

Prophet Moses (pbuh), Part 2

The Qur'anic narrative of Prophet Moses (Musa in Arabic, pbuh) is rich with profound lessons on divine providence, human frailty, and steadfast faith.

I have often wondered why the Qur'an contains so many fragments and details about the life of Prophet Moses (pbuh). In contrast, the life of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is scarcely mentioned in the Qur'an, as it is preserved in his biography (Sirah in Arabic) and memorized by millions, including myself. One answer that resonates with me is this: the story of Moses is a profound lesson about tyranny, how tyrants behave, the dangers they pose, and what unfolds when their oppression is left unchecked for too long.

As we will see, the Pharaoh brought destruction upon his own people, and following his death, Egypt itself nearly collapsed. This striking pattern has tragically repeated throughout history, mirrored in the downfall of many dictatorial regimes.

One clear lesson emerges: prolonged rule by a single leader almost inevitably leads to tyranny and ruin. The Qur'an tells us, **"Pharaoh exalted himself in the land, and he divided its people into factions. Oppressing a group of them: slaughtering their sons, while sparing their women. He was one of the corrupters."** [Qur'an 28:4].

But what about Aaron? While we know how Moses was miraculously saved from Pharaoh's cruel decree to kill all newborn Israelite boys, what about his younger

brother Aaron? How did he survive this ruthless order?

Fearing the lack of manpower, the pharaoh's advisors advised the pharaoh to save some males' lives. They convinced the pharaoh to kill the male babies one every other year, that is to kill them in one year and to save them in another! A clear sign of humiliation and cruelty reveals how little human lives meant to the pharaoh. Aaron was born in a year in which babies were not destined to be killed.

So, we now know that Moses (pbuh) lived in the Pharaoh's palace, raised as a prince within the very household he would one day return to, tasked with demanding the freedom of the Israelites from Egypt.

As Moses grew, he became increasingly aware of his true identity as an Israelite. The Egyptians had always known that the Israelites were distinct, descendants of the tribes who had come to Egypt in the time of Joseph (pbuh), and not native Egyptians. Quietly observing, Moses absorbed all he saw and felt, laying the foundation for his future role as a liberator and messenger. The Qur'an says, **"And when he reached full strength and maturity, We gave him wisdom and knowledge. Thus, We reward the virtuous."** [Qur'an 28:14].

A pivotal moment in his life, and a cornerstone in his preparation as a messenger, is the incident in which he accidentally kills an Egyptian and subsequently flees to Midian. This critical episode, primarily recounted



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in the Qur'an, **"Once he entered the city, unnoticed by its people. There, he (Moses) found two men fighting. One from his own people, and the other from his opposing people (a native Egyptian). The one from his people called to him for help against the one from his enemies. So Moses struck him (the Egyptian) and put an end to him (killed him). (Then) He (Moses) said, 'This is from Satan's doing (Plans). He is an enemy that openly misleads.'"** [Qur'an 28:15]. This incident signaled the end of his sheltered life as a prince in Pharaoh's palace and the beginning of his transformative journey toward prophethood.

It is important to understand from this verse that Prophet Moses (pbuh) did not intend to kill anyone; his sole aim was to break up a fight between an Israelite and an Egyptian. Moses was endowed with exceptional physical strength, perhaps more than others, which was part of his preparation for the mission ahead. It is clear from the verse that before this incident, Moses was unaware of his own strength. This episode demonstrates that he was never violent by nature, had never engaged in a fight before, nor had he used his strength to resolve disputes.

Moses (pbuh) knew that

no one had witnessed the fight, and none suspected him as the cause of the man's death. Instantly overwhelmed with remorse, he turned to sincere repentance. The Qur'an recounts his prayer: **"He said, 'My Lord, I have wronged myself, so forgive me.' And He forgave him. Indeed, He is the Most Forgiving, Most Merciful. He said, 'My Lord! Because of Your favor upon me, I will never be a supporter of the wrongdoers.'"** [Qur'an 28:16-17].

Moses' words express deep regret for what he had unintentionally done and a genuine commitment to avoid wrongdoing in the future. This verse also demonstrates that Moses faithfully followed monotheism, the religion of his ancestors.

Yet, his repentance did not quell his fear. The next morning, as he walked cautiously and watchfully through the city, the same man who had previously sought his help confronted him loudly. He sought his help, again, against another Egyptian. The Qur'an narrates: **"The next morning, he went about in the city, fearful and vigilant, when the man who had sought his help the day before was shouting out to him. Moses said to him, 'You are clearly a troublemaker.'"** [Qur'an 28:18]. His vigilance and anxiety reveal the heavy burden of guilt and the danger he now faces. This also reveals that among the Israelites themselves, some caused trouble, as Moses observed. This internal discord may have contributed to the Egyptians' distrust and dislike of the

Israelites, viewing them not only as foreigners but also as a divided people. Such divisions often fueled tensions and justified, in the eyes of their oppressors, the harsh treatment they endured.

Moses (pbuh) sought to help the Israelite who had called on him for assistance. As he approached the two men, the Israelite overheard Moses saying, **"You are truly a troublemaker."** The Israelite, fearing punishment because Moses appeared angry, shouted out in alarm, fearing a fate similar to the Egyptian's death the day before. He cried, **"O Moses, do you intend to kill me as you killed someone yesterday? You only seek to be a tyrant in this land, not a peacemaker."** [Qur'an 28:19].

The verse reveals how the Israelite exposed Moses (pbuh), literally putting his life at risk by divulging the secret. The Egyptian present during the incident was well aware of the murder that occurred the day before and knew that the security forces were searching for the culprit. This situation clearly illustrates a hallmark of autocratic regimes: they function as military or police states, with intense surveillance and control over their people. Remarkably, this also offers a glimpse into how ancient Egypt, thousands of years ago, operated under such a system of strict oversight and authoritarian governance. The verse also illustrates how Egypt functioned thousands of years ago, much like any modern state does today.

The Egyptian quickly fled the scene, no doubt

intending to report what he had just heard to the authorities, whether for reward or in revenge against the Israelite he had been fighting. In the eyes of the law, Moses (pbuh) was now labeled a murderer.

It is a deep irony that sometimes those you try hardest to help can end up causing you the greatest pain. The Israelite, in his haste and fear, revealed Moses' secret, an action taken in the hope of protection, yet it brought Moses hardship instead. Although Moses acted out of concern for the man's safety, that same man exposed him, changing the course of Moses' life.

When Pharaoh was informed of the incident, he immediately recalled his ominous dream. Was Moses truly the one destined to threaten his rule? Like all dictators, Pharaoh would not take risks; he promptly summoned his advisors to plot against Moses' life.

Among them, however, was one advisor who felt sympathy for Moses (pbuh). After the council disbanded, he hastily began searching the city for Moses. When he finally found Moses, he urged him to flee, warning that the ruling circle was conspiring to take his life. The Qur'an vividly describes this tense moment: **"And there came a man, rushing from the outskirts of the city, saying, 'O Moses, the authorities are conspiring against you, to kill you, so get out; I am giving you good advice.'"** [Qur'an 28:20].

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