achieve a high status in the Hereafter. Therefore, the arrest of Benjamin and delay in reuniting with Ya’qub was a Divine command that Yusuf obeyed. Allah desired the grief of Ya’qub to reach the zenith to qualify him for the greatest rewards.

7) Why did Yusuf cry, “O Caravan! You are thieves!” Whereas he knew they had not stolen anything. A Prophet can never utter a lie.

Reply: Sometimes it is permitted to make a statement with the intention of meaning something else. This is not termed a ‘lie’. It is known as ‘Toriya’. In some circumstances it becomes obligatory to use Toriya. Here it was a necessity because without it, the arrest of Benjamin was not possible. Therefore Yusuf said, ‘You are thieves’ with the intention that they had stolen Yusuf from his father. Some people say that it was not Yusuf who passed this remark. It was one of his servants who cried in that way without Yusuf bidding him to do so. Another explanation is that it was a question. “You are thieves?” and it was not an assertion. The first explanation is more authentic.

8) How did Ya’qub and his sons prostrate for Yusuf while it is haram to do so except for Allah the Almighty? And how Yusuf was supportive of their obeisance?

Reply: The reply is the same that I have stated with regard to the doubt against obeisance of Angels to Adam. The first explanation is they prostrated as thanksgiving to Allah for reuniting them with Yusuf and for the bounties He had showered on Yusuf. We have already mentioned the tradition where Imam al-Sadiq says that the Sajdah (prostration) of Ya’qub and his sons was for worshipping (thanking) Allah.

Secondly, the prostration was not that of obeisance but it was a gesture of respect for Yusuf. And in that shari'ah it was allowed to prostrate before others as a mark of honor. Third interpretation is that it was not a Sajdah, as we know it. It was a ritual associated with expressing respect for someone and those people had named it 'Sajdah'. Nevertheless the prostration was according to Divine Command and it was intended to manifest the superiority of Yusuf over his brothers and other people.

Lastly, when we accept the infallibility of Prophets and Imams we must know that whatever they did must have had Divine sanctions even though we may be ignorant of the hidden wisdom. Doubts and suspicions are created by Satan and cause deviation and irreligiousness.

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