

Sura 28: Al-Qasas (The Stories)

In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy

Verses 1 to 43:

1. *Ta. Sin. Mim.*
2. *These are Verses of the Book that makes (things) clear.*
3. *We narrate to you part of the story of Moses and Pharaoh in truth, for people who believe.*
4. *Pharaoh exalted himself in the land and divided its people into factions. He persecuted a group of them, killing their sons and sparing their women. He was, indeed, of those who spread corruption.*
5. *And We desired to confer favor on those who were oppressed in the land, and to make them leaders, and to make them the inheritors,*
6. *And to establish them in the land, and to show Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts that which they feared from them.*
7. *And We inspired the mother of Moses, saying, "Suckle him and, when you fear for his safety, then cast him into the river and fear not nor grieve. We shall bring him back to you and shall make him (one) of Our messengers.*
8. *And the family of Pharaoh picked him up, that he might become for them an enemy and a source of grief; indeed, Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts were deliberate sinners.*
9. *The wife of Pharaoh said, "(Here is) joy of the eye, for me and for you. Do not slay him. It may be that he will be of use to us, or we may adopt him as a son." And they perceived not (what they were doing).*
10. *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.*
11. *And she said to his sister, "Follow him." So she observed him from afar, and they were unaware.*
12. *And We ordained that he would refuse to be suckled by any of the wet nurses, so she (his sister) said, "Shall I tell you about a household who will take care of him for you?"*
13. *So We returned him to his mother that she might be comforted and not grieve, and that she might know that the promise of God is true. But most of them do not know.*
14. *When he reached maturity, and became firmly established, We bestowed on him wisdom and knowledge. Thus, do We reward the doers of good.*
15. *And he entered the city unnoticed, and he found there two men fighting, one of his own people, and the other, of his foes. The man who was of his own people asked for help against his foe. Moses struck him with his fist and (unintentionally) killed him. He said, "This is the work of Satan, for he is an enemy that openly misleads."*
16. *He said, "My Lord, I have wronged myself, so forgive me." Then He forgave him. He is the All-Forgiving, the Giver of Mercy.*
17. *He said, "My Lord, in as much as you have bestowed Your Blessing on me, I shall never be a supporter of the criminals."*

18. *The next morning, he was walking in the city, fearful, vigilant; when the one who sought his help the day before cried out to him for help. Moses said to him, "You are clearly a mischief-maker."*
19. *As he was about to strike the man who was their enemy, he said, "Moses, do you want to kill me as you killed a person yesterday. You want to be a tyrant in the land, and you do not want to be a peacemaker."*
20. *And a man came hurriedly from the farthest part of the city. He said, "Moses, the chiefs are conspiring to kill you; therefore, escape. I am giving you good advice."*
21. *So he escaped from the city, fearful, vigilant. He said "My Lord, deliver me from the wrongdoers."*
22. *Then, when he turned his face towards (the land of) Madyan, he said, "I do hope that my Lord will show me the straight path."*
23. *And when he arrived at the watering (place) in Madyan, he found there, a group of men watering (their flocks), and besides them he found two women who were keeping back (their flocks). He said, "What is the matter with you?" They said, "We cannot water (our flocks) until the shepherds take back (their flocks). And our father is a very old man."*
24. *So, he watered (their flocks) for them; then he turned back to the shade, and said, "My Lord, truly I am in (desperate) need of any good that You send down for me."*
25. *Then one of the two women came to him, walking shyly. She said, "My father invites you, that he may reward you having watered (the flock) for us. Then, when he came to him and told him the (whole) story, he said, "Fear not, you escaped from the wrongdoers."*
26. *One of the two women said, "My father, hire him. Indeed, the best (man) that you can hire is the strong, the trustworthy."*
27. *He said, "I desire to wed one of these two daughters of mine to you, on condition that you serve me for eight years; but if you complete ten years, it will be (a grace) from you. But I intend not to place you under any difficulty. You will find me, indeed, God willing, one of the righteous."*
28. *He said, "That (is settled) between you and me. Whichever of the two terms I fulfill, there will be no injustice to me, and God is a witness over what we say."*
29. *Then, when Moses had fulfilled the term, and was travelling with his family, he saw in the distance a fire. He said to his family, "Wait, I see in the distance a fire; maybe I shall bring you some news, or a burning brand from the fire that you may warm yourselves."*
30. *But when he came to the (fire), a voice was heard from the right bank of the valley at the blessed spot from the tree, "Moses, I, am God, the Lord of the Worlds."*
31. *Throw down your staff, and when he saw it wiggling as it had been a demon, he turned to flee headlong, (and it was said to him), "Moses, draw near and fear not. You are of those who are secure."*
32. *Thrust your hand into the bosom of your robe it will come forth white without being harmed. And draw in your arm close to you (to guard) from fear. Then, these shall be two proofs from your Lord to Pharaoh and his chiefs. They are indeed transgressors."*
33. *He said, "My Lord, I killed one of them and I fear that they will kill me."*
34. *And my brother Aaron is more eloquent than me in speech. Therefore, send him with me as a helper to confirm my words. I fear that they will deny me."*

35. *He (God) said, "We will certainly strengthen your arm with your brother, and invest you both with authority, so they shall not be able to touch you. With Our signs, you two as well as those who follow you will be triumphant."*
36. *When Moses came to them with Our clear signs, they said, "this is nothing but fabricated magic. We never heard of this from our forefathers."*
37. *Moses said, "My Lord knows best who brings guidance from Him and whose end will be best in the Hereafter. Certainly, the wrongdoers will not succeed."*
38. *Pharaoh said, "Chiefs, I know not of any deity for you but myself. Therefore, Haman, light me a (kiln to bake bricks) out of clay, and build me a lofty tower, that I may mount up to the god of Moses. But I think he (Moses) is a liar."*
39. *And he was unjustly proud in the land, he and his hosts, and they deemed that they would not be brought back to Us.*
40. *So, We seized him and his hosts, and We cast them into the sea, see what was the end of the wrongdoers.*
41. *And we made them leaders who invite to the Fire; and on the Day of Resurrection they will not be helped.*
42. *And We made a curse to follow them in this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be among the hateful.*
43. *We did reveal to Moses the Scripture after We had destroyed the earlier generations, (to give) insight to people, and guidance and mercy, that they may become mindful. (28: 1 - 43)*

This Sura was revealed in Mecca. The Muslims were few in number at the time. They were persecuted and humiliated by the idolaters who had the power, the wealth, and the numbers. The Sura establishes the true measure for power and values. The Sura states that there is one power in this universe: the power of God. It states that there is only one value in this universe: the value of faith. Those who are aligned with God should not have any worry even if they were few in number and even if they lacked the material strength. Those who are against God have neither security nor assurance, even if they are able to muster a mighty material power. To the faithful belongs all goodness.

The Sura starts with three letters of the Alphabet, "*Ta. Sin. Mim,*" to emphasize the fact that the Quran has been composed using the letters of the Arabic Alphabet. The Quran is a revealed Book, "*These are Verses of the Book that makes (things) clear.*" God addresses the believers using this Quran. God's words provide training to the believers and outline the fundamentals of the Islamic project, "*We narrate to you part of the story of Moses and Pharaoh in truth, for people who believe.*" God honors the believers by addressing them using the verses of the Quran.

The following verses describe the conditions in Egypt at the time when Moses (PBUH) was born. Only in this Sura the story of Moses (PBUH) starts with mention of Moses (PBUH) birth. This brings into focus the contrast between Pharaoh's might and Moses' (PBUH) helplessness,

“Pharaoh exalted himself in the land and divided its people into factions. He persecuted a group of them, killing their sons and sparing their women. He was, indeed, of those who spread corruption.” The verses do not specify which Pharaoh was the subject of this story. The verses focus on the characteristics of Pharaoh not his name. He was a tyrant and he persecuted the Children of Israel who came to Egypt with their father Israel (PBUH) at the time of Joseph (PBUH). They resided in Egypt and multiplied. They had their own religion, the religion of Israel (PBUH) and did not share the Egyptians their beliefs. Pharaoh was concerned about the perceived threat which the Israelis posed to his kingdom and his person. He needed them to complement his labor force. So, he could not expel them from Egypt; instead, he devised the evil scheme of slaying the males among the newborn and letting the females live. In addition, he persecuted the adults. Pharaoh thought that this will save him and he forgot that safety and security are decreed by God alone. God’s will always overpower the will of His creatures no matter how powerful they are. The verses then declare what God willed, *“And We desired to confer favor on those who were oppressed in the land, and to make them leaders, and to make them the inheritors, and to establish them in the land, and to show Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts that which they feared from them.”* God wanted those who were persecuted and humiliated to take their place of honor in the land. God promised to bestow His grace on them and will make them leaders and inheritors of the land. This was God’s reward for them, they earned it by being believers and righteous. Let Pharaoh, Haman and their hosts scheme and persecute, but God’s plan will prevail without they even realizing it.

Having set the stage, the verses continue to narrate the details of Moses’ (PBUH) birth story. The next verse describes the first scene of the story, the scene of the perplexed mother who was fearful for the life of her newborn and how God comforted her and inspired her, *“And We inspired the mother of Moses, saying, ‘Suckle him and, when you fear for his safety, then cast him into the river and fear not nor grieve. We shall bring him back to you and shall make him (one) of Our messengers.’”* Moses’ (PBUH) mother was apprehensive when she gave birth to Moses (PBUH), she was afraid that the news will reach Pharaoh’s soldiers. So, God inspired her to cast him in the river. The inspiration brought comfort and security to Moses’ (PBUH) mother: do not fear nor grieve, God will take care of him. The promise was made that not only God will return him safe and sound to her but He will also make him one of God’s messengers.

The second scene of the story depicts the events at Pharaoh’s place when they picked up the newborn baby in his cradle, *“And the family of Pharaoh picked him up, that he might become for them an enemy and a source of grief, indeed, Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts were deliberate sinners.”* Pharaoh’s soldiers were looking everywhere for the newborn male babies to slay them, and here is one that would float right into Pharaoh’s palace. The verse indicates clearly the intention of bringing the harmless, helpless Moses’ (PBUH) into the hands of Pharaoh. He will become for them, *“an enemy and a source of grief.”* God made Pharaoh’s wife tender towards the baby. She pleaded with her husband, *“The wife of Pharaoh said, ‘(Here is) joy of the eye, for me and for you. Do not slay him. It may be that he will be of use to us, or we may adopt him as a son.’ And they perceived not (what they were doing).”* Moses (PBUH) was

protected from Pharaoh's persecution, not by force but by love. God filled Pharaoh's wife with overwhelming love for this baby whom they just picked up from the river. She argued that he may be of use to them or they may want to adopt him as a son so they spared his life. Little they knew what the future will bring, *"And they perceived not (what they were doing)."*

Then we come to the third scene, the scene of Moses' (PBUH) mother, the worried mother who acted according to the inspiration but now became apprehensive and fearful of what might happen to her baby, *"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."* The Quran uses an extremely expressive word to describe the mother's feelings, *"And the heart of the mother of Moses became void."* Her heart became void of all means of rationalization or power to think. She was about to give her secret away, *"would have betrayed him,"* but God gave her the strength to trust in His promise and to remain steadfast, *"if We had not fortified her heart."*

However, she wanted to know her son's fate, *"And she said to his sister, 'Follow him.' So she observed him from afar, and they were unaware."* She must have seen him in the hands of Pharaoh's servants while they were looking for a woman to nurse him. It was part of the divine plan that Moses (PBUH) would refuse to suckle from any of the women that were ready to suckle him, *"And We ordained that he would refuse to be suckled by any of the wet nurses,"* His sister then came forward suggesting a solution to save the baby, *"so she (his sister) said, 'Shall I tell you about a household who will take care of him for you?'"* This suggestion was happily embraced by the people of Pharaoh. So, he was brought back to his mother, *"So We returned him to his mother that she might be comforted and not grieve, and that she might know that the promise of God is true. But most of them do not know."* The baby was returned safe and sound back to his mother, protected by Pharaoh, and loved by Pharaoh's wife.

Moses' (PBUH) years of growing up are missing from the narrative. The verses move to the time when Moses' (PBUH) reached maturity, *"When he reached maturity, and became firmly established, We bestowed on him wisdom and knowledge. Thus, do We reward the doers of good."* The age of maturity is around thirty years of age. Many questions arise, did Moses (PBUH) live in Pharaoh's palace all this time? Or did he move out at some point in time? He must have known who he was and what his faith was. How did he feel about the way the Israelis were treated in Egypt? These questions have no answers, but the verse states that he was a doer of good and God rewarded him by bestowing on him wisdom and knowledge.

"And he entered the city unnoticed, and he found there two men fighting, one of his own people, and the other, of his foes. The man who was of his own people asked for help against his foe. Moses struck him with his fist and (unintentionally) killed him. He said, 'This is the work of Satan, for he is an enemy that openly misleads.'" He entered the city and found two men fighting, one of them was an Israeli and the other was an Egyptian. The Israeli asked him for help. Moses (PBUH) struck the Egyptian with his fist and killed him. It took one strike from his

fist to kill the man which indicates the physical strength of Moses (PBUH). Moses (PBUH) did not intend to kill the Egyptian and when he saw him lying on the ground dead, he regretted ever striking him. He asked God for forgiveness, “*He said, ‘My Lord, I have wronged myself, so forgive me.’ Then He forgave him. He is the All-Forgiving, the Giver of Mercy.*” It seems that the high level of spirituality that Moses (PBUH) had achieved made him feel that God has forgiven him, so he made a pledge to God, “*He said, ‘My Lord, in as much as you have bestowed Your Blessing on me, I shall never be a supporter of the criminals.’*” It is a clear pledge that affirmed his intention not to side with the guilty. This represented an unequivocal denunciation of all types of crimes and criminals, even if it were in response to persecution or humiliation.

The verses move to describe the following scene, “*The next morning, he was walking in the city, fearful, vigilant; when the one who sought his help the day before cried out to him for help. Moses said to him, ‘You are clearly a mischief-maker.’*” The first encounter ended with the death of an Egyptian. Moses (PBUH) regretted what he had done and sought God’s forgiveness which he received. He then pledged not to support the wrongdoers in any way. He woke up in the morning fearing that the authorities would discover what he had done and punish him for it. The Arabic text describes Moses (PBUH) to be in a state of anticipation and apprehension. One may also assume that Moses (PBUH) was no longer attached to Pharaoh’s court in any way at that time. Why would he be afraid if he was still part of that court? While he was in this situation, Moses (PBUH) heard a cry for help from the same Israeli who sought his help the previous day. He was again involved in a fight with another Egyptian. Moses (PBUH) realized that this person was indeed a mischief-maker. Moses’ (PBUH) volatile nature overcame him and he was about to strike the Egyptian. His actions may have been also motivated by the feelings of injustice and persecution practiced for many years by the Pharaoh against his people. The Egyptian reminded Moses (PBUH) of what had happened the day before, “*As he was about to strike the man who was their enemy, he said, ‘Moses, do you want to kill me as you killed a person yesterday. You want to be a tyrant in the land, and you do not want to be a peacemaker.’*” One also may deduce from the way that the Egyptian used in addressing Moses (PBUH) that Moses (PBUH) had a reputation for being a peacemaker. It also confirms the idea that Moses (PBUH) was not connected to Pharaoh’s court at that time. Had he been, the Egyptian would not have dared to rebuke him in such a strong language. It is important to notice how the Quran described Moses’ (PBUH) actions in these two episodes. While it does not justify the assault on the Egyptians, it describes clearly the context of the conflicts and how Moses’ (PBUH) reactions were motivated in part by his resentment of the way the Egyptians treated the Israelis. The remarks of the Egyptian stopped Moses (PBUH) in his tracks and the Egyptian fled safely.

The verses then move to another scene, “*And a man came hurriedly from the farthest part of the city. He said, ‘Moses, the chiefs are conspiring to kill you; therefore, escape. I am giving you good advice.’*” The chiefs in the Pharaoh’s court knew about the incidents and they must have feared that these incidents would precipitate a revolt against the authorities. So, they schemed to kill Moses (PBUH). They must have thought that it is better to be proactive in quelling the revolt before it erupts. Moses (PBUH) reacted quickly, “*So he escaped from the city, fearful, vigilant. He said ‘My Lord, deliver me from the wrongdoers.’*” The verse describes Moses’ (PBUH)

mindset. He was afraid, apprehensive, and feeling lonely in the vast desert. His only recourse was to God. So he prayed God for safety, security, and guidance, *“Then, when he turned his face towards (the land of) Madyan, he said, ‘I do hope that my Lord will show me the straight path.’”*

“And when he arrived at the watering (place) in Madyan, he found there a group of men watering (their flocks), and besides them he found two women who were keeping back (their flocks). He said, ‘What is the matter with you?’ They said, ‘We cannot water (our flocks) until the shepherds take back (their flocks). And our father is a very old man.’” His long journey ended up at a watering place in Madyan. He arrived tired and exhausted. He saw a crowd of shepherds watering their sheep and he noticed these two ladies who were keeping their sheep away from the watering place. His gallant nature revolted against this lack of etiquette. He asked them, *“What is the matter with you?”* They said, *“We cannot water (our flocks) until the shepherds take back (their flocks). And our father is a very old man.”* So he watered their sheep for them. One cannot but notice the nobility of Moses’ (PBUH) character. A fleeing man, tired and exhausted after this long journey thinks of only one thing: to help the weak. He was not worried about his safety; he was only worried about helping whoever is in need, *“So he watered (their flocks) for them;”*

He then sought to rest in the shade, which indicates that it was a hot sunny morning. Moses (PBUH) sat in the shade and prayed God, *“Then he turned back to the shade, and said, ‘My Lord, truly I am in (desperate) need of any good that You send down for me.’”* Moses (PBUH) pleaded with God saying he was in desperate need for help. The response was quick, *“Then one of the two women came to him, walking shyly. She said, ‘My father invites you, that he may reward you having watered (the flock) for us.’”* One of the two ladies came walking shyly to him. The verse stresses her decent approach to Moses (PBUH) inviting him to meet her father. Although she was shy but her speech was clear and the message was precise. The following verse takes us to the meeting between Moses (PBUH) and the old man. The Quran does not reveal the identity of the old man, but only narrates the dialogue between him and Moses (PBUH), *“Then, when he came to him and told him the (whole) story, he said, ‘Fear not, you escaped from the wrongdoers.’”* The old man reassured Moses (PBUH) that he was safe in Madyan.

“One of the two women said, ‘My father, hire him. Indeed, the best (man) that you can hire is the strong, the trustworthy.’” The two women worked hard to take care of the sheep, feed them, and water them. The previous verses described the difficulty they were facing in watering the sheep and how they had to compete with strong men to be able to do it. The two ladies were reluctant to engage in such a competition with the other shepherds. One of them saw an opportunity for a solution that would benefit them and in the same time benefit the stranger. She advised her father to hire him. She described him as *“strong and trustworthy,”* a conclusion that shows the woman’s intuition. The old man accepted the idea and approached Moses (PBUH) in a straight forward way, *“He said, ‘I desire to wed one of these two daughters of mine to you, on condition that you serve me for eight years; but if you complete ten years, it will be (a grace) from you. But I intend not to place you under any difficulty. You will find me, indeed, God*

willing, one of the righteous.” This was a simple and straight forward offer combined with a promise of fair working conditions. The old man did not promote himself but expressed his hope that Moses (PBUH) would find him a righteous person which reflects his modesty and good character. Moses accepted, *“He said, ‘That (is settled) between you and me. Whichever of the two terms I fulfill, there will be no injustice to me, and God is a witness over what we say.’”* The conditions for the contract were clearly stated and accepted by both men. It was narrated that Moses (PBUH) completed the longer term although it was his choice to stop after the eight years as agreed upon in the contract.

Before continuing with the story let us stop for minute to reflect on the different experiences that Moses (PBUH) went through. These experiences were part of his training to become a messenger of God. His responsibility was difficult, that is why his training took a long time and a number of experiences so that he would be ready to undertake the difficult task that would be entrusted to him. His task was difficult because he was sent to the worst tyrant on earth. He was sent to liberate a people who lived for a long time under persecution and humiliation and who lost their faith in the process. His task was not only to liberate his people but to retrain them and to reshape them into a new confident nation on the basis of a strong foundation of faith.

“Then, when Moses had fulfilled the term, and was travelling with his family, he saw in the distance a fire. He said to his family, ‘Wait, I see in the distance a fire; maybe I shall bring you some news, or a burning brand from the fire that you may warm yourselves.’” Moses (PBUH) completed his term according to the contract and embarked with his family on a trip to return back to Egypt. On his way, in the darkness of the desert and not knowing where he was, he saw a fire. He told his family to stay in their place while he would go to seek directions and bring back a burning brand of fire to give them warmth in this cold night. When he got there he heard a voice, *“But when he came to the (fire), a voice was heard from the right bank of the valley at the blessed spot from the tree, ‘Moses, I, am God, the Lord of the Worlds.’”* Moses (PBUH) heard the voice while he was standing alone in the vast desert; a voice that resonated in the universe around him. This was a blessed place; here is God talking to Moses (PBUH). The voice continued, *“Throw down your staff.”* He obeyed the command and threw his staff. The staff was no longer a staff but it turned into a serpent, *“he saw it wiggling as it had been a demon.”* This was a surprise which he was not prepared for, so he turned around and started running, *“he turned to flee headlong, (and it was said to him).”* But the voice reassured him, *“Moses, draw near and fear not. You are of those who are secure.”* God gave him an assurance of safety and security.

“Thrust your hand into the bosom of your robe it will come forth white without being harmed.” Moses (PBUH) obeyed the command. He put his hand inside the opening of his shirt then he took it out; he saw that the color of the skin on his hand became glittering white. His natural skin color was dark. But his hand felt healthy and there was nothing wrong with it. This was a sign for the bright white color of the truth. Once again, Moses (PBUH) was frightened, so God calmed him down, *“draw in your arm close to you (to guard) from fear.”* As if his hands were

wings that he could use to cover his chest, and thus bring security to his heart similar to what a bird would do.

Having been shown the miracles and being reassured; it was the time to give him the undertaking which he was being prepared for since childhood, *“Then these shall be two proofs from your Lord to Pharaoh and his chiefs. They are indeed transgressors.”* This was a fulfillment of the promise that God made to his mother, *“We shall bring him back to you and shall make him (one) of Our messengers.”* But Moses (PBUH) recalled the circumstances surrounding his escape from Egypt, *“He said, ‘My Lord, I killed one of them and I fear that they will kill me.’”* It was not his unwillingness to accept the undertaking that made him say this, but it was his eagerness to fulfill his responsibility successfully. He also needed his brother’s assistance, *“And my brother Aaron is more eloquent than me in speech. Therefore, send him with me as a helper to confirm my words. I fear that they will deny me.”* God accepted his request and provided further reassurance of safety, *“He (God) said, ‘We will certainly strengthen your arm with your brother, and invest you both with authority, so they shall not be able to touch you.’”* Not only God answered his request and reassured him regarding his and his brother’s safety but God also promised him victory, *“With Our signs, you two as well as those who follow you will be triumphant.”*

The narrative moves fast forward to describe the encounter between Moses (PBUH) and Pharaoh and his chiefs, *“When Moses came to them with Our clear signs, they said, ‘This is nothing but fabricated magic.’”* This is the same argument that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) heard from the people of Quraish. It is a lame argument that is made to support falsehood against the truth. They claimed that the miracles that Moses (PBUH) showed them were merely the work of magic, although they had no real evidence to support their claim. The only evidence they had was that, *“We never heard of this from our forefathers.”* They did not provide a proof that Moses (PBUH) could refute logically, so he sought God’s judgment, *“Moses said, ‘My Lord knows best who brings guidance from Him and whose end will be best in the Hereafter. Certainly, the wrongdoers will not succeed.’”* It is a clear and honest answer but it is also a diplomatic answer that does not pose a direct accusation or threat. On the contrary to that, Pharaoh’s answer was rude and sarcastic, *“Pharaoh said, ‘Chiefs, I know not of any deity for you but myself.’”* This was an audacious statement from Pharaoh, *“I know not of any deity for you but myself,”* which was accepted readily by his court. His tyranny subdued them, they could not think for themselves. He made the ridiculous assertion and they accepted it without any argument. Then he continued in his sarcasm, *“Therefore, Haman, light me a (kiln to bake bricks) out of clay, and build me a lofty tower, that I may mount up to the god of Moses. But I think he (Moses) is a liar.”*

The narrative again jumps to the conclusion of the story, *“And he was unjustly proud in the land, he and his hosts, and they deemed that they would not be brought back to Us.”* Because they never believed that they will be returning to God, they became arrogant and rejected the warning. God seized them, *“So We seized him and his hosts, and We cast them into the sea, see what was the end of the wrongdoers.”* This was the end of the wrongdoers.

The narrative then jumps to a scene of the scenes of the Hereafter, *“And we made them leaders who invite to the Fire; and on the Day of Resurrection they will not be helped.”* They lost both the worldly life and the Hereafter. Not only they lost but they were also cursed, *“And We made a curse to follow them in this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be among the hateful.”* After being arrogant in the worldly life they will become ugly in the Hereafter. This brings us to the end of the Pharaoh’s story but the verses continue to discuss the fate of Prophet Moses (PBUH), *“We did reveal to Moses the Scripture after We had destroyed the earlier generations, (to give) insight to people, and guidance and mercy, that they may become mindful.”* It is an honored fate and great reward.

Verses 44 to 75:

44. *And you (Muhammad) were not on the western side (of the Mount) when We decreed the command to Moses, and you were not among those present;*
45. *But We brought forth generations, who lived long lives. And you were not living among the people of Madyan reciting to them Our revelations, but We kept sending (messengers to people).*
46. *Nor were you at the side of (the Mountain of) Tur when we called (to Moses). Yet (you are sent) as mercy from your Lord, to give warning to a people to whom no warner had come before you; in order that they may become mindful.*
47. *Otherwise, if a disaster should afflict them because of that which their own hands have earned, they might say, “Our Lord, if only You had sent a messenger to us, that we might have followed Your revelations and been of the believers?”*
48. *But when the truth came to them from Ourselves, they said, "If only he was given the like of what Moses was given." Did they not reject what was formerly sent to Moses? They said, "Two kinds of magic that support each other." And they said, "Indeed, we disbelieve in both."*
49. *Say (Muhammad), “Then bring a Book from God, which is a better guide than either of them, that I may follow; if you are truthful.”*
50. *But if they do not respond to you, then know that they only follow their own whims and who is more astray than one who follows his own whims, devoid of guidance from God? God does not guide the wrongdoers.*
51. *We have delivered the word to them, in order that they may become mindful.*
52. *Those to whom We sent the Scripture before this, they do believe in this (revelation).*
53. *And when it is recited to them, they say, "We believe in it, it is the truth from our Lord. Indeed, we have submitted before this.”*
54. *These will be given their reward twice over, because they persevered and they used to repel evil with good, and spend of that which We have provided them,*
55. *And when they hear vain talk, they turn away from it and say, "To us our deeds, and to you yours; peace be with you; we do not seek the ignorant."*
56. *You (Muhammad) will not guide whom you love, but God guides whom He wills. And He is fully aware of those who are guided.*

57. *They say, "If we were to follow the guidance with you, we would be snatched away from our land." Have We not established for them a secure sanctuary, to which are brought the fruits of all kinds- a provision from Ourselves? But most of them do not know.*
58. *And how many a town, which exulted in its means of subsistence, have We destroyed; these are their abodes, they have not been dwelt in after them except a little, and We are the inheritors,*
59. *Nor was your Lord the one to destroy a population until He had sent to its centre a messenger, reciting to them Our revelations; nor are We going to destroy a population except when its members were wrongdoers.*
60. *And whatsoever you have been given is a comfort of the life of the world and an ornament thereof; and that which God has is better and more lasting. Will you not use reason?*
61. *Is he whom We have promised a fair promise which he will find (true) like him whom We have provided with the provisions of this world's life, then on the Day of Resurrection he shall be of those who are brought up (for punishment)?*
62. *On the day when He will call them and say, "Where are those whom you used to allege as My partners?"*
63. *Those against whom the sentence has become confirmed will say, "Our Lord, these are they whom we caused to err; we caused them to err as we ourselves did err; to You we declare ourselves to be disassociated (of them); they never worshiped us."*
64. *It will be said (to them), "Call upon your (so-called) partners (for help)." They will call upon them, but they will not respond to them; and they will see the torment (before them); (how they will wish) if only they had followed guidance.*
65. *That Day (God) will call to them, and say, "What was the answer you gave to the messengers?"*
66. *On that Day all news will seem obscure to them and they will not be able to question each other.*
67. *But whoever had repented, believed, and did good deeds maybe he will be among the successful.*
68. *Your Lord creates and chooses as He pleases. No one had any choice. Glory be to God. He is far above the partners they associate with Him.*
69. *And your Lord knows all that their hearts conceal and all that they reveal.*
70. *And He is God; there is no deity but He. All praise is due to Him, in this life and in the next. His is the Arbitration, and to Him shall you (all) be brought back.*
71. *Say, "Have you considered, if God were to make the night everlasting over you to the Day of Resurrection, what god is there other than God, who can give you light? Will you not then listen?"*
72. *Say, "Have you considered? If God were to make the day everlasting over you to the Day of Resurrection, what god is there other than God, who can give you a night in which you can rest? Will you not then see?"*
73. *It is out of His Mercy that He has made for you night and day, that you may rest therein, and that you may seek of His grace; and in order that you may be grateful.*
74. *The Day that He will call on them, He will say, "Where are those whom you used to allege as My partners?"*

75. *And from each nation, We will draw a witness; and We shall say, "Produce your proof." They shall then know that God alone has the truth, and the (lies) which they fabricated will leave them in lurch. (28: 44 – 75)*

A new theme is dealt with in the following verses. The theme revolves around the issue of the truth of the revelation. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was narrating to them events that happened long before he existed. The only way he would have known these details is through a divine revelation, *"And you (Muhammad) were not on the western side (of the Mount) when We decreed the command to Moses, and you were not among those present."* Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was not present when Moses (PBUH) met with his Lord at the western side of the mount of Tur. This was the meeting during which Prophet Moses (PBUH) received the Tablets from God. This happened long before the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), *"But We brought forth generations, who lived long lives. And you were not living among the people of Madyan reciting to them Our revelations, but We kept sending (messengers to people). Nor were you at the side of (the Mountain of) Tur when we called (to Moses). Yet (you are sent) as mercy from your Lord, to give warning to a people to whom no warner had come before you; in order that they may become mindful."* The only way that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) would have known the details of these events is from the divine revelation that he received. This revelation came as a mercy for people so that they may be reminded.

"Otherwise, if a disaster should afflict them because of that which their own hands have earned, they might say, 'Our Lord, if only You had sent a messenger to us, that we might have followed Your revelations and been of the believers?'" This is what they would have said, had not God sent a messenger to warn them. But, when the messenger came to them, they found another excuse, *"But when the truth came to them from Ourselves, they said, 'If only he was given the like of what Moses was given.' Did they not reject what was formerly sent to Moses? They said, 'Two kinds of magic that support each other.' And they said, 'Indeed, we disbelieve in both.'"* They were not true to their word; they were simply making excuses to justify their disbelief.

But the Prophet (PBUH) was commanded to go along with them, *"Say (Muhammad), 'Then bring a Book from God, which is a better guide than either of them, that I may follow; if you are truthful.' But if they do not respond to you, then know that they only follow their own whims and who is more astray than one who follows his own whims, devoid of guidance from God? God does not guide the wrongdoers."* The Quran came with the clear truth. Those who rejected the Quran are simply following their whims and desires. The people are one of two kinds: those who are sincerely interested in the truth and those who follow their own whims. People in the first group will find their way to guidance and belief, but people in the second group will produce false arguments and will reject guidance. Those who follow their whims without seeking guidance from God are truly lost. They are wrongdoers and that is why God did not guide them.

The people who sought and found the truth are depicted in the following verses, *“We have delivered the word to them, in order that they may become mindful. Those to whom We sent the Scripture before this, they do believe in this (revelation). And when it is recited to them, they say, ‘We believe in it, it is the truth from our Lord. Indeed, we have submitted before this.’ These will be given their reward twice over, because they persevered and they used to repel evil with good, and spend of that which We have provided them.”* It has been narrated that these verses detail an actual event that occurred. A group of Christians met with Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). They discussed Islam with him and listened to him reciting the Quran. At the end of their meeting they declared their submission to God and they became Muslims. There are different narrations about where these Christians came from. One narration stated that they came from Ethiopia, but another narration stated that they came from Yemen. Either way, the point here is that the Quran mentioned this incident which the Arabs of Quraish were privy to. No one came out to deny the authenticity of the story. These people accepted the Quran because it agreed with their Scripture and they realized that it brought the truth from God. They will be rewarded double the reward for their steadfastness in the face of disbelief and the disparaging remarks and humiliation which were inflicted upon them by the idolaters of Quraish. Not only they exercised patience but they also, *“repel evil with good.”* And they spend in the way of God of that which He provided them with. These two attributes manifest their tolerance and their willingness to suppress their ego and desires. A third attribute that distinguishes these people is the control they exercised in distancing themselves from those who indulge in vain talk, *“and when they hear vain talk, they turn away from it and say, ‘To us our deeds, and to you yours; peace be with you; we do not seek the ignorant.’”* They do not waste their time in dealing with people who enjoy vain talk. They realize that faith places on them serious obligations. Their focus is to fulfil these obligations successfully.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not spend much effort in convincing the above mentioned group of Christians, who adopted Islam after they had listened to the Quran, while he tried very hard to convince some of the Arab idolaters but they were very determined to reject him. The following verse explains this phenomenon, *“You (Muhammad) will not guide whom you love, but God guides whom He wills. And He is fully aware of those who are guided.”* This verse was revealed to explain why the uncle of the Prophet (PBUH), Abu Taleb, insisted on rejecting his nephew’s call to Islam. Abu Taleb used to support and protect the Prophet (PBUH) against the persecution of Quraish. He endured the boycott that Quraish imposed on the clan of Bani Hashem as a punishment for supporting Muhammad (PBUH). Abu Taleb supported the Prophet (PBUH) for two reasons. The first is that Abu Taleb loved his nephew dearly. The second is that Abu Taleb believed in the tribal values which dictated that he should support his nephew, even though he did not accept his call. Abu Taleb died without accepting Islam, even though the Messenger (PBUH) asked him to submit to God before he died.

God kept the power to guide people to His religion to himself. Even the Messenger (PBUH) could not guide whom he wanted. The Messenger’s (PBUH) duty is only to deliver the message.

The following reveals the fears that the idolaters had; the fears which prevented them from accepting the call to Islam, *“They say, ‘If we were to follow the guidance with you, we would be snatched away from our land.’”* They submitted that the Messenger (PBUH) brought them guidance, but they were afraid that they would lose their power over the other tribes that lived nearby. They forgot that only God can offer them the true security. They forgot that no power on earth could harm them if they were under God’s protection. Guidance is the path to true power and real honor and dignity. God’s guidance provides a project for establishing the correct lifestyle on earth. It is a realistic lifestyle that provides happiness not only in this life but also in the Hereafter. This project aligns human activities to serve the purposes of people’s lives both in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

God refuted their false claims, *“Have We not established for them a secure sanctuary, to which are brought the fruits of all kinds- a provision from Ourselves? But most of them do not know.”* They forgot that the safety and security that they enjoyed were God’s gift. God sanctified this place since the time Prophet Abraham (PBUH). Most of them did not recognize who is the one who provides genuine safety and security. The real danger is to be destroyed by God in a way similar to what happened to peoples before them, *“And how many a town, which exulted in its means of subsistence, have We destroyed; they have not been dwelt in after them except a little, and We are the inheritors.”* The sure way to destruction is to show ingratitude towards God. Idolaters should be careful that their fate would be similar to those who were destroyed before. They knew where these people lived before and they saw the destruction that happened to their houses.

It is God’s law that He sends a messenger to the people before punishing them for their wrongdoing, *“Nor was your Lord the one to destroy a population until He had sent to its centre a messenger, reciting to them Our revelations; nor are We going to destroy a population except when its members were wrongdoers.”* The messenger would be sent to a central place to be accessible to all those who live around that place. Mecca was the central point to the lands of Arabia.

They should also remember that whatever was bestowed on them is a transient pleasure, that what is with God is the everlasting and will provide the true enjoyment, *“And whatsoever you have been given is a comfort of the life of the world and an ornament thereof; and that which God has is better and more lasting. Will you not use reason?”* The following verse makes a comparison between the transient pleasures of this life and the everlasting comfort of the Hereafter. Each one is free to choose, *“Is he whom We have promised a fair promise which he will find (true) like him whom We have provided with the provisions of this world’s life, then on the Day of Resurrection he shall be of those who are brought up (for punishment)?”*

The following verses describe some of the scenes on the Day of Resurrection, *“On the Day when He will call them and say, ‘Where are those whom you used to allege as My partners?’”* This is a rhetorical question posed as a rebuke for the disbelievers. God knows that those partners do not exist and He knows that the disbelievers will not be able to answer the question. The question will be posed in public to disgrace the disbelievers. The disbelievers will try to disassociate

themselves from the crime, *“Those against whom the sentence has become confirmed will say, ‘Our Lord, these are they whom we caused to err; we caused them to err as we ourselves did err; to You we declare ourselves to be disassociated (of them); they never worshiped us.’”*

They will be asked to call upon those whom they took as partners with God, *“It will be said (to them), ‘Call upon your (so-called) partners (for help).’ They will call upon them, but they will not respond to them; and they will see the torment (before them); (how they will wish) if only they had followed guidance.”* It will become evident to them that there is no use of calling upon anyone for help. They will wish in vain that they had heeded the guidance before.

They will be further asked about their response to God’s messengers who came to them, *“That Day (God) will call to them, and say, ‘What was the answer you gave to the messengers?’”* They will be dumbfounded and unable to answer, *“On that Day all news will seem obscure to them and they will not be able to question each other.”* On the other hand, those who repented will get their reward, *“But whoever had repented, believed, and did good deeds maybe he will be among the successful.”*

All matters are in the hands of God. He created everything, He knows everything, and He is in control of everything, *“Your Lord creates and chooses as He pleases. No one had any choice. Glory be to God. He is far above the partners they associate with Him.”* God also knows what they reveal and what they conceal. God will decide the reward for each one. He will decide who will be guided and who will be misguided according to what they deserve, *“And your Lord knows all that their hearts conceal and all that they reveal.”* He is God, there is no other deity except Him, *“And He is God. There is no deity but He. All praise is due to Him, in this life and in the next. His is the Arbitration, and to Him shall you (all) be brought back.”* We praise Him for His decisions, His blessings, His wisdom, His justice, and His mercy. He is the only Arbitrator who decides the fate of each one of His servants. To Him we will all return.

Another theme is dealt with in the next few verses. The verses take us on a tour in the universe considering different cosmic phenomena, *“Say, ‘Have you considered, if God were to make the night everlasting over you to the Day of Resurrection, what god is there other than God, who can give you light? Will you not then listen?’”* Say, *“Have you considered? If God were to make the day everlasting over you to the Day of Resurrection, what god is there other than God, who can give you a night in which you can rest? Will you not then see?”* *It is out of His Mercy that He has made for you night and day, that you may rest therein, and that you may seek of His grace; and in order that you may be grateful.”* People are used to the perpetual occurrence of the night and day. They rarely pay attention to the phenomenon. Few people observe in awe the scenes of sunrise and sunset. They never pay attention to the miracles associated with these cosmic phenomena. The Quran poses questions to alert people to these miracles so that they reflect on them. People yearn to the breaking daylight after the long hours of night in the winter months. Imagine if the night was to continue forever and there would be no daylight. What would people feel about that, provided that life is able to continue? People like to have a period

of rest during the long hours of the day in the summer months. How would they feel if there was no night and the day continued forever, assuming that life can continue without nights? The night is usually a time for people to rest and rejuvenate. God determined the appropriate lengths of the day and the night so that life on earth continues and people would have time for rest and time for work. This is a blessing and a mercy from God for which we should be grateful.

The verses go back to the scenes on the Day of Resurrection, *“The Day that He will call on them, He will say, ‘Where are those whom you used to allege as My partners?’”* The same question that was posed earlier is reiterated here to emphasize its importance and to introduce the following verse, *“And from each nation We will draw a witness, and We shall say, ‘Produce your proof.’ They shall then know that God alone has the truth, and the (lies) which they fabricated will leave them in lurch.* The messenger that was sent to each nation will be brought forward to give his testimony and tell how his nation responded to his message. People will then be asked to produce an evidence to support the decisions which they implemented in response to the messenger who came to them, but they will have no evidence and they will know, *“that God alone has the truth,”* and they will lose track of those whom they worshipped beside God before.

Verses 76 to 84:

76. *Certainly Qaroun (Korah) was of Moses' people, but he oppressed them; and We gave him so much treasure that the keys thereof would verily have been a burden for a troop of mighty men. When his own people said to him, “Exult not; God does not love the exultant;*
77. *But seek, with the (wealth) which God has bestowed on you, the Home of the Hereafter, do not neglect your share in this world. Do good as God has been good to you, and do not seek corruption in the land, God does not love the corruptors.”*
78. *He said, “I have been given it only on account of knowledge I possess.” Did he not know that God had destroyed, before him, generations which were superior to him in strength and greater in the amount (of riches) they had collected? Certainly, the guilty will not be called (immediately) to account for their sins.*
79. *So he came out before his people in the (pride of his worldly) glitter. Those whose aim is the life of this world said, “If only we had been given like what was given to Qaroun. Indeed, he is very fortunate.”*
80. *But those who had been given knowledge said, “Woe to you! The reward of God is better for those who believe and do good deeds, and only the perseverant will get it.”*
81. *Then We caused the earth to swallow him and his house; and he had no one to help him against God, nor could he defend himself.*
82. *And those who had coveted him the day before began to say on the morrow, “It is indeed God who gives what He wills, abundantly or sparingly, to whomever He pleases of His servants. Had it not been that God was gracious to us, He could have caused the earth to swallow us up. The disbelievers will never succeed.*

83. *That Home of the Hereafter We shall give to those who do not seek superiority on earth, nor corruption. The happy end is for those who are conscious of God.*
84. *Whoso brings a good deed, he will have better than the same; while those who do evil-deeds will be recompensed only according to what they did. (28: 76 – 84)*

The following verses narrate the story of Qaroun, stating that he was from the people of Moses (PBUH); he was very rich; and he oppressed his people, *“Certainly Qaroun (Korah) was of Moses' people, but he oppressed them; and We gave him so much treasure that the keys thereof would verily have been a burden for a troop of mighty men.”* He was so rich that the keys to his treasures were so heavy to the extent that it was difficult for a group of strong men to carry them. His wealth made him a tyrant and he treated his people badly. The verse described his behavior in a general way and did not dwell on the details of this behavior. Some of his people tried to give him a sincere advice. They explained to him that God gave him this wealth to spend it in ways that please God, *“When his own people said to him, ‘Exult not; God does not love the exultant; but seek, with the (wealth) which God has bestowed on you, the Home of the Hereafter, do not neglect your share in this world. Do good as God has been good to you, and do not seek corruption in the land, God does not love the corruptors.’”* They pointed out that the divine project aims at striking a balance between the enjoyment of this life and the requirements of the Hereafter. God created good things on earth for humankind to enjoy and for life on earth to flourish. This is how the vicegerency of humankind can be achieved. However, one should not forget that every good activity in this life should lead to happiness in the Hereafter. This way a balance is struck between the spiritual life and the material life of the human being, allowing the human being to enjoy this life while keeping an eye on the Hereafter. Wealthy people should remember that wealth is a blessing from God so they should use it to do good to people, *“Do good as God has been good to you.”* The wealth should not be used to spread corruption and oppression on earth because certainly God does not love those who spread corruption on earth.

His answer embodied every meaning of corruption and arrogance, *“He said, ‘I have been given it only on account of knowledge I possess.’”* This is a statement that only an ignorant arrogant man would make. The answer to his statement came in the form of a threat, *“Did he not know that God had destroyed, before him, generations which were superior to him in strength and greater in the amount (of riches) they had collected? Certainly, the guilty will not be called (immediately) to account for their sins.”* God destroyed many a people who were mightier and wealthier than him. God is capable of destroying him as well.

The second scene of the story depicts Qaroun parading proudly in front of his people in his worldly glitter. Some of his people looked at him in awe and wished that they would be in his place, *“So he came out before his people in the (pride of his worldly) glitter. Those whose aim is the life of this world said, ‘If only we had been given like what was given to Qaroun. Indeed, he is very fortunate.’”* The same scene rekindled the flame of faith in the hearts of others who recognized that what they were given was much more precious than what was given to Qaroun.

They reminded their brothers who envied Qaraoun, *“But those who had been given knowledge said, ‘Woe to you! The reward of God is better for those who believe and do good deeds, and only the perseverant will get it.’”* God’s verdict came swiftly to settle the dispute between the two groups, *“Then We caused the earth to swallow him and his house; and he had no one to help him against God, nor could he defend himself.”* The great test was settled and those who were impressed by the worldly pleasures woke up and realized the ultimate truth, *“And those who had coveted him the day before began to say on the morrow, ‘It is indeed God who gives what He wills, abundantly or sparingly, to whomever He pleases of His servants. Had it not been that God was gracious to us, He could have caused the earth to swallow us up. The disbelievers will never succeed.’”* They stood there praising God that they did not share Qaroun his wealth and his destiny. They realized that wealth is not the true measure for God’s favor. God provides for some abundantly and for some sparingly for reasons that only He knows. Quaroun was tested with wealth; he failed the test; and he received his due punishment. The disbelievers will never succeed. It is true that Qaroun never expressed his disbelief but his actions caused him to join the ranks of the disbelievers. The following verse is an appropriate conclusion for the scene, *“That Home of the Hereafter We shall give to those who do not seek superiority on earth, nor corruption. The good end is for those who are conscious of God.”* In the Hereafter, people will be recompensed for their deeds according to God’s promise, *“Whoso brings a good deed, he will have better than the same; while those who do evil-deeds will be recompensed only according to what they did.”*

Verses 85 to 88:

- 85. *Verily He Who prescribed the Quran for you, will bring you back home again. Say, “My Lord knows best who it is who brings true guidance, and who is in manifest error.”*
- 86. *And you did not expect that the Book would be sent to you except as a mercy from your Lord. Therefore, do not support in any way the disbelievers.*
- 87. *And let nothing keep you back from the revelations of God after they have been given to you; and invite to your Lord; and do not be one of those who associate partners with God.*
- 88. *And do not invoke any other god beside God. There is no god but He. Everything will perish except His Face. To Him belongs the Command, and to Him will you (all) be brought back. (28: 85 – 88)*

In the following verses, God addresses the Messenger (PBUH) and the believers. These verses were revealed to the Messenger (PBUH) on the route to Medina after he escaped from Mecca, *“Verily He Who prescribed the Quran for you, will bring you back home again.”* The Quran has been revealed by God. He will give His Messenger (PBUH) victory at the time He had decreed. This was a promise to the Messenger (PBUH) and the Muslims that God will not abandon His Messenger (PBUH). God reassured His Messenger that one day, known only to God, God will bring the Messenger (PBUH) back to his home from which he was evicted. The Messenger (PBUH) was commanded to repeat that statement that Moses (PBUH) made when he was

rejected by Pharaoh and his people, *“Say, ‘My Lord knows best who it is who brings true guidance, and who is in manifest error.’”* God will judge between people.

“And you did not expect that the Book would be sent to you except as a mercy from your Lord. Therefore, do not support, in any way, the disbelievers.” Muhammad (PBUH) never expected that he will be chosen to be a messenger of God, but God chose him and gave him the Quran as an act of mercy from Him. Therefore, never support the disbelievers because they will try to make you deviate away from the straight path, *“And let nothing keep you back from the revelations of God after they have been given to you;”* Call to the way of your Lord, *“and invite to your Lord; and do not be one of those who associate partners with God.”* The Sura ends by stressing and emphasizing the concept of the Oneness of God, *“And do not invoke any other god beside God. There is no god but He. Everything will perish except His Face. To Him belongs the Command, and to Him will you (all) be brought back.”* Everything will perish and vanish except God. His is the kingdom and the judgment and to Him all will return.