

Section 2: Moses and Aaron Sent Towards Pharaoh

Surah Ash-Shu'ara - Verses 10-12

وَإِذْ نَادَى رَبُّكَ مُوسَى أَنْ أُنْتِ الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ أَلا يَتَّقُونَ

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُكَذِّبُونِ

10. ***“And when your Lord called out to Moses (saying): ‘Go to the unjust people,”***

11. ***“The people of pharaoh; will they not fear (Allah)?”***

12. ***“Said (Moses): ‘O my Lord! Surely I fear that they will reject me?’”***

Sending prophets to people is of Allah's status. Struggling with false god is at the top of prophets' programs.

(Go to the unjust people)

As we said before, this Surah states the life story of 7 great prophets as an instructive lesson for all Muslims, especially early ones.

It begins with Moses (as) and explains some parts of his life and struggles with Pharaohs until the time

when this tyrannical nation sank.

Up to now many Suras of the holy Qur'an have talked about Children of Israel, Moses (as) and the people of Pharaoh and in some of the next Suras there will be some discussions about them, too.

Of course, some of these discussions are apparently repeated, but studying them carefully shows that each of them emphasizes on a particular part of this event and it is for a special aim.

For example, the concerned verses were sent down when Muslims were so minor that they did not have any power and important position while their enemies were very powerful and mighty so that by no means they were equal.

Here, it is necessary for Allah to mention some similar life stories of the former nations in order to make them know this great power of foe and their apparent weakness would never bring about their defeat, and so their morale would be boosted and they could increase their resistance and insistence.

It is interesting that after each life story of these 7 prophets, these two verses are repeated:

"...but most of them do not believe."

"And verily, your Lord is He the Mighty, the Merciful."

It is exactly the same sentences that we read about the Prophet (S) in the beginning of this very Surah. This harmony is an active evidence of this fact that mentioning this part of the stories of prophets has been because of some special psychological and social conditions of Muslims in that particular part of time and age, and their similarity in other occasions.

At first it says:

"And when your Lord called out to Moses (saying): 'Go to the unjust people,"

In the next verse the Qur'an adds:

"The people of pharaoh; will they not fear (Allah)?"

This point is worth-studying that here the only attribute of Pharaohs that is emphasized is /zulm/ (oppression).

We know that this word has got a comprehensive and extensive meaning, and polytheism is one of its manifest extensions:

("...verily polytheism is a grievous iniquity."²)

Exploitation and slavery of the Children of Israel, with those harsh punishments and tortures, is its other extension. Moreover, before anybody else, they first oppressed themselves with their wrong actions; and

so we can summarize the purpose of Divine prophets' call in struggling with oppression and tyranny in all aspects.

At this time Moses (as) tells Allah his great problems and difficulties and asks Him to strengthen and boost him more for carrying out this great mission.

Here is what the Qur'an says:

“Said (Moses): ‘O my Lord! Surely I fear that they will reject me?’”

Thus, Moses implied that they would defeat him with their oppositions and denials before he could complete his mission and this mission could not get anywhere.

Moses (as) was totally right, for Pharaoh and his people had so much dominance over the conditions of the country, Egypt, that no one could struggle with and oppose them, and, thus, any little opposition would be harshly and tyrannically suppressed.

Surah Ash-Shu'ara - Verses 13-15

وَيَضِيقُ صَدْرِي وَلَا يَنْطَلِقُ لِسَانِي فَأَرْسِلْ إِلَى هَارُونَ

وَلَهُمْ عَلَيَّ ذَنْبٌ فَأَخَافُ أَنْ يَقْتُلُونِ

قَالَ كَلَّا فَاذْهَبَا بِآيَاتِنَا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُسْتَمِعُونَ

13. “And my breast straitens, and my tongue is not eloquent, therefore sent for Aaron (to help me).”

14. “And they have a crime against me, therefore I fear that they may slay me.”

15. “Said (Allah): ‘By no means, so go you both with Our signs, surely We are with you, hearing.’”

The purpose of Moses' wrong action, mentioned in verse 14, is an event that is referred to in Surah Al-Qasas, No. 28, verse 14. Before his prophethood, Moses (as) entered a city and saw that one of his adherents was fighting with one of the people of Pharaoh. Moses' adherent asked Moses' help, and Moses (as), supporting him, struck the Coptic enemy with his fist and he died.

This event sent a shock wave across the region and it forced Moses (as) to escape. Although this action

of Moses was not done to kill that person, for it was done to support an oppressed person, it caused Moses (as) to be counted as a murderer in the view of the people of Pharaoh.

When Moses (as) was appointed as a prophet, he said to Allah that he feared the death of that Coptic man prevented him from his mission.

It is understood from the word 'Kalla' (nay) that the act of Moses (as) was not a deliberate murder, otherwise, Allah may not say to a willful murderer:

"... 'By no means so go you both with Our signs, surely We are with you, hearing.'"

And therefore, Moses (as) implies that his breast straitens, and has: not enough capacity for the accomplishment of this mission.

Moses also added that his tongue was not eloquent enough and, therefore, he (as) asked Him to give his brother the messengership, too, so that they could struggle with together.

Moses (as) wanted to carry out this great commandment with the help of Aaron, his brother, in spite of those stubborn oppressors.

The verse says:

"And my breast straitens, and my tongue is not eloquent, therefore sent for Aaron (to help me)."

In the next verse Moses (as) implies that, further, they have a charge of crime against him, as they think, because he had killed one of those cruel Coptic people when the man was quarrelling with an oppressed person from the children of Israel.

The verse says:

"And they have a crime against me, therefore I fear that they may slay me."

Moses (as) feared that the people of Pharaoh might kill him as retaliation for slaying one of them and this could put an end to that great mission.

As a matter of fact, Moses (as) encountered 4 problems on the way of carrying this great mission and he asked Allah to solve them, (the problem of denial, the problem of straitening of breast, the problem of retaliation, the problem of lack of eloquence).

Meanwhile, it gets clear that Moses (as) did not fear about his own life, but he feared that he might get killed before fulfilling his mission, and so he asked Allah to help him more, for succeeding in this struggle.

The kind of means that Moses (as) asked Allah in this connection is a clear evidence upon this fact. He

asked expansion of breast (great and extensive soul), eloquence, and commissionership of his brother, Aaron, to participate in this great job.

This matter has been explained in details, in Surah Ta-Ha, where it says:

***“(Moses) said: ‘My Lord expand me my breast!’
“And make easy for me my task,”
“And loose a knot from my tongue,”
“(That) they may understand my saying;”
“And appoint for me an assistant from my family,”
“Aaron, my brother;”
“Strengthen my back by him,”
“And associate him (with me) in my affair.”
“So that we glorify You much,”
“And remember You abundantly.”***³

Through the next verse, Allah fulfilled this sincere demand of Moses, where the Qur’an says:

“Said (Allah): ‘By no means, so go you both with Our signs, surely We are with you, hearing’.”

This statement means that they can not kill you, your breast will not be straitened and you will be eloquent.

Allah also fulfilled Moses’ praying about his brother and he was commissioned, too, to go to invite Pharaoh and his people to the truth.

Allah never left them alone and He helped them in tight conditions, and they paved the path of the Truth firmly and with assurance.

Thus, by three sentences Allah provided Moses (as) enough assurances of support and fulfilled his demand; by the word ‘Kalla’ (nay) Allah assured him that they could not kill him. Also he would have no problem in speaking and in his job.

And with the sentence *lfaḥaba bi ‘ayatinal (So go you both with Our signs)*, Allah sent his brother, Aaron, to help Moses (as). And finally, with the sentence *’inna ma‘akum mustami’un/ (Surely We are with you, hearing)*, He promised them to support them anywhere on the earth.

It is considerable that, in the last sentence, the pronoun has been used in the plural form and it is said,

‘We are with you’.

It is possible that this sentence refers to the matter that Allah is present in all meetings and gatherings that Moses (as) and his brother have with the people of Pharaoh and He hears all their words, and, thus,

helps these two brothers to overcome those oppressors.

Some think that since the Arabic word /ma'a/ (with) indicates support and helps, and this help is not for the people of Pharaoh, they are wrong, but this word indicates the perpetual presence of Allah in all scenes and places. Even he is with wrongdoers and lifeless creatures and there is no place in which He is not present.

The application of a derivative of the word /'istima'/ that means: 'to listen carefully' puts emphasis on this fact, too.

Surah Ash-Shu'ara - Verses 16-19

فَأْتِيَا فِرْعَوْنَ فَقُولَا إِنَّا رَسُولُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

أَنْ أَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

قَالَ أَلَمْ نُرَبِّكَ فِيْنَا وَلَيْدًا وَلَبِثْتَ فِيْنَا مِنْ عُمُرِكَ سِنِينَ

وَفَعَلْتَ فَعَلَتِكَ الَّتِي فَعَلْتَ وَأَنْتَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ

16. ***“So go to Pharaoh and say: ‘Verily we (two) are the Messengers of the Lord of the worlds!’”***
17. ***“Send you with us the Children of Israel’.”***
18. ***“Said (Pharaoh): ‘Did we not cherish you as a child among us, and you tarried among us for (many) years of your life?’”***
19. ***“And you did that your deed which you did, and you are one of the ungrateful.”***

It is Allah's will to rear Moses (as) in the house of Pharaoh. Allah's friends do not get bound by ties of people's hospitality, and society and environment have no effect on them.

It is not right to leave someone who is good with us alone and to accept, or ignore, his faults. (Moses (as) was helped and brought up by Pharaoh but Moses (as) did not leave him alone.)

In the previous verses, the first phase of Moses' mission was stated, namely receiving revelation and

asking means of achieving this great aim, ended.

Now, the second phase that is meeting Pharaoh and having a critical conversation with him is mentioned.

As an introduction, Allah, pointing to availability of everything for Moses and Aaron, commands them and says:

“So go to Pharaoh and say: ‘Verily we (two) are the Messengers of the Lord of the worlds!’”

The Qur’anic phrase *ifa’tiyal (come together)* shows that they must speak with Pharaoh himself at any price, and using the word /rasul/ (messenger) which is in the singular form, although they were two, refers to unity and oneness of their call, as if they were two souls in one body with one program and one aim.

After declaring their mission, they asked freedom of the Children of Israel, when they said:

“Send you with us the Children of Israel’.”

It is obvious that the purpose of this statement is to set them free in order to go with Moses and Aaron (as), and its purpose is not at all that they have asked Pharaoh to send them by himself.

Here, Pharaoh began to speak and, with calculated and, at the same time, wicked words, tried to deny their mission.

First, he addressed Moses (as), as the Qur’an announces:

“Said (Pharaoh): ‘Did we not cherish you as a child among us, and you tarried among us for (many) years of your life?’”

Pharaoh wanted to say to Moses (as) that he rescued him from huge waves of Nile, called nut nurses for him, exempted him from the law of death sentence of the Children of Israel and reared him well in a secure, comfortable and luxurious environment, so that Moses (as) spent many years of his Life with them.

In the next verse Pharaoh found another fault with Moses, (as): (referring to killing one of the advocates of Pharaoh).

It says:

“And you did that your deed which you did, and you are one of the ungrateful.”

Pharaoh implied that Moses (as) has been fed with the hand of him and now how Moses (as) wanted to bite that hand.

As a matter of fact, he wanted to condemn Moses (as) with this argumentation, as he supposed.

The purpose of Moses' wrong action mentioned in verse 14 is an event that is referred to in Surah Al-Qasas, verse 14 and it does not need that we repeat it.

Some commentators have said that the best form in the meaning of the verse is the content of the tradition of Imam Rida, the eighth Imam (as), who said Moses (as) had acted amphibological congruity.

Surah Ash-Shu'ara - Verse 20

قَالَ فَعَلْتُهَا إِذَا وَأَنَا مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ

20. "Said (Moses): 'I did it then, when I was (as you think) in error'."

Sometimes confession is a value. After hearing the diabolic words of Pharaoh, Moses (as) answered the three faults that were mentioned, but he counted the second fault more important, when he answered it prior to the first one, (or basically the first fault was not worth answering, for rearing one is not a reason for not guiding the probably misled person who rears.)

However, here is his answer:

"Said (Moses): 'I did it then, when I was (as you think) in Error'."

In the commentary of Atyab-ul-Bayan, we read different commentaries about the Qur'anic phrase ***Imin-ad-dallin***; some say that Moses (as) implied that he did not intend to kill and he did not know that it would lead to death.

Some say that Moses (as) implied that he had forgotten. Some say that murder was done by error. Some say that he had not been appointed to messengership when he did it. But all these are wrong, for we know that one of the conditions of prophets, messengers and saints is infallibility. They are far from sins, errors, mistakes, ignorance, and forgetfulness.

Moreover, before this event, Allah says:

"And when he reached his maturity and was full grown, We gave him wisdom and knowledge..."⁴

So attributing ignorance, forgetfulness, mistake and error to Moses (as) is wrong.

Moreover, Moses (as) knew that he would become prophet, for it was revealed to his mother:

"...verily We shall bring him back unto you and shall make him (one) of the Messengers."⁵

The purpose of the Qur'anic word */dallin/* seems that, because the Coptic man wanted to kill another person and that person asked Moses (as) to help him, and also removing oppression of oppressor is necessary according to intellect and reason.

Then Moses (as) added he thought that helping the oppressed person makes Pharaoh happy and he would like what Moses (as) wanted to do. But after making Pharaoh angry, he escaped for Pharaoh wanted to kill Moses (as). And it got clear to Moses that what he (as) had done was wrong according to the opinion of Pharaoh.

Another commentary says that this word, */dall/*, mentioned in the verse under discussion, refers to a practical deviation which is unintentional and it does not mar infallibility, or it means astonishment, like verse 7 of Surah Ad-Duha, No. 93 which says:

“And He found you wandering and guided (you).”⁶

Surah Ash-Shu'ara - Verse 21

فَفَرَرْتُ مِنْكُمْ لَمَّا خِفْتُكُمْ فَوَهَبَ لِي رَبِّي حُكْمًا وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

21. “So I fled from you when I feared you, then my Lord granted me wisdom and made me of the messenger.”

In this noble verse Moses (as) tells the reason of his escape after that event.

He (as) says:

“So I fled from you when I feared you, then my Lord granted me wisdom and made me of the messenger.”

The commentators are of different opinions about the purpose of the Qur'anic word */hukm/* in this verse. Is it the position of prophethood or knowledge and cognizance? But by paying attention to the rest of the verse which sets the position of prophethood in front of the position of wisdom, it gets clear that it is something other than prophethood and mission.

Another evidence for this subject is verse 79 of Surah 'Al-i-'Imran, No. 3:

“It is not for a human being that Allah should give him the Book, the judgment and the Prophethood, then he should say to people: ‘Be my servants rather than Allah’s...”

Basically the Arabic word 'Hukm' originally means to prevent for reforming, therefore snaffle is called 'Hakamah' in Arabic language. Then this word has been applied to saying something that is wisdom,

and in this relation, knowledge and intellect have been called /hukm/, too.

There may be said that it is understood from verse 14 of Surah Al-Qasas, No. 28 that Moses (as) had achieved the position of wisdom and knowledge before this event; when it says:

“And when he reached his maturity and became full grown, We granted him wisdom and knowledge...”

After this verse the affair of killing that man is mentioned through some verses next to it.

The answer to this question is that knowledge and wisdom has got various levels and Moses (as) had reached one level formerly and he reached a higher level of it at the time of appointing as prophet.

Imam Ali (as) was once asked that why, after the Prophet (S), did he not gain his due with the help of sword and why he did not fight with his former caliphates as he fought with Talhe, Zubayr, and Mu‘awiyah.

Imam Ali (as) said:

“Sometimes it is necessary to be silent. Did not ‘Ibrahim (as) say to people:

“And I shall withdraw from you and what you call on besides Allah...”?⁷

Did not Aaron say:

“...verily the people judged me weak and had well-nigh slain me...”?⁸

Did not Yusuf (as) say:

“...‘My Lord! The Prison is dearer to me than that to which they invite me...?’⁹

Did not Moses (as) tell them:

“So I fled from you when I feared you...”?¹⁰

Did not Lut (as) say for the demand of the wrong-doers:

“...‘Would that I had the power against you or I might take refuge in a strong support?’¹¹

Therefore other friends of Allah sometimes have to be silent or to be in reclusion.”

Surah Ash-Shu‘ara – Verse 22

وَتِلْكَ نِعْمَةٌ تَمُنُّهَا عَلَيَّ أَنْ عَبَّدتَّ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

22. “And is it a favour with which you reproach me that you have enslaved the Children of Israel?”

The reproaches and arrogance should be answered with harshness and severity.

To answer back the reproach of Pharaoh about rearing Moses (as) in his childhood, Moses (as) protested and decisively said:

“And is it a favour with which you reproach me that you have enslaved the Children of Israel?”

It is correct that the hand of events brought Moses (as) to the Palace of Pharaoh and he (as) was unwillingly brought up in his lap, and this shows the might of Allah, but one must see what the main factor of this affair was. Why was not Moses (as) brought up in his real home with his father and mother caring him?

Is not it true that Pharaoh held the Children of Israel captive and killed boys and let girls to live for being slave-girl?

This great oppression that Pharaoh committed caused Moses’ mother to put her son in a wooden box and placed it in Nile River in order to protect her child. It was Allah’s will that this small ship came near Pharaoh's palace.

Yes, it was Pharaoh’s great oppression that made Moses (as) indebted to this reproach and deprived him of his clean parental home and placed him in Pharaoh defiled palace.

With this commentary, the relation of Moses (as) with Pharaoh’s question gets clear.

Another possible commentary is that the purpose of Moses (as) was that his rearing by Pharaoh could be as a blessing compared with those tyranny and cruelties Pharaoh imposed on the Children of Israel, and it is understood that this blessing is a drop in the ocean. What blessing is it that Pharaoh points to, while he has done many oppressions and crimes beside it?

The third commentary that can be mentioned for the answer of Moses (as) to Pharaoh is that: if Moses (as) was brought up in Pharaoh’s palace and enjoyed various blessings, it must not be forgotten that the real builders of that palace were the slaves taken from the nation of Moses (as) and the producers of those blessings were the prisoners of the Children of Israel.

How did Pharaoh reproach Moses (as) for enjoying his (Moses’) own nation products?

These three above mentioned commentaries are not inconsistent with each other, but the first one seems clearer from some aspects.

By the way, the Qur’anic phrase *imin-al-mursalin* (used in the previous verse, refers to the fact that Moses (as) was not the only messenger of Allah, and before him there had come many prophets and

Moses (as) was one of the divine prophets, and Pharaoh did forget all of these things.

Surah Ash-Shu'ara – Verses 23–26

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُوقِنِينَ

قَالَ لِمَنْ حَوْلَهُ أَلَا تَسْتَمِعُونَ

قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأُولِينَ

23. “Pharaoh said: ‘And what is the Lord of the worlds?’”

24. “He said: ‘(He is) the Lord of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, if you have faith’.”

25. “Pharaoh said to those around him: ‘Do you not hear (what he says)?’”

26. “(Moses) said: ‘Your Lord and the Lord of your fathers of old’.”

The Qur’an implies that Prophets’ thesis against their opponents was around Allah’s lordship, that is Allah’s management and legislation and the necessity of the obedience of His orders, otherwise, prophets’ opponents accepted Allah as the creator of the world.

Nowadays some people say that religion is separated from politics. This statement is like the words of those who say the creation of the world by Allah is something other than management of the world; (Allah creates it and we govern it).

According to the holy Qur’an and intellect, the right of lordship, obligating and being obeyed belongs only to the One who is Creator, not others. One who has created knows what law to be enacted.

Moses (as) implied that Pharaoh’s question was not for understanding, but he was beating about the bush. If Pharaoh really sought the Truth, he would understand His unity and lordship by pondering over the current order and system of the creation.

Anyway, when Moses (as) answered Pharaoh's words very decisively and strongly and Pharaoh got hopeless from this aspect, he changed the course of conversation.

He questioned Moses (as) who had said: his Lord, the Lord of the worlds, appointed him (as) one of the messengers; as the Holy Qur'an declares:

“Pharaoh said: ‘And what is the Lord of the worlds?’”

It seems very unlikely that Pharaoh has raised this question for understanding the matter, but it seems that he said it rather out of feigning ignorance and for the sake of scoffing.

In the second verse, like all aware and attentive discussers, Moses (as) had no way but to treat the matter earnestly and to answer it seriously.

In view of the fact that the Essence of Allah is out of reach of man's thoughts and perceptions, Moses (as) used His signs and effects that are everywhere in the universe and spoke about the extrovertive signs, as follows:

“He said: ‘(He is) the Lord of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, if you have faith’.”

The heavens with their greatness, the earth with its vastness and its various creatures, before which Pharaoh's kingdom is nothing, is the creation of the Lord of Moses (as). Such a Creator, Divisor and administrator, namely Allah (s.w.t), deserves worshipping, not a weak and tiny creature like Pharaoh.

Paying attention to this matter is also necessary that idol-worshippers believed that each creature of the world had got a certain lord, and counted universe as a mixture of scattered systems, but Moses' words refer to the fact that this united single system that governs the universe is an evidence that it has 'a single Lord' unique Allah.

The Qur'anic sentence *‘in kuntum muqinin/ (if you have; faith)* probably refers to this matter that Moses (as) implicitly wanted to make Pharaoh and his companions understand that

the aim of their question was not for understanding the Truth, but if they were really seeking the Truth and were the owner of wisdom and intellect, that argument that he uttered would be enough.

Moses (as) implied they should open their eyes for some time and see His signs in the vast heavens and the expanded earth in order to know what they must know and correct their world-view.

But Pharaoh did not rouse from ignorance sleep with this strong speech of the heavenly great teacher and continued ridiculing and scoffing. He used the ancient method of the conceited tyrants and addressed his companions when he spoke, as the Qur'an says:

“Pharaoh said to those around him: ‘Do you not hear (what he says)?’”

It is obvious who were the companions of Pharaoh. They were like Pharaoh himself; they were some oppressors and wealthy people who supported tyranny.

Ibn ‘Abbas says that his companions, who were attending there, were 500 persons who were some special and important persons of his nation. 12

Pharaoh’s aim was to render this logical and pleasant speech of Moses (as) ineffective on the dark heart of group, and to show that this speech was meaningless and its content was not understandable.

Then Moses (as) continued his logical and calculated words, while he feared no one:

“(Moses) said: ‘your Lord and the Lord of your fathers of Old’.”

As a matter of fact, Moses (as) who began with the extrovertive signs in the first stage, then in the second stage, he proceeded to introvertive signs and embarked on mysteries of creation in man himself and the signs of divine rearing and Allah's lordship in soul and body of man in order to make these ignorant conceited persons think about themselves and to know themselves a little and then to know their Lord.

Surah Ash-Shu‘ara – Verses 27-30

قَالَ إِنَّ رَسُولَكُمْ الَّذِي أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ لَمَجْنُونٌ

قَالَ رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

قَالَ لئن اتَّخَذتِ إِلَهًا غَيْرِي لَأَجْعَلَنَّكَ مِنَ الْمَسْجُونِينَ

قَالَ أَوْلَوْ جِئْتُكَ بِشَيْءٍ مُّبِينٍ

27. **“(Pharaoh) said: ‘Verily your messenger who has been sent unto you is a veritable madman’.”**

28. **“(Moses) said: ‘The Lord of the east and the west and what is between the two, if you have understanding’.”**

29. **“(Pharaoh) said: ‘If you take any god other than me, I will certainly make you one of the**

imprisoned’.”

30. “(Moses) said: ‘Even if I bring unto you something manifest?’”

Calumniation does not cause Allah’s friends to depart from their divine aims. One of the strongest weapons of prophets’ opponents is unfair imputation of insanity. Yes, those who can not offer reasonable argument, resort to false accusation and foul language.

Therefore, Pharaoh continued stubbornness. He exceeded the stage of scoffing and ridiculing him and imputed insanity to Moses (as).

The verse says:

“(Pharaoh) said: ‘Verily your messenger who has been sent unto you is a veritable madman’.”

It is the same imputation that all oppressors of the world used to charge divine reformers.

It is interesting that this conceited deceiver is not willing even to say ‘our messenger’ or ‘unto us’, but he says ‘your messenger’ and ‘unto you’, for the phrase ‘your messenger’ has got a ridiculing aspect.

It is a kind of ridiculing that is along with self-assertion, implying that he is so important that a godly prophet can not come, to call him. His aim of imputing insanity to Moses (as) was to negate the effect of the strong logic of Moses on his present companions.

However, this unfair accusation had no effect on the heavenly soul of Moses (as) and he continued the main path of monotheism by Allah’s signs in the expanse of creation, microcosm and macrocosm.

The verse says:

“(Moses) said: ‘The Lord of the east and the west and what is between the two, if you have understanding’.”

If Pharaoh had an unreal government in a small region called Egypt, Allah’s real government rules the East and the West and all that there are between them.

His signs are seen everywhere and in all creatures. Basically the very rising and downing of the sun in the east and the west and the system that works in it is the sign of His magnificence. But the problem is that such people do not ponder them and even they are not used to thinking.

(You must pay attention that the Qur’anic sentence *‘in kuntum ta’qilun/ (if you have understanding)* refers to this matter that if Pharaoh had used to thinking in the past and present, he would understand this fact).

In fact, Moses (as) answers this insanity accusation very nicely, saying that he is not insane and a person who does not see all these signs of Allah is mad and insane.

A Persian poem says:

*In spite of these strange signs and things that are found on
the wall of creation,
If one does not think about You, is a picture on the wall.*

It is true that for the first time Moses (as) referred to management of heavens and the earth, but since the heaven is so high and the earth it so mysterious, therefore, at last he pointed out a matter that no one could deny it and man sees it every day. It is the system of rising and downing of the sun and the precise program it has and no one can claim that he is its designer.

The Qur'anic phrase ***Iwa ma baynahuma*** (**and what is between the two**) refers to the unity and relation of the East and the West, as this meaning is also applied to the heavens and the earth. And the relation and unity of their generations have somehow been stated by the Qur'anic phrase which is recited:

"... 'Your Lord and the Lord of your fathers of old'." 13

However, then this strong and top logic made Pharaoh very angry and he restored to the same weapon that all irrational oppressors use when they are defeated and hopeless.

The Qur'an says:

"(Pharaoh) said: 'If you take any god other than me, I will certainly make you one of the imprisoned'."

Pharaoh wanted to say he could not understand what Moses (as) said and the only thing he persisted on was that there was one great god to be worshipped and it was Pharaoh, and whoever would say something other than that he should be condemned to death or being sent to his helish prison.

Some commentators believe that since the Qur'anic word '**Al-Masjunin**' in this verse has 'Alif' and 'Lam', it refers to a special prison into which if anyone was sent, one would remain in it until his corpse was brought out. 14

As a matter of fact, Pharaoh wanted to suppress Moses (as) with these threatening and tough words and to make him silent, for the continuation of these discussions could make people awaken, and nothing is more dangerous for oppressors than alertness and cognizance of people.

In the previous verses we saw how Moses (as) maintained his logical superiority over Pharaoh, and showed the audience how much his religion depended on logic and intellect, and how Pharaoh's claim was baseless and senseless. Sometimes Pharaoh ridicules, sometimes he imputes insanity to Moses (as), and finally he resorts to power, force, and threatening to death and prison.

Now Moses (as) had to choose a new approach which made Pharaoh hopeless again. Resorting to Allah's might originated from a conspicuous miracle, he (as) addressed Pharaoh implying that if he (as) showed a manifest thing as a sign of his messengership, would he imprison him?

The verse says:

“(Moses) said: ‘Even if I bring unto you something manifest?’”

Surah Ash-Shu'ara - Verse 31

قَالَ فَأْتِ بِهِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ

31. “(Pharaoh) said: ‘Bring it then, if you are of the truthful ones’.”

At this time Pharaoh reached a very difficult deadlock, for Moses (as) implicitly referred to an extraordinary program and attracted the attention of the audience towards himself. If Pharaoh ignored his words, all persons would object him and would say that he must let Moses present his important job.

If Moses (as) could do it, it would get clear that he (as) could not be dealt with, otherwise, his bragging and idle talk would get obvious. Anyway, the words of Moses (as) could not be easily ignored.

Pharaoh unwillingly had to utter as follows:

“(Pharaoh) said: ‘Bring it then, if you are of the truthful Ones’.”

When logic does not work, miracle is a must, for prophets' miracle is real and true and people understand it easily.

Surah Ash-Shu'ara - Verses 32-33

فَأَلْقَى عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِينٌ

وَنَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَاءُ لِلنَّاظِرِينَ

32. “So he cast down his rod, and behold, it was a clear serpent.”

33. “And he drew out his hand, then behold, it was radiant white to the beholders!”

Prophets' miracles are clear and manifesting, not fantasy and imagination. Becoming staff a manifest serpent is repeated ten times in the holy Qur'an, and whitening of Moses hand is repeated five times. Of course, for making the true words effective, one must rightly use both hopeful and unhelpful or threatening methods.

Moses (as) threw the staff that he had in his hand and it changed into a great serpent by the command of Allah.

The verse says:

“So he cast down his rod, and behold, it was a clear serpent.”

And then he put his hand in his cloth on his chest and took it out, it suddenly became white and brightening.

The verse says:

“And he drew out his hand, then behold, it was radiant white to the beholders!”

In fact, these two great miracles were signs of hope and fear. The first one was for warning and the second one was for good tidings. One is stating the divine punishment and the other one is light and the sign of mercy, for miracle must be in harmony with prophet's call.

The Arabic word /u'ban/ means a great serpent like a dragon. In the book Mufradat, Raqib says that this word is probably derived from the word /a'b/ that means the current of water, for the movement of this animal is like the streams that move in the shape of serpent form.

The Qur'anic word ***imubin*** may refer to this fact that staff really changed into a great snake and no jugglery and cunning, like what sorcerers do, has happened.

It is necessary to mention that here the word /u'ban/ is used, in Surah An-Naml, No. 27, verse 10, and in Surah Al-Qasas, No. 28, verse 31 the word 'Jan' (small snakes that move fast and swiftly), and in Surah Ta-Ha, No. 20, verse 20, the word 'Hayyah' (that means 'snake' and is derived from the word 'Hayat') is used.

The application of these various words may raise question, but they are for stating one of the following matters:

They may refer to various statuses of that snake; first the staff changed into a thin and small snake and then it grew gradually and changed into a great dragon.

Or these three various words may refer to the different characteristics of that snake; the word /u'ban/ refers to its greatness, the word 'Jan' refers to its swiftness and fastness, and the word 'Hayyah' refers to the life and liveliness of that snake.

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1. Surah Al- Baqarah, Surah Al-Ma'idah, Surah Al-'A'raf, Surah Yunus, Surah Al-'Isra', Surah Ta-Ha
 2. Surah Luqman, No. 31, verse 13
 3. Surah Ta-Ha, No. 20, verses 25-34
 4. Surah Al-Qasas, No.28. verse 14
 5. Ibid, verse 7
 6. The commentary of Nur, Vol. 8, P. 301
 7. Surah Maryam, No. 19, verse 48
 8. Surah Al-'A'raf, No. 7, verse 150
 9. Surah Yusuf, No. 12, verse 33
 10. The current verse
 11. Surah Hud, No. 11, verse 80
 12. The commentary of Abul-Futuh Razi, the explanation of the verse
 13. The current Surah, verse 26
 14. The Commentaries of Al-Mizan, Fakhr-i-Razi, Ruh ul-Ma'ani

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