

Musa and Haroon (Moses & Aaron)

Peace be upon them (pbuh). There is a fascinating irony at the heart of the story of Moses and Aaron (pbuh). Whereas Prophet Moses was sent on a mission to free the Israelites from bondage and lead them out of Egypt, the earlier Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him, pbuh) had accomplished just the opposite; he brought his family into Egypt, welcoming them with the words, **“And bring your whole family to me.”** [Qur’an 12:93]. Historical accounts place Joseph’s time during the era of the Hyksos (the Bedouin rulers), while Moses and Aaron were born centuries later, in the age of Ramses II. This marks a gap of roughly 270 years after the arrival of the 12 tribes of Israel.

Strikingly, both the stories of Joseph and Moses (peace be upon them) begin with a dream. This poetic symmetry invites deeper reflection on the unfolding of destiny and the mysterious ways in which God’s plans manifest across generations.

Another striking fact is that Prophet Moses (pbuh), known as Musa in Arabic, is mentioned by name a hundred-thirty-six (136) times in the Qur’an, making him the most frequently named individual in this noble scripture. This extensive mention underscores the profound importance of his life and mission within Islamic tradition, as his experiences and the moral lessons drawn from his story hold great significance. For comparison, Prophet Ibrahim

(Abraham) is mentioned sixty-nine (69) times, Prophet Jesus (Isa) twenty-five (25) times, and Prophet Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon them all), is mentioned by name only five times. The frequent references to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) in the Qur’an not only highlight his central role in guiding and shaping the faith of the Children of Israel but also serve as an inspiration to Muslims for his perseverance, courage, and unwavering commitment to God’s commandments. His life story and teachings are a vivid reminder of the shared message carried by all prophets: the Oneness of God, or monotheism. This fundamental theme unites all prophetic missions across history, emphasizing that despite differences in time and place, the essence of their message remains constant and divinely ordained.

The story of Prophets Moses and Aaron (pbuh) begins even before their birth, with a powerful dream that haunted the Pharaoh (Ramses II). In this vision, he saw a child among the Israelites who posed a threat to his throne. Terrified by the prophecy, the Pharaoh awoke and cruelly ordered the killing of every newborn male among the Israelites; a ruthless decree borne of fear and tyranny. Moses’ mother, aware of the Egyptian officials who patrolled the streets, recording the names of pregnant women to monitor births, took great care to conceal her pregnancy. She



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knew that after each birth, officials would check the newborn’s gender, endangering any male child from the Israelite community. God the Almighty ensured her pregnancy was easy and hidden, without any of the usual signs that would have caused Moses’ mother’s womb to grow and attract attention. When she went into labor, she felt no pain and remained silent. Moses (pbuh) was born, and just like any newly born baby, he would scream.

Not knowing what to do, Allah*, Exalted and Praised He is, inspired Moses’ mother to put her son in a chest and throw the chest (with Moses in it!) in the river (mostly, the River Nile). The Qur’an describes these delicate moments, **“When We inspired your mother with inspiration. ‘Put him in the chest, then throw it in the river. The river will wash him ashore, where an enemy of Mine and an enemy of his will pick him up.’ And I have bestowed on you love from Me, so that you would be raised under My eye.”** [Qur’an 20:38-39]. And in another chapter we read: **“And We inspired the mother of Moses: ‘Nurse him; but when you fear for him, put him into the river, and do not fear, nor be sad. We will return him**

to you and will make him one of the messengers.” [Qur’an 20:7].

The profound significance of these verses lies in their dual power: detailing the extraordinary event of Moses’ infancy and foreshadowing his prophetic destiny. Faced with Pharaoh’s brutal decree to slaughter all Israelite newborn boys, a desperate mother was compelled to perform an act that defies natural maternal instinct and all logic! The incredible depth of her faith is revealed as, to save her child, she followed that inspiration and placed her newborn son in a chest and entrusted him to the river.

Moses’ mother had nothing to rely on but a feeling – a quiet hope within her heart that her son would survive. The inspiration she received gave her no visible guarantee of Moses’ safety or future greatness, just trust in God’s promise. The Qur’an beautifully captures what happened next: **“Pharaoh’s household picked him up, only to become their enemy and a source of grief. Pharaoh, Haman, and their soldiers were sinful. Pharaoh’s wife said, ‘An eye’s delight for me and for you. Do not kill him; perhaps he will be useful to us, or we may adopt him as a son.’ But they did not foresee.”** [Qur’an 20:8-9]. The river carried the chest with baby Moses gently to the shore, right where Pharaoh, his officials, and his wife happened to be standing. Ironically, the very child who would one day become their

adversary was found and raised in the palace itself – the fulfillment of Pharaoh’s fearful dream. When they opened the chest, they saw it was a baby boy. There have not been any signs showing he was an Israelite, but fearing they may think he is, for who else would do such an act, the Pharaoh’s wife immediately pleaded for his life, hoping he could be adopted or be useful to them. It wasn’t just her compassion; God had blessed Moses with a special love that touched the hearts of everyone who saw him, as the Qur’an says – he was beloved from the very first moment. Moses now lives in the house of the Pharaoh and will be raised there.

But what about Moses’ mother? She was a mother, after all – her heart would not allow her to remain silent or apart from her child for long. In fact, she nearly rushed to the Pharaoh’s palace, desperate to reveal that she was his mother. The Qur’an describes this intense and emotional moment: **“The heart of Moses’ mother became empty. She was about to disclose him, had We not steadied her heart, so that she might remain a believer. She said to his sister, ‘Keep track of him.’ So she watched him from a distance, while they were unaware.”** [Qur’an 28:10-11]. Her pain was unbearable, but God strengthened her, giving her the patience and faith she needed in that most challenging moment. Out of love and worry, she asked Moses’ sister to follow him and

keep watch, standing quietly in the background, her heart filled with hope and anxiety, while none suspected her true connection. Moses’ mother now knows where her son is, but who may believe this is enough for a mother? A mother won’t be satisfied unless her son is in her arms. There is nothing she can do to get her son back. Whatever she tries, she will expose the truth that she is his mother and that Moses is an Israelite.

God, the Almighty, would never leave Moses’ mother alone. The Pharaoh and his wife searched for someone to feed him. Yet, every woman who tried, Moses refused; he wouldn’t nurse from any of them! Moses’ sister was watching everything unfold, and it seems she was old enough to have the courage to approach the palace. She spoke up, offering advice to Pharaoh’s wife that she knew just the right woman to nurse the baby, thus helping Moses return to his real mother. The Qur’an tells us: **“And We forbade him breastfeeding at first. So she said, ‘Shall I direct you to a family that will raise him for you and will look after him?’ Thus, We returned him to his mother so that she may be comforted, and not grieve, and know that Allah’s promise is true. But most of them do not know.”** [Qur’an 28:12-13].

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