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MOSES VERSUS PHARAOH

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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC PUBLISHERS
(PRIVATE) LIMITED

III-E-2, Commercial Area, Nazimabad

KARACHI — PAKISTAN

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First Edition July 1979
Second Edition January 1987

Price :

Published By
AKHLAQ HUSAIN, MANAGING DIRECTOR,
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC PUBLISHERS LTD KARACHI
Printed at Ahmed Brothers Printers, Nazimabad 2, Karachi

MOSES VERSUS PHARAOH

فہرست لائبریری
(شعبہ کتب)
بیت المسجد - مقالہ نشریہ
مولچر بازار - کراچی

Contents

Foreword	9
Introduction	14
The Aim and Object of the Story of Moses as narrated in the Holy Qur'an	17
The Bearer of the last Shari'ah before the Holy Prophet	17
The Nearest Period	18
Two Living Symbols of History	18
Fresh Vigour and Enthusiasm for the Faithful	18
Glad Tidings for the Believers	19
The Condition of Egypt at the Birth of Moses	22
Partial Genocide	22
Ultimate end of Oppression — The Sunnah of Allah	24
Pharaoh's Apprehensions and Arrangements	25
The Birth of Moses	26
Moses in Possession of Pharaoh	28
The Condition of the Mother of Moses	29
Intelligence of the Sister	30
Arrangement for suckling Moses	31
An Incident and Moses' Migration to Midyan	32
Patrolling in the City	32
Murder of a Qibti	32
Conspiracy Against the life of Moses	34
Migration to Midyan	34
Entry into Midyan and the Beginning of Nomad Life	36
Supplication to God	37
Arrival at the Well	37
Meeting Hadrat Reuel	38
Proposal for Marriage	39
The Auspicious Return Journey and Conferment of Prophethood	41
Search for fire	41
The First Message of Allah	44
Bestowal of Miracles	46

The Aim and Object of Bestowing	47
Miracles upon Moses	48
Order for Setting out on the Mission	48
Supplication of Moses	50
Appologies of Moses	51
Grant of the Prayer	52
Exaltation of Aaron to Prophethood	53
Instructions at the Time of Proceeding	55
Technique of Propagation	55
Consolation and Glad Tidings	55
Declaration of Prophethood and	
Demand for Freedom of Bani Israel	58
Pharaoh Speaks of the Favours Conferred on Moses	60
Dialogue Between Pharaoh and Moses	60
Pharaoh's Joke	65
Pharaoh's Threat	67
The Challenge of Pharaoh	67
Display of Miracles in the Court	67
Obstinacy of Pharaoh	68
Charges of Pharaoh	68
Flattery of the Courtiers	69
Intelligence of the Courtiers in Appreciating the Implications of the Call	72
The Challenge for a Contest with the Magicians	73
Pharaoh's Preparations for the Contest	75
Magicians in the Court of Pharaoh	76
The Contest with the Magicians	79
A Warning to the Magicians	79
Effect of the Warning	79
The Challenge for Contest	80
Effect of Magic	81
Moses' Victory	82
Magicians' Acceptance of the Truth	83
Threats and Accusations by Pharaoh	85
Perseverance and Determination of the Magicians	87
Retaliation after Defeat	91
Consultation with the Courtiers	91
A New Reign of Persecution	91
Courage of Youngmen in Declaring their Faith	92
Advice of Moses	93
Resolution of the Youngmen	94

Cowardice of the Bani Isreal	96
Glad Tidings of Moses	97
Torments to the People of Pharaoh	98
Stubbornness of the People of Pharaoh	99
The New Trap of Pharaoh	101
Mentality of an Autocratic Ruler	103
The Impact and Intrusion of Islamic Movement	105
in Pharaoh's Court	105
Decision to Kill Moses	106
Pharaoh's Tactics	108
The Indifferent Attitude of Moses	108
Proclamation of Faith by the Believers	111
Contemptuous Attitude of Pharaoh	112
The Final Reformatory Attempt of the True Believers	113
Deliverance of the True Believer	115
Korah An Israelite Aristocrat	115
Korah's Conduct	116
Korah's Wealth	117
Korah's Mentality	118
Korah's Display of Wealth	118
Envy of the Foolish	119
Curse of Moses	119
Acceptance of the Prayer	120
Advice of the Wise	122
Reorganization of the Call	122
Establishment of Missionary Centre	123
Can Only Open Declaration of Faith	123
Fulfil the Mission?	123
Different Methods of Propagation	124
The Last Warning of Moses to Pharaoh	126
Migration	126
Moses' Supplication to his Lord	126
Order to Migrate	127
Precautions Adopted by Moses	128
Pharaoh's Arrangements	130
Pursuance of Moses	130
Moaning of the Israelites	131
Prophetic Steadfastness of Moses	131
Guidance of Divine Inspiration	131
Renting the Sea	132
Pharaoh's Entry into the Sea	132

How Pharaoh Drowned	132
Pharaoh's Declaration of Faith	133
Doom of Pharaoh and God's Observation thereon	135
The Consequences of Pride and Arrogance	135
Elusiveness of the World	136
Sunnah of God and Glad Tidings for the Believers	138
The Tyrants Would be Annihilated	138
Condemnation for the Haughty	139
Severe Punishment for the Disbelievers	139
The Disobedient Shall Not be Granted Pardon	140
Glad Tidings to the Oppressed Folk to	
Inherit Land	140
The Doom of the Arrogant	141
Torment on the Arrogant	141
Domination and Victory for the Believers	141
Guidance and Leadership	142
The Story of Pharaoh and Moses - A Tremendous Sign	145

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

FOREWORD

The familiarity with the style in which the stories and events of the ancient Prophets have been narrated in the Holy Qur'an is absolutely essential for every standard-bearer of Islam and without a deep and comprehensive study of these stories and events, the mission of the propagation of Islam cannot be successfully carried on. The stories related in the Holy Qur'an are of paramount significance in many respects. A student of the Holy Qur'an cannot grasp its true meaning nor can he imbibe its true spirit unless he keeps in view all the aspects of these stories.

The first thing is that the events pertaining to the past nations, as narrated in the Holy Qur'an, contain authentic and accurate record of the history of mankind not to be found in any other book. The information and knowledge about the ancient history of man and the rise and fall of the past nations, as contained in the abrogated books of the past, various historical documents, investigations and research works, is mainly based on presumptions and conjectures. We are highly indebted to the Holy Qur'an for its vivid portrayal of the true pictures of the various important stages and incidents of human history, i.e., how man was born hundred million years ago and how many important civilizations and nations existed at different times on the planet of the earth. Quite authentic and reliable information is gleaned through the stories narrated in the Holy Qur'an. This knowledge has not been handed down to the posterities by a historian born after lapse of centuries following the occurrence of these historical events, but it has been vouchsafed to us by the Creator who has created man and history.

If the ancient books had remained immune from interpolation and distortion, they would have constituted the authentic and accurate record of Islam and history, but woe to the

believers in these books, whether they were jews or Christians, who not only made additions and alterations in these books but also distorted the characters of their prophets and reformers and levelled such false accusations against them as were unbecoming even of a common man, not to speak of a prophet. The second munificence of the Holy Qur'an is that it absolves of the charges levelled against them and restores their prestige. This aspect of the Holy Qur'an is of special significance that by presenting the true portraits of the characters of the ancient Prophets, it has laid down the basic concept of the history of mankind.

The general significance of the history of mankind is that it acquaints the man of today with the past events, and its special significance lies in the fact that the man of today learns a lesson from these events and experiences of the past. This is the aim and object of the stories narrated in the Holy Qur'an. These tell us how the nations who submitted to the will of Allah were granted emancipation and prosperity, whereas the nations who defied the Commandments of Allah met with disaster and ruin. This aspect is conspicuous in all the stories mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. The study of the history of mankind could be beneficial if we took a warning from it and did not consider it only a fiction. No literature can be more useful than the Qur'anic stories for the achievement of this purpose. The philosophy of the rise and fall of a people is fully reflected in these stories. Only the seeker of a lesson from them is needed.

The real and significant aspect of the Qur'anic stories is that these are the gateways to that continuous and eternal movement of Islam which was first launched by the Prophet Adam. This movement reached its perfection under the auspicious guidance of the Holy Prophet, Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and would continue till eternity through the noble and righteous men of his Ummah. The details of this faith-inspiring and exemplary movement can be read in these Qur'anic stories. The standard-bearers of Islam, preachers and those entrusted with the duty to guide people to the True Religion can enrich not only their souls with the heart-warming message of this true and eternal movement, but they will also come to know what trials and

tribulations the caravans of Islam had to face at different times; what methods were adopted by the leaders of the movement for the establishment of the True Religion, according to the prevailing conditions and stages; and what were the causes of their success and of their failure. In short, the preacher of the truth will find his own story being told in these scriptural stories. He will study what line of action may be adopted by him and what measures should be taken by him to bring the righteous struggle to a successful end. This is the reason why these stories were not revealed in continuity but only parts of the events relevant and appropriate to the occasion were revealed and were necessary to impart training and discipline to the movement at its various stages.

The story of Pharaoh and Moses has been narrated in detail in the Holy Qur'an than the other stories. The detail and the novelty of the style in which the struggle between faith and power has been described in this story cannot be found elsewhere. In the point of fact, the precise psycho-analysis of evil and its powerful manoeuvring and as opposed to it the planning and courage of Right and its self-confidence and farsightedness has been explained in an attractive and comprehensive way not found in the stories of the other Prophets of the past. The crusador, fighting in the cause of righteousness will find all that is necessary for framing his future policy.

In Urdu some persons have attempted to reproduce the stories of the Prophets under the heading "The stories of the Prophets", but their endeavours are limited to explaining the chain of events, and the incentive and spirit behind these stories which forms their real essence has been overlooked. The Arabic literature extant on this subject is also based on historical events, but the movement and spirit that worked behind these stories has not been touched upon. Sayyid Abul 'Ala Maudoodi has thrown some light on the real significance and wisdom of these stories in his "Tafhim-ul-Qur'an", in Urdu. In the Arabic language, Sayyid Qutb Shahid in his commentary, "Fi Zilalil Qur'an", has given us illuminating knowledge about these stories from this specific angle of vision. When we glance at these stories, we feel that the events being related to our own age and environment.

However, both "Tafhim-ul-Qur'an" and "Fi Zilalil Qur'an" narrate the events of the Prophets not in the sense of a tale related to the others but in the sense of our own tale. But, since these events are scattered over different pages, there was an urgent need to compile them in the form of a book.

Our old friend, Mr. Akhlaq Husain, has ventured to accomplish the useful task. The book under review is a laudable attempt in this respect. This is now being presented to the readers, who can well judge from the hard labour, inspiring sentiments and vigorous style of the writer that it has been written primarily with a view to furthering the movement of Islam. Right from the birth of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) to the liberation of the children of Israel, all the relative events are based on the events narrated in the Holy Qur'an. These events are scattered over the pages of the Holy Book. In order to go through the whole story one has to study all the Chapters of the Sacred Book. The learned author has taken great pains in collecting all these scattered events. He has arranged them in a chronological order in a way that this book has not only become an excellent compilation work but also has surpassed all other works in points of continuity of contents and lucidity of style and narration, so that the reader while studying spontaneously feels as if the historical battle of Right and Wrong thus fought between Pharaoh and Moses were being waged before our very eyes. The manner in which the compiler of this book has recorded his own observations on this relevant aspects of the events and the skill he has employed in deducing lessons from these stories have not only made this work into a vivid portrait of the battle fought between the Prophet Moses of the Israelites (peace be upon him) and the Pharaoh of Egypt thousands of years ago, but also have made it a mirror in which the fight between Evil and Good is truly reflected and the glimpses of the movements of Moses (peace be upon him) and of Pharaoh of all times can be beheld. Herein lies the real worth of the book. The main object of the Holy Qur'an, too, is that the representatives of Right in the form of Moses (peace be upon him) and those of Wrong in the garb of Pharaoh should be truly and distinctively characterized. Since the learned author has made a comprehensive study of this subject, his style is

both fluent and spontaneous. The author's domestic environment, business and personal labour have a good deal to do with the shaping of his literary taste and the developing of his keen insight, having inculcated in him love for the Holy Qur'an since his very childhood. This work is not only compatible with his missionary zeal but also has a striking harmony with his temperament and taste. The writer of the Foreword hopes the author would compile the stories of Adam and satan, Khalil and Namrood, and Christ and Bani Israel as well as the stories of all the illustrious Prophets (on whom be peace) who passed away before the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). These collected stories and events should be in the possession of every preacher of the Faith.

Ichhra-Lahore
9th July, 1972

Khalil Ahmad Hamidi
Director, Arabic Department
Jama'at-e-Islami, Pakistan.

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

INTRODUCTION

In the course of his study of the Holy Qur'an, the reader comes across incidents, the real meaning and significance of which cannot be appreciated by him unless he visualises the conditions and situations in which the relevant Qur'anic verses were revealed (or such conditions and situations as have been stated in these verses are created).

I do vividly remember that in 1963, when all Pakistan Convention of Jama'at Islami was held in Lahore, Ayyub Government had caused a reign of terror to prevail. When I recited the last Ruku of Surah Baqarah in the evening prayer, there was none among the persons who had come to offer prayer who could restrain his tears, and there were many men whose sobs and cries could clearly be heard. I can never forget the sentiments and feelings which were aroused in my heart at that time.

Similarly, I recited the events of the story of Moses (peace be upon him), as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, many a time and pondered over them but the real aim and object of those events of Moses' story remained hidden from my vision until 1958, when Martial Law was promulgated by Ayyub Khan and the reign of terror and persecution was let loose. The life-strangling and oppressive atmosphere of tyranny and persecution and the characteristic atmosphere of tyranny and persecution and the characteristic environment around Moses (peace be upon him) came vividly before my eyes and the parts of his story which are narrated in different verses of the Holy Qur'an seemed to me as having been linked together. At that time, I recited these verses to my friends, and thereby consoled their frustrated and dejected hearts and infused fresh courage and vigour in them. In those days, I started writing a series of articles in the weekly 'Asia', Lahore, under the heading, "The Battle between Pharaoh and Moses", on the advice and exhortation

of my friends. This series of articles was published in seven continuous instalments.

Some friends of mine who were scholars of Islamic Studies encouraged me in this undertaking and advised me to continue this series of articles, but for all the affectionate advice of my friends I could not carry on this work due to my pre-occupations with business and party matters.

Later on, the happenings in Pakistan, from 1970 to 1972, had a frustrating and depressing influence on the preachers of Islam. In East Pakistan, the lovers of Islam in general and the non-Bengalis in particular were subjected to unbearable tortures, and this movement of oppression and persecution in that part of the country had its repercussions in West Pakistan. In the meantime, the tragic incident of the separation of East Pakistan came about. All these sad incidents drove the adherents of Islam into a dark and dismal abyss of disappointment and despondency. Even a great number of intelligentsia suffered from a deep sense of frustration. This is but a miracle of the Holy Qur'an that during this period of turbulence, I never fell a prey to frustration. At the sight of the miserable plight of my companions, my conviction grew all the stronger that at such critical times turning to the Holy Qur'an was the only panacea for all our woes. So, in the name of Allah, the Almighty, I decided to dispel the atmosphere of frustration and despondency by presenting the story of Pharaoh and Moses (peace be upon him), as stated in the Holy Qur'an, holding out the definite promise of success and victory and breaking glad tidings as well as telling the stories of helplessness and pitiable conditions of the righteous people and the glorious success and victory ultimately won by them in their struggle against Evil and Wrong, so that these should be the source of infusing new zeal and spirit into the frustrated, dejected and disgusted souls and of inculcating in them a firm determination to bear all hardships with perseverance and steadfastness.

As I commenced the work, I thought the subject was not likely to extend beyond seventy or eighty pages and that I would be explaining only two or three verses on one subject. However, I sat down to write; every verse spoke:

کوشش دامن دل می کشد که ایستاست

It was difficult for me to select some verses and leave the others. So, I decided to collect all the Qur'anic verses which have bearing on the one and the same event. This resulted in the compilation of a voluminous book. It is now for the readers to judge as to how far I have succeeded in my effort.

I am thankful to Malik Ghulam 'Ali Sahib, the special assistant of Maulana Abul 'Ala Maudoodi, and Hafiz Khalil Ahmad Hamidi, Director of Arabic Section, Jamaat-e-Islami, Pakistan for their valuable advice and useful assistance and co-operation so kindly extended to me in this task (may Allah grant them good reward). I am also thankful to Mr. Saeed Ahmed Siddiqui, who translated the Urdu original book "M'arka-e-Firaun-u-Kaleem and rendered it into English and thus enabled me to present it to the English readers. May Allah reward him the best reward.

Should the study of this book afford steadfastness to an individual person in the cause of righteousness and infuse in him renewed zeal and enthusiasm to hold high the banner of Islam, I would consider my efforts crowned with success, and that I have made a provision for my salvation.

'My welfare is only in Allah. In Him do I trust and unto Him do I turn (as a repentant.)' (11 : 88)

Lahore
25th Rajab, 1392 Hijrah
4th September, 1972

Akhlaq Husain

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

THE AIM AND OBJECT OF THE STORY OF MOSES (P.B.U.H.)

The description of the conflict between Pharaoh and Moses (peace be upon him) has been given in the Holy Qur'an in different manners. The life events of none of the ancient Prophets have been narrated in the Holy Qur'an in such graphic detail as those of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). There are numerous reasons for this particularisation but we shall explain here a few of them.

THE BEARER OF LAST SHARI'AH BEFORE THE HOLY PROPHET (S.A.W.)

Before the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.), Moses (P.B.U.H.) had been the last of the Prophets to whom the Shari'ah of Allah was revealed. The Torah was the last code of life vouchsafed by Allah to the people of the world and the past generations were enjoined to act upon its teachings.

SIMILARITY IN THE EVENTS OF LIFE OF THE HOLY PROPHET (S.A.W.) AND THOSE OF MOSES (P.B.U.H.) LIFE.

The striking similarity existing between the events of Mose's (P.B.U.H.) life and those of the Holy Prophet's (S.A.W.) noble life is not to be found in the events of the life of any other Prophet. From the very beginning, the untoward circumstances, the peculiarity of the mission, unsuitability of the circumstances, continuous hostilities and manoeuvring of the antagonists, opposition of the vested interests, persecution of the offended ruling class, encounter with the obstinate, quarrelsome and irreconciling enemies, contest with the powerful, proud and haughty rulers, migration, and victory — all these stages and phases have a striking similarity, so much so that when we take notice of the fight between Pharaoh and Moses (P.B.U.H.), the incidents as occurring in the Meccan Phase of the Holy Prophet's (S.A.W.)

apostolic mission begin to flash across our eyes and everyone can easily appreciate that in this story one's own story is being repeated.

THE NEAREST PERIOD

The period of Moses (P.B.U.H.) was so nearer to that of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) that the traditions and events of that period were still fresh in the minds of people, and the people who testified those events were still alive.

TWO LIVING SYMBOLS OF HISTORY

Pharaoh and Moses (P.B.U.H.) were not two separate individuals, but two living symbols that appeared again and again on the screen of the world and left their deep and lasting impressions.

On the one hand, there was Pharaoh, a personification of tyranny, oppression, persecution, bigotry, who was intoxicated with the pride of power and autocracy and, on the other, there was Moses (P.B.U.H.) endowed with the farsightedness of a Prophet, resolute, wise, emancipator of the weak and standard-bearer of the True Religion, who appeared as perfect symbol of righteousness, in order to establish the True Faith despite straitened circumstances, scanty means and meagre resources at his command. Whenever Evil encountered Good and there was a fight between the wrathful and tyrannous rulers and the helpless, weak, downtrodden and unarmed people, the latter recalled that the history of Pharaoh and Moses (P.B.U.H.) was repeating itself. The courage, determination, wisdom, foresight, perseverance and steadfastness of Moses (P.B.U.H.) served as a beacon light to guide the preachers of the True Religion and to prompt them to affirm their faith and conviction that Truth was always predominant and Evil was destined to perish. This fact was so self-evident and undeniable that the proverb:

'There is a Moses for each Pharaoh', was at every man's lips.

FRESH VIGOUR AND ENTHUSIASM FOR THE FAITHFUL

When the story of this struggle between Right and Wrong was recited before the Meccans, fresh faith and new zeal and enthusiasm revived in Muslims, and all sorts of persecution and oppression on the part of the Quraish could not cow down their spirits for one single moment. With the intensified tempo of their persecution, their conviction grew more and

more firm that persecution and oppression was doomed to end one day and the whole world saw that in the battles of Badr, Ahzab, Mecca and Hunain all that persecution met with its inevitable end.

That is why Allah has repeated again and again the events of Moses (P.B.U.H.) in Surah Baqarah, 'Araf, Hud, Ta Ha, Shu'ara, Qasas, Naml, Momin, Zariyat, etc., so that the believers, frustrated by their discouraging circumstances, should not lose heart.

Today, when the evil forces of tyranny and oppression are dominant, persecution and aggression is rampant and the believers are passing through a dark period of trials and tribulation, it is necessary that the story of Pharaoh and Moses (P.B.U.H.) should be repeated to them time and again, so that their footsteps might not waver and they should not give up the struggle, being disgusted and frustrated by the circumstances.

GLAD TIDINGS FOR THE BELIEVERS

The significance and the aim and object of narrating the story of Pharaoh and Moses (P.B.U.H.), in the words of the Holy Qur'an is as under:

Ta Sin Mim. These are revelations of the scripture that maketh plain. We narrate unto thee (somewhat) of the story of Moses and Pharaoh with truth for the people who believe.
(28 : 1-3)

The purpose of the events which are being related is not merely to satisfy the desire for telling a story nor is it meant to win the admiration and applause of the people who listen to them. Their object is also not to lay open a few chapters of history, so as to add to the people's knowledge. The real significance of these events lies in the fact that they form a part and parcel of the Holy Qur'an and constitute the Signs of Allah so that the true believers may receive guidance from them.

The implication of the word 'Mominin' used here is highly significant. It has two aspects; one aspect is that the people who do not believe in Allah and His Book cannot derive any benefit from them. They can neither learn the lesson of steadfastness and perseverance nor take a warning from them. Only, the people who believe in the Book and

the Bestower of this Book can derive spiritual and moral benefit from these events. The other aspect can be viewed in the light of the conditions and situations in which the verses of the Qur'an embodying those events were revealed, together with the environment in which the believers lived at that time.

The unbelievers of Mecca were the deadly foes of the believers. Judged from all worldly standards, the circumstances were most unfavourable to the believers. As regards their numerical strength, material wealth, resources and physical pomp and show, the believers were no match for the unbelievers. They were being tortured and oppressed everywhere. They were helpless and downtrodden. Their very affirmation of faith in the True Religion made them liable to the worst type of persecution. On the other hand, the enemies of Islam felt exultant and jubilant. Apparently, it seemed that the new movement with its surging waves would last but for a few days and not survive in the face of the formidable foe. There appeared to be hardly any chance of success or triumph for the believers. Even their very existence was treathened. To every observer it seemed that the believers would meet with their inevitable end. There was neither any ray of hope for the believers nor any refuge or protection for them. The gloomy and dismal clouds of despondency and despair were looming large before their eyes. At times, they were made to lie on live ambers. Then, at other moments, they were dragged with a noose fastened around their necks. Sometimes they were made to lie on the scorching sand, and on other occasions they were pressed under slabs and stones. No eyes were there to shed tears over their miserable lot. Nobody's heart sobbed out of sympathy for them. In every street and lane were they subjected to ridicule and vilification, and abuses and taunting remarks were hurled at them.

There was many a hardship for the weak and infirm. Meanwhile, heart-warming tidings were received from the Lord Almighty that all those enemies would be ruined like Pharaoh and that the weak and downtrodden would be successful and victorious. Those who had firm religious faith found peace and tranquility in the glad tidings, but the unfortunate persons who were deprived of faith would

not listen to the happy news. They were of the opinion that "Might is Right", and that the power of the rulers was permanent and everlasting just as the humiliation and helplessness of the weak was permanent and enduring. Although they had beheld the ruin of Pharaoh many a time with their own eyes, yet they always considered each succeeding Pharaoh to be possessor of eternal power and sovereignty.

THE CONDITION OF EGYPT AT THE BIRTH OF MOSES (P.B.U.H.)

The conditions prevailing in the land of Egypt at the time of the birth of Moses (P.B.U.H.) are vividly depicted in the words of Holy Qur'an:

“Lo! Pharaoh exalted himself in the earth and broke up its people into sections. A tribe among them he oppressed, killing their sons and sparing their women. Lo! he was of those who work corruption.” (28 : 4)

In the above verses of Sura Al-Qasas, the story of Moses (P.B.U.H.) has been narrated from his birth. The pitiable circumstances in which he was born and how he was brought up by his enemies and how did he overthrow the sovereignty of Pharaoh and all his pomp and show all these events have been explained in these verses.

Partial Genocide

The Pharaoh who ruled over Egypt, belonged to a clan of Qibti tribe. He was an absolute and autocratic ruler. The established policy of his Government was “Divide and rule”. By fanning the flames of racial distinction and discord, he meted out gruesome treatment to the children of Israel, a slight reflection of which could be noticed, even today, in the treatment of the white race towards the coloured race in South Africa and that of the Brahmins towards the untouchables and the Muslims in India. They might have borrowed these tactics from the evil devices of Pharaoh. The whole ruling class belonged to Qibti race, whereas the Israelites had been born for abject servitude, hard drudgery and forced labour even with their social and economic ruination. Pharaoh did not feel contended. The ever-increasing population of the serving class and their progeny was like a nightmare that would not let him sleep at night. He was terribly afraid that in case their population went on increasing in that big proportion, Bani Israel would be able to snatch power from him by dint of their numerical

majority. He, therefore, resorted to their partial genocide in order to get rid of this menace. The human intellect had perhaps not developed to appreciable extent at that time, otherwise he could get rid of the unwanted element of the population by evolving apparently attractive schemes like planned parentage, family planning, and so-called shortage of foodgrains, etc. Perhaps, he was not so shrewd a diplomat as to persuade the unwanted population to collective suicide or that he was so intoxicated with the pride of his power and sense of security that the necessity of coating the bitter pills with sugar was never felt by him. He issued clear orders for the male babies to be slain, sparing the lives of the female babies, so that when there would be no men there would be no children.

Moreover, the scheme launched by Pharaoh would serve two-fold purpose; on the one hand, it would provide maid-servants for their luxurious palaces and the next generation to be born would increase the population of the Qibties. It is not known whether or not regular 'family planning' clinics were opened to implement the scheme. Only this much is known with certainty that the duty of putting to death every newly-born male baby of Bani Israel was entrusted to the midwives. They went about in every street and lane and spied whether there was any newly-born living male baby of Bani Israel. This partial annihilation of the future generation of the Israelities was the greatest calamity ever to befall them, the deliverance from which has been affirmed by God, the Almighty, as the greatest bounty of their Lord.

"And (remember) when We did deliver you from Pharaoh's folk, who were afflicting you with dreadful torment, slaying your sons and sparing your women: That was a tremendous trial from your Lord." (2 : 49)

This scheme of Pharaoh was so rigorous that Moses (P.B.U.H.) himself called the deliverance from it as the greatest bounty of the Lord.

"And (remind them) how Moses said unto his people: Remember Allah's favour unto you when He delivered you from Pharaoh's folk who were afflicting you with dreadful torment, and were slaying your sons and sparing your women; that was a tremendous

trial from your Lord." (14 : 6)

In another Qur'anic verse, Allah addresses Moses (P.B. U.H.) as saying:

"And (remember) when We did deliver you from Pharaoh's folk who were afflicting you with dreadful torment, slaughtering your sons and sparing your women. That was a tremendous trial from your Lord." (7 : 141)

Now recall to your mind the ordeals and tribulations through which Bani Israel had to pass in Egypt.

Firstly, a haughty and tyrannic ruler ruled over them, the policy of whose Government was based on oppression, highhandedness and butchery.

Secondly, there were in the clutches of an inimical and cruel community, every child of which was their sworn enemy.

Thirdly, they were crushed economically, socially and politically, and all sorts of measures were taken by the rulers that they should never be able to raise their heads.

Fourthly, this partial genocide or family planning was compulsorily imposed on them, so that they should never be in a majority and that they should be deprived of their warlike race altogether.

Pharaoh and those at the helm of state affairs adopted all possible measures which were, according to them, quite adequate to invest them with permanent power and sovereignty, but fate had decided otherwise. It smiled at the prospect that the palaces built on sandy foundations would crumble down with a single shock.

ULTIMATE END OF OPPRESSION —

THE SUNNAH OF ALLAH

There is no denying the fact, when oppression and persecution exceeds all limits and people lose all hope of change for the better and the rulers consider themselves as rivals unto Allah, and when a section of a people, after consolidating the foundations of their rule begins to consider the ruler's power and rule as permanent and enduring, and transgress all limitations in carrying out their behests and whims, at that critical juncture, the Mercy of Allah comes to rescue His helpless and miserable bondsmen. Then, it becomes

manifest that there is the Supreme God Who never disappoints those who rely upon Him. He can defer matters but therein lies His Wisdom and not His supposed inequity.

So, when life was rendered unbearable for Bani Israel, nay their very right of existence on the earth was snatched away from them, and all possible means were adopted to keep them in permanent servitude, and it seemed as if there had been no escape from this state of affairs; Allah the Almighty decided to overthrow the haughty and despotic rulers.

“And We desired to show favour unto those who were oppressed on the earth, and to make them examples and to make them the inheritors, and to establish them on the earth, and to show Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts that which they feared.”

(28 : 5-6)

These are the ways of Allah and history is replete with incidents that whenever some Pharaoh comes into power and, having ascended the throne given to him by the Lord, assumes the power of God, the Almighty ordains his defeat and annihilation. In the Qur'anic verses quoted above, there is glad tidings for all helpless creatures who suffer innumerable and unbearable tortures at the hands of the Pharaoh of their times and find no way out of the tortures. The tyrants may go to any length of oppression and persecution, but there is ultimately an end to all this tyranny, and a day does surely dawn when power and rule go into the hands of those who were subjected to the most cruel oppression and made to pass through the severest ordeals by Pharaohs who employed all resources and means at their command for testing them.

PHARAOH'S APPREHENSIONS AND ARRANGEMENTS

Such was the ultimate fate of Pharaoh and his courtiers! The Israelites who were born slaves were not only delivered from the cruel clutches of Pharaoh, but they were also responsible for the ultimate ruin and annihilation of Pharaoh and his followers and the apprehensions which had led Pharaoh to adopt all possible security measures proved to be true.

Now, what fears were gnawing at the heart of Pharaoh?

Every despotic and autocratic ruler who rules over the people by oppression and tyranny is haunted by the fear lest someone should overthrow his power and rule. He is startled even by the rustling of a leaf and the imaginary fear is instilled in his mind that some one might be engaged in some destructive activity against him. He is, therefore, always panic-stricken and takes all possible safeguards even against imaginary and remotely possible dangers.

Bani Israel became dominant in Egypt and rose to the height of power. They formed the major part of the country's populace. Their numerical strength had always been a threat to their enemies. This is a peculiar feature of the western outlook of life and a display of the jugglery of the 20th century that people view increase in their own population with alarm and concern. Pharaoh was fully alive to this danger. In order to cut down their numerical strength, he enforced partial genocide among them. With a view to make Bani Israel economically bankrupt, he closed all the avenues of trade and employment to them. Their social status was that of a servant or a labourer. Politically, they were a weak and poor minority that hardly had a chance of gaining strength or power. Such were the extreme measures taken to pave the way for perpetuating the power and domination of the ruling class.

The security measures as described above, were adopted not only by Pharaoh, but his courtiers and advisers also acted as accomplices. Haman was their unrivalled leader. The security of this section of the ruling class was also necessary, since this class is the mainspring of power of a despotic ruler. Those who are loyal to the King are, in fact, the virtual Kings. They are the manifestation of evils essentially required for the perpetuation of a despotic government. So Allah the Almighty, managed to put an end to Pharaoh, and drastically dealt with the higher class of faithful and loyal servants of Pharaoh.

THE BIRTH OF MOSES (P.B.U.H.)

In the life-strangling and dangerous atmosphere, when the spies and reporters of the Government were spread in every street and lane, spying each and every house, Allah the Almighty blessed a person, 'Imran by name, with a son.

He was the third child of his parent. Before his birth, two children, male and a female, had been born to them before the promulgation of the act of partial genocide, so they had been surviving. Perhaps, in those days, the law was not enforced with retrospective effect, otherwise these children would not have survived.

In unfavourable atmosphere, when the formidable majority casts inquisitive eyes on every individual member of the helpless minority community, there was hardly any chance of concealing the birth of a newly born baby for long. So Allah the Almighty not only warned the mother of Moses against the danger at the birth of a baby but also told her about the ways and means of his safety. The Lord in His Infinite Mercy took upon Himself the duty of defending the child, at the same time conveying the glad tidings of exalting him to the status of Prophethood. He said:

“And we inspired the mother of Moses, saying: Suckle him, and when thou fearest for him, cast him into the river, and fear not nor grieve. Lo! We shall bring him back unto thee and shall make him (one) of Our Messengers. (28 : 7)

In another Qur’anic verse, He has narrated this incident with additional details:

“And, indeed, another time, already We have shown thee favour, when We inspired in thy mother that which is inspired, saying: Throw him into the ark, and throw it into the river, then the river shall throw it on to the bank, and there an enemy to Me and an enemy to him shall take him. And I endowed thee with love from Me that thou mightest be trained according to My Will; when thy sister went and said: Shall I show you one who will nurse him? And We restored thee to thy mother so that her eyes might be refreshed and might not sorrow? (20 : 37-40).

God, Almighty not only put the idea of casting the child into the river in the mother’s mind but also disclosed to her the whole Divine scheme consoling her that though obviously the inspired act appeared to her so fatal for the child, yet, as a matter of fact, it was meant to take the child to his proper destination.

The duty to be assigned to Moses (P.B.U.H.) demanded

that he should be trained in the best possible manner, and that he should have all qualities and virtues required for discharging his duty properly. It is obvious that only a King's palace could afford such ideal training.

It seemed absolutely impossible, at a cursory glance, that the child of an Israelite family should be receiving training in the hostile house of the Qibti, and that too in the royal family. Neither the Israelite family's social status was such as it might afford the child the privilege of receiving training in the palace nor was it apparently possible to reach the royal palace. But, behold the ways of Allah as to how does He dispose of matters! His worst enemies deliberately or undeliberately set about the work of training him and came to know of the reality only after it had been accomplished. To all intents and purposes, the result was against their expectations. So says Allah:

'Lo! My scheme is strong.' (7 : 183)

Moses (P.B.U.H.) was accordingly laid in a box which was cast into the river. Obviously, the task was fraught with hazards and its inevitable result seemed to be as if the child were thrown into the jaws of death, but none can hurt a person whom Allah saves. The waves of the river washed away the child to the palace where Pharaoh, his queen and his relatives were sleeping and the box drifted towards the bank of the river.

MOSES IN POSSESSION OF PHARAOH

Pharaoh and his companions beheld the child. There was every possibility that the man who had killed thousands of children should have also put this child to death or allowed him to float in the unrelentingly waves of the river, eventually to serve as food for fish and other animals. But, how could it be possible, when Allah had ordained otherwise? He wanted to show to the world that the person who had taken all measures to avert this danger would himself bring up the enemy of his throne and thus fulfil the predetermined Divine Will from which he wanted to save himself. So, the child was taken out of the chest. A discussion was held as to the fate of the child. The Holy Qur'an describes the event as follows:

'And the family of Pharaoh took him up, he might

become for them as enemy and a sorrow. Lo!

Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts were men of sin. And the wife of Pharaoh said: (He will be) a consolation for me and for thee. Kill him not. Peradventure, he may be of use to us, or we may choose him for a son. And they perceived not.' (28 : 8,9)

The servants and courtiers who make a greater display of loyalty to the King than others, offered their advice: "Kill child at once. He may be belonging to the antagonistic group of Bani Israel and be a source of trouble for us." But, Pharaoh's wife who was childless had the soft and humane heart of a woman and cherished deep love and longing for children. She vehemently opposed the advice. The child was so handsome that even the most hard-hearted and unfeeling person could not help loving him. How could she bear the sight of the moon-like child being slaughtered before her eyes? She declared that such a lovely child who was exceedingly handsome and intelligent should not be put to death, rather he should be brought up by them, perchance he might be a source of peace and comfort for their restless souls and prove to be the light of their eyes. Thus, Allah, the Almighty proposed to send Moses (P.B.U.H.) to the royal palace of Pharaoh and arranged for his upbringing. Pharaoh and his advisers, despite their wisdom and cleverness, were providentially made to train and feed a person who was to overthrow their rule. It never occurred to them that they were arranging for their own ruination. How could that occur? Such are the proposals of Allah as the enemies would adopt them to their advantage, feeling safe and sound, but with the passage of time when the result comes out, their eyes stare in wilderness and confusion.

THE CONDITION OF THE MOTHER OF MOSES

On the one hand, Allah proposed to bring up the child safely and exalt him to a high position; on the other, it so happened that the condition of the mother went from bad to worse. Why should it not have so happened? How could the mother of a child, after throwing her beloved son into the waves of the river, pass her time in peace and tranquility? Her motherly love and affection deprived her of all peace and relief and so it happened:

'And the heart of the mother of Moses became void, and she would have betrayed him if We had not fortified her heart, that she might be of the believers. And she said unto his sister: Trace him. So, she observed him from afar, and they perceived not. And We had before forbidden foster mothers for him, so she said: Shall I show you a household who will rear him for you and take care of him? So We restored him to his mother that she might be comforted and might not grieve, and that she might know that the promise of Allah is true. But most of them know not.'

(28: 10-13)

How could Moses mother find relief after throwing her child into the river? She might have raised such a hue and cry as to gather a crowd of people and disclose her secret, but Allah, the Almighty Who had sustained the child up to the moment could not allow that thing to happen and ruin the future of the whole people merely on this account that a woman should be giving vent to her feelings. He Willed to assign tremendous duty to Moses (P.B.U.H.) and to exalt him to the status of prophethood, in order to guide the world to the path of righteousness. He intended to put an end to Pharaoh's oppressive and unjust rule. Moses (P.B.U.H.) was to serve as a beacon light for the future generations on the dark nights of despondency. He was to act as the harbinger of glad tidings to the helpless and destitute people and an emancipator of the downtrodden and miserable humanity to affirm the fact that "there is Moses for every Pharaoh".

Allah, the Almighty gave patience and perseverance to Moses's mother, consoling her that the child would not only remain safe and sound but that he would become a Prophet and cause the deliverance of his people. But, a mother is after all a mother. Her motherly love and affection did not allow her peace and comfort. Overwhelmed by her grief she sent her daughter and advised her to go on watching the box, herself being at some tolerable distance until it reached its destination.

INTELLIGENCE OF THE SISTER

The girl was very intelligent and wise. She followed the box in a manner that no one knew that the girl was

in any way associated with it. Just imagine the sad plight of the girl, when she saw the servants of Pharaoh taking out the box from the river and presenting it before Pharaoh. The very thought of the child being in the hands of the enemy would have squeezed life out of her. The distress of her heart could easily be appreciated, but she discharged her duty with the utmost calmness, care and intelligence and did not give vent to her sentiments. She waited for the decision regarding the fate of the child. She heaved the sigh of relief when she felt assured that the King had not only decided to let the child live but also undertaken to bring him up.

ARRANGEMENT FOR SUCKLING MOSES

Behold the arrangement made by Allah to unite the mother with the child. It was a custom with the royal and aristocratic families, and the custom is in vogue even today, that nurses were engaged for suckling their babies. All the wet nurses who were there to offer themselves failed to make the child inclined to suckling. How could the baby be ready to do so? Allah Willed that no other nurse except the child's mother should suckle him. There was thus caused a commotion in the palace. The sister of Moses, being on the look out for such an opportunity, sent a message to the King that she would tell of the address of a nurse who could suckle the child and she gave the address of her mother. She, however, did not disclose, even by a hint, the mutual relation of the mother and the baby. So, Moses mother was engaged instantly. Every one was wonder-struck to see the baby, who had previously been adamant to suckle any nurse, that it was suckling the woman with ease and comfort. It was thus that Allah managed to unite the mother and the baby and bring up the child in the royal palace. Not only did He give security from all dangers but also made this event a lesson for all those idiots of all times who are proud of their power and strength that their wisdom and cleverness is of little avail against the Almighty Lord, and that all their intrigues against Allah; His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the believers are going to be foiled.

AN INCIDENT AND MOSES' MIGRATION TO MIDYAN

Thus Moses (P.B.U.H.) was brought up under royal arrangements that existed in the palace of Pharaoh till he attained maturity. He had acquired all those qualities and that knowledge of affairs which are so essential for a great leader and wise politician.

'And when he reached his full strength and was ripe,
We gave him wisdom and knowledge. Thus do We
reward the good.'
(28 : 14)

PATROLLING IN THE CITY

One day, as the streets of the city wore a calm and quite look and the people were resting, Moses came into the city, probably to visit it at the time when there was all calmness and tranquility, for in the busy hours of the day a multitude of men used to gather round the princes who entered the city, and it was not possible to visit the city properly or perhaps, he went there to enquire about the miserable and wretched condition of Bani Israel and he took that precaution lest the entry of a member of the royal family in the habitation of the serving class should startle Pharaoh and his companions.

MURDER OF A QIBTI

Whatever the reason, he selected the quite and calm hours of the day for entering the city. All of a sudden, he saw two persons fighting with each other. One of them was an Israelite and the other a Qibti. The Israelite belonged to a subjugated race and was, on that account, displaying psychological and physical weakness. When he saw the prince coming, he cried for help. Most probably, he called to him for help since Moses had been widely known for helping the poor and the downtrodden, or possibly for the reason that he was known to be an Israelite prince. Whatever the reason, when Moses saw a helpless man being beaten, his sense of helping

the weak and the oppressed awakened in him. The man who had been deputed to deliver the whole nation from persecution could not afford to be an idle spectator of a helpless person beseeching his help. So, Moses decided to help the distressed man, and struck such a deadly blow with his fist to the Qibti that he died then and there. Moses was extremely perplexed. He had had no intention of killing the man, but he had committed a murder. He made humble petitions to his Lord—Allah and sought His forgiveness. He made penitence before Him that he would not commit such an act in future. The Lord, Who is oft Forgiving and Merciful to His men, forgave him and covered his sin.

On the next day, the same person whom he had protected the day before was seen fighting again with another person. Moses (peace be upon him) rebuked him, saying, "you are a strange type of man. You are always fighting." Then he stepped towards the Qibti, but the Israelite thought that he had stepped forward to beat him. The incident of the previous day was still fresh in his memory and he was fully aware of Moses' power and strength. He was sure that he was most likely to be killed. He cried out, "O Moses! You want to kill me today as you killed a man yesterday." Thus, the foolish man disclosed the secret of his benefactor. The Holy Qur'an briefly relates this incident as follows:

'And thou didst kill a man and We delivered thee from great distress, and tried thee with a heavy trial.' (20 : 40)

And its details have been given in Surah Al-Qasas, as follows:

'And he entered the city at a time of carelessness of its folk, and he found therein two men fighting, one of his own caste, and the other of his enemies; and he who was of his caste asked him for help against him who was of his enemies. So, Moses struck him with his fist and killed him. He said: This is of the devil's doing. Lo! He is an enemy, a mere misleader. He said: My Lord! Lo! I have wronged my soul, so forgive me. Then He forgave him. Lo! He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. He said: My Lord! For as much as Thou hast favoured me, I will never more be a supporter of the guilty. And the morning

found him in the city, fearing, vigilant. When behold! He who had appealed to him the day before cried out to him for help. Moses said unto him: Lo! thou art indeed a mere hothead. And when he would have fallen upon the man who was an enemy unto them both, he said: O Moses! Wouldst thou kill me as thou didst kill a person yesterday. Thou wouldst be nothing but a tyrant in the land, thou wouldst not be of the reformers.' (28 : 15-19)

The foolish man was not content with getting his benefactor and the benefactor of his community arrested, but in order to prove himself not guilty and also to win the sympathy of the people around him, he began to rebuke Moses. So, it is said, "Friendship of the foolish is a nuisance".

CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE LIFE OF MOSES

The crime of murder had already been proved. In case a member of Bani Israel had been killed no one would have cared to investigate the case or interrogate the person charged with the murder. But this case was a different one; it was the murder of a member of the ruling party and that too by a man of Bani Israel. The news reached Pharaoh's palace immediately. Pharaoh's chiefs, who already felt jealous of Moses, gathered together. It was their unanimous decision that since it was a golden chance for them, Moses should not be let off but he should be killed. However, he who is defended by God is immune from all harm. He Who had saved him from the hands of those cruel people at the time of his birth and caused him to be brought up by them and Who intended to bestow prophethood on him, how could He lose him? He managed his escape in an ideal way:

MIGRATION TO MIDYAN

'And a man came running from the uttermost part of the city. He said: O Moses! Lo! the chiefs take counsel against thee to slay thee; therefore escape. Lo! I am of those who give thee good advice. So, he escaped from thence, fearing, vigilant. He said: My Lord! Deliver me from the wrongdoing folk. And when he turned his face toward Midyan, he said: peradventure my Lord will guide me to the

right road.'

(28 : 20-22)

The man who came running to Moses must have been from the court of Pharaoh and fully aware of the circumstances of the royal court. As soon as he heard that a conspiracy was being hatched to murder Moses (peace be upon him) he rushed to him to inform him of the danger.

The qualities and traits of characters required for leading the mission providentially assigned to Moses (peace be upon him) have already been developed in him. The persons who are to be endowed with Prophethood by God or those who are ordained as reformers for reforming the creation of God are imbued with the best virtues. Moses (peace be upon him) spent the best part of his life, childhood and youth, in the palace of Pharaoh. Some of the people must have been impressed by his noble conduct and pleasing manners. Surely, the man who informed Moses of the hovering danger must have been belonging to that particular group of men. Moses knew Pharaoh fully well and was also aware of the depraved mentality and evil intentions of his companions. Sincere as the informant was, there was no reason to belie him. He at once sensed the danger and decided to leave Egypt. Where was he to go then? This question called for serious consideration by him. Throughout the country a network of police stations had been spread and no one could easily escape away. Had there been a common man, he would have taken to his heels in confusion without thinking over the situation; but Moses (peace be upon him) was above all common men. In all humility, he turned to Allah for help and guidance, and one who seeks help and guidance from Allah has never to repent. He had the Divine guidance and set out for Midyan, which was not only the nearest place in the east but also beyond the reach of Pharaoh.

ENTRY INTO MIDYAN AND THE BEGINNING OF NOMAD LIFE

Moses arrived at Midyan after a journey that had lasted for many days, hiding himself from the eyes of the people. When he reached Midyan, he found that Lord had already made arrangement for the boarding and lodging. In fact, he who relies upon God has proper provision made for himself by the Almighty. What happened next is stated below in the words of the Holy Qur'an:

'And when he came unto the water of Midyan, he found there a group of men, watering. And he found apart from them two women keeping back (their flocks). He said: What aileth you ? The two said: We cannot water (our flock) until the shepherds take back (their flocks); and our father is a very old man. So, he watered (their flock) for them. Then, he turned aside into the shade, and said: My Lord! I am needy of whatever good thou sendest down for me. Then, there came unto him one of the two women, walking shyly. She said: Lo! My father biddeth thee, that he may reward thee with a payment for having watered (our flocks) for us. Then, when he came unto him and told him the whole story, he said: Fear not. Thou hast escaped from the wrong doing folk. One of the two women said: O my father! Hire him! For the best (man) that thou canst hire is the strong, the trustworthy. He said: Lo! I fain would marry thee to one of these two daughters of mine on the condition that thou hirest thyself to me for (the term of) eight years. Then if thou completest ten, it will be of thine own accord, for I would not make it hard for thee. Allah willing, thou will find me of the righteous. He said: that (is settled) between thee and me. Whichever of the two terms I fulfil, there will be no injustice to me and Allah is surety over what we say.' (28 : 23-28)

SUPPLICATION TO GOD

Moses (peace be upon him) badly suffered the pangs of hunger and thirst. He felt extremely tired after a long and weary journey. He had no friends or companions at the strange place. He was all alone and terribly lonely. There was every possibility of his going astray and meeting with his end while wandering about in the desert. At such critical hours, there is none except God Who comes to the help of a man. It is the time when the remembrance of God is a source of consolation and peace of mind to the distressed soul.

‘Those who believe and whose hearts have rest in the remembrance of Allah! Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest!’ (13 : 28)

How could Moses (peace be upon him) who had beheld the bounties of Allah since his childhood, afford to forget God at that time? He at once turned to his Lord and made humble but earnest, petitions to Him in the hope that God would guide him to the right path.

And so it happened that not only did God the Almighty show him the way to safety, but He caused him to reach the destination safe and sound. Nay, the Lord brought him to the place that proved to be a turning point in his life.

ARRIVAL AT THE WELL

When Moses arrived at the well in Midyan, he saw the people watering their animals from the well. He noticed that everyone who came there had his animals watered from the well and then withdrew. The poor women stood at a distance, waiting long and patiently for their turn to come. Moses (peace be upon him) could not bear this state of affairs. He, who was destined to be the emancipator of a world could not see the miserable plight of the two helpless women. He stood up and came up to the women. He enquired of them as to what the matter was. When the women noticed that a strong and stout person was ready to help them, they related to him their whole story, saying, “Might is right is the law of this country. The powerful and mighty among the men first water their animals, and when they go away, we have our turn. We have no male member in our family. Our father is too old to walk. We, therefore, have to

forgo our right and depend on the mercy of others." Moses' spirit of valour and his sense of honour were stirred. He said, "Let me water the flock of animals for you. The men, who had gathered round the well and were pushing aside the women, were overawed by the august personality, liberal hospitality and noble courage of Moses (peace be upon him) and cleared the way for women. Moses, then, watered the animals for them and himself sat down to recline.

MEETING HADRAT REUEL

The two girls were the daughters of the famous saint and reformer, Hadrat REUEL. They related the whole story to their father, and they were all praise for the sympathy, fellow-feeling, courage, power, piety and sincerity of the man. Their father expressed the desire to see the man. He bade one of his daughters call the man in, so that he should pay back the debt of gratitude he owed to the man and make some payment for the pains taken by him in watering his flock of animals. So the girl, in compliance with the orders of her father, walked back shyly to Moses, as a modest and respectable girl would do.

Alas! The masculine type of modern women who wander about in the broad day light, all unveiled with their breasts stratched out should learn a lesson from this incident. What a highly esteemed virtue modesty is for a woman and how discreetly a nomad woman born in the free and informal environment of the desert took care of her modesty and honour? The particular environment and her own necessity demanded that she should assume the masculine demeanour, but even in those 'dark days of ignorance' a gentle girl was fully conscious that higher feminine qualities consisted in modesty, chastity, self-respect and piety. A woman deprived of these noble feminine qualities might be anything but not a woman of whom the entire humanity should be proud and in whose lap a progeny should be brought up which was capable of changing the destiny of the world.

In short, the girl conveyed the message of her father to Moses (peace be upon him) that he wanted to see him, with a view to enquiring about the man and repaying his debt of gratitude.

Due to the environment in which he was brought up and

the good nature Go^ri had endowed him with, Moses (peace be upon him) would have declined to accept any payment in lieu of the help rendered by him to the women. But, helplessness is a curse. In those strained circumstances, he was in dire need of a sympathizer and a wise man to whom he could relate his story and consult him in his future plans. The danger of his being chased by Pharaoh still persisted there. He badly needed a shelter where he could feel safe and sound, beyond the reach of his enemies. When Moses (peace be upon him) saw that his prayer, "Allah I need whatever good thou bestowest upon me," was going to be granted, he got up and went to see the saintly person. He related the whole story to the man. REUEL listened to it and said, "Do not worry, you are quite safe and sound here and out of the reach of Pharaoh and his men. He can do you no harm". When the girls came to know that the man was quite alone and lonely, helpless and destitute, and badly in need of help, they thought that they needed a person who could serve them and take care of their household work. They said to their father, "since a servant is required by us, this man may be engaged as servant. He is by all means strong and healthy. He is also brave and courageous. He seems to be a pious man of good moral character and is honest, too". Little did they know that the future of one of them was going to be linked with the man who was being recommended by them for engagement as servant. A very few people are aware of the ways of Allah.

PROPOSAL FOR MARRIAGE

Hadrat REUEL was an experienced man and a competent judge of men. Rightly did he judge that it was not proper to engage that man as a servant. His behaviour and demeanour, his habits, virtues, personality and piety reflected something more. He decided to have the man as a member of the family and to allow his intellectual capabilities to grow and develop. He disclosed his desire to give the hand of one of his daughters in marriage to him, provided he agreed to serve him for a period of eight years, and if he completed ten years so much the better, but he did not want to compel him on that score. He assured Moses that by the Grace of God he would be finding him to be a righteous man.

Now, Moses (peace be upon him) needed a shelter urgently. Firstly, he secured a job, secondly, he got married, and thirdly, he was favoured with the protecting hand of a saint - he seemed to have killed two, rather three, birds with one stone. What else did he want? He accepted the generous offer there and then. He said: "That is settled between you and me. I will complete either of the two terms after which please do not commit any injustice. Allah is Surety over the promise we have taken."

The contract between the two men was confirmed. Moses (peace be upon him) began to look after the house and serve the elderly man. After the expiry of the stipulated term he got married and settled into life. The Ulema are of the view that as Moses was a very persevering man, he showed perseverance and got married after completing the period of ten years. He married the elder daughter of REUEL.

THE AUSPICIOUS RETURN JOURNEY AND CONFERMENT OF PROPHETHOOD

Ten years had rolled by since he left home. He was now a married man. He was feeling extremely homesick and badly missed his mother, brothers and sisters. He was very anxious to know about their health and condition. He, therefore, took leave of his father-in-law to proceed to Egypt. He left for home, taking his wife alongwith him.

The time was ripe for which Allah the Almighty had made all those prearrangements. It was the right time for assigning the duty to Moses (peace be upon him) for which he had been brought up and safeguarded. The necessary training and nobility of character required for a Prophet's mission had been acquired by him. He had gained sufficient knowledge of the essential subjects in the palace of Pharaoh. He was fully aware of the habits, manners, environment and mentality of the advisers of the enemy whom he had to encounter. He also fully knew of their devices and techniques. Ten years of the desert life had accustomed him to diligence, hard labour and perseverance which are the essential prerequisites for a Prophet's splendid mission. This has been referred to in the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

"And thou didst kill a man and We delivered thee from great distress, and tried thee with a heavy trial. And thou didst tarry years among the folk of Midyan. Then comest thou (bitter) by (My) providence, O Moses, and I have attached thee to myself."

(20 : 40-41)

SEARCH FOR FIRE

It was winter season. He alongwith his wife travelled through lonely and deserted paths until it was night. They were shivering with cold. They were concerned as to how they would pass the night in that desolate place where there was no shelter. In the meantime, they espied a fire burning at a distance. He said to his wife "Stop for a while. I fetch

some fire, so that we may protect ourselves against the cold by warming ourselves". Little did he know that the fire he was going to fetch was to enlighten his soul:

"Ask of Moses as to the bounty of the Lord.
He went to fetch fire and had Prophethood."

The incident of this interesting search and discovery has been narrated in the Holy Qur'an as under:

"Then, after Moses had fulfilled the term and was travelling with his housefolk, he saw in the distance a fire and said unto his housefolk: Bide ye (here). Lo! I see in the distance a fire; peradventure, I shall bring you tidings thence, or a brand from the fire that ye may warm yourself. And when he reached it, he was called from the right side of the valley in the blessed field, from the tree: O Moses! Lo! I, even I, am Allah, Lord of the Worlds." (28 : 29-30)

The details of the exaltation of Moses (peace be upon him) to Prophethood and his conversation with his Lord have been narrated in other verses as under:

"When he saw a fire and said unto his folk: Wait! Lo! I see a fire far off; peradventure, I may bring you a brand therefrom or may find guidance at the fire. And when he reached it, he was called by name: O Moses! Lo! I, even I, am Thy Lord. So take off thy shoes, for Lo! Thou art in the Holy valley of Tuwa. And I have chosen thee, so hearken unto that which is inspired. Lo! I, even I, am Allah. There is no God save Me. So serve Me and establish worship for My remembrance. Lo! the Hour is surely coming. But I will keep it hidden, that every soul may be rewarded for which it striveth (to achieve). Therefore, let him not turn thee aside from (the thought of) it who believeth not therein but followeth his own desire, lest thou perish." (20 : 10-16)

In another verse, the incident has been narrated as under:

"(Remember) when Moses said unto his housefolk: Lo! I espy far off a fire; I will bring you tidings thence, or bring to you a borrowed flame that ye may warm yourselves. But when he reached it, he was called, saying: Blessed is Whosoever is in the Fire and

whosoever is round about it! And glorified be Allah,
 Lord of the Worlds! O Moses! Lo! It is I, Allah,
 Lord of the Worlds!" (27 : 7-9)

The whole event on which the above Qur'anic verses throw light is that when Moses (peace be upon him) was in need of fire, he suddenly saw a fire burning at a distance. On a cold night, at a place where there was no habitation, the intense joy which Moses (peace be upon him) felt at the sudden discovery of fire can be experienced only by a person who has ever had a chance to pass through a jungle or a desert in winter. He ran to the spot to fetch the unexpected bounty. As he drew nearer, he saw a bush lighting spontaneously, and there was no one nearby to light it. He was at his wits' end and when he heard a sudden voice:

'Blessed is Whosoever is in the fire and whosoever is around it. Glory be to Allah, Creator of All the Worlds. O Moses! Here am I, the powerful, the Wise.

He was all surprise. He had come thither to fetch fire and found the Creator of fire there. God be glorified, what a blessed and auspicious moment it was! What an exalted position! The Lord Himself was addressing His humble servant. That True and Real Being, to catch a glimpse of Whom many a man lies in prostration, was before him. He stood there, overjoyed and overawed. Then he heard a voice calling:

O Moses, take off your shoes. You are in the Holy Valley of Tuwa. I have chosen you, so hearken unto that which is inspired.

It was thus that Allah the Almighty exalted him to the eminent position of prophethood, without any previous intimation or function, preparation or declaration before hand. All of a sudden, one of Allah's bondsmen was crowned with Prophethood. A moment earlier he had been simply a traveller of the desert. Now he was transformed, in the twinkling of an eye, into a leader of mankind, their teacher and guide. This is the Sunnah of Allah and not an acquired thing which a man could attain by virtue of his personal efforts. It is a Munificence which Lord confers on whom he desires at His appointed hour. Herein lies the difference between a forged and a genuine Prophet. A claimant to forged Prophethood chalked out a programme, creates an

موسى بازار - سید السجاد - کتب خانہ

environment, attracts friends and companions and then holds a function for celebrating his Prophethood. But a genuine Prophet is neither in need of these things nor does he know a moment before that he is going to become a Prophet, but he is suddenly appointed to this eminent position by the Will of God.

THE FIRST MESSAGE OF ALLAH

God, then, imparted the message which he was ordained to listen to. What that message was is given here:

"I alone am Allah. So establish My worship and offer prayer to Me in My remembrance. The Doomsday is surely to come. I want not to disclose its time, so that each man should be recompensed according to his efforts. So, a person who does not believe in it and acts according to his whims must not make you forgetful of that moment, otherwise, you will be ruined."

Thus at the very outset, by means of the above ordinance, the reality of this world, the relationship between the creation and the Creator and the ways and means to keep this relation in the right channel, the aim and object of life and the code of life were made known to him, so that the onerous duty of Prophethood that was to be undertaken by him and the hardships which were to be faced by him should not make him, even for a moment, indifferent to the real aim and object of life.

First of all, He said to him, "This universe is not without God. I, even I, am Allah. I, even I, manage the affairs of this universe. There is none except Me Who can manage the universe, or be a partner in My management".

He then told Moses that the position of a man was that of His bondsman who has no power to do any work of his own accord. Whatever his Master and Sustainer enjoins on him must be obeyed by him ungrudgingly. To make him a persevering bondsman of Allah, Salat (prayer) is the most important thing. Salat (Prayer) reminds a man time and again that he is a servant of Allah and he keeps afresh his sentiments of submission to Allah. No man can discharge his duty of being the Lord's true bondsman unless he establishes prayer.

From the above, it is clear that prayer has been made

obligatory on every Ummah in one form or the other. When it has been made obligatory on the Prophets (peace be upon them) how could any follower of a Prophet be exempted from it? The forsaker of prayer could be a devil and a misguided person, but he could never be a rightly guided man.

He, then, told Moses as to what was the ultimate end of this world. This earthly life is to end one day. Man is to render an account for all his actions at an appointed hour. Every man will get reward or punishment according to his actions. A man might go to any length (in committing sins) but he would not be getting any concession or chance to make amends for that on the Doomsday. Its exact time has not been disclosed by God, so that, on the one hand, the unbelievers may do whatever they like and on the other, the believers may be tested as to whosoever among them believe in the Unseen God and refrain from exploitation in the hope of the promise of the future. Everyone of them will then be compensated according to his deeds.

Simultaneously, Almighty Allah has administered a warning that a soul who is forgetful of that day cannot adhere to the path of righteousness. He is bound to fall into the abyss of destruction and ruin. He whose heart is afraid of the Last Day and who does not allow his desires and whims a free play will be a rightly guided and successful person. This has been observed in another verse as under:

“Then, as for him who rebelled and chose the life of the world, Lo! Hell will be his home. But, as for him who feared to stand before his Lord and restrained his soul from lust, Lo! the garden will be his home.”

(79 : 37-41)

Moses (peace be upon him) was not altogether ignorant of the responsibilities of Prophethood, as he belonged to the Ummah and progeny of the Prophets. He knew full well that Prophethood was not a bed of roses. On the one hand, it was the most exalted position to which a man could be elevated, and on the other, it marked the commencement of the unending period of trials and tribulations. The intensity of awe and fear of his appointment to this exalted mission had not yet abated when God enquired of Moses:

“And what is that in thy right hand, O Moses?” (20 : 17)

BESTOWAL OF MIRACLES

Moses (peace be upon him) was so much perplexed that he forgot that the Glorified Lord Who was questioning him was All-Knowing and All-Wise and was fully aware of the thing in his hand and that His question was not meant for getting any information or knowledge, but intended for drawing his attention to the minor inanimate staff in his hand. He began to enumerate the qualities of the staff there and then.

"He said: This is my staff whereon I lean and where-with I beat down branches for my sheep, and wherein I find other uses". (20 : 18)

Allah ordained:

"He said: Cast it down, O Moses!" (20 : 19)

He cast his staff on the ground, as enjoined by God. No sooner did he cast his staff on the ground than a strange phenomenon occurred.

"So, he cast it down, and Lo! it was a serpent gliding." (20 : 20)

Moses (peace be upon him) was panic-stricken at the spectacle. He began to run in fear and did not even turn his face to see that he was standing in the Presence of his Glorified Lord. How highly the Lord might have praised the simplicity and graceful manners of Moses! He spoke to him in His Infinite Clemency and Consoled him as under:

"He said: Grasp it and fear not. We shall return it to its former state." (20 : 21)

Frightened, he caught hold of it by the hand, and Lo! to his surprise, it again turned into the staff. He must have been perplexed at the sight and also enjoyed the phenomenon. He would have also felt some embarrassment. He was engrossed in these feelings when he received another command:

"And thrust thy hand within thine armpit, it will come forth white without hurt. (That will be) another Sign. That We may show thee (some) of our greater portents."

(20 : 22-23)

To his utter surprise, firstly, the staff was turned into a serpent and, secondly, his hand was made resplendent. He was sure that the matter was very significant, otherwise these phenomena would not have been called "Signs of

Allah". He applied all his mental faculties to the understanding of the mystery of these phenomena and the motive behind that Munificence of the Lord.

Moses' (peace be upon him) reaction to these bounties and miracles and the assignment of the tremendous duty to Mose: (peace be upon him) has been described in greater details in other verses, as under:

THE AIM AND OBJECT OF BESTOWING MIRACLES UPON MOSES

It has been so observed in Sura Al-Qasas:

"Throw down thy staff. And when he saw it writhing as if it had been a snake, he turned to flee headlong (and it was said unto him): O Moses! Draw nigh and fear not. Lo! Thou art of those who are secure. Thrust thy hand into thy bosom, it will come forth white without stain (or harm). And guard thy heart from fear. Then, these shall be two credentials from thy Lord unto Pharaoh and his chiefs: Lo! they are evil-living folk." (28 : 31-32)

Allah further ordained:

"And throw down thy staff! But, when he saw it writhing as if it were a snake, he turned to flee headlong (but it was said unto him): O Moses! Fear not! Lo! The emissaries fear not in my Presence, save he who hath done wrong and afterwards hath changed evil for good. And Lo! I am Forgiving, Merciful. And put thy hand into thy bosom, it will come forth white without stain (or harm). (This will be one) among nine signs unto Pharaoh and his people. Lo! They were ever evil-living folk." (27 : 10-11)

It transpires from the above Qur'anic verses that Moses (peace be upon him) was panic stricken to see that the staff transformed into a serpent and he took to his heels; but God Almighty consoled him there and then. He alleviated his fear and comforted him by observing that no harm would come to him. The magnificent Lord who had put that onerous duty on his shoulders would never forsake him. He would always be there to help him in the hour of need. He then told him about the exalted position of his mission and the etiquette thereof, saying, "you are one of the Prophets of God who are the dear

and loved ones of Allah. He showers his blessings on them. They know no fear. Only the man who disobey Him and are damned need have any fear. He also told him beforehand the answer to the question which Moses (peace be upon him) was then going to ask, that is, if a servant committed a sin and repented afterwards, he would not be punished but be forgiven by Him. Thus, he was assured of forgiveness for a sin he had been so afraid of. He was also told that in addition to the two signs, seven more signs would be bestowed upon him to enable him to discharge his tremendous duty without fear.

ORDER FOR SETTING OUT ON THE MISSION

After giving this assurance and consoling him the Lord told him about the duty which was to be entrusted to him. He ordained:

“Go thou unto Pharaoh! Lo! He hath transgressed
(the bounds). (20 : 24)

On hearing the name of Pharaoh, the incidents of many past years passed before his eyes. The scene of tortures and persecutions perpetrated by Pharaoh on the Israelites came vividly before the eyes. He recalled to his mind his miserable plight and loneliness, the murder of a Qibti and the desperate efforts of Pharaoh's men to arrest him. He also had a keen sense that he lacked the talent of an eloquent speaker. His heart began to sink within him at the thought of the enormous difficulties of his mission. He thought as to who could be a greater tyrant than the one to whose tyranny God Almighty Himself had testified. He made a humble petition to his Lord.

SUPPLICATION OF MOSES

“(Moses) said: My Lord! Relieve my mind. And ease my task for me; and loosen a knot from my tounge, that they may understand my saying. Appoint for me a minister from my folk, Aaron, my brother. Confirm my strength with him. And let him share my task, that we may glorify Thee much and remember Thee much. Lo! Thou art ever seeing us.” . . . (20 : 25-35)

So Moses (peace be upon him) begged all that was, according to him, necessary to discharge this onerous duty. He saw that God, the Gracious in His Infinite Grace was showering

His blessings on him; he begged of Him to his heart's content. He fully knew of the sublimity of the mission and the difficulties and hardships it entailed. He, therefore, begged all that was necessary to discharge his duty well. Let us see what Moses (peace be upon him) sought from his Lord.

1. First of all, he supplicated God to grant him perception, since unless that was done, it was extremely difficult for him to comprehend the aim and object of his mission and to apply all his energies and capabilities to the task. So he supplicated the Lord to grant him perception, so that his mind could be fully concentrated and he could carry on the mission of his Prophethood with singleminded devotion. This was not a strange petition as his grandfather Hadrat Abraham (peace be upon him) had previously made the same petition:

'In order that my heart may be satisfied'. (2 : 260)

As a matter of fact, no man can accomplish a great task unless he is fully satisfied in regard to its aim and object and his mind and heart are ready to undertake it.

2. His second petition to God was that his task be made easy for him. The stories of ancient Prophets were before him. He was fully aware of of trials and tribulations through which they had passed. He also knew the limitations of human power and resources. He, therefore, begged for facility and ease instead of being proud of his exalted mission. No individual man or a group of men, may they be intellectual and physical giants, could ever discharge their duties without the help and favour of their Lord, and unless He facilitates the way for them, they cannot advance an inch.
3. The third petition related to the eloquence and fluency of speech. There is no denying the fact that speech plays an important role in life. Sweet conversation, convincing arguments, attractive speech, fine literary style, appropriate sentences and words are some of the attractive means of bringing about a revolution in nations and changing their destiny, inculcating in them a new zeal, enthusiasm and conviction. It was quite obvious that a person whose mission was to preach and propagate could not do anything without fluent and eloquent

speech. So, Moses (peace be upon him) asked for this favour at the very outset. This is the Munificence with which the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) was favoured by Allah. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) expressed his gratitude to Allah for this Munificence as under:

'I am the most eloquent of all the Arabs'.

4. His fourth petition to God was that some one should extend help and cooperation in that noble task. He had in view the hardships he would be facing in carrying out this enormous duty. The people to whom he was being duped were even worse than the blood thirsty wolves in cruelty and callousness. He was afraid lest they should kill him if they found him alone, and thus the work entrusted to him would end. He, therefore, prayed that a man who could offer advice to him at a critical time might be appointed his assistant and minister. The man might act in that capacity in his absence and should be able to speak more eloquently than himself. Hadrat Aaron (peace be upon him) was, according to him, such a man. He fully knew his noble character and good conduct, his eloquence of conversation and speech as well as his sound counsels. Moreover, he belonged to the family of Prophets and Moses (peace be upon him) reposed full confidence in him.

APPOLOGIES OF MOSES

It is clear from other verses of the Holy Qur'an that Moses (peace be upon him) made some more petitions, offered some apologies and also advanced some arguments, the detail of which is given as under:

"He said: My Lord! Lo! I killed a man among them and I fear that they will kill me. My brother Aaron is more eloquent than I in speech. Therefore, send him with me as a helper to confirm (and strengthen) me. Lo! I fear that they will give the lie to me."

(28 : 33-34)

"And when thy Lord called Moses, saying: Go unto the wrong doing folk, the folk of Pharaoh. Will they not fear God? He said: My Lord! Lo! I fear that they will charge me with falsehood, I shall be embarrassed,

and my speech will not go (smoothly), therefore, send for Aaron. And they have a crime against me, so I fear that they will kill me." (26 : 10-14)

It is clear from the above verses that Moses (peace be upon him) explained all the apprehensions and weaknesses which he thought were impediments in discharging his tremendous duty and sought the help of his Lord. What were those apprehensions?

The first apprehension was that he was a criminal in the eye of Pharaoh and his people. They would be prone to retaliation before listening to him and kill him then and there for a murder that had been committed by him through error.

Since they were a cruel and callous people, who exulted in killing and slaying, and had already put a thousand men of his community to death, how could they spare him? They would belie his each and every word. Who could be more cruel and callous than the people whom God Himself affirmed a cruel?

Moreover, Moses (peace be upon him) did not possess the power of a charming speech which could turn the direction of their anger and falsehood. He said, 'O God! Either bestow Prophethood upon my brother Aaron (peace be upon him) or make him my helper, so that when these cruel people belie me, there should be someone to support me and testify to my message'.

But the decisions of Allah are firm and free of all defects and are not liable to change. His decisions are wise, deliberate and firm. He knew well beforehand what was going to happen and had made all arrangements for it.

GRANT OF THE PRAYER

In order to keep up the morale of Moses (peace be upon him) and to deliver him from all sorts of apprehensions and imaginary fears, He granted his petition:

"He said: Thou art granted thy request, O Moses".
(20 : 36)

That is to say, the Lord made his brother Aaron (peace be upon him) his helper. He gave him the eloquence of speech and power of perception. He has summarized this incident as follows:

"And make a mention in the Scripture of Moses Lo! He was chosen, and he was a messenger (of Allah), a Prophet. We called to him from the right slope of the Mount, and brought him nigh in communion. And We bestowed upon him out of Our Mercy his brother Aaron, a Prophet (likewise)." (19 : 51-53)

In addition to it, he comforted and consoled him in the following words:

EXALTATION OF AARON TO PROPHETHOOD

"He said: We will strengthen thine arm with thy brother, and We will give unto you both power, so that they cannot reach you for our portent Ye twain and those who follow you will be the winners."

(28 : 35)

That is to say, if he was afraid they would belie him and kill him, God told him beforehand that he would grant him such power, dignity and authority as they would not dare to do him any harm. He also gave him the good news that the people would listen to him, accept his call, and act upon it and that he and his followers would ultimately succeed.

The Munificence of God and the grant of the prayer of Moses (peace be upon him) has been described in another verse of the Holy Qur'an, as follows:

"We verily gave Moses the Scripture and appointed with him his brother Aaron as Minister. Then We said: Go together unto the folk who have rejected Our signs. Then We destroyed them, a complete destruction." (25 : 35-36)

God Almighty has explained in these verses the rules and regulations which He has laid down for those of his servants whom He chooses to serve the Faith. His commands they obey them. He protects them against their enemies and their evils. He bestows upon them such power and dignity as the enemies of Islam are terribly afraid of them. He gives glad tidings to all those who propagate His faith and owe submission to Him that they and their companions will succeed in the end. This has been explained in another Qur'anic verse:

"Allah hath decreed: Lo! It is I and My apostles who must prevail." (58 : 21)

"And verily Our word been passed before (this) to our bondmen sent (by us) that they verily would be helped, and that our host, they verily would be the victors."
(37 : 171-173)

INSTRUCTIONS AT THE TIME OF PROCEEDING

The time was now ripe that the mission of Moses (peace be upon him) should be brought home to him and that he should be provided with all that was necessary for carrying it on. Moreover, the necessary instructions for this purpose should be issued to him. The result of his efforts should also be intimated to him and, above all, the assurance of Divine help and nearness should be given to him.

A reference to the mission has already been made in the above verses. The details thereof are given below:

Allah said:

1. "Behold thy Lord did call to him in the Holy Vale of Tuwa, (saying): Go thou unto Pharaoh - Lo! He hath rebelled and say (unto him): Wouldst thou that shouldst be purified? And that I guide thee to thy Lord and thou shouldst fear (Him). Then did (Moses) show him the Great Sign." (79 : 16-20)
2. "Then, after them, We sent Moses and Aaron unto Pharaoh and his chiefs with our revelations, but they were arrogant and were a guilty folk." (10 ;76)
3. "Then We sent Moses and Aaron with Our Signs and clear Authority unto Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they behaved insolently and they were an arrogant people." (23 : 45-46)
4. "And verily We sent Moses with Our revelations unto Pharaoh and his chiefs, and he said: I am a Messenger of the Lord of the Worlds." (43 : 46)
5. "Then , after them, We sent Moses with Our Signs unto Paraoh and his chiefs, but they wrongfully rejected them. Now, see the nature of the consequence for the corrupters!" (7 . 103)

In the above verses, God Almighty has given an analysis of Pharaoh and his people and laid down some important principles for embracing or rejecting Divine guidance:

- (1) A people who grow proud and haughty and whose national character is based on crime and disobedience

- never accept Divine guidance.
- (2) A nation which is proud and boastful and dominates the earth does not care for any preacher of Faith nor does it listen to arguments, however convincing.
- (3) A people who take pride in creating discord and spreading dissension are never reformed and try to foil every scheme meant to reform them by creating fresh troubles and mischiefs.
6. "We verily sent Moses with Our Signs, saying: Bring thy people forth from darkness unto light. And remind them of the days of Allah. Lo! Therein are Signs for each steadfast, thankful and appreciation."
(14 : 5)
7. "And I have prepared thee for Myself. Go thou and thy brother with My tokens, and slacken not in remembrance of Me. Go, both of you, unto Pharaoh. Lo! He hath transgressed (the bounds). And speak unto him a gentle word that peradventure he may heed or fear. They said: Our Lord! Lo! We fear lest he hasten with insolence against us, or that he may play the tyrant. He said: Fear not. Lo! I am with you twain, Hearing and Seeing. So, go ye unto him and say: Lo! We are two Messengers of thy Lord. So, let the children of Israel go with us, and torment them not. We bring thee a Sign from thy Lord. And peace will be for him who followeth right guidance. Lo! It hath been revealed unto us that the doom will be for him who denieth and turneth away." (20 : 41-48)
8. "He said: Nay, verily, so go ye twain with our tokens. Lo! We shall be with you, Hearing. And come together upon Pharaoh and say: Lo! We bear a message of the Lord of the worlds, (saying) Let the children of Israel go with us." (26 : 15-17)
9. "And verily We gave unto Moses nine clear Signs."
(17 : 101)

First of all, God Almighty informed Moses (peace be upon him) of the nefarious activities and bad conduct of Pharaoh and his people. He told him that Pharaoh was the most haughty and rebellious man (79 : 15; 20 : 24-43) and his chiefs were a group of tyrants. They were extremely haughty and great braggart and boasters. They exulted in

perpetrating persecution. Their arrogance and oppression had made them confirmed scoundrels. Murduring, devastation, crime and mischief had become their second nature.

After this, Moses (peace be upon him) was apprised of his duty and position. He was also introduced to the Faith of which he was to become a standard-bearer, and the basic-points of the Faith were made known to him, namely, he was a Messenger of the Lord of the worldwide. His duty was to go to Pharaoh and his chiefs and ask them to acknowledge his prophethood and obey him.

The second point was that he was being deputed as an emancipator of the down-trodden people of Bani Israel. On the one hand, his duty was to remind Bani Israel of the lesson which they had since forgotten, to remove their defects and shortcomings, to reform their conducts and make them obedient and submissive believers, and on the other, he was called upon to deliver them from the cruel clutches of Pharaoh. In short, his duty was not only to convey the message of his Prophethood, but also to further the demand for their liberation and release from Pharaoh.

TECHNIQUE OF PROPAGATION

While explaining the technique of propagation, God Almighty exhorted him to talk politely and gently in spite of the insolent behaviour, stubbornness and provocation of Pharaoh, since rude talk fails to impress the hearers despite its being right. It incites a man to persistence, stubbornness and unreasonable opposition. These instructions were all the more necessary since Moses (peace be upon him) was, by his very nature, somewhat hot-tempered and self-respecting. Pharaoh, too, was full of anger. If Moses (peace be upon him) had given him tit for tat, Pharaoh would not have listened to the call at all. God Almighty, then, ordered Moses (peace be upon him) to warn Pharaoh of the doom of evil acts, and told him that if he made a demand for the proof of his prophethood, the Signs which He had given him should be shown to him.

CONSOLATION AND GLAD-TIDINGS

Then, He alleviated Moses' fear and consoled him, saying, "you will not be left alone; but will remain under my vigi-

lance and I shall listen to each call of yours. Whenever you will need Me, I shall help you and safeguard you against the evils and intrigues of your enemies. You are being favoured with two 'Signs' i.e. the staff and the white hand. In addition to these, seven more signs will be bestowed upon you to defend you in the hour of need and to serve as a shield against Pharaoh.

As stated above, although Moses (peace be upon him) was being consoled and assured of His help and support, yet in point of fact, this good news is meant for all the Muslims who are either treading the path of righteousness or want to tread this path. The story of Moses (peace be upon him) tells the believers that just as when Moses (peace be upon him) was alone and helpless in his time and enemies were very powerful, Allah Almighty gave him help and support and made him successful in the end, so they would also succeed in spite of their scanty means and meagre resources, and they would never be deprived of the help and support of Allah.

In short, Allah Almighty fully appraised Moses (peace be upon him) of his position and also made him understand the nature and outcome of his mission with the following glad-tidings:

"You twain and those who follow you will be the winners."
(28 : 35)

So, Moses (peace be upon him), overjoyed with the glad tidings of the help and support of Allah, set out for his home which was under the sway of a cruel and despotic ruler who was backed by criminals, mischief-mongers and a group of hard-hearted chiefs and the people. Moses met Aaron (peace be upon him) and the members of his family. He took his brother Aaron along with him and undauntedly entered the court of Pharaoh. A few days back, he had been afraid lest Pharaoh should revenge himself on him and kill him. But, on his becoming the standard-bearer of the true religion, all the pomp and show of Pharaoh seemed to be insignificant in his eye. He called Pharaoh to the true religion in the open court caring little for his wrath and anger.

Faith is such a tremendous force as brings a helpless and down-trodden person against a powerful sovereign and renders the latter's pomp and show meaningless in the for-

mer's eye. Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar has explained this position in the following excellent verse:

I need have no fear even if the whole world were
against me. God alone suffices me.

DECLARATION OF PROPHETHOOD AND DEMAND FOR FREEDOM OF BANI ISRAEL

At the time of exalting Moses (peace be upon him) to the eminent position of Prophethood, God Almighty had laid special emphasis on two points:

1. Declaration of Prophethood.
2. Emancipation of Bani Israel.

The Lord observed:

"And come together unto Pharaoh and say: Lo! We bear a message from the Lord of the worlds. (Saying): Let the children of Israel go with us." (26 : 16-17)

So, Moses (peace be upon him) along with his brother Aaron (peace be upon him) set out and entered the court of Pharaoh without any fear. He said:

"Moses said: O Pharaoh! Lo! I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds, One for whom it is right to say nothing but truth about. I come unto you (people) with a clear proof from your Lord. So, let the children of Israel go with me." (7 : 104 - 105)

The above declaration and demand of Moses (peace be upon him) were in compliance with the instructions given to him at the time of his appointment to the position of Prophethood. In this connection, the verses of Surahs 20 : 47-48, 2 : 16-17, 43 : 46, 79 : 15-20, and 7 : 103-105, may be referred to. The detail of this call to the Faith has been explained in Surah Ad-Dukhan as follows:

"And verily We tried before them Pharaoh's folk, when there came unto them a noble messenger, saying: Hand over to me the slaves of Allah. Lo! I am a faithful Messenger unto you. And saying: Be not proud against Allah. Lo! I bring you a clear warrant." (44 : 17-19)

Some other points have been explained in Surah Ta Ha as under:

"So, go ye unto him and say: Lo! We are two messengers of thy Lord. So, let the children of Israel go with

us, and torment them not. We bring thee a Sign from thy Lord. And peace will be for him who followeth right guidance. Lo! It hath been revealed unto us that the doom will be for him who denieth and turneth away." (20 : 47-48)

It is clear from the above verses that Moses (P.B.U.H.) not only declared his own Prophethood but also the Prophethood of his brother.

Moses (P.B.U.H.) first called Pharaoh to the right path and told him that his peace and safety lay in embracing the true Faith.

He, then, warned him not to defy Allah's Commands but accept His Message, as he had been informed through revelations about the ultimate end of the people who rejected Allah's message and turned their faces away from it. They would incur the displeasure and wrath of Allah in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

This declaration which was made in the open court of Pharaoh was of special significance. It implied that sovereignty rests with Allah alone. Since Moses (P.B.U.H.) was an authorised agent of that Sovereign Power, all the people were required to owe allegiance to him, act upon his advice, consider all that he said as true and belie that which came from other sources. Thus, the claim of Pharaoh that he was the personification of the Attributes of God became null and void and the position which he claimed for himself became insignificant.

The freedom of Bani Israel implied these aspects:

1. Since Bani Israel were a Muslim community, their deliverance and reformation rested with the Prophet as the first and foremost duty.
2. Its political aspect was that the rule of Pharaoh over a large number of people ended with immediate effect.
3. The one inevitable consequence of the acceptance of the demand of Moses (P.B.U.H.) was that the awe, power and dread of Pharaoh automatically vanished. The deliverance of such a large section of the people of Bani Israel served as an incentive to the other oppressed classes of people to fight for their freedom and deliverance from Pharaoh.

Pharaoh was at first surprised to see Moses (P.B.U.H.). He

was all the more astonished to hear his plain conversation. He was filled with the apprehension by his boldness and courage. Lest he should lose his prestige with the people, he first tried to side-track and put off the matter. He, then, reminded him of the past incidents and recounted the favours which he had done to him, with a view to influencing him. He also made a vain attempt to give an impression to his chiefs and followers that he had taken no notice of the talk of the new comer. He said:

PHARAOH SPEAKS OF THE FAVOURS CONFERRED ON MOSES

“(Pharaoh) said (unto Moses): Did we not rear thee among us as a child? And thou didst dwell many years of thy life amongst us, and thou didst that thy deed which thou didst, and thou wast one of the ingrates.”
(26 : 18-19)

Here it must be borne in mind that the conversation of Moses (P.B.U.H.) was not directed to the Pharaoh who had brought him up. In those days, men of the ruling class were known as Pharaoh, meaning “the race that descended from the sun-god”. The first Pharaoh who brought up Moses (P.B.U.H.) was ‘Amsis’; the second Pharaoh Moses (P.B.U.H.) was talking to was ‘Amsis’ son, called Manfatha or Manfatah.

In the sentences quoted above, where Pharaoh tried to impress Moses (P.B.U.H.) by renouncing his favours to him, he also brought a moral pressure to bear on him, when he told him that he was very ungrateful. Thus, he tried to prejudice the listeners against him at the very outset by telling them that the talk of the man who was forgetful of the favours of his benefactor and claimed to be his instructor and controller did not deserve to be listened to.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN PHARAOH AND MOSES

Moses (peace be upon him) grasped the full implication of Pharaoh’s talk and made the following plain reply:

He said: I did it then, when I was of those who are astray. Then, I fled from you when I feared you, and my Lord vouchsafed to me a Command and appointed me (one of the member) of those sent (by Him). And this is the past favour wherewith thou reproac-

hest me that thou hast enslaved the children of Israel."

(26 : 20-22)

Here lies the difference between a Prophet and a common man. Had there been a common man in place of Moses (P.B.U.H.), he would have offered many excuses for his absence and boasted that he had proceeded on such and such expedition. He would have also concocted many stories to cover his sin. But Moses (P.B.U.H.) was a Prophet of Allah and a standard-bearer of the True Faith. If he had not spoken the truth, who else could have told the truth? He confessed frankly that he had committed a murder unknowingly and unintentionally and left the country out of the fear of his revenge. He reiterated the claim of his having been appointed by Allah His Messenger. His duty was to guide and lead the people to the right path. Then, he exposed in detail Pharaoh's boast of the favours conferred on him. He told him that he had been extolling the favours done to him without thinking over the matter as to how all this had happened. He said, "your father held my people under subjection by tyranny and oppression. They ordered the male babies to be killed. If you and your people had not perpetrated this oppression, I would not have come to you. My parents could bring me up; but as they were afraid lest you should kill me, I was cast into the river and thus came to your house.

When Pharaoh heard this, he was at his wits' end and did not know what to do. The tyranny and oppression perpetrated by him and his forefathers was being exposed publically. He turned the trend of the discourse, saying:

"Pharaoh said: And who is the Lord of the Worlds?

(26 : 23)

This incident has been explained in another verse as under:

"(Pharaoh) said: Who then is the Lord of you twain,
O Moses?"

(20 : 49)

Thus Pharaoh challenged the claim of Moses (P.B.U.H.) that he was the Prophet of God. He asked him to discuss the claim of his Prophethood later on, but he said he would like to know who the Lord of the worlds was and what that meant.

The above question was not put to Moses by Pharaoh

with a view to adding to his knowledge, but it fully reflected the depraved mentality of the disbelievers and polytheists of all time in general and those of this rebellious and arrogant rulers in particular.

If Moses (P.B.U.H.) had preached, "There is a God, perform some religious rites before Him and make some offerings to Him, he would not have been offended as the conception of these people about God consisted in the performance of certain rituals and in chanting certain hymns before him. According to them, they owed nothing else to Him. They considered that it was not at all necessary that their God should either interfere in their worldly life and its affairs or have a say in their political or administrative affairs. They would not let anyone interfere in their affairs or impose restrictions on them.

But, Prophets (peace be upon them) always laid emphasis on one major point that their God was not an imaginary, illusory, helpless and powerless Being, but He was the Omnipotent Sovereign Ruler. He alone had the right to rule over the world. All the other so-called rulers were His subjects. So, they must lead a life as His obedient servants and submit to the will of the Real King who had created the whole world as well as those who claimed to be its rulers. All the Prophets (peace be upon them) have, therefore, preached the same Faith.

"O my people! serve Allah. Ye have no other God
save Him (7 : 59)

and

"So fear Allah, and obey me." (26 : 108)

The polytheists and the unrestrained ruling class could never accept the demand of submitting to the Will of God.

If there had been a brief talk, Pharaoh might have overlooked it or tried to confuse the discussion or the argumentation. The crux of the matter was that not only had his despotic rule been challenged, but he had also been asked to release the Bani Israel and hand them over to Moses. It was an open threat to the political domination and despotic rule of Pharaoh. He could never accept it. First of all, he challenged Moses' claim that he was the Prophet of the Lord of the worlds and repudiated the basic conception of "the Lord of the worlds".

Moses spoke in persuasive and eloquent manner:

"(Moses) said: Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, if ye had but sure belief."
(26 : 24)

And

He said: Our Lord is He Who gave unto everything its form and nature, and further gave (it) guidance."
(20 : 50)

In the above brief and intelligent reply, Moses (P.B.U.H.) not only explained as to who was their Lord, but he also told Pharaoh why and how He was their Lord. It was thus in a brief sentence that he not only introduced God, the Glorified to them but expounded a comprehensive conception of the Attributes of God together with a brief outline of the course of action in conformity with His Commands.

He told: My God is the Creator of all that which is on the earth and in the heavens. He is their Sustainer. He has not been created by anyone nor anyone has made Him the Lord; but He is the Lord by Himself and by His own power. He has created not only you but also many a false claimants to godhead supported by others. If you believe in God in real sense, no one can prevent you from believing in Him. It should be your belief that He has not only created His creatures but also provided them with everything that was required for their sustenance. Thus wings have been provided to birds for flying, water to fish for swimming, hands and feet to a man for walking as well as many other qualities, powers and capabilities.

He has not only created them and provided them with necessities but also given them Guidance and Instruction. Every species has been assigned the specific duty and also endowed with capabilities to discharge it. God Almighty Who guides a insignificant worm and the magnificent ocean, cannot leave man, the best of his creation, without guidance. It is for this purpose that He has sent me to you.

"Then, I will guide thee to Thy Lord, so thou shouldst fear (Him)".
(79 : 19)

But, Pharaoh's discussion was not intended for the sake of clarification. He sought to deny Moses' Prophethood by refuting his arguments. He also wanted to entangle him in a futile discussion and hush him up by making him the butt

of ridicule, so that the courtiers might not be impressed by his message. Thirdly, he wanted to turn down the demand for deliverance of Bani Israel once for all, so as to eliminate any threat to his autocracy. He, therefore, turned the trend of the discourse and addressed his courtiers in the following words, in order to eclipse the image of Moses (P.B.U.H.).

“(Pharaoh) said unto those around him: Hear ye not.”
(26 : 25)

In short, he wanted to let the people around him to see how the person who laid a claim to Prophethood could, according to him, indulge in such an irrelevant talk.

But, Moses (P.B.U.H.) was fully aware of the nature of Pharaoh's tactics. It was hard to defeat his strategem. He did not let Pharaoh turn the trend of the discourse or change the topic under discussion. His prompt reply was as follows:

“He said: Your Lord and the Lords of your fathers.”
(26 : 26)

That is to say, he did not believe in a Lord whose lordship was only temporary, but he believed in a Lord whose Lordship was Permanent and Eternal. He is the Ever-Living and Everlasting Lord. He was the Lord before they and their forefathers were born, nay even before them. He would remain the Lord even after their death. Pharaoh, who was trying to confuse Moses (P.B.U.H.) was glad to listen to this reply. He thought that he had put him in a tight corner and got a point whereby he could instigate the people against him by arousing their sense of false pride and dignity. He was now sure that there was no way of escape for him. He said in a commanding voice:

“He said: What, then, is the state of the generations of old?”
(20 : 51)

“That is to say, if your explanation that God has created the whole world and arranged for the guidance of mankind is true, what would be your verdict about the men who had been worshipping other lords besides your Lord? Were all such persons misled, and do all of them, according to your philosophy, deserve punishment against which you are warning me?”

But, one could not adequately appreciate a Prophet's wisdom. Moses had a providential escape from the tangle, and made a reply that dumb-founded Pharaoh.

"He said: The knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a Record. My Lord neither erreth nor forgeteth."

(20 : 52)

This intelligent answer lays down an important principle of preaching the Faith wisely that whenever an addressee is bent upon making a fuss or mischief, avoid answering his question directly as it would add fuel to the fire and afford him a chance to make a mischief. One should make one's reply in a way that not only the truth is brought home and the object of preaching is fulfilled but also no chance is left for the addressee to create a fuss or mischief.

If Moses (P.B.U.H.) had liked, he could have made this direct reply: "Well! All your forefathers were misled, and they would serve as fuel for Hell-Fire". That reply might have been a masterpiece of truth, but it would have provided the enemy with a weapon whereby he could rally all the people against Moses (P.B.U.H.). But, not only did he silence Pharaoh by his answer, but also explained to him the fundamentals of his Faith and gave a comprehensive idea of the Attributes of God in these words: "My Lord keeps a complete record of every action. He never omits an entry therein nor does He err. As for those people (who have gone before), their affairs rest with Him. Since He is All-Powerful, He has the power to treat them as He Wills. Your worry should be only about yourself.

"Do not poke your nose into other's affairs. Mind your own business."

Pharaoh was speechless. But a proud and haughty ruler never gives in easily. His pride and arrogance impede his way to accept the Truth and impel him to stubbornness, fanaticism and indecency. So, Pharaoh began to pass blasphemous remarks against the Prophet Moses.

PHARAOH'S JOKE

"(Pharaoh) said: Lo! Your messenger who hath been sent unto you is, indeed, a mad man." (26 : 27)

The same reply was given in every age to every preacher of the Truth. Noah, Abraham, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon them) received the same reply from the obstinate, insolent and rude chiefs. Whenever these persons suffer a defeat in discussion, they resort to abuses and false

accusations, thinking in that way they would be able to lower the prestige of the opponent. But, the world knows those adopting such mean tactics are themselves humiliated in the end.

Moses (P.B.U.H.) would not forsake his mission at the insolent reply of Pharaoh. He continued:

"He said: Lord of the East and the West and all that is between them, if ye did but understand."

(26 : 28)

That is to say, my Lord is the Lord of the whole world, extending from the East to the West. Your rule is over a small piece of land, whereas my Lord rules over the east as well as the west. You are nothing as compared to Him. Should I consider that Magnificent Being or you as the Lord, you being just an insignificant iota of His creation. You consider me mad, but I cannot help regretting your wisdom. Had you been wise, you would not have denied such an obvious thing.

On hearing this, the rage of Pharaoh knew no bounds. It was but natural, as Abraham (P.B.U.H.) the grandfather of Moses (P.B.U.H.), had given the same argument to Nimrod. Nimrod had claimed that since he was king and the country belonged to him, who else could be the Lord? Thereupon Abraham (P.B.U.H.) said, "My Lord is the One Who gives life and death". Thereupon Nimrod instantly replied that he, too, could do the same easily. Abraham (P.B.U.H.) offered an argument that the so-called lord was absolutely confounded. He replied:

"Abraham said: Lo! Allah causeth the sun to rise in the East, so do thou causes it to come up from the West. Thus was the disbeliever abashed." (2 : 25E)

Now that Moses (P.B.U.H.) had followed the Sunnah of Abraham (P.B.U.H.), how would not Pharaoh adopt the way of Nimrod? If the believers are constant in their attitude to the propagation of the truth, the unbelievers, too, despite all their boasts, are persistent in their unbelief and pagan ways of life even after thousands of years.

Neither the world's battlefield is new, nor are the combatants new: The same is the spirit of valiance, the same is the nature of villainy.

The way of unbelievers is that if arguments fail to settle

a matter.resort should be made to abuses, threats, imprisonment, hanging or burning the enemies alive.

So, following in the footsteps of Nimrod, his spiritual leader, Pharaoh said in a threatening voice:

PHARAOH'S THREAT

“(Pharaoh) said: If thou choosest a god other than I, I assuredly shall place thee among the prisoners”.

(26 : 29)

When Moses (P.B.U.H.) noticed that Pharaoh was mad with rage and bent upon obstinacy and insolence and that he would not listen to any argument, he decided to try another device and offer such a self-evident and practical argument as *Ayat-e-Kubra* (a major sign)—one which he could not refute.

“Moses said: Even if I showed you something clear (and) convincing.”

(26 : 30)

Pharaoh was quite unaware of the change that had come about in Moses (P.B.U.H.). He was under the impression that he had an encounter with a person whom he had brought up. This was not the case with Pharaoh alone: the unbelievers always make wrong judgements in regard to the Prophets. He did not know what wonders the miracles of ‘white hand’ and ‘staff’ of Moses could work. Pharaoh flung a challenge:

THE CHALLENGE OF PHARAOH

“Pharaoh said: Produce it, then, if thou art of the truthful.”

(26 : 31)

The details of the challenge of Pharaoh has been explained in another Qur’anic verse as under:

“(Pharaoh) said: If thou comest with a Sign, then produce it, if thou art of those who speak the truth.”

(7 : 106)

DISPLAY OF MIRACLES IN THE COURT

Moses (P.B.U.H.) accepted Pharaoh’s challenge instantaneously and displayed the two miracles the Lord had bestowed upon him especially for this occasion. The Holy Qur’an explains what those miracles were:

“Then he cast down his staff and it became a serpent manifest, and he drew forth his hand and Lo! it was

white to the beholders." (26 : 32-33 and 7 : 107-108)

When Pharaoh beheld a serpent hissing in the open court and saw Moses' hand was resplendent like the sun, he was struck with amazement and addressed his courtiers as follows:

"(Pharaoh) said unto his chiefs around him: Lo! This is verily a knowing sorcerer, who could drive you out of your land by his magic. Now what counsel do ye offer?" (26 : 34-35)

The awe of the truth was so terrific that the man who had claimed to be a god a moment before and threatened his addressee with imprisonment even calling him mad, was absolutely outwitted with one stroke of the staff of Moses (P.B.U.H.). He began to consult his chiefs as to how to deal with that man. These miracles of the Prophet Moses (P.B.U.H.) would have been a sufficient proof for a good-natured man, but no miracle, however plain and evident, could impress an obstinate person. Pharaoh was that type of man. The Holy Qur'an describes the mental outlook of this man as under:

OBSTINACY OF PHARAOH

"And We verily did show him all Our Signs, but he denied them and refuted?" (20 : 56)

The inherent defect in Pharaoh's character and behaviour has been pin-pointed in the above verse. The man who was invested with unlimited powers and was not in his senses on this account, especially when his opponent happened to be very weak and helpless, could never be convinced of the Divine Truth, whatever attempt should have been made and whichever arguments or reasons should have been advanced. Just as a few drops of water add to the intensity of fire, for a while, so does the sense of shame at having suffered a defeat in reasoning add to the fury of a man like Pharaoh. Thus, Moses (P.B.U.H.) put forth convincing arguments and solid replies, made an impressive speech and displayed open miracles, those of the 'staff' and the 'white hand'. In short, he adopted every method to convince him of the Truth, but in vain.

CHARGES OF PHARAOH

The more he witnessed the miracles the more he felt

exasperated. He applied his propaganda technique to his full advantage and said: "This man is an expert magician. He wants to drive you out of your country by means of witchcraft". This has been described in Sura Ta Ha as under:

"He said: Hast thou come to drive us out of our land by thy witchcraft, O Moses?" (20 : 57)

He tried all his wiles and skill, as the above verse explains.

On the one hand, he made an attempt to falsify Moses (P.B.U.H.) by levelling the charge against him that he was not a Prophet but only a magician and, on the other, he sought to undermine the reputation he had earned by dint of his good moral conduct, courage and straight forwardness.

The second charge levelled by Pharaoh against him was that Moses (P.B.U.H.) was striving merely for the sake of snatching power from him under the pretext of magic tricks.

He also tried to make his courtiers and followers realize the danger and instil in them fear saying, "In case this man succeeds, we shall remain in power no longer. If you want that you and your men should remain in power, put an end to this menace which is threatening us".

He had already tried to arouse the sense of false dignity and pride in his courtiers by saying, "This man regards your ancestors as misled and miscreants". Then, he tried to inculcate in them the feelings of false racial distinction and discord by saying that a conspiracy was being hatched to overthrow the Qibtis' rule and bring Bani Israel to power.

FLATTERY OF THE COURTIERS

On this occasion, the courtiers who always make a show of their unlimited loyalty to the king began to ditto him. This being a quality inherent in them, they could not afford to miss the chance.

"The chiefs of Pharaoh's folk said: Lo! This is some sorcerer well-versed who would expel you from your land. Now what do you advise?" (7 : 109-110)

Even though he had beheld the miracles, the Pharaoh continued talking in his usual shame-facedness which has been described in the Holy Qur'an as under:

"And when the truth from Our Presence came unto them, they said: This is mere witchcraft." (10 : 77)

Pharaoh and his courtiers not only adopted an obstinate

and insolent behaviour, but they started jeering and cutting jokes in the open court.

"But, when Moses came unto them with Our clear Signs, they said: This is not but invented magic. We never heard of this among our fathers of old. And Moses said: My Lord is best aware of him who bringeth guidance from His Presence, and whose will be the sequel of Home (of bliss). Lo! wrong-doers will not be successful. And Pharaoh said: O Chiefs! I know not that ye have a god other than I, so kindle for me (a fire), O Haman, to bake the mud; and set up for me a lofty tower that I may survey the God of Moses: and Lo! I deem him of the liars." (28 : 36-38)

When Moses (P.B.U.H.) displayed the miracles of 'white hand' and 'staff', Pharaoh tried to belie them by calling them magic tricks and when the former challenged the latter's claim to be a god or lord, Pharaoh asked Moses as to wherefrom he had brought a new God and Lord. He remarked that there was none else besides him who had power to rule and command. He had been ruling over the country for so many generations. No one else could give the people a constitution and compel them to act upon his will. What a strange and non-sensical talk!

Moses (P.B.U.H.) said: He Who has sent me a messenger knows full well as to which way is the right one and leads to peace and salvation. Do not adopt the way of pride and persecution, for it does not lead to peace and salvation. It only leads to inevitable destruction.

Pharaoh did not stop there and went a step further. He made the God of Moses the subject of ridicule so as to cut at the very root of the whole affair. He spoke:

"O Haman! Construct a tower or a big building, so that I may behold where He is. He is false. I want to deal with him once for all".

The idiot was of the view that inspiration descended from a height. It was not only Pharaoh but also the demigods of every time who suffered from such delusion about God. Khuruchiev (the Soviet Prime Minister of the twentieth century) had made the same non-sensical remarks at the time when sputnik, after completing its movement in the space, came back to the earth that he had not seen God anywhere.

Who could tell the idiot that God Whom he was looking for in the space and the sky was in his heart? To search out God in the earth and heaven is a tremendous task. If only he had eyes, he would have cast a searching glance in the depth of his heart, but a blind man could not see things for himself. He might have had a chance to see God when he had been made to relinquish the chair. He would have never cut such a joke after that.

When Moses (P.B.U.H.) perceived that Pharaoh and his companions were bent upon clear transgression and characterized the clear Signs presented on their demand as magic tricks in order to refute the Truth, belittle his position and belie the Faith, he once again made a detailed and comprehensive reply as follows:

“Moses said: Speak ye (so) of the truth when it hath come unto you? Is this magic? Now magicians thrive not”. (10 : 78)

You first made a demand for producing some authority in support of my appointment (to Prophethood); but when I showed you clear Signs, you threw them to the four winds. Are the magicians like me? Can a helpless person encounter a tyrant with such courage and boldness and preach his Faith without any temptation of reward, and do all that merely for guiding the people, and can he display miracles which a magician is by no means capable of demonstrating? A magician, if he wants to show his magic skill in the court, first take permission of the King and strives hard to demonstrate his skill as such. Then, he asks for a reward. Have I done anything of this sort? As a matter of fact, a magician can win applause or receive a reward, but he can never earn a good name.

On hearing this plain reply from Moses (P.B.U.H.), Pharaoh's men spoke with one voice like a skilful debater.

They said. Hast thou come unto us to pervert us from that (faith) on which we found our forefathers, and that you two may own the place of greatness in the land? We shall not believe in you two.” (10 : 79)

In the above sentence, they again used the specific technique of Pharaoh and appealed to the people to safeguard the sanctity of the religion of their ancestors and not to accept the call of Moses (P.B.U.H.) at all, declaring that no

one should dare accept it. Alongwith it, they brought their whole propoganda machinery into operation against the two brothers who were, according to them, fighting for power.

These idiots advised Pharaoh as under:

"They said: Keep him and his brother in suspense and send them into the cities summoners who shall bring unto thee every sorcerer well-versed."

(26 : 36-37)

The same words have been given in Sura Al-A'raf.

"They said (unto Pharaoh): Put him off (a while) — him and his brother — and send into the cities summoners, to bring each knowing wizard unto thee."

(7 : 111-112)

It is not known whether any 'Preventive Detention Order' was passed, or not, or whether any 'Safety Act' was issued or not, or whether or not he was 'pleased' to put a ban on the liberty of Moses (P.B.U.H.).

Perhaps, civilization had not advanced to that extent that he would have been 'pleased' to put a ban on the liberty of someone or there was dearth of some legal advisers as could present those bitter pills after coating them with sugar. He, however, kept them in suspense through 'crude diplomacy' somehow or other by making lame excuses and pretexts, asking for some more time to recover his lost prestige.

It transpires from the advice of the so-called intelligentsia that whenever the call to the truth is raised, there is a great tumult in the royal court and its foundations which are laid on the sandy walls of persecution and tyranny begin to give way. Those who are at the helm of state affairs foresee their decline and use all sorts of nefarious tacts and devices to curb the movement aimed at their destruction.

INTELLIGENCE OF THE COURTIER IN APPRECIATING THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE CALL

One undeniable fact, however, is worth appreciation that Pharaoh and his followers displayed great intelligence and farsightedness in ascertaining correctly the consequences of Moses' call. As a matter of fact, the call of the Truth and power go hand in hand. Without power religion is merely a sermon and nothing more. Religion is always a dominating force and is never dominated by any one. This crystal clear

fact has been explained by God Almighty in the Holy Qur'an as under:

"He it is Who hath sent His Messenger with guidance and true religion, that He may proclaim it over all religion, however much idolators may be averse."

(61 : 9)

This universal truth has been explained by Hazrat Usman nicely as under:

'Allah ends (evils) through a Ruler which the Holy Qur'an cannot end.'

Pharaoh and his followers fully grasped the implications of Moses' call to the Divine Truth within no time. Woe to the so-called religious men who deny this obvious fact, in spite of so much discussion and argumentation on this point.

THE CHALLENGE FOR A CONTEST WITH THE MAGICIANS

In order to regain his lost prestige, Pharaoh challenged Moses (P.B.U.H.) for a contest with his magicians:

"But we surely can produce magic like thereof; so appoint a tryst between us and you, which neither we nor thou shall fail to keep, at a place convenient (to us both) in an open place."

(20 : 58)

The propaganda campaign of Pharaoh reached its climax when Moses (P.B.U.H.) was produced as a magician before the whole world.

If Moses (P.B.U.H.) had been a magician, he would have hesitated to accept the challenge. But as he was a preacher of the Truth, he considered it a God-sent opportunity to affirm the truthfulness of his Faith to the people in broad day light and to establish as to who was right and who was armed with the nefarious weapons of deceit and cunningness. He accepted the challenge then and there.

"(Moses) said: Your tryst shall be the day of the feast, and let the people assemble when the sun hath risen high."

(20 : 59)

In other words, this contest should not be held in the darkness of night or in the haziness of dawn, but in the broad daylight, so that the people could not be deceived or misled. Moreover, the day of the contest should be such as the maximum number of men could see it. So, the day of their

festival was fixed for this purpose and Moses (P.B.U.H.) went back to his house.

When Moses (P.B.U.H.) returned from the court of Pharaoh, he set to the task of spreading the Faith and organizing his mission. Caring little for Pharaoh and his challenge, he devoted himself to the mission with perfect mental peace and tranquility. The reasons for this peace and tranquility were as under:

Firstly, he had full confidence in himself and in the righteousness of his mission. He was sure the truth was always supreme and the impediments in its way were **only** transitory, and he was bound to succeed in the end. He expressed these feelings time and again. Allah grants this peace of mind and tranquility to every preacher of the True Faith. That is the reason why he does not give up hope and courage even in the most distressing circumstances.

Secondly, he had in view all the glad tidings of success which the Lord had conveyed to him, especially those which were conveyed to him at the time of the conferment of Prophethood i.e. he would not be left alone; God was there with him; he and his followers would ultimately succeed.

PHARAOH'S PREPARATIONS FOR THE CONTEST

On the other hand, Pharaoh made full-fledged preparations for the ensuing contest. He said to his followers:

"And Pharaoh said: Bring every Sorcerer well-versed unto me." (10 : 80)

Spies were sent to every corner of the country to search out the magicians and bring them to the scene at the appointed time.

"So the magicians were gathered together at a set time on a day appointed." (26 : 38)

Then, he utilized all the resources at his command in collecting the people on the appointed day. It was instilled in their minds by means of strong propaganda that the very existence of their religion depended on the result of the contest. If they won, their religion would win; otherwise, Moses and his brother Aaron would turn them away from their religion.

Pharaoh's men had launched nefarious propaganda to arouse the feelings of false racial friction in the people. The real motive behind it was that the people who had been impressed by the plain preaching and miracles of Moses (P.B.U.H.) in the court of Pharaoh should give way to their propaganda and refrain from embracing the true religion. Little did the fools know that the inherent quality of the truth is that it dominates when it is suppressed.

"Islam is by nature so elastic that it emerges triumphant to the extent it is suppressed."

Even if Moses (P.B.U.H.) had spent the major part of his life, he would not have introduced himself and his religion to such a large number of people. The credit went to the enemies of Moses (P.B.U.H.) that they served as an impetus to spread the Faith so rapidly. Such is the case with Pharaohs of every age. They propagate their own views to suppress the Truth, but little do they know that their efforts directed to

suppressing the Truth only go to accentuate the call to the true religion.

God Almighty has narrated this struggle of Pharaoh in two verses:

“And it was said unto the people: Are ye (also) gathering? (They said): Aye, so that we may follow the sorcerers if they are the winners.”

(26 : 39, 40)

Pharaoh not only assembled the wizards and launched a propaganda but also used all his resources and devices. This attitude of him has been described in the Holy Qur'an as under:

“Then, Pharaoh went and gathered his strength, then came (to the appointed tryst).”

(20 : 60)

What were the tactics and devices as adopted by Pharaoh?

A vigorous propaganda was launched throughout the country that Moses and his brother Aaron (peace be upon them) were magicians. Moreover, a storm of discord and dissention was raised that their national religion was in danger and that the Bani Israel constituted a menace to their civilization and culture, and they were bent upon overthrowing their power and sovereignty. He sent out his aide-de-camps and spies to collect all the skilful magicians and called the people to see the magnificent feat.

MAGICIANS IN THE COURT OF PHARAOH

In short, the magicians from all over the country reached the capital. When they came to know that the authority of the king depended on their support, they considered it a golden chance to bargain with him and receive a high price in return for the extraordinary service to be thus rendered to him. The Holy Qur'an describes this event, as under:

“And the sorcerers came to Pharaoh, saying: Surely there will be a reward for us, if we are victors.”

(7 : 113)

This event has been narrated in Surah Ash-Shu'ara, as under:

“And when the sorcerers came, they said unto Pharaoh: Will there surely be a reward for us, if we are the winners?”

(26 : 41)

The outstanding differences between a Prophet and a

magician which are clearly manifest in the above verse are as follows:

1. The magicians, as a rule, do visit their rulers and kings off and on, pay homage to them and demand some payment and rewards in lieu of their magic plays. It never happens that a magician stands face to face before a king. On the other hand, they take it as a great honour to serve the king.
2. A prophet needs not take permission from anyone to propagate and preach the true religion. The fact that he has been appointed God's Messenger is sufficient for him. He is bound to fulfil the mission irrespective of the fact that one is pleased or displeased with him. He called all the people, including the king himself, to submit to him.
3. A Prophet does not discharge his duty for the sake of remuneration or reward; rather he considers it the very aim and object of his life and sacrifices his all in this cause. He expects reward only from his Lord.
4. A magician can fascinate a man temporarily by his magic feats. A Prophet impresses the people by his noble character and sublime mission.
5. Hitherto no moral or political revolution has been brought about through feats of magic. Contrary to this, political and moral awakening is brought about even at the first stage of preaching by the Prophets.

So, Pharaoh who knew well this distinction between witchcraft and the Prophetic Mission made the same reply as every ruler, so ambitious of power, would make in that situation. He also knew well that the temptations of reward and appointment to key posts in the court could cause the footsteps of even a conscientious man to waver. He was fully conscious of the fact that the best incentive whereby to induce the characterless people to fight against the standard-bearers of the truth was that a temptation should be offered to them for appointment as ministers of state and that they should be bribed lavishly. The jingling of coins would make them his most obedient servant. He said:

"He answered: Yea, and surely ye shall be of those brought near (to me)." (7 : 114)

"He said: Aye, and ye will then surely be of those brought near (to me)." (26 : 42)

You demand only payment and reward which you will surely get. In addition to this, I will appoint you ministers and ambassadors and invest you with unlimited powers. The appointments will be made at your recommendation. Murderers will be acquitted on your suggestions and innocent people will be put behind the bars at your behests. It is not known whether the practice for issuing licences and permits was in vogue at that time or not. Had it been an established practice, the Pharaoh of those days like the Pharaohs of today might have even made this offer: 'You demand payment and reward, I will set up factories for you. Take licences, sell them and enjoy yourselves.'

THE CONTEST WITH THE MAGICIANS

A WARNING TO THE MAGICIANS

The magicians whom Pharaoh had given definite promises of handsome rewards and for whose success he prayed most fervently came to encounter Moses (P.B.U.H.) The latter in accordance with the Islamic tenets and human psychology, once more called the enemy to the True Faith. Sometimes it so happens that a man standing at the cross roads is drawn to the call to the Faith and embraces it. So, Moses said:

“Moses said unto them: Woe unto you! Invent not a lie against Allah, lest He (should) extirpate you by some punishment. He who lieth faileth miserably.”

(20 : 61)

EFFECT OF THE WARNING

The call of Moses (P.B.U.H.) did not prove to be a cry in the wilderness. The timely warning had its effect. It seemed to the courtiers and the magicians, who had come there with a firm resolve to fight the contest, as if the ground were slipping under their feet. They began to whisper to one another. The Holy Qur'an has given a graphic picture of their condition as under:

“Then, they debated with one another what they should do, and they kept their counsel secret.”

(20 : 62)

Now, what did their whispering imply?

Since they had listened to the preaching of Moses (P.B.U.H.) and witnessed the miracles and signs and watched the reactions thereto in the open court, the experienced and sober minded among them began to whisper that if he were a Prophet, they were sure to suffer a defeat at his hands and in the event of defeat before the general public, they would be no more and would be humiliated within no time. They found themselves on the horns of a dilemma and did not know as to whether they should attempt the contest or not.

It appears that the conscience of all the people was not

dead. There were still some conscientious men among Pharaoh's people. The mischievous among them, however, saw through the situation and threatened the magicians thus:

"They said: Lo! These are two sorcerers who would drive you out of your country by their magic, and destroy your best traditions; so arrange your plan and come in the battle line. Whoso is uppermost this day will be indeed successful." (20 : 63-64)

As a matter of fact, the followers of a tyrant ruler who are the most wicked are the virtual kings. Hence the decision rested with them. Not only was it decided to hold the contest, but also the charge that Moses and Aaron were ambitious of power was reiterated. Perhaps, the despotic rulers of every age have learnt this technique from Pharaoh that whenever some pious and virtuous men come forward to preach the Faith and speak boldly before a tyrant, they accuse them of being ambitious of power. Some of them would forego their claim for fear of false accusations. As for the others such a strong propaganda campaign is launched against them as to give an impression to every one that the whole struggle is for the chair. We may ask the Pharaohs of our age as to how they got the right of dominating the people as their chiefs. Is it a Divine right? They also pose to pine and waste their lives away for their people. They would never say that their rule was in danger, but they would always tell that the existence of the people was in danger. Their vested interests assume the form of Public Safety and Public Interests. So said Pharaoh's men to his people, "He will seize your lands". In other words, they (rulers) were quite safe and no one should worry about them; rather they were worried about the people and their future. The matter did not end there. He tried to instigate the people against Moses by recalling what were their interests and telling that all the luxuries, festivities, pomp and show, power and magnificence which they enjoyed would be dashed to the ground. This instigating propaganda technique proved very efficacious and the magicians who were reluctant a moment earlier decided to fight the contest.

THE CHALLENGE FOR CONTEST

"They said: O Moses! Either you throw first, or let

us be first to throw". (20 : 65)

It is narrated in Surah Al-A'raf:

"They said: O Moses! Either you throw (first), or let us be the first throwers". (7 : 115)

Moses (P.B.U.H.) was sure of his success. He knew no fear. He said boldly:

"He said: Nay, do ye throw"! (20 : 66)

It has been narrated in Surah Younus:

"And when the sorcerers came, Moses said unto them: Cast your cast"! (10 : 81)

In Surah Ash-Shu'ara, it has been mentioned:

"Moses said unto them: Throw what ye are going to throw"! (26 : 43)

Moses (P.B.U.H.) gave the first chance to the magicians, so that they could display all their skill and not complain that they were not given ample opportunity to show their feats. He gave the first chance to the magicians, as he was certain that whatever trick they might try, he would defeat them with the help and support of Allah. So, the magicians threw their ropes and staves:

"Then they threw down their ropes and their staves and said: By Pharaoh's might, lo! we verily are the winners." (26 : 44)

EFFECT OF MAGIC

Those ropes and staves contained a mighty magic power. The Holy Qur'an describes it as under:

"He said: Throw! And when they threw, they cast a spell upon the people's eyes and overawed them, and produced a mighty spell." (7 : 116)

The details of the wonders wrought by their witchcraft has been narrated in Sura Ta Ha as under:

"Then lo! Their ropes and their staves by their magic appeared to him as though they ran". (20 : 66)

No sooner did Moses (P.B.U.H.) bid them throw their staves then all the magicians threw their ropes and staves on the ground. Lo! Hundreds of serpents were gliding on all sides.

The effect of this awe-inspiring scene on Moses (P.B.U.H.) has been described in the Holy Qur'an as under:

"And Moses conceived fear in his mind. We said

Fear not! Lo! Thou art the higher. Throw that which is in thy hand. It will eat up that which they have made. Lo! That which they have forged is but a wizard's artifice, and a wizard shall not be successful to whatever point (of skill) he may attain".

(20 : 67-69)

Moses (P.B.U.H.), overcame by the feeling of human weakness, might have been outwitted and overawed at the sight of the craft. But glorified by the Lord, the Beneficent, the Merciful, He never lets his bondsmen alone and helps them even before they call Him for help. Whenever a man finds himself helpless and lonely, He reminds him of His constant help and support. So, when He saw Moses (P.B.U.H.) panic-stricken, He ordered him to display the miracle of the staff.

MOSES' VICTORY

When Moses (P.B.U.H.) heard the Divine glad tidings, all his fear was dispelled. Recomposing himself, he called to the magicians:

"And when they had cast, Moses said: That which ye have brought is magic. Lo! Allah will make it vain. Lo! Allah upholdeth not the work of mischief-makers. And Allah will vindicate the Truth by His words, however much the guilty may be averse".

(10 : 82-83)

The above declaration of the Faith was made by him openly in public. He explained the Sunnah of Allah that whatever be the apparent glamour and pomp and show of disbelief, God Almighty would falsify them. On the other hand, the Truth, though apparently weak and helpless as compared with its formidable adversaries and the offenders and rebels against God, is ultimately established and affirmed. Verily, God tests His men as to whether they support the Truth or not. Then, He foils the stratagem of those who act according to their whims instead of acting upon His Commandments. He frustrates their designs instead of crowning them with success. At last, they meet with their doom.

Herein lies the clear difference of outlook between the believer and the unbeliever. The magicians came forward and swore by the honour of their imaginary deity, Pharaoh,

and sought his support. But, Moses (P.B.U.H.) concentrated all his attention on God Almighty, instead of relying on any other support or power. Despair and despondency did not cow down his spirits. His conviction in the support and help of God and in the truth of the glad tidings of Allah grew unwaveringly firmer.

After declaring his Faith, Moses (P.B.U.H.) cast the staff on the ground as he had been ordained by God. What happened next? Notice it in the words of the Holy Qur'an:

"Then, Moses threw his staff and lo! it swallowed up that which they did falsely show". (26 : 45)

"and we inspired Moses (saying): Throw thy staff! And lo! it swallowed up their lying show. Thus was the truth vindicated and that which they were doing was made vain. Thus were they defeated there and brought low". (7:117-119)

Thus, God Almighty affirmed the truth of the facts which had been declared by Moses publicly in the open field.

The show which a vast multitude of men had gathered to witness was over. Falsehood met with its end and the Truth was triumphant. The ropes and staves of the magicians lay there in the field as inanimate objects.

Now, only two alternatives were left to the people; either to accept the plain truth and proclaim it openly and daringly irrespective of the consequences and regardless of their vested interests or to refuse to accept it with bare shamefacedness and stubbornness and make a strenuous efforts to annihilate it. There seemed to be no midway left to them.

MAGICIANS' ACCEPTANCE OF THE TRUTH

"And the wizards were flung prostrate, crying: We believe in the Lord of the worlds, the Lord of Moses and Aaron". (26 : 46-48)

The above incident has been narrated in Surah Al-A'raf, in almost the same words:

"And the sorcerers fell down prostrate, crying: We believe in the Lord of the worlds, the Lord of Moses and Aaron". (7 : 120-122)

Again in Surah Ta Ha

"Then the wizards were (all) flung down prostrate,

crying: We believe in the Lord of Aaron and Moses".
(20 : 70)

The magicians who had been a few moments earlier contesting Moses (P.B.U.H.) and trying their utmost to defeat him perceived the plain and obvious truth. No one knew magic skill better than they. They were sure that the feat could not be accomplished through magic, but through Prophethood.

Having accepted the truth, they could not be distracted by any worldly or material temptations. They would neither refrain from declaring the truth nor keep silent. They adopted such a bold and courageous attitude as God Almighty would like that everyone of the believers should adopt. They not only embraced the truth sincerely but also declared it publicly. They could, if they so desired, conceal their Faith and embrace it secretly before Moses (P.B.U.H.). But, this attitude of theirs was against their sentiments of valour and determination under which they had embraced the Faith. Those who accept the Faith sincerely, stick to it, undaunted by the fears and dangers they have to face. So, they adopted the attitude which every sincere believer would adopt. They embraced the True Faith and affirmed before all, irrespective of the consequences.

The magicians' acceptance of the Faith before a large number of people not only ended Pharaoh's hopes but also dealt a deadly blow to his divinity, and the fate turned his evil designs against his own person. A few days earlier he had thought that the defeat of Moses would strike a fatal blow to his Prophethood and Egypt would prove to be its graveyard and that new religion and its preacher would be ended. But, now he was on the horns of a dilemma. It became extremely difficult for him to save his throne and divinity.

One aspect of this wisdom of God (which is concealed from a superficial observer) is that the evil designs to annihilate Islam are responsible for their own ruin. The magnificent victory which Moses (P.B.U.H.) won in the open field in the broad daylight ended the pomp and show of Pharaoh. Now, every one was aware that Moses (P.B.U.H.) was right and Pharaoh possessed no power except that of tyranny and persecution. Moses' call to the Faith was acclaimed by all the people as the dominant doctrine and outlook. Although

the majority of the people did not profess the Faith, yet they were sure of its being right and true.

This state of affairs was quite unexpected and perplexing for Pharaoh. He was extremely exasperated and enraged at the defeat suffered by him, but this could not solve matters. He hit upon a plan. He levelled a sensational charge against Moses (P.B.U.H.) and the magicians that they had been involved in an intrigue, so as to distract the attention of the people from the real problem by entangling them in side issues.

THREATS AND ACCUSATIONS BY PHARAOH

“(Pharaoh) said: Believe ye in Him before I give you leave. Lo! he is your chief who taught you magic. Now surely I shall cut off your hands and your feet alternately, and I shall crucify you on the trunks of palm trees, and ye shall know for certain which of us hath sterner and more lasting punishment”. (20 :71)

This has also been explained in Surah Ash-Shu'ara, as under:

“(Pharaoh) said: Believe ye in Him before I give you leave. Lo! he doubtless is your chief who taught you magic! But, verily ye shall come to know, verily I will cut off your hands and your feet alternately, and verily I will crucify you every one.” (26 : 49)

Another characteristic of these threats and accusations has been explained in Surah Al-A'raf.

“Pharaoh said: Ye believe in Him before I give you leave! Lo! this is the plot that ye have plotted in the city that ye may drive its people from hence. But ye shall come to know! Surely I shall have your hands and feet cut off upon alternate sides. Then, I shall crucify you every one”. (7 : 123-124)

These threats and accusations fully reflect the wicked mentality of the exasperated and power intoxicated rulers. When the sword of power is in the hands of a cruel, despotic, malevolent and autocratic ruler and he is out of senses due to his defeat, he can go to any length. It has always been a practice with such rulers that first they try to beguile the innocent people by levelling false accusations against them,

and then they try to create consternation among the people by threats and warnings and when these tactics fail, they perpetrate the worst sort of persecution.

The same technique was employed by Pharaoh. First, he accused Moses (P.B.U.H.) of a conspiracy against him and then warned him of punishment, but these techniques proved to be of no avail and Moses (P.B.U.H.) continued preaching the Faith with unabated zeal and enthusiasm.

Let us now examine the charge-sheet and the threats held out by Pharaoh.

1. His first charge was that the contest was merely a 'false show'. Moses and the magicians had conspired together against Pharaoh. As all of them had been the disciples of Moses, how could they be expected to contest their guide?
2. This alliance of theirs was due to conspiracy and could not, therefore, be considered a criterion for judging right from wrong. The statement that it was a contest between right and wrong to safeguard his religion had been only given to avoid the challenge.
3. Moses and the magicians had conspired to deprive their sons and Qibties of their power. It was his intention to arouse in the people the passions of racial discord so as to prove that Moses' struggle was merely aimed at snatching power from them. This is the charge which the rulers have always levelled against pious men in every age.
4. He also tried to bring home to the people the fact that they could act upon a religion or modify it to the extent that it did not curtail the powers of the king. Not to speak of acting upon a particular creed against the wishes of the king, no one would ever think about it.
5. On the one hand, he tried to refrain the magicians from accepting the True Faith by threats of dire consequences, and on the other, he warned the people that he would be punishing in the same manner all those who were either so inclined or were guilty of accepting the new call.
6. Pharaoh wanted to indicate that he could pressurise

the magicians into confessing the conspiracy by threats of persecution, so that the effects of his defeat could be eliminated and the moral influence of the new Faith mitigated.

PERSEVERANCE AND DETERMINATION OF THE MAGICIANS

The spirit of determination in which the new converts faced the threats and punishments is clearly reflected in the reply they made to Pharaoh before the gathering.

"They said: We choose thee not above the clear signs that have come unto us and above Him who created us. So, decree what thou wilt decree. Thou wilt decree the life of this world." (20 : 72)

This rejoinder to the terrible threats of Pharaoh was not only outspoken and courageous but it also signified a counter challenge. They replied: You warn us against the consequences of this mundane life. Listen to us.

"They said: Lo! We are about to return unto our Lord! Thou takest vengeance on us only for as much as we believed in the sign of our Lord when they came unto us.. Our Lord! Vouchsafe unto us steadfastness and make us die as men who have surrendered (unto Thee)." (7 : 125-126)

They not only declared their belief about life, but also fully endorsed the claim of prophethood of Moses (P.B.U.H.) and vehemently opposed the propaganda that he was a magician.

Then, they gave their reasons for accepting the Faith.

"They said: It is no hurt, for lo! unto our Lord we shall return. Lo! We ardently hope that our Lord will forgive us our sins because we are the first of the believers." (26 : 50-51)

In other verse, further detail has been given:

"Lo! We believe in our Lord that He may forgive us our sins and the magic unto which thou didst force us. Allah is Better and More Lasting". (20 : 73)

The standard of moral conduct which God Almighty wants to set for every Muslim is clearly reflected in the above reply of the magicians. The believer has been enjoined to

display such excellent conduct. In the story, "The conflict between Pharaoh and Moses", this Faith-inspiring aspect has been repeated again and again with a view to lending it prominence over other aspects. The believers have been exhorted to develop the same character and conduct. The Muslims of all times have been advised to fight undauntedly against the tyrants. When tyranny and persecution are rampant and those intoxicated with power are bent upon using these nefarious weapons and are trying to barter your loyalties and faith for your lives, it is better to lay down your lives than to give in.

The reply of the magicians is a unique example of the believer's singular steadfastness and noble conduct in the history of mankind. It tells us that it is easier for a self-respecting and conscientious man (and who is more self-respecting and conscientious than a believer) to court death than to forsake the Faith, after having embraced it, merely for the sake of material benefits and comforts. Even the most wicked, tyrant and despotic ruler can perpetrate persecution only as long as he is alive. His authority ends with his death. At the most, a man may live for one hundred years or for one hundred and fifty years. He may perpetrate all sorts of persecution during this short span of life (and he cannot do so except with the Will of God). After this, the mightiest earthly power is helpless. How foolish the man is who spoils the eternal life for the sake of his temporary and shortlived life. So they said:

Do what you want, O Pharaoh, If it is a crime, we shall commit this crime again and again.

This expression of the Faith is not a conspiracy but a recompense for the sin of opposing the truth. So far as Permanence and Eternity are concerned, these are the Attributes of God alone. Everything is perishable except Him. God Almighty has narrated this fact, as under:

"Lo! whoso cometh guilty unto his Lord, verily for him is Hell. Therein he will neither die nor live. But, Whoso cometh unto him a believer, having done good deeds, for such are the high stations, Eternal gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide for ever. This is the reward for him who adopts virtuous life."

(20 : 74-76)

In reality, a person who leads a pious life and seeks the Pleasure of God and thereby incurs the wrath of the ruling class is not guilty, but guilty is the man who disobeys the Lord of the worlds out of fear of people. Just possible, he may enjoy himself in this transitory life, but he would be produced before the Real Lord as a sinner. He would be deprived of all support or recommendation and would find no way of escape. Those who do not accept the truth, inspite of having admitted it, and even conspire to curb it, God Almighty has got ready with Him Fire for such people from which they would not be delivered

The sinful person would be dealt with severely by God. Burning flames would roast him. His skin would be burnt and the body would be stripped of the skin. It would again be put on him, so that there would be no abatement in the punishment he would be suffering. He would be clothed in a dress of resin and sulphur which would add to the intensity of the Fire. The life for the security of which he had taken great pains would become a burden for him. He would wish to die rather than suffer the pangs of such extreme pain, but he would not die. He would have life but it would be worse than death. He would raise a great hue and cry and strike his head, but would find no escape (may God save us from this torment). If any one wants to save oneself from this torment, there is only one way of escape, that he should make the best use of the time at his disposal in this world and adorn it with pious deeds. He should sacrifice his life to safeguard the truth rather than support the falsehood. Even if the whole world called him a rebel, he should not care for it. He should under no circumstances disobey God. Those who submit to the Will of God would enjoy eternal pleasure and bliss.

When we ponder over the above verses, we come to the following conclusions:

1. The fight between Good and Evil is not a new thing. This fight has continued since the beginning and will continue for ever.
2. Whenever evil would encounter Good, the latter would be victorious.
3. The standard-bearers of the truth are always charged with the ambition of power and the ruling class

always claims the right to rule, and launches a false propaganda against the believers.

4. The believers have always been persecuted by the false ruling class.
5. The characteristic of a true believer is that he faces boldly all that befalls him in the way of righteousness and never forsakes the truth.
6. The real culprit is the one who disobeys God. His worldly life may be glamorous, but his end would be so terrible that every one would take a warning from it.

RETALIATION AFTER DEFEAT

Having suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of Moses (P.B.U.H.) before thousands of people and having beheld the exemplary perseverance and steadfastness of the magicians, Pharaoh flew into a fit of rage. The 'menace' which the success of the mission involved, was looming large in his mind. It was rather impossible for him to overlook the danger that involved the risk of his rule and the possibility of the people succumbing to it. He immediately called a meeting of his cabinet and discussed with them the ways and means to deal with the situation.

CONSULTATION WITH THE COURTIER

Those born servants who acted as ministers could never think of sparing the life of a man whose existence posed a grave danger to the rule of their Lord. They were sure that with the downfall of their Lord, they would have to go with bag and baggage. So all of them incited Pharaoh to eliminate the danger for ever.

"The chiefs of Pharaoh's people said: (O King), wilt thou leave Moses and his people to make mischief in the land, and flout thee and thy gods?" (7 : 127)

Pharaoh who was intoxicated with pride of power knew but one remedy to deal with opposition and resistance. He told his men that he knew many ways to deal with his opponents. He disclosed his wiles and his methods of persecution and tyranny, as under:

A NEW REIGN OF PERSECUTION

"He said: we will slay their sons and spare their women, for lo! We have over them (power) irresistible" (7 : 127)

Being the son of the father who had committed large-scale genocide at the time of the birth of Moses (P.B.U.H.), how could he behave otherwise? He had already seen that perse-

cution and tyranny were of no avail and despite all his manoeuvring, Moses was not only born but was also brought up by him. But, alas! The tyrants do not learn a lesson nor do they have a warning from any incident. They never understand that the fight against Right cannot be fought with the blunt weapons of tyranny and persecution.

In short the grinding wheel of persecution was once again set to move and crush the Bani Israel. In the reign of terror when spies were spread throughout the country, scaffolds and stakes for the upholders of the truth were set up and there prevailed a tense and terrific atmosphere all round the country, the affirmation and profession of faith was to court sure death. All and sundry dare not support Moses (P.B.U.H.). Experienced and elderly persons receded to the background. Although they knew Moses (P.B.U.H.) preached the True Faith and he was their benefactor and his struggle was meant for their deliverance and freedom, the Bani Israel did not support Moses (P.B.U.H.) nor did they respond to his call. History tells us repeatedly that people turn their faces away from their benefactors and submit to the will of the tyrants, because of their fear of persecution and tyranny.

COURAGE OF YOUNGMEN IN DECLARING THEIR FAITH

Pharaoh went on perpetrating persecution, while Moses (P.B.U.H.) preaching fascinated the minds of the people; but in that terrible atmosphere no one could dare declare his Faith publicly. However, a few daring young men came forward to hold aloft the banner of Islam. God Almighty has described the firm determination of these men in the following words:

"But none believed Moses, save some scions of his people (and they were) in fear of Pharaoh and the elders of their own nation, that they would persecute them. Lo! Pharaoh was verily a tyrant in the land, and lo! he verily was of the wanton." (10 : 84)

As a matter of fact, young men are the real assets of a nation. It is they who after having accepted the truth spare no efforts and sacrifice everything to further the cause of truth without looking to their own interests. They do not care to take meals or change their dresses. They are not

worried about their domestic affairs or their family. Warm blood runs through veins and their passion for sacrifice is at the highest pitch. They support selflessly whomsoever they like and even lay down their lives beside him. The awe and fear of Pharaoh could not deter those from declaring the right. The elderly swore by their life and property that they were bent upon ruining themselves. But, they did not heed their warning. These cunning and shrewd old men always try to turn the young men away from the way of righteousness. They frighten them with many an apprehension, give them many a piece of advice and tell them that the time is not yet ripe for drastic action. They neither accept the truth nor do they take any risk for its sake, despite their having known the truth. They do not avail themselves of the favour of having embraced or supported the truth. On the other hand, they discourage the young men to declare the truth.

The same as described above was the situation during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) Those who believed in him were mostly young men. Similar was the condition in Moses' (P.B.U.H.) time. The same situation prevails now and will continue to continue in the days to come.

Herein lies a clear hint for the standard-bearers of the truth as to whom they should preach. There is no denying the fact that for furthering any movement or ideology, the young men of the community should on no account be ignored.

One can find daring, devoted and valiant young men, who plunged into the fire of Nimrod. So, a preacher of the truth must pay special attention to these young men who will hold the banner of Islam aloft and even lay down their lives to maintain its prestige and make it triumphant.

ADVICE OF MOSES

The intensity of Pharaoh's persecution increased with the passage of time, and both the immature young and the prudent elderly men were subjected to it. The young were relentlessly butchered and the old were tortured and the women-folk were enslaved. In that reign of terror, when every individual was terribly afraid of the horrible punishment perpetrated by Pharaoh, Moses (P.B.U.H.) exhorted the young men especially, consoled them and showed them the

way to deal with Pharaoh's persecution and tyranny. He said:
 "And Moses said: O my people! If ye have believed in Allah, then put trust in Him, if ye have, indeed, surrendered (unto Him)!" (10 : 85)

That is to say, a believing and submissive Mōmin (a convinced believer) should not under any circumstances grumble or raise a hue and cry. He should neither forsake the truth nor bow down to the tyrant. He must demonstrate full confidence in Allah Who alone shall bring the succour and victory. He must give a tough battle to the tyrant and fervently adhere to his Faith and conviction. The young men responded to the advice of Moses (F.B.U.H.) from the core of the heart and expressed their determination in the following words.

RESOLUTION OF THE YOUNGMEN

"They said: In Allah we put our trust. Our Lord! Oh, make us not a trial for the wrong-doing false; And of Thy Mercy, save us from the folk that disbelieve." (10 : 86-87)

The above prayer fully reflects the character of a staunch believer should demonstrate in difficult times. None except God can help those who set out to serve the cause of Islam for the sake of God. So, a good believer must have unflinching faith in Him. He must remember Him alone and none else. The true believer depends on Him exclusively rather than on weapons or numerical strength.

"The forehead Thou hast given me bows before Thee alone. Wherefrom should I bring a forehead that bows before others."

So, they turned to the Lord with single-minded devotion and sought His Protection and Refuge with a sincere heart. They prayed: "Our Lord! Make us not a trial for the wrong doing false". It is a very comprehensive prayer which was offered at that critical time.

In the reign of terror, when crime and sin are rampant every where, persecution and tyranny are the order of the day and the declaration of the Faith means sure death, they have to face different types of people.

The first group comprises those hostile men who are possessed of all means of power and are bent upon annihilat-

ing them with full might and main and do not hesitate to use even the meanest possible tactics for achieving their ignoble ends.

The second group of men includes the so-called worldly-wise adherents of the truth. Their support to the truth lasts so long as it does not incur the wrath of the rulers. The struggle that envisages an open clash with the disbelievers is considered by them to be unwise and foolish.

The third group of people includes men who have no sense. Such people are merely passive spectators. They approve of every stratagem of a party, but at length follow and praise the party that has a chance to win.

In case, God forbid, the believers suffer a defeat or they are made to surrender, the first ignorant group raises a slogan of victory. At that moment, their pride and arrogance increase, they boast of their success (which is only transitory), declaring it had been due to their valid stand.

The worldly-wise selfish people make taunting remarks. "Did we not warn you against fighting with these people, but you did not listen to us and put yourselves in danger"? Thus they assume false saintly airs and find fault with every action of the sincere men and they are content with their lack of conscience. They carry on their so-called 'sacred' mission of turning other people away from the dangerous path of righteousness.

The defeat of the believers provides a good pretext to common man to avoid the truth, cover their nefarious activities and ensure their safety. They go about exulting over their safety.

The above three factors are the mainsprings of mischief and strike a fatal blow to the causes of the believers and lead the masses astray.

Therefore the prayer of these young pious and sincere believers: "Our Lord! Oh make us not a trial for the wrong doing folks", is very significant. Those young men not only prayed for their safety, but also prayed to their Lord for delivering them from the wrong-doers, as they would not let them adhere to the path of righteousness with steadfastness owing to their power, and they would not be able to discharge their duty according to the dictate of their belief.

COWARDICE OF THE BANI ISRAEL

The determination among the Bani Israel demonstrated by those zealous young men was lamently lacking in a large number of the elderly people. They were confounded to see the persecution having been perpetrated by Pharaoh, and came to Moses (P.B.U.H.) absolutely frustrated and disgusted about their future considering his power to be permanent. Moses (P.B.U.H.) consoled them once again and said to them:

“And Moses said unto his people: Seek help in Allah and endure. Lo! the earth is Allah’s. He giveth it for an inheritance to whom He will. And lo! the end is (best) for the righteous.” (7 : 128)

That is to say, this calamity can be averted only by God. You should, therefore, seek His help and bear all that comes in this way with patience and courage. Abide by it. How unwise it is to fear a power which is temporary and short-lived! God can transfer power to whom He wants. Today, power is in the hands of Pharaoh, tomorrow, it will be in your hands. So, fear God Who is the Real Lord of this world. I tell you those who submit to Him will succeed in the end.

But, people who had been age-long slaves consigned them to their fate. They did not possess the courage so essential for the preachers of the Faith. Had they put their reliance on the Lord, they would have supported Moses (P.B.U.H.) wholeheartedly and held the banner of his Faith. It was Moses who had taken them out of the abyss of sin and depravity and led them to the right path.

No one can infuse courage into a people who are afraid of death and are cowardly by nature and who feel contented with disgrace and humiliation, especially when they have to face a blood-thirsty and power-intoxicated ruling class. So, Moses’s words of consolation would not raise the spirits of the Bani Israel. They grumbled, cried and made a humble petition.

“They said: We had (nothing but) trouble before and after thou camest unto us, and since thou hast come unto us.” (7 : 129)

Woe to the people who consider their benefactors to be the cause of their misfortune! When Moses (P.B.U.H.) noticed

this state of his people, he once again brought home to them the responsibilities and requirements of their mission and its nature and ultimate end. He also conveyed to them the glad tidings which is especially meant for the believers of every age.

GLAD TIDINGS OF MOSES

“He said: It may be that your Lord is going to destroy your adversary soon and make you inheritors in the earth, that He may see how ye behave.” (7 : 129)

The glad tidings conveyed to the Bani Israel by the Prophet Moses was not specifically meant for them. From the very beginning to the end, this glad tidings has been given to all the believers that whenever they are subjected to persecution and tyranny, God Almighty will come to their succour. The circumstances may be most discouraging and disappointing, but the day is not far off when these wrong-doers will have to render an account for their actions, and the down-trodden, destitute and humble class of people will dominate. The history bears a witness to the truth of this glad tidings of good many a time and will continue to testify it. After their triumph, the believers are tried by the Lord Who sees whether they become His obedient servants and tread the path of righteousness or resort to oppressions from which He had delivered them and then bestowed power upon them.

TORMENTS TO THE PEOPLE OF PHARAOH

The time was not far when the above glad tidings was going to be fulfilled openly. God Almighty repeatedly struck Pharaoh and his people with torments of small dimensions to serve as a warning against their haughty and arrogant conduct.

“And We straitened Pharaoh’s folk with famine and dearth of fruit, that peradventure they might heed. But whenever good befell them, they said: This is due to us; and whenever evil smote them, they ascribed it to the evil omens of Moses and those with him. Surely the evil omens are theirs in God’s sight. But most of them knew not. And they said: Whatever potent thou bringest wherewith to bewitch us, we shall not put faith in thee.” (7 : 130-132)

When some torment befalls a people, they lose their senses like this. They behold their doom but they never care to look to their own evil deeds and put the blame on others’ shoulders. The same was the case with the men of Pharaoh. Instead of receiving a warning from these torments and punishments, they began to blame Moses (P.B.U.H.) and adopted a very stern and stiff attitude. They said, “It is all due to your witchcraft. You may bring any signs, we are not going to believe in you.” So, not to speak of reforming themselves, they did not even think that their attitude was extremely objectionable. They belied Moses’ miracles by calling them magic feats. When their persistence and obstinacy reached such a high pitch, God Almighty sent down punishment upon them.

“So we sent them the flood and the locusts and the vermin and frogs and the blood — signs openly self-explained. But they were steeped in arrogance and guilty. And when penalty fell upon them, they cried: O Moses! Pray for us unto thy Lord, in virtue of His promise to thee. If thou removest the penalty from

us, we verily will trust thee and will let the children of Israel go with thee. But, when We did remove from them the terror for a term which they must reach, behold! they broke their word." (7 : 133-135)

This was the height of their misfortune, hard-headedness and Stubbornness that they saw the punishment of God descending upon them. They supplicated, cried and turned to Him: but when it was over, they again resorted to evils and forgot all their promises and repentance and adopted the same hostile and inimical attitude. God Almighty has narrated the obstinate behaviour of these people in another verse as follows:

STUBBORNNESS OF THE PEOPLE OF PHARAOH

"But when he brought them Our Signs, behold! they laughed at them. And every sign that we showed them was greater than its sister (signs), and we grasped them with the torment, that haply they might turn again. And they said: O Sorcerer! Entreat thy Lord for us according to this covenant with thee. Lo! We verily will walk aright. But when We eased them of the torment, behold! they broke their word."

(43 : 47-50)

Moses (P.B.U.H.) had warned Pharaoh against the evil consequences of his stubbornness, breach of promise, treachery towards God and His Messenger and attitude of ridicule and joking. He said:

"And verily We gave unto Moses nine clear signs. Do but ask the children of Israel how he came unto them, then Pharaoh said unto him: Lo! I deem thee one bewitched, O Moses. He said: In truth, thou knowest that none sent down these (portents) save the Lord of the heavens and the earth as proofs, and lo! (for my part) I deem thee to be one doomed to destruction, O Pharaoh."

(17 : 101-102)

But, this timely warning by Moses (P.B.U.H.) had little effect on him. He who had resolved not to accept, any argument or sign, however great it might be, could not lead him to the path of righteousness. He beholds the doom hovering over his head, but instead of avoiding it, he courts it and it descends upon him with all its might and main. He is punished

for his action.

Just look into the depraved mentality of those people. Plain signs were produced before them. Terrible calamities befell them, but each warning and punishment added to their list of crimes and sins.

1. The 'staff' of Moses (P.B.U.H.), which turned into a hissing serpent in the twinkling of an eye was, in their eyes a magic trick.
2. The white hand, when it was drawn out of the sleeve, became resplendent and radiant like the sun, but it was, in their estimation just a magic trick.
3. Moses (P.B.U.H.) won a clear victory against the magicians, who finally believed in Moses, but despite the fact that Pharaoh had bracketed his future with the magicians, he belied Moses.
4. The people were in the grip of a severe famine and were famished for even a grain of corn. The prayer of Moses (P.B.U.H.) averted the famine, but the people still called him a magician.
5. A strong windstorm raged and a violent hailstorm devastated the crops and the habitation, but they did not take a warning.
6. In the whole country, in the villages and fields, there appeared swarms of locusts but they considered this as magic-craft.
7. Lice, bugs and weevils infested every house and individual, so that it became extremely difficult for one to move, sit or walk freely; but still they would not profess the Faith.
8. A host of frogs croaked in every lane, river, pond and wall which made life hard for the people, but they called it a trick of the magician.
9. Water in wells, tanks, fountains, rivers and utensils turned into blood. The people gasped for a draught of water, but they called it magic.

It is, however, interesting to note that all these torments were averted by the prayer of the individual whom they entreated for help and whom they called a magician. But, they were not inclined to accept him as a Prophet and Messenger of God and were reluctant to embrace the religion

preached by him. Scourage after scourage descended upon them, but they called him a magician even during the course of trials and tribulations.

God Almighty has described their obstinacy and persistence in the following words:

"But when our signs came unto them, plain to see, they said: This is mere magic, and they rejected those signs in iniquity and arrogance though their souls acknowledged them. So see what was the end of those who acted corruptly. (27 : 13-14)

It has never happened in the world that a magician ever threatened and sabotaged the machinery of the Government and ruined the whole country by means of his witchcraft. In that event, the magician would have held their sway in the whole world. Contrary to this, they deceive the people for a few minutes and get some reward from them. They have no power over their subsistence, otherwise that they might not have to beg.

Pharaoh was extremely upset and terrified to witness these calamities. The ground seemed to be slipping underneath his feet. He was afraid he would be unable to cope with the situation and hold his sway for a long time. The people saw that the whole country, having thus reached the stage of ruination at the behest of an individual, was again delivered at his prayer, while the Government was quite helpless in the matter. How long could he retain his hold on the people? He felt extremely exasperated at the terrifying circumstances and laid a new trap to entangle the simple and credulous persons.

THE NEW TRAP OF PHARAOH

"And Pharaoh proclaimed amongst his people, saying: O my people! Is not mine the sovereignty of Egypt and these rivers flowing under me? Can you not then discern? Am I not better than this fellow, who is despicable, and can hardly make (his meaning) plain? Why, then, have not armlets of gold been set upon him, or angels sent along with him?

Thus did he make fool of his people, and they obeyed him. Lo! They were a rebellious folk." (43 : 51-54)

Pharaoh tried to prove Moses (P.B.U.H.) to be a magician,

but the people soon became aware of the reality. He also tried to flare up the fire of racial-discard, but he could not succeed against the movement which was based on sound moral conduct and constructive ideology. He perpetrated persecution, but the courage and steadfastness of the righteous souls rendered it ineffective. People are impressed by sound and convincing arguments. Persecution and tyranny breeds hatred and bad blood. Now he used his propaganda machinery to his best advantage, in order to maintain the image of his august personality in the minds of the people. He told them that all national progress and prosperity was due to him and that if he were not there, the country would go to dogs and would become barren and desolate.

This type of idiot was also born in our country. He kept on telling people for ten long years that all mighty dams and all development owed their origin to him. None would be taking care of them after him. But, when he was thrown out of power, the country remained as it was. Of course, the thorns of the thorny bushes planted by him fell to the lot of the people. The temperament of the despotic rulers and the powerful dictators of every age is strikingly similar. According to them, the integrity and solidarity of the country depended on them, so it was their inherent right to rule over the masses.

It is not known whether Pharaoh had set up any 'Press Information Bureau' or not or had assigned this duty to his courtiers and retainues only. The late poet, Akbar, when he read about the campaign of genocide launched by Pharaoh, observed:

"Alas! Pharaoh did not conceive the idea of setting up a college."

The observation may be correct, but, in my opinion, had radio and television been available to him, these state singers would have implanted him in the minds of the people and caused his imminent ruin. However, say it was his good luck or even bad luck that he could not find such practical avenues of press information and mass media.

Along with the self praise propaganda campaign in his favour, he thought it necessary to tell the people as to why he deserved to remain in power. According to him, good conduct, courage, determination, knowledge and guidance were

not the qualities a ruler should be possessed of, but wealth and pomp and show of ministers and ambassadors, calls like "get aside", "be off", a host of retinues and flatterers, all these things prove the greatness of man. The poor destitutes deprived of all amenities and luxuries of life, could not claim to be the representatives of the Lord of the Kingdom. How could one imagine the representative of such a Magnificent Ruler to be in such a miserable plight? He who did not wear the gold armlets of an ambassador and had no servants and flatterers around him, how his claim of being a messenger of God be justified? The style of his conversation was neither haughty nor majestic like that of the rulers nor did it include royal compliments and epithets. How could he be the apostle of the Lord of the worlds? Why Pharaoh adopted such an attitude towards Moses (P.B.U.H.) has been elucidated by God Almighty in the following verse:

MENTALITY OF AN AUTOCRATIC RULER

"Thus did he make fools of his people and they obeyed him. Lo! they were a rebellious folk."

(43 : 51-54)

In one single verse, God Almighty has explained the undeniable supreme fact that whenever a despot, a tyrant, or a dictator acquires power through manoeuvring and persecution, he considers all people as inferior to him. Why should he attach importance to the people whom he had subjugated by dint of his power and kept under tight control through power and tact, having purchased their conscience and loyalties with money. It is his policy that if any one proves to be steadfast and resolute, he should bribe him lavishly. As a matter of fact, the people who behave cowardly and start cringing and bowing to all and sundry and sell their conscience for money and mortgage their loyalties to a powerful person are basically corrupt and always ready to adopt the ways of humiliation and disgrace.

The second reason was that Pharaoh and his courtiers who belonged to the ruling class could not tolerate that two men of the serving class should get up and act as their advisers and guides, or that they should relinquish the rule after handing it over to two men of the serving class whom they had

been dominating for generations. They said:

"And they said: Shall we put faith in two mortals like ourselves, and whose folk are servile unto us? So, they accused him of falsehood, and became of those who were destroyed." (23 : 47-48)

The craze of power and racial prejudice are the traits which blur the vision of a man and he cannot be guided aright. He would prefer ruination to the discarding of false personal pride and self-conceitedness.

Moses (P.B.U.H.) tried his best to guide the people to the right path; he showed them the best Signs and offered them the most convincing arguments, but the people who were immersed in the self-conceited pride of racial distinction and superiority failed to appreciate the truth. They were yet to suffer more hardships and pitfalls that ultimately led to their utter ruin. This plain fact has been explained by God Almighty, as under:

"And verily We sent Moses with our clear Sign and a clear warrant unto Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they did follow the command of Pharaoh, and the command of Pharaoh was no right (guide)." (11 : 96-97)

The vision of the people who are doomed to destruction is blurred. They cast away pearls and diamonds and choose pebbles. The standard of their likes and dislikes and of good and bad is changed, and they madly run after things that lead them hastily to the abyss of destruction.

If arguments and signs could prevent a people from falling into the abyss of destruction, no one might commit a sin or a crime, and this world would become paradise for mankind. In the point of fact, only those men receive a warning from signs and arguments who believe in the Invisible God and look forward to their After Life out of fear of Him, leaving aside the physical existence of this world. God Almighty has explained this fact in the following verse:

"And We verily gave Moses and Aaron the crieterion (of right and wrong) and a light and a reminder for those who keep from evil, those who fear their Lord in secret and who dread the hour (of the doom).

(21 : 48-49)

THE IMPACT AND INTRUSION OF ISLAMIC MOVEMENT IN PHARAOH'S COURT

Despite the tactics and threats of Pharaoh, the movement of Islam carried on its mission. The more did Pharaoh try that the people should avoid Moses (P.B.U.H.), the greater the number of men were attracted to the call to Islam in the country and in the areas under his jurisdiction. Even the royal court could not remain secure from this 'menace'. There were some people even in his court who were not only impressed by the call of Moses (P.B.U.H.) but were ready to lay down their lives in this cause. As a matter of fact, it is a special feature of every ideological movement that it draws its adherers and followers from amongst its enemies. It is a special peculiarity with the Islamic movement that it takes its birth amongst its enemies. The birth of Moses (P.B.U.H.) amply proves this fact.

One such sympathizer of the Islamic movement was born among the courtiers of Pharaoh. He not only spread the call of Moses (P.B.U.H.) among the courtiers in an impressive and quiet manner but also kept him (Moses) fully aware of the conspiracies which were being hatched against him. Once when Pharaoh finally decided to kill Moses, he tried his best to dissuade him from his intention even at the risk of his life. Allah has described the bold conduct of this valient believer in the following verse.

DECISION TO KILL MOSES

"And verily we sent Moses with Our Signs and a clear Authority unto Pharaoh and Haman and Korah, but they said: A lying sorcerer! And when he brought them the truth from Us they said: Slay the sons of those who believe with him, and spare their women. But the plot of disbelievers end in nothing but error. And Pharaoh said: Leave me to kill Moses, and let him cry out to his Lord. Lo! I fear that he will alter your religion or that will cause mischief in the land.

(40 : 23-26)

That is to say, Moses (P.B.U.H.) went to Pharaoh and his chiefs with the signs and miracles which were a clear proof of his Prophethood. Although it was absolutely impossible for a magician and a false claimant of Prophethood to display such signs, yet the obstinate, unbelieving and arrogant people replied that he was a wizard and a liar.

Pharaoh and his companions launched such a vigorous propaganda that Moses (P.B.U.H.) was known throughout the country as a skilful magician. It was almost impossible for Moses (P.B.U.H.) to carry on his mission unless he removed the doubt which constituted a great obstacle in the way of propagation of his Faith, as nobody could then listen to him or accept his call. So Moses (P.B.U.H.) exposed the reality and gave such a crushing defeat to the renowned magicians of the time before a large gathering that it was proved beyond any shadow of doubt that he was not a magician but that he possessed some other sort of power over them. The bold confession of the magicians gave a new impulse to the mission of Moses (P.B.U.H.). Later on, torments befell on the Egyptians in quick succession at the curse of Moses and were averted at his prayers. It was now almost impossible to consider Moses (P.B.U.H.) as merely a magician. This splendid victory proved to be a turning point in the life of Moses. Every pious man was impressed by the call and by and by the people embraced the Faith. To Pharaoh it seemed as if the earth was slipping under his feet.

When Pharaoh beheld that state of affairs, he resorted to the wicked techniques which every defeated tyrant and despotic ruler always employs i.e. the preparation of unrestrained persecution following in the footsteps of his forefathers, he issued orders that the sons of those who believed in Moses or supported him should be killed and their daughters left alive. He wanted to cow down the spirits of the believers, impede the onward march of the movement of Islam and lessen its impact by means of these tactics; but like all tyrant and despotic rulers, he was absolutely unaware of the fact.

“Islam is by nature so elastic that it emerges triumphant to the extent it is suppressed.”

PHARAOH'S TACTICS

All the tactics proved to be of no avail and he could

not check the onward march of the movement of Islam. He felt extremely exasperated over this state of affairs and declined to kill Moses and finish the affair once for all. According to him if the root was extirpated, the branches would automatically go dry. So one day he said to his courtiers.

Let me kill Moses and he may call his God. I fear he will turn you away from your religion or create anarchy in the country.

These were the words coined by a cunning, coward and guilty conscience man. Although he was terribly afraid yet he was trying to give a false impression that His Majesty could deal with Moses easily and that the people were refraining him and advising him unnecessarily. The only treatment that Moses deserved was according to him, to kill him irrespective of the fact that he had committed a crime or not or that he was guilty or innocent. The fear that he may commit a crime in the future was sufficient to prove him guilty. It appears that the 'Public Maintenance Order' or the 'Laws of Preventive Detention' are not the products of today but these were also in vogue in Pharaoh's time and every tyrant dictator whose rule is in danger acts upon them. According to them, the very reason that they are haunted by some imaginary fears make a man liable to be killed. It is against the policy of their wisdom and prudence that they should take steps when the danger is imminent, but their wisdom lies in killing the 'criminal' even before he commits a crime. It does not matter if some men are killed but their rule and sovereignty must remain intact. As far as the sanctity of human lives is concerned, these are not more valuable than their power. There is hardly any justification in attaching so much importance to these insignificant creatures. The only man who deserve honourable treatment are those who are at the helm of affairs of the state or their followers. Is it not a great crime that they do not act as 'yesman' of the Government or that they stare into the eyes of the Government? From whom there is a hazard of this sort, they are 'pleased' to issue their death warrants.

Moreover they have not enough moral courage to tell the people that the menace is to them; but they convince the

people cunningly and bare shamefacedly that the real danger exists to the lives of the people and not to them and that they have taken these steps for the sake of the 'safety and honour' of the people and not for their own sake.

So Pharaoh did not say that he and his rule was in danger; but he always told the people that he was afraid least their religion, their laws, modes of life and power and prestige should be dashed to the ground and lest confusion and chaos should prevail everywhere. There would then remain no security for their lives, properties, honour and prestige and all their pomp and show and dignity would end. His struggle was, therefore, for their sake.

THE INDIFFERENT ATTITUDE OF MOSES

Call it the blessing of the Islamic movement or the efficiency and vigilance of his spying system that Moses (P.B.U.H.) instantly the information about the conspiracy to kill him. Probably, the informer was the believing man whose mention has been made in the next pages or that he was one of the affected courtiers. However, he got the information in time Moses (P.B.U.H.) did not express any anxiety or worry but he spoke with perfect peace of mind:

"Moses said. LO! I seek refuge in my Lord and your Lord from every arrogant who believeth not in a day of Reckoning." (40 : 27)

One wonders at the composure of mind of Moses (P.B.U.H.) with which he replied. As a matter of fact, the man in whose heart there is fear of God, is not afraid of anyone. Moses paid little regard to the bad news and flung it at the very face of Pharaoh with a great contempt.

PROCLAMATION OF FAITH BY THE BELIEVER

The true believer saw this state of affairs of the court. Setting aside all personal considerations he decided to advise Pharaoh and his men and dissuade them from their evil design by all means.

"And a believing man of Pharaoh's family, who hid his faith, said: Would ye kill a man because he saith: My Lord is Allah, and hath brought clear proofs from your Lord? If he is lying, then his lie is upon him, and if he is truthful, then some of that wherewith he threateneth you will strike you. Lo! Allah guideth

not one who is a prodigal, a liar. O my people! Yours is the dominion today, ye being uppermost in the land. But who would save us from the wrath of Allah should it reach us?(40 : 28-29)

The above address is a rare specimen of a pathetic, heart-warming and wise speech. He explained the error to Pharaoh and his courtiers wisely without provoking them, and instead of refuting them directly placed the real facts before them.

He told that Moses (P.B.U.H.) had shown clear signs which even they could not belie.

He then offered arguments to convince them that if Moses were a liar, they needed no worry as his lie was bound to be exposed one day and that he must bear the consequences of his false statements. If he was right there was every possibility that at least some portion of the torment against which he was warning them might befall them.

He did not say directly that since Moses was right, they could not escape punishment; but quoting past references, he drew logical conclusions from them and then pointed out a very significant fact:

'Almighty God never guides a man who transgresses the limits and is a liar.'

There he provided a mirror to them wherein Pharaoh and his followers could see their own faces. Without mentioning their names, he passed such pungent remarks on Pharaoh's folk as the sharpness of which could only be felt by them but no objection thereto was possible to be raised.

The above sentence carried two meanings. The first was that if Moses was not right, Almighty God would punish him on account of his (false) claim of Prophethood as one who fabricates a lie against Him and transgresses in his behaviour cannot escape His punishment.

The second implication was that a man must ponder over his behaviour. Hitherto their attitude had been that of defiance of God's Commands, perpetration of the worst persecution on the people and refutation of truth despite the fact that it had been explicitly explained to them. Their attitude was bound to incur the wrath of God.

Then he warned the people lest the glaring light of the sun of power should blur their vision. After the light comes

to darkness. If today the power was in their hands, tomorrow it will be in the hands of the others. It was not permanent. So they should never labour under the misconception that their power was everlasting. When the wrath of God would descend upon them, this power and sovereignty of theirs would avail them naught.

It also transpires from the above speech that basically Pharaoh and his companions were aware of the conception of God. Moses (P.B.U.H.) therefore, warned them repeatedly against the disobedience and wrath of God, But woe to the racial discord and vested interests, whenever Moses (P.B.U.H.) called the people to the True religion of God, they said, "Well, if He is the God of Moses, we refuse to accept Him."

Their basic difference was regarding the conception of God which Moses (P.B.U.H.) presented to the people.

According to them, the status of god was not more than that a man should perform certain religious rites before him. So far as law and administration of the state were concerned, the supreme power rested with the king. On this very ground, Pharaoh claimed to be the god and the lord. His attitude has a striking similarity with the so called religious men who believe in prostrating before God but owe whole-hearted allegiance to the unbelievers.

The speech was so well-worded and convincing that Pharaoh had nothing to say in reply. He, however, spoke the following words shamefully:

"Pharaoh said: I do not show you what I think, and I do but guide you to the right faith." (40 : 29)

When the true believer saw Pharaoh speechless, he gave more arguments, quoting some facts of the history to conclude his talk in order to move the heart of these unfortunate man. He said:

"And he who believed said: O my people! Lo! I fear for you a fate like that of the factions (of old); A plight like that of Noah's folk, and 'Aad and Thamud, and those after them, and Allah Willeth no injustice for (His) slaves. And, O my people! Lo! I fear for a Day of Summoning, day when there will be mutual calling (and wailing) having no preserver from Allah: and he whom Allah sendeth astray, for him there is no guide. And verily Joseph brought you

of old clear signs yet ye ceased not to doubt of the mission for which he had come, when he died, ye said: Allah will never send any messenger after him.

(40 : 30-34)

Thus he warned them against their doom in intelligible narrative form and also guided them to the right path. He referred to the treatment meted out to Joseph (who also belonged to the Israelites tribe of Moses) as a proof and told them that during his life time they had been paying little regard to his noble life, guidance and instructions. But after his death they acknowledged his greatness saying that such a noble and pious man could never be born in this world. His gracious being was used as a pretext for denying the Truth. Now they were adopting the same attitude towards Moses (P.B.U.H.). They were not ready to listen to him in his life time, but after his death they would remember him like Joseph. But keep this fact in mind that they would not be allowed further time and they would meet their doom like the past nations who belied God and His Apostiles. Their obstinacy, persistence and selfishness would not let them accept the truth. This principle has been explained in the next verse as under:

"Thus doeth Allah leave to astray such as transgress and live in doubt. Those who wrangle concerning the revelations of Allah without any authority that hath come unto them. Grievous and odious (is such conduct) in the sight of Allah and in the sight of those who believe. Thus doth Allah print on every arrogant, disdainful heart." (40 : 34-35)

That is to say, the way of righteousness is shown to the people who listen to the arguments, ponder over them and if they find them right accept them. Contrary to this, the way of righteousness is not shown to the men who are not inclined to listen to the arguments of the other party; but try to refute them, thinking them as inferior to him. Such are the people as are not led aright and wander about in utter arrogance and stubbornness.

CONTEMPTUOUS ATTITUDE OF PHARAOH

The self-conceitedness of Pharaoh would not let him ponder over these arguments. When he saw that it was not

easy to refute the arguments of the true believer, he turned the discourse from him to Moses and began to cut jokes.. He remarked:

And Pharaoh said: O Haman! Build for me a tower that haply I may reach the roads, The road of the heavens, and may look upon the God of Moses, though verily I think him a liar. Thus was the evil that he did made fair-seeming unto Pharaoh, and he was debarred from the (right) way. The plot of Pharaoh ended but in ruin. (23 : 36-37)

The attitude has been narrated in the Verse 37 of Surah Al-Qasas, when he had begun to cut jokes with Moses (P.B.U. H.) in the court. The same attitude of ridicule had been adopted by him now. His intention was to carry the call of Moses off in a joke. This was not the case with him only; the Pharaohs of every age had been making the call to Truth as subject of ridicule; but their tactics failed and they went further from the Truth, till they were damned.

When the true believer saw that Pharaoh had resorted to joking and was thus trying to evade the discussion he once again tried to awaken the dead conscience of the courtiers and bring them to the right.

THE FINAL REFORMATORY ATTEMPT OF THE TRUE BELIEVER

And he who believed said: O my people! Follow me. I will show you the way of right conduct. O my people! Lo! This life of the world is but a passing comfort, and Lo! The Hereafter, that is the enduring home. Whose doeth an ill-deed, he will be repaid the like thereof. while whoso doeth right, whether male or female, and is a believer, (all) such will enter the Garden, where they will be nourished without stint. And, O my people! What aileth me that I call you unto deliverance when ye call me unto the Fire? Ye call me to disbelieve in Allah and ascribe unto Him as partners that whereof I have no knowledge, while I call you unto the Almighty, the Forgiver. Assuredly that where unto ye call me hath no claim in the world or in the Hereafter, and our return will be unto Allah, and the prodigals will be owners of the fire. And soon you will recall what I say unto you.

I confide my cause unto Allah. Lo! Allah (ever) watches (His) slaves." (40 : 38-44)

A turning point comes in the life of a man when he has to decide as to which way of life he is to adopt. On the one hand, there is unbelief and polytheism with its terrorism and allurements and, on the other hand, there is the Faith, the ultimate goal of his life which has a strong impact on his mind and soul. It is voice of his conscience that constitutes the pivot point around which all his desires and aspirations resolve. It calls a man. At that time, the support of unbelief means worldly progress and prosperity and the support of Truth means destruction. There are few people who discard the imitation jewels and take the live ambers of Truth in their hands. But the seekers of truth are indifferent to the allurements. They not only embrace the Truth but extend full support to it. So the true believer setting aside his personal gains affirmed the Faith publicly and gave plain and convincing arguments that the life in the Hereafter was superior to this mandane life. He was fully conscious of the consequences of speaking the truth; but despite this he affirmed the Faith and declared that he was ready to bear any punishment that was in store for him. He also told that they might give any punishment to him in a fit of rage; but they would ultimately testify the truth of his mission and remember him. As for him, he sought the protection of God in the hope that He was never forgetful of his bondmen and could be perfectly relied upon for his security.

The daring declaration of the true believer was enough to incur the wrath of the courtiers. But behold the Graciousness and Infinite Clemency of God that Pharaoh and his courtiers could cause no harm to the true believers and their stratagem proved to be of no avail. Pharaoh and his courtiers suffered defeat and humiliation and were punished. Almighty God explained their miserable plight in the following words:

DELIVERANCE OF THE TRUE BELIEVER

So Allah warded off from him the evils which they plotted, while a dreadful doom encompassed Pharaoh's folk. The fire; they are exposed morning and evening; and on the Day that judgement will be established:

Cause Pharaoh's folk to enter the most awful (doom).
(40 : 45-46)

Call it the personal influence of the true believer or the awe of his faith that in spite of his outspoken and bold talk, Pharaoh could not dare lay his hands on him publicly. He hint upon many plans to involve him and keep him under control but Almighty God foiled all the stratagem of Pharaoh and kept the true Believer safe and sound. None can hurt one whom God protects. Contrary to this, Pharaoh and his men were humiliated in this world and the disgrace and humiliation which they would suffer in the Hereafter would be worst.

In the above incident, there are lessons and admonishments for the people who believe and also for those who disbelieve and oppose the believers.

For those who trust God and rely on His help and support, it is a harbinger of the glad-tidings that how much well-equipped might be the enemies of God, they are ultimately destined to fail. On the other hand, the supporters of truth would be triumphant in this world as well as in the hereafter.

KORAH—AN ISRAELITE ARISTOCRAT

On the one hand, there was the conduct of the believing courtier who belonged to the family of Pharaoh and on the other hand was the conduct of Korah of Moses' folk. He refused to embrace the Faith and not only opposed Moses for the sake of worldly gains but also conspired with Pharaoh, the enemy of his folk to cause him harm. He like other adherents of Pharaoh, vehemently opposed and suppressed the Truth. Almighty God has described the conduct of this man as under:

KORAH'S CONDUCT

"Indeed Korah was of Moses' folk, but he acted insolently towards them; and We gave him so much treasure that the keys thereof would verily have been a burden for a troop of mighty men. Once when his own folk said unto him: exult not; Lo! Allah loveth not the exultant. But seek the abode of the Hereafter in that which Allah hath given thee and neglect not thy portion of the world, and be thou good as Allah has done good to thee and seek not mischief in the earth; Lo! Allah loveth not those who do mischief".

(28 : 76-77)

Korah belonged to the Israelities. According to Israelite traditions, he was from Moses' folk. He forsook the men of his caste and creed and augmented his relations with Pharaohs. Like all cunning and opportunist men, he decided to adorn his worldly life by cementing his ties with the ruling class. He said to himself, "What is there in supporting a weak and downtrodden community. It is high time to amass wealth and live with pomp and show by pleasing the rulers". So he was lavishly rewarded due to his treachery with his people. He became a renowned capitalist of the country. Due to his materialistic bent of mind, he had a craving to fill his treasure to the brim. The nation might go to dogs and suffer disgrace

and humiliation. Persecution and tyranny might continue to be perpetrated upon them and they might go to hell, but the treasure he had amassed with much difficulty should remain secure. Exactly the same mentality was shown by the treacherous men to amass wealth and build properties at the time the British captured India and Pakistan. The freedom loving men were being hanged and transported to the Andaman Islands but they remained busy in earning the pleasure and goodwill of their lords.

When Moses (P.B.U.H.) propagated the Faith in Egypt, Korah began to oppose him at the behest of his master. He transgressed in his opposition to the extent that Almighty God calls him as one of the sworn enemies of Moses. He has observed:

‘And verily We sent Moses with Our Signs and Authority manifest unto Pharaoh and Haman and Korah, but they said: A sorcerer telling lies.’

(40 : 23-24)

He has observed in another verse:

‘And Korah, Pharaoh and Haman! Moses came unto them with clear signs but they behaved with insolence in the land. And they could not over-reach (us).

(29 : 39)

He thrived so much on account of his treachery and lack of conscience that he amassed enormous wealth. As stated in the Holy Qur’an, a group of stout men could hardly lift the keys of treasures. It can thus be ascertained from the keys, how many bungalows and stores and palaces did he possess?

KORAH'S WEALTH

The enormous wealth made him extremely proud and haughty. Like every aristocrat he shunned the poor members of his family and moved in the company of the rich and affluent. Some wise men of his family told him that his pride and arrogance would cause his ruin as Almighty God, may forgive all other sins of a man except that of pride and arrogance. He should be grateful to God for the wealth which He had bestowed upon him and spend it in the deserving men in token of His favour to him. The world which he loved so much is mortal. It is better he should make provision for the next world during the short span of life at his disposal. The

palaces which he had made would crumble. He would hardly get two yards of ground. So he must not spend his wealth in creating discord and dissension on this earth and purchasing the loyalties and conscience of the people by offering them temptations and tyrannizing over them. But he must spend it to spread piety and end indecency and use his good offices for furtherance of piety. It is the will of God that He should not tolerate the miscreants. But one whose vision was blurred, no advice could prove effective. He said arrogantly:

KORAH'S MENTALITY

“He said: I have been given it only on account of knowledge I possess. (28 : 78)

That is to say, he had earned his wealth by dint of hard labour and intellectual capacities. According to him, hundreds of men wandered about but no one could acquire that position. He had some qualities and virtues which entitled him to that position. So He could not afford to expend his wealth on the worthless and destitute.

This is the mentality of a man who forgets God and considers that his wealth and fortune are due to his capabilities. Would that he had probed into his own heart and enquired from himself as to who had favoured him with that capacity, wisdom, capability and suitable environment? Had he been a crippled and helpless man, how could he acquire that eminent position? He is, however, unable to think from this angle of vision. Those who always fear God and keep their eyes and heart awoken are His grateful bondmen. So Almighty God has observed:

“Knew he not that Allah had destroyed already of the generations before him men who were mightier than him in strength and greater in respect of following? The guilty are not questioned of their sins. (28 : 78)

One might ask from these criminals, “were the persons punished before you awarded punishment on confession of their crimes? Since you have not confessed your guilt you will not be awarded Divine punishment.” The fact that a criminal has committed a crime, makes him liable to punishment whether he confesses it or not. When he transgresses the limits in committing crimes he is bound to meet his doom. It

does not depend upon their permission.

The mentality of the criminals is strange. When they see the doom of the past nations, they point out their defects and shortcomings but do not care to think as to how could they escape that doom on commitment of similar crimes. As a matter of fact, only those who believe in God and are afraid to appear before Him to account for their actions, take a warning from the historical events or relics of the past.

The pages of the history of the past lay open before Korah. He was not unfamiliar with the nations like 'Aad, Thamud, Noah, and Lot. They excelled him in wealth and power but when the torment of God befell them on account of their misdeeds, no one could save them. Whosoever was struck therewith, his name was blotted out from this world. He was nothing as compared with them.

KORAH'S DISPLAY OF WEALTH

When Korah heard that the people were talking about his wealth and his habits and demeanour, he came out with great pomp and show and splendour, displaying his wealth, in order to overawe the people with his grandeur and majesty. The Holy Qur'an narrates this incident as under:

"Then went he forth before his people in his pomp. Those who were desirous of the life of the world said: Ah, would that unto us had been given the like of what hath been given unto Korah! Lo! he is lord of rare good fortune."
(28 : 79)

ENVY OF THE FOOLISH

There is no dearth of fools who aspire for millions and billions of dollars. No wonder their mouth began to water to see the wealth of Korah. When wealth and standard of living become the criteria to judge a man's worth, only a fool would not have a craving for it.

When Korah's procession came out with pomp and show, the greedy people uttered, "Alas! Our fortune has been like that of Korah. Fortune has come to the share of Korah only." On the one hand, there was the glamour of Korah and, on the other hand, was their poverty. They were full of sorrow over their deprivation. These wretched greedy men might have said anything; there were also many among the believing

men whose faith was shattered. On the one hand cash payments were being made in lieu of their disloyalty to the nation and religion and on the other hand, the remuneration for supporting the truth was that they not only rendered themselves liable for punishment by the Government but were also reduced to abject poverty. The conscience of many a man was dead and they forsook the way of righteousness. Imagine the said plight of Moses (P.B.U.H.) to see the set back which his movement received. Witnessing the rebellious and arrogant attitude of the people he raised up his hands and prayed to Almighty God thus:

CURSE OF MOSES

“And Moses said: Our Lord! Lo! Thou hast given Pharaoh and his chiefs splendour and riches in the life of the world, Our Lord! That they mislead (men) from Thy Path. Our Lord! Destroy their riches and send hardness to their hearts so that they believe not till they see the painful doom.” (10 : 88)

This was the humble petition which the Prophet of God made after a long hard labour. This was echo of the voice raised by the Prophet Noah in similar circumstances:

“And Noah said: My Lord! Leave not one of the disbelievers in the land.” (71 : 26)

ACCEPTANCE OF THE PRAYER

So he received glad tidings from God.

“He said: Your prayer is hard. Do ye twain keep to the straight path, and follow not the road of those who have no knowledge.” (10 : 90)

Almighty God first conveyed a glad tidings to his pious men that his prayer had been accepted and that He would dispose of matters according to his wishes. He further told him that the way of truth was strewn with thorns. The ignorant people seeing the frequent failures of the believers lose heart thinking that only failures are their lot. By and by, they are constrained to compromise and conciliate with evil and surrender their bodies and souls to it. He warned these unwise and ignorant people against adopting such an attitude and exhorted them to adhere to Truth boldly and patiently and witness the phenomenon of God.

Let us see how this glad tidings was confirmed like the broad day light.

Whereas some people beholding the wealth of Korah cherished the deepest longing to possess wealth and riches, there were also some sincere people who were aware of the reality behind this delusion and allurements. They knew that when disbelief and sin are rampant the doom of the people is at hand. So they advised the short-sighted and week-minded believers in the following words:

ADVICE OF THE WISE

“But those who had been given knowledge said:
Woe unto you! The reward of Allah for him who believeth and doeth right is better, but this none shall attain, save those who steadfastly persevere (in good)

(28 : 80)

Those who are aware of the reality have explained here a very important fact. As a matter of fact, the basis of Faith is that a man should believe in the Hereafter as against the present and the existing. So long as a man wants the remuneration of his deeds should be given to him there and then like a bill of exchange (payable at sight); he can never adhere to the Faith as it demands that even if a man enjoys the long life of Noah, he should stick to it and should never rue if he does not earn any material benefit therefrom. If he does not possess such qualities of perseverance and steadfastness, his steps are bound to waver after going a few steps further. The courage and constancy of this nature are the lot of those people who not only show patience but are habitual to it. To face boldly every temptation, pressure and hardship; to feel contented with lawful earnings, to live on simple fare, rather to go without food to earn the Pleasure of God, to discard heaps of wealth than to please the false demigods — all these qualities are called patience. Such persevering men are indeed firm in their belief on the Day of Judgment. He who makes no discrimination between the lawful and unlawful and between that which pleases God and that which displeases Him, the path of righteousness is tiresome for him and he always tries to evade that path.

According to Korah, he had made full preparations to influence people through this show of wealth and grandeur

but fate had decided otherwise. When indecency and crime transgress all limits and the footsteps of the people start wavering, Almighty God ordains to punish them. So He decided to award such punishments to Korah as might serve as a warning to the people till eternity. So He caused the earth to engulf Korah along with his pomp and show i.e. palaces and treasures etc. He ordained:

“So we caused the earth to swallow him and his dwelling place. Then he had no host to help him against Allah, nor was he of those who can save themselves. And morning found those who had coveted his place but yesterday crying: Ah, well a day! Allah enlargeth the provision for whom He will of His slaves and straighteneth it (for whom He will). If Allah had not been gracious unto us He would have caused the earth to swallow us (also). Ah, well a day! the disbelievers never prosper.” (28 : 81-82)

REORGANIZATION OF THE CALL

A great impediment in the way of Moses (P.B.U.H.) was removed. One of the treasure chests used for purchasing and spoiling the integrity of the people and supporting the unbelief was closed. In spite of that it was extremely difficult for Moses (P.B.U.H.) to spread the Faith and carry on his mission publicly. The second round of Pharaoh's persecution continued unabated, Except a few youngmen, none could dare profess his faith. The last and decisive contest with Pharaoh was imminent. So it became imperative for Moses (P.B.U.H.) to reorganize the call. At that critical juncture, Almighty God sent down some very important instructions.

ESTABLISHMENT OF MISSIONARY CENTRES

"And We inspired Moses and His brother, (saying):
 Appoint houses for your people in Egypt and make
 your houses into places of worship and establish
 worship. And give good news to the believers."

(10 : 87)

The scholars say that the above verse contains instructions for reorganization of the Bani Israel. They are of the view that when the system of congregation prayers had ceased to exist, a few selected houses of Bani Israel were used as mosques. Thus the basic demand of religion i.e. establishment of prayer was fulfilled.

According to a few of them, this verse grants exemption. As it was absolutely impossible to gather in the mosques in those terrible days of persecution; they were allowed to discharge this obligatory duty in a few houses chosen for this purpose.

The above views may be right; but in my opinion a new line of action was proposed at that critical stage of the movement bringing about a change in the old way and technique of propagating the Faith. These instructions are important in so far as the mission can be organized and carried on even in

the most critical and hazardous times. How terrible be the circumstances, no power on earth can smash this system.

CAN ONLY OPEN DECLARATION OF FAITH FULFIL THE MISSION?

As a matter of principle a standard-bearer of religion, must propagate his Faith publicly and present his call to the maximum number of men. He must utilize all means of communications. The circumstances might be favourable or most unfavourable, he should face them boldly and perseveringly and never think to save his skin.

DIFFERENT METHODS OF PROPAGATION

The personal character of a missionary and a leader is one thing and to devise and adopt the ways and means to organize a movement is another thing. A missionary and a leader who do not possess enough to propagate their Faith in the most distressing circumstances, to bear patiently when they are pelted with stones, to walk on thorns, to tolerate the refuse being thrown on them, to pray in return for false accusations and abuses, cannot accomplish this task. So it has been observed times and again in different manners:

“Thus have patience (O Muhammad) even as the stout of heart among the messengers (of old) had patience.” (46 : 35)

In case unsurmountable Himalayan mountain impede his way, he should not strike his head against it to end his life; but mine his way into it. He should try to overcome the hardships. So the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) was ordained:

“And warn thy tribe of near kindred.” (26 : 214)

Acting upon this advice, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) preached the religion to his kith and kin and his friends for 3 years. Sometimes he preached it during meals and at another time in the company of his intimate friends. During that period, those who accepted his call were his most dependable and reliable companions like Hadrat Khadija, —Hadrat Zaid — his special servant, Hadrat Abu Bakr — his journey companion, Hadrat 'Ali, his loving brother whom he had brought up. When the circumstances became somewhat favourable for him, he was ordained:

"So proclaim that which thou art commanded."

(15 : 94)

The matter did not end there. The call to the new Faith became the burning topic of the day and almost every one was aware of it. He was also opposed so tenaciously that it became impossible for him to live in Mecca. He went to Madina to find adherents. How did he accomplish that task? Did he hold a general meeting and declared therein that he was going to migrate or arrange a procession or sent emissaries for the change of his centre? No, but for two years a few selected men had been coming very secretly from Medina. The Bait-e-'Uqba Ula and Thania was held so secretly that the Meccans who acted as spies upon the believers like Pharaoh, could not even get an smell of it until he had migrated to Medina in the darkness of night while they stood guarding at the door.

I am of the view that in the above quoted verse, Moses (P.B.U.H.) was ordered to organize the mission secretly as it had become absolutely impossible for him to work publicly. He was, therefore, ordered to set up various organization centres. Since prayer enjoys a unique position in Islamic organizations, it was enjoined to establish prayer centres. The remaining were only ancilliary matters and were included in it.

Since propagation of Faith was impossible in the atmosphere of terror created by Pharaoh's folk, and the time for migration to the new place was drawing near the centres were set up in every street and corner so that the adherents could remain organized and united and there should be no delay in conveying them instructions. Moreover, arrangement was made to send the messages quickly and confidentially so that the co-workers could be liberated from the persecution of Pharaoh. It was due to that quick communication system that when orders for migration were issued, millions of men gathered and left Egypt in the darkness, and Pharaoh, in spite of his most efficient spying system could not detect them before time.

THE LAST WARNING OF MOSES TO PHARAOH

Moses (P.B.U.H.) was certain that the movement of Islam could not carry on its mission in Egypt successfully. Pharaoh had instilled the sentiments of racial prejudice and discord

into the minds of the people. They rejected everything that Moses (P.B.U.H.) preached despite its being true on the plea that it was presented by him. On the other hand, the men of Pharaoh perpetrated such persecution and tyranny as even the most courageous men were intimidated. Qibties were already torn with racial discord and dissension. There were, however, some pious souls who being terribly frightened could not dare declare their Faith openly. Even among the Israelites there were a large number of men who had not the courage to support Moses openly. Like all other prophets, Moses (P.B.U.H.) perceived through a Divine inspiration that he was going to receive orders for migration. So he decided to talk finally with Pharaoh. He went to the court of Pharaoh and warned him.

“And saying: Be not arrogant against Allah. Lo! I bring you a clear authority. And Lo! I have sought refuge in my Lord and your Lord lest ye stone me to death. And if ye believe me not, at least keep yourself away from me.” (44 : 19-21)

“That is to say, you who are bent upon opposing me, take it for granted that I have already shown signs of my Prophethood. You have witnessed the truthness of my mission during this long time. Even then if you defy, this is in reality the defiance of God’s command as I am His apostle and what I say is according to His Divine Instructions and guidance.

I warn you not to commit such folly as God has granted me protection against all your intrigues. You cannot do me any harm. Of course you will meet your doom instantaneously as the past nations have met with their doom.”

This warning of Moses (P.B.U.H.) proved to be futile like previous warnings. Although they could not dare lay his hand on him out of fear of Truth; yet he did not refrain from his wicked way.

MIGRATION

MOSES'S SUPPLICATION TO HIS LORD

When Moses (P.B.U.H.) was sure that there was little good in his folk and that they were bent upon wickedness, he prayed to his Lord:

"And he cried unto his Lord (saying): These are guilty folk." (44 : 22)

ORDER TO MIGRATE

Almighty God ordained him:

"Then (his Lord Commanded): Take away my slaves by night. Lo! ye will be followed." (44 : 23)

The clash between Pharaoh and Moses reached the highest pitch and the rulers took a very stern notice of it. It became almost impossible for the believers to safeguard their faith. There were only two alternatives before them, either to face gallows or to forsake the religion. They had no protection or refuge. In such circumstances how could the Gracious and Merciful God put a burden on his faithful men beyond their endurance? So according to His Sunnah, Moses (P.B.U.H.) was ordered to migrate. The detail of this order has been given in the Holy Qur'an in different verses. In one verse it has been observed:

"By inspiration We told Moses: Take away My slaves by night, for ye will be pursued." (26 : 52)

In another verse, it has been observed:

"And verily We inspired Moses, saying: Take away My slaves quietly by night." (20 : 77)

The great wisdom of God is fully reflected in the above order. When the adherents of Truth are weak and few and those of disbelief are powerful and armed to the teeth, Almighty God Wills that the believers should rise up and challenge the unbelievers and should not forsake their mission fearing the stern measures, persecution and tyranny

of the unbelievers. His Will is not that they should behave like blind and deaf men and strike their heads against the walls but like wise and sagacious men, they should find a hole to plug their fingers into the wall of disbelief and a way from where the believers can enter it. If it is not possible, they should search out some other suitable corners in the land of God where the circumstances might be comparatively favourable. In case there is no chance of the call to bring an encouraging response in a particular place, Almighty God, ordains his bondmen to migrate from that place.

In order to protect the believers from Pharaoh's persecution and to spread the religion in new regions and to give a final blow to the rule of Pharaoh, Almighty God ordered Moses (P.B.U.H.) to shift from that condemned place and carry the believers with him.

But He did not order Moses 'to set out in the broad day light but in the darkness of the night.' His Will was not that Moses and his folk should simply shift but He wanted to take them safe and sound to the destination. He told them the security measures and precautions to be taken by them. By the way He pointed them that the leadership of the believers should not be in the hands of the unwise, foolish and inexperienced persons but in the hands of the most wise, prudent, and farsighted men who must be aware of all the ins and outs so that they could lead the caravan to its destination safe and sound. When one avenue is blocked they should adopt the other course and when a particular technique fails, they should be able to try the other. Almighty God in His Infinite Grace informed them also about the future hazards in store for them and that they would not have an easy escape from Pharaoh, but that, their enemies would pursue them hotly and will try to annihilate them upto the last.

PRECAUTIONS ADOPTED BY MOSES

In the light of the Divine inspiration Moses (P.B.U.H.) adopted every possible safety measure. He took full advantage of the Organization Cells which had already been set up. The Communication System worked so secretly and quickly that the whole nation gathered at a single call and set out quietly on the journey in the darkness of the night and

Pharaoh despite all his arrangements could not check them. But in spite of all these precautions, Pharaoh came to know about it as such a mass migration could not remain hidden for long.

The spies, Pharaoh's folk, courtiers and flatterers played their role and immediately warned him that as his prey was going out of bound, some arrangements should be made immediately to foil his attempt. Pharaoh could not miss the mark. At once, the entire machinery of the Government came into operation.

PHARAOH'S ARRANGEMENTS

"Then Pharaoh sent in to cities summoners, (who said):
Lo! these indeed are but a little troop, and Lo! they
are raging furiously against us. And Lo! we are a mul-
titude forewarned."
(26 : 53-56)

Pharaoh had tried many methods to curb and extirpate the new rising movement. He had resolved to kill the great leader of the movement and was planning how to deal with his followers. When Moses (P.B.U.H.) received orders to migrate along with his people, Pharaoh felt extremely exasperated at the audacity of Moses and his people who wanted to go out of his country. As a matter of fact, the dictator, despite his awe and terror is narrow-minded and coward. So many fears might have haunted his mind that in case he failed to curb such a small number of people in spite of his tremendous power and pomp and show in the country, what would happen if he went outside the country. The proclamation he made to collect the army that "we were a community who remained always alert fully" reflects his fears. It also exposes another aspect of Pharaoh's character that as compared to the present day rulers he was more realistic and straightforward. He confessed it plainly that he had been constrained to punish Moses' folk as they had offended him. Even while issuing death warrants of a man, these hypocrites use the word, "They are pleased to while Pharaoh caused the death of some one in a fit of rage, the pleasure of the hypocrites consists in hanging a person. You can judge well the conduct of the latter.

To Pharaoh, it was the last chance to deal with Moses. He mustered all his resources to extirpate the small party.

Behold the awe of Truth! Pharaoh himself confessed that these were only a small number of men. But to deal with them, leaders and chiefs from all over the country were called and armies were rallied. In every period the power and awe of truth had been haunting the minds of the disbelievers. In every age such small band of true believers had been considered as a constant 'menace'. Always large armies were mustered to fight against them. This awe and fear hold the hands of the tyrants from persecution. According to Pharaoh, he had taken all measures to annihilate Moses and his companions, but if the affairs of the world could be settled merely on the basis of power, none among his weak creatures could survive. That splendid manoeuvring as Pharaoh called it, was destined to be turned otherwise. The army mustered to crush Moses and his companions smashed the sovereignty of Pharaoh. It has been rightly said by All Knowing God:

"Thus did We take them away from gardens of water, springs, and treasures every kind of honourable position. Thus it was and We made the children of Israel inheritors of such things." (26 : 57-59)

To a cursory observer whose vision is limited to the physical and material view of things, rallying of forces from all over the country gathering of princes and chiefs and bringing to bear all the resources at his command mattered much. Moses and his companions were unarmed and few in number and their death was, according to Pharaoh, inevitable. He was sure that Moses and his party's existence was for sometime more and it would not take long to crush them.

Behold the wisdom of God! He caused the mischievous people (each one of whom a personification of Pharaoh) to gather at one place. In case any one of them had been allowed to survive, there was still every possibility of the evil to perpetuate. Almighty God brought them out of their palatial buildings and luxurious palaces and put them on the way leading to their ruin. They laboured under the delusion till the last moment that they would catch Moses, kill him and put an end to menace once for all.

PERSUANCE OF MOSES

"And they overtook them at sunrise. And when the two hosts saw each other, those with Moses said: Lo! we are indeed caught." (26 : 60-61)

The standard-bearer of Faith were facing heavy odds. Just imagine their sad plight! Pharaoh's army which had control over all the resources and means of communications and was armed to teeth was chasing them hotly and was about to overtake them. In front of them, there was a vast expanse of ocean whose furious waves were ready to devour a thousand lives. He had no boats or ships to cross it. On the one hand, there were dazzling sharp swords and on the other, sure collective drowning. They were in a dilemma and could not find any way of escape. Even the most valient among them felt terribly afraid and frustrated. It is one thing to face death and it is another thing to boast of being not afraid of death. When death was staring into the very faces of men only few among them could remain steadfast and constant. So the companions of Moses who had been suffering unbearable tortures for years together, began to moan and cry. They said. 'Lo! We have been caught'.

MOANING OF THE ISRAELITES

Whatever hue and cry they raised at that time was justified. They had raised hue and cry in the same way when Pharaoh had persecuted the believers.

"They said: We suffered hurt before thou comest unto us, and since thou hast come unto us." (7 : 129)

As death was hovering over their heads, they could pass any taunting remarks on Moses (P.B.U.H.) in these circumstances. At that critical time we remember the perseverance and patience of the Prophet and their firm conviction in the truth of God's promises. It serves a lesson of patience and steadfastness to the believers and pious men. Moses (P.B.U.H.) did not lose heart at that critical moment. He neither cried will be triumphant like Moses and his followers, and the

nor was he depressed. On the other hand, he displayed firm and unwavering faith in God and His promises which would continue to inspire the believers till eternity.

PROPHETIC STEADFASTNESS OF MOSES

“He said: Nay, Verily for Lo! my Lord is with me.
He will guide me.” (26 : 62)

As a matter of fact, none can excel the Prophets in this world in steadfastness and perseverance. If a man keeps in view the character of the Prophets (peace be upon them) he can never succumb to despondency even in the most straitened circumstances.

At last Providential support which Moses' prophetic institution expected at every moment came with such splendour as Moses and his companions were not only delivered from the persecution of Pharaoh but Pharaoh and his army were utterly ruined. God ordained:

GUIDANCE OF DIVINE INSPIRATION

“Then We inspired Moses, saying: Smite the sea with thy staff. And it parted and each part was a mountain vast.” (26 : 63)

Moses (P.B.U.H.) along with his folk was standing at the bank of the river waiting for Providential support which had been rescuing him at every step since his childhood. He was thinking what descended next from the Invisible Power. He was thus mediating when a sudden Divine inspiration ordered him to strike his staff into the water of the sea and Lo! it was cut asunder leaving a way in between to let Moses and his people cross it safe and sound.

Almighty God wanted to shower more blessings on him. He not only prepared a way through the sea to let Moses (P.B.U.H.) and his people to cross the river, but also dried dampness and swamp after water had receded otherwise, they would have stuck into it. He observed:

RENTING THE SEA

“And verily We inspired Moses, saying: Take away my slaves by night and strike for them a dry path in the sea, fearing not to be overtaken, neither being afraid (of the sea).” (20 : 77)

Almighty God not only made the way dry but also consoled them that Pharaoh would never overtake them and the water in the sea would not resume its normal position until all of them cross the sea. He also conveyed him the glad tidings that the sea would engulf Pharaoh. It was observed:

"And leave the sea as a furrow (divided), for Lo! they are a host (destined) to be drowned."

(44 : 24)

The sea whose relentless waves had engulfed many a man dried up to give way to Moses to enable him to cross it safely. The Supreme Power Willed to save the small number of believers and also wanted to show to the world how the tyrants who stood in the way of preaching the true religion of God met with their doom. Those who are intoxicated with power and perpetrate persecution on the truthful, are ultimately humiliated and disgraced and those who are bent upon strangling the voice of truth, are themselves ruined.

PHARAOH'S ENTRY INTO THE SEA

When Pharaoh saw Moses and his companions crossing through the way formed in it, he was extremely exasperated. He could not perceive that plain Sign of Moses. If he had a little intelligence and wisdom, he would have pondered over that clear Sign and refrained from this sheer foolishness. But history tells us that the enemies of truth lose sense of wisdom and they cannot perceive even the most obvious Signs. Each step of theirs brings them nearer to ruin. Almighty God has rightly affirmed:

"For indeed it is not the eyes that are blind, but it is the hearts, which are within the bosoms, that grow blind." (22 : 46)

Pharaoh at once rushed through the way which God had made to deliver Moses and ruin Pharaoh. The Holy Qur'an has narrated this incident as under:

HOW PHARAOH DROWNED

"Then brought We near the others to that place. And We saved Moses and those with him, everyone; We drowned the others." (26 : 64-66)

See the wisdom and planning of God. How Pharaoh's senses were lost! In front of him was the caravan of Moses

being pursued by his army. Moses too had to face a very distressing situation at that time. Pharaoh was sure of Moses's defeat. He was absolutely unaware that death was hovering over the heads of his whole army. The success about which he was so sure was in fact a step towards the end of his evils. When all his forces were between the deep sea, Moses' folk had already crossed the sea. Just at that moment, Almighty God ordered the two ends of water to unite and thus ended the pomp and show of Pharaoh.

In another verse, the end of wicked leadership of Pharaoh has been explained as under:

"Then Pharaoh followed with his hosts and there covered them that which did cover them of the sea. And Pharaoh led his folk astray, he did not guide them."
(20 : 78, 79)

Such is the end of the short sighted, haughty and revengeful leaders. They not only cause their ruin but also the ruin of their whole family and companions.

PHARAOH'S DECLARATION OF FAITH

In another verse, the detail how Pharaoh and his men drowned has been narrated as under:

"And we brought the children of Israel across the sea, and Pharaoh with his hosts pursued them in rebellion and transgression, till, when the (fate of) drowning overtook him, he exclaimed: I believe that there is no god save Him in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of those who surrender (unto him)."
(10 : 91)

'Woe to the regret of the regretting'.

He had seen the sea rented before his eyes and a way formed miraculously in between it. It was high time that he would have realised the fact and owed submission to God, forsaking the way of persecution and sin. But he who claimed to be god and was extremely proud and haughty and was full of revenge could not think wisely. He came to his senses in a single dip into water. When he saw his death hovering over his head, he realised the futility of his claim of godhood. None among his ministers, advisers and soldiers could help him. In a fit of despair and despondency, he called "O God! I believe in you." But what could be done now? The time was over.

Moses (P.B.U.H.) tried to bring him to the way of righteousness, gave arguments, showed signs; but he persisted in, stubbornness, vice and arrogance. It would have been much better if he had agreed like a gentleman at that time. But there is a proverb, "a word to the wise and a rod to the foolish." When the angel of death strangled his breath, he came to know the real fact; but then it was too late and quite useless. His affirmation of Faith was not accepted by Almighty God., Who observed:

"What! No! When hitherto thou hast rebelled and been of the wrong-doers? But this day We save thee in thy body that thou mayest be a portent for those after thee. Lo! most of mankind are heedless of Our Portents."
(10 : 92-93)

Pharaoh's dead body still exists in the museum of Egypt and is a warning to every visitor. It bespeaks:

"I revolted against God and saw the results thereof. If you want to avoid the consequences, never tread this path or you will be punished likewise." But only a few persons take a lesson from Pharaoh's end. They are interested in seeing his dead body in so far as relics of the past are concerned. They knew his ultimate end; but shut their eyes deliberately and tread the wrong path and in consequence thereof face their doom.

Almighty God has described this magnificent event as the great munificence of their Lord on Bani Israel. This event has been briefly narated as under:

"And when we rented the sea for you and rescued you, and drowned the folk of Pharaoh in your sight."
(2 : 50)

DOOM OF PHARAOH AND GOD'S OBSERVATION THEREON

How did Pharaoh meet with his doom and what were the causes of his ruin? Almighty God has observed on this point in various verses in different manners. What is to come next has been explained in detail as under:

THE CONSEQUENCES OF PRIDE AND ARROGANCE

"And he and his hosts were haughty in the land without right, and deemed that they would never be brought back to us. Therefore We seized him and his hosts, and We flung them unto the sea. Behold the nature of consequences for evil-doers! And We made them (but) leaders inviting them to the Fire, and to the Day of Resurrection they will be in great distress."

(28 : 39-42)

Real Greatness and Magnificence rests with God alone. It does not behove anyone to boast of his greatness as compared to Almighty God, to ask the people to owe ungrudging allegiance to him, and to do what he likes considering the land as his personal property and himself as not accountable to any one.

Pharaoh and his companions adopted the above attitude and how terrible was his end? It was just a beginning; their doom Hereafter would be the worst. On account of their perverted mentality, they set a very bad example for the future generations and taught them how to oppose the truth and the extent to which one can go in opposing it. They would not only be punished for their own sins, but also for the vices of all those malevolent people who following him perpetrated tyranny and were guilty of revolt against God. On the Day of Judgement, they would not only be cast into the Fire, but would be liable to dire punishment as the leaders of the culprits. Then they would come to know that their companions and army were of little avail. None would come to their help. Being condemned till Doomsday, they were

simply punished for their evil ways and arrogance. Such a terrible punishment as deformation of their faces would be inflicted on them. They would be placed in the category of the condemned and damned persons and would be liable to such punishments as God save us from them.

While explaining the severe punishment that would be inflicted upon Pharaoh, Almighty God has observed:

"He will go before the people on the Day of Resurrection and will lead them to the Fire (as cattle are led to the water). But woeful will be the place to which they are led. And they are tolerated by a curse in this (life) and on the Day of Judgement. And woeful is the gift which shall be given unto them."

(11 : 98-99)

Alas! The men who consider themselves Pharaohs of today and support indecency and vices should learn a lesson from the end of their predecessor and reform themselves. This worldly pomp and show which has allured man is only transitory. It will end during the short span of his life. But the punishment in the Hereafter is a different thing. This worldly pomp and show is merely to influence the people. But with what result? condemnation in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

ELUSIVENESS OF THE WORLD

'How many were the gardens and water-springs and palaces that they left behind, and the corn lands and the goodly sites and pleasant things wherein they took delight! Even so (it was), and We made it an inheritance for other folk; And the heaven and the earth wept not for them, nor were they reprieved. And we delivered the Children of Israel from the shameful doom; (We delivered them) from Pharaoh. Lo! he was a tyrant of the wanton ones. (44 : 25-31)

All the hostility was due to the fear lest Moses (P.B.U.H.) should overthrow them from power as a result of the success of his mission and lest the hustle and bustle of their luxurious palaces should end. They also feared lest their so-called divinity and their magnificence should cease to attract people. They tried their utmost to safeguard these privileges and vested interests, flouted the true Commandments of God and

belied His Apostle despite the fact that they were convinced as to the truth of the Faith. But what happened next? When the torment of God seized them, none could escape. They were not given the least margin to atone or make amends for their sins; but on the contrary they had to forgo everything against their expectations, desires and stratagem. Almighty God not only forsook them but His wrath descended upon them. No eye was there to shed tears on their destruction, no mouth to grieve over their loss or chant an elegy over them. On the other hand, curses would be hurled on them till eternity. Whom did he want annihilate in sheer pride of power, Almighty God not only managed to save them; but rewarded them immensely.

SUNNAH OF GOD AND GLAD TIDINGS FOR THE BELIEVERS

Whenever the people defy the message of the Apostle of God collectively and belie their obvious signs after having witnessed them and instead of repenting and reforming themselves are bent upon defiance and arrogance, blinded with the pride of power, perpetrate persecution on the adherence of Faith (who are apparently weak and small in number), Almighty God annihilates them and makes the Faithful triumphant. This fact has been explained in the following verse.

"So they denied them, and became of those who were destroyed."
(23 : 48)

That is to say, one who would belie the Truth would be crushed. During the short respite they begin to think that there is none to question or punish them. They go about proudly and arrogantly and enquire as to where is their God Who promised to save them? But soon they are aware that God is over their heads.

"And Moses was denied; but I indulged the disbelievers a long while, then I seized them, and how (terrible) was My Abhorrence!"
(22 : 44)

They were deluded during the time allowed to them and considered it as weakness on the part of God. But when the time was over, such a severe punishment was inflicted upon them that nobody was left even to utter their name.

THE TYRANTS WOULD BE ANNIHILATED

"And he wished to scare them from the land but We drowned him and those with him, all together."
(17 : 103)

"So when they angered us, We punished them every-one. And We made them a thing past, and an example for those after (them)
(43 : 55, 56)

God may defer his decision; but He never does injustice. The tyrants are allowed sometime to amend. They think that

there is no power over them and there is none to check them. Almighty God neither shows impatience nor hastens, nor is He revengeful. He allows the tyrants time unless they are immersed in indecency and vice. When no virtue is left in them, He punishes them so severely that those who have a chance to hear or see shudder at it. This aspect of the story of Pharaoh has been explained as under:

CONDEMNATION FOR THE HAUGHTY

“And in Moses (too, there is a portent) when We sent him unto Pharaoh with clear Sign, but he withdrew (confiding) in his might, and said: A wizard or a mad man. So We seized him and his hosts and flung them in the sea, for he was reprobate.” (51 : 38-40)

Summing up the character of Pharaoh in a few sentences, Almighty God warned beforehand all the future Pharaohs against their wicked deeds and threatened them with the same punishment.

SEVERE PUNISHMENT FOR THE DISBELIEVERS

“But (Pharaoh) rejected it and disobeyed, then turned his back striving hard (against God) then gathered (his men) and proclaimed: “I (Pharaoh) am your lord the highest. So Allah seized him (and made him) an example for the after (life) and for the former. Lo! herein is indeed a lesson for him who feareth.”

(79 : 21-26)

He told the people about the consequences of pride, arrogance, obstinacy and persistence. Pharaoh could not save himself from punishment of God inspite of his power and cleverness. But a man who witnesses the events of the world with his eyes wide open and believes that he would appear before his Lord and account for each of his deed, takes a warning from this event. He has firm belief that he would be punished for his disobedience in this world and in the Hereafter. The one who believes that he has to account for his deeds and that he would be rewarded or punished according to his deeds can tread the right path.

Telling the Meccan people about the sad end of Pharaoh, he warned the mankind not to defy the Message of the Prophet of God otherwise they would be dealt with severely like Pharaoh.

THE DISOBEDIENT SHALL NOT BE GRANTED PARDON

“Lo! We have sent unto you a messenger as witness against you, even as We sent unto Pharaoh a messenger. But Pharaoh rebelled against the messenger, whereupon We seized him with a heavy punishment.”

(73 : 15-16)

Invested with unlimited powers Pharaoh believed the message of the Prophet and resolved to crush the believers. Almighty God punished him for his arrogance, and the people who were apparently weak, down-trodden and poor in number and resources dealt a crushing blow to him. Thus God made the destitute people the masters of the east and the west.

GLAD TIDINGS TO THE OPPRESSED FOLK TO INHERIT LAND

“Therefore, We took retribution from them; therefore We drowned them in the sea: because they denied Our revelations and were heedless of them. And We caused the folk who were despised to inherit the eastern parts of the land and western parts thereof which We had blessed. And the fair word of the Lord was fulfilled for the children of Israel because of their endurance; and We annihilated (all) that Pharaoh and his folk had done and that they had contrived.

(7 : 136, 137)

In the above verse, the adherents of Truth who are weak, down-trodden have been given glad-tidings and the tyrants have been warned against persecution which they perpetrated over the weak and distressed people in sheer pride of their power.

The weak and down-trodden have been given the glad tidings that their patience will not go in vain and that they

will be triumphant like Moses and his followers, and the tyrants will meet their ultimate doom like Pharaoh and his folk. He has also told them in unequivocal terms that all those who revolted against God were crushed. How could they then escape his wrath. Every proud and haughty man has been dealt with severely. This punishment is not cruelty but it is due to the sins he had committed.

THE DOOM OF THE ARROGANT

“And Korah, Pharaoh and Haman! Moses came unto them with clear signs, but they were boastful in the land. And they were not winners (in the race). So We took each one of his sin, of them was he who was overtaken by a (mighty) blast, and of them was he whom We caused the earth to swallow, and of them was he whom We drowned. It was not for Allah to wrong them, but they wronged themselves.”

(29 : 39, 40)

Then he exhorted the believers not to lose heart to see the persecution being perpetrated. They should never be frustrated and disgusted nor succumb to sin and vice. Almighty God has proposed punishment for the tyrants. When the time would be over, they would not escape punishment.

TORMENT ON THE ARROGANT

“And with (the tribe of) Thamud, who clove the rocks in the valley; And with Pharaoh, lord of stakes, who (all) were rebellious (to Allah) in these lands, and heaped mischief therein? Therefore, the Lord poured on them the disaster of His punishment. Lo! thy Lord is ever watchful.”

(89 : 9-14)

He conveyed this glad tidings to the believers of every age.

DOMINATION AND VICTORY FOR THE BELIEVERS

“And We verily gave grace unto Moses and Aaron, and saved them and their people from the great distress, and helped them so that they became the victors. And We gave them the clear scripture. And showed them the right path. And We left for them among the later folk (the salutation): Peace be unto

Moses and Aaron! Lo! thus do We reward the good.
Lo! they are two of our believing slaves.

(37 : 114-122)

That is to say, just as Moses and Aaron (peace be upon them) were granted a splendid victory over the despotic ruler like Pharaoh and Almighty God not only safeguarded these two weak and supportless brothers from his persecution and tyranny but caused his kingdom to be overtaken by them. Similarly, he would not only safeguard the believers of every age; but also grant them clear victory. He not only extirpated their enemies but made them a symbol of condemnation till eternity. On the other hand, He not only gave success and victory to those two brothers; but also ordered the believers to remember their name for ever. Whenever their names are recited, peace is invoked upon them.

The reasons for this exalted position are not far to seek. They were the standard-bearers and lovers of piety; the obedient servants of God and His bondmen. They obeyed the Commands of God in all circumstances even at the risk of their lives and properties. No trial or tribulation in the way of Truth could waver their footsteps or distract them. They remained Faithful believers in all circumstances. The munificence with which these two believers were favoured would also be bestowed upon all the true believers of every age.

"If today your Faith be as firm as that of Abraham, the Fire can be turned into a garden."

The blessing of God was not showered on these two persons only; but on all those men who followed them. God has observed:

GUIDANCE AND LEADERSHIP

"And when they became steadfast and believed firmly in Our revelations, We appointed from among them leaders who guided by Our Command." (32 : 24)

In short when they acted upon God's Commandments, relied on His promises, faced every danger, bore every hardship that befell in His way and displayed usual perseverance and steadfastness, Almighty God not only delivered them and made them triumphant and victorious but also appointed them as the leader of the world. The community which wants to lead, should adopt this way and attitude.

THE STORY OF PHARAOH AND MOSES —A TREMENDOUS SIGN

Lo! Herein is indeed a Sign, yet most of them are believers. And Lo! thy Lord! He is indeed the Mighty, the Merciful.” (26 : 67-68)

In the above verse, Almighty God while narrating the story of Pharaoh and Moses (peace be upon him) has explained its aim and object. That is to say, this incident has not been related merely to recite a historical event but it contains excellent moral lessons both for the believers and unbelievers and a tremendous warning and exhortation. That plain historical fact that sign, that warning and exhortation imply that the fight between right and wrong is not a new thing. This fight has been waged from the very beginning and will continue till eternity.

The call to Truth always attracts its adherents from among the unknown, strange and hostile persons. The believers are always subjected to unbearable tortures. They are apparently weak and poor and liable to persecution and punishment in the eyes of the rulers.

The enemies of Truth are mostly those who possess the comforts and luxuries of life and who rule in wealth and are invested with power, dignity, pomp and show and magnificence. Immersed in the pride of these worldly provisions, they always adopt a hostile attitude towards the Truth and make the religion a subject of ridicule. They spare no efforts to curb the Truth and when they fail to suppress it by force, they perpetrate worst sorts of persecution. All the endeavours to instruct and reform them prove to be in vain and add fuel to fire of their fury. Sometimes their very existence is made almost unbearable for the standard-bearers of Faith so that they begin to feel that there is none on the earth to help them and the tyrants may met out whatever treatment with them they like. The enemies of Truth exult over their success and the pride of power blur their vision and they belie even the most obvious signs. When the matter comes to such a pass such a severe punishment is inflicted on the

enemies of Faith as make the people shudder to think about their pitiable condition and thus the warning of God proves to be true.

“Lo! the punishment of thy Lord is stern.”

(85 : 12)

On the other hand, the promise given to Believers will be surely fulfilled:

“And that our host, they verily would be the victors.

(37 : 173)

And all the believers have the glad tidings till eternity:

“Despair not of the Mercy of Allah.”

(39 : 53)





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