

Prophet Moses (pbuh), Part 5

“When Moses had completed the term and was traveling with his family, he spotted a fire on the side of Mount Tûr. He said to his family, ‘Stay here, for I have spotted a fire. Perhaps from there I can bring you some directions or a torch from the fire so you may warm yourselves.’” (Qur’an 28:29).

Moses (pbuh) chose to marry the eldest daughter of the man from Midian, the very one who first approached him and invited him to meet her father. After fulfilling the term of service they had agreed upon—which many scholars interpret as a 10-year term—Moses (pbuh) longed to return to Egypt and reunite with his family. Precisely how Moses (pbuh) felt assured that he would not face prosecution upon his return remains unclear; the Qur’an does not specify whether the killer Pharaoh had ceased searching for him or if a new ruler had taken the throne. What is clear, however, is that Moses (pbuh) gathered his family, herd, and belongings and began the journey back to Egypt. The narrative also suggests that Moses (pbuh) maintained contact with his family, especially his brother Aaron, and other relatives in Egypt, a detail that becomes apparent as his story continues. The Qur’an describes this moment in the verse above.

While traveling back home, most scholars agree that Moses (pbuh) journeyed through the Sinai desert. In the darkness, he spotted a

distant fire, possibly a bonfire, and it was a big one. Being a responsible man, he asked his wife and family to wait for him while he approached the fire. Perhaps Moses (pbuh) hoped to gain useful information from those around it, or to obtain a burning torch to light a fire for his family’s warmth. However, when Moses (pbuh) reached the fire, he found no one there—yet this moment would become the greatest surprise of his life.

At the fire, while Moses (pbuh) searched for someone to speak with, a voice called out to him, saying, **“O Moses.”** The Qur’an recounts this monumental moment in two distinct chapters. In Surah Taha (Chapter 20), the Qur’an says: **“But when he approached it, he was called, ‘O Moses! It is truly I, your Lord! So take off your sandals, for you are in the sacred valley of Tuwa. And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed: It is truly I. I am Allah! There is no god [worthy of worship] except Me. So worship Me [alone], and establish prayer for My remembrance. The Hour [Day of Judgment] is near; I almost conceal it from people so that they may not know its exact moment. My will is to keep it hidden, so that every soul may be rewarded according to their efforts. Do not let those who disbelieve and follow their desires distract you from it, or you will be doomed”** (Qur’an 20:11-16). Here, the place is mentioned only by name, the sacred



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valley of Tuwa, believed to be in Sinai. In another chapter, Surah Al-Qasas, Chapter 28, the Qur’an states, **“And when he reached it, he was called from the right bank of the valley, at the Sacred Ground, from the bush: ‘O Moses, it is I, Allah, Lord of the Worlds’”** (Qur’an 28:30). This verse offers further details about the location of this profound encounter. Truly, what an extraordinary moment!

But God’s words did not end there. To reassure Moses (pbuh) that he was indeed speaking to Him, God asked a gentle, thoughtful question: **“What is that you hold in your hand, Moses?”** Although God, Exalted and Praised be He, already knew the answer, He sought to put Moses (pbuh) at ease and make him feel comfortable. He also wanted to ensure Moses (pbuh) recognized the nature of the object he held—a simple walking stick (staff or cane). Then, God commanded Moses (pbuh) to throw down his staff. The Qur’an narrates this moment: **“[Allah said:] ‘And what is that in your right hand, O Moses?’ He replied, ‘It is my staff! I lean on it, and with it I beat down branches for my sheep, and have other uses for it.’ Allah said, ‘Throw it down, O Moses!’ So he did, and**

behold—it became a serpent, slithering. Allah said, ‘Take it, and fear not. We will return it to its former state. And place your hand under your arm; it will come out shining white, unblemished, as another sign, so that We may show you some of Our greatest signs.’” (Qur’an 20:17-23).

Moses (pbuh) had now witnessed some of the great miracles of Allah (Allah is the name of God in Arabic and Aramaic. It is pronounced with emphatic L). In another passage (Chapter 28), God the Almighty says, **“[God Commanded Moses], ‘Throw down your cane.’ And when he (Moses) saw it wiggling, as if it were possessed (with a jinn), he turned in retreat without turning back. ‘O Moses, draw near, and do not fear, you are perfectly safe. (And) Put your hand inside your pocket, and it will come out white, without blemish. And press your arm to your side, against fear. These are two proofs from your Lord to Pharaoh and his chiefs, for they are sinful people.”** (Qur’an 28:30-31).

Moses is now prepared to receive the command from Allah, the Almighty. Then Allah, the Exalted, commands Moses to go to Pharaoh to call him to believe in God, the Almighty, and to set free the Israelites and send them with Moses (pbuh). The Qur’an tells us this in the following verse: **“Go to Pharaoh, for he has truly transgressed [all bounds].”** (Qur’an 20:24). Moses (pbuh)

understood his duty and did not argue, but wanted to ensure the message would be delivered to Pharaoh most clearly and effectively. Moses asked for help and sought God’s permission to include his brother Aaron in the message. The Qur’an says, **“Moses prayed, ‘My Lord! Uplift my heart for me, and make my task easy, and remove the impediment from my tongue, so that people may understand my speech, and grant me a helper (advisor) from my family, Aaron, my brother. Strengthen me through him, and let him share my task, so that we may glorify You much, and remember You much, for truly You have always been overseeing us.”** (Qur’an 20:25-35).

We observe here that Moses (pbuh) fully understood the immense responsibility he bore. He was sent to confront one of the most ruthless leaders of his time, if not of all times. Though Moses (pbuh) did not fear delivering the message, he sought assurance that it would be conveyed effectively. This is why he asked for the assistance of his brother, Aaron (pbuh). But how did Moses know that Aaron was still alive had he not maintained contact with his family in Egypt? This question reveals an important point: Moses (pbuh) never forgot his family, especially his brother Aaron. He must have maintained good correspondence with his relatives, showing his enduring connection and concern for them.

God the Almighty an-

swered Moses’ (pbuh) request with boundless mercy. The Qur’an beautifully recounts this divine response: **“Allah said, ‘All that you requested has been granted, O Moses! And surely We had shown you favor before, when We inspired your mother with this: ‘Put him into a chest, then cast it into the river. The river will wash it ashore, and he will be taken by [Pharaoh], an enemy of Mine and his. And I endeared you with love from Me, O Moses, so that you would be brought up under My watchful Eye. Remember when your sister came and proposed, ‘Shall I guide you to someone who will nurse him?’ So We reunited you with your mother so that her heart would be at ease and she would not grieve. Later, you killed a man [by mistake], but We saved you from sorrow, as well as other trials We put you through. Then you stayed several years among the people of Midian. Then you came here as preordained, O Moses! And I have chosen you for My service. Go forth, you and your brother with My signs, and never falter in remembering Me. Go, both of you, to Pharaoh, for he has truly transgressed [all bounds]. Speak to him gently, so perhaps he may be mindful [of Me] or fearful [of My punishment].”** (Qur’an 28:36-44). This last verse shows how merciful Allah (Exalted be He) is.

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