

The Miraculous Reunion

There was chaos in the palace, but Musa's sister, who had followed the box containing the child to the palace, managed to send word to the Queen about a "particular nurse" who could bring him up and take good care of him. Queen Asiya was pleased to hear that. She immediately sent for this nurse.

When Yukabid came to the palace, the queen did not know that she was the real mother of Musa ﷺ. Queen Asiya explained the situation and handed the baby into her care. As soon as Musa's mother took her little baby in her arms, he stopped crying and fed happily. The queen was delighted to see this and sighed

with relief: the baby's life was now out of danger.

And thus, as the Quran tells us, Allah restored Musa ﷺ to his mother, so that her eyes might be cooled from weeping and she should grieve no more and would know that Allah's promise was fulfilled (20:40). Musa's mother was overjoyed, and thanked Allah from the depths of her heart. She thought how strange it was that her child would now be brought up in the palace of Firawn, the very same person who had ordered that all the new-born baby boys of the Children of Israel be put to death!

Hieroglyphics



The ancient Egyptians developed a writing system called hieroglyphics using consonants and picture symbols instead of an alphabet as we know it.

Hieroglyphs were called "the words of the gods." They were only used for official texts. At that time—3000 B.C.—only a handful of Egyptians could read and write. They were the scribes. The scribes had a very high place in Firawn's palace and in society. They were the only ones who could record things, and Firawn depended on them to run his administration—

civil, military and religious. The Egyptians used stone tablets, and they also discovered a way to make paper with the papyrus plant.

In hieroglyphics, the consonant symbols were combined with pictures, or *ideograms*, to give the whole meaning of the word. Since the ancient Egyptians did not write any vowels, many different words would have looked the same without the picture symbol. Thus the word "cow" was written where the first three signs are phonograms that would be read jHt and the fourth sign, the ideogram, determines the sounds written with the three first signs to mean "cow."

Some words were so commonplace they were often written with ideograms only. "People" was written thus,

The understanding of hieroglyphics was lost for many hundreds of years after the decline of the ancient Egyptian civilization. In 1799 French soldiers on a campaign in Egypt with Napoleon found a black stone with an inscription in both hieroglyphics and Greek, called the Rosetta Stone, which gave the first clue to solving this mystery.

A Stranger and the Old Man

Musa ﷺ travelled day and night on foot through the vast desert. As he moved farther and farther away from his beloved land of Egypt, Musa ﷺ prayed, “May my Lord guide me to the right path.... I surely stand in great need of whatever good You shall send down upon me.”

After several days he reached Madyan. Resting in the shade of a rock near the Gulf of Aqaba, Musa ﷺ saw some men drawing water from a well for their animals, while two young women stood nearby, holding back their thirsty flock. He rose to give them a helping hand, taking their sheep to the well for them. The

two girls thanked him and went on their way. Shortly, one of them returned and said shyly, “My father is asking you to come. He wishes to reward you for watering our flock.” Now it so happened that the girls’ father was a pious man and a prophet by the name of Shu‘yab ﷺ. Shu‘yab ﷺ thanked Musa ﷺ for helping his daughters, and listened attentively to Musa’s story of his flight from Egypt.

Shu‘yab ﷺ liked the strong and trustworthy stranger, and as he was old and alone in the village he needed help. “I am willing to let you marry one of my daughters, on the condition that you serve me for eight years,” Shu‘yab ﷺ told Musa ﷺ. “God willing you will find me an upright man,” he added. (28:27)

Taken by surprise, but pleased, Musa ﷺ agreed. Surely this help had come from Allah as a blessing, he thought.

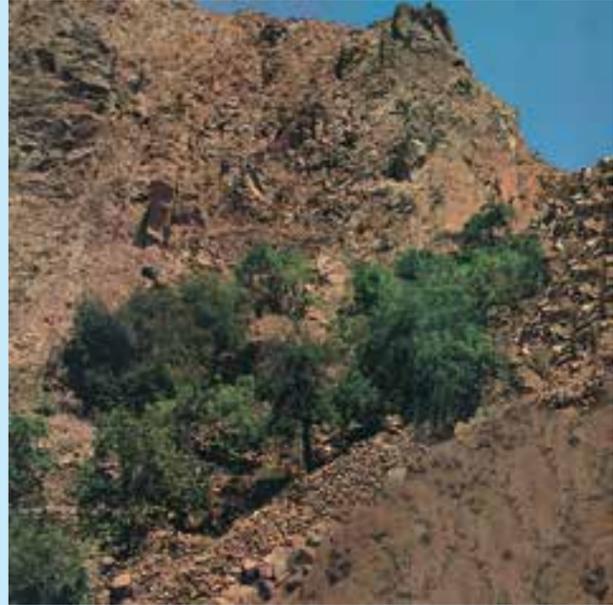
Escape to Madyan



Madyan was the home of a wandering Arab tribe, who were neighbours of the Canaanites. They lived in the dry barren lands on the western edge of the Arabian desert, around the Gulf of Aqabah. Their main lands in the times of the Prophet Musa ﷺ were in the north east of the Sinai Peninsula to the east of the Amalekites. They lived in tents, kept sheep and travelled on camels.



Shu‘yab ﷺ welcomes Musa ﷺ



Musa ﷺ travelled across the harsh and waterless Sinai Desert before reaching Madyan, where he lived with the family of Shu‘ayb ﷺ.

Shu‘yab ﷺ said to Musa ﷺ: “The real truth is that Allah has guided you to me. I am a descendant of your beloved Yusuf ﷺ and father Yaqub ﷺ and his grandfather, Ibrahim ﷺ. Allah has brought you out of Egypt, not just to become a shepherd, but to complete your instruction with me, for I too am a prophet.” Shu‘yab ﷺ told Musa ﷺ he was safe there, and bade him welcome.

The Burning Bush

Travelling slowly toward Mount Sinai, they passed through an awesome landscape of desert and rock. One cold winter's evening, as it grew darker and a breeze began to blow, they seemed to have lost their way. They decided to camp for the night. Musa ﷺ looked around and, at a distance, noticed a fire on the side of a mountain. "Wait here!" he said to his family. "Look, I can see a fire. Perhaps I can bring you some news, or at least I can get a burning

branch from the fire, so that we may warm ourselves!"

After stumbling and groping in the darkness, Musa ﷺ came to the place where he had seen the source of light, a tree which seemed to be burning. As soon as Musa ﷺ approached it a voice on his right side called out from above the tree: "Blessed be He who is in this fire and all around it! Glory to Allah, Lord of the universe! Musa, I am Allah, the Mighty, the Wise One. Take off your sandals, for you are now in the sacred valley of Tuwa. Know that I have chosen you. Therefore, listen to what shall be revealed. I am Allah, there is

no deity save Me. So serve Me and establish the rites of worship for My remembrance. The hour is surely coming. But I will keep it hidden, so that every soul may be rewarded for its labours." (20:11-16)

Musa ﷺ stood stock still and speechless. He began trembling. He managed to overcome his fear, took off his sandals and prostrated himself. Allah said: "What is that in your right hand, O Musa?" He mustered the courage to reply: "It is my staff, I lean on it, and I beat down leaves for my sheep with it, and I use it for other things too." Allah commanded: "Throw it down, O Musa!"

Musa ﷺ threw down the stick. It turned into a large snake, coiling and uncoiling swiftly in front of him. He shrank back in fear and turned to run. But Allah spoke again: "Grasp it and have no fear. We shall return it to its former state. Do not be alarmed. My Messengers are never afraid in My presence. As for those who sin and then do good instead of evil, I am forgiving and merciful to them."

Mount Sinai



On his return from Madyan to Egypt, Musa ﷺ spotted a burning bush in a valley on Mount Sinai. When he came near it, Allah spoke to him, gave him His special signs, and told him to take Allah's message to Firawn.

Musa عليه السلام versus the Magicians

The huge square where the contest was to be held gradually filled with thousands of curious spectators. They had never before heard of such a contest, and the presence of Firawn made this

the single most important event of the times. Everyone was very excited.

The most famous magicians of Egypt whispered to each other as they approached Firawn and bowed down before him. Firawn nodded, assuring them all of victory favours.

But Musa عليه السلام warned them: “Woe to you! Invent no falsehoods against Allah, or He will destroy you with a scourge. Impostors will surely come to grief.” (20:61)

“Will you throw first, or shall we?” the magicians asked Musa عليه السلام. “Throw,” he replied calmly.

The magicians threw down their magic ropes and sticks, with the cry: “By Firawn’s glory, we shall win!” They bewitched the people and terrified them with a display of great magic. They cleverly made it seem to the entire gathering that the ropes and sticks had turned into live serpents wriggling and writhing on the ground! Everyone was struck dumb with horror.

As the snakes seemed to coil and uncoil around him, Musa عليه السلام began to lose his nerve. But just then the Lord spoke to him: “Have no fear, you shall surely win. Throw that which is in your right hand. It will swallow everything which they have faked here. What you have is real. Theirs are only magic tricks. And a wizard shall not succeed, however much he may attain.”

Prophet Musa’s confidence restored, he did as Allah said. The moment his staff touched the ground, it became a huge snake, much bigger than those of the magicians, and began to eat them up one after another.

Everyone was wonderstruck. The magicians were speechless, and so was Firawn. The magicians knew all about the art of magic, so they realised at once that this was not magic. It was a real snake. Only Allah’s help could have produced it.

As the people whispered excitedly among themselves, Musa عليه السلام bent over and picked up the snake, which instantaneously became his old staff again.

Defeat fuels fury



Firawn and his men had been defeated and put to shame before hundreds of thousands of ordinary people. Even the magicians bowed down before the truth of the Lord. Still, Firawn and his men insisted all the more violently: “This is nothing but baseless magic; nor have we heard of the like among our forefathers.”

Musa عليه السلام replied, “My Lord knows best the man who brings guidance from His presence and gains the reward of the hereafter. The wrongdoers shall never prosper.” (28:37)

It was a message that Allah’s followers would take to heart in the difficult days ahead, as Firawn dramatically escalated his vengeful persecution of the Children of Israel.

The Magicians Bow Down to Allah's Truth

The most skilled magicians of the land bowed their heads in humility before Allah's signs. They were convinced that what Musa ﷺ had performed on the Festival Day was a miracle, a feat beyond human powers: "We believe in the Lord of the Universe, the Lord of Musa and Harun," they said.

Firawn exploded with rage against the magicians. "How dare you believe in Him without my leave?! This man must be your master, one who has taught you witchcraft. This is a plot you have contrived to turn the people out of the city. But you will see." He threatened to cut off their hands and legs on

opposite sides, and crucify them on the trunks of palm trees.

"That cannot harm us," they replied, bravely acknowledging the message of Musa ﷺ, even in the face of the tyrannical Firawn's threats. They had seen the truth. "We shall surely return to our Lord. You would punish us only because we believed in the signs of our Lord when they were shown to us. Lord, give us patience and let us die in submission."

The magicians spoke out boldly to Firawn: "We will not prefer you over the clear signs that have come to us; nor over Him who has created us. Therefore, do your worst; you can punish us only in the present life."

They continued forthrightly: "We have put our faith in our Lord, so that He may forgive us our sins, and the magic you have forced us to practice. Better is the reward of Allah, and more lasting.... We trust that He will forgive us our sins, since we are the first who have believed."

It was unthinkable! These masters of magic, this elite group who should be the last to submit to the "signs" of a mere slave, were fearlessly professing their faith in the God of Musa ﷺ! Firawn could not imagine such insolence from his subjects. The chiefs of the royal court challenged him: "Will you allow Musa and his people to make mischief in the land, and to reject you and your gods?" They were right: the threat to Firawn's power had grown too menacing; it could no longer be tolerated.

Firawn vowed then and there to wipe out every last trace of Prophet Musa's teachings. In the days that followed, new waves of terror were unleashed from the royal palace against the Children of Israel.

New challenges

Prophet Musa ﷺ struggled to calm his people and reassure them in the face of each new round of brutality from Firawn. "Seek help in Allah and be patient. The earth belongs to Allah. He gives it for an inheritance to whom He will. Happy shall be the lot of the righteous," he told them. But Prophet Musa's followers were tired and frightened. Would the cycles of vengeance never end? "We were oppressed before you came to us, and oppressed we still remain," they told Musa ﷺ.

Musa ﷺ tried to explain that one day they would be free of Firawn's tyranny, and would then have to build their own just society, and that their ability to conduct themselves responsibly was being tested now. Allah had told Musa ﷺ and Harun ﷺ the way: "Build houses in Egypt for your people and make your homes places of worship. Conduct prayers and give good tidings to the faithful."

By himself, Musa ﷺ prayed fervently, begging the Lord to punish the cruel Firawn and his men: "You have bestowed on Firawn and his nobles splendour and riches in this life, so that they may stray from Your path. Lord, destroy their riches and harden their hearts, so that they shall persist in unbelief until they face a terrible punishment."

Allah promised that Prophet Musa's prayers would be answered. And in the days ahead they were, but everyone had to pay the price. For in turning his back on the call of the prophets Musa ﷺ and Harun ﷺ, Firawn brought widespread calamity and death upon himself and his people.

Qarun's Treasure

Beside ever more harsh persecution of the Israelites, a propaganda war was unleashed against Musa ﷺ. One of Firawn's chiefs in particular excelled in the game of slander-mongering.

Qarun or Korah was one of the Children of Israel who had left his people and become a close associate of Firawn. He was so rich that the keys of his treasure were too heavy for even several strong men to carry. He lived in a huge mansion, and enjoyed every luxury available.

When he publicly displayed the glitter of his immense wealth, those who coveted the worldly life said, "How wonderful it would be if we possessed the like of what Qarun has been given. Surely he is a man of great good fortune." But those who had been given true knowledge said, "Alas for you! The reward of Allah in the Hereafter is better for him who believes and does good works, and none shall receive it except those who have endured with fortitude."

Musa ﷺ and other Israelite leaders admonished Qarun to pay the *zakat* from the wealth Allah had given him for charity and good works. But Qarun reacted arrogantly, arguing that the wealth which he possessed was due to his own cleverness. To Prophet Musa's personal entreaty he avowed that his wealth was a sign of Allah's favour.

Qarun not only refused to give the *zakat*, but he started a campaign of lies against

Musa ﷺ. Then he bribed people to spread the wicked rumours.

It was truly an evil deed. But, as Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has told us, one fine day Allah made the earth open up and engulf Qarun and his palace, as if he had never existed at all! Those who envied Qarun were reminded to be thankful to Allah in both poverty and abundance.

But for Firawn and his men, the lesson of Qarun only brought the conflict with Musa ﷺ and his message of the one true God to a new, more ominous point of crisis.

An appeal to selfishness

Firawn himself actively led the slander campaigns. He asserted that Prophet Musa's teachings were lies, and ridiculed him for his simple woolen dress and lack of ornaments. At the same time, he appealed to the most base and selfish instincts of his people in an effort to blind them to the light of Prophet Musa's message: "O my people, is the kingdom of Egypt not mine, and are these rivers which flow at my feet not mine too? Can you not see? Am I not better than this man, who is unworthy of respect, who cannot even express himself properly? Why is he not loaded with gold or attended upon by angels?"



Meeting al-Khidr

During the long journey to the Promised Land, Prophet Musa ﷺ too learned many lessons. One of these was from al-Khidr (“the green one”). Probably an angel in the form of a man, al-Khidr had special knowledge and the power to make great changes in the affairs of the world.

Musa ﷺ set out with his young disciple, Yusha bin Nun. At a certain point the fish they were carrying to eat revived and slipped away into the sea. As predicted, this is where they found al-Khidr. “May I follow you, and be guided by your knowledge?” Musa ﷺ asked al-Khidr. “Impossible!” said al-Khidr, “For how can you tolerate what is beyond your knowledge?”

Musa ﷺ replied: “If Allah will, you shall find me patient: I shall in no way cross you.” Al-Khidr agreed but warned Musa ﷺ not to question him about anything until he mentioned it himself.

The two then embarked upon a ship, whereupon al-Khidr bored a hole in it. Musa ﷺ exclaimed: “Do you want to drown the passengers?”

“Didn’t I tell you,” replied al-Khidr, “that you would not bear with me?”

“Forgive me,” said Musa ﷺ. “Please don’t be angry.” They journeyed on until they met a young boy, whom al-Khidr promptly killed. Musa ﷺ exclaimed: “What wickedness—killing an innocent soul!”

“Didn’t I tell you,” al-Khidr replied, “that you would not bear with me?” Musa ﷺ said: “If ever I question you again, abandon me; for then I should deserve it.”

Then they came to a city and asked for food, but were refused. Seeing a wall that was crumbling, al-Khidr repaired it, but Musa ﷺ objected to his doing so without payment.

“Now we must part,” said al-Khidr. “But first I will explain my actions which seemed so dreadful to you. I damaged the ship because it belonged to some poor fishermen and nearby there was a king who plundered every vessel. As for the youth, he would only have distressed his believing parents with his wickedness and unbelief. We prayed that their Lord would replace him with a more righteous and filial son. The wall belonged to two orphans, sons of an honest man in the city. Beneath it their treasure lay buried. Your Lord decreed that they should dig it up when they grew to manhood. What I did was not by my will. That explains what you could not bear to watch with patience.” (18:60-82)

All this shows that the highest Divine wisdom sometimes appears to bring calamity. Man’s limited knowledge and lack of foresight cause him to grieve over seeming tragedies. But the true believer never flinches at such times, for he knows that the loving hand of Allah unceasingly directs humanity toward the goal of the greatest good. This is the lesson of the story of al-Khidr.

Al-Khidr and the sparrow

While al-Khidr and Musa ﷺ were in the boat, a sparrow perched on its side and dipped its beak once or twice into the water. Al-Bukhari reported al-Khidr’s words: “Musa, what I know and what you know has not lessened what Allah knows any more than the waters have been decreased by what the sparrow has drunk.”

During the famous meeting between al-Khidr and Musa ﷺ, Allah made it clear that there are different kinds of knowledge—wisdom and understanding—and that He gives them to whomever He wishes, whenever He wishes.

Man’s limited knowledge and his inability to see into the future cause him to feel great concern over what he thinks are tragedies. The true believer would never lose heart at such losses, for he would know that the beneficent hand of Allah, that works in nature, unceasingly directs humanity toward the goal of the greatest good.

The Promised Land

“Remember, my people, the favour which Allah has bestowed upon you,” Musa ﷺ told his followers when they had finally reached the borders of Palestine. “He has raised up prophets among you, made you kings, and given you that which He has given no other nation. Enter, my people, the holy land which Allah means specially for you. Do not turn back, or you shall be ruined.”

They had faced many trials and difficulties along the way, yet pushed on. Now Prophet

Musa’s followers shrank back. “Musa,” they whined, “a race of giants dwells in this land. We will not set foot in it till they are gone.” Musa ﷺ felt helpless.

Only Yusha bin Nun and Kalab supported Musa ﷺ. “Go into them through the gates, and when you have entered, you shall surely be victorious,” they told the Israelites. “In Allah put your trust, if you are true believers.”

But the Israelites dug in their heels. “Musa, we will not go in so long as they are in it. Go, you and your Lord, and fight. Here we will stay,” they answered derisively.

On account of their refusal to confront the inhabitants of Palestine, the Children of Israel had to wander homeless for forty years more. (5:20-26).

It is said that when the Children of Israel finally did enter “the promised land” their great leader Musa ﷺ was no longer with them. Harun ﷺ, too, had died, and Musa ﷺ had made Yusha bin Nun his successor.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said that when the Angel of Death was sent to Musa ﷺ, he hit the angel in the eye, not having recognized him in human form.

“You have sent me to a slave who does not want to die,” the angel told his Lord. Allah replied: “Go back to him and tell him to put his hand on the back of an ox and for every hair that it covers he will be given another year of life.” When the angel had done so, Musa ﷺ asked, “Oh Lord! What will happen after that?” And he was told, “Death!” So Musa ﷺ said, “Let it come now.” And he asked Allah to let him die close to the Holy Land.

It is said that Musa ﷺ died on a mountain top overlooking the Jordan Valley. He was then 120 years old.



We gave the persecuted people dominion over the eastern and western lands which we had blessed. Thus was your Lord’s gracious word fulfilled for the Children of Israel, because they had endured with fortitude; and we destroyed the edifices and the towers of Firawn and his people. (7:137)

The Holy land

The Tribe of Israel spent forty years wandering about aimlessly in the wilderness before they were able to enter the Holy Land of Palestine, where Allah had promised that they would be settled.

This was because they had fallen into the bad habit of questioning the guidance which had been revealed to Musa ﷺ by Allah, often paying no attention to it whatsoever, and forgetting their promises to Allah. Time after time, Musa ﷺ had had to remind them of the blessings and punishments that would result from their actions.

When Palestine was finally conquered each of the 12 tribes descended from Prophet Yaqub’s sons was given territory. At first they had no king, but were linked together by observance of the laws of Allah given to them by Musa ﷺ. Some continued for hundreds of years guided by the teachings of Musa ﷺ. Allah then sent to them a long line of prophets to ensure that they did not alter what Musa ﷺ had taught.

The “promised land”



Palestine, or Canaan, as it is also called, had a variety of scenery, from plains and river valleys suited to farming, to lakes and hills, and rocky deserts. During Prophet Musa’s time the hills were covered with poplar, oak and sycamore trees. Along the Mediterranean coast and in the Jordan River valley fertile land supported lush crops of pomegranates, grapes and figs. In Palestine, the Israelites, who were experts in tending flocks and living off the land, found people skilled in other crafts and trade, such as stone workers, metal workers, jewelers and musicians. It was all such a contrast to the barren surroundings the Children of Israel had experienced for so long.