

## Section 5

### Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 49

وَإِذْ نَجَّيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يُذَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ وَفِي ذَلِكَ بَلَاءٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ

**49. "And (remember) when We delivered you from the people of Pharaoh who had afflicted you with evil torment, slaughtering your sons and sparing your women-folk, and in that was a great trial from your Lord. "**

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In this verse, the Qur'an points to another great bounty out of the bounties He bestowed on the Children of Israel. This favour is the bounty of deliverance from the grips of those transgressors. This is the greatest bounty amongst the bounties of *Allah* on them and He reminds them, saying:

**"And (remember) when We delivered you from the people of Pharaoh..." "...who had afflicted you with evil torment..."**

**"...slaughtering your sons and sparing your women-folk..."**

They let your women-folk live as maid-servants and serve hard for them.

**"...and in that was a great trial from your Lord."**

To illustrate the torments of Pharaoh upon the Israelites, the Qur'an has particularly applied the term / yasumuna / in the future tense of the verb, which, in Arabic, indicates the duration and continuity of that evil torment.

Thus, they saw for themselves that their innocent sons were slaughtered before their eyes and their daughters were taken away from them to serve in the Egyptians' houses as maid-servants. That conduct

caused them to tolerate and experience torture permanently, too. They were considered as servants, workers, and slaves of the Coptic people in Egypt and of the men of Pharaoh.

It is a matter of importance that the Qur'an counts this event as a great and grievous trial for the Children of Israel and, of course, bearing all those bitter harsh afflictions had been a hard tremendous trial.

It is also probable that the term / bala' / ' trial', here, has been used with the meaning of 'punishment'. The reason is that before that event, Israelites had been enjoying an abundance of bounties with great power and authority. But they became ungrateful and the Lord punished them.

Anyhow, the day when the Children of Israel were delivered from the tyrannical clutches of the Egyptian monarch, the Pharaoh, was a very important historical day in their lives on which the Holy Qur'an has emphasized repeatedly.

## **Slavery of Females, Past and Present**

In the history of the Israelites, their bondage in Egypt was indeed a tremendous trial for them. Even the Egyptians' wish to spare the lives of the Israelites' females when the males were slaughtered, as the Qur'an declares, added to their bitterness. So, their rescue from that cruelty was really counted as a bounty.

It seems that the Qur'an intends to warn all human beings that they should try to obtain their rightful freedom however hard it may be, and protect it.

Hadrat Ali (as) has pointed out this matter in one of his sermons:

***"...Real death is in the life of subjugation while real life is in dying in the way of freedom..."*** 60

But the modern world is different from that of the ancient in this manner. At that time, for example, Pharaoh, through his peculiar cruelty, slaughtered the men and the sons of the people who were his enemies and let their females remain alive to serve Egyptians.

While, today, in this modern world, the spirit of manhood among males is often slaughtered under some other circumstances, and their females are mostly made slaves for the lustful pleasure of a group of filthy men.

Sometimes, the Pharaohs of the Age have pity upon neither men nor women; neither sons nor daughters; neither adults nor infants. They have verified this statement in the massacres they have committed in some Islamic and non-Islamic countries by using chemical bombs and the likes of them. Their actions are often even worse than what the Pharaohs of Egypt used to do.

Now, why did Pharaoh decide to kill the Israeli boys and let their women-folk live? Some of the commentators believe that the reason for that murderous decision was the dream that Pharaoh

dreamed. A more appropriate answer to this question will be discussed when commenting on **Surah AL-Qasas No 28 verse 4**.

Therein, you will come to know that the reason for that murder was not only Pharaoh's dream, but he and his clique also stood in awe of the increasing number of the Children of Israel and that they might become powerful and destroy the government of Pharaoh. This factor helped them make that hostile decision.

Some details about the miserable lot of the Israelites under the bondage of Pharaoh and how they were rescued, are also explained in Exodus –the opening chapter of the Bible i.e. Chapter 1.

## **Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 50**

وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمُ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ

**50. "And (remember) when We divided the sea for you, and delivered you and drowned Pharaoh's people while you were looking on."**

### **The Rescue from Pharaoh!**

In the previous verse the miraculous rescue of the Israelites from the tyrannical grips of the Egyptian monarch, the Pharaoh, was briefly pointed out. The present verse is, in fact, an explanatory statement of that rescue, which itself is a sign of the great bounties of *Allah* upon the Children of Israel. It says:

**"And (remember) when We divided the sea for you,..."**

**"...and delivered you and drowned Pharaoh's people while you were looking on."**

The incident of the drowning of Pharaoh and his horsemen in the sea, and the rescue of the children of Israel from their cruel clutches is expressed in several Suras of the Qur'an, including: Surah Al-'A'raf, No. 7, verse 136 –Surah Al-'Anfal, No.8, verse 54 –Surah Al-'Asra', No. 17 , verse 103– Surah Ash-Shu'ara', No.26, verses 63 & 66 –Surah Az-Zukhruf, No.43, verse 55– and Surah Ad-Dukhan, No.44, from verses 17 onwards.

More or less all the details of that happening are stated in the above Suras, but by the verse under discussion the story is hinted at only from the point of the favour and grace of *Allah* upon the Children of Israel in order to attract them to the invitation of Islam, the new religion of salvation, and to invoke them to accept it.

As you will read the explanation of this subject in detail through the aforementioned Suras, Moses (as), after a long time of preaching and inviting Pharaoh and his people to the Divine Faith and showing them

numerous miracles and receiving no positive response from them, was commissioned that he and the Children of Israel move from Egypt at midnight. But when he reached the seashore, he realized that Pharaoh and his horsemen were closely pursuing them. The Israelites were terribly afraid.

They had the frightful sea in front of them and at their heels the forceful army of the Pharaoh, whom they could not challenge, threatened them. At that time Moses (as) was commanded to strike the water of the sea with his Rod and he obeyed. Then several dry paths appeared in the sea on which Moses (as) and his people passed.

When they crossed the sea from between the walls of water and arrived on the other side of the sea safely, Pharaoh and his army, who were following them, entered the same paths. They reached the midst of the sea when the walls of water came together and all of them drowned.

Their corpses were floating over the sea water as the Children of Israel were watching them and witnessing how helpless their enemies were in front of their eyes.

That terrible anxiety and the horrible fear they had compared with this miraculous rescue both deserved to be contemplated, and demanded that they express thanksgiving to *Allah*.

In this manner, the Qur'an tells the Jews that *Allah* has granted them His Mercy so that they could rid themselves of that anxiety and awe; then why do they repudiate the Prophet of Islam, *Allah*'s Messenger, and do not accept Islam?

By the way, this verse teaches the human race to rely on *Allah* and trust in that everlasting Power in their lives. They ought to try hard and not stop in their endeavours and seek His help, because He helps them even in their most grievous moments.

A detailed story of this miraculous event is given in the Bible, Exodus; Chapter 14.

1. And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying,
2. Speak unto the children of Israel that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea.
3. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.
4. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the **LORD**. And they did so.
5. And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this that we have let Israel go from serving us?

6. And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him.
7. And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt and captains over every one of them.
8. And the **LORD** hardened the heart of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel and the children of Israel went out with a high hand.
9. But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon.
10. And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the **LORD**.
11. And they said unto Moses, because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?
12. Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.
13. And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the **LORD**, which he will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever .
14. The **LORD** shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.
15. And the **LORD** said unto Moses: Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.
16. But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.
17. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get honour upon Pharaoh, upon all his host, upon his chariots and upon his horsemen.
18. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the **LORD**, when I have gotten honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.
19. And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them:
20. And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the

night.

21. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the **LORD** caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

22. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left.

23. And the Egyptians pursued and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

24. And it came to pass that in the morning watch the **LORD** looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of the fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians.

25. And took off their chariot wheels, that they drove them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, let us flee from the face of Israel: for the **LORD** fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

26. And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and upon their horsemen.

27. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the **LORD** over-threw the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

28. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.

29. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

30. Thus the **LORD** saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.

31. And Israel saw that great work which the **LORD** did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the **LORD**, and believed the **LORD**, and his servant Moses.

The above text is exactly narrated from the Bible, published in London by the British and Foreign Bible Society, 146 Queen Victoria Street.

Then, if some signs and punctuations are not the same as those used in the present style of English writing, it should not be taken as being wrong or misused, but it is because of the method of writing in the original English translated Bible that we observed carefully, without making any changes in the text. The case is also true for page 190 in this book.

## Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 51-54

وَإِذْ وَاعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِن بَعْدِهِ وَأَنتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ

ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنْكُمْ مِّن بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

وَإِذْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ الْكِتَابَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي كُنْتُ نَذِيرًا لَّكُمْ أَن تُعْبُدُوا الْعِجْلَ بَدَلًا لِّمَن لَّدُنِّي فَمَا تَبْغُونَ  
بَارِئِكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ عِندَ بَارِئِكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ  
الرَّحِيمُ

51. "And (remember) when We appointed forty nights for Moses, and you then took the Calf (for worship) after him, and you were unjust (to yourselves)."
52. "Then We pardoned you after that in order that you might be thankful."
53. "And (remember) when We gave Moses the Book as a Criterion (between right and wrong) so that you might be guided (aright)."
54. "And (remember) when Moses said to his people: 'O my people, you have indeed wronged yourselves by worshipping the Calf; so turn (in repentance) to your Creator and slay yourselves (the wrong doers), that will be better for you with your Creator'. Then, He turned towards you (mercifully). Truly, He is the Oft-Pardoning, the Most Merciful."

### The Israelites' Greatest Deviation

In these four verses, the Qur'an refers to another episode in the adventurous history of the Children of Israel and reminds the Jews of some shaking events of theirs.

These verses speak of their greatest deviation throughout the history of their lives which was their aberration from the path of monotheism to the worshipping of the calf. The Qur'an warns them that they had gone astray once in their history because of the temptations of the mischief makers.

Now they should beware not to repeat that mistake. They should be attentive that the way of pure

monotheism, viz. the way of Islam and the Qur'an, is open to them. They must not detach from it. First the verse says:

***"And (remember) when We appointed forty nights for Moses..."***

When he (Moses) departed from you and his thirty night appointment delayed for forty nights,

***"...and you then took the Calf (for worship) after him, and you were unjust to yourselves."***

This event will be scrutinized when commenting on **Surah AL-'Araf. No.7. verse 141** and Surah Taha, No. 20 verses 86 on. The story in brief is as follows:

After the deliverance of the Children of Israel from the tyrannical grips of Pharaoh and his men, who drowned in the sea, Moses (as) was commanded to leave for Mount Sinai to stay there for thirty days and nights in order to receive the Law or the Turah on the Tablets from the Lord.

Subsequently, the term was extended by ten more days and nights for the trial of the people. The delay in the return of Moses (as) to his people at the end of thirty days, owing to the extension of the time by ten days and nights, was sufficient to create in the minds of the Israelites doubt about the authenticity of Moses (as) as a true Prophet, on one hand, and for fallacious seductive Sameri to make a golden Calf possessing a special sound in order to deceive the Israelites, on the other hand. They, thereby, were deluded into calf-worship.

The majority of the Children of Israel joined him. Aaron (as), the deputy and brother of Moses (as) with a minority of people remained faithful to their monotheistic creed. They tried very much to restrain others from that great deviation, but they failed finally.

When Moses (as) returned from the Mount and observed the circumstances, he became angry about it and scorned them severely. They understood that they had done wrong and decided to repent. Moses (as) on *Allah's* command suggested to them an important repentance, whose explanation will be presented in future verses–

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In the next verse it says:

***"Then We pardoned you after that in order that you might be thankful."***

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Then, it continues mentioning the series of happenings that had occurred before, saying:

***"And (remember) when We gave Moses the Book as a Criterion (between right and wrong) so that you might be guided (aright)."***

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***"And (remember) when Moses said to his people: 'O' my people, you have indeed wronged yourselves by worshipping the Calf..."***

***"...so turn (in repentance) to your Creator..."*** your repentance should be fulfilled in this definite form: ***"...and slay yourselves (the wrong doers)..."***, in which the righteous had to kill the wrong doers.

Of course, those who had not worshipped the calf were not condemned to death, but they were commissioned to slay those calf-worshippers among themselves, be they their own kith and kin, i.e. their own fellow men whom they loved the most because they had associated a partner, the Calf, to the Lord, the One True God. 1

***"...that will be better for you with your Creator..."***

***"..Then, He turned toward you (mercifully). Truly, He is the Oft-Pardoning, the Most Merciful."***

The phrase /innakum alamtum anfusakum/ 'you have indeed wronged yourselves', here, is also noteworthy because: in Islam, sin which a man or a woman commits, is done against the individual's own self. For, the first and the immediate effect of a sin committed is that the individual becomes degenerated and thus gets far away from Divine Mercy.

## **Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 55-56**

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَىٰ لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ نَرَى اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً فَأَخَذَتْكُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ وَأَنْتُمْ  
تَنْظُرُونَ

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكُم مِّن بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

**55. "And (remember) when you said: 'O'Moses! We will never believe in you until we see Allah manifestly', so the thunderbolt struck you while you looked on."**

**56. "Then We raised you up after your death in order that haply you might be thankful."**

### **An Unjust Demand!**

These two verses remind the Children of Israel about another bounty amongst the great bounties that *Allah* bestowed upon them. This illustrates how stubborn and obstinate those people were, and how the divine grievous torment encompassed them as a result of their unjust demand. But, thereafter, the Mercy of *Allah* blessed them again. It says:

***"And (remember) when you said: 'O' Moses! We will never believe in you until we see Allah manifestly..."***

This kind of demand might originate from their' ignorance', because the minds of ignorant ones usually cannot understand beyond the impressions of their senses. Their minds are not able to conceive anything invisible. So, they demanded to see the Lord openly with their own eyes.

Or, it originated haply from their stubbornness and their habit of seeking pretext which was one of the characteristics of those people.

At any rate, they frankly told Moses (as) that they would never believe in him until they saw the Lord manifestly and with their very eyes.

Here, they insisted on seeing Him. This placed Moses (as) in a helpless predicament. So, they saw, instead, one of the creatures of *Allah* that they did not have the ability to look upon. This incident might have made them understand that the eyes of the head were not able to see even many of the creations of *Allah*, much less their ability to see His Pure Self, the Almighty.

Then, a thunderbolt came down and struck the mountain. It issued an amazing light with a horrible sound and an awful earthquake so that everybody there, because of their intensive fear, fell down dead. So, the Qur'an, following the above sentence says:

***".-so the thunderbolt struck you while you looked on."***

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Moses (as) was very worried about that event. Seventy persons from amongst the great leaders of the Israelites had died in that occurrence. It was a very crucial event for the Children of Israel to endure and they would make life hard for Moses (as). Then he (as) asked *Allah* to raise them up and let them live again. His supplication was accepted, as the Qur'an says:

***"Then We raised you up after your death in order that haply you might be thankful."***

This short explanation of the above two verses is also expounded more comprehensively in **Surah Al-'Araf. No.7. verse 155** and **Surah Nisa No. 4. verse 153**. Concerning seeing God, we have in Exod. 33: 20: " And He said: 'Thou canst see My face: for there shall no man see Me and live'."

See the Bible, Exodus 19: 16 and 17, too, which is as follows:

16. And it came to pass on the third day in the morning that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.

17. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.

This story shows that while inviting the ignorant and stubborn people to the right path, the great prophets of *Allah* were involved in many complicated problems. Sometimes, the people asked for improvisatorial miracles from the prophets; and sometimes they went further and demanded of them to see the Lord openly with their physical eyes.

They said decisively that they would never believe in them unless their demand was actually performed. They insisted on their vain thoughts and put forth some new excuses even when they were faced with respective violent responses from the Lord.

But, the Grace and Mercy of *Allah* assisted the prophets on their path, else it was impossible for them to resist and stand firm when receiving all those excuses.

This tendency of demanding extraordinary and silly manifestations as miracles had also been the habit of the opponents of the holy Prophet (S), (the Holy Qur'an 4: 153, and 17: 90-96).

By the way, this verse is one of the verses that attest to the existence of the possibility of 'restoration of life', in this world, because its occurrence in one respect is evidence of its possibility in other respects, too.

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1. Atyabul-Bayan, vol. 2, pg 34