

DARUL ULOOM TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
A CONCISE COMMENTARY COURSE OF
THE HOLY QURAAAN (2001-2020)

49. And they said [to Musa (Moses)]: "O you sorcerer! Invoke your Lord for us according to what He has covenanted with you. Verily, We shall guide ourselves (aright)."

The verse explains that they called out to him (Moosa A.S) when they were afflicted with the punishments, saying 'O Sorcerer! Supplicate and beseech your Lord for us so that He may remove this punishment and calamity which has befallen us. Supplicate to him through the covenant which He has made with you that He will accept your prayers and answer your supplications, and that if we believe, He will remove the punishment from us'. They also said to him, 'Verily, we shall guide ourselves'. It means, 'we shall certainly believe in you if the punishments are removed through your supplications'.

While commenting on the words, 'O Sorcerer', which they used to address Moosa (A.S), the exegetes/commentators of the Holy Quran have stated that this address was not used to show any defect or fault in him (Moosa). In fact, in their understanding, it was a word of respect and honour – since sorcery/magic was considered to be 'the knowledge of their time' and it was not deemed to be blameworthy/reprehensible. So, they addressed him as 'O Sorcerer' as a way of respect.

Abdullah bin Abbas (R.A) said, 'Their statement, 'O Sorcerer', really meant, 'O knowledgeable person' and a 'sorcerer' amongst them was a great person who was well respected by all'. (Safwah At Tafaseer vol.15 pg. 49 Dar Al Quran Al Kareem Beirut 1981; Tafseer Al Qurtubi vol.16 pg. 85 Maktaba Rasheediyah; Tafseer Ibn Jareer vol.25 pg. 95 Dar Ihya At Turath Al Arabi Beirut 2001)

While explaining the above, Hafiz Ibn Katheer also writes, 'O you Sorcerer', meaning expert or knowledgeable one. This was the view of Ibn Jareer. The scholars of that time were the sorcerers or magicians, and magic was not regarded as something reprehensible by them at that time, so this was not a slight on their part. They were in a state of need, so it would not have been appropriate for them to insult him. This was a way of honouring him, as they thought'. (Tafseer Ibn Katheer vol.5 pg. 472 Dar Al Kitab Al Arabi Beirut 2013)

Surah Az Zukhruf goes further in verse 50 and states:

50. But when We removed the torment from them, behold! They broke their covenant.

Here, Allah mentions that when He removed the punishment from them through the supplication of Moosa (A.S) (on each occasion), they broke the promise/covenant which they made that they will believe in Moosa (A.S) if the punishment was removed. They disregarded what they willingly agreed to, and refused to believe in the message of Moosa (A.S).

Surah Az Zukhruf continues in verse 51 and states:

51. And Fir'aun (Pharaoh) proclaimed among his people, saying: "O my people! Is not mine the dominion of Egypt, and these rivers flowing underneath me. See you not then?"

The above verse explains that when Pharaoh saw the compelling signs of Moosa (A.S) which came in the form of miracles and punishments, he feared that his people may be inclined to believe in Moosa (A.S) and so, he called out to them in a flaunting and boastful manner and said, 'O my people, isn't the land of Egypt my kingdom, and these rivers from the Nile flow beneath my palaces? Don't you see'. That is, 'don't you see the authority and kingdom I have, while Moosa and his followers are poor and weak'.

While commenting on the above, Qatadah (A.R) says, 'there were gardens and rivers flowing beneath the palaces of Pharaoh'. Imam Qurtubi and Abu Hayyan said, 'There were four canals flowing beneath his palaces which were from the river Nile. It is also stated by some commentators that the statement, 'and these rivers flowing beneath me' means that 'these rivers continue to flow under my control, authority and permission'. (Tafseer Al Qurtubi vol.16 pg. 86 Maktaba Rasheediyah; Tafseer Al Bahrul Muheet vol.9 pg. 381 Dar Al Fikr Beirut 1992)

Sura Az Zukhruf further states in verse 52:

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52. "Am I not better than this one [Musa (Moses)], who is *Mahin* [has no honour nor any respect, and is weak and despicable] and can scarcely express himself clearly?"

Fir'aun (Pharaoh) continued to speak against Moosa (A.S), and told his people that he was far better than Moosa. Therefore, they should listen to him and turn away from Moosa (A.S) and his message. He informed his people that Moosa (A.S) was a low and weak person. He had no respect, status or authority, and was despised in the society. He further told his people that Moosa (A.S) could not even express himself properly when he spoke. So, how can he claim to be a prophet?

These statements were nothing but mere fabrications of Fir'aun (Pharaoh) which he made in order to deceive the people and to 'bring down' the rank of Moosa (A.S), which he had in the eyes of the people. Fir'aun (Pharaoh) knew very well that Moosa (A.S) was far better than him and that he had great respect and rank among the Israelites. He also knew that although Moosa (A.S) had a difficulty in his speech while he grew up in his palace, it was removed at the time when he was commissioned to be a prophet. Therefore, Moosa (A.S) expressed himself clearly when he preached to the people and delivered the message of truth. Fir'aun however, wanted to degrade Moosa (A.S) and also turn the people against him, so that he will remain as the king and 'lord' of the people as he falsely claimed. (Tafseer Ibn Katheer vol.5 pg. 473 Dar Al Kitab Al Arabi Beirut 2013)

He (Fir'aun) went on to say to the people:

53. "Why then are not golden bracelets bestowed on him, or angels sent along with him?"

This was another objection Fir'aun made against Moosa (A.S). He told the people if Moosa was a true prophet, then why are bangles of gold not given to him to show that he has been granted a position of honour and rank. He further questioned as to why angels have not been sent with him to support him in his work.

The great scholar of Tafseer, Mujahid (A.R) has stated that it was a custom in Egypt that when a person was chosen to be a leader, bangles of gold, as well as a necklace of gold were placed on him. These were signs that he was the leader of the people. Based on this custom, Fir'aun questioned Moosa's right to be a leader of the people and said that if Moosa was a true leader, then why gold bracelets were not given to him by his Lord? Even if this did not occur, then why angels were not sent with him to help and support him in his mission? (Tafseer Al Bahrul Muheet vol.9 pg. 383 Dar Al Fikr Beirut 1992)

As mentioned before, these statements/objections made by Fir'aun were nothing but lies/fabrications which were intended to turn the people against Moosa (A.S) so that they may not accept his message. Fir'aun knew that the people were illiterate and ignorant and he took advantage of this. The Quran speaks about this and says in verse 54 (of Sura Az Zukhruf):

54. Thus he [Fir'aun (Pharaoh)] befooled and misled his people, and they obeyed him. Verily, they were ever a people who were *Fasiqun* (rebellious, disobedient to Allah).

Allah explains in the verse that Fir'aun befooled his people. It means that he took advantage of their idiocy and feeble-mindedness and made statements which they readily accepted. So he deluded them and made fools of them, and got them to follow him in misguidance. For this reason, Allah says, 'Indeed, they were a sinful nation'.

Sura Az Zukhruf continues in verse 55 and states:

55. So when they angered Us, We punished them, and drowned them all.

Allah states, 'So when they angered Us'. It means when they did things that caused the anger and wrath of Allah to descend. From among these, was that they disbelieved in Moosa (A.S) and denied the signs of Allah, without paying attention to the warnings given to them by Moosa (A.S). When their sins and transgressions had reached the extreme limit and they made a mockery of the message of Moosa (A.S), Allah seized them with His punishment and destroyed all of them in the sea.