When Musa (as) arrived in Egypt, he went to Pharaoh to deliver his message from Allah. Pharaoh was arrogant, and mocked Musa (as). Pharaoh believed that he was a God, and threatened to punish Musa (as) if he did not stop spreading the message of the one, true Allah.

Musa (as) showed Pharaoh and his chiefs two miracles that he had been granted by Allah.

The first miracle was that Musa (as) threw his staff on the ground. When he threw the staff, Allah turned it into a snake. When Musa (as) picked up the snake, it turned back into a staff.

Second, Musa (as) put his hand inside his garments. When Musa (as) removed his hand, it emerged bright and shining white.

Despite seeing these two miracles, Pharaoh still did not believe and accused Musa (as) of being a magician. Pharaoh challenged Musa (as) to a competition against the best magicians in Egypt. The contest began with the magicians first throwing their sticks and ropes that appeared to turn into moving snakes. But this was just a trick of the light; the sticks and ropes were not real snakes. Musa (as) then threw his staff. Through Allah’s power, the staff actually turned into an even bigger snake and swallowed up all other ropes and sticks.

The magicians recognised the miracle of Allah and fell down in prostration saying “We have believed in the Lord of the worlds, the Lord of Musa and Harun.”

Pharaoh became angry when he heard this. He worried that people would start to follow Musa (as) and Harun (as), and stop believing in him as a God. Pharaoh knew he had to stop this, and set about causing more harm and suffering for the people of Banu Israel. Throughout all of this, Musa (as) told them to be patient.

Because Pharaoh refused to let the Banu Israel free, Allah sent severe trials to the people of Egypt. Still, Pharaoh refused.
The parting of the Red Sea

Finally, Musa (as) was commanded by Allah to make preparations for the Banu Israel to leave Egypt and go to Palestine. The Banu Israel left secretly and quickly one night, so that Pharaoh could not stop them. But Pharaoh found out, and before the hundreds and hundreds of people could reach Palestine safely, Pharaoh gathered his army and sped behind them.

Musa (as) and the Banu Israel headed east towards Palestine and reached the Red Sea at sunrise. They saw that the army of Pharaoh was chasing them, but they were trapped. There was no way to cross the Red Sea.

Musa (as) stood in front of the Red Sea and Allah commanded him to strike the sea with his staff. When he did this, a great miracle occurred. The mighty Red Sea parted in the middle, the waves rose like mountains on either side of the Banu Israel and a path appeared for them to walk safely to the other side.

The sea stayed parted until Musa (as) and the Banu Israel had crossed it safely. When Pharaoh and his army were in the middle of crossing, Allah commanded the sea to come together. The mountainous waves came crashing down on Pharaoh and his army. At the last moment, Pharaoh cried out that he believed in Allah and the message of Musa (as). But it was too late for him to believe, and he drowned.

The Banu Israel freed

The Banu Israel were finally free from the tyrant Pharaoh. They travelled with Musa (as) toward Palestine, because Allah wanted them to settle in Jerusalem. When the Banu Israel reached Palestine, they found it was occupied by another tribe who did not believe in Allah.

Through Musa (as), Allah ordered the Banu Israel to take back Jerusalem from the disbelievers. But the Banu Israel had lived too long as slaves in Egypt. Now they were cowardly and said “We will not go into Jerusalem until the people have left.”

They also said to Musa (as)

“You go with your Lord and fight these people.”

Musa (as) was very upset with the words and actions of the Banu Israel, because after everything Allah had done for them, they were not obeying Him. Because the Banu Israel did not do as Allah had commanded, they lost their way in the desert. For forty years the Banu Israel wandered in circles around the desert, but could not find their way back to Jerusalem.

During this time in the desert, Musa (as) had a special meeting with Allah. First, Musa (as) had to fast for forty days, to purify himself in order to meet Allah. He left his brother Harun (as) in charge of Banu Israel.

On this second meeting with Allah, Musa (as) asked Allah to grant him the gift of seeing the Almighty instead of just hearing Him speak. Allah told Musa (as) that he did not have the strength to see Allah. However, Musa (as) insisted.

Allah told Musa (as) that He would show a part of Him on a nearby mountain. When the light of Allah struck, the mountain crumbled to dust and Musa (as) fainted. When Musa awoke, he realised how mighty and great Allah was, that the mere light of Allah’s being could destroy an entire mountain.
Allah gave guidance for the Banu Israel to Musa (as), which was written down on two tablets made of stone.

When Musa (as) returned to his people, he found them worshipping a golden calf that they had built whilst he was away. Musa (as) was so angry at what he saw that he threw down the tablets.

The Banu Israel had committed a great sin by worshipping an idol. Worshipping anything other than Allah is the worst thing a believer can do, and the Banu Israel received a severe punishment from Allah for it. Later, Musa (as) prayed to Allah to forgive his people and Allah accepted the prayer of Musa (as).

The Qur'an tells us many stories of Musa (as) and his people, the Banu Israel. Musa (as) faced many challenges to free his people from Pharaoh and take them to Jerusalem, but he never reached the holy land.

When Musa (as) passed away, he asked to be buried close to the city of Jerusalem, so that he could be near it even if he had not entered it during his lifetime. May Allah’s peace be upon him.