

Ali Zayn al-Abidin  
bin Abdul-Rahman al-Jifri

# I DO NOT ABSOLVE MYSELF



*I do not Absolve Myself*



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*Ali Zayn al-Abidin  
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**In the name of Allah, Most Compassionate,  
Ever-Merciful**

This book was originally a talk at the Sheikh Muhammad bin Khalid Al Nahyan Cultural Center in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates

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All praise be to Allah, the Generous, the Bestower, the Eternally Beneficent, the Most Compassionate, the Ever-Merciful, Who created the human being and taught him to communicate.

I bear witness that there is no god but Allah alone; no partner has He; a witnessing whose lights firmly establish the realities of faith in our hearts and by which we ascend in the degrees of Islam, Iman (faith) and Ih-san (spiritual excellence). I bear witness that our master and patron Muhammad is His servant and messenger, the Chosen One from Adnan and the noblest human being. Allah the Exalted has been gracious to creation, past and present, through him. Prayers, peace and blessings be upon him and upon his family, companions and those who follow them well.

It is from the wondrous, beautiful planning of Allah this blessed night with this noble assembly that when "I do not absolve my self" was chosen as the title for this talk, the arrangement was for the talk to be at the Sheikh Muhammad bin Khalid Center, and it was to be for women. Thereafter, when a group of men repeatedly requested to have the opportunity to attend, it was set up so they could come too. I reflected on the title. What came to mind was to connect hearts to a lesson from what transpired in the story of Zulaykha, the governor's wife. In Allah's Book, we read this statement by her: {I do not absolve my [own carnal] self, for man's very self incites him to evil.} [Yusuf:53]

## Differences Between People of Knowledge Are a Door to Vast Comprehension

When Allah facilitated this talk to be for both men and women, I recalled that the scholars had different opinions regarding the attribution of this utterance. A group of the people of exegesis opined that the utterance was on the tongue of our master Joseph when Allah manifested the truth and his innocence. They reported narrations to support this. Another group, who looked with some depth at the sequence of what the verses relate, opined that the one who said this statement was Zulaykha.

Men and women have attended this assembly. Thus, both opinions have come together. The utterance, as some scholars and a group of people of exegesis mentioned, came from the tongue of a man: our master Joseph. The other opinion is that it came from the tongue of a woman: Zulaykha. In these different opinions about the utterance a vast door to comprehension is opened to us by Allah to understand our duty towards ourselves so that the world we live in is a right state.

## Confusion Is Caused by Our Whims

*A*t the beginning, we should note that differences in opinions between scholars (may Allah the Exalted have mercy upon them) is not something bad or negative for the ummah at all. What is bad lies in the narrow understanding of some who read the words of the scholars and take a fringe opinion and ascribe all truth to that opinion and do not accept any other opinion. Or what is bad is when one picks and chooses out of the differing opinions what his lower self<sup>1</sup> fancies to concoct a path that suits his whims and base desires. He thus worships Allah in a state of deceiving himself. Allah the Exalted's refuge is sought from that!

There is no mistake or shortcoming in the scholars having different opinions or understandings. The mistake occurs in the manner of listening or perusing, either by capricious fanaticism to one opinion or flip-pantly fabricating opinions by whim. If you ponder this meaning, you will realize the danger of whims when they come upon and overcome a person. And you will realize the importance of this title: {I do not absolve my [own carnal] self.} [Yusuf:53]

The confusion in the ummah today with regards to its connection to the sacred texts of Allah's Book and the sunna of His Beloved (peace and blessings be upon him) does not stem from the texts, those who conveyed them or the scholars who spoke about

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1. The human being is composed of five parts: the spirit, the intellect, the self, the heart and the body. The self is the repository of a person's base inclinations; the hiding place of a person's desires, emotions and reactions; greed, lust, anger... A person's whims lie in the self.

them. Rather, the confusing is caused by the whims of those contemplating the texts and comprehending them. When a person's whims overcome his lower self and take possession of it, he veers from truth towards falsehood. If we are truly cognizant of this meaning, we can delve into the aim of this night and this gathering...

## The Beginning of the Story

It is related that Zulaykha was a daughter of kings from the Maghreb. She was more beautiful than any other woman of her time. Eminent men committed to proposing to her. In her dreams she saw someone that her heart became attached to. She heard someone say, "This is your husband." So she was kindled with love. In the dream she was told that it was the governor of Egypt. Therefore, she rejected everyone who came courting, until one day the governor of Egypt—who was, as some exegetes related, impotent<sup>2</sup>—approached her. Zulaykha was told, "The governor of Egypt is asking for your hand in marriage," so she agreed and was married to him. When she found him not to be the one she saw in her dream, she concealed her grief, agitation and anger. Days and nights passed while she was in the governor's house drinking the bitterness of her grief because he wasn't the one she wanted. And he wasn't suitable for being a husband. Days passed while she occupied herself with wealth, clothes, beauty treatments, perfume and various

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2. *Tafsir al-Baghawi* (Dar Ihya at-Turath al-Arabi), 2/498. *Tafsir al-Qurtubi* (Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyya), 9/160.

amusements that women at home were accustomed to. She kept mum, so no one knew her state except Allah.

Meanwhile, our master Jacob (upon our Prophet and upon him be the best prayers and peace) had sons. Among them was our master Joseph and his full brother Benjamin. Our master Joseph occupied a great place in his father's heart. When his brothers saw their father's inclination towards him, their lower selves stirred. Out of envy, they found it unbearable for Joseph's standing to be higher than theirs.

## A Pause for Reflection

*L*et us stop and consider for a moment, trouble always begins when people's lower selves play tricks on them. The governor's wife's self was inclined to the one she saw in her dream. The governor of Egypt's self was inclined to marry a beautiful woman even though he was impotent. He pursued his self's desire. And we see this too with Joseph's brothers.

## A Return to the Story

*T*he ruse that you know of occurred. Joseph's brothers asked their father's permission to take Joseph with them to play, for he was young. By the inner sight that Allah had given him, their father alluded to them: {[Jacob] replied, 'The thought of you taking him away with you worries me: I am afraid a wolf may eat him'} [Yusuf:13]. They said that a wolf wouldn't eat him when there were so many of them. They implored him until he gave them permission.

They had intended to kill him. One of the brothers interposed when he heard them plotting. Plotting is an affair of lower selves. He said, "If you must do this, then don't kill him. Throw him in a well instead." So they took him and threw him in the well. When they returned to their father, {They said, 'Father! We went off racing one another, leaving Joseph behind with our things, and a wolf ate him. You will not believe us, though we are telling the truth!' And they showed him his shirt, deceptively stained with blood. He cried, 'No! Your souls have prompted you to do wrong! But it is best to be patient: from God alone I seek help to bear what you are saying'} [Yusuf:17-18]. And this is an act of the lower selves.

Ruse.

Slyness.

Deceit.

These are the fruits whose bitterness we drink today and, the results from the effects of our lower selves playing with us we reap hereafter. These acts are ugliest when plied by someone who is affiliated with a religion or has great knowledge, rank, or trust and responsibility in life.

Days passed. Some travellers came by the well. One of them let down his bucket to draw water and removed Joseph. They took him and sold him. Our master Joseph, who was in the prime of his youth, arrived in Egypt by Allah the Exalted's planning. He was taken to the governor's house, and when the governor's wife saw Joseph, she remembered what she saw in her dream. She was annoyed and discontent with her present state. Her husband was not suitable for her

and seeing our master Joseph and his dazzling beauty compounded her distress. When he came of age, which was the age of thirty-three, Zulaykha was in a state of commotion and her heart was attached to him.

Here another meaning of the play of the lower self emerged when it is attached to something or desires something.

## Whims

The scholars defined whims as the self's inclination to something. The most dangerous thing that can carry a person away from his connection with his Lord and good upholding of his duties in life is his whims and fancies.

*When whims become empowered, they either destroy or defile.*

## Distinction Is a Trial

Distinctions are some of Allah's trials. This is something we should reflect on.

The diverse and manifold appearances of distinction in this world, be it wealth, beauty, intelligence, etc., are trials that Allah directs to the one He distinguishes and those around him who interact with him.

The presence of wealth is a trial from Allah by which He tests a person to see how he will administer it. And it is a trial for those around the person. So it is a trial for the person's self. Will the person play with this wealth and do with it as he wishes without connection to obeying the command of the One who gave

it? Or will the wealthy person sense the greatness of the connection to the Real One and know the right of this distinction that it was entrusted with, and fulfill Allah's right regarding his wealth?

Wealth is a trial even for those around the rich person. Will their selves tremble in envy, rancor and discontent from seeing this distinction? Or will their selves drop and fall when interacting with the possessor of the wealth to attain a share of his wealth? Thus, it is a trial for both of them.

Trials, on the whole, are for the one distinguished and for those around him. It is a trial for the society he lives in. Wealth, beauty, esteem, standing, job, rank, intelligence, understanding, knowledge, all of these are appearances of distinction. Reflect that they are appearances! In other words, they are not true distinctions. True distinction is only what is brought forth from the self's interaction with the appearance of distinction. If a person interacts well with the appearance of distinction that he has been entrusted with, this good interaction will be a cause for his attaining true distinction and its fruit. True distinction is bound to Allah's pleasure.

There is a lesson for those who reflect on what arose from Adam's creation (peace be upon him) and the mix of positive and negative fruits that appeared from that story.

When Allah brought Adam (peace be upon him) into being and commanded the angels to prostrate to him, He manifested a distinction for a new creation. Adam's merit did not appear by lots of worship or perfection of deeds by him. Rather, merely upon the



completion of his creation and the emission of life in him, it was said to the angels, "Prostrate!" They knew nothing of the distinction that Allah had distinguished Adam with. They were but commanded to prostrate.

However, since the angels did not have lower selves that incline, desire or incite to evil, the matter was easy for them. They prostrated without hesitation. They obeyed Allah's command and so attained a share of this distinction. Every excellent interaction with an appearance of distinction avails the one who interacted excellently, even if the possessor of the distinction may not benefit.

Iblis (Satan) was a self that inwardly purely incites to evil, though his outward appearance was beautified by lots of worship, so much so that it was said there was nowhere on earth that Iblis hadn't prostrated himself to Allah the Exalted; his worship, though was outward only. He did not sense its reality. Iblis had been given an appearance of distinction in that he was entered in the group of angels, he ascended to the rank of those drawn near and he was named Peacock of the Angels.

When the angels were given the distinction of proximity to Allah the Exalted and tasted the sweetness of this appearance of distinction, it was a reality for them. So when they were commanded, they obeyed and were firm in their proximity to Allah. As for Iblis, when his lower self contained envy, he did not prostrate.

## The Source of All Diseases

The source of incitation to evil in every soul is three diseases: envy, arrogance and conceit. These three diseases of the heart are the sources of whims that influence people to err or go astray.

Conceit: Seeing a blessing or good deed as coming from one's own self rather than seeing Allah granting one the enabling grace.

The fruit of conceit is the setting in of envy.

Envy: To find it hard to see a blessing with someone else.

The fruit of envy with conceit is the setting in of arrogance.

Arrogance: Haughtiness, deeming oneself above others and having contempt for them.

These diseases are impermissible for anyone in creation, whoever it may be. It is impermissible for you to elevate yourself over any creation, whether due to this world or due to religion. It is evident why you should not elevate yourself because of the things of the world because this world is not a measure of distinction. Allah gives it to those He loves and those He does not love. You should not elevate yourself because of religious appearance because if religion truly settled in the heart, it would fill the heart with humbleness, good etiquette, submission and brokenness for Allah. Thus, if the heart has not actualized the religion, the heart is empty of this fruit, and it becomes proud. People's endings are unknown. No matter how upright one of us may be, and no matter

how righteous his state with Allah may be, he does not know what condition his ending will be. A hadith says: "A man may do deeds of the people of the Fire till there is only a cubit between him and the Fire, but then what has been written for him precedes, and he does the deeds of the people of Paradise and enters it; and a man may do the deeds of the people of Paradise till there is only a cubit between him and Paradise, but then what has been written for him precedes and he does the deeds of the people of the Fire and enters it."<sup>3</sup> So the matter of endings is unknown. And this is what robbed the truthful and the righteous gnostics of sleep. Iblis was commanded to prostrate. He was proud and refused. First, conceit was triggered in the self: {'I am better than him: You made me from fire, and him from clay'} [Sad:76].

Then envy stirred in his heart: {'Should I prostrate to someone You have created out of clay?'} [al-Isra:61]. Who is this new creation in whom we haven't seen any distinction? And now he is given precedence over me, and I am ordered to prostrate and be submissive to him? And I am the one who left no handspan on earth except that I prostrated on it.

From conceit and envy emerged arrogance: {'I'}.

When Iblis was censured, instead of apologizing, he persisted. When he was banished, instead of repenting, weeping and seeking forgiveness, he said: {I swear by Your might! I will mislead them all} [Sad:82].

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3 *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Hadith 3208.

So in ugly opposition to his Lord he challenged Him, because he lived in absolution of his self without purifying it.

Our father Adam (peace be upon him) was brought into being and made to enter paradise, not to remain there forever from the get-go, but he entered paradise to be prepared, so we understand this lesson behind what Allah the Exalted decreed. He was commanded not to eat of the tree. Satan caused him and his wife to eat from the tree and they thereafter left paradise. When he and his wife left paradise, he sensed regret over laxity and blamed himself, repented, wept, turned to Allah the Exalted and confessed and asked for his Lord's pardon, so He pardoned him and accepted his repentance. However, Iblis refused to repent.

This matter happened among Adam's offspring thereafter. The story of Abel and Cain occurred. And matters followed in succession until we came to Joseph and Zulaykha.

When Zulaykha gazed at Joseph, she saw the beauty he was distinguished with, and she was dead set on him. An opportunity came to her where her husband was absent. She bolted the doors and called him to herself. Allah protected him, and he refused. When he refused falsehood and wanted to leave, she grabbed his clothes until she tore his shirt. Suddenly the governor of Egypt came. When he saw the scene, it terrified him, and she wanted to absolve herself.

Consider that. She wanted to absolve herself.

If a person is deprived of Divine grace to question his or her self so as to refine it, and instead strives in life to absolve his or her lower self in order to put on appearances, he or she is then capable of great crimes.

So do not be astonished when you see crimes that are committed today in the world at the individual, public or national level. The beginning of every crime in existence returns to the individual and to the person's self.

When this woman felt she would be exposed, she began to incite her husband against our master Joseph and appeal for assistance against him. {She said, 'What, other than prison or painful punishment, should be the reward of someone who tried to dishonour your wife?'} [Yusuf:25]

She began to goad him to imprison Joseph, and she wanted him to be whipped. Our master Joseph spoke truthfully. The words of a person true to Allah have the serenity of truthfulness, even if he has been wronged. This too is a lesson for us as individuals, and a lesson for us as an ummah. If we are wronged, we should repel evil as is permitted for us. We should not make the wrongs of others justification for us to do wrong.

Our master Joseph (peace be upon him) responded: {"It was she who tried to seduce me that I may not guard myself"} [Yusuf:26]. He absolved himself with the truth. So Allah manifested his truthfulness with the utterance of a witness from her household, said to be a baby.

## Babies Who Spoke in the Cradle

The baby in the story of Jurayj, the monk; the infant from the Israelites whose mother was nursing him when he saw a woman being accused of adultery despite her innocence; the baby who said to his mother, "Throw yourself in the fire" in the event of Ukhdud (the trench); and our master Jesus Christ who is their master (peace be upon him).<sup>4</sup>

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4. Abu Hurayra narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: None spoke in cradle but three: [The first was] Jesus. [Then there was] a man from Bani Israel called Jurayj. While he was offering his prayers, his mother came and called him. He said [to himself], "Shall I answer her or keep on praying?" [He went on praying] and did not answer her. His mother said, "O Allah! Do not let him die till he sees the faces of prostitutes." So while Jurayj was in his hermitage, a lady came and sought to seduce him, but he refused. So she went to a shepherd and presented herself to him to commit illegal sexual intercourse with her and then later she gave birth to a child and claimed that it belonged to Jurayj. The people, therefore, came to him and dismantled his hermitage and expelled him out of it and abused him. Jurayj performed ablution and offered prayer, and then came to the child and said, "Who is your father, O child?" The child replied, "The shepherd." [After hearing this] the people said, "We shall rebuild your hermitage out of gold." But he said, "No, of nothing but mud." [Then there was] a lady from Bani Israel who was nursing her child at her breast when a handsome rider passed by her. She said, "O Allah! Make my child like him." At that the child left her breast, and facing the rider said, "O Allah! Do not make me like him." The child then started to suck her breast again. [Abu Huraira further said, "As if I were now looking at the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) sucking his finger [illustrating the scene.]" After a while the people passed by with a lady slave, and [the child's mother] said, "O Allah! Do not make my child like this [slave girl]!" At that the child left her breast and said, "O Allah! Make me like her." When she asked why, the child replied, "The rider is one of the tyrants; and they were saying about this slave girl, 'You committed fornication; you committed theft,' when she had not." [Narrated by Bukhari. Hadith 3436]. And in the hadith of the people of the trench:

The king commanded that trenches be dug at important points in the path and fire lit in them and said: "He who would not turn back from [the young boy's] religion, throw him in the fire" or it would be said to

And the scholars mentioned this baby who was from Zulaykha's household. {A member of her household bore witness, saying: 'If his shirt is torn at the front, then it is she who is telling the truth and he who is lying, but if it is torn at the back, then she is lying and he is telling the truth.'} [Yusuf:26,27]. The baby uttered a statement, which is a miracle, but the statement also appeals to the intellect. This is so that we comprehend that our religion addresses hearts and intellects. Had this baby said that it was Zulaykha who tried to seduce Joseph, the matter would be settled, because it would be a miracle. However, miracles in our religion are distinct in that they do not render the human intellect ineffectual. The baby established rational proof by differentiating between the shirt being torn at the front or the back. He tied the matter to logic. Joseph's innocence manifested. Since the governor knew himself to be impotent, and that the mistake began from himself, he was not harsh, but rather was content to give advice.

Days passed, news leaked and the women of the city talked. They blamed the governor's wife for trying to seduce her slave-boy. So Zulaykha's lower self stirred.

All those who don't question themselves regarding what is between them and Allah in matters of their lives stumble, whether they perceive it or not.

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them to jump into it. They did so till a woman came with her child. She felt hesitant in jumping into the fire. The child said to her: "O mother! Endure [this ordeal] for you are on the Truth." [Muslim reported it in his Sahih. Hadith 3005].

One who does not become acquainted with his lower self's faults in order to strive to purify it lives in the delusion of absolution of the self. He labors for this—even if he harms others, takes their rights and commits aggression against them; even if he abases himself through lies or other inappropriate acts. He does not give a care in all of that.

Zulaykha gathered the women to absolve herself before them regarding what she did. She prepared a banquet for them, giving each of them a knife and a fruit. Some say it was an apple. Some say it was a citrus fruit, which has a pleasant smell and taste. The Prophet likened the believer who reads the Quran to the citrus fruit.<sup>5</sup> When the women took the knives and fruit, she beckoned Joseph to enter. When Joseph entered, his beauty took their breath away and captivated them. They began to cut this fruit. They went beyond it until they cut their hands and blood flowed from them, but they felt no pain due to the dazzling splendor of our master Joseph that gripped them.

## A Subtle Observation

Some knowers of Allah said when Zulaykha's love for Joseph was linked to the self's base desire and was not a pure, lofty love for beauty, she

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5. Abu Musa al-Ash'ari said that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said, «The example of a believer who recites the Quran is like that of a citron whose fragrance is nice and whose taste is nice. And the example of a believer who does not recite the Quran is like a date which has no fragrance but has a sweet taste. And the example of a hypocrite who recites the Quran is like basil whose fragrance is nice, but whose taste is bitter. And the example of a hypocrite who does not recite the Quran is like the colocynth which has no fragrance and has a bitter taste.» [*Sahih al-Bukhari*. Hadith 5427].



directed harm to the one she claimed to love and didn't care about harming him. Her connection to him was one of base desire and not one of ascension in understanding beauty. Pure, lofty love of beauty has its considerations. When the women at the banquet looked at Joseph, however, their looks weren't of a base desire but an appreciation of beauty. Their love was lofty. So they preferred to harm themselves to see the beloved. When Zulaykha's love was linked to the lower self's portion, she harmed the beloved when disturbance arose. The women's love didn't have a portion in the lower self, so they harmed themselves rather than harm the beloved. Such are the portions of the self when they arise in all affairs of life.

When Zulaykha saw her victory over the women and felt her argument was victorious, the intoxication of her lower self, which wanted to absolve her, took hold of her. So she openly showed her persistence in falsehood. Everyone who believes they are pure and absolved without any legitimate claim, and feels distinction and power over people, has exceeded proper bounds. This is true of everyone.

Thus she announced, "This is the one you blamed me for." She then disclosed: {If he does not do what I command now, he will be put in prison and degraded} [Yusuf:32]. A threat of imprisonment. What was the reason? The self's sense of its distinction and the delusion of establishing an argument for herself before the women when she had no argument and her quest was false.

Our master Joseph sensed this trial that surrounded him, so he turned to his Lord. There is a big differ-

ence between one who turns to the creation seeking to absolve his self and one who turns to the Creator seeking absolution of his self. He preferred prison and said it was dearer to him than what the women sought of him, even though only one woman was soliciting him. However, in the situation he saw this woman's self-confidence in the falsehood and evil she sought. The governor thought it best to cut the talk that had leaked in his society and silence the voices. So he imprisoned our master Joseph.

### **Joseph (Peace Be upon Him) in Prison**

*He* entered the prison and remained there for some time. Allah the Exalted granted him wisdom and prophethood, and He gave him interpretation of dreams and great understanding. Then occurred the well-known story of his interpretation of dreams of his two companions: the king's cupbearer and the presenter of his food. Joseph confirmed the king's cupbearer's innocence and gave him good news of his return to serving the king. He told the other that he would be killed. {Joseph said to the one he knew would be saved, 'Mention me to your master,' but Satan made him forget to do this} [Yusuf:42].

Some exegetes said Satan made our master Joseph forget to remind his lord, and that is why he sought that. This is not a common opinion because our master Joseph had attained the rank of prophethood. What is more fitting such a perfect rank is that Satan made that server of drink forget his master, forget to request the freeing of our master Joseph from

the king he worked for. The forgetfulness being from him is strengthened by the Exalted One's saying {but the prisoner who had been freed at last remembered [Joseph]}. Years had passed. It is said seven years or even more.<sup>6</sup>

Then the king had a dream of seven green ears of corn and seven withered ones, and seven lean cows and seven fat ones. Who could interpret this dream? Those around him were incapable, for Allah brings to pass what He wants. Some of the king's soothsayers, companions or wiseacres could have possibly contrived any interpretation and the matter would have concluded. Many are those who fabricate answers when they are questioned so that they don't lose their standing with others -- Allah's refuge is sought!-- which is an affair of the lower self. However, the king's retinue confessed ignorance. The cupbearer then remembered our master Joseph and sought his removal from prison. So he was removed. And he interpreted the dream. He attained standing with the king, who gave him a position. At the time the king appointed him the governor died. So he occupied the place of the governor too. Our master Joseph was raised up with Allah's care. He saw the interaction of lower selves around him, beginning with his brothers, passing by those who took him and sold him without right, and then what transpired in the governor's house, then in prison, and then what happened from those for whom he interpreted the dreams.

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6. Look at the opinions in *Tafsir at-Tabari* (Dar Hijr), 13/172 and *Tafsir al-Qurtubi* (Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyya), 9/195.

## The Gravity of Lying about Dreams

It is said that the two men lied about their dreams. But when they said, "We didn't see anything. We were only jesting," he replied: {The matter about which you inquired has already been decided.}<sup>7</sup> Thus it is repugnant for a person to lie about a dream. "Of the worst lies are to pretend to have seen what one has not seen."<sup>8</sup> "Whoever claims to have seen a dream which he did not see will be ordered to make a knot between two barley grains which he will not be able to do."<sup>9</sup>

All the injustice that happened to Joseph and thereafter being forgotten in prison for years are the affairs of the lower self. Our master Joseph stood with the king who asked him about what happened to those women. Zulaykha was summoned. She saw the situation before her. When she saw that Allah had strengthened Joseph and what had befallen her, such as the death of the governor and the cessation of her splendid connection to the kingdom, she felt brokenness, which is the cure for the diseases of our lower selves, O people of faith! Our lower selves exceed proper bounds by the darkness of self-sufficiency. {Man exceeds all bounds when he thinks he is self-sufficient.} Its treatment: the attainment of brokenness for the Real One. Commensurate with the brokenness in selves and humility for Allah the Exalted, a person is able to see and is inspired with insight to know where his mistake is. It becomes easy for him to re-

7. *Tafsir at-Tabari* (Dar Hijr), 13/167.

8. *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Hadith 7043.

9. *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Hadith 7042.

turn to Allah. So she said: {'Now the truth is out: it was I who tried to seduce him.'} In the moment where she showed her departure from claiming absolution of herself, in the moment where the perfect truthfulness of our master Joseph appeared, the two matters met. So the saying {I do not absolve my [own carnal] self} emerged.

According to the understanding that these are the words of our master Joseph, it is a lesson for us to learn that even if others have erred towards us, if the truth comes to light and it returns to us and Allah comes to our aid, we should not give our lower self what it desires. Thus the scholars said that it is wrong regarding one's connection to Allah that when one is wronged and Allah takes revenge on the oppressor for one to feel elated. "Look, glory be to Allah! Allah did not leave anyone. The person wronged me. Look at how Allah showed me his punishment. Glory be to Allah!" This is not "Glory be to Allah!" This is an appearance of "Glory be to Allah!" while inwardly it is "Glory be to my lower self!" Allah's refuge is sought! What is the meaning of "Glory be to my lower self!"? I.e. I am something that is entitled... I am something big. Thus when the person wronged me, a calamity occurred to him because I am to be respected... This is the falsehood that we should never fall into. Thus, according to the opinion of attributing it to our master Joseph (peace be upon him), the words came immediately. When she acknowledged the truth, our master Joseph also acknowledged to his Lord: {I do not absolve myself, for man's very self incites him to evil.} It is a lesson we should comprehend.

As for the opinion that Zulaykha is the speaker, then the words are clear in that if a believer acknowledges wrongdoing, he should not search for someone else to shift the blame to. When someone wanting to absolve themselves acknowledges their wrongdoing, he says, "Yes, I did wrong, but so-and-so is the one who did this and that to me. And the reason is the circumstances that I went through. And the reason I did it is such and such and because so-and-so spoke ill of me. He is the one who roused me. When he oppressed me, I had no choice. And the salary was too small. That's why I accepted a bribe." He searches for excuses to justify himself. This is a false way. That person will not be purified until he leaves this way. Although Zulaykha had a form of excuse, it wasn't a perfect excuse. A mistake is a mistake. However, she did have a form of excuse. She was attached to Joseph by the dream that she would see. And she was wronged by a man who could not give her her right to intimacy. She could have said, "Now the truth is out: it was I who tried to seduce him. But I am also wronged. My husband was unable to approach women. He would not give me what I needed. He could not satisfy me. I was wronged. I saw Joseph and I was taken by surprise that he was the one I saw in my dream." She has a right to excuse herself. However, when the lights of truth are in the heart, a person rises above the level of searching for excuses for his lower self and absolving it, to the level of turning the matter to Allah, acknowledgment of wrongdoing and brokenness. Thus she said: {I do not absolve myself, for man's very self incites him to evil.}

## The Fruit

So what was the fruit?

The lights of faith shone on Zulaykha's heart. She had been only content with the lower world, but in the end she attained the good of the hereafter of which she had been heedless.

And what happened to our master Joseph?

The world came in submission to him.

Reflect on this wonderful meaning! She was attached to the lower world and her base desires even to the point of committing injustice, deceit and contraventions. She turned away from Allah and had not tasted the sweetness of connection to Him, the Exalted. When she was truthful with Allah the Exalted, He gave her the thing she had been deprived of. She attained Allah's pleasure, proximity to Him and the sweet taste of faith. Likewise, when our master Joseph (peace be upon him) did not absolve himself --and he was truthful in his connection to his Lord-- he was given the world that had so often been inaccessible to him. He had been wronged and was denied his right in the world. So the world came to him, under his feet, and he became the governor of Egypt and occupied a great rank in the kingdom. And the two matters met. The king married our master Joseph to this lady after her husband died. Days passed after our master Joseph married her. It is said that he married her and found her a virgin. So her dream came to pass, for he was the governor at that time.

When the lady tasted the sweetness of connection to Allah, her heart became intimate with Allah. Her soul tasted the sweetness of connection from Allah and intimate entreaty of Him during night vigil and she was given the cup of connection to drink. Imam Ghazzali mentioned the story of her state in the *Ihya*. When she believed and Joseph (peace be upon him) married her, she withdrew from him, confined herself exclusively for worship and devoted herself to Allah the Exalted. He would call her to his bed during the day, and she would defer until the night. If he called her at night, she would postpone until the day. She said, "O Joseph, I loved you before I knew Him. Since I have known Him, His love has left no love for anyone else. I want no substitute."<sup>10</sup>

It is known to us in our sacred law that it is better for a woman to be complaisant to her husband's needs than to hold vigil. However, her lofty connection reached the point that when Joseph would seek her, she would say to him, "If you could leave me to my Lord?"

That is because she knew Him. When she knew Him, she loved Him. When she loved Him, she longed for Him. When she longed for Him, He left no place in her heart for other than Him. So when she brought out the meaning of {I do not absolve my [own carnal] self}, the fruit was that Allah chose her for the rank of sainthood, truthfulness and proximity to Him. So she attained a high station. And the fruit for our master Joseph was permanence of the matter. His brothers came to him. The story is well known, and our master

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10. Imam al-Ghazzali, *Ihya Ulum ad-Din* (Dar al-Ma'rifa), 4/331.



Joseph arranged it such that he brought his parents. He took them up to the throne, and his brothers all fell down prostrate before him, in reverence of him, and his parents too just as he saw in his dream from childhood when he dreamed the sun and the moon and eleven stars prostrated themselves before him. So his dream came to pass just as Zulaykha's dream that she would marry the governor of Egypt whom she sought manifested itself. So bliss was the conclusion to their life in this world, and the bliss that awaits them in the hereafter is much greater!

### **Surah Yusuf Is a Fruit of the People of Paradise**

And that became Quran that is recited. There is no story of a prophet in the Quran narrated completely in one sequence, except for the story of our master Joseph (peace be upon him). As for the story of the rest of the prophets, you find a part of his story here and a part there, each pointing to a particular aspect of his life for your guidance. However, since the story of our master Joseph relates to the self that is foundational in one's connection to Allah, Allah made it complete. In fact, it is reported that the people of paradise enjoy the fruits of Surah Yusuf and delight in reciting it.<sup>11</sup> They arrived in paradise through the door of {I do not absolve my [own carnal] self.} They arrived in paradise by ascending in their lower selves' conduct with Allah. This is what you and I as individuals, families, countries, peoples and an ummah in its entirety, are most in need of. Absolving the lower self is the root of the calamities of

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11. *Tafsir al-Baghawi* (Dar Ihya at-Turath al-Arabi), 2/473.

the ummah, beginning with the household: the problems of husband with wife, children with parents, parents with children, neighbor with neighbor, companion with companion, employee with boss, boss with employee, coworker with coworker, the governed with the ruler, the ruler with the governed, elder with young, young with elder, the public among themselves, nations with one another—the summary of the calamities of the world and its problems returns to {I do not absolve my [own carnal] self, for man's very self incites him to evil.}

If we leave this gathering tonight with comprehension of the reality of {I do not absolve my [own carnal] self}, none of us will ever enter into a fight with someone and be heedless of searching for our own mistake. None of us will ever do a work without searching for the fault in our work, even if people praise our work, even if the appearance of success in it appears to us. None of us will ever be honored by a distinguishing feature from Allah without seeking the reality of the distinction. The way to that is refining the self. {The one who purifies his soul succeeds and the one who corrupts it fails.}

## Supplication

*May* Allah make me and you of those who purify their lower selves. May He elevate us in the ranks of gnosis, lights, secrets and manifestations of {I do not absolve my [own carnal] self, for man's very self incites him to evil.} O Allah, grant our lower selves piety! Purify them, You are the best Who purifies them! You are their Guardian and Patron. O Allah, give

life to what has died in our hearts! Return to us whatever guidance of the sunna has been lost. Honor us with perfect firmness upon excellent deeds. O Allah, bring us and all the Muslims back to You beautifully! O Allah, grant us to see the faults of our lower selves and help us to rectify them. Allah, grant us to see the faults of our lower selves and grant us success to rectify them. O Allah, we manifest to You our incapacity of rectifying ourselves, and You are our Lord, Creator and Master! To You we resort! At Your door we stand! Upon You we rely! We have no one but You to turn to, place our hopes in or seek! O Allah, we are standing at the door of Your generosity and kindness. Our quest is Your pleasure and forgiveness. O Allah, gaze at our hearts and give life to them. Purify them and illumine them. Gaze at our lower selves and purify and elevate them and take us by our hands to You! Our God, Master, Creator, to Whom is our return and before Whom is our standing on the Day of Resurrection, we seek refuge in the Light of Your Countenance, by which all darkness is illuminated, from the nights and days of our life passing us by while we are in this state of heedlessness and turning away. O Allah, bestow us with perfect turning to You! Grant us to see what will elevate us to lofty ranks. Do not deprive us of good with You due to our evil. O Allah, we complain to You of our lower selves and what they have done and what they do. You are able to rectify them. So inspire us with what we rectify ourselves with. O Allah, help us over them and do not help them over us. O Allah, close to our lower selves all doors to devils, love of standing among creation and inclination to the lower world and attachment to it. O Allah, rid our hearts of love of the lower world. Grant us to see the lower world

the way You made Your righteous servants see it. Make the world in our hands; do not make it in our hearts. O Allah, make our hearts devoted to You. Make our hearts free from other than You. Make us of a people You love and who love You. O Allah, we complain to You of our lower selves' clinging and inclining to the world. We complain to You of disobedience and sins. You are the One Who accepts, has mercy, forgives, pardons, treats well and grants repentance. O Turner of hearts and sights, make our hearts firm upon Your religion. O Allah, we ask You for firmness upon rectitude, protection from sin, dispelling of evil, turning to You, fulfilment of Your covenant, upholding of Your right, humility before You, might by You, need of You and sufficiency by You. O Allah, we ask You for gnosis of You by which You open our eye of inner sight, purify our heart, rectify our conduct and honor us with Your profuse gifts until we are happy. O Allah, do not deprive us of good with You due to our evil. O Allah, our lower selves overcome us and we know goodness lies in going against them. We also know incapacity and weakness to be our state before these lower selves. We see our lower selves overcoming us in life. We ask You, O Allah, for a gaze! O Allah, grant us a gaze! O Allah, grant us a gaze! For if You grant a gaze, You give life to the heart. We ask You to diffuse a spiritual breeze in this gathering. O Allah, honor us with a breeze of grace! O Allah, Your Prophet, our master Muhammad, filled us with longing for Your generosity. He said, "Indeed, your Lord has gentle breezes in the days of your life, so expose yourselves to them!" Our God and Master, as for our outward exposure, that has been established, and were it not for Your grace and beneficence, it would not have been estab-

lished. So we ask You Who honored us with outward exposure to spiritual breezes, to honor our hearts with true exposure to Your spiritual breezes, and to honor them with a breeze until their attachment and inclination to other than You is cut off. O Most Generous of those asked and Most Munificent in giving who is never miserly! If You do not give us, who will? If You do not honor us, who will? If You do not open the door, at whose door should we stand? Whose door should we seek? No! By Your might, we have no Lord other than You to call upon and ask! We have no god but You! There is no refuge or safety from Allah except in Him. Our God and Master, save us from ourselves! Free us from slavehood to our lower selves that incite to evil. O The Succour of those who seek help! O The Succour of those who seek help! O Rescuer of those who are perishing! O God of the worlds! O Allah! O my Lord! O my Aid! O He alone who is called by this Name! Gaze at the ummah of our master Muhammad, rectifying what has corrupted and purifying their souls and bodies. Do not leave them to anyone else! O Allah, lift Your anger from the ummah. O Allah, lift Your anger from the ummah. O Allah, while we ask You for relief for the ummah, we acknowledge that what has befallen us is due to what our hands have reaped. However, O our Master, Creator and Patron, we have no door but Yours to stand at! We have no god but You to hope in! If You do not have mercy on us, who will we ask for mercy? O Most Merciful! O Most Merciful! O Most Merciful! Grant relief to the Muslims! O Allah, grant mercy to suckling babies, white haired elders, humble youth and grazing animals. O Allah, provide the ummah with guidance by which the obedient become mighty, the disobedient are grant-

ed repentance, and those for whom repentance has not been decreed are debased. Make us of the most beneficial, merciful and blessed in the ummah to the ummah. Spread guidance, integrity and goodness in this country. Make it safe and at ease. Make the hearts of its people approach You truthfully. Make the blessings that You have granted them increase Your contentment with them. O Allah, grant success to the rulers to uphold what pleases You. Help them in that. Guide their steps. Grant them success to do that which will beautify their standing before You on the Day they are presented before You. O Allah, grant them a righteous retinue that guides them to good. Keep evil and harmful associates away from them. Likewise for all rulers of the Muslims. O Allah, unite Muslim scholars. Purify their hearts. Remove love of the world from the hearts, O Allah! Remove love of the world from the hearts, O Allah! Remove love of the world from the hearts, O Allah! Inspire this ummah with guidance to what You want from it. Be its ally and be gracious to it. Have mercy on our deceased, the deceased of this country and all deceased Muslims, O Munificent! Lift punishment off those in the grave who are being punished. Have mercy on us when we go to the grave, O Most Forgiving, O Most Appreciative! Make our last words in this world be 'La ilaha illaLlah. Muhammadun RasuluLlah. (There is no god but Allah. Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Peace and blessings be upon him and his family and companions),' actualizing its realities outwardly and inwardly. When You honor the elect of those You love with proximity to You and to taste the sweetness of connection to You and intimate entreaty of You and guide them to what brings

them to the ranks of those drawn near, do not deprive us, O Most Generous! Honor us with Your generosity and grace, O Generous! O Allah, send prayers, peace, blessings, honor and grandeur upon our master, patron, beloved, coolness of our eyes, light of our hearts, door to our openings, source of our gifts, path of our guidance and master of creation Muhammad; send a prayer upon him which is a Pleasure for You and which befits his legitimate right, and grant him the Closest Access, the Pre-eminence and the Lofty Rank, and send him to the Most Praised Station which You promised him, by Your mercy, O Most Merciful. O Allah, reward our master Muhammad well on our behalf. Gather us with him in this world and the hereafter! Grant us to dwell near him in grand mansions. Bestow us with gazing upon Your Noble Countenance while You are pleased with us, O Most Generous! Peace and blessings be upon our master and patron Muhammad and his family and companions. {Your Lord, the Lord of Glory, is far above what they attribute to Him. Peace be upon the Messengers and praise be to Allah the Lord of all the Worlds.} al-Fatiha.

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