

Surah al-Ghafir, Verses 23 - 45

Surah al-Ghafir - Verses 23 - 25

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا وَسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ

إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَقَارُونَ فَقَالُوا سَاحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُم بِالْحَقِّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا قَالُوا اقْتُلُوا أَبْنَاءَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ وَاسْتَحْيُوا نِسَاءَهُمْ
وَمَا كَيْدُ الْكَافِرِينَ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ

23. And verily We sent Moses with Our Ayat (Verses, Signs) and a manifest authority.

24. To Pharaoh, Haman, and Korah, but they called [him] a sorcerer, a liar.

25. Then when he brought them the Truth from Us, they said: "Slay the sons of those who believe with him and let their women live" but [they knew not that] the plots of disbelievers are nothing but in vain.

Messengers had two weapons of significance against tyrants: the miracle of Divine Ayat and manifest authority. Prophetic missions mainly aim at struggling with the chiefs of corruption and disbelief who make use of force, government, political power, stratagems, mischief, cultural power, worldly possessions, and economic power.

Resuming the allusion to the dire fate of ancient peoples in the preceding Verses, the verses in question alludes to the story of Pharaoh, Haman, and Korah.

Verses 23 and 24 say:

“We sent Moses with our Ayat and manifest authority to Pharaoh, Haman, and Korah, but they said: ‘He is a lying sorcerer.’”

Different interpretations have been produced by Qur’anic exegetes as to the difference between Ayat and manifest authority. Some maintain that the former and the latter refer to manifest arguments and miracles respectively.

Some maintain that the former indicates all of Moses’ miracles whereas the latter designate his prominent miracles such as his walking stick and illuminating hand which led to his manifest dominance over Pharaoh. Thus, Ayat refers to his miracles and manifest authority designates his solid and decisive arguments against the people of Pharaoh.

It is worthy of note that Moses possessed intellectual arguments and also wrought miracles which demonstrated his nexus with the supernatural; however, the stance of the people of Pharaoh was that they accused him of being a liar and a sorcerer.

They made use of such accusations against Ayat and miracles and disbelieved him against his logical arguments. It bears another testimony to the acceptability of the two interpretations in question. To refute the true arguments of men of truth, lords of disbelief have always made use of such accusations. Even today we find many instances of such false accusations.

It is noteworthy that three names have been mentioned in this Verse each of whom symbolize something: Pharaoh as the symbol of rebellion and tyrannical rule; Haman as the symbol of mischief and satanic stratagems; Korah as the symbol of material possessions, rebellion, and exploitation who left no stone unturned to preserve his wealth.

Thus Moses was divinely appointed to put an end to the oppression of tyrannical rules, the mischief of treacherous politicians, and transgressions of the arrogant rich and establish a society on the basis of justice and on a politically, culturally, and economically firm ground, but those whose illegitimate interests were in jeopardy rose against him.

Verse 25 exposes some of their mischievous stratagems saying:

“Then when he brought them the Truth from Us, they said: ‘Slay the sons of those who believe with him and let their women live.’”

The expression reveals that slaying males and keeping females alive was not restricted to the time prior to Moses’ birth but it recurred following his uprising and prophethood.

It is mentioned elsewhere in the Holy Qur’an that the Children of Israel said unto Moses (as):

“We had suffered troubles before you came to us.”

The Children of Israel said it unto Moses following the conspiracies of the people of Pharaoh aiming at slaying believers’ offspring.

It is worthy of note that satanic rulers recurrently hatch vicious plots so as to destroy active forces and keep alive inactive ones for exploitation.

It is not a source of wonder that such plots were hatched prior to Moses’ (as) birth for the Children of Israel who were slaves of the people of Pharaoh and it was regarded as an anti-revolutionary move following Moses’ (as) uprising so as to severely suppress the forces of the Children of Israel forever.

At the close of the blessed Verse in question it reads:

“but [they knew not that] the plots of disbelievers are nothing but in vain.”

Their stratagems are like arrows shot in the shadows of ignorance and error hitting rocks, since they are not convinced that they will pay for the consequences of their vicious acts. It is Divine Will that the forces of Truth vanquish those of falsehood.

Surah al-Ghafir – Verse 26

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ ذَرُونِي أَقْتُلْ مُوسَى وَلْيَدْعُ رَبَّهُ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُبَدِّلَ دِينَكُمْ أَوْ أَنْ يُظْهِرَ فِي الْأَرْضِ الْفَسَادَ

26. Pharaoh said: “Leave me to slay Moses and let him call his Lord [so that He may save him]. I fear that he may change your religion or that he may cause mischief to appear in the land.”

It is the common practice of tyrannical rulers to slay the leaders of the Path of Truth and it is the policy of the arrogant to deny, menace, and humiliate.

The struggle between Moses (as) and his adherents on the one side and Pharaoh and his followers on the other heightened and in order to impede the revolutionary move of Moses (as), Pharaoh made up his mind to slay him but it sounds as if his people and advisors declined.

The Holy Qur’an says:

“Leave me to slay Moses and let him call his Lord [so that He may save him].”

The Verse reveals that the majority of his advisors or at least some of them were against slaying Moses (as) and produced arguments to the effect that taking his miraculous acts he might cast a curse and his

God might send down some torment.

Yet, the arrogant Pharaoh said:

“I will slay him! Come what may!”

However, the real motive of the adherents and advisors behind such impediment is not precisely known.

There are different possibilities all of which may be true: firstly, fear of Divine torment, secondly, fear of slaying Moses (as) and making a hero and martyr out of him thereby casting him in a halo of sanctity.

Thus, it could increase the number of believers and adherents particularly when it happened following Moses (as) demonstrating his feats against sorcerers and his wonderful victory over them.

It is apparently so since Moses had demonstrated the twain great miracles of his, namely the walking stick and the illuminating hand, in his first meeting with Pharaoh as a consequence of which he had obtained the appellation of sorcerer.

He had asked for Moses' confrontation with his sorcerers and had set his hope on their sorcery as a consequence of which he awaited the due date of confrontation.

Taking the above points into consideration, there would remain no reason for Pharaoh's decision as to slaying Moses (as) at this time span nor would he stand in awe as to mass conversion into Moses' (as) religion.

In short, Pharaoh and his people maintained that Moses is a “menace” but slaying him would turn him into an “uprising” which would lead to an uncontrollable effervescent and massive movement.

There were a number of Pharaoh's people who were displeased with him. They wanted Moses (as) alive so that Pharaoh might be preoccupied with him and leave them in peace to take advantage of the preoccupation and be engaged in their misappropriations.

It is the usually practice that sovereigns' retinues desire the crown's preoccupation with certain affairs so that they could fill up their own coffers and at times provoked foreign enemies so as to stay secure from the crown's peace of mind.

To justify his decision as to slaying Moses (as), Pharaoh produces two arguments, a religious and spiritual argument and a material and worldly one, saying:

“I fear that he may change your religion or that he may cause mischief to appear in the land.”

He says:

“If I keep silence, the religion of Moses (as) will immediately profoundly penetrate the hearts of the

people of Egypt, as a consequence of which the sacred religion of idolatry protecting your identity and interests will be substituted with a monotheistic religion against you!

If I stay silent today and take measures against Moses (as) after a while, he will gather many an adherent and bloody conflicts will follow which will lead to bloodshed, corruption, and unrest throughout the land. Thus, it sounds expedient that I slay him at the earliest convenience.”

It is noteworthy that from Pharaoh’s point of view, religion was nothing more than being worshipped or idolatry which aimed at fooling the masses and poisoning their minds and a means of sanctification of their tyrannical and blood thirsty rule.

By corruption, he intended the creation of anti-arrogance revolution aiming to liberate the masses in bondage and eradication of the traces of idolatry and revival of monotheism. To justify their crimes and to struggle against the men of God the corrupt and tyrants have made efforts at all times to make use of unfounded pretexts the instances of which may be seen in our time.

Surah al-Ghafir – Verse 27

وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ إِنِّي عُذْتُ بِرَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ مُتَكَبِّرٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ

27. Moses said: “Indeed I seek refuge in my Lord and Your Lord from [the evil of] every arrogant who believes not in the Day of Reckoning.”

We are supposed to seek refuge in God Almighty against the menaces of enemies since all our affairs are within His Sway and We are all subject to His Lordship.

Moses (as) said:

“I seek refuge in my Lord and Your Lord from [the evil of] every arrogant who believes not in the Day of Reckoning.”

Moses (as) uttered such words with decisiveness and assurance springing from his firm faith and reliance on his Lord and demonstrated that he entertained nor fear of such menace.

The words of Moses (as) explicitly reveal that people with arrogance and lack of faith in the Day of Resurrection put others in jeopardy and one is supposed to seek refuge in God Almighty against such people.

Arrogance leads man to bias as a consequence of which he may not perceive nothing but his own self and thought, regard Divine Signs and Miracles as sorcery, and consider benevolent reformers to be

corrupt and the admonitions of friends and adherents conservative and weak in character.

Faithlessness in the Day of Reckoning leads man to a frame of mind into which no specific plan may find its way.

Such a person may rise against Divine Omnipotence and resort to his limited power and fight His Messengers, since there is neither reckoning nor measure in his affairs. Now let us see to what Pharaoh's threats led. The following Verses unravels the issue and sheds light on the manner of Moses' (as) rescue from the tyrannical rule of that arrogant and vain Pharaoh.

Surah al-Ghafir – Verse 28

وَقَالَ رَجُلٌ مُؤْمِنٌ مِنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَكْتُمُ إِيمَانَهُ أَتَقْتُلُونَ رَجُلًا أَنْ يَقُولَ رَبِّيَ اللَّهُ وَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَإِنْ يَكُ كَاذِبًا فَعَلَيْهِ كَذِبُهُ وَإِنْ يَكُ صَادِقًا يُصِيبْكُمْ بَعْضُ الَّذِي يَعِدُكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ كَذَّابٌ

28. And a believing man of Pharaoh family who concealed his faith said: “Would you slay a man because he says: ‘My Lord is Allah and he has come to you with clear signs from your Lord? And if he is a liar, upon him will be [the sin of] his lie; but if he is telling the truth, then some of that [misfortune] wherewith he threatens you will befall on you.’” Indeed Allah guides not one who is a transgressor [of limits] a liar!

One of the manifestations of Divine Succor springing from seeking refuge in Him is appearance of adherents among opponents. Bounties of forbidding evil extend to such degree that a Messenger may be saved from being slain and he may save a society from perdition.

This Verse treats of another episode in the history of Moses (as) and Pharaoh which is solely attested in this Chapter. It is the story of the believer of Pharaoh's family, one of his kith and kin who acknowledged Moses' (as) Call to monotheism.

However, he did not reveal his faith since he considered it incumbent upon himself to render Moses (as) well measured support. When he observed that Pharaoh was severely wrathful and he could jeopardize the life of the Messenger, he valiantly stepped forward and nullified the conspiracy aiming at taking his life.

The blessed Verse reads:

“A believing man of Pharaoh family who concealed his faith said: ‘Would you slay a man because he says: ‘My Lord is Allah and he has come to you with clear signs from your Lord?’”

Can you deny his miracles like those of his walking stick and his illuminating hand? Did you not see him who defeated sorcerers such that they surrendered to him? Did you not see that they were not moved by our threats and spared their lives for the sake of their faith in Moses' (as) Lord? Can such person be called a sorcerer?

Think twice before resorting to any hasty measure. Think about the consequences of your acts otherwise you will regret your negligence.

Furthermore, there are two alternatives:

“If he is a liar, upon him will be [the sin of] his lie; but if he is telling the truth, then some of that [misfortune] wherewith he threatens you will befall on you.”

In other words he is saying that if Moses (as) happens to be a liar, he will be disgraced and will be recompensed for his lies, but it is also possible that he is an honest man appointed by Allah to impart Divine Promises and Warnings; consequently, it would be unwise to slay him.

Then he adds:

“Allah guides not one who is a transgressor [of limits] a liar!”

If a believer proceeds toward transgression of bounds and telling lies, he will certainly lose Divine Guidance and if you happen to act likewise, he will be deprived of His Guidance.

It is worthy of note that the words of the believing man of Pharaoh family aimed at impressing Pharaoh and his people from different angles: firstly, Moses (as) does not deserve such severe reaction; secondly, one should not forget that he produces his own arguments which sound justified and confrontation with such a man will entail perils; thirdly, there is no need for your measures, since if he happens to be a liar, he will be chastised by God Almighty, but there exists the possibility that he is right and we will be chastised by his Lord!

Surah al-Ghafir – Verse 29

يَا قَوْمِ لَكُمْ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ ظَاهِرِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَمَنْ يَنْصُرُنَا مِنْ بَأْسِ اللَّهِ إِنْ جَاءَنَا
قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ مَا أُرِيكُمْ إِلَّا مَا أَرَىٰ وَمَا أَهْدِيكُمْ إِلَّا سَبِيلَ الرَّشَادِ

29. “O my people! Yours is the sovereignty today, you are dominant in the land. But who will save us from the torment of Allah, should it befall us?” Pharaoh said: “I show you only that which I see and I guide you only to the path of guidance!”

Believers are compassionate to people and prefer to struggle and make his presence even in disbelievers' rule rather than keep aloof and live in solitude. The believing man of the family of Pharaoh was not satisfied with uttering such words.

Addressing them benevolently in a friendly manner, he said:

“O my people! Yours is the sovereignty today, you are dominant in the vast land of Egypt. You are dominant and triumphant. Do not squander such abundant bounties. Who is going to render us succor if Divine torment befall us?”

It is possible that he intended to say unto them:

“Today you have absolute power and you may pass any judgment as to Moses’ (as) fate, but do not be deceived by the power nor forget the contingent consequences of your acts.”

His words apparently impressed Pharaoh's people and led to abatement of their wrath against Moses (as). However, Pharaoh did not keep silent and said abruptly:

“The die is cast and I believe in the veracity of my decree. Moses (as) should lose his life and there remains no other alternative. Know that:

‘I guide you only to the path of guidance!’”

That is the case with all tyrants and wrong doers in the past and present that they always imagine that their decisions are right and allow no one to comment on their acts. They consider themselves to be the masterminds and others are devoid of knowledge and intellect! This is mere ignorance and inanity.

Let us say a few words concerning the believing man of the family of Pharaoh. Qur'anic Verses solely reveal that he was a man of Pharaoh's people who had believed in Moses (as) but he concealed his faith and loved Moses (as) at heart.

He regarded it incumbent upon himself to defend him. He was intelligent, meticulous, tactful, and very sensible who helped Moses (as) at a critical point and saved him from a perilous conspiracy aiming at his murder. Islamic traditions and the words of Qur'anic exegetes yield further details regarding him among which mentioned is made of his relation to Pharaoh.

It is noteworthy that one of the points treated in the blessed Verse is discretionary concealment of one's beliefs (taqiyya).

It is not equal to weakness, fear, and conservativeness, au contraire, it is the concealment of one's beliefs employed as an effective means against the arrogant tyrants through which the secrets of enemies may be exposed.

Concealment of beliefs, plans, and stratagems of struggles against enemies may inflict severe blows on

them. The believing man of the family of Pharaoh employed the same means so as to render service to the religion of Moses (as) and save his life at a critical point.

What is better than having a believing supporter to defend one at the enemy's administration through whom one may penetrate into the depth of enemy's seat of power and obtain intelligence regarding everything, inform one's supporters, impress tyrants' minds, and alter their plans and stratagems?

According to a tradition narrated from Imam Sadiq (as):

*“Discretionary concealment of beliefs is my religion and that of my forefathers. One who lacks it does not believe in religion. It is Divine Shield on the earth, since had the believing man of the family of Pharaoh revealed his faith, he would have lost his life.”*¹

It may be particularly employed when believers constitute a minority under the rule of a merciless and insensible majority. Thus, it may impede ungrounded sparing of active forces rather it may concentrate and mobilize them for final uprising.

The Noble Prophet of Islam (as) concealed his Call in the first years of his Prophethood and make use of the same method; however, following an increase in the number of his adherents and followers and the solidification of the original nucleus, he declared his Call in public.

It would be of interest to note the following Prophetic tradition:

*“The first individuals who believed in the Call [of the exalted Prophet]: Habib the carpenter, the believer among the people of Yasin, the one who asked the people [of Antioch] to follow the Messengers of God who are guided themselves and ask you for no remuneration; Ezekiel (Hizqiyal), the believer of the family of Pharaoh; and ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) who is superior to all in rank.”*²

Surah al-Ghafir – Verses 30 – 31

وَقَالَ الَّذِي آمَنَ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ مِثْلَ يَوْمِ الْأَحْزَابِ

مِثْلَ دَابِّ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ وَمَا اللَّهُ يُرِيدُ ظُلْمًا لِلْعِبَادِ

30. And he who believed said: “O my people! Indeed I fear for you a fate like that day [of destruction] of the [former] Confederates!

31. Like the fate of the people of Noah and ‘Ad, and Thamud [inflicted with tempest, poisonous icy gale, and lightning, respectively] and those who came after them. And Allah wills no injustice

for [his] servants.

Do not desist promulgation of faith and Divine Guidance for the sake of opponents' words. Solitude does not lie in commanding good and forbidding evil.

Egyptians at the time were relatively civilized and literate and knew about historians' accounts of ancient peoples, like those of Noah, 'Ad, and Thamud whose lands did not lie too remote from theirs and they were more or less aware of their dire fates.

The blessed Verses in question indicate that the believing man of the family of Pharaoh, after raising objection as to the conspiracy against Moses' (as) life faced Pharaoh's severe resistance who confirmed his command as to taking the life of Moses (as); however, he did not desist from making efforts as he deemed it fit and appropriate to do so and thought of reminding the rebellious people of the history of ancient peoples and warn them against being inflicted with the same afflictions so that they may wake up and revise their decision.

Thus he opened his admonition:

"O my people! Indeed I fear for you a fate like that day [of destruction] of the [former] Confederates!"

Then he added:

"Like the fate of the people of Noah and 'Ad, and Thamud [inflicted with tempest, poisonous icy gale, and lightning, respectively] and those who came after them. And Allah wills no injustice for [his] servants."

He made efforts to convince them, saying:

"these people were entangled with polytheism, disbelief, and rebellion and we are apprised of their dire fates. Some of them met their end by a devastating tempest, some by a horrible gale, some by lightning, and some by annihilating earthquakes!"

Do you not think that you may be afflicted by such terrible disasters as a recompense of your persistence in disbelief and rebellion? Therefore, allow me to say unto you that I am afraid of such dire fate in store for you.

Could you produce some argument substantiating that you are different from them and you will not be afflicted with such Divine torments? What had they done that they were entangled with such torments? They solely resisted the Calls of Prophets and at times murdered or denied them. You are supposed to know that whatever befalls on you will be the consequences of your evil acts since:

'Allah wills no injustice for [his] servants.'"

Surah al-Ghafir – Verses 32 – 33

وَيَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَوْمَ التَّنَادِ

يَوْمَ تَوَلَّوْنَ مُدْبِرِينَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ عَاصِمٍ وَمَنْ يُضَلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ

32. “And, O my people! Indeed I fear for you the Day when there will be mutual calling.”

33. A Day when you will turn your backs and flee having no protection from Allah [‘torment’]. And whomsoever Allah sends astray [for his evil deeds and abandons him], for him there is no guide.

In promulgation of faith we are not supposed to expect achievement of favorable consequences at imparting the first reminder, but reiteration is a part and parcel of the task. One should also attend to emotions and feelings in this vein. We are supposed to remind people of Divine Wrath in this world and on the Day of Resurrection.

According to Verse 32, the believing man of the family of Pharaoh said:

“O my people! Indeed I fear for you the Day when there will be mutual calling,”

when people call one another for help but they hear no answer. The word **al-tanad**, originally al-tanadi whose final /i/ is omitted and the final /i/ indicates the ellipsis derives from n-d-’ (“call”).

Most of Qur’anic exegets maintain that:

“the Day of mutual calling”

is one of the names of the Day of Resurrection. Different exegets attend to very similar aspects of the appellation in question.

According to an exeget, mutual calling refers to calling the people of Paradise by the people of Hell as it is attested elsewhere in the Holy Qur’an:

“And the dwellers of Hell call to the dwellers of Paradise: ‘Pour on us some water or anything that Allah has provided you with.’ They will say: ‘Both Allah has forbidden to disbelievers’”³.

They may as well call others seeking refuge in one another and the Callers of Resurrection call unto them:

“No doubt! The curse of Allah is on wrong doers”⁴.

When a believer sees the record of his deeds, he cries excitedly:

“Here, this is the record of my deeds. Come hither. O people! Read it!”⁵

A disbeliever at that time will fearfully cry out:

“I wish that I had not been given the record of my deeds”⁶.

It is worthy of note that a broader semantic range may be assumed for the Verse in question such that

“the Day of mutual calling”

may comprehend this world as well, since it merely indicates calling one another and those who are at the end of their tether call one another but their calling is of no avail.

We find so many instances of mutual calling when Divine torments are sent down, when societies come to dead ends for their own sins and faults, when crises and terrible incidents adversely affect everyone, they flee seeking some refuge but there is not one to be found; all cry out for succor!

Verse 33 provides an interpretation for the Day of mutual calling:

“A Day when you will turn your backs and flee having no protection from Allah [’ torment].”

One whom God Almighty sends astray [for his evil deeds] may not find any guide. Such people lose the Path of Guidance and sink in the dire of ignorance and error and will lose the Path of Paradise and Divine Bounties.

The aforesaid expression may allude to Pharaoh’s words:

“I show you only that which I see and I guide you only to the path of guidance!”

Surah al-Ghafir – Verse 34

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ يُوسُفُ مِنْ قَبْلُ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا زِلْتُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِمَّا جَاءَكُمْ بِهِ حَتَّى إِذَا هَلَكَ قُلْتُمْ لَنْ يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ رَسُولًا كَذَلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللَّهُ مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ مُرْتَابٌ

34. And verily Joseph did come to you in times gone by with clear signs, but you ceased not to doubt in what he did bring to you: till when he died you said: “No Messenger will Allah send after him.” Thus, Allah leaves astray him who is a transgressor [of limits] and one who doubts [Allah’s Warning and His Oneness].

The conducts of the good affects the obduracy of their generation. The believing man of the family of

Pharaoh said:

“If you do not believe in Moses (as) today, it is no wonder, since you did not believe in Joseph (as) either.”

In this blessed Verse, he further proceeds with his admonition.

A brief survey of the preceding Verses and the One in question reveals that to impress the impenetrable heart of Pharaoh and his people, the believing man from his family made efforts to cleanse their arrogance and disbelief by presenting his words in five forms and stages.

Firstly, he opened his remarks with precaution calling that rebellious and disbelieving people to abstain from contingent loss saying that if Moses (as) were lying, he would carry the burden of his sins but if he tells the truth, we will be afflicted with Divine torment, so behave cautiously and be afraid of the dire consequences of your deeds.

Secondly, he asked them to glance at the accounts of ancient peoples and warned them against entanglement with such dire fate.

Thirdly, mention is made of an account of other peoples who were not too remote from them and they were still aware of their history since the nexus between them and those people were still intact. He raises the question of Joseph's (as) Prophethood who was Moses' (as) forefather. He also mentions Joseph's (as) people confronting with his Call.

“And verily Joseph did come to you in times gone by with clear signs, but you ceased not to doubt in what he did bring to you.”

They declined his Call for the sake of their arrogance, obduracy, and incessant suspicion rather than because of intricacies in his Call.

To dispose themselves of any obligation and in order to persist in their arrogance and following their concupiscence, they said upon Joseph's (as) demise that God would never appoint another Messenger.

On the one side, they transgressed Divine bounds and on the other they entertained doubts as to everything; as a consequence of which God deprived them of His Bounties and left them in the mire of error and they could never expect any fate better than that.

The believing man of the family of Pharaoh further added:

“If you show the same reaction against Moses' (as) Call without any reflection or investigation, he may be a divinely appointed Messenger but you may deprive your sealed hearts of Divine Guidance.”

Surah al-Ghafir – Verse 35

الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطَانٍ أَتَاهُمْ كُفْرًا مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَعِنْدَ الَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا كَذَلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ قَلْبٍ مُتَكَبِّرٍ جَبَّارٍ

35. Those who dispute about the Ayat (Verses, Signs) of Allah, without any authority that has come to them, it would lead to a fearsome Wrath to those who believe. Thus does Allah seal up the heart of every arrogant, tyrant.

The word **sultan** indicates “authority, argument” and **maqt** designates “severe wrath.”

The blessed Verse in question provides further exposition for those according to which God Almighty seals hearts. It is herein said that God Almighty seals up the heart of arrogant tyrants.

Treating of

musrif–un murtab–un (“transgressor, doubter”) the Verse explains that they are those who

“dispute about the Ayat of Allah without any authority that has come to them.”

In other words, they take a stance against Divine Signs and Verses without producing an intellectual or narrational argument to substantiate their groundless disputations which spring from baseless assumptions, temptations, and pretexts.

Such baseless disputations against the Truth lead to Divine Wrath and detestation of believers, since groundless disputations and taking insensible stances against Divine Signs and Verses lead to the error of disputants and others; it extinguishes the light of truth and reinforces the pillars of the rule of falsehood.

Their failure to submit to Truth is mentioned at the close of the Verse, saying that thus God Almighty seals the hearts of the wrong doing arrogant to the extent that their hearts are sealed up that neither their foul contents may exude nor may the right and invigorating contents be absorbed by them.

God deprives the arrogant tyrants who rise against the Truth failing to acknowledge truths of the spirit of truth seeking such that truth tastes bitter and falsehood tastes sweet to them.

The words of the believing man of the family of Pharaoh were quite effective and Pharaoh changed his mind as to slaying Moses (as) or at least postponed the execution of his decision, such that Moses (as) was saved from the perils and it was the great mission fulfilled by that intelligent and valiant man at that critical point and as will be mentioned below, he lost his life for it.

Surah al-Ghafir – Verses 36 – 37

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَا هَامَانَ ابْنِ لِي صَرْحًا لَعَلِّي أَبْلُغُ الْأَسْبَابَ

أَسْبَابَ السَّمَاوَاتِ فَأَطَّلِعَ إِلَى إِلَهِ مُوسَى وَإِنِّي لأَظُنُّهُ كَاذِبًا وَكَذَلِكَ زَيْنَ لِفِرْعَوْنَ
سُوءَ عَمَلِهِ وَصَدُّ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا كَيْدُ فِرْعَوْنَ إِلَّا فِي تَبَابٍ

**36. And Pharaoh said: “O Haman! Build a tower for me so that I may arrive at the ways,
37. “The ways of [ascending] the heavens and I may look upon the God of Moses: Indeed, I regard him a liar.” Thus it was made fair, in Pharaoh’s eyes, the evil of his deeds and he was impeded from [treading] the [Straight] Path; and the plot of Pharaoh led to nothing but loss and perdition.**

The word **sarh** designates “lofty edifice” visible from afar and **tasrih** indicates “declaration, clear statement.” The word **tabab** is used in the sense of “continuity in incurring loss.” Materialists regard everything in terms of materiality.

Pharaoh imagined that God was in the heavens and the way to knowing Him was only through the senses, like vision:

(“and I may look upon the God of Moses”).

Though Pharaoh was impressed by the words of the believing man of his family to avoid slaying Moses (as), but he was still vain and arrogant and he failed to make him submit to Truth, since the arrogant man did not deserve such submission; as a consequence of which he proceeded with his mischievous measures and ordered that a lofty tower be built for ascending to the heavens and finding intelligence concerning Moses’ (as) God, as it is reflected in the blessed Verse,

“Pharaoh said: ‘O Haman! Build a tower for me so that I may arrive at the ways.’”

Was Pharaoh so ignorant that he thought Moses’ (as) God was in the heavens and he could ascend to the heavens through the construction of a lofty edifice whose height was nothing compared to the mountains?

He apparently took such measure to achieve a number of goals. Firstly, he intended to preoccupy people with something other than Moses’ (as) Prophethood and the uprising of the Children of Israel.

Construction of such lofty edifice which according to a number of Qur'anic exegetes was supposed to employ fifty thousand architects, masons, and construction workers on a vast site could overshadow other issues and the loftier the tower, the more attention it could attract.

Then people would talk about it and defeating sorcerers by Moses (as) could temporarily slip into oblivion. Secondly, he aspired to bear financial assistance to laborers and provide them with at least a temporary employment for the unemployed so that they may consign to oblivion his wrong doings and people become more economically dependent on his treasury.

Thirdly, following the completion of construction, he planned to ascend it and take a glance at the sky, probably shoot an arrow, return to people and deceive them by saying that Moses' (as) claims were baseless, proceed with your affairs and rest assured! It is worthy of note that he knew that his lofty edifice could not be taller than mountains and there would be no difference in looking at the sky from the top of the edifice or mountains or from the plains.

It is also noteworthy that through ordering the construction of such lofty edifice, he took a step backwards by saying that he intended to investigate about God of Moses (as).

By saying:

“Indeed I regard him a liar!”

he descended from certitude to doubt.

The sentence

“Thus it was made fair, in Pharaoh’s eyes, the evil of his deeds and he was impeded from [treading] the [Straight] Path; and the plot of Pharaoh led to nothing but loss and perdition”

reveals that the main reason lying behind Pharaoh's error was the embellishment of his evil deeds in his eyes which stemmed from his arrogance and vanity. The consequence of his vanity and arrogance was that he went astray from the Path of Truth.

In the third stage, the total defeat of his plans is declared. Three brief but terse clauses suffice to express the truth. Certainly, such political stratagems may impress people in the short run; however, in the long run, total defeat is the consequence of such stratagems.

According to a number of traditions, Haman continued the construction of Pharaoh's tower such that strong winds impeded the process.

He came to Pharaoh and said unto him:

“We cannot construct it loftier than this.”

A strong wind blew before long and the edifice collapsed.7

Surah al-Ghafir – Verses 38 – 39

وَقَالَ الَّذِي آمَنَ يَا قَوْمِ اتَّبِعُونِ أَهْدِكُمْ سَبِيلَ الرَّشَادِ

يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا مَتَاعٌ وَإِنَّ الْآخِرَةَ هِيَ دَارُ الْقَرَارِ

38. And the man [from the family of Pharaoh] who believed said: “O my people! Follow me, I will guide you to the Path of Guidance.

39. “O my people! Indeed this life of the world is nothing but an [insignificant] merchandise, and verily the Hereafter is the permanent abode.”

One is supposed at times to disregard discretionary concealment of one’s beliefs and express them and call people to tread the Straight Path single handedly.

And the man [from the family of Pharaoh] who believed said:

“O my people! Follow me; I will guide you to the Path of Guidance”.

It was mentioned in the preceding Verses that Pharaoh said:

“What I say leads to the Path of Guidance.”

However, the believing man from the family of Pharaoh refuted his words and convinced people not to be deceived by his temptations since his plans would result in defeat and misfortune. He suggests them to follow the Path of fearing and worshipping God Almighty.

Verse 39 reads:

“O my people! Indeed this life of the world is nothing but [insignificant] merchandise, and verily the Hereafter is the permanent abode.”

Put the case that we become victorious, turning away from the Truth, and resorting to wrong doing and bloodshed. How long will we stay in this transient world? Death takes all into its sickle and sends everyone from lofty palaces to dust. Our everlasting abode is somewhere else.

Surah al-Ghafir - Verse 40

مَنْ عَمِلَ سَيِّئَةً فَلَا يُجْزَى إِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَمَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أَنْتَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ
فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ يُرْزَقُونَ فِيهَا بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

40. “Whosoever does an evil deed will not be requited except the like thereof and whosoever does a righteous deed, whether male or female, and is a true believer, will enter Paradise, where they will be provided therein without limit.

Faith and deeds are jointly effective and one of them may not lead to deliverance.

The question is not merely the transience of this world and the everlastingness of the world to come, but the significant question is reckoning deeds, since:

“Whosoever does an evil deed will not be requited except the like thereof but whosoever does a righteous deed, whether male or female and is a true believer, will enter Paradise and will be provided therein without limit.”

Secondly, in his well measured words, he refers to Divine Justice on the one hand through which sinners will be recompensed the like of their sins and on the other hand, he makes a reference to Boundless Divine Bounties to be bestowed upon believers without limit.

Such Bounties are without human imagination. Thirdly, the requisite of the accompaniment of faith and righteous deed is mention. Fourthly, mention is made of the equality of females and males before God Almighty and human values.

It is noteworthy that he tersely expresses the fact that despite the insignificance and transience of the merchandise of this world, it may lead to gaining boundless rewards. Is there any transaction more profitable than this?

The phrase:

“the like thereof” (mithlaha)

indicates that the recompenses in the Hereafter closely resemble the deeds committed in this world.

The phrase:

“without limits”

may demonstrate that reckoning the Bounties if for those who enjoy a few of them and fear that failing to

keep a record of the same would entail shortage, but the Lord requires no reckoning since His Bounties are limitless and bestowing bounties may not decrease them.

A question is raised here as to the consistency of the Verse in question with:

“Whoever brings a good deed shall have ten times the like thereof to his credit”⁸.

In providing a reply to the question, it is worthy of note to keep in mind that

“ten times”

is the least Divine Reward and in case of expending in the Cause of Allah, it will be increased to seven hundred times and more and finally it will be increased to limitless reckoning whose extend is solely known by God Almighty.

Surah al-Ghafir – Verses 41 – 42

وَيَا قَوْمِ مَا لِي أَدْعُوكُمْ إِلَى النَّجَاةِ وَتَدْعُونَنِي إِلَى النَّارِ

تَدْعُونَنِي لِأَكْفُرَ بِاللَّهِ وَأُشْرِكَ بِهِ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَأَنَا أَدْعُوكُمْ إِلَى الْعَزِيزِ الْغَفَّارِ

41. [The believing man of the family of Pharaoh said:] “And O my people! How is it that I call you to salvation while you call me to Hellfire!

42. “You invite me to disbelieve in Allah and to associate partners in worship with Him of which I have no knowledge [whereas] I invite you to the Omnipotent, the Oft-Forgiving!

Repentance and turning away from polytheism and disbelief will be accepted by God Almighty; however such acceptance is not owing to inability and desperateness, but it signifies that God Almighty, the Omnipotence, is Oft-Forgiving.

In the fifth and the last stage, the believing man of the family of Pharaoh tore all veils asunder. He could not conceal his faith any longer and expressed what was due frankly and as it will be mentioned below, they made a perilous decision about him.

The contextual meaning of the Verses demonstrates that those vain and obdurate people were not silent before that faithful and valiant man but talked of polytheism and called him to embrace idolatry.

In reply, he cried:

“And O my people! How is it that I call you to salvation while you call me to Hellfire?”

In Verse 42, he said:

“You invite me to disbelieve in Allah and to associate partners in worship with Him of which I have no knowledge [whereas] I invite you to the Omnipotent, the Oft-Forgiving!”

Different Qur’anic Verses and the history of Egypt reveal that besides worshipping Pharaohs, they also worshipped many an idol, as it is reflected elsewhere in the Holy Qur’an:

“The chiefs of Pharaoh’s people said: ‘Will you leave Moses and his people to spread mischief in the land and to abandon you and your gods?’ He said: ‘We will slay their sons and let live their women and we have indeed irresistible power over them’⁹.

Joseph (as) imprisoned at Pharaoh’s prison said unto his inmates:

“Are many different lords better or Allah, the One, the Irresistible?”¹⁰

In a crystal clear juxtaposition, the believing man of the family of Pharaoh reminded them that they call him to polytheism which is groundless and a dark and perilous path whereas he calls them to tread a manifest path, that of God Almighty, the Omnipotent, the Oft-Forgiving.

The Divine Most Beautiful Names, the Omnipotent and Oft-Forgiving make a reference to the Great Origin of fear and hope on the one hand and allude to the negation of the divinity of idols and Pharaohs lacking potency and forgiveness on the other.

Surah al-Ghafir – Verse 43

لَا جَرَمَ أَنَّمَا تَدْعُونِي إِلَيْهِ لَيْسَ لَهُ دَعْوَةٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَأَنْ مَرَدْنَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ هُمْ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ

43. “No doubt you call me to [worship] one who cannot grant [me] my request in this world nor in the Hereafter. And our return will be to Allah and the transgressors [of limits] shall be the dwellers of the Fire!”

Faith and decisiveness play significant roles in doctrinal issues. We are supposed to substantiate our arguments with convincing reasons in matters concerning commanding good and forbidding evil. Idols may not call people nor do they grant their requests.

The blessed Verse in question is saying that what they call him to may not grant his requests in this

world and the Hereafter. In other words, these idols have never sent messengers to people to call people to them nor will they have any power in the Hereafter.

These insentient things may never engender anything. They do not talk; they have neither messengers nor any tribunal.

In short, they may not solve problems nor are they able to make them. Thus, we should know that we shall return to God Almighty on the Resurrection Day. He is the One Who sent His Messengers for man's guidance and He is the One Who shall chastise and reward His servants for their good and evil deeds.

We are also supposed to bear in mind that:

“transgressors [of limits] shall be the dwellers of the Fire!”

Surah al-Ghafir – Verse 44

فَسَتَذْكُرُونَ مَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ وَأَفْوِضُ أَمْرِي إِلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ

44. “And [before long] you will remember what I am telling you and my affair I leave it to Allah since He is the All-Seer of [His] servants.”

The Arabic word ***tafwid*** ad hoc indicates “leaving affairs to Allah” which is higher in rank than *tawakkul* “reliance in God” since in the former the client may supervise the task of the agent but in the former all the affairs are unquestionably vested with the agent.¹¹

It is worthy of attention that leaving all affairs to God as the slogan of the believing man of the family of Pharaoh followed all his efforts toward saving Moses (as) from execution, promulgation of faith, warning Pharaoh's people against Divine Wrath, and waking others from neglect.

Such leaving affairs to God Almighty leads to Divine Support:

(“Therefore Allah saved him from the evils that they plotted [against him]”).

Thus, the believing man of the family of Pharaoh finally revealed his faith and drew a distinction between his monotheism and their polytheism and singlehandedly resisted them and refuted their polytheistic beliefs.

Finally, he provided them with a meaningful warning to the effect that they would remember what he said them and that would be when Divine wrath would afflict you with torments in this world and the Hereafter. It is unfortunate that it will be too late since all the gates to repentance will be shut in this

world and there will be no return to this world in the Hereafter.

He further added:

“my affair I leave it to Allah since He is the All-Seer of [His] servants.”

That was why he entertained no fear of their threats, large number, power, and being singlehanded since he had left all his affairs to God Almighty, the Omnipotent, the All-Seer of His servants' states.

It is noteworthy that his last words were his humble devotions to God Almighty when he was entangled by a powerful and merciless people invoking God Almighty to protect him in such dire circumstances.

Surah al-Ghafir – Verse 45

فَوَقَاهُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِ مَا مَكَرُوا وَحَاقَ بِآلِ فِرْعَوْنَ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ

45. Therefore Allah saved him from the evils that they plotted [against him], while an evil torment encompassed Pharaoh's people.

It is through Divine Grace that the life and faith of believers are saved from conspiracies and conspirators and plotters are destroyed. The blessed Verse in question says that God Almighty did not leave this believing and struggling servant alone but protected him from their vicious plots.

The expression:

“the evils that they plotted”

reveals that they probably hatched plots against him. What were these plots? The nature of these plots is not explicitly mentioned herein; however, they were naturally different punishments, torments, and finally execution.

The important point is that Divine Grace rendered all those plots ineffective. A number of Qur'anic exegetes maintain that the believing man took an opportunity to reach Moses and the Children of Israel and crossed the Nile with them.

It is also said that when the decision was made as to his execution, he escaped to a mountain and no one could see him anymore. 12 The twain interpretations are not inconsistent. It is probable that he hid somewhere without the city to join the Children of Israel later on and cross the Nile with them.

Some of the plots in question were probably the imposition of idolatry and convincing him to abandon monotheism but God Almighty saved him from these plots as well and made him to proceed more firmly

on the Path of faith, monotheism, and fearing God Almighty.

Au contraire, severe torments were sent down on the people of Pharaoh.

Divine chastisements and torments are all excruciating but the expression:

“an evil torment”

reflects that God Almighty condemned them to a more excruciating torment which is mentioned in the following Verse.

1. Majma' al-Bayan, vol. 8, p. 521, under the Verses in question.

2. Saduq, Amali; Ibn Hajar, Sawa'iq, Chapter 2, Section 9.

3. 7:50

4. 11:18

5. 69:19

6. 69:25

7. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 13, p. 125, apud 'Ali ibn Ibrahim's Tafsir.

8. 6:160

9. 7:127

10. 12:39

11. Tafsir Nimuna.

12. Majma' al-Bayan, under the Verse in question.

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