

MOSES

A PROPHET FROM SUDAN

An Alternative View of the Story of
Moses and the Pharaoh

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About The Author

Sheikh ElNayyal Abu Groon, descendent of Prophet Muhammad, prayer and Blessing of Allah be upon Him, his Parents, and Family (PBHPF), was born in Sudan, 1947 in Abu Groon, the home of the Sufi traditional institution of his renowned grandfather Sheikh Muhammad Abu Groon. His father Sheikh Abdelqadir was a unique reformer of virtues upon the footsteps of Prophet Muhammad (PBHPF). He raised his son upon loving Prophet Muhammad (PBHPF) and living pure Islam. He graduated in Law, University of Khartoum in 1970, and has been High Court Judge and Legal Affairs Minister.

In the early 1970's the author wrote his first book: *Al-Sirat Al- Mustaqeem* (The Straight Path), a brief comprehensive account on Islamic theology. Since then, the author has completed a series of books on revision of Islamic thought and heritage using his own unprecedented rigorous methodology of critique. This included his criteria for checking the authenticity of Prophetic traditions (Sunnah) and the contextual approach to understanding the Holy Quran (*Tarteeel*), i.e. reflecting on a Quranic

verse upon other relevant Quranic texts, as well as the geographical & historical contexts of that verse. This methodology is implemented in the writing of this book. Here is a list of the author's publications:

- 1-The Holistic Nature of the Human Being (Arabic): Pub. The Arab Establishment for Research and Publication 2012.
- 2-The All-Embracing Message of Islam: Pub. Outskirts Press, Inc. 2009; and by Xlibris (2016).
- 3- Critiques of Islamic Thought: Volumes 1 & 2 (Arabic) Pub. The Arab Establishment for Research and Publication 2014.
- 4- Islam & the State (Arabic): A Critique of Islamic Theocracy. Pub. The Arab Establishment for Research and Publication 1st Edition 2011; 2nd Edition 2015.
- 5- Moses A Prophet from Sudan (Arabic): Pub. The Arab Establishment for Research and Publication 2011
- 6- Faith in Muhammad (Arabic): Pub. The Arab Establishment for Research and Publication 2012.
- 7- The Remedy of Souls from Accusations Held by Muslims Against the Prophet (Arabic): Pub. The

Arab Establishment for Research and Publication 2013. Published in English by Matador, London (2016), and by Xlibris (2018).

8-The Bright Lights of Love: Poetry, (Arabic): Pub. The Arab Establishment for Research and Publication 2014

9-Accusations of the Master of God's Messengers by Qur'an Interpreters (Arabic): Pub. The Arab Establishment for Research and Publication 2016.

10-The Essence of Life (Arabic): Published by The Arab Establishment for Research and Publication 2018.

Preface

The geographical and historical context of the story of Moses Peace Be Upon Him (PBUH) didn't receive the due attention of historians and religious writers despite its central importance in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The Hebrew Bible has strong historical connections with *Mizraim* and *Kush*. Two pharaohs were mentioned by name in the Bible: Taharque the King of Ethiopia (*Kush*) in *2 Kings 19:9 and Isaiah 37:9*, and Apries or Hophra in *Jeremiah 44:30*. However, the name of the pharaoh of Exodus is not mentioned in the bible or biblical studies. Since both the Biblical and the Quranic versions of the story of Moses mentioned "the Pharaoh" and "Misr: The Arabic name of modern Egypt", most of the scholars of history and religion widely accepted that the major events of the story of Moses (PBUH) took place in the country now known as Egypt, a name first given by the Greeks after 332 B.C. to what was known as *Kemet*. Unfortunately, this name (Egypt/ Misr) has been retrogradely generalised over the entire history of *Kemet* that started before the union of Upper and Lower *Kemet* around 3100 B.C. I think this is one of the reasons that the history of

the Israelites in the Nile Valley from Prophet Joseph to Prophet Moses, peace be upon them, is not well established because historians up to now has been searching for archaeological evidence of the Pharaoh of Exodus only in Egypt of nowadays. Moreover, they have been using two classical sources to determine his time, namely: the ancient Egypt timeline, largely based on the *Aegyptiaca* of Manetho and the Biblical Chronology. To this day, all the writings about the history of Moses (PBUH) based on the above assumptions are inconclusive. In this book I have attempted to add to this research new premises from the Holy Quran and the history of the land of *Kush*. Our basic assumption is that the Holy Quran would mention historical events in their historical and geographical contexts using the exact names of people and places. One of the most important developments of this approach is that it allows suggestions of alternative geographical locations for key places in the Quranic version of this story like the mount of *Tur of Sinaa'*, the *sacred valley of Tuwa*, the *place where the two seas merge*, and the *sea* of the miraculous crossing. Moreover, it allows new interpretations of the names mentioned in the story, e.g., *Misra*, *Misran*, *Almadinah*, and

Alqaryah in the Quranic Arabic on grounds of their linguistic indications and historical contexts.

The history of the regions of the Nile valley, known as *Kemet* and *Kush* or *Nubia*, are largely interconnected. The settlement of people in these regions and the development of their culture, religion, and socioeconomics predated the political development that started by what is known as the dynastic period, i.e. the era immediately following the unification of Upper and Lower *Kemet* around 3100 BC. Even after this late development, most of the kings and pharaohs were based in southern *Kemet* where the border with *Kush* used to move north and south between the Nile delta and the second cataract due to shifts in the balance of power between *Kemet* and *Kush*. However, the most stable point as a border between them was the first cataract by Aswan.

Moreover, people across the two regions shared almost the same culture, religion, and arts; yet, there is a huge controversy between historians from various fields about their ethnic background. However, we hope that in such debates, scholars would investigate the facts without prejudice since history is a legacy for all humanity and

should be celebrated away from the tensions of racism, partisanship, and nationalism. Here is an example of contesting views on the ethnic background of the Pharaohs of the Nile based on their art. Simson Najovits states, “Egyptian art depicted Egyptians on the one hand and Nubians and other blacks on the other hand with distinctly different ethnic characteristics. There is an extraordinary abundance of Egyptian works of art which clearly depicted sharply contrasted reddish-brown Egyptians and black Nubians.”¹ However, Manu Ampim claims that many ancient Egyptian statues and artworks are modern frauds that have been created specifically to hide the ‘fact’ that the ancient Egyptians were black, while authentic artworks that demonstrate black characteristics are systematically defaced or even ‘modified’.²

¹ Simson Najovits (2003): *Egypt, Trunk of the Tree, A Modern Survey of an Ancient Land*, Vol. 2. p. 318. Algora Publishing.

² Manu Ampim (1994): “Ra-Hotep and Nofret: Modern Forgeries in the Cairo Museum?” pp. 207–212. *Child of Africa* (1994), edited by Ivan Van Sertima.

The Kingdom of Kush

Kush is the elder son of Ham, the son of Noah (PBUH); and from his earlier grandfathers is Idris (PBUH), who is known in the bible as Enoch. Among the sons of Kush are Saba and Nimrud who was adopted by his uncle Canaan.

The land of Kush as in the Hebrew Bible, or Ethiopia as in Greek, refers to the country which lay to the south of *Kemet*, beginning at Syene (Aswan) on the First Cataract and extending to beyond the confluence of the White and Blue Nile. It corresponds generally with what is now known today as the Sudan, a literal translation of the word 'Ethiopia' that means the black people. It was inhabited by the decedents of Kush where his son Nimrud, a strong hunter, founded the first kingdom on earth after the flood of Noah (PBUH). Kush civilisation continued to flourish and gave rise to three successive kingdoms that dominated most of the Nile basin for over two thousand years. They comprise the Kingdom of Kerma (2500 – 1500 BC), Kingdom of Napata (850 – 568 BC), and the kingdom of Meroe (568 BC – 350 AD). Some of the early Kushite kings expanded their power over

Kemet and Palestine. However, by the end of the first century AD some of the descendants of Meroitic kings and queens (Candaces) who had kinship relations with the Children of Israel, migrated to the high lands of Ethiopia and established the kingdom of Axum that continued to the last century when the monarchy ended by the death of the last emperor Haile Selassie in 1975.

Diodorus Siculus, a Greek historian, devoted an entire chapter of his magnum opus on world history the Bibliotheca Historica, or Library of History (Book 3), to the Kushites or 'Ethiopians', in which he wrote: *"The Ethiopians were the earliest inhabitants of earth. They did not arrive as immigrants but are the natives of their country and therefore rightly are called autochthonous. Among them were the people that first taught to honour the gods and offer sacrifices and arrange processions and festivals and perform other things by which people honour the divine. For this reason, their piety is famous among all men, and the sacrifices among the Ethiopians are believed to be particularly*

*pleasing to the divinity.*³ The connection, in this quote, of the Kushites with the origin of religion is natural and their heritage since the grandfather of Kush was Noah (PBUH), the prophet and the first messenger of God, glory be to Him.

The original form of the term *Pharaoh* in Egyptian is pr-³, literally 'great house'. In Hebrew it is Par'oh; in Greek, Pharao; in Latin, Pharaonem; and in Old English, Pharon. The term Pharaoh (the phrase pr-³) was used in the Old Kingdom only to refer to the actual household of the king, and not in a formalized way. It became a more formal term in the Middle Kingdom, but still only in reference to the household as a whole. In the New Kingdom the use of the term began to shift. Its first documented use to refer to the king was found in a letter to Akhenaten⁴. It is worth mentioning here that the Holy Quran addressed the sovereign of Kemet in the time of Joseph (PBUH) as *the King*;

³ Diodorus of Sicily. "The Library of History" with English translation by C. H. Oldfather et. Al. Published in Volume 2 of the LEOB Classical Library Edition. 1935. P 89.

⁴ Griffith, F.L.I. 1898, Hieratic papyri from Kahun and Gurob (principally of the middle kingdom). Pub London: Quaritch

however, in the time of Moses (PBUH), the sovereign was addressed as *the Pharaoh*.

Historians seemed to have generalised the term 'pharaoh' to refer to all the kings of Kemet and Kush. The history of the Pharaohs who ruled Kemet consists of thirty dynasties from 3100 BC to 341 BC, that included many races such as the Hyksos, Libyans, Kushites/Nubians, and Persians. Therefore, the term Pharaoh does not imply that the ruler is necessarily of Egyptian origin in the modern sense. It is rather a common title added to the personal name of every king who ruled Kemet in ancient history. This is similar to the common title of Caesar given to every high ruler for the Romans and Byzantines.

Some of the Pharaohs who ruled Kemet during that time belonged to the Nubian Kushites who lived in Northern Sudan, as can be seen from the monuments that reveal their features and colour. Buhen's text, which goes back to the eighteen years of the rule of King Senusert who ruled Kemet between 1971 BC and 1928 BC, is considered the first text that mentions the land of Kush. In another text for the same king the name Kush is mentioned twice in the island of Philae. It is also

found in the *execration texts*⁵ in the Middle (2055–1650 BC) and new kingdoms (1550–1069 BC) of Kemet in the temple of Queen Hatshepsut in *Aldier Albahry*, in addition to other archaeological sources.

In the Holy Bible – the Old Testament – Kush is mentioned more than forty times including the mention in 2 Chronicles 14:9, that the Kushites took control over a district called Jarar South of Palestine. Kush is also mentioned in the 1 Kings 5:14, 2 Chronicles 2:12, 2:35, 2 Kings 9:23, and Jeremiah 46:9 and Isaiah 20:4.

The control of Jarar by the Kushites was during the reign of King Asa of Juda who died 150 years before the beginning of the 25th dynasty by the Kushite kings of Napata that ruled Kemet for over a century. The bible mentioned in 2 Chronicles 14:9 the name Zerah, a Kushite/Ethiopian king as a contemporary of King Asa of Juda (908–867 BC). This period falls between the end of Kerma and the beginning of Napata, which is unclear in the history of the Kingdom of Kush. Some people may

⁵ Execration texts, written upon statuettes of certain foreigners, are ancient Egyptian hieratic texts, listing enemies of the Pharaoh, most often enemies of the Egyptian state or troublesome foreign neighbours.

think that Kush, which is mentioned in relation to Jarar, is a region in northern Arabia⁶. However, the commentaries on the bible states that, “There is no doubt that what is meant by ‘Kush’ in the bible is the African Kush.” In the same commentary there is also evidence that Zerah was a Kushite king, “Zerah is a Hebrew name that means ‘the appearance of light’; many biblical characters had this name including ‘Zerah the Ethiopian’ who was a Kushite king and contemporary of King Asa, as mentioned in 2 Chronicles 14:9”⁷.

⁶ Arabic Reference: Kamal Salibi, 1986: Torah has come from the Arab Peninsula. Pub Arab Research Establishment, Beirut.

⁷ https://st-takla.org/Full-Free-Coptic-Books/FreeCopticBooks-002-Holy-Arabic-Bible-Dictionary/01_A/A_094_01.html

Pharaohs of the 25th Dynasty

Alara was the first recorded prince of Nubia who established Napata as the religious capital of Nubia. He unified all Upper Nubia from Meroë to the Third Cataract. Alara was not himself a 25th dynasty Nubian king, since he never controlled any region of Kemet during his reign, compared to his two immediate successors: Kashta and Piey or Piankhy respectively. The kingdom of Kush, with Napata as its capital, grew in influence, and dominated the Southern region of Kemet known as Elephantine and even Thebes by the reign of Kashta, Alara's successor who managed in the eighth century BC to compel Shepenupet I, half-sister of Takelot III and the serving God's Wife of Amon, to adopt his own daughter Amenirdis I as her successor. After this event, Thebes was under the de-facto control of Napata. Its power reached a climax under King Piankhy, Kashta's successor, who conquered all of Kemet in Year 20 of his reign and established the 25th Dynasty (See the Appendix, figures 1 to 5).

Piankhy went back to Napata, after having conquered the cities in the middle and north of

Kemet. He was buried in his tomb in El Kurru necropolis. His successors were Shabaka followed by Shebataka whose reign was significant because he consolidated the Nubian Kingdom's control over all of Kemet from Nubia down to the Nile Delta region. Shebataka's reign also witnessed an enormous amount of building works undertaken throughout Kemet, especially at the city of Thebes, which he made the capital of his kingdom. However, after their death, their bodies were taken back to Sudan and were buried in the necropolis of Al Kurru in the pyramids of Napata. It was the custom that a king got buried in his hometown. Taharque's brother Shebataka succeeded Shabaka, and he made Taharque his co-regent to assure his succession. About 688 BC, approximately 23 years after Nubian rule had been imposed over Kemet, Taharque assumed the throne in his own right. Professor Abdel Qadir Mahmoud mentions in his book *Sudanese Personalities Part One: Pianky (Piey)* that 'kings Shabaqo and Shabitqo lived in Manf in Kemet, while Taharque made Tanis, known as *San Al Hajar*, his capital. This transition allowed him to be close to the land of Levant to deal with the

dangerous interference from the Assyrians at that time’⁸.

Taharque took full advantage of the lull in fighting and the abundant harvest. He restored existing temples, built new ones, and built the largest pyramid in the Napatan region. Particularly impressive were his additions to the Temple at Karnak, the new temple at Kawa, and the temples at Jebel Barkal. Taharque died in the city of Thebes in 664 BC and was succeeded by his appointed successor Tanwtamany, a son of Shabaka. The stories show that King Tanwtamany lived in Napata before moving north to regain Kemet, which his predecessors had ruled. Figures 6 and 7 in the Appendix, show part of the statue of king Tanwtamany and his name written in the ancient Egyptian language. His name was preceded by the Egyptian titles of *son of the god Ra, king of the north and south.*

⁸ In Arabic: Prof Abdelgadir Mahmood, 2003: This is Sudan: Antiquity & Contemporary: Sudanese Personalities, Part One: Piankhy (Piey). The first Sudanese King who ruled both Sudan and southern Egypt.

The Pharaoh of Moses

The Almighty says about the Pharaoh of Moses: **“Today we will save you with your body so that you shall be a lesson for those after you”** (10:92). The Pharaoh of Moses could be one of the discovered mummies of the pharaohs as God saved him from drowning. This pharaoh belongs to the Nubian Kushites who lived in Northern Sudan; they might be distinguished by the dark skin colour, the shape of the nose, the size of the body, and type of the hair.

With the drowning of the people of the Pharaoh of Moses, his state came to an end, his monuments were destroyed, and no one was left alive to give attention to him after God saved him from drowning. The Almighty says: **“We utterly destroyed all that Pharaoh, and his people were making and what they were building”** (7:137). God mentions that He would ‘*save him with his body*’. So, what does this mean? Indeed, recovering the dead body after drowning will not be considered as saving the person! Moreover, the verse continued addressing the Pharaoh: **“so that you shall be a lesson for those after you”**. How

could saving him from drowning be a lesson? God described this in the verse: "**So God seized him with a humiliating punishment in this life and the hereafter**" (79:25). Therefore, God saved him from drowning with *only his body* to taste the loss of his family, kingship, kingdom, his people, and his wealth. Just before the drowning of his people, he was a tyrant king and used to say: "**I am your Lord, the Highest**", and now he was left begging for food, shelter, and cloth! In such a state no one would have paid attention to him as an ordinary person, let alone as a king. Hence, equally his death would have happened unnoticed.

What endorses this hypothesis is that it has similarities with the life story of Taharque who has a pyramid in Sadeinga north of Sudan other than the great one in Nuri (figures 8, 9, 10 in the Appendix); however, his body was not found in either. Pharaohs used to build their pyramids and prepare them for their burial during their lives, the bigger the pyramid, the greater the Pharaoh. In the case of Taharque, he built the biggest pyramid among the Nubian kings, which showed his power and greatness. Moreover, some block stones with his name were found in the pyramid in Sadeinga, as the pyramid is related to him, in spite of

differing opinions. One of these pyramids might have been built as a symbol by his followers after the drowning incident. However, his humble death would not have prevented the preservation of his body if God had meant it.

If the method of mummification was present in the Kingdom of Kush and the black Kushite Pharaohs who ruled Kemet were interested in their burial preparations, then how could there be no mummy for any of them among what was found?

The verse in the Quran indicates continuity: “**We will save you with your body**” (10:92). Therefore, God saved him without his power, wealth, and people, to be a lesson for those to come after him; hence, he lived in humility, begging the people of Kush to acknowledge his status. Many mummies of the Pharaohs were found in Kemet, and it is not farfetched to assume that some belong to the Kushite Pharaohs. It is illogical to think that the Kushites who ruled Kemet and Nubia and established the 25th Pharaonic Dynasty, including Piankhy, Shabaka, Shebtaka, and Taharque, none had a mummy among those found. This is in addition to the fact that a set of all the tools and materials used for

mummification in the Kingdom of Kush are present in the Sudan National Museum and in international museums such as the Museum of Boston in America, which indicates that the Kushites knew the mummification process.

God saved Pharaoh with his body in order to make an example of it for those after him. If God meant to preserve his body as well, this might have taken place without the need for mummification as it is proven that the land from the third to the fourth cataract naturally preserves bodies. In this case it could be an example of divine mummification.

Dr. Osama Abdel Rahman Al Noor mentions in his book, *The Ancient History of Sudan* that there are several well-preserved bodies in the necropolis in Kerma⁹. Also, other bodies were found, predating the time of Meroe and the beginnings of the age of Christianity, naturally preserved and a number of them still retain the flesh and hair; figure 11 in the

⁹In Arabic: Usama Abdelnoor, 2006: Studies on Ancient History of Sudan. Pub. Abdelrahim Mirghani Cultural Centre, Omdurman.

Appendix, show one of them. Hopefully future research will shed light on many of these speculations as Moses' Pharaoh might or might not be one of the non-mummified bodies found. In which case, his appearance will not resemble those of the Pharaoh kings found mummified, and as a result would not be given any importance, because he is not mummified by humans, as there is a specific way the mummified body is kept. It is only the mummified bodies that are given attention by archaeologists because they think that royals should be mummified. It is also possible that his body has been preserved in some way till today, but no one has found him yet. God's saying might come true by the fact that his body will be an example to the future generations of the world. All this is plausible even though there is a mummy for one of the Pharaohs in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo allegedly belonging to the Pharaoh of Moses. A great proportion of its features and hair is preserved, and it appears to be a person who is dark in complexion with Nubian features.

The Pharaoh was dark-skinned, close to being black in colour, like the rest of the Nubian tribes who inhabit the area. They live in the far North of

the Savannah overlooking the desert between Egypt and Sudan. The climate there gave them sharpness in interaction in addition to the heat that shaded their complexion. The inhabitants of Kush mainly herd cattle most of which are cows, and this is reflected in their religious beliefs and rituals. This is evident in Kerma civilization where they surround their necropolises with cattle horns that make them unique among ancient civilizations as illustrated by figure 12, in the Appendix, from Kerma Museum. Moreover, the *Samiri* fashioned for the Israelites a calf that moos, telling them that this is their God and the God of Moses (20:88). Also, Moses' miracle in raising back the dead involved slaughtering a cow (2:67-73). Besides herding cattle, the Kushites used to plant palm trees where there is plenty of water near the Nile.

The Pharaoh ruled as a mighty despot and was aided by the great cunning of Haman, who carried out all sorts of tasks on the Pharaoh's behalf. He also supervised the soldiers and chose consorts - those people who gave their opinion in emerging matters. At the time magic was widespread, especially in the island of Nawa, north of Sudan, which lies a hundred kilometres west of Al-Barkal

Mountain. It was considered the centre for magicians. Their power can be seen in the present day as there are still people who practise magic there. The inhabitants of the nearby places to the island fear staying there after sunset.

The city of Napata lies west of the Nile at the curve in northern Sudan where the Pharaoh's palace stands surrounded by rich gardens and palm trees (see Map 1 Kush Napata page 36 for the above locations). The canals extend from the river irrigating the gardens that had their soil, waters and valleys blessed by God. They had: "**... gardens and water springs, and plants and noble dwellings, and blessings they were fruitful in**" (44:25-27).

The economic revival of the Kingdom of Kush and the expansion of the Pharaoh's rule to Misr/ Kemet, was a cause for drawing people from neighbouring areas. The Pharaoh of Moses used to say: "**Don't I have the reign of Misra and these rivers that run underneath me...**" (43:51). This indicates that his power extended to Kemet, and that he was a Kushite since there is only one river in Kemet – the Nile – while in Sudan there are many rivers in addition to the Nile including

Atbara, Wadi Elmalik, Wadi Hawar, and Wadi Elmagaddam. The Pharaoh was a tyrant in his rule, and he was overtaken by the intoxication of power, so he became corrupt and said: **“I am your greatest Lord”** (4:24).

The Pharaoh wasn't ignorant when he made such a claim. To the contrary, he was knowledgeable in theology and *oneness of God* or divinity just like Satan was. Satan's problem lies in disobeying God's order and refusing to kneel to God's messenger Adam (PBUH), because he was arrogant: **“He said I am not to kneel down to a human being You have created from hot fermented clay”** (15:33). But he acknowledged that God is the creator as he said: **“You have created me from fire”** (38:76). When God ousted him, he acknowledged His lord-hood **“he said my Lord...”** (38:79) and he asked God and did not ask anyone else when he said: **“Allow me to live”** and he believed in the afterlife as he asked to be given time **“to the day of resurrection”** (38:79). God replied: **“.. you are allowed to live till the day of Appointed Time”** (38:80-81). To this Satan swore by God's glory and did not swear by anyone else: **“He said by Your glory I will tempt them all, except for your true worshippers among them”**

(38:82-83). God allowed him to deal with those who followed him after making an exception for true worshippers and He said to him: **“Infuriate those who you can from among them with your voice and bring over them your (troops) on horses and on foot; and share their money and children and promise them (false promises)”** (17:64).

Thus, Satan acknowledged that God created him, He is his God, asked God and didn't ask anyone else, swore by His glory and didn't swear by anyone else's, believed in the day of resurrection, and made an exception for God's true believers. His disastrous misconduct was a result of his pride and his refusal to kneel to God's messenger Adam when Almighty ordered him to. Such calamity befalls anyone who disobeys Muhammad (PBHPF) as Almighty says: **“Whoever obeys the Messenger has indeed obeyed God”** (4:80) and the faith of such a person in the oneness of God will not benefit him/her like Satan. God Almighty ordered people just as He ordered Satan that: **“Whatever the Messenger brings you take and whatever he forbids you forsake”** (59:7). Those who do not abide with this order have disobeyed divine order by not obeying the Prophet (PBHPF)

“Satan was able to make them believe his thoughts and they followed him except for a group of believers” (34:20). A knowledgeable person should not be proud of his knowledge, since only good manners lead to safety, and being proud and claiming knowledge make one perish.

As for the Pharaoh he was **“haughty and extravagant”** (44:31) in his knowledge of the oneness of God, while Almighty God **“dislikes the extravagant”**. The Pharaoh used to see that there is no other doer in the universe but God, so consequently, he believed that everything he himself did was an act of God. Since he was the ruler and his action, as he believed, is an act of God, he told his subjects: **“I am your Lord, the Highest”** (79:24) so he trespassed the higher Lordship status and did not stop at his own lordship over the Kingdom of Kush. Lordship has various levels. It starts with the lord of the house, followed by the lord of the tribe, and moves on to the lord of the kingdom.

Almighty says through Joseph (PBUH) **“God forbid; he is my lord who treats me well”** (12:32) and the word *lord* here means the Governor, the ruler of Kemet. Joseph also said:

“Prison mates, one of you will serve his lord wine” (12:41) and lord here means the ruler. **“And he said to the one of the two whom he thought will be saved mention me to your lord”** (12:42). Here he does not mean God but means the higher ruler that is the King. Those are various lords and God the Merciful (Al Rahman) is the Highest Lord as Almighty said: **“Praise the name of your Highest Lord”** (87:1). The lesser sense of lordship is possible for God’s creation as Almighty mentioned through Joseph in the previous verses. Also, the act of creation itself can be performed by people as Almighty says: **“... and you create lies”** (29:17) and He said through Jesus (PBUH): **“I (Jesus) create for you from mud what appears like a bird”** (3:49) but God is **“the best of all Creators”** (23:14). This verse indicates that there are creators other than God, but God is the best of all. And the Pharaoh **“haughty and extravagant”** (44:31) in his claim so he was oppressive. If he were ignorant, he would not have needed two prophets to be sent to him with one message **“Both of you go to the Pharaoh for he has become oppressive”** (20:43). This is apparent in what we will reveal in his debate with Moses (PBUH) in the Holy Quran chapter 26.

Prophet Joseph in Misr/ Kemet

The Children of Israel (PBUH), during the reign of Joseph (PBUH) came from the *Baadiyah*, which is a countryside and lived with the Pharaohs in the Kingdom of Kush and cohabited with the original Nubians. The Semitic Canaanites shepherds, known as the Hyksos, had arrived in the Kingdom of Kush and lived there before they entered Kemet and occupied it in 1720 BC. Hyksos -*Higa Khasut* - is a name given to these by the people of Kemet, which means the foreign-rulers. However, Josephus, the Jewish historian, considered them a faction of the Hebrews and named them the *captive shepherds* and he assumed that the prophet Joseph (PBUH) entered Kemet in their time¹⁰. They might have come from the same countryside as the children of Israel during the time of famine. There was a good relationship between the Hyksos and the Kushites in Kerma that developed into an allegiance against the people of Kemet that was evident from the messages exchanged between them. Also, several

¹⁰ Josephus, Flavius, Against Apion, 1:86–90.

official seals of Hyksos were discovered in Kerma bearing Semitic names like Jacob and Hur as well as huge Hyksos necropolises with human sacrifices buried at the doorstep – a cultural practice common in Kerma.

The Kingdom of Kush included the greater part of the Nile basin south of the first cataract to latitude 10 N and from Darfur to the Ethiopian highlands in addition to Kemet that Kush had ruled for some time. Kemet at that time extended from the first cataract to the Nile delta. Apart from the cities around the Nile in Kush and Kemet, the rest of the Nile basin was predominantly rural or countryside. This is clear from the address of Joseph (PBUH) to his parents and brothers: “**... and He was kind to me as He took me out of prison and brought you from the *badu* (countryside) after Satan sown enmity between me and my brothers**” (12:100). *Badu* refers to what lies far away from civil life in the same country where people mainly raise livestock and may plant some crops. That’s why the reference to *countryside/badu* does not mean another country; in this case it was the *Baadiyah* of Kush on the upper Nile basin. The person who found Joseph in the well took him as a commodity and set him up

for sale in Kemet where the Governor bought him. The Governor was the ruler of Kemet appointed by the Kushite king and represented him. He took Joseph to his palace and thought of him as good luck.

The Almighty says: **“The one from Misra who bought him said to his wife make his stay [with us] honourable for he might be of benefit to us, or we might take him as a son”** (12:21). So, Joseph grew up in the Governor’s house and learnt how to manage the province and learnt the Nubian language. **“And we bestowed on Joseph a dignified settlement on earth in order to teach him the (inner) interpretation of narratives and God has full power and control over His affairs; but most people do not know”** (12:21). The phrase “the one who bought him” indicates that he is not the king. Dominance at the time was for the Kingdom of Kush.

In history there seems to be some ambiguity around the time before the rise of the Kingdom of Napata although the Kushite culture, religion, and governance, dominated the Nile Valley. Kerma was the capital of Kush during the time of Joseph (PBUH). Within Kerma stood the King’s palace

whose reign extended to Kemet as the king had to remain in his country where he was brought up. The same applies to his death. That's why he appoints rulers in the countries over which he has sovereignty. After this period the capital city was moved to Napata then to Meroe in the historical chronology of the Kingdom of Kush.

The Governor's wife was fascinated with Joseph and expressed her desire, but he abstained from her. She insisted that he should be imprisoned if he rejected her demand, and this was the reason why Joseph went to prison for some years. This matter was either by a decree from Governor himself or was passed with his knowledge. When Joseph tried to run away from the Governor's wife, she ripped his shirt from behind just before her husband entered through the door. God says: **"The woman whom he was in her house tempted him and locked the doors and said: 'come, I am yours'. He said God forbid; he (the governor) is my lord, and he was kind to me. Wrong-doers never prosper. And, indeed, she desired him; and he could have desired her hadn't he saw his lord's sign, that We might turn away from him (all) evil and shameful deeds: for he was one of Our servants, sincere and purified. They**

both ran to the door, and she ripped his shirt from behind and they ran into her husband at the door” (12:23-25). The Governor’s wife addressed her husband: “**What can the punishment be for whoever wants immoral deed with your family except that he should be imprisoned or face painful torture...**” (12:25). Joseph (PBUH) answered: “**She, it was who asked of me an evil act. One of her family bore witness that if his shirt is torn from the front then she is truthful and he is a liar, and if his shirt is torn from the back then she is a liar, and he is truthful**” (12:26-27). This indicates that the Governor inquired into the matter “**and when he saw that his shirt was torn from the back**” the matter was clear to him, and he addressed his wife: “**This is of the guile of you women. Lo! the guile of you is great**” (12:28). Then he continued addressing the two of them: “**Joseph leave this (messy matter) behind**”, as if he is telling him off for what his wife has accused him of. Then he tells his wife: “**Ask forgiveness for your sin for you are in the wrong.**” Although he found evidence to clear Joseph and become certain of his honesty, Joseph was nonetheless imprisoned. It was the Governor’s wife who insisted on his imprisonment

as he refused to carry out what she ordered him to do.

The word spread from the Governor's house to the city: **"Some women in the city said the Governor's wife is tempting her lad against his will. Her love for him has pierced her heart; and we see that she is in great deviation"** (12:30). Here the strength of the Governor's wife appears: **"Thereupon, when she heard of their malicious talk, she sent for them, and prepared for them a sumptuous repast, and handed each of them a knife and said [to Joseph]: "Come out and show yourself to them!" And when the women saw him, they were greatly amazed at his beauty, and [so flustered were they that] they cut their hands, exclaiming, "God save us! This is no mortal man! This is naught but a noble angel. Said she: "This, then, is he about whom you have been blaming me! And, indeed, I did try to make him yield himself unto me, but he remained chaste. Now, however, if he does not do what I bid him, he shall most certainly be imprisoned, and shall most certainly find himself among the despised"** (12:30-32). The Almighty says: **"And it seemed good to them (the governor and his household) after they had seen**

the signs (of his innocence) to imprison him for a time” (12:35). This verse shows that the Governor saw evidence of Joseph’s honesty as his shirt was ripped from behind and a witness from her family testified that she tempted him. Also, his facing them at the door indicates that Joseph was running away from her, and she was behind him. The Governor was between two choices: either to clear Joseph and announce his innocence which would cause a scandal for his household, or to imprison Joseph and hide the matter. He knew that no one in the community was concerned about Joseph as he is no more than their slave that they bought for a few dirhams. The Governor preferred the second choice and placed Joseph in prison. Also, Joseph was placed between two choices: either to obey the Governor’s wife and carry out what she asked or go to prison. He chose the latter. **“He said: My Lord, Prison is more desirable to me than [compliance with] what these women invite me to: for, unless You turn away their guile from me, I might yet yield to their allure and become one of those who are unaware [of right and wrong]”** (12:33). A widely accepted opinion emphasises that Joseph went to prison because of this prayer. If he had asked God to save him without being imprisoned, his prayer

would have been granted. God grants the prayer of his messengers, but Joseph asked to be saved by going to prison: **“God answered him by deriving their guile away from him, for He is the All Hearing, and the All Knowing”** (12:34).

In addition, Joseph according to God’s description is among the faithful worshippers over whom Satan has no power. This has been verified in the previous verses. As a result, people should not interpret Joseph “desired her” to mean that he almost gave in to her temptation and softened. For the meaning of “she desired him” which asserts her intentions and insistence, and the sentence “he would have desired her hadn’t he saw his lord’s sign” shows that the phrase “would have” affirms that neither the action nor the intention of enacting it has happened. That is, if he hadn’t seen his lord’s sign, he would have desired her. So, the act described by the verb ‘desired’ did not take place.

Some people thought that the Governor was the King, and this is a grave mistake as he is the one appointed by the King. So, it cannot be that the one who imprisoned Joseph, in spite of what appeared to him during investigation, would be the one who

would entrust him later on with matters and concerns of the state. Also, Joseph was appointed ruler, so the former Governor cannot be another ruler together with him and bearing the same status!

While Joseph was in prison, the King saw a vision: **“And [one day] the King said: Behold, I saw [in a dream] seven fat cows being devoured by seven emaciated ones, and seven green ears [of wheat] next to [seven] others that were withered. O you nobles enlighten me about [the meaning of] my dream if you are able to interpret dreams”** (12:43).

The King could not get an interpretation of his vision by any of his people. **“They said nonsense dreams, and we do not know how to interpret dreams”** (12:44). Then he was told that a prisoner of the Governor in Kemet called Joseph knows how to interpret dreams. The King sent him someone to interpret the vision who said: **“Joseph, O truthful one! Interpret to us (a vision of) seven fat cows being devoured by seven emaciated ones, and seven green ears [of wheat] next to [seven] others that were withered; so, I may go back to the people lest they know”** (12:46).

Joseph (PBUH) interpreted it for the King's messenger to mean that they will plant for seven years and leave what they have harvest in its ears – to preserve it from crop-pests – then after this will come seven years of drought that will finish up what has been preserved in the previous years. Then a year of relief will come: **"He said: you will plant for seven years continuously and what you have sown you will leave in its ears except for the little that you eat. Then after those seven severe years of famine will come and consume what you have spared for them except for a little of what you preserve. Then a year will come after in which people will be relieved and will press (olive and grapes)"** (12:47-49). When the King was brought such a detailed interpretation, he was impressed by the interpreter: **"And the King said bring him to me..."** (12:50), that is from prison. But Joseph (PBUH) refused to comply before being cleared from the charge for which he had been imprisoned: **"So when the messenger (of the king) came to him he said go back to your lord"** (12:50) – that is the King – **"... and ask him about the women who cut their hands"** (12:50). The Governor who ordered the imprisonment of Joseph knew the truth because he had investigated

the matter before. Joseph (PBUH) indicated this by saying: "**My lord is aware of their conspiracy**" (12:50). He is here referring to the Governor by the word *lord* because he was brought up in his house and is still under his rule and in his province. The Governor knew what had happened with the women and his wife because he had previously investigated the matter.

The King carried out an investigation with the women and with the Governor's wife: "**He said what is the matter with you when you have tempted Joseph against his will. They said: God save us; we have not known anything bad about him**" (12:51). The Governor's wife then confessed her conspiracy: "**The Governor's wife said now the truth has manifest (to all). I have tempted him against his will, and verily he is honest. Let him know that I have not cheated upon him secretly and God does not direct the conspiracy of the traitors. I do not clear myself (of guilt), surely, the desire of the self incites evil, except those whom God has been merciful to. My Lord is forgiving and merciful**" (12:51-53). When Joseph's innocence was revealed to the King from the conspiracy of the Governor's wife, and he realized that he is honest and possesses

knowledge not found with others, he ordered that he be brought to him: **“...and the King said: bring him to me so I can take him for myself”** (12:54). And he sent for him a second time informing him of his innocence, so Joseph accepted the call of the messenger this time and went to the King honoured and endeared **“so when he spoke to him”** (12:54) about how he was cleared he made him comfortable and made him feel his status with him **“He (the king) said today for us you are affirmed and trustworthy”** (12:54). When Joseph (PBUH) sensed the King’s justice and trust in him he did not hesitate to ask the King to appoint him: **“He said let me be in charge of the treasuries of the earth for I am a safe-keeper and knowledgeable”** (12:55). The King endowed him with the treasuries of the earth in the Kingdom of Kush and appointed him the ruler of Kemet. The reason Joseph got appointed was because he knew what people’s earnings entailed in addition to his honesty, chastity, and trustworthiness in the Governor’s house. Also, the injustice that befell Joseph from the Governor might be one of the reasons that made the Pharaoh appoint him ruler over Kemet. It seems that the previous ruler was removed by the Pharaoh and Joseph got appointed in his place. Joseph’s saying:

“**My lord knows of your conspiracy,**” indicates that the Governor was present when the King investigated the matter and did not die as some interpreters claim i.e., that the Governor – who was referred to by the term ‘my lord’ – knows the events that took place, and he can be asked about the matter. Thus, the Children of Israel had power in the Kingdom of Kush through Joseph (PBUH). God taught him the interpretation of speech and he started to speak in the Nubian tongue. The Almighty says: **“And thus We established Joseph securely in the land: to live therein wherever he willed. We cause Our grace to alight upon whomever We will; and We do not fail to requite the doers of good”** (12:56).

What indicates that the Governor was not the Pharaoh is that Joseph (PBUH), after interpreting the King’s vision, was told by the king – after he was convinced that Joseph was free from the accusation that was the cause of his imprisonment regarding the affair of the Governor’s wife: **“Today, in our regard, you are affirmed** (in a noble status) **and trustworthy”** (12:54). And he appointed him ruler over Kemet, so he took the Governor’s place. This was mentioned by Joseph’s brothers when he took his brother from them:

“They said: dear Governor, he has a great old father so take one of us in his place. We see that you are one of the righteous” (12:78). Also, when they went back to him: **“When they entered, they told him dear Governor, our families and us have been harmed and we have come with modest merchandise, so fill for us the measure and be charitable unto us, for God rewards the charitable”** (12:88).

After they recognized him later and admitted their mistake and acknowledged his benevolence with them, he forgave them and asked them to bring all his family and said to them: **“Take this shirt of mine and lay it over my father's face, and he will recover his sight, and bring all your family to me”** (12:93). This is evidence that the Children of Israel migrated to the Kingdom of Kush during Joseph's time (PBUH) after he became the ruler and sat on the throne under the power of the King. The Almighty says: **“When they entered before Joseph, he draws his parents closer to him and he said: enter Misra by God's leave in safety; and he raised his parents to the throne, and they fell in prostration before him”** (12:99-100).

We find that the reference to what Joseph (PBUH) says “**lay it on my father’s face and he will recover his sight**” (12:93) indicates his knowledge of the unseen which God allowed to some of his servants. Another example is what Jacob (PBUH) says: “**Surely, I find the aroma of Joseph**” (12:94).

The bodies of the Children of Israel are different from those of the Kushites and so is the colour of their complexion and hair. Some people may regard these qualities as beautiful, like the women of the city, who were amazed at the appearance of Joseph, when the Governor’s wife brought them to see him after they rebuked her for trying to tempt him. Most likely they were of her own background and not from that of the Children of Israel. It is also most probable that the Governor was from Kush and was appointed by the Kushite king to rule Kemet and was married to a woman of his own background. The Almighty says: “**And when the women saw him, they were greatly amazed at his beauty, and [so flustered were they that] they cut their hands, exclaiming, ‘God save us! This is no mortal man! This is naught but a noble angel.’ She said this is what you have blamed me for, and I have tempted him against his will**

and he refused and if he does not do what I order he will be imprisoned and will be belittled. Said she: 'This, then, is he about whom you have been blaming me! And, indeed, I did try to make him yield himself unto me, but he remained chaste. Now, however, if he does not do what I bid him, he shall most certainly be imprisoned, and shall most certainly find himself among the despised'" (12:31-32).

The Birth of Moses

The Pharaoh of Moses used to look upon the Children of Israel as second-class citizens. This prejudice was probably because they were migrants of a different background, and he was keen to keep them away from power. The Nubians felt threatened by the rapid increase in numbers of the Children of Israel and wanted to maintain superiority to them through power by keeping them away from it. Joseph in the past had reached the status of governor of Kemet and as a result the Children of Israel did not receive kind treatment as befits them like the rest of the Nubians. The more the Israelites increase in numbers, the more the Pharaohs of Kush felt the threat.

As a result, the Pharaoh ordered his minister Haman and his soldiers to kill every male child born for the Israelites: **“The Pharaoh exalted himself in the land and divided its people into castes. One group of them he deemed utterly low; he would slaughter their sons and spare (only) their women: for, behold, he was one of those who spread corruption [on earth]”** (28:4).

The soldiers dared to desecrate the sanctity of the houses of the Children of Israel in search of a male born to kill. Life for the Children of Israel became an unbearable Hell under the oppression of the Pharaoh, Haman, and the soldiers, as they killed their sons and spared their women: **“Indeed, the Pharaoh, Haman and their soldiers were wrongdoers”** (28:8).

In this suffocating, spying atmosphere and under the dread of such killing, Moses (PBUH) was born. His mother's heart almost shattered as a result of her knowledge of the fate of every newly born male once they were found by the Pharaoh's soldiers and the Nubians. God inspired her to: **“breastfeed him.”** But fear had overcome her from what the soldiers of the Pharaoh might do, and she could not expel her fear to breastfeed him. So, God inspired her to: **“put him in a basket and place him in the Yam (river) so the Yam will drift him onto the shore”** (20:39). The word “Yam” here means river. The inhabitants of the river Nile also call it the sea. They also say this for both its tributaries: the *white sea* (the White Nile) and the *blue sea* (the Blue Nile). So, the word sea is used for river. The Almighty says: **“the two seas are not similar: this one is sweet, thirst-**

allaying, and pleasant to drink; and the other is salty and bitter” (35:12). Moses’ mother did what she was inspired to do and put Moses (PBUH) in his basket and placed him in the Yam (the river) **“and she told his sister: follow him”** (28:11). The current of the Nile took him where God wills: **“. he will be taken up by one who is an enemy to Me and an enemy to him”** (20:39).

The River Nile’s current drifted Moses’ basket until it reached the Pharaoh’s palace **“and the Pharaoh’s family picked it up”** (28:8). The Pharaoh wanted to kill him, but his wife suggested they adopt him, so he would become a son to them. **“And the Pharaoh’s wife said he is a joy for me and you, don’t kill him. He might benefit us, or we might adopt him as a son”** (28:9). He agreed after hesitating. Moses (PBUH) was dark in colour which made the Pharaoh agree, as he was close to their colour. God Almighty also bestowed on Moses’ love from Him as He says: **“And I have bestowed on you love from Me”** (20:39).

However, **“The heart of Moses’ mother became empty, and she almost disclosed the matter but We strengthened her heart so she would be among the believers”** (28:10). God promised

Moses' mother that He would return him to her as He said: "**And we inspired Moses' mother: do suckle him, but if you are worried for him, place him in the Yam (river) and have no fear and do not grieve for We will return him to you and make him a messenger**" (28:7). "**And she told his sister: 'follow him'; and she observed him as if he was a stranger to her while they were heedless**" (28:11). Moses has already refused to suckle in the Pharaoh's palace in spite of all the efforts they attempted. The Almighty says: "**And We had already forbidden foster-mothers for him**" (28:12). They feared he would perish from hunger so his sister, who was watching him secretly from the minute he was put in the basket and placed in the river until he reached them, said: "**Shall I show you a household who will rear him for you and sincerely take care of him?**" (28:12). They accepted her suggestion because they feared that the child would perish.

"So, we returned him to his mother so that she would become joyous and not be sad and learn that God's promise is Truth but the majority of the people do not know" (28:13). Moses' mother was brought to the palace to feed him, and

henceforth, she enjoyed his company for the rest of her life. So, he was raised and brought up in the royal palace until he was mature. God says: **“And when he reached maturity, we bestowed on him wisdom and knowledge. This is how we reward the benevolent”** (28:14). Regarding this phase of his life, God related the Pharaoh’s words: **“Did we not bring you up amongst us from infancy and you spent many years of your life with us?”** (26:18).

Moses (PBUH) grew strong in build, and he had a sharp mood and disposition to the extent that he used to stumble over his words at times. This is evident from his saying: **“And untie my tongue so they would understand what I am saying”** (20:27-28). This is also evident in what he said when he wanted to excuse himself from taking on the duties of God’s message: **“He said My Lord, I fear that they would disbelieve me and I would become impatient and my tongue would not be fluent, so send to Aaron”** (26: 12-13).

One day he went out of the Pharaoh’s palace towards the city: **“He entered the city while its people were unaware, he encountered two men fighting with one another - one of his**

people and the other of his enemies. The one of his people asked for his help against his enemy, so Moses struck him with his fist and killed him” (28:15). Moses did not intend to kill him, that is why “**he said: this is the devil’s work. He is an evidently misleading enemy”** (28:15). Moses regretted killing a person, so he took refuge in God: “**He said My Lord, I have been unjust to myself; forgive me. So, He forgave him for He is the Merciful Forgiver”** (28:16). At this moment he took an oath upon himself: “**He said My Lord, for what you have bestowed on me I will not be a supporter of the criminals”** (28:17). He did not return to the Pharaoh’s palace: “**He remained fearful and watchful in the city and the person who asked for his help the day before called out to him** (for support against another enemy)” (28:18). Moses saw ill behaviour in the man who is from his people. He fought a man the day before and was doing the same the following day, and as a result: “**Moses told him: you are indeed deeply in the wrong”** (28:18). The man felt sharpness in Moses’ words and feared for himself knowing Moses’ mighty power: “**And when he (Moses) was about to strike the one who was as enemy of both of them,”** (28:19) the Israeli thought that Moses wanted to punish him for his bad

behaviour. He knew that a punch from Moses meant death, as he had witnessed it the day before with his own eyes; therefore, he said: **“Moses, do you want to kill me just as you have killed a person yesterday? You only want to be an oppressor on earth, and you do not want to be one of the rectifiers”** (28:19). So, Moses left the two men alone and did not interfere in the matter. The Nubian man heard that it was Moses who killed one of them the day before and the news spread in the city and reached its furthest ends where the Pharaoh lives. Hence, **“A man came from the furthest end of the city and said Moses, the people are plotting against you to kill you, so leave. I am advising you. So, he left afraid and watchful and said: My Lord, save me from the unjust people”** (28:20-21).

The Migration of Moses

Moses (PBUH) left Napata and ran away from the Pharaoh's rule. He passed through Kemet and was fearful and watchful, for Kemet was under the Pharaoh's rule. He did not know where he was heading but the divine care guided his direction. The Almighty says: "**When he headed towards Midian, he said I hope that My Lord will direct me to the right path**" (28:22). He passed by Kemet towards the land of Levant and reached Jordan and the city of Midian where Jethro (Shueyb) the Prophet of God lived: "**And when he reached, he arrived at the wells of Midian, he found there a large group of men who were watering [their herds and flocks]; and at some distance from them he came upon two women who were keeping back their flock.** He asked [them]: "**What is the matter with you?**" They said: "**We do not water [our animals] until the herdsmen leave, and our father is a big sheikh**" (28:24). The phrase 'big sheikh' does not mean an incapable old man but indicates he is big in status, so he does not compete with the shepherds for water. This was verified later by what was agreed

between him and Moses, Peace Be Upon Them, in the marriage contract; for it shows his stay for ten years to fulfil the contract. Moses realized this with his prophetic sense, so **“He watered for them then went to the shade and said: My Lord, in spite of the good you have bestowed on me, I am needy”** (28:24). It is said in this verse **“My Lord, in spite of the good you have bestowed on me, I am needy”** is the best prayer for marriage. **“Then, one of them walked shyly towards him and said My father is inviting you in order to repay you for watering for us”** (28:25). Moses rose with her accepting the invitation and asked of Jethro’s daughter to walk behind him and give him directions to protect her from thinking that he is looking at her if she walked in front of him. This is the manner of the prophets. He carried on this way till they reached the house of Jethro, the prophet of God. **“And when he arrived and narrated the stories to him”** (28:25), God’s prophet Jethro listened to him. When he finished his narration of the Pharaoh’s despondence and what he did to the Children of Israel and what he did by killing the Nubian, **“he said: don’t worry; you have been saved from the unjust people”** (28:25). The two daughters of Jethro were listening to Moses as he narrated to their father what happened to him,

and they saw what he did with strength and courtesy as he watered for them. **“One of them said: Father hires him, for the best you would hire is the strong and trustworthy”** (28:26). Jethro could tell from his daughter’s words that she liked Moses, and he saw, with the prophets’ wisdom, that he should win Moses into his service and marry him to the daughter from whom he sensed, through her words, her initial acceptance in her praise of Moses as strong and trustworthy. **“He said I want to give you in marriage one of these two daughters of mine”** (28:27). Jethro (PBUH) did not specify which daughter, in order to leave the choice to both parties, because it is the basis of marriage, but he specified the dowry by his service on condition that **“you serve me eight years and if you complete ten then it is (favour) from you. I don’t want to burden you, and God willing, you will find that I am among the righteous”** (28:27). It is known that the dowry is the woman’s right in a marriage contract, and so it was the same here for the service of Moses to Jethro for this period was supposed to be carried out by the daughter, so this service was her dowry because she would be better off. Moses accepted the offer and said: **“this is between you and me whichever time I carry out there is no**

transgression against me, and our reliance is on God in what we have said” (28:28). The contract took place with the knowledge of Jethro and Moses, Peace Be Upon Them, that neither of them would die during the eight years they agreed upon, nor would the woman in the contract, rather they knew that they would live for more than this if the contract should become ten years. God’s prophets are far from ignorance, and they are above taking a contract that they cannot fulfil. This is part of the knowledge of the unseen which God bestows on some of his worshippers. It resembles the foretelling of Joseph that his father would recover his sight when his shirt will be thrown on his face; and in Jacob’s finding the aroma of Joseph when the caravan of his children left Kemet with the shirt of Joseph Peace Be Upon Them.

The Return Home

Moses lived with and served prophet Jethro for ten years. Prophet Muhammad (PBHPF) said that Moses carried out the full period of service ¹¹. **“When Moses carried out the time”** (28:29), he and his wife bade farewell of Jethro (PBUH). Then he **“left with his family”** (28:29) and went back home where his mother and brother Aaron were. He believed he was safe since he was told by Prophet Jethro **“Don’t worry, you have been saved from the unjust people”** (28:25).

There is no mention of whether Moses was older or younger than Aaron. Most probably Aaron was older because he could not have been born after the Pharaoh’s verdict of killing the male children of the Israelites. Aaron would not have survived if he was born after Moses. Also, Moses said to his Lord **“Send for Aaron”** (26:13) which indicates that Aaron was worthy of being assigned and it is a sign that he was the older.

¹¹ Al Hakim, Al Mustadrak Ala Al Sahihayn.

Moses did not intend to confront any of his countrymen. He was content with going safely back to his country and living with his wife, mother, and brother away from the eyes of the ruler and his soldiers. He was not aware of the great matter that awaited him in the country he grew up in and in which he knew how his people suffered the injustice of the Pharaoh and his soldiers. The Almighty says: **“You have remained for years with the people of Midian, then you have returned upon fate, O Moses”** (20:40). Fate brought him back to his motherland **“... so that God might accomplish a matter that already had been ordained”** (8:42).

Moses deliberately went back home at night **“... he left with his family...”** (28:29) in order not to be discovered by the Pharaoh and his soldiers. In this darkness **“He saw a fire by the side of the *Tor*”** (28:29). The *Tor* might be what is called today Al-Barkal mountain that lies near Karima in northern Sudan; for the Arabic word *Tor* is another name for mountain just as *Bahr* or sea is another name for river. Also, the Arabic word *Saahil* or seacoast means riverbank, and ship means boat. God has mentioned *Tor* in the sense of a mountain several times in the Holy Quran: *Tor of Sineen* (95:2), *Tor*

Sina'a (23:20), and mentioned the *Tor* alone (52:1), (19:52), (20:80), and (28:29). He swore by the *Tor* and *Tor Sineen* and mentioned *Tor Sina'a* with the olive tree. Moses (PBUH) wanted to inspect the matter: **“He said to his family: wait I have seen a fire; I might bring back to you some news or a burning brand from the fire you might warm yourself”** (28:29).

“When he reached it, he was called from the (burning) tree at the right-side bank of the valley in the blessed place: O Moses I am God, the Lord of the worlds” (28:30). Moses heard the call from the tree in the blessed place of the sacred valley of *Towa*. He was overwhelmed by hearing the divine voice coming from the tree, so he headed towards the fire and was surprised to see the fire igniting in the tree without burning it. **“When he reached it, he was called: Behold! those who are in the fire are blessed and (also) those around it; glory be to God the Lord of the worlds. O Moses, it is I, God the Almighty and Wise”** (27:8-9). **“It is I, your Lord; so, take off your shoes you are in the sacred valley of Towa; and I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed. It is I God, there is no deity except Me; so, worship me and perform the prayer for**

My remembrance. The Hour (of the end) is coming; I barely hide it in order that every soul shall be rewarded with what it has earned; so, let not the one, who does not believe in it and followed his desires, turn you away from (getting ready for) it, lest you perish” (20:12-16).

After Moses heard the divine speech and God chose him and warned him against those who do not believe in Him and in the Day of Judgment, he felt that such a great matter was too heavy for him. So, God Almighty, while Moses was in His presence, started to be subtle with him as the Almighty is the Subtle. He asked him in a soothing manner while He is the All Knowing: **“What is this in your right-hand O Moses”** (20:17). Here Moses felt the coolness of soothing and the sweetness of Divine friendliness, so he quickly answered hoping for more conversation: **“He said: this is my staff, I lean upon it, and waive my sheep with it, and I have many other uses of it”** (20:18).

The answer to the question of God Almighty needs some introductory phrases. A good example lies in the answer that Jesus (PBUH) gave in reply to Almighty’s question when He told him: **“Have you**

said to the people” (5:116). Jesus answered: “**If I had said so, then surely You have known it”** (5:116). Jesus answered in this way to attribute the knowledge to God.

God said of Moses: “**And I have bestowed on you love from Me and you would be fashioned the way I see (you)”** (20:39). The answer given by Moses was one rendered in ecstasy as he was befriended by the Divine and took pleasure in being addressed by Him. He went on to describe that what is in his right hand is a staff and it belongs to him! Moreover, he elaborated by explaining the things he performs with it like reclining on it and waving his sheep with it. He also hid some of the usages he has for it. So, he received from God Almighty an instruction that clarified to him the avoidance of being certain of his perception of anything in the Almighty’s presence. At the same time this instruction was a miracle in the message of Moses to the Pharaoh: “**He said cast it down, O Moses; and he threw it; then it became a moving snake”** (20:19-20). Here Moses (PBUH) became scared of what he saw as his staff changed when God Almighty said to him: “**And throw down your staff”** (28:31) in order to show him this unique quality and the

intervention of the divine competence in the nature of creation, which is beyond human comprehension. **“And when he saw it shaking as if it were a demon, he turned away and did not look back”** (28:31). So, he was called by God Almighty: **“O Moses, come forward, and have no fear, for you are among the safe (ones)”** (28:31). **“O, Moses, don’t be afraid, for messengers in My presence shall have no fear; except those who were unjust and then replaced the bad with good; for I am the merciful forgiver”** (27:10-11). The one who replaced the bad with good from the prophets was Moses (PBUH), because he killed the Nubian and he asked for God’s forgiveness, and He forgave him. Then God addresses him concerning his staff: **“He said take it and don’t be afraid We will revert it to its former state”** (20:21). **“And place your hand close to your side, it will come forth [shining] white, without blemish, as another miracle [sign of Our grace], in order to show you some of our major miracles”** (20:22-23). After God Almighty assured Moses that he is safe, He showed him this verification to become a signifier and a proof of the truth of his message to those he is sent to. Then He told him: **“Go to the Pharaoh for,**

verily, he has transgressed all bounds of equity" (20:24).

Moses found the divine assignment and his choice of being one of the messengers too big a mission; so, he excused himself from carrying out the message: **"He said: My Lord, I fear that they will call me a liar and I will become impatient and my tongue will not speak fluently, so send to Aaron. And I have committed a sin against them, and I fear they will kill me"** (26:12-14). No excuse can rid one from carrying out a divine order, therefore God Almighty rejected his excuse: **"He said No,"** (26:15) because a divine order has to be carried out in any case and there is no reversing for it. But God Almighty kindly assured him against his fears then added his brother Aaron to the message to strengthen him: **"Go both with our signs (miracles) for We are listening with both of you. Approach the Pharaoh and say we are both the Messenger from the Lord of the Worlds, that you send with us the Children of Israel"** (26:15-17). It is noteworthy that the Almighty said: **"and say we are both the messenger from the Lord of the Worlds"** and He did not say "and we are both *the messengers* of the Lord of the Worlds", which is a reference to the

divine order that you [Moses] are the only messenger and you cannot excuse yourself. To be kind to Moses, He added his brother Aaron as Almighty said: **“Go both with our signs”** (26:15) while the words are addressed to Moses. When Moses heard Almighty’s words: “Go both with our signs,” he realized that Aaron has become a partner in the matter. He was not content with these verses, and he found the opportunity to ask for what aids him to carry out his message, and assert that his brother Aaron should be involved in the order of the message:

“He said My Lord, ease my chest and ease my mission and untie the knot in my tongue for them to understand what I say. And appoint for me a minister from my family: my brother Aaron, to strengthen myself with and involve him in my mission in order (that both of us) to glorify You a lot and remember You a lot; indeed, You have been acquainted with us” (20:25-35). **“He said you have been granted what you asked O Moses”** (20:36).

It worth mentioning the emphasis here on the Almighty’s words: **“in order to glorify You a lot and remember you a lot.”** Glorifying (*Tasbeeh*) is

different to remembering (*Dhikr*)! So, the meaning of remembering or *Dhikr* that Moses (PBUH) meant after glorifying is a matter that deserves contemplation.

Then God reminds Moses once more of the favours He bestowed upon him when he was born: “**And We have bestowed favour on you another time; when We inspired your mother with this inspiration: put him in the basket and place him in the Yam (river) and the Yam will drift him onto the shore, and he will be taken up by one who is an enemy to Me and an enemy to him; And I have bestowed on you love from Me and you would be fashioned as I see (you). As your sister walks and says shall I show you (Pharaoh & his family) who can take care of him? So, we returned you to your mother so that her eye would rejoice and she would not grief and you have killed a soul and We saved you from gloom and We tried you in various ways. Then you remained for years with the people of Midian, then you have returned upon fate, O Moses; and I have fashioned you for Myself, so, go you and your brother with My Signs and do not stay away from remembering Me**” (20:37-42).

So, Moses did not hesitate after that in carrying out the message and showed readiness and he walked through the valley of Towa to the east of Al Tor (Al-barkal) and walked parallel to the Nile then crossed it (see Map 2 The Crossing page 138) He went to his family's houses at night and met his brother Aaron and told him the great news. Then God inspired them: "**Go both of you to the Pharaoh for he has become a despot and speak to him kindly that he might remember or revere (God)**" (20:43-44).

"They said our Lord; we fear he would act hastily with regard to us, or he transgress all bounds (of reason and equity)" (20:45).

"He said do not be afraid, for I am with you, I see and hear. So, go both to him and tell him we are (both) messengers of your Lord so, send with us the Children of Israel and do not torture them. We have come to you with a sign of Grace from your Lord, and peace be upon who follows the right path. We have been inspired that suffering shall befall all who lies and turns away" (20:56-48). It should be noticed here that the divine order was addressed to both Moses and Aaron. This is why the divine order

came: “So go to him and tell him we are (both) messengers of your Lord” and He did not say “We are the Messenger of your Lord” because the addressing earlier on was meant for Moses (PBUH) but here it is addressed to both of them.

Meeting Al-Khidr

Moses found out that at the place where the two rivers meet is a holy man to whom God has given knowledge of His own, so Moses decided to go to him. God's speaking to Moses ignited love in Moses for everything connected to God especially saints and holy ones. He informed his student Joshua of his intention to go where the man is, even if it cost him many years of walking. **"And Moses told his lad: I will not give up until I reach where the two seas merge or carry on for long periods of time"** (18:60). Then Moses headed South parallel to the river Nile with his lad until they reached the place where the river of Atbara meets the River Nile (see Map 3 Kingdom of Kush page 162). There they sat to rest under the shade of a rock. Joshua carried the provisions for travel including a fish for food. They ate half of it for breakfast and kept the other half for dinner. But something unexpected happened when Joshua placed the fish near the water. The water touched the fish, and it came back to life and swam away. Almighty says: **"When they reached the meeting point of the two seas, they forgot their *Hoot* (fish) and it**

took its way into the sea and disappeared from sight” (18:61).

Moses rose in a hurry from his place and resumed his serious pursuit followed by Joshua **“and when they were far beyond”** (18:62) the place where the river Atbara meets the River Nile, Moses felt tired and in need of food: **“he said to his lad: bring us the food, truly we have suffered much fatigue at this (stage of) our journey”** (18:62).

The answer from his lad was filled with apology and wonder: **“He said: did you see when we rested by the rock, I forgot the Hoot, and only Satan made me forget to mention it, and it amazingly found its course to the sea”** (18:62).

It seems that the Arabic word *hoot* (whale) also means fish and some Arab people still call fish by the word *hoot*. Moses was not concerned with losing the fish that was prepared for their dinner, and that took its course to the sea, as much as he was concerned with the abnormality of what happened. He realized that it is a sign that concerns him and that the place where the two rivers meet is the place he was meant to go to. His tiredness and hunger disappeared and **“He said**

this is what we wanted; and they turned back upon their course” to where the sign took place.

The Almighty says: **“They found a servant of Ours on whom We bestowed mercy from Us and taught him from Our Own knowledge”** (18:65). The meeting was where the Atbara River meets the River Nile as we mentioned. When Moses (PBUH) met this holy man, he greeted him.

“Moses said to him can I follow you so that I learn guidance from what you have learnt” (18:66).

The holy man (al-Khidr) knew that Moses was a Prophet with a sharia/ Law that required him to object to things that contradict it, and for this reason he explained to Moses:

“He said: you will not be able to be patient with me; and how can you be patient towards what you are not acquainted with” (18:67-68).

The sentence **“what you are not acquainted with”** does not mean al-Khidr implies ignorance on Moses’ behalf. It rather means that what al-Khidr will carry out will not fall within the realm of the sharia/law Moses has been given. Moses

learnt that the doings of this man might apparently seem in opposition to the Law, but he decided to see the truth of the matter:

“He said: God willing you will find me among the patient, and I will not disobey any commands of yours” (18:69).

At this point al-Khidr placed a condition:

“He said: then, if you follow me, do not ask me about anything until I speak to you about it” (18:70).

“And they carried on until they embarked the *Safina* (ship) and he (al-Khidr) made a hole in it” (18:71).

“He (Moses) said: you have made a hole in it, so you would drown its people! you have done a grievous thing” (18:71).

Sharia compels Moses to object to the apparent transgression therefore his objection was because of abiding by sharia and not out of ignorance. It seems that the word ship - *safina* - here means a wooden boat, because it is easy to make a hole in.

“He (al-Khidr) said: didn’t I tell you that you will not be able to be patient with me” (18:72). So, Moses took back what he said and apologized saying: **“Do not rebuke me for forgetting; and do not over burden me with my matter (of following you) by raising difficulties”** (18:73).

Moses forgot that he agreed not to oppose any matter until al-Khidr explains his action. What makes him forgetful is his sharpness and firmness to observe the sharia he is sent to endorse. Since this is difficult for him to bear, he told al-Khidr: **“and do not over burden me with my matter (of following you) by raising difficulties.”** Al-Khidr accepted Moses’ apology as he knows he is sincere, and they continue their companionship. **“They carried on until they met a boy and he killed him”** (18:74). Here the matter was neither acceptable nor bearable for Moses and his legislation. He could not keep quiet as the person killed is an innocent child who is legislatively innocent of any crime that could be ascribed to him. **“He said you have slain an innocent soul who has slain no soul! you have committed something unacceptable”** (18:74).

Moses (PBUH) was not satisfied with objecting, but he described what al-Khidr did as “something unacceptable”. Al-Khidr reminded him that he would not be able to be patient with his actions. **“He said: didn’t I tell you that you will not be able to be patient with me”** (18:75).

Here Moses realized he broke the agreement for the second time and was embarrassed and sensed the difficulty of keeping quiet towards violations that go against sharia.

“He (Moses) said: if I ask you about something after this, then do not accompany me; you had enough apologies from me” (18:75).

He placed a condition on himself and an order for al-Khidr that compels him not to accompany him in case he objects for a third time. **“So, they continued until they came upon a village where they asked its people for food, but they refused to host them, and they found a wall that was tilting to fall, and he straightened it up”** (18:77). As the people of the village refused to host Moses and al-Khidr, Moses saw that taking payment for carrying out work was necessary in return for their inhospitable treatment. He

conveyed this to al-Khidr. **“He said: if you desire, you can take payment for it”** (18:77).

Here al-Khidr was polite with Moses and carried out what he ordered him to do when he said to him **“if I ask you about something after this then do not accompany me”** (18:76) so, he immediately put an end to their companionship and announced: **“This is a separation between me and you; I will tell you the interpretation of what you were unable to endure”** (18:78).

Al-Khidr started to verify his action concerning the matters that apparently seemed against the sharia of Moses (PBUH) and said:

“As for the ship, it was owned by poor people who works in the sea, and I wanted to make it faulty as a king was after them who takes every ship by force” (18:79).

His description of the owners of the ship as poor indicates that it is a small sailing boat made of wood, that's why it was easy for al-Khidr to pierce it. Al-Khidr's action was meant to damage the boat so that it would not be confiscated by the aggressing king. The strange matter is that the boat did not sink, and no water came into it. The

people who were on it did not notice al-Khidr's action because no water came into the boat and if they had seen him pierce it, they would not have let him. It is not an easy matter to pierce a boat without anyone on board noticing or objecting because this action takes time and requires the use of tools. This situation is like the incident of Moses' basket in which he was placed in the river. It might have had many holes as it was done in haste but despite this Moses did not drown!

“As for the boy, his parents were believers and we feared he would wear them out with his despondence and infidelity; so, we wanted their Lord to replace him with someone better than him in purity (of soul) and closer to kindness” (18:80-81).

Here al-Khidr's explanation seems quite difficult as it goes beyond reason. This asserts that the actions of the person with divine knowledge cannot be pinned down by the apparent sharia, logic, and obvious common sense. There seems to be intervention from other powers in al-Khidr's action in this incident.

It is worth noticing that regarding the source of will power in his actions, al-Khidr concerning the

boat said: “I wanted”, but in this incident, he said “we wanted” after he said, “we feared”. Here too the parents of the boy did not see al-Khidr killing their son otherwise they would have stopped him. Could it be that while al-Khidr carried out his actions he was only seen by Moses and not by others? Does this mean that al-Khidr cannot be seen except by those whose souls are pure? In his meeting with Moses at the place where the two rivers merge, there had been an indication of this as the affair of bringing the fish to life was quite peculiar. Therefore, the question is where was al-Khidr when Moses sat with his lad by the rock where the two rivers merge? He certainly was not absent, and Moses knew he was present, but there had to be something to indicate his presence. The indication appeared to Joshua and not to Moses in bringing the fish to life. When Joshua told Moses about it, he learnt that this was the place of al-Khidr so he returned and found him there. We do not find any mention of the lad after Moses met al-Khidr. It seems that he could not see what al-Khidr did to object to it, so he seemed unaware of what was going on! Some people speak of al-Khidr's presence and others deny it; the matter remains with God. The story of killing the boy has similarity in Moses' life. He had previously killed the Nubian

without there being a reason to kill him, although Moses did not intend it.

Al-Khidr continued explaining his actions: **“As for the wall it was for two orphan boys in the city and beneath it was a treasure for them and their father was righteous, so your Lord wanted them to grow strong and get their treasure out as a mercy from your Lord; and I did not carry it out of my own accord; this is the interpretation of what you could not be patient with”** (18:82).

The reason this time for al-Khidr’s action is that the two orphan boys were not old enough and their father was righteous. So, he repaired the wall to preserve the treasure for them for the sake of their father’s righteousness until they had grown up. This action resembles what Moses carried out when he watered for Jethro’s daughters without return. But this time al-Khidr did not act out of his own accord as he said: **“your Lord wanted”** and he said about all his actions: I did not carry them out of my own accord. He attributed all the will and power to God in what appeared to be carried out as a result of his own will as he said, **“I wanted”**. He also attributed the will to God in

what appeared to be coming from a joint will with the will of God in saying "**we wanted**". Here too it seems that the matter indicates the strangeness of al-Khidr's action (PBUH) for he did not destroy the wall and rebuild it, but he straightened it up so that it would not fall. That means it was leaning down and about to fall, so he put it back as the Qur'anic verse is precise where the Almighty says: "**tilting to fall**" that is 'eventually will fall', so he "**straightened it up**". The reason that al-Khidr abstained from asking for payment could be that he cannot be seen by people during his action and that his actions in themselves are an order from God. The Almighty says regarding the people attending a person at his death moment: "**And during that time you will be watching, and We are closer to him than you are, but you do not see**" (56:85). In another context He says: "**Behold! I do swear by what you see and what you do not see**" (69:38-39). The same goes for the story of amending the wall for the two orphans who have not grown up and their father was righteous. It is the same as what happened to Moses (PBUH) with Jethro's two daughters and their father was righteous, so he watered for them and did not ask them for payment for what he did.

The actions of Moses (PBUH) were preceded by their justifications and reason, but al-Khidr's actions preceded their justifications.

The meeting of Moses with al-Khidr was essential in Moses' life (PBUH) as he was sharp in manner; and sharpness is usually followed by haste. Implementing the laws or sharia on people requires gentleness and treating people with mercy. For by being gentle, a reason might be found to excuse the person deemed wrongdoer by the one who perceived him as such. According to the Prophet Muhammad (PBHPF) "*Sight can be wrong, and hearing can be wrong.*" So, Moses took a lesson from what he saw with al-Khidr (PBUH). He is destined to meet a tyrant and the manner of treating people should be consistent, whether with a despot or a fair and just person. To be tolerant, careful, patient, and soft in words are the qualities of prophets and of whoever follows their example in dealing with others. Carrying out the message should never be accompanied by cruelty and harshness by God's prophets or those who follow their path lead by their example. The final message came to the best of the prophets and messengers asserting that this is the way, and it cannot be otherwise. Prophet Muhammad

(PBHPF) says: "*I have been sent to complete the best of manners.*" Whoever thinks that the message came for something else should check his religion.

Meeting The Pharaoh

Moses and Aaron (PBU) went to the Pharaoh and addressed him with soft words as is the habit of prophets who bear impeccable manners. They told him: **“Send with us the Children of Israel”** (26:17). The tyrant looked at Moses and with the vanity of a boasting ruler to embarrass him:

The Pharaoh said: **“Did we not bring you up among us as a newly born and you lived years of your life among us; and you did commit that [heinous] deed of yours and you are one of the disbelievers”** (26:18-19).

Moses did not accept the Pharaoh describing him as a disbeliever, therefore he replied: **“I did it then and I was of those who were astray; and I ran from you when I feared you so, My Lord bestowed on me rule and made me one of the messengers; and is this a bounty with which you boast upon me, while you have enslaved the Children of Israel?”** (26:20-22).

It worth mentioning, in this context, God’s words as delivered by Moses (PBUH) **“My Lord**

bestowed on me rule,” (26:21) which means the sharia/Law and not power, for every prophet has sharia. That’s why he added **“and made me one of the messengers”** as Moses was not a ruler.

The Pharaoh felt the weakness of his argument for rejecting the message of Moses and his call to liberate the Children of Israel, on the grounds of his favour of adopting him. As a result, he addressed his words to him and his brother Aaron:

The Pharaoh said: **“Who, then, O Moses, is the Lord of you two?”** (20:49).

Moses said: **“Our Lord is He Who gave to everything (He created) its form and nature, and further, gave (it) guidance”** (20:50).

Pharaoh said: **“What then is the state of the early generations?”** (20:51).

Moses said: **“The knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a Record. My Lord neither errs nor forgets. He has made the earth as a bed, has enabled you to go about therein by roads, and has sent down water from the sky, and thereby We have brought forth diverse kinds of vegetation. Eat (for yourselves) and pasture**

your cattle: verily, in this are Signs for those endued with understanding. From it (earth) we have created you and in it we return you and from it we shall bring you out once more" (20:52-55).

We have mentioned that the Pharaoh was steeped in the oneness of God as he did not see any doer except God. And, since he is the ruler, then too his action – as he sees it – is exalted over the action of others.

Moses came to remind him of God's action in the universe as He levelled the earth and brought down the rain and brought out plants, and creation, death and resurrection. This verification by the signs of grace overwhelmed the Pharaoh, and he wanted to win against Moses. This made him ask Moses about the nature of God, knowing truly well that it is impossible to answer such a question:

"The Pharaoh said: what is the Lord of the worlds" (26:23).

Moses gave an indirect answer to the question:

“He said: (He is) the Lord of the Heavens and earth and what is between them if you have faith” (26:24).

The answer of Moses (PBUH) was about God’s Lordship of the heavens and earth and what is between them while the question was not about the subjects of the Lord but about the Lord himself. The Pharaoh felt victorious for the lack of an answer and deliberately went on to embarrass Moses:

“He said to those around him: are you listening (to what he says)” (26:25).

For Moses could not substantiate what the Lord of the worlds is so he (PBUH) felt the awkwardness of the situation and wanted to avoid the question; thus, he continued:

“He said: He is your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers” (26:26).

The Pharaoh looked at his crowd pointing out the disrupted answer of Moses and making fun of him because he did not clarify the nature of the Lord of all creation whom he asked about; therefore, he said:

“Your Messenger that was sent to you is mad”
(26:27).

Moses insisted on informing people of God's graces, because it is not possible to answer the question about the essence of God Almighty:

Moses said: “**He is' the Lord of where the sun rises and where the sun sets and what is between them if you rationalise**” (26:28).

At this point the Pharaoh felt victorious and it was apparent to the people that Moses could not give an answer. The Pharaoh wanted to show off his Lordship in public after it became obvious to them that Moses could not answer his question:

The Pharaoh said: **“If you choose a god other than me, I will make you a prisoner”** (26:29).

Here the Pharaoh diverted from the rationale of the conversation in which he sensed victory, therefore, he started intruding upon Moses' freedom with his authority. The purpose of the message of God is to prevent this kind of injustice towards people's freedom, which is rejected by all heavenly messages that came to form virtuous societies and to respect human beings and their

freedom. Moses found the chance in this transition to show God's signs with which he was sent to face the Pharaoh:

Moses said: **“Even if I came to you with something that clearly shows the truth?”** (26:30).

The Pharaoh thought that what appeared to him from Moses' reply was inability to give the right answer. However, the inability to give an answer to the nature of God is indeed the right answer. He thought that this inability of Moses will prevail in their confrontation, therefore He said to Moses: **“bring it (the miracle) forth if you are truthful”** (26:31).

This is what Moses (PBUH) wanted:

“Thereupon, he threw down his staff and it was clearly a snake; and he drew forth his hand, and it was white to those who were looking” (26:32-33).

The Pharaoh never thought that after his victory over Moses in the debate that Moses had another matter in forwarding the message. That's why he said: **“bring it forth if you are truthful”** (26:31).

When he saw the miraculous signs, he described them as magic and directed his speech to his consort for their opinion in the matter and how to deal with it as it seemed to him quite dangerous. The matter was quite puzzling:

“He said to the assembly around him: “Verily, this is indeed a sorcerer of great knowledge who wants to take you out of your land with his magic so what do you command” (26:34-35).

It seems that the Pharaoh addressed some of Moses' people who were aiding him and was making them inimical to Moses. One of them was Qarun (Korah): **“Qarun was one of Moses' people”** (28:78). This is apparent in his saying: **“who wants to take you out of your land”** (26:35) because Moses only asked to take the Children of Israel: **“Send with us the Children of Israel”** (26:17).

The Pharaoh relented about imprisoning Moses because of the signs Moses showed him. It seems he became somewhat afraid, and this is why he said to those around him: **“so what do you command”** (26:35), which shows his perplexity and anxiety as well as he wanted people to become inimical towards Moses.

“They said: “Let him and his brother wait a while and send unto all cities heralds who will bring you every knowledgeable magician” (26:36-37).

The Pharaoh liked the opinion of the crowd around him then he wanted to divert the attention of those present away from what Moses has come with and divert them from what the message calls for; so, he accused him of being a magician and showed a bit of challenge:

“He said have you come to take us out of our land with your magic O Moses? We will come to you with a similar kind of magic. Let there be between us and you an appointment which neither we nor you forgo in a common place” (20:57-58).

It is to be noted that the Pharaoh addressed Moses in a way that does not differentiate between them (the Nubians) and the Children of Israel: **“to take us out of our land”** (20:57), while Moses is only asking for the Children of Israel. This statement by the Pharaoh was only to show the Children of Israel who were with him that there was no difference between them, in order to make them inimical to Moses (PBUH).

Moses saw an opportunity to openly show the miracles of his Lord and to deliver his message as he was certain of victory. He chose the day of the Pharaoh's celebration as all the people gather to watch the Pharaonic display. So, he addressed the Pharaoh and his crowds with power and sharpness:

“He said: Your meeting is the Day of the Festival, and let the people be assembled when the sun is well up” (20:59). At this point the voices of the Pharaoh's crowd rose:

“Have you come unto us to pervert us from that (faith) in which we found our fathers, and that you two may own the place of greatness in the land? We will not believe you two” (10:78).
“And the Pharaoh said: bring me every potent magician” (10:79).

The Debate with the Magicians

When it was the Day of the Festival, during which the Pharaoh celebrates the anniversary of his coronation, all the people gathered: **“So, the magicians were assembled at the appointed time on a certain day. And it was said unto the people: Are you all together? For, we might follow the magicians if they are the victorious”** (26:38-40).

“When the magicians came, they said to the Pharaoh: Will there surely be a reward for us if we are the victorious?” (26:41).

“He said: “Yes - and, verily, in that case you shall be among those who are near (unto me)” (26:42).

The magicians then headed to the exhibition square to contest with Moses. Moses came out to them firm and confident - warning and threatening. He said to them: **“Woe unto you! Do not invent lies against God, lest He afflict you with most grievous suffering: for he who contrives (such) a lie fails miserably”** (20:61).

The magicians sensed the power, confidence, threat and truth in Moses' words: **"So they debated among themselves as to what to do; but they kept their counsel secret"** (20:62). The Pharaoh's people were suspicious and felt anxious when they heard of Moses' threats and menace to the magicians. They also saw how the magicians debated amongst themselves as a result of Moses' words, so they directed their speech to the magicians: **"They said those are two magicians who want to take you out of your land with their magic and do away with your exemplary way. So, gather your craftiness and come in line and whoever is superior today will be prosperous"** (20:63-64).

The magicians approached Moses politely to display what they had, and gave him the choice of who was to start:

They said: **"O Moses, either you throw, or we will be the first to throw"** (20:64).

He said: **"No, you throw first"** (20:65).

So, the magicians started to throw what they had: **"Then, their ropes and their rods - so it seemed**

to him on account of their magic - began to be in lively motion!" (20:66).

Moses looked at the large crowd who were overwhelmed with the great magic displayed by the magicians. The Almighty said:

"And when they threw down [their staffs], they cast a spell upon the people's eyes, and struck them with awe, and produced mighty sorcery" (7:116).

At this point, Moses had to show the crowds The Almighty's power when he saw what the magicians had done and how the people regarded it as tremendous. This situation demanded that Moses should give his reaction to what he had seen; so, he said: **"What you have contrived is merely sorcery; verily, God will make it vain! Verily, God does not further the works of those who spread corruption. God, by His words, does prove and establish the Truth, however much the sinners may hate it!"** (10:81-82).

Then, it was the moment when Moses should show people the difference between magic and the miraculous signs of God that nullify the magic and the corruption of those who practice it. God made

Moses realize that those magicians were forced to practice magic, whereas they were holy men of God. This is shown in what will follow as well as in their politeness when they addressed Moses. God told that Moses **“felt fear inside of himself”** (20:68) when he realized that he was dealing with holy men and he knew how God is protective over his holy people. He was also able to know from the actions of al-Khidr (PBUH) that appeared to be in conflict with God’s law. He was not afraid of magic as prophets have no fear, and no prophet can fear a magician. The Almighty says: **“the Messengers have no fear in My presence”** (27:10). But his fear was from God’s unpredictable planning: **“Only the losers feel safe towards (the unpredictable) planning of God”** (7:99). God’s assurance has reached him that these are now just magicians; they are yet to be holy men of God: **“We said: have no fear (O Moses) for you are the superior; and throw what is in your right hand it will do away with what they have faked; what they have faked is only the cunningness of a magician, and a magician will never succeed, no matter what he does”** (20:68-69). Moses enacted the command of God: **“So, Moses threw his staff and it started gulping their falsehood”** (26:45). **“Thus, truth was confirmed, and all**

that they did was made of no effect. And thus, they were vanquished there and then, and became utterly humiliated. And down fell the sorcerers, prostrating themselves. They said: we believe in the Lord of the worlds; the Lord of Moses and Aaron" (7:118-122).

The Pharaoh was incensed and filled with indignation as he screamed at the magicians, threatening and warning upon seeing them prostrate. The Almighty said: **"And the magicians fell in prostration and said we believe in the Lord of Aaron and Moses" (20:70).**

The Pharaoh said: **"you believed in him before I give you permission? This is a plotting you have come within the city to drive its people out" (7:123). "Indeed, he is your chief who taught you magic. Now surely, I shall cut off your hands and your feet alternately¹², and I shall crucify you on the trunks of palm trees, and you shall know for certain which of us has sterner and more lasting punishment" (20:71).**

¹² i.e. right hand and left foot.

It is worth mentioning the Pharaoh's words: "**I shall crucify you on the trunks of palm trees**" that clearly indicate that the Pharaoh of Moses was from the North of Sudan where there are palm trees. Nonetheless, his power extended over to Kemet as he said: "**Does not the reign over Misra belong to me?**" The pyramids of historical Egypt have nothing to do with the matter of Moses nor the whole of the ancient Egyptian civilization as well as the Red Sea. The place of the story is where the river runs and where the palm trees are in the land which God had blessed. For the sake of this blessing God drew out of it the people of the Pharaoh who were tyrants and arrogant and He made the weak inherit it. The Almighty says: "**And We caused the folk who were surpassed to inherit the eastern parts of the land and the western parts thereof**" - that is east of the Nile and west of it - "**which We had blessed**" (7:137).

The magicians' answer to the Pharaoh's threats were stern and blunt, similar to his threatening. They said: "**We shall never prefer you to the Clear Signs that have come to us, or to Him Who created us! So, decree whatever you desire to decree for you can only do away with the life of this world. We have believed in our Lord, may**

He forgive us our faults and the magic you have forced upon us, for God is the best (choice for us) **and the everlasting** (bounty to have). **Verily, he who comes to his Lord as a sinner** (at Judgment), - **for him is Hell: therein he shall neither die nor live.** As for those who come to Him as Believers who have worked righteous deeds, - **for them are the exalted ranks, the gardens of Eden from underneath the rivers run where they are immortal; and this is the recompense of all who attain to purity”** (20:72-76).

It is apparent from what took place between Moses and the magicians that the magicians were from the Children of Israel because of the following:

1. The magicians asked the Pharaoh if he would give them a reward: **“He said: yes, and then you will be among the close** (nobles)” (26:42). For the Children of Israel were not among those close to the Pharaoh.
2. Moses addressed them in a sharp manner which indicates that they knew each other.

3. After Moses spoke sharply to them, they had a discussion amongst themselves which made the Pharaoh's crowd suspicious: "**So they debated among themselves as to what to do; but they kept their counsel secret**" (20:62).

4. The Pharaoh's people addressed the magicians saying that Moses and Aaron are two magicians of a different kind who wanted to take them out of their land as they asked to take the Children of Israel away from the Pharaoh's power and his land: "**They said those are two magicians who want to take you out of your land with their magic and do away with your exemplary way**" (20:63).

5. The manner of the magicians with Moses was polite when they addressed him; and they sought his permission as to who was to start: him or them.

6. The Pharaoh said to the magicians when Moses was victorious that they were of one kind: "**This is a plotting you have come with, in the city to drive its people out**" (7:123).

7. The Pharaoh's saying to the magicians: "**he is your chief who has taught you magic**" (20:71).

8. The way the magicians immediately reverted to faith when it was clear that Moses is truthful. They were from the lineage of prophets and were forced by the Pharaoh to do magic. **“We have believed in our Lord, may He forgive us our faults and the magic you have forced upon us, for God is the best (choice for us) and the everlasting (bounty to have)”** (20:73).

Moses (PBUH) left victorious and the Pharaoh was defeated in the magicians' confrontation he had set up for Moses. Thus, he started his media attack on Moses and his entourage excitedly encouraged him:

“The crowd of the Pharaoh’s people said (to him): will you leave Moses and his people to corrupt on earth and to abandon you and your gods?” (7:127).

The Pharaoh’s claim to divinity is known so how could he be told: “to abandon you and your gods”? The ‘gods of the Pharaoh’ in fact, refer to his forefathers as they too were considered deities.

The Pharaoh answered: **“we will slay their sons and spare their women, and we have a powerful control over them”** (7:127).

Then, the Pharaoh called his people: “..O people don't I have the reign of *Misra* and these rivers run underneath me, can't you see. Aren't I better than this contemptible man who can hardly express himself? He should have golden armlets bestowed on him or have angels escorting him. Thus, he (Pharaoh) made fools of his people, and they obeyed him: truly they were corrupt” (43:51-54).

Moreover, the Pharaoh thought of destroying Moses:

He said: “Leave me to slay Moses; and let him call on his Lord! What I fear is that he will change your religion, or he will cause mischief in the land!” (40:26).

Then Moses said: “I have taken refuge in my Lord and your Lord from every arrogant who does not believe in the day of Judgement” (40:27).

“Only a few of Moses' people believed in him fearing the persecution of the Pharaoh and their people (whom the Pharaoh turned against them), for the Pharaoh is exalted on earth and he transgressed all the bounds” (10:83).

This verse indicates that some of the people of Moses were among the helpers of the Pharaoh as Almighty says: **“fearing the persecution of the Pharaoh and their people”** (10:83). The greatest fear they held was being lured by their own people to the Pharaoh for Qarun was one of the people of Moses.

Then Moses said: **“O people if you believe in God then rely on Him if you are Muslims”** (10:84).

They said: **“In God we rely; O God, do not make us an allurement for the unjust people and save us with Your mercy from the disbelieving people”** (10:85-86).

Disruption started in the Nubian society that rejected change. A lot of talk was spreading about Moses' social revolution that also seemed to destroy the economic system; special concern for Qarun (Korah) – who was among the people of Moses as we mentioned – possessed uncountable treasures. If he were to go with the prophet of his people, then the economy would collapse, and it would lead the people to a crisis and a revolution.

“When Moses came to them with our clear signs, they said this is no more than false magic

and we have not heard of this before from our earlier fathers" (28:36).

News of what the Pharaoh had said and how he had threatened Moses with death and accused him of being no more than a false magician spread:

"Whatever be the Signs you bring, to work your sorcery upon us, we shall never believe in you" (7:132).

The Believer from The Pharaoh's People

No doubt there existed some voices in society that were in opposition to the ruler and his followers. A voice bearing reason cannot be annulled in the whole nation even if it were repressed and manipulated by a powerful despot. Some people see that the nation's salvation lies contrary to what the ruler is at and might even publicly declare their opinions. While some will remain silent out of fear, others will dread to express their opinion due to weakness in faith.

A believer's voice rose from the conscience of the Pharaoh's people. He used his reason to assess the ongoing events amid a society in which Moses was seen to be carrying out a revolution against the current rule. The majority made their assessment upon political and racist viewpoints, but a Nubian man rose and attempted to expose the truth. He realized that the situation was not in harmony with what the Pharaoh and his people declared. He saw that the aim behind what Moses was proposing was not to rule, reign or build a state.

He felt that they needed to consider his alternative view and use their rationale:

"At that, a believing man of Pharaoh's family, who [until then] had concealed his faith, exclaimed: "Would you slay a man because he says, 'God is my Lord' - seeing, withal, that he has brought you all evidence of this truth from your Lord? Now, if he be a liar, his lie will be against him; but if he is truthful, something [of the punishment] whereof he warns you is bound to befall you: for, verily, God would not grace with His guidance one who has wasted his own self by lying [about Him]. O my People! Yours is the dominion this day: You have the upper hand in the land: but who will help us from the Punishment of God, should it befall us?" (40:28-29).

Some of the Kushites listened to the powerful reasoning of the Nubian. His opinion started to spread and anyone who had an enlightened heart was convinced by it. This accounts for the existence of some dark Jews on the Nile valley, especially those in Ethiopia called the Falasha. They claim that Moses' Ark of the Covenant is with them, as well as the original version of the Torah.

The Nubian argument got transmitted to the Pharaoh who attempted to control public opinion. The use of repression and tyranny were not enough to control the nation. Reason needs to be met with a matching reason. In this situation the Pharaoh addressed his people as a leader who does not hide anything of his thoughts from them, and thus, he is showing them the best path:

The Pharaoh said: **“(My People) I only want to make you see what I see myself; and I would never make you follow any path but that of rectitude!”** (40:29).

His ego made him carry on with his acclaim and insist on proving Moses a liar and a magician like the rest of the magicians, or even perhaps the greatest magician among them.

Moses said: **“My Lord knows best who it is that comes with the right guidance from Him and whose end will be best in the Hereafter; indeed, the wrong-doers will not prosper”** (28:37).

Whereupon Pharaoh said: **“O people I have not known any god for you other than myself; so, bake mud (bricks) for me Haman and set up for**

me a lofty tower that I may survey the god of Moses. I deem him (Moses) of those who (always) tell lies" (28:38).

So, Haman built the mud tower with which the Pharaoh wanted to prove to his people that there is no other god than himself especially as the tower stands very high implying that nothing lies above it: "**He (Pharaoh) made fools of his people, and they obeyed him: truly they were corrupt**" (43:54).

Then the Nubian who believed said: "**O people, truly I do fear for you a similitude of the Day (of disaster) of the factions (that perished); the like of what happened to Noah's people, and to (the people of) Aad and Thamud and those who came after them; surely, God does not want injustice to people. O people, I fear for you that Day of (Judgment - the Day when you will be) calling unto one another (in distress). That day you shall turn your backs and flee, having no preserver from God; and any whom God leaves to stray, there is none to guide. Indeed, it was to you that Joseph came a foretime with all evidence of the truth; but you never ceased to throw doubt on all (the messages) that he**

brought you - so much so that when he died, you said, 'Never will God send any messenger after him!' In this way God leaves the doubting extravagant to stray" (40:30-34).

It is apparent from the opinion of this Nubian man that there was among the Nubians a messenger from the Children of Israel who was Joseph (PBUH) and they were also doubtful of him because Joseph (PBUH) was not from their ethnic group. This time they are also refusing Moses as a messenger from the Children of Israel for the same reason. They knew that accepting his opinion implies an upheaval in the Nubian society for it gives the Children of Israel a place higher than them. Therefore, they said: **"Shall we have faith in two mortals like ourselves - and their people are our slaves?" (23:47).** The Nubians were masters over the Children of Israel and wanted to maintain the status quo.

The Nubian who had attained to faith went on: **"O my people! Follow me: I shall guide you onto the path of rectitude. O my people! This worldly life is but a brief enjoyment, whereas the life to come is indeed the abiding home. (There), anyone who has done a bad deed will**

be requited with no more than the like thereof, whereas anyone, be it man or woman, who has done righteous deeds and is a believer, they will all enter paradise, wherein, they will have abundance without measure. O my people! How (strange) it is for me to call you to Salvation while you call me to the Fire! You call me to disbelieve in God and place with Him a partner that I have no knowledge of, and I call you to the Mighty and Forgiver. Without doubt you do call me to one who is not fit to be invoked, whether in this world, or in the Hereafter; our return will be to God; and the abode of the transgressors will be the Fire! Soon you will remember what I say to you (now), My (own) affair I commit to God, for God (ever) watches over His Servants” (40:38-44).

During such an upheaval in the Nubian society and the Pharaonic revolution, Moses had to assure his people and strengthen their faith in God. He told them that in the end this blessed land would be theirs and they would inherit it from the unjust people:

Moses said to his people: “**seek help in God and be patient for the earth belongs to God to give**

as a heritage to whoever he pleases from his servants and the (best) end is for the righteous" (7:128).

But the ones who believed in him from the Children of Israel found circumstances difficult and faced oppression especially after they followed him in his revolution against the Pharaoh, therefore, they said:

"We suffered hurt before you came to us, and since you have come to us" (7:129).

This is evidence of the racial oppression they faced before Moses.

Moses said: **"It may be that your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you inheritors in the earth; that so He may try you by your deeds" (7:129).** When things escalated with the Children of Israel and they said this to Moses, he had no choice but to turn wholeheartedly to God. Then a sign from the Almighty indicated that the time of their departure from the grip of the Pharaoh into freedom has approached. The Almighty said: **"And we revealed to Moses and his brother to have houses in Misra for your people and make your houses the direction (of**

your prayers) **and perform prayer and give glad tidings to the believers**" (10:87). And when Moses (PBUH) felt that his people's delivery was close by, he wanted some contentment by witnessing something against his enemy before he takes his people to *Misra* (a city by the Nile away from Napata) to perform their rituals and set their houses and make them the direction of their prayers. "**And Moses said: our Lord, you have given the Pharaoh and his chiefs ornamentation and wealth in this life, so our Lord, that they would go astray from your path? Our Lord destroys their riches and harden their hearts so, they would not believe until they see the painful punishment**" (10:88). "**He said: the prayer of both of you has been granted, so be righteous both of you and do not follow the path of those who do not know**" (10:89). Thus, God granted their prayers by punishing the Pharaoh's people before the Children of Israel had left for *Misra*.

Then God's signs of relief started to appear as the economic crisis befell Kush as a result of scarcity in rain and shortage in the water of the River Nile. The Almighty says: "**We have punished the people of the Pharaoh by the years** (of drought)

and a decrease in yield lest they remember. If good fortune alighted upon them, they say this is our due; but whenever affliction befell them, they would blame their evil fortune on Moses and those who followed him; verily, their [evil] fortune had been decreed by God, but most of them do not know" (7:130-131). However, the economic crisis did not yield them to believe in Moses in spite of their suffering. **"They said no matter what signs you bring us in order to bewitch us we will not believe in you" (7:132).** They became arrogant and criminal to the extent that they ridiculed God's signs that were His miracles. The Almighty says: **"But as soon as he came before them with Our (miraculous) signs, they laughed at them. And we do not show them a sign except that it is bigger than the preceding one; and we took them with suffering, so they might come back (to the Truth). They said: O sorcerer! Invoke your Lord for us according to His covenant with you, for we shall truly accept guidance" (43:47-49).**

When their arrogance and mockery reached such a point to call the Messenger of God, Moses (PBUH) **"O sorcerer!"**, divine intervention became a necessity. The Almighty said:

“Thereupon We let loose upon them floods, and [plagues of] locusts, and lice, and frogs, and [water turning into] blood - a succession of clear signs; but they were steeped in arrogance and sinning” (7:133). When one of them wanted to drink a glass of water he found it turned into blood. They were constrained and became certain that there would be no relief for them except by appeasing Moses. The Almighty said: **“When affliction befell them, they said: O Moses, invoke your Lord for us according to His covenant with you that if He uplifts the affliction from us, we will believe in him and we will send with you the Children of Israel”** (7:134).

The Pharaoh felt the threat of Moses (PBUH), as his people found it necessary to ask him for deliverance from the unbearable catastrophes that befell them, since this had exposed the weakness of the Pharaoh’s claims. The divinity that he claimed was badly in need of the Lord of Moses to uplift the catastrophes from them; and this was an unbearable matter for him. He thought of speedily getting rid of Moses and those with him. But he found that the fulfilment of his promise to send the Children of Israel with Moses

meant defeat and implies the falsity of his claim to divinity. As a result, he broke his promise. The Almighty says: **“But when We removed the plague from them according to a fixed term which they had to fulfil, they broke their promise”** (7:135). When Moses heard of their breaking their promise, he started to prepare his people for what would come next. He received the divine order to lead his people by night away from the Pharaoh’s city. The Almighty says: **“By inspiration we told Moses: Travel by night with my servants; for surely you shall be pursued”** (26:52). The Pharaoh started to gather the people and stir their enmity against Moses and those with him: **“Then Pharaoh sent heralds to (all) the Cities (saying): Behold, these (Children of Israel) are but a contemptible band; and they are raging us furiously; but we are, verily, a nation united, and fully prepared”** (26:53-56).

Moses (PBUH) walked with his people to the north along the left bank of the Nile towards the fourth cataract where they can cross easily to the right bank. They started to move at night to guarantee a safe exit. But the eyes of the Pharaoh were on the lookout, so he went out of Napata following them with his people, leaving behind his palaces,

treasures, and gardens. His only concern became destroying Moses and those with him. The Almighty says: **“so we have (rightly) driven them (pharaoh & his people) out of (their) gardens and springs, and treasures, and honourable estate. Thus, we caused the Children of Israel to inherit them (all what they left)”** (26:57-59). Some of the Children of Israel did not go out with Moses and remained in this blessed land. The Pharaoh with his army and those with him went chasing Moses, (see Map 2 The Crossing page 138). **“So, they pursued them towards the east (sunrise). When the two groups saw each other, Moses' companions said: we shall certainly be caught”** (26:60-61). Moses assured them with the certitude of a messenger: **“He said no; I have my Lord with me, and He will guide me”** (26:62). Deliverance and victory were immediately granted: **“Thereupon, we inspired Moses: Strike the sea with your staff, whereupon it parted, and each part appeared like a great mountain. And**

We caused the pursuers to draw near unto that place: and we rescued Moses and all who were

with him" (26:63-65). "And We delivered the Children of Israel across the sea; and thereupon Pharaoh and his troops pursued them with vehement insolence and tyranny, until when he was about to drown, (Pharaoh) exclaimed: "I have come to believe that there is no deity save Him in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am among the Muslims" (10:90). God said: "Is it just Now? -while ever before this you have been rebelling (against Us), and have been among those who spread corruption? Today we will save you (from drowning with nothing but) your body; so that you shall be a Sign to the ones after you; but verily, many among people are heedless of Our Signs" (10:91-92). The Pharaoh was saved but all his people drowned. The Almighty says: "When they caused us to feel remorseful (by insisting to be hopeless), We exacted retribution from them, and We drowned them all. We made them an account of the past and an example for later generations" (43:55-56). The Pharaoh survived with only his body, i.e., with nothing of his wealth, people, and status. "After him (Pharaoh), We said to the Children of Israel: inhabit the land and when the promise of the afterlife comes, we will bring you all a gathered

(nation)” (17:104). The weak Children of Israel, who remained behind and had not gone out with Moses, lived in this land after God took the Pharaoh and his people out of it for a promise they had to meet. They lived with the Nubian people of Kush on the banks of the river Nile, and they became close to them. Many of the Nubians were convinced by the opinion of the Nubian believer who called them to listen to what Moses (PBUH) came with.

After The Crossing

Moses and his people crossed on the dry bottom of 'the sea' - that is the river Nile - after he had struck it with his staff. However, the Pharaoh stopped risking himself by going further into the dry bottom of the sea with the water around him. Here the angel Gabriel entered before the Pharaoh with a horse which made the Pharaoh's horse, and the rest of his people follow him. When they all went in, God drowned them. The *Samiri* was the only one among the Children of Israel who saw Gabriel and knew that he was a spirit sent to accomplish a mission.

The incident of the crossing fostered love of religiosity and worship in the people of Moses and gave them confidence in him. So, they asked him to make them a God to worship. The Almighty says: **"We delivered the Children of Israel across the sea, then, they came by people who worship idols of their own; so, they said: O Moses, make us a god just as they have gods; he said you are an ignorant people. What those people are upon is renounced and what they do is futile"**

(7:138-139). And Moses explained to them that God cannot be created as He is the creator of all things and has favoured them above the worlds: **“He said: Am I to seek for you a deity other than God while he favoured you above all people”** (7:140).

God unburdened Moses from his enemy. Therefore, his sole concern was to be grateful and thankful to God. He started fasting to prepare for this. The Almighty said: **“We appointed for Moses thirty nights and completed (the period) with ten thus, and he completed the whole time appointed by his Lord of forty nights. (already) Moses had charged his brother Aaron (saying): "Take my place among my people, and act righteously, and don't follow the way of those who do mischief”** (7:142). Moses went in a hurry to the mountain of Tor and left his people with Aaron expecting them and Aaron to follow him. He arrived at the designated time with indescribable longing. The Almighty says: **“And when Moses came to Our time and his Lord spoke to him, he said: My Lord, allow me to see You while I am conscious. He said you will not see Me (in that way) but look at the mountain, if it remained in place, you would see Me. When**

his Lord manifested Himself to the mountain, He rendered it to nothing, and Moses fell unconscious. When he woke, he said: Glory be to You, I have relented to You, and I am the first of the believers” (7:143). No doubt prophets are devoid of ignorance, therefore what Moses asked to see was not out of his ignorance, but, literally, he asked to see himself in the state of seeing God; that is to see himself while he is seeing Him: “he said my Lord, allow me be aware of myself while I am looking at you.” He did not say ‘let me see You’; as in this way the vision cannot take place. Divine manifestation or theophany cease the existence of everything once it happens, so there would be no Moses looking at Moses in his state of seeing God. In theophany nothing remains except God in His manifestation on everything and the attributes of everything will vanish until the manifestation is over. After this, everything will regain its state as it was before. When the theophany or manifestation took place, Moses became unconscious during it. He then woke up after it was over and realized the matter in its entirety and said: **“Glory be to You, I have relented to You, and I am the first of the believers”** (7:143). Moses said that he is the first of the believers because he took an oath to believe in Muhammad

(PBHPF) and support him. The Almighty says: **“When God made (His) covenant with the Prophets, (He said): Behold that which I have given you of the Scripture and wisdom. And afterward there has come unto you a messenger, confirming that which you possess. You shall believe in him, and you shall support him”** (3:81). Moses (PBUH) knew that this status of “seeing God while being in full consciousness” is the status of Muhammad (PBHPF); so, his heart filled with love for him which is faith because Muhammad (PBHPF) said: *“None of you will have faith until I become more beloved to him than his parents, his children and all people.”*¹³ So, Moses (PBUH) said: **“I am the first of the believers,”** (7:143) and he asked God to be among the nation of Prophet Muhammad (PBHPF). After that he said: **“Glory be to You I have relented to you, and I am the first of the believers”** (7:143).

After Moses recovered from the manifestation, his Lord addressed him: **“He said: O Moses, I have chosen you above people by virtue of My message and My (direct) conversation (with**

¹³ Al Bokhari.

you); so, take what I have given you and be among the thankful” (7:144).

And God wrote the tablets for Moses. The Almighty says: **“And We have written to him on the tablets about everything, guidance and detailed knowledge for everything” (7:145).** The Almighty ordered him to powerfully carry them out and order his people to take the best of them: **“So, powerfully take it and order your people to take its best and I will show you the dwelling of the dissolute people” (7:145).** The reference to the dwelling of the dissolute here is the land by the Nile valley where the custodians of the Kushite system of the Pharaoh still existed. God gave glad tidings to Moses’s people that they will enter *Misra/ Mizraim* (urban districts by the Nile) while they were under the rule of the Kushite Pharaoh near Napata and they shall have houses there and make the houses of Moses & Aron (PBUT) the direction of prayer: **“We revealed to Moses and his brother to have houses in Misra for your people and make your houses the direction (of your prayers) and perform prayer and give glad tidings to the believers” (10:87).**

After God spoke to Moses about favouring him with his messages and speech and said to him: **“you will not see Me,”** (7:143), He soothed Moses by asking him about his people and why he came ahead of them: **“what has caused you, O Moses, to leave your people behind in so great a haste?”** (20:83). He said: **“they are treading in my footsteps, and I hastened unto You that You, my Lord, might be well pleased”** (20:83).

It is known that every messenger remains with his people and does not leave them until he completes his message. Moses thought that by leaving Aaron with them and entrusting him to bring them upon his footsteps, this would not demean his work as messenger because Aaron is his partner in the matter. But the divine planning is different to human planning, so the divine question came reproaching Moses: **“what has caused you, O Moses, to leave your people behind in so great a haste?”** (20:84). Moses’ intention to please his Lord by rushing was not an acceptable excuse for him. The view of the servant as to what pleases God is not perfect and can even be wrong. Although Moses aimed to please God by rushing before his people, the temptation that befell them was as great as his leaving them: **“He said We**

have tempted your people after you and the Samiri has mislead them" (20:85).

"The people of Moses made, in his absence, out of their ornaments, a likeness of a calf, (for worship): it seemed to low; did they not see that it could neither speak to them, nor show them the way? They took it for worship, and they did wrong" (7:148). "And when Moses returned to his people, full of wrath and sorrow, he exclaimed: "Vile is the course which you have followed in my absence! Did you anticipate on the matter of your Lord?" He cast down the tablets, seized his brother by (the hair of) his head, and dragged him to him" (7:150).

Because Moses tended to be fiery and hasty, he did not inquire about the matter from Aaron but took his head and pulled him towards him after throwing down the tablets. Those were the tablets that God wrote for him with His hand and therein is an elaboration of everything. But Aaron entreated him and clarified the matter:

He said: **"Son of my mother! the people have overpowered me and were about to kill me. So do not allow the enemies to gloat over me; and**

do not place me among the unjust people"
(7:150).

Moses let go of his brother and went back, asking his people in anger and sorrow: **"So, Moses returned to his people in a state of indignation and sorrow. He said: "O my people! did not your Lord make a good promise to you? Was my absence too long for you? Or did you desire that wrath should descend from your Lord on you, and so you broke your promise to me?"** (20:86).

They were supposed to follow him for his Lord's time; **"They answered: 'We did not break our promise to you of our own free will, but (this is what happened:) we were loaded with the (sinful) burdens of the people's (Kushite) ornaments, and so we threw them (into the fire), and likewise the *Samiri* did cast (his into it)'. Then he moulded for them a statue of a calf, which made a lowing sound"** (20:87-88). So, they were amazed and bewitched by the matter: **"thereupon they said, "This is your god, and the god of Moses - but he has forgotten (his past). Didn't they see that it could not return them a word (for answer), and that it had no power**

either to harm them or to do them good? Aaron had already, before this said to them: 'O my people! you are being tested in this: for verily your Lord is 'God', Most Gracious; so, follow me and obey my command'" (20:88-90). But they refused to follow him to take them to Moses at the mountain, so they answered: "By no means shall we cease to worship it until Moses comes back to us!" (20:91).

At that point Moses looked once more at his brother: "**O Aaron, what has prevented you from following me, when you saw that they had gone astray? Did you then disobey my order?" (20:92-93).**

Aaron feared that Moses would get up again and take him by the head and beard. "**He said: son of my mother, do not take my beard or head, I feared that you would say you (Aaron) caused division among the Children of Israel, and you did not pay attention to my words" (20:94).**

Then Moses started investigating the story of the Golden Calf; he asked the *Samiri*: "**what is the matter with you O Samiri?" (20:95).**

He replied: “**I saw what they didn’t see: so, I took a handful (of dust) from the footprint of the (Angle) messenger and threw it (onto the calf): thus, did my soul suggest to me**” (20:96).

Moses said to him: “**Then, just leave! And in this life, it is for you to say: ‘Touch me not!’ However, (in the life to come) there is for you a tryst that you can’t break. Now look upon your god of which you have remained a votary: Verily we will burn it and will scatter its dust over the Yam (river Nile)**” (20:97).

“**Your God is only Allah, there is no god but He: all things He comprehends in His knowledge**” (20:98).

After the *Samiri*’s answer, Moses felt that what the *Samiri* did has affected people’s minds, and they were impressed by it just as the magicians did among the Pharaoh’s people before Moses interfered. So, he pardoned his brother Aaron and realized how he belittled him among the people and was affected: “**He said my Lord forgive me.**” (7:151) for this “**and my brother and take us both in Your mercy, and You are the most Merciful of all**” (7:151).

“Those who chose the calf (for worship), will indeed be overwhelmed with wrath from their Lord and humiliation will come upon them in the life of the world. Thus, do We requite those who invent a lie. But those who did wrong but repent thereafter and (truly) believe, verily your Lord is thereafter, Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. And when the wrath banished off Moses, he took up the tablets, whereof in its writing there was guidance and grace for all who stood in awe of their Lord” (7:152-154).

Moses burnt the Samiri's calf and dispersed it in the river Nile, so the Children of Israel would have a sound faith against polytheism and going astray. Then he wanted to take them to the holy mountain where they were supposed to follow him earlier. He chose seventy people for the promised time. The Almighty says: **“And Moses chose of his people seventy men for Our appointed tryst and, when they were overwhelmed by the trembling, he (Moses) said: My Lord! If you had willed, you would have destroyed them long before, and me. Will you destroy us for that which the ignorant among us did? This is but a trial from You, whereby You allow to go astray whom You will, and guide aright whom You**

will. You are our guardian: grant us, then, forgiveness and have mercy on us - for You are the best of all forgivers! And ordain for us what is good in this world as well as in the life to come: for, we have turned unto You in repentance!" (7:155). The question of Moses for begging mercy and forgiveness: "**Will you destroy us for that which the ignorant among us did?**" will not pass without any divine guidance - God said: "**I hit with My punishment who I will and My mercy has embraced everything and I will write it for those who are righteous, who give charity, and who have faith in our revelation**" (7:156). The dissolute whom Moses meant were the ones who worshipped the calf, as some of them did not worship it and that is why Aaron said: "**I feared that you would say you caused division among the Children of Israel**" (20:94). If Aaron had followed Moses to the Mountain with the group that didn't worship the calf, the other group would have stayed behind in their misguidance; hence, the Children of Israel would have split into two groups. Therefore, Aaron was worried that he would be the cause of such split.

Herein, God, The Almighty clarifies in His revelations the relationship between the messengers and the *final prophet* as He has taken an oath from them to believe in him and support him. This is well established in God's sacred books the Torah and Bible. The Almighty says in addressing Moses after He clarified that His punishment would hit who He wishes while His mercy is extended to "**those who follow the messenger, the *Ummi* Prophet¹⁴, whom they will find written in the Torah and the Gospel (which are) with them. He will enjoin on them that which is right and forbid them that which is wrong. He will make lawful for them all pure things and prohibit for them the foul things; and he will relieve them of their burden and the chains that were upon them. Then those who believed in him, and honoured him and supported him, and followed the light which is sent down with him: they are indeed the successful**" (7:158).

God Almighty ascertains that Muhammad is his messenger for all people and this does not exclude

¹⁴ *Ummi*, in this context is a description of a person or people who are not from the People of the Book, i.e. an *Ummi* is neither Jewish nor Christian.

anyone from Adam to Jesus. “**Say O people I am God’s messenger to you all**” (7:158). This is because Muhammad (PBHPF) is the first of all Muslims. The Almighty says to Muhammad (PBHPF): “**Say my prayer and devoutness and my life and death are for God, the Lord of the worlds; He has no partner and with this I am ordained, and I am the first of the Muslims**” (6:162-163). So, all the messengers that came before him were his deputies among their people so that people would know that religion is one; “**He has ordained for you (people) that religion which He commended unto Noah, and that which We inspire unto you (Muhammad), and that which We commended unto Abraham and Moses and Jesus, (saying): Establish the religion, and be not divided therein**” (42:13). And Muhammad came to show the status of this religion above all religion - “**He it is who has sent His messenger with the guidance and the Religion of Truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all religion, however much the idolaters may hate this**” (9:33) - and to clarify what the followers of previous messengers disagreed upon: “**We did not send you (O Muhammad) the book except to clarify to them what they have disagreed upon and a right**

guidance and mercy to people who believe” (16:64). So, what the previous messengers came with is Muhammad’s message, as they are deputies for him, and he endorsed this one message with his final message. Muhammad (PBHPF) did not come to nullify what the previous messengers came with, but to assert the truth therein, believing in them, and in their books. The Almighty says: **“We have sent you** (Muhammad), **for sure, to all humankind”** (34:28). And He says: **“Say: O people I am God’s messenger to you all. He who has the Kingdom of heaven and earth there is no god but Him, He gives life and death, so believe in God and his messenger: the *Ummi* prophet who believes in God and His words; (0 people) follow him, so that you might find guidance”** (7:158).

God’s words are His creation and among them are His complete words who are His messengers BUT and among them is Jesus (PBUH): **“...God’s messenger and His word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him...”** (4:171). The Qur’anic sequence continues speaking about the Children of Israel, thus asserting the oneness of the message: **“And from Moses’ people is a nation that leads with the**

truth and administer justice therewith (7:159).

After Moses burnt the god of the *Samiri*, he asked his people to repent to God from the deed of taking the calf as deity; so, he can take them to the set place and time for meeting God. **"Moses said unto his people: "O my people! Verily, you have sinned against yourselves by worshipping the calf; turn, then in repentance to your Creator and mortify yourselves; this will be the best for you in your Creator's sight".** Then after, He accepted your repentance: for, behold, He alone is the Ever-Acceptor of Repentance, the Dispenser of Grace" (2:54). There seems to be cruelty in Moses' request on behalf of his people so their repentance can be accepted: **"kill yourselves"** (2:54); however, this does not imply physical death, rather, killing the damaging characteristics of the self like arrogance, conceit, hypocrisy, double-dealing, and haughtiness. It seems that Moses' people responded in fear lest they face the suffering that the Pharaoh's people faced. God forgave them as He says: **"Then We pardoned you after that, so you might be thankful"** (2:52). Moses walked with his people, the seventy men, to the designated place and time.

When they reached the blessed mountain where Moses (PBUH) was spoken to, he showed them the special place where the speaking and receiving the tablets took place. But they did not believe what he told them and asked him to show them God publicly if He had spoken to him and given him the tablets: **“And you said: O Moses, we will not believe in you until we see God visibly,”** (2:55) thus, they received punishment from God by thunderbolt: **“so you were taken by thunderbolt while you were looking”** (2:55). This was not their end but it was a sign for them so they would believe: **“Then we resurrected you after your death that you might be thankful”** (2:56). Then, the covenant was taken from them under the Tor Mountain or the Blessed Mountain: **“We have taken a covenant from the Children of Israel (to this effect): Worship none but God, treat with kindness your parents and kindred, and orphans and those in need; speak fair to the people; be steadfast in prayer; and practise regular charity. Then you turned back, except a few among you, and you were deflecting”** (2:83). **“And when We made with you a covenant (saying): Shed not the blood of your people nor turn (a party of) your people out of your dwellings. Then you ratified (Our**

covenant) **and you were witnesses** (thereto)" (2:84). Then God ordered them to take this covenant with power and observe what is in it. The Almighty says: "**And** (remember, O Children of Israel) **when We made a covenant with you and caused the Mount to tower above you**, (saying): **Hold fast that which We have given you, and observe consciously that which is therein, that you may be righteous**" (2:63). Then Moses divided them into twelve parties.

Moses then headed with these twelve groups towards *Misra or Mizraim*; a destination that God had already given them glad tidings about, when they were under the Pharaoh's rule, saying: "**have houses in Misra for your people**" (10:87). And when they were struck by the hot winds of the Nubian desert, divine care aided them. The clouds shaded them, and God brought down for them *manna and quail*. They ate by God's grace the God-given food without any effort on their part then they asked Moses for water: "**And We divided them into twelve tribal communities. And when his people asked for water, We inspired Moses: "Strike the rock with your staff," whereupon twelve springs gushed forth from it, so that each community knew where to**

drink. And We caused the clouds to shelter them with their shade; and We sent down unto them manna and quails, (saying): "Eat of the good things We have provided for you". And (by all their sinning) they did no harm unto Us - but only against their own selves did they sin" (7:160). The command of God to Moses "Strike the rock with your staff,**" was most likely in the part of the Nubian desert known as Batn Ehajar (Belly of the Rock), (see Map 3 Kingdom of Kush page 162).**

It seems that several factors had created disturbance in the temperament and action of the Children of Israel including the way they were oppressed by the Pharaoh, what they suffered during the days of the revolution that Moses created in the Nubian society, the various divine miracles, and the early performances of the magicians before that. Therefore, they started to ask for miracles unnecessarily. And if a miracle were to take place in their favour, they would become impatient with it, and more inclined towards the material life. God sheltered them with clouds and brought down food for them, and produced water from the rocks for their twelve tribal communities, but they got bored with this

and inclined to the worldly life and asked Moses for a change saying: **“O Moses, we cannot endure one kind of food** (always); **so request your Lord for us to bring forth for us of what the earth grows of its pot-herbs, and cucumbers, its garlic, lentils, and onions..”** (2:61).

Moses was surprised by what his people required, as they refused food from the divine and wanted something different: **“He Said: "Would you take a lesser thing in exchange for what is [so much] better?”** (2:61). Then he ordered them to move northwards which is down in relation to the River Nile: **“Descend Misran for you will have what you asked for”** (2:61). The Children of Israel walked with Moses to the north down the river Nile: **“And they were told: Settle in this *Qaryah* (country) and eat therein as you wish, but say *Hittatun* 'Remove from us the burden of our sins,' and enter the gate in a posture of prostration, then, We shall forgive you your faults; We shall increase (the portion of) those who do good”** (7:161-162).

Thus, unsteadiness and disobedience became the state of the Children of Israel. They took an oath not to work on Saturday, but they did not abide by

this as they found a way around it to hunt, so they trespassed God's limits. In a Qur'anic exclamation about their behaviour, The Almighty says: **"Ask them concerning the town that was urban by the sea."** (7:163). It is a matter that the people of Muhammad (PBHPF) did something similar to, where the Quran also exclaimed at what they did; the Almighty says: **"It does not befit the people of the Medina and the Arabs around them to hold back from following the Messenger of God"** (9:120). The Prophet (PBHPF) said: *"You will follow the ways of those before you."*¹⁵ As for the Children of Israel: **"...they transgressed in the matter of the Sabbath. For, on the day of their Sabbath their fish did come to them, openly holding up their heads, but on the day, they had no Sabbath, they didn't come: thus, did We make a trial of them, for they were given to transgression"** (7:163). They went around this by throwing their nets on Friday, so the fish fall into them on Saturday, and they pick them up on Sunday. Those who transgressed on Saturday were punished for this trick. The wise ones among them advised the people who carried out the trick for work on Saturday and reminded them to fear

¹⁵ Al Bokhari.

God. Some of them were so offended that they did not give advice and left them to taste punishment and said to those who gave advice: “**Why are you advising people God will perish or severely punish? They said: to discharge our duty to your Lord, and perchance they may fear Him**” (7:164). The ones who found a way around work on Saturday did not listen to the advice of the wise: “**And thereupon, when those (sinners) had forgotten all that, they had been told to take to heart, we saved those who had tried to prevent the doing of evil, and overwhelmed those who had been bent on evildoing with dreadful suffering for all their iniquity. But, when they disdainfully persisted in doing what they had been forbidden to do, we said unto them: ‘Be as apes desppicable!’**” (7:165-166).

After punishment befell those who changed the word *Hittatun* “*Remove from us the burden of our sins*” it was a must to move from the place of suffering. Moses asked his people to head towards the Holy Land, but they slackened and did not heed much his words. They harmed him by going away from him and ignoring what he told them. It is likely that they made fun of him for their love of staying in the land of *Misraim* as they found

luxuries there: “**O my people! Why do you cause me harm, though you know that I am the messenger of God sent unto you?**” And so, when they swerved from the right way, God let their hearts swerve from the truth: for God does not bestow His guidance upon iniquitous folk” (61:5). This was the same for the majority of people with the messengers of God to the extent that God felt sorry for them for their bad conduct. The Almighty says: “**Disappointing is the state people; whenever a messenger comes to them, they make fun of him**” (36:30). The divine order comes to Moses to complete his message by taking his people out of darkness to light, that is from being punished by the Pharaoh to the Holy Land which God has promised them. The Almighty says: “**We have sent Moses with Our clear signs** (saying): **take your people from darkness to light and remind them of God’s days for there are messages indeed for all who are wholly patient in adversity and deeply grateful.** When Moses said to his people: Remember God’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. And when

your Lord proclaimed: ‘If you are grateful, I will add more (favours) unto you; But if you show ingratitude, truly My punishment is terrible indeed’ (14:5-7). When Moses found that they turned away from his reminder and what is good for them, he warned them: **“Moses said: if you should [ever] deny the truth, you and whoever else on earth, (get to know that) God is indeed self-sufficient, worthy of all praise”** (14:8).

Moses and those with him from the Children of Israel went heading to the Holy Land that God had promised them, but they were tardy in following their messenger and God ordained that they stray in the wilderness.

Moses said to his people: **“O my people, Remember the blessings which God bestowed upon you when he raised up prophets among you, made you kings, and gave you what He had not given to any other peoples. O my people, enter the holy land that God has ordained for you; but do not turn back, for surely you turn back as losers”** (5:20-21).

They answered: **“O Moses: indeed, ferocious people dwell in that land, and we will surely**

not enter it unless they depart therefrom; but if they depart therefrom, then, surely, we will enter it" (5:22).

"[Whereupon] two men from among those who revere (God), whom God had blessed, said: "Enter upon them through the gate, for as soon as you enter it, surely, you shall be victorious. And in God you must place your trust if you are (truly) believers!" (5:23).

They said: "O Moses: we will never enter it so long as they are in it, so you and your Lord go and fight; we are staying here" (5:24).

Moses said: "My Lord, I have control of none but myself and my brother, so, separate us from the dissolute people" (5:25).

God accepted the call of his Prophet Moses (PBUH) and he forbade them the holy land and decreed that they shall be lost on earth for forty years: "He said: it is forbidden on them; for forty years they will wander aimlessly in the land; so, do not be sorrowful for the dissolute people" (5:26).

Conclusion

We have mentioned in the preface of this book that the geographical and historical context of the story of Moses Peace Be Upon Him (PBUH) didn't receive the due attention of historians and religious writers despite its importance in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Linking the Biblical and Quranic versions of the story of Moses (PBUH) to history and geography requires the knowledge of the place and time of both Moses and the pharaoh of Exodus. Unfortunately, there is a rift between archaeology and the history of religion and prophets. The first move in reconciling these disciplines, I believe, should be a sincere interdisciplinary effort to link religious texts to their geographical and historical contexts. This may allow archaeologists to choose with precision where to search for prophetic/ religious monuments and artefacts and interpret them in their textual and historical contexts. In this book I have attempted to add to the research for the place of both Moses and the pharaoh of Exodus new premises from the Holy Quran and the geography and history of the land of *Kush*.

The records used to determine historical times of Moses and the Pharaoh, such as the ancient Egypt timeline based on the *Aegyptiaca* of Manetho, and the Biblical Chronology are controversial. Therefore, verification of dates and times of prophet Moses and the Pharaoh are beyond the scope of this book. Regarding the place of this story in which the Pharaoh and “Misr” were mentioned, most of the scholars of history and religion widely accepted that its major events took place in the country now known as Egypt, a name first given by the Greeks to what was known as *Kemet* after they occupied it in 332 B.C. To this day, all the surveys and writings about the history of Moses (PBUH) based on the above assumption are inconclusive. Moreover, the description, in the Torah and the Quran of the places where the events happened, doesn't match the geography of contemporary Egypt. This situation has encouraged me to investigate the Quranic texts that mentioned Prophet Moses (PBUH), the Pharaoh, and the Israelites and to rearrange them in a story with a defined geographical context that starts with the birth of Moses (PBUH) and finishes with the departure of Moses and Aaron (PBUT) from the Israelites. In this book, we assume that the Holy Quran would mention historical events in

their historical context using the exact names of people and places. One of the most important developments of this approach is that it allows consideration of alternative geographical locations for key places in the Quran like the mount known as *Tur of Sinaa'*, the *sacred valley of Tuwa*, the place *where the two seas merge*, and *the sea* of the miraculous crossing. Moreover, it allows new interpretations of the names mentioned in the story, e.g., *Misra*, *Misran*, *Almadinah*, and *Alqaryah* in the *Quranic Arabic* on grounds of their linguistic indications and historical contexts. Therefore, we have investigated the etymology of such names and the possible geographical locations that match the descriptions of the events and places in the Holy Quran. Here is the summary of our findings.

Indications of the word “*Misra*” in the Holy Quran:

Literally the word “*Misra*” means a city, village, or an urban, in contrast to “*Baadiyah*” - countryside and temporary dwellings of nomadic people. In the Holy Quran the term “*Misra*” mentioned in relation to prophets Joseph and Moses (PBUT), generally indicates any or all the cities, villages,

and urbans built by the Nile Valley. Regarding Joseph (PBUH), God said: **“The one from *Misra* who bought him said to his wife make his stay [with us] honourable.”** (12:21); we have mentioned that the one who bought him was the governor of the land of *Misra* - that lies north to the first cataract of the Nile - on behalf of the Kushite king. This land is referred to in the Hebrew Bible as *Mizraim*, the plural of *matzor*, meaning a "mound" or "fortress"; *Mizraim* in Arabic is *Amsaar*. This is the most probable etymology of *Misra'*, *Mizraim*, or lately *Egypt* which means the "land of the *protected cities*". Moreover, the city of this Kushite governor in the verse **“Some women in the *Madinah* (city) said the Governor’s wife is tempting her lad against his will”** (12:30) is most probably the city of Memphis since it was the capital of the unified *Kemet* (ancient Egypt). The same city is referred to as "*Misra* in the sense of *urban*" in the verse **“When they entered before Joseph, he draws his parents closer to him and he said: enter *Misra* by God’s leave in safety”** (12:99). This sense of urban is deduced by contrasting "*Misra*" where they arrived at to the word "*Badu*, synonym of *Baadiyah*" which they came from as in the verse **“... and He was kind to me (Joseph) as He took me out of prison and**

brought you (Joseph's parents and brothers) **from the *badu*** (countryside)." (12:100). We have mentioned that they came from the *Baadiyah* of Kush on the upper Nile basin. This is further supported by the command of God to Jacob (PBUH) to 'go down to *Mizraim*' in Genesis 47: 3-4: "*I am God, the God of your father,*" he said. "*Do not be afraid to go down to Mizraim, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Mizraim with you.*"¹⁶. Going down to *Mizraim* is only possible from the high lands of Kush.

The words "*Misran*", "*Madinah*", and "*Qaryah*" were mentioned in the story of Moses (PBUH). They are synonyms indicating dwellings of urban communities living near permanent sources of freshwater. However, the general term for city or urban - "*Misra*" - may also indicate the whole region. God related the words of the Pharaoh "**Don't I have the reign of *Misra* and these rivers that run underneath me...**" (43:51). In this verse *Misra* is the region between the first cataract and the Delta of the Nile that was under the rule of the Kushite Pharaoh. As for the word "*Misran*" in the verse "**Descend *Misran* for you**

¹⁶ Genesis 46:3-4

will have what you asked for” (2:61), it fits any city by the Nile in which the crops and vegetables demanded by the Israelites may be found. Therefore, after this command, they headed north along the flood plains of the Nile, then God directed them to that city “**And they were told: Settle in this *Qaryah* (country) and eat from it as you may desire, but say *Hittatun* ‘Remove from us the burden of our sins, ..’**” (7:161). The term *Qaryah* may refer to the urban style of life that depends primarily on farming. Most probably this city was between the second and the third cataract in vicinity of Abri on the right bank of the Nile facing *Batn Alhajar* desert where Moses and his people were camping (see Map 3 Kingdom of Kush on page 162) This city was also referred to as *Misra* in the verse “**And we revealed to Moses and his brother to have houses in *Misra* for your people and make your houses the direction (of your prayers) and perform prayer and give glad tidings to the believers**” (10:87). The term *Misra* used here may suit the style of urban dwellings like brick houses in contrast to tents and straw huts. It worth mentioning that the command of God “**and make your houses the *Qiblah* (direction of your prayers)**” regards Moses

and his brother. Hence, their houses were the first *Qiblah* (direction of prayer).

The Tor of Sinaa' and the sacred valley Tuwa:

Currently there is no mountain in Sinai called Tor. The Quran did not attribute holiness to a mountain, but it mentioned a *holy valley*¹⁷. Having God, the Almighty swear by the Tor¹⁸, He also swore by the star¹⁹, and there is no mention of a particular star or a particular mountain. But the Torah in the Book of Exodus (2:3) mentioned the name of the mountain Horeb (Haryib) as a holy mountain. However, research shows that Sinai does not have a mountain with this name²⁰. From a linguistic point of view, in the ancient Egyptian language that was used in the Kingdom of Kush

¹⁷ (20:12), (51:16).

¹⁸ (52:1)

¹⁹ (53:1)

²⁰ Arabic Reference: Kamal Salibi, 1986: Torah has come from the Arab Peninsula. Pub Arab Research Establishment, Beirut.

(Napata), the mountain named *Al-Barkal* was described as the abode of the god *Amon Ra*. That is why it was considered as the holy mountain, or the mountain of *Baraka*, i.e., the blessed mountain. Hence, Amon Ra was described as: (*Inn Ra hr ib wab dw*), and this is pronounced *Amon Ra Haryib wab jo*; meaning *the god Amon Ra who dwells in the sacred mountain*. The mountain gained its sacredness from the dwelling of the god Amon Ra in it. The word *Hrib* in ancient Egyptian means the dweller. The mountain of Al-Barkal or Baraka acquired this status from a time that is well before Moses (PBUH). The name Hariyb was mentioned in the Torah (Horeb) and is most probably a result of Amon Ra's association with the mountain as it was the only sacred and pure mountain in the Nile valley and the surrounding area. It was the most important sacred spot for both people of Kemet and the Kushites, hence, the name it was known by in the ancient Egyptian language is the *holy mountain* or the *Baraka Mountain*. The word Barkal might be a derivative from the Arabic word Baraka that means blessings.

Therefore, it is far-fetched that the place where God Almighty the Gracious spoke to Moses is on a mountain in Sinai. Also, the speaking took place on

the right shore of the valley and there are no shores in Sinai. The verses indicate that the mountain was near to a shore. However, there is a sacred mountain near the capital of the Kingdom of Kush. This mountain is the mountain of Al-Barkal in northern Sudan as we mentioned before, found to the right bank of the river Nile south of the 4th cataract (see Map 2 The Crossing page 138). Most probably this is the area near which Moses crossed with the Children of Israel and the Pharaoh's people drowned in the river.

It is noteworthy that the inhabitants of this area describe many directions relative to the course of the river: the direction towards the source of the water is "up the river" and they also say "landwards - *Qibli* or *barri*". The direction where the water runs is "down the river" and they say "seawards - *Bahri*". This is similar to the way of naming directions in other languages like in English. Therefore, because the water of the river Nile runs from south to north then this *Misra*/*Misraim* is "down the river" from the Kingdom of Kush. There is a reference for this in the verse: "**descend Misran**" (2:61).

The Qur'anic text indicates that the conversations of God with Moses (PBUH), when he was on the way back from Median and after the miraculous crossing of the river, did take place in the sacred valley *Tuwa* by the mountain (see Map 2 The Crossing page 138). The conversation with God that took place after the crossing was followed by the walk to *Misra* (urban districts down the Nile valley) where God had ordered them to build houses and make the houses of Moses & Aron their direction for prayer. Moreover, when the Children of Israel were not patient with eating manna and quail, Moses ordered them to do so in his saying: **“descend Misran”** (2:61). All this indicates that the mountain is in an area closer to the capital of Kush than to Kemet, and that it is in the upper direction from which the Nile descends in its course to the sea.

The Sea of the Crossing:

Some people might also think that Moses (PBUH) had crossed the Red Sea and the Pharaoh followed him until he drowned in the sea, but this is too far-fetched for a number of reasons:

1. The far distance between the capital of Kush and the Red Sea. It is a distance that

takes weeks or months to walk, in addition to the need for food and water. It is highly unlikely that the Children of Israel – most of whom are women and children – were able to cross this distance and run away from the Pharaoh and his soldiers. How could an organised army with its armaments and provisions not catch up with a number of women and children until they reach the Red Sea?

2. If the water did ebb after Moses hit with his staff, then Moses and his followers had to walk to the bottom then cross the width of the Red Sea on foot. Its width is 280 kilometres and its depth is 490 meters. This is a very long distance which people cannot cross, and the Pharaoh with his soldiers could not have seen them across it.

3. The narration of the Quranic story of Moses (PBUH) mentions the entry into *Misra* after crossing ‘the sea’. However, its widespread among both experts and lay people that *Misra* is the country now known as Egypt and that the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. If that is the case, then they would have entered the Arab

peninsula. The Qur'anic narration said that Moses (PBUH) said to his people, after God saved them by drowning the Pharaoh's army: "**descend Misran**" (2:61). This was when they asked Him to exchange for them the divine food – manna and quail – with field produce of crops and vegetables. If they had crossed from the Red Sea to the Arab peninsula, then there is nothing to justify Moses saying to them "**descend Misran**" (2:61) in the above sense, because the Arab peninsula is not directly connected to Kemet. In this case, the Levant would be closer to them than Kemet. However, we mentioned that 'Misran' indicates an urban district down the Nile Valley in northern Kush. This assumption is more probable because it makes the descending of the Israelites from the 'Belly of the Rock' desert to that urban in consistency with the Quranic description.

The Pharaoh of Moses:

The above analyses may justify our assumption that the Pharaoh of Moses might be the black

fighter Pharaoh Taharque who was mentioned in the Torah (The Second Book of Kings 9.19 and Isaiah 37-8-9) out of his actual period. Taharque waged wars against the Assyrians for years with little success of maintaining his victory and many failures and defeats that forced him to return to Napata. It might have been his reaction to his defeat that led to his increased anger, spite, and oppression against the Children of Israel who lived with him in his kingdom. In the last five years of making things difficult for the Children of Israel, his reign ended by the drowning of his people in the River Nile while following Moses (PBUH). God had saved the Pharaoh from drowning to taste humiliation in this world after he lost everything and lived a stranger in the land that used to be his kingdom. This took place near Napata in the North of Sudan in part of the Nile that changes its course to the south, hence, mount Al-Barkal lies at the right bank and Nuri at the left bank (see Map 2 The Crossing page 138). This may explain the changing of the necropolis of this Kushite Dynasty from Alkuru to Nuri where Taharque had built his pyramid and a number of his successors were buried. Pharaoh Taharque has another pyramid at Sadinga; however, his body was not found, neither there, nor in his pyramid at Nuri.

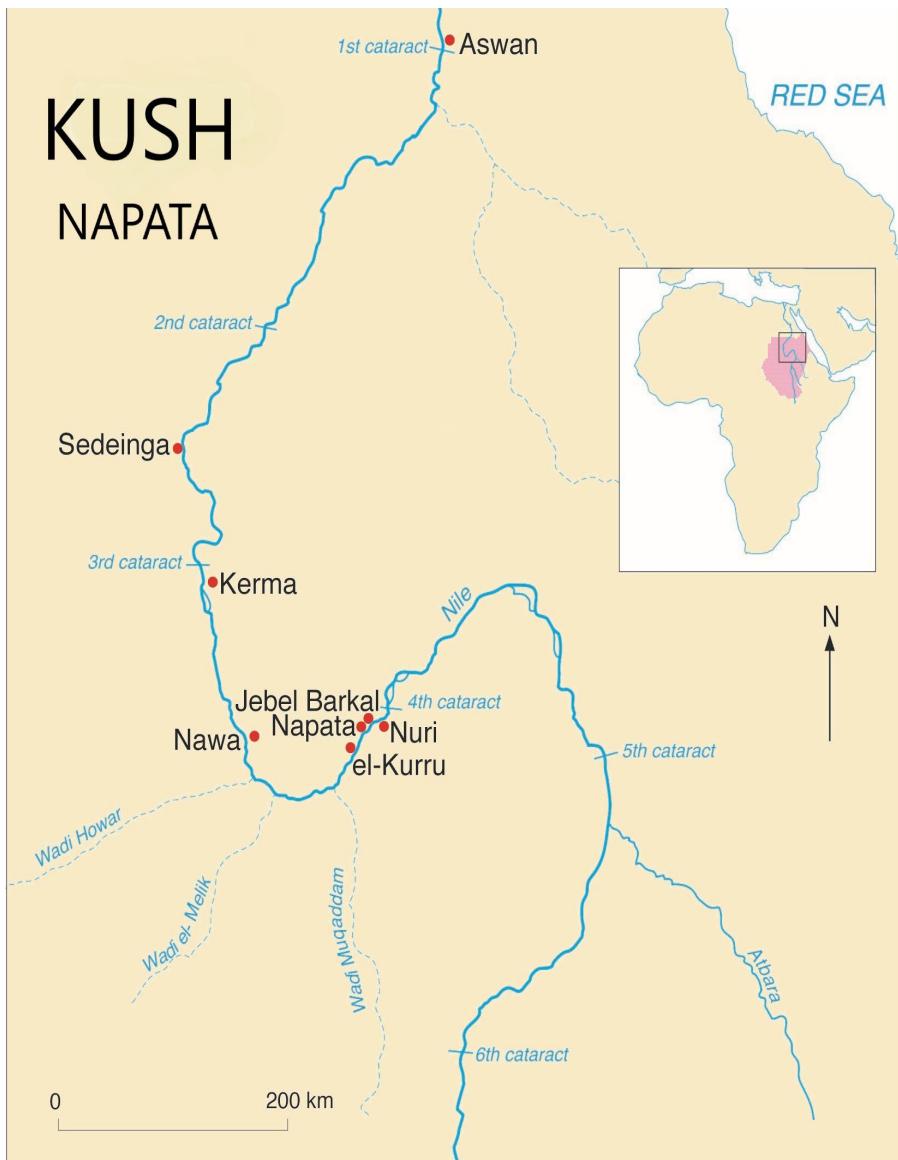
The holy Quran mentioned that after the story of Moses (PBUH), the exodus, and the drowning of the Pharaoh's people, the country was affected by events of ruin and destruction: **"... and We levelled to the ground the great works and fine buildings which Pharaoh and his people erected"** (7:137). Some people assumed that the Pharaoh of Moses is one of those who preceded Taharque, but this is not supported by evidence. No ruin or destruction took place after the reign of any of them, to the contrary, their monuments are still intact; for instance, those of Ramses/ Ramesses II. Some people believe he was the Pharaoh of Moses, but his monuments remained intact after him and are considered among the most important antiquities. These include the Temple of Abu Simbel that was only threatened in modern times by the building of the High Dam and was transported with all its complete design to where the water of the dam cannot reach it. Meanwhile, the monuments of Taharque were terribly destroyed and ruined by King Psmatik II, one of the kings of the 26th Dynasty in Kemet (593 BC). He destroyed a lot of the Kushite statues and temples in the land of Kush in the conflict with the Kushite king Aspelta. Archaeologists in 2003 have found a cache of broken colossal statues in a large

pit in *Doukki Gel* (see Appendix Figure 4), near the fifth cataract of the river Nile in northern Sudan.²¹ Among the royal statues found were those of Pharaoh Taharque (690-664 BC), kings Senkamanisken (643-623 BC), Anlamani (623-593 B.C.), Aspelta (593-568 BC), and Tanwtamany (Died: 653 BC).

²¹ Robert G. Morkot, 2000: The Black Pharaohs, Egypt's Nubian Rulers, pp303-304. Rubicon Press.

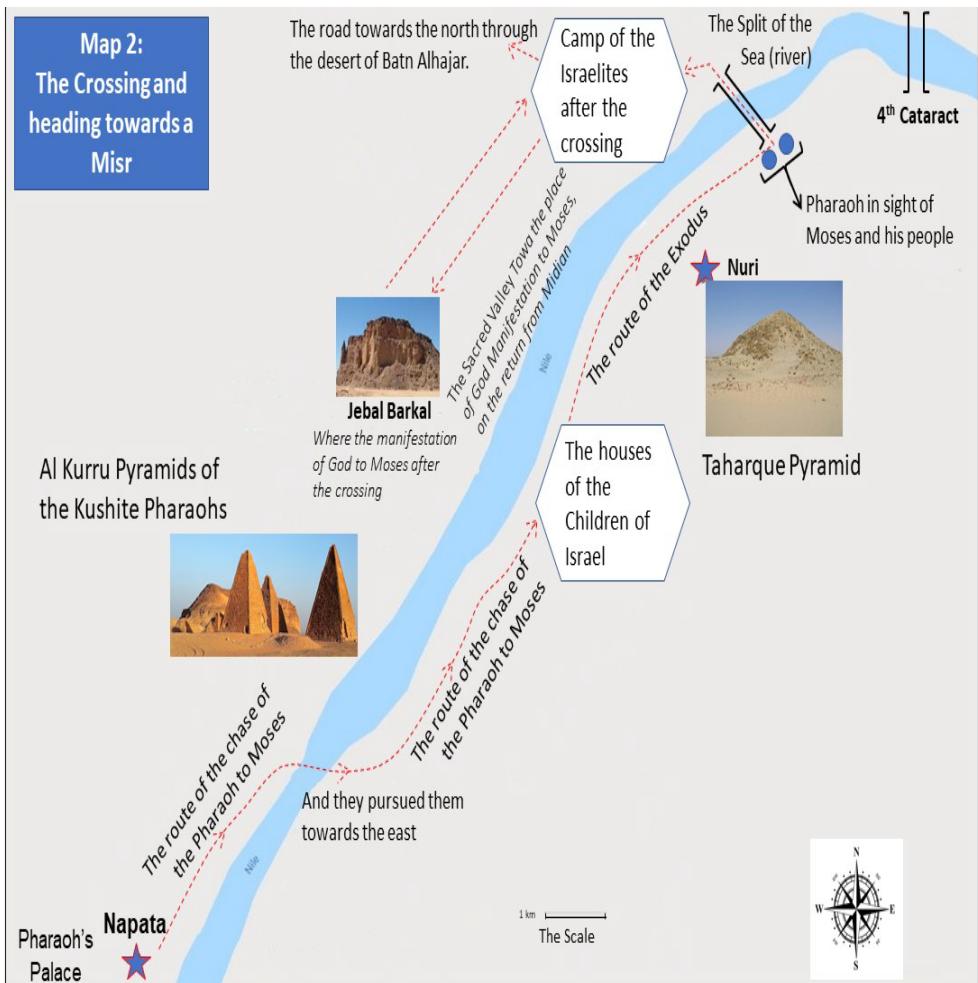
Appendix of maps & figures

KUSH NAPATA



map (1)

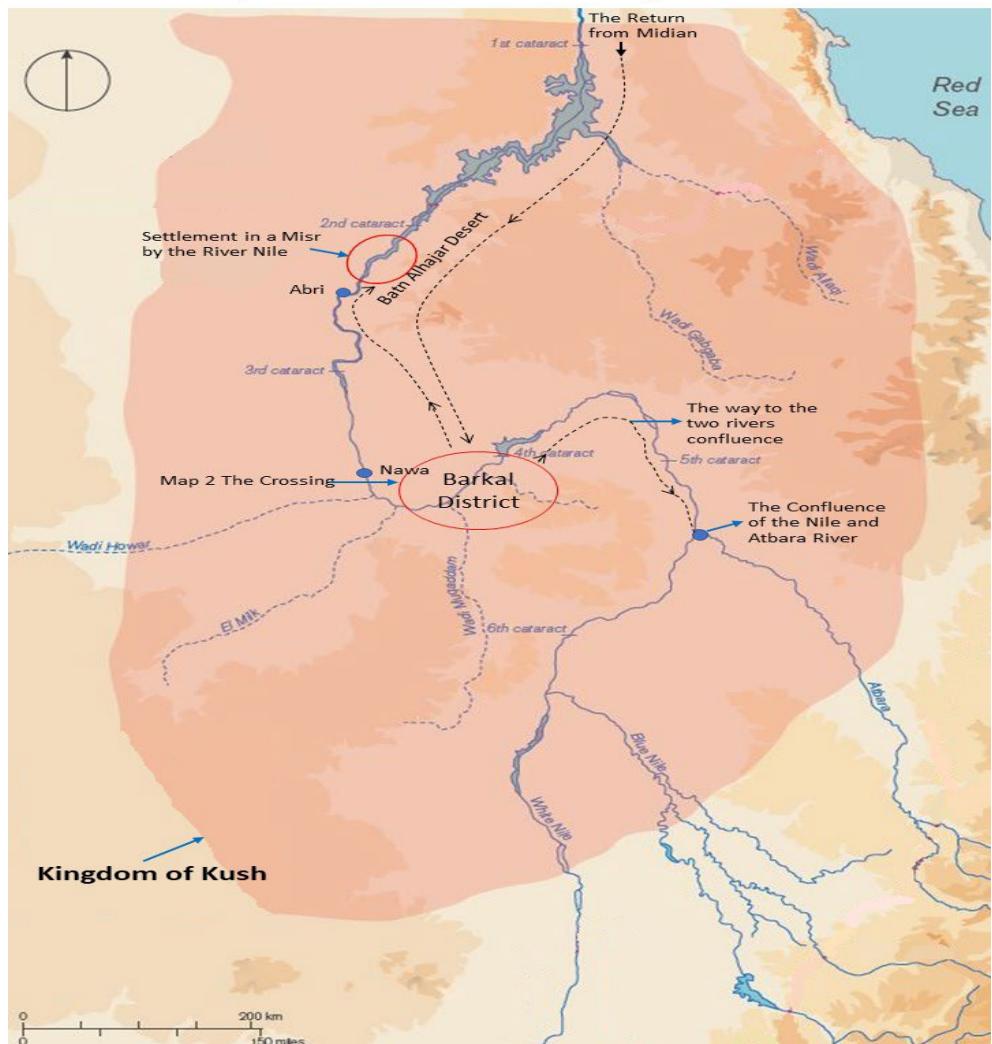
Map 2: The Crossing and heading towards a Misr



map (2)

THE KINGDOM OF KUSH

Map 3: Al-Barkal District & Journeys of Moses



Map (3)



Figures 1&2: Statues of black Pharaohs from the kingdom of Kush. Museum of Kerma, Sudan.



Figure 3: From right to left: Senkamanisken, Tanwtamany, Anlamani, Taharque.



Figure 4: The cache that contained the broken statues of the Kushite Pharaohs.



Figure 5: The Pharaoh Senkamanisken in the form of the Sphinx.

Figure 6: The name Pharaoh Tanwtamany, written in hieroglyph.





Figure 7: The name Pharaoh Tanwtamany, a decedent of Taharque, on his belt

Figure 8: Pharaoh Taharque in the form of the Sphinx.

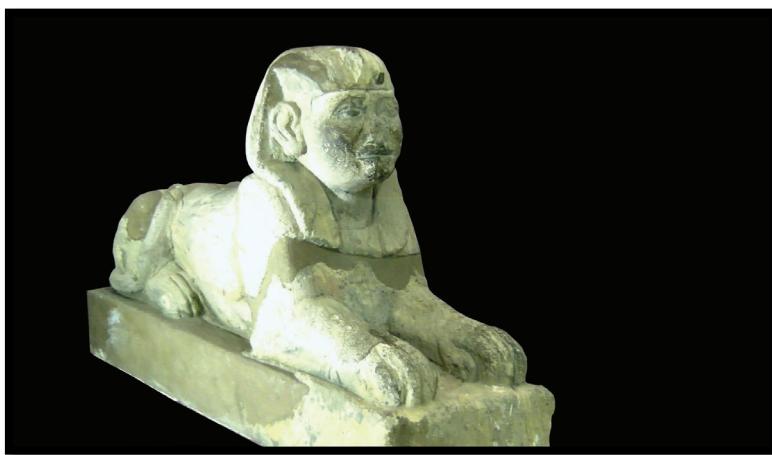




Figure 9: Statue of Taharque in the Sudan National History Museum



Figure 10: Pyramid of Taharque in Nori.



Figures 11: Natural mummification: A body from the post Meroitic period showing the skin, some flesh, and nails

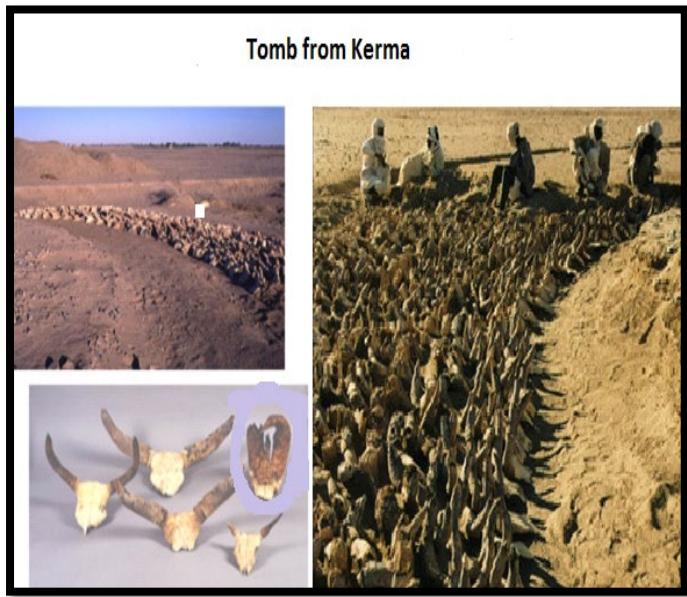


Figure 12: Parts of Kerma necropolis showing cattle horns surrounding it.

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