

The Prophet Sālih ('alaihis-salām):

The Prophet (ﷺ) passed by the land of Thamūd, the people who Allāh destroyed after they had slaughtered the She-camel. The Messenger and his Companions stopped by the well wherein the camel was thrown. So then he narrated that which Allāh, the all-Knowing, informed him of. Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) warned them from doing that which the people of Sālih (ﷺ) did in asking for a sign. So when Allāh gave them a mighty sign, i.e. the She-camel, they rejected the sign and slaughtered the She-camel, so Allāh destroyed them. He sent upon them a calamity and punishment.

Imām Al-Bukhārī stated:

بَابُ قَوْلِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى: {وَإِلَى ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا}

Chapter: The Statement of Allāh: **“And to Thamūd, Allāh sent their brother Sālih...”** Then he reported the hadīth:

سَالِمُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَمَّا مَرَّ بِالْحَجَرِ قَالَ ” لَا تَدْخُلُوا مَسَاكِنَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونُوا بَاكِينَ، أَنْ يُصِيبَكُمْ مَا أَصَابَهُمْ “. ثُمَّ تَقْنَعُ بِرِدَائِهِ، وَهُوَ عَلَى الرَّحْلِ.

Narrated `Abdullāh bin `Umar: When the Prophet (ﷺ) passed by Al-Hijr, he said, **“Do not enter the places of those who were transgressors [against themselves] unless you enter weeping, lest you should suffer the same punishment as was inflicted upon them.”** After that he covered his face with his cloak while he was on his riding beast. (Bukhārī, no. 3380)

Al-Hijr (The rocky tract) where Thamūd lived.

عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَمَّا نَزَلَ الْحَجَرِ فِي غَزْوَةِ تَبُوكَ أَمَرَهُمْ أَنْ لَا يَشْرَبُوا مِنْ بَيْرِهَا، وَلَا يَسْتَقُوا مِنْهَا فَقَالُوا

قَدْ عَجَنَّا مِنْهَا، وَاسْتَقَيْنَا. فَأَمَرَهُمْ أَنْ يَطْرَحُوا ذَلِكَ الْعَجِينَ وَيَهْرِيقُوا ذَلِكَ الْمَاءَ. وَيُرَوِّى عَنْ سَبْرَةَ بْنِ مَعْبِدٍ وَأَبَى الشِّمُّوسِ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَمَرَ بِالْقَاءِ الطَّعَامِ. وَقَالَ أَبُو ذَرٍّ عَنْ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: مَنْ اعْتَجَنَ بِمَائِهِ

Narrated Ibn `Umar: When Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) stopped at Al-Hijr on his way to the battle of Tabūk, he ordered his Companions not to drink water from its well or collect water from it. They said, **"We have already kneaded the dough with its water, and also filled our water-skins."** On that, the Prophet (ﷺ) ordered them to throw away the dough and pour out the water. It was reported from Sabrah Ibn Ma'bad and from Abush-Shumūs that Allāh's Messenger commanded them to cast away the food. Abu Dharr narrated from the Prophet (ﷺ): **"The dough that was made from its water."** (Sahīh al-Bukhārī 3378)

Imām Ahmad reported in his Musnad from Jaabir (radiyAllāhu 'anhu) who said: When the Prophet (ﷺ) passed by Al-Hjir, he said: **"Do not ask for a sign for indeed the people of Sālih asked for a sign. They were a people from this valley and they appeared in this valley. They rebelled against the command of their Lord and they slew the She-camel. It would drink from their water one day, and they would drink from its milk the next. They slew it so they were punished by an awful scream, and Allāh killed all those who were from them under the sky except for one man, who was in the Sacred Mosque of Allāh (the Haram)."**

Reported by Imām Ahmad in his Musnad, 3/296; Ibn Kathīr said in Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah (1/137): "This hadīth is authentic upon the conditions of Muslim and there is no mention of it in the six books." Al-Haythami said: "It is reported by Al-Bazzār; and At-Tabarānī in Al-Awsat... the narrators of Ahmad are all from the narrators of the Sahih." (Majma' az-Zawā'id 6/194).

Our Lord has informed us in detail of the story of the Prophet

Sālih (‘alaihi-salām) with his people, the Thamūd. This story is not found in the Tawrāt (Torah). The People of the Book have not made mention of Thamūd nor ‘Ād, who were the people of the Prophet Hūd. However in the Qur’ān it is stated that Mūsā (‘alaihi-salām) made mention of both of these nations. Allāh, the Most High, stated:

وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ إِنَّ تَكْفُرُوا أَنْتُمْ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ
أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَبَأُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لَا يَعْلَمُهُمْ
إِلَّا اللَّهُ

“And Moses said, “If you should disbelieve, you and whoever is on the earth entirely – indeed, Allāh is Free of need and He is the Praiseworthy.” Has there not reached you the news of those before you – the people of Noah and ‘Ād and Thamūd and those after them? None knows them but Allāh.” (Ibraaheem: 8-9)

And the believer amongst the people of Pharaoh said:

وَقَالَ الَّذِي آمَنَ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ مِثْلَ يَوْمِ الْأَحْزَابِ
مِثْلَ دَأْبِ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ وَمَا اللَّهُ يُرِيدُ ظُلْمًا لِلْعِبَادِ

“And he who believed said: “O my people! Verily, I fear for you a fate like that day of disaster of the Confederates of old! Like the fate of the people of Nūh, and ‘Ād, and Thamūd and those who came after them. And Allāh wills no injustice for His slaves.” (Ghāfir: 30-31)

As we mentioned above that the books of hadīth report that the Messenger (ﷺ) passed by the dwelling of the people of Thamūd which was called Al-Hijr on his way to the battle of Tabūk. So he stopped off there with his Companions, and the Companions drank from the wells that the Thamūd used to

drink from, and they prepared their dough from that, and they set out their cooking pots. Then the Prophet (ﷺ) commanded them to pour out their cooking pots and to feed the dough to the camels. Then they moved out until they reached the well from which the she-camel used to drink, and he forbade them from entering a place of a people who were punished except that are are weeping – and the reason is stated in the words of the Prophet (ﷺ): **“I fear that you will be afflicted with what they were afflicted with.”** (Bukhārī, 3378) There occurs a hadīth from Ibn ‘Umar (radiyAllāhu ‘anhumā) wherein he said: **“Allāh’s Messenger stopped at Al-Hijr in the year of the battle of Tabūk, at the houses of the people of Thamūd. The people drank from the water of the of the wells that Thamūd drank from and they made dough from it. They set up cooking pots with meat. The Messenger (ﷺ) commanded them to pour out the pots, to feed the dough to the camels. Then he left out with them till they reached the place of the well from where the she-camel used to drink from.”** (Reported by Ahmad) It is understood that if one is compelled to pass by such a place, he should pass by quickly with one’s head covered. Ibn ‘Umar narrated that when the Prophet (ﷺ) passed by Al-Hijr, he said, **“Do not enter the dwelling places of those people who were unjust to themselves unless you enter weeping lest the same calamity that befell them should befall you.”** Then he covered his head and made his speed fast till he crossed the valley. (Sahīh al-Bukhari 4419)

Allāh said about the land of Thamūd (Al-Hijr):

وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ أَصْحَابُ الْحِجْرِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
وَأَتَيْنَاهُمُ آيَاتِنَا فَكَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ
وَكَانُوا يُنْحِتُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا آمِنِينَ
فَأَخَذْنَاهُمُ الصَّيْحَةَ مُصْبِحِينَ
فَمَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

“And verily, the dwellers of Al-Hijr (the rocky tract) denied the Messengers. And We gave them Our Signs, but they were averse to them. And they used to carve from the mountains, houses, feeling secure. But then the awful scream overtook them in the early morning (of the fourth day of their promised punishment days). And all that which they used to earn availed them not.” [Al-Hijr: 80-84]

Al-Hijr, the dwelling place of the people of Thamūd, to whom was sent the Prophet Sālih.

From the strangest of affairs concerning the people of Sālih (‘alaihis-salām) that the Prophet (ﷺ) informed us about is that they would drink from the milk of the she-camel to their satisfaction, and they would compensate what they took with the provision of water for her, yet they still killed her. They were sent this She-camel because they asked for a sign. They said:

مَا أَنْتَ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا فَأْتِ بَيَّةٍ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ

“You are but a human being like us. Then bring us a sign if you are of the truthful.” [Ash-Shu’arā: 154]

So Allāh sent them a sign:

قَالَ هَذِهِ نَاقَةٌ لَهَا شَرْبٌ وَلَكُمْ شَرْبُ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُومٍ
وَلَا تَمَسُّوهَا بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابُ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ
فَعَقَرُوهَا فَاصْبَحُوا نَادِمِينَ
فَأَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

“Sālih said: ‘This is a she-camel. For her is a time to drink, and for you is a time to drink, each on a known day. And do not touch her with any harm, lest you be seized by the punishment of a terrible day.’ But they hamstrung her,

and killed her, and so became regretful. And the punishment seized them. Indeed in that is a sign, but most of them were not to be believers.” [Ash-Shu’arā: 155-158] They were commanded to worship Allāh, so they asked for a miracle, and they were given a She-camel, and were expressly forbidden from harming her:

وَإِلَى ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَيْنَهُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ هَذِهِ نَاقَةُ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فَذُرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِي أَرْضِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَمَسُّوهَا بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابُ أَلِيمٍ

“And to the Thamūd, We sent their brother Sālih. He said, ‘O my people, worship Allāh for you have no deity worthy of worship other than Him. There has come to you clear evidence from your Lord. This is the She-camel of Allāh sent to you as a sign. So leave her to eat within Allāh’s land and do not touch her with harm, lest there seize you a painful punishment.” [Al-A’rāf: 73]

Ibn Kathīr stated: “When the she-camel was sent as a sign, it had to remain and live among them, grazing wherever she wanted and drinking from wherever she wanted. When she came to the well, she drank the water of that day, so they would fulfill their need from the water the next day. It is said that they all drank from her milk to their satisfaction.” (Qasas al-Anbiyaa)

Yet even though they benefitted greatly from the She-camel, they became resentful of her presence amongst them, as she was a proof of the truthfulness of Sālih (‘alaihis-salām), and so they eventually killed her:

فَعَقَرُوا النَّاقَةَ وَعَتَوْا عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقَالُوا يَا صَالِحُ ائْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

“So they hamstrung the She-camel and were insolent

toward the command of their Lord and said, “O Sālih, bring us what you promise us, if you are from the Messengers.” [Al-A’rāf: 77]

Ibn Jarīr at-Tabarī stated that nine of them waited in ambush for the She-camel, and one of them by the name of Masra’ lay in wait and aimed his arrow at her and shot her through her shinbone. Women came along to incite the tribal men to kill her. So one them, named Qidār, came forth with his sword and he hamstrung her and she fell to the earth and died.

فَنَادَوْا صَاحِبَهُمْ فَتَعَاطَىٰ فَعَقَرَ

فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِي وَنُذْرٌ

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَكَانُوا كَهَشِيمِ الْمُحْتَظِرِ

“So they called their comrade and he took a sword, hamstrung her and killed her. And how severe was My punishment and warning. Verily, We sent against them a single *Saiha* (an awful cry), and they became like the dry stubble of twigs.” [Al-Qamar: 30-32]

Ibn Kathīr said: Firstly: They disobeyed Allāh and His Prophet by killing the she-camel, which was a sign for them, that they asked for. Secondly: They hastened their own punishment and they deserved it for two reasons: Firstly, because Allāh said, “**and do not harm her lest you be seized by a swift punishment**” but they harmed her and killed her. Secondly, they asked Sālih for the punishment to be hastened, so they deserved it when it came.

Ibn Kathīr also stated: It is said that when they hamstrung the She-camel, the first who attacked was Qidār. He slew her and she fell to the earth. Then all of them rushed forward cutting her into pieces. The calf of the she-camel watched all this and fled into the mountains and howled three times. That is why Sālih said to them: “**Enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days**” excluding the day they slaughtered the She-

camel. They did not believe even in that threat. When it became dark in that evening, they tried to murder the Prophet Sālih (‘alaihis-salām) and slaughter him as they had slaughtered the She-camel as they claimed. **“They said: ‘Swear one to another by Allāh that we shall make a secret night attack on him and his household, and afterwards we will say to his near relatives: ‘We witnessed not the destruction of his household, verily we are telling the truth.’”** [An-Naml 27:49] Meaning: We will kill him and his family together, and then denounce their murder by disowning it.

Allāh, the Most High, said:

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَاهَا
إِذِ انْبَعَثَ أَشْقَاهَا
فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ نَاقَةَ اللَّهِ وَسُقْيَاهَا
فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَعَقَرُوهَا فَدَمْدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ فَحَسَّوَاهَا
وَلَا يَخَافُ عُقْبَاهَا

“Thamūd denied their prophet by their transgression, when the most wicked man among them went forth to kill the She-camel. And the messenger of Allāh Salih said to them, “Do not harm the She-camel of Allāh or prevent her from her drink.” 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. And He does not fear the consequence thereof.” [Ash-Shams: 11-15]

Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) described to us the one who hamstrung the she-camel when he said to ‘Alee (radiyAllāhu ‘anhu) and ‘Ammār: **“Shall I not tell you who the two most wretched men are?”** They said: **“Yes, O Messenger of Allāh.”** So he said: **“The red one of the people of Thamūd who hamstrung the she-camel and the one who will strike you, O ‘Alee, right here – meaning upon his head – such**

that your beard shall be drenched [with blood].” Reported by Imām Ahmad in his Musnad, 4/263.

Furthermore, Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) informed us that this *Saiḥah* (awful scream) utterly destroyed all those on the earth who disbelieved and rejected from this tribe – it made no difference if they were in their homes or upon a journey, all were destroyed except one man who was in the Sacred Mosque in Makkah, the Haram. So the punishment did not reach him in that Sacred Masjid. The Prophet informed us that his name was Abu Righāl, and when he exited the Haram, he was inflicted by the same punishment that his people were inflicted with.

So this she-camel that was given by Allāh to his Prophet Sālih (‘alaihis-salām) and it was as a result of their request: مَا أَنْتَ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا فَأْتِ بَآيَةٍ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ **“You are but a human being like us. Then bring us a sign if you are of the truthful.”** (Ash-Shu’arā 26:154) So they were given the She-camel as a sign and were commanded:

هَذِهِ نَافَةٌ لِلَّهِ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِي أَرْضِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَمَسُّوهَا بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابُ أَلِيمٍ

“Indeed there has come to you a clear sign (the miracle of the coming out of a huge she-camel from the midst of a rock) from your Lord. This she-camel of Allāh is a sign unto you; so you leave her to graze in Allāh’s earth, and touch her not with harm, lest a painful torment should seize you.” (Al-A’rāf 7:73) Ibn Kathīr (rahimahullāh) cited that the mufasssirūn state: The people of Thamūd gathered one day at their gathering place, and the Prophet Sālih came to them and invited them to the path of Allāh. He admonished them and cautioned them of the consequences of their rejection. So they said to Sālih: “If you produce from this rock

a she-camel with these characteristics – and they mentioned that it should be ten metres long.” So he said to them: “Tell me then, if I respond to your demand, will you believe in what I am calling you to, and bear witness that I am Allāh’s Messenger?” They said: “Yes.” So he took their covenant and their promise. Allāh then commanded that rock to bring out a she-camel with those qualities. When they saw the miracle with their own eyes, they regarded it as something tremendous, and a clear sign of Allāh’s greatness. So many of them believed in Sālih’s message but most persisted upon their disbelief. (end) So centuries later the Messenger Muhammad (ﷺ) said, **“Do not ask for a sign for indeed the people of Sālih asked for a sign. They were a people from this valley and they appeared in this valley. They rebelled against the command of their Lord and they slew they she-camel...”** So the Messenger cautioned his Companions from asking for a sign just as the people of Sālih asked for a sign out of fear that there are amongst mankind those who reject signs after asking for them, just like the people of Sālih, after which they were destroyed at Al-Hijr.

Further lessons from the story of Sālih (‘alaihis-salām):

1. There were those from the nations before who would ask for signs from their Messengers as a proof of their Prophethood. When those signs were sent by Allāh, they rejected them and were vanquished due to their rejection. There occurs in a narration collected by Bukhārī, Muslim and At-Tirmidhee from Anas Ibn Maalik (radiyAllāhu ‘anhu):

أَنَّ أَهْلَ مَكَّةَ سَأَلُوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنْ يُرِيَهُمْ آيَةً، فَأَرَاهُمْ
انْشِقَاقَ الْقَمَرِ

“The people of Makkah asked the Messenger of Allāh for a sign, so he showed them the splitting of the moon.” (Bukhārī, no. 3637)

Ibn Mas'ūd said: **“In the lifetime of Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) the moon was split into two parts; one half remained high over the mountain and the other half fell away beyond the mountain. Upon that Allāh’s Messenger said to them: “Witness this miracle.””** (Bukhārī, 4864)

2. One should be fearful of the punishment of Allāh, the Most High, and His anger for those who reject His Messengers and His Books.

3. The she-camel that was sent to Sālih was truly a miracle and great sign from Allāh. It had qualities and characteristics not shared by other camels in terms of its size, and height and unnatural proportions.

4. The Haram is a place of refuge and protection granted by Allāh – for this reason Abu Righāl was protected from Allāh’s punishment. However, when he left from there, the punishment that was inflicted upon his people came to him also.

5. The incident of Abu Righāl’s protection at the Haram proves that the Haram must have been a sacred site before Ibrāhīm (‘alaihis-salām) had built the Ka’bah there along with his son Ismā’il (‘alaihis-salām). That is because Sālih, who was an Arab, was from the offspring of Nūh. The fact that it was a Haram even before Ibrāhīm is further proven by the saying of Ibrāhīm:

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ

“O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in an uncultivable valley by Your Sacred House...” (Ibrāhīm 14:37)

End