SAMPLE

Sodom: The Cities of Lut

Sodom (سدوم) in the Quran

Aira Aurora

Free sample: Introduction & Chapter 1

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Introduction

The Quran tells the story of a city that was destroyed by stones from the sky — a city whose sin was so egregious that the punishment came not from the earth below but from the heavens above. The city is Sodom, and the prophet sent to it was Lut, who asked his people: "Do you commit such immorality as no one has preceded you with in all the worlds?" (7:80).

Sodom is the city of the sin that was unprecedented. Unlike the people of Nuh who rejected the message, or the people of 'Aad who boasted of their power, or the people of Madyan who cheated in their trade, the people of Sodom committed an act that no one had committed before — an act that the Quran describes as an innovation in immorality. The city that was known for its sin was the city that was destroyed by the sky — the sky that rained stones of clay, baked hard, upon a people who had hardened their hearts against the truth.

The destruction of Sodom is the destruction by the morning. The Quran says: "So the shriek seized them at sunrise" (15:73). The destruction came at dawn — the time when the light enters the world, the time when the darkness is supposed to retreat. But for the people of Sodom, the morning was not the beginning of the light; the morning was the end of the existence. The dawn that should have been the mercy was the dawn that was the punishment.

This book — the eighth in the Places in the Qur'an series — covers Sodom: its name, its people, its prophet, its sin, its visitors, its night of departure, its destruction, and its connections to the other sacred places. The book follows the same approach as the first seven books — Makkah: The Holy City, Madinah: The City of the Prophet, Al-Quds: The Night Journey, Egypt: The Land of Pharaoh, Mount Judi: The Resting Place, Iram: The Lost City, and Madyan: The Land of Shu'ayb — exploring the place as the Quran presents it.

The Places in the Qur'an series traces the sacred geography of the Quran. The first book explored Makkah — the center of worship. The second book explored Madinah — the center of community. The third book explored Jerusalem — the center of the prophets. The fourth book explored Egypt — the center of trial. The fifth book explored Mount Judi — the center of survival. The sixth book explored Iram — the center of transience. The seventh book explored Madyan — the center of commerce. This eighth book explores Sodom — the center of immorality. The eight places are the eight dimensions of the sacred geography: the House, the community, the tradition, the test, the survival, the transience, the commerce, and the immorality. The person who understands the eight understands that the places where Allah acted are the places that teach — and

the city that was destroyed by the sky is the city that teaches that the sin that is unprecedented receives a punishment that is unprecedented.

Sodom is the eighth pillar of the sacred geography — the pillar that teaches that the sin that no one has committed before is the sin that receives a punishment that no one has received before.

Chapter 1: The Name — Sodom in the Quran

The Quran refers to the cities of Lut in several passages — first the confronting question with which Lut was sent to his people, asking whether they commit such immorality as no one has preceded them with in all the worlds (7:80), the question this book quotes in full at its chapter on his mission:

"And they indeed sought to shame his guests. So We said: Taste the punishment of the blazing fire" (38:34 — the principle applies).

The cities are the significance: the Quran speaks of "cities" — plural — because the people of Lut were not confined to one city but inhabited a region of multiple settlements. The cities are the lesson: the sin that was shared by multiple cities was the sin that was punished in multiple cities. The person who studies the cities sees: the corruption that spread from one city to the next was the corruption that was destroyed in all of them at once.

The Quran does not use the name "Sodom" explicitly. Instead, the Quran refers to "the people of Lut" and their cities. Traditionally, the cities of Lut are identified with the region of the Dead Sea — the area where the Jordan Valley meets the Dead Sea, in the land that was once fertile and is now barren. The location is the significance: the people who lived in a fertile valley were the people who were given abundance and who used the abundance for the sin. The location is the lesson: the land that was the blessing was the land that was cursed. The fertile valley that was the garden became the barren sea that is the sign. The person who visits the Dead Sea sees: the water that is bitter and the land that is dead are the remnants of a place that was once alive.

The Quran says of the destroyed cities:

"And indeed, you pass by them in the morning and at night. Then do you not use reason?" (37:137-138).

The ruins are the significance: the Quran tells the reader — the people of the Prophet Muhammad who passed by the Dead Sea on their trade routes — that they pass by the ruins of the destroyed cities. The ruins are the lesson: the person who passes by the ruins should remember the people. The person who sees the destroyed cities and does not reflect is the person who has missed the purpose of the ruins. The ruins are the sign: the cities that were destroyed are the cities that are still visible — not as living places but as dead remnants, the evidence of the punishment that is preserved for the generations to see.

The cities of Lut are connected to Ibrahim. The Quran says:

"And We saved him and Lut to the land which We had blessed" (21:71).

The connection is the significance: Lut was the nephew of Ibrahim, and the land where Lut was sent was the land that was connected to the migration of Ibrahim. The connection is the lesson: the prophet who was sent to the cities was the prophet who was part of the family of Ibrahim. The person who studies the connection sees: the family of Ibrahim was the family that was given the prophethood, and the member of the family who was sent to the cities was the member who was given the mission to the cities. The two — Ibrahim and Lut — are connected by blood and by prophethood, and the land where they both lived was the land that was blessed before it was cursed.

The Quran says:

"And We saved him and Lut to the land which We had blessed for the worlds" (21:71).

The blessing is the significance: the land where Lut was sent was the land that had been blessed by Allah — a land of fertility, of water, of vegetation. The blessing is the lesson: the land that is blessed is the land that is tested. The people who are given the fertile land are the people who are tested by the fertility. The person who is given the abundance and uses the abundance for the sin is the person who is punished by the loss of the abundance. The land that was blessed for the worlds became the land that was cursed for the sin — and the blessing that was given was the blessing that was taken away.

Sodom is remembered in the Quran through the story of Lut. The name is the significance: the city that is not named in the Quran is the city that is known through its prophet. The city is "the people of Lut" — the city that is defined by the prophet who was sent to it. The memory is the lesson: the city that forgot the prophet is the city that is remembered by the prophet. The city that rejected the messenger is the city that is known by the messenger. The name that is not mentioned is the name that is not forgotten — because the story of the city is preserved in the story of the prophet, and the story of the prophet is preserved in the Book that endures.

The city that is remembered by the prophet is the city that is remembered by the Book — and the Book that endures is the Book that preserves the memory of the city that did not endure.

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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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