# SAMPLE

## Haman: The Architect of Tyranny

A Close Reading of the Quranic Story of Haman

Aira Aurora

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# Introduction

Haman is a name that appears in the Quran six times across four surahs — and every single mention places him beside Pharaoh. He is never mentioned alone. He is never given an independent scene. He exists in the Quranic narrative as a companion, a deputy, a collaborator — the man who stood at the right hand of the tyrant and made the tyrant's ambitions possible.

The Quran mentions Haman in Surah Al-Qasas (28:6, 8, 38), Surah Ghafir (40:36-37), Surah Al-Ankabut (29:39), and Surah Al-Mu'min (40:24). In every case, he is paired with Pharaoh. The two are named together as if they were a single entity — the tyrant and his instrument, the king and his architect, the one who desired and the one who built.

The most dramatic moment in the Quranic account of Haman is the tower. Pharaoh, seeking to disprove Musa's claim about a God in the heavens, commands Haman to build him a tower — a structure tall enough to reach the sky — so that Pharaoh can look up and see the God of Musa. It is one of the most audacious scenes in the Quran: a man trying to build a staircase to the heavens to confront the Lord of the heavens.

This book is a close reading of the Quranic verses about Haman. It examines his role, his relationship with Pharaoh, the tower he was commanded to build, the arrogance that drove both him and his master, and the destruction that overtook them both. It asks the questions the Quran raises through Haman's story: What is the relationship between power and obedience? When does service become complicity? What happens to the one who builds the instruments of tyranny?

Haman's story is the story of the enabler — the one who does not originate the tyranny but who makes it possible. Pharaoh gave the orders. Haman built the tower. Pharaoh declared himself god. Haman lit the fire. The Quran does not distinguish between the tyrant and his deputy — both are named, both are condemned, both are destroyed. The lesson is clear: the one who builds for the tyrant is the tyrant.

The chapters that follow walk through the Quranic narrative, drawing out the moral and spiritual lessons the text contains. The goal, as always, is to listen to what the Quran says — and to let the text speak.

# Chapter 1: The Name and the Man

Haman appears in the Quran in six verses across four surahs:

- 28:6 — "And We established them in the land and showed Pharaoh, Haman, and their hosts what they were warned against." - 28:8 — "And the wife of

Pharaoh said... while Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts were wrongdoers." - 28:38 — "And Pharaoh said: 'O chiefs, I do not know of any god for you other than me. O Haman, kindle for me a fire over the clay and make for me a tower that I may look at the God of Musa.'" - 29:39 — "And [We destroyed] Qarun and Pharaoh and Haman. And Musa came to them with clear signs, but they were arrogant in the land." - 40:24 — "To Pharaoh and Haman and Qarun. So they said: 'A lying sorcerer.'" - 40:36-37 — "And Pharaoh said: 'O Haman, build for me a tower that I may reach the pathways — the pathways of the heavens — that I may look at the God of Musa, though I think he is a liar.'"

Every mention of Haman places him beside Pharaoh. He is never the subject of his own narrative. He is always a co-actor — the deputy, the second name, the man beside the man. The Quran does not tell us his backstory. It does not describe his origins, his family, his personal qualities. It tells us only what he did: he served Pharaoh.

The name Haman has been the subject of considerable discussion among both classical and modern scholars. In the biblical tradition, Haman is a figure from the Book of Esther — a vizier in the court of a Persian king who plotted against the Jews. Some have noted the similarity of the name and wondered whether the Quranic Haman is the same figure. The Quran, however, places Haman in the court of Pharaoh — in Egypt, during the time of Musa — which is a completely different historical and geographical context from the Esther narrative.

The classical Quranic commentators understood Haman as a figure in Pharaoh's court — a minister, a deputy, a man of authority who carried out Pharaoh's commands. The Quran does not explain the name or its origins. It uses the name as it uses all names in these narratives — as an identifier of a person whose actions matter more than their biography.

What matters is not where the name came from but what the man did. And what Haman did, in the Quranic account, was build — build the fire, build the tower, build the infrastructure of Pharaoh's tyranny. He was the architect. He was the one who turned Pharaoh's words into structures.

The Quran introduces Haman not as an individual but as part of a system. In

28:8, the Quran says: "Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts were wrongdoers" (kana fir'awnu wa hamanu wa junuduhuma min al-dhalimin). The three — Pharaoh, Haman, and their hosts — are named together as a single group of wrongdoers. The Quran does not say that Pharaoh was the wrongdoer and Haman was merely following orders. It says they were all wrongdoers.

This is the first and most important fact about Haman in the Quran: he is not excused by his subordinate position. He is not given the defense of "I was only following orders." The Quran places him in the same sentence as Pharaoh, in the same category of wrongdoing, in the same group of those who will face destruction. The deputy is not innocent because he is a deputy. The architect is not guiltless because he did not give the order.

The Quran says of the pair: "And they were arrogant in the land" (29:39). The arrogance is attributed to all three — Pharaoh, Haman, and Qarun. The arrogance was not Pharaoh's alone. It was the arrogance of the system — the king, the minister, the wealthy — all of them arrogant, all of them warned, all of them destroyed.

The Quran's silence about Haman's personal life is itself a statement. We do not know if Haman had a family. We do not know if he had doubts. We do not know if he questioned Pharaoh's commands. We do not know if he feared the consequences of disobedience. The Quran shows us only his actions: he kindled the fire, he built the tower, he served the tyrant.

This silence is the Quran's way of saying: what matters is what you do, not why you did it. The justification, the rationalization, the excuse — none of these are recorded. What is recorded is the act. Haman built. That is what the Quran preserves. The building is his legacy. The tower is his epitaph.

In the Quranic vision, the enabler is not less guilty than the one enabled. The one who lights the fire is not less responsible than the one who gives the order. The one who builds the tower is not less accountable than the one who asks for it. Haman's story is the story of every person who has used their skills, their knowledge, their labor, to serve injustice — and who believed that service was not the same as complicity.

The Quran says: it is.

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aira Aurora is an independent researcher and writer specializing in Quranic studies. Her work focuses on close reading of the Quranic text, exploring its themes, narratives, and moral framework with attention to both the original Arabic and the broader human context.

The NurOne master series is her primary project -- a multi-sub-series exploration of the Quran covering prophets, people, places, events, lessons, commands, signs, the unseen, the hereafter, and everyday life. Each book is a close reading of the Quranic verses on a specific topic, presented in clear, accessible language.

Her work is published under the pen name Aira Aurora.

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