

The series of the stories of Prophets in this surah continues. The following few *ayaat* briefly mention Prophet Shuaib (AS) and his people. Then there is a long passage concerning Prophet Moses (AS) and the *Children of Israel*. As we mentioned in the introduction of this surah, the time this surah was revealed, the Holy Prophet (SAW) was going to migrate from *Makkah*. Thus a good portion of the Surah addresses the people of the Book with whom the Prophet (SAW) was going to come into contact. During the course of the address to the *Jews*, the consequences of their hypocritical conduct towards Prophethood have also been pointed out clearly, for they professed to believe in Prophet Moses (AS) but in practice opposed his teachings, disobeyed him and adhered to falsehood and consequently were afflicted with ignominy and disgrace.

(85) *"And to Madyan, (We sent) their brother Shuaib (AS). He said: "O my people! Worship Allah (SWT)! You have no other God but Him.""* From here begins the story of Prophet Shuaib (AS) and the people of *Madyan*. The people of *Madyan* were the descendants of *Madyan*, the son of *Midyan*, the son of Prophet Abraham (AS). Prophet Shuaib (AS) was also from one of the tribes of *Madyan*, to whom he was sent by Allah (SWT) to proclaim His Message. Thus, he called them to the Oneness of Allah (SWT) like all other Prophets before him. Then he said: *"Verily, a clear proof from your Lord has come unto you."* This refers to the proofs and miracles which were manifested through the hands of Prophet Shuaib (AS). And he said: *"So give full measure and full weight and wrong not men in their things."* i.e. he commanded them not to cheat people in buying and selling and give full measure and weight and not cause harm to anyone by holding back what is their due. *"And do not mischief on the earth after it has been set in order that will be better for you, if you are believers."* The people of *Madyan* are being admonished by Prophet Shuaib (AS) not to disobey the commands of their Lord and not to transgress the limits that He has set for them, for this is much better for them.

(86) *"And sit not on every road, threatening, and hindering from the Path of Allah those who believe in Him, seeking to make it crooked."* These people would sit on the roads and streets and would terrorize people, rob them and threaten them of worse consequences if they believed in Prophet Shuaib (AS). They would further twist and misrepresent the Message of Allah (SWT) to turn them away from His path. Thus they were commanded to abandon such evil acts and it was said to them: *"And remember when you were but few, and He multiplied you. And see what was the end of the mischief-makers."* i.e. you should remember the favors of Allah (SWT), Who made you strong when you were weak and then increased your numbers to make you a large nation. And also remember the fate of the previous nations who were destroyed for their disobedience to Allah (SWT) and rejection of His Messengers, like the people of Noah (AS), *A'ad*, *Thamud* and the people of Lot (AS). Consider the fate of the evil-doers.

(87) *"And if there is a party of you who believes in that with which I have been sent and a party who do not believe, so be patient until Allah (SWT) judges between us."* In this *ayah* Prophet Shuaib (AS) addressed his people that if you become divided concerning me, and some of you believe in the message that I have brought while others reject it, then do not make haste and be patient for Allah's decree will certainly come and He will decide between us and you. *"And He is the Best of judges."* i.e. He is surely the best to decide as to who is to be rewarded for his righteousness among His servants and who deserves His punishment.

(88) *"The chiefs of those who were arrogant among his people said: "We shall certainly drive you out, O Shuaib (AS), and those who have believed with you from our town, or else you (all) shall return to our religion.""* The arrogant chiefs of the people of *Madyan* warned Prophet Shuaib (AS) and his followers that they should revert to the disbeliever's religion or else they would be expelled from their village. But Prophet Shuaib (AS) replied to them: *"He said: "Even though we hate it!"*" i.e. are you trying to force us to accept your religion, even though we do not like it and consider it as falsehood.

(89) *"We should have invented a lie against Allah (SWT) if we returned to your religion, after Allah (SWT) has rescued us from it."* This is the answer of Prophet Shuaib (AS) to the chiefs of his people. He told them that after he and his followers had believed in what Allah (SWT) had revealed to them and after having its knowledge, reverting to disbelief would mean that the first standpoint was false and this would be an accusation against Allah (SWT). Then he said: *"And it is not for us to return to it unless Allah (SWT), our Lord, should will. Our Lord comprehends all things in His Knowledge. In Allah (SWT) (Alone) we put our trust."* i.e. to succeed in staying away from evil and falsehood is nothing but the grace of Allah (SWT), for all matters are referred to Him, Who has the perfect knowledge of everything. Then Prophet Shuaib (AS) prayed: *"Our Lord! Judge between us and our people in truth, for You are the Best of those who give judgment."* i.e. he prayed for their victory and for the destruction of the disbelievers among his people.

(90) *"The chiefs of those who disbelieved among his people said: "If you follow Shuaib (AS), be sure then you will be the losers!"*" This is the misleading statement of the disbelieving chiefs of the people of *Madyan* to their people, so that they do not obey and follow Prophet Shuaib (AS).

(91) *"So the earthquake seized them and they lay (dead), prostrate in their homes."* This was the punishment for the disbelievers who expelled Shuaib (AS) and his followers and rejected him.

(92) *"Those who belied Shuaib (AS) became as if they had never dwelt there. Those who belied Shuaib (AS), they were the losers."* i.e. they were destroyed completely and they themselves were the actual losers.

(93) *"Then he turned from them and said: "O my people! I have indeed conveyed my Lord's Messages unto you and I have given you good advice. Then how can I sorrow for the disbelieving people."*" With punishment for his people in sight, Prophet Shuaib

(AS) felt concerned in his heart because of his affection to his people. Therefore he turned to them and admonished them for defying Allah's commandments and avoiding guidance and said to them that he will not feel grieved for them since they rejected him.

(94) *"And We sent no Prophet unto any town, but We seized its people with tribulation and adversity, so that they might humble themselves."* Allah (SWT) tested them with hardships and afflictions so as to see if the earnest and sincere believers within them turn to Allah (SWT) and repent on His disobedience or they turn away. Also refer to *ayah* 42 of surah *Al-Ana'am*.

(95) *"Then We changed the evil for the good, until they increased in number and in wealth, and said: "Our fathers were touched with evil and with good." So We overtook them suddenly while they were unaware."* Then Allah (SWT) gave them increasing wealth, children and provisions and opened the world of material comforts for them. But instead of showing gratitude to their Lord, they became completely lost in their material desires and said that this suffering and prosperity came to our fathers too and it has nothing to do with our deeds. Thus while they became lost in the labyrinth of luxuries, Allah (SWT) seized them suddenly with a painful punishment.

(96) *"And if the people of the towns had believed and had Taqwa (piety), certainly, We should have opened for them blessings from the heaven and the earth, but they disbelieved. So We took them for what they used to earn."* This *ayah* indicates that Allah's blessings do not depend upon one's prosperity and wealth. Instead, blessings in all the heavenly and earthly things can only be achieved through faith and obedience of Allah (SWT). Thus, this *ayah* states that if the people to whom Allah (SWT) had sent His Messengers, would have believed and showed piety, then He surely would have bestowed upon them His blessings. But they denied His Messengers and thus they were punished for their disobedience.

(97) *"Do the people of the towns feel secure against the coming of Our Punishment by night while they are asleep?"* This refers to the people of the towns living at the time of

Prophet Muhammad (SAW). This is a warning to the disbelievers among them that they should not feel secure for themselves from the punishment of Allah (SWT) which may come to them suddenly while they are asleep.

(98) *“Or, do the people of the towns feel secure against the coming of Our Punishment in the forenoon while they play?”* i.e. the punishment of Allah (SWT) may also come to them suddenly while they are busy in their worldly pursuits.

(99) *“Do they then feel secure against Allah's scheming?”* i.e. His punishment. *“None feels secure from it except the people who are the losers.”* This refers to the disbelievers who commit evil acts while feeling secure from His wrath and punishment.

(100) *“Is it not clear to those who inherit the earth in succession from its possessors, that had We willed, We would have punished them for their sins.”* i.e. was it not made clear for those people who become successors of this earth after Allah (SWT) destroyed their previous generations that if He wanted He would have punished them too for their disbelief just like their ancestors. Then Allah (SWT) said: *“And We seal up their hearts so that they hear not?”* This means that they have taken no lesson from the past events, thus Allah (SWT) sealed their hearts and they are now unable to listen to the truth. So they were left bereft of hearing.

(101) *“Those were the towns whose story We relate unto you.”* i.e. O Muhammad (SAW) We narrate to you the news of the towns to whom We sent Our Messengers. *“And there came indeed to them their Messengers with clear proofs, but they were not such as to believe in that which they had rejected before.”* The Messengers came to them with miracles and signs from their Lord, but the disbelievers rejected the truth and obstinately followed the path of ignorance, only because they had once belied them. *“Thus Allah (SWT) does seal up the hearts of the disbelievers.”* i.e. because of their rigidity and rejection of the truth.

(102) *“And most of them We found not (true) to their covenant, but most of them We found transgressors.”* This covenant refers to the Primordial Covenant (*Ahd Alast*),

which took place before the creation of this material realm i.e. in the realm of spirits (*Aalam-e-Arwah*). The covenant was taken from the souls (*Arwah*) of the human beings by Allah (SWT) before they were sent to the physical world. Allah (SWT) said to them: *"Am I not your Lord?"* Then all the humans entered into a covenant when they answered *"Yes"*. This will further be elaborated in *ayah* 172 of this surah.

(103) *"Then after them We sent Moses (AS) with Our Signs to Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they wrongfully rejected them."* After the five Prophets mentioned in this surah, Allah (SWT) sent Prophet Moses (AS) with miracles and His Book to proclaim His Message to Pharaoh and his people. But instead of being grateful to Allah (SWT) for these miracles and guidance, they rejected His revelations. *"So see how was the end of the mischief-makers."* i.e. look how We punished them for their transgression and think of your own fate if you do the same.

(104) *"And Moses (AS) said: "O Pharaoh! I am a Messenger from the Lord of the Worlds."*

(105) *"Proper it is for me that I say nothing concerning Allah (SWT) but the truth."* Prophet Moses (AS) further said to Pharaoh that as a Prophet of Allah (SWT), it is his duty to convey His message as it is given to him and that his status of Prophethood does not allow him to ascribe anything but truth to Allah (SWT). *"Indeed I have come unto you from your Lord with a clear proof."* This refers to all the miracles given to Moses (AS) by Allah (SWT) as a proof of his Prophethood. *"So let the Children of Israel depart along with me."* i.e. with all these miracles and signs as a clear proof of his Prophethood, Pharaoh must believe in them and release the *Children of Israel* from his slavery.

(106) *"(Pharaoh) said: "If you have come with a sign, show it forth, - if you are one of those who tell the truth.""* i.e. if you really are what you claim then produce a sign or miracle for us to see.

(107) *"Then he (Moses) threw his staff and behold! it was a serpent plain (for all to see). His staff turned into a big snake that opened its mouth and rushed towards Pharaoh, who jumped from his throne and sought shelter from Moses (AS).*

(108) *"And he drew out his hand, and behold! it was white (with radiance) for the beholders."* This was the second miracle performed by Prophet Moses (AS) at this occasion.

(109) *"The chiefs of the people of Pharaoh said: "This is indeed a skilled enchanter.""* After seeing these great miracles the Pharaoh and his people feared that Moses (AS) might lure their people to his side with these great signs thus they plotted against him to pose him as a liar and said to the people that this is nothing but sorcery.

(110) *"He wants to get you out of your land, so what do you advise?"* Pharaoh feared that Moses (AS) could get the people on his side, so that they drive them out from their land. Therefore, he asked his chiefs for advice.

(111) *"They said: "Put him and his brother off (for a time), and send forth heralds to the cities to collect."*

(112) *"And bring to you all skilled magicians."* i.e. they decided to bring expert sorcerers from all over the country, who are capable enough to defeat Moses (AS).

(113) *"And so the sorcerers came to Pharaoh. They said: "Indeed there will be a (good) reward for us if we are the victors.""* It should be noted that the first thing the sorcerers demanded from Pharaoh was a reward for their performance as all worldly people do. On the contrary, the Prophets do not ask for any reward for they preach and convey the Message only to gain Allah's pleasure.

(114) *"He said: "Yes, and moreover you will become my favourites.""* Pharaoh assured them that he will reward them and give them great provisions.

(115) *"They said: "O Moses (AS)! Either you throw (first), or shall we have the (first) throw?""* The sorcerers asked Moses (AS), if he would drop his staff first or should they throw their first.

(116) *"He (Moses) said: "Throw you (first)."* So when they threw, they bewitched the eyes of the people, and struck terror into them, and they displayed a great magic." Then Prophet Moses (AS) gave them permission to begin and they demonstrated their magic by bewitching the eyes of the people that made them see their staffs and strings as snakes. They were terrified by a display of great wonders.

(117) *"And We revealed to Moses (AS): "Throw your staff," and behold! It swallowed up straight away all the false devices which they showed."* As soon as Moses (AS) dropped his staff on the ground, it turned into a great snake that swallowed all the snakes of the sorcerers.

(118) *"Thus the truth prevailed and all their doings proved vain."* i.e. the truth prevailed over falsehood.

(119) *"So they were defeated there and put to humiliation."* i.e. the Pharaoh and his magicians were defeated and put to shame.

(120) *"And the sorcerers fell down prostrate."* The enchanters prostrated themselves in adoration.

(121) *"They said: "We believe in the Lord of the Worlds."*

(122) *"The Lord of Moses (AS) and Aaron (AS)."* The magicians realized that what Moses (AS) showed them was not magic and it can only be from Allah (SWT), thus they fell in prostration and became believers.

(123) *"Pharaoh said: "You have believed in him before I give you permission. Surely, this is a plot which you have contrived in the city to drive out its people."* It was an embarrassing situation for Pharaoh, but he was clever enough to conceal his state of mind in front of the people and tried to change the situation by putting the blame back on the sorcerers. He threatened the sorcerers on one hand that how dare they accept faith without his permission. And on the other hand, he claimed that this is all a part of a great conspiracy and that these sorcerers had joined hands with Moses (AS), so that to gain power over them and expel them from their land. He further threatened them and said: *"But you shall come to know."* i.e. what punishment I give to you.

(124) *"Surely, I will cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, and then I will crucify you all."* This is the punishment that the Pharaoh threatened the sorcerers with, if they persist in their rebellion against him.

(125) *"They said: "Verily, we are returning to our Lord.""* i.e. their belief in Allah (SWT) became so strong that they were ready to face any threat or punishment against them. This satisfaction was due to the fact that now this temporary world had no value in their eyes and they were sure of the meeting with their Lord and that they shall get eternal bliss in the Hereafter.

(126) *"And you take vengeance on us only because we believed in the signs of our Lord when they reached us!"* The sorcerers further said to Pharaoh that you take revenge from us simply because we have come to believe that the signs and miracles produced by Moses (AS) are by none other than Allah (SWT). Then they prayed: *"Our Lord! Pour out on us patience, and cause us to die as Muslims."* i.e. make us firm in our religion, lest we should turn back to disbelief and falsehood and make us die as Muslims even if we are punished and tortured to death.

(127) *"The chiefs of Pharaoh's people said: "Will you leave Moses (AS) and his people to spread mischief in the land, and to abandon you and your gods?""* With these great signs in sight that Allah (SWT) showed to Pharaoh and his people, his chiefs

became frightened and worried of the fact that people will start following Prophet Moses (AS) and forsake their false gods, thus they advised Pharaoh that if he did not kill Moses (AS) and his brother Aaron (AS) then they would surely spread unrest calling his people to worship Allah (SWT) alone instead of him. But Pharaoh had nothing to answer his chiefs but he said: *"He said: "We will kill their sons, and let live their women, and we have indeed irresistible power over them.""* With this order he meant to satisfy his people that we will eliminate them completely by killing their males while keeping their daughters alive and we shall triumph over them.

(128) *"Moses (AS) said to his people: "Seek help in Allah (SWT) and be patient. Verily, the earth is Allah's (SWT). He gives it as a heritage to whom He will of His slaves, and the (blessed) end is for the pious.""* When Pharaoh advised his evil plot against the Children of Israel, Prophet Moses (AS) advised them that the only way to succeed through this trial was to seek help from Allah (SWT) and be patient. And if they show piety and righteousness, then they will certainly prevail and inherit the land, for all the land belongs to Allah (SWT) alone and He gives it to whomsoever He wills from among His servants.

(129) *"They said: "We had suffered troubles before you came to us, and since you have come to us." He said: "It may be that your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you rulers in the earth, so that He may see how you act?""* The Israelites did not show patience and blamed Prophet Moses (AS) that he did not deliver them from the persecution of Pharaoh and their fate remained unchanged even after he came to them as a Messenger of Allah (SWT). But Moses (AS) encouraged them to show gratitude to Allah (SWT) and remain steadfast, for it might be that He removes affliction and oppression from them and makes them the rulers of this earth testing them with great provisions and bounties. This *ayah* also indicates that Allah (SWT) judges the acts of those who are given power and authority and sees how they make use of this trust.

(130) *“And indeed We punished the people of Pharaoh with years of drought and shortness of fruits, that they might remember.”* They were inflicted with calamities and sufferings so that they take heed from this warning and mend their ways.

(131) *“But whenever good came to them, they said: "Ours is this." And if evil afflicted them, they ascribed it to evil omens connected with Moses (AS) and those with him.”* i.e. whenever Allah (SWT) gave them provisions and bounties, they would accept it and said that we have been bestowed upon because we deserve it, but whenever He tested them with famine or drought, they would blame Prophet Moses (AS) and his followers that this is because of what they had done. Then Allah (SWT) said: *“Be informed! Verily, their evil omens are with Allah (SWT) but most of them know not.”* i.e. good and bad fate comes from Allah (SWT) alone, for everything in this universe happens under His Will. But these disbelievers do not know, for they are ignorant of this fact. It was Allah [SWT] who had ordained their ill fortune, though most of them did not know it.