# SAMPLE

## Shu'ayb: The Prophet of Midian and the Call for Justice

The Story of Prophet Shu'ayb (شعيب) in the Quran and Islamic Tradition

Aira Aurora

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# Introduction

Shu'ayb (عليه السلام) is the prophet of the marketplace. While other prophets confronted idolatry, immorality, or tyranny, Shu'ayb confronted something more mundane and more insidious: dishonest scales. Short measures. Fraud in trade. The corruption of economic life.

The Quran tells Shu'ayb's story in several passages — Surah Al-A'raf, Surah Hud, Surah Ash-Shu'ara, Surah Al-Hijr, Surah An-Naml, and Surah Al-Ankabut — each adding a layer to the portrait of a prophet who stood in the market and called for justice. His people, the people of Midian and the people of the Wood (Aykah), were merchants — wealthy, comfortable, dependent on trade. And their trade was corrupt.

Shu'ayb's message was deceptively simple: give full measure, do not defraud, do not corrupt the earth, and worship Allah alone. But this message was radical because it challenged not just their theology but their economy. To worship Allah alone was to submit their religion; to give full measure was to submit their wealth. The first was a matter of belief; the second was a matter of money. And the people of Midian, like many before and after, were more willing to change their beliefs than their profits.

The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have called Shu'ayb "the eloquent one among the prophets" — *khatib al-anbiya*. He was the one who spoke most clearly, most persuasively, most beautifully among the prophets. His eloquence was not just in his words but in his approach: gentle, reasonable, patient, persistent. He did not shout; he reasoned. He did not threaten; he explained. And when his people rejected him, he did not rage; he grieved.

Shu'ayb is also connected to the story of Musa. After Musa fled Egypt, he arrived in Midian and met Shu'ayb — the old man whose daughters he helped at the well. Shu'ayb gave Musa his daughter in marriage and became his father-in-law, his mentor, and his guide. The connection is significant: the prophet who taught economic justice in the marketplace became the father-in-law of the prophet who would teach social justice on a national scale.

This book traces Shu'ayb's story through the Quran: his message, his people's rejection, his eloquence, his connection to Musa, and his legacy. It is the twelfth light in the NurOne - The Prophets series — the light that shone in the market, the light that weighed with justice, the light that spoke with clarity and was refused.

## The Honest Merchant

The story of Shu'ayb in the Quran is the story of a prophet who spoke to a people of commerce about honesty and justice. In Surah Hud, Allah records Shu'ayb's words: "O my people, worship Allah, for you have no deity other than Him. And do not give short measure and short weight. Indeed, I see you in good condition, and indeed, I fear for you the punishment of an all-encompassing Day" (11:84). Shu'ayb was sent to Madyan — a people who had built a prosperous trading economy but had corrupted it with dishonesty. They shortchanged their customers, manipulated their scales, and took what was not theirs.

The Quran describes Shu'ayb as a prophet whose message was practical and specific: do not cheat, do not steal, do not deprive people of what is theirs. The people of Madyan rejected him, and their destruction came as an earthquake. The Quran says: "And the Shout seized those who had wronged, and they became in their homes fallen on their faces" (11:67, 11:94 across surahs). The chapters that follow trace Shu'ayb's story across every surah where it appears, from his first warning through his people's rejection to the final earthquake.

## Reflection on Shuayb

The Quran highlights this further the final exchange between Shu'ayb and his people: "They said: O Shu'ayb, we do not understand much of what you say, and indeed, we consider you among us as weak. And if not for your family, we would have stoned you, and you are not dear to us" (11:91). The verse reveals the complete moral failure of Madyan — they dismissed their prophet as incomprehensible, weak, and unworthy of respect. They threatened him with death but held back only because of his family's standing. Shu'ayb's response was measured: "O my people, is my family more respected to you than Allah?

And you have turned away from Him as something behind your backs. Indeed, my Lord encompasses what you do" (11:92). The question — is my family more important to you than Allah? — is the question the Quran puts to every society that honors status over truth, wealth over honesty, and family ties over the words of the One who created both. The chapters that follow trace Shu'ayb's story from his first warning through this final confrontation to the earthquake that ended the conversation.

## The Aftermath: Shuayb

The Quran records the destruction of Madyan in two forms across different surahs. In Surah Hud: "And when Our command came, We saved Shu'ayb and those who believed with him by mercy from Us. And the Shout seized those who had wronged, and they became in their homes fallen on their faces"

(11:94). In Surah Al-A'raf: "So the earthquake seized them, and they became in their homes fallen on their faces" (7:78). Two different words — the Shout and the earthquake — for the same event. The Quran does not explain which came first or how they relate. It states them as two descriptions of a single destruction. What unites them is the result: the people who cheated in trade, who mocked their prophet, who threatened him with death — they fell on their faces in their own homes. Shu'ayb was saved. The message he carried survived. The people who rejected it did not.

## What Shuayb Teaches

The Quran portrays Shu'ayb's message as the bridge between commerce and morality. In Surah Ash-Shu'ara, Shu'ayb says: "Give full measure and do not be of those who cause loss. And weigh with an even balance. And do not deprive people of their due and do not commit abuse in the earth as corrupters" (26:181-183). Four commands in three verses: measure fully, weigh justly, do not shortchange, do not corrupt. The Quran depicts Shu'ayb as the prophet who showed that the market is not outside the jurisdiction of faith. The scales of trade are the scales of morality. The measure of a person's honesty in commerce is the measure of their honesty before Allah.

## Parting Words on Shuayb

The stories exist for a purpose — to be reflected on, learned from, and returned to the One who told them who sent them with hearts that are awake and minds that are open to the guidance they contain.

# Chapter 1: Shu'ayb in the Quran

## 1.1 The Quranic Account

Shu'ayb (عليه السلام) is mentioned in six surahs of the Quran. His story is told in parallel passages, each with slight variations that add detail and depth:

**Surah Al-A'raf (7:85-93)** — The most detailed account of Shu'ayb's mission to Midian. Includes his message, the people's response, their threats, and the earthquake that destroyed them.

**Surah Hud (11:84-95)** — A parallel account with additional details about the people's rejection and Shu'ayb's grief.

**Surah Ash-Shu'ara (26:176-191)** — The story of the people of the Wood (Aykah), associated with Shu'ayb. A shorter, more condensed version.

**Surah Al-Hijr (15:78-79)** — A brief mention of the people of the Wood and their destruction.

**Surah An-Naml (27:80-84)** — Mentioned in a list of rejected prophets.

**Surah Al-Ankabut (29:36)** — A brief reference to Shu'ayb's mission to Midian.

**Surah Al-Qasas (28:22-28)** — The story of Musa arriving in Midian and meeting the "old man" — identified in tradition as Shu'ayb.

## 1.2 The People of Midian and the People of the Wood

The Quran associates Shu'ayb with two groups:

**The people of Midian** (*Madyan*) — A trading people who lived in the region of northwestern Arabia, near the Gulf of Aqaba. They were merchants, and their economy was built on trade. Their sin was economic corruption: short measures, fraud, and the manipulation of the marketplace.

**The people of the Wood** (*Aykah*) — A group mentioned in Surah Ash-Shu'ara and Surah Al-Hijr. Some scholars identify them as the same as the people of Midian; others as a distinct group that lived in a forested area and was also addressed by Shu'ayb. The Quran treats them as a separate case but with the same message and the same outcome.

The identification is not critical for the Quranic narrative. What matters is that

Shu'ayb addressed both groups with the same message: worship Allah, give full measure, and do not corrupt the earth.

## 1.3 The Message

Shu'ayb's message is recorded in Surah Al-A'raf:

"And to Midian, their brother Shu'ayb. He said: O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him. There has come to you a clear sign from your Lord. So give full measure and weight, and do not deprive people of their due, and do not cause corruption on the earth after it has been set right. That is best for you, if you are believers" (7:85).

The message has two dimensions:

**Theological.** "Worship Allah. You have no god other than Him." The fundamental message of every prophet: monotheism. Shu'ayb was not just a social reformer; he was a prophet of Allah, calling his people to the worship of one God.

**Economic.** "Give full measure and weight, and do not deprive people of their due." The specific application of monotheism to economic life. The worship of Allah is not just a matter of prayer; it is a matter of scales. whoever worships Allah in the mosque but cheats in the market has not understood the message.

The combination is significant. Other prophets focused on idolatry (Ibrahim), immorality (Lut), or tyranny (Musa). Shu'ayb focused on economics — on the honesty of trade, the fairness of transactions, the integrity of the marketplace. His message shows that economic justice is not separate from religious faith; it is an expression of it.

## 1.4 The Clear Sign

"There has come to you a clear sign from your Lord" (7:85). The Quran does not specify what the "clear sign" was. The sign may have been a miracle, or it may have been the message itself — the clarity of Shu'ayb's teaching, the evident truth of his call. Whatever the sign was, the people were left without excuse. They had been shown the truth, and their response would determine their fate.

## 1.5 "Do Not Cause Corruption on the Earth"

"And do not cause corruption on the earth after it has been set right" (7:85).

The word *fasad* — corruption — is broad. In Shu'ayb's context, it primarily means economic corruption: the manipulation of weights and measures, the fraud that distorts the market, the injustice that harms the community. But it extends to all forms of corruption — the social, moral, and spiritual decay that follows when economic justice is abandoned.

"After it has been set right" — *ba'da islahiha*. The earth had been set right — by Allah's creation, by the prophetic tradition, by the basic principles of fairness that every human being knows instinctively. The corruption of the market is not just an economic crime; it is a reversal of what Allah has established. whoever corrupts the market is undoing what Allah has done. whoever gives full measure is maintaining what Allah has set right.

## 1.6 "That Is Best for You"

"That is best for you, if you are believers" (7:85). Shu'ayb's message was not just a command; it was an argument. He said: honesty is best for you. Fair trade is best for you. Full measure is best for you. The argument is practical: a society built on honest trade is more stable, more prosperous, and more durable than one built on fraud. The short-term gain of cheating is outweighed by the long-term loss of trust, stability, and divine favor.

"If you are believers." The conditional is crucial. Shu'ayb did not say: honesty is best for you, period. He said: honesty is best for you if you are believers. The condition links economics to faith. whoever believes in Allah will practice honest trade — not because it is good business (though it is) but because it is worship. The believer does not cheat because the believer fears the One who sees every transaction, who knows every scale, who records every measure.

## 1.7 The Significance of Shu'ayb

Shu'ayb's significance lies in his application of monotheism to economics. He reveals that the worship of Allah is not limited to the prayer mat; it extends to the marketplace. The scales and the prayers are connected. whoever worships Allah on Friday and cheats on Monday has not worshipped Allah; they have performed a ritual without substance.

This teaching is relevant to every age. In our own time, when economic systems are complex and fraud is sophisticated, the message of Shu'ayb is simple and direct: give full measure, do not defraud, do not corrupt. The principle has not changed. The application may be more complex — the scales are digital now, the measures are contractual — but the principle is the same. The believer is honest in trade because the believer knows that the One who

sees the prayer also sees the transaction.

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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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