

## QUR'ANIC EXEGESIS

### Sūrah Ṭāhā (1)

*Amīn Aḥsan Işlāhī*

#### Theme

In this *sūrah*, the Prophet (sws) is urged to show patience on the attitude of his adversaries and to wait for God's decision: if they do not listen to him, he should not worry for soon they will meet their fate. With this topic, the *sūrah* begins and with it, it ends as well. He has been directed to diligently pray and supplicate before God to attain patience and to adhere to it. At the same time, the ills of impatience are explained. The whole of the *sūrah* addresses the Prophet (sws). If his adversaries are spoken to, it is in an indirect way without directly addressing them.

In the previous *sūrah*, many celebrated prophets of God are mentioned. In this one, however, only Moses (sws) is mentioned in detail. All important incidents of his life from his birth and migration are highlighted. The purpose is to provide guidance to the Prophet (sws) in his current phase of preaching and in the future ones also through a practical example.

#### Analysis

The *sūrah* can be divided into three portions with respect to its meanings:

**Verses (1-8):** In a very affectionate way, the Prophet (sws) is directed to not over-stretch and burden himself in his concern for others to accept faith. His responsibility is to only remind those who have some fear in them. It is not his duty to make those devoid of fear accept faith. The Qur'ān is not a petition or a request: it is the directive of the creator of the heavens and the earth and the whole universe, and the Prophet (sws) should present it in a manner worthy of it; he does not need to pamper the ingrates and arrogant people; he should trust His Lord Who knows all hidden and open affairs.

**Verses (9-98):** The account of Moses (sws) is mentioned. Briefly

put, following are its prominent aspects:

- Moses (sws) reaches the sacred valley of Ṭuwā after returning from Madyan and is blessed with prophethood.
- He receives his first directive after being made a prophet.
- God blesses him with the miracles of the staff and the white hand.
- He is given the directive of going to the Pharaoh to warn him. Mention of his supplication for inner satisfaction and for Aaron as a helper, and its immediate acceptance.
- To strengthen the heart of Moses (sws), it is stated how in his childhood he was shown special favour by God: he was cast in the river; God not only saved him but made his enemy and His own enemy rear and nurture him and ultimately took him to his mother. It was she who, in utmost distress, had consigned him to the waves of the river fearing the Pharaoh.
- The incident of the killing of a Copt at the hands of Moses (sws) is mentioned. Moses (sws) then sets off to Madyan. After passing through various trials and tribulations there, he reaches the sacred valley of Ṭuwā in accordance with the divine plan and is chosen as a prophet.
- After he is reminded of this act of God's favour, Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) are encouraged to bravely go and warn the Pharaoh. God will protect them.
- Moses (sws) presents his message to the Pharaoh and the latter argues and debates with him.
- The contest between Moses (sws) and the magicians of the Pharaoh is mentioned. The latter are defeated and embrace faith.
- The Pharaoh accuses Moses (sws) and those who have professed faith in him of rebellion and threatens to kill them.
- Moses (sws) is directed to migrate from Egypt along with the Israelites and is pursued by the Pharaoh. Ultimately, Moses (sws) and the Israelites cross over the sea safely and the Pharaoh and his armies are drowned.
- The favours of God bestowed on the Israelites are recounted. In Moses' absence of a few days in which he had gone to receive the Torah, the Israelites are afflicted with the trial of Sāmirī. As a result, they take to idol worship. Details of this incident are mentioned including its causes and consequences.

**Verses (99-135):** After the account of Moses (sws) is presented, these concluding verses address the Prophet (sws). The *sūrah* ends

on the topic with which it began: he is assured that this anecdote of the past is not merely a past happening. It is actually his own anecdote as well. People have been warned from all aspects in the book given to him. If they do not accept it, they will bear its consequences both in this world and in the next. There are many lessons which these people can learn from history. For this reason, the Prophet (sws) should not show impatience in their matter and should patiently wait for God's decision. Hastiness gives Satan a chance to play his mischief. It was because of hastiness that Adam (sws) was deceived by Satan. So, the Prophet (sws) should patiently wait for God's decision and diligently adhere to the prayer to acquire this patience. The Prophet (sws) should also not be worried about the faith of the rich thinking that this would strengthen his ranks. His preaching has its own resources and God has taken upon Himself to fulfil his financial needs. He should tell those who are demanding to see the punishment that his duty is only to inform them. If they now await this punishment, they should keep waiting; the Prophet (sws) too is waiting.

## Section 1: Verses (1-8)

### Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
طه ﴿١﴾ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى ﴿٢﴾ إِلَّا تَذَكُّرٌ لِّمَن يَخْشَى ﴿٣﴾ تَنْزِيلًا مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ  
الْأَرْضَ وَالسَّمَوَاتِ الْعُلَى ﴿٤﴾ الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى ﴿٥﴾ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَ  
مَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرَى ﴿٦﴾ وَإِنْ تَجْهَر بِالْقَوْلِ فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى ﴿٧﴾ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ  
لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى ﴿٨﴾

In the name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

This is Sūrah Ṭāhā. We have not revealed this Qur'ān to you to put you through difficulty. It is only a reminder for those who fear God. It has been revealed in a very thorough manner by the being Who created the earth and the lofty skies. The most Merciful Who sits on the throne of governance. Whatever is in the heavens and in the earth and whatever is in between and whatever is below the earth are under His control. (1-6)

Whether you speak openly or secretly; nothing is hidden from

Him because He knows what is said secretly and what is even more hidden. He is God; there is no deity besides Him. All good names belong to Him. (7-8)

### Explanation

<sup>1</sup> طه

These letters are from among the isolated letters. A detailed discussion on them can be seen under the first verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

<sup>2</sup> مَا أُنزِلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ بِتَشْقَىٰ

The Prophet (sws) has very affectionately been made to understand here that the extent of responsibility of preaching the Qur'ān that he has taken upon himself and the burden he is bearing as a result is not required of him at all. His only responsibility is to communicate this Book to people. Those who have the ability to recognize the truth and a semblance of God's fear will accept it. It is not his responsibility to force it down those who are devoid of this ability. He should not make his life miserable by doing this.

It has been explained at several instances in this book that when after exerting himself day and night to call people to the Qur'ān, the Prophet (sws) saw that they still denied a very evident thing and in no way had a soft heart towards it, he was worried that perhaps he was lacking in effort. When he was overcome with this feeling, his preaching efforts increased further and he still felt dissatisfied after doing his utmost.

It is in this background that the verse assures him. He is not to go beyond the call of his duty as he is not responsible for others to accept faith.

<sup>3</sup> إِلَّا تَذَكَّرَ فَإِنَّ يَخْشَىٰ

This verse explains the status of the Qur'ān, the extent of the Prophet's responsibility and also the type of people who would be influenced by it and those who would be deprived of it.

1. This is Sūrah Ṭāhā.

2. We have not revealed this Qur'ān to you to put you through difficulty.

3. It is only a reminder for those who fear God.

The word تَذَكُّرٌ means “a reminder.” Obviously, what is reminded of is always found within an addressee and that which he may have forgotten and cannot be something brought from outside. Deliberation on the Qur’ān shows that its purpose too is precisely the same. It is not something strange or unique and does not impose anything from outside on us. It actually reminds us of the facts already found in our nature that we may have become indifferent to. The arguments which the Qur’ān employs to remind us are drawn from the world inside and outside us and which our intellect readily understands. However, either we do not use them or evade their obvious consequences. The history which the Qur’ān has presented to teach its addressees and make them learn a lesson is one which they are already aware of. The teachings of the prophets it refers to are the ones which these addressees claimed to be the progeny and followers of.

The verse states that only those will benefit from this who fear (لِمَنْ يَخْشَى). The grammatical object of the verb يَخْشَى is suppressed. If parallel verses of the Qur’ān are kept in consideration, then the whole sentence would be to the effect: لِمَنْ يَخْشَى رَبَّهُ بِالْغَيْبِ (it is a reminder for those fear their Lord in spite of not seeing Him).

In other words, this is the same as what is said in verse 2 of Sūrah al-Baqarah (هُدًى لِّلْمُسْتَظِّينَ). I have explained it there that this piety and fear is found in every person whose nature has not been perverted. If such people become indifferent, they are awakened from their slumber by reminders of the Qur’ān. As for those who pervert their natures because of their misdeeds, no amount of shaking can awaken them. The only logic that they can understand is the logic of force which animals understand. They want to believe after seeing things with their naked eyes. However, before God, the only belief that has weight is one which is acknowledged through intellect and not through observation.

If the Qur’ān is a reminder, then it follows that the task of the Prophet (sws) is reminding people and not forcing them to believe. His obligation is to only remind people of the lesson they have forgotten. Whether they actually are reminded or not is the responsibility of the people and not his.

In other words, the verse under discussion stresses the fact that if people are not benefitting from the Prophet’s reminders, he

should not worry. It is they who are responsible for their behavior and not he.

تَنْزِيلًا مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ وَالسَّمَوَاتِ الْعُلَى ۖ

The word تَنْزِيل means to reveal something in a thorough and gradual manner. The implication is that since the Qur'ān has been revealed to remind people, the Almighty did not content Himself to just giving it to people in one go so that what is meant to be presented to them is done so in some way or the other. On the contrary, He has revealed it in episodes in a very painstaking way so that they are not left with any excuse that are not able to understand it

The words “by the being Who created the earth and the lofty skies” point to the exalted nature of the Qur'ān by referring to the majesty of the Being Who revealed it. It is not something that can be dismissed because it has no basis. It is also not a request of a petitioner so that if it is accepted, it will be a favour to him and if it is not, then he will be deprived. In fact, the directive of the creator of the heavens and the earth has to be followed. If people reject it, they should fully contemplate the consequences.

There is an indication in this for the Prophet (sws) that he should present the Book before people the way the words of the Creator and Master of the heavens and the earth should be presented. Neither should he console and reassure them nor force or pressurize them. If they accept it, they themselves are the beneficiaries and not God. It is not a meek request; it is in fact a scripture of guidance for people. Those who reject it, will face its grave consequence and not harm the Prophet (sws) in any way.

This topic is discussed in the Qur'ān at various instances. Thus, for example in Sūrah ‘Abas, it is stated:

كَلَّا إِنَّهَا تَذْكِرَةٌ ۖ فَمَنْ شَاءَ ذَكَرْهُ ۚ فِي صُحُفٍ مُّكَرَّمَةٍ مَّرْفُوعَةٍ مُّطَهَّرَةٍ ۚ بِأَيْدِي سَفَرَةٍ  
كِتَابٍ بَرَكَةٍ (٨٠ : ١١ - ١٦)

Certainly not! This is but a reminder; so whoever wishes, can benefit from it. It is in esteemed pages, exalted and untouched, in the custody of scribes, honourable and

4. It has been revealed in a very thorough manner by the being Who created the earth and the lofty skies.

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى ۚ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ  
الْثَّرَى ۚ ٥

This verse mentions the exaltedness of the Qur'ān and states the attributes of the Almighty which are reflected in this Book. He is the creator of the heavens and the earth. It is a requisite of His mercy that He not leave His creatures to themselves after creating them. Thus, it is essential that just as He has arranged for the fulfilment of their material needs, He also provides them with guidance. Hence, He has blessed them with intellect and intuition and revealed this Book as a further favour. This fact is also alluded to in the initial verses of Sūrah al-Raḥmān thus: الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ<sup>6</sup>

The implication is that today people who are rejecting the Qur'ān are not harming God or His Messenger in any way. In fact, they are depriving themselves of the greatest mercy of God.

The words “Who sits on the throne of governance” point to an attribute of the Almighty: He did not become aloof after creating the world; He is in fact running its affairs. He is the real sovereign of this universe. For this reason, He has informed people of His directives and laws through the Qur'ān. After this awareness, people who still do not listen will meet their fate on the day of accountability.

The words “whatever is in the heavens and in the earth and whatever is in between and whatever is below the earth are under His control” are meant to uproot the seed of polytheism from its roots: there is no part of this universe that is beyond God's control and jurisdiction. If someone has freedom in some sphere, that too is because of God's design and plan. Thus, a person should not think that he can escape from God or there is anyone besides Him who can give him refuge.

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5. The most Merciful Who sits on the throne of governance. Whatever is in the heavens and in the earth and whatever is in between and whatever is below the earth are under His control.

6. It is the Merciful who has taught the Qur'ān.

وَأِنْ تَجْهَرُوا بِالنَّوَلِ فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى ۚ

In accordance with the principles of eloquent Arabic, parallel portions of the verse are suppressed because of concomitant indications. I.e: وَأِنْ تَجْهَرُوا بِالنَّوَلِ أَوْ تُخَافَتُ بِهِ فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَالسَّامَّ وَأَخْفَى (and whether you say anything openly or secretly, He knows what is open, the hidden and what is even more hidden).

In this verse, the Prophet (sws) is assured from another angle: all his pleadings to God are heard by Him in whatever state he utters them. The purpose is to let him know the consequence of this fact: when his Lord is aware of all his secrets, his path will be eased by Him and he will be provided guidance from Him at every step. If there is a delay in any matter, it is because of a certain reason and benefit and it is actually for his own betterment. For more details, readers may look up what I have written while explaining verse 64 of Sūrah Maryam.

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ ۚ

This verse directs the Prophet (sws) to completely rely on God and not go out of the way in reforming his enemies and worry himself. There is no god but God and in His presence, he does not need anyone.

The words “all good names belong to Him” are a treasure trove of assurance for the Prophet (sws). The assurance sounded to him in the previous verses is given in the light of the consequences of His exaltedness, His mercy, His sovereignty, His oneness and His knowledge. Yet these are not the only attributes of God. He possesses all good and lofty attributes. So, obviously the consequences of these attributes will manifest themselves for the Prophet (sws) in accordance with his circumstances. In other words, glad tidings are given to the Prophet (sws) in this part of the verse that all good attributes belong to God and they protect everyone. Whichever among them he seeks support of, he will gain its blessings and benefits. He does not need any support except them.

All scholars agree that here “names of God” actually refer to

7. Whether you speak openly or secretly; nothing is hidden from Him because He knows what is said secretly and what is even more hidden.

8. He is God; there is no deity besides Him. All good names belong to Him.

His attributes because His names actually express His attributes.

## Section II: Verses (9-98)

In the previous section, the Prophet (sws) has been assured through the attributes of God. Coming up is the account of Moses (sws) in which this assurance and facts mentioned academically in the previous section are stated through a living example. In this anecdote, details of how God helped him in the trials he passed through before and after becoming a messenger are stated. A greater part of the phases which the Prophet (sws) still had to go through were unknown to him at that time. This anecdote reflects those phases before him and also indicates to him the preparations needed. The impact of living examples is unparalleled. In particular, the anecdote of a prophet for another is like is own biography.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

### Text and Translation

وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَى ﴿٩﴾ إِذْ رَأَى نَارًا فَقَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا لَعَلِّي آتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ أَوْ أَجْدٍ عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى ﴿١٠﴾ فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ يٰمُوسَى ﴿١١﴾ إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْذِعْ نَعْلَيْكَ إِنَّكَ بِأَلْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى ﴿١٢﴾ وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَى ﴿١٣﴾ إِنَّنِي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي ﴿١٤﴾ إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا لِتُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَى ﴿١٥﴾ فَلَا يَصُدُّكَ عَنْهَا مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَتَرْدَى ﴿١٦﴾ وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِينِكَ يٰمُوسَى ﴿١٧﴾ قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ أَتَوَكَّأُ عَلَيْهَا وَأَهُشُّ بِهَا عَلَىٰ غَنَمِي وَلِيَ فِيهَا مَآرِبُ أُخْرَى ﴿١٨﴾ قَالَ أَأَقْبَهَا يٰمُوسَى ﴿١٩﴾ فَالْقَهَا فَإِذَا هِيَ حَبِيبَةٌ تَسْعَى ﴿٢٠﴾ قَالَ خُذْهَا وَلَا تَخَفْ ۗ سَعِيَهَا سَيَرَّهَا الْأَوَّلَى ﴿٢١﴾ وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ إِلَىٰ جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجَ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ آيَةً أُخْرَى ﴿٢٢﴾ لِنُرِيكَ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا الْكُبْرَى ﴿٢٣﴾ أَذْهَبَ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَى ﴿٢٤﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي ﴿٢٥﴾ وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي ﴿٢٦﴾ وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِّنْ لِّسَانِي ﴿٢٧﴾ يَقْفَهُوا قَوْلِي ﴿٢٨﴾ وَاجْعَل لِّي وَزِيرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِي ﴿٢٩﴾ هَارُونَ أَخِي ﴿٣٠﴾ اشْدُدْ بِهِ أَزْرِي ﴿٣١﴾ وَأَشْرِكْ فِي أَمْرِي ﴿٣٢﴾ كَيْ تَسْبِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٣٣﴾ وَتَذْكُرَكَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٣٤﴾ إِنَّكَ كُنْتَ بِنَا بَصِيرًا ﴿٣٥﴾ قَالَ قَدْ أُوتِيتَ سُؤْلَكَ يٰمُوسَى ﴿٣٦﴾

And has the story of Moses come to your knowledge when he saw a flame, he said to his family: “Wait here you people I see fire so that I can bring an ember from it for you or perhaps am able to find some information there about the way.” (9-10)

Then when he reached near it, a voice called: “Moses! It is I, your Lord. So, take off your shoes because you are in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā. And I have chosen you. So, intently listen to what is being revealed to you. Indeed, I alone am God; there is no deity besides Me. So, worship Me and be diligent in the prayer to keep Me in remembrance. Indeed, the Hereafter is sure to come. I shall strive to keep it hidden so that every person is rewarded for his deeds. Thus, anyone who does not believe in the Hereafter and follows his desires should not make you negligent of the prayer lest you perish.” (11-16)

“And what is this in your hands, O Moses!” He replied: “This is my staff. I lean on it and through it bring down leaves for my flock. And I also have other uses in it.” God said: “Place it on the ground, O Moses.” He placed it. So, suddenly it became a slithering serpent. God said: “Pick it up and fear not. We shall return it again to its first shape. And draw your hand towards your arm. It will emerge from there white without any illness as a second sign so that We may make you observe some great signs of Ours.” (17-23)

“Go to the Pharaoh. He has become a great tyrant.” He prayed: “Lord! Open my chest for me and make my task easy for me and free my tongue from its impediment so that people are able to understand what I say. And by appointing my brother Aaron from my family a helper for me strengthen my back, and make him share my responsibility so that as much as possible we are able to extol and glorify you and spread your word far and wide. Indeed, you have been continuously watching over our affairs.” God said: “Your request is granted, O Moses!” (24-36)

### **Explanation**

وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَى ۙ

This style has been used in the Qur’ān to warn and threaten as well as to urge and exhort. Here occasion and context shows that it is used in the latter meaning. The implication is that the

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9. And has the story of Moses come to your knowledge.

Prophet (sws) is asked whether he has heard the account of Moses (sws). God shall narrate it to him. In it, he will find all the answers to questions that confront him in his current or future phases of preaching. It should be kept in mind that the reason that the anecdote of Moses (sws) is repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'ān in various styles is that it was the legacy of Moses' (sws) nation that has been transferred to the Prophet's nation. Before the Prophet (sws), it was Moses (sws) who had been given the *sharī'ah*. The precarious phases which Moses (sws) faced in his preaching and the way he was helped by God were a source of great guidance and inspiration for the Prophet (sws). At the same time, the mistakes committed by the Israelites at every step and the guidance they received to mend their ways were a great source of teaching for the followers of the Prophet (sws). Readers may give due importance to this anecdote as such. It is, in fact, their own tale and not that of the others'.

إِذْ رَأَيْنَا أَفْقَالَ لِهَيْلِهِ امْكُشُوا إِلَيْنَا إِنَّا نَسْتَنْتِ نَارَ الْعَلَىٰ إِنَّا نَكُنُّم مِّنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ أَوْ أَجْدُ عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى ۝١٠

Now begins the anecdote of Moses (sws) from the time he was called upon to accept the responsibility of God's messenger. This took place when he was returning from Madyan with his family.

It is evident from the word *اِنْسْتُ* that he had not seen a big fire burning but only some sort of a flame which shimmered and then disappeared, and perhaps no one else saw it. From here, this word also began to be used to mean “to see and observe intently.”

Had it been a blazing fire, Moses (sws) would have indicated that a fire was burning at a distance and that he would go there to find out the way from anyone there; in case, there was none there, he would return with an ember to shield them from the biting cold.

فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ يٰمُوسَىٰ ۖ إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ ۚ إِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى ۝١١

As is evident from the verses, the first directive given to Moses (sws) was to take off his shoes. This is not only among the

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10. When he saw a flame, he said to his family: “Wait here you people I see fire so that I can bring an ember from it for you or perhaps am able to find some information there about the way.”

11. Then when he reached near it, a voice called: “Moses! It is I, your Lord. So, take off your shoes because you are in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā.”

etiquette of cleanliness but also a norm of decency and humility. Thus, taking off shoes in the mosques has been made mandatory precisely for this reason. They are places of gathering in God's presence for which both cleanliness and humility are essential. Some people are of the opinion that if the shoes are clean, they can be worn in the mosque. However, this is not correct because this would be against decency and humility which is a also condition to enter the mosques just as cleanliness is.

The reason for asking Moses (sws) to take off his shoes is that he was in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā. This is a vast flat land situated at the base of mount Sinai. All parts of the earth have been created by God and do not have any superiority over one another except if some part has some special association with God. The valley of Sinai has some special distinctions: God spoke to Moses (sws) here and made His reflection manifest on mount Sinai. For this reason, it is called sacred in this verse.

12 ﴿وَإِنَّا اخْتَرْنَاكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَىٰ﴾

The word *استمع* means “to listen attentively.” This sentence is meant to focus the attention of Moses (sws) before uttering what is really meant to be communicated to him. Evident from this verse is the honour and respect which Moses (sws) acquired after being appointed God's messenger and also the great responsibility which was imposed on him in this capacity.

13 ﴿إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي﴾

This is the first instruction given to Moses (sws) and it is something which has been given to all messengers of God. An analysis of this verse shows that three things are mentioned in it.

Firstly, the belief of monotheism is alluded to because it occupies the central place in religion. As far as believing in God is concerned, the world has always believed in Him. Denying Him is a fashion of current times. However, associating partners with Him has always afflicted mankind in some form or the

12. “And I have chosen you. So, intently listen to what is being revealed to you.”

13. “Indeed, I alone am God; there is no deity besides Me. So, worship Me and be diligent in the prayer to keep Me in remembrance.”

other. Thus, every messenger was first instructed in this belief and every messenger launched an offensive against polytheism the foremost.

The second instruction given to Moses (sws) was to worship God. Worship is God's right alone. As God, He must be worshipped and since He has no partner, it is essential that this worship be done without associating anyone with Him. One of the consequences of this worship, as has been explained at other instances, is that He be obeyed too. Just as it is not permissible to worship anyone, it is also not permissible to willingly obey anyone against His directives. The real essence of worship is to express one's servitude before God, revive one's promise of obeying Him and of showing sincerity to Him and to keep Him in remembrance. Thus it is absolutely against one's obligation to God to glorify Him but to fashion a *sharī'ah* or to acknowledge this right for someone else. This is polytheism. I have presented arguments to validate this in my book *Ḥaqīqat-i Shirk o Tawḥīd* (The Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism).

The third thing is the prayer. The word used with it is *إقامة*. It means to diligently offer it. It is mentioned to keep God in permanent remembrance. Whether it is offered individually or collectively, it is the greatest means of protecting God's remembrance and also its highest and most effective manifestation. For this reason, after professing belief in monotheism, all messengers were asked to observe it the foremost. Through the prayer, a person keeps in remembrance his covenant of servitude with God and it is through it that an *ummah* keeps in remembrance its covenant made with God. If an individual or a group of people show neglect in offering the prayer, it will be as if they have shown neglect to the whole religion. This has been explained under verse 59 of Sūrah Maryam. Readers may look it up.

14. **﴿١٥﴾** إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا لِتُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَىٰ

This verse a reminder of the hereafter and the word used for it is *آتِيَةٌ*. It does not merely refer to its coming but the fact that it is destined to come. This is because it occurs in the form of a

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14. "Indeed, the Hereafter is sure to come. I shall strive to keep it hidden so that every person is rewarded for his deeds."

subject-noun (*fā'il*) and not a verb, and thus has an element of stress in it. It may be kept in mind that people have generally not rejected the hereafter in the absolute sense. Rather they have expressed it being improbable. For this reason, not only has the Qur'ān validated its arrival but also emphasized its certainty.

The verse expresses the real purpose of its arrival: people will necessarily be rewarded or punished for their deeds. If this does not happen, it would mean that this world has not been created by someone merciful and compassionate. In such a case, it becomes a place of amusement and this obviously is totally illogical. The words *بِهَا تُنْجَى* also highlight the fact that it is essential that every person be treated according to his deeds only. If a person has satanic deeds but attains the status of the righteous or is absolved of accountability because of someone's intercession or because of his own lineage, it would only mean that it is not character and deeds which carry weight before God; rather intercession and lineage do.

The words *أَكَادُ أَخْفِيهَا* form a very subtle parenthetical sentence. It is not just said: "I will hide the Day of Judgement." The words used are: "I will strive to keep it hidden." Those who have an appreciation of literary Arabic know that the word *أَكَادُ* has incorporated the meaning that even though God has concealed the Day of Judgement and will continue to do so, it is very eager to get exposed. In verse 187 of Sūrah al-A'rāf, this subject<sup>15</sup> is stated by the words: *ثُقُلْتُ فِي السَّلَوتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا تَأْتِيكُمْ إِلَّا بَغْتَةً* (both the heavens and the earth are burdened by its weight; it will suddenly come to you).

<sup>16</sup> *فَلَا يَصُدُّكَ عَنْهَا مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَتَرْدَى* ﴿١٦﴾

The antecedent of the pronoun in *عَنْهَا* is *صَلَاةٌ* and that of *بِهَا* is *السَّاعَةُ*.

Someone can regard this interpretation of the verse to be the result of ambiguity in the pronouns which is considered to be a defect of a discourse. However, it is a defect when there is no indication found in the discourse to ascertain their antecedents.

15. For its detailed explanation, see: vol. 3, 404.

16. Thus, anyone who does not believe in the Hereafter and follows his desires should not make you negligent of the prayer lest you perish."

In the presence of a clear indication, this ambiguity is not a defect; it, in fact, imparts brevity to a sentence. Examples of this usage can be found in the works of the eloquent literati.

Here the indication is very apparent. After a mention of the prayer and the hereafter two verbs are used: **يُؤْمِنُ** and **يُصَدِّقَ**. Everyone having a flair for language instantly knows that the first of these collocates with **صَلَاةً** (the prayer) and the second with **السَّاعَةَ** (the hereafter). Among past scholars, Abū Muslim also holds this opinion and I consider it to be correct in all respects.

On the basis of philosophy of religion too, if one reflects, it becomes evident that a person who does not have a firm belief in the hereafter will always regard the prayer to be a burden. The Qur'ān specifies it thus:

وَأَنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ الَّذِينَ يَنْظُرُونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلْقُوا رَبَّهُمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ  
(٤٥ : ٤٦)

And, undoubtedly, this is exacting but not to those who fear the Almighty, who think that they have to meet their Lord and that to Him alone they also have to return. (2:45-46)

It is also similarly mentioned in the Qur'ān that following one's desires and forsaking the prayer mutually necessitate one another. It is stated in Sūrah Maryam:

فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ أَضَاعُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَاتَّبَعُوا الشَّهْوَةَ فَسُوفَ يَلْقَوْنَ غِيًّا  
(١٩ : ٥٩)

Then, after them, those wicked succeeded them who squandered the prayer and followed their desires. So, soon they will face the consequences of going astray. (19:59)

It is evident from these verses that after monotheism, it is the prayer to which Moses (sws) was directed the foremost and it was the hereafter which he was specially reminded of. This is also in consonance with the history of God's prophets, as is evident from Sūrah Maryam. However, the misfortune of the Jews is lamentable that they squandered the prayer and also became indifferent to the hereafter. It may be a cause of amazement for the readers that their scriptures do mention the

ritual of animal sacrifice, but the prayer, specially the one in the temple, is mentioned at just one place in chapter 26 of the book of Deuteronomy. Some of their jurists even think that Moses (sws) never bade them to offer the prayer and if it is mentioned in the Torah, then it is because of later editors who added it. As for their belief in the hereafter, their Sadducees never believed in it. Their view was that reward and punishment took place in this world. It seems that the Murijites among the Muslims have also taken their belief from them.

The words “lest you perish” at the end is meant to warn the addressees. If they become indifferent to the prayer and to the hereafter, they will be ruined. These two things protect the whole religion and safeguard people from the trials of Satan. He who becomes negligent of them is as if he has consigned himself to Satan.

17 ﴿وَمَا تِلْكَ يَمِينُكَ يُوُوسَىٰ﴾

The word *يَمِينٌ* means “a hand” irrespective of being right or left. Several examples of this can be found in classical Arabic literature.

Obviously, this question is not meant to solicit an answer. It is meant to express affection and liking. It is similar to a question posed to a child by a person even though he knows what is in his hands. This question was asked about something that would in future would become the source of miracles at the hands of Moses (sws).

18 ﴿قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ أَتَوَكَّأُ عَلَيْهَا وَأَهُشُّ بِهَا عَلَىٰ غَنَمِي وَلِيَ فِيهَا مَآرِبُ أُخْرَىٰ﴾

*هش* means to bring down leaves from a tree. ‘Ukbarī is of the opinion that the words *أَهُشُّ بِهَا عَلَىٰ غَنَمِي* mean *أَقْوُمُ بِهَا عَلَىٰ غَنَمِي* (I protect and tend to my herd through it).<sup>19</sup> If linguistic evidence can support this meaning, it would be very apt, but ‘Ukbarī has not

17. “And what is this in your hands, O Moses!”

18. He replied: “This is my staff. I lean on it and through it bring down leaves for my flock. And I also have other uses in it.”

19. Abū al-Baqā’ ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abdullāh al-‘Ukbarī, *Imlā’ mā manna bihī al-Raḥmān min wujūh al-i-rāb wa al-qirā’āt*, vol. 2, (Lahore: Maktabah ‘ilmiyyah, n.d.), 120.

presented any evidence. So I have followed its common meaning in this regard.

It is clear from Moses' answer that he did not merely respond to the question; he went much further and elaborated quite a lot. He could have just said that there was a staff in his hand. But he fully understood that the question posed was not merely an inquiry, it carried a great amount of affection in it. Thus he went into detail to answer it anticipating that this would open up the way to more exchange. If the questioner is very loved and sought after, prolonging the conversation with him is a natural desire.

20 ﴿قَالَ أَلْقَهَا يُوسُفُ﴾ ﴿١٩﴾ فَأَلْقَهَا فَإِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَى ﴿٢٠﴾

The verses express what ensued next.

21 ﴿قَالَ خُذْهَا وَلَا تَخَفْ﴾ ﴿٢١﴾ سَنُعِيدُهَا سِيرَتَهَا الْأُولَى ﴿٢٢﴾

Fearing a snake is something natural. Moses (sws) was scared because he thought that the staff he could use to kill the snake with had itself become a snake. He was thence assured by the Almighty.

22 ﴿وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ إِلَى جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ آيَةً أُخْرَى﴾ ﴿٢٢﴾

At the same time, a second directive was given to Moses (sws), as is spelled out in the verse.

The verse specifies that the whiteness of the hand would not be because of any ailment; it would actually be a sign from God. This clarification refutes the Bible in which the whiteness of the arm is regarded to be because of the ailment of leprosy. It may also be noted that this was not meant to be a permanent sign. The words of the Qur'ān bear witness that this would only happen when Moses (sws) drew his hand into his gown and then take it out. An ailment could be suspected if the hand had permanently turned white. And if this had happened, then how could it have

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20. God said: "Place it on the ground, O Moses." He placed it. So, suddenly it became a slithering serpent."

21. God said: "Pick it up and fear not. We shall return it again to its first shape."

22. "And draw your hand towards your arm. It will emerge from there white without any illness as a second sign."

been regarded as a miracle?

The words *آيَةً أُخْرَى* are not an independent sentence. They form a second accusative of state (*ḥāl*). The first was that the hand would emerge white not because of any ailment and the second was that it would emerge as a sign from God. This aspect has been taken into account in the translation.

23. *لِنُرِيكَ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا الْكُبْرَى*

This verse forms permanent glad tidings for Moses (sws): apparently, these are just two miracles; however, they are not merely two; concealed in them are some other great ones; when he faces trials later in life, he will see how these miracles manifest from them to express the power and might of God.

Thus, details of all the miracles which Moses (sws) showed to the Pharaoh are presented in the Torah. In the Qur'ān too, the ones which are mentioned show their majestic nature. It was this staff which created a way in the sea for Moses (sws) and the Israelites, and from it he was able to make twelve springs gush from the mountain.

After imparting Moses (sws) with the teaching of monotheism and the hereafter and after equipping him with miracles, he was asked to go to the Pharaoh to try to make him fear God and His wrath since he had become very tyrannical. Here a question may arise: according to the established practice of God, miracles are given to the Prophets when their nations vehemently demand them and the purpose of giving them these miracles is conclusive communication of the truth so that those who are not using their intellect and are persistent on this demand are left with no excuse. If this is the case, then why was an exception created for Moses (sws) as he was given these miracles as soon as he was chosen as a prophet? The answer to this question is that he was being sent to a tyrannical and cruel ruler who was his extreme enemy both in his individual and in his collective capacity. As soon as the Pharaoh knew that Moses (sws) was sent from God, he would immediately order his execution, let alone listen to and understand his message. In fact, he had already ordered his execution when he had killed a Copt. However, Moses (sws) had

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23. "So that We may make you observe some great signs of Ours."

sneaked away to Madyan and hence he could not succeed in his plan. If Moses (sws) had gone to such a tyrannical and despotic ruler to warn him in the capacity of God's Messenger, how could he even have tolerated listening to him? He could only have been prepared to listen to him if he had shown a sign that struck awe in him. Thus, at the very outset, the Almighty equipped Moses (sws) with two miracles through the help of which he remained secure from every onslaught of his enemies and, as is evident from succeeding verses, that as soon as he came to the Pharaoh he presented these miracles before him. The purpose was to caution him that if he indulged in some foul play, Moses (sws) had not come to him empty handed: he had a staff which could smash all conceit and arrogance to pieces.

<sup>24</sup> اذْهَبْ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ

This was the first campaign assigned to Moses (sws). Details of the Pharaoh's tyranny are mentioned in detail in the explanation of Sūrah al-A'rāf. He regarded himself to be the supreme God and was regarded as an avatar of the greatest deity of the Egyptians: the Sun. How despotic and oppressive he was can be sufficiently gauged from the fact that he had ordered that all male off-spring born of the Israelites in his kingdom be put to death or cast into the sea. Only girls were allowed to live so that they could serve as slave-maidens. How can there be two opinions about the rebellious nature of such a person? Since Moses (sws) was fully aware of this nature; in fact, had suffered because of it, the Almighty has not pointed to any details of his rebelliousness.

Here it should be kept in mind that God's Messengers foremost address and warn the leaders and chiefs of their society. This is because it is through them that the whole society is administered. If they are reformed, the whole society becomes quickly reformed and everyone is awe-inspired by the logic and persuasive nature of the call of the prophets. However, if these leaders instead choose to stubbornly deny, this too has a positive aspect for the preaching of the prophets: the hollow nature of their logic becomes evident to their followers. If they later accept the truth, they do so with full insight and comprehension and this

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24. "Go to the Pharaoh. He has become a great tyrant."

insight creates in them the power to conquer the hearts of people. Hitherto, they were fishermen who would catch fish from the sea and later they become people who would grab people to lead them to the path of the truth. Contrary to this, movements who begin their campaigns through public propaganda rely on inciting the emotions of people. It is because of their participation that these movements prosper and remain functional as long as this participation continues. Sense and reason have no role in them and neither can they ever have. It cannot be denied that emotions have a strong role but if only they are relied upon, one can easily know the consequence.

قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي ﴿٢٥﴾ وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي ﴿٢٦﴾ وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِّنْ لِّسَانِي ﴿٢٧﴾ يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي ﴿٢٨﴾ وَاجْعَلْ لِّي وَزِيرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِي ﴿٢٩﴾ هَؤُلَاءِ أَخِي ﴿٣٠﴾ اشْدُدْ بِهِ أَزْرِي ﴿٣١﴾ وَأَشْرِكْهُ فِي أَمْرِي ﴿٣٢﴾ كَيْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٣٣﴾ وَنَذْكُرَكَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٣٤﴾ إِنَّكَ كُنْتَ بِنَا بَصِيرًا ﴿٣٥﴾ قَالَ قَدْ أُوتِيتَ سُؤْلَكَ يَا مُوسَى ﴿٣٦﴾

As soon as Moses (sws) came to know that he had been appointed a messenger and was required to go to the Pharaoh in this capacity to preach to him, he immediately uttered the supplication cited in the verses. Every word of this supplication shows how heavy Moses (sws) regarded this burden to be and how earnestly he pleaded before God to help him in fulfilling its responsibilities. Leaders who are slaves of worldly status live and die in their infatuation for leadership. Yet the prophets of God are devoid of any such desire. When God chooses them for leadership, they tremble when they imagine its responsibilities and pray to God that if He has burdened them with this responsibility, He should provide them with the strength to bear it and help and guide them at every step.

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25. He prayed: "Lord! Open my chest for me and make my task easy for me and free my tongue from its impediment so that people are able to understand what I say. And by appointing my brother Aaron from my family a helper for me strengthen my back, and make him share my responsibility so that as much as possible we are able to extol and glorify you and spread your word far and wide. Indeed, you have been continuously watching over our affairs." God said: "Your request is granted, O Moses!"

Consider Moses' words: قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي. First of all, Moses prayed for inner peace and satisfaction. If the responsibility is onerous and a person is fully aware of its requisites, the heart of every sensitive individual feels burdened. This is not a sign of weakness; in fact, it shows how conscientious he is. Prophets of God do not demand prophethood; on the contrary, as indicated earlier, they are given this responsibility from God. For this reason, they are naturally worried and apprehensive about carrying it out in the best way. This burden in the heart can only be done away with by God's grace. He alone instils inner strength and provides guidance and conviction for future phases. It is only then that the heart is comforted and morale boosted. It may be kept in mind here that the prophets of God are not imparted knowledge and conviction in one go. They are given these provisions in accordance with their needs and circumstances. On their part, they keep yearning for more.

Next he prayed: وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي. After requesting God to give him peace of mind and inner satisfaction, Moses (sws) implores God to ease out the path for him and make the circumstances conducive for his success. No doubt, the task is difficult but God's grace can remove all impediments and make the path smooth to tread.

His subsequent words وَاخْلُفْ عَقْدَةً مِنِّي لَيْسَانِي beseech God in a very humble way to grant him eloquence in speech in order to make his preaching impactful. It may be kept in mind that in those days, the sole means of communication was oratory and effective communication. For this reason, orators and speaker were respected the most in those times. Such was the extent of this in Arabia that the most powerful speaker would actually end up becoming the leader of his tribe. Without mesmerizing his audience through words, no one in those times could discharge the responsibilities of a leader in the optimum way.

Today the invention of the printing press has increased the importance of the written word and in fact it now occupies primary significance. If a person is able to secure help of the printing press, he can claim to surpass Demosthenes in oratory even though he may not be able to articulate a few sentences effectively. However, before the invention of the press, speech and oratory had great importance. This was

specially true for those who had leadership roles. It is evident from the Qur'ān that Moses (sws) was not a powerful speaker. Though this trait is not a requisite for prophethood yet, as indicated earlier, it has great significance in preaching one's message. Thus when Moses (sws) was given the responsibility of a prophet, he felt this deficiency in him and among others things, he prayed to God to bless him with this skill.

Realizing this deficiency in himself, he also requested God to make his elder brother Aaron (sws) his partner. It is evident from both the Torah and the Qur'ān that Aaron (sws) was a very eloquent orator. Moses (sws) rightly thought that if he could obtain his help, his own shortcoming would be taken care of.

In Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, his prayer is mentioned in the following words:

وَإِخِي هَارُونَ هُوَ أَفْصَحُ مِنِّي لِسَانًا فَأَرْسَلْهُ مَعِيَ رِدْءًا يُصَدِّقُنِي ۚ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُكَذِّبُونِ  
(٣٤ : ٢٨)

And my brother Aaron is more eloquent than me. Send him with me also as my helper that he may support me. I fear that these people will reject me. (28:34)

It is clearly evident from this verse that the real need for which Moses (sws) requested the help of his brother Aaron (sws) was because he was a powerful speaker. He wanted to fill the void of his own deficiency through the skill of his brother so that he could present his message to people in a more effective way.

In Sūrah al-Shu'arā', precisely this aspect has been stated thus:

وَيَضِيقُ صَدْرِي وَلَا يَنْطَلِقُ لِسَانِي فَأَرْسِلْ إِلَى هَارُونَ (٢٦ : ١٣)

And my chest is in discomfort and my tongue is also not fluent; so send message to Aaron. (26:13)

It is evident from these verses that Moses (sws) was not a very powerful orator; but there are no grounds to believe that he stammered. This is actually what the Torah says. It is from there that it entered *tafsīr* books and then in order to authenticate it, exegetes fabricated an incident. The extent of the veracity of the Torah can be gauged from the fact that it regards the whiteness

of Moses' hand to be due to leprosy. It is quite probable for those who regard their prophet to be a patient of leprosy to ascribe stammering to him as well.

Nevertheless, there is nothing in the Qur'ān that indicates he stammered. The request found in the words **وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِّن لِّسَانِي يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي** is not to relieve him of stammering but to bless him with the power of oratory. This was essential for him in order to effectively discharge his duty as God's Messenger. The request made was in a very humble style. He never requested God to make him a powerful speaker who conquers the hearts of people; on the other hand, he very humbly requested God to bless him with fluent speech so that people were able to understand. This prayer is not necessarily from a person who suffers from stammering. Even a very articulate speaker prays and should pray for this ability. At times, thoughts arise in such a tumultuous way in the heart of a very eloquent person that he finds himself at a loss to express them orally or in written form. Moses (sws) was not a person who merely voiced a slogan like common people; he wanted to teach and explain the facts and secrets of religion and that too in front of people who were not only vehemently denying him but were also after his life. Moreover, Moses (sws) did not want to do his job in a perfunctory way; his desire was to vanquish the hearts of his adversaries. A change of heart was not expected from them; so, he requested his Lord to bless him with the prowess and expression to make them understand his message.

In short, the notion that Moses (sws) used to stammer has no basis. Regardless of the fact that just as God protects His messengers from moral shortcomings, He also protects them from physical defects, the most important point is that the Qur'ān does not in any way corroborate this notion. Under the sarcastic accusation of the Pharaoh **وَلَا يَكَادُ يُبِينُ** (he cannot speak clearly) cited in verse 52 of Sūrah al-Zukhruf, readers can read more on this topic.

In the next part of his prayer **وَاجْعَلْ لِّي وَزِيرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِي** هُزُونَ أَخِي Moses (sws) has requested Aaron (sws) as his helper. In the verses of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ and Sūrah al-Shu'arā' cited earlier, he had made this request to cater for his own deficiency in oratory. He reckoned that his brother Aaron (sws) would effectively fill this

void in him. He was his elder brother and he also trusted his character and conduct and most of all he was an acclaimed and eloquent speaker, as is evident from the Torah. When a person with all these traits is found in one's own family, it is quite natural that Moses (sws) regard him to be the most worthy of fulfilling this role. The words *مِنْ أَهْلِي* (from my family) should not give the wrong impression that this selection had anything to do with family bias. This could have been the case if only the family was the basis of this choice. However, when the basis of selection is attributes, there is no chance of familial bias playing any role. In fact, the guidance obtained from this prayer is that when a person prays for God's grace, he should first of all include his family in this prayer on the condition that they are righteous. Readers may look up the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Baqarah where the prayer of Abraham (sws) is mentioned.

Consider next the words *أَشْدُدْ بِيَ أَزْرِي وَأَشْرِكْهُ فِي أَمْرِي*. The word *أَزْر* means "back." The request to God by Moses (sws) is to strengthen his back by making Aaron (sws) his partner so that he could bear the burden of his responsibility in a befitting way. It is evident from the words *وَأَشْرِكْهُ فِي أَمْرِي* that the request made by Moses (sws) was not merely to make Aaron (sws) his companion but to actually make him a prophet as well: he too should be responsible before God in this capacity and he also should be directly guided and protected by God. This was a very significant request because as has been explained under verse 53 of Sūrah Maryam it is not known if ever a prophet was made the helper of another prophet. However, God showed favour to Moses (sws) and accepted his request. Leaders who are slaves to the pleasures of this world feel so jealous that even for small gains and positions, they do not let others come near them. Yet, a true comprehension of entrusted responsibilities makes even a prophet pray to God to make someone share his task.

Here it may be noted that in the Torah, Aaron (sws) is not mentioned the way he is in the Qur'ān. In the Torah, he is mentioned as a companion and spokesman of Moses (sws) who was actually responsible for the prank played by Sāmirī. The Qur'ān has unveiled the true character of these personalities.

The verses *فِي نَسَبِكَ كَثِيرًا وَتَذَكَّرُكَ كَثِيرًا* refer to the fact that the reason for making Aaron (sws) his partner in prophethood was that both

could together glorify and remember God as much as possible. Obviously, here individual glorification and remembrance is not implied; it refers to its collective form and actually means discharging the responsibility of prophethood. The public and private lives of all those who follow prophets of God in guiding people are an epitome of glorification and remembrance. Their prayers in the mosque constitute glorification and remembrance and their tasks at their work places also constitute these. In short, what they do is the same regardless of their locus. In verse 14 of this *sūrah*, it has been stated: اَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي (adhere to the prayer to remember me) and then in verse 41 both Moses (sws) and Aaron are directed to go to the court of the Pharaoh with the guidance: لَا تَنْيَا فِي ذِكْرِي (both of you do not be negligent in remembering Me). Obviously, here remembrance refers to the responsibility of warning the Pharaoh.

There is a literary element found in the adjacent mention of glorification and remembrance. The former is meant to absolve someone of negative traits and the latter affirms positive traits in someone and both these are necessary to engender a relationship with God on the right footing. In other words, things which are against the majesty of God, His attributes and liking should be negated and things which are in harmony with His majesty, attributes and directives should be affirmed and expressed. Both these things come together to constitute the belief and character of a believer. Moreover, negation has priority over affirmation. Unless a person declares to rebel against all false deities, he cannot be faithful to God. Before saying **إِلَّا اللَّهُ** it is essential to utter: **لَا إِلَهَ**.

The words **إِنَّكَ كُنْتَ بِنَايِمًا** are a plea in favour of this prayer just as Zacharias mentioned the words **مَا كُنْتُ بِدُعَايِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا** (I have never remained deprived regarding acceptance of my prayer) in favour of his prayer. They have already been explained under verse 4 of *Sūrah Maryam*. The best plea before God is not one's deeds; rather, it is pleading before Him on the basis of His grace and compassion. When a person asks with such faith in God Who has given him everything without asking, how can he deprive that person when he actually asks from Him? Here Moses (sws) too has pleaded to God by referring to His dealing with himself and his brother. His implication is: you have always

watched over us; now that we are preparing to uplift your cause, how can we be deprived of Your grace.

Consider next the part: قَالَ قَدْ أُوتِيتَ سُؤْلَكَ يَمُوسَى. The words سُؤْل and سُؤَال have the same meaning: request and plea. It is stated that the request of Moses (sws) has been granted. Here there is a great amount of affection found in the invocate يَمُوسَى and the words in which his prayer was accepted also show great splendour. As soon as his prayer ended, he was given glad tidings of its acceptance. In other words, everything was accepted in the blink of an eye without any hesitation and without any exception. Obviously, included in this acceptance is also the prayer of Moses (sws) which he made to increase his power of speech. He was blessed with this power and Aaron (sws) was made his helper. If a prayer is made for the right objective at the right time in a sincere way, it is accepted by God.

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