

## Sūrah 28: al-Qasas

### Period of Revelation

According to Ibn Abbas the Sūrahs ash-Shu'arā', an-Naml and al-Qasas were sent down one after the other. The language, the style and the theme also show that the period of the revelation of these three Sūrahs is nearly the same. Another reason for their close resemblance is that the different parts of the story of Prophet Moses is mentioned in these Sūrahs together to make up a complete story.

### Theme and Topics

The main theme is to remove the doubts and objections that were being raised against the Prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad and to invalidate the excuses which were being offered for not believing in him. For this purpose first the story of the Prophet Moses has been related which by analogy with the period of revelation impresses the following points in the listener's mind automatically:

1. First God provides the means and motives of whatever He wills to do in imperceptible ways. Thus God so arranged things that the child through whom Pharaoh had to be removed from power was bred and brought up in his own house and he could not know whom he was fostering. Who can then fight God and frustrate Him by his machinations.
2. Secondly Prophethood is not granted to a person amid festivities by issuing a proclamation from the earth and heavens. You wonder how Muhammad has been blessed with Prophethood unexpectedly all of a sudden but Moses whom you yourselves acknowledge as a Prophet (v.48) had also become a Prophet unexpectedly while on a journey and nobody had known what event had occurred in the desolation at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Even Moses himself did not know a moment before what he was going to be blessed with. He in fact had gone to bring a piece of the fire but had returned with the gift of Prophethood
3. Thirdly the person from whom God wants to take some service comes out without any army and armour and without an apparent helper or force at his back yet he puts to rout much stronger and better equipped opponents. The contrast that existed between the strengths of Moses and Pharaoh was much more prominent and glaring than that which existed between Muhammad and the Quraysh; yet the world knows who had come out victorious in the end and who had been routed.
4. Fourthly you refer to Moses again and again and say, 'Why has Muhammad not been given the same which was given to Moses?' i. e. miracles of the staff and the shining hand etc. as if to suggest that you would readily believe only if you were shown the kind of the miracles that were shown by Moses to Pharaoh. But do you know what sort of response was made by those who were shown those miracles? They had not believed even after seeing the miracles and had only said, 'This is magic' for they were involved in stubbornness and hostility to the Truth. The same malady afflicts you today. Will you believe only when you are shown the same kind of miracles? Then do you know what fate the disbelievers had met even after seeing the miracles? They were annihilated by God. Do you now wish to meet the same doom by asking for the miracles in your obstinacy?

These were the things which were automatically impressed in the mind of every listener who heard this story in the pagan environment of Makkah for a similar conflict was going on at that time between the Prophet and disbelievers of Makkah as had already taken place between the Prophet Moses and Pharaoh before. This was the background against which the story of the Prophet Moses was narrated so that a perfect analogy was established automatically in every detail between the conditions prevailing then in Makkah and those existing in the time of the Prophet Moses. Then from verse 43 onward the discourse turns to the real theme.

In the first place the narration of a two thousand year old historical event by the Prophet with such accuracy and detail is presented as a proof of his Prophethood although he was un-lettered and the people of his city and clan knew full well that he had no access to any source of such information as they could point out.

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Then his appointment as a Prophet is put forward as God's mercy to them, for they were heedless and God had made this arrangement for their guidance. Then their oft-repeated objection, "Why has not this Prophet brought the miracles which Moses had brought?" has been answered. It is said to them, "How can you be justified in demanding miracles from this Prophet when you did not believe in Moses either, who, as you yourselves acknowledge, had brought miracles from God? You can still see the truth only if you do not serve your lusts and whims. But if you remained afflicted with this malady, you would never see it even though you were shown any kind of miracles."

Then the disbelievers of Makkah have been warned and put to shame for an event that occurred in those very days. Some Christians had come to Makkah and embraced Islām when they heard the Qur'ān from the Prophet. Instead of learning any lesson from this the Makkans were so upset at this that their leader, Abu Jahl, disgraced those people publicly. In conclusion, the excuse that the disbelievers put forward for not believing in the Prophet has been dealt with. What they feared was this: "If we give up the polytheistic creed of the Arabs and accept the doctrine of Tawhid instead, this will put an end to our supremacy in the religious, political and economic fields, which, in turn, will destroy our position of the most influential tribe of Arabia and we shall be left with no refuge anywhere in the land." As this was the real motive of the chiefs of the Quraysh for their antagonism towards the Truth, and their doubts and objections were only the pretenses, which they invented to deceive the common people, God has dealt with these fully till the end of the Sūrah, considered each aspect of these in a wise manner and offered the remedy for their basic ailment due to which those people judged the Truth and falsehood only from the viewpoint of their worldly interests.

**Sūrah 28: al-Qasas**<sup>1019</sup>

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate,  
the Most Merciful

1. Tā, Seen, Meem.<sup>1020</sup>
2. These are the verses of the clear Book.
3. We recite to you from the news of Moses and Pharaoh in truth for a people who believe.
4. Indeed, Pharaoh exalted himself in the land and made its people into factions, oppressing a sector among them, slaughtering their [newborn] sons and keeping their females alive. Indeed, he was of the corrupters.
5. And We wanted to confer favor upon those who were oppressed in the land and make them leaders and make them inheritors
6. And establish them in the land and show Pharaoh and [his minister] Hāmān and their soldiers through them<sup>1021</sup> that which they had feared.
7. And We inspired to the mother of Moses, “Suckle him; but when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear and do not grieve. Indeed, We will return him to you and will make him [one] of the messengers.”
8. And the family of Pharaoh picked him up [out of the river] so that he would become to them an enemy and a [cause of] grief. Indeed, Pharaoh and Hāmān and their soldiers were deliberate sinners.
9. And the wife of Pharaoh said, “[He will be] a comfort of the eye [i.e., pleasure] for me and for you. Do not kill him; perhaps he may benefit us, or we may adopt him as a son.” And they perceived not.<sup>1022</sup>
10. And the heart of Moses’ mother became empty [of all else]. She was about to disclose [the matter concerning] him had We not bound fast her heart that she would be of the believers.
11. And she said to his sister, “Follow him”; so she watched him from a distance while they perceived not.
12. And We had prevented from him [all] wet nurses before,<sup>1023</sup> so she said, “Shall I direct you to a household that will be responsible for him for you while they are to him [for his upbringing] sincere?”
13. So We restored him to his mother that she might be content and not grieve and that she would know that the promise of God is true. But most of them [i.e., the people] do not know.
14. And when he attained his full strength and was [mentally] mature, We bestowed upon him judgement and knowledge. And thus do We reward the doers of good.
15. And he entered the city at a time of inattention by its people<sup>1024</sup> and found therein two men fighting: one from his faction and one from among his ene-

<sup>1019</sup> *Al-Qasas*: The Narrative (or Story).

<sup>1020</sup> See footnote to 2:1.

<sup>1021</sup> By means of those whom they had oppressed and enslaved.

<sup>1022</sup> What would be the result of that.

<sup>1023</sup> Prior to that, Moses had refused to nurse from any other woman.

<sup>1024</sup> i.e., during the noon period of rest.

- my. And the one from his faction called for help to him against the one from his enemy, so Moses struck him and [unintentionally] killed him. [Moses] said, "This is from the work of Satan. Indeed, he is a manifest, misleading enemy."
16. He said, "My Lord, indeed I have wronged myself, so forgive me," and He forgave him. Indeed, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.
17. He said, "My Lord, for the favor You bestowed upon me, I will never be an assistant to the criminals."
18. And he became inside the city fearful and anticipating [exposure], when suddenly the one who sought his help the previous day cried out to him [once again]. Moses said to him, "Indeed, you are an evident, [persistent] deviator."
19. And when he wanted to strike the one who was an enemy to both of them, he<sup>1025</sup> said, "O Moses, do you intend to kill me as you killed someone yesterday? You only want to be a tyrant in the land and do not want to be of the amenders."
20. And a man came from the farthest end of the city, running. He said, "O Moses, indeed the eminent ones are conferring over you [intending] to kill you, so leave [the city]; indeed, I am to you of the sincere advisors."
21. So he left it, fearful and anticipating [apprehension]. He said, "My Lord, save me from the wrongdoing people."
22. And when he directed himself toward Madyan, he said, "Perhaps my Lord will guide me to the sound way."
23. And when he came to the water [i.e., well] of Madyan, he found there a crowd of people watering [their flocks], and he found aside from them two women driving back [their flocks]. He said, "What is your circumstance?" They said, "We do not water until the shepherds dispatch [their flocks]; and our father is an old man."
24. So he watered [their flocks] for them; then he went back to the shade and said, "My Lord, indeed I am, for whatever good You would send down to me, in need."
25. Then one of the two women came to him walking with shyness. She said, "Indeed, my father invites you that he may reward you for having watered for us." So when he came to him<sup>1026</sup> and related to him the story, he said, "Fear not. You have escaped from the wrongdoing people."
26. One of the women said, "O my father, hire him. Indeed, the best one you can hire is the strong and the trustworthy."
27. He said, "Indeed, I wish to wed you one of these, my two daughters, on [the condition] that you serve me for eight years; but if you complete ten, it will be [as a favor] from you. And I do not wish to put you in difficulty. You will

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<sup>1025</sup> i.e., the Israelite, thinking that Moses meant to strike him. Some commentators have attributed the words to the Copt; however, the Israelite was the only one who knew of the previous occurrence.

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<sup>1026</sup> Prophet Shu'ayb, the father of the two women.

- find me, if God wills, from among the righteous.”
28. [Moses] said, “That is [established] between me and you. Whichever of the two terms I complete - there is no injustice to me, and God, over what we say, is Witness.”
29. And when Moses had completed the term and was traveling with his family, he perceived from the direction of the mount a fire. He said to his family, “Stay here; indeed, I have perceived a fire. Perhaps I will bring you from there [some] information or burning wood from the fire that you may warm yourselves.”
30. But when he came to it, he was called from the right side of the valley in a blessed spot - from the tree,<sup>1027</sup> “O Moses, indeed I am God, Lord of the worlds.”
31. And [he was told], “Throw down your staff.” But when he saw it writhing as if it was a snake, he turned in flight and did not return.<sup>1028</sup> [God said], “O Moses, approach and fear not. Indeed, you are of the secure.
32. Insert your hand into the opening of your garment; it will come out white, without disease. And draw in your arm close to you [as prevention] from fear, for those are two proofs from your Lord to Pharaoh and his establishment. Indeed, they have been a people defiantly disobedient.”
33. He said, “My Lord, indeed, I killed from among them someone, and I fear they will kill me.
34. And my brother Aaron is more fluent than me in tongue, so send him with me as support, verifying me. Indeed, I fear that they will deny me.”
35. [God] said, “We will strengthen your arm through your brother and grant you both supremacy so they will not reach you. [It will be] through Our signs; you and those who follow you will be the predominant.”
36. But when Moses came to them with Our signs as clear evidences, they said, “This is not except invented magic, and we have not heard of this [religion] among our forefathers.”
37. And Moses said, “My Lord is more knowing [than we or you] of who has come with guidance from Him and to whom will be succession in the home.<sup>1029</sup> Indeed, wrongdoers do not succeed.”
38. And Pharaoh said, “O eminent ones, I have not known you to have a god other than me. Then ignite for me, O Hāmān, [a fire] upon the clay<sup>1030</sup> and make for me a tower that I may look at the God of Moses. And indeed, I do think he is among the liars.”
39. And he was arrogant, he and his soldiers, in the land, without right, and they thought that they would not be returned to Us.
40. So We took him and his soldiers and threw them into the sea.<sup>1031</sup> So see how was the end of the wrongdoers.

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<sup>1027</sup> Which was within the fire.

<sup>1028</sup> Or “did not look back.”

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<sup>1029</sup> i.e., in this world or in the Hereafter.

<sup>1030</sup> From which bricks are made.

<sup>1031</sup> God caused them to leave all their worldly wealth behind and enter the sea in pursuit of the Children of Israel. See 26:52-66.

41. And We made them leaders<sup>1032</sup> inviting to the Fire, and on the Day of Resurrection they will not be helped.
42. And We caused to overtake them in this world a curse, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be of the despised.<sup>1033</sup>
43. And We gave Moses the Scripture, after We had destroyed the former generations, as enlightenment for the people and guidance and mercy that they might be reminded.
44. And you, [O Muhammad], were not on the western side [of the mount] when We revealed to Moses the command, and you were not among the witnesses [to that].
45. But We produced [many] generations [after Moses], and prolonged was their duration.<sup>1034</sup> And you were not a resident among the people of Madyan, reciting to them Our verses, but We were senders [of this message].<sup>1035</sup>
46. And you were not at the side of the mount when We called [Moses] but [were sent] as a mercy from your Lord to warn a people to whom no warner had come before you that they might be reminded.
47. And if not that a disaster should strike them for what their hands put forth [of sins] and they would say, "Our Lord, why did You not send us a messenger so we could have followed Your verses and been among the believers?"...<sup>1036</sup>
48. But when the truth came to them from Us, they said, "Why was he not given like that which was given to Moses?" Did they not disbelieve in that which was given to Moses before? They said, "[They are but] two works of magic supporting each other,<sup>1037</sup> and indeed we are, in both, disbelievers."
49. Say, "Then bring a scripture from God which is more guiding than either of them that I may follow it, if you should be truthful."
50. But if they do not respond to you - then know that they only follow their [own] desires. And who is more astray than one who follows his desire without guidance from God? Indeed, God does not guide the wrongdoing people.
51. And We have [repeatedly] conveyed to them the word [i.e., the Qur'ān] that they might be reminded.
52. Those to whom We gave the Scripture before it - they<sup>1038</sup> are believers in it.
53. And when it is recited to them, they say, "We have believed in it; indeed, it is the truth from our Lord. Indeed we were, [even] before it, Muslims [i.e., submitting to God]."

<sup>1032</sup> i.e., examples or precedents, followed by subsequent tyrants.

<sup>1033</sup> Literally, "those made hideous," who will be far removed from all good and mercy.

<sup>1034</sup> So they forgot and neglected the ordinances of God

<sup>1035</sup> The Prophet had no way of obtaining this information except through God's revelation.

<sup>1036</sup> The conclusion of the sentence is understood to be "...We would not have sent messengers," meaning that God sent messengers and sent Muhammad with the final scripture to mankind so that no one could claim that punishment was imposed unjustly without warning.

<sup>1037</sup> The reference is by the disbelievers of Quraysh to the Qur'ān and the Torah.

<sup>1038</sup> i.e., the sincere believers among them.

54. Those will be given their reward twice for what they patiently endured and [because] they avert evil through good, and from what We have provided them they spend.
55. And when they hear ill speech, they turn away from it and say, "For us are our deeds, and for you are your deeds. Peace will be upon you,<sup>1039</sup> we seek not the ignorant."
56. Indeed, [O Muhammad], you do not guide whom you like, but God guides whom He wills. And He is most knowing of the [rightly] guided.
57. And they [i.e., the Quraysh] say, "If we were to follow the guidance with you, we would be swept<sup>1040</sup> from our land." Have We not established for them a safe sanctuary to which are brought the fruits of all things as provision from Us? But most of them do not know.
58. And how many a city have We destroyed that was insolent in its [way of] living, and those are their dwellings which have not been inhabited after them except briefly.<sup>1041</sup> And it is We who were the inheritors.
59. And never would your Lord have destroyed the cities until He had sent to their mother [i.e., principal city] a messenger reciting to them Our verses. And We would not destroy the cities except while their people were wrongdoers.
60. And whatever thing you [people] have been given - it is [only for] the enjoyment of worldly life and its adornment. And what is with God is better and more lasting; so will you not use reason?
61. Then is he whom We have promised a good promise which he will meet [i.e., obtain] like he for whom We provided enjoyment of worldly life [but] then he is, on the Day of Resurrection, among those presented [for punishment in Hell]?
62. And [warn of] the Day He will call them and say, "Where are My 'partners' which you used to claim?"
63. Those upon whom the word<sup>1042</sup> will have come into effect will say, "Our Lord, these are the ones we led to error. We led them to error just as we were in error. We declare our disassociation [from them] to You. They did not used to worship [i.e., obey] us."<sup>1043</sup>
64. And it will be said, "Invoke your 'partners,' " and they will invoke them; but they will not respond to them, and they will see the punishment. If only they had followed guidance!
65. And [mention] the Day He will call them and say, "What did you answer the messengers?"
66. But the information<sup>1044</sup> will be unapparent to them that Day, so they will not [be able to] ask one another.

<sup>1039</sup> This is not the Islāmic greeting of "Peace be upon you." Rather, it means "You are secure from being treated in a like manner by us."

<sup>1040</sup> By the other Arab tribes.

<sup>1041</sup> By travellers seeking temporary shelter. The reference is to the ruins which were visible to the Quraysh during their journeys.

<sup>1042</sup> The decree for their punishment.

<sup>1043</sup> i.e., We did not compel them, and they did not obey us; instead, they obeyed their own desires and inclinations.

<sup>1044</sup> By which they might invent lies or excuses.

67. But as for one who had repented, believed, and done righteousness, it is expected [i.e., promised by God] that he will be among the successful.
68. And your Lord creates what He wills and chooses; not for them was the choice. Exalted is God and high above what they associate with Him.
69. And your Lord knows what their breasts conceal and what they declare.
70. And He is God; there is no deity except Him. To Him is [due all] praise in the first [life] and the Hereafter. And His is the [final] decision, and to Him you will be returned.
71. Say, "Have you considered:<sup>1045</sup> if God should make for you the night continuous until the Day of Resurrection, what deity other than God could bring you light? Then will you not hear?"
72. Say, "Have you considered: if God should make for you the day continuous until the Day of Resurrection, what deity other than God could bring you a night in which you may rest? Then will you not see?"
73. And out of His mercy He made for you the night and the day that you may rest therein and [by day] seek from His bounty and [that] perhaps you will be grateful.
74. And [warn of] the Day He will call them and say, "Where are my 'partners' which you used to claim?"
75. And We will extract from every nation a witness and say, "Produce your proof," and they will know that the truth belongs to God, and lost from them is that which they used to invent.
76. Indeed, Qārūn was from the people of Moses, but he tyrannized them. And We gave him of treasures whose keys would burden a band of strong men; thereupon his people said to him, "Do not exult. Indeed, God does not like the exultant.
77. But seek, through that which God has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and [yet], do not forget your share of the world. And do good as God has done good to you. And desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, God does not like corrupters."
78. He said, "I was only given it because of knowledge I have." Did he not know that God had destroyed before him of generations those who were greater than him in power and greater in accumulation [of wealth]? But the criminals, about their sins, will not be asked.<sup>1046</sup>
79. So he came out before his people in his adornment. Those who desired the worldly life said, "Oh, would that we had like what was given to Qārūn. Indeed, he is one of great fortune."
80. But those who had been given knowledge said, "Woe to you! The reward of God is better for he who believes and does righteousness. And none are granted it except the patient."
81. And We caused the earth to swallow him and his home. And there was for him no company to aid him other than

<sup>1045</sup> Meaning "Inform me if you really know."

<sup>1046</sup> There will be no need to enumerate their sins separately, as their quantity is obvious and more than sufficient to warrant punishment in Hell.



- God, nor was he of those who [could] defend themselves.
82. And those who had wished for his position the previous day began to say, "Oh, how God extends provision to whom He wills of His servants and restricts it! If not that God had conferred favor on us, He would have caused it to swallow us. Oh, how the disbelievers do not succeed!"
83. That home of the Hereafter We assign to those who do not desire exaltedness upon the earth or corruption. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous.
84. Whoever comes [on the Day of Judgment] with a good deed will have better than it; and whoever comes with an evil deed - then those who did evil deeds will not be recompensed except [as much as] what they used to do.
85. Indeed, [O Muhammad], He who imposed upon you the Qur'ān will take you back to a place of return.<sup>1047</sup> Say, "My Lord is most knowing of who brings guidance and who is in clear error."
86. And you were not expecting that the Book would be conveyed to you, but [it is] a mercy from your Lord. So do not be an assistant to the disbelievers.<sup>1048</sup>
87. And never let them avert you from the verses of God after they have been revealed to you. And invite [people] to your Lord. And never be of those who associate others with God.
88. And do not invoke with God another deity. There is no deity except Him. Everything will be destroyed except His Face.<sup>1049</sup> His is the judgement, and to Him you will be returned.

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<sup>1047</sup> Meaning to Makkah (in this life) or to Paradise (in the Hereafter).

<sup>1048</sup> In their religion by making any concessions to their beliefs.

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<sup>1049</sup> i.e., except Himself.