

Surah Yusuf – Summary

Learning Objectives:

- Reviewing the whole of Surah Yusuf
- Summarising the key themes of the surah

Summary of Surah Yusuf

Introduction:

- Makki surah
- Number 12
- 111 verses
- Story of Prophet Yusuf (as) except for the last few verses at the end
- Prophet Yusuf (as)'s name has been mentioned 65 times in this surah and only twice in other suwer.
- Discusses the different phases and incidents of Prophet Yusuf (as)'s life in great detail
- His life as it is discussed in the surah can be divided into 3 parts:
 1. Prophet Yusuf (as)'s childhood
 2. Prophet Yusuf (as)'s youth
 3. Prophet Yusuf (as)'s as a king/ruler

Aims of/Lessons from the surah:

- The main aim of the Surah is to display the Power of Allah (swt) – He shows us through the events of Prophet Yusuf (as)'s life, that whatever He Wills will happen, no matter what we or others may try to do – ***“They planned and Allah (swt) [also] Planned, and Allah (swt) is the Best of Planners”*** [3:54]
- The surah also teaches us about the importance of having faith in Allah (swt) – knowing that whatever He has Planned for us, is actually for our own good and if we are suffering then it has some sort of benefit to us even though we may not be able to see it at that moment – ***“And rely on Allah; and Allah is sufficient for a Protector”*** [33:3]
- The importance of having the quality of virtue is emphasised through the character of Prophet Yusuf (as)
- Another lesson we learn from this surah is that we will tested many times during our lives and that we will face difficulties and trials as well as moments of bliss and happiness and it is all part of our test and life on this earth – ***“Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, We believe, and not be tried?”***[29:2]
- An important lesson to learn is about the importance of not giving into peer pressure when it involves going against the commands of Allah (swt) – for example when the brothers wanted to slay Prophet Yusuf (as), one brother refused to give in and suggested they just leave him at the bottom of the well instead – this saved Prophet Yusuf (as)'s life

- We are also taught about the detrimental effects of Jealousy (*Hasad*) – it is a trait so despised by Allah (swt) that He curses those who have jealousy in their hearts – **“Those are they whom Allah has cursed, and whomever Allah curses you shall not find any helper for him... Are they jealous of the people for what Allah has given them of His grace?”** [4:52-54]
- Islam is a religion of ease not difficulty, we have been sent down the Holy Qur`an as a guide to remind us of our duties that are inherently human. He teaches us to not judge people as guilty before they have committed a crime (P. Ya`qub knew his sons’ evil intentions towards P. Yusuf but could/did not blame them while they had not committed any sin) – **“...Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire for you difficulty...”** [2:185] & **“We have not revealed the Quran to you that you may be unsuccessful. Nay, it is a reminder to him who fears”** [20:2-3]
- We see the importance of seeking refuge in Allah (swt) when there is no way out – also knowing He is watching at all times (as in the next few verses many women invite him to commit evil and he seeks refuge in Allah (swt)) – **“He said: My Lord! The prison house is dearer to me than that to which they invite me; and if Thou turn not away their device from me, I will yearn towards them and become (one) of the ignorant. Thereupon his Lord accepted his prayer and turned away their guile from him; surely He is the Hearing, the Knowing”** [12:33-34]
- The importance of honesty and integrity, the Aziz knew that Zulaikha was lying because Prophet Yusuf (as) had always been truthful and honest – **“O Yusuf! turn aside from this; and (O my wife)! ask forgiveness for your fault, surely you are one of the wrong-doers”** [12:29]
- We see many times throughout this Surah, that when the Almighty is called upon by His servants He answers him – **“And your Lord says: Call upon Me, I will answer you”** [40:60]
- Resisting temptations to do wrong when we know that this will lead to “worse” consequences for ourselves (Prophet Yusuf (as) in prison because he didn’t yield to Zulaikha)
- Understanding many of our characteristics and skills are gifts from G-d
- The importance of using every opportunity to spread the Word of Allah (swt)
- Maintaining one’s akhlaaq even towards those who have wronged you
- Remembering that no matter what we do the final outcome of something is with Allah (swt) – Prophet Ya`qub (as) advising his sons to enter Egypt through different gates in order to not attract attention and ill feelings towards themselves
- Sabrun Jameel
- Being the “bigger” person
- Importance of the Ahlul Bayt (as) as a wasila to Allah (swt)
- Throughout the whole story of Prophet Yusuf (as) the overriding lesson is understanding and having faith in Allah (swt)’s Plans. Whatever He wills will come to pass, and He is All-Aware. We need to have complete faith and trust in Him, that whatever He does, is for a reason and in the end it’ll be good for us – our souls, even if it negatively affects our worldly matters.
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Prophet Yusuf (as)’s childhood:

- Prophet Yusuf (as) sees a dream and recounts it to his father Prophet Ya`qub (as)
- He in turn tells prophet Yusuf (as) to keep his dream to himself to avoid jealousy from his brothers
- Prophet Ya`qub (as)’s family was chosen by Allah (swt) to be honoured through propethood

- Despite prophet Yusuf (as) keeping his dream to himself, his brothers grew increasingly jealous of their father's love and affection towards him
- Thus they plotted to get rid of Prophet Yusuf (as) by either killing him or somehow sending him away
- One brother suggested he is thrown into a well so that travellers may find him and take him somewhere
- The brothers were aware that their father didn't trust them with Prophet Yusuf (as) and so had to employ strategies to convince their father of their trustworthiness
- They manage to convince him and were allowed to take Prophet Yusuf (as) with them beyond the boundary of the city
- There they threw him in a well where he started to cry and plead to Allah (swt) to help him
- The Almighty (swt) inspires him telling him to not fear and that he will have the upper hand over his brothers one day
- When the brothers returned to their father, they knew they had to make it look like an accident in order to gain their father's sympathy, love and affection, they slaughtered goat and stained Prophet Yusuf (as)'s shirt with its blood
- So weeping, they took Prophet Yusuf (as)'s bloodied shirt and told him they had left him guarding their stuff while they raced and that upon their return a wolf had eaten them
- They had lied to their father to gain his affection – he knew about their lie, with some traditions even mentioning the fact that there were no tears in the shirt proving their lies
- Their base souls did not let them comprehend the gravity of their sins – however, Prophet Ya'qub (as) said he would be patient, not complain and rely on Allah (swt) to ease his suffering
- Prophet Yusuf (as) spent a number of days in the well alone and anxious, however, he never lost faith in Allah (swt)
- When a caravan of travellers passed by the well he took the opportunity to free himself and held onto the rope when they let down the water bucket
- The travellers were delighted at their find and decided to take him to the slave markets and sell him, The Almighty (swt) mentions here that He was aware of the travellers' plans – again reminding us of His Omniscience and Omnipotence
- He was bought by the governor of Egypt and taken to the palace – where he was looked after
- The governor saw Prophet Yusuf (as)'s potential and told his wife to honour him as he could prove useful or could be adopted as their son

Prophet Yusuf (as)'s Youth

- Prophet Yusuf (as) grew up to be a very handsome young man
- So much so that Zulaikha (the wife of the governor) fell in love with him
- She was so enticed by him that she tried to seduce him into committing an act of evil with her, she dismissed her servants and locked the doors
- When Prophet Yusuf (as) realised her intention he found no way out and sought refuge in Allah (swt) he ran for the doors and she ran after him tearing his shirt from the back
- When he reached the doors and opened them the Aziz was standing there

- At this point Zulaikha being caught in this situation made it out as if Prophet Yusuf (as) had been the one who tried to seduce her and even worse attack her (G-d Forbid)
- There were no witnesses but a wise relative of Zulaikha's suggested that if the shirt is torn from behind then Prophet Yusuf (as) was running from her and she was at fault, if his shirt is torn from the front then it is the other way around
- The Aziz was in a lose-lose situation, as if Zulaikha was lying then his honour and reputation was at stake and if Prophet Yusuf (as) was lying (G-d Forbid) then his trust would have been betrayed
- The Aziz realises that his wife is lying and Prophet Yusuf (as) is truthful and so asks her to repent
- Word got around the upper circles of society that Zulaikha had tried to seduce a servant of hers
- She planned to prove to the ladies that she was not in the wrong so she invited them all to the palace and served fruit with a knife to cut them with and commanded Prophet Yusuf (as) to come in
- Most of the ladies cut their hands instead of the fruit on seeing Prophet Yusuf (as)'s beauty
- Zulaikha reprimanded the women for condemning her saying that if they were in her place, they would have done the same thing
- She also stated that he resisted her but that if he continues to resist her, she would imprison him and he would be disgraced
- Prophet Yusuf (as) prays to Allah (Swt) to remove him from this situation as he feared falling into sin and knew he would be at a loss if he succumbed
- Allah (swt) accepted Prophet Yusuf (as)'s du'a and the women eventually gave up pursuing him
- The Aziz and his advisors thought the best way to end this scandal was to remove Prophet Yusuf (as) from the scene. So they imprisoned him – this also made it look to the general public as if he was the guilty party
- Prophet Yusuf (as) was imprisoned along with two servants of the king
- They asked Prophet Yusuf (as) his expertise because they saw him as a pious man.
- He replied that he interprets dreams and explains that ***it is a gift from his Lord***
- He also informs them of his lineage - that he is from the honourable and pure family of Prophet Ibrahim (as) who was the father of the monotheistic religions
- His forefathers received divine revelations and these teachings were ingrained in him
- Prophet Yusuf (as) spent his time in prison wisely – He preached about Monotheism to his fellow prisoners, Comforted those who were suffering, Helped those who were sick
- He hoped that the cup-bearer would become a believer and that would make him an honest person and would be very effective in helping the needy as he had a close position to the Pharaoh
- As for the baker who was sentenced to death - Prophet Yusuf wanted to console him give him hope by having faith in Allah (swt)
- When the cup-bearer was free to go Prophet Yusuf (as) asked him to mention him to his King and remind him that he had imprisoned Prophet Yusuf (as) wrongly – however when he was released he forgot
- Prophet Yusuf (as) then prayed to Allah (swt) to release him from the prison using a du'a taught to him by Jibra'il (as)
- Prophet Yusuf (as) was forgotten in the prison and spent many years there

- One day the Pharaoh saw a dream and ask for its interpretation – that is when the cup bearer remembered about Prophet Yusuf (as) – Prophet Yusuf (as)'s correct interpretation led to his release and attaining a high position with the Pharaoh
- However before accepting his freedom, he demanded to be freed of all charges as he was an innocent man – he asked the king to summon the women who cut their hands and ask them of their guilt – they all accepted that Prophet Yusuf (as) was in fact innocent
- Prophet Yusuf (as) accepted a position in government in order to help the poor and oppressed
- He did so well in his position due to his excellent and noble traits that reports narrate he turned the people and king of Egypt towards his religion - Monotheism

Prophet Yusuf (as) as a King:

- Prophet Yusuf (as) gained a very high position in Egypt and was in charge of all the grain in the land
- Thus during the time of famine, people would come to him to ask for a share of the grain, he would even distribute grain to areas in the peripheries of Egypt including his homeland of Canaan
- The famine got so bad that Prophet Ya'qub sent all his sons to buy grain from Egypt – when Prophet Yusuf (as) read the names on the register of visitors he recognised his brothers and asked for them to be brought to him
- He received them honourably but did not reveal his identity to them
- He asked about his brother Benyameen and instructed them to bring him next time if they wanted a full measure of grain
- In order to encourage their return with Benyameen he asked his servants to secretly return their merchandise that they had brought with themselves to pay for the grain
- The brothers returned overjoyed by their reception in Egypt, however they knew they would have difficulty convincing their father to let them take Benyameen in their next visit
- Prophet Ya'qub (as) allowed them to take Benyameen on the condition that they take an oath to do everything in their power to protect him and bring him back safely
- Once in Egypt they were yet again received with great hospitality – a lavish banquet and private audience with Prophet Yusuf (as)
- They were even given accommodation in his palace – he asked Benyameen to be his roommate and revealed his true identity to him
- He then told him he had a plan by which Benyameen would be able to remain behind with Prophet Yusuf (as) in Egypt
- He had his silver cup placed in Benyameen's bag and then had him accused of thievery
- He asked his brothers the punishment in Palestine for thievery to which they replied enslavement of the thief to the one robbed
- The brothers remembering their covenant with Prophet Ya'qub (as) they appealed to Prophet Yusuf (as) asking him to take another brother instead however Prophet Yusuf (as) refused saying that would be unjust
- His brothers realised there was nothing they could do and so went away to confer amongst themselves – one of the brothers vowed to remain in Egypt with Benyameen until he was freed and urged his brothers to tell their father the truth of what happened
- When the brothers returned and informed their father, he was very upset and angry

- He reminded them of the similar situation with Prophet Yusuf and could not contain his grief – crying until he became blind – however he displayed ultimate patience by complaining only to G-d
- Prophet Ya'qub sends them back for a third time with a letter to the king and this time instructs them to enquire about Prophet Yusuf (as) and to have faith in the Mercy of Allah (swt)
- They reach Egypt and give Prophet Yusuf (as) the letter, he reads it and cries and reprehends his brothers for what they had done to him, their father and Benyameen
- Realising he is their brother Prophet Yusuf (as) they are awestruck by Allah (swt)'s plan and outcome, they repent and ask for forgiveness
- Prophet Yusuf (as) forgave them wholeheartedly and prayed for their forgiveness too
- When they informed Prophet Yusuf (as) of their father's condition – of losing his eyesight due to the grief of losing him, he sent his shirt to Prophet Ya'qub (as) and instructed all his brothers to come back with their whole families so that they may be looked after by him in Egypt
- When the brothers return to Canaan, the shirt of Prophet Yusuf (as) is placed upon the face of Prophet Ya'qub (as) whose sight is resorted
- He admonishes his sons for their lack of faith in Allah (swt) – they realise their fault and ask for his forgiveness and also for him to pray for Allah (swt) for their forgiveness
- The family prepared for their final journey to Egypt and upon their arrival Prophet Yusuf (as) seated his parents (his father and his aunt who looked after him) upon the throne
- Realising the magnitude of Allah (swt)'s grace Prophet Yusuf (as)'s parents and brothers all fell into prostration – which was the manifestation of Prophet Yusuf (as)'s initial dream
- Prophet Yusuf (as) then gave thanks to Allah (swt) for bestowing upon him great political power, and the science of dream interpretation
- He also acknowledges that it is Allah (swt) Who created the heavens and the earth and it is for this reason that everything is humble when facing Him; He is our Guardian and our Protector in this world and in the world Hereafter
- He prays to Allah (swt) that He makes him to die as a Muslim, meaning one who submits in his entirety to Allah (swt)
- Narrations state that he lived in Egypt with his family for many years, sired three children and was the first Prophet of Bani Isra'eel

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