Youth is a branch of Madness

أَلْقُذْ قَيْسَمُ فِي يُوسُفَ وَإِخْوَتِهِ آيَاتٌ لِلسَّائِلِينَ (12:7)

and his brothers there are messages for those who search (for the truth)” (12:7)

Youth are the mirror of a nation's destiny. To know whether a nation's future is bright and promising or bleak and lamentable, take an account of its young men's lives. Scan their desires, wishes, hobbies and aspirations.

Look at their character and behavior, their achievements and activities, and they will demonstrate the trends, values and aspirations of society. Youth are the architects of society who eventually mould and shape the course of our future.

Our challenge as a community is to mobilize the youth to take responsibility, both for their own development, as well as for the reconstruction and development of our society and country.
My discourse today is based on extracts from Sûrah Yusuf عليه السلام – the twelfth Sûrah of the Holy Qur’ân. The Qur’ân gives a graphic description of how Yusuf عليه السلام as a youth responded to overwhelming social vices.

- He was betrayed by his brothers, sold as a slave, rescued to a royal household, only to be seduced by the lady of the house. He rose to the highest rank of the kingdom for his management skills.
- He was the victim of jealousy, conspiracy, slavery, beauty and tyranny. His humility, determination, faith and courage, provide invaluable lessons for the youth of today.

The Holy Qur’ân states: “Remember when Yusuf عليه السلام told his father

إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لَِِبِيهِ يَا أَبِي إِنِي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِي سَاجِدِينَ (12:4)

“O! My beloved father I have seen eleven stars, the sun and the moon – I saw them prostrating to me.”

- Yusuf عليه السلام was 12 years old. He was confused, puzzled and amazed at what he saw.
- Who did he turn to in times of confusion? Who did he confide in?
- His very own father. Your challenge as youth is to forge such a relationship with your parents where you can talk to them about your emotional needs. Your stability depends largely on the stability of your home environment.
- The very first requisite for Islamic resurgence is the establishment of a healthy family unit. The family nurtures values that bring out the nobility in a person enabling him/her to establish healthy interpersonal relations.

His ten brothers plotted to kill him. They connived and eventually threw him down a well. The Holy Qur’ân states:

اقْتُلُواْ يُوسُفَ أَوِ اطْرَحُوهُ أَرْضًا يَخْلُ لَكُمْ وَجْهُ أَبِيكُمْ وَتَكُونُواْ مِن بَعْدِهِ قَوْمًا صَالِحِينَ (12:9)

“Kill Yusuf Alayhis salâm or else drive him away to some (distant) land so that your fathers regard may be for you alone: and after this is done you will be free to repent and become righteous.”

- This is what happens when your energies as youth are channeled incorrectly, when you choose the wrong company and eventually succumb to peer pressure.
- All the while Shaytân will beguile you into thinking, that you are young, it is time to explore and experience; you can always repent and reform at a later stage. Do not be deceived into thinking that you are young; you still have time to repent and become righteous.
The company you keep largely influences your character. The parable of a good or bad companion is like the seller of musk or a blacksmith. The fragrance of perfume may rub off you, or the soot of the blacksmith may blacken you.

Their purpose was to banish him, and they used the pretext of sport and play to execute their grand plan. The Holy Qur’ân states:

أُرِسِلْهُ مَعَنَا غَدًا يَرْتَعْ وَيَلْعَبْ وَإِنَّا لَهُ نَحَافِظُونَ (12:12)

“Send him with us tomorrow, to enjoy himself and play.”

Is sport not used to distract people from the real world, from real jobs and real lives? Have the sports stadiums; become the new shrines of our culture?

Are televisions the new pulpits from which the message is spread? Are we enchanted and bewitched by ‘sport’ though it has become synonymous with violence, drugs, fornication gambling, and match fixing?

A caravan of merchants passed by the well, and found Yusuf عليه السلام a youth of surpassing beauty. The Holy Qur’ân states:

وَجَاءتْ سِيَّارَةٌ فَأَرْسَلُواْ وَارِدَهُمْ فَأَدْلَى دَلْوَهُ قَالَ يَا بُشْرَى هَـذَا غُلاَمٌ وَأَسَرُّوهُ بِضَاعَةً وَاللَّ ُ عِلِيمٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ (12:19)

“And they sold him for an insignificant price a mere few silver coins: thus low did they value him.”

They eventually sold him to the opulent slave market for a miserable price. In this day and age, youth are almost always the pawns used in the lucrative drug trade. The most precious of human lives are sold to the slavery of the drug trade, for miserable economic gains.

Yusuf عليه السلام was sold as a slave to a high-ranking official of the kingdom. But his wife was blinded and enchanted by the beauty of Yusuf عليه السلام. The Holy Qur’ân states:

وَرَاوَدَتْهُ الَّتِي هُوَ فِي بَيْتِهَا عَن نَّفْسِهِ وَغَلَّقَتِ الَِبْوَابَ وَقَالَتْ هَيْتَ لَكَ قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَِّ إِنَّهُ لاَ يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ (12:23)

“But in whose house he was sought to seduce him, she bolted the doors and said: “Now come unto me.”

She bolted the doors and pleaded with Yusuf عليه السلام to come to her. But Yusuf عليه السلام refused infidelity, he refused to succumb to his brute desires, he fled saying: “O’ Allâh preserve me”
We are human, we live in a highly electrified sexual environment, passion aroused by beauty places great temptations before us.

She thought that the doors were locked, no one will see them, and he knew that Allâh was there. Know that you are never, never alone. Allâh sees what you do. Never compromise yourself into a situation, which may lead to zînâ. There is no such thing as a platonic relationship, the free intermingling of sexes leads to the zînâ of the eyes, ears, tongue and heart.

Protect yourselves; divest your lives from the hollow culture of dazzling cars, designer clothes, music, etc.

When word spread that the wife of the Aziz tried to seduce him, the women of the town looked down upon her for being enchanted by a slave. When her reputation was torn to pieces - to get back at them - she invited them to a sumptuous meal, and while they had knives in their hands she instructed Yusuf عليه السلام to appear before them.

So captivated were they with his beauty that they in their enchantment cut their fingers off, his beauty played havoc with their hearts and minds. The Holy Qur’ân states:

فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ أَرْسَلَتْ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مَتَّكَأً وَآتَتْ كُلَّ وَاحِدَةٍ مِّنْهُنَّ سِكْيَنًا وَقَالَتِ اخْرُجْ عَلَيْهِنَّ فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُ أَكْبَرْنَهُ وَقَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ وَقُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلِّمَا هَذَا بَشَرًا إِنَّهُ إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ (12:31)

“And when the women saw him, they were greatly amazed at his beauty and so flustered were they that they cut their hands with their knives exclaiming Allâh save us! This is no mortal man. This is but a noble angel.”

They lost their fingers, we may lose our lives.

AIDS is the scourge of promiscuity that knows no race, religion or class. It will kill you long before your death. Remember, you’re never too young to get married.

Marriages do not break because couples are immature, but because of an immature, irreligious and irresponsible lifestyle.

The Holy Qur’ân states:

ثُمَّ بَدَا لَهُم مِّن بَعْدِ مَا رَأَوُا الآيَاتِ لَيَسْجُنُنَّهُ حَتَّى حِينٍ (12:35)

“And when they had seen all the signs (proving his innocence) to imprison him for a time.”

Yusuf عليه السلام was imprisoned not because he was guilty, but because he was unwittingly causing such an upheaval in the society.

Thus it was not the first time that the innocent was sent to prison for the guilt of the guilty. The wicked may plot, they may incarcerate the innocent, and meet out
inhuman treatment, yet the tyranny, oppression and miscarriage of justice may plant the seeds for the resurgence of Islâm.

- Do not forget that the first prisoners brought to our shores were Muslims. Their imprisonment planted the seeds for the rise of Islâm in South Africa.

Two other men were imprisoned at about the same time as Yusuf عليه السلام, for some unspecified crimes. Yusuf عليه السلام did not wallow in self-pity; instead he used the opportunity to make da’wah.

The Holy Qur’ân states:

يَا صَاحِبَيِ السَّجْنِ أَأَرْبَابٌ مُّتَفَرَّقُونَ خَيْرٌ أَمِ اللَّهَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ (12:39)

“O! My two companions of the prison are many differing gods better or Allâh the One-the Irresistible.”

- Despite the global onslaught against Islâm- the masses in our country - given their historical past are easily able to identify with the oppressed.
- We have a unique opportunity of taking the message of Allâh to the people. The opportunity for da’wah is endless. Become ambassadors of the Dîn, it will solidify your own faith and attract the help of Allâh.
- Too often we take Islâm for granted, as our own personal property and refuse to make da’wah. Islâm was never meant to be an individualistic faith, reserved for the “chosen few”. Muslims have a duty to spread the Dîn, and practicing Muslim youth, whether beginners, activists or leaders have a crucial role to play.

After languishing in jail for some time, the King heard of his ability to interpret dreams and sent a messenger to release him. The Holy Qur’ân states:

- “So the king said: “Bring him to me, but when the messenger came to him Yusuf عليه السلام said: “Go back to your lord and ask him what was the matter with the ladies who cut their hands…”
- Normally a prisoner would be just too overjoyed to be released, but Yusuf عليه السلام refused to leave until he was cleared of all charges. You are the flag bearers of Islâm, people judge Islâm according to your actions, it is vital that you lead your lives with integrity.
- Your reputation and your family name need to be jealously guarded. You have the opportunity of changing perceptions about Islâm and Muslims by actively participating in different youth forums.
- You have the opportunity of making the Muslim voice heard in the many ongoing debates about various issues in our country.
In conclusion: Let’s look at the lessons of Yusuf عليه السلام

Yusuf عليه السلام chose to occupy a position within government despite it being a non-Muslim government.

- The portfolio he chose had a direct bearing on the day to day lives of people
- He used his knowledge and skills to serve humanity and not for selfish gain
- His credentials for the post were hafîz and amîn – knowledge that would contribute to the maintenance, conservation, protection, and defence of the country; this knowledge was couched in loyalty, trustworthiness, and honesty.
- He displayed his patriotism by dedicating his time energy and skills to uplift and better the plight of the citizens, despite the fact that he was not one of them.

What lessons do we learn from the choice that Yusuf عليه السلام made:

- We need to identify and groom individuals to fill the gaping vacuum in Muslim political participation, especially at local level. We have an opportunity to make a difference to the lives of people through active participation in local government.
- The most conspicuous lapse among youth is the total lack of Islamic Knowledge. Youth at the most impressionable years leave madrasah, equipped only with a profound misunderstanding of their Dîn. Ignorance is darkness, which leads to doubt, insecurity and lack of purpose and direction.
- Vocations that you choose must contribute to the maintenance, conservation, protection, and defence of the populace. You learn to serve and not only to earn. We live in an age of specialisation, and it is vital that you excel and stand out in the disciplines that you chose.
- You need to confront the challenges of health by leading the offensive against poverty, volunteering for health education and fighting HIV/AIDS.
- You need to deal with the prejudices of the media by through the power of the pen. The greatest jihad of our times is to fight the war of propaganda and Islamaphobia.
- You need to promote youth participation in community development projects. The most beloved of people in the sight of Allâh are those who help the creation of Allâh.
Some examples of youth from Islamic history and their achievements

- **Abdul Rahman Al Nasser**, 21 years old: most powerful prince of Iberia, his era was the golden time of Andalusia, in which he ended the chaos and raised an unrivaled scientific renaissance, making his state the strongest one in his era, which required the leaders of Europe to seek his acceptance.

- **Mohammed Al Fateh**, 22 years old: conquered Constantinople, capital city of the Roman/Byzantine empire, that the top commanders at the time couldn’t approach.

- **Usamah bin Zayed**, 18 years old: led the army of the Muslims that included the top companions may Allah be pleased with them, like Abu Bakr and Umar, to face the greatest armies of the earth at the time.

- **Mohammed Al Qassem**, 17 years old: conquered the Land of Indus, was one of the top military commanders of his time.

- **Sa’ad bin Abi Waqqas**, 17 years old: the first to throw an arrow for the sake of Allah and one of six people of Al Shur’ra. whenever he turned to the Prophetﷺ while sitting among his Companions, he was greeted cheerfully by the Prophetﷺ saying, “He’s my maternal uncle. let every person show me who his uncle is”

- **Al Arqam bin abi al Arqam**, 16 years old: made his house a headquarter for the prophetﷺ for 13 continuous years.

- **Talhah ibn Obaidullah**, 16 years old: the most generous arab in Islam, pledged an allegiance to the Prophet saws in the battle of Uhud, and protected him from the Kuffār and shielded him from the arrows with his own hands until it got paralyzed and shielded him with his body.

- **Al Zubayr ibn al-Awam**, 15 years old: first one to raise a sword for Islam, and he’s the disciple of the prophetﷺ.

- **Amr ibn Kulthum**, 15 years old:
- a knight and the leader of the Taghlib tribe, in which it was said that “if it weren’t for islam, the taghlib tribe would have eaten the people”.

- **Mu‘awwidh ibn ‘Afrā’, 14 years old:** fatally wounded Abu Jahl the leader of the polytheists in the battle of Badr.

- **Zayed bin Thabit**, 13 years old:
- had the role of writing down the Quranic verses that were sent to the Prophetﷺ from Allah swt through Jibreel. learned the Syriac and Hebrew languages in 17 nights.memorized the Quran and contributed in compiling it, was the personal scribe of the Prophet.ﷺ.

- **Attab ibn Asid**:
- the prophetﷺ appointed him as the governor of Mecca when he was 18 years old.
Some examples of youth from Islamic history and their achievements:

- **Abdul Rahman Al Nasser, 21 years old.** He was the most powerful prince of Iberia, his era was the golden time of Andalusia, in which he ended the chaos and raised an unrivaled scientific renaissance, making his state the strongest one in his era, which required the leaders of Europe to seek his acceptance.

- **Mohammed Al Fateh, 22 years old:** He conquered Constantinople, capital city of the Roman/Byzantine empire, that the top commanders at the time couldn’t approach.

- **Sayyadina Usamah bin Zayed, 18 years old,** led the army of the Muslims that included the top companions may Allah be pleased with them, like Sayyadina Abu Bakr and Sayyadina Umar, to face the greatest armies of the earth at the time.

- **Mohammed Al Qassem, 17 years old:** He conquered the Land of Indus, he was one of the top military commanders of his time.

- **Sayyadina Sa’ad bin Abi Waqqas, 17 years old:** He was the first to throw an arrow for the sake of Allah and one of six people of Al Shura. Whenever he turned to the Prophet ﷺ, while sitting among his Companions, he was greeted cheerfully by the Prophet ﷺ, saying, “He’s my maternal uncle. let every person show me who his uncle is.”

- **Sayyadina Al Arqam bin abi al Arqam, 16 years old:** He made his house a headquarter for the Prophet ﷺ for 13 continuous years in MAKKAH.

- **Sayyadina Talhah ibn Obaidullah, 16 years old:** He was the most generous arab in Islam, pledged an allegiance to the Noble Prophet (saws) in the battle of Uhud, and protected him from the Kuffar and shielded him from the arrows with his own hands until it got paralyzed and shielded him with his body.

- **Sayyadina Al Zubayr ibn al-Awam, 15 years old:** He was the first one to raise a sword for Islam, and he’s known as “the disciple” of the Noble prophet ﷺ.

- **Sayyadina Amr ibn Kulthum, 15 years old:** He was a knight and the leader of the Taghlib tribe, in which it was said that “if it weren’t for islam, the taghlib tribe would have eaten the people”.

- **Sayyadina Mu’ādh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-Jamūḥ, 13 years old and Mu‘awwidh ibn ‘Afrā’, 14 years old:** They fatally wounded Abu Jahl the leader of the polytheists in the battle of Badr.

- **Sayyadina Zayed bin Thabit, 13 years old:** He was entrusted the important role of writing down the Quranic verses that were sent to the Prophet ﷺ from Allah swt through Sayyadina Jibreel. He learned the Syriac and Hebrew languages in 17 nights, memorized the Quran and contributed in compiling it, and he was the personal scribe of the Noble Prophet ﷺ.

- **Sayyadina Attab ibn Asid:** the most Noble Prophet appointed him as the governor of Mecca when he was just 18 years old.

*MAY ALLAH TA’ALA GRANT DIRECTION TO OUR YOUTH AND MAKE OUR FUTURE BRIGHT THROUGH THEIR UPRIGHT NURTURING. AMEEN*