

Section 14: Pharaoh and His Magicians Defeated

Surah al-'Araf – Verses 108–109

وَنَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَاءُ لِلنَّاظِرِينَ

قَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّ هَذَا لَسَاحِرٌ عَلِيمٌ

108. “Then he drew out his hand, and behold! It was white to the beholders.”

109. “The chiefs of Pharaoh’s people said: ‘Verily this indeed is a knowing sorcerer’.”

Besides warnings and changing the Rod as a serpent, Moses showed white hand, too. But the opponents of the prophets used to spoil the rank of the prophets. The verse says:

“Then he drew out his hand, and behold! it was white to the beholders.”

Therefore, the adherents and the chiefs of wrong-doers around false deities are also shared with them in their crimes. The verse says:

“The chiefs of Pharaoh’s people said: ‘Verily this indeed is a knowing sorcerer’.”

Surah al-'Araf – Verse 110

يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنْ أَرْضِكُمْ فَمَاذَا تَأْمُرُونَ

110. “He (Moses) intends to expel you from your land. Then what do you advise?”

In order to pervert the common opinions, Pharaoh tried to denigrate Moses (as). From the point of belief, he called Moses (as) a sorcerer, and from the social and political points of view, he introduced him as a seditious and quarrelsome person. One of the weapons of the opponents is to denigrate the men of the Truth. The verse, from the tongue of Pharaoh, says:

“He (Moses) intends to expel you from your land...”

False deities are often tyrannical, but sometimes they become helpless to consult in difficulties with some others around them.

“...Then what do you advise?”

Surah al-‘Araf – Verses 111-112

قَالُوا أَرْجِهْ وَأَخَاهُ وَأَرْسِلْ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ حَاشِرِينَ

يَأْتُوكَ بِكُلِّ سَاحِرٍ عَلِيمٍ

111. “They said (unto Pharaoh): ‘Keep him and his brother in suspense (for a while); and send men to the cities to collect (sorcerers),”

112. “To bring you every knowing (expert) sorcerer’.”

In their consultation, however, the attitude of all of them was that they told him to keep Moses and Aaron (as) in suspense in order to collect sorcerers. The verse says as follows:

“They said (unto Pharaoh): ‘Keep him and his brother in suspense (for a while); and send men to the cities to collect (sorcerers),”

This device was for the reason that they would call all knowledgeable skillful experts of the time in sorcery to be gathered and to be brought to the presence of Pharaoh. The verse says:

“To bring you every knowing (expert) sorcerer’.”

Since haste in slaying Moses and Aaron, regarding Moses’ two surprising miracles, would cause the attraction of the attention of many people to him, and the feature of his ‘prophethood’ might be strengthened with the feature of ‘martyrdom and being oppressed’, at first they thought that they would

frustrate his deeds by means of some extraordinary actions of their sorcerers, and defame him.

After that, they should slay him so that the story of Moses and Aaron could disappear from the minds of people forever.

Surah al-‘Araf – Verses 113-114

وَجَاءَ السَّحَرَةُ فِرْعَوْنَ قَالُوا إِنَّ لَنَا لَأَجْرًا إِن كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْغَالِبِينَ

قَالَ نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ لَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ

113. “And the sorcerers came to Pharaoh, they said: ‘Verily there will be a reward for us if we are victors’.”

114. “He said: ‘Yes! and you will surely be of the near-stationed (to me)’.”

From this verse on, the words are upon the entanglement of Moses with the sorcerers and the end of his struggle therein.

The verse implies that, by the invitation of Pharaoh, sorcerers went to him, and the first thing that they told him was that whether they would have a large reward if they could overcome the enemy. Here is the verse:

“And the sorcerers came to Pharaoh, they said: ‘verily there will be a reward for us if we are victors’.”

Immediately after that, Pharaoh also gave them a favorable promise, and said that not only he would give them a good financial reward but also they would be of the near-stationed to him. The verse says:

“He said: ‘Yes! and you will surely be of the near-stationed (to me)’.”

Thus, Pharaoh promised them both the reward of wealth and the reward of high rank.

Surah al-‘Araf – Verses 115-116

قَالُوا يَا مُوسَى إِمَّا أَنْ تُلْقِيَ وَإِمَّا أَنْ نَكُونَ نَحْنُ الْمُلْقِينَ

قَالَ أَلْقُوا فَلَمَّا أَلْقَوْا سَحَرُوا أَعْيُنَ النَّاسِ وَاسْتَزْهَبَهُمْ وَجَاءُوا بِسِحْرِ عَظِيمٍ

115. ***“They (the sorcerers) said: ‘O’ Moses! Will you throw, or shall we be the (first) throwers?”***

116. ***“He (Moses) said: ‘Throw (yours) !’ So when they threw, they bewitched the people’s eyes and terrified them and produced a great magic.”***

Finally, a proper time was appointed for the meeting of Moses (as) and the sorcerers to have their attempts. So all people were invited to come and see the event.

When the appointed day came, the sorcerers were completely ready with all their tools for the action. They had supplied some ropes and staffs which, it seemed, they had been filled with some special chemical materials. These materials could be changed into the form of some light gases before sunshine which could move those ropes and hollow staffs.

It was a wonderful scene. Moses, standing before people and the sorcerers, was alone. Only his brother, Aaron, was with him. The sorcerers told Moses either he would begin the action and cast his means first, or they might start and cast their own means. The verse in this regard says:

“They (the sorcerers) said: ‘O’ Moses! Will you throw, or shall we be the (first) throwers?”

Moses, with a particular coolness, answered them that they could begin first. The verse says:

“He (Moses) said: ‘Throw (yours)!...’

When the sorcerers threw down their ropes and other means on the ground, they fascinated people and, by their deceitful deeds and exaggerative statements, they cast a sudden fear and terror upon people, and caused a great sorcery to be produced before them. The verse says:

“...So when they threw, they bewitched the people’s eyes and terrified them and produced a great magic.”

The Arabic term /sihr/ means: ‘deceit, imposture, dexterity, and jugglery’. Sometimes it also means: ‘whatever the cause and motive of which is invisible’. The verse says:

“...and produced a great magic.”

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 117

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَلْقِ عَصَاكَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَأْفِكُونَ

117. “And We revealed to Moses: ‘Throw down your rod!’ And behold, it swallowed (all) that they falsely had invented.”

At the moment when all people were excited, and happy shouts were heard from every side, Pharaoh and his by-standers were watching the scene of activities of sorcerers, while they were smiling contently and their eyes were glittering with joy.

Then suddenly the Divine revelation came unto Moses (as), bidding him to throw down the staff. It caused the scene to be changed wholly. The faces of audience lost their colour, and instability overtook Pharaoh and his adherents.

In this verse, the Qur’ān refers to the very fact. It implies that Allah revealed to Moses (as) to throw down his Rod. It became as a huge serpent which quickly and precisely gathered all false snakes and artificial means of the sorcerers. The holy verse says:

“And We revealed to Moses: ‘Throw down your rod!’ And behold, it swallowed (all) that they falsely had invented.”

Surah al-‘Araf – Verses 118–120

فَوَقَعَ الْحَقُّ وَبَطَلَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

فَغُلِبُوا هُنَاكَ وَانْقَلَبُوا صَاغِرِينَ

وَأُلْقِيَ السَّحَرَةُ سَاجِدِينَ

118. “So the truth was established and what they were doing was made vain.”

119. “Thus were they there defeated and brought low.”

120. “And the sorcerers fell down in prostration.”

It was thus that the truth was manifested and the acts of sorcerers, which were baseless and improper, were nollified. The verse says:

“So the truth was established and what they were doing was made vain.”

The reason of this incident was that the deed of Moses (as) was a reality while the sorcerers' deeds were some deceits, trickeries, dissimulations, juggleries and delusions.

This was the first stroke which was struck upon the foundation of the power of Pharaoh, the arrogant.

In verse 119, the Qur'ān implies that, thereafter, the signs of failure were seen in them, and all of them became low and helpless.

The verse says:

“Thus were they there defeated and brought low.”

The more important stroke happened when the scene of struggle of sorcerers against Moses (as) was totally changed, and suddenly all the sorcerers fell down prostrating for the greatness of Allah. The verse says:

“And the sorcerers fell down in prostration.”

Surah al-‘Araf – Verses 121-122

قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

رَبِّ مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ

121. “They said: ‘We have believed in the Lord of the worlds.’”

122. “The Lord of Moses and Aaron’.”

The sorcerers shouted that they believed in the Lord of the worlds, Who was the Lord of Moses and Aaron. The verses say:

“They said: ‘We have believed in the Lord of the worlds.’”

“The Lord of Moses and Aaron’.”

This happening was something which could never be foresighted by Pharaoh and his men.

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 123

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ ءَامَنْتُمْ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ ءَاذَنَ لَكُمْ إِنَّ هَذَا لَمَكْرٌ مَكْرْتُمُوهُ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ
لَتُخْرِجُوا مِنْهَا أَهْلَهَا فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ

123. “Pharaoh said: ‘Did you believe in him before I should give you permission? Surely this is a plot you have plotted in the city that you may expel its people from it, but soon you shall know (the consequences)!’”

When a new stroke was struck upon the bases and pillars of the power and authority of Pharaoh because of the victory of Moses (as) over the sorcerers and that they believed in Moses (as), Pharaoh was frightened and got excited. That was why he applied two plots as follows:

The first was his accusation against the sorcerers which perhaps was admired by common people. The verse says:

“Pharaoh said: ‘Did you believe in him before I should give you permission?...’”

This is the worst form of colonialism that a nation be taken as slaves and captives so that they may not have even the right of thinking, contemplating, and heartily believing in a person or a religion.

This is the very plan which, in the present age, is pursued under the title of ‘New colonialism’, too.

Then, Pharaoh added:

“...Surely this is a plot you have plotted in the city that you may expel its people from it...”

This accusation was so unfounded and infamous that none could accept, except some perfectly unaware persons among common people.

After that, Pharaoh threatened them ambiguously, but it was said intensively and firmly. He said:

“...but soon you shall know (the consequences)!”

Surah al-‘Araf – Verses 124-125

لَأَقْطَعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ مِنْ خِلَافٍ ثُمَّ لَأُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

قَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُونَ

124. ***“Surely I will cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, then I will certainly crucify you all’.”***

125. ***“They said: ‘Verily unto our Lord we return’.”***

The ambiguous threat of Pharaoh, which was referred to in the previous verse, is clearly stated in the verse under discussion. Here, Pharaoh takes an oath that he cuts off their hands and feet on opposite sides, i.e. the right hand and the left foot, or the left hand and the right foot. The verse says:

“Surely I will cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, then I will certainly crucify you all’.”

What Pharaoh undertook here against the sorcerers, who had believed in Moses (as), was a general behaviour that usually the tyrannical rulers have in their cowardly oppositions against the adherents of the Truth.

On one side, they use the weapon of accusation against the demandant of the Truth to weaken them and their position both in the view of common people. And, on the other side, they rely on force, power, and threat to slaughter and destruction in order to break down their authority and will.

None of the two weapons of Pharaoh could defeat the decision of the sorcerers. In their answer, they heartily and decidedly refused him, as follows:

“They said: ‘Verily unto our Lord we return’.”

They said this statement with the meaning that if the Pharaoh’s threat could be done, they finally would become martyrs. In that case, not only the event might not harm them or decrease anything from them, but also it could be considered as an honour and a happiness for them.

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 126

وَمَا تَنْقِمُ مِنَّا إِلَّا أَنْ ءَامَنَّا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّنَا لَمَّا جَاءَتْنَا رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَتَوَفَّنَا مُسْلِمِينَ

126. ***“And you do not take revenge upon us except because we have believed in the signs of our Lord when they came to us.’ ‘Our Lord! Pour out upon us patience, and cause us to die in submission’.”***

Then, in order to respond the accusation of Pharaoh, and to make the truth clear for the audience of the concerning scene, and, also, to prove their own sinlessness, the sorcerers said:

“And you do not take revenge upon us except because we have believed in the signs of our Lord when they came to us.’...”

At that time, they turned their faces from Pharaoh and, being attentive to Allah, they invoked Him to bestow upon them the highest degree of patience and perseverance. They knew that they could not tolerate those terrible threats without His help and His support. So, they said:

“...‘Our Lord! Pour out upon us patience, and cause us to die in submission’.”

As it has been recorded in the Islamic traditions, as well as the history, finally the sorcerers resisted on their idea so much so that Pharaoh fulfilled what he had threatened, and he hung their mutilated bodies on some tall palm trees by the bank of Nile River.

Yes, if belief and full awareness combine with together, the income of such a spiritual love will be some perseverance and devotion which will not be surprising in that way.

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