بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Khutbah Surah Yusuf: dealing with grief and sadness

Today I would like to share with you, are some important life lessons for myself and for you that stem from surah Yusuf. Surah Yusuf enjoys a unique place in the Quran because as many of you know it's the one place in the Quran where almost the entire Surah is dedicated to a story in chronological order and there are a lot of things to learn in this Surah. And every bit of this Surah is important and when the ulema (scholars) talk about the fruits that you can get from the ayaat you can literally write a few phd thesis on the lessons and the counseling that comes out of this surah. But overwhelmingly there's one aspect of the surah that I never want you to forget. It's a surah that teaches you and me how to deal with sadness, how to deal with grief, how to deal with difficult situations in life. Allah az Zawjal essentially describes two characters in this surah that deal with a lot of sadness. On the one hand there's the father, Yaqub AS and on the other hand there's the son, Yusuf AS and they both suffer from a great deal of sadness throughout the narrative of the Surah.

The father is excessively in love with his son, and this love is expressed in a few words at the beginning of the Surah. You all know the story so I won't walk you through the surah, but there are some essential lessons and some aspects if how we should be thinking about Allah, especially when it comes to sadness, how we should be thinking of Allah az Zawjal, that's what we're going to focus on today.

You know, in the beginning when Yusuf AS came to his father and told him his dream, his father's first response was worried. He told him not to tell his dream to his brothers. And we learn this is part of the character and nature of Yaqub AS he, worries for his children. Many years later, his sons, who left Bin Yamin behind, and he is worried about what has happened to him, and they're about to go back into the city of Egypt. He's worried and says don't go into the city all together, go through different doors. Don't go in from one door, go in from different doors because he's worried. It was an economically tough time, we all know there was a famine at the time, so if you have 8 or 10 guys going with camels with them, which they're going to load up and take back, so they would become an easy target, and people would think that they're trying to stock up \*\*\* and people would keep an eye out for them and they would be targeted on the journey back, so he tells them to split up, and go through different doors, this is the benefit of him giving them good practical advice. \*\*\* even though he brings all his plans if the plan of Allah is otherwise his plans will not benefit them. Which leads me to an important point.

He told his son, don't tell this dream to your brothers they might plan against you, and we learn in this story that even though he didn't tell his brothers, because he listened to his father they still planned against him, didn't they? They planned against him anyway. What we are learning here is there are two plans going on: there's a human being's plan, a great human being, Yaqub AS, who has a wonderful relationship with Allah Az Zawjal, there's his plan, and then there is Allah's plan. Of course when you read the story all you see is there is Yaqub AS who is worried and there is the brother's plans, his sons, Yusuf's brothers. In reality there are our hopes, our plans and there are Allah's plans. Sometimes our hopes and our plans for the future are the same. So you really want to get that job, and Allah decides you will get that job. So Allah's plans and your plans are working together. But sometimes Allah decides that your plan is something else and his plan is something else. So you want to get that job and you want to move to that house and all the paperwork is going okay, everything has been approved, and last second they pull back, they don't want to give you the house. Because your plans were going a certain way but Allah had a different plan, do you understand? And when this happens, when we have everything planned out, and we have everything figured out, and things don't go our way, that's when sadness and grief, unexpected turns in our life, when they hit us. That is when a person goes into depression, the Quran's term is Yaoos, extremely depressed. When a nai'mah is taken away \*\*\* sad, overwhelmingly depressed. The only thing left after that is the next attribute Allah gives is yaoosun kafoor. He falls into disbelief. Why would Allah do this to me anyway? What's the point in believing in him? So first comes sadness and then it leads to disbeleif subhanAllah.

Well lets stick to the story. There are two names of Allah Az Zawjal which are mentioned in this Surah after some gaps. In the beginning when Yaqub AS heard the dream he realised this is no ordinary dream. He's a very intelligent man, he figured out this child is going to be a prophet so he already started congratulating Yusuf AS. Yaqub AS tells his son, this is how your master has chosen you and he will teach you all kinds of interpretation of speech. Keep that in mind, Allah will teach you to interpret all kinds of speech and he's going to complete his favor upon you. He goes on and on in this one ayaat about how Yusuf AS has a wonderful future, he's got an amazing future, but one part of that I don't want you to forget and that is that you're going to have the ability to interpret speech. He said something very powerful here and we'll see why. Yaqub AS obviously has a lot of hope for Yusuf AS.

You and I? Don't we have hopes for our children? We all have hopes for our children that they're going to do wonderful things in life. Our parents have hopes in us. Our parents place their hopes in us. Yaqub AS as a father naturally puts his hopes in this child and days you're going to have a wonderful future, but I don't know how it's going to play out so the end of the ayaat is, my master is knowledgeable.

I have hopes, but what's really going to happen only Allah knows. Hakim - he possesses all the wisdom. Whatever he plans will be full of wisdom, when you hear these words Aleem ul Hakeem, you know what they are here? They are words of hope. He hasn't experienced the future yet he's talking about the future and at the end of the ayaat he calls out two names of Allah, Allah is knowledgeable and Allah is wise. Yaqub AS trusts the knowledge and trusts the wisdom of Allah and has high hopes, because he's already seeing the potential. You know when you see a plant come out of the ground a little bit, if you're an experienced farmer, you can tell by the color of the plant that this is a good plant, I can tell. This one has potential.

This is what Yaqub AS sees. A bright future. Let me take you further into the Surah. These two names of Allah come up again. By the way these two names come up three times in the Surah. They come up three times, one in the beginning, Aleem ul Hakeem, and when they come in the beginning they are words of hope. \*\*\* the after some time Yusuf AS is taken away, he's been kidnapped and taken into child slavery, he's sold off in Egypt, now he's living in another household, all of that has happened, and then eventually he goes into prison, and even after that he's come out of prison, now there's a famine in the land, his brothers have ended up right in front of him, and they don't even recognize him, and he keeps (going fast forward in the story) Bin Yamin, he keeps his brother and watches the rest of them go back and now the second time in this Surah the brothers have gone with one of their siblings and they've come back without him. It's not the first time, it's the second time. And they're thinking how are we going to face dad, how are we going to tell dad this time, so they go before their father and they tell him and he doesn't want to hear it, because they said, "if you don't believe us, (because last time they lied pretty badly) ask the caravan!"  There are other passengers too, they saw it too, i know you don't trust us anymore, we don't have any credibility any more, but it's like Yaqub AS doesn't even want to hear it from them.

You guys whatever you did, somehow it was made easy for you. You guys made it easy for yourselves - anfusukum. Yourselves made it easy for you to do whatever you did. I don't know, maybe Allah will bring all of them back to me. He means Yusuf and Bin Yamin and the oldest brother because he stayed behind. He said I'm not coming until my father comes to get me. So three sons are gone now.

In the beginning he was suffering from the grief of one son he had lost, now he gets even worse news! That is three children are lost. And what does he say ... Inna rabbi Aleem un Hakeem.

Once again Allah knows, Allah knows and Allah is full of wisdom and before he said that he said maybe Allah will bring all of them back. Maybe Allah will bring all of them back and by the way when he used to keep saying that Yusuf will come back people started calling him crazy. And it wasn't just his sons that were called him crazy, later on in this Surah when he said I can tell, I can sense the wind of Yusuf (i.e. that has touched Yusuf AS) I can sense it, I can feel it. After he had gone blind, it wasn't his children that were taking care of him, somebody else in the crowd said, you're still on that old craziness? Old man come on get over it! Why are you still talking like this? Your son's gone! Forget him! It's been years now get over it already.

But he understood something about these words. Allah knows everything and Allah is fully wise. He knew something about these words. He knew that through these words you can also trust Allah. You know when someone has trouble, and they have trouble expressing their problems to their wife, or their husband, or their father, or their mother, when you have a communication problem, you see they don't understand what I'm going through, they don't know what I'm going through. By saying that Allah is all knowledgeable you have already acknowledged that Allah knows what I'm going through. Allah gets it. It's not alien to Allah what you and I are going through and whatever I'm going through is part of a plan, and that plan has no breaks, no problems in it, it is a plan full of wisdom.

Allah will bring them back, this must be part of the wisdom of Allah. The second time we hear these words, they are words of trust.

But the problem didn't get better, it got even worse. Now i want you to remember, the first time these words were said, who was listening? Yaqub AS was speaking, and Yusuf AS was listening, as a child. He was listening and at the end of that speech he heard two names of Allah, Aleem un Hakeem. Yusuf AS heard those names. I'm going to fast forward to the end of the story.

His brothers have come back, he is exposed now that he himself is Yusuf. He is Yusuf. The family has come back, the whole reunion has happened. He elevated both his parents on the throne, and he said to his dad, this is the interpretation of my dream! This is what it meant! So this is the second time that same dream is being discussed it was being discussed in the begining, and now it is being discussed towards the end.

My master is subtle in whatever he does. And guess what are the names that Yusuf AS mentions? When all of his problems in the world are solved,  now he's in the company of his family once again, it's an amazing family reunion, and he describes Allah Az Zawjal with the words Aleem un Hakeem.

It is as though he didn't forget the lesson his dad taught him as a child. His dad told him, when he heard his dream, that some thing really wonderful is going to happen with you, and Allah knows, and Allah is full of wisdom. And after all of this, if you look back at his life, I was kidnapped as a child, I was hated by my brothers, then I was taken by a bunch of criminals on a caravan that wanted to sell me off, then I was sold, basically as a slave in the house even though they kept me well, and eventually I had to deal with this psychotic woman that got me imprisoned, and the politicians figured it was the right thing to do, because it was too big of a scandal, all these politicians wives were involved in the scandal so they didn't want the bad media, so let's just keep him in prison until a little bit if time, until the scandal blows over, but you know politicians they forget the little people so they forgot, I was there for years and years and years and I interpreted a dream for a guy and said when you go out at least mention me but that guy forgets him too, he forgot about him too, and when he came back he didn't come back out if concern, but he was like 'Yusuf ya aiyuhal Sidiq!' As in help me out buddy I've got a dream you need to interpret. He wanted to use him at that time too.

He's gone through a lot of problems in life! But when he looks back at his life he says, oh no no no Allah knew what I was going through all along, and all of this was Allah's wisdom. SubhanAllah. But he added something. He added a name of something to what his father had taught him. His father had taught him Aleem un Hakeem, in the beginning of the Surah, he adds on another phrase, my master is subtle, unnoticed, when he does things, you don't even notice. You don't even realize Allah's plan is at work. The invisible hand of God they say in english. Allah is at work, Allah is planning, Allah is doing things for you and me all the time and as he's doing them, we don't even realize it.

There is one name of Allah mentioned in this Surah that is not mentioned in any other Surah. There is one name of Allah, one description if Allah in this Surah in this Surah in particlar that Allah does not mention anywhere else. As a noun, as an Ism, he doesn't mention it anywhere else. He says Allah will be dominant over his matters.

Let me tell you where this happens, this is incredible. This boy has just been taken away. Im a father of six children, and I live Texas. Texas in the south is notorious for kidnapping and all this kind of stuff, it's on the news, like horrific news all the time with children. I'm driving the other night and I see a big amber alert, kidnapped child, look for a red corolla, and what happens to a parent? First they get angry, what kind of animal would do this? And then you're looking at the highway where can I find the red corolla? You know, you can't even help yourself. How would anybody do that to a child? It makes you angry. You can't even imagine that happening in your own family. Allah protect all of our families.

When you hear even news like that it's so disturbing, and now imagine this boy has been kidnapped. Then he's taken, and you don't know what's happened to him, and now he's in the house of this minister, and pay attention to the language here, he settled down, Allah has given him stability for Yusuf, for the sake of Yusuf, in arabic they say makkana Yusuf, they don't use the laam

He settled Yusuf down, he settled down in the land, makkanna LI yusufa, we settled him down for his sake. Meaning all of this happened not against Yusuf, Allah says it happened FOR Yusuf. So think about that, no human being could look at what s happening to Yusuf AS and say that this is happening for the child. Everyone of us would say this is happening against the child. He says this is happening for Yusuf, and then he even explains why this is happening for Yusuf. So we can teach him the interpretation of speech. Now please listen, Allah says this all happened for the sake of Yusuf, why did it happen for the sake of Yusuf? So Allah could teach him the interpretation of all kinds of speech. Where did we hear those words before? In the beginning of the Surah when Yaqub AS heard the dream and said you, child, are special. Allah will teach you the interpretation of speech.

Now which school will he learn this from? Which university is he going to go to to learn the interpretation of speech? The institution from which he will learn is up to Allah. Allah decided he will learn in Egypt. Allah decided he will. I don't know how he's going to transfer to that university, I don't know that's Allah's plan, but he will transfer to that university, and he will go there and he will live in that house.

Allah will give him his dormitory too because the master brought him in, usually slaves are not treated with respect, but he walks in and tells his wife, sort out his place to stay, give him a decent room. Give him a respectable space to live. It also means a permanent long term space. It doesn't mean out him in this bed one day and out him in the garage the next day, then put him in the shed, it means put him in a permanent room, and make sure it's a respectable space. Who does that for a slave? Its part of Allah's plan, so he set him up.

But we still don't understand where is the interpretation of speech? Allah says he put him in Egypt, in that land, so he can learn. Why? He's in the house of a minister isn't he? What kinds of friends come to visit the minister? Other ministers, and what kind of things do they discuss? Policy matters, economic issues, big things and this boy who is cleaning the windows and mopping the floor is listening to this high level talk all the time. He's listening to this high level stuff and he's becoming really smart. Allah az Zawjal made sure this child had access to information that even no adult had access to, this child had access to it. This is part of Allah's plan.

So Allah az Zawjal teaches all of this, and he says Allah is dominant over all matters.

Don't for a second think that Allah left him. Why did Allah leave this child inside the well? Why would Allah let his brothers do that? Why would Allah let him get kidnapped? Why would Allah take him away from his lovely father? Allah didn't for a second leave him. Allah is dominant, Ghalib, over him in control completely, over every one of the things he did. Every one of the things he did was critical, even him going to jail was critical, if he had never been to jail he would never have come out as a minister. If he didn't come out as a minister, people would have starved to death. He saved hundreds of thousands of lives by going to jail for several years.

That's part of Allah's plan! If one thing doesn't happen the next thing doesn't happen, if the next thing doesn't happen the next thing doesn't happen. Allah is full of wisdom, all of it, even the brothers that committed the crimes against him, they didn't even know that they were part of Allah's plan. This is Yusuf AS's story, it teaches us something. So now we have four names of Allah as I wrap up this khutbah.

On the one hand Allah is dominant, I'll give you an easy example of Ghalib that you can understand. Those of you that work in offices, some of you have really annoying bosses. They're always watching over you. They're just standing behind your chair, what are you doing? And you constantly have to hit all tabs to get rid of the youtube video and pretend to work because they're standing right behind you, the overbearing boss is Ghalib, constantly watching over you. But is that boss watching over you with some kind if spy software? And he's in control, but doesn't let you feel like he's in control? That means he's Latif, he's subtle. He doesn't let you sense that he's there.

At the beginning of the Surah Allah was Ghalib, but at the end of the Surah Yusuf AS realises that he (Allah) was Ghalib all along, but he was so latif, so subtle. Allah has been so subtle in everything he did with him. Everything was part of a plan. But you know what? These two names of Allah, Allah is dominant, and Allah is subtle. Many people know Allah is powerful, Allah has control. But when they know of these two names they actually start complaining.

"Yes I know Allah controls everything, why did he have to do this to me? Why did I have to go through these problems? If allah controls everything why can't Allah help me again? Why did my family member have to die? Why did this have to happen, why did that have to happen? What have I ever done to deserve this?"

Understand this, an innocent child, a child ready for prophethood, Yusuf AS, if Allah can put him through difficulty, we cannot ask what did I do to deserve this? It's all part of Allah's plan, you can't ask why is Allah being so unfair to me, you can't say that. We know in every other case they say power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. We say that in every other case, but not in the case of Allah. In the case of Allah Allah is Ghalib, and Latif. But at the same time, what balances Allah's power in this Surah, is Allah is Aleem and Hakeem.

Allah knows and Allah is wise. In the beginning of the Sura before problems even hit, We turn to Allah and call him knowledgeable and wise, and we have hopes that he has great plans for us. When trouble hits, we call Allah knowledgeable and wise because no matter what is happening it is part of Allah's knowledge and his wisdom, we trust him. and when our problems are resolved, we look back and we say it helped us, we see how it benefited us in our iman, and it benefited us in some way and even if we don't understand it, Allah has some benefit in it for you. Allah had something in this for me.

And a young brother, who is dying terminally with cancer, seventeen years of age, very far from deen, seventeen years of age and doctors have told him he has six months to live and he started thinking about his life, and he decided whatever few minutes, whatever few days I have left, I will dedicate them to Allah. I'm going to try and remind other people about Allah, especially young people who think they have their whole life in front of them and feel like they can party as much as possible, i will remind them. I will be a reminder for them to come closer to Allah. So he started a Facebook page and started making these short little videos, thousand upon thousands upon thousands of followers, and he goes back six months later to the doctors and the doctors say actually you're fine now. Cancer's in remission.

Allah wanted good work out of him. Allah wanted some hard work out of him. If he hadn't heard that bad news he wouldn't have done it, he wouldn't have the energy, he wouldn't have the enthusiasm, he wouldn't have the spirit to serve the deen to help so many other people the way he did. Part of Allah's plan.

Even that kind of terrible news can be a part of Allah's plan. These are not just stories of people that died a long time ago, these stories are alive in our lives. We learn about Allah az Zawjal in these stories. We learn how to think about Allah in these stories. May Allah give us the ability to cope with our problems in a healthy way. And may he help us to learn from these tremendous lessons that he has revealed upon us and incidentally these are stories that Allah told Muhammad SAW in what is called Amin Husn, the year of grief. His beloved wife has passed away, his uncle who has supported him all this time has passed away. All these problems are combined upon him all on top of one another. Its a very very tough time in the prophet SAW's seerah, and Allah says, you think you have problems, let me tell you about this boy and he reveals to him Surah Yusuf so he can remain in task, and he can cope. If the messenger SAW is being given counsel through Surah Yusuf, you can definitely get something from it.