

The Story of Moses (part 9 of 12): We Drowned Them in the Sea

Description: The Children of Israel flee, but they are a broken people.

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Pharaoh and the majority of the people of Egypt refused to believe the signs. Repeatedly God sent his punishments and the people appealed to Moses, promising to worship God alone and free the Children of Israel but time and time again, they broke their promises. Finally, God withdrew His mercy and gave the order for Moses to lead his people out of Egypt.

But when We removed the punishment from them to a fixed term, which they had to reach, behold! They broke their word! So We took retribution from them. We drowned them in the sea, because they belied Our signs, and were heedless about them. (Quran 7: 130-136)

Pharaoh's spies knew immediately that something momentous was happening and Pharaoh called a meeting of his most trusted advisors. They decided to gather the entire armed forces to pursue the fleeing slaves. Gathering the army took all night and Pharaoh's army did not leave confines of the city until dawn.

Pharaoh's army marched into the desert. It was not long before the children of Israel could look back into the distance and see the dust raised by the approaching army. It was also not long before those in the front ranks of the children of Israel had reached the edge of the Red Sea.

The Children of Israel were trapped. In front of them was the Red Sea; to their back was the avenging army. Fear and panic began to spread through their ranks. They appealed to Moses. Moses had been walking at the back of his fleeing people; he could see the army getting closer and closer. He made his way through the ranks to the edge of the sea. He walked amongst his people allaying their fears and reminding them to keep the faith to continue trusting that God would not let them down.

Moses stood at the edge of the Red Sea and looked out toward the horizon. Ibn Kathir narrates that Joshua turned to Moses and said, "In front of us is this impassable barrier, the sea, and behind us the enemy; surely death cannot be avoided!" Moses did not panic; he stood silently and waited for God to keep His promise, to free the children of Israel.

At that moment, as panic swept over the children of Israel, God inspired Moses to strike the sea with his stick. He did as he was commanded. A fierce wind began to blow, the sea began to swirl and spin, and suddenly it parted to reveal a pathway; the bottom of

the sea became dry enough for the people to walk across it.

Moses began to direct the people across the dry corridor in the middle of the sea. He waited until the last person had commenced walking across the sea before he turned back to look at the approaching army and then followed his people across the seabed. As they reached the other side, the panic and fear began to overwhelm the children of Israel. They once again began to beg and plead for Moses to close the corridor. Moses refused, God's plan was already in motion, and he was confident that the Children of Israel would be safe even though Pharaoh's army had followed them into the dry seabed corridor.

And We took the children of Israel across the sea, and Pharaoh with his hosts followed them in oppression and enmity, till when drowning overtook him, he said, "None has the right to be worshipped but He, in whom the children of Israel believe, and I am one of the Muslims (those who submit to God's Will)."

**Now you believe while you refused to believe before and you were one of the evildoers! So this day We shall deliver your dead body out from the sea that you maybe a sign to those who come after you!
And verily, many among humankind are heedless of our Signs.
(Quran10:90-92)**

Ibn Kathir describes the death of Pharaoh, "The curtain fell on Pharaoh's tyranny, and the waves threw his corpse up to the western seashore. The Egyptians saw him and knew that the god whom they worshipped and obeyed was a mere man who could not keep death away from his own neck." When Pharaoh had power, wealth, good health and strength he refused to acknowledge God but when he saw death approaching he cried out to God with fear and horror. If humankind remembers God in times of ease, God will remember the even the lowliest of human beings in times of distress.

Generations of oppression had left an indelible mark on the Children of Israel. Years of humiliation and constant fear had left them ignorant and obstinate. Most of them had been deprived of comforts and luxuries for all of their lives. They longed for anything that was a sign of wealth or materialism. The children of Israel believed in God, they had just witnessed the most amazing miracles and signs of God's power but still they coveted an idol they saw on their journey out of Egypt.

And We brought the Children of Israel (with safety) across the sea, and they came upon a people devoted to some of their idols (in worship). They said, "Moses! Make for us a god as they have gods." He said, "Verily, you are a people who know not the Majesty and Greatness of God and what is obligatory upon you." Moses added, "Verily, these people will be destroyed for that which they are engaged in (idols-worship). And all that they are doing is in vain."

He said, "Shall I seek for you a god other than God, while He has given you superiority over the mankind and jinn of your time."

And (remember) when We rescued you from Pharaoh's people, who were afflicting you with the worst torment, killing your sons and letting your women live. And in that was a great trial from your Lord." (Quran 7: 138-141)

God had favoured the Children of Israel. They were led safely out of Egypt and they had witnessed the drowning of their cruel ruler Pharaoh. When they needed water God commanded Moses to strike a rock, which sent forth twelve springs of water for the twelve different tribes so that there was no dispute. God also sent clouds to protect them from the scorching sun and to relieve their hunger He sent a special delicious food called *manna*, and quail. Sadly, in spite of God's generosity many of the children of Israel complained and wanted the food they were used to eating in Egypt, onions, garlic, beans and lentils.

Moses admonished his people and reminded them that they had just left a life of degradation and humiliation. He asked why they whined for the worst bounties when God was providing them with the best. Moses said, "**Would you exchange that which is better for that which is lower? Go you down to any town and you shall find what you want!" (Quran2: 61)**. God was providing bounties and making life easy for the children of Israel while they made their way to the Promised land, but they were a broken people, unable to stay away from sin and corruption.

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