

*Special Paper***JOSEPH OF THE BIBLE AND THE TALMUD
COMPARED WITH YŪSUF OF THE QUR'ĀN**

(A STUDY FROM MUSLIM PROSPECTIVE) EDITOR

Ayūb Hamīd*

[Ma'ārif is a research journal, which provide platform to scholars to present their opinions and point of view on any topic, just like this topic: JOSEPH OF BIBLE AND THE TALMUD COMPARED WITH YUOSUF OF THE QUR'ĀN: then it is duty of our esteemed readers to evaluate the arguments and facts and statements provided by the writer, anyhow we try our best that there should be no point hurting or insulting or abusing any one.

This cross dialogue will create mutual and common thinking among the scholars, and we have to accommodate each other with different religions and cultures because this world is multicultural and we have to respect different opinions of each other with love and tolerance.

That is why we had sent this paper for evaluation to a non Muslim scholar and writer made many changes as were suggested by the scholar and I am very much thankful for both for their co-operation, it will be a matter of pleasure for me if any Christen or Jew or any other scholar will share in this topic, it will be published.] (Editor)

Joseph, an important personality of the Bible to which it has devoted a significant amount of space, is Yosef of the Talmud and Prophet Yūsuf of the Qur'ān. Although all three scriptures tell essentially the same story, they give very different flavours and leave very different impressions in the minds of the readers.

The Bible tells the story in the context of Jewish history, with its usual emphasis on names, places and who married who, as well as the names and number of their children. The story is about the moral strength of Joseph in resisting sexual temptations, but contains its own share of inconsistencies, anomalies and immoralities, as is normal with the Bible. When reading the Biblical story, one is left to wonder “why would God bless those terrible characters? Just because they are descendents of Abraham? Does God act according to principles or is He just racist, acting irrationally by favouring one family for no goodness on their part over others for no fault of their own?” Because the Book of Genesis that contains this story is the same in the Bible and the Torah, the same comments apply to both.

The Talmud, which is supposed to explain and elucidate the content of the Bible/Torah, also provides some details of the story that are not given in the Bible. It also embellishes the story with so many mythical fabrications that one is forced to think whether Joseph and his brothers were even real characters or invented characters like those of Roman and Greek mythology. In addition, the description of the story has extremely strong racist overtones. It blatantly implies that God is especially tied to the Jacob family regardless of what they practiced. Thus, it depicts God as a racist deity instead of a principled god. He helps the members of this one family because of who they are, disregarding the evil acts and moral depravity of its members; and He unjustly harms others or deprives them of goodness because of who they are not, rather than because of

* Toronto, Canada. Email: ayub.hamid@gmail.com
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their actions and behaviours. Even the mythical concoctions appear to be attempts to impress upon the “specialness” of this one race.

In the Qur'ān, Sūrah (Chapter) Yūsuf gives a detailed account of the life and mission of Prophet Yūsuf¹ (Joseph) ‘Alayhissalaam² (AS). In that respect, it is a unique Sūrah because there is no other Sūrah in the Qur'ān that is fully dedicated to describing the life and mission of one prophet. Likewise, Yūsuf AS is the only prophet whose mission has been completely described at one place.

This Sūrah was revealed when the chiefs of Makkah had started to discuss the idea of killing or banishing Prophet Muḥammad ṣall-Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallam. In those days, the Jews of Yathrib had been in contact with the Quraish of Makkah in order to counsel them against the Prophet. The Makkans did not know the details of Jewish history, nor did they know how the Israelites of Palestine ended up in Egypt. So, at the suggestion of the Jews, the Makkans asked the Prophet about it to test whether he was actually receiving the revelations from Allah or just pretending to be so. They hoped that he would not be able to answer this question and thus his pretence would be exposed. Instead, Allah SWT immediately revealed this Sūrah, providing the pertinent historical details that fully answered their test question. Yet, the Qur'ān maintained its principles regarding the use of historical information, which are as follows:

- It does not provide historical facts just for information; rather, being the Book of guidance, it uses historical information to highlight and illustrate points of guidance;
- It cites the historical anecdotes very concisely, giving only the information relevant to the guidance it is meant to impart. Even from the relevant points, those details are omitted that can be inferred from the context, understood without being explicitly mentioned or are generally known to the audience.

While the main purpose of this story was to answer the question raised as a test, many other lessons were taught throughout the story, which are referred to at the beginning of the Sūrah in verse seven: “Certainly there are many signs in the story of Yūsuf and his brothers for those who asked.” In addition to the lessons given by various anecdotes comprising the story, the following overall lessons from the story as a whole were delivered:

1. The story provided a parallel between the Prophet's life and mission vis-à-vis his adversaries and Yūsuf vis-à-vis his brothers. The consultation among Yūsuf's brothers to kill him or to throw him in an abandoned well was similar to the private discussions the Makkans chiefs were having about the Prophet at the time of the revelation of this story. The anecdotes of the rest of the story such as Yūsuf's finding a home in another city, his rise to power after difficult challenges, his brothers' final regret and accepting of his leadership and Yūsuf's forgiving them were precisely foretelling the stages that the Prophet's mission was to go through. Thus, through this story, the Prophet was given the good news of his eventual success while the Makkan chiefs were told that their devious plans would fail and they would be begging for the Prophet's kindness and mercy just as the brothers of Yūsuf did. History is witness that when the Prophet entered Makkah victoriously a few years later, he announced his clemency citing Yūsuf's words of pardon for his brothers: “There will be no reproof against you this day; go, you are free.”
2. The story inculcates the reality that no one and nothing can stop the execution of Allah's plan and attainment of its objectives. If He plans to do good to someone, people cannot stop it from happening. Often opponents do something to harm that person, but their actions become the stepping stones for the fulfilment of Allah's

plan for him. On the surface, things may appear to go awry, but in reality they are moving inexorably to the objectives of Allah's plans. This underscores the fact that the believers must perform their duties to Allah and His Deen to the best of their abilities and resources without being distraught by the adversity they find themselves in and without concerning themselves with the results or worrying about the consequences -- with complete reliance (Tawakkul) upon Allah Who will take care of the results and the attainment of objectives.

3. The story also highlights the clear difference between the beautiful personality (such as Yūsuf's) that belief in Allah and the paradigm of Taqwa builds, and the personality that is the product of disbelief and the paradigm of maximizing the gratification of desires (such as those of the Egyptian authorities and their women).

In addition, to impart the important moral lessons that the Biblical version lacks, the Qur'ānic version presents important points which are missed in the Bible but are quoted in the Talmud or missed in both, corrects the errors that had occurred in the Biblical or Talmudic versions, is free from all inconsistencies that are found in the Bible and the Talmud, and omits all mythical content found either in the Bible or the Talmud. It was only possible because the Qur'ān is the word of All-Knowing Allah, while the Bible and the Talmud are collections of the writing or sayings of many known and unknown authors over a long period of history. This is a strong proof of the Prophet being the true messenger of Allah because other than the revelation of the Qur'ān, the Prophet had no way of being aware of the story of Yūsuf. He could not have heard it from his society because the Arabs in general and the Makkans in particular were ignorant of it. He could not have read it, not only because he was illiterate, but also because there were no religious or history books that contained this story in his reach in the Makkani society. In addition, the details of the story that the Qur'ān provides are not available in one book. Some were mentioned in the Bible, others were reported only in the oral traditions such as Mishnah (or Mishna) and Gemara (or Gemora) of the Jews, which were written down as Talmud somewhere between the third and sixth century CE in Aramaic and Hebrew languages.

Some people wildly speculate that the Prophet may have heard such stories when he was travelling to other cities in trading caravans. The caravans could have had the opportunity to learn the customs or traditions of a society, but it could have not been possible to learn the matters described in multiple religious books in multiple languages available only to a select few religious authorities, or to learn them in a way that the rest of the caravaners remained unaware of it! If someone picked up any information during his travels, it would be a common knowledge of the caravan. In addition, the reasonable people who understand human psychology know that such acquired knowledge, if any, would have slipped out of or surfaced on his lips sometime before the revelation of the Qur'ān. Above all other reasons, the story told in the Qur'ān is sensible, depicts high moral values and is befitting the prophetic personalities of Ya'qūb (Jacob) and Yūsuf (Joseph) while the reports in the Bible and the Talmud sometimes present the father and the son as unethical and in a non-flattering manner, and are at times mythical and at times self-contradictory.

To give the readers an idea of the difference between the three versions, we are first giving the story as narrated in the Qur'ān, and then show only some important variances of the Qur'ānic version from the Biblical and the Talmudic version; and then we will also give some examples of the myths found in the Talmud.

THE QUR'ĀNIC STORY

¹ Alif Lām Rā (A, L, R) ³; these are the verses of the Book that describes its teachings clearly. ² We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'ān so that you ⁴ understand. ³ By Our revealing this Qur'ān to you, O Muḥammad, We narrate to you the best of the stories, though before this you were certainly among the unaware.

⁴ (Keep in mind the incident) when Yūsuf told his father⁵, “O my father! I saw eleven stars and the sun and the moon in a dream – I saw them prostrating to me.” ⁵ He responded, “Dear son, do not mention your dream to your brothers, lest they contrive a plot against you; surely Shayṭaan is an open enemy to human beings. ⁶ This indicates that your Lord is going to choose you, teach you understanding of the reality of matters, and complete His favour upon you and on the progeny of Ya'qūb as He did earlier upon your fathers Ibraheem and Ishâaq. Indeed, your Lord is Knowing, Wise.”

⁷ Certainly there are many signs in the story of Yūsuf and his brothers for those who asked. ⁸ The story begins when his brothers⁶ talked to each other saying, “Verily Yūsuf and his brother⁷ are dearer to our father than we, though we are a strong group; thus, our father is clearly in error. ⁹ Let us kill Yūsuf or throw him somewhere, so your father's attention becomes exclusive for you; and you can become thereafter a righteous people.” ¹⁰ One of them spoke up and said, “Do not kill Yūsuf; but if you must do something, throw him into the bottom of a well, from where some passing travellers may pick him up.”

¹¹ Then, they approached their father saying, “O our father! Why do you not trust us with Yūsuf when most surely we are his sincere well-wishers. ¹² Send him with us tomorrow that he may enjoy himself and play; and certainly we will be his protectors.” ¹³ He expressed his concern, “It really worries me that you take him with you; and I fear that a wolf may eat him while you are not attending to him.” ¹⁴ They responded, “If a wolf eats him while he is with our strong group, we would certainly be the real losers.”

¹⁵ So when they had gone off with him – they agreed to throw him into the bottom of a well; and we revealed to him, “You will surely inform them of this affair of theirs one day when they will not be aware of your identity”; ¹⁶ and they came to their father at night, weeping – ¹⁷ they said, “O our father! We went racing with one another and left Yūsuf with our things, and a wolf ate him; but you would not believe us even if we were truthful.” ¹⁸ They even brought his shirt with false blood upon it. He responded, “Rather, your minds have beguiled you into making up a tale; so the most fitting patience is my only option; and Allah is the one sought for help against what you assert.”

¹⁹ (At the well,) a caravan came along; they sent their waterman to the well, who let down his bucket and (noticing Yūsuf's presence) shouted, “Good News! Here is a boy.” They hid him as an article of merchandise; and Allah was fully aware of what they were doing. ²⁰ Arriving in Egypt, they sold him for a low price, a few silver coins, being content with little in this matter.

²¹ The person from Egypt who bought him told his wife, “Make his stay among us honourable; maybe he will be useful to us, or we may adopt him as a son.” That is how We established Yūsuf in that country so that We (appoint him as a prophet) and⁸ teach him the understanding of the reality of matters. And Allah is the Master of His plans, but most people do not know. ²² When Yūsuf reached his prime, We granted him wisdom and knowledge. That is how We reward those who pursue excellence.

²³ The woman, in whose house he was, sought to seduce him from his pure self; she closed the doors and invited him, "Come!" He responded, "I seek Allah's refuge, He is my Lord Who has made my stay excellent. Indeed, the wrong doers do not attain Falaah." ²⁴ She determinedly advanced towards him, and Yūsuf would have also advanced towards her had he not considered the clear argument against it from his Lord. This way We guided him so that We turn away evil and sexual misconduct from him. Indeed, he was of Our chosen slaves.

²⁵ They both raced towards the door; and pulling from behind, she tore his shirt from the back; and they found her husband at the door. At this she exclaimed, "What can be the punishment for someone who intended to do evil to your wife except that he be imprisoned or given painful punishment?" ²⁶ Yūsuf clarified, "It was she who sought to seduce me from my pure self". Then, a person from her own family presented the logical evidence: "If his shirt is torn from the front, then she is telling the truth and he is one of the liars; ²⁷ but if his shirt is torn from the back, then she is lying and he is one of the truthful." ²⁸ When the husband saw that the shirt was torn from the back, he said, "It is one of you women's snares; indeed your snares are vehement. ²⁹ Yūsuf, ignore this. And you (my wife), seek forgiveness for your sin, you indeed were the one at fault."

³⁰ The women of the city gossiped, "The wife of 'Azeez⁹ is seeking to seduce her slave boy; he surely has infatuated her with love. We see her evidently misguided." ³¹ When she heard of their sly gossip, she invited them over for a party; prepared seating arrangements with cushions to recline upon; and gave each one of them a knife. Then, she asked Yūsuf, "Come out before them." So when they saw him, they extolled his awesome grandeur, cut their hands and exclaimed, "Perfection is for Allah! This is not a human being! This is none other than a noble angel!" ³² So she said, "This is the one you were blaming me about. I did seek to seduce him, but he held himself back firmly. If he does not do what I command him, he shall definitely be jailed, and shall certainly be of those who are debased."

³³ He prayed, "My Lord! The prison is preferable to me than that to which they invite me; unless You turn away their snares from me, I may fall for them and become one of the ignorant." ¹⁰ ³⁴ His Lord responded to his prayer and turned their snares away from him; He indeed is the Hearing, the Knowing. ³⁵ So, it occurred to them¹¹ that they should imprison him for a while, even after they had seen the signs of his innocence.

³⁶ Two young men had also entered the prison along with him. One day, one of them mentioned his dream to Yūsuf, "I saw myself pressing wine"; the other reported, "I saw myself carrying bread on my head, of which birds were eating." They asked, "Please tell us the interpretation thereof; we see that you are excellent in conduct." ³⁷ Yūsuf responded:

"I will definitely inform you both of the interpretation of your dreams even before the food that is provided to you arrives. However, note that this knowledge is one of the things that my Lord has taught me. You see that I have not adopted the paradigm of the people who do not believe in Allah and who deny the Hereafter. ³⁸ Instead, I follow the paradigm of my fathers Ibraheem, Ishaaq, and Ya'qūb; it does not befit us to consider anything as a partner with Allah in any respect; that is Allah's bounty towards us and towards humanity, but most of the people do not appreciate it.

³⁹ O my two fellow-prisoners! Are multiple lords better or Allah the One, the Dominant? ⁴⁰ Whatever you worship other than Him are merely names that you and your fathers have given them; Allah has sent down no sanction for them. Command belongs only to Allah. He has commanded that you do not perform worship or slave-like obedience to anyone except Him. That is the proper, straightforward Deen, but most people do not realize it.

⁴¹ O my two fellow-prisoners! As for the first one of you, he will be serving wine to his master; while the second one will be crucified, so the birds will eat from his head. The matter has been decreed concerning which you both had inquired.

⁴² Then, Yūsuf asked the one whom he thought would be freed, “Tell your master about me”; but Shaytaan caused him to forget mentioning it to his master. So Yūsuf remained in jail for several years. ⁴³ Then one day, the king said, “I saw in a dream seven fat cows which seven lean ones are eating, and seven green ears of grain and other seven withered. O notables, explain to me my dream, if you know how to interpret the dream.”

⁴⁴ They responded, “They are just muddled thoughts, we do not know how to interpret such dreams.” ⁴⁵ Then, the one who was freed said, – he now remembered Yūsuf after such a long period – “I will inform you of its interpretation, so send me to him.”

⁴⁶ (Arriving at the prison, he exclaimed,) “Yūsuf, O man of truth! Explain to us the king’s dream: Seven fat cows which seven lean ones are eating, and seven green ears of grain and other seven withered; that I may return to the people so that they may know its true interpretation.” ⁴⁷ He explained, “You will have good crops for seven years continuously, so leave what you harvest in its ear except a little that you eat. ⁴⁸ They will be followed by seven tough years during which you will eat up all that you will have saved for them except a little that you will preserve. ⁴⁹ Then will come after that, a year in which the people will be given rain and they will press grapes.”

⁵⁰ (Upon hearing the interpretation,) the king ordered, “Bring him to me”. But when the king’s messenger came to him, Yūsuf said, “Go back to your master and ask him as to what was the case of the women who cut their hands? My Lord is fully aware of their tricks.” ⁵¹ The king asked the women, “What was your affair when you sought to seduce Yūsuf?” They replied, “Perfection is for Allah! We knew of no evil on his part.” ‘Azeez’s wife admitted, “Now that the truth has become evident, it was I who sought to seduce him and he indeed is truthful.” ⁵² When the news reached Yūsuf, he commented, “This is what I wanted to clarify so that the king knows that I did not betray ‘Azeez in secret and that Allah does not lead the snare of the betrayers to success. ⁵³ I do not claim to be free of desires, the mind does incite towards evil, it is only my Lord’s mercy that saves. Indeed my Lord is Forgiving, Merciful.”

⁵⁴ Now the king commanded, “Bring him to me, so that I dedicate him to myself.” When Yūsuf was brought, the king told him, “Be assured that this day you stand before us as an authority figure and trusted.” ⁵⁵ Yūsuf said, “Make me in charge of all resources of the country, I am a good guardian and knowledgeable.”

⁵⁶ That is how we gave power to Yūsuf in the country with an authority to exercise control wherever he wanted. We reach with Our mercy whom We will and We do not waste the reward of those who excel. ⁵⁷ However, the reward of the Hereafter is much better for those who believe and maintain Taqwa.

⁵⁸ (During the famine) Yūsuf's brothers came and, seeking grain, presented themselves before him. He recognized them, but they remained ignorant of who he was. ⁵⁹ When he had furnished them with their provisions, he said, "Next time, bring to me your half brother¹² from your father as well. Do you not realize that I give full ration and that I am the best of hosts? ⁶⁰ If you do not bring him along, there will be no ration for you at all, nor should you approach me. ⁶¹ They said, "We will hopefully be able to convince his father; that we will surely do." ⁶² Yūsuf quietly instructed his staff that they should pack the merchandise that they paid for the ration back into their saddle bags along with the grain in order to ensure that when they return home (and unpack the bags), they appreciate the surprise and come back for more.

⁶³ So when they returned to their father, they told him, "O our father! Any further ration has been categorically denied to us; therefore, send our brother with us next time that we get the ration; and we will indeed guard him well." ⁶⁴ He remarked, "Should I entrust you with him as I did with his brother before? Only Allah is the best of the protectors; and He is the most Merciful of the merciful ones." ⁶⁵ Then when they opened their baggage, they found their trading merchandise returned to them. They joyfully exclaimed, "O our father! What more can we desire? Here is all our trading merchandise returned to us. We will go¹³, bring provision for our family, protect our brother and acquire an additional camel's load of grain; that is such an easy addition."

⁶⁶ (At the time of departure) Ya'qūb said, "I will not 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 surrounded, with no way out." When they gave him their covenant, he said, "Allah is Witness over what we have talked about." ⁶⁷ And he instructed them, "O my sons! Do not enter all from the same gate but enter from different gates; but I cannot help you at all against any of the matters from Allah. Command belongs only to Allah. On Him do I rely and on Him must all the reliant rely." ⁶⁸ And when they entered in the manner their father had ordered, it did not help them at all against any matter from Allah. It was a concern in Ya'qūb's mind that he addressed. He was knowledgeable in what We had taught him, but most people do not know.

⁶⁹ Now when they went in before Yūsuf, he received his full brother to stay with him and told him, "I am your brother, so do not feel distressed over what they have been doing."

⁷⁰ When he had furnished them with their provisions, he put the king's drinking utensil (used for measuring ration) in his full brother's saddlebag. (On their departure,) an announcer shouted out, "O caravaners! You are really thieves!" ⁷¹ Turning towards them, they enquired, "What are you missing?" ⁷² The employees explained, "We are missing the measure of the king." Yūsuf added, "And for the person who finds and brings it, there will be a camel-load of grain, and I am warrantor for it." ⁷³ The brothers assured, "By Allah! You surely know that we did not come to commit corruption in the country and we are no thieves." ⁷⁴ The employees asked, "Then, what shall the retribution be if you happen to be liars?" ⁷⁵ The brothers responded, "Its retribution? The person in whose bag it is found shall himself be the retribution; that is how we punish the wrongdoers." ⁷⁶ So Yūsuf started searching their bags before his brother's bag, then he brought it out of his brother's bag. Thus did We plan for Yūsuf. It did not suit him to take his brother by the Deen (law) of the king, but Allah made it happen as He wanted. We raise in rank whoever We wish; and over every knowledgeable person is the All-Knowing.

⁷⁷ They reacted, “No wonder if he steals, a brother of his did steal before.” But Yūsuf hiding his reaction in his heart, without disclosing it to them, said to himself, “You are in such a terrible condition! And Allah is well aware of your accusations.” ⁷⁸ They pleaded, “O ‘Azeez (your majesty)! His father is a very old man, not strong enough to handle the shock; take any of us in his place, we see that you are such a magnanimous person.” ⁷⁹ He responded, “Allah’s refuge do I seek from seizing anyone other than him with whom we found our property; we would then become the wrong-doers.”

⁸⁰ Then when they despaired of (any flexibility from) him, they secluded themselves consulting privately. The eldest of them said, “Do you not know that your father took from you a firm covenant in Allah's name and how you failed earlier in the case of Yūsuf? Therefore, I shall not depart from this land until my father permits me or Allah decides for me, and He is the best of the judges. ⁸¹ Go back to your father and say, ‘O our father! Your son has indeed stolen; we testify only to what we know, and we were not the watchers over the unseen. ⁸² Ask at the town where we were, and the caravan with which we returned, and we certainly are truthful.’”

⁸³ (When Ya‘qūb was told this), he commented, “Rather, your minds have beguiled you into making up a tale; so the most fitting patience is my only option; maybe Allah will bring them all back to me; surely He is the Knowing, the Wise.” ⁸⁴ And he turned away from them, and exclaimed, “Alas, my grief for Yūsuf!” – he had lost his eyesight because of grieving, while he was keeping most of it inside – ⁸⁵ the brothers reacted, “By Allah! You will keep on remembering Yūsuf until you become debilitated or die.” ⁸⁶ He responded, “I cry for my distress and grief only to Allah, and I know from Allah what you do not know. ⁸⁷ O my sons! Go and enquire about Yūsuf and his brother, and despair not of Allah's mercy; surely none despairs of Allah's mercy except the disbelieving people.”

⁸⁸ When (they went for ration again and) entered upon Yūsuf, they pleaded, “O ‘Azeez, adversity has afflicted us and our family and we have brought meagre merchandise, but please grant us full ration and be charitable to us; indeed Allaah rewards the charitable.” ⁸⁹ He asked, “Do you know what you did to Yūsuf and his brother when you were ignorant?” ⁹⁰ They exclaimed, “Are you then really Yūsuf?” He affirmed, “I am Yūsuf and this is my brother; Allah has indeed been gracious to us. Certainly whoever maintains Taqwa and perseveres, Allaah does not waste the reward of those who pursue excellence.” ⁹¹ They acknowledged, “By Allah! Indeed Allah has preferred you above us, and we certainly were those at fault.” ⁹² He declared, “There will be no censure against you this day! May Allah forgive you, and He is the most Merciful of the merciful. ⁹³ Go with this shirt of mine and lay it on my father's face, He will regain a clear sight. Then come to me along with all your families.”

⁹⁴ When the caravan departed from Egypt, their father said, “I definitely sense Yūsuf’s scent, though you may disregard it as my senility.” ⁹⁵ The people of the house remarked, “By Allah, you truly are lost in the past.” ⁹⁶ So when the bearer of good news came, he put Yūsuf’s shirt on his face and he regained his sight, then Ya‘qūb commented, “Did I not say to you that I know from Allah what you do not know?” ⁹⁷ The brothers requested, “O our father! Ask for us forgiveness of our sins, for we were truly at fault.” ⁹⁸ He responded, “I shall ask forgiveness of my Lord for you; He surely is the Forgiving, the Merciful.”

⁹⁹ Then when they¹⁴ entered the presence of Yūsuf, he provided a home for his parents with himself, and welcomed all of them saying, “Enter Egypt, Allah willing, to live in peace and security.”

¹⁰⁰ He seated his parents on his throne and they all fell down in prostration, and he said, "O my father! This is the fulfillment of my earlier dream; my Lord has made it true! He was really excellent to me when He brought me out of prison and brought all of you from the desert after Satan had incited strife between me and my brothers. Indeed my Lord is Subtle in fulfilling what He wants, and He surely is the Knowing, the Wise.¹⁰¹ My Lord! You have bestowed on me some sovereignty and taught me understanding of the reality of matters. O Creator of the universe through rupture¹⁵! You are my Guardian in this world and the Hereafter; make me die as a Muslim and join me with the righteous."

¹⁰² O Muḥammad! This story is from the matters unknown to you that We reveal to you – you were not with them when they reached a consensus on their action plan and were conspiring. ¹⁰³ Yet most of these people¹⁶ will not become believers, no matter how eager you may be. ¹⁰⁴ And you are not even asking for any compensation for your services; it is nothing other than a reminder for all peoples. ¹⁰⁵ And how many a sign in the heavens and the earth do they pass by? Yet they ignore them. ¹⁰⁶ And most of them do not believe in Allah without ascribing partners to Him. ¹⁰⁷ Do they then feel secure that there may come to them an overwhelming part of Allah's punishment or suddenly the Moment of the end of the world may arrive while they do not suspect it? ¹⁰⁸ Conclude by saying, "This is my path that I invite you to Allah alone, I and those who follow me have adopted it based on rational insight; and exalted in glory is Allah, and I am not one of those who ascribe partners to Him."

¹⁰⁹ We did not send any messengers before you except the men from the towns' local residents, to whom We sent revelations. Have they¹⁷ not then travelled in the land and realized what was the end of the rejecters of the messengers before them and that the home of the Hereafter is better for those who (believed in messengers and) adopted Taqwa? Will you not then use reason? ¹¹⁰ (In all those cases, the rejecters were given respite) until, when the messengers despaired of their people and the people assumed that they had indeed been lied to, our help came to the messengers and only whom We willed were saved; and Our punishment is not averted from the guilty people. ¹¹¹ There is, in their stories, a lesson for prudent people. The Qur'ān is not a forged narrative, but a confirmation of the existing Scripture, a detailed exposition of every aspect of Deen, a guidance and a mercy for people who believe.

VARIANCES AMONG THE QUR'ĀNIC, BIBLICAL & TALMUDIC NARRATIVES

General Comment about the Differences in the Three Books

The first overall difference is the conciseness of the narrative. The Qur'ān conveys the story in Arabic very concisely while imparting many lessons along the way. The English translations cannot retain the unparalleled Qur'ānic preciseness, but still it took only 3,600 English words (our translation) to describe it. In comparison, starting and stopping at the same points as the Qur'ānic story, the Bible (NIV) narrates it in more than 8,000 words (though it does not cover some of the Qur'ānic points) and Talmud (as per The Legends of the Jews by Louis Ginzberg) narrates it in more than 35,000 words.

How did Jacob react to the Dream of his son?

Which of the three descriptions is more fitting with the personality of Prophet Ya'qūb (Jacob) and his love for Yūsuf (Joseph)?

According to the Qur'ān, when Yūsuf told his dream, Ya'qūb lovingly responded:

“Dear son, do not mention your dream to your brothers, lest they contrive a plot against you; surely Shaytaan is an open enemy to human beings. This indicates that your Lord is going to choose you, teach you understanding of the reality of matters, and complete His favour upon you and on the progeny of Ya'qūb as He did earlier upon your fathers Ibraheem and Ishaaq. Indeed, your Lord is Knowing, Wise.”

The Bible reports:

³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age... ¹⁰ When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, “What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?” (Genesis 37)

The Talmud states:

Then Joseph dreamed ..., and Jacob, to whom he told it first, was rejoiced over it, for he understood its meaning properly... Jacob wrote the dream in a book, ... for the holy spirit cautioned him, "Take heed, these things will surely come to pass."

But when Joseph repeated his dream to his brethren, in the presence of his father, Jacob rebuked him, saying, "I and thy brethren, that has some sense, but I and thy mother, that is inconceivable, for thy mother is dead." ... Jacob may be excused, he had spoken in this way only in order to avert the envy and hate of his brethren from Joseph...

HOW OLD WAS YŪSUF WHEN THROWN IN THE CISTERN?

According to the Qur'ān, Yūsuf's brothers planned to get rid of Yūsuf, one way or the other. With a plan, they approached their father to send Yūsuf with them for an outing and picnic. When their father expressed his concern about them neglecting him to be devoured by a wolf, they assured him that they would guard him responsibly. It indicates that Yūsuf was quite a young boy at that time. However, some Muslim scholars, without reflecting upon the implications of the Qur'ānic statements, have simply quoted the Biblical claim that Yūsuf was seventeen when he started having true dreams. So, they assume that he was between 17 and 18 when he was taken to Egypt. This shows the danger of accepting any details from the Bible or the Talmud without extreme caution and due diligence that is needed before quoting anything from those sources.

When we look at the Bible and the Talmud, we find them quite inconsistent in this respect.

The Bible describes Joseph as “a young man of seventeen” (Genesis 37:2), when he started having dreams that indicated his superiority over his brothers, which antagonized them. He was also the favourite of his father. The brothers started hating him. The Bible then states that he was sent by his father to bring news about his brothers who had gone to graze their flocks. (It is not stated why all the ten strong men were needed to tend the flock at the same time, nor does it answer a natural question: why would the father, who

knew their animosity towards his most favourite son, knowingly send him to his death or disappearance?). The Bible claims that when his brothers saw him coming, it was at that time that they first decided to kill him, but then, on Reuben's suggestion, threw him in a cistern (Gen. 37:14-21). It also states "Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father." This raises the question as to why would Reuben not rescue him and quietly let him go home, as he came. If he was old enough to come on his own, why did he have to be "taken back"?

Then, the brothers sat down for a meal and then sold Joseph to a caravan? Where did Reuben disappear when this was happening? Why did he not know what had happened that the Bible had to say, "When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes. He went back to his brothers and said, "The boy isn't there! Where can I turn now?" (Gen 37:29-30) Thus, besides the other anomalies in the statements of the Bible, it is clear that the "boy" was not old enough to look after himself or to go back and forth safely between his home and the pasture.

Furthermore, the Bible claims that Yūsuf was in prison for 10 years when his fellow prisoners saw the dreams, and he must have spent a few years at his master's house to gain his confidence and taking charge of all his estate, "except for the food that Potiphar ate". If he was seventeen when he started having dreams, by the time he was thrown in the cistern, taken to Egypt, and bought by Potiphar, he must be at least 18. Adding the years up, he should be around 30 at the time the butler was released. Now the Bible itself says, "Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream." (Gen, 41:12) Do you think a 30+ year old man would be called "a young Hebrew", when it is also claimed that Egyptians had a short life span?

The Talmud tells the same story but in lot more detail, containing a lot more anomalies and inconsistencies. For example, it says, "No sooner was the sale of Joseph an accomplished fact than the sons of Jacob repented of their deed. They even hastened after the Midianites to ransom Joseph, but their efforts to overtake them were vain, and they had to accept the inevitable." How soon was "no sooner" and how fast could the Caravan move that they could not catch it? Also reflect on the following:

Then Reuben went away from his brethren, and he hid in the mountains, so that he might be able to hasten back in a favorable moment and draw Joseph forth from the pit and restore him to his father... Joseph, who had to spend three days and three nights in the pit before he was sold... His first errand was to go to the pit, in the hope of finding Joseph there. In that case he would have carried him off and restored him to his father clandestinely, without the knowledge of his brethren. He stood at the opening and called again and again, "Joseph, Joseph!" As he received no answer, he concluded that Joseph had perished, either by reason of terror or as the result of a snake bite, and he descended into the pit, only to find that he was not there, either living or dead. He mounted to the top again, and rent his clothes, and cried out, "The lad is not there, and what answer shall I give to my father, if he be dead?"

See, Reuben wanted to hasten back to save Joseph, but the poor guy could not find a favourable moment in three days and three nights. Then, he was able to go into the pit and come out on his own. *Should it make one wonder why a 17-18 years old Joseph could not get out of it in three days and three nights?*

However, coming back to the point about age, what does “he would have carried him off and restored him to his father” mean? Was he going to carry his 17 year old brother or a baby brother?

Also, according to the Talmud, the brothers had a heated argument with the people of the caravan about the ownership of Yūsuf. Throughout the conversation, he was referred to as a “lad” by both parties, inappropriate for a grown up man.

Another question that needs to be considered is why could they not recognize him only after a few years when they went to buy grain from him, if he was already a grown up man of 17 or 18 and was unique in his outstanding beauty? The Talmud describes the reason: “They did not know him, for when Joseph was sold into slavery, he was a beardless youth. But he knew his brethren, their appearance had not changed in aught, for they were bearded men when he was separated from them.” “Not only had he been transformed from a smooth-faced youth into a bearded man since they had abandoned him, but also the forsaken youth now stood before them the ruler of Egypt.” *These statements indicate that he had not come of age when he was thrown in the pit. Now consider that:* “For Benjamin, when he was but ten years old, Jacob took Mahlia to wife, the daughter of Aram, the grandson of Terah, and she bore him five sons. At the age of eighteen he married a second wife, Arbat, ... and by her also he had five sons.” If this statement is correct, it indicates that boys were coming of age around 10. (All Talmud quotes are from Ginzberg, emphasis added).

Hence, we can estimate Yūsuf's age when his ordeal began to be less than 10. He was not yet old enough to go out with his brothers to graze their flocks or bring their reports to the father, as the Bible and the Talmud claim was happening. That is why the brothers had to come to their father with the proposal that he be sent with them for an outing and picnic.

What did the Brothers do after throwing Yūsuf into the pit, as per the Talmud?

Then Reuben went away from his brethren, and he hid in the mountains, so that he might be able to hasten back in a favorable moment and draw Joseph forth from the pit and restore him to his father... To avoid hearing Joseph's weeping and cries of distress, his brethren passed on from the pit, and stood at a bow-shot's distance. The only one among them that manifested pity was Zebulon. For two days and two nights no food passed his lips on account of his grief over the fate of Joseph, who had to spend three days and three nights in the pit before he was sold. During this period Zebulon was charged by his brethren to keep watch at the pit. He was chosen to stand guard because he took no part in the meals. Part of the time Judah also refrained from eating with the rest, and took turns at watching, because he feared Simon and Gad might jump down into the pit and put an end to Joseph's life.

... His (Reuben's) first errand was to go to the pit, in the hope of finding Joseph there. In that case he would have carried him off and restored him to his father clandestinely, without the knowledge of his brethren. He stood at the opening and called again and again, "Joseph, Joseph!" As he received no answer, he concluded that Joseph had perished, either by reason of terror or as the result of a snake bite, and he descended into the pit, only to find that he was not there, either living or dead. He mounted to the top again, and rent his clothes, and cried out, "The lad is not there, and what answer shall I give to my father, if he be dead?"

Was Reuben not scared of the snakes and scorpions himself? He went in and came back without being bitten? Why could Reuben not find a favourable moment in three days and three nights? Did he keep hiding in the mountains for all three days and three nights, without food or water? Did the rest of the brothers wonder what happened to him?

If it was so easy to jump in and out of the pit, Why did Zebulon not help Joseph escape instead of keeping hungry and crying for him?

If they did not come out for a picnic but to graze their flock, who tended the flock when all of the brothers were busy in these games for "three days and three nights"?

If Jacob sent Joseph to bring the news of his brothers and he did not come back for three days and three nights, did he get worried and go out to find out what was going on? After all he went out for the following:

He (Jacob) went up into the mountains, hewed twelve stones out of the quarry, and wrote the names of his sons thereon, their constellations, and the months corresponding to the constellations, a stone for a son, thus, "Reuben, Ram, Nisan," and so for each of his twelve sons. Then he addressed the stones and bade them bow down before the one marked with Reuben's name, constellation, and month, and they did not move. He gave the same order regarding the stone marked for Simon, and again the stones stood still. And so he did respecting all his sons, until he reached the stone for Joseph. When he spoke concerning this one, "I command you to fall down before Joseph," they all prostrated themselves. He tried the same test with other things, with trees and sheaves, and always the result was the same, and Jacob could not but feel that his suspicion was true, Joseph was alive.

They all (Seven Midianites) joined together and dragged him up, and took him along with them when they continued on their journey. They had to pass his brethren, who called out to the Midianites: "Why have you done such a thing, to steal our slave and carry him away with you? We threw the lad into the pit, because he was disobedient."

(If Zebulon or Judah were watching, did they not call their brothers when the Midianites were dragging him up? What happened to snakes and scorpions when they were dragging him up? Why did it take several to drag him up when it seems that only one brother was intending to?)

When they (Midianites) came close, they heard Joseph screaming and wailing, and they looked down into the pit and saw a youth of beautiful figure and comely appearance.... The Midianites replied: "What, this lad, you say, is your slave, your servant? More likely is it that you all are slaves unto him, for in beauty of form, in pleasant looks, and fair appearance, he excelleth you all."

For so handsome a youth as Joseph, the sum paid was too low by far, but his appearance had been greatly changed by the horrible anguish he had endured in the pit with the snakes and the scorpions. He had lost his ruddy complexion, and he looked sallow and sickly, and the Midianites were justified in paying a small sum for him. *(Which of the two statements is true: Did he have comely appearance or did he look sallow and sickly?)*

Who pulled Yūsuf out of the well, and was he sold?

According to the Qur'ān, after Yūsuf's brothers threw him in a well, a caravan came to get water from the well, picked up Yūsuf and hid him as an article of merchandise. Then, arriving in Egypt, they sold him for a low price, a few silver coins.

The Bible states: ²³ So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing— ²⁴ and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it. (Gen. 37:23-24) Then seeing a caravan, the brothers took him out and sold him to the people of caravan for 20 silver coins (Gen. 37:25-28).

But who did they sell him to, Ishmaelites or Midianites? And who took him out of the well, cistern or pit? Both the Bible and the Talmud contradict their own statements as well as each other.

According to **the Bible** Genesis 37:25-28 and 36:

²⁵ As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming ... ²⁶ Judah said to his brothers,... ²⁷ Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites ... His brothers agreed. ²⁸ So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt. ... ³⁶ Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar,

But Genesis 39:1 states:

Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there.

So, was it the caravan of Ishmaelites or of the Midianite merchants? Did Ishmaelites sell him in Egypt or Midianites? Apparently, the redactor who was combining the two version of the Genesis could not make up his mind whether to stick with the Ishmaelites version of the Bible or the Midianites version.

The Talmud states that the Midianites were the people who pulled Joseph out of the pit – “They all (seven Midianites) joined together and dragged him up”. Then, when they were passing by his brothers, they saw him and argued with the Midianites and threatened them until they gave them 20 silver coins for Joseph. Then the Midianites sold him for the same price to Ishmaelites.

Thus, the Rabbis of Talmud have tried to reconcile between the two caravans as well as between the fact that the people of the caravan pulled him out and the Biblical claim of the brothers selling him. However, the lengthy explanations they have concocted do not sound reasonable. Here is an example of how they convinced Midianites to pay for Joseph:

Then Simon rose up, and with bared sword he sprang upon the Midianites, at the same time uttering a cry that made the earth reverberate. The Midianites fell down in great consternation, and he said: "I am Simon, the son of the Hebrew Jacob, who destroyed the city of Shechem alone and unaided, and together with

my brethren I destroyed the cities of the Amorites. God do so and more also, if it be not true that all the Midianites, your brethren, united with all the Canaanite kings to fight with me, cannot hold out against me. Now restore the boy you took from us, else will I give your flesh unto the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field."

Then later on, the Rabbis once again forget what they had said in the past, and say:

"The merchantmen that bought Joseph from the company of Ishmaelites to whom his brethren had sold him" and "The Midianites that obtained him from the merchantmen".

They (Ishmaelites) continued their journey as far as the borders of Egypt, and there they met four men, descendants of Medan, the son of Abraham, and to these they sold Joseph for five shekels. The two companies, the Ishmaelites and the Medanites, arrived in Egypt upon the same day. Then latter, hearing that Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, was seeking a good slave, repaired to him at once, to try to dispose of Joseph to him. Potiphar was willing to pay as much as four hundred pieces of silver, for, high as the price was, it did not seem too great for a slave that pleased him as much as Joseph... Potiphar rested satisfied with this report, paid the price asked for Joseph. *So Medanites (not to be confused with Midianites) are selling to Potiphar for 400 pieces of silver.*

With the permission of her husband, Potiphar's wife sent a eunuch to the Ishmaelites, bidding him to buy Joseph, but he returned and reported that they demanded an exorbitant price for the slave. She dispatched a second eunuch, charging him to conclude the bargain, and though they asked one mina of gold, or even two, he was not to be sparing of money, he was to be sure to buy the slave and bring him to her. The eunuch gave the Ishmaelites eighty pieces of gold for Joseph, telling his mistress, however, that he had paid out a hundred pieces. Joseph noticed the deception, but he kept silent, that the eunuch might not be put to shame.

Thus it is impossible to conclude from the above as to from whom Potiphar bought Joseph and at what price. There is more nonsense that can be quoted here from the Talmud, but hopefully what has been quoted is enough to give the reader an idea.

Ishmaelites must be extremely stupid to sell a slave for five shekels for which they had paid 20 shekels (as per the Bible: "his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites" Gen. 37:28).

And what is meant by the following statements in a discussion between the brothers and Yūsuf according to the Talmud?

The brethren: "We did hear that some Ishmaelites stole our brother, and sold him into slavery in Egypt, and as our brother was exceeding fair in form and face, we thought he might have been sold for illicit uses, and therefore we searched even the disreputable houses to find him."

Joseph: "Is there a greater falsehood than that ye spake concerning your brother Joseph, whom you sold to the Midianites for twenty pieces of silver, telling your father, an evil beast hath devoured him?"

However, there is another surprise! If Yūsuf's statement is right as per the Talmud, the brothers did not even throw him in the cistern, they just sold him:

"Yes, brother," spoke Joseph, "when they had stripped me of my coat, they handed me over to the Ishmaelites, who tied an apron around my waist, scourged me, and bade me run off. But a lion attacked the one that beat me, and killed him, and his companions were alarmed, and they sold me to other people."

Thus, on the basis of the contents of the Bible as well as the comments of a multitude of Rabbis quoted in a variety of places in the Talmud, it cannot be concluded whether Yūsuf was thrown in the cistern or sold directly; or if he was thrown, who pulled him out; or who was he sold to; or who sold him in Egypt; or how many hands did he pass through before ending up with Potiphar; or at what price he was sold by different parties.

The reality is that the brothers did throw him in the well as they had planned, killed a goat to stain his shirt with the blood and went home crying to their father. An unknown caravan came along and pulled him out and sold him at a cheap price. At the time of the writing of Genesis and explaining it in the Talmud, the authors blamed whoever they did not like and attributed to that party whatever suited them at the moment.

How did Jacob (Ya'qūb) react when he was told that Yūsuf was killed?

According to the Qur'ān, when the sons come back with blood on Yūsuf's shirt and reported that he had been eaten by a wolf, Ya'qūb did not believe their story, and responded: "Rather, your minds have beguiled you into making up a tale; so the most fitting patience is my only option; and Allah is the one sought for help against what you assert."

Although he knew they were lying and he had no way of finding his beloved son, even then he remained patient despite being grief stricken.

But according to Gen. 37:

³³ He recognized it and said, "It is my son's robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces." ³⁴ Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. ³⁵ All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "No," he said, "I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave." So his father wept for him.

The Talmud reports a similar but longer description of Jacob's lamentations. For example:

Jacob recognized Joseph's coat, and, overwhelmed by grief, he fell prostrate, and long lay on the ground motionless, like a stone. Then he arose, and set up a loud cry, and wept, saying, "It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces."

After these words, Jacob could doubt no longer that Joseph had been torn by wild beasts, and he mourned for his son, saying: "O my son Joseph, my son, I sent thee to inquire after the welfare of thy brethren, and now thou art torn by wild beasts. ... how bitter is thy death! ... O Joseph, my son, how painful and appalling was thy death! None hath died a death like thine since the world doth stand.

Jacob refused to be comforted... lookout, too, for beasts of prey, and catch the first you meet. Seize it and bring it to me. It may be that God will have pity upon my sorrow, and put the beast between your hands that hath torn my child in pieces, and I will take my revenge upon it."

WHAT WAS THE NAME OF THE PERSON WHO BOUGHT YŪSUF?

Another suspect piece of information that our recent scholars have picked up from the Bible and Talmud is the name of the 'Azeez.

The Bible claims his name was Potiphar (Gen, 39:1) and the name of Joseph's father in law was Potiphera, priest of On (Gen 41:45), presenting them as two different persons. Talmud states, "Thus Joseph became the slave of the idolatrous priest Potiphar, or Potiphera, as he was sometimes called" and it also claims that Joseph married his adopted daughter Asenath. Thus, it regards both the master and the father in law as one and the same person. In addition to the peculiarity of these claims from the Bible and Talmud, the modern Egyptologists have expressed their reservations about the existence of such names in Egypt when Yūsuf is estimated to have been there. This name was only found on a stela (Cairo JE 65444) that belonged to the 21st dynasty of Pharaohs that started ruling around 1069-945 BCE, long after the Israelites' Exodus. Those who analyze the name patterns on the basis of Egyptian naming conventions at different ages, such as K. A. Kitchen and Donald B. Redford, state that the use of these types of names began in the 19th dynasty towards the close of the New Kingdom, increased in frequency in the 21st and 22nd Dynasties, and became very common from the 25th Dynasty to the Greco-Roman times.

The Biblical researchers are of the opinion that the use of anachronisms indicates the time of writing of the books, rather than the timing of the incidents reported. The writers or editors took the liberty of inserting names and titles prevalent or known at the time of writing (around seventh century BCE).

What happened when Yūsuf ran out of the room?

The Bible (Gen 39) says:

¹¹ One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. ¹² She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house. ¹³ When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, ¹⁴ she called her household servants. "Look," she said to them, "this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed. ¹⁵ When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house." ¹⁶ She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. ¹⁷ Then she told him this story: "That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. ¹⁸ But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house." ¹⁹ When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me,"

he burned with anger. ²⁰ Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined.

Three points in the story seem to be seriously odd: Firstly, how did his cloak get off his body? Was it a magical shirt that the moment it was grabbed, it came off his body? Or was Yūsuf insane that instead of pulling it off her hands, he would remove it to give it to her as a proof against him? Secondly, if no servants were inside, how did she call them to tell her story? Thirdly, the master used to have complete confidence in Yūsuf, so why did he not even try to find out the reality of the matter before sending him to prison?

The coverage in the Talmud on this topic is extremely lengthy, mythical and inconsistent, but the following are some highlights:

She ... arrayed herself in princely garments. She placed precious stones upon her head, ... she beautified her face and her body ... she perfumed the hall and the whole house ... and afterward sat herself down at the entrance to the hall, in the vestibule leading to the house, through which Joseph had to pass to his work...

Joseph started to escape from his mistress, but Zuleika caught him by his garment, and she said: "As the king liveth, if thou wilt not fulfill my wish, thou must die," and while she spoke thus, she drew a sword with her free hand from under her dress, and, pressing it against Joseph's throat, she said, "Do as I bid thee, or thou diest." Joseph ran out, leaving a piece of his garment in the hands of Zuleika as he wrenched himself loose from the grasp of the woman with a quick, energetic motion... Also she took Joseph's torn garment, and laid it out next to her. Then she sent a little boy to summon some of the men of her house, and to them she told the tale of Joseph's alleged outrage ... The men of her house spake not a word, but, in a rage against Joseph, they went to their master, and reported to him what had come to pass...

Potiphar hastened home, She accused him in the following words: "O husband, mayest thou not live a day longer, if thou dost not punish the wicked slave that hath desired to defile thy bed,... He did lay a privy design to abuse thy wife, and this at the time of observing a festival, when thou wouldst be absent." These words she spoke at the moment of conjugal intimacy with Potiphar, when she was certain of exerting an influence upon her husband... Potiphar gave credence to her words, and he had Joseph flogged unmercifully....

God opened the mouth of Zuleika's child, a babe of but eleven months, and he spoke to the men that were beating Joseph, saying: "What is your quarrel with this man? Why do you inflict such evil upon him? Lies my mother doth speak, and deceit is what her mouth uttereth. This is the true tale of that which did happen," and the child proceeded to tell all that had passed ...

Abashed by the speech of his own infant son, Potiphar commanded his bailiffs to leave off from chastising Joseph, and the matter was brought into court, where priests sat as judges. Joseph protested his innocence ... but Potiphar repeated the account his wife had given him. The judges ordered the garment of Joseph to be brought which Zuleika had in her possession, and they examined the tear therein. It turned out to be on the front part of the mantle, and they came to the conclusion that Zuleika had tried to hold him fast, and had been foiled in her attempt by Joseph, against whom she was now lodging a trumped up charge.

Once again, these statements raise many questions. The Talmud goes to great lengths describing all the preparations Zuleika did for getting ready for Joseph, even describing the kind of things she used for beautification and the list of perfumes she used, but no sword was mentioned. Where did that come from? What kind of love making was she planning with a sword under her dress? She must also be extremely strong and deft that she was able to hold his garment with one hand and draw a sword with other. Also what kind of sword was it that it was pressed against his neck but did not leave a mark or cut?

Also, does it makes sense that her husband hastens home being upset about the incident, but instead of finding about what happened goes right into love making that “at the moment of conjugal intimacy with Potiphar, when she was certain of exerting an influence upon her husband” his wife makes her appeal? Then, he punishes Yūsuf without finding out his side of the story, his own child miraculously speaks to exonerate Yūsuf, but he takes the matter to court? Then, he gives false witness in front of the court telling only his wife’s side of the story and the court is so stupid that they see the mantle torn from the front, but call it an evidence of the woman’s fault?

Furthermore, how do you explain Potiphar being able to have an “11 month old son” and also to have “conjugal intimacy” when the Talmud told earlier the following:

He (Potiphar) had secured possession of the handsome youth (Joseph) for a lewd purpose, but the angel Gabriel mutilated him in such manner that he could not accomplish it.

Then, the Talmud also claims that, at the time of his appointment as the viceroy:

The Egyptians had hesitated to make him their viceroy, because they shrank from choosing a man accused of adultery for so high an office. It was the priests that made the suggestion to examine Joseph's torn garment, which his mistress had submitted as evidence of his guilt, and see whether the rent was in front or in back. If it was in back, it would show his innocence--he had turned to flee, and his temptress had clutched him so that the garment tore. But if the tear was in front, then it would be a proof of his guilt--he had used violence with the woman, and she had torn the mantle in her efforts to defend her honor. The angel Gabriel came and transferred the rent from the fore part to the back, and the Egyptians were convinced of Joseph's innocence, and their scruples about raising him to the kingship were removed.

Here is what really happened:

²³ The woman, in whose house he was, sought to seduce him from his pure self; she closed the doors and invited him, “Come!” He responded, “I seek Allah's refuge, He is my Lord Who has made my stay excellent. Indeed, the wrong doers do not attain Falaah.” ²⁴ She determinedly advanced towards him, and Yūsuf would have also advanced towards her had he not considered the clear argument against it from his Lord.

²⁵ They both raced towards the door; and pulling from behind, she tore his shirt from the back; and they found her husband at the door. At this she exclaimed, “What can be the punishment for someone who intended to do evil to your wife except that he be imprisoned or given painful punishment?” ²⁶ Yūsuf clarified,

“It was she who sought to seduce me from my pure self”. Then, a person from her own family presented the logical evidence: “If his shirt is torn from the front, then she is telling the truth and he is one of the liars; ²⁷ but if his shirt is torn from the back, then she is lying and he is one of the truthful.” ²⁸ When the husband saw that the shirt was torn from the back, he said, “It is one of you women’s snares; indeed your snares are vehement. ²⁹ Yūsuf, ignore this. And you (my wife), seek forgiveness for your sin, you indeed were the one at fault.”

At the time of his appointment, he did not come out of the prison until his innocence was well established and acknowledged. These are the examples of how Allah SWT corrected the errors of the human writers of the Bible and the Talmud through the revelations of the Qur’ān.

WAS THERE A PARTY WHERE WOMEN CUT THEIR HANDS? WHEN WAS IT?

When the wife of Yūsuf’s master (Zuleika) invited him to sin but he freed himself and ran out, the story became the talk of the town. All the elite or socialite women, her social circle, started gossiping about it. To justify in their eyes her passion for Yūsuf, she decided to give them a practical demonstration. She invited them for a party to give them a chance to see him and be waited upon by him. After this brief encounter, they fully understood Zuleika’s infatuation and Zuleika felt exonerated. Then all of them tried to seduce him, and failing in their endeavours, accused him of wrongdoing and caused his incarceration. That is a natural, logical sequence of events. Thus, the Qur’ān mentions the first incident in which Yūsuf had to run away with torn shirt and then says:

³⁰ The women of the city gossiped, “The wife of ‘Azeez¹⁸ is seeking to seduce her slave boy; he surely has infatuated her with love. We see her evidently misguided.”

³¹ When she heard of their sly gossip, she invited them over for a party; prepared seating arrangements with cushions to recline upon; and gave each one of them a knife. Then, she asked Yūsuf, “Come out before them.” So when they saw him, they extolled his awesome grandeur, cut their hands and exclaimed, “Perfection is for Allah! This is not a human being! This is none other than a noble angel!” ³² So she said, “This is the one you were blaming me about. I did seek to seduce him, but he held himself back firmly. If he does not do what I command him, he shall definitely be jailed, and shall certainly be of those who are debased.”

The Bible does not mention this incident at all. It sends Joseph to jail right after the torn-cloak incident. The Talmud mentions it but in the wrong order. It gives the impression as if the hand-cutting incident happened first. The women had come to visit Zuleika because she was not feeling well. To explain to them the cause of her sickness, she arranged the food and knives and asked Yūsuf to wait upon them. After cutting their hands, they acknowledged, “It is true, who can look upon this beauty in the house, and refrain her feelings?” Then, after some time later on, Zuleika tried to force Yūsuf to sin and he ran away with the torn cloak.

The questions that arise about the Talmud narrative are: If the women used to visit Zuleika in her house, had they not seen Yūsuf before? Was he kept in hiding? How did they explain their cut hands to their families? If all of them blamed Yūsuf at that time, why was he not jailed? Or, if they told the truth, then, everyone would have known about Yūsuf’s innocence, when the torn-cloak incident happened. In short, the Talmud does not make sense.

WAS IT IMPROPER FOR YŪSUF TO ASK THE BUTLER FOR HELP?

We have explained the Islamic concept of Tawakkul (Reliance on Allah) at different places, clarifying that Tawakkul is a mental state or attitude comprising of the following attributes:

1. Regardless of how good or how tough one's circumstances happen to be -- without dwelling upon the past, lamenting about the present, worrying about the future, brooding about adversities, expressing frustration, or feeling helpless or defeated due to continual apparent failures -- focussing fully and devotedly on evaluating how to make the best of existing conditions, taking the right steps towards attaining one's goals and the objectives of Deen, putting in one's best efforts using the best possible means and resources that can lawfully be applied, relying on Allah for taking care of whatever is beyond a believer's control, and then leaving the results and outcomes to Allah alone, without worrying about the consequences, knowing only He can deliver results and He does so according to His own plan.
2. As the circumstances change, new incidents happen or new consequences are encountered, re-evaluating the strategy and actions plans as per point one, and continuing in that manner until objectives are achieved or earthly stay expires.

Thus, according to the Islamic concept of Tawakkul, Yūsuf asked the butler who was going to be restored to his job that he should mention to the king the experiences he had had with Yūsuf, hoping that it may initiate the process of his release from the prison. He knew that he would gain freedom only according to Allah's plan, but he also knew that Allah's plan requires that people must also make all efforts that are humanly possible. It is Allah's law that He grants help only to those who exhaust their efforts and then leave those matters that are beyond their power to Allah. Those people who do not make the efforts that are humanly possible but expect Allah to help them, Allah SWT ignores their expectations and supplications.

However, the butler did not deliver on his promise and Yūsuf had to stay longer in the prison. Consequently, Yūsuf continued to do his best in the prison according to the principle of Tawakkul until it was the right time for him to be free.

But, the Talmud gives a totally invalid view of this matter. It regards Joseph's asking the butler to speak to the king on his behalf as an act of reliance on a human being, instead of relying on Allah and regards his stay in the prison as a punishment for his relying on a human being, instead of Allah. Asking for human help becomes non-reliance in Allah only when a person believes that the results are in the hands of people, instead of being in the hands of Allah, which obviously could never be expected from Yūsuf. The Talmudic stance (that merely seeking help from fellow human beings is non-reliance upon Allah) implies that people who want to rely on Allah should not do anything; which is a totally ridiculous concept. Another problem with the Talmudic view is its suggestion that Allah punishes individuals for their sins right away in this world, which is another ridiculous idea. Allah SWT has made it very clear that He will hold individuals accountable and reward or punish them only after death.

The following excerpt is from the Talmud:

Properly speaking, Joseph should have gone out free from his dungeon on the same day as the butler. He had been there ten years by that time, and had made

amends for the slander he had uttered against his ten brethren. However, he remained in prison two years longer. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord," but Joseph had put his confidence in flesh and blood. He had prayed the chief butler to have him in remembrance when it should be well with him, and make mention of him unto Pharaoh, and the butler forgot his promise, and therefore Joseph had to stay in prison two years more than the years originally allotted to him there. The butler had not forgotten him intentionally, but it was ordained of God that his memory should fail him. When he would say to himself, If thus and so happens, I will remember the case of Joseph, the conditions he had imagined were sure to be reversed, or if he made a knot as a reminder, an angel came and undid the knot, and Joseph did not enter his mind.

According to the Bible, the butler was released in three days as per the interpretation given by Yūsuf. Did Yūsuf not know that his prison term was going to be up in three days, along with the butler, that he asked him for help? Also look at the absurdity of the reasons given for the butler forgetting the mention of Yūsuf, as compared to the sensible reason given by the Qur'ān.

This is also another example of how the Qur'ān corrects the misguidance propagated by the Bible and the Talmud and how it restores proper honour and prestige to the prophets of God accused of inappropriate behaviour by the misguided and ignorant writers of the Bible and the Talmud.

HOW OLD WAS JOSEPH WHEN FREED FROM THE PRISON, AND HOW MUCH TIME DID HE SPEND AT HIS MASTER'S HOUSE?

Once again, Muslims have quoted the Bible and the Talmud without thinking and have accepted that Yūsuf was 30 years old at the time of his appointment by the king. This age may or may not be right and we have no way of knowing it. Also, we do not have any need to know it for any Islamic use or purpose. However, it may be worthwhile to be aware of the Talmudic inconsistencies in this respect.

Both the Bible and the Talmud claim that Joseph started having dreams that his brothers did not like when he was seventeen. They also claim that Joseph was in prison for 12 years and that he was appointed by the king at age 30: "Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt." (Gen. 41:46) How can this be correct? For him to be thirty at the time of his appointment, it has to be assumed that from the days of his dreams to his imprisonment everything in between happened within one year, including the following:

They (Ishmaelites) therefore decided to leave him with a shopkeeper until they should come back to Egypt again with their merchandise. ... and Joseph remained with him for three months and five days. ... and Joseph stayed in prison for twenty-four days (for insisting that he was a slave), until the return of the Ishmaelites to Egypt.

Thus, at least for four months Joseph remained unsold in Egypt. So he was at least 18 according to the Talmud, when he was bought by Potiphar – and this includes all time that passed from Joseph's dreams to his brothers' antagonism, abduction, slavery, sale, etc.

Talmud also says:

“On the pretext of visiting him, she would go to him at night, and, as she had no sons, she would pretend a desire to adopt him. Joseph then prayed to God in her behalf, and she bore a son. However, she continued to embrace him as though he were her own child, yet he did not notice her evil designs.” This child was 11 month old when he gave witness for Joseph.

Potiphar treated Joseph not as a slave, but as a member of his family, for he said, "This youth is not cut out for a slave's work, he is worthy of a prince's place." Accordingly, he provided instruction for him in the arts, and ordered him to have better fare than the other slaves.

Accordingly, Joseph stayed at least two years at Potiphar's house – and that includes time taken for him to gain the confidence of Potiphar, superintendence of the Potiphar's estate, Potiphar's wife's advances, cutting of hands by women, miraculous birth of Potiphar's son and his growing to be 11 month old and Joseph's appearance in court. This indicates that there is something wrong with what the Talmud reports.

The reality is that Yūsuf was brought to the ‘Azeez’s house at quite a young age, spent a long time being treated as a member of his family and provided education, then was given charge of affairs as he grew up and proved his capabilities, until Zuleika started to desire him as a man to play with, instead of the son she wanted to adopt.

WAS YA‘QŪB SURE ABOUT YŪSUF’S DEATH OR NOT?

The Talmud says:

Then he arose, and set up a loud cry, and wept, saying, "It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces.

After these words, Jacob could doubt no longer that Joseph had been torn by wild beasts, and he mourned for his son,

Then, it contradicts itself:

He tried the same test with other things, with trees and sheaves, and always the result was the same, and Jacob could not but feel that his suspicion was true, Joseph was alive.

Therefore the fact that he was inconsolable made Jacob suspect that Joseph was alive, and he did not give entire credence to the report of his sons.

The words of Jacob, which he uttered, "Me have ye bereaved of my children," were meant to intimate to his sons that he suspected them of the death of Joseph and of Simon's disappearance as well, and their reports concerning both he regarded as inventions.

COULD YA'QŪB SEE OR NOT?

Verbatim quotation for the Talmud, except for the italicised words:

He (Jacob) went up into the mountains, hewed twelve stones out of the quarry, and wrote the names of his sons thereon, their constellations, and the months corresponding to the constellations, a stone for a son, thus, "Reuben, Ram, Nisan," and so for each of his twelve sons.

They proceeded on their journey home, and their father met them on the way. Jacob was astonished not to see Simon with them. (*After the brothers' first trip to Egypt*).

Jacob wrote a letter when they were departing for the second trip. The letter started with "From thy servant Jacob, the son of Isaac, the grandson of Abraham, prince of God, to the mighty and wise king Zaphenathpaneah, the ruler of Egypt, peace!" Then he writes:

My children surrounded me, and begged for something to eat, but, alas, I am very old, and I cannot see with mine eyes, for they are heavy with the weight of years, and also on account of my never-ceasing tears for my son Joseph, who hath been taken from me.

Then Judah handed his father's letter to Joseph, who was so moved at seeing the well-known handwriting that he had to retire to his chamber and weep.

If he could not see, how did he write the letter in handwriting that Joseph recognized? And how did he see Joseph and his sons on his entry into Egypt?

HOW DID YŪSUF REVEAL HIS IDENTITY?

To his full brother

According to the Genesis 43, Yūsuf invited all of them for a dinner, but there is no mention of him informing Benjamin of his identity or plan. The poor guy, Benjamin, was accused of stealing and he did not even know what was going on!

According to the Talmud, Joseph revealed his identity to Benjamin magically: "Joseph ordered his magic astrolabe to be brought to him, ... Benjamin ... then looked upon the astrolabe, and to his great astonishment he discovered by the aid of it that he who was sitting upon the throne before him was his brother Joseph."

According to the Qur'ān, Yūsuf confided in him at the first opportunity:

Now when they went in before Yūsuf, he received his full brother to stay with him and told him, "I am your brother, so do not feel distressed over what they have been doing."

To his half brothers

According to the Qur'ān:

When (they went for ration again and) entered upon Yūsuf, they pleaded, "O 'Azeez, adversity has afflicted us and our family and we have brought meagre merchandise, but please grant us full ration and be charitable to us; indeed Allaah rewards the charitable."⁸⁹ He asked, "Do you know what you did to Yūsuf and his brother when you were ignorant?"⁹⁰ They exclaimed, "Are you then really Yūsuf?" He affirmed, "I am Yūsuf and this is my brother; Allah has indeed been gracious to us. Certainly whoever maintains Taqwa and

perseveres, Allaah does not waste the reward of those who pursue excellence.”⁹¹ They acknowledged, “By Allah! Indeed Allah has preferred you above us, and we certainly were those at fault.”⁹² He declared, “There will be no censure against you this day! May Allah forgive you, and He is the most Merciful of the merciful.

According to the Bible:

¹ Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, “Have everyone leave my presence!” So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. ² And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh’s household heard about it. ³ Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still living?” But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

According to the Talmud:

Turning to his brethren, he said: "Ye lie when ye say that your brother is dead. He is not dead. You sold him, and I did buy him. I shall call him, and set him before your eyes," and he began to call, "Joseph, son of Jacob, come hither! Joseph, son of Jacob, come hither! Speak to thy brethren who did sell thee." The others turned their eyes hither and thither, to the four corners of the house, until Joseph called to them: "Why look ye here and there? Behold, I am Joseph your brother! "Their souls fled away from them, and they could make no answer, but God permitted a miracle to happen, and their souls came back to them....

Abashed they stood there, and in their rage they desired to slay Joseph as the author of their shame and their suffering. But an angel appeared and flung them to the four corners of the house. Judah raised so loud an outcry that the walls of the city of Egypt tumbled down, the women brought forth untimely births, Joseph and Pharaoh both rolled down off their thrones, and Joseph's three hundred heroes lost their teeth, and their heads remained forever immobile, facing backward, as they had turned them to discover the cause of the tumult.

JEWISH MYTHOLOGY ABOUT JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

While studying the Talmud, one point stands out loud and clear: the Rabbis were bent upon proving that Hebrews were a special race. So much so that they did not let the truth come in their way of inculcating that point. In an attempt to impress upon the “specialness” of this race, outrageous myths have been concocted and propagated in this story; examples of which are given under different headings in the sections that follow. Please note that all text in this appendix is from the *Legends of the Jews* by Louis Ginzberg, with a few quotes from the Bible. Only emphasis and italicized comments are ours.

SOME EXAMPLES OF EVIL BEHAVIOUR ATTRIBUTED TO THE HOUSE OF JACOB:

Isaac

And as God kept the truth a secret from Jacob, Isaac did not feel justified in acquainting him with his grandson's fate, which was well known to him, for he was a prophet. Whenever he was in the company of Jacob, he mourned with him, but as soon as he quitted him, he left off from manifesting grief, because he knew that Joseph lived. (*Hypocrisy*)

Jacob

But Jacob took a piece of tin, inscribed the Holy Name upon it, and bound it about the neck of the girl, and he put her under a thornbush, and abandoned her there. (*Cruel abandoning of a granddaughter*)

She was abandoned at the borders of Egypt, only, that people might know who she was, Jacob engraved the story of her parentage and her birth upon a gold plate fastened around her neck. (*Was it gold plate or a piece of tin?*)

"How can I leave the land of my fathers, the land of my birth, the land in which the Shekinah dwells, and go into an unclean land, inhabited by slaves of the sons of Ham. (*Blatant Racism*)

The Ten Sons of Jacob

The heartless treatment they had dealt out to Joseph, paying no heed to his distress, though he fell at the feet of each of them, weeping, and entreating them not to sell him into slavery.

The brethren accepted Reuben's proposition, and Simon seized Joseph, and cast him into a pit swarming with snakes and scorpions, beside which was another **unused** pit, **filled** with offal.

Not satisfied with exposing Joseph to the snakes and scorpions, his brethren had stripped him bare before they flung him into the pit. They took off his coat of many colors, his upper garment, his breeches, and his shirt. However, the reptiles could do him no harm. God heard his cry of distress, and kept them in hiding in the clefts and the holes, and they could not come near him.

They took an oath not to betray to his father or any human being what they had actually done with Joseph. He who violated the oath would be put to the sword by the rest.

When Joseph revealed his identity: Abashed they stood there, and in their rage they desired to slay Joseph as the author of their shame and their suffering.

Joseph

The Talmud also claims "when they (Yūsuf's brothers) went down to Egypt, the slaves of Joseph took their shoes off their feet as they entered the gates, and they prostrated themselves before Joseph as before a Pharaoh, and, as they lay prostrate, they were spat upon, and put to shame before the Egyptians." (*Vengeance*)

The expression "by the life of Pharaoh" might have betrayed Joseph's real feeling to his brethren, had they but known his habit of taking this oath only when he meant to avoid keeping his word later.

They took an oath not to betray to his father or any human being what they had actually done with Joseph. He who violated the oath would be put to the sword by the rest. (*Deceit*)

He then looked upon the astrolabe, and to his great astonishment he discovered by the aid of it that he who was sitting upon the throne before him was his brother Joseph. Noticing Benjamin's amazement, Joseph asked him, "What hast thou seen, and why art

thou astonished?" Benjamin said, "I can see by this that Joseph my brother sitteth here before me upon the throne." (Superstition, divination and magic)

Then Joseph reflected, saying to himself: "My brethren are as pious as aforetime, and they speak no lies. They said I was dead, because when they abandoned me, I was poor, and 'a poor man is like unto a dead man;' they stood beside my grave, that is the pit into which they cast me; but they did not say that they had shovelled earth upon me, for that would have been a falsehood."

Turning to his brethren, he said: "Ye lie when ye say that your brother is dead. He is not dead. You sold him, and I did buy him. I shall call him, and set him before your eyes," and he began to call, "Joseph, son of Jacob, come hither! Joseph, son of Jacob, come hither! Speak to thy brethren who did sell thee." (*Cheating and Lying*)

The bible says: There was no food, however, in the whole region because the famine was severe; both Egypt and Canaan wasted away because of the famine.¹⁴ Joseph collected all the money that was to be found in Egypt and Canaan in payment for the grain they were buying, and he brought it to Pharaoh's palace.¹⁵ When the money of the people of Egypt and Canaan was gone, all Egypt came to Joseph and said, "Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? Our money is all gone."¹⁶ "Then bring your livestock," said Joseph. "I will sell you food in exchange for your livestock, since your money is gone."¹⁷ So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for their horses, their sheep and goats, their cattle and donkeys. And he brought them through that year with food in exchange for all their livestock.¹⁸ When that year was over, they came to him the following year and said, "We cannot hide from our lord the fact that since our money is gone and our livestock belongs to you, there is nothing left for our lord except our bodies and our land."¹⁹ Why should we perish before your eyes—we and our land as well? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be in bondage to Pharaoh. Give us seed so that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become desolate."²⁰ So Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh. The Egyptians, one and all, sold their fields, because the famine was too severe for them. The land became Pharaoh's,²¹ and Joseph reduced the people to servitude, from one end of Egypt to the other. (Genesis 47:13-21)

The people were soon left without means to purchase the corn they needed. In a short time they had to part with their cattle, and when the money thus secured was spent, they sold their land to Joseph, and even their persons. (*Cruel exploitation of the needy and hungry*)

The rest of the inhabitants of Egypt, who had to part with their land, were not permitted to remain in their native provinces. Joseph removed them from their own cities, and settled them in others. His purpose herein was to prevent the Egyptians from speaking of his brethren derogatorily as "exiles the sons of exiles"; he made them all equally aliens. (*Senseless cruelty*)

HOW MANY HEBREWS WENT TO EGYPT?

But in this I do not resemble my father, he had only himself to provide for, and my house consists of seventy souls, and therefore am I compelled to go down into Egypt. The blessing which my father gave me was not fulfilled in me, but in my son Joseph, whom peoples serve, and before whom nations bow down."

Then the Shekinah addressed Jacob, calling his name twice in token of love, and bidding him not to fear the Egyptian slavery foretold for the descendants of Abraham, for God would have pity upon the suffering of his children and deliver them from bondage. God furthermore said,

"I will go down into Egypt with thee," and the Shekinah accompanied Jacob thither, bringing the number of the company with which he entered Egypt up to seventy.

Now, if we count all his sons and grandsons that accompanied him to Egypt, as per the lists given in the Bible and the Talmud, their number comes to 69, and Jacob himself is the 70th. But what about women and girls? Do they not count? Do they not eat? Are they not human beings? According to the Talmud, every male of his family, including the one year old, was married, which means 69 wives of his children and grand children, plus his daughter Dinah, and a granddaughter (from Zebulun), and whoever of his four wives were surviving – 74 or 75 women and girls. So why do they keep talking about only 70 Hebrews entered Egypt, instead of 144 or 145?

Mythology and Contradictions about Asenath, the alleged wife of Joseph

Dinah bore her brother a son, and from her union with Shechem, the son of Hamor, sprang a daughter, Asenath by name, afterward the wife of Joseph. When this daughter was born to Dinah, her brethren, the sons of Jacob, wanted to kill her, that the finger of men might not point at the fruit of sin in their father's house. But Jacob took a piece of tin, inscribed the Holy Name upon it, and bound it about the neck of the girl, and he put her under a thornbush, and abandoned her there. An angel carried the babe down to Egypt, where Potiphar adopted her as his child, for his wife was barren. Years thereafter, when Joseph travelled through the land as viceroy, the maidens threw gifts at him, to make him turn his eyes in their direction and give them the opportunity of gazing upon his beauty. Asenath possessed nothing that would do as a present, therefore she took off the amulet suspended from her neck, and gave it to him. Thus Joseph became acquainted with her lineage, and he married her, seeing that she was not an Egyptian, but one connected with the house of Jacob through her mother...

The day on which Asenath was exposed, Potiphar went walking with his servants near the city wall, and they heard the voice of a child. At the captain's bidding they brought the baby to him, and when he read her history from the gold plate, he determined to adopt her. He took her home with him, and raised her as his daughter...

Asenath had saved Joseph's life while she was still an infant in arms. When Joseph was accused of immoral conduct by Potiphar's wife and the other women, and his master was on the point of having him hanged, Asenath approached her foster-father, and she assured him under oath that the charge against Joseph was false...

So both Joseph and Asenath were living in the same house of Potiphar. Even as a child, she knew that the charge against Joseph was false. When Joseph became viceroy, she had seen him and he had seen her and known her lineage. Now, in the first year of plenty, Joseph came to visit Potiphar. Before his arrival, he talks to Potiphar to marry her to Joseph.

But when he disclosed his plan to his daughter, she rejected it with indignation. "Why shouldst thou desire to see me united with a vagabond, a slave," she cried out, "one that does not even belong to our nation, but is the son of a Canaanitish herdsman, a fellow that attempted to violate the honor of his mistress, and in punishment for this misdemeanor was thrown into prison, to be liberated thence by Pharaoh for interpreting his dream? Nay, father, never will I become his wife. I am willing to marry the son of Pharaoh, the future ruler and king of Egypt."... then Standing by the window, she saw

Joseph pass, and she was so transported with his divine beauty and his indescribably noble carriage that she burst into tears ...

When Joseph sees her looking from the window, he objects and Potiphar explains:

Potiphar explained to Joseph that the maiden at the window was his virgin daughter, who never permitted men to abide near her; he was the first man she had ever looked upon. The father continued and made the request of Joseph, to allow his daughter to pay him her respects. Joseph granted the favor he desired, and Asenath appeared and greeted him with the words, "Peace be with thee, thou blessed of God Most High," whereunto Joseph returned the salutation, "Be thou blessed of the Lord, from whom flow all blessings."

Was she not his niece, who witnessed his innocence? Were both not aware of each other's lineage? Did they not live in the same house? Had they not ever seen each other before?

The appearance and the speech of Joseph made so deep an impression upon Asenath that no sooner had she reached her apartment than she divested herself of her robes of state and took off her jewels, and put on sackcloth instead, strewed ashes upon her head, and supplicated God amid tears to grant her pardon for her sins. In this manner she spent seven days and seven nights in her chamber. Not even her seven attendants were permitted to enter her presence during the time of her penance. The morning of the eighth day an angel appeared unto her, and bade her put away her sackcloth and ashes and array herself in state, for this day she had been born anew, he said, to eat the blessed bread of life, to drink of the cup of life immortal, and anoint herself with the oil of life eternal. Asenath was about to set food and drink before her guest, when she perceived a honeycomb of wondrous form and fragrance. The angel explained to her that it had been produced by the bees of Paradise, to serve as food for the angels and the elect of God. He took a small portion of it for himself, and the rest he put into Asenath's mouth, saying: "From this day forth thy body shall bloom like the eternal flowers in Paradise, thy bones shall wax fat like the cedars thereof, strength inexhaustible shall be thine, thy youth shall never fade, and thy beauty never perish, and thou shalt be like unto a metropolis surrounded by a wall." At the request of Asenath, the angel blessed also her seven attendants, with the words, "May the Lord bless you and make you to be seven pillars in the City of Refuge." Thereupon the angel left her, and she saw him ascend heavenward in a chariot of fire drawn by four steeds of fire. Now she knew that she had not been entertaining a human being, but an angel.

Is this any different from Greek or Roman mythology? Does any of this make sense?

MANASSEH -- THE ELDER SON OF JOSEPH

It happened in the first of the seven years of plenty that Joseph planned to visit the place in which Potiphar resided, and he sent word to him that he would put up with him, at his house. Potiphar was enchanted with the honor in prospect for him, and also with the opportunity it would afford him of bringing about a marriage between Asenath and Joseph.

Asenath at first refused, as discussed in the previous section, but then they married. So it can be assumed that the marriage happened towards the middle or the end of the first year of plenty.

According to the Bible: ⁵⁰ Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphara, priest of On. ⁵¹ Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh.

According to the Talmud: Asenath bore him two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, during the seven years of plenty, for in the time of famine Joseph refrained from all indulgence in the pleasures of life.

Let us give the maximum allowance and say that Manasseh was born early in the second year of plenty.

On the twenty-first day of the second month in the second of the seven years of famine, Jacob came down to Egypt, and his daughter-in-law Asenath visited him.

*Thus at that time, the maximum possible age of Manasseh when Jacob came to Egypt was: Six years of plenty+ two years of famine= **8 years** at the most. And in the first year of Famine, he could not have been more than **7 years old**.*

*Now read the following about what Manasseh did **when he was seven**, on the first visit of the brothers of Joseph:*

At the gates of the city of Egypt, the brethren of Joseph were asked what their names were, and the names of their father and grandfather. The guard on duty happened to be Manasseh, the son of Joseph.

The brethren of Joseph knew not that the viceroy of Egypt understood Hebrew, and could follow their words, for Manasseh stood and was an interpreter between them and him. *Did the brothers wonder how a seven year Egyptian learnt Hebrew?*

Joseph sent word to Pharaoh to let him have seventy of his valiant men, to aid him in arresting robbers. But when the seventy appeared upon the scene, and were about to lay hands on Simon, he uttered a loud cry, and his assailants fell to the floor and knocked out their teeth. Pharaoh's valiant men, as well as all the people that stood about Joseph, fled affrighted, only Joseph and his son Manasseh remained calm and unmoved. Manasseh rose up, dealt Simon a blow on the back of his neck, put manacles upon his hands and fetters upon his feet, and cast him into prison. Joseph's brethren were greatly amazed at the heroic strength of the youth, and Simon said, "This blow was not dealt by an Egyptian, but by one belonging to our house."

The following is what he accomplished when he was 8:

He ordered his son Manasseh, the steward of his house, to bring the men into the palace, and make ready a meal for them.

They were not yet far beyond the city gates, when Joseph dispatched Manasseh, the steward of his house, to follow after them, and look for the silver cup that he had concealed in Benjamin's sack.

Joseph bade his son Manasseh make haste and gather together all the inhabitants of Egypt, and all the valiant men, and let them come to him on horseback and afoot. ... In the meantime (*which was a matter of minutes when the arguments were still taking place*) Manasseh had assembled a great army, five hundred mounted men and ten thousand on foot, among them four hundred valiant heroes, who could fight without spear or sword, using only their strong, unarmed hands.

When Judah gave utterance to this threat, Joseph made a sign, and Manasseh stamped his foot on the ground so that the whole palace shook. Judah said, "Only one belonging to our family can stamp thus!" and intimidated by this display of great strength, he moderated his tone and manner.

When Judah heard this, he was exceedingly wroth, and he took a stone weighing four hundred shekels that was before him, cast it toward heaven with one hand, caught it with his left hand, then sat upon it, and the stone turned into dust. At the command of Joseph, Manasseh did likewise with another stone, and Joseph said to Judah: "Strength hath not been given to you alone, we also are powerful men.

At his behest, Manasseh laid his hand upon Judah's shoulder, and his touch allayed Judah's fury, for he noticed that he was in contact with a kinsman of his, because such strength existed in no other family.

(Are you wondering that when they kept realizing that these feats can be accomplished only by one of their kinsmen, why they could not recognize Joseph? Why were they stupefied when Joseph revealed his identity?)

Behold, I am Joseph your brother! "Their souls fled away from them, and they could make no answer, but God permitted a miracle to happen, and their souls came back to them. Joseph continued, ... "I speak with you in Hebrew, and I am truly your brother." But they would not believe him. ... Therefore Joseph bared his body and showed them that he belonged to the descendants of Abraham.

But the age of Manasseh should not be surprising in the light of the following:

Such was the manner of Jacob's arrival in Egypt. He came with his whole family ... All the males in his family were married men; even Pallu and Hezron, the latter of whom was but **one year old** at the time of their migration, and the former but **two years**, had the wives with them that had been chosen for them by their parents. In general, all the sons and grandsons of Jacob had married young, **some of them had been fathers at the age of seven.**

SOME OTHER EXAMPLES OF THE TALMUD MYTHOLOGY – WITHOUT COMMENTS

"Brethren, let us not slay him, but let us cast him into one of the dry pits, which our fathers dug without finding water." That was due to the providence of God; He had hindered the water from rising in them in order that Joseph's rescue might be accomplished, and the pits remained dry until Joseph was safe in the hands of the Ishmaelites.

Then Simon rose up, and with bared sword he sprang upon the Midianites, at the same time uttering a cry that made the earth reverberate. The Midianites fell down in great consternation, and he said: "I am Simon, the son of the Hebrew Jacob, who destroyed the city of Shechem alone and unaided, and together with my brethren I destroyed the cities of the Amorites. God do so and more also, if it be not true that all the Midianites, your brethren, united with all the Canaanite kings to fight with me, cannot hold out against me.

These aromatic substances were well suited to Joseph, whose body emitted a pleasant smell, so agreeable and pervasive that the road along which he travelled was redolent

thereof, and on his arrival in Egypt the perfume from his body spread over the whole land, and the royal princesses, following the sweet scent to trace its source, reached the place in which Joseph was. Even after his death the same fragrance was spread abroad by his bones, enabling Moses to distinguish Joseph's remains from all others, and keep the oath of the children of Israel, to inter them in the Holy Land.

In a little while Joseph's prophecy was confirmed: that year and the six following years were years of plenty, as he had foretold. The harvest was so ample that a single ear produced two heaps of grain, and Joseph made circumspect arrangements to provide abundantly for the years of famine.

(Arguing with Joseph, Judah¹⁹ said) "If I but utter a sound, death-dealing pestilence will stalk through the land as far as No. In this land Pharaoh is the first, and thou art the second after him, but in our land my father is the first, and I am the second. If thou wilt not comply with our demand, I will draw my sword, and hew thee down first, and then Pharaoh."

The other brethren withheld themselves intentionally from taking part in the dispute between Judah and Joseph, saying, "Kings are carrying on a dispute, and it is not seemly for us to interfere between them." Even the angels descended from heaven to earth to be spectators of the combat between Joseph the bull and Judah the lion, and they said, "It lies in the natural course of things that the bull should fear the lion, but here the two are engaged in equal, furious combat."

His outcry reached to a distance of four hundred parasangs, and when Hushim the son of Dan heard it in Canaan, he jumped into Egypt with a single leap and joined his voice with Judah's, and the whole land was on the point of collapsing from the great noise they produced. Joseph's valiant men lost their teeth, and the cities of Pithom and Raamses were destroyed, and they remained in ruins until the Israelites built them up again under taskmasters. Also Judah's brethren, who had kept quiet up to that moment, fell into a rage, and stamped on the ground with their feet until it looked as though deep furrows had been torn in it by a ploughshare. And Judah addressed his brethren, "Be brave, demean yourselves as men, and let each one of you show his heroism, for the circumstances demand that we do our best."

Then they resolved to destroy Mizraim, the city of Egypt, and Judah said, "I will raise my voice, and with it destroy Egypt."

Reuben: "I will raise my arm, and crush it out of existence."

Simon: "I will raise my hand, and lay waste its palaces."

Levi: "I will draw my sword, and slay the inhabitants of Egypt."

Issachar: "I will make the land like unto Sodom."

Zebulun: "Like unto Gomorrah will I render it."

Dan: "I will reduce it to a desert."

Then Judah's towering rage began to show signs of breaking out: his right eye shed tears of blood; the hair above his heart grew so stiff that it pierced and rent the five garments in which he was clothed (*It must have been freezing cold*); and he took brass rods, bit them with his teeth, and spat them out as fine powder. When Joseph observed these signs, fear befell him, and in order to show that he, too, was a man of extraordinary strength, he pushed with his foot against the marble pedestal upon which he sat, and it broke into splinters.

Judah: "If I pluck out a single hair from my body, I will fill the whole of Egypt with its blood."

...but Simon interposed, saying, "Let not this thing trouble you, I will go to the mount, and take up one huge stone from the mount, throw it over the whole of Mizraim, the city of Egypt, and kill all therein."

Judah, however, called to them, "Why are you terrified, seeing that God grants us His mercy?" He drew his sword, and uttered a wild cry, which threw all the people into consternation, and in their disordered flight many fell over each other and perished, and Judah and his brethren followed after the fleeing people as far as the house of Pharaoh. Returning to Joseph, Judah again broke out in loud roars, and the reverberations caused by his cries were so mighty that all the city walls in Egypt and in Goshen fell in ruins, the pregnant women brought forth untimely births, and Pharaoh was flung from his throne. Judah's cries were heard at a great distance, as far off as Succoth.

Abashed they stood there, and in their rage they desired to slay Joseph as the author of their shame and their suffering. But an angel appeared and flung them to the four corners of the house. Judah raised so loud an outcry that the walls of the city of Egypt tumbled down, the women brought forth untimely births, Joseph and Pharaoh both rolled down off their thrones, and Joseph's three hundred heroes lost their teeth, and their heads remained forever immobile, facing backward, as they had turned them to discover the cause of the tumult. Yet the brethren did not venture to approach close to Joseph, they were too greatly ashamed of their behavior toward their brother. He sought to calm them, saying, "Now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life."

Jacob rewarded her therefor with the words, "My daughter, may death never have power over thee, for thou didst revive my spirit." And so it was. Serah did not die, she entered Paradise alive.

Manasseh also shall become great, the judge Gideon shall descend from him, but his younger brother will be the ancestor of Joshua, who will bring the sun and the moon to a standstill, though they have dominion over the whole earth from end to end.

Who in their right mind would believe such nonsense?

REFERENCES & NOTES

- 1- Also spelled as Yousuf, Yousef, Yusef and Yusuf
- 2- Peace be upon him
- 3- Some chapters (Sūrah) of the Qur'ān start with alphabets such as these. At the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān, it was in vogue for celebrated poets and orators to use random letters of alphabet in their literary pieces. As the Qur'ān was to dazzle the Arabs in superbness of its style over every other literary work, Allaah SWT did not leave out any aspect of style from the Qur'ān that was in vogue at that time.
- 4- This is addressed to Arabs as the first addressees of the Qur'ān. It was then their job to make this guidance available to the whole world.
- 5- Jacob, Ya'qoob, Ya'qub or Yaqub
- 6- Ten half brothers of Yūsuf who were all older than he was.
- 7- Benjamin, Benyamin, Binyamin or Binyameen, Yūsuf's only full brother who was younger than him, and thus was the youngest of all the brothers.
- 8- Conjunction "and" indicates its preceding phrase is omitted as per the Qur'ānic Arabic style. The omitted part has been re-instated in the English rendering according to the full Arabic text given in verse 6.
- 9- An honorific title for a king's senior officer, like other official titles such as minister, governor, king or pharaoh. Here it is used for the officer who had bought Yūsuf and brought him to his home.
- 10- Ignorant in the Qur'ānic terminology are those people who behave ignorantly: without availing the guidance from Allaah SWT; whose emotions overtake their knowledge and reason; or who are blinded by their emotions.
- 11- 'Azeez and his fellow elites.
- 12- Apparently, they had asked for the ration for the half brother who could not come with them.
- 13- Word taken as granted in Arabic, and thus omitted, restored in English.
- 14- The parents, the brothers and their families
- 15- The word Faatir means the One Who created out of nothing by explosion, rupture or bursting open.
- 16- Those who asked the question
- 17- The Makkan chiefs
- 18- A honorific title for a king's senior officer, like other official titles such as minister, governor, king or pharaoh. Here it is used for the officer who had bought Yūsuf and brought him to his home.
- 19- This is the guy (Judah) who commits adultery with his widowed daughter in law (Tamar) who was posing as a prostitute and pledges some personal things in lieu of her remuneration. When her pregnancy becomes evident, he orders that she should be burnt alive for committing adultery. When she furnishes his pledged things as a proof that it was him who impregnated her, "God" declares all of them innocent.