Stories from the Qur'an
Series 5

The She-Camel of Allah

The Story of Prophet Salih and the People of Thamud According to the Qur'an and Authentic Hadith



Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron
AK (Kelantan)
quranscience.my

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

STORIES FROM THE QUR'AN

SERIES 5

THE SHE-CAMEL OF ALLAH

The Story of Prophet Salih and the People of Thamud According to the Qur'an and Authentic Hadith

قَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ لِمَ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِٱلسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ ٱلْحَسَنَةِ ۖ لَوْلَا تَسْتَغْفِرُونَ ٱللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

“He said, "O my people, why are you impatient for evil instead of good? Why do you not seek forgiveness of Allah that you may receive mercy?".”

SURAH AN-NAML 27:46

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord who is ever near and ever responsive to the prayers of His servants. Blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who covered his head and hastened his steps when passing the dwellings of those who were destroyed — 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 make us servants who honour His signs, who have the courage to forbid wrong before it drowns everyone, and who hasten to seek forgiveness before it is too late. 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 **scenery**: a desert valley at dawn, surrounded by **sandstone mountains** bearing **rough carved openings**, empty of inhabitants. In the middle of the valley is **an old stone well**, and beside it **a light-coloured she-camel** drinks calmly from a water trough. **Her footprints** in the sand lead to the well.

The she-camel is the sign Allah gave to Thamud: ***"this is the she-camel of Allah - [she is] to you a sign"*** (11:64). She is shown **drinking at the well** because the trial of Thamud revolved around water: ***"For her is a [time of] drink, and for you is a [time of] drink, [each] on a known day"*** (26:155). She is painted calm and undisturbed — as Prophet Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ commanded: ***"So let her feed upon Allah's earth and do not touch her with harm"***.

The carved mountains recall Thamud, who ***"used to carve from the mountains, houses, feeling secure"*** (15:82). The openings are deliberately drawn rough and unadorned, because the decorated tombs at Hegra today are later Nabataean structures (see Section 9). **The empty openings** recall the word of Allah: ***"As if they had never prospered therein"*** (11:68). **The light of dawn** recalls that the punishment came ***"at early morning"*** (15:83). **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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THE SHE-CAMEL OF ALLAH

Series 4 told of ‘Ad, destroyed by the wind. After them arose another people, also strong and skilled in building — but they did not build on the ground only; they carved the mountains. They were **the people of Thamud**, and Allah sent to them their brother, **Salih** عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ.

SURAH AL-A‘RAF 7:74

وَٱذْكُرُوٓاْ إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَآءَ مِنۢ بَعْدِ عَادٍ وَبَوَّأَكُمْ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِن سُهُولِهَا قُصُورًا وَتَنْحِتُونَ ٱلْجِبَالَ بُيُوتًا ۖ فَٱذْكُرُوٓاْ ءَالَآءَ ٱللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْثَوْاْ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾

And remember when He made you successors after the 'Aad and settled you in the land, [and] you take for yourselves palaces from its plains and carve from the mountains, homes. Then remember the favors of Allah and do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/7:74

Prophet Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ reminded his people: ***“remember when He made you successors after the 'Aad”***. Just as ‘Ad came after the people of Nuh (7:69), Thamud came after ‘Ad. The Qur’an arranges these stories in order of time, and this series follows the same order.

	Al-A‘raf 7:73–79	Hud 11:61–68	Al-Hijr 15:80–84	Ash-Shu‘ara’ 26:141–159	An-Naml 27:45–53	Al-Qamar 54:23–32	Ash-Shams 91:11–15	Fussilat 41:17–18	Adh-Dhariyat 51:43–45
Call to tawhid	●	●		●	●				
Homes carved in mountains	●		●	●					
The she-camel as a sign	●	●		●		●	●		
Shared turns of water				●		●	●		
The she-camel hamstrung	●	●		●		●	●		
The plot of the nine					●				
Respite: “enjoy yourselves”		●							●
The destroying punishment	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Believers saved		●			●			●	
Total episodes	5	6	2	6	4	4	4	2	2

Figure 1: The episodes of the story of Prophet Salih and Thamud in nine surahs. Only the destroying punishment is mentioned in every surah.

Figure 1 shows that **the she-camel** and **her hamstringing** are the core of this story — mentioned in five surahs. One episode is found only in Surah An-Naml: the plot of nine corrupters to kill Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ by

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surprise. As in the earlier stories, the episode mentioned in every surah is **the end** of the people who denied.

Note: The translation of the Qur'anic verses in this eBook is Sahih International. The grade of every Hadith is stated in the Hadith box, with a link to sunnah.com.

A PEOPLE WHO CARVED THE MOUNTAINS

The most prominent feature of Thamud in the Qur'an is their skill in carving rock. It is mentioned in four surahs in different words.

SURAH AL-HIJR 15:80–82

وَلَقَدۡ كَذَّبَ أَصۡحَٰبُ ٱلۡحِجۡرِ ٱلۡمُرۡسَلِينَ ٨٠

And certainly did the companions of Thamud deny the messengers.

وَءَاتَيۡنَٰهُمۡ ءَايَٰتِنَا فَكَانُواْ عَنۡهَا مُعۡرِضِينَ ٨١

And We gave them Our signs, but from them they were turning away.

وَكَانُواْ يَنۡحِتُونَ مِنَ ٱلۡجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا ءَامِنِينَ ٨٢

And they used to carve from the mountains, houses, feeling secure.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/15:80-82

Surah Al-Hijr names them ***"the companions of Thamud"*** — literally "the people of al-Hijr" — and says that they ***"used to carve from the mountains, houses, feeling secure"***. Notice the word ***āmīnīn*** — "feeling secure". They felt safe inside their strong stone houses. The commentators explain that ***al-Ḥijr*** is the name of the dwelling place of Thamud in the north-west of the Arabian Peninsula. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 15:80

SURAH AL-FAJR 89:9

وَثَمُودَ ٱلَّذِينَ جَابُواْ ٱلصَّخۡرَ بِٱلۡوَادِ ٩

And [with] Thamud, who carved out the rocks in the valley.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/89:9

Surah Al-Fajr mentions ***"Thamud, who carved out the rocks in the valley"***. Some commentators identify that valley as Wadi al-Qura, the valley north of Madinah. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 89:9

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SURAH ASH-SHU'ARA' 26:146–152

أَتُتْرَكُونَ فِي مَا هَٰهُنَآ ءَامِنِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾

Will you be left in what is here, secure [from death]?

فِي جَنَّٰتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿١٤٧﴾

Within gardens and springs.

وَزُرُوعٍ وَنَخْلٍ طَلْعُهَا هَضِيمٌ ﴿١٤٨﴾

And fields of crops and palm trees with softened fruit.

وَتَنْحِتُونَ مِنَ ٱلْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا فَٰرِهِينَ ﴿١٤٩﴾

And you carve out of the mountains, homes, with skill.

فَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ ﴿١٥٠﴾

So fear Allah and obey me.

وَلَا تُطِيعُوٓا۟ أَمْرَ ٱلْمُسْرِفِينَ ﴿١٥١﴾

And do not obey the order of the transgressors?

ٱلَّذِينَ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١٥٢﴾

Who cause corruption in the land and do not amend?

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/26:146-152

COMMENTARY ON VERSES 26:146–152 — BLESSINGS AND WARNING

First: The illusion of permanence. ***"Will you be left in what is here, secure [from death]?"*** Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ mentioned gardens, springs, fields and ***"palm trees with softened fruit"***. Their valley was fertile and prosperous.

Second: A skill they prided themselves on. ***"And you carve out of the mountains, homes, with skill"***. The word ***fārihīn*** is interpreted by some commentators as "skilful" and by others as "boastful and exultant". Both meanings were true of Thamud. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 26:149

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Third: Do not follow the corrupters. ***"And do not obey the order of the transgressors"***, ***"Who cause corruption in the land and do not amend"***. This warning came true in Sections 4 and 5, when a handful of corrupters dragged a whole people to destruction.

In Surah Al-A'raf, Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ mentions two kinds of building: ***"you take for yourselves palaces from its plains and carve from the mountains, homes"***. The commentators explain that they built palaces on the plains for one season, and stone houses in the mountains for another. His advice: ***"Then remember the favors of Allah and do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption"***.

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A DISAPPOINTED HOPE

SURAH HUD 11:61–63

وَإِلَىٰ ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَٰلِحًا ۚ قَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ ٱعْبُدُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُۥ ۖ
هُوَ أَنشَأَكُم مِّنَ ٱلْأَرْضِ وَٱسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا فَٱسْتَغْفِرُوهُ ثُمَّ تُوبُوٓا۟ إِلَيْهِ ۚ إِنَّ رَبِّى
قَرِيبٌ مُّجِيبٌ ﴿٦١﴾

And to Thamud [We sent] their brother Salih. He said, "O my people, worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him. He has produced you from the earth and settled you in it, so ask forgiveness of Him and then repent to Him. Indeed, my Lord is near and responsive."

قَالُوا۟ يَٰصَٰلِحُ قَدْ كُنتَ فِينَا مَرْجُوًّا قَبْلَ هَٰذَآ ۖ أَتَنْهَىٰنَآ أَن نَّعْبُدَ مَا يَعْبُدُ
ءَابَآؤُنَا وَإِنَّنَا لَفِى شَكٍّ مِّمَّا تَدْعُونَآ إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٍ ﴿٦٢﴾

They said, "O Salih, you were among us a man of promise before this. Do you forbid us to worship what our fathers worshipped? And indeed we are, about that to which you invite us, in disquieting doubt."

قَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ أَرَءَيْتُمْ إِن كُنتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّى وَءَاتَىٰنِى مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً فَمَن
يَنصُرُنِى مِنَ ٱللَّهِ إِنْ عَصَيْتُهُۥ ۖ فَمَا تَزِيدُونَنِى غَيْرَ تَخْسِيرٍ ﴿٦٣﴾

He said, "O my people, have you considered: if I should be upon clear evidence from my Lord and He has given me mercy from Himself, who would protect me from Allah if I disobeyed Him? So you would not increase me except in loss."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/11:61-63

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 11:61 — A COMPLETE CALL

The call of Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ in Surah Hud contains two arguments, a call and an encouragement. **The first argument: *"He has produced you from the earth"*** — the origin of man from the soil. **The second argument: *"and settled you in it"*** — the earth was given to man to inhabit and develop, not to corrupt. **The call: *"so ask forgiveness of Him and then repent to Him"*. The encouragement: *"Indeed, my Lord is near and responsive"***. Allah is near, and He answers. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 11:61

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COMMENTARY ON VERSE 11:62 — "YOU WERE OUR HOPE"

The reply of Thamud is very moving: ***"O Salih, you were among us a man of promise before this"***. Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ was known as an intelligent young man of good character; his people hoped he would become their leader. When he brought tawhid, that hope turned into disappointment: ***"Do you forbid us to worship what our fathers worshipped?"***

Truth may cost a caller his standing. The answer of Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ shows his choice: ***"who would protect me from Allah if I disobeyed Him?"***

SURAH AN-NAML 27:45–47

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَآ إِلَىٰ ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَٰلِحًا أَنِ ٱعْبُدُواْ ٱللَّهَ فَإِذَا هُمْ فَرِيقَانِ يَخْتَصِمُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

And We had certainly sent to Thamud their brother Salih, [saying], "Worship Allah," and at once they were two parties conflicting.

قَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ لِمَ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِٱلسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ ٱلْحَسَنَةِ ۖ لَوْلَا تَسْتَغْفِرُونَ ٱللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

He said, "O my people, why are you impatient for evil instead of good? Why do you not seek forgiveness of Allah that you may receive mercy?"

قَالُواْ ٱطَّيَّرْنَا بِكَ وَبِمَن مَّعَكَ ۚ قَالَ طَٰٓئِرُكُمْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ ۖ بَلْ أَنتُمْ قَوْمٌ تُفْتَنُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

They said, "We consider you a bad omen, you and those with you." He said, "Your omen is with Allah. Rather, you are a people being tested."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/27:45-47

COMMENTARY ON VERSES 27:45–47 — TWO PARTIES AND A BAD OMEN

The call of Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ split his people into ***"two parties conflicting"***. He asked with great wisdom: ***"why are you impatient for evil instead of good?"*** Then he offered a way out: ***"Why do you not seek forgiveness of Allah that you may receive mercy?"*** This verse is the motto of this eBook.

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Their reply showed a superstitious way of thinking: ***"We consider you a bad omen, you and those with you"***. The word ***iṭṭayyarnā*** comes from the pre-Islamic practice of reading omens from birds. Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ corrected that belief: ***"Your omen is with Allah. Rather, you are a people being tested"***. Good and bad fortune are not caused by a person, but are Allah's decree, based on people's own deeds.

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THE SHE-CAMEL AS A SIGN

SURAH ASH-SHU'ARA' 26:153–156

قَالُوٓاْ إِنَّمَآ أَنتَ مِنَ ٱلۡمُسَحَّرِينَ ١٥٣

They said, "You are only of those affected by magic."

مَآ أَنتَ إِلَّا بَشَرٞ مِّثۡلُنَا فَأۡتِ بِـَٔايَةٍ إِن كُنتَ مِنَ ٱلصَّٰدِقِينَ ١٥٤

You are but a man like ourselves, so bring a sign, if you should be of the truthful.

قَالَ هَٰذِهِۦ نَاقَةٞ لَّهَا شِرۡبٞ وَلَكُمۡ شِرۡبُ يَوۡمٖ مَّعۡلُومٖ ١٥٥

He said, "This is a she-camel. For her is a [time of] drink, and for you is a [time of] drink, [each] on a known day."

وَلَا تَمَسُّوهَا بِسُوٓءٖ فَيَأۡخُذَكُمۡ عَذَابُ يَوۡمٍ عَظِيمٖ ١٥٦

And do not touch her with harm, lest you be seized by the punishment of a terrible day?

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/26:153-156

Thamud accused Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: ***"You are only of those affected by magic"***, and said: ***"so bring a sign, if you should be of the truthful"***. Allah gave them the sign they asked for: ***"This is a she-camel"***.

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SURAH AL-A'RAF 7:73

وَإِلَىٰ ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَٰلِحًا ۚ قَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ ٱعْبُدُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُۥ ۖ قَدْ
جَآءَتْكُم بَيِّنَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ ۖ هَٰذِهِۦ نَاقَةُ ٱللَّهِ لَكُمْ ءَايَةً ۖ فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِىٓ
أَرْضِ ٱللَّهِ ۖ وَلَا تَمَسُّوهَا بِسُوٓءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾

And to the Thamud [We sent] their brother Salih. He said, "O my people, worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him. There has come to you clear evidence from your Lord. This is the she-camel of Allah [sent] to you as a sign. So leave her to eat within Allah's land and do not touch her with harm, lest there seize you a painful punishment."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/7:73

SURAH HUD 11:64

وَيَٰقَوْمِ هَٰذِهِۦ نَاقَةُ ٱللَّهِ لَكُمْ ءَايَةً ۖ فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِىٓ أَرْضِ ٱللَّهِ ۖ وَلَا تَمَسُّوهَا
بِسُوٓءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابٌ قَرِيبٌ ﴿٦٤﴾

And O my people, this is the she-camel of Allah - [she is] to you a sign. So let her feed upon Allah's earth and do not touch her with harm, or you will be taken by an impending punishment.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/11:64

COMMENTARY — "THE SHE-CAMEL OF ALLAH"

First: Attributed to Allah. The Qur'an calls her ***nāqatullāh*** — ***"This is the she-camel of Allah [sent] to you as a sign"***. Attributing her to Allah shows her honour as a sign of His greatness. The Qur'an does not say how the she-camel appeared; the story that she came out of a rock is discussed in Section 9. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 7:73

Second: Her rights. ***"So let her feed upon Allah's earth and do not touch her with harm"***. The test was very easy: simply leave her alone. No need to feed her, no need to guard her — just do not harm her.

Third: A clear warning. ***"or you will be taken by an impending punishment"***. The condition and its consequence were stated from the start.

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SURAH AL-QAMAR 54:27–28

إِنَّا مُرْسِلُوا۟ ٱلنَّاقَةِ فِتْنَةً لَّهُمْ فَٱرْتَقِبْهُمْ وَٱصْطَبِرْ ﴿٢٧﴾

Indeed, We are sending the she-camel as trial for them, so watch them and be patient.

وَنَبِّئْهُمْ أَنَّ ٱلْمَآءَ قِسْمَةٌۢ بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ كُلُّ شِرْبٍ مُّحْتَضَرٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

And inform them that the water is shared between them, each [day of] drink attended [by turn].

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/54:27-28

THE TRIAL OF WATER

Surah Al-Qamar calls the she-camel ***"trial for them"***. The form of the trial was the sharing of water: ***"the water is shared between them, each [day of] drink attended [by turn]"***. One day for the she-camel, one day for them (26:155). For a people living in a desert valley, water is life. This trial tested whether they were willing to share the most precious thing they had, out of respect for a sign of Allah.

SURAH AL-ISRA' 17:59

وَمَا مَنَعَنَآ أَن نُّرْسِلَ بِٱلْـَٔايَـٰتِ إِلَّآ أَن كَذَّبَ بِهَا ٱلْأَوَّلُونَ ۚ وَءَاتَيْنَا ثَمُودَ ٱلنَّاقَةَ مُبْصِرَةً فَظَلَمُوا۟ بِهَا ۚ وَمَا نُرْسِلُ بِٱلْـَٔايَـٰتِ إِلَّا تَخْوِيفًا ﴿٥٩﴾

And nothing has prevented Us from sending signs except that the former peoples denied them. And We gave Thamud the she-camel as a visible sign, but they wronged her. And We send not the signs except as a warning.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/17:59

This verse of Surah Al-Isra' holds a deep lesson. The Quraish demanded all kinds of miracles from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and Allah explained why not every demand was granted: ***"except that the former peoples denied them"***. ***"And We gave Thamud the she-camel as a visible sign, but they wronged her"***. A miracle demanded and then denied brings destruction. Ibn Kathir explains that part of Allah's mercy to the Quraish was that He did not send down the miracles they asked for, so that they would not be destroyed like Thamud. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 17:59

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HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4981

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ يُوسُفَ، حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ، حَدَّثَنَا سَعِيدٌ الْمَقْبُرِيُّ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم « مَا مِنَ الأَنْبِيَاءِ نَبِيٌّ إِلاَّ أُعْطِيَ مَا مِثْلُهُ آمَنَ عَلَيْهِ الْبَشَرُ، وَإِنَّمَا كَانَ الَّذِي أُوتِيتُ وَحْيًا أَوْحَاهُ اللَّهُ إِلَىَّ فَأَرْجُو أَنْ أَكُونَ أَكْثَرَهُمْ تَابِعًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه said: The Prophet ﷺ said: **"There was no prophet among the prophets but that he was given (signs) the like of which caused people to believe in him. What I have been given is revelation that Allah revealed to me, so I hope to have the most followers of them on the Day of Resurrection."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Abdullah ibn Yusuf, from al-Laith ibn Sa'd, from Sa'id al-Maqburi, from his father, Kaisan al-Maqburi, from Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Virtues of the Qur'an, chapter on how revelation came down, Hadith No. 4981. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 152).

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:4981

COMMENTARY — THE LASTING MIRACLE

The she-camel was a miracle seen with the eyes, and it ended when she was hamstrung. This Hadith explains that the greatest miracle of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is different: ***"What I have been given is revelation"*** — the Qur'an, a miracle that is recited and remains until the Day of Resurrection. No one can "hamstring" this miracle. That is why he hoped to be the prophet with the most followers.

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THE MOST WRETCHED OF THEM

SURAH ASH-SHAMS 91:11–15

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَىٰهَآ ﴿١١﴾

Thamud denied [their prophet] by reason of their transgression.

إِذِ ٱنۢبَعَثَ أَشْقَىٰهَا ﴿١٢﴾

When the most wretched of them was sent forth?

فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ ٱللَّهِ نَاقَةَ ٱللَّهِ وَسُقْيَىٰهَا ﴿١٣﴾

And the messenger of Allah [Salih] said to them, "[Do not harm] the she-camel of Allah or [prevent her from] her drink."

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَعَقَرُوهَا فَدَمْدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُم بِذَنۢبِهِمْ فَسَوَّىٰهَا ﴿١٤﴾

But they denied him and hamstrung her. So their Lord brought down upon them destruction for their sin and made it equal [upon all of them].

وَلَا يَخَافُ عُقْبَىٰهَا ﴿١٥﴾

And He does not fear the consequence thereof.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/91:11-15

COMMENTARY ON VERSES 91:11–15

First: The root of it all. ***"Thamud denied [their prophet] by reason of their transgression"***. The word ***bi-ṭaghwāhā*** shows that it was their transgression that drove them to deny.

Second: One man acted. ***"When the most wretched of them was sent forth" — idh inbaʿatha ashqāhā***. The one who hamstrung the she-camel was a single man, whom the Qur'an calls "the most wretched".

Third: A final warning. ***"[Do not harm] the she-camel of Allah or [prevent her from] her drink"***.

Fourth: All were punished. ***"But they denied him and hamstrung her"*** — notice the verb ***fa-ʿaqarūhā*** in the plural: "**they** hamstrung her". Though only one man acted, the whole people are counted as having done it because they agreed and were pleased. Ibn Kathir relates this explanation. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 91:14

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SURAH AL-QAMAR 54:29

فَنَادَوْا۟ صَاحِبَهُمْ فَتَعَاطَىٰ فَعَقَرَ ﴿٢٩﴾

But they called their companion, and he dared and hamstrung [her].

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/54:29

Surah Al-Qamar describes the process: ***"But they called their companion, and he dared and hamstrung [her]"***. The people called, planned and supported; one man carried it out.

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4942

حَدَّثَنَا مُوسَى بْنُ إِسْمَاعِيلَ، حَدَّثَنَا وُهَيْبٌ، حَدَّثَنَا هِشَامٌ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، أَنَّهُ أُخْبِرَهُ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ زَمْعَةَ، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَخْطُبُ وَذَكَرَ النَّاقَةَ وَالَّذِي عَقَرَ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم « {إِذِ انْبَعَثَ أَشْقَاهَا} انْبَعَثَ لَهَا رَجُلٌ عَزِيزٌ عَارِمٌ، مَنِيعٌ فِي رَهْطِهِ، مِثْلُ أَبِي زَمْعَةَ ». وَذَكَرَ النِّسَاءَ فَقَالَ « يَعْمِدُ أَحَدُكُمْ يَجْلِدُ امْرَأَتَهُ جَلْدَ الْعَبْدِ، فَلَعَلَّهُ يُضَاجِعُهَا مِنْ آخِرِ يَوْمِهِ ». ثُمَّ وَعَظَهُمْ فِي ضَحِكِهِمْ مِنَ الضَّرْطَةِ وَقَالَ « لِمَ يَضْحَكُ أَحَدُكُمْ مِمَّا يَفْعَلُ ». وَقَالَ أَبُو مُعَاوِيَةَ حَدَّثَنَا هِشَامٌ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ زَمْعَةَ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم « مِثْلُ أَبِي زَمْعَةَ عَمِّ الزُّبَيْرِ بْنِ الْعَوَّامِ ».

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn Zam'ah رضى الله عنه narrated that he heard the Prophet ﷺ deliver a sermon, and he mentioned the she-camel and the one who hamstrung her. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"{When the most wretched of them was sent forth} (91:12) — there rose to do it a mighty, wicked and harsh man, protected by his clan, like Abu Zam'ah."** He also mentioned women and said: **"One of you deliberately beats his wife as one beats a slave, yet he may lie with her at the end of the day."** Then he admonished them for laughing when someone passed wind, and said: **"Why does one of you laugh at something he himself does?"** Abu Mu'awiyah narrated: **"...like Abu Zam'ah, the uncle of az-Zubair ibn al-'Awwam."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Musa ibn Isma'il, from Wuhaib ibn Khalid, from Hisham ibn 'Urwah, from his father, 'Urwah ibn az-Zubair, from 'Abdullah ibn Zam'ah رضى الله عنه. A second route: Abu Mu'awiyah, from Hisham, from 'Urwah, from 'Abdullah ibn Zam'ah.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Tafsir, Tafsir of Surah ash-Shams, Hadith No. 4942. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 2855).

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:4942

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COMMENTARY — A KILLER PROTECTED BY HIS CLAN

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ described the one who hamstrung the she-camel as ***'azīz 'ārim, manī' fī rahṭih*** — a mighty, wicked, harsh man, protected by his clan — and likened him to a chief of the Quraish of that time. That is why Thamud did not stop him: he was a feared strongman, and his clan stood behind him.

This Hadith also contains two other pieces of advice given in the same sermon: the prohibition of beating one's wife as one beats a slave, and a rebuke for laughing at something everyone does. All three rebuke an attitude of belittling and harming — towards a sign of Allah, towards a spouse, and towards fellow human beings.

THE PARABLE OF THE SHIP

SURAH AL-A'RAF 7:75–77

قَالَ ٱلۡمَلَأُ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱسۡتَكۡبَرُواْ مِن قَوۡمِهِۦ لِلَّذِينَ ٱسۡتُضۡعِفُواْ لِمَنۡ ءَامَنَ مِنۡهُمۡ أَتَعۡلَمُونَ أَنَّ صَٰلِحٗا مُّرۡسَلٞ مِّن رَّبِّهِۦۚ قَالُوٓاْ إِنَّا بِمَآ أُرۡسِلَ بِهِۦ مُؤۡمِنُونَ ٧٥

Said the eminent ones who were arrogant among his people to those who were oppressed - to those who believed among them, "Do you [actually] know that Salih is sent from his Lord?" They said, "Indeed we, in that with which he was sent, are believers."

قَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱسۡتَكۡبَرُوٓاْ إِنَّا بِٱلَّذِيٓ ءَامَنتُم بِهِۦ كَٰفِرُونَ ٧٦

Said those who were arrogant, "Indeed we, in that which you have believed, are disbelievers."

فَعَقَرُواْ ٱلنَّاقَةَ وَعَتَوۡاْ عَنۡ أَمۡرِ رَبِّهِمۡ وَقَالُواْ يَٰصَٰلِحُ ٱئۡتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَآ إِن كُنتَ مِنَ ٱلۡمُرۡسَلِينَ ٧٧

So they hamstrung the she-camel and were insolent toward the command of their Lord and said, "O Salih, bring us what you promise us, if you should be of the messengers."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/7:75-77

Surah Al-A'raf shows that the opposition was led by ***"the eminent ones who were arrogant among his people"***, while the believers were ***"those who were oppressed"***. After hamstringing the she-camel, they even challenged: ***"O Salih, bring us what you promise us"***.

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HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 2493

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو نُعَيْمٍ، حَدَّثَنَا زَكَرِيَّاءُ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ عَامِرًا، يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ النُّعْمَانَ بْنَ بَشِيرٍ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَثَلُ الْقَائِمِ عَلَى حُدُودِ اللَّهِ وَالْوَاقِعِ فِيهَا كَمَثَلِ قَوْمٍ اسْتَهَمُوا عَلَى سَفِينَةٍ، فَأَصَابَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَعْلاَهَا وَبَعْضُهُمْ أَسْفَلَهَا، فَكَانَ الَّذِينَ فِي أَسْفَلِهَا إِذَا اسْتَقَوْا مِنَ الْمَاءِ مَرُّوا عَلَى مَنْ فَوْقَهُمْ فَقَالُوا لَوْ أَنَّا خَرَقْنَا فِي نَصِيبِنَا خَرْقًا، وَلَمْ نُؤْذِ مَنْ فَوْقَنَا. فَإِنْ يَتْرُكُوهُمْ وَمَا أَرَادُوا هَلَكُوا جَمِيعًا، وَإِنْ أَخَذُوا عَلَى أَيْدِيهِمْ نَجَوْا وَنَجَوْا جَمِيعًا ».

TRANSLATION:

An-Nu'man ibn Bashir رضى الله عنهما narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"The example of the one who abides by the limits of Allah and the one who violates them is like a people who drew lots for (places on) a ship. Some of them got the upper deck and some the lower. Those on the lower deck, when they wanted water, had to pass by those above them. So they said: If we made a hole in our share (of the ship), we would not trouble those above us. If (those above) let them do what they wanted, they would all perish. But if they held them back by the hand, they would be saved, and all of them would be saved."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Abu Nu'aim al-Fadl ibn Dukain, from Zakariya ibn Abi Za'idah, from 'Amir ash-Sha'bi, from an-Nu'man ibn Bashir رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Partnership, chapter on drawing lots in division, Hadith No. 2493.

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:2493

The parable of the ship explains why the whole of Thamud perished because of one man's deed. The one who hamstrung the she-camel was like the man who bores a hole in the bottom of the ship. His people did not "hold him back by the hand" — indeed, it was they who called him (54:29). So ***"they would all perish"***. The lesson for every society: leaving open wrongdoing unchecked is not neutrality; it is participation.

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THE PLOT OF THE NINE

Surah An-Naml reveals a dark side not mentioned in the other surahs: a plot to kill Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ himself.

SURAH AN-NAML 27:48–53

وَكَانَ فِي ٱلْمَدِينَةِ تِسْعَةُ رَهْطٍ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

And there were in the city nine family heads causing corruption in the land and not amending [its affairs].

قَالُوا۟ تَقَاسَمُوا۟ بِٱللَّهِ لَنُبَيِّتَنَّهُۥ وَأَهْلَهُۥ ثُمَّ لَنَقُولَنَّ لِوَلِيِّهِۦ مَا شَهِدْنَا مَهْلِكَ أَهْلِهِۦ وَإِنَّا لَصَٰدِقُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

They said, "Take a mutual oath by Allah that we will kill him by night, he and his family. Then we will say to his executor, 'We did not witness the destruction of his family, and indeed, we are truthful.'"

وَمَكَرُوا۟ مَكْرًا وَمَكَرْنَا مَكْرًا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

And they planned a plan, and We planned a plan, while they perceived not.

فَٱنظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَٰقِبَةُ مَكْرِهِمْ أَنَّا دَمَّرْنَٰهُمْ وَقَوْمَهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٥١﴾

Then look how was the outcome of their plan - that We destroyed them and their people, all.

فَتِلْكَ بُيُوتُهُمْ خَاوِيَةًۢ بِمَا ظَلَمُوٓا۟ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَءَايَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

So those are their houses, desolate because of the wrong they had done. Indeed in that is a sign for people who know.

وَأَنجَيْنَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَكَانُوا۟ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

And We saved those who believed and used to fear Allah.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/27:48-53

COMMENTARY ON VERSES 27:48–53

First: A handful of corrupters. ***"nine family heads causing corruption in the land and not amending [its affairs]"***. The original wording is ***tis'atu rahṭ*** — nine groups or nine men. Their number was small, but their influence destroyed a whole people. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 27:48

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Second: Swearing by Allah to kill His prophet. ***"Take a mutual oath by Allah that we will kill him by night, he and his family"***. They planned a crime while using the name of Allah, and prepared an alibi: ***"We did not witness the destruction of his family"***. Notice that they still feared the kin of Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ — showing that Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ had standing among his people.

Third: A plan met with a plan. ***"And they planned a plan, and We planned a plan, while they perceived not"***. They planned a surprise attack by night; Allah brought upon them a sudden punishment.

Fourth: Desolate houses. ***"So those are their houses, desolate because of the wrong they had done"***. The stone houses they thought made them ***āminīn*** — secure (15:82) — gave no protection. ***"And We saved those who believed and used to fear Allah"***.

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THREE DAYS, THEN THE PUNISHMENT

SURAH HUD 11:65–68

فَعَقَرُوهَا فَقَالَ تَمَتَّعُواْ فِي دَارِكُمۡ ثَلَٰثَةَ أَيَّامٖۖ ذَٰلِكَ وَعۡدٌ غَيۡرُ مَكۡذُوبٖ ٦٥

But they hamstrung her, so he said, "Enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days. That is a promise not to be denied."

فَلَمَّا جَآءَ أَمۡرُنَا نَجَّيۡنَا صَٰلِحٗا وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ مَعَهُۥ بِرَحۡمَةٖ مِّنَّا وَمِنۡ خِزۡيِ يَوۡمِئِذٍۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ ٱلۡقَوِيُّ ٱلۡعَزِيزُ ٦٦

So when Our command came, We saved Salih and those who believed with him, by mercy from Us, and [saved them] from the disgrace of that day. Indeed, it is your Lord who is the Powerful, the Exalted in Might.

وَأَخَذَ ٱلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ ٱلصَّيۡحَةُ فَأَصۡبَحُواْ فِي دِيَٰرِهِمۡ جَٰثِمِينَ ٦٧

And the shriek seized those who had wronged, and they became within their homes [corpses] fallen prone.

كَأَن لَّمۡ يَغۡنَوۡاْ فِيهَآۗ أَلَآ إِنَّ ثَمُودَاْ كَفَرُواْ رَبَّهُمۡۗ أَلَا بُعۡدٗا لِّثَمُودَ ٦٨

As if they had never prospered therein. Unquestionably, Thamud denied their Lord; then, away with Thamud.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/11:65-68

COMMENTARY ON VERSES 11:65–68

First: A respite of three days. After the she-camel was hamstrung, Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ said: ***"Enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days"***. ***"That is a promise not to be denied"***. Surah Adh-Dhariyat mentions the same: ***"Enjoy yourselves for a time"*** (51:43). Those three days were a last chance — yet they did not repent.

Second: The form of the punishment. ***"And the shriek seized those who had wronged"***, ***"and they became within their homes [corpses] fallen prone"***. They died inside the homes they thought were safest.

Third: As if they had never existed. ***"As if they had never prospered therein"***. The same expression is used of the people of Madyan (11:95) — the people of Prophet Shu'aib عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ — with a direct comparison: ***"as Thamud was taken away"***.

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ONE PUNISHMENT, MANY NAMES

The Qur'an describes the punishment of Thamud with several different words. Figure 2 gathers them.

Qur'anic word	Meaning (Sahih International)	Verse
al-Rajfah	the earthquake	7:78
al-Ṣayḥah	the shriek / the blast	11:67 • 15:83 • 54:31
al-Ṣāʿiqah	the thunderbolt	41:17 • 51:44
al-Ṭāghiyah	the overpowering [blast]	69:5
Damdama	brought down destruction, equal upon all	91:14

Figure 2: The words describing the punishment of Thamud in the Qur'an.

SURAH AL-A'RAF 7:78

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ ٱلرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا۟ فِى دَارِهِمْ جَٰثِمِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾

So the earthquake seized them, and they became within their home [corpses] fallen prone.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/7:78

SURAH AL-HIJR 15:83–84

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ ٱلصَّيْحَةُ مُصْبِحِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

But the shriek seized them at early morning.

فَمَآ أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا۟ يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

So nothing availed them [from] what they used to earn.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/15:83-84

SURAH FUSSILAT 41:17–18

وَأَمَّا ثَمُودُ فَهَدَيْنَٰهُمْ فَٱسْتَحَبُّوا۟ ٱلْعَمَىٰ عَلَى ٱلْهُدَىٰ فَأَخَذَتْهُمْ صَٰعِقَةُ ٱلْعَذَابِ ٱلْهُونِ بِمَا كَانُوا۟ يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

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And as for Thamud, We guided them, but they preferred blindness over guidance, so the thunderbolt of humiliating punishment seized them for what they used to earn.

وَنَجَّيْنَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَكَانُواْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

And We saved those who believed and used to fear Allah.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/41:17-18

SURAH AL-QAMAR 54:31

إِنَّآ أَرۡسَلۡنَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ صَيۡحَةٗ وَٰحِدَةٗ فَكَانُواْ كَهَشِيمِ ٱلۡمُحۡتَظِرِ ﴿٣١﴾

Indeed, We sent upon them one blast from the sky, and they became like the dry twig fragments of an [animal] pen.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/54:31

The commentators explain that these words do not contradict one another; they describe different aspects of a single punishment. Ibn Kathir explains that a shriek came from the sky and a quake from beneath them, and their souls were taken all at once. Surah Al-Hijr mentions its time: ***"at early morning"***, and its outcome: ***"So nothing availed them [from] what they used to earn"***. Surah Al-Qamar pictures them ***"like the dry twig fragments of an [animal] pen"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 7:78

Surah Fussilat explains the most basic cause: ***"We guided them, but they preferred blindness over guidance"***. They did not perish out of ignorance; they had been given clear guidance, and chose misguidance.

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SALIH AND THE BELIEVERS ARE SAVED

SURAH HUD 11:66

فَلَمَّا جَآءَ أَمۡرُنَا نَجَّيۡنَا صَٰلِحٗا وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ مَعَهُۥ بِرَحۡمَةٖ مِّنَّا وَمِنۡ خِزۡيِ
يَوۡمِئِذٍۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ ٱلۡقَوِيُّ ٱلۡعَزِيزُ ٦٦

So when Our command came, We saved Salih and those who believed with him, by mercy from Us, and [saved them] from the disgrace of that day. Indeed, it is your Lord who is the Powerful, the Exalted in Might.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/11:66

As in the stories of Nuh and Hud, peace be upon them, the believers were saved: ***"We saved Salih and those who believed with him, by mercy from Us"***, ***"and [saved them] from the disgrace of that day"***. Their salvation is mentioned in three surahs (11:66; 27:53; 41:18), and each time it is linked to faith and piety.

SURAH AL-A'RAF 7:79

فَتَوَلَّىٰ عَنۡهُمۡ وَقَالَ يَٰقَوۡمِ لَقَدۡ أَبۡلَغۡتُكُمۡ رِسَالَةَ رَبِّي وَنَصَحۡتُ لَكُمۡ
وَلَٰكِن لَّا تُحِبُّونَ ٱلنَّٰصِحِينَ ٧٩

And he turned away from them and said, "O my people, I had certainly conveyed to you the message of my Lord and advised you, but you do not like advisors."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/7:79

WORDS OF FAREWELL

Surah Al-A'raf records the words of Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ as he left his people who had perished: ***"O my people, I had certainly conveyed to you the message of my Lord and advised you"***, ***"but you do not like advisors"***. These words carry the sorrow of a messenger who had fulfilled his trust, and a precise diagnosis of his people: they did not merely hate the truth, they hated those who advised them.

This disease exists in every age. A society that dislikes advisors will hear only what it wants to hear, and push away anyone who corrects it. The story of Thamud shows where that road ends.

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WHEN THE MESSENGER ﷺ PASSED THROUGH AL-HIJR

The story of Thamud was not only told by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ; he himself passed through their dwellings. During the expedition of Tabuk (9 AH), the Muslim army heading north passed through al-Hijr. Two authentic Hadith record his conduct there.

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4419

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ الْجُعْفِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّزَّاقِ، أَخْبَرَنَا مَعْمَرٌ، عَنِ الزُّهْرِيِّ، عَنْ سَالِمٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ عُمَرَ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ قَالَ لَمَّا مَرَّ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم بِالْحِجْرِ قَالَ « لاَ تَدْخُلُوا مَسَاكِنَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ، أَنْ يُصِيبَكُمْ مَا أَصَابَهُمْ إِلاَّ أَنْ تَكُونُوا بَاكِينَ ». ثُمَّ قَنَّعَ رَأْسَهُ وَأَسْرَعَ السَّيْرَ حَتَّى أَجَازَ الْوَادِيَ.

TRANSLATION:

Ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنهما said: When the Prophet ﷺ passed by al-Hijr, he said: **“Do not enter the dwellings of those who wronged themselves, lest what befell them befall you, unless you enter weeping.”** Then he covered his head and hastened his pace until he had crossed the valley.

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from ‘Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Ju‘fi, from ‘Abd ar-Razzaq ibn Hammam, from Ma‘mar ibn Rashid, from Ibn Shihab az-Zuhri, from Salim ibn ‘Abdullah, from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Military Expeditions, chapter on the Prophet ﷺ stopping at al-Hijr, Hadith No. 4419. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 2980).

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:4419

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3378

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ مِسْكِينٍ أَبُو الْحَسَنِ، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ حَسَّانَ بْنِ حَيَّانَ أَبُو زَكَرِيَّاءَ، حَدَّثَنَا سُلَيْمَانُ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ دِينَارٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ عُمَرَ ـ رضى الله عنهما أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم لَمَّا نَزَلَ الْحِجْرَ فِي غَزْوَةِ تَبُوكَ أَمَرَهُمْ أَنْ لاَ يَشْرَبُوا مِنْ بِئْرِهَا، وَلاَ يَسْتَقُوا مِنْهَا فَقَالُوا قَدْ عَجَنَّا مِنْهَا، وَاسْتَقَيْنَا. فَأَمَرَهُمْ أَنْ يَطْرَحُوا ذَلِكَ الْعَجِينَ وَيُهَرِيقُوا ذَلِكَ الْمَاءَ.

وَيُرْوَى عَنْ سَبْرَةَ بْنِ مَعْبَدٍ وَأَبِي الشَّمُوسِ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم أَمَرَ بِإِلْقَاءِ الطَّعَامِ. وَقَالَ أَبُو ذَرٍّ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم « مَنِ اعْتَجَنَ بِمَائِهِ ».

TRANSLATION:

Ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنهما narrated that when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stopped at al-Hijr during the expedition of Tabuk, **he commanded them not to drink from its wells nor draw water from them.** They said: “We have already kneaded dough with its water and filled our water-skins.” So he **commanded them to throw away that dough and pour out that water.** It is also narrated from Sabrah ibn Ma‘bad and Abu ash-Shumus that the Prophet ﷺ commanded that the food be thrown away. Abu Dharr narrated from the Prophet ﷺ:

“Whoever kneaded (dough) with its water…”

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Muhammad ibn Miskin, from Yahya ibn Hassan, from Sulaiman ibn Bilal, from ‘Abdullah ibn Dinar, from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Prophets, chapter on the words of Allah {And to Thamud [We sent] their brother Salih}, Hadith No. 3378. Similar narrations are in Sahih al-Bukhari 3379 and Sahih Muslim 2981.

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:3378

COMMENTARY — THE MANNERS OF PASSING A PLACE OF PUNISHMENT

First: Not a place for sightseeing. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ forbade the Companions to enter the dwellings of a punished people ***“unless you enter weeping”***. That place is not for admiring its buildings or for amusement, but for taking a lesson with a fearful heart.

Second: His own example. He ***“covered his head and hastened his pace until he had crossed the valley”***. Even the noblest of people, the most assured of safety, showed fear when passing a place of punishment.

Third: Water not to be used. The Companions had kneaded dough with water from the wells there, and he commanded that the dough be thrown away and the water poured out. In another narration (Sahih al-Bukhari 3379), he commanded them to draw water from the well from which the she-camel used to drink. This Hadith shows that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ identified that place as the dwelling of Thamud.

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SURAH IBRAHIM 14:45

وَسَكَنتُمْ فِي مَسَٰكِنِ ٱلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوٓاْ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ كَيْفَ فَعَلْنَا بِهِمْ وَضَرَبْنَا لَكُمُ ٱلْأَمْثَالَ ﴿٤٥﴾

And you lived among the dwellings of those who wronged themselves, and it had become clear to you how We dealt with them. And We presented for you [many] examples.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/14:45

This verse is addressed to those who live in or pass through the places of destroyed nations: ***"And you lived among the dwellings of those who wronged themselves"***. Today, many tourists visit al-Ula and Hegra in north-western Saudi Arabia. The manners taught by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ remain relevant: come with a heart that takes a lesson, not merely with a camera.

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WHAT THE QUR'AN DOES NOT TELL

The story of the she-camel of Prophet Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ is often told with many astonishing details. Some are found in tafsir reports whose chains do not reach the Messenger of Allah ﷺ authentically, and some come from storytellers. Guided by the Hadith of Sahih al-Bukhari 4485 (Series 1), we do not make them part of the story we believe in.

POPULAR TALES AND WHAT REVELATION SAYS

THE POPULAR TALE	WHAT THE QUR'AN AND AUTHENTIC HADITH SAY
The she-camel came out of a great rock, already pregnant, at the request of Thamud.	The Qur'an only says "the she-camel of Allah [sent] to you as a sign" (7:73), without saying how she appeared.
The she-camel had a calf that fled to the mountain and wept after its mother was hamstrung.	Not in the Qur'an or authentic Hadith.
Her milk was enough for the whole people to drink on her day.	The Qur'an only mentions the turns of drinking water (26:155; 54:28).
The name of the one who hamstrung her was Qudar ibn Salif, and the names of the nine corrupters are listed one by one.	The Qur'an mentions "the most wretched of them" (91:12) and "nine family heads" (27:48) without names. Authentic Hadith does not name him either (Sahih al-Bukhari 4942).
Their faces turned yellow, red and black over the last three days.	The Qur'an only mentions the period of three days (11:65). The details of colours come from tafsir reports not authentically traced to the Prophet ﷺ.
The story of Abu Righal, a man of Thamud who survived because he was in the Sacred Precinct, and was destroyed when he left.	The report about it in Sunan Abi Dawud is graded weak by some Hadith scholars.
The grave of Prophet Salih is in Makkah, Hadramawt or Palestine.	The Qur'an and authentic Hadith do not mention where Prophet Salih is buried.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTE: THAMUD IN HISTORICAL RECORDS

Unlike 'Ad, **the name Thamud is recorded in historical sources outside the Qur'an**. The records of King **Sargon II** of Assyria (reigned 722–705 BCE) mention the "Tamudi" in a list of Arab desert tribes. Classical writers such as Diodorus (1st century BCE), Pliny and Ptolemy (1st and 2nd centuries CE) also mention the "Thamudeni" in the north-west of the Arabian Peninsula.

The most solid find is **the temple inscription of al-Ruwafa** (around 165–169 CE) in the Hisma region of north-western Saudi Arabia. This bilingual Greek and Nabataean inscription mentions "the confederation of

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Thamud" (šrkt tmwdw), who built the temple in the time of the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius. It is now kept in the National Museum of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh.

An important note: The Qur'an states that those who denied were destroyed, while Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ and the believers were saved (11:66). Scholars differ on whether the "Thamud" of these inscriptions are the same people, their descendants, or a later tribe bearing the same name. These records prove that **the name Thamud and its link to north-western Arabia** are historical fact; they do not detail the story of Prophet Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTE: HEGRA (MADA'IN SALIH) — NABATAEAN TOMBS, NOT THE HOUSES OF THAMUD

The archaeological site of **al-Hijr or Hegra** (also known as Mada'in Salih) near al-Ula, Saudi Arabia, was **Saudi Arabia's first UNESCO World Heritage Site** (2008). It contains **111 monumental tombs** carved into sandstone outcrops.

But according to UNESCO, those decorated tombs were built by **the Nabataeans** between the 1st century BCE and the 1st century CE — long after the time of Prophet Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ. Many pictures on the internet claiming these tombs as "the houses of Thamud" are **inaccurate**. The site also contains some 50 pre-Nabataean inscriptions, including "Thamudic" script — a term scholars use for a kind of ancient North Arabian writing, not necessarily written by Thamud themselves.

What is solid is this: the location of al-Hijr was identified by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself as the dwelling of Thamud (Sahih al-Bukhari 3378, 4419). The stone houses of Thamud mentioned in the Qur'an (15:82) **cannot be specifically identified** in published archaeological research.

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THE SIGN THAT WAS HAMSTRUNG

Thamud asked for a sign, and Allah gave it. The test was very easy — leave the she-camel alone, and share the water. Yet they chose to hamstring the sign. This story teaches that mankind's problem is not a lack of proof, but the unwillingness of the heart.

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A BRIEF COMPARISON

THE PEOPLE OF THAMUD	PROPHET SALIH AND THE BELIEVERS
Carved the mountains and felt secure (15:82)	Reminded them that blessings do not last (26:146)
"We consider you a bad omen" (27:47)	"Your omen is with Allah" (27:47)
Asked for a sign, then hamstrung it (26:154; 91:14)	Honoured the she-camel of Allah (7:73)
Followed the arrogant chiefs (7:75–76)	The oppressed who believed (7:75)
Swore by Allah to kill His prophet (27:49)	"Why do you not seek forgiveness of Allah?" (27:46)
"You do not like advisors" (7:79)	"I … advised you" (7:79)
Corpses fallen prone in their own stone homes (11:67)	Saved by Allah's mercy (11:66)

LESSONS FROM THIS STORY

First: Allah is ever near. The door of istighfar is open, and Allah answers the prayers of His servants (11:61; 27:46).

Second: Truth may cost a person his standing. Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ lost the hope and praise of his people because of tawhid (11:62).

Third: Bad omens and fortune are not in people. Good and bad are with Allah; blaming the righteous is superstition (27:47).

Fourth: Honour the signs of Allah. Even an easy test can become a cause of destruction if taken lightly (7:73; 17:59).

Fifth: Being pleased with wrongdoing is participation. One man hamstrung her, all were punished (91:14; Sahih al-Bukhari 2493).

Sixth: A handful of corrupters can destroy everyone. Nine men dragged a whole people (27:48–52).

Seventh: Do not hate those who advise. A people who reject advice will reap its consequence (7:79).

Eighth: Pass places of punishment with a fearful heart. The example of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ at al-Hijr (Sahih al-Bukhari 4419).

CONCLUSION

The she-camel of Allah is long gone. But the signs of Allah are still all around us — and the greatest is the Qur'an, a miracle no one can hamstring (Sahih al-Bukhari 4981). The question is the same as the question put to Thamud: do we honour that sign, share what Allah asks of us, and hold back the hand of the one who wants to bore a hole in the ship of society?

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The call of Prophet Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ still echoes: ***"Why do you not seek forgiveness of Allah that you may receive mercy?"*** May Allah make us among the believers and the God-fearing who are saved, and protect us from the attitude of a people who do not like advisors. Amin.

In sha Allah, the series **Stories from the Qur'an** continues with the story of Prophet Ibrahim عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ, 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."

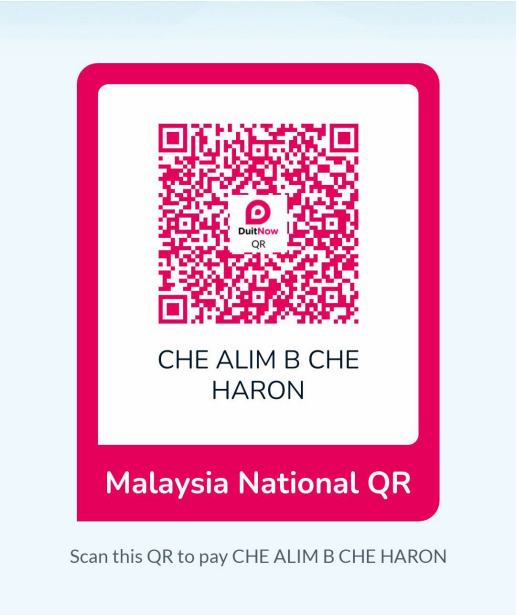
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REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Wills (Kitab al-Wasiyyah), chapter on the reward that reaches a person after his death, Hadith No. 1631.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

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

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