

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SELECTED COMMENTARY

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#### A. PROPHETHOOD SIGNS

Prophet Músá's call to Prophethood has been reiterated in several chapters of the Qur'án. The three most clearly expressed events leading to this are discussed in the following chapters respectively: Súra **Ṭá há** [Chapter 20]; Súra **Naml** [Chapter 27] and Súra **Qasas** [Chapter 28].

As the present study focuses on Músá's life from Prophethood and beyond only the views of selected commentators relevant to this period will be discussed. Explanation is based on systematic categorisation of events:

- Fire
- Voice
- Serpent together with miracles.

#### 5.1 FIRE

##### 5.1.1 Súra **Ṭá há**

و هل أتتكم منها بقبس أو أجد على النار هدى (١٠)  
و هل أتتكم حديث موسى (٩) إذ رءا نارا فقال لأهله امكثوا إني ءانست نارا لعلى

And has the story of Músá reached you? Suddenly he saw a fire!, then he said to his family, "Remain here, indeed I perceive a fire. Perhaps I will bring to you from there a firebrand or I will find guidance at the fire" [Qur'án 20:9-10].

As a preamble to the verses relevant to the present study both al-**Ṭabarí** and al-**Rází** provide differing analysis of the circumstances prompting the revelation of these particular verses.

يقول تعالى ذكره لنبية محمد صلى الله عليه و سلم مسليه عما يلقي من الشدة من مشركى قومه ، و معرفه ما اليه صائر أمره و أمرهم، و أنه معلية عليهم، موهن كيد الكافرين، و يحثه على الجد فى أمره، والصبر على عبادته .....

"Allah Almighty says by mentioning to His Messenger Muhammad [p.b.u.h] in which He consoles him for undergoing hardships due to the polytheism of his people for He makes him cognisant of what would happen to him and to them as well. [Allah is in essence comforting] His Messenger at a time when he was undergoing tremendous distress due to the disbelievers. He [explains to him] that He has made him exalted over them for He has weakened the plot of the disbelievers and urges him to be diligent in his affairs and to be steadfast in His worship...." [al-Ṭabarí 1968:16/141-2].

Al-Ṭabarí elaborates in a narrative style the opposition Músá faced from his enemies, his own people as well as the Baní Isrá'íl by mentioning his childhood, youth and adulthood.

أعلم أنه تعالى لما عظم حال القرآن و حال الرسول فيما كلفه اتبع ذلك بما يقوى قلب رسول صلى الله عليه و سلم من ذكر أحوال الأنبياء عليهم السلام تقويه لقلبه فى الإبلاغ كقوله (و كلاً نقص عليك من انباء الرسل ما نثبت به فؤادك)

Al-Rází views this as Allah's statement to the Prophet [p.b.u.h] encouraging him to strengthen his heart by providing by way of parable the hardships endured by Músá [p.b.u.h] in conveying the message of Allah.

"It should be noted that Allah's [statement] concerning the importance of the status of the Qur'án and [the position] of the Messenger [p.b.u.h] is one in which He commissions him to follow [it] by strengthening his heart; [this is attained] by mentioning the conditions of other prophets. Allah Almighty says: 'And on the contrary We relate to you from the tidings of the Messengers to firm your heart' " [al-Rází n.d:22/14].

The addressee is the Prophet [p.b.u.h], but al-Rází provides several possible interpretations to this statement.

- ❑ It is possible that this was the first time that the Prophet [p.b.u.h] had been informed about the situation of Músá [p.b.u.h]:
- ❑ It is possible that it had reached him in a preceding time for it appears that Almighty Allah says to him: "Has it not already reached you?"

[This is according to Muqátíl and ~~Dahhák~~ on the authority of ibn ‘Abbás] [al-Rází n.d:22/14].

It could be interpreted as a rhetorical question whose effect upon the listener is very great.

This narrative of Músá [p.b.u.h] is the "earliest Qur'anic exposition of the Moses story. Its mention here is connected with the reference to revelation at the beginning of this súra (verses 2-4) as well as the Qur'anic doctrine of the basic ideological unity of all revealed religions" [Asad 1980:471].

### **Suddenly he saw a fire! [20:10].**

The commentators are unanimous as to Músá's actual sighting of the physical fire. Al-Zamakhsharí's grammatical analysis of the term 'idh' is as follows:

(اذ) ظرفاً للحديث لأنه حدث أو لمضمر: أي حين (رأى ناراً) كان كيت و كيت، أو مفعولاً  
لاذكر ....

"Idh is a demonstrative adverb referring to an occurrence because it signifies an incident or it is a reference to a suppressed noun أن, meaning {when he saw a fire}, it was so and so or it is a direct object of {recall}" [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/531].

Al-Tabarí, al-Zamakhsharí as well as al-Rází describe the night on which Músá travelled as a gloomy, wintry and icy night [It was a Friday].

"It appears that Músá had lost his way in the desert: probably a symbolic allusion to his dawning awareness that he was in need of spiritual guidance" [Asad 1980:471].

Al-Rází describes Músá's actual spotting of the fire as follows:

حاد عن الطريق فقدح موسى عليه السلام النار فلم تور المقدحة شيئاً، فبينما هو مزاوله ذلك  
اذ نظر ناراً من بعيد عن يسار الطريق. قال السدى ظن أنها نار من نيران الرعاة وقال  
آخرون انه عليه السلام رآها فى شجرة و ليس فى لفظ القرآن ما يدل على ذلك، و اختلفوا  
فقال بعضهم الذى رآه لم يكن ناراً بل تخليه ناراً والصحيح أنه رأى ناراً ليكون صادقاً فى  
خبره اذ الكذب لا يجوز على الأنبياء....

"Músá had strayed from the path, he ignited the fire, but the fire iron did not kindle anything. Whilst in pursuit of that he saw a fire from afar to the left of the path. Suddí said he thought it was one of the shepherd's fires; others are [of the opinion] that Músá [p.b.u.h] saw it in a tree, this is not mentioned in the Qur'án. [Authorities] do differ for some of them say that he did not see a fire but imagined that he did, the reality is that he did in actual fact see a fire for it is not permissible for prophets to speak lies" [al-Rází n.d:22/15].

An alternative view is that the fire had four divisions:

- ❑ a fire that consumes but does not absorb and that is the fire of the world;
- ❑ a fire that absorbs but does not consume which is the fire of the tree;
- ❑ a fire that consumes and absorbs and that is the fire of the stomach;
- ❑ a fire that neither consumes nor absorbs which is the fire of Músá [p.b.u.h].

There are further connotations attached to the fire:

- ❑ fire that has light without burning - it is the fire of Músá [p.b.u.h];
- ❑ burning without light - it is the fire of hell;
- ❑ burning and light - it is the fire of the world; and
- ❑ devoid of both burning and light - it is the fire of the tree [al-Rází n.d:22/15].

Al-Tabarí and al-Zamakhsharí do not provide extensive detail of the nature of the fire itself.

**Músá said to his family, "Remain [here]" [20:10].**

According to al-Rází [n.d:22/15] it is possible that he was addressing the woman and her son as well as the servant who had accompanied her as the expression ahl refers to the plural.

**"Indeed I see a fire" [20:10].**

Al-Ṭabarí and al-Zamakhsharí discuss the concept ínás at great length:

(آنست ناراً) وجدت، و من أمثال العرب بعد اطلاع ايناس، و يقال أيضا: بعد طلوع ايناس، و هو مأخوذ من الأنس.

"(I perceive a fire) - I have found: An Arabic proverb says [after finding someone there is intimacy]. Alternatively, it is said [after appearance there is perception]. It is derived from the root ans,<sup>102</sup> meaning {to see or perceive}" [al-Ṭabarí 1968: 16/142].

According to al-Zamakhsharí [1966:2/531] when the bringing of the live coal **قبس** and the existence of the guidance occur [for these people], expectantly and anxiously, the matter for them rests upon hope and desire.

Músá's statement to his family concerning his return with the firebrand has differing views.

Perhaps I will bring forth for you from the fire [which I have perceived] flames and the firebrand: [here he is referring to the fire in the topmost part of the branch or the reed]. At this stage Músá says to his Lord: "Give me knowledge." His Lord gives it to him in the topmost part of the branch [al-Ṭabarí 1968:16/142].

According to al-Zamakhsharí [1966:2/531] there exists the possibility that Músá will return but this is without certainty as to whether he will execute [his task].

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102. The root is أنس, أنس is form 1v and the verbal noun is ايناس.

### **"Or I will find guidance at the fire" [20:10].**

Al-Zamakhsharí [1966:2/531] interprets this as a people who will guide me to the path or who will benefit me by their guidance in the rubric of religion. People close to the fire are regarded as overlooking it.

huda is one who is guided by someone for it is a verbal noun. It is as though Músá said: "I will find at the fire one who will guide me by [way] of a sign or [even] by indication " [al-Rází n.d:22/15].

### **5.1.2 Súra Naml**

Súra Naml is the second of three súr as selected for this particular study in which Músá's call to prophethood has been illustrated at great length.

إِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِأَهْلِهِ إِنِّي آنست نارا سنأتيكم منها بخر أو آتيكم بشهاب قبس لعلكم

تصطلون (٧)

Suddenly! Músá said to his family, "Indeed I perceive a fire, perhaps I will bring from there information or I will bring you a burning firebrand in order that you may warm yourselves" [Qur'án 27:7].

idh is dependent on the preceding statement terminating with alím. The meaning of the term is illustrated when Músá said to "his family." [This will be discussed below] [al-Tabarí 1968:19/132].

idh is a direct object of the verb dhikr [to recall]. It is as though Almighty Allah had said "follow the religious relics of His wisdom and knowledge." It is narrated that none had accompanied Músá [p.b.u.h] except his wife and Allah has alluded to her with the entire family and it therefore follows that the appearance of the message is expressed in the plural form, for this is verified in Músá's saying "امكثوا" [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:3/137].

## "I will come forth with a burning firebrand" [27:7].

Reciters differ in the recitation of the above-mentioned verse.

The general Madinan and Basran reciters read it as **بشهاب قيس** by annexing **shiháb** to **qabas** and eliminating the **tanween**, **أو آتيكم بشعلة نار أقتبسها منها** - meaning "I will bring to you a flaming fire, I will obtain knowledge from it." The majority of Kufan reciters read it as **بشهاب قيس** with the **tanween** on **shiháb** and eliminating its **idáfa** to **qabas**, **أو آتيكم بشهاب مقتبس**, meaning "I will bring to you a flaming fire deriving knowledge [from it]."

The accuracy of these statements is that they are both well-known recitations in the metropolitan areas: as for the closest of the two meanings whichever one the reciter reads is correct. Some of the Basran grammarians hold the following view: When **qabas** is a **badal** for the word **shiháb** then **shiháb** is read with the **tanween** [i.e. with the final **nún**]; and if **shiháb** is made genitive to **qabas** it appears without the **tanween**. Some of the Kufan grammarians say that when **shiháb** is made genitive to **qabas** then it is like **و لدار الآخرة**, other examples are: **حبة** **يوم الخميس** and **ليلة القمراء, الخضراء**. If in essence **shiháb** is **qabas** then the **idáfa** is not permissible, because **qabas** is a qualifying adjective and a noun cannot be annexed to its qualifier, except in rare instances [al-Tabarí 1968:19/133].

**الشهاب: الشعلة . والقبس: النار المقبوسة، و أضاف الشهاب الى القبس لأنه يكون قيساً و غير قيس، و من قرأ بالتنوين جعل القبس بدلاً أو صفة لما فيه من معنى القبس .**

**النار المقبوسة** is **ألقبس**. **الشعلة**, both meaning 'fire/flare'. **الشهاب** is synonymous to **شهاب** fire or the acquisition of knowledge. **شهاب** is annexed to **قيس** because it is both a splinter and otherwise. For those who read it with the **tanween** make **قيس** a

substitute for **شهاب** or an adjective reflecting the meaning of **قبس**" [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:3/137].

### 5.1.2.1 The delay

**"I will bring to you from there information " [27:7].**

(سأ آتيكم منها بخبر و لعلى آتيكم منها بخبر) كالمتدافعين، لأن أحدهما ترج و الآخر تيقن .

"There exist divergent views regarding the two statements: the one is based on hope and the other on certitude" [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:3/137 ].

كيف جاء بسين التسويف ؟ (جوابه) عدة منه لأهله

"How can the use of the particle **سين** denote the future? [Simply] because it was a promise of his to his family" [al-Rází n.d:24/181].

لماذا أدخل أو بين الأمرين و هلا جمع بينهما لحاجته اليهما معا؟ (جوابه) بنى الرجاء على أنه ان لم يظفر بهذين المقصودين ظفر بأحدهما، إما هداية الطريق و إما اقتباس النار ثقة بعادة الله تعالى لأنه لا يكاد يجمع بين حرمانين على عبده.

"Why did he transpose 'or' between the two issues. And why did he not combine them since he needed them both? Answer: The hope rests on the {grounds} that should he be unsuccessful in any one of these two designs he would be successful in the other; either the guidance to the path or the acquisition of knowledge at the fire, because Allah scarcely combines two deprivations for His servant" [al-Rází n.d:24/181].

### 5.1.3. Súra Qasas

This forms the third súra in which Prophet Músá's call to prophethood has been enunciated elaborately.

فلما قضى موسى الأجل و سار بأهله ءانس من جانب الطور نارا قال لأهله امكثوا إتي  
ءانسست نارا لعلى ءاتيكم منها بخبر أو جذوة من النار لعلكم تصطلون (٢٩)

When Músá fulfilled the term he left with his family, he perceived a fire at the side of **Ṭúr**. He said to his family: "Remain here, perhaps I will bring from it information or a brand of fire so that you can warm yourselves" [Qur'án 28:29].

[Asad 1980:593 refers to at-**Ṭúr** {the mountain} as being "Mount Sinai" for it is to this and no other mountain that the Qur'án refers to].

Al-**Ṭabarí**'s views about the completion of the term:

When Músá had fulfilled the term to which he was entrusted he parted from his master after marrying his daughter. He had completed both of the terms. Scholars are unanimous that he completed the "better and the longer of the two terms" [al-**Ṭabarí** 1968:19/68].

There are those who say that he completed 10 years and supplemented these with a further ten<sup>103</sup>.

"When Músá fulfilled the term ...."- this is an indication that the apparition had come upon him after the total completion of the two terms. There is nothing to suggest that he had obtained one of them afterwards [reference to the completion of the term]. It would be false for one to assume that he did not exceed the term. The Qur'án says "he travelled with his family" in which there is no indication that he travelled alone, because **امكثوا** is indicative of the plural [al-Rází n.d:27/244].

According to al-Jazá'irí [1987:3/395] he travelled to Egypt with his wife and son to visit his mother and brothers.

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103. This is based on various chain of authorities as cited by al-**Ṭabarí** [1968:19/69].

"I see a fire from **Ṭúr**"

Meaning: "I perceive." "I see," and "I feel " - [two connotations]. The following is a poem by al-'Ajjáz:

آنس خربان فضاء فانكدر      داني جناحيه من الطور فمر

"He saw the ruins of a vast empty space and became annoyed, drawing its wings close to **Ṭúr**, it passed" [al-Ṭabarí 1968:19/69].

... آتيكم بقطعة غليظة من الحطب فيها النار، و هي مثل الجذمة من أصل الشجرة ...

"...I will bring for you a thick piece of wood for [lighting] the fire,' this would be like a severed root from the tree" [al-Ṭabarí 1968:19/69].

All the selected commentators are unanimous that <sup>104</sup> جذوة appears in three different Arab dialects.

"I will bring to you from there glad tidings"- 'as to which way we are to pursue'  
[Asad 1980:593].

## 5.2 VOICE

### 5.2.1 Súra **Ṭa ḥa**

The Voice that Músá [p.b.u.h] heard whilst standing at the fire forms phase two of his call to prophethood which is a continuation of the verses discussed in the three relevant súras.

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104. It is read with the kasra below the جيم - this in the Hijázi, Basran and Kufan recitation. The most well-known dialect is the one read with the fatha on the جيم.

فلما أتتها نودى يموسى (١١) إني أنا ربك فأخلع نعليك إتك بالواد المقدس طوى (١٢) و أنا

اخترتك فاستمع لما يوحى (١٣) إننى أنا الله لا إله إلا أنا فاعبدنى و أقم الصلاة لذكرى (١٤)

But when he approached it, a voice called out, "O Músá! Indeed I am your Lord! Take off your sandals you are at the sacred valley of **Tuwá**, and I have chosen you, so listen to what is being revealed [to you]. Indeed, I am Allah, there is no deity except Me so worship Me [alone] and stand for prayer, so as to remember Me!" [Qur'án 20:11-14].

Al-Zamakhsharí remains silent on Músá's actual advancement when he heard the voice.

Al-**Tabarí**'s brief explanation is as follows:

Músá [p.b.u.h] advanced towards the fire which was in a tree, the People of the Book refer to it as boxthorn tree. He drew closer to it with a hope of obtaining information from it although he was overcome by a sense of fear [al-**Tabarí** 1968:16/143].

Al-Rází very philosophically offers the following interpretation:

Músá [p.b.u.h] advanced towards the fire, according to ibn 'Abbás he saw a green tree from its lowest part to its uppermost part; {it looked} as though it was a bright fire, he stopped, amazed at the intense radiance which the fire emitted as well as the intense greenness of the {particular} tree. The fire did not change its greenness nor did the abundance of water from the tree alter the light of the fire. [At this stage] he heard the chanting of angels [songs of praise in glorification of Allah - **تسبيح**] and he saw a great light as well.

Wahb bin Munabbih said Músá [p.b.u.h] thought it was a fire or a slat, he [then] took the crushed wood in order to acquire information from its flame, but it inclined towards him as though it desired him. Músá retreated in fear of it, yet it aspired after him for he was not quick enough to extinguish it. He threw his glance towards its branches. There was its greenness shining in the sky and all of a sudden [there emerged] a light between the heavens and the earth, dimming his sight. On seeing that Músá [p.b.u.h] placed his hands over his eyes, then a voice

called forth, " O Músá!" At this point al-Qádí ‘Abd al-Jabbár illustrates his opinion by using the example of the rod: denouncing its usage [i.e. for kindling the fire] would be permissible, but denying that the miracle was anything other than the call to prophethood is not acceptable. Allah had said to him **أنا اخترتك فاستمع لما** **و يوحى** ["I have selected you, so listen to what is revealed to you"]. This in itself indicates that during this stage Allah had inspired Músá [p.b.u.h] and made him a prophet. Those who say that the fire delayed him are far from the truth for the simple reason that this symbolic occurrence had taken place without any obstruction [al-Rází n.d:22/16].

**"Verily, I am your lord<sup>105</sup>" [20:12].**

Al-Tabarí [1968:16/144-5] cites differences in the reading of "I am your Lord." Some of the Madinan and Basran reciters read it as **أنى** - with the fatḥa on the alif, **أن** in their recitation serves the function of an independent element. However some of the Madinan and Kufan reciters read it with the kasra for which it would read **نودى يا موسى انى**.

The correct statement in the view of al-Tabarí is that the kasra is the better recitation because the exclamation interposes between it and the grammatical agent operating in an referring to Músá. Núdiya may operate before yá músá in a statement like núdiya an yá músá inní aná rabbuka. It has no role in an after Músá.

Al-Zamakhsharí's [1966:2/531] lexical approach is illustrated in the following way:

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105. "I created you, provided you with the means of subsistence and managed your affairs" [al-Jaz'irí 1987:3/45].

Abú ‘Umar and ibn Kathír read **أَتَى** with the **fatha** [meaning: a voice called] as a way of indicating indirect speech and the rest read it with the **kasra** - [meaning: he was called] - {as introducing direct speech}. Repetition of the personal pronoun is for intensifying the meaning and identifying the definite noun as well as removing doubt.

As for the actual voice and the spoken words al-Rází renders the views of the *Mu‘tazilites* and the *Sunnis*.

قال الأشعري أنا الله تعالى أسمع الكلام القديم الذى ليس بحرف و لا صوت، و أما المعتزلة فانهم أنكروا وجود ذلك الكلام فقالوا انه سبحانه خلق ذلك النداء فى جسم من الأجسام كالشجرة أو غيرها لأن النداء كلام الله تعالى و الله قادر عليه و متى شاء فعله و أما أهل السنة من أهل ما وراء النهر فقد اثبتوا الكلام القديم الا أنهم زعموا أن الذى سمعه موسى عليه السلام صوت خلقة الله تعالى فى الشجرة و احتجوا بالآية على أن المسموع هو الصوت المحدث قالوا انه تعالى رتب ...

"al-Ash‘ari has said that Almighty Allah made him listen to the eternal speech<sup>106</sup> which was devoid of consonants as well as sound. The *Mu‘tazilite* deny the existence of these words for they allege that Allah Almighty created these voices in some substances such as trees and other such things, because the voice was the speech of Allah and Allah has mastery over all things so He does as He wills. The ahl al-Sunnah including those from Transoxiana acknowledge the eternal speech, except they maintain that which Músá [p.b.u.h] heard was a voice created by the Almighty Allah in the tree and there was no need for the sign which would be audible, that is the voice of the speaker. They say that Allah regulated the voice so that it would emerge from the tree " [al-Rází n.d:22/16].

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106. Divine speech unlike human speech is uncreated in time. It is unique.

Differences do exist as to Músá's actual hearing of the voice and if that voice was that of the Almighty. Our commentators interpret it as follows:

قال الله عز و جل: إني أنا ربك و ان ابليس وسوس اليه فقال: لعلك تسمع كلام شيطان، فقال: أنا عرفت أنه كلام الله بأني أسمع من جميع جهاتي الست و أسمع به بجميع أعضائي.

It has been narrated that when a voice called O Músá! - he said, "Who is speaking?" Allah Almighty said, "It is I, your Lord." At this stage Iblís whispered to him [i.e. to Músá], "Perhaps you heard the words of Satan." Músá [p.b.u.h] said: "I know that it is the speech of Almighty Allah because I heard it from all six directions and I have heard it with each of my organs" [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/531].

يجوز أن يخلق الله تعالى علما ضروريا بذلك و يجوز أن يعرف بالمعجزة قالت المعتزلة أما العلم الضروري فغير جائز لأنه لو حصل العلم الضروري يكون هذا النداء كلام الله تعالى لحصل العلم الضروري بوجود الصانع العالم القادر لاستحالة أن تكون الصفة معلومة بالضرورة والذات تكون معلومة باستدلال و لو كان وجود الصانع تعالى معلوما له بالضرورة لخرج موسى عن كونه مكلفا لأن حصول العلم الضروري ينافي التكليف ، و بالاتفاق لم يخرج موسى عن التكليف فعلنا أن الله تعالى عرفه ذلك بالمعجزة ثم اختلفوا في ذلك المعجز ..

"It is possible that Allah created a priori knowledge (such as a person's knowing that someone can't be both present and absent at once) and it is possible that He was defining a miracle. The Mu'tazilites imply that a priori knowledge is not possible, simply because had a priori knowledge occurred with this voice being the speech of Allah Almighty, then a priori knowledge about the All-Knowing, the All-Powerful Creator would have occurred, for it would be absurd that an attribute would be known a priori whereas the being would be known with inference. If the existence of Allah would be known a priori, Músá would be excluded from being accountable for his deeds, simply because obtaining a priori

knowledge would be contrary to the accountability of Allah. It is agreed that Músá did not leave the (sphere of) accountability as Allah had made it known to him by way of miracle then they disagreed about it" [al-Rází n.d:22/16].

### **"Remove your sandals" [20:12].**

All the commentators provide lengthy explanations as to the importance attached to the sandals. Al-Ṭabarí [1968:16/144] commences by saying that the People of Knowledge differ as to the reasons why Allah ordered Músá [p.b.u.h] to remove his sandals. Some are of the opinion that he was told to remove them on account of their being made of the skin of a dead donkey.

The most accurate statement according to al-Ṭabarí is:

قال أبو جعفر: و أولى القولين فى ذلك بالصواب قول من قال : أمره الله تعالى ذكره بخلع نعليه ليباشر بقدميه بركة الوادى، إذ كان واديا مقدسا .

"Allah Almighty commanded Músá [p.b.u.h] to remove his sandals to be in direct contact with the blessings of the valley with his feet, since it was a holy valley" [al-Ṭabarí 1968:16/144].

His view is upheld as it is not outwardly [expressed] that he was commanded to remove his sandals on account of their being made of donkey leather or their being impure.

One view is that treading the valley with his feet would be a blessing for him. An alternative view is that being bare-footed is a {sign} of humility before the Almighty [as one would circumambulate the Ka'ba: bare-footed]. Yet another view is that it was considered an arrogant [act] for him to enter the mosque with his sandals. The Qur'án indicates that it was respect that was to be shown to that particular spot [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/531].

استدللت المعتزلة بقوله (اخلع نعليك) على أن كلام الله تعالى ليس بتقديم إذ لو كان قديما  
لكان الله قائلا قبل وجود موسى اخلع نعليك يا موسى و معلوم أن ذلك سفه فان الرجل  
الدار الخالية إذا قال يا زيد افعل و يا عمر لا تفعل مع أن زيدا و عمرا لا يكونان حاضرين يعد

جنونا و سفها فكيف يليق ذلك بالإله سبحانه و تعالى و أجاب أصحابنا عنه: أن كلامه تعالى و

إن كان قديما إلا أنه في الأزل لم يكن أمرا و لا نهيا

"The *Mu'tazilite* infer that the words of Allah were not of old<sup>107</sup>, for if they were, why would Allah be saying before the presence [i.e. the appearance] of Músá, 'Remove your sandals?...' - it is known that that would be stupid. [An example] is that if a man is in an empty house and he says 'Zayd do this,' and 'Umar do not do that,' although both are not present at the time this would be construed as madness and foolishness, how then can one [possibly] attribute such a [conception] to Allah?

Our friends (i.e. *Ash'arites*) respond:

Even though Allah's speech is eternal, it was neither a command nor a prohibition [al-Rází n.d:22/17-18].

### **"You are at the sacred valley of $\text{Ṭuwa}$ " [20:12].**

According to al-~~T~~abarí [1968:16/145], "It was twice blessed."

The ahl al-Ta'wíl (interpreters) differ in the interpretation of طوى: some of them say it is the sacred valley - twice sanctified, some say it means to traverse [al-~~T~~abarí 1968:16/145].

Al-Zamakhsharí [1966:2/531] explains  $\text{ṭuwa}$  as meaning "twice" i.e. - twice hallowed: because Allah's voice was heard in it and because Músá was raised there to Prophethood.

### **"And stand for prayer, so as to remember Me" [20:14].**

"Conscious remembrance of Allah and of His oneness and uniqueness is declared to be the innermost purpose, as well as the intellectual justification, of all true prayer" [Asad 1980:471].

One who does not engage in prayer does not remember Allah and that is equivalent to denying his Lord [al-Jazá'irí 1987:3/45].

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107. His words were created in time, therefore they were not of old.

### 5.2.2 Súra Naml

فلما جاءها نودى أن بورك من في النار ومن حولها وسبحان الله رب العالمين (٨)

When he approached it a voice was heard, "Blessed are those in the fire and those around, and glory to Allah, Lord of the Worlds" [Qur'án 27:8].

اختلف أهل التأويل في المعنى بقوله (من في النار) فقال بعضهم: عنى جل جلاله بذلك نفسه

وهو الذى كان فى النار، وكانت النار نوره تعالى ذكره فى قوله جماعة من أهل التأويل .

"The interpreters differ in the meaning of 'those who are in the fire' - some of them say that Allah Himself was in the fire and the fire was [in actuality] the Light of Allah which is interpreted as such by majority of the ahl al-Ta'wíl" [al-Ṭabarí 1968:19/133].

و قال آخرون: معناه النار لاالنور.

Others say its meaning is the fire and not the light [al-Ṭabarí 1968:19/135].

From a linguistic point of view al-Zamakhsharí discusses the term أن: it is the 'an of mufassira', meaning the [explanatory an] because by the call in it is meant the speech. It was said to Músá [p.b.u.h], "بورك" [Blessed are those] - {for 'an has the status of 'ay'-meaning: We said}. Would it then be possible that أن is the vowelles form of أن and بأنه is implied for نودى before بورك with the pronoun being the pronoun for denoting status? According to al-Zamakhsharí [1966:3/137], it is a marker and it is not omitted [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:3/137].

According to al-Rází [n.d:24/182] there is a difference of opinion as to who was in the fire:

- ❑ the Light of Allah
- ❑ or the angels, this has been reported on the authority of ibn 'Abbás.

Allah called him by words which he heard from the tree in the blessed spot as the tree was invariably the locus for the particular speech. For Allah was the speaker and He had an influence on him more than the tree. One can assume that the tree was in the fire and those surrounding it were the angels. [Refer to the Qur'anic statement above].

According to *Jubbá'í النار من فى* is a reference to Músá [p.b.u.h] for he was closest to it and *من حولها* refers to the angels [al-Rází n.d:24/182].

بورك من فى مكان النار و من حولها مكانها، و مكانها البقعة التى حصلت فيها و هى البقعة المباركة المذكورة فى قوله تعالى (نودى من شاطئ الوادى الأيمن فى البقعة المباركة) - و تدل عليه قراءة أبى تباركت الأرض و من حولها، ... حدوث أمر دينى فيها و هو تكليم الله موسى و استنباؤه له و اظهار المعجزات عليه، ... فكيف يمثل ذلك الأمر العظيم الذى جرى فى تلك البقعة . و قيل المراد بالمبارك فيهم موسى والملائكة الحاضرون، و الظاهر أنه عام فى كل من كان فى تلك الأرض و فى ذلك الوادى و حواليهما من أرض الشام و لقد جعل الله أرض الشام بالبركات موسومة فى قوله (و نجيناها و لوطا الى الأرض التى باركنا فيها للعالمين) .

"Blessed are those in the location of the fire and those surrounding it is the locality where it occurred, for it is this blessed spot that is mentioned by Allah, [Refer to Arabic text above]. A reading of 'Ubayy indicates that the land and those who surrounded it were blessed as this was a great religious occurrence, one in which Allah spoke to Músá [p.b.u.h] and made him messenger and presented miracles to him. [Syria is hence regarded as a blessed land].... Just imagine the like of such an event that occurred at that spot. It has been reported that the meaning of those who were blessed is Músá and the angels present. [Al-Tabarí's chain of transmitters concur with this view]. It is apparent that it embraces all who were on that land and in the valley and in their surrounding area of Syria.

Allah had made Syria [engulfed] with blessings as is evident in the following statement: "و نجينا و لوطا الى الأرض التي باركنا فيها للعالمين [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:3/137].

"The phrase من فى النار و من حولها refers to Allah's Own light, which encompasses, and is the core of, all spiritual illumination" [Asad 1980:577].

### **"And praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds" [27:8].**

تعجيب لموسى عليه السلام من ذلك و إيدان بأن ذلك الأمر مریده و مكونه رب العالمين تنبيها على أن الكائن من جلائل الأمور و عظام الشئون .

This aroused admiration of Músá [p.b.u.h] and was a declaration because the desirer and formulator of that is the Lord of the Universe. This draws attention to the fact that creation is one of the most stupendous events [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/138].

Al-Rází [n.d:24/182] interprets it as Allah's exalting Himself for there is none befitting His Being and Wisdom. That was a preamble in the authentic message to Músá [p.b.u.h].

يموسى إنّه أنا الله العزيز الحكيم (٩)

"Indeed I am Allah, the Almighty, the Wise" [Qur'án 27:9]

The **هـ** in **إنّه** is the **هـ** for support: it is a pronoun which is not apparent in some of the Arab dialects. According to some Kufan grammarians the **هـ** is unknown, meaning here "the actual situation is I am Allah"[al-Tabarí 1968:19/135].

It is possible that the **هـ** in **إنّه** is a pronoun of status. This pronoun refers to "I"- "I am Allah" in a nominal sentence with **ألعزیز الحكيم** being two adjectives describing the predicate. It seems possible that it refers to what has been mentioned before

this, namely: "The One who spoke to you was I" and "Allah" is the expository noun for "I" in which **العزیز الحکیم** are two adjectives referring to this exposition. The usage of **أنا** is intended to show the Power of Allah [meaning, I am the Strong One and One capable of eliminating doubts such as the transformation of the rod into a snake and I do whatever I want with wisdom and measurement] [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/138].

Prophet Músá [p.b.u.h] knew that the voice was from Allah and not from any other source has been interpreted by the ahl al-Sunna in the following ways:

- 1) he heard words that were not similar {to other} letters and sounds, he knew that these were characteristic of Allah.
- 2) the voice whether from the tree or the fire was {most certainly} from Allah because a {mortal being} would not be capable of this; it is a weak assumption for those who claim that Satan entered the tree and called out.
- 3) that it is closely associated to a miracle is clear; the view that the fire was burning in a green tree and that it was not flaming can be construed as a miracle. [al-Rází n.d:24/183].

### 5.2.3 Súra Qasas

فلما اتها نودى من شاطئ الواد الأيمن فى البقعة المباركة من الشجرة أن يموسى إتى أنا  
الله رب العلمين (٣٠)

But when he came close to it, a call was sounded from the right side bank of the valley, in the blessed spot of the tree: "O Músá! I am Allah, the Lord of the Worlds" [Qur'án 28:30].

(نودى من شاطئ الواد الأيمن) يعنى بالشاطئ : الشط ، و هو جانب الوادى و عدوته، و  
الشاطئ يجمع شواطئ و شطآن و الشط: الشطوط ....

"A voice called out from the right side bank of the valley, meaning from the bank: *shátí'* is derived from *shatt* which was on the slope of the valley and *'udwa* is a

synonym for the [slope of the valley]. The plural form of *shátí'* is *shawátí'* and *shut'án* and the plural of *shatt* is *shutú'* [al-Tabarí 1968:20/71].

من الأولى و الثانية لابتداء الغاية : أى أتاه النداء من شاطئ الوادى من قبل الشجرة .  
"From the first and the second, to the beginning of the extreme limit, i.e. the voice approached him from the bank of the valley, namely from the tree"  
[al-Zamakhsharí 1966:3/174].

من الشجرة is a badal for من شاطئ الوادى as it is an inclusive substitution because the tree had germinated on the bank as Allah says: لجعلنا لمن يكفر بالرحمن لبيوتهم: بقعة is read with the damma and the fatḥa.

Al-Rází indicates that the spot is described as being blessed as it was there that Músá [p.b.u.h] obtained the beginning of his message and Allah spoke to him. He discusses a few issues. The *Mu'tazilite* viewpoint is as follows:

They contend that Allah was the speaker of the words which He created in [particular] bodies [such as] the tree.

فان هذا صريح فى أن موسى عليه السلام سمع النداء من الشجرة و المتكلم بذلك النداء هو الله سبحانه و هو تعالى منزه أن يكون فى جسم فثبت أنه تعالى انما يتكلم بخلق الكلام فى جسم (أجاب) القائلون بقديم الكلام فقالوا لنا مذهبنا (الأول) قول أبى منصور الماتريدى و أئمة ما وراء النهر و هو أن الكلام القديم القائم بذات الله تعالى غير مسموع انما المسموع هو الصوت و الحرف و ذلك كان مخلوقا فى الشجرة و مسموعا منها و على هذا التقدير زال السؤال (الثانى) قول أبى الحسن الأشعري و هو أن الكلام الذى ليس بحرف و لا صوت يمكن أن يكون مسموعا ، كما أن الذات التى ليست بجسم و لا عرض يمكن أن تكون مرئية . فعلى هذا القول لا يبعد أنه سمع الحرف و الصوت من الشجرة و سمع الكلام القديم من الله تعالى لا من الشجرة فلا منافاة بين الأمرين ...

"If it is clear that Músá [p.b.u.h] did in fact hear the voice from the tree and the speaker was the Almighty and Allah is too exalted that He should be in the tree, then can it be established that Allah did address him but by way of speech created in the body? The proponents of ancient speech base their views according to the following principles:

a) Abú Mansúr al-Máturídí and leaders of Transoxiana say that the existing ancient speech was none other than that of Allah which was inaudible, for what could be heard was the sound and the letters which were created in the tree and hence could be heard from it.

b) Abú 'l-Hasan al-Ash'arí is of the opinion that speech which was devoid of letters and sound could be heard just as essence which is not corporeal nor an accident that could be visible. It would not be unlikely to say (according to this view) that he heard the letters and the sound from the tree and that he heard the eternal words from Allah Almighty and not from the tree. In this way there would be no contradiction between the two views" [al-Rází n.d:24/244-5].

### 5.3. SERPENT AND MIRACLES

#### 5.3.1 Súra ~~Ṭ~~há

This forms phase three of Prophet Músá's call to Prophethood.

و ما تلك بيمينك يا موسى (١٧) قال هي عصاى أتوكؤ عليها و أهش بها على غنمى و لى فيها  
مأرب اخرى (١٨) قال ألقها يا موسى (١٩) فألقاها فاذا هى حية تسعى (٢٠) قال خذها و لا  
تخف سنعيدها سيرتها الأولى (٢١) واضمم يدك الى جناحك تخرج بيضاء من غير سوء ءاية  
أخرى (٢٢) لنريك من ءايتنا الكبرى (٢٣)

" 'And what is in your right hand, O Músá?' He said: 'It is my rod, I lean upon it and I gather fodder for my sheep and I keep it for other uses.' He said, 'Cast it O, Músá.' When he cast it, it became a snake in motion. He said, ' Take it and do not fear, soon We will transform it into its former state. Press your hand to your side, it will come forth [shining] white, without blemish, this is yet another sign, in order that We may show you of Our greatest signs' " [Qur'án 20:17-23].

## "And what is in your right hand, O Músá?" [20:17].

The **بَاء** in **بيمينك** is dependent on **تلك** [al-Tabarí 1968:16/153].

..... و انما قال ذلك عز ذكره له إذا أراد أن يحولها حية تسعى ، و هى خشبة ،

فنبه عليها .... ليعرفه قدرته على ما يشاء... إذا أراد ذلك به ليجعل ذلك لموسى آية مع سائر

آياته إلى فرعون و قومه.

Allah said that to remind him that He intended to transform the rod into a serpent in motion. The rod was of [wood] for he was reminded of it... This was [in actuality] a means of informing Músá [p.b.u.h] of Allah's Power as He could do as He willed... He intended this to make this a sign together with the remainder of His Signs to the Pharaoh and his people" [al-Tabarí 1968:16/154].

The accusative is of the **حال** referring to **اشارة** which is the same as **يمينا** - there is an alternative possibility for **تلك** is a relative pronoun linking it to **بيمينك**. Músá [p.b.u.h] at this stage asked the Almighty to show him the Power of Whom had created him. Allah demonstrated this by lifting from the [solid] wood a hissing snake [this is reference to the transformation]; in this way Allah wanted to show him how the piece of wood could devour as He said to him, "What is this?" Músá's [reply] was that it was a piece of wood. Allah then shows him the miracle [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/533].

Several questions emerge from this one question posed by the Almighty to Músá [p.b.u.h]: that the Almighty was in search of Knowledge is unthinkable, then the purpose of this line of questioning is illustrated by al-Rází [n.d:22/25] as follows:

- ❑ Allah intended to demonstrate to him a noble act by virtue of something insignificant [i.e.the rod]. He is in fact displaying His miracles and informing him of the totality of His Power and the extremity of His Greatness via a demonstration of these miracles.
- ❑ Allah directed the question to divert his attention from the rod as Músá

[p.b.u.h] was overcome by fear and confusion.

- Another reason was to confirm that it was indeed a rod and it was a serpent only when transformed, but that he need not fear.

**"This is my rod, I lean upon it, I gather fodder for my sheep and I use it for other purposes" [20:18].**

Prophet Músá responds to his Lord by explaining that he uses the rod to beat down the dried leaves which are consumed by his sheep.

عصاى is with the kasra on the ياء for the joining of the two sákins; this is similar to the reading of Hamza. Ibn Isháq reads it with the sukún on the ياء. I lean upon it when I am exhausted, or stop at the head of the flock or leap [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/533].

الإتقاء معناه أعتد عليها اذا عيبت أو وقفت على رأس القطيع أو عند الطفرة فجعل موسى عليه السلام نفسه متوكئا على العصا و قال الله تعالى لمحمد صلى الله عليه و سلم " اتكىء على رحمتى "

The meaning is to rely upon or lean against [something] when one is weary or when one attends to a flock or when leaping. Músá [p.b.u.h] made himself lean against the staff as Allah said to Prophet Muhammad [p.b.u.h] - 'Lean upon My Mercy' [al-Rází n.d:22/26].

Al-Zamakhsharí discusses the term هش as follows:

هش is a reference to crisp [bread] but هس is the verb used for restraining sheep. Mentioning in detail the relevant verses pertaining to the rod, it is as though he had [already] sensed the question which was to follow from the Almighty, for when Allah spoke to him he said, "It is nothing except a rod serving no benefit, except [certain] uses". His answer corresponds to the aim which was his understanding of the significance of the words which his Lord had spoken to him.

It is possible that Allah had enumerated the many conveniences of the rod which were deemed rather significant, then Allah showed him subsequent to that great sign as though He said to him the following: What is your stand with respect to its more significant usages and its greater forgotten purposes, for each has a use and a purpose, do you rely upon it or do you honour it {as well}? Allah asks him to expound on it and minimise its importance. Músa generalises Allah's questioning him about its uses, so he exceeds in relating its more distinguished qualities [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/533].

Músa [p.b.u.h] at this stage knew it was a command from Allah for when he said: *ولى فيها مآرب أخرى*, Allah had intended to make him aware that in it were other uses. Various factors relevant to the rod are as follows:

The views are primarily those of al-Rází:

- ❑ Purpose of transforming the rod into a serpent at that particular time. Allah had transformed the rod in order to display the miracle to Músa [p.b.u.h.], so that he would recognise the prophethood himself because he had until then heard nothing except the voice.

The voice was a tribute to him, so the transformation of the rod into a serpent increased that tribute (veneration) because both the removal of the sandal and the miracles were reasons for the disappearance of melancholy in his heart.

3) It turned into a serpent in his presence so that he could witness it first, then [when] he would display it to the Pharaoh his fear would be dispelled.

4) He was a poor shepherd, so he wanted to display his great rank. Perhaps he harboured amazement so the transformation stimulated in him a certain degree of strength.

- ❑ When did Músa [p.b.u.h] take the rod ?  
Was it before or after its transformation?

It has been reported that he placed his hand between its teeth, [at this time] it was transformed into a piece of wood and the Qur'án [20:21] provides evidence of this for Allah says: "Soon We shall transform it into its former state," - this is reference to the future tense. Also this was closest to a miracle as the

transformation of the rod was a miracle so too was the placing of his hand in its mouth without fear and the [subsequent] transformation into a piece of wood [again] yet another miracle.

□ How did he take it, with fear or boldly?

It has been narrated that he took it with fear but this is strange - after continuous evidence this view seems unlikely. If Músa [p.b.u.h] knew Allah would transform the rod into its former shape how would he dispel his fear? Simply because he knew the authenticity of His statement and some of them say when his Lord said: "Do not fear," he was overcome by a sense of tranquility [al-Rází n.d:22/28-9].

□ What is the meaning of it will transform into its former state?

Muhammad Asad [1980:472] interprets the transformation "as being of mystic significance. It reveals an intrinsic difference between appearance and reality and is a spiritual insight into this gift bestowed by Allah to His chosen servants."

□ Why is سيرتها in the accusative form?

Firstly, the removal of the preposition (i.e. إلى سيرتها).

Secondly, "We shall return it" is self-contained without any link to its state. This means that it was initially a rod which became a snake. So we shall make it a rod as it was. The سيرة is vowelled in the accusative on the basis of a concealed verb, namely, it shall become like its initial state.

### 5.3.1.1 Miracles

و اضمم يدك إلى جناحك تخرج بيضاء من غير سوء ءآية أخرى (٢٢) لنريك من ءآيتنا  
الكبرى (٢٣)

Press your hand to your side, it will come forth [shining] without blemish, this is yet another sign, in order that We may show you of Our greatest signs [Qur'án 20:22-23].

**"And press your hand to your side..." [20:22].**

يقول تعالى ذكره: و اضمم يا موسى يدك ، فضعها تحت عضدك، و الجناحان هما اليدان،

كذلك روى الخبر عن أبى هريرة و كعب الأحبار. و أما أهل العربية ، فانهم يقولون: هما

الجنبان .

جناحان refers to the two hands. [This has been related on the authority of Abú Hurairah and Ka'b al-Abbár]. Proponents of the Arabic language say they are the two sides.

{The wings of the bird are literally its hands and those of the human are his hands. The two hands of the human are at his sides. According to Zujjáj the wings are the upperarms; the hand refers to the whole arm} [al-Tabarí 1968:16/157].

الأصل المستعار منه جناحا الطائر سميا جناحين لأنه يجنحهما عند الطيران، والمراد الى جنبك تحت العضد دل على ذلك.

The original metaphor stems from the usage of جناح [wings] of a bird; they are provided with two wings for the [purposes] of flight. The meaning of "to your side under the arm" proves that [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/534].

Al-Rází provides the following narration by ibn 'Abbás:

روى عن ابن عباس رضى الله عنهما الى جناحك الى صدرك الأول أولى لأن يدي الإنسان

يشبهان جناحي الطائر لأنه قال (تخرج بيضاء) و لو كان المراد بالجناح الصدر لم يكن لقوله

(تخرج) معنى و أعلم أن معنى ضم اليد الى الجناح ما قال فى آية أخرى (و أدخل يدك فى

جيبك) لأنه اذا أدخل يده فى جيبه كان قد ضم يده الى جناحه و الله أعلم.

According to ibn 'Abbás [R.A] it could refer to your side or to your chest, the former being of foremost relevance because the hands of a human resemble the wings of a bird, for Allah says it will come forth white. Had the intention been for

the hands to be placed on the chest **تخرج** would have been meaningless- "Press your hands to the sides" is what has been stated in another verse: Place your hand into your cavity [Súra Naml], because by placing his hand in his breast he had already pressed it to his side [al-Rází n.d:22/30].

### **"It will come forth [shining] white without any blemish" [20:22].**

"By Allah, he removed it without blemish and disfigurement, so Músá knew that he had met his Lord<sup>108</sup>" [al-Fabarí 1968:16/158].

**السوء** is wickedness and ugliness and it is linked to leprosy, just as imperfection is linked to evil [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/534].

It is narrated that Músá [p.b.u.h] had firm skin, he put his right hand in his bosom and thereafter under his left armpit. On removing it, it shone like lighting. Another view is that it was like the sun; on removal it returned to its former colour without light [al-Rází n.d:22/30].

Asad's [1980:472] interpretation is that "it will come forth luminescent by virtue of the prophethood to which he had been raised."

### **5.3.2 Súra Naml**

و ألق عصاك فلما رءاها تهتز كأنها جان و لى مدبرا و لم يعقب يا موسى لا تخف انى لا يخاف لدى المرسلون (١٠) .. و أدخل يدك فى جيبك تخرج بيضاء من غير سوء فى تسع آيات الى فرعون و قومه انهم كانوا قوما فاسقين (١٢)

And throw your rod down , when he saw it moving as if it was a moving snake, he turned in flight, and did not look back. [A voice said:] "O Músá do not fear, Indeed the Messengers do not fear in My Presence"[Qur'án 27:10].. "Place your hand under your bosom, it will forth white without blemish. These are among the signs to Pharaoh and his people, indeed they are a people who are rebellious" [Qur'án 27:12].

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108. This is based on a reliable chain of authorities.

### **And throw your rod down, when he saw it moving...[27:10]**

In this particular speech [a chain of events] has been omitted, since it is superfluous. [This is a reference to Músá's throwing of the rod and its subsequent transformation]. The view is that it was a great serpent and **جان** is a category of the well-known serpents [al-Tabarí 1968:19/135].

### **Did not retreat [27:10].**

All the commentators interpret it as **لم يرجع** - did not return.

### **5.3.2.1 Miracles**

#### **"Place your hand under your bosom" [27:12].**

Allah Almighty says this as a reminder to Músá [p.b.u.h] because on that day he had a loose outer garment made of wool. According to some authorities it did not have a sleeve [al-Tabarí 1968:19/138].

The nine signs [supplemented by two more] according to al-Zamakhsharí [1966:2/534] and al-Rází [n.d:24/30] are:

- ❑ the hand and the rod;
- ❑ the other nine refer to the drought, the flood, locusts, lice, frogs, blood, extinction, infertile lands and destruction of crops.

### **5.3.3 Súra Qasas**

و أن ألق عصاك فلما رءاها تهتز كأنها جان و لى مدبرا و لم يعقب يموسى أقبل  
و لا تخف انك من الأمنين (٣١) اسلك يدك فى جيبك تخرج بيضاء من غير سوء و اضمم  
اليك جناحك من الريب فذانك برهانان من ربك الى فرعون و ملاءيه انهم كانوا قوما  
فسقين (٣٢)

"And throw down your staff, so when he saw it moving as if it was a serpent, he drew back in terror and did not [dare to] return.

[Allah spoke to him again], 'O Músá! draw near and have no fear - for behold you are of those who are secure [in this world and the next].

[And now] put your hand into your bosom; it will come forth shining white without blemish and henceforth hold your arm to yourself, free from all fear. These then shall be the two signs [of your bearing a message] from your sustainer unto Pharaoh and his great ones- for hold they are a people depraved!' " [Qur'án 28:31-32].

وَأَنْ أَلْقِ عَصَاكَ - throw your rod!

فَلَمَّا رَأَاهَا - when he [i.e.Músá] saw it.

تَهْتَزُّ - it was in motion and wavering.

كَأَنَّهَا جَانٌ - as if it was one of the well-known species of snakes, among the larger ones.

[al-Tabarí 1968:19/76].

وَقَوْلُهُ كَأَنَّهَا جَانٌ صَرِيحٌ فِي أَنَّهُ تَعَالَى شَبِيهَا بِالْجَانِ وَ لَمْ يَقُلْ أَنَّهُ فِي نَفْسِهِ جَانٌ، فَلَا يَكُونُ

هَذَا مَنَاقِضًا لِكُونِهِ ثَعْبَانًا بَلْ شَبِيهَا بِالْجَانِ مِنْ حَيْثُ الْاهْتِرَازُ وَالْحَرَكَةُ لَا مِنْ حَيْثُ الْمَقْدَارُ...

"The rod moved as though it were clearly a serpent, for Allah had made it bear resemblance to the serpent. It is not directly stated that it was [in essence] a snake - there is nothing to the contrary to suggest that it was a serpent, but it resembled a serpent in view of its trembling and movement, not on account of its size" [al-Rází n.d:27/246].

### **He turned in flight and did not return [28:31].**

He did not retrace his steps or turn back" [al-Tabarí 1968:19/76].

He did not turn around out of fear" [al-Tabarí 1968:19/76].

### 5.3.3.1 Miracles

#### "Place your hand in your bosom..." [28:32].

(أسلك يدك فى جيبك) يقول : أدخل يدك و فيه لغتان: سلكته، و أسلكته (فى جيبك) يقول : فى جيب قميصك .

"Place your hand.." - it is of two dialects: سلكته - [verb I] and أسلكته - [verb IV].

أسلك is derived from سلك meaning 'to insert or put in'. It is said . "[Place] it in the opening of your garment" [al-Ṭabarí 1968:19/76].

#### "....it will come forth shining without blemish.." [28:32].

It will come out white without leprosy. When he removed his hand it shone [as a lamp] - Músá was convinced that he had met his Lord.

#### "Hold your arm to yourself" [28:32].

ما معنى قوله (و اضم اليك جناحك من الرهب) ؟ قلت : فيه معنيان: أحدهما أن موسى عليه السلام لما قلب العصا حية فزع و اضطرب فاتقاها بيده كما يفعل الخائف من الشيء ، فقبل له ان اتقاءك بيدك فيه غضاضة عند الأعداء، فاذا ألقيتهما فكما تنقلب حية فأدخل يدك تحت عضدك مكان اتقائك بها ثم أخرجها بيضاء ليحصل الأمران اجتناب ما هو غضاضة عليك و اظهار معجزة أخرى . و المراد بالجناح اليد، لأن يدى الإنسان بمنزلة جناحى الطائر، و اذا أدخل يده اليمنى تحت عضد يده اليسرى فقد ضم جناحه اليه. و الثانى أن يراد بضم جناحه اليه تجلده و ضبطه نفسه و تشدده عند انقلاب العصا حية حتى لا يضطرب و لا يرهب استعاره من فعل الطائر لأنه اذا خوف نشرجناحيه و أر خاهما و الا فجناحاه مضمومان اليه مشمران .

Two meanings are attached to this particular verse:

1) "When Allah Almighty transformed the rod into a serpent, Músá became terrified and disturbed: he held onto the rod with his hand as though he was overcome by fear of [something]; so it was said to him: "if you hold onto it with your hand, you will disgrace your enemies. When you throw it, it will be transformed into a snake, so place your hand under your armpit at a spot where you can touch it then remove it as a light, so that two matters can be gained: avoidance of that which will be a disgrace to you and the revelation of another miracle." For the correlation of **جناح** with **يد** is so because human hands are in a similar position to the wings of a bird. [Here he is using a metonymy which is expressive of freedom from fear]. When he placed his right hand under the upper arm of his left hand he had drawn its side to him.

2) By pressing his armpit towards it is meant holding it firmly and retaining it himself so that he remains unmoved at the transformation of the rod [into] a serpent. That is why a metaphor of a bird has been used because when it is afraid, it spreads its wings and lowers them, otherwise its wings are close together [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:3/175 & al-Rází n.d:27/247].

### **"Free from fear" [28:32].**

There is a difference in the reading of **من الـرهـب** - the majority of Hijází and Basran reciters read it with the fatḥa on the **راء** and the **هـاء**. However Kúfan reciters read it with **da**mma on the **راء** and sukún on the **هـاء**. Any one of the two readings is accepted [al-Tabarí 1968:19/73].

Al-Zamakhsharí as well as al-Rází interpret **وأضمم إليك وأسلك يدك في جيبيك** and **جناحك من الـرهـب** as one, but there exists a difference between the two expressions, for in the one the meaning is reiterated. The objective in the former is the removal of the hand which will come forth shining, whereas the latter emphasises the concealment of fear [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:3/75 & al-Rází n.d:27/247].

**"These are the two proofs from your Lord to the pharaoh and his people" [28:32].**

The two proofs are the transformation of the rod into a serpent and the emergence of the shiny white hand without disease [al-Tabarí 1968:19/73].

حجتان نيرتان على صدقه فى النبوة و صحة ما دعاهم اليه من التوحيد، و ظاهر الكلام يقتضى أنه تعالى أمره بذلك قبل لقاء فرعون حتى عرف ما الذى يظهره عنده من المعجزات.

"This is proof of the validity of his prophethood and the truth of his being called to monotheism, and the apparent [meaning] of the speech indicates that Allah commanded him [of this] prior to his encounter with Pharaoh so that he knew that whatever He made apparent to him was a miracle [al-Rází n.d:27/248].

Asad [1980:594]: "The two signs may be understood as Músá's ability to remain, by virtue of his certainty of Allah's omnipresence, forever free of all physical or moral fear, as well as his ability to show that appearance and reality are not always identical."