

الْغَيْبِ أَمْ اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمَنِ عَهْدًا ﴿٧٨﴾ كَلَّا ۖ سَنَكْتُبُ مَا يَقُولُ
 وَنَمُدُّ لَهُ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ مَدًّا ﴿٧٩﴾ وَنَرِيهِ مَا يَقُولُ وَيَأْتِينَا فَرْدًا ﴿٨٠﴾
 وَاتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ آلِهَةً لِيَكُونُوا لَهُمْ عِزًّا ﴿٨١﴾ كَلَّا ۖ
 سَيَكْفُرُونَ بِعِبَادَتِهِمْ وَيَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ ضِدًّا ﴿٨٢﴾

Did you, then, see him who rejected Our verses and said, "I shall certainly be given wealth and children?" [77] Has he peeped in the unseen or taken a covenant with the Raḥmān (All-Merciful)? [78] Never. We will write what he says and extend for him the punishment extensively. [79] And We will inherit from him what he is talking about and he will come to Us all alone. [80] And they have taken gods other than Allah so that they might be a might for them. [81] Never. They will soon deny their worshipping and they will be just the opposite for them. [82]

Commentary

لَأَوْتَيْنَ مَالًا وَوَلَدًا ("I shall certainly be given wealth and children". - 19:77) Bukhārī and Muslim relate the story of Sayyidnā Khabab Ibn Al-'Aratt who had lent some money to 'Ās Ibn Wā'il. When pressed to return the loan, 'Ās Ibn Wail said that he would not make the payment until he (Sayyidnā Khabab) dissociated himself from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Sayyidnā Khabab replied that he would never do that - not until 'Ās was dead and rose to life again. At this 'Ās Ibn Wail said, "What? will I be brought to life again after I am dead? If so I will repay the loan only after I am brought back to life again because even then I will have my wealth and my children." (Qurṭubī)

This verse is an answer to 'Ās Ibn Wail's boastful claim. How does he know that when he is brought back to life he will still have his wealth and children?

أَطَّلَعَ الْغَيْبِ (Has he peeped in the unseen - 19:78) It is obvious that nothing of this kind has happened. Then why has he considered it as a surety?

أَمْ اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمَنِ عَهْدًا

"Or taken a covenant with The Raḥmān (All-Merciful)" - 19:78.

Or has he entered into a covenant with Allah Ta'ālā and obtained a promise from Him for his wealth and his children?

وَنَرْتُهُ مَا يَقُولُ

"And We will inherit from him what he is talking about" - 19:80.

It is foolish of him to talk about retaining his wealth and children in the Hereafter because he will have to leave behind even these things which he possesses in this world, and his wealth and children will all revert to Allah Ta'ālā.

وَيَأْتِينَا فَرْدًا

"And he will come to Us all alone" - 19:80.

And on the Day of Judgment he will appear in God's presence alone without his wealth and his children.

وَيَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ ضِدًّا

"And they will be just the opposite for them" - 19:82.

The idols and the false gods whom the infidels worshipped in the hope of winning their help will turn against them on the Day of Judgment. God will grant speech to them and they will say, "O God! finish these sinners because they turned away from you and made us the objects of their worship."

Verses 83 - 87

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَا أَرْسَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِينَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ تَؤُزُّهُمْ أَزًّا ﴿٨٣﴾ فَلَا تَعْجَلْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ إِنَّمَا نَعُدُّ لَهُمْ عَدًّا ﴿٨٤﴾ يَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ الْمُتَّقِينَ إِلَى الرَّحْمَنِ وَفْدًا ﴿٨٥﴾ وَنَسُوقُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ وَرْدًا ﴿٨٦﴾ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ الشَّفَاعَةَ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمَنِ عَهْدًا ﴿٨٧﴾

Did you not see that We have sent the devils onto the disbelievers inciting them with all their incitements. [83] So do not hurry about them; We are but counting for them a count down. [84] The day We will assemble the God-fearing before the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) as guests [85] and will drive the sinners towards the

Jahannam as herds towards water, [86] they will have no power of intercession except the one who has taken a covenant with the Raḥmān (All-Merciful).[87]

Commentary

تَوَزَّهُمْ أَزًّا

"Inciting them with all their incitements" - 19:83.

In Arabic language the words **حَضَّ**- **فَزَّ**- **أَزَّ**- **هَزَّ** are synonymous, differing only in shade or degree, and mean to urge, incite, instigate. The word **أَزَّ** means to apply strong pressure, to persuade somebody to do something. The sense of this verse is that the Devils instigate the unbelievers to persist in their evil ways by presenting before their eyes the benefits and hiding from them the wickedness of their evil deeds.

إِنَّمَا نَعُدُّ لَهُمْ عَدًّا

"We are but counting for them a count down." - 19:84

This verse means: "Do not be impatient about their punishment because it is going to befall upon them in any case - and very soon. We have allowed them a fixed term in this world and that term is about to end. Then will come their retribution." **نَعُدُّ لَهُمْ** means: "We are counting for them, i.e. they do not have control on anything. Their days are numbered and We keep a count of every moment of their life and everything they do."

Once Ma'mūn Rāshīd read Sūrah Maryam. Upon reading this particular verse, he desired that Ibn Simak, one of the Islamic scholars sitting in that meeting with him, to say something on it. Thereupon Ibn Simak submitted that when our breaths are numbered and their number cannot be enhanced, they will soon come to an end. The same notion is reflected in the following poetic verse:

☆ حیاتک انفاست تعد فکلماً ☆ مضی نفس منک انتقصت به جزءاً

That is, the breaths of your life are counted. With every passing breath, your life gets reduced to that extent.

It is said that during one span of twenty-four hours, one breathes twenty-four thousand times. (Qurṭubī)

The following stanza explores the same context:

وكيف يفرح بالدنيا ولذتها ☆ فتي يُعدّ عليه اللفظ والنفس

That is, how can one be so engrossed and relaxed with the worldly pleasures, while his words and breaths are being counted. (Rūh)

يَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ الْمُتَّقِينَ إِلَى الرَّحْمَنِ وَفْدًا

"The day We will assemble the God-fearing before the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) as guests." - 19:85.

The word **رفد** applies to those who are received by rulers and princes with respect and honour. According to some sayings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ he said, "These men will ride on their mounts which they used in their worldly life." Some say that their own virtuous deeds will take the shape of their mounts.

إِلَى جَهَنَّمَ وَرْدًا

"Towards the Jahannam as herds towards water" - 19:86.

وَرْدٌ means to go towards water and since only a thirsty man or animal goes towards water, this word has been translated to denote a thirsty person.

مَنْ اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمَنِ عَهْدًا

"Except the one who has taken a covenant with the Raḥmān (All-Merciful)" - 19:87.

Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ has said that **عَهْدٌ** means a declaration of firm belief in the Unity of Allah Ta‘ālā, while others say that **عَهْدٌ** means committing the Qur‘ān to memory. In brief only those people will have the permission to intercede with Allah who stand firm by their covenant to adhere to the true faith. (Rūh)

Verses 88 - 98

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا ﴿٨٨﴾ لَقَدْ جِئْتُمْ شَيْئًا إِدًّا ﴿٨٩﴾ تَكَادُ
السَّمَاوَاتُ يَتَفَطَّرْنَ مِنْهُ وَتَنْشَقُّ الْأَرْضُ وَتَخِرُّ الْجِبَالُ هَدًّا ﴿٩٠﴾ أَنْ
دَعَوْا لِلرَّحْمَنِ وَلَدًا ﴿٩١﴾ وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لِلرَّحْمَنِ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا
﴿٩٢﴾ إِنْ كُلُّ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا آتِي الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدًا

﴿٩٣﴾ لَقَدْ أَحْضَاهُمْ وَعَدَّهُمْ عَدًّا ﴿٩٤﴾ وَكُلُّهُمْ آتِيهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
 فَرْدًا ﴿٩٥﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ
 الرَّحْمَنُ وُدًّا ﴿٩٦﴾ فَإِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنَاهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لِتُبَشِّرَ بِهِ الْمُتَّقِينَ وَتُنذِرَ
 بِهِ قَوْمًا لُدًّا ﴿٩٧﴾ وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْنٍ هَلْ تُحِسُّ مِنْهُمْ
 مِّنْ أَحَدٍ أَوْ تَسْمَعُ لَهُمْ رِكْزًا ﴿٩٨﴾

And they say, "The Raḥmān (All-Merciful) has taken to Himself a son." [88] You have come up, indeed, with something so abominable [89] that the heavens are about to explode therewith and the earth to burst and the mountains to fall down crumbling, [90] for they have ascribed a son to the Raḥmān (All-Merciful), [91] while it is not befitting for the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) to have a son. [92] There is none in the heavens and the earth, but bound to come to the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) as a salve. [93] He has fully encompassed them and precisely calculated their numbers, [94] and each one of them is bound to come to Him on the Day of Judgment, all alone. [95] Surely, those who believe and do the righteous deeds, for them the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) will create love. [96] So We have made it easy through your tongue so that you give with it the good news to the God-fearing and warn with it an obstinate people. [97] And how many a generation We have destroyed before them. Do you sense (the presence of) any one of them or hear from them even a whisper? [98]

Commentary

وَتَخِرُّ الْجِبَالُ هَدًّا

"And the mountains to fall down crumbling" - 19:90.

These verses suggest that the earth, the mountains and everything that grows thereon possess a certain degree of knowledge and intelligence though in their case these perceptions are not of the same extent as that bestowed on human beings. This explains the fact that everything in the world glorifies Allah Ta'ālā as will be evident from the verse.

وَأَنَّ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ

"And there is not a single thing that does not extol His purity

and praise." - 17:44.

These verses refer to this very perception of these things that to associate anything or being with Allah Ta'ālā, specially to assert that He has children is a sin which makes the earth and the mountains quake with fear. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ؓ has said that except humans every created thing is terrified of any suggestion of association with Allah (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī).

وَعَدَّهُمْ عَدًّا

"And precisely calculated their numbers" - 19:94.

It means that Allah Ta'ālā has full knowledge of their doings.

سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ وُدًّا

"For them the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) will create love." - 19:96.

It means that for those who are steadfast in their faith in Him, Allah creates an environment of friendship and love for each other, which consequently promotes mutual amity and goodwill among the true Muslims. Furthermore, by their conduct and behavior they command the admiration and respect of all those with whom they come into contact. Bukhārī, Tirmidhī and others have related on the authority of Sayyidnā Abu Hurairah that the Holy Prophet ؓ once said that when Allah Ta'ālā is pleased with someone He says to Jibra'īl, "I am pleased with so and so and I desire that you too should show favour to him." Jibra'īl makes an announcement to this effect in all the skies so that their residents begin to harbor a liking for that person. Then this love descends upon the earth and the people of the earth also begin to love him. The Holy Prophet ؓ then quoted this verse. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ وُدًّا

"Surely those who believe and do the righteous deeds, for them the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) will create love." - 19:96.

Haram bin Ḥayyan has said that when a person devotes himself wholly towards Allah He fills the hearts of all believers with love for him. (Qurtubī)

When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalilullah ؑ, planned to go back to Syria, after leaving behind his wife Hajira and his baby son Sayyidnā

Ismā'il عليه السلام in the desert enclosed by the barren hills of Makkah in accordance with the command of Allah, he also prayed for both of them with the following words

فَجَعَلْ أَقْبِدَةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِي إِلَيْهِمْ

"So make hearts of a number of people yearn toward them." -
14:37.

The prayer was granted so that even after the lapse of many millennia people all over the world entertain great love for Makkah and its inhabitants. They visit the place in large numbers, and not only incur heavy expenditure but also endure great hardships while making the journey.

أَوْ تَسْمَعُ لَهُمْ رِكْرًا

"Or hear from them even a whisper" - 19:98.

The word رِكْر means a faint, unintelligible sound such as a death-rattle. The meaning of the verse is that there have been many kings who ruled vast empires, exercised unlimited authority and lived in great splendor, but when the wrath of Allah caught upon them for their sinful acts, they were annihilated in such a manner that not even a whisper or a feeble motion is now being heard of them.

Alḥamdulillāh

The Commentary on

Sūrah Maryam

Ends here.

Sūrah Ṭā-Hā

Sūrah Ṭā-Hā was revealed in Makkah and it has 135 Verses and 8 sections

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

The other name of this Sūrah, according to As-Sakhawi is Sūrah Kalīm (كَلِیْم) because it contains the detailed story of Kalīmullah Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام.

It is reported in the Musnad by Dārimi on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that two thousand years before Allah Ta'ālā created the sky and the earth, He recited (i.e. to the angels) Sūrahs Ṭā-Hā and Yāsīn, the angels said, "Fortunate and blessed are the people to whom these Sūrahs will be revealed, and blessed are the chests which will preserve (memorize) them, and blessed are the tongues which will recite them." And it was this very Sūrah which brought about the conversion of Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه who had actually set out fully determined to kill the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This story has been related in all the books of *Sīrah* (Biographies of the Holy Prophet ﷺ).

The story as narrated by Ibn Ishāq runs as follows: One day Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه set out, with sword in hand, fully determined to kill the Holy Prophet ﷺ. On the way Nu'aim Ibn 'Abdullāh accosted him and asked him where was he headed to. Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه replied that he was going to finish off the man who had sown discord among the Quraish, vilified their faith, seduced them from belief and disparaged their idols. Nu'aim then said "O 'Umar! You are deceiving yourself. If you kill Muḥammad ﷺ, do you really think that his clan Banū 'Abd Munāf will spare your life? If you have any sense, better see to your own sister and her husband because they both have become Muslims and have accepted the religion of Muhammad ﷺ." Sayyidnā

‘Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ؓ was shaken by what he heard and retraced his steps towards the house of his sister and her husband. At that moment Sayyidnā Khabbāb bin ‘Arath, one of the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, was teaching both of them Sūrah Ṭā-Ḥā which was written on a sheet of paper.

When they realized that Sayyidnā ‘Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ؓ was coming, Sayyidnā Khabbāb Ibn ‘Arath ؓ hid himself in another room or in some corner of the house and Sayyidnā ‘Umar's sister hid the sheet of paper under her thigh. But Sayyidnā ‘Umar had heard Sayyidnā Khabbāb Ibn Art ؓ reciting something, and he asked his sister what was it. She tried to evade the question but he would not be put off. Finally he came out in the open and told them point blank that he had just learned about them becoming Muslim and followers of Muḥammad ﷺ. Having said this, he started beating his brother-in-law Sa‘īd Ibn Zaid and when his sister Fāṭimah رضى الله عنها came to the rescue of her husband he beat her too and left her bleeding.

Sayyidah Fāṭimah رضى الله عنها and her husband had enough of it and they called out defiantly, "All right, you listen now! It is true that we have become Muslims and have adopted the Faith of Allah Ta‘ālā and His Prophet ﷺ. Now you do whatever you want". Sayyidnā ‘Umar ؓ then saw that his sister was bleeding and he felt remorse for being too rough with her. He asked her to show him the sheet of paper from which she was reading so that he could learn something about the teachings of Muḥammad ﷺ. Sayyidnā ‘Umar ؓ was a literate person. That is why he wanted to read the sheet of paper himself. His sister was afraid that he might either destroy or desecrate it, but he assured her on oath that he would do neither and promised to return it to her after he had read it. When she saw the way things were moving and noticed a change in his attitude, she even began to entertain the hope that he too might become a Muslim. But she told him that he was unclean and only those who were clean could touch the sheet. So Sayyidnā ‘Umar ؓ bathed and his sister gave him the sheet on which Sūrah Ṭā-Ḥā was written. He read the first few lines and said, "It is written in beautiful language and appears to be worthy of respect." Khabbāb Ibn ‘Arath who had remained hidden all this time, now came out and said, "O ‘Umar Ibn Khattab! Allah Ta‘ālā is very Merciful and it is my conviction that He had chosen you in response to the

ardent wishes of the Holy Prophet ﷺ whom I heard only yesterday making the following supplication to Allah Ta'ālā بن أبي الحكم ("O Allah! Strengthen Islam through Abul Ḥikam Ibn Hishām (meaning Abu Jahl) or 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb"). The intention was that the conversion of either one of these two men would lend great strength to the Muslims who were as yet very weak. Ibn Khabbāb said, "O 'Umar! This is your chance. Do not miss it". At this, Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb requested Khabbāb ﷺ to take him to the Holy Prophet ﷺ (Qurṭubī). What followed next and how he came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and embraced Islam is too well known to need a repetition at this place.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 8

طه ﴿١﴾ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى ﴿٢﴾ إِلَّا تَذِكْرَةً لِمَنْ
يَخْشَى ﴿٣﴾ تَنْزِيلًا مِمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ وَالسَّمَوَاتِ الْعُلَى ﴿٤﴾
الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى ﴿٥﴾ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي
الْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرَى ﴿٦﴾ وَإِنْ تَجْهَرُ بِالْقَوْلِ فَإِنَّهُ
يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى ﴿٧﴾ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۗ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى
﴿٨﴾

Ṭā-Hā [1] We did not reveal the Qur'ān to you to (make you) face hardship [2] rather to remind him who has the fear [3] a revelation from the One Who created the earth, and the heavens so high. [4] The Raḥmān (the All-Merciful) has positioned Himself on the Throne. [5] To Him belongs whatever there is in the heavens, whatever there is in the earth, whatever there is between them and whatever there is beneath the soil. [6]

And if you pronounce the word aloud, then (it makes no difference, for) He certainly knows the secret and what

is even more hidden. [7] (Such is) Allah. There is no god but He. For Him are the Beautiful Names. [8]

Commentary

طه (Ṭā-Ḥā) Many Commentators have assigned different meanings to this word. Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ thinks it means يا رجل (O man!) while according to Ibn ‘Umar ؓ it means يا حبيبي (O my Dear!). It is also suggested that طه and يس are the names of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. However the most obvious explanation is the one given by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ and the majority of scholars, namely that like many other isolated letters حروف مقطعه appearing at the beginning of several chapters of the Qur’ān (such as اَلَمْ), this word is also among the مُتَشَابِهَات or mysteries whose meaning is known only to Allah Ta‘ālā.

مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى (We did not reveal the Qur’ān to you to [make you] face hardship - 20:2) The word لِتَشْقَى is derived from شقاء which means pain and distress. In the early days of Islam when the Qur’ān was first revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions used to spend whole nights in prayers and in reciting the Qur’ān, as a result of which his feet used to get swollen due to standing for long hours in the prayers. Whereas during day time he would worry himself on how to bring light to the infidels in order that they should accept the teachings of the Qur’ān. This verse seeks to lessen the burden of long hours of prayers by informing the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the Qur’ān was not revealed to inflict toil and hardship on him and that it was not expected of him to stay awake the whole night reciting the Qur’ān. Thereafter, the Holy Prophet ﷺ adopted a routine by which he rested in the early hours of the night and would get up later to offer the ṣalāh of tahajjud.

This verse also suggests that the duty of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is merely to convey the Message of Allah Ta‘ālā to the unbelievers, and thereafter he need not concern himself as to who accepted the Message and who did not.

إِلَّا تَذَكَّرْهُ لِمَنْ يُخَشَى (Rather to remind him who has the fear - 20:3). Ibn Kathīr has narrated that in the early days following the revelation of the Qur’ān while the believers spent whole nights in prayers, the infidels mocked and taunted them that the revelation of the Qur’ān brought nothing to them but hardship, allowing them no rest and peace. In this

verse, Allah Ta'ālā says that these wretched and miserable people cannot sense that the Qur'ān and the knowledge communicated through it can bring only blessings and felicity. This fact is not appreciated by them because they are ignorant and misguided. In a Ḥadīth which has been related by Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "When Allah intends to reward a person, He gives him the correct perception of religion". (Ṣaḥīhain)

Here Imām Ibn Kathīr has recorded another authentic Ḥadīth which has been related by Ṭabarāni from Tha'labah Ibn Al-Ḥakam and which will be good news for the learned people :

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: يقول الله تعالى للعلماء يوم القيامة اذا قعد على كرسيه لقضاء عبادهم: انى لم اجعل علمى وحكمتى فيكم الا وانا اريد ان اغفر لكم على ما كان منكم ولا ابالى (ابن كثير ص ١٤١ ج ٣)

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "On the Day of Judgment when Allah will ascend His Kursiyy (Chair) to pronounce judgment on the actions of His servants He will tell the learned people that He had placed His knowledge and wisdom in their hearts for the sole reason that He wished to forgive them in spite of their failings, and that these matters were of no concern to Him."

It is evident that in this Ḥadīth the reference to learned people applies to those only who possess the fear of Allah Ta'ālā which is a sure sign of Qur'ānic knowledge.

عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى (Positioned Himself on the Throne - 20:5): About these words the truth is what the majority of the early scholars have held that the exact nature of 'Istiwa' (positioning) is not known to anybody. It is included in 'Mutashabihat' (the verses meaning of which is unknown). A Muslim has to believe that Istiwā' 'Ala-Al-'Arsh' (positioning on the Throne) is true, the nature of which must be in accordance with the high attributes of Allah, but nobody can comprehend it in this world.

وَمَا تَحْتِ التُّرَى (And whatever is beneath the soil - 20:6). (تُرَى) (soil) means wet earth which comes out after digging upto a certain depth. Human knowledge does not go beyond تُرَى and what is beneath it is known only to Allah. Some years back scientists and researchers, using the latest and the most sophisticated instruments, spent considerable time and effort to pierce across the centre of the earth. According to newspaper reports they

were able to penetrate upto a depth of six miles only after which they came across a rock casing and all their efforts to bore further down failed. Scientists were able to collect data only upto six miles, while the diameter of the earth covers thousands of miles. One has to admit, therefore, that the knowledge of what is below the soil is a special attribute of Allah.

يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى (Knows the secret and what is even more hidden - 20:7). سِرٌّ (Sirr: Secret) means something which a man hides in his heart and which is not known to anyone else and اخفى (what is more hidden) means a thought which has not even formed in his mind and will take shape later on. Allah is fully aware of what ideas a man conceals in his heart at a particular moment and what thoughts he will entertain in the future, while the person concerned himself does not know what thoughts will come to his mind in the days to come.

Verses 9 - 16

وَهَلْ أُنْتِكَ حَدِيثٌ مُوسَى ﴿٩﴾ إِذْ رَأَى نَارًا فَقَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّي آتِيكُم مِّنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ أَوْ أَجْدٌ عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى ﴿١٠﴾ فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ يَمْوَسَى ﴿١١﴾ إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ إِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى ﴿١٢﴾ وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَى ﴿١٣﴾ إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي ۖ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي ﴿١٤﴾ إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا لِتُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَى ﴿١٥﴾ فَلَا يَصُدُّكَ عَنْهَا مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَتَرْدَىٰ ﴿١٦﴾

And has there come to you the story of Mūsā? [9] When he saw a fire and said to his family, "Wait. I have noticed a fire. Perhaps I bring you an ember from it, or find some guidance by the fire." [10]

So when he came to it, he was called, "O Mūsā, [11] it is Me, your Lord, so remove your shoes; you are in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā. [12] And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed: [13] Surely, I AM ALLAH. There is no god but I, so worship Me and establish

Ṣalāh for My remembrance. [14] Surely, the Hour has to come. I would keep it secret so that everyone is given a return for the effort one makes. [15] So the one who does not believe in it and follows his desires must not make you neglectful of it, otherwise you will perish. [16]

Commentary

هَلْ أَتَكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَى (And has there come to you the story of Mūsā? - 20:9)
In the earlier verses, reference was made to the greatness of the Qur'an and also to the reverence due to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Thereafter, the story of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has been related so that the Holy Prophet ﷺ should become fully aware of the trials and tribulations which afflict the prophets in the discharge of their missions, and which were rendered with courage and fortitude by the earlier prophets. This was to prepare the Holy Prophet ﷺ for the great mission which was entrusted to him. There is another verse which conveys the same sense:

وَكَلَّا نَقْصُ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الرُّسُلِ مَا نُثَبِّتُ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ

"And We narrate to you everything from the events of the messengers with which We strengthen your heart." (11:120)

It means that these stories are narrated to prepare you (the Holy Prophet ﷺ) and make you strong to undertake the responsibilities of the mission.

The story of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام which is related here begins like this. At Madyan he stayed with Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام with the understanding that he would serve the latter for a period of eight or ten years. According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ, after the expiry of this period he sought the permission of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام to proceed to Egypt to see his mother and sister. He had fled earlier from Egypt fearing capture or death by the soldiers of the Pharaoh but this danger had now passed through the lapse of so many years. Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام willingly gave the permission and sent him away, with his wife (who was the latter's daughter). He also gave him some money and a few articles which they might use during their journey. Since he was apprehensive of the hostility of some of the rulers in Syria, he adopted a less frequented route. It was winter season and his pregnant wife was very close to confinement. The route which he had taken was unfamiliar to him and he lost his bearings. He came out to the west, i.e. the right side of the mount of Ṭūr.

It was a dark and cold night and to add to the misery, his wife began to experience birth pangs. He tried to strike fire with flint but did not succeed. In this state of utter confusion he saw light on the Ṭūr mountain which, infact, was the Nūr (the light symbolizing the truth). So he said to his family, "I have noticed fire. I am going there to bring for you a live coal and I may also find someone who could tell me the way to Egypt." The presence of his wife on the journey is well established. According to some traditions there was a servant with him who is also addressed. Others say that there were some other companions also who were separated when they lost their way. (Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ)

فَلَمَّا أَنهَا (So when he came to it - 20:11): means that he approached the fire which he had seen from a distance. Musnad by Ahmad, on the authority of Wahb Ibn Munabbih رحمه الله تعالى reports that when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام drew near the fire he saw a very strange scene. A fire was blazing on a green tree without scorching even a leaf or a branch. On the other hand the flame added manifold to the beauty and the freshness of the tree. He stood there quite a while watching this strange sight waiting for a chance to pick up a piece of burning wood. At last he collected some dry grass and tried to light it but as soon as he pushed the grass towards the fire, it retracted. It is also related that the fire advanced towards him and he drew back in consternation. Consequently he was unable to collect any fire. And as he stood, not knowing what to do, a mysterious voice called him. This happened in a plain called Ṭuwā which was to his right side and at the foot of this mountain.

نُودَىٰ بِمُوسَىٰ إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ (He was called, "O Mūsā, it is Me, your Lord, remove your shoes - 20:11,12). It is related in Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ, Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī and other books that the voice which Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام heard appeared to come from all directions and not from any particular direction. At the same time the manner in which the voice reached his perception was most extraordinary, because it was heard not only through his ears but by the entire body. This, indeed, was a miracle! What the voice said was that the light that he saw was not fire but a particular kind of divine manifestation. And the voice said, "Surely I am your Lord". The question arises: how did Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام know that it was the voice of Allah Ta'ālā? The answer is that Allah Ta'ālā had created in his heart the conviction that the voice which he heard was

really the voice of Allah Ta'ālā. Then there was the circumstance that the fire, instead of burning the tree added to its beauty and luster. Also the manner in which the voice was perceived by all the parts of his body and not only by his ears, were all factors which left no doubt in his mind that the voice he heard was really the voice of Allah Ta'ālā.

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام learned the words of Allah directly

It is mentioned in a report of Wahb mentioned in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī on the authority of Musnad by Aḥmad that when the mysterious voice called him "O Mūsā!", he replied, "I hear the voice O Allah! But I do not know from where it comes. Where are you, O Allah?" And Allah Ta'ālā said, "I am above you in front of you, to your right and your left. Indeed I am all around you." Then Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام said, "O Allah, do I hear these words from you directly or through an angel sent by You?" And Allah Ta'ālā said, "I myself am speaking to you." According to Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī this proves that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام heard this كلام لفظي (spoken words) directly from Allah Ta'ālā. There is a sect among the Sunnis who believe that كلام لفظي (spoken words) can also be heard.

To take off shoes at a sacred place is an act of respect

فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ: (Remove your shoes - 20:12). The command to take off shoes was given because it was a sacred place and it was necessary to take off shoes to show it proper respect. Another reason for this command may be that since shoes are made from the hides of dead animals, they should be removed when entering upon sacred places. Sayyidnā 'Alī عليه السلام, Ḥasan al-Baṣri and Ibn Juraij رحمهم الله تعالى have supported the first explanation and reasoned that the real purpose in commanding Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to remove his shoes was that the soles of his feet should come into contact with the soil of this hallowed place and be blessed thereby. Others have said that by this command Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was required to show humility and in earlier times devout and pious believers used to take off their shoes when circumambulating around the Holy Ka'bah.

There is a Ḥadīth that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ once saw Bashīr Ibn Khaṣaṣiā walking through the graves with his shoes on, said:

اِذَا كُنْتَ فِي مِثْلِ هَذَا الْمَكَانِ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ

"When you pass by a place which needs to be respected, take off your shoes."

All the jurists are unanimous that if the shoes are clean they may be worn when offering prayers and it is established by authentic reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his companions often wore clean shoes when saying prayers. But their common practice appears to be of removing the shoes when saying prayers, because it is closer to humility.

إِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى (You are in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā - 20:12): Allah, in his Divine Wisdom, has granted special status to some selected places such as Baitullah (the Holy Ka'bah), the Aqṣā Mosque, Masjid Nabawi etc. Wādī Ṭuwā (the valley of Ṭuwā) is also one such sacred place and is situated at the foot of the mount of Ṭūr.

How to conduct oneself when the Qur'an is being recited

فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَى (So listen to what is revealed - 20:13). Sayyidnā Wahb Ibn Munabbih has said that the correct behavior while listening to the recitation of the Qur'an is, that one sits still, refrains from any unnecessary movement in a way that no organ of his body is involved in any other work, keeps eyes down - concentrates the mind towards understanding its meaning. The person who listens to the Holy Qur'an in this respectful manner is rewarded by Allah Ta'ālā with a better understanding of His word.

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي (Surely I AM ALLAH. There is no god but I, so worship Me and establish Ṣalāh for My remembrance - 20:14): with these words Allah Ta'ālā bestowed upon Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام a knowledge of all the basic principles of the true Faith, namely the Oneness of Allah Ta'ālā, the prophethood and the Hereafter. فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَى (So listen to what is revealed) refers to prophethood. فَاعْبُدْنِي means "worship Me alone and no one else". This points to the Oneness of Allah Ta'ālā. إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ (Surely, the Hour has to come) points to the inevitability of the Hereafter. Although the word فَاعْبُدْنِي (worship Me) encompasses the injunction for prayers also yet it has been mentioned separately to stress its special merit relative to the other forms of worship. It is the pillar of the Faith and its neglect is the mark of the infidels.

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي (Establish Ṣalāh for My remembrance - 20:14): means that the essence of prayer is the remembrance of Allah Ta'ālā and that the Ṣalāh, from beginning to end is nothing but remembering Allah - with the tongue, the heart and the other organs of the body. Therefore,

one should not neglect to remember Allah Ta'ālā while praying. This sentence also means that if a person omits to say his prayers at the appointed time due to over-sleeping or forgetfulness while engrossed in some other task, he should say his prayers as soon as he wakes up from sleep or becomes aware of his lapse. This is according to Ḥadīth.

أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا (I would keep it secret - 20:15): Allah Ta'ālā says that He wishes to keep the circumstances relating to the Day of Judgement hidden from all created things including prophets and angels. The word أكاد (I would) gives a subtle hint that it is only to induce people to good deeds that the coming of the Day of Judgment has been disclosed, otherwise even this fact would have been concealed.

لِنُجْزِيَ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَى (So that everyone is given a return for the effort one makes - 20:15). If this phrase is taken to be linked with the word آتِيَةً (has to come) then it would mean that this world is not a place of requital. Here a person does not receive recompense according to his merits and even if he receives some reward in this world it is just a token which does not constitute the full recompense of his deeds. It is, therefore, essential that there should be a time when everybody would receive his due reward.

Another possibility about the construction of this phrase is that it is taken to be linked with the words أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا (I would keep it secret - 20:15). In this case, it would mean that the philosophy in not revealing the time of death and the Day of Judgment is that people should continue in their endeavours and should not cease to strive in the belief that their own death or the Day of Judgment are still far away in the future. (Rūḥ)

فَلَا يَصُدُّكَ عَنْهَا (must not make you neglectful of it - 20:16) Here Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام is cautioned by Allah Ta'ālā lest he should allow himself to be led away by the infidels and become negligent about the Day of Judgment because that would be the cause of his ruination. It is clear that a Prophet and a Messenger who is impeccable cannot commit such a lapse but the fact that such a warning has been addressed to him is meant to warn his followers as well as mankind at large to be cautious in the matter.

Verses 17 - 24

وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِينِكَ يَا مُوسَى ﴿١٧﴾ قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ ۚ أَتَوَكَّوْا عَلَيْهَا
 وَأَهشُّ بِهَا عَلَى غَنَمِي وَلِيَ فِيهَا مَآرِبُ أُخْرَى ﴿١٨﴾ قَالَ أَلْقِهَا
 يَا مُوسَى ﴿١٩﴾ فَأَلْقَاهَا فَإِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَى ﴿٢٠﴾ قَالَ خُذْهَا وَلَا
 تَخَفْ ۗ وَتَنفَسُ نَسْفَةً سَعِيْدُهَا سَيْرَتَهَا الْأُولَى ﴿٢١﴾ وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ إِلَى
 جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجُ بَيضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ آيَةً أُخْرَى ﴿٢٢﴾ لِنُرِيكَ مِنْ
 آيَاتِنَا الْكُبْرَى ﴿٢٣﴾ اذْهَبْ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَى ﴿٢٤﴾

And what is that in your right hand, O Mūsā?" [17] He said, "It is my staff. I lean on it, and with it I beat down leaves for my sheep, and for me it has many other uses." [18] He said, "Throw it down O Mūsā". [19] So, he threw it down, and suddenly it was a snake, running. [20] He said, "Pick it up and be not scared. We shall restore it to its former state. [21] And put your hand under your arm and it will come out white, without any disease as another sign, [22] so that We may show you some of Our great signs. [23] Go to the Pharaoh. He has really transgressed." [24]

Commentary

وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِينِكَ يَا مُوسَى The question: "What is in your right hand, O Mūsā"? - 20:17 marks the beginning of the special favour which Allah Ta'ālā showed towards Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in order to dispel the fear created by the unusual sights that he had seen and the Divine Word that he had heard. The style in which Allah Ta'ālā addressed him was friendly, inquiring from him what he held in his hand. Besides there was a subtle purpose in the question, namely to make him aware that what he held in his hand was a staff made of wood and nothing more. And when he had satisfied himself again that it was indeed a wooden staff, then the miracle of turning it into a serpent was revealed, thus precluding any doubt in his mind that in the darkness of the night he might have picked up a serpent instead of his staff.

قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ (He said, "It is my staff" - 20:18). The simple question which

was put to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام i.e. "What is in your hand?" called for an equally brief answer, such as, "It is a staff". But he volunteered additional information which was outside the scope of the question put to him. First, he said that the staff belonged to him; second, that it served him many purposes, namely that he often reclined on it, and also beat down leaves from trees for his goats; third, that he put it to many other uses. This long and detailed reply is a perfect combination of extreme love and adoration on the one hand and profound reverence on the other. It is a natural human instinct that when a person finds the object of his adoration to be kind and attentive, he wishes to prolong the conversation in order to get the best advantage. At the same time the dictates of extreme respect require that the conversation should remain within proper limits and not become too lengthy. For this reason he ended his reply with a brief statement وَلِي فِيهَا مَارِبٌ أُخْرَى i.e. "And for me it has many other uses", but he did not give any detail of those "other uses". (Rūḥ and Maḥzarī)

From this verse Qurṭubī has deduced in his Tafsīr that when needed, it is permissible, while answering a question, to include matters which are not specifically covered in the question.

Rule

This verse also shows that carrying a staff is a practice followed by the prophets. The Holy Prophet ﷺ also used to carry a staff in his hand and this practice has numerous religious as well as mundane advantages.

فَإِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَى (And suddenly it was a snake running - 20:20): When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, in obedience to the command of Allah Ta'ālā, cast down his staff it turned into a serpent. The Qur'ān has described this serpent at one place as كَانَهَا جَانًّا (28:31). The word جَانًّا means a small and slim snake. At another place it has been referred to as فَإِذَا هِيَ تُعْبَانٌ (26:32). The word تُعْبَانٌ means a long and thick snake. The word حَيَّةٌ occurring in this verse is a generic name used for snakes of all sizes and thickness. These different words can be reconciled by the fact that this serpent was slim and small in the beginning and grew later on in size and thickness. Or that this serpent was originally long and thick and has been called جَانًّا by reason of its fast speed because as a general rule big and thick snakes are slow moving. The word كَانَهَا used in this verse, which means "as if" also points to the fact that it has been compared to جَانًّا on account of its swift movements. (Maḥzarī)

وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ إِلَى جَنَاحِكَ (And put your hand under your arm - 20:22). The word جَنَاح means fore-limb of an animal or wing of a bird. Here Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was commanded to press his hand under his armpit so that when he brings it out it will shine as brilliantly as the sun, and this will be the second miracle granted to him. This is the meaning given to the words by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه (Mazhari).

إِذْهَبْ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ (Go to the Pharaoh - 20:24). Having suitably armed him with two great miracles, Allah Ta'ālā commanded Sayyidna Mūsā عليه السلام to proceed to Egypt and invite the Pharaoh to accept the true faith because he had exceeded all bounds in his tyranny and misdeeds.

Verses 25 - 36

قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي ﴿٢٥﴾ وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي ﴿٢٦﴾ وَاجْعَلْ لِي وَزِيرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِي ﴿٢٧﴾ هَارُونَ أَخِي ﴿٢٨﴾ اشْدُدْ بِهِ أَزْرِي ﴿٢٩﴾ وَأَشْرِكْهُ فِي أَمْرِي ﴿٣٠﴾ كَيْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٣١﴾ وَنَذْكُرَكَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٣٢﴾ إِنَّكَ كُنْتَ بِنَا بَصِيرًا ﴿٣٣﴾ قَالَ قَدْ أُوتِيتَ سُؤْلَكَ يَا مُوسَى ﴿٣٤﴾

He said, "My Lord, put my heart at peace for me [25] and make my task easy for me [26] and remove the knot from my tongue, [27] that they may understand my speech. [28] And make for me an assistant from my own family: [29] Hārūn, my brother. [30] Enhance with him my strength, [31] and make him share my task, [32] so that we proclaim Your purity a lot [33] and remember You a lot. [34] You are certainly watchful over us." [35]

He said, "You have been granted your request O Mūsā. [36]

Commentary

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام received the high honour of conversing with Allah Ta'ālā and was granted the mission of prophethood, then, instead of relying on his own self and on his own ability, he turned to Allah Ta'ālā and sought His help in the discharge of his duties without

which it would be impossible for him to endure and persevere in the face of the trials and tribulations inherent in the performance of his mission. He, therefore, prayed to Allah Ta'ālā to grant him five favours.

The first prayer was *إِشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي* (Put my heart at peace for me - 20:25). Meaning to expand the ability of his heart to enable him to receive all the knowledge and wisdom of prophethood, and at the same time to bear with equanimity the slander of those people who will oppose him in his mission.

His second prayer was *وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي* (make my task easy for me - 20:26). Having been granted prophethood he realized that it is not the human ability and skill or other apparent causes which make affairs easy or difficult. In reality, things become easy or difficult as Allah Ta'ālā wills. In the *ḥadīth* the believers have been advised to seek Allah Ta'ālā's help in their affairs with the following words:

اللَّهُمَّ الطُّفْ بِنَافِي تَيْسِيرِ كُلِّ عَسِيرٍ فَإِنَّ تَيْسِيرَ كُلِّ عَسِيرٍ عَلَيْكَ يَسِيرٌ

O Allah! Be kind to us and make our difficult tasks easy because it is easy for you to make every difficult thing easy.

The third prayer *وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِنْ لِسَانِي يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي* (And remove the knot from my tongue, that they may understand my speech - 20:27, 28). The story behind this "knot" is that as an infant Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام lived with his own mother who used to suckle him and was paid for her services by the Pharaoh. When he was weaned, the Pharaoh and his wife 'Āsiya adopted him, and took him away from his mother. One day Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام caught hold of the Pharaoh's beard and slapped him on the face. Another version has it that he was playing with a stick and with it he struck the Pharaoh on his head. The Pharaoh was enraged and made up his mind to put him to death. His wife 'Āsiya tried to pacify him and said, "O King! Why do you take this matter so seriously? After all he is merely a child who does not understand things. You can test him if you like and you will find that he cannot distinguish between good things and bad things".

Thereupon, the Pharaoh ordered two trays to be brought. One was filled with live coal and the other with jewellery. It was expected that the child would be attracted by the brightness of the burning coal and reach for it because children are not normally drawn towards jewellery which is not as bright. This would have convinced the Pharaoh that what Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام did was nothing more than the act of an innocent

child. But Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was no ordinary child. Allah Ta'ālā had chosen him to be a prophet whose instincts were unusual from the very moment of his birth. He put forth his hand to reach out for the jewellery instead of the coal, but Jibra'il عليه السلام turned his hand away and placed it in the tray containing coal. He picked up a piece of burning coal and put it in his mouth and so burned his tongue. The Pharaoh was thus fully satisfied that the action of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was not due to mischief but the result of a child's inability to distinguish between good and bad for himself. This incident caused an impediment in his speech which has been called عقده (knot) in the Qur'an, and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام prayed to Allah Ta'ālā to make loose this knot. (Mazharī and Qurṭubī)

The first two prayers are of a general nature and sought Allah Ta'ālā's help in all matters. The third prayer is for the removal of a disability because eloquence and fluency of expression are essential elements in the successful conduct of prophetic mission. In a subsequent verse Allah Ta'ālā informed Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام that all his prayers had been granted which would suggest that he was cured of his disability. However, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in his prayer to make Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام his partner in the prophethood also said هُوَ أَفْصَحُ مِنِّي لِسَانًا (He is more fluent in his tongue than me - 28:34) which would indicate that his speech's impediment was not fully cured and that the stammer persisted, though in a milder form. One of the defects which the Pharaoh found in Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was that وَلَا يَكَادُ يُبَيِّنُ (he cannot express himself clearly - 43:52). Some people have argued that in his prayer Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had prayed to Allah Ta'ālā to loose the knot of his tongue only to the extent that others could understand his words. To that extent his stammer was cured but a trace of it still remained, which is not inconsistent with the grant of his prayer.

The fourth prayer was وَاجْعَلْ لِي وَزِيرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِي (and make for me an assistant from my own family - 20:29). The first three prayers of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام concerned his own person. This fourth prayer relates to the assembling of means which would facilitate the successful completion of his mission, and the most important among these was the appointment of a deputy or a helper, who would assist him in this task. The literal meaning of the word وزير is "one who carries a burden", and since a minister of a state carries the burden of responsibilities entrusted to him

by the ruler, he is called a minister (وزير). This shows the extreme foresight and prudence of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام because the success of any movement or enterprise depends on the selection of competent and dedicated supporters. With good and loyal workers it is easy to surmount all obstacles and hurdles, while with irresponsible and indifferent workers the best preparations and arrangements become futile. If one were to examine the causes of the decline of some of the modern states and the evils from which they suffer, they can all be attributed to the irresponsible conduct, mismanagement and incompetence of the ministers and advisers. It is related from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that when Allah Ṭā'ālā appoints someone to govern a country and wishes that the country should be well administered, He provides the ruler with a good Wazīr to assist him in whatever he does, and if he forgets to attend to some important task, the Wazīr is quick to remind him and to help him in what he intends to do. (Nisa'ī, from Qāsim Ibn Muḥammad).

In this prayer Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has specified that the helper he wants should be from his own family, the reason being that the behavior and conduct of a member of the family is well-known. Besides, there is mutual affection and understanding between the members of the family which greatly helps towards the accomplishment of the mission. But it is essential that the person selected should be competent and in possession of the merit necessary for the performance of his duties so that his selection may not be attributed to nepotism and favouritism. Nowadays when there is a scarcity of people of integrity and dedication, the ruler who appoints his own close relatives to be his Wazīr and deputies renders himself liable to public criticism. When, however, the standards of probity and integrity are high, such appointments are considered normal and are, in fact, conducive to the more efficient performance of sensitive assignments. Indeed all the four Khulafā' ar-Rāshidīn (guided Caliphs) who succeeded the Holy Prophet ﷺ were in some way related to him.

In his prayer Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام first asked that the helper he required should be from his own family and then specifically asked for his brother Hārūn to be his Wazīr so that with the latter's support and assistance he could better perform the duties of his prophetic mission.

Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام was three or four years senior to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and died three years before the latter. When Sayyidnā Mūsā

ﷺ petitioned to Allah Ta'ālā for his appointment as Wazīr he was in Egypt, and there he received, through an angel, information about his elevation to the status of a prophet and his appointment as an assistant to Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ. He was also instructed to receive Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ outside Egypt when he arrived there in pursuance of his mission to persuade the Pharaoh to accept the true faith. This he did.

وَأَشْرِكُهُ فِي أَمْرِي (and make him share my task - 20:32): Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ had the power to appoint Sayyidnā Harūn ﷺ as his Wazīr on his own, but he petitioned to Allah Ta'ālā to confer the appointment on his brother in order to seek His grace. Besides, he wanted him to share his prophethood and his mission and this power does not rest in any Prophet. Therefore he specially prayed to Allah Ta'ālā to make him a partner in his mission.

Good companions are a help in the better performance of worship and Dhikr (remembrance)

كَيْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا وَنَذْكُرَكَ كَثِيرًا (So that we proclaim Your purity a lot and remember You a lot - 20:33,34). The advantage of making Sayyidnā Harūn ﷺ a Wazīr and a partner in prophethood would be that both of them together would be able to pray to Allah Ta'ālā and glorify His name more often. Here the question may arise that a man by himself can also pray as often as he desires, so where was the need for a companion? The answer to this is that good companions and a conducive environment definitely contribute towards the better performance of worship and Dhikr. A person whose friends are negligent about Allah cannot devote himself to His worship with the same quality and quantity as the person who is fortunate to have the company of pious men and righteous friends devoted to Allah's worship and Dhikr.

Here Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ ended his petition, and he was rewarded with the good news that Allah Ta'ālā, the Almighty, had granted all his requests قَالَ قَدْ أُوتِيتَ سُؤْلَكَ يَا مُوسَى (you have been granted your request O Mūsā - 20:36).

Verses 37 - 44

وَلَقَدْ مَنَّا عَلَىكَ مَرَّةً أُخْرَى ﴿٣٧﴾ إِذْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ مَا يُوحَىٰ

﴿٣٨﴾ أَنْ أَقْدَفِ فِيهِ فِي التَّابُوتِ فَأَقْدِفِ فِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ فَلْيُلْقِهِ الْيَمُّ
 بِالسَّاحِلِ يَأْخُذْهُ عَدُوٌّ لِي وَعَدُوٌّ لَهُ ۗ وَالْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةٌ مِّنِّي ۚ
 وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلَى عَيْنِي ﴿٣٩﴾ إِذْ تَمْشِي أُخْتُكَ فَتَقُولُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَى
 مَن يَكْفُلُهُ ۗ فَرَجَعْنَاكَ إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ ۗ وَوَقَلْتَ
 نَفْسًا فَجَّيْنَاكَ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَفَتَنَّاكَ فُتُونًا ۗ فَلَبِثْتَ سِنِينَ فِي أَهْلِ
 مَدْيَنَ ثُمَّ جِئْتَ عَلَىٰ قَدَرٍ يُّمُوسَىٰ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَأَصْطَنَعْتُكَ لِنَفْسِي ﴿٤١﴾
 إِذْ هَبَّ آنتَ وَأَخْوَكُ بِآيَتِي وَلَا تَنِيَا فِي ذِكْرِي ﴿٤٢﴾ إِذْ هَبَا إِلَىٰ
 فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ ﴿٤٣﴾ فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لِّعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَىٰ
 ﴿٤٤﴾

And We have bestowed Our favour on you once more, [37] when We revealed to your mother what was to be revealed, [38] that is, "Put him (the baby) in the chest, then cast it into the river, then let the river throw it by the shore and it will be picked up by one who is enemy to Me and enemy to him". And I have cast love on you from Myself, and that you are fashioned under My eye. [39] (Remember) when your sister was going (to the family of the Pharaoh) and was saying, "Shall I point you to one who nurses him?" Thus We brought you back to your mother, so that her eyes might be cooled and she does not grieve. And you had killed a person, then We brought you out of the trouble; and We tested you with a great ordeal. Then you lived a number of years amidst the people of Madyan. After all this, you came O Mūsā, to a point, destined. [40] And I have fashioned you for Myself. [41] Go, you and your brother, with My signs, and do not be slack in My remembrance. [42] Go, both of you, to the Pharaoh; he has indeed transgressed. [43] So speak to him in soft words. May be, he takes to the advice or fears (Allah)". [44]

Commentary

وَلَقَدْ مَنَّا عَلَيْكَ مَرَّةً أُخْرَى (And We have bestowed Our favour on you once

more - 20:37). Having bestowed His gifts and special favours on Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام such as the honour of conversation with Allah, the grant of prophethood and miracles etc. Allah Ta'ālā reminds him of the benefits and favours which He had showered on him throughout his life - from his birth uptill that time and how He had saved his life from numerous risks and hazards. In relation to time, these benefits (which will be discussed in the following pages) pertain to an earlier period.

إِذْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ مَا يُوحَىٰ (When We revealed to your mother what was to be revealed - 20:38) It means that the information given to the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was about a matter which could be learnt only through Divine revelation. This was that the Pharaoh's soldiers had orders to put to death all the male children belonging to the tribe of Banī Isrā'īl. She was told by means of a revelation that in order to save the life of her son she should put him in a box and float it down the river. She was re-assured not to entertain any apprehensions about his safety because Allah Ta'ālā would protect him and also return him to her. These are things which cannot be learnt by conjecture or guess work. The promise of Allah Ta'ālā, and the divine scheme to save his life are beyond human conception and can be made known through Divine revelation only.

Can a Revelation be sent to a person who is not a Prophet?

The truth of the matter is that the literal meaning of the word وحى (Waḥy) is a secret message which can be understood only by the person to whom it is addressed and by no one else. According to this literal sense, the word وحى (Waḥy) is not restricted to the prophets only and it can be used for people at large and even to animals. In the verse أَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ (16:68) the word has been used in its literal and general sense, i.e. instructing the bees by means of وحى Waḥy. Similarly in this verse أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ (20:38) the word has been used in its general meaning and this does not necessarily mean that she was a prophet. Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام also received Divine messages though the scholars unanimously hold the view that she was not a prophet. The Waḥy of this type is made by means of a Divine inspiration (Ilhām إلهام). Allah Ta'ālā puts an idea into someone's heart and then confirms him in the belief that it is from Allah Ta'ālā. Saints and other devout people receive such inspirations. Abū Ḥayyān and some other scholars hold that sometimes such inspirations

can be made through angels as happened to Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام when Jibra'il عليه السلام appeared before her in the form of a human being and conveyed to her the will of Allah Ta'ālā. These inspirations (Ilhām: الإلهام), however, are specific to the person to whom they are made and are not meant for public or to be used for the propagation of the True Faith, whereas the Waḥy which is revealed to the prophets aims at appointing someone to reform people and enjoining upon him to invite people to the True Faith. It is the duty of such a person not only to have complete faith in His Waḥy himself, but also to bind others to accept his prophethood and the Waḥy and to pronounce as infidels those who deny him.

This is the difference between وحى الإلهام (Waḥy in the sense of Ilhām) or literal وحى نبوت (the waḥy of a prophet) or technical Waḥy. Literal Waḥy has always been there and will be there for ever, whereas the prophethood and (Waḥy of a prophet) have ceased with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, who was the last Prophet. Some respected scholars have given them the names of وحى تشريعي (legislative Waḥy) and وحى غير تشريعي (non-legislative Waḥy). The false prophet of Qadiyan has used these definitions and certain writings of Sheikh Muhiyy-uddin Ibn 'Arabi in support of his claim to prophethood. His arguments, however, are contrary to what Ibn 'Arabi himself has written. A detailed discussion of this question will be found in my book ختم نبوت (Khatme Nabuwat).

The name of the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام

In Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī her name is given as Yuhanadh (يُوْحَانَد) and in Itqān it is said that her name was Liḥyāna daughter of Yaṣmad Ibn Lawi (لحيانه بنت يصد بن لاوى). Others say her name was Bārkhā (بَارْخَا) and still others that it was Bazakht (بازخت). Some people who dispense charms and amulets attribute strange properties to her name but according to Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī there is no basis for such a belief and probably it is nothing more than a hoax to entice innocent and ignorant people.

فَلْيُلْقِهِ الِئِمُّ بِالسَّاجِلِ (Then let the river throw it by the shore - 20:39.). The word ئِمُّ (Yamm) means river and here it refers most probably to the river Nile. In this verse the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has been commanded by Allah Ta'ālā to place the baby in a box and set him afloat in the river Nile. Simultaneously the river has been commanded to cast the box on its bank. But the question arises as to how a river can be commanded to do something while it has no sense or understanding.

Some scholars have answered this query with the argument that although here the word has been used in the imperative mood which implies a command, it is not really a command but is meant to convey the information that the river would cast the box on its bank. However some scholars have disputed this explanation and have claimed that the word is really a command and is addressed to the river Nile because everything that Allah Ta'ālā has created possesses emotions and a sense of feeling and it is these properties, which according to the Qur'an, enable even trees and rocks to glorify the name of Allah Ta'ālā. It is, nevertheless, a fact that except the human beings, the Jinns, and the angels no other created thing possesses feelings and emotions to a degree where the precepts of Ḥalāl (permissible) and Ḥarām (forbidden) can be made binding on them. Maulānā Rūmī رحمه الله تعالى has expressed the same idea in the following verse:-

خاک و باد و آب و آتش بنده اند ☆ با من تو مرده با حق زنده اند

(Earth, wind, water and fire are all servants of Allah. To me and you they appear lifeless, but Allah knows that they too have life.)

يَأْخُذُهُ عَدُوِّي وَعَدُوُّهُ (And it will be picked up by one who is enemy to Me and enemy to him - 20:39.). It means that a person who is an enemy of Allah Ta'ālā and also the enemy of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام will rescue the child. Here the reference is to the Pharaoh who was the enemy of Allah Ta'ālā because of his infidelity, but his enmity towards Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام needs some explanation since at that time he cherished no hostility towards the latter, rather he was incurring considerable expenditure on his upbringing. Perhaps it was due to his future enmity towards Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام which was even at that time in the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā. Or again it is possible that even at that time he was the enemy and had reluctantly agreed to bring up Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام for the sake of his wife 'Āsiya. Yet when he felt the slightest suspicion about Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام he ordered his immediate execution and was prevented from carrying out his intention through the wise role of Sayyidah 'Āsiya. (Rūḥ and Mazhari)

وَأَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِنِّي (And I have cast love on you from Myself - 20:39). The word "love" in this verse is in the sense of 'being loved', meaning thereby that Allah Ta'ālā has bestowed upon Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام an

attribute that will make people show love towards him. This is the interpretation given to this verse by Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās and ‘Ikrimah رضي الله عنه. (Maḏhari)

وَلْيَصْنَعْ عَلَيَّ عَيْنِي (And that you are fashioned under My eye - 20:39). The word صَنَعْتُ here means "good upbringing". The Arabs have a common phrase صَنَعْتُ فَرَسِي (I trained my horse well). عَلَيَّ عَيْنِي, is used in the same sense as عَلَيَّ حِفْظِي i.e. it was Allah Ta‘ālā’s will that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام should be brought up under His own eye, and for this purpose He chose the Pharaoh, the supreme authority in Egypt, to bring up Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in his own palace, unaware all the time that the child that he was raising was his enemy. (Maḏhari)

إِذْ تَمْشِي أُخْتُكَ (When your sister was going - 20:40). The story of the sister of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام following the box along the river and the subsequent events are alluded to in this verse, which ends with the words وَفَتَنَّاكَ فُتُونًا (We tested you with a great ordeal - 20:40). According to Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه these words mean "We tried you repeatedly", while Ḍaḥḥāk رحمه الله تعالى has translated them as "We subjected you to severe trials". Full details of this story have been given in a long Ḥadīth reported by Imām an-Nisa’ī رحمه الله تعالى in his book on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه. This story is as follows:

Detailed Story of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام

In Kitāb-ut-Tafsīr of his Sunan, Imām Nisa’ī رحمه الله تعالى has reported a long Ḥadīth known as (Ḥadīth-ul-Futūn) (Ḥadīth-ul-Futūn) on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه. Ibn Kathīr has also reproduced the whole of it in his commentary and then has added that Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه thought that it was مرفوع (Marfū‘), in other words, it was a statement of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Ibn Kathīr has confirmed this view with the words: وَصَدَقَ ذَلِكَ عِنْدِي (I too believe that this Ḥadīth is مرفوع), and also gave reason in support of his opinion. However, he has admitted that the version of this story given by Ibn Jabīr and Ibn Abī Ḥātim رحمهم الله تعالى is the statement of Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه, and not of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم while it contains some parts which were stated by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. It appears that Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه has learnt this story from Ka‘b al-Aḥḃār as has happened in many other cases. Be that as it may, the critics like Imām Nasa’ī and Ibn Kathīr رحمهم الله تعالى hold it to be marfū‘ (statement of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم) and even those who do not accept it as such have never

challenged its contents, while a major part of this story is also mentioned in the Holy Qur'an itself. Therefore, we would like to give full translation of this Ḥadīth which has many beneficial points having academic and practical value. Imām Nisa'ī رحمه الله تعالى has related this story which he learnt from Sa'id bin Jubair ؓ that he (Sa'id Ibn Jubair ؓ) asked Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ؓ to explain to him the meaning of the expression *وَقَتْنَا قُتْرًا*, specially the word *قُتْرًا* which occurs in the verse relating to Sayyidnā Mūsā ؑ. Ibn 'Abbās ؓ said it was a long story which he would tell him (Sa'id Ibn Jubair ؓ) if he comes to him early the next morning. This he did and Ibn 'Abbās ؓ told him the story which runs as follows:

One day the Pharaoh and his companions were talking about Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ؑ and the promise which Allah Ta'ālā had made to him to raise prophets and Kings from his progeny. Some of those present said that the Banī Isrā'īl were indeed expecting the birth of a prophet in their community and were in no doubt that Allah Ta'ālā's promise would be fulfilled. In the beginning they thought that Sayyidnā Yūsuf ؑ was the prophet promised by Allah Ta'ālā but when he died they said he was not the prophet promised to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ؑ and that there must surely come another prophet whose arrival would fulfill Allah Ta'ālā's promise. This information upset the Pharaoh who feared that if ever a prophet was born in the Isrā'īli community, whom he held in bondage, he (the prophet) would try to liberate them from their servitude. He, therefore, asked his friends to advise him how such a catastrophe could be avoided. After much deliberation they came to the unanimous conclusion that the only way to meet this contingency was to put to death every male child born in an Isrā'īli family. In pursuance of this decision, armed soldiers were sent out with orders to search every Isrā'īli house and kill all male children.

This blood-shed continued for some time but then the Egyptians realized that all their work was done and arduous duties performed by the Banī Isrā'īl and if the process of killing their male children continued then a time would come when, their old men having died a natural death, no young men would be left to serve them, and they themselves would have to perform all the hard and toilsome work. In order to overcome this problem they came up with another proposal according to which all male

children born in one year should be put to death while all those born in the following year should be spared. Such a device would ensure the availability of a continuous supply of labour force of young Isrā'īlis who could replace the older men, yet at the same time their number would not be large enough to pose a threat to the Pharaoh's authority. Everybody approved of this proposal and a law was passed for its implementation. (And now the wisdom and power of Allah Ta'ālā demonstrated itself in the following way). Sayyidnā Mūsā's عليه السلام mother gave birth to Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام in the year when, according to the law of the Pharaoh, male Isrā'īli children were spared and there was no danger to his life. But when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was conceived, his birth was expected in the year when the Pharaoh's decree required that all male Isrā'īli children be put to death. His mother was, therefore, greatly distressed at the thought of losing her son after its birth.

Here Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه paused in his story and said, "O Ibn Jubair! This was the first test (فتون) to which Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was put in that his life was at risk even before he was born."

Then Allah Ta'ālā, by means of وحى الهام (Divine inspiration) told the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to set her mind at rest.

لَا تَخَافِي وَلَا تَحْزَنِي إِنَّا رَادُّوهُ إِلَيْكَ وَجَاعِلُوهُ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

Do not fear and do not grieve, surely We are going to bring him back to you and appoint him one of (Our) messengers - 28:7.

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was born Allah Ta'ālā commanded his mother to put him in a box and float him down the river Nile, which she did. After she had completed this task the Satan tried to perplex her with the suggestion that she had made a mistake by floating her son down the river because even if he had been put to death by the order of the Pharaoh she would at least have had the satisfaction of burying him with her own hands. Now there is no hope for him and he would probably be eaten up by the river animals. While the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was greatly worried at what the Satan had told her, the waves cast the box upon a rock where the Pharaoh's slave girls used to come for bathing and washing. When they saw the box they wanted to open it, but one of them said that if the box contained some valuable articles and they opened it, then the Pharaoh's wife would suspect that they had kept back

some of these for themselves and nothing that they could say would satisfy her. Accordingly, they brought the box unopened to the Pharaoh's wife.

When the Pharaoh's wife opened the box she found a boy and she instinctively felt a sudden surge of love for him - something which she had never experienced before. This was just as Allah Ta'ālā had told him (وَالْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِنِّي) : And I have cast love on you from Myself). On the other hand, the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, in a state of puzzle caused by the Satan forgot the promise made to her by Allah Ta'ālā and was so overwhelmed by grief that all happiness forsook her heart leaving it an empty shell. وَأَصْبَحَ قُودًا أُمَّ مُوسَىٰ فَارِعًا (And the heart of the mother of Mūsā became restless - 28:10). At the same time the Pharaoh's soldiers learnt about the presence of an Isrā'īli boy in the palace and they rushed with knives in their hands, and asked the Pharaoh's wife to surrender the boy so that they could put him to death.

Here Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه paused again and said, "O Ibn Jubair! This was the second test (فُتُون) to which Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was exposed."

The Pharaoh's wife remonstrated with the soldiers. "What?" She said, "Do you think this small and frail baby, if allowed to live, can ever increase the strength of Banī Isrā'īl? You wait here and I will go to the Pharaoh and plead for his life. I hope the Pharaoh will spare his life. If not, then I will not stand in your way and you can take him." Saying so, she went to the Pharaoh and said to him, "This child is the joy of my heart and yours also." The Pharaoh replied, "Yes, I know that he is the joy of your heart, but as for me, I do not need him."

At this point of the story Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه quoted the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as saying, "I swear by Allah that if on that occasion the Pharaoh had also admitted to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام being the joy of his heart, as his wife did, Allah Ta'ālā would have guided him along the path of the True Faith as He guided his wife."

(However, on account of his wife's urgent pleas the Pharaoh spared the life of the child). Now she needed a woman to nurse him. Many women offered their services but he would not suck from any of them

وَحَرَمْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَرَاصِعَ مِنْ قَبْلُ (And We had already barred him (Mūsā) from (accepting) any suckling woman - 28:12). The Pharaoh's wife was in a real predicament. How will the child live if he was not nursed? She sent him with her servants to the market place to find any woman whose milk he would draw.

While these events were taking place in the Pharaoh's palace, the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was concerned by anguish at the fate of her son. She asked her daughter to go out and make inquiries about the box and the child that whether he was still alive or was he eaten up by the river animals. The promise which Allah had made to her when she was pregnant that he would protect her child and return him to her after a brief separation had completely escaped her memory. And then a miracle happened. As soon as the sister of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام came to the market place she met the Pharaoh's female servants who held Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in their arms and were looking for a woman who could nurse him. She also noticed that the child would not accept milk from any woman which caused them great anxiety and distress. So she said to them, "I can take you to a family where there is a woman whose milk, I hope, the child will accept and who will bring him up with great love and affection." Thereupon the servants held her on the suspicion that she was, perhaps, the mother or a close relation of the child and for that reason spoke with such a confidence that the proposed family is well-wisher of and sympathetic to this child.

Here Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه stopped and told Ibn Jubair رضي الله عنه that this was the third test (فْتُون) (for the sister of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was naturally frightened at being held like that but she kept her pose and told the servants that when she said that the family would love the child and serve him with devotion what she meant was that they would do so in the hope of getting access to the Pharaoh's court and thus obtaining some material benefit for themselves. This explanation satisfied the servants and they released her. She hurried back home and informed her mother of what had happened. Then both of them went to the market place where the servants stood with the baby. The mother took him in her arms and put him to her breast, and he sucked greedily until he was satiated. The Pharaoh's wife was overjoyed when she was informed that at last a woman had been found whose milk the child would take and ordered her

to be brought to her. On arrival the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام sensed that the Pharaoh's wife needed her and her services badly. At the same time she remembered Allah's promise to her that her son would be re-united to her after a brief separation. So she decided that she would offer her services on her own terms. The Pharaoh's wife told her that she was extremely fond of the child and could not bear parting from him for a moment. Therefore she should come and live in the palace and nurse the child. But Sayyidnā Mūsā's mother declined to do so. She said she had a child of her own who too had to be nursed and fed and therefore it was not possible for her to leave her home. However, if the child was entrusted to her care she would keep him with her and nurse him. She assured the Pharaoh's wife that if she agreed to her proposal no effort shall be wanting on her part to give him the best care and attention. There was no choice for the Pharaoh's wife and she accepted this arrangement. Thus the child was, re-united to his mother and Allah's promise to her was fulfilled.

After some time when Sayyidna Musa عليه السلام grew comparatively stronger, the Pharaoh's wife asked the mother of Mūsā عليه السلام to bring the child to her so that she may see him (as she was longing for him). She also told all the courtiers that the child was coming to their home and they must show him due respect and offer him gifts. She warned them that she would watch what they would do with the child. So when Mūsā عليه السلام came out with his mother from her home, he was showered with gifts and presents right from that moment. The Pharaoh's wife was delighted to see him and gave him many expensive presents on her own and delivered all these presents to the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. She then took him to the Pharaoh hoping that he too would give him presents. The Pharaoh took the child in his arms who suddenly clutched at his beard and pulled it causing his head to bow down. The courtiers were horrified and said to the Pharaoh: "We warned you about the promise of Allah to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام that a prophet will be born in the tribe of Banī Isrā'īl who will inherit your Kingdom and your wealth and will defeat and overthrow you. You have seen with your own eyes the first signs of the fulfillment of Allah's promise". The Pharaoh took the warning and ordered his soldiers to put the child to death.

Here Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه stopped again in his narration and

said, "O Ibn Jubair عليه السلام ! This is the fourth test (فتون) for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام where death seemed so near".

The Pharaoh's wife at once came to the child's rescue and addressed her husband thus, "You have given this child to me. He is all mine. So what is all this fuss about?" The Pharaoh said, "Can't you see that by his action this child is warning me that one day he would overthrow me and deprive me of my Kingdom?" His wife replied, "I know a sure means of ascertaining whether his action was the action of an uninformed and innocent child or he deliberately intended to defy and challenge your authority. You order a servant to bring two trays. Put two live coals in one and two shining pearls in the other and place both the trays in front of the child. If he picks up the coal, that would be proof enough that he is totally unaware of the consequences of his action because nobody with any sense would put his hand in fire." The Pharaoh agreed to this test and when the two trays were placed before Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام he picked up the coal. (However there is another tradition that he wanted to reach for the pearls but Jibra'īl عليه السلام guided his hand and placed it on the coal). When the Pharaoh saw this he snatched away the coal from the child's hand to save him from harm. Thus the Pharaoh's wife was proved right. She turned to him and said, "O King! Now you know the truth." Thus Allah once again saved his life because He had chosen him for a very special mission.

(And so Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام continued to enjoy the favours of the Pharaoh and the great love of his mother until he grew to full manhood). Knowing in what esteem the royal family held him, the people of the Pharaoh did not dare to insult and torment Banī Isrā'īl as they used to do previously. One day he was out for a stroll in the city when he came across two persons who were quarrelling over some matter. One of them was a man of the Pharaoh and the other was an Isrā'īli. The latter called out to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to help him. Mūsā عليه السلام got very angry at the Pharaoh's man. How dare he bully an Isrā'īli in his presence knowing that he held a place of honour in the royal court, and also that he was full of sympathy for the Isrā'īlies (on account of the harsh treatment to which they were constantly subjected by the Egyptians). People in general thought that his sympathy for the Isrā'īlis was due to his being nursed and brought up by an Isrā'īli woman. It is also possible that Allah Ta'ālā

may have informed him through his mother or by some other means that he himself was an Isrā'īli and that the woman who had nursed him was in fact his own mother.

Anyway, being in extreme anger, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام hit the Egyptian with such force that he died on the spot. There were no witnesses to this incident except the Isrā'īli, and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was certain that he (the Isrā'īli) would not inform against him.

The Egyptian's death filled Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام with remorse and he said, هَذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ مُضِلٌّ مُبِينٌ (This is some of Satan's act, He is indeed a clear enemy who misleads - 28:15). Then he prayed to Allah.

رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي فَغَفَرَهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

O my Lord! I have wronged myself, so forgive me. So He forgave him. Indeed He is the Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful - 28:16.

After this incident Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام made secret inquiries about the reaction of the Egyptian about the murder and whether the matter was reported to the Pharaoh. He learned that the report that was made to the Pharaoh merely said that an Isrā'īli had killed an Egyptian for which their tribe should make full retribution, and that no mercy should be shown to them.

The Pharaoh asked them to apprehend the murderer and produce him with full proof of his guilt because although he was their own king he did not think it was right to punish someone without sufficient evidence. He assured them that if they produced the offender with sufficient proof of his guilt he would not be spared. Thereupon people went out in search of the murderer but found no clue which could lead them to him.

The next day as Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام came out of his house he saw the same Isrā'īli again fighting with an Egyptian. On seeing Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام he again called to him for help. But Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام who was full of remorse at what had happened the day before was very angry and blamed the Isrā'īlie for picking up fights. However, he wanted to stop the man of Pharaoh from attacking the Isrā'īli, and at the same time reproached the Isrā'īli for being so quarrelsome. The Isrā'īli, seeing Mūsā عليه السلام in anger was frightened and feared that he would kill him too. So he called out, "O Mūsā! Will you kill me too as you killed a man yesterday"?

And so they parted, but the Egyptian hastened to inform the people who were on the look out for the murderer that the Isrā'īli himself had accused Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام of having murdered a man the day before. The Pharaoh who was informed of this latest development at once sent his soldiers to apprehend Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and to execute him. The soldiers were confident that there was no way for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to escape and therefore they took the main road of the city searching for him. Somehow a follower of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام who lived in a far flung area of the city got wind of the Pharaoh's order to kill him and managed to reach Mūsā عليه السلام through smaller streets to warn him of the impending danger.

At this point in his narration, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه paused again and said, "O Ibn Jubair! This was the fifth test (فنون) for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام when death had overcome him but Allah Ta'ālā saved his life".

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام at once left the city and headed for Madyan. All his life was spent in comfort and luxury and he had never undertaken a task involving physical exertion. He was also unfamiliar with the surrounding areas and the roads connecting them. But he had full faith in Allah عَسَىٰ رَبِّيٰٓ اَنْ يَّهْدِيَنِي سَوَآءَ السَّبِيْلِ (I hope my Lord will guide me to the straight path - 28:22).

As he approached Madyan, he stopped at a well where people had gathered and were drawing water for their animals. There he saw two girls standing away from the crowd with their goats. He asked them why they stood apart to which they replied that being unable to contend with men for water they were waiting until they had finished watering their animals and then, if any water was left, they would give it to their goats. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was moved to pity for the girls and being physically a strong man he pushed forward and in no time he watered their goats. The girls went home with their herd and he sat under the shade of a tree and prayed: رَبِّ اِنِّي لِمَا اَنْزَلْتَ اِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيْرٌ (O my Lord, I am in need of whatever good you may send down to me - 28:24). By this prayer he sought Allah's help in providing him something to eat and a place to stay.

Now when the girls returned home with their herd earlier than usual their father was surprised, but the girls told him how a kind man had helped them and watered their goats. The father asked one of the girls to

bring the man home which she did, and when he heard the story of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, he said: ("Do not fear, you have escaped from the wrongdoing people." - 28:25).

One of the girls suggested to her father to engage Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام on wages and said *يَا بَتِ اسْتَأْجِرْهُ إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ اسْتَأْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ* (Dear father, hire him; the best man you hire, is the one who is strong, trustworthy - 28:26). the father was disconcerted at her words and asked her how she knew that he was strong and trust-worthy. The girl replied that she witnessed his strength when he pushed aside all the other shepherds and drew water for her goats. And she knew him to be trustworthy because when she went to bring him home he cast his eyes down and did not raise them until she had conveyed to him his invitation. Then he told her to follow him and to guide him to this place from behind. Only a person who is totally trustworthy would conduct himself in such a manner. The father (He was Sayyidnā Shua'ib عليه السلام, a prophet of Allah), having being fully satisfied on this score, proposed to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام that if he would agree to work for him for eight years he would give the latter one of his daughters in marriage. He also said that he would like it if Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, of his own free choice, worked for him for a further period of two years, but this would not be a condition for his marriage with his daughter. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام accepted these terms and ultimately, by Allah's command, rendered full ten years service to Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام.

Sayyidnā Sa'id Ibn Jubair رضي الله عنه says, "Once a Christian scholar met me and asked me whether I knew how long Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام worked for Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام. This was before Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه had narrated to me this Ḥadīth. So I told him that I did not know the answer to his question. Afterwards when I met Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه and put the same question to him he informed me that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was bound to do service for the contractual period of eight years which could not be reduced in any circumstances. Also, it was Allah's will that he should also serve the additional optional two years. Therefore, he did actually serve Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام for full ten years. Later, when I met the Christian scholar and gave him the information, he asked me whether the person from whom I learnt this was more knowledgeable than I was. I replied him in affirmative and told him that indeed he was a very learned

person and the best among us".

Having completed ten years of service with Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام departed from Madyan with his wife. He had chosen an unfrequented and unfamiliar route, and on a cold, dark night when he saw fire on the mount of Ṭūr he went there to bring some for his wife. There he saw strange sights, was granted the miracles of the staff (عصا) and the bright hand (يَدٌ بَيضاء) and was also entrusted with the Mission of Prophethood. This story has been related by the Holy Qur'an in the preceding pages. At the mount of Ṭūr he was also commanded by Allah to proceed to Egypt and place his message before the Pharaoh. He was anxious how he would discharge this duty when he has been declared by the royal court as an absconding offender and was under the sentence of death. Moreover, he recalled his stammer. So he prayed to Allah to remove these impediments. In response to his prayer Allah appointed his brother Hārūn عليه السلام to share his prophethood and through a revelation commanded the latter to receive him before he entered Egypt. The two brothers met and as commanded by Allah both of them went to the Pharaoh's court to invite him to accept the True Faith. After a while they were admitted to his presence after passing through several stages. They said to him: "إِنَّا رَسُولَا رَبِّكَ" "We are the messengers of your Lord". The Pharaoh asked them فَمَنْ رَبُّكُمَا (Who then is the Lord of you two? - 20:49). Their reply to this question has been reported in the Qur'an itself.

رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ، ثُمَّ هَدَى

Our Lord is He who gave everything its shape, then guidance -
20:50.

The Pharaoh then asked them what they wanted. He charged Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام with the murder of the Egyptian and at the same time reminded him how he had brought him up in his own palace and the great kindness he had shown towards him. The reply which Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام gave on both these points is mentioned in the Qur'an. That is, the murder of the Egyptian was a mistake for which he had asked Allah's forgiveness. As for the second point, he accused the Pharaoh of having enslaved the Banī Isrā'īl and of subjecting them to oppression. These things could not be allowed to continue for ever and in consequence an inevitable destiny so decreed that he should be brought up in the

Pharaoh's palace. It was Allah's will and so it came to pass and he owed no gratitude to anyone. He then asked the Pharaoh to accept the True Faith and free the Banī Isrā'īl from the slavery. The Pharaoh refused, and asked Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to show some sign to prove his claim of prophethood. Mūsā عليه السلام cast his staff (عصا) on the ground and it turned into a huge snake, which advanced towards the Pharaoh with a fearsome manner. In great fright the Pharaoh crawled under his throne and begged Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to save his life. Mūsā عليه السلام picked up the snake and it became a staff again. He then showed the Pharaoh his second miracle. He pressed his hand under his armpit and when he brought it out it was shining brilliantly. Then he repeated the action and his hand became normal.

The Pharaoh was in great terror at what he had seen. He assembled all his advisors and asked them to consider and decide how best they could meet the threat posed by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. Having discussed the matter among themselves, the advisors assured him that the matter was not as serious as appeared at first sight. Those two men were magicians who, by their sorcery, wanted to deprive him of his Kingdom and also to destroy their religion which regarded him as god, worthy of worship. They advised him not to accept any demand made by the two magicians and on the other hand to invite all the great magicians living in Egypt who would, by their skill, prevail upon the two visiting magicians.

The Pharaoh accepted this advice. He ordered all the famous magicians in Egypt to be brought before him, and when they came he told them what was expected of them. They asked the Pharaoh what was the special trick of the magician whom they were to confront. They were informed that he could turn his staff into a snake. At this, the magicians said in a casual manner that it was not a big deal. They too could change staffs and ropes into snakes and that nobody could beat them at that trick. They also wanted to know what their reward would be if they defeated their opponent. The Pharaoh replied, "If you are successful in this contest I will make you part of my own family and you will be given everything that you desire".

The magicians in agreement with Mūsā عليه السلام appointed the morning of the day of their festival for the contest. Ibn Jubair رحمته الله reports that the

day of their festival was the 10th of Muḥarram. A large number of people were gathered in a vast open space to see the contest. They were in no doubt about its outcome. They scoffed at Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and said tauntingly that in case he got the better of their own magicians, they would accept his religion لَعَلْنَا نَتَّبِعَ السَّحْرَةَ إِنْ كَانُوا هُمُ الْغَالِبِينَ (So that we may follow the sorcerers if they are victorious - 26:40).

When everything was ready, the Egyptians asked Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام whether he would like to begin the contest or he wanted them to make the start. He invited them to show their tricks first. So they threw their staffs and ropes with the words بِعِزَّةِ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْغَالِبُونَ (By the majesty of the Pharaoh we are going to prevail definitely - 26:44) which at once turned into creeping, coiling snakes.

This sight evoked fear in the heart of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام فَأَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةً مُوسَى (So, Musa concealed some fear in his heart - 20:67). Now this fear could be a natural human reaction and not even prophets are free from it. Or it may be that he was overtaken by a momentary doubt about the success of his own mission. But Allah commanded him by means of revelation to cast his staff. As he did so, it turned into a huge snake and ate up all the snakes which the Egyptians had produced with their tricks. The magicians who knew everything about magic at once realized that the performance of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was no magic but a miracle from Allah. So they openly announced their faith in the One and Only Allah and accepted the religion brought by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. They said they repented their past sins and abjured the faith of their forefathers. Thus, Allah effectively belittled the Pharaoh and his companions frustrating their evil designs فَغَلِبُوا هُنَالِكَ وَانْقَلَبُوا صَاحِبِينَ (So, they were overcome there and turned humiliated - 7:119). It is also reported that while the contest was in progress 'Āsiya, the Pharaoh's wife, put on a humble garb and prayed to Allah for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. The people of Pharaoh were under the impression that she was anxious for the Pharaoh and was praying for him while all her worries were about Mūsā عليه السلام.

The Pharaoh was now in a dilemma. He had no intention of allowing Banī Isrā'īl to leave Egypt. In the years that followed Egypt was visited by several calamities such as floods, locusts, lice, frogs appearing in food and utensils etc. (these have been described in the Qur'an as آیات مفصلات (Signs distinct 7:133). The Pharaoh would, at the time of each such

visitation, approach Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and promised to release Banī Isrā'īl from his bondage and let them leave Egypt if he prayed to Allah to deliver him from the disaster. But as soon as the affliction was removed through the prayers of Mūsā عليه السلام the Pharaoh reneged on his promise. This happened several times until Allah commanded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to take Banī Isrā'īl with him and leave Egypt. One night he and the whole tribe of Banī Isrā'īl quietly stole out of Egypt. The next morning when the Pharaoh discovered their escape, he assembled his army and went after them. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and his men soon came to a river which had to be crossed. Allah commanded the river that when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام would strike its water with his staff it should part to make twelve exits for the twelve tribes of Banī Isrā'īl and that when they had crossed over, it should resume its normal flow again.

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام reached the river, he forgot that if he struck the river with his staff it would open up twelve passages for him and his men. As they stood there not knowing what to do, the Pharaoh and his army appeared in the distance. In utter despair they cried إِنَّا لَمُدْرَكُونَ (Surely we are overtaken - 26:61). At that critical moment Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام remembered Allah's promise to him. He at once struck his staff on the water and the river parted showing twelve passageways. Quickly he and his men went across. The Pharaoh and his army who were hard on their heels followed them over the passageways but when they reached the midstream and the last of the Banī Isrā'īl had crossed over safely, the water of the river flowed over the passageways as commanded by Allah. And so the Pharaoh and his entire army perished under the eyes of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and his men. Some of the men feared that the Pharaoh might have escaped death and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام prayed to Allah to reveal his death to them. Then by the command of Allah the Pharaoh's dead body was tossed out of the river and everybody witnessed his end.

As Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Banī Isrā'īl continued their journey they came across a people who worshipped idols which they themselves had fashioned. Banī Isrā'īl were tempted and they said to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام : يُمُوسَى اجْعَلْ لَنَا إِلَهًا كَمَا لَهُم آلِهَةٌ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ مَتَّبِعُوا مَا هُمْ فِيهِ : (O Mūsā! make a god for us like they have gods". He (Mūsā) said, "You are really an ignorant people. What these people are in, is sure to be destroyed" - 7:138,

139). He also reminded them of the miracles which Allah had revealed in their behalf and the bounties which He had showered on them and asked them how they could entertain such wicked ideas. Having admonished them thus, he and his party proceeded on their travel until they came to a place where they camped. There he said to his men, "You stay here while I go to my Lord. I will return after thirty days. In my absence my brother Hārūn will act as my deputy and you should obey him in all matters".

Then Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام went to the mount of Ṭūr where he was commanded by Allah to fast for thirty continuous days in order to prepare himself for conversation with Him. After fasting for thirty days continuously he sensed a bad odor in his mouth which is usual when people fast for long periods, and he thought it would be grossly irreverent for him to appear before Allah and receive His message in that state. So he cleaned his mouth with an aromatic grass which grew on a hill close by. When he approached the August presence, Allah asked him why he had broken the fast. He replied, "O Lord! I merely wished to get rid of the offensive smell in my mouth before coming to Your presence". Allah said, "O Mūsā! Surely you know that the odor from the mouth of a person who observes fast is more pleasant to Us than the fragrance of the perfume of musk. Go back; fast for ten more days and then return to Us." Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام obeyed Allah's command.

After the departure of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام his brother Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام assembled Banī Isrā'īl and addressed them saying, "You have brought along with you many things which you either borrowed from the people of the Pharaoh (Egyptians) or which were deposited with you by them, as a trust. At the same time there are many things belonging to you which you loaned to them or left with them in trust. You seem to think that you can appropriate to yourself the Egyptian's property in lieu of what you have left behind with them. I do not consider this deal as lawful; and since we cannot return to the Egyptians what really belongs to them, I suggest that we dig a pit and bury all such property in it". Banī Isrā'īl accepted this advice and threw everything into the pit. Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام then had a big fire built over it so that everything was reduced to ashes. He said, "Now it is neither theirs nor ours".

Among the Banī Isrā'īl there was a man by the name of Sāmiri who, though not one of them, had migrated with them when they left Egypt.

He came from a tribe who worshipped cows. Being an observant person he noticed a strange phenomenon namely that wherever Sayyidnā Jibra'il عليه السلام put his foot, he left traces of life. He picked up a handful of earth from one such place and as he was going along he met Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام who thought that the man had in his hand something of value belonging to the Egyptians. He told him to throw it into the pit as the others had done, but Sāmiri said that what he held in his hand was the earth from the footprints of Sayyidnā Jibra'il عليه السلام with whose help they all had crossed the river and that he would not throw it away unless Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام promised to pray to Allah for the fulfillment of a wish which he cherished in his heart. On the latter's promise to do so he threw the earth in this pit and as promised, Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام prayed to Allah to grant Sāmiri his wish. Thereupon Sāmiri prayed, "I wish that all the gold, silver, iron and brass which has been thrown in this may take the shape of a calf". Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام had already prayed to Allah on behalf of Sāmiri, and his prayer was granted by Allah. So all the valuables and other metals which had been thrown in the pit assumed the cast of a calf which had no life but produced a sound like the bellow of a bull. According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه it was not the sound of a living thing but more like the low-pitched sound of wind passing through a hollow passage.

This strange event greatly perplexed the Banī Isrā'īl and split them into several groups. Sāmiri told them that the calf was the true God and that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had strayed from the right path. One group accepted his claim and adopted the worship of the calf. Another group reserved their judgment until Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام would explain to them how the matter stood, while a third group rejected Sāmiri's claim outright and refused to accept the calf as their god.

When Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام saw this mischief and discord he admonished the people and said:

يَقَوْمِ إِنَّمَا فُتِنْتُمْ بِهِ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ فَاتَّبِعُونِي وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرِي

"O my people! You have only been led astray with it, and your Lord is the Raḥmān (All-Merciful). So follow me and obey my command." - 20:90.

But they asked about Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام why did not he come back

while he had promised to return after thirty days and even after forty days nearing completion there was no news of him. Some foolish persons suggested that perhaps he had lost his Allah and was even at that time searching for Him.

While these events were taking place at the camp, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام having completed forty days of fasting was honoured with conversing with Allah Ta'ālā who informed him of the disorder into which Banī Isrā'īl had fallen:

فَرَجَعَ مُوسَىٰ إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ غَضْبَانَ أَسِفًا

So Mūsā went back to his people in anger and sorrow. (20:86)

He put aside the Tablets of Torah which he had brought from the mount of Ṭūr and pulled his brother Hārūn by the hairs. Later, when he had calmed down and Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام had given an account of everything that had happened, he accepted the explanation given by his brother and prayed to Allah to forgive him.

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام then went to Sāmiri and asked him to explain his actions. He replied:

فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِّنْ أَثَرِ الرَّسُولِ فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذَلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِي نَفْسِي

I picked up a handful of dust from under the foot of the messenger (the angel). Then I cast it, and thus my inner self tempted me - 20:96.

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام then replied to him with the following words:

فَاذْهَبْ فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ أَنْ تَقُولَ لَا مِسَاسَ وَإِنَّ لَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَّنْ تَخْلَفَنَّهُ وَانظُرْ إِلَىٰ إِلَهِكَ الَّذِي ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفًا لَّنُحَرِّقَنَّهُ ثُمَّ لَنَنْسِفَنَّهُ فِي الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا

He (Musa) said, "Then go away, for your fate in this life is to say: Do not touch me. And, of course, you have another promise, never to be held back from you. And look at your god to which you stayed devoted. We will certainly burn it, then we will scatter it thoroughly in the sea. (20:97)

Banī Isrā'īl now realized that they had been led astray and they admired those who agreed with Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام in negating the divinity of the calf. They begged Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to pray to Allah to forgive them and that they were ready to expiate for their sins. Sayyidnā

Mūsā عليه السلام took pains in selecting seventy persons from amongst them who were well-known for their virtue and piety and who, according to his knowledge had abstained from the worship of the calf. He led this selected group to the mount of Ṭūr where all of them might beseech Allah's Mercy. But as they approached the mount, the earth shook in a violent earthquake. On this, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام felt greatly embarrassed in front of the group he was leading as well as before his people in general, therefore he pleaded to Allah:

رَبِّ لَوْ شِئْتَ أَهْلَكْتَهُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ وَآيَايَ أَتَهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَّا

"My Lord, had it been Your will, You could have destroyed them earlier, and me too. Would you destroy us for what the foolish among them have done?" - 7:155.

It then transpired that the cause of the earthquake was that despite all his inquiries and precautions some of the men included in the delegation had indeed worshipped the calf and still cherished a sense of reverence for it.

Allah Ta'ālā replied to the prayer of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as follows:

وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَسَاكُنْهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ
بِآيَاتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ. الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي
التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ

"And My mercy extends to everything. So, I shall write it for those who fear, and pay Zakāh, and those who do believe in Our verses. Those who follow the Messenger, the *Ummī* (unlettered) prophet whom they find written with them in the Torah and the Injil (The gospels)". (7:156, 157)

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام said, "O Lord! I had prayed to You on behalf of my people who have repented their evil deeds but You have just informed me that Your mercy encompasses everyone but the Banī Isrā'īl. O Lord! Why was my birth not delayed and why was I not born among the favoured people of the unlettered Prophet?" On this, Allah told him that the only way through which Banī Isrā'īl's repentance could be accepted by Him was that each one of them should slay with sword anyone he finds from among his relations, be he his father or son and at the same spot where the sin of worshipping the calf was committed. Thereupon those among the seventy delegates whom Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had

brought with him in the belief that they were pious people, but who in their hearts felt reverence for the calf, also repented and obeyed the rigorous condition for the expiation of their sins, and when this was done, Allah forgave the sins of the slayers as well as the slain.

It will be recalled that when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام returned to his people from the Ṭūr on learning that they had fallen into mischief he had put aside in anger the Tablets which he had brought from the mount. He now picked them up and led his people towards the Holy land (Syria). On the way they passed by a city where a mighty and powerful people lived whose unusual appearance inspired fear in the hearts of all who saw them. Many tales of their valour and cruelty were related to the Banī Isrā'īl so that when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام proposed to enter the city they refused and said, "O Mūsā! These people are tyrants and we cannot face them. We will not enter this city so long as they are there, but if somehow, they can be made to leave the city we will gladly enter it." Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام argued with them but they were adamant and refused to be moved.

The Holy Qur'ān has, at another place, mentioned that two persons tried to convince Banī Isrā'īl to enter the city. According to Yazid Ibn Hārūn, a narrator of this report, Sayyidnā Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has interpreted the relevant verse to the effect that these two men belonged to the tyrant nation. They after coming out from the city had embraced the faith of Mūsā عليه السلام and realized that Banī Isrā'īl are terrified by their nation. Therefore, they said to Banī Isrā'īl, "We are fully aware of the nature of our own nation. You are terrified of their high stature and their large number, but in reality they have no strength of heart, nor do they have courage to face you. If you proceed to the gate of the city, you will see that they will surrender and you will prevail." Some commentators have held that these two men were from Banī Isrā'īl and convinced them to proceed to the city, but even after hearing their advice they flatly refused and addressed Sayyidna Mūsā عليه السلام in the most absurd manner as mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān in the following words:

They said:

يُمُوسَىٰ إِنَّا لَنُؤَدُّخُلُهَا أَبَدًا مَا دَامُوا فِيهَا فَادْهَبْ أَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَا إِنَّا هَاهُنَا قَاعِدُونَ

"O Mūsā! we shall never enter it, in any case, so long as they are there. So go, you and your Lord, and fight. As for us, We are

sitting right here." (5:24)

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had seen enough of the arrogance and defiant attitude of Banī Isrā'īl in spite of the numerous favours and benefits showered upon them by Allah and had refrained so far from praying against them for their provocations. But the rude reply which they now gave him filled his heart with sorrow and he prayed against them and termed them as فَاسِقِينَ (Transgressors). Allah Ta'ālā accepted his prayer, and holding them as فَاسِقِينَ (transgressors), denied them entry into the Holy Land for forty years and confined them to an open plain where they wandered aimlessly from morning till evening. However since Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was also with them, Allah favoured them with many gifts even while they suffered punishment. Wherever they went in this waterless desert of Tih (Sinai) a constant cloud shaded them from the burning sun. For food, Allah sent to them من و سلوى (Manna is a viscous substance from the ash tree and Salwa is a quail-like bird). As if by a miracle their clothes were never torn nor did they become dirty. They were given a square stone and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was instructed to strike it with his staff whenever they needed water and twelve springs of sweet water - three on each side - gushed out of it to serve the twelve tribes of Banī Isrā'īl, thus avoiding all disputes. At the end of their journeys wherever they camped, they found that the square stone was there already. (Qurtubī)

According to the present narration of this Ḥadīth-ul-Futūn, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه had attributed it to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. That Sayyidna Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه did not tell this story on his own, or after hearing it from someone else is the correct view in my opinion which is supported by the following event:

When Sayyidnā Mu'awiyā رضي الله عنه heard this Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, he denied the truth of that part of the story which said that while the men of the Pharaoh were unable to find any clue which could lead them to the murderer of the Egyptian (i.e. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام), it was disclosed by the second Egyptian with whom the Isrā'īli of the previous day was fighting. Sayyidnā Mu'awiyā's رضي الله عنه objection was that the Egyptian being ignorant of the previous day's murder could not have known and disclosed the name of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as the murder. The only witness to the event was the Isrā'īli.

When Sayyidnā Mu'awiyā ؓ expressed his doubts about this part of the Ḥadīth Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ got angry and took the former by the hand and brought him to Sa'd Ibn Mālik Zuhri and asked him if he remembered the occasion when the Holy Prophet ﷺ related the story about the murdered Egyptian. When Sa'd Ibn Mālik ؓ replied in the affirmative he asked him, "Now tell me whether it was the Isrā'īli or the Egyptian who brought information about the murderer to the Pharaoh?", Sa'd Ibn Mālik ؓ replied that it was the Egyptian because he had heard the Isrā'īli say that the murder was committed by Sayyidnā Mūsā ؑ and reported the matter to the Pharaoh. Imām Nasa'ī has reproduced this long Ḥadīth in كتاب التفسير of his larger book Al-Sunan al-Kubrā.

Ṭabarī and Ibn Abī Ḥatim have both reproduced this Ḥadīth in detail in their Commentaries and have expressed the view that it is not مَرْفُوع (marfū') i.e. it is not mentioned by the Holy Prophet ﷺ but is in the words of Sayyidna Ibn 'Abbās ؓ which he has taken from those Isrā'īli traditions of Ka'b al-Aḥbār whose reproduction and narration is permissible. It is true, however, that at places it contains sentences of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Ibn Kathīr has reproduced this Ḥadīth in his Commentary and after giving his own arguments says that, like Tabari and Ibn Abī Ḥatim, Sheikh Abul Hajjaj Mizzi also believes that this tradition is مَوْقُوف which means that it is a saying of Sayyidna Ibn 'Abbās ؓ and not of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The results, lessons and the great benefits to be obtained from the story of Sayyidnā Mūsā ؑ

The importance which the Qur'an attaches to the story of Sayyidnā Mūsā ؑ is evident from the fact that it is repeated frequently in several Sūrahs, the reason being that it contains numerous lessons for mankind, instances of high wisdom and unusual manifestation of the Supreme Power of Allah. All these things confirm a true believer in his beliefs, and provide for him practical and moral guidance. A brief account of some of these is given in the following paragraphs.

The Pharaoh's foolish plan and how Allah frustrated it

On being told that a boy born to the Isrā'īlites would cause the overthrow of his Kingdom, the Pharaoh issued orders that all male children born among the Isrā'īlies should be put to death. Later on for his

personal and diplomatic reasons he modified those orders so that male children born in alternate years only were put to death. Allah had the power to bring about the birth of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in the year in which the male children born to the Isrā'īlies were spared, but He willed that the tyrant's brutal plan should recoil on himself. Therefore it was decreed that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام should be born in the year when the new born Isrā'īli boys were to be put to death. Then Allah in His Supreme Wisdom created a situation in which the Pharaoh took Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام under his care and brought him up in his own palace. While all the Isrā'īli male children were being put to death lest any of them pose a threat to the Pharaoh's authority, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام grew up in the luxury of the royal palace where he was loved and respected by everyone.

Divine favours for the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام

If Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had accepted the milk from any other wet-nurse he would have spent his early years in the Pharaoh's palace and his mother would have suffered great anguish at being separated from her son. Also he would have been nursed by an infidel woman. But an inscrutable decree of providence saved him from being nourished by an infidel woman and at the same time united him with his mother. The Pharaoh and his wife felt beholden to her and not only showered gifts on her but also gave her remuneration for her services. By bringing Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to her own house she escaped the necessity of having to live in the Pharaoh's palace like any other servant. فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ.

Good news for industrialists and traders

There is a Ḥadīth according to which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that an industrialist or a businessman who, while engaged in his trade also desired to win the good-will of Allah was like the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, who nursed her own child and at the same time was paid for her services (Ibn Kathīr). It means that if a mason who builds a mosque, a school or a building for public use is concerned only with his wages, he would receive it, but nothing more. But if he undertook to construct these buildings in preference to other jobs with the intention that these would be used for good purposes and would benefit pious persons then, like the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, he would receive his wages as well as the religious benefit.

The chosen servants of Allah are gifted with a special attribute so that all who see them, love them

وَالْفَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِنِّي

And I have cast love on you from Myself - 20:39.

This verse suggests that Allah bestows upon his chosen servants a special grace which causes all men, friend or foe, to love them. Of course, the prophets enjoy this grace to a much greater degree, but many saints are also known to have possessed it.

Why was the murder of the Egyptian by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام regarded as a sin?

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام saw an Egyptian infidel fighting an Isrā'īli Muslim, he struck the former with a blow causing his death. He described this act as an act of Satan and prayed to Allah for forgiveness and Allah accepted his prayer.

Here is a point for consideration by jurists. This Egyptian was an infidel and a citizen of a non-Muslim state who had no peace agreement between him and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. Also he could not be given the status of a ذِمِّي (Dhimmi: A non-Muslim under Muslim rule) who is entitled to full protection from the Muslims. He was a non-Muslim citizen of دارالحرِب (Enemy country) and according to Muslim law killing such a person does not constitute a sin. So why was the murder of the Egyptian described as an act of Satan and a sin?

In none of the commentaries has this issue been brought up for consideration. Some time back, at the behest of Haḍrat Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanavī رحمه الله تعالى I began writing my book احكام القرآن and when I came to this issue, I sought his guidance, and his explanation was that although there was no covenant between Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and the Egyptian nor did he enjoy the status of a Dhimmi (a non-Muslim citizen of a Muslim state) yet neither of them was the head of a state. They were both subjects of the Pharaoh and at peace with each other. This was for all practical purposes an implied covenant between the two of them. Thus the murder of the Egyptian was in the nature of violation of the implied compact and therefore a sin. And since the murder was not deliberate but accidental, it does not adversely affect the sanctity of his Prophethood. For this reason in pre-partition India when both the Muslims and the Hindus

lived under the British rule, Hadrat Maulānā Thānavi رحمه الله تعالى did not consider it lawful for the Muslims to take the life or property of a Hindu.

Helping the weak and public service have their own rewards both in this world and in the hereafter

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام reached the outskirts of Madyan, he noticed two girls who stood aside because they were too weak to contend against men and water their goats. These girls were complete strangers to him and he himself was a homeless wanderer. But being a decent man he was prompted to come to their help. He watered their goats and by this act of kindness he gained the pleasure of Allah. And his worldly reward was that Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام gave him his daughter in marriage.

The philosophy and benefits of a situation in which one Messenger was an employee and the other an employer

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام came to the house of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام as an honoured guest. After sometime when he felt sufficiently secure from pursuit by the Pharaoh's soldiers, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام, at the suggestion of his daughter, offered him employment on wages. This offer embodies a deep philosophy from Allah and guidance for mankind.

First: Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was a Prophet of Allah Ta'ālā and it was not beyond his means to entertain a traveler for sometime without asking for recompense. But it seems that by prophetic wisdom he had perceived that being a person of noble character Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام would not accept his hospitality much longer and would move to some other place where he might suffer hardship. He therefore made a straight offer of employment. Here is a lesson that it is not proper to become a burden on somebody's hospitality for long periods.

Second: Allah Ta'ālā had chosen Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام for the grant of prophethood, and although toil and hard labour are neither the pre-conditions for prophethood, nor can the prophethood be obtained by any amount of exertion and effort, because it is a pure gift from Allah, yet His Supreme Wisdom had decreed that the prophets should also undergo a period of strenuous physical labour as a means of character building and for reforming others. The life of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had been spent in comfort and luxury and since he was destined to be a leader of mankind and to reform their moral life, his service with Sayyidnā Shu'aib

عليه السلام was to accustom him to hard work and to prepare him for the great mission for which Allah had chosen him.

Third: Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was given the task of tending the flocks of goats of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام. It is rather strange that many prophets have, at one time or the other, performed similar duties. Now a goat often breaks away from the main flock to the great annoyance of the shepherd. If he lets it stray it may be lost or even fall prey to a wolf, and if he punishes it, he may cause injury to the delicate animal. Therefore he has to be very patient with his flock. The same is the case with prophets; they can neither ignore the errant humanity nor can they be too severe in disciplining them. They have to conduct themselves with great patience and forbearance.

How to choose the best man for a job

The daughter of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام suggested to her father that he should employ Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in his service as the latter was both strong and honest (قَوِيٌّ أَمِينٌ). The word قَوِيٌّ (*qawiyy*: strong) is applied to a person who is strong and has ability to perform satisfactorily the duties which are entrusted to him, and أَمِينٌ (*amin*, honest) means that the record of his past life proves his honesty and integrity.

These two brief words, if considered in depth, cover all the qualities for selecting a person for different jobs and offices, public or private. In some cases even the detailed parameters laid down for the selection of employees in contemporary institutions are not so comprehensive as these two words are. Honesty, in particular, is something totally neglected today when selecting a candidate, the entire importance being given to academic degrees only. The corruption, disorder and mismanagement seen in public and private institutions at present is mainly caused by neglecting honesty and integrity in the employees. If a person is qualified and wise, but devoid of honesty, he may devise ways to protect himself from rules against his inefficiency and corruption. This is exactly what has rendered many public and private institutions inefficient and corrupt. Islam has therefore laid great emphasis on honesty and integrity, the blessings of which have been witnessed by the world through the centuries.

Difference between the approach of magicians and that of the prophets

The address which the Pharaoh delivered to his magicians in which he warned them of the threat to the country called for a patriotic response from the magicians, but they exploited the situation and negotiated their reward in case they gained victory over Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. On the other hand the prophets declare openly that they do not expect any reward for their services.

وَلَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ

I do not claim from you any reward for it - 26:109

Among the many factors for the success of their mission is the denial of all material rewards for their services. Nowadays the non-payment of remuneration to scholars, jurists, preachers etc. from Government sources has compelled them to accept payment for their services which, though permitted by the later jurists, has reduced the effectiveness of their mission.

Truth about the magic of the Egyptian magicians

The Egyptian magicians caused their sticks and ropes to appear as if they had really turned into snakes. The question is whether they were in reality turned into snakes. The Qur'ān says:

يُخَيَّلُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ أَنَّهَا تَسْعَى

Seemed to him, due to their magic as if they were running - 20:66.

This shows that they did not really become snakes, but it was some kind of mesmerism which cast a hypnotic spell on those present, to whom they appeared as running snakes. This, of course, does not mean that things or substances cannot be transformed by magic, but the Egyptian magicians did not possess these powers.

Division into tribes in matters of social life is not censurable

Islam has condemned the notion that regional, linguistic, ethnic and tribal divisions become the basis of nationalism. It has encouraged in all possible manners the elimination of all such differences and prejudices. The very foundation of Muslim polity rests on Islamic nationalism where

people of diverse description, race, lineage and culture constitute one single nation. The first step which the Holy Prophet ﷺ took when laying down the foundations of the Islamic state at Madīnah was to unite the Muhajirs and the Anṣār into a single bond of brotherhood. In his last sermon (حجة الوداع) he ﷺ laid down the rule, for all times to come, that prejudices and divisions based on geographical region, race and language are the idols which Islam has demolished. Nevertheless, their distinctions in the matters of social life have been duly recognized and permitted within reasonable limits. This is to avoid any hardship for the people due to the fact that the customs of living, dress, food etc. vary from one area to the other and from one tribe to another.

The Isrā'īlites whom Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام led out of Egypt were divided into twelve tribes and when crossing the river on their flight twelve passageways were cleared, one for each tribe. Similarly in the plain of Tīh (the waterless desert where Banī Isrā'īl wandered for forty years) the stone, by a miracle shot forth twelve springs of water in order that the twelve tribes of Banī Isrā'īl might not engage in strife over the use of water.

Appointment of a deputy to manage the affairs of a community

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام parted from his people in order to engage himself in prayers at the mount of Ṭūr for thirty days, he appointed Sayyidnā Harūn عليه السلام as his deputy during his absence and commanded his people to obey the latter in all matters, so that disputes and quarrels might not rise among them. This shows that when the head of a community or a family proceeds on a journey, he should, following the practice of the prophets, appoint a deputy to maintain order and discipline among them.

A disagreeable course of action may temporarily be adopted if it prevents disruption among Muslims

When Banī Isrā'īl started worshipping the calf during the absence of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, Sayyidnā Harūn عليه السلام remonstrated with them but did not go to the extent of severing all relations with them and his justification was that any harsh action by him would have caused a split among the Banī Isrā'īl.

إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تَقُولَ فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِي

"I feared that you would say, 'You have caused discord among the children of Isrā'īl and did not observe my advice'". (20:94)

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام accepted this explanation and prayed to Allah in favor of his brother. It leads to the principle that it is permissible to take a lenient view against an evil as a temporary expediency to prevent discord and strife among Muslims.

A vital principle of Prophetic Mission

When ordering Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام to go to Egypt and invite the Pharaoh to the path of righteousness, Allah also enjoined upon them to adopt a soft attitude toward him. فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَيِّنًا لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى (So, speak to him in soft words. May be, he takes to the advice or fears [Allah] - 20:44). Here an important principle has been enunciated that those who wish to reform people and lead them to a life of virtue should always be gentle and amiable towards their opponents however obstinate and perverse they may be. By such methods alone can they be persuaded to give heed to the message brought to them by the prophets.

The Pharaoh, who claimed to be a god, was also absolutely guilty of the massacre of thousands of Isrā'īli children just to safeguard his life and his Kingdom. But when Allah sent the two messengers to him, He gave them a guideline, namely that they should talk to him in a gentle and persuasive manner so that he might ponder and reflect on the message which they had brought to him. This guideline was emphasized in spite of the fact that Allah knew that the Pharaoh would never give up his obduracy nor his perverse ways. Here the intention was to bind the prophets to a conduct which might induce people to reflect and ultimately instill the fear of Allah in their hearts.

An unfortunate tendency is in vogue among the scholars of criticizing each other which they regard as a service to Islam. There is a need for curbing this tendency and the true teaching of Islam should be adopted.

Verses 45 - 50

قَالَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّنا نَخَافُ أَنْ يَفْرُطَ عَلَينا أَوْ أَنْ يَطَّغى ﴿٤٥﴾ قَالَ لا تَخَافَا
إِنِّى مَعَكُما أَسْمَعُ وَأَرى ﴿٤٦﴾ فَأَتَيْه فُقُولًا إِنَّا رَسُولُ رَبِّكَ فَأَرْسِلْ