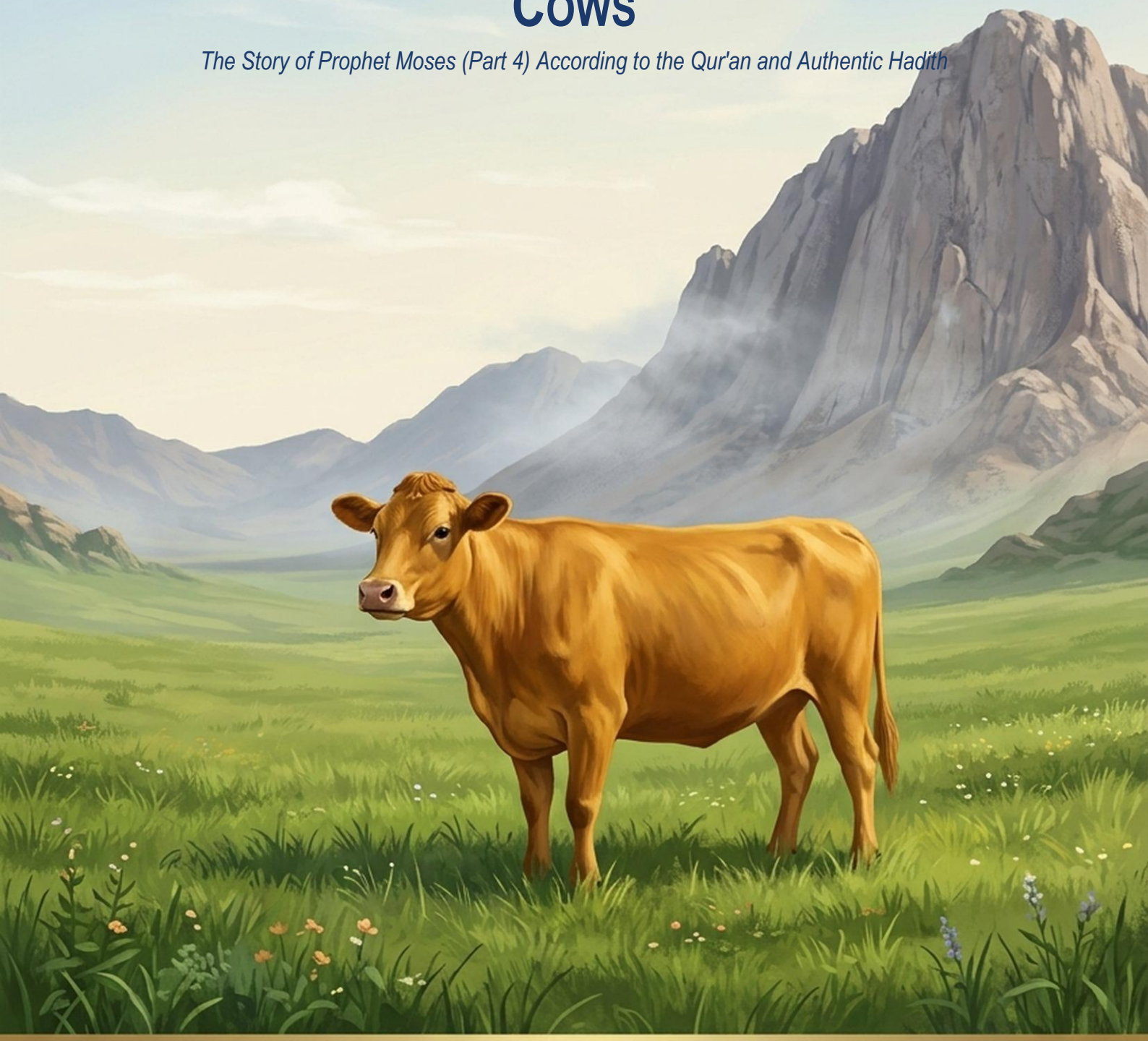
Stories from the Qur'an
Series 17

Two Cows

The Story of Prophet Moses (Part 4) According to the Qur'an and Authentic Hadith



Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron
AK (Kelantan)
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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

STORIES FROM THE QUR'AN

SERIES 17

TWO COWS

The Story of Prophet Moses (Part 4) According to the Qur'an and Authentic Hadith

وَإِنِّي لَغَفَّارٌ لِّمَن تَابَ وَءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَٰلِحًا ثُمَّ ٱهْتَدَىٰ

"But indeed, I am the Perpetual Forgiver of whoever repents and believes and does righteousness and then continues in guidance."

SURAH TAHA 20:82

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who pardoned the people who worshipped the calf when they repented, who shaded them with clouds and fed them with manna and quails, and whose mercy encompasses all things. Blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, whose name is written in the Torah and who relieved the burdens of the earlier nations, and upon his family and his Companions.

This eBook is specially dedicated to my beloved wife,

ZAHARAH MOHD LATIF;

my dear children,

MUHAMMAD HAFIZ, NOOR HAZWANI, ABDUL HAKIM, NOOR HIDAYAH, NOR AQILA and **NOR ATIQAH**;

and my sons- and daughters-in-law,

FAZILAH, MALEK, HANIN, FAIRIZAL and **FIRWAN**.

May Allah protect our hearts from worshipping anything other than Him — whether an idol, wealth or our own desires — and make us servants who obey promptly without making excuses. May this knowledge be ‘ilmun yuntafa‘u bih, knowledge that brings benefit.

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ABOUT THE COVER OF THIS EBOOK

The cover of this eBook does not depict any human being. It shows the **scenery** of a **calm pasture** at the foot of a mountain in the morning, with **a cow of bright yellow colour**, healthy and without blemish, standing on green grass. The land around it is unploughed, and there is no rope or yoke on the cow.

The **bright yellow cow** is taken from the description given in the Qur'an: ***"It is a yellow cow, bright in color - pleasing to the observers"*** (2:69), and ***"It is a cow neither trained to plow the earth nor to irrigate the field, one free from fault with no spot upon her"*** (2:71). The **mountain** in the background recalls Mount Sinai (7:143).

The cover deliberately **does not depict the golden calf**, because it is an idol worshipped besides Allah and is not fit to be made into a picture. The second animal in the title — the one that was worshipped — is left undrawn, and is only told within the book as a warning. The **dark blue band** at the bottom, framed by **fine gold lines**, is where the author's name appears.

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SUPPORT & DONATIONS

Colour guide: green box = verses of the Qur'an; gold box = Hadith; brown box = archaeological note; blue table = comparison. Underlined blue narrator names can be clicked to open the narrator's page on sunnah.com.

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TWO COWS

In Part 3 (Series 16), the Children of Israel watched the sea split and Pharaoh drown before their eyes. They were now free. But freedom from Pharaoh did not mean freedom from their own desires. This Part 4 tells of the trials of the Children of Israel after the sea — the trial of blessings, the trial of patience, and the trial of obedience.

This part of the story revolves around ***two cows***. The first is the golden calf that they worshipped without any command from Allah. The second is the cow that Allah commanded them to slaughter, yet they questioned and made excuses until they almost failed to do it. One was worshipped, one was slaughtered — and both reveal the condition of the human heart.

SURAH AL-A'RAF 7:138–140

وَجَٰوَزۡنَا بِبَنِيٓ إِسۡرَٰٓءِيلَ ٱلۡبَحۡرَ فَأَتَوۡاْ عَلَىٰ قَوۡمٖ يَعۡكُفُونَ عَلَىٰٓ أَصۡنَامٖ لَّهُمۡۚ قَالُواْ يَٰمُوسَى ٱجۡعَل لَّنَآ إِلَٰهٗا كَمَا لَهُمۡ ءَالِهَةٞۚ قَالَ إِنَّكُمۡ قَوۡمٞ تَجۡهَلُونَ ١٣٨

And We took the Children of Israel across the sea; then they came upon a people intent in devotion to [some] idols of theirs. They said, "O Moses, make for us a god just as they have gods." He said, "Indeed, you are a people behaving ignorantly."

إِنَّ هَٰٓؤُلَآءِ مُتَبَّرٞ مَّا هُمۡ فِيهِ وَبَٰطِلٞ مَّا كَانُواْ يَعۡمَلُونَ ١٣٩

Indeed, those [worshippers] - destroyed is that in which they are [engaged], and worthless is whatever they were doing.

قَالَ أَغَيۡرَ ٱللَّهِ أَبۡغِيكُمۡ إِلَٰهٗا وَهُوَ فَضَّلَكُمۡ عَلَى ٱلۡعَٰلَمِينَ ١٤٠

He said, "Is it other than Allah I should desire for you as a god while He has preferred you over the worlds?"

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/7:138-140

COMMENTARY ON 7:138–140 — AFTER THE SEA, A SHOCKING REQUEST

Their feet were still wet from the bed of the sea when they saw a people devoted to idols, and they said: ***"O Moses, make for us a god just as they have gods"***. Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ answered firmly: ***"Indeed, you are a people behaving ignorantly"***, and ***"Is it other than Allah I should desire for you as a god"***? This request was an early sign of what was to happen with the golden calf. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 7:138

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Figure 1: The flow of the story of Prophet Moses (Part 4) — from the request for an idol to repentance and mercy.

Figure 1 shows eight main events. The story is gathered from Surah Al-A'raf (7:138–157), Taha (20:80–98) and Al-Baqarah (2:51–74).

Note: The translation of the Qur'anic verses in this eBook is Sahih International. The translations of the Hadith are our own, from the Arabic text. The grade of each Hadith is stated in its Hadith box, with a link to sunnah.com.

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BLESSINGS IN THE DESERT

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:57

وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ ٱلْغَمَامَ وَأَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ ٱلْمَنَّ وَٱلسَّلْوَىٰ ۖ كُلُوا۟ مِن طَيِّبَٰتِ
مَا رَزَقْنَٰكُمْ ۚ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَٰكِن كَانُوٓا۟ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

And We shaded you with clouds and sent down to you manna and quails, [saying], "Eat from the good things with which We have provided you." And they wronged Us not - but they were [only] wronging themselves.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:57

COMMENTARY ON 2:57 — SHADE, MANNA AND QUAILS

First: Clouds as a canopy. ***"And We shaded you with clouds"***. In the scorching desert, Allah sent clouds to protect them.

Second: Food from the sky. ***"and sent down to you manna and quails"***. The exegetes mention that ***al-mann*** was a kind of sweet food that came down like dew, and ***al-salwā*** was a kind of bird that was easily caught. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:57

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2049

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا جَرِيرٌ، ح وَحَدَّثَنَا إِسْحَاقُ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، أَخْبَرَنَا جَرِيرٌ، وَعُمَرُ بْنُ عُبَيْدٍ عَنْ عَبْدِ الْمَلِكِ بْنِ عُمَيْرٍ، عَنْ عَمْرِو بْنِ حُرَيْثٍ، عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ زَيْدِ بْنِ عَمْرِو، بْنِ نُفَيْلٍ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ « الْكَمْأَةُ مِنَ الْمَنِّ وَمَاؤُهَا شِفَاءٌ لِلْعَيْنِ ».

TRANSLATION:

Sa'id ibn Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl رضى الله عنه said: I heard the Prophet ﷺ say: **"Truffles (al-kam'ah) are a kind of al-mann, and their water is a cure for the eyes."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Qutaybah ibn Sa'id, from Jarir ibn 'Abd al-Hamid; and from Ishaq ibn Ibrahim (Ibn Rahawayh), from Jarir and 'Umar ibn 'Ubayd, from 'Abd al-Malik ibn 'Umayr, from 'Amr ibn Hurayth, from Sa'id ibn Zayd رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Drinks (Kitab al-Ashribah), chapter on the virtue of truffles and treating the eyes with them, Hadith No. 2049. Also narrated by al-Bukhari (No. 4478).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim, the second most authentic book of Hadith after Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2049a

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ mentioned that ***al-kam'ah*** (desert truffles) are a kind of ***al-mann***. The scholars explain that this means truffles grow without being planted and without human effort, like the manna that came down to the Children of Israel — provision that comes purely from the bounty of Allah.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:60

وَإِذِ ٱسْتَسْقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِۦ فَقُلْنَا ٱضْرِب بِّعَصَاكَ ٱلْحَجَرَ ۖ فَٱنفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ ٱثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا ۖ قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ ۖ كُلُوا۟ وَٱشْرَبُوا۟ مِن رِّزْقِ ٱللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا۟ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾

And [recall] when Moses prayed for water for his people, so We said, "Strike with your staff the stone." And there gushed forth from it twelve springs, and every people knew its watering place. "Eat and drink from the provision of Allah, and do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:60

COMMENTARY ON 2:60 — TWELVE SPRINGS

"Strike with your staff the stone" — and ***"there gushed forth from it twelve springs, and every people knew its watering place"***. The Children of Israel consisted of twelve tribes, descended from the twelve sons of Jacob عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ (Series 10). Allah gave each tribe its own spring so that there would be no quarrelling. The staff that split the sea now brought water out of a rock.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:58–59

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ٱدْخُلُوا۟ هَٰذِهِ ٱلْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوا۟ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَٱدْخُلُوا۟ ٱلْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُولُوا۟ حِطَّةٌ نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطَٰيَٰكُمْ ۚ وَسَنَزِيدُ ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

And [recall] when We said, "Enter this city and eat from it wherever you will in [ease and] abundance, and enter the gate bowing humbly and say, 'Relieve us of our burdens.' We will [then] forgive your sins for you, and We will increase the doers of good [in goodness and reward]."

فَبَدَّلَ ٱلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا۟ قَوْلًا غَيْرَ ٱلَّذِى قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَنزَلْنَا عَلَى ٱلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا۟ رِجْزًا مِّنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ بِمَا كَانُوا۟ يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

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But those who wronged changed [those words] to a statement other than that which had been said to them, so We sent down upon those who wronged a punishment from the sky because they were defiantly disobeying.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:58-59

COMMENTARY ON 2:58–59 — ONE WORD THAT WAS CHANGED

Allah commanded them to enter a city and to ***"enter the gate bowing humbly"*** and say: ***"Relieve us of our burdens"*** — ***ḥiṭṭah***. But ***"those who wronged changed [those words] to a statement other than that which had been said to them"***.

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4479

حَدَّثَنِي مُحَمَّدٌ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ مَهْدِيٍّ، عَنِ ابْنِ الْمُبَارَكِ، عَنْ مَعْمَرٍ، عَنْ هَمَّامِ بْنِ مُنَبِّهٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « قِيلَ لِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ {ادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ} فَدَخَلُوا يَزْحَفُونَ عَلَى أَسْتَاهِهِمْ، فَبَدَّلُوا وَقَالُوا حِطَّةٌ، حَبَّةٌ فِي شَعَرَةٍ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"It was said to the Children of Israel: {Enter the gate bowing humbly and say: Ḥiṭṭah (relieve us of our burdens)}. But they entered dragging themselves on their buttocks, and they changed (the word), saying: Ḥabbah fī sha'rah (a grain in a hair)."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Muhammad ibn Salam, from 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Mahdi, from 'Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak, from Ma'mar ibn Rashid, from Hammam ibn Munabbih, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Tafsir, chapter on the verse {And when We said: Enter this town} (2:58), Hadith No. 4479. Also narrated as No. 3403, and by Muslim (No. 3015).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:4479

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ explained how they changed it: instead of bowing humbly, they entered in a mocking manner; instead of asking for forgiveness (***ḥiṭṭah***), they said a word that sounded almost the same but meant asking for grain (***ḥabbah***). They made a game of Allah's command with a trick of words.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:61

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَٰمُوسَىٰ لَن نَّصْبِرَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامٍ وَٰحِدٍ فَٱدْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا
تُنۢبِتُ ٱلْأَرْضُ مِنۢ بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَّآئِهَا وَفُومِهَا وَعَدَسِهَا وَبَصَلِهَاۖ قَالَ أَتَسْتَبْدِلُونَ
ٱلَّذِى هُوَ أَدْنَىٰ بِٱلَّذِى هُوَ خَيْرٌۚ ٱهْبِطُواْ مِصْرًا فَإِنَّ لَكُم مَّا سَأَلْتُمْۗ وَضُرِبَتْ
عَلَيْهِمُ ٱلذِّلَّةُ وَٱلْمَسْكَنَةُ وَبَآءُو بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ ٱللَّهِۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُواْ يَكْفُرُونَ
بِـَٔايَٰتِ ٱللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ ٱلنَّبِيِّـۧنَ بِغَيْرِ ٱلْحَقِّۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَواْ وَّكَانُواْ يَعْتَدُونَ

٦١

And [recall] when you said, "O Moses, we can never endure one [kind of] food. So call upon your Lord to bring forth for us from the earth its green herbs and its cucumbers and its garlic and its lentils and its onions." [Moses] said, "Would you exchange what is better for what is less? Go into [any] settlement and indeed, you will have what you have asked." And they were covered with humiliation and poverty and returned with anger from Allah [upon them]. That was because they [repeatedly] disbelieved in the signs of Allah and killed the prophets without right. That was because they disobeyed and were [habitually] transgressing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:61

And they grew tired of the blessing: ***"O Moses, we can never endure one [kind of] food"***. Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ asked: ***"Would you exchange what is better for what is less?"*** Blessings that come without effort are often not appreciated.

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FORTY NIGHTS

SURAH AL-A'RAF 7:142

۞وَوَٰعَدۡنَا مُوسَىٰ ثَلَٰثِينَ لَيۡلَةٗ وَأَتۡمَمۡنَٰهَا بِعَشۡرٖ فَتَمَّ مِيقَٰتُ رَبِّهِۦٓ أَرۡبَعِينَ لَيۡلَةٗۚ وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِأَخِيهِ هَٰرُونَ ٱخۡلُفۡنِي فِي قَوۡمِي وَأَصۡلِحۡ وَلَا تَتَّبِعۡ سَبِيلَ ٱلۡمُفۡسِدِينَ ١٤٢

And We made an appointment with Moses for thirty nights and perfected them by [the addition of] ten; so the term of his Lord was completed as forty nights. And Moses said to his brother Aaron, "Take my place among my people, do right [by them], and do not follow the way of the corrupters."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/7:142

COMMENTARY ON 7:142 — THIRTY PROMISED, COMPLETED AS FORTY

First: The appointment at Mount Sinai. ***"And We made an appointment with Moses for thirty nights and perfected them by [the addition of] ten"***. Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ left his people to speak intimately with Allah. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 7:142

Second: The charge to Aaron. ***"Take my place among my people, do right [by them], and do not follow the way of the corrupters"***. Three charges: to lead, to set things right, and not to follow the corrupters.

SURAH TAHA 20:83–84

۞وَمَآ أَعۡجَلَكَ عَن قَوۡمِكَ يَٰمُوسَىٰ ٨٣

[Allah] said, "And what made you hasten from your people, O Moses?"

قَالَ هُمۡ أُوْلَآءِ عَلَىٰٓ أَثَرِي وَعَجِلۡتُ إِلَيۡكَ رَبِّ لِتَرۡضَىٰ ٨٤

He said, "They are close upon my tracks, and I hastened to You, my Lord, that You be pleased."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/20:83-84

Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ came early, and Allah asked: ***"And what made you hasten from your people, O Moses?"*** His answer was full of longing: ***"and I hastened to You, my Lord, that You be pleased"***. A servant hastening to his Lord, hoping for His pleasure.

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"SHOW ME YOURSELF"

SURAH AL-A'RAF 7:143

وَلَمَّا جَآءَ مُوسَىٰ لِمِيقَٰتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُۥ رَبُّهُۥ قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِيٓ أَنظُرۡ إِلَيۡكَۚ قَالَ لَن تَرَىٰنِي وَلَٰكِنِ ٱنظُرۡ إِلَى ٱلۡجَبَلِ فَإِنِ ٱسۡتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُۥ فَسَوۡفَ تَرَىٰنِيۚ فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّىٰ رَبُّهُۥ لِلۡجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُۥ دَكّٗا وَخَرَّ مُوسَىٰ صَعِقٗاۚ فَلَمَّآ أَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبۡحَٰنَكَ تُبۡتُ إِلَيۡكَ وَأَنَا۠ أَوَّلُ ٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ ١٤٣

And when Moses arrived at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said, "My Lord, show me [Yourself] that I may look at You." [Allah] said, "You will not see Me, but look at the mountain; if it should remain in place, then you will see Me." But when his Lord appeared to the mountain, He rendered it level, and Moses fell unconscious. And when he awoke, he said, "Exalted are You! I have repented to You, and I am the first of the believers."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/7:143

COMMENTARY ON 7:143 — THE MOUNTAIN THAT WAS LEVELLED

First: The longing of one who loves. After Allah spoke to him, Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ asked: ***"My Lord, show me [Yourself] that I may look at You"***. This was not an arrogant request, but the longing of a servant who had heard the speech of his Lord.

Second: A gentle answer. ***"You will not see Me, but look at the mountain; if it should remain in place, then you will see Me"***. Allah did not rebuke him, but showed the weakness of creation through the mountain.

Third: The manifestation (tajallī). ***"But when his Lord appeared to the mountain, He rendered it level, and Moses fell unconscious"***. Even the firmest mountain could not bear the manifestation of Allah's majesty, let alone human eyes in this world.

Fourth: Glorification and repentance. ***"Exalted are You! I have repented to You, and I am the first of the believers"***. Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ at once glorified Allah and repented — not because he had sinned, but out of courtesy (adab) towards his Lord.

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HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 179

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، وَأَبُو كُرَيْبٍ قَالاَ حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو مُعَاوِيَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا الأَعْمَشُ، عَنْ عَمْرِو بْنِ مُرَّةَ، عَنْ أَبِي عُبَيْدَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي مُوسَى، قَالَ قَامَ فِينَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم بِخَمْسِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَقَالَ « إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لاَ يَنَامُ وَلاَ يَنْبَغِي لَهُ أَنْ يَنَامَ يَخْفِضُ الْقِسْطَ وَيَرْفَعُهُ يُرْفَعُ إِلَيْهِ عَمَلُ اللَّيْلِ قَبْلَ عَمَلِ النَّهَارِ وَعَمَلُ النَّهَارِ قَبْلَ عَمَلِ اللَّيْلِ حِجَابُهُ النُّورُ - وَفِي رِوَايَةِ أَبِي بَكْرٍ النَّارُ - لَوْ كَشَفَهُ لأَحْرَقَتْ سُبُحَاتُ وَجْهِهِ مَا انْتَهَى إِلَيْهِ بَصَرُهُ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ ». - وَفِي رِوَايَةِ أَبِي بَكْرٍ عَنِ الأَعْمَشِ وَلَمْ يَقُلْ حَدَّثَنَا.

TRANSLATION:

Abu Musa al-Ash'ari رضى الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ stood among us and spoke to us of five things. He said: **"Indeed Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, does not sleep, and it is not befitting for Him to sleep. He lowers the scale and raises it. The deeds of the night are raised up to Him before the deeds of the day, and the deeds of the day before the deeds of the night. His veil is light. Were He to remove it, the splendour of His Face would burn whatever of His creation His sight reaches."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah and Abu Kurayb, from Abu Mu'awiyah, from Sulayman al-A'mash, from 'Amr ibn Murrah, from Abu 'Ubaydah ibn 'Abdillah, from Abu Musa al-Ash'ari رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Faith (Kitab al-Iman), chapter on the saying of the Prophet ﷺ "Allah does not sleep" and "His veil is light", Hadith No. 179.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim, the second most authentic book of Hadith after Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:179a

REFLECTION — SEEING ALLAH

This Hadith explains why the mountain was levelled: ***Allah's veil is light; were He to remove it, the splendour of His Face would burn all creation.*** Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah hold that Allah cannot be seen in this world — ***"Vision perceives Him not"*** (6:103) — but the believers will see Him in the Hereafter: ***"[Some] faces, that Day, will be radiant"***, ***"Looking at their Lord"*** (75:22–23).

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 2411

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ قَزَعَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بْنُ سَعْدٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، عَنْ أَبِي سَلَمَةَ، وَعَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ الأَعْرَجِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ قَالَ اسْتَبَّ رَجُلاَنِ رَجُلٌ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

وَرَجُلٌ مِنَ الْيَهُودِ، قَالَ الْمُسْلِمُ وَالَّذِي اصْطَفَى مُحَمَّدًا عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ، فَقَالَ الْيَهُودِيُّ وَالَّذِي اصْطَفَى مُوسَى عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ. فَرَفَعَ الْمُسْلِمُ يَدَهُ عِنْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَطَمَ وَجْهَ الْيَهُودِيِّ، فَذَهَبَ الْيَهُودِيُّ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَأَخْبَرَهُ بِمَا كَانَ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ وَأَمْرِ الْمُسْلِمِ، فَدَعَا النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم الْمُسْلِمَ فَسَأَلَهُ عَنْ ذَلِكَ، فَأَخْبَرَهُ فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم « لاَ تُخَيِّرُونِي عَلَى مُوسَى، فَإِنَّ النَّاسَ يَصْعَقُونَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ، فَأَصْعَقُ مَعَهُمْ، فَأَكُونُ أَوَّلَ مَنْ يُفِيقُ، فَإِذَا مُوسَى بَاطِشٌ جَانِبَ الْعَرْشِ، فَلاَ أَدْرِي أَكَانَ فِيمَنْ صَعِقَ فَأَفَاقَ قَبْلِي، أَوْ كَانَ مِمَّنِ اسْتَثْنَى اللَّهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه said: Two men insulted each other — a Muslim and a Jew. The Muslim said: "By (Allah) who chose Muhammad over all the worlds." The Jew said: "By (Allah) who chose Moses over all the worlds." The Muslim raised his hand and slapped the Jew on the face. The Jew went to the Prophet ﷺ and told him what had happened. The Prophet ﷺ summoned the Muslim and asked him, and he told him. The Prophet ﷺ said: **"Do not prefer me over Moses. People will fall unconscious on the Day of Resurrection, and I will fall unconscious with them. I will be the first to regain consciousness, and there will be Moses holding on to the side of the Throne. I do not know whether he was among those who fell unconscious and recovered before me, or whether he was among those whom Allah exempted."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Yahya ibn Qaza'ah, from Ibrahim ibn Sa'd, from Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, from Abu Salamah and 'Abd al-Rahman al-A'raj, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Disputes (Kitab al-Khusumat), Hadith No. 2411. In another narration (No. 3398) he said: "…or he was compensated for the swoon at the Mount (al-Tur)." Also narrated by Muslim (No. 2373).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:2411

This Hadith links the swoon of Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ at the Mount with the swoon of all mankind on the Day of Resurrection. In another narration, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"or he was compensated for the swoon at the Mount"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 3398). This Hadith also teaches adab: the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, the master of all the prophets, forbade his followers to prefer him in a way that belittles Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ (see also Series 13).

THE TABLETS OF THE TORAH

SURAH AL-A'RAF 7:144–145

قَالَ يَٰمُوسَىٰٓ إِنِّى ٱصْطَفَيْتُكَ عَلَى ٱلنَّاسِ بِرِسَٰلَٰتِى وَبِكَلَٰمِى فَخُذْ مَآ ءَاتَيْتُكَ وَكُن مِّنَ ٱلشَّٰكِرِينَ ﴿١٤٤﴾

[Allah] said, "O Moses, I have chosen you over the people with My messages and My words [to you]. So take what I have given you and be among the grateful."

وَكَتَبْنَا لَهُۥ فِى ٱلْأَلْوَاحِ مِن كُلِّ شَىْءٍ مَّوْعِظَةً وَتَفْصِيلًا لِّكُلِّ شَىْءٍ فَخُذْهَا بِقُوَّةٍ وَأْمُرْ قَوْمَكَ يَأْخُذُوا۟ بِأَحْسَنِهَا سَأُو۟رِيكُمْ دَارَ ٱلْفَٰسِقِينَ ﴿١٤٥﴾

And We wrote for him on the tablets [something] of all things - instruction and explanation for all things, [saying], "Take them with determination and order your people to take the best of it. I will show you the home of the defiantly disobedient."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/7:144-145

COMMENTARY ON 7:144–145 — A BOOK RECEIVED WITH DETERMINATION

First: Chosen with the message and the speech. ***"O Moses, I have chosen you over the people with My messages and My words [to you]"***. Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ is called ***Kalīmullāh*** — the one to whom Allah spoke directly, from behind a partition (42:51).

Second: Take it and be grateful. ***"So take what I have given you and be among the grateful"***. The request to see Allah was not granted, but Allah gave something else — so be grateful for what is given.

Third: Hold it firmly. ***"Take them with determination and order your people to take the best of it"***. The Book of Allah is not received half-heartedly.

THE CALF THAT LOWED

SURAH TAHA 20:85–88

قَالَ فَإِنَّا قَدْ فَتَنَّا قَوْمَكَ مِنۢ بَعْدِكَ وَأَضَلَّهُمُ ٱلسَّامِرِىُّ ﴿٨٥﴾

[Allah] said, "But indeed, We have tried your people after you [departed], and the Samiri has led them astray."

فَرَجَعَ مُوسَىٰٓ إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِۦ غَضْبَٰنَ أَسِفًا ۚ قَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ أَلَمْ يَعِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ وَعْدًا حَسَنًا ۚ أَفَطَالَ عَلَيْكُمُ ٱلْعَهْدُ أَمْ أَرَدتُّمْ أَن يَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُم مَّوْعِدِى ﴿٨٦﴾

So Moses returned to his people, angry and grieved. He said, "O my people, did your Lord not make you a good promise? Then, was the time [of its fulfillment] too long for you, or did you wish that wrath from your Lord descend upon you, so you broke your promise [of obedience] to me?"

قَالُوا۟ مَآ أَخْلَفْنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلْكِنَا وَلَٰكِنَّا حُمِّلْنَآ أَوْزَارًا مِّن زِينَةِ ٱلْقَوْمِ فَقَذَفْنَٰهَا فَكَذَٰلِكَ أَلْقَى ٱلسَّامِرِىُّ ﴿٨٧﴾

They said, "We did not break our promise to you by our will, but we were made to carry burdens from the ornaments of the people [of Pharaoh], so we threw them [into the fire], and thus did the Samiri throw."

فَأَخْرَجَ لَهُمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا لَّهُۥ خُوَارٌ فَقَالُوا۟ هَٰذَآ إِلَٰهُكُمْ وَإِلَٰهُ مُوسَىٰ فَنَسِىَ ﴿٨٨﴾

And he extracted for them [the statue of] a calf which had a lowing sound, and they said, "This is your god and the god of Moses, but he forgot."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/20:85-88

COMMENTARY ON 20:85–88 — A TRIAL IN THE ABSENCE OF THE LEADER

First: Allah informs Moses. ***"But indeed, We have tried your people after you [departed], and the Samiri has led them astray"***. Only a few days after Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ left, his people had gone astray.

Second: How it happened. They said: ***"we were made to carry burdens from the ornaments of the people [of Pharaoh], so we threw them [into the fire]"***. Then ***"he extracted for them [the statue of] a calf which had a lowing sound"***.

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Third: An outrageous claim. ***"This is your god and the god of Moses, but he forgot"***. Not only did they worship it, they accused Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ of forgetting his "god".

SURAH TAHA 20:89

أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَلَّا يَرْجِعُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَوْلًا وَلَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا ﴿٨٩﴾

Did they not see that it could not return to them any speech and that it did not possess for them any harm or benefit?

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/20:89

Allah questions their reasoning: ***"Did they not see that it could not return to them any speech and that it did not possess for them any harm or benefit?"*** And in Surah Al-A'raf: ***"Did they not see that it could neither speak to them nor guide them to a way?"*** (7:148). The true God speaks and guides; an idol can do neither.

SURAH TAHA 20:90–91

وَلَقَدْ قَالَ لَهُمْ هَٰرُونُ مِن قَبْلُ يَٰقَوْمِ إِنَّمَا فُتِنتُم بِهِۦ ۖ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنُ فَٱتَّبِعُونِى وَأَطِيعُوٓا۟ أَمْرِى ﴿٩٠﴾

And Aaron had already told them before [the return of Moses], "O my people, you are only being tested by it, and indeed, your Lord is the Most Merciful, so follow me and obey my order."

قَالُوا۟ لَن نَّبْرَحَ عَلَيْهِ عَٰكِفِينَ حَتَّىٰ يَرْجِعَ إِلَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ ﴿٩١﴾

They said, "We will never cease being devoted to the calf until Moses returns to us."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/20:90-91

Aaron عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ did not stay silent: ***"O my people, you are only being tested by it, and indeed, your Lord is the Most Merciful, so follow me and obey my order"***. But they refused (20:91).

THE CALF IN OUR TIME

Today, perhaps no one worships the statue of a calf. But the Qur'an speaks of ***"the one who takes as his god his own desire"*** (25:43). Wealth and desire can become a hidden "calf".

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O SON OF MY MOTHER

SURAH AL-A'RAF 7:150–151

وَلَمَّا رَجَعَ مُوسَىٰٓ إِلَىٰ قَوۡمِهِۦ غَضۡبَٰنَ أَسِفٗا قَالَ بِئۡسَمَا خَلَفۡتُمُونِي مِنۢ بَعۡدِيٓۖ أَعَجِلۡتُمۡ أَمۡرَ رَبِّكُمۡۖ وَأَلۡقَى ٱلۡأَلۡوَاحَ وَأَخَذَ بِرَأۡسِ أَخِيهِ يَجُرُّهُۥٓ إِلَيۡهِۚ قَالَ ٱبۡنَ أُمَّ إِنَّ ٱلۡقَوۡمَ ٱسۡتَضۡعَفُونِي وَكَادُواْ يَقۡتُلُونَنِي فَلَا تُشۡمِتۡ بِيَ ٱلۡأَعۡدَآءَ وَلَا تَجۡعَلۡنِي مَعَ ٱلۡقَوۡمِ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ ١٥٠

And when Moses returned to his people, angry and grieved, he said, "How wretched is that by which you have replaced me after [my departure]. Were you impatient over the matter of your Lord?" And he threw down the tablets and seized his brother by [the hair of] his head, pulling him toward him. [Aaron] said, "O son of my mother, indeed the people oppressed me and were about to kill me, so let not the enemies rejoice over me and do not place me among the wrongdoing people."

قَالَ رَبِّ ٱغۡفِرۡ لِي وَلِأَخِي وَأَدۡخِلۡنَا فِي رَحۡمَتِكَۖ وَأَنتَ أَرۡحَمُ ٱلرَّٰحِمِينَ ١٥١

[Moses] said, "My Lord, forgive me and my brother and admit us into Your mercy, for You are the most merciful of the merciful."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/7:150-151

COMMENTARY ON 7:150 AND 20:92–94 — ANGER FOR THE SAKE OF ALLAH

First: Justified anger. ***"And when Moses returned to his people, angry and grieved"***, he threw down the tablets and seized his brother by the head. His anger was anger for the sake of Allah — seeing his people worship an idol after all the blessings they had received.

Second: Aaron's loving reply. ***"O son of my mother, do not seize [me] by my beard or by my head"***. Aaron عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ called Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ by the tenderest of names: ***Yabna'umm*** — "O son of my mother" — to soften his heart.

Third: Aaron's reason. ***"Indeed, I feared that you would say"*** that he had caused division among the Children of Israel (20:94), and ***"indeed the people oppressed me and were about to kill me"***. Aaron عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ chose to preserve unity while waiting for Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ to return — the judgement (ijtihād) of a prophet in a difficult situation.

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Fourth: A prayer for his brother. After hearing the explanation, Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ at once prayed: ***"My Lord, forgive me and my brother and admit us into Your mercy, for You are the most merciful of the merciful"***. Righteous anger quickly subsides once the truth is clear, and is replaced by prayer.

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THE SAMIRI AND "NO CONTACT"

SURAH TAHA 20:95–98

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكَ يَٰسَٰمِرِيُّ ﴿٩٥﴾

[Moses] said, "And what is your case, O Samiri?"

قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُواْ بِهِۦ فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِّنْ أَثَرِ ٱلرَّسُولِ فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذَٰلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِى نَفْسِى ﴿٩٦﴾

He said, "I saw what they did not see, so I took a handful [of dust] from the track of the messenger and threw it, and thus did my soul entice me."

قَالَ فَٱذْهَبْ فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِى ٱلْحَيَوٰةِ أَن تَقُولَ لَا مِسَاسَ ۖ وَإِنَّ لَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَّن تُخْلَفَهُۥ ۖ وَٱنظُرْ إِلَىٰٓ إِلَٰهِكَ ٱلَّذِى ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفًا ۖ لَّنُحَرِّقَنَّهُۥ ثُمَّ لَنَنسِفَنَّهُۥ فِى ٱلْيَمِّ نَسْفًا ﴿٩٧﴾

[Moses] said, "Then go. And indeed, it is [decreed] for you in [this] life to say, 'No contact.' And indeed, you have an appointment [in the Hereafter] you will not fail to keep. And look at your 'god' to which you remained devoted. We will surely burn it and blow it into the sea with a blast."

إِنَّمَآ إِلَٰهُكُمُ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِى لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ وَسِعَ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ عِلْمًا ﴿٩٨﴾

Your god is only Allah, except for whom there is no deity. He has encompassed all things in knowledge.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/20:95-98

COMMENTARY ON 20:95–98 — THE PUNISHMENT FOR THE FOUNDER OF MISGUIDANCE

First: The Samiri's confession. ***"I saw what they did not see, so I took a handful [of dust] from the track of the messenger and threw it, and thus did my soul entice me"***. The exegetes mention that the "messenger" meant here is Gabriel (Jibril). What matters is that the Samiri himself admitted: ***thus did my soul entice me***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 20:96

Second: A fitting punishment. ***"Then go. And indeed, it is [decreed] for you in [this] life to say, 'No contact.'"*** The one who divided the community was punished by being cut off from the community.

Third: The idol destroyed. ***"We will surely burn it and blow it into the sea with a blast"***. What is worshipped besides Allah cannot even defend itself.

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Fourth: The closing word. ***"Your god is only Allah, except for whom there is no deity. He has encompassed all things in knowledge"***. The whole story of the calf ends with tawhid.

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REPENTANCE, AND MERCY THAT ENCOMPASSES ALL THINGS

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:51–54

وَإِذْ وَٰعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰٓ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ ٱتَّخَذْتُمُ ٱلْعِجْلَ مِنۢ بَعْدِهِۦ وَأَنتُمْ ظَٰلِمُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

And [recall] when We made an appointment with Moses for forty nights. Then you took [for worship] the calf after him, while you were wrongdoers.

ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنكُم مِّنۢ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

Then We forgave you after that so perhaps you would be grateful.

وَإِذْ ءَاتَيْنَا مُوسَى ٱلْكِتَٰبَ وَٱلْفُرْقَانَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

And [recall] when We gave Moses the Scripture and criterion that perhaps you would be guided.

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِۦ يَٰقَوْمِ إِنَّكُمْ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنفُسَكُم بِٱتِّخَاذِكُمُ ٱلْعِجْلَ فَتُوبُوٓاْ إِلَىٰ بَارِئِكُمْ فَٱقْتُلُوٓاْ أَنفُسَكُمْ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ عِندَ بَارِئِكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ ٱلتَّوَّابُ ٱلرَّحِيمُ ﴿٥٤﴾

And [recall] when Moses said to his people, "O my people, indeed you have wronged yourselves by your taking of the calf [for worship]. So repent to your Creator and kill yourselves. That is best for [all of] you in the sight of your Creator." Then He accepted your repentance; indeed, He is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:51-54

COMMENTARY ON 2:51–54 — A HEAVY REPENTANCE

First: Forgiven so that they would be grateful. ***"Then We forgave you after that so perhaps you would be grateful"***. Worshipping the calf was the sin of shirk — the greatest sin — yet the door of repentance remained open.

Second: A heavy law of repentance. Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ said to his people: ***"So repent to your Creator and kill yourselves"***. Ibn Kathir reports from the early generations (salaf) that this meant those who had not worshipped the calf were commanded to punish those who had — a special form of repentance in the law of the Children of Israel because of the enormity of that sin. Then Allah accepted their repentance. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:54

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Third: Ease for the nation of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. This nation is taught to pray: ***"Our Lord, and lay not upon us a burden like that which You laid upon those before us"*** (2:286). Repentance in Islam is remorse, abandoning the sin, and resolving not to return to it — and ***"Allah forgives all sins"*** (39:53).

SURAH AL-A'RAF 7:155–156

وَٱخۡتَارَ مُوسَىٰ قَوۡمَهُۥ سَبۡعِينَ رَجُلٗا لِّمِيقَٰتِنَاۖ فَلَمَّآ أَخَذَتۡهُمُ ٱلرَّجۡفَةُ قَالَ رَبِّ
لَوۡ شِئۡتَ أَهۡلَكۡتَهُم مِّن قَبۡلُ وَإِيَّٰيَۖ أَتُهۡلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ ٱلسُّفَهَآءُ مِنَّآۖ إِنۡ هِيَ إِلَّا
فِتۡنَتُكَ تُضِلُّ بِهَا مَن تَشَآءُ وَتَهۡدِي مَن تَشَآءُۖ أَنتَ وَلِيُّنَا فَٱغۡفِرۡ لَنَا وَٱرۡحَمۡنَاۖ
وَأَنتَ خَيۡرُ ٱلۡغَٰفِرِينَ ١٥٥

And Moses chose from his people seventy men for Our appointment. And when the earthquake seized them, he said, "My Lord, if You had willed, You could have destroyed them before and me [as well]. Would You destroy us for what the foolish among us have done? This is not but Your trial by which You send astray whom You will and guide whom You will. You are our Protector, so forgive us and have mercy upon us; and You are the best of forgivers.

۞وَٱكۡتُبۡ لَنَا فِي هَٰذِهِ ٱلدُّنۡيَا حَسَنَةٗ وَفِي ٱلۡأٓخِرَةِ إِنَّا هُدۡنَآ إِلَيۡكَۚ قَالَ عَذَابِيٓ
أُصِيبُ بِهِۦ مَنۡ أَشَآءُۖ وَرَحۡمَتِي وَسِعَتۡ كُلَّ شَيۡءٖۚ فَسَأَكۡتُبُهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ
وَيُؤۡتُونَ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَٱلَّذِينَ هُم بِـَٔايَٰتِنَا يُؤۡمِنُونَ ١٥٦

And decree for us in this world [that which is] good and [also] in the Hereafter; indeed, we have turned back to You." [Allah] said, "My punishment - I afflict with it whom I will, but My mercy encompasses all things." So I will decree it [especially] for those who fear Me and give zakah and those who believe in Our verses -

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/7:155-156

COMMENTARY ON 7:155–156 — SEVENTY MEN AND THE PRAYER OF MOSES

Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ chose seventy of the best men to seek forgiveness from Allah. When the earthquake seized them, Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ prayed: ***"Would You destroy us for what the foolish among us have done?"*** — and ***"You are our Protector, so forgive us and have mercy upon us; and You are the best of forgivers"***.

And Allah's answer is among the most hopeful verses in the Qur'an: ***"My punishment - I afflict with it whom I will, but My mercy encompasses all things"***. Allah's mercy is wider than the sins of His servants.

SURAH AL-A'RAF 7:157

ٱلَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ ٱلرَّسُولَ ٱلنَّبِيَّ ٱلْأُمِّيَّ ٱلَّذِى يَجِدُونَهُۥ مَكْتُوبًا عِندَهُمْ فِى ٱلتَّوْرَىٰةِ وَٱلْإِنجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُم بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَىٰهُمْ عَنِ ٱلْمُنكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ ٱلطَّيِّبَٰتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ ٱلْخَبَٰٓئِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَٱلْأَغْلَٰلَ ٱلَّتِى كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ فَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ بِهِۦ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَٱتَّبَعُوا۟ ٱلنُّورَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أُنزِلَ مَعَهُۥٓ ۙ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find written in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel, who enjoins upon them what is right and forbids them what is wrong and makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil and relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them. So they who have believed in him, honored him, supported him and followed the light which was sent down with him - it is those who will be the successful.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/7:157

The next verse tells who is most deserving of that mercy: ***"Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find written in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel"***. And he ***"relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them"***.

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THE COW

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:67–71

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِۦٓ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَن تَذْبَحُوا۟ بَقَرَةً ۖ قَالُوٓا۟ أَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُوًا ۖ
قَالَ أَعُوذُ بِٱللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ ٱلْجَٰهِلِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾

And [recall] when Moses said to his people, "Indeed, Allah commands you to slaughter a cow." They said, "Do you take us in ridicule?" He said, "I seek refuge in Allah from being among the ignorant."

قَالُوا۟ ٱدْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّن لَّنَا مَا هِىَ ۚ قَالَ إِنَّهُۥ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَّا فَارِضٌ وَلَا
بِكْرٌ ۖ عَوَانٌۢ بَيْنَ ذَٰلِكَ ۖ فَٱفْعَلُوا۟ مَا تُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾

They said, "Call upon your Lord to make clear to us what it is." [Moses] said, "[Allah] says, 'It is a cow which is neither old nor virgin, but median between that,' so do what you are commanded."

قَالُوا۟ ٱدْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّن لَّنَا مَا لَوْنُهَا ۚ قَالَ إِنَّهُۥ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ صَفْرَآءُ فَاقِعٌ
لَّوْنُهَا تَسُرُّ ٱلنَّٰظِرِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾

They said, "Call upon your Lord to show us what is her color." He said, "He says, 'It is a yellow cow, bright in color - pleasing to the observers.'"

قَالُوا۟ ٱدْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّن لَّنَا مَا هِىَ إِنَّ ٱلْبَقَرَ تَشَٰبَهَ عَلَيْنَا ۖ وَإِنَّآ إِن شَآءَ ٱللَّهُ
لَمُهْتَدُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

They said, "Call upon your Lord to make clear to us what it is. Indeed, [all] cows look alike to us. And indeed we, if Allah wills, will be guided."

قَالَ إِنَّهُۥ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَّا ذَلُولٌ تُثِيرُ ٱلْأَرْضَ وَلَا تَسْقِى ٱلْحَرْثَ مُسَلَّمَةٌ لَّا
شِيَةَ فِيهَا ۚ قَالُوا۟ ٱلْـَٰٔنَ جِئْتَ بِٱلْحَقِّ ۚ فَذَبَحُوهَا وَمَا كَادُوا۟ يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

He said, "He says, 'It is a cow neither trained to plow the earth nor to irrigate the field, one free from fault with no spot upon her.' " They said, "Now you have come with the truth." So they slaughtered her, but they could hardly do it.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:67-71

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COMMENTARY ON 2:67–71 — AN EASY COMMAND MADE DIFFICULT

First: A clear command. ***"Indeed, Allah commands you to slaughter a cow"***. The command was simple: ***a cow*** — any cow. But they replied: ***"Do you take us in ridicule?"*** Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ sought refuge in Allah from being among the ignorant.

Second: Question after question. They asked about its age (2:68), then its colour (2:69), then its features again (2:70). Each time they asked, the description of the cow became more specific and harder to find: ***"It is a cow neither trained to plow the earth nor to irrigate the field, one free from fault with no spot upon her"***.

Third: They "could hardly" do it. ***"So they slaughtered her, but they could hardly do it"***. The exegetes report from Ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنهما that had they slaughtered any cow from the start, it would have sufficed; but they were hard on themselves, so Allah was hard on them. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:67

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:72–73

وَإِذْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْسًا فَٱدَّٰرَٰٔتُمْ فِيهَا ۖ وَٱللَّهُ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا كُنتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

And [recall] when you slew a man and disputed over it, but Allah was to bring out that which you were concealing.

فَقُلْنَا ٱضْرِبُوهُ بِبَعْضِهَا ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ يُحْىِ ٱللَّهُ ٱلْمَوْتَىٰ وَيُرِيكُمْ ءَايَٰتِهِۦ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

So, We said, "Strike the slain man with part of it." Thus does Allah bring the dead to life, and He shows you His signs that you might reason.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:72-73

COMMENTARY ON 2:72–73 — THE SECRET BEHIND THE COMMAND

Only then does the Qur'an mention the reason for the command: ***"when you slew a man and disputed over it"***. Allah commanded: ***"Strike the slain man with part of it"*** — and the dead man came back to life and named his killer. ***"Thus does Allah bring the dead to life"***. This story is also a proof of resurrection after death.

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	The Golden Calf (worshipped)	The Cow (slaughtered)
Origin	Made by the Samiri from melted gold ornaments	Chosen by the command of Allah from among the cattle
Command of Allah	*None — it was invented by human desire*	*"Indeed, Allah commands you to slaughter a cow"*
Attitude of the Children of Israel	Quick to worship it and refused to abandon it	Many questions and excuses; they "could hardly do it"
Outcome	Burnt and its dust blown into the sea	With part of it, Allah brought the dead man to life
Verses	7:148 • 20:88–97	2:67–73
Lesson	What is worshipped besides Allah cannot speak and brings no benefit	Obey promptly; do not burden yourself with needless questions

Figure 2: Two cows in the story of the Children of Israel — one worshipped without Allah's command, one slaughtered by His command.

Figure 2 compares the two cows. With the golden calf, they rushed to worship without any command; with the cow, they made excuses even though there was a command. Both show the same disease: ***following desire, not revelation***.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:74

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُم مِّنۢ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ فَهِىَ كَٱلْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً ۚ وَإِنَّ مِنَ ٱلْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ ٱلْأَنْهَٰرُ ۚ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَّقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ ٱلْمَآءُ ۚ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ ٱللَّهِ ۗ وَمَا ٱللَّهُ بِغَٰفِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

Then your hearts became hardened after that, being like stones or even harder. For indeed, there are stones from which rivers burst forth, and there are some of them that split open and water comes out, and there are some of them that fall down for fear of Allah. And Allah is not unaware of what you do.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:74

And this story closes with a stirring image: ***"Then your hearts became hardened after that, being like stones or even harder"***. The rock struck by the staff of Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ gushed forth twelve springs (2:60), but their hearts, after all the miracles, gushed forth nothing. ***"and there are some of them that fall down for fear of Allah"*** — even stones fear Allah, but a hardened heart does not.

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WHAT THE QUR'AN DOES NOT TELL

The stories of the golden calf, the Torah and the cow are also found in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers in the Bible. Guided by the Hadith in Sahih al-Bukhari 4485 (Series 1), we do not make outside details part of the story we believe in. Some of them must also be rejected because they contradict the Qur'an.

POPULAR STORIES AND WHAT REVELATION SAYS

THE POPULAR STORY	WHAT THE QUR'AN AND AUTHENTIC HADITH SAY
Aaron made the golden calf at the request of his people (Exodus 32).	MUST BE REJECTED. The Qur'an says it was the Samiri who made it (20:85–88), and Aaron forbade them (20:90). The prophets are protected from shirk.
Moses smashed the Tablets of the Torah in anger.	The Qur'an says Moses "threw down" the tablets (7:150), then "took up" the tablets again when his anger subsided (7:154).
The Samiri was a goldsmith from the people of Samaria, or a child raised by Gabriel.	The Qur'an only mentions his title, "al-Samiri". His origin is not mentioned in any authentic text.
The cow belonged to an orphan who was dutiful to his mother, and was sold for its skin's weight in gold.	Not mentioned in the Qur'an or authentic Hadith.
The names of the slain man and his killer (a nephew who wanted the inheritance).	The Qur'an does not mention their names or the motive for the killing (2:72–73).
The content of the Ten Commandments as in the Bible.	The Qur'an says the tablets contained "instruction and explanation for all things" (7:145), without listing them.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTE: PROTO-SINAITIC INSCRIPTIONS AT SERABIT EL-KHADIM

At **Serabit el-Khadim**, in the Sinai Peninsula, there are **turquoise** mines that belonged to the ancient Egyptian state. There, **Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions** were found — among the **earliest examples of alphabetic writing in the world** — carved by workers from the lands of Canaan and the Levant around **1800 BCE**, in the time of Pharaoh Amenemhat III.

This discovery shows that **the Sinai Peninsula was inhabited and travelled** by Egyptians and people from the Levant in ancient times — consistent with the Qur'anic setting of the journey of the Children of Israel in the region of Mount Sinai.

Claim not included. In 2025, an independent researcher, Michael Bar-Ron, claimed that two inscriptions there mention the name **"Moses"**. Egyptologist Thomas Schneider (University of British Columbia) described the claim as entirely unsubstantiated and misleading, and the study has not been peer-reviewed. Therefore, **the claim that the name of Moses appears in these inscriptions is not included**.

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A SOFT HEART, A HARD HEART

The Children of Israel watched the sea split, ate food from the sky, drank water from a rock, and were shaded by clouds. Yet they asked for an idol, worshipped a calf, changed the word of Allah, and made excuses against His command. This story is not told to condemn one nation, but to warn every heart: ***abundant blessings do not guarantee a grateful heart***.

A BRIEF COMPARISON

PARTY	ATTITUDE AND LESSON
Moses	Hastened to his Lord, longed for Him, was angry for the sake of Allah, then at once prayed for his brother (7:143–151; 20:84)
Aaron	Advised his people and preserved unity in a difficult situation (20:90–94)
The Samiri	Followed his desires and led others astray — he was cast out (20:96–97)
The people who worshipped the calf	Quickly went astray without their leader, but were given the chance to repent (2:51–54)
The people commanded to slaughter the cow	Asked many questions and made excuses until an easy command became difficult (2:67–71)

LESSONS FROM THIS STORY

First: Freedom from a tyrant is not necessarily freedom from one's desires. (7:138).

Second: Hasten to Allah to seek His pleasure. (20:84).

Third: Allah cannot be seen in this world, but the believers will see Him in the Hereafter. (7:143; 75:22–23; Sahih Muslim 179).

Fourth: Receive the Book of Allah with determination and gratitude. (7:144–145).

Fifth: Beware of the "calf" in the form of wealth and desire. (20:88–89; 25:43).

Sixth: Be angry for the sake of Allah, but calm down quickly once the truth is clear. (7:150–151).

Seventh: The mercy of Allah encompasses all things. (7:156).

Eighth: Obey promptly; do not burden yourself with needless questions. (2:67–71).

Ninth: Do not let your heart become harder than stone. (2:74).

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CONCLUSION

Every day we receive our own “manna and quails” — provision that comes without our having planted it. Every day there is also a “calf” calling the heart to worship it, and a command of Allah that we try to avoid with question after question. The story of the two cows asks us: which of the two lives in our heart?

May Allah soften our hearts, make us servants who obey promptly, and admit us into His mercy that encompasses all things. ***Rabbighfir lī wa li-akhī wa adkhilnā fī raḥmatik, wa anta arḥamur-rāḥimīn.*** Amin.

In sha Allah, the series **Stories from the Qur’an** will continue with the story of Prophet Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ

Part 5: Moses and al-Khidr in Surah Al-Kahf — with the same method: the Qur’an, authentic Hadith, and solid archaeological findings only.

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SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:261

مَّثَلُ ٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمۡوَٰلَهُمۡ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنۢبَتَتۡ سَبۡعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنۢبُلَةٖ مِّاْئَةُ حَبَّةٖۗ وَٱللَّهُ يُضَٰعِفُ لِمَن يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ٢٦١

The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:261

SURAH SABA' 34:39

قُلۡ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبۡسُطُ ٱلرِّزۡقَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهِۦ وَيَقۡدِرُ لَهُۥۚ وَمَآ أَنفَقۡتُم مِّن شَيۡءٖ فَهُوَ يُخۡلِفُهُۥۖ وَهُوَ خَيۡرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ ٣٩

Say, "Indeed, my Lord extends provision for whom He wills of His servants and restricts [it] for him. But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will compensate it; and He is the best of providers."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/34:39

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2588

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، وَابْنُ، حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - وَهُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلاَّ عِزًّا وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلاَّ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Charity does not decrease wealth.

Allah does not increase a servant who forgives except in honour. And no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises him in rank."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue, Good Manners and Joining the Ties of Kinship (Kitab al-Birr wa al-Silah wa al-Adab), chapter on the encouragement of forgiveness and humility, Hadith No. 2588.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2588

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1631

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، - يَعْنِي ابْنَ سَعِيدٍ - وَابْنُ حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - هُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « إِذَا مَاتَ الإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلاَّ مِنْ ثَلاَثَةٍ إِلاَّ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: an ongoing charity, knowledge that is benefited from, or a righteous child who prays for him."

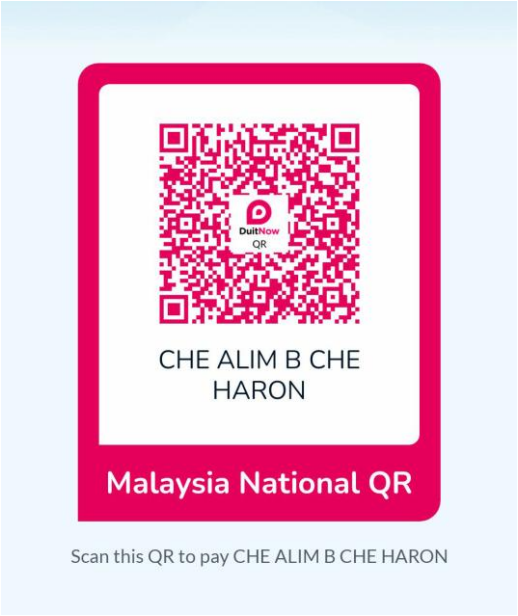
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GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:1631

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