

Surah 7. Al-A'raf

Asad: And when Moses returned to his people, full of wrath and sorrow, he exclaimed: "Vile is the course which you have followed in my absence! Have you forsaken¹¹⁶ your Sustainer's commandment?" And he threw down the tablets [of the Law], and seized his brother's head, dragging him towards himself. Cried Aaron: "O my mother's son! Behold, the people brought me low¹¹⁷ and almost slew me: so let not mine enemies rejoice at my affliction, and count me not among the evildoing folk!"

Malik: When Musa came back to his people, he was extremely angry and sorrowful, and he said: "What an evil thing you have done in my place in my absence! Have you tried to hasten the retribution of your Rabb?" He put down the Holy Tablets and seized his brother by the hair of his head and dragged him closer. Haroon (Aaron) cried: "O son of my mother! The people overpowered me and almost killed me; do not make my enemies happy over me and do not count me among the wrongdoers."

Pickthall: And when Moses returned unto his people, angry and grieved, he said: Evil is that (course) which ye took after I had left you. Would ye hasten on the judgment of your Lord? And he cast down the tablets, and he seized his brother by the head, dragging him toward him. He said: Son of my mother! Lo! the folk did judge me weak and almost killed me. Oh, make not mine enemies to triumph over me and place me not among the evil doers!

Yusuf Ali: When Moses came back to his people angry and grieved he said: "evil it is that ye have done in my place in my absence: did ye make haste to bring on the judgment of your Lord?" He put down the tablets seized his brother by (the hair of) his head and dragged him to him. Aaron said: "son of my mother! the people did indeed reckon me as naught and went near to slaying me! make not the enemies rejoice over my misfortune nor count thou me amongst the people of sin." ^{1115 1116 1117 1118}

Transliteration: Walamma rajaAAa moosa ila qawmihi ghadbana asifan qala bisama khalaftumonee min baAAadee aAAajiltum amra rabbikum waalqa alalwaha waakhattha birasi akheehi yajurruhu ilayhi qala ibna omma inna alqawma istadAAafoonee wakadoo yaqtuloonanee fala tushmit biya alaAAadaa wala tajAAalnee maAAa alqawmi alththalimeena

Khatab:

Upon Moses' return to his people, ?totally? furious and sorrowful, he said, "What an evil thing you committed in my absence! Did you want to hasten your Lord's torment?" Then he threw down the Tablets and grabbed his brother by the hair, dragging him closer. Aaron pleaded, "O son of my mother! The people overpowered me and were about to kill me. So do not ?humiliate me and? make my enemies rejoice, nor count me among the wrongdoing people."

Author Comments

116 - Lit., "outrun". The expression "one has outrun a matter" is synonymous with "he has forsaken it" or "left it undone" (Zamakhshari).

117 - Lit., "made me [or "deemed me"] utterly weak". Contrary to the Biblical account (Exodus xxxii, 1-5), the Qur'an does not accuse Aaron of having actually participated in making or worshipping the golden calf; his guilt consisted in having remained passive in the face of his people's idolatry for fear of causing a split among them cf. {20:92-94}.

1115 - Did ye inake haste...? 'In your impatience, could you not wait for me? Your lapse into idolatry has only hastened Allah's wrath. If you had only waited, I was bringing to you in the Tablets the most excellent teaching in the commands of Allah.' There is subtle irony in the speech of Moses. There is also a play upon words: 'ijl = calf: and 'ajila = to make haste: no translation can bring out these niceties.

1116 - Put down the Tablets: we are not told that the Tablets were broken: in fact vii. 154 (below) shows that they were whole. They contained Allah's Message. There is a touch of disrespect (if not blasphemy) in supposing that Allah's Messenger broke the Tablets in his incontinent rage, as is stated in the Old Testament: "Moses's anger waxed hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands, and brake them beneath the Mount." (Exod. xxxii. 10). On this point and also on the point that Aaron (in the Old Testament story) ordered the gold to be brought, made a molten calf, fashioned it with a graving tool, and built an altar before the calf (Exd. xxxii. 2-5), our version differs from that of the Old Testament. We cannot believe that Aaron, who was appointed by Allah to assist Moses as Allah's Messenger, could descend so low as to seduce the people into idolatry, whatever his human weaknesses might be.

1117 - Moses was but human. Remembering the charge he had given to Aaron (vii. 142) he had a just grievance at the turn events had taken. But he did not wreak his vengeance on the Tablets of Allah's law by breaking them. He laid hands on his brother, and his brother at once explained.

1118 - Aaron's speech is full of tenderness and regret. He addresses Moses as "son of my mother."-an affectionate term. He explains how the turbulent people nearly killed him for resisting them. And he states in the clearest terms that the idolatry neither originated with him nor had his consent. In xx. 85, we are told that a fellow described as the Samiri had led them astray. We shall discuss this when we come to that passage.

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