

## The Story of Mūsā ('alaihi-salām): His Birth, Struggles, Miracles and Victory over Pharaoh on the Day of 'Āshūrā'

By Abu Khadeejah Abdul-Wāhid

All praise is due to Allāh, Lord of all creation. May Allāh extol the mention of the Prophet in the highest company of Angels and may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him, his family, his Companions and all those who follow him diligently till the Day of Judgement.

The stories of the Prophets in the Qur'an provide mankind with immense lessons and especially for those who possess knowledge and insight. Allah (the Most High) stated:

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ۗ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَىٰ وَلَٰكِن تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

**“There was certainly in their stories a lesson for those of understanding. Never was the Qur'an a narration invented, but a confirmation of what was before it and a detailed explanation of all things and guidance and mercy for a people who believe.”**  
(Yusuf: 111)

## The Children of Israel and Pharaoh's Oppression

From the greatest of these stories that Allah informs us of is the story of the Messenger to whom Allah spoke directly, the Kaleem of Allah, the Mūsā or Moses ('alaihi salām). Allah mentions the life and trials of this great and noble Prophet throughout the Qur'an. Allah, the Most High, said:

إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ أَهْلَهَا شِيَعًا يَسْتَضْعِفُ  
طَائِفَةً مِّنْهُمْ يُدَبِّحُ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءَهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ  
مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

**“Indeed, Pharaoh exalted himself in the land and made its people into factions, oppressing a group among them (the Children of Israel), slaughtering their new-born sons and keeping their females alive. Indeed, he was from the corrupt.”** (Al-Qasas: 4)

So, they were the Children of Israel who were the offspring of Ya'qūb ('alaihi salām), the son of Ishāq ('alaihi salām), the son of the Khalīl (the close friend) of Allah, Ibrāhīm ('alaihi salām). The Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) the son of Jacob was buried in Egypt. They were the best of the people on earth in that time. So, this oppressive, brutal unbeliever, the Pharaoh, enslaved them, debased them and made them lowly

and used them to carry out the lowliest of chores.

The Children of Israel believed that that from the progeny of Ibrāhīm ('alaihi-salām) a child would be born who would destroy the Pharaoh and his kingdom. It is said that the tidings were given to Sārah, the wife of Ibrāhīm ('alaihi-salām) when she passed through Egypt and its king tried to misbehave with her. As-Suddī narrated from Ibn 'Abbās (radiyallāhu 'anhumā), also Murrah from Ibn Mas'ood (radiyallāhu 'anhumā), and also other Companions that Pharaoh had a frightening dream wherein he saw a fire coming from the direction of Jerusalem which burned the Copts of Egypt and their homes but did not harm the Children of Israel. Pharaoh gathered all his priests, soothsayers and magicians so they could interpret his dream. They told him, "There will be a boy born among these people who will destroy the people of Egypt." It was due to this that Pharaoh ordered the killing of all the new-born boys, and he spared the girls.

When the Copts complained to Pharaoh that the population of the Israelites was diminishing due to the numerous killings, that their slave manpower was reducing and feared they would have to carry out their own duties, the Pharaoh found for them a solution. He decreed that the boys born in one year

were to be killed, and the boys born in the following year were to be spared. It is said that Mūsa's brother Hārūn ('alaihimas-salām) was born in a year of pardon and Mūsā's ('alaihissalām) was born in a year of killing.

But the plan of this disbeliever did not help him against the Decree of Allah (the Most High). Pharaoh did whatever he could to ward off the birth of Mūsā ('alaihissalām). He would send men and midwives who would regularly check up on the pregnant women of the Israelites and keep track of their delivery dates. So, no believing woman gave birth except that the people of Pharaoh would slay him that very moment.

## The Birth of Mūsā and his Concealment

When Mūsā's mother (may Allah's be please with her) become pregnant, the normal signs of pregnancy did not show on her. When she gave birth, she became fearful. So, Allah, the Most High, stated:

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ ۖ فَإِذَا خِفْتِ عَلَيْهِ فَأَلْقِيهِ  
فِي الْيَمِّ وَلَا تَخَافِي وَلَا تَحْزَنِي ۗ إِنَّا رَادُّوهُ إِلَيْكِ وَجَاعِلُوهُ مِنَ  
الْمُرْسَلِينَ

**“And We inspired to the mother of Moses, ‘Suckle him; but when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear and do not grieve. Indeed, We will return him to you and will make him [one] of the messengers.’” (Al-Qasas 28:7)**

She was commanded by Allah to place him in a small covered box because they lived on the banks of the river Nile, and to tie a rope to it and tether it to her house. So, whenever she feared for the safety of Mūsā (‘alaihi-salām), she would cast him out into the River Nile in the box and pull the rope to bring him back in after the danger had passed. However, the rope came apart and the box floated downriver to the palace of Pharaoh.

فَالْتَقَطَهُ آلُ فِرْعَوْنَ لِيَكُونَ لَهُمْ عَدُوًّا وَحَرْنًا ۗ إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ

وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا كَانُوا خَاطِئِينَ

**“And the family of Pharaoh picked him up [out of the river] so that he would become to them an enemy and a [cause of] grief. Indeed, Pharaoh and Hāmān and their soldiers were deliberate sinners.”**

(Al-Qasas 28:8)

When they opened the box, they found a baby boy. When the glance of the wife of the Pharaoh passed over him, she fell in love with the baby in front of her, and her heart instantly became attached. When the Pharaoh arrived, she pleaded with him that the child be spared.

وَقَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ فِرْعَوْنَ قُرَّتْ عَيْنٌ لِّيَ وَلَكَ ۖ لَا تَقْتُلُوهُ عَسَىٰ  
أَن يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ وَلَدًا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

**“And the wife of Pharaoh said, ‘[He will be] a comfort of the eye for me and for you. Do not kill him; perhaps he may benefit us, or we may adopt him as a son.’ And they perceived not [what was to be].”** (Al-Qasas 28:9)

## The Wife of the Pharaoh, her Torture and Death

So, Allah granted Āsiyah, the wife of Pharaoh, the child, and she loved him and cared for him. Later, when Mūsā (‘alaihi-salām) called her to Allah, she accepted Islam and worshipped Allah alone, for which the Pharaoh punished and tortured her and eventually killed her.

وَصَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا امْرَأَتِ فِرْعَوْنَ إِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ  
ابْنِ لِي عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِي مِّنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهِ  
وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

**“And Allah presents an example of those who believed: the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his deeds and save me from the wrongdoing people.”** (At-Tahrīm 66:11)

Salmān (radiyallāhu ‘anhu) said: **“The wife of the Pharaoh was punished by [the heat of] the sun. When they would leave her there [alone], the angels would come and shade her with their wings, and she would be able to see her house in Jannah.”**<sup>1</sup>

Abu Hurayrah (radiyallāhu ‘anhu) said: **“The Pharaoh**

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Abi Shaybah 13/331; Ibn Jareer 23/115; Authenticated by Al-Hākim 2/496 and Al-Bayhaqi 1237.

hammered four nails into the hands and feet of his wife. When they left her in that state, the angels would come and shade her. She said, رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ ‘My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise.’ So, her house was shown to her in Paradise.”<sup>2</sup>

Ibn ‘Abbās (radiyallāhu ‘anhumā) said that Allāh’s Messenger (salallāhu ‘alaihi wassallam) said, “The best of the women of Paradise are: Khadeejah bint Khuwaylid, Fātimah bint Muhammad, Maryam bint ‘Imrān and Āsiyah bint Mazāhim the wife of the Pharaoh.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Abu Ya’lā 6431; Al-Bayhaqi 1238 as a saying of Abu Rāfi’ and the mention of Abu Hurayrah was dropped by him. Al-Hāfidh Ibn Hajr said: It is authentic as a saying of the Companion, see Al-Matālib Al-Āliyah 9/62.

<sup>3</sup> Ahmad 4/409, 5/77, 113 (2668, 2901, 2957); At-Tabarāni 11928; Al-Hākim 3/185 – and the verifiers of the Musnad of Ahmad said: Its chain of narration is sahih.

## Mūsā ('alaihi-salām) is Restored to his Mother

So, when Mūsā ('alaihi-salām) was adopted by the wife of the Pharaoh, Āsiyah (may Allah be pleased with her), he would not take the milk of any woman. So, the palace sent out midwives along with baby Mūsā ('alaihi-salām) searching for a wet-nurse whose milk he would accept. Whilst they were out, the sister of Mūsā saw him and recognised him. So, she said, "Shall I guide you to a household who will take care of him for you?" So, the people of the palace were delighted. And the mother of Mūsā ('alaihi-salām) took hold of him and suckled him. This was the Decree (Qadr) of Allah that Mūsā would be returned to his mother who missed him dearly, and that his life would be spared and protected by Allah, the Most High:

فَرَدَدْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ أُمِّهِ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ ۚ وَلِتَعْلَمَ أَنَّ وَعْدَ  
اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

**“So, We restored him to his mother that she might be content and not grieve and that she would know that the promise of Allah is true. But most of the people do not know.” (Al-Qasas 28:13)**

## Mūsā ('alaihi-salām) Grows up, Kills an Egyptian Unintentionally and Leaves Egypt

By the time Mūsā ('alaihi-salām) reached adulthood, he had some influence in Egypt due to his connection to the Pharaoh and his entourage. He would travel through the land as the Pharaoh travelled and he wore the garments that he would wear, he rode as he rode.

One day, Mūsā ('alaihi-salām) left the palace without the knowledge of its people and walked into the town, and he saw two men fighting each other. One of them was from the Children of Israel (his own people) and the other was from their enemy, from the people of the Pharaoh, an Egyptian. So Mūsā helped the one he saw to be correct and struck the Egyptian which resulted in his death. Mūsā ('alaihi-salām) felt deep regret for what he had done as he did not intend to kill the Egyptian. He supplicated to Allah, seeking forgiveness for his action and Allah forgave him.

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي فَغَفَرَ لَهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ  
الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

**“He said, ‘My Lord, indeed I have wronged myself, so forgive me,’ and He forgave him. Indeed, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.” (Al-Qasas 28:16)**

Mūsā (‘alaihi-salām) then fled from Egypt **“when a man came from the farthest end of the city, running. He said, ‘O Mūsā, indeed the chiefs are conspiring to kill you, so leave! Indeed, I am to you of the sincere advisors.’”** (Al-Qasas 28:20)

## **Mūsā (‘alaihi-salām) Travels to Madyan and Marries the Daughter of a Righteous Man**

So Mūsā left for the land of Madyan and remained there for ten years in the service of a righteous man. He came into the service of that man after he helped two of his daughters draw water from a well for their flock. Allah states that Mūsā (‘alaihi-salām) said to them: **“What is the matter?” The women said, “We cannot draw water until the shepherds have gone away, and our father is a very old man.” So, he drew water for them, and then went to sit in the shade and said, “My Lord! I am in need of any good You may send to me.”** (Al-Qasas 28:23-24) The shepherds would place a huge stone over the well after they had watered their flock, so Mūsā (‘alaihi-salām) moved the rock due to the strength Allah had given him. When the women came home, they relayed the story to their father, so he sent one of them back to fetch him. **“Then one of the two women came to him, walking bashfully. She said, ‘My father invites you that he may reward you for drawing water for us.’”** (Al-Qasas 28:25) After Mūsā was honoured by the father, one of the daughters said, **“O my father! Employ him for a wage.”** (Al-Qasas 28:26) She praised him for being strong and trustworthy.

Ibn ‘Abbās and ‘Umar stated: When she said that, her father asked her, **“How do you know that he is strong and trustworthy?”** She replied, **“He lifted a rock that no less than ten people could lift. And when I led him home by walking in front of him, he said, ‘Walk behind me. When you need me to change the path, throw a pebble on that path and I will know to change direction.’”** This shows the chivalry of Mūsā, his chastity and his respect for women.

He shepherded and cared for his flock for ten years and married one of his daughters. The old man said, **“I intend to marry to you one of my daughters provided you serve me for eight years. However, if you complete ten, that will be grace from you. I do not wish to place hardship upon you. If Allah wills, you shall surely find me a righteous man.”** (Al-Qasas 28:27)

Ibn Mājah wrote a chapter in his Sunan, **“The chapter of employing a person for food.”** Then he reported that the Prophet (salallāhu ‘alaihi wassallam) recited Sūrah Al-Qasas and said, **“Mūsā (salallāhu ‘alaihi wassallam) engaged himself in employment for eight or ten years for his moral decency and chastity, and for food in his stomach.”**

Some of the scholars (from the mufassirīn) have speculated that the righteous man was the Prophet of Allāh, Shu'ayb ('alaihi-salām) who was in Madyan, but that is unlikely, and Allah knows best.

Mūsā ('alaihi-salām) fulfilled the term of ten years. Bukhārī reported from Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr that he said, **“A Jew came to me and asked, ‘Which of the two terms did Mūsā serve?’ I said, ‘I will not know until I ask the most knowledgeable person among the Arabs.’ So, I came to Ibn ‘Abbās and asked him. He replied, ‘He fulfilled the best of it which was the longer of the two.’”**

## Mūsā ('alaihi-salām) Returns to Egypt and Meets Pharaoh After Receiving Revelation

So, after ten years in Madyan, he travelled with his family heading towards Egypt. It was during this journey that Allah (the Most High) ennobled him with Revelation and spoke to him directly.

وَرُسُلًا قَدْ فَصَّصْنَا لَهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَرُسُلًا لَمْ  
نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ ۚ وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَى تَكْوِيمًا

**“And We sent messengers about whom We have related their stories to you before and messengers about whom We have not related to you. And Allah spoke to Mūsā directly.”** (An-Nisā 4:164)

Allah commanded him to go to Pharaoh with signs and the proofs. Allah said to him: **“O Mūsā, I am the Lord of the worlds. Throw down your staff. So, when he saw it quivering like a snake, Mūsā fled. ‘O Mūsā! Come back and fear not for you are in safety. Put your hand in your pocket and it will come out shining white without blemish and draw your hand close to your side to be free from fear. These are the two proofs from your Lord to Pharaoh and his chiefs for indeed they are a wicked people.”** (Al-Qasas: 28:30-32) The Pharaoh, however, was an arrogant and haughty man who would say, **“I am your Lord, Most High.”** Mūsā ('alaihi-salām) came to him and

invited him to worship Allah:

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

**“Pharaoh said, ‘And what is the Lord of the worlds?’”**

قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُوقِنِينَ

**“Mūsā said, ‘The Lord of the heavens and earth and whatever is between them if you should be convinced with certainty.’”**

قَالَ لِمَنْ حَوْلَهُ أَلَا تَسْتَمِعُونَ

**“Pharaoh said to those around him, ‘Do you not hear?’”** So Mūsā responded again:

قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

**“Mūsā said, ‘He is your Lord and the Lord of your ancient forefathers.’”** Pharaoh was dumbfounded and responded with an insult:

قَالَ إِنَّ رَسُولَكُمْ الَّذِي أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ لَمَجْنُونٌ

**“Indeed, your ‘messenger’ who has been sent to you is mad.”** So Mūsā replied to him again:

قَالَ رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

**“Mūsā said, ‘He is the Lord of the east and the west,**

and all that is between them if you could only understand!” So, when he was defeated, he threatened Mūsā:

قَالَ لَئِنِ اتَّخَذْتَ إِلَهًا غَيْرِي لَأَجْعَلَنَّكَ مِنَ الْمَسْجُونِينَ

**“Pharaoh said, ‘If you take a god other than me, I will surely place you among those who are imprisoned.’”**

But Mūsā (‘alaihi-salām) did not stop. He brought more and more verses and signs, each one greater than the previous. The Pharaoh tried hard to extinguish the call (da’wah) of Mūsā (‘alaihi-salām). He was arrogant, haughty and certain of his strength and power. He would not let-up on Mūsā (‘alaihi-salām) nor did he ease his tyranny on the Children of Israel, the Muslims. He said, **“Am I not better than him who carries no respect and yields no power – who can hardly express himself in speech.”** (Az-Zukhruf: 51)

## **Accusations of Sorcery and the Great Challenge on the Day of the Festival of Adornment**

Pharaoh gathered all the great magicians of the kingdom of Egypt – and Egypt at that time was land renowned for the sciences of magic and the greatest magicians were in the service of the Pharaoh. The chiefs accused Mūsā (‘alaihi-salām) and his brother, the Prophet Hārūn (‘alaihi-salām) of being magicians, **“Verily! These are two magicians. Their object is to drive you out from your land with magic and overcome your chiefs and nobles. So, devise your plot, and then assemble in line. And whoever overcomes this day will be indeed successful.”** (Tāhā: 62-63) Pharaoh said, **“Have you come to drive us out of our land with your magic, O Mūsā! We shall also bring magic to match yours. So, make between us and you an appointment, which we will not fail to keep and neither will you, in a place assigned.”** Mūsā (‘alaihi-salām) responded, **“Let the encounter be on the Day of the Festival of Adornment, and let the people be assembled after the sun has arisen.”** (Tāhā: 57-59) This was the best day for Mūsā (‘alaihi-salām) because all of the people would be gathered in one place. So, they gathered in great numbers with the Pharaoh, his ministers and his people.

So, it began! **“The magicians of the Pharaoh said, ‘O Mūsā! Either you throw first, or shall we be the first to throw?’ He said, ‘Rather, you throw.’ And suddenly by their magic, their ropes and staffs seemed to him they were moving [like snakes].’ So, Mūsā sensed a fear in himself. Allah said, ‘Fear not! Surely, you will have the upper hand.’ Throw that which is in your right hand! It will swallow up that which they have made. That which they have made is only a magician’s trick, and the magician will never be successful, no matter whatever amount of skill he may attain.”** (Tāhā: 65-69) So the truth was established. When Mūsā (‘alaihis-salām) cast down his staff it turned into a huge snake such that the people started to flee. His staff came to the ropes and sticks of the magicians and started devouring them with short quick movements, one by one. The people were in shock and the magicians left in bewilderment. **“The magicians of Pharaoh fell down in prostration and said, ‘Now we believe in the Lord of Hārūn and Mūsā.’ Pharaoh called out, ‘You dare believe in him before I have given you permission! Surely, he is your chief who taught you the magic. I shall cut off your hands and feet on opposite sides of your body and I will have you crucified on the trunks of palm trees. And then you will certainly know which of us is more severe in punishing, and**

**more lasting.”** (Tāhā: 70-71)

Sa’īd Ibn Jubayr, Ikrimah and Al-Awzā’ee stated: When the magicians fell in prostration in Allah’s worship, they were shown their palaces and homes in Paradise being made ready and decorated for them, so they were not frightened by the threat of the Pharaoh.

Ibn ‘Abbās said: They started the day as magicians and they were martyred in the last part of the day as innocent souls.

## **A Series of Plagues upon Pharaoh and his People**

Then Allah sent to the disbelievers a host of trials and afflictions, **“So We sent upon them the flood and locusts and lice and frogs and blood as distinct signs, but they were arrogant and were a criminal people.”** (Al-A’rāf 7:133)

The locusts did not spare any of their crops, nor their fruits. Sa’īd Ibn Jubayr said that the lice were tiny black insects. The frogs were found everywhere; in their food, water and dishes; even as they lifted food to put it in their mouths. All their water was mixed with blood, even when they drew it from the Nile. Yet none of these trials afflicted the Muslims, the Children of Israel. This was another proof of the truthfulness and Prophethood of Mūsā and his brother Hārūn.

## **The Exodus from Egypt and the Search for the Bones of the Prophet Yūsuf (‘alaihi-salām).**

None of this was enough for the arrogant Pharaoh and his evil followers. So, when the affair reached its limits, and the Pharaoh persisted in his persecution, tyranny and rejection of the truth, Allah revealed to Mūsā (‘alaihi-salām) that he was to leave Egypt by night with all of Banī Isrā’īl (Children of Israel). So, they left out heading to Shām.

Al-Hākim reports from Abu Mūsā Al-Ash’arī (radiyallāhu ‘anhu) that Allah’s Messenger (salallāhu ‘alaihi wassallam) stopped off on a journey and was hosted by a Bedouin (i.e. a dweller of the desert) who honoured him and looked after him. So, the Prophet (salallāhu ‘alaihi wassallam) said to him, “O dweller of the desert, ask of me for your needs.” The man replied, “O Messenger of Allah, just a camel to ride and a goat that my family can milk.” He repeated it twice. So, Allah’s Messenger (salallāhu ‘alaihi wassallam) said to him, **“You were not able to be like the old woman among the Children of Israel.”** The Companions (radiyallāhu ‘anhum) asked, **“Who is the old woman among the Children of Israel?”** He replied, **“Mūsā intended to lead the Children of Israel quickly away [in the night] but he got lost on the way. So, the scholars among the Children of**

**Israel said, ‘We will narrate to you that the Prophet Yūsuf (‘alaihi-salām) took from us a covenant by Allah that we were not to leave from Egypt (Misra) unless we take his bones with us.’ Mūsā asked, ‘Which of you knows where the grave of Yūsuf is?’ They answered, ‘No one knows where the grave is except an old woman from the Children of Israel.’ So, they sent him to her. He said, ‘Show me the grave of Yūsuf (‘alaihi-salām).’ She replied, ‘By Allah, I will not tell you until I know that I will be with you in Paradise.’ Mūsā was not pleased with what he was being asked. So, it was said to him, ‘Give her what she has requested.’ So, he did that, and she went to a small lake. She said, ‘Drain away this water.’ When they had done that, she said, ‘Dig here.’ When they dug, they found the bones of Yūsuf. After they lifted out his bones, their path was as clear as the brightness of the day.’”<sup>4</sup>**

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<sup>4</sup> Reported by Al-Hākim in Al-Mustadrak 2/624, no. 4088. He stated, “This hadith has an authentic chain of transmission though Bukhāri and Muslim did not report it.”

## The Fury of the Pharaoh, the Pursuit and the Parting of the Sea into Twelve Paths

When Pharaoh realised what had happened, he became enraged. He gathered his army in order to hunt down and kill every last one of the Children of Israel. He called upon all the townships, sending messengers to them saying, “They are small in number and they have made us furious.” So, they left out in pursuit of the Children of Israel and finally caught up with them as the Sun was setting. By that time the Children of Israel had reached the sea and when they turned they saw the army of Fir’awn (the Pharaoh) – and nothing remained for them in their minds except their own slaughter.

فَلَمَّا تَرَأَى الْجَمْعَانِ قَالِ أَصْحَابُ مُوسَى إِنَّآ لَمُدْرَكُونَ

**“And when the two hosts saw each other, the people of Mūsā said, ‘We are sure to be overtaken.’”** (Ash-Shu’arā 26:61) That is because they had come to the end of their path at the shores of the sea. There was nowhere for them to go: An ocean in front of them, a vast army behind them, mountains to their right and left so they complained to Mūsā in desperation, **“We are sure to be overtaken.”** Meaning: we are going to be killed. So, their Messenger, the truthful, the trustworthy and

believed said to them:

قَالَ كَلَّا إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ

**“No! Indeed, with me is my Lord; He will guide me.”**

(Ash-Shu’arā 26:62) And Allah, the Most High, said:

فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْبَحْرَ ۖ فَانفَلَقَ فَكَانَ  
كُلُّ فِرْقٍ كَالطَّوْدِ الْعَظِيمِ

**“Then We inspired Musa saying, ‘Strike the sea with your staff.’ And it parted, and each separate part of that sea water became like the huge, firm mass of a mountain.”** (Ash-Shu’arā 26:63)

So, when he struck the sea with his staff, it parted into twelve paths, one for each of tribes of Banī Isrā’īl, that led straight through to the other side of the sea with water as high as a mountain on each of the sides. From the mercy of Allah upon them, there was not left on the seabed even a puddle or slippery mud. They walked through quickly and in haste. Pharaoh and his army hesitated in amazement and then followed – the arrogance of these unbelievers was still not humbled in the face of this great miracle.

When Mūsā (‘alaihis-salām) exited from the other side along with the last of his people, and the whole army of the Pharaoh was still on the path on the

seabed, Allah collapsed the mountains of the sea-water upon them and drowned them all. And then He continued to punish them in the Barzakh, and then He will punish them even more severely in the Hereafter.

النَّارُ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَيْهَا غُدُوًّا وَعَشِيًّا وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ  
أَدْخِلُوا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ أَشَدَّ الْعَذَابِ

**“They are exposed to the Fire morning and evening. And the Day the Judgement it will be said, ‘Make the people of Pharaoh enter the severest punishment.’”** (Ghāfir 40:46)

## 'Āshoorā: The Day of Victory and the Drowning of Pharaoh and his Final Plea!

When the drowning overtook Pharaoh, he called out. Allah said:

وَجَاوَزْنَا بِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْبَحْرَ فَأَتْبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ وَجُنُودُهُ بَغْيًا  
وَعَدُوًّا حَتَّى إِذَا أَدْرَكَهُ الْغَرَقُ قَالَ آمَنْتُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا  
الَّذِي آمَنْتُ بِهِ بَنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ وَأَنَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

**“And We took the Children of Israel across the sea, and Pharaoh and his soldiers pursued them in tyranny and enmity until, when drowning overtook him, he said, ‘I believe that there is no deity except that in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of the Muslims.’” (Yunus 10:90) Allah responded:**

الآنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

**“Now O Pharaoh?! While you had surely disobeyed Him before and were of the corrupt ones?” (Yunus 10:91)**

The Prophet Muhammad (salallāhu ‘alaihi wassallam) said: **“Jibreel said to me, ‘if only you could have seen me when I took the mud from the seabed and shoved it into his mouth fearing that the Mercy of Allah might still save him.’”** But the fate of the Pharaoh was already sealed and inscribed into

the Preserved Tablet 50,000 years before the creation of the Heavens and Earth, and Allah knew he would be a wicked, unbelieving tyrant.

Look at this amazing story and look at the lessons therein, may Allah have mercy on you. Look at what occurred and how the aid of Allah came to the believers who trusted in Him and remained patient. Allah made manifest truth over falsehood.

That was the tenth day of Muharram. And this was the day of ‘Āshoorā’, the day that Mūsā (‘alaihis-salām) was given victory over Pharaoh. Bukhāri reported from Ibn ‘Abbās (radiyallāhu ‘anhu) that:

قَدِمَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الْمَدِينَةَ وَالْيَهُودُ تَصُومُ  
عَاشُورَاءَ فَقَالُوا هَذَا يَوْمٌ ظَهَرَ فِيهِ مُوسَى عَلَى فِرْعَوْنَ.  
فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لِأَصْحَابِهِ أَنْتُمْ أَحَقُّ  
بِمُوسَى مِنْهُمْ فَصُومُوا

When the Prophet (salallāhu ‘alaihi wassallam) arrived in Madinah, the Jews were observing the fast of ‘Āshoorā’ (on the 10th of Muharram) and they said, **“This is the day when Mūsā became victorious over Pharaoh,”** So, the Prophet (salallāhu ‘alaihi wassallam) said to his Companions, **“You Muslims have more right to Mūsā than them, so observe the**

**fast on this day.”<sup>5</sup>**

So, it is recommended to fast this day in gratitude to Allah, the Most High. Mūsā (‘alaihi-salām) fasted on this day in gratitude to Allah and the Prophet Muhammad (salallāhu ‘alaihi wassallam) fasted it and he informed his Companions that they should fast this day. He (salallāhu ‘alaihi wassallam) said, **“I hope/anticipate that Allah will forgive the sins of the year that has passed.”**<sup>6</sup> A Muslim, however, should also fast the day before it so as to differ from the Jews. The Messenger (salallāhu ‘alaihi wassallam) said, **“If I remain alive till next year, surely, I will [also] fast on the ninth.”**<sup>7</sup> And in a narration reported by Ahmad and Ibn Khuzaymah, he (salallāhu ‘alaihi wassallam) said, **“Fast a day before it or after it and differ from the Jews.”**

### **References:**

*Qasas Al-Anbiyā’* of Ibn Kathīr (d. 774H); *Al-Khutab Al-Mimbariyyah* of Al-Fawzān, 1/141-146; *Ad-Durr Al-Manthoor fī At-Tasfīr bil-Ma’thoor* of As-Suyūti (d. 911H) Surah At-Tahrīm, vol. 14, pp. 595-598.

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<sup>5</sup> Bukhāri, no. 4680.

<sup>6</sup> Muslim, no. 1162.

<sup>7</sup> Muslim, no. 1134, 134.