

Prophets of the Quran: An Introduction

(part 1 of 2)



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The Quran mentions twenty five prophets, most of whom are mentioned in the Bible as well. Who were these prophets? Where did they live? Who were they sent to? What are their names in the Quran and the Bible? And what are some of the miracles they performed? We will answer these simple questions.

Before we begin, we must understand two matters:

- a. In Arabic two different words are used, *Nabi* and *Rasool*. A *Nabi* is a prophet and a *Rasool* is a messenger or an apostle. The two words are close in meaning for our purpose.
- b. There are four men mentioned in the Quran about whom Muslim scholars are uncertain whether they were prophets or not: *Dhul-Qarnain* (18:83), *Luqman* (Chapter 31), *Uzair* (9:30), and *Tubba* (44:37, 50:14).
1. *Aadam* or Adam is the first prophet in Islam. He is also the first human being according to traditional Islamic belief. Adam is mentioned in 25 verses and 25 times in the Quran. God created Adam with His hands and created his wife, *Hawwa* or Eve from Adam's rib. He lived in Paradise and was expelled from there to earth for disobedience. The story of his two sons is mentioned once in Chapter 5 (Al-Maidah).
2. *Idrees* or Enoch is mentioned twice in the Quran. Other than that little is known about him. He is said to have lived in Babylon, Iraq and migrated to Egypt and that he was the first one to write with the pen.
3. *Nooh* or Noah is mentioned 43 times in the Quran. He is said to be from Kirk, Iraq. Polytheism (shirk) appeared for the first time among his people who lived close to the present day city of Kufa, in the south of Iraq. His

wife was an unbeliever as mentioned in Chapter 66 (At-Tahrim). His son also chose disbelief and was drowned in the flood. The story is found in Chapter 11 (Hud).

One of his great miracles was the Arc which he built on God's command that rested on Mt. Judi which is said to be between the Syrian-Turkish border today near the city of Ayn Diwar.

4. *Hud* is said to be Heber in English. He is mentioned 7 times in the Quran. Hud is the first person to have spoken Arabic and was the first Arab prophet. He was sent to the people of *Aad* in the area known as *Al-Ahqaf* which is around Hadramaut in Yemen and the Ar-Rub al-Khali (the Empty Quarter). God destroyed them by a fierce wind that blew for 8 days and seven nights.
5. *Salih* is mentioned 9 times in the Quran. He was an Arab prophet sent to the people of *Thamud* who lived in an area known as *Al-Hijr* between Hijaz and Tabuk. *Al-Hijr* was the ancient name. Today, the place is known as "*Madain Salih*" in Saudi Arabia and is a UNESCO world heritage site. They are magnificent structures literally carved in the mountains. The people demanded he produce a female camel out of the rocks to prove his claim to being a prophet. He did, and warned them not to harm it, but they killed it despite the warning of Salih. A loud shriek – *saihah* - killed them all.
6. *Ibrahim* or Abraham is mentioned 69 times in 25 chapters of the Quran. His father's name was *Aazar*. They lived in the city of *Ur* in the Chaldean kingdom. He escaped Ur to Harran, in the north of the Arabian peninsula, in today's Syria, when Nimrod, the king tried to burn him alive. From Harran he went to Palestine with his wife Sarah and the son of his brother, Lot (*Loot* in Arabic) and his wife. Due to a famine, they were forced to move to Egypt.

He later returned with Lot to the south of Palestine, Ibrahim settling in Bir Sab'a and Lot settled close to the Dead Sea.

Abraham then moved his second wife, Hagar, to Mecca with his son Ishmael and left them there at God's command. Mecca was a barren land and the well of *zamzam* was provided by God for their survival. The ancient tribe of Jurhum settled there due to *zamzam*. Abraham is said to be buried in Hebron, Palestine.

- 7, 8. Abraham had two sons: *Ishaq* or Issac and *Ismael* or Ishmael. Issac is mentioned 16 times in the Quran whereas Ishmael is mentioned 12 times. Issac lived with his father, Abraham, and died in Hebron, Palestine. God ordered Abraham to sacrifice Ishmael. He went to Mecca

with his parents and was left there with his mother. Abraham visited Ishmael several times in Mecca, and during one of those times, God ordered Abraham and Ishmael to build the *Ka'bah* (the Holy House). Ishmael died in Mecca and was buried there. Issac is the forefather of the Jews and Ishmael is the forefather of the Arabs.

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9. Lot or *Loot* is mentioned 17 times in the Quran. He is the nephew of Abraham, the son of Abraham's brother. Lot lived towards the southern tip of the Dead Sea. His people were from Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot believed in Abraham and after their return from Egypt, they settled in separate locations. People of Sodom were the first to commit homosexuality. That is why homosexuals are sometimes called sodomites. His wife was not a believer. She did not commit the sin, but accepted it. Rocks were rained down on the people of Sodom and Gomorrah that crushed them.
10. *Yaqub* or Jacob, the son of Issac and the grandson of Abraham is mentioned 16 times in the Quran. Jacob's other name was Israel. The "*Bani Israel*," Children of Israel, or Israelites are named after him. All the Hebrew prophets came from him, the last of whom was *Eesa* or Jesus. Jacob is the father of the twelve tribes known as *Al-Asbaat* (7:160) in the Quran. He is said to have traveled to north of Iraq, returned to Palestine and then settled in Egypt and died there. He was buried in Hebron, Palestine, along with his father according to his last will. The Bible mentions that Issac married Rebecca and his son Jacob married Rachel (*Rahil* in Arabic).
11. *Yusuf* or Joseph, the son of Jacob or Israel is mentioned 17 times in the Quran. He was left in a Jerusalem well by his brothers, and then taken to Egypt where he attained a high rank in the government. Later, his father, Jacob, and brothers settled in Egypt.
12. *Shuaib* or Jethro, mentioned 11 times in the Quran, was sent to the people of *Madyan*, who was one of the sons of Abraham. *Shuaib* lived between the time of Lot and Moses and was an Arab prophet. His people worshipped a tree called *Al-Aykah* (15:78, 26:176, 38:13, 50:14). They were highway robbers, and cheated in business dealings. Several punishments came down upon them: an awful cry combined with an earthquake destroyed them.

13. *Ayyub* or Job is mentioned 4 times in the Quran. He is said to have lived close to either the Dead Sea or Damascus. He was an affluent prophet who was tested by God with poverty and sickness, but he was patient and was helped by his loyal wife who stayed by him in every hardship. Eventually, they are immensely rewarded by God for their patience.
14. *Yunus* or Jonah, also known as “*Dhun-Noon*,” is mentioned 4 times in the Quran. He lived in Nineveh, close to Mosul, in Iraq. He left his people before God allowed him to, headed towards modern day Tunisia, but possibly ended up in Yafa. He was swallowed by the whale, he then repented to God and went back to his people in Iraq where all 100,000 of them repented and believed in him.
15. *Dhul-Kifl* is mentioned twice in the Quran. Some scholars say he was the son of Job, others say he is Ezekiel of the Bible.
16. *Musa* or Moses is the most frequently mentioned prophet in the Quran, appearing 136 times. Before Moses, Joseph had started spreading the message of monotheism (*tawhid*: worship of One, true God) among the people of Egypt. His mission was strengthened when his father, Jacob, and his brothers also settled in Egypt, slowly converting all of Egypt. After *Yusuf*, the Egyptians turned back into polytheism (*shirk*) and the children of Jacob, the Israelites, multiplied and gained prominence in the society. Moses was the first prophet sent to the Israelites at a time when the Pharaoh of Egypt was enslaving them. Moses fled to *Madyan* to flee persecution. God made him a prophet at Mt. *Toor*, situated in the Sinai and he was given nine great miracles.
17. *Haroon* or Aaron is the brother of Moses and is mentioned 20 times in the Quran.
- 18,19. *Ilyas* or Elijah and *Yas'a* are mentioned two times each in the Quran, they both lived in Baalbek.
- 20,21. *Dawud* or David is mentioned in the Quran 16 times. He led the Israelites in war and won, and had many miracles. His son, *Suleiman* or Solomon is mentioned 17 times and was also a king with great miracles. Both are buried in Jerusalem.
22. *Zakariyyah* or Zechariah is mentioned 7 times. He was a carpenter. He raised Mary, the mother of Jesus.
23. *Yahya* or John is the son of Zechariah and is mentioned 5 times. He was killed in Jerusalem, and his head was taken to Damascus.
24. The name *Eesa* or Jesus is mentioned 25 times, Messiah 11 times, and the ‘son of Mary’ 23 times. He was born in Bethlehem, Palestine. He is said to

have visited Egypt with his mother. He is the last prophet among the Children of Israel.

Five prophets were Arabs: *Hud*, *Salih*, *Shuaib*, *Ismail*, and Muhammad. Four of them were sent to the Arabs, whereas Muhammad was sent to all human beings.

In conclusion, prophets, biblical and non-biblical, are integral to the Islamic scripture. Muslims see themselves as the true inheritors of the mission of the prophets sent by God to humanity: worship of the One True God and obedience to Him.

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