

## Lesson 17: Hazrat Musa (A.S.) He to whom Allah spoke

At the same time as Hazrat Musa (a.s.) was born, two large tribes, the Copts and the Israelites, were living in Egypt. The Pharaohs, who were the rulers in Egypt, were Copts, but the Israelites were from the lineage of Ya'qub (Jacob), and had the name of Bani Isra'il. The original birthplace of the Bani Isra'il was Can'an, but after Yusuf (Joseph), from among these people, reached great rank in Egypt, they also came to Egypt and remained there. In the beginning, their number was not very great, but gradually they became more and more numerous until they became a social group in their own right, and they held great esteem.

But with the death of Yusuf, and also because of their inadmissible disobedience, they forfeited their esteem and glory. The Copts became their rulers and exploited them, and assigned arduous and difficult work to them, and did not hold themselves back from any kind of oppression and violence.

The monarch of Egypt, who was named 'Pharaoh' and was a Copt, had dipped his fingers in the blood of the Israelites and had so much power that fighting with him was out of the question. Due to excessive egotism he called himself 'god', and lead the people towards worship of him and to polytheism and idolatry.

Pharaoh was heedless of the fact that Allah was looking after the people with the light of His guidance, and he did not understand that it was the inveterate practice of Allah that whenever he set up a prophet, he delivered the people from ignorance, oppression and cruelty.

A soothsayer told Pharaoh that a child from Bani Isra'il would soon come into the world who would be a danger for his sovereignty. Pharaoh flew into a rage and gave an order without delay to cut off the head of every boy in Bani Isra'il, and to see that no male child remained to them.

In the middle of all this, Hazrat Musa (a.s.) was born.

When the fear of danger had gone, his mother, with all the love she had for him, placed her dear

newborn baby into a box, according to Divine inspiration, and committed him to the waves of the river Nile, and the water took the box away with itself.

Pharaoh and his wife, at their residence on the banks of the Nile, were gazing into the river when they caught sight of the box with the infant, who was sleeping peacefully atop the troubled waves. When Pharaoh's wife saw that child's pure face, her heart was uneasy about casting him back into the river. She looked at him and liked him; her heart was seized with love for him, and she pleaded with Pharaoh to allow them to look after him in the palace and to consider him as their child. Pharaoh also became glad and hoped that his adopted child would one day be useful for him, and bring him some benefit.

The suckling infant would not accept to be breast-fed from any wet-nurse and this became a problem. In the end the mother of Hazrat Musa (a.s.), whose breasts were full of his milk, and who was looking for Musa came into the court of Pharaoh as a wet-nurse, took Musa to her bosom and suckled him. [1](#)

How amazing it seems – Pharaoh brought up his incomparable enemy in his own lap! And thus Hazrat Musa (a.s.) grew up and came to maturity, and God made him acquire his share of knowledge and wisdom. He saw all the oppression and injustice in Pharaoh's cruel administration; but, not only did he not participate in it, but also he suffered from seeing the injustice, and began to look for a remedy.

One day, as he was walking along, he saw one of Pharaoh's men struggling with a man of Bani Isra'il and tormenting him. As soon as the Israelite saw Hazrat Musa (as) he called him to help him. Musa rushed forward and struck the man of Pharaoh hard with his fist, and accidentally, as a result of his blow, the man died.

Hazrat Musa (a s) went far from that place, but the next day he again saw the same person from the previous day fighting with another of Pharaoh's men. Again this man called for Hazrat Musa's help, but Musa said to him angrily that he was a deluded person, i.e. that he was making a mistake by fighting with one of Pharaoh's men every day, which was dangerous for everyone. Then he went forward and pushed him aside. The Israelite thinking that Musa wanted to hit him, shouted at him, "Do you want to kill me, like the man yesterday?"

After these events, Hazrat Musa (as.) was anxiously on his guard, but it became clear to Pharaoh's people that the killer of that man was none other than Musa and therefore Pharaoh gave an order for the death of Hazrat Musa (as)

The officials began to hunt for Hazrat Musa (as) and he lived in fear and apprehension. A benevolent God-worshipper advised him that the sooner he left the town the better it would be, because the men of Pharaoh were seeking to kill him.

Unhappily, Hazrat Musa (a.s.) came out of Egypt and went towards Median, thus saving himself from the oppressors and seeking the friends of Allah.

***O Lord, Deliver me from the unjust people. (28:21)***

At long last Hazrat Musa (a.s.) entered Midian, and, in order to rest, he stopped beside a well. Around the well he saw many men who were watering their animals. A little further away from the crowd of men, he saw two women who were standing waiting with their sheep. Hazrat Musa (a.s.) went forward to help them, and inquired the reason for their waiting. They said, "Our father is an old man of many years, and we have to give water to the sheep ourselves. Now we are waiting till the crowd goes away from around the well and we can quench the thirst of our sheep."

Hazrat Musa (as) went forward and watered the sheep. And the women resumed home. Musa, who was very tired and hungry and had no provisions with him, sat down in the shade and asked God to take away his hunger:

***O my Lord, truly I stand in need of any good Thou would send to me. (28:24)***

It was not long before one of these two girls returned. Walking very shyly, and said to Hazrat Musa (a.s.), "My father calls you so that he may give you remuneration for the work you did."

The Father of the girls was Shu'aib (a.s.), one of the prophets of Allah.

Hazrat Musa (a.s.) got up and went with the girl. On the way he asked to go ahead of her, and told her to direct him from behind because he was from a family (the family of the prophets) who did not cast their eyes on the body of a woman from behind.

And in this way he came to Hazrat Shu'aib and related his story to him. Shu'aib consoled him and said, "Do not fear, again you have been saved from the talons of the oppressor."

The same daughter who had followed Hazrat Musa (a.s.) said to Hazrat Shu'aib (as), "O Father, please engage this man in your service, for he is robust, strong, trustworthy and honest."

Hazrat Shu'aib (a.s.) who was aware of Hazrat Musa's honesty and virtuousness, gave one of his two daughters as a wife to him. Musa made an arrangement with him that he would take sanctuary with Shu'aib for ten years, and that in that time he would carry out Shu'aib's work, especially being a shepherd and keep his flocks.[2](#)

At the end of the ten years, Hazrat Musa set out with his family towards Egypt. On the way, one cold and dark night, they lost themselves everywhere was dark. The road was indistinguishable in the wilderness. Hazrat Musa (a.s.) and his family remained wandering about. His eyes caught sight of a fire. He said to his wife, "Stay here, and I will go towards that fire, perhaps I will come across someone to guide us, or I can take an ember from the fire and bring it here."

He hastened towards the fire. And when he reached it, this voice called him from the direction of a tree.

***O Musa, Verity I am Allah, the Lord of the World, (28:30)***

***I have chosen you as a prophet, so listen to what is revealed to you. I am the Unique God, and there is no god apart from I. Worship me alone, and establish prayer so that you may remember Me. The resurrection is sure to come...so that every soul may be recompensed as he strives. (20:13-15)***

Hazrat Musa (a.s.) had a staff in his hand, which he used as a crook and also to help him shake and pull off leaves from branches for his sheep. In this revelation, he was given the command to cast down his staff on the ground, and his staff immediately formed into a running serpent. Hazrat Musa (a.s.) was afraid and started to run away. Because of his fear he did not even look back. But a call came to return him, "Don't be afraid, be calm".

His heart quieted and he turned back, and according to God's command he stretched out his hand and grabbed the serpent. Following the will of Allah, it changed back into a staff. He was then told to place his hand under his arm and then to pull it out again. When he had done this, he saw his hand bright white (but not ill).

A white-coloured light radiated from his hand, but in a way that did not hurt the eyes. These were the miracles of Hazrat Musa (a.s.); God had equipped him with these signs so that Pharaoh and his people would not doubt his prophethood. These powers were granted to him so that they would not think that he was pretending on his own to be a prophet.

Then Allah commanded him to declare to Pharaoh that his Messengership had commenced.

At first, Hazrat Musa (a.s.) informed Pharaoh of his prophethood with sweet words and invited him to the worship of Allah and asked him if he wished to have a meritorious and clean spirit, if he wanted Musa to guide him towards his God.

Pharaoh asked, "Who is your God?"

Hazrat Musa (a.s.) replied, "My God is He who created the heaven and the earth. He it is who created all things."

Pharaoh became incensed at this, and turned towards Hazrat Musa (a.s.) and said, "I have no evidence from you of the existence of another god apart from myself, and as for you, Musa, if you do not worship me, there will be a punishment for you!"

Hazrat Musa (a.s.) replied, "If I bring you evidence from God himself for you, what will you say?"

Pharaoh asked, "What are they? Where are the evidence? Bring them if you speak the truth!"

Hazrat Musa (a.s.) threw down his staff, his crook, and it became a serpent. He placed his hand under his

arm and took it out, and it shone into Pharaoh's eyes with a pure white light. Pharaoh was amazed. On one side were Hazrat Musa and the God of Hazrat Musa and His signs; on the other side were his sovereignty and kingship, and his monopolistic command over Egypt and the Egyptians. Pharaoh's egotism kept him back from, submitting to Hazrat Musa (a.s.), but there remained the difficulty of the signs. He said to himself, "How will it be if I call him a magician and a sorcerer?" and it was with this fiction that he spoke to his bewildered votaries:

"Behold, Here is a magician who wishes to turn you from your lands and to usurp your place. What do you say? "

They said that he should invite observers and magicians so that they might prevail over him, expose his sorcery and disgrace him.

Pharaoh agreed, and at his commands all the old sorcerers who excelled at that time gathered together. In this huge assembly Pharaoh promised that if they prevailed over Musa they could have anything they wanted from him.

So with this juvenile idea that they could degrade Hazrat Musa and make him seem wretched, and thereby increase their standing with Pharaoh. They cast down their sticks and ropes on the ground. With the magic that they performed, these sticks and ropes became snakes as if they were slithering about in front of people who were witnesses to this day of trial. Their mouths fell open in amazement. But Hazrat Musa (a.s.) was with God, or rather, better still, God was with Hazrat Musa (a.s.), and his turn came. He cast his simple staff down beside the multitude of spells and wizardry of Pharaoh's magicians, and everyone saw that staff turn into a ferocious serpent which circled round and swallowed all the fabrications of the sorcerers, as if you would have said there had never been anything there.

First and foremost, then, were the magicians who came to believe in Hazrat Musa (a.s.). All of them, with one heart and one voice, said, "We believe in the Lord of the worlds who is the God of Hazrat Musa and Harun."<sup>3</sup>

They fell down and prostrated themselves, and begged forgiveness for what they had done.

Pharaoh's rage increased. He threatened them. But they, who knew the difference between magic and miracle better than anyone else, thoroughly understood that Hazrat Musa (a.s.) was not a magician, and that his power was the power of God, and for this reason they were not afraid of Pharaoh's threat. Pharaoh shouted at them, "How dare you believe in the God of Musa without my permission I will tear off your arms and legs; I will hang you from the branches of the date-palm!"

The wretched creature imagined that in their own beliefs people were also obliged to get his permission. The magicians replied, "We will not choose you over and above a God who created us; we will return to our God; we are the first group who believed in Musa; we hope for God's forgiveness. Whatever you want to do, do it; for we know perfectly well that this world does not last."

But this heated speech went without effect on the cold hearts of Pharaoh and his followers. Their own status and manifestation of power deceived them.

They captured Bani Isra'il; those women from whom there was no danger were left alive and were put to work. The boys and youths of that people were killed. Many times God demonstrated the weakness of Pharaoh's people, and made them despicable so that they would learn their lesson. Every time a calamity came, they sent a message to Hazrat Musa (a.s.) that if God would take the calamity away, they would believe in Him; but when the calamity was removed, they forgot their message, and committed another iniquity.

Pharaoh said to his own people, "Don't fear! Let me kill Musa. I worry least he take your religion away from you, and I am afraid that he will create a revolution in this country and bring about a disaster."

Hazrat Musa (a.s.) said, "I seek refuge with God from every rebel who does not believe in the resurrection."

In the middle of all this, a man appeared who, until then, had kept his faith hidden; heedless of the people, he raised his voice and said, "Do you want to kill a man who says God is his Lord? Do you not see the signs of the existence of God which he has brought with him?"

Pharaoh announced. "It is as I have spoken!"

Again this solitary believer warned people, saying that he was frightened that their fate would be the same as the fate of the people of Nuh, or 'Ad and Thamud that he was afraid they would end up in Hell and the Fire, and that no-one would be able to save them from the punishment of their God.

Paying no attention to this man's warning, Pharaoh thought about his own plans and said in mockery to Harun, who was his minister, "Build a large tower for me so that I may get to know the ways of heaven from the top of it. May be there I will capture the God of Musa!"

But the man who had a strong faith in God went on repeating his same warnings. He said, "Follow me! I will lead you to the right path, O my people! The life of this world is ephemeral; do not be proud of it. The next world is eternal; the next world is everlasting. All the deeds of man will be investigated. The bad deeds will be punished, and the good deeds will receive a reward The reward for good is eternal Paradise. O people, I call you to salvation, why do you invite me to the Fire?"

"You want me to become an incomparable unbeliever in God and further to ascribe partners to him, but I call you towards God, Who in truth is bountiful and the master of power. It is God who will return all of us towards Himself

"All of those who see the truth and understand it but do not obey it will be in the Fire. There will be no tardiness; what I say will take place soon."

Pharaoh and his worshippers did not turn back from their way after this speech. God took the fearless believer under his own protection and increased the difficulties for Pharaoh's own men.

In the end God gave the command to Musa to take the oppressed masses out of Egypt by night. Hazrat Musa (a.s.) led Bani Isra'il out in the darkness. They set off in the direction of the Red Sea. In their hearts they feared least Pharaoh should pursue them with his might, and in fact that is what happened. Pharaoh set out in pursuit of Hazrat Musa with his army. Bani Isra'il saw that mighty force and became very uneasy. No solution could be found. On the one side was the sea, coast to coast there was water; on the other side was Pharaoh with his immense army. Musa sought refuge with God and he revealed to him that he should strike his staff on the water and take it off.

This staff became the manifestation of the power of Allah. Hazrat Musa (a.s.) struck his stick on the water. In an instant, a dry, smooth way was opened up. Ban Isra'il followed Musa on this way. The water on the two sides of the way was piled up like two walls, mound upon mound, and did not spill over. Bani Isra'il came out of the water, and Pharaoh came up to it with his forces. He was wondering what he should do: should he turn back or entrust his soul to the sea. In front of him he saw Hazrat Musa (a.s.) and his people; how had they set foot in the water and passed through it in safety?

But he did not have faith in the clear sign of the power of Allah. He commanded his forces to pass through the water in the same way as had Muse's people. All of them obeyed him and entered the sea. They rushed in to capture Hazrat Musa (a.s.) – peace be upon him – and his people. They were drunk with the wine of pride. All at once the walls closed in on them. The way became a well; the ocean enveloped them on all sides. Pharaoh, seeing himself without hope, became a believer, but it was too late. All were drowned in the sea, all were annihilated, and their memory obliterated.

The Qur'an relates the situation of the last moments of Pharaoh's life with exactitude. It says:

***“At length, when he (Pharaoh) was overwhelmed with the flood he said, “I believe that there is no god except Him Whom Bani Isra'il believe in. I am of those who submit. (It was said to him) “Why now, Just a little while before you were in rebellion and you did mischief! This day we save you in your body,<sup>4</sup> that you may become a sign to those who will come after you. But verily, many among mankind are heedless of the signs of our power.” (10: 90–91).***

Thus was Bani Isra'il saved from the sea.

If Hazrat Musa (a.s.) had become free from the spectra of Pharaoh and his oppression, there was now a grave concern for him, and that was the ignorance and propensity for dispute among the Bani Isra'il itself. On the other side of the sea they reached a people who worshipped idols, and Bani Isra'il begged Hazrat Musa (as.) to build an idol for them so that they might not be in any way, even in idol- worship, inferior to them. Hazrat Musa (a.s.) was very grieved by this and said, “How ignorant and unknowing you are? Do you expect me to look for another god apart from He who delivered you from the grip of Pharaoh?

God summoned Hazrat Musa (a.s.) to spend thirty nights for people in prayer. Hazrat Musa (a.s.) appointed Hazrat Harun (a.s.), his own brother, in his place for Bani Isra'il and recommended him to the people. After thirty nights following the command of Allah, he added to them another ten nights. After the completion of these forty nights, the Torah was revealed to him, that it should be a guide at that time for the Jewish people.

However, as for Bani Isra'il, after they had been a few days without Hazrat Musa (as), the excuse of the idol seized them again. An impostor called Samiri took gold and jewellery from them and built a golden calf, in such a way that in special conditions, by its own contrivance, it emitted the sound of the calf. Then he said to the people, whose wisdom was only in their eyes, "This calf is the son of the God of Musa, it is your god, you must worship it."

The people had forgotten that God could not be in the form of a body, could not be in space and they had forgotten that God must be their guide. Contrary to the teachings of Hazrat Musa (a.s.), they accepted as god the golden calf which had been built at the hands of Samiri, and which had no benefit or loss for anyone. They did not pay attention to the fact that it was an idol built by Samiri for them which merely made a cow-like lowing, and did not realize that if it were possible that God should manifest himself among them, He would proceed to guide them and lead them. It is clear that there is an enormous difference between guidance and leading and the braying of a calf.

Thus the Jews went astray and heeded not the advice of Hazrat Harun (s).

When Hazrat Musa (a.s.) came back and saw their great aberration, he became completely dejected and rebuked the ignorant people.

He told Samiri, "Now, you idol-builder who was built by God, what shall I do with you? That idol, I shall have it burnt and its ashes flung into the sea. And your True God is the only God, Who sees and knows everything that is, and there is no god apart from him."

And with these words he broke the idol into pieces and no trace of it remained.

The Divine words of Hazrat Musa (a.s.) had failed to have their effect; the people still looked for excuses, and reneged on their pledges. After Hazrat Musa (a.s.), they became less obedient to the Truth and to the words of God's prophets and His chosen ones. They remained heedless. They oppressed some people, and they killed the prophets. They even got to work on their own Divine Book, and altered it, and thus they created the Torah in its present form, whose imperfections are so great that one cannot call it a Divine Book.

## Questions

1. Which two tribes were living in Egypt at the time of Hazrat Musa's birth?

2. Which tribe did the Pharaohs belong to?
3. Which tribe did the lineage of Yacub belong to?
4. Why did the Pharaoh order the entire babies head to be cut off from the Bani Isra'il tribe?
5. Why was the order given to kill Musa?
6. What happened when Musa reached the bush?
7. What happened when Musa threw down his staff?
8. What did Allah command Musa to declare to the Pharaoh?
9. What did Musa say when Pharaoh asked him who is you God?
10. What did the people immediately do when they saw the miracles Musa showed them?
11. What did pharaoh say to the people as a threat when the prostrated before Musa?
12. Who was Harun?
13. When Hazrat Musa went with his followers to the Red Sea what did pharaoh do?
14. What happened when Musa struck his staff in the water?
15. What happened when Pharaoh and his men enter the sea?
16. What did the imposter Samiri do?
17. What was the idol in the shape of?
18. What did Musa do when he saw what the people were doing when he returned?
19. What did Musa do with the Idol?
20. What did the people do after Musa's death?

[1.](#) Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar vol. 13, p. 38-40.

[2.](#) Nur ath-Thaqalayn, vol. 4, p. 117.

[3.](#) Harun was the brother of Hazrat Musa (a.s.) With his loud clear voice he went together with Hazrat Musa (a.s.) everywhere and helped him in his work of delivering the Message.

[4.](#) Pharaoh was the general name for the rulers of ancient Egypt. The Pharaoh contemporary with Musa was called 'Ramses II' and his body was mummified. It was discovered in 1881 (AD) and is now in Cairo Museum.)

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