

## Section 4: The Children of Israel Follow Moses

### Surah Ta Ha – Verses 77 – 79

وَلَقَدْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي فَاصْرَبْ لَهُمْ طَرِيقًا فِي الْبَحْرِ يَبَسًا لَا تَخَافُ دَرْكًا وَلَا تَخْشَىٰ

فَاتَّبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ بِجُنُودِهِ فَغَشِيَهُمْ مِنَ الْيَمِّ مَا غَشِيَهُمْ

وَأَضَلَّ فِرْعَوْنُ قَوْمَهُ وَمَا هَدَىٰ

**77. “And We indeed revealed unto Moses (saying): ‘Take away My servants by night, and strike for them a dry path in the sea, with no fear of being overtaken (by Pharaoh) nor you be afraid (of being drowned).”**

**78. “Then Pharaoh pursued them with his armies so (the bellows) of the sea covered them, as they were covered (completely drowned).”**

**79. “And Pharaoh led his people astray and he did not guide them (aright).”**

When the sorcerers and the people of Egypt believed in Moses (as) and did not fear from the threats of Pharaoh, the gate of the helps of Allah were opened to them and, after that Moses (as) was ordered to take people out of Egypt by night, and that Allah made the sea dry for them and secured them from the harm of Pharaoh. 1

The verse says:

***“And We indeed revealed unto Moses (saying): ‘Take away My servants by night...’***

Thus, the Children of Israel became ready to set out toward the Promised Land (Palestine), but when they reached the shores of the Nile, the men of Pharaoh were informed of the event and, therefore, Pharaoh, accompanied with a large army, pursued them. Now, the Children of Israel found themselves surrounded by the sea and the enemy.

At this time Allah commanded Moses as follows:

***“...and strike for them a dry path in the sea...”***

The revelation, pointing to the dry path in the sea, informs Moses that it is a path that when you step on it, you will be faced:

***“...with no fear of being overtaken (by Pharaoh) nor you be afraid (of being drowned).”***

Therefore, Moses and the Children of Israel arrived to some paths which, by going water aside, appeared inside the sea. At this time, Pharaoh and his army reached beside the sea and were confronted such an amazing and unexpectedly scene.

The verse says:

***“Then Pharaoh pursued them with his armies...”***

From one end, the last figure of the Pharaoh’s army entered the sea, and, on the other end, the last figure of the Children of Israel went out of the sea. At this moment, the pillars of water in the sea were commanded to return to their first state. The walls of water waved and, like an old building the base of which is broken, fell down all of a sudden.

The verse says:

***“...so (the bellows) of the sea covered them, as they were covered (completely drowned).”***

And, in this way, an unjust cruel power together with its powerful forces were wholly covered by the masses of water in the sea and were swallowed by the fish of that sea in the form of a ready made food.

Yes, it is true that the verse says:

***“And Pharaoh led his people astray and he did not guide them (aright).”***

However, the Arabic word /’isra’/ means ‘to travel by night’. The word /yabas/ is called to a place where it has become dry now. The term /darak/ means the losses which encompasses a person. And, the objective meaning of the Qur’anic term /’ibadi/, mentioned in this holy verse, is the Children of Israel.

## Surah Ta Ha – Verse 80

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ قَدْ أَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ عَدُوِّكُمْ وَوَاعَدْنَاكُمْ جَانِبَ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ وَنَزَّلْنَا  
عَلَيْكُمْ الْمَنَّاءَ وَالسَّلْوَى

**80. “O Children of Israel! We delivered you from your enemy, and We made a covenant with you on the right side of Tur (the Mount Sinai), and We sent down unto you Manna and quails.”**

The subject of the deliverance of the Children of Israel from the cruelty of Pharaoh, and the descent of Manna and the quails for them when they were wandering in the desert, have been mentioned in the Qur’an several times.

The Arabic term /manna/ apparently means: ‘honey and hedysarum’, while /salwa/ means ‘quails’, a kind of bird the meat of which is delicious and lawful for eating.

The phrase:

**“and We made a covenant with you on the right side of Tur”,**

mentioned in the verse, is an indication to the event of the tryst of Tur, the Mount Sinai, where Moses, accompanied with a group of the Children of Israel, went. There, Allah sent down the Tablets of Turah to Moses (as). Law is usually the most important necessity of a community after dismissing the tyrannical ruler and formation of a government.

This holy verse addresses the Children of Israel and, in general, all human being in any time, and reminds them the great bounties that Allah has bestowed on them and leads them to the path of salvation.

At first it says:

**“O Children of Israel! We delivered you from your enemy...”**

Then, the verse points to one of the spiritual bounties, when it says:

**“...and We made a covenant with you on the right side of Tur (the Mount Sinai)...”**

As it was said in the above, this part of the verse points to the tryst when Moses and some of the Children of Israel went to the Tur Mount. It was in this very tryst that Allah sent down the Tablets of Moses and spoke with him and all of them saw the special manifestation of Allah.

And, finally, the verse points to an important material bounty which originated from the peculiar graces of

Allah unto the Children of Israel.

It says:

***“...and We sent down unto you Manna and quails.”***

They were wandering in a desert where they had no suitable food. Then the grace of Allah helped them and He gave them some delightful and delicious food to use, as much as they needed.

However, the spiritual bounty is prior to the material bounty.

At first He said:

***“We made a covenant with you on the right side of Tur”,***

which refers to the descent of the Turah. Next to that He said:

***“and We sent down unto you Manna and quails”,***

which refers to the food of the body.

## **Surah Ta Ha – Verse 81**

كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا فِيهِ فَيَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبِي وَمَنْ يَحِلَّ عَلَيْهِ  
غَضَبِي فَقَدْ هَوِيَ

***81. “Eat of the good things We have provided for your sustenance, but commit no excess therein, lest My Wrath should descend on you, and on whomever My Wrath does descend, he is lost indeed.”***

After mentioning those three valuable bounties, this verse addresses them and says:

***“Eat of the good things We have provided for your sustenance, but commit no excess therein, lest My Wrath should descend on you...”***

Insolence, concerning the Divine bounties, is that a person, instead of using them in the path of obedience of Allah and the path of his own felicity, uses them as a means of sinning, ingratitude, disbelief, obstinacy, and prodigality, as the Children of Israel did in the like manner.

And, following that matter, the verse continues saying:

***“...and on whomever My Wrath does descend, he is lost indeed.”***

The Qur'anic term /hawa/ originally means: 'to fall from a height down', the result of which is usually destruction. Moreover, here the term also indicates to the fall of spiritual rank: separation from nearness of Allah, and being sent away from His presence.

Yet, the real fall for a man is to be involved in the Wrath of Allah, such as political failure, economical bankruptcy, and the like of them.

## Surah Ta Ha – Verse 82

وَإِنِّي لَغَفَّارٌ لِّمَن تَابَ وَءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَىٰ

**82. “And verily I am the most forgiving to him who repents and believes and does righteous deed, and at last is guided.”**

Next to the previous verse, which ended with a warning, this verse consists of the glad tidings of Allah, the good tidings to accepting repentance and forgiveness. This style is seen in all occurrences of the Qur'an concerning those occasions which are similar to this one.

Of course, repentance from any sin and fault should be proportional to that very sin and fault. For example, the repentance of a person who has not established a statutory prayer is that he should fulfill that prayer; the repentance of hurting people is apology; the repentance of concealment of a fact is its announcement; the repentance of polytheism is belief in Allah; and the repentance of consuming people's wealth is to return the wealth to its owner(s).

And since warnings and threats should be followed by encouragement and glad tidings, in order to equally remove the potential fear and hope, which are the main factors of development, and to open the doors of return to the repentant, in this verse, He says:

**“And verily I am the most forgiving to him who repents and believes and does righteous deed, and at last is guided.”**

The application of the word /qaffar/ (The most forgiving) in this verse is an indication to the fact that Allah forgives such people not only once but also for many times.

Some Islamic traditions denote that the purpose of the word /ihtada/, mentioned in this verse, has also been rendered into the guidance toward the mastership of Ahlul-Bayt (as) (the immaculate Imams).<sup>2</sup>

The reason of this idea is that Faith and righteous deeds, without the acceptance of the guidance of the Divine leaders, are not enough. (Yes, When there are both Faith and righteous deeds in one believer but he does not pave the path of guidance of the Divine leaders, he will become the prey of others, such as

Samiri and Bal'am Ba'ura.)

Thus, the phrase "**and at last is guided**" is an indication to the necessity of the acceptance of mastership and obedience to the leadership of the Divine leaders.

That is, repentance, faith, and righteous deeds are accepted and cause felicity when they are under the light of the guidance of Divine leaders. Once this guidance was at the time Moses (as), and another time it was in the time of the Prophet of Islam (S); then it was at the time of Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as); and today it relates to Hadrat Mahdi (as).

The reason of it is that one of the principals of religion is the acceptance of the invitation and the leadership of the Prophet (S) and then the acceptance of the leadership of his true successors.

The Late Tabarsi, concerning the commentary of this verse, narrates a tradition from Imam Baqir (as) who said:

*"The objective meaning of the phrase lummahtadal is the guidance unto the leadership of Ahlul-Bayt (as)"*

Then he (as) added:

*"By Allah, if a man spends all his lifetime in Divine service (close to the Ka'bah) between 'Rukn and Maqham (station of Abraham)', then he dies in the state that he has not accepted our mastership, Allah will throw him by face into the Fire (of Hell)."*

Hakim Abul-Ghasim Huskani, The well-known scholar of hadith of the Sunnites, has also narrated this tradition in his book.<sup>3</sup>

There have been recorded many other traditions in this field narrated from Imam Zayn-ul-'Abidin (as), Imam Sadiq (as), and the Prophet himself (S).

In order to know how deep the abandonment of this principal is destructive, it is enough to study the following verses and see how the Children of Israel were involved in worshipping the Calf, idolatry, and infidelity as the result of abandonment of the mastership and leaving the line of following Moses (as) and his successor Aaron.

However, to be a believer, and to become a believer, is important, but remaining in Faith is more important.

***"...and at last is guided."***

## Surah Ta Ha – Verses 83 – 85

وَمَا أَعْجَلَكَ عَنْ قَوْمِكَ يَا مُوسَى

قَالَ هُمْ أَوْلَاءٌ عَلَيَّ أَتْرَبِي وَعَجَلْتُ إِلَيْكَ رَبِّ لِتَرْضَى

قَالَ فَإِنَّا قَدْ فَتَنَّا قَوْمَكَ مِنْ بَعْدِكَ وَأَضَلَّهُمُ السَّامِرِيُّ

**83. “And (Allah said): ‘What caused you to hasten from your people, O’ Moses?’”**

**84. “Said (Moses): ‘They are upon my track, and I hastened unto You, my Lord, that You might be pleased’.”**

**85. “Said He: ‘Verily We have tested your people in your absence and the Samiri has led them astray’.”**

Upon the commentary of these verses, Imam Sadiq (as) has illustrated the feature of a lover as this:

*“A lover thinks neither of food, clothing, and residence, nor does he have calmness and tranquility until he reaches what he is desirous to; as Moses, desirous to receive revelation from the Lord, did neither sleep nor feed, and he said to the Lord that he had come to Him sooner than his people in order that He became pleased.”<sup>4</sup>*

Then the Qur’an refers to another important part of the life of Moses (as) and the Children of Israel, which relates to the time when he (as), accompanied with a number of the representatives of the Children of Israel, went to the tryst of Tur Mount, and, in their absence, the Children of Israel committed Calf worship.

It was appointed that Moses (as) would go to Tur to take the laws of the Turah, and some of the Children of Israel might also accompany him along that way.

But, in view of the fact that the desire of conversation to Allah was flaming in the heart of Moses, he went alone to the tryst of the Lord before others.

Here, the revelation was sent down to him as follows:

**“And (Allah said): ‘What caused you to hasten from your people, O’ Moses?’”**

Then Moses immediately answered Him, as the verse says:

***“Said (Moses): ‘They are upon my track, and I hastened unto You, my Lord, that You might be pleased’.”***

Moses implied that not only the love of conversation to Him and listening to His statements had made him impatient, but also he had been desirous to take His Laws and ordinances as soon as possible to convey them to His servants, so that, by this manner, he could attract His pleasure better. Yes, Moses was in love of Allah’s pleasure and was also desirous to hear His command.

Yet, in this meeting, his tryst prolonged from thirty nights to forty nights, and different grounds of aberration, which had existed among the Children of Israel from before, manifested. Samiri, that heretic but clever man, by means of some materials made a Calf and invited people to worshipping it. Then, it was in the same tryst that Allah told Moses that his people did not pass their trial well.

The verse says:

***“Said He: ‘Verily We have tested your people in your absence and the Samiri has led them astray’.”***

With the presence of the leader in the society, the enemies cannot do any thing. The heretic persons usually misuse the absence of the Divine leader in the society.

## **Surah Ta Ha – Verse 86**

فَرَجَعَ مُوسَىٰ إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ غَضْبَانَ أَسِفًا قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَلَمْ يَعِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ وَعَدًّا حَسَنًا  
أَفْتَالٍ عَلَيْكُمُ الْعَهْدُ أَمْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ يَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُم مَّوْعِدِي

***86. “Then Moses returned to his people angry and sad, saying: ‘O my people! did not your Lord promise you a fair promise (the descent of the Turah)? Did then the time (of my absence) seem so long to you? Or did you desire that Wrath should descend from your Lord on you so that you failed in your tryst with me?’”***

By hearing this matter, Moses became so angry that as if his whole entity burnt. Perhaps he was saying to himself that he had worked and tried studiously, confronted any danger and laboured for long years until when that community became acquainted with Monotheism, but alas! and alas again that because of a few days of his absence all his efforts were lost. That was why he immediately returned to those people.

The verse says:

***“Then Moses returned to his people angry and sad...”***

When Moses saw the hideous scenery of Calf worship, he shouted at them:

***“...saying: ‘O my people! did not your Lord promise you a fair promise (the descent of the Turah)?...”***

This ‘fair promise’, mentioned in the verse, was either the promise that he had given to the Children of Israel upon the descent of the Turah and the statement of heavenly ordinances in it; or the promise of victory and delivering them from the people of Pharaoh and becoming the inheritor of the earth; or the promise of forgiveness for the repentant, or all of the abovementioned promises.

Then, Moses (as) added:

***“...Did then the time (of my absence) seem so long to you?...”***

Or, by means of this hideous action, they opposed him in their appointment in order to cause the chastisement of Allah to be descended on them.

The verse says:

***“...Or did you desire that Wrath should descend from your Lord on you so that you failed in your tryst with me?”***

There are two points here which must be noted. In this verse, two promises have been referred to. One of them is the promise from the side of Allah, i.e., the descent of the Turah; and the other is the promise from the side of Moses (as) to his people that when he was absent they should obey his brother Aaron, but the people, by their Calf worship, ignored both them.

When Moses (as) was reprimanding them he questioned them, about their aberration. He questioned whether their aberration was done deliberately and they went toward the Wrath of Allah knowingly, or they did it neglectfully. He also asked them whether they went astray for the reason that his absence prolonged from thirty days to forty days.

In this verse, similar to the content of verse No. 81, the Wrath of Allah has been pointed out, with a difference that: in that verse the cause of the Wrath of Allah has been stated the disobedience of people, while here its reason has been mentioned the people’s breach of promise. These are the factors in which the secret of the defeat of the Children of Israel is hidden.

## **Surah Ta Ha – Verse 87**

قَالُوا مَا أَخْلَفْنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلِكِنَا وَلَكِنَّا حُمِّلْنَا أَوْزَاراً مِنْ زِينَةِ الْقَوْمِ فَقَذَفْنَاهَا

## فَكَذَّبَ الْقِيَ السَّامِرِيُّ

**87. “They said: ‘We did not fail in our tryst with you of our own accord, but we were laden with burdens of ornaments of the people, then we cast them (in the fire), and thus did the Samiri suggest’.”**

In order to flee from punishment, sinners usually take refuge to some pretexts, such as compulsion, aversion, and outward coercion. A society, the Faith of which is feeble and it easily accepts an undue sovereignty, by means of an adroit trick, may lose every thing it has.

It was for this reason that when the Children of Israel found themselves before the intensive protest of Moses (as) and understood that they had done an indecent action, tried to bring some pretexts.

The verse says:

**“They said: ‘We did not fail in our tryst with you of our own accord..’”**

That is, in fact, we ourselves did not tend to Calf worship by our will, but it was Samiri who suggested it. The verse continues saying:

**“...but we were laden with burdens of ornaments of the people, then we cast them (in the fire), and thus did the Samiri suggest’.”**

## Surah Ta Ha – Verses 88 – 89

فَأَخْرَجَ لَهُمْ عِجْلاً جَسَداً لَهُ خُوارٌ فَقَالُوا هَذَا إِلَهُكُمْ وَإِلَهُ مُوسَىٰ فَنَسِيَ

أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَنَّ الْأَيُّ يَرْجِعُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَوْلًا وَلَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا

**88. “Then he (Samiri) produced for them a (mere) body of a Calf that lowed. So they said: ‘This is your god and the god of Moses’, but he forgot (both the Lord and Moses’ teachings).”**

**89. “Do they not see then that it (the Calf) returns to them no saying and possesses neither harm nor profit for them?”**

One of the smartnesses of Samiri was that he did not show those people how he constructed the Calf, and the people, all of a sudden, were faced with a lowing Calf that Samiri had constructed.

The verse says:

***“Then he (Samiri) produced for them a (mere) body of a Calf that lowed. So they said: “This is your god and the god of Moses’, but he forgot (both the Lord and Moses’ teachings).”***

The Children of Israel did not contemplate that if that Calf were worthy of worship, Samiri himself, who was the constructor of it, would be more worthy of worship while they did not worship him.

However, as a blame and reprimand upon those idolaters, Allah says:

***“Do they not see then that it (the Calf) returns to them no saying and possesses neither harm nor profit for them?”***

A real deity should at least be able to answer the questions of the servants. Can the sound of lowing heard from the golden statue of a Calf alone be an acceptable and sufficient reason for people to worship it?

Moreover, can a thing, which is not the possessor of the harm and the profit of others, or even of itself, be an object of worship?

Besides, the intellect judges that the object of worship of a man should be able to attract profit for him and to repel harms from him.

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1. The Commentary of Fi-Zilal-il-Qur’an
  2. Commentary of Burhan; and Kafi, vol. 8, p. 393
  3. Majma‘-ul-Bayan, the Commentary
  4. As-Safi, the Commentary, the explanation about the verse

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