

## **SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE LEADERSHIP OF PROPHET YUSUF: SOCIOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL ANALYSIS IN EGYPT IN 16 BC**

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### **Abstract**

*This research examines the social and spiritual transformation in the story of the Prophet Yusuf from a sociological perspective. The story of the Prophet Yusuf in the Koran is known to have a deep message and universal learning value. Prophet Yusuf inspired social and spiritual change with his empathetic actions towards the people around him. This research focuses on the final stage of social change implemented by the Prophet Yusuf after becoming the leader of Egypt. The research method used is content analysis with a phenomenological approach. This research shows that Prophet Yusuf as an agent of social change had strong leadership integrity. He inspires change by maintaining personal integrity, being a role model in honesty, forgiveness, and patience, and interacting with various levels of society. The process of social change carried out by Prophet Yusuf includes centrifugal methods (changing oneself first and influencing the people around him) and cultural diffusion (changing the culture of Egyptian society). This research concludes that the story of Prophet Yusuf provides insight into how social change can occur, namely through leadership integrity and cultural change. This story shows that social change can start from individuals who have strong vision and integrity, who then influence the community around them and spread the values of change through culture.*

*Keywords: Social, Spiritual, Leadership. Prophet yusuf.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Social change is a critical aspect in the evolution of a society. Various programs planned and implemented in community development efforts aim to achieve the desired changes in social structures and dynamics. While it is widely acknowledged that social change is an inevitable element in the process of societal development, there is no universal consensus on defining the exact mechanisms underpinning social change (Dianto, 2019).

Surah Yusuf stands out as a unique narrative compared to other prophetic stories. This chapter recounts the complete story of Prophet Yusuf As and contains a series of episodes rich with lessons, guidance, and wisdom. It vividly portrays the emotional struggles of a young man, the temptations of women, patience, suffering, and the compassion of a father. Moreover, the story includes elements of imagination and provides both explicit and implicit insights into historical events from a turbulent past (Shihab, 2008).

Prophet Yusuf As is renowned for his ability to inspire social and spiritual transformation in his surroundings, as evidenced by his empathetic actions—such as respecting the servants in Zulaikha's palace and fostering relationships with fellow prisoners during his incarceration. However, his most significant role emerged after becoming a leader in Egypt, where he implemented numerous critical social change initiatives. This study aims to delve deeper into how Prophet Yusuf As concretely carried out social transformation efforts (Purnama, 2022).

Previous research by Icol Dianto, titled *the paradigm of social change from the perspective of change agents in the quran: a thematic analysis of prophet yusuf's story*, yielded intriguing findings. Dianto categorizes Prophet Yusuf's social change paradigm into three crucial stages:

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leadership integrity, the concept of change, and the process of social transformation. This study differs by focusing on the spiritual and social changes led by Prophet Yusuf (As).

The social life of ancient Egypt before the arrival of Prophet Yusuf (As) was characterized by rigid social stratification and periodic crises due to reliance on the Nile River. Spiritually, polytheism prevailed, with Pharaoh serving as both spiritual and worldly leader. However, after Prophet Yusuf assumed leadership in Egypt, the nation gradually improved and prospered. This transformation serves as the backdrop for the present research, which seeks to answer the following question: How did Prophet Yusuf (As) implement social and spiritual changes that led to Egypt's improvement, prosperity, and societal trust?

## RESEARCH METHOD

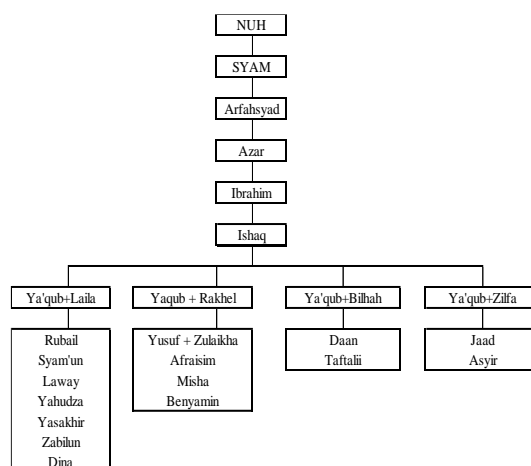
The research method employed in this study is intellectual history, which focuses on past thoughts and ideas that significantly influenced human life (Pranoto, 2010). Through shifts in thought, we trace how ideas emerged, evolved, and inspired substantial changes in the social, political, and cultural aspects of human existence. The approach used in this research is the revelatory approach, based on the belief that knowledge and understanding of the world can be obtained through divine revelation or spiritual experience. This approach is often applied in the context of religion and philosophy, where faith and spiritual experiences are regarded as legitimate and reliable sources of knowledge (Supratman, 2020). Additionally, this study employs content analysis techniques, emphasizing structured data presentation and providing detailed insights into the research object, which consists of communication messages. Content analysis is a research method commonly used in the field of communication to analyze the content or messages embedded within texts or data (Muhajir, 1990).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Leadership in Social Change

Prophet Yusuf As lived around 1745–1635 BC. He was one of the prophets in Abrahamic religions and a son of Prophet Ya'qub (Jacob, peace be upon him), also known as Israil. Yusuf was the great-grandson of Ishaq bin Ibrahim (HAMKA, 1992). The story of Prophet Yusuf is elaborated extensively in Surah Yusuf, the 12th chapter of the Quran, which consists of 111 verses. This chapter primarily focuses on the story of Prophet Yusuf (summarized as the youngest son of Prophet Ya'qub). It is considered the most beautiful story for several reasons: (1) It is the most detailed narrative in the Quran, (2) It entirely revolves around the transformation of human characteristics, and (3) It vividly portrays a range of emotions and life situations, including an aged father's trust in his son, the jealousy and conspiracy of Yusuf's brothers, the father's grief, the sale of the beloved son—who was also a prophet—at a meager price, and many lessons derived from these events (Ali, 1934).

Self-integrity is the integration of internalized values derived from external sources (field of reference) with the personal values within an individual (frame of reference). Integrity reflects the alignment of one's heart, intellect, and actions, which in Islamic teachings is referred to as *shiddiq* (truthfulness). In communication studies, an individual with integrity can enhance their personal credibility, which is manifested through charisma or the personal appeal of the individual, as well as their mastery of knowledge. This credibility contributes significantly to their effectiveness as a social change actor (Bungin, 2008).



When connected to Prophet Yusuf's (As) personality, it becomes evident that he was a speaker with credibility in the eyes of friends, foes, and his people. Since childhood, Yusuf (As) had been accustomed to honesty, a value instilled by his father, Prophet Ya'qub (As). This honesty became deeply ingrained in his life and was reflected in several segments of his story. Moreover, Allah Swt the Almighty praised Yusuf (As) as a person of righteousness, faith, piety, and patience. With these three core characteristics, Allah the Almighty bestowed upon Yusuf (As) prophethood and taught him the interpretation of dreams, wisdom, and knowledge. The personality of Yusuf (As) is illustrated as follows:

- 1) The Honesty of Prophet Yusuf (As). Prophet Yusuf's honesty is evident in his interaction with the leader of the caravan that rescued him from a dry well. Yusuf (As) was persuaded by his brothers to go hunting in the pasture, only to be thrown into the well. He was rescued by a passing caravan, whose leader, Malik, was a descendant of Prophet Ismail (As). Before being saved, Angel Jibril conveyed Allah's revelation to Yusuf (As), instructing him to identify himself as a "child of the well" when asked by the caravan. Despite these instructions, when pressed by Malik, Yusuf (As) revealed his true identity as the son of Prophet Ya'qub bin Ishaq bin Ibrahim (As). This honesty ultimately led Malik, who was Yusuf's cousin, to return the money given by the Egyptian treasurer, Qutifar, thereby affirming that Yusuf (As) was not a bonded slave.
- 2) Integrity in Serving the Egyptian Ruler. Yusuf's (As) integrity was also apparent in his service to the Egyptian ruler. As an outsider adopted into the household, he displayed courtesy and upheld his master's trust. For instance, when tasked with distributing food rations within the palace, Yusuf (As) acted fairly, using valid data and ensuring equal treatment for all, including palace servants. He stood firm against the demands of the temple guards, who often took food as they pleased. By limiting their share to one portion per person, Yusuf (AS) demonstrated his unwavering commitment to justice, even when faced with opposition.
- 3) Integrity in Resisting Temptation. Prophet Yusuf's (As) integrity was further highlighted when he was seduced by his master's wife, Queen Zulaikha. Despite harboring feelings for her, Yusuf (As) recognized his position as her adopted son and rejected her advances. His character shone brighter as he chose imprisonment over remaining in a palace filled with betrayal and immorality.
- 4) Compassion and Empathy. Even while living in the palace, Yusuf (As) preferred to associate with the enslaved children of the palace. His kindness and compassion towards the weaker segments of society endeared him to both the enslaved individuals and the palace residents. Similarly, during his time in the Zawiya prison, Yusuf (As) befriended all prisoners, regardless of age, and encouraged cleanliness within the prison. His humility and willingness to help others earned the admiration of both inmates and prison officials.

The exemplary character of Prophet Yusuf (As) illustrates the qualities of a chosen servant of Allah Swt. Prophets and messengers were humans like us but were distinguished by their firm

faith, high levels of piety, and exceptional patience. When tempted by Queen Zulaikha, Yusuf (As) nearly succumbed but was guided by Allah's signs, enabling him to resist. In contrast, ordinary humans, when faced with temptations such as wealth or women, often disregard divine reminders. Hence, many are described as slaves to their desires.

Despite being a foreigner in Egypt, Yusuf (As) was entrusted with significant responsibilities for social transformation (Brouwer, 1980). Cultural differences between Yusuf (As) and the Egyptian society did not hinder him from fulfilling his prophetic mission. Based on the theory of symbolic interactionism (Aripuddin, 2013), Yusuf (As) analyzed the prevailing situations in Egypt to determine their compatibility with his mission. He carefully studied the social, political, economic, and familial dynamics of Egyptian society to guide his actions.

### Leadership of Prophet Yusuf (As)

Hamka explains the position of Prophet Yusuf (As) in his interpretation of verse 54 of Surah Yusuf. Although Yusuf (As) was not a king or the supreme ruler of Egypt, his role as the treasurer was highly significant and influential at that time, equating his position to that of a king (HAMKA, 1992). Prophet Yusuf (As) qualifies as a leader because he possessed the authority to direct his subordinates and was accountable for his responsibilities (Andriono, 2020).

Thariq M. As-Suwaidan and Ir. Faishal Umar Basyaril, in their book, outline seven characteristics of effective leaders: 1) motivation, 2) personality, 3) credibility, 4) confidence, 5) intelligence, 6) problem-solving ability, and 7) self-control (As-Suwaidan, 2008). Based on these traits, Prophet Yusuf (As) exemplified effective leadership due to the following attributes:

- 1) Motivation. Prophet Yusuf (As) was a leader driven by motivation to utilize his authority in mobilizing subordinates and the populace to achieve collective goals, as interpreted by Hamka.
- 2) Personality. As a proactive leader, Yusuf (As) spearheaded initiatives to prepare Egypt's granaries for the prolonged famine, showcasing his ability to lead through transformation and preparation.
- 3) Credibility. Yusuf (AS) was consistently truthful and trustworthy in his role. As a treasurer, he not only performed his duties with integrity but also set an example for his people through his exemplary conduct.
- 4) Confidence. Prophet Yusuf (As) demonstrated high self-confidence, enabling him to accept the king's trust in managing Egypt's treasury and preparing for the impending famine (HAMKA, 1992).
- 5) Intelligence. Yusuf (As) was known for his intelligence, particularly his ability to interpret dreams, as reflected in his supplications in the Qur'an. Imam Jalaluddin, in his exegesis, elaborates that Yusuf (As) was skilled in administration, particularly in writing and arithmetic (Al-Mahalli & As-Suyuthi, 2015).
- 6) Problem-Solving Ability. Through divine guidance, Yusuf (As) foresaw future challenges, such as the prolonged famine, by interpreting the king's dream. This enabled him to devise strategies for Egypt's survival and prosperity.
- 7) Self-Control. Yusuf (As) demonstrated remarkable self-control, resisting the temptations of a prominent Egyptian official's wife and forgiving his brothers for their betrayal (HAMKA, 1992).

Hamka's interpretation describes Prophet Yusuf's (As) leadership as proactive. Yusuf (As) independently and diligently achieved his position without relying on the reputation of his father, Prophet Ya'qub (As), making his leadership unrelated to inheritance theory (Arifin, 2016).

Hamka also emphasizes that Prophet Yusuf's (As) leadership was purpose-driven, aiming for worldly welfare aligned with the pleasure of Allah Swt. An effective leader must possess a clear vision and purpose, which should manifest in strategies and conduct that align with their goals (Rivai, 2004).

The traits of Prophet Yusuf's (As) leadership are primarily evident in the narrative context rather than specific verses. While certain verses explicitly highlight these traits, others require comprehensive interpretation of Yusuf's (As) story. From a detailed analysis of the Qur'anic narrative, the following leadership characteristics emerge:

### **Professionalism, Honesty, and Exemplary Leadership**

Prophet Yusuf was a professional leader and set an example for his subordinates by always doing something good. If the leaders realize that they are recipients or carry out mandates both from those they lead and mandates from Allah Swt, they are also honest and always set an example, then a nation will run well. Because every step of the leader will be decorated with the rules that have been revealed by Allah the giver of the mandate, the behavior of his leadership that is played, and the style used in his leadership becomes an example for his people or society (Marius, 2006).

In the verse above, Prophet Yusuf was always aware that all blessings were from Allah, so he was always grateful for the blessings (rank) that He had given. As a professional leader, Prophet Yusuf always tried to act in the best way and become a leader who acted according to the rules (Ibn, 2005). As a leader, Prophet Yusuf was also known as an honest person, even he was willing to be imprisoned for a mistake he did not make. He always acted honestly and was trustworthy in holding office. Not only that, Prophet Yusuf was also a leader who always set an example for his people. He tried to always do good so that his people would follow his example (Arifin, 2016).

*First*, a Leader Who Has High Ability, Intelligence and Wisdom. As clearly indicated in the Qur'an, Prophet Yusuf was given the wisdom of knowledge. William stated that there is an extraordinary ability from a leader so that with all his superior qualities (high intelligence, communication skills and sensitivity to the psychological climate of his group) he is able to achieve the desired goals (Piotr, 2004). One of the special qualities of Prophet Yusuf is being able to interpret someone's dreams. People who have the ability to interpret dreams must have certain special qualities and high intelligence. In addition, Prophet Yusuf also has extraordinary wisdom, namely in terms of economic management. After Prophet Yusuf became a governor, the economy in Egypt was able to run well without any significant obstacles.

- 1) A Just Leader. The image of Prophet Yusuf as a just leader is Prophet Yusuf when distributing wheat to the people, doing it fairly. He did not differentiate between origins or degrees (Al-'Alawi-Al-Harari, 2001). Basically, the people needed it, so he would happily give it. He always showed justice in carrying out his leadership. Justice is very important for a leader. Without justice, a leader will lose the leadership qualities that he has. If a leader is unable to do justice, then those he leads will be destroyed and perished.
- 2) Thorough and Trustworthy Leader. The Prophet Yusuf's meticulousness is evident in the inspection and distribution of wheat rations to reduce the misery of the people at that time. In addition to being meticulous, the Prophet Yusuf was also a trustworthy leader who was always responsible for all his actions. He was always responsible for all the policies he took (Al-'Alawi-Al-Harari, 2001). The trustworthy nature is needed and required in a leadership. Because without the trustworthy nature, the leader will do as he pleases. Trustworthy in the sense of maintaining leadership responsibilities, not in the sense of only accepting leadership and carrying it out as he pleases.
- 3) Consistent Leader. As in his story, Prophet Yusuf was a person who was consistent and firm in his convictions. Prophet Yusuf was not easily swayed by things or issues that occurred during his reign. He always did what he thought was right and was right according to Allah. He always asks Allah for guidance when he wants to do something (2005, n.d.).
- 4) A Leader Who Can Create a Hard Working Climate Full of Tolerance. If we look at the feedback on the multi-social society, the Prophet Yusuf was able to create a climate of hard work. This is proven by his efforts that were able to make Egypt a fairly rich

country. How the Prophet Yusuf had good management skills to be able to create a work climate full of tolerance (M. Arifin, 1997).

- 5) A confident and self-confident leader (optimistic). The nature of self-confidence and self-confidence is a kind of light that radiates from a person. With that nature, people will know their presence and realize their position in relation to the situation and their surroundings. Basically, someone who has confidence and self-confidence will easily transfer it to others. Optimism is an important requirement that a leader must have. Without confidence, a leader will not be able to start and take the initiative in what he will do. Prophet Yusuf was an optimistic leader because he was aware of the task he was carrying out as a form of trust from Allah Swt. Even at the beginning, Prophet Yusuf had felt that he would become a leader with his dream of seeing the sun, moon, and eleven stars prostrating to him. At the end of this surah, Prophet Yusuf said to his father, this is the takbir of my dream that I told you (Al-Mahalli & As-Suyuthi, 2015).

### Concept and Objectives of Social and Spiritual Change

Agents of change must have a clear concept of where the desired change is headed. Likewise, the concept of change carried by Prophet Yusuf (as) is clearly a prophetic mission. Allah Ta'ala has chosen Yusuf (as) as the successor to the prophethood of his father, Ya'qub (as).

Although the concept and purpose of social and spiritual change carried out by Yusuf as was a prophetic mission, humanitarian efforts were not free from the role of Yusuf bin Ya'qub bin Ishaq bin Ibrahim (Salim, 2006). First, he had to be separated from his father, younger brother and siblings and his other family to undergo self-training (personality formation) so that he grew into a young man with a strong, honest and responsible character. Second, Yusuf as experienced harsh treatment from his brothers and was forced to face a difficult life at the bottom of a well for some time. Third, Yusuf as had to have his hands tied during his journey to Egypt because the caravan was worried that he would run away. In one story, in the middle of his journey to Egypt with the caravan, Yusuf as saw the tomb of his mother Rahil. He stopped at the tomb and did not tell the caravan guard. The guard who knew that Yusuf as was missing panicked. He went around looking for and calling Yusuf as. Prophet Yusuf as was carried away by his feelings of emotion and sadness, so he did not hear the guard's call. Finally, the caravan guard found Yusuf as at the tomb and scolded him. The guard slapped Yusuf As in the face so hard that Yusuf As's face turned blue. Fourth, Yusuf as was sold in the slave market. Even though as a messenger of Allah, Allah easily entrusted Yusuf (As) to His servants whom He desired, but although he was a Messenger, Yusuf (As) was not free from the human dimension and his prophetic mission, even though it was for humanitarian purposes. Fifth, Yusuf (As) became a foster child who was elevated to a higher status than a slave. Sixth, Yusuf (As) had to live in prison for 10 years. Yusuf (As) underwent a long process, full of trials, to carry out a mission of social change in Egypt. Herein lies the superiority of God's chosen humans (His prophets and apostles), so that a strong spirit and patience are embedded in them as agents/activators of social change (Zulaiha, 2016).

*First, Social Change Process.* Social change does not happen suddenly. There are factors that influence it, namely the meeting of new cultures with old cultures, so that the old culture can be maintained (acculturation), the emergence of new cultures (assimilation) and the occurrence of balance between the two cultures (accommodation). (Soekanto & Sulistyowati, 2017). In addition, there is a way to spread new ideas, concepts and cultures through the process of spreading from individuals and community groups to other individuals/communities. This condition is known as cultural diffusion. Cultural diffusion occurs through change agents from those close to a particular culture, then spread through the closest environment, namely family, neighbors, friends, and society. Then the culture is taken by community groups that have been far from the main cultural source. Using the term in sociology, then in the story of the Prophet Yusuf it can be understood that the changes that occurred in the City of Egypt were social changes through cultural diffusion. The Prophet Yusuf who had a polite culture from Kan'an, so that the Egyptian people who had

advanced at that time greatly admired the Prophet Yusuf who was innocent and polite but very wise.

In addition, social change driven by Prophet Yusuf is also known as the centrifugal method, (Faesol, 2010) meaning the idea of change that starts from oneself, then spreads to the environment around the figure/change agent and continues to expand to reach all levels of society. This centrifugal method is an effort to utilize all potential resources owned by the change agent. Ahmad Faesol explained that there are two typologies of social change movements, namely actions that are directly targeted at existing social structures and actions that are aimed at other agents. Other agents are educated and indoctrinated in such a way that they have the same perception and goals as the first change agent (Rahman, 2012).

The social changes carried out by Yusuf (As) initially followed the centrifugal method. A strong personality had been deeply rooted in Yusuf (As) since childhood until he grew up. He was consistent with such an identity (*istiqomah*). The understanding of truth, honesty, forgiveness and patience were still held and he tried to influence others to practice it. We find in the story of Yusuf (As), he was patient with the treatment of his brothers and forgave them, he was patient with the rejection of the church monks, insults and resistance, which then all the priests of the God Amun were forgiven by him. He instilled this noble personality in others, namely the group of slaves in the palace of Queen Zulaikha, and the prisoners when he was in prison. When Yusuf (As) was entrusted as the ruler of the Egyptian treasury, his friends, slaves and prisoners, were the reliable palace workers in building Egyptian agriculture and corn barns to face the famine (economic crisis). The efforts mentioned above are the centrifugal method of social change, as intended by Sztompka (Purnama, 2022).

In the next stage, social change played by Yusuf as used the method of cultural diffusion. The process of social change that occurred in Egyptian society also occurred through cultural change, namely the culture of society that had previously worshiped the God Amun, but now worships Allah, the One God. The cultural diffusion of Egyptian society was supported by power, where King Amunhatap embraced the teachings of the Prophet Yusuf as and banned the activities of the church of the God Amun. King Amunhatap's policies clearly received rejection and resistance from the church, so that social change involved the core of the social order, large masses and sometimes violence. First, the changes that occur are fundamental, comprehensive and multidimensional changes and touch the core of the social order. Second, they involve large masses who are mobilized and act in a revolutionary movement. Third, the changes that occur require the involvement of violence and the use of violence.

Even though there was physical friction/violence, King Amunhatap and Yusuf (As) advised their soldiers to give the priests and their followers the opportunity to repent and embrace the religious teachings brought by the Prophet Yusuf (AS).

*Second*, the process of spiritual change. The process of spiritual transformation carried out by the Prophet Joseph towards the Egyptian people took place gradually and indirectly, through several important phases:

- 1) Moral Influence and Exemplary Behavior. As a prisoner who was later appointed as a high official in Pharaoh's palace, Prophet Yusuf demonstrated noble morals, honesty, and justice. This exemplary behavior earned him the respect of Pharaoh and the Egyptian people. Yusuf was known not only as a wise man, but also as someone who had a strong relationship with God. This was the first step in introducing new moral and ethical values to society.
- 2) Crisis Management with the Principle of Unity. When Egypt faced a food crisis, Prophet Yusuf, guided by revelation, led an effort to efficiently manage resources. This success not only demonstrated his ability as a visionary leader but also implied the presence of a divine power guiding him. Yusuf often attributed his success to his belief in One God, which began to open the minds of the Egyptian people to the power of divinity beyond their belief in many gods.

- 3) Spreading the Concept of God through Social Policy. As an important official in control of the Egyptian treasury, Joseph implemented policies that were fair, balanced, and full of compassion. He helped not only Egyptians, but also foreigners who came for help during the famine, including his own family from the land of Canaan. Through this policy, Yusuf shows that belief in one God brings universal human values, such as justice and equality.
- 4) Spiritual Dialogue in the Palace Environment. Although he did not explicitly impose the teachings of monotheism, Prophet Yusuf used his position to dialogue and explain the concept of divinity to Pharaoh and his closest people in the palace. Pharaoh's belief and recognition of the wisdom and guidance of the God worshiped by Joseph reflected a new spiritual acceptance among the Egyptian elite, although this change did not immediately change the entire belief system of the country.
- 5) Transformation of Society. Through personal example and policies based on divine principles, the teachings of the oneness of God brought by the Prophet Yusuf began to slowly penetrate society. Although the majority of Egyptian society still maintained polytheistic beliefs, the influence of Yusuf's spirituality provided a new alternative in understanding the relationship between humans and God. Society began to appreciate the principles of monotheism, especially regarding justice and honesty, which were the main characteristics of Yusuf's leadership. This process of spiritual transformation went hand in hand with the social and economic changes made by the Prophet Yusuf, thus forming a new foundation for Egyptian society that was more oriented towards justice and morality, while also introducing them to the concept of the One God.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that there were several efforts made by the prophet Yusuf as in changing Egypt to be better and more prosperous when he was in office, including through the integrity of the prophet Yusuf himself, the prophet Yusuf as was an honest, forgiving and obedient person to Allah SWT so that the prophet Yusuf was trusted and emulated by the Egyptian people, then the social transformation carried out by the prophet Yusuf as was by carrying out cultural diffusion, the culture that was always shown by the prophet Yusuf included politeness and wisdom so that the Egyptian people were motivated to obey and become better. As well as the spiritual transformation carried out by the prophet Yusuf as was shown by the following steps, influencing morals and exemplary behavior, crisis management with the principle of monotheism, spreading the concept of divinity through social policies, spiritual dialogue in the palace environment and subtle transformation of society so that a society was formed that was moral and obedient to Allah Swt.

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