

STORIES OF THE PROPHETS

SAYYED ABUL HASAN ALI NADWI

UK ISLAMIC ACADEMY

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Dedication

Dear Nephew (Muhammad al-Hasani),

I know that you, like other children of your age, have a keen interest in reading and listening to stories. What saddens me is that stories you read are only about animals – cats, dogs, lions, wolves, monkeys and bears. We your elders are to blame for this sad state of affairs, for these are the only stories available for you.

That is why I planned to write a series of story books in Arabic suitable for children of your age, dealing with the life and the work of the Prophets and Messengers. *Qīṣaṣ al-Nabīyeen* (Stories Of The Prophets), being the first part of the series, is presented here. It is my gift to you.

In this series of stories I have tried to write in a way that suits the interests of children. That is why I have repeated certain expressions and kept the story simple. I believe this may be the first book of its kind for children studying in religious institutions. In future titles in this series, you will read other interesting, clear and moving accounts of other Prophets of Allah. What happens in these stories is very special, because, unlike other stories, they are totally free of any lie or falsehood.

May Allah, through you, bring happiness and peace to your parents, to your uncle and to Islam and help to restore the glory of your ancestors the Muslims who came before you. (Ameen)

Ali al-Hasani

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Islamic and Biblical Names

Ādam	Adam
Ayyūb	Job
Benyāmīn	Benjamin
Dā'ūd	David
Hajar	Hagar
Hārūn	Aaron
Hūd	
Ibrāhīm	Abraham
'Isā	Jesus
Ishāq	Isaac
Ismā'īl	Ishmael
al-Khaḍīr	
Lūṭ	Lot
Maryam	Mary
Mūsā	Moses
Nūḥ	Noah
Ṣāliḥ	
Sārah	Sarah
Shu'ayb	
Sulaymān	Soloman
Yaḥyā	John
Ya'qūb	Jacob
Yūnus	Jonah
Yusha'	Josuah
Yūsuf	Joseph
Zakariyyā	Zachariah

Foreword

The Prophets were chosen by Allah to guide mankind to the Divine Path. They faced many difficulties and suffered severe hardships in their efforts to call their straying people to obey and worship Allah. This edition of *Stories of the Prophets* presents the lives of Allah's Prophets (peace and blessing be upon them). The stories were written by the renowned Islamic scholar Maulana Sayyed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi. He is one of the greatest living authorities on Islam and his works are used as textbooks throughout the Arab and Muslim world.

This translation from a major Arabic work provides English-speaking Muslims with the benefits of Maulana Sayyed Abul Hasan's scholarship. The stories which have been drawn from the Holy Qur'an constantly reflect the author's depth of knowledge. They are written in a lively style with subtleties explained and descriptions vividly portrayed to provide the reader with a clear picture of each Prophet's mission.

Each story is a delight to read and should provide both adults and children with a fresh insight into the life of the men Allah chose to guide their communities. The story of the last Prophet has not been included in this edition as it deserves a book to itself. To ensure that young people

receive all the guidance, knowledge and inspiration that *Stories of the Prophets* offers, a workbook is included.

My thanks are due to Sis. Aisha Bewley, Sis. Maryam Davies, Bro. Jamil Qureshi, my daughters Su'ād, Shifa' and my other children for their help in producing this book. May Allah accept this effort and make it a source of inspiration and guidance for all.

Leicester (England)

Iqbal Ahmad Azami

Shawwal 1410 A.H

May 1990

Introduction

I know Sayyed Abul Hasan Nadwi, the author of this book, both in person and through his writings. I find in him the heart and mind of a Muslim – he has spent his whole life in the service of Islam – in addition to his thorough knowledge and insight into Islam. This is my testimony which I affirm for Allah’s sake in this introduction.

Though quite small, *Stories of the Prophets* is a major work and a substantial addition to the *opus* of Sayyed Abul Hasan and his distinguished contemporaries in the field of Islamic *Da’wah* (in the Indian subcontinent). Islam must be taught in its pristine purity not only to adults but also to Muslim children. They are in greater need of such food for thought which may instruct them in the message of Islam. For it will help them grow up with the taste of Islam in their souls, the radiance of faith in their hearts and joy in their spirits. Stories are the basic constituency that help orient and mature the supple minds of children. Yet, though meant for children, this book will, I believe, be invaluable to adults also. For many Muslim adults taught under the colonial and Christian missionary-dominated educational system have been deprived of the opportunity to know the Qur’anic stories, to value their profound meaning, their spiritual quality, and their effectiveness, which are to the fore in this book.

I have read many books for children including those about the Stories of the Prophets (peace be upon them).

Indeed, I have been closely associated with a series of books drawn from the Holy Qur'an. Nonetheless, I testify without reservation, that Abul Hasan's present book surpasses all such works. What accounts for its excellence is the inclusion, with elucidation, of subtle teachings of the Qur'an, of explanations that highlight and reinforce the Qur'anic message, through the author's apt comments interwoven into the telling of the story. These comments provide glimpses of the greatest religious truths and they easily and effectively enter into the hearts of children and adults alike.

May Allah bestow His choicest rewards on Sayyed Abul Hasan and grant him the strength to carry out more such works. May Allah guide through his writings the future generations of Muslims that are under the constant attack of storms of disbelief, whose paths are strewn with thorns, whom black darkness surrounds, and who so urgently need guidance, light, care and sincere counselling for their growth. Allah alone grants the strength to accomplish every good deed.

Sayyed Qutb

1. The Prophet Nuh

After Adam (peace and blessings be upon him)*

Allah blessed the descendants of Adam, his children and grandchildren, and they spread and multiplied. If Adam had come back and seen them all, and someone had said to him, 'These are your descendants, Adam,' he would have been astonished. He would have said, 'Glory be to Allah! These are all my children! These are all my descendants!'

Adam's descendants founded many villages. They built many houses. They ploughed the land, grew crops and lived in comfort and contentment. They followed the way of their ancestor, Adam. They worshipped only Allah and did not worship anything else besides Him.

They were one united community. Adam was the one father of all of them, and Allah was their One Lord.

Satan's envy

Satan had not bowed down to Adam when Allah had commanded him to do so. So he was driven out and damned for ever. But how could Satan and his descendants be content with this? Were not people still worshipping

*Muslims are required to invoke Allah's blessings and peace upon the Prophets whenever their name is mentioned.

Allah? Were not people still a single community with no differences? That could not be! Would Adam's descendants go to the Garden while Iblis and his descendants went to the Fire? That could not be! Should not he take revenge on the sons of Adam so that they would go to the Fire with him?

Satan's idea

But how could Satan do that when people were worshipping Allah? He decided to call them to worship idols so that they would go to the Fire and never get to the Garden. He knew that Allah forgives people all sins, if He so wills, except one. Allah never forgives people worshipping other things besides Him or as well as Him.

So Satan decided to call the people to associate other things with Allah so that they would never go to the Garden. But how could he persuade them?

If he went to the people and said to them, 'Worship idols. Do not worship Allah,' they would curse him and chase him off. They would say: 'Allah forbid! How can we associate other things with our Lord? How can we worship idols? You are a cursed satan! You are a foul satan!'

So Satan had to look for another way, a cleverer way, to get the people to do as he wanted.

Satan's trick

There had been men who feared Allah and worshipped Him night and day and who remembered Him often. They had loved Allah, so Allah had loved them and answered their prayers. People loved them and spoke of them with respect long after they had died and gone to Allah's mercy.

Satan was well aware of this. So he went to the people and mentioned those men. He said, 'What do you think of So-and-so and So-and-so and So-and-so?'

They said, 'Glory be to Allah! They were men of Allah and His friends. When those men prayed, He answered them. When they asked, He gave to them.'

Pictures of the righteous men

Satan asked, 'How great is your sorrow for them?' They replied, 'Very great indeed.'

He asked, 'How great is your longing for them?' They replied, 'Very great indeed!'

He asked, 'Why don't you look at them every day then?' They said, 'How can we do that when they are dead?' He said, 'Make pictures of them and look at them every morning.'

People liked Satan's idea and made such pictures and looked at them every day. Whenever they saw the pictures, they remembered how those holy men had lived.

From pictures to statues

In time, the people moved on from making pictures to making statues. They made many statues of the holy men and put them in their houses and their mosques.

They still worshipped Allah and did not associate anything with Him. They knew that these were only statues of holy men and that they could neither help nor hurt them nor provide for them. They showed them respect because they were reminders of the holy men.

As time passed, the number of statues increased. The people respected them more and more. They got used

to having them around and looked for blessings in them. Now whenever one of their holy men died, they would make a statue of him and name it after him.

From statues to idols

Sons saw their fathers looking for blessings through the statues and saw how much respect they had for them. They saw them kiss the statues, dress them and pray to Allah in their presence. They saw them lower their heads and bow down in their presence.

When the fathers passed away, the sons added to what their fathers had done. They began to prostrate themselves before them, to ask the statues for things and to sacrifice animals to them. In this way the statues were turned into idols.

People began to worship them as they had worshipped Allah before. They had a lot of these idols. One was Wadd. Another was Suwa'. This was Yaghuth. That was Ya'uq. Another was Nasr.

Allah's anger

Allah became very angry with the people. He cursed them. How could Allah not be angry with the people because of what they were doing? Was this what they were created for? Was this what they were given provision for?

They walked on Allah's earth, but rejected Allah! They ate Allah's provision, but associated others with Allah! How terrible a sin!

Allah was so angry with the people that He held back the rain and made things hard for them. Their harvests

were small and few children were born to them.

But the people did not learn their lesson from that, they did not understand. They did not turn to Allah in repentance. They needed good counsel.

The messenger

Allah does not speak to each person individually or tell each one to do this or do that. The angels are a race just like mankind. It is possible to see them and hear what they say, if Allah wills. But the angels do not speak to each person individually either, or tell each one to do this or do that. Only Allah can choose the person who will receive His message to give to the people. Allah wanted to send a messenger to the people who could speak to them and counsel them. Allah chose to send the children of Adam a man from among themselves to speak to them and give them good counsel.

Man or angel?

Allah wanted this messenger to be a man and to be one of the people. That way they would recognize him and understand what he said.

If the messenger had been an angel, the people might say, 'What has he got to do with us? He is an angel and we are mortals! We eat and drink and we have wives and children. How can we worship Allah?' But if the messenger were a man, he could answer, 'I eat and drink; I have a wife and children. But I worship Allah. Why don't you worship Allah?'

If the messenger had been an angel, the people might say to him, 'You do not get hungry or thirsty. You

do not get ill or die. So you can worship Allah and remember Him always!’ But if the messenger were a man, he could answer, ‘I am just like you. I get hungry and thirsty. I get ill and will die. But I worship Allah and remember Him. So why don’t you worship Allah? Why don’t you remember Him?’ In this way the people would not be able to make up excuses.

Nuh the Messenger

Allah chose to send Nuh to his people.

There were wealthy people and leaders among the children of Adam, but Allah alone knew who should carry His message and who could bear His trust.

Nuh was a pious and generous man; he was intelligent and forbearing, compassionate and sincere. He was truthful and trustworthy and known for giving good counsel. Allah revealed to Nuh, *‘Warn your people before a painful punishment comes to them.’* (71: 1) So Nuh stood up among his people and told them, *‘I am a faithful messenger to you.’* (26: 107)

What answer did his people give to him?

When Nuh began to say to his people, *‘I am a faithful messenger to you,’* (26: 107) some of them answered back, ‘When did this man become a Prophet? Yesterday he was one of us and today he says, “I am Allah’s messenger to you”!’

Nuh’s friends said, ‘This man used to play with us when we were young and he sat with us every day. When did he become a Prophet? Was it during the day or the night?’

The rich and proud said, 'Couldn't Allah find anyone except him? Has everyone else died? Couldn't He find anyone except a poor man from among the common people?'

The ignorant ones said to each other: *'This is only a man like yourselves. If Allah had willed, He would have sent down angels. We have never heard of this among our fathers, the ancients.'* (23: 24)

Some of the people said that Nuh only wanted to become a leader, a man of power and position among them, by saying he was the messenger of Allah.

Nuh and his people

People had got used to thinking that worshipping idols was the truth and a sensible thing to do. They thought that anyone who did not worship idols was foolish. They would say, 'Our fathers worshipped idols, so why doesn't this man worship them?'

Nuh thought that their fathers were in the wrong and unwise and that Adam, who was the father of the fathers, did not worship idols. He worshipped Allah alone. Nuh thought that the people were in the wrong and foolish when they worshipped stones and did not worship Allah who had created them.

Nuh stood up among his people, saying in his loudest voice, *'O my people! Worship Allah! You have no god but Him. Truly I fear for you the punishment of a dreadful day.'*

The Council of his people said, 'We see that you are in clear error.'

He said, 'My people, there is no error in me. But I am a messenger from the Lord of all the worlds. I convey

to you the messages of my Lord and I give you good advice, for I know from Allah what you do not know.'
(7: 59–62)

'The lowliest follow you'

Nuh tried hard to make his people abandon idols and worship Allah alone. But only a few of those people who worked with their hands and ate lawful food, lawfully earned, believed in him.

The rich were too proud of being rich to believe. Their pride kept them from listening to Nuh. Their property and children distracted them from thinking about the Next World. They would say, 'We are nobles and those people are lowly.' When Nuh called them to Allah, they answered, '*How should we believe you when the lowliest follow you?*' (26: 11)

They asked Nuh to drive the poor away. Nuh refused and said, '*I cannot drive away the believers. My door is not a king's door. I am only a clear warner.*' (26: 114–15)

Nuh knew that those poor people were sincere believers and that Allah would be angry if he drove them away. Against the anger of Allah, no-one would be able to help him. Nuh said, '*My people, who could deliver me from Allah if I drive them away?*' (11: 30)

The argument of the rich

The rich said to the people: 'Listen to us. What Nuh is calling you to is not true. It is not good. Why? Because we are the first to sample every good thing. We have every sort of good food, every sort of beautiful clothes. We set

the fashion and people follow us. We have seen that we do not want for any good thing, and nobody out-does us in anything in the city.'

They said about the poor people who had believed in Nuh: 'If there had been any good in this religion, it would have come to us before these paupers. *If it had been any good, they would not be before us in attaining it.*' (46: 11)

Nuh's call

Nuh went on calling his people and trying hard to counsel them.

He said, 'O my people! I am a clear warner to you, saying "Worship Allah and fear Him and obey me that He may forgive you your sins and defer you to a specified term. When Allah's term comes, it cannot be deferred, if you only knew."' (71: 2-4)

Allah kept the rain from them and was angry with them. Their harvests were small and they had few children. Nuh told them: 'My people! If you believe, Allah will be pleased with you and remove this punishment.'

Then, when Allah sent the rain to them and blessed their crops and children, Nuh called his people and said to them: 'Don't you recognize Allah? These are the signs of Allah all around you. Can't you see them? Can't you see the heavens and the earth? Can't you see the sun and the moon? Who created the heavens? Who placed the moon in them as a light and made the sun a lamp? He created you and laid the earth as a carpet for you.'

But the people of Nuh would not understand and would not believe. When Nuh called them to Allah, they put their fingers in their ears. Now, how can anyone who

does not hear a message understand it? How can anyone who does not want to hear, hear?

Nuh's prayer

Nuh stayed with his people for nine hundred and fifty years, calling them to Allah, but his people would not believe. They would not stop worshipping idols. They refused to return to Allah.

How long could Nuh wait? How long could he watch the earth and its people being ruined? How long could he put up with his people worshipping stones? How long could he watch them eat from Allah's provisions while they worshipped something else?

Why did Nuh not get angry? He was more patient than anyone else could have been! Nine hundred and fifty years: Glory be to Allah!

Then Allah revealed to Nuh, *'None of your people will believe except those who have already believed.'* (11: 36)

When Nuh called his people again, they said, *'Nuh! You have disputed with us and you have disputed often with us, so bring us what you promised us if you are speaking the truth.'* (11: 32)

Nuh became angry for Allah and despaired of those people. He said, 'O Allah, do not leave even one of the unbelievers on the earth!'

The ark

Allah answered Nuh's prayer and He decided what the fate of the unbelievers would be. All of them would be drowned in a great flood.

Allah wanted to save Nuh and the believers. He commanded Nuh to build a great ship, and Nuh began straightaway.

The unbelievers from his people saw him working busily and they mocked: 'What is this, Nuh? Since when have you become a carpenter? Didn't we tell you not to sit with the carpenters and ironsmiths and now you have really become a carpenter!

'Where is this ship going, Nuh? Everything about you is unbelievable! Is it going to sail in the sand or climb up the mountains? The sea is a long way from here. Will the *jinn* carry it or will oxen pull it?'

Nuh heard all that and was patient. He had heard worse things and had been patient. But sometimes he would say to them, *'If you mock us, we will mock you as you mock.'* (11: 38)

The flood

The promise of Allah came. We seek refuge with Allah!

It rained and rained until the sky was like a sieve which could not hold the water. Water poured down and gushed up and flowed in until it surrounded the people on every side.

Then Allah revealed to Nuh, 'Take with you those of your people and family who believe.'

Allah revealed to Nuh to take with him a pair of every animal and bird, a male and a female, because the flood would cover the earth. Neither man nor beast would be saved from it. Nuh did so. With him in the Ark were those of his people who believed in him and a pair of every bird and animal.

The Ark rode with them on waves like mountains. The people outside the Ark climbed onto every high place and every hill, fleeing from Allah's punishment.

But there is no refuge from Allah except in Him.

Nuh's son

Nuh had a son who was with the unbelievers. Nuh saw his son in the flood and said, *'My son, embark with us and do not be with the unbelievers.'*

He said, 'I will seek refuge on a mountain that will protect me from the water.'

Nuh said, 'Today there is no protector from Allah's command except for the one to whom He shows mercy.'

The waves came between them and Nuh's son was among the drowned. (11: 42-3)

Nuh was sad about his son. How could he not be sad about his own son? He wanted to save him from the Fire on the Day of Judgement since he was not able to save him from the water. The Fire is worse than the water. The punishment of the Next World is harsher.

Did not Allah promise that He would save his family? Yes! And Allah's promise is true. He wanted to speak to Allah on behalf of his son.

'He is not one of your family'

Nuh called on his Lord and said, 'My son is part of my family and Your promise is true. You are the most just of those that judge.' (11: 45)

But Allah does not look at people's family trees. He looks at their actions. Allah does not accept pleas on behalf of idol-worshippers. The idol-worshipper is not part of a

Prophet's family, even if he is his son. Allah made Nuh aware of that. He said, *'Nuh, he is not part of your family; he is of evil conduct. Do not ask of Me that about which you do not know. I warn you lest you be one of the ignorant.'* (11: 46)

Nuh became aware and turned to Allah, repentant. He said: *'My Lord, I take refuge with You lest I should ask of You something about which I have no knowledge. If you do not forgive me and show mercy to me, I will be among the losers.'* (11: 47)

After the flood

When what Allah willed had happened and the unbelievers were drowned, the rain stopped and the water sank away.

The unbelievers of the people of Nuh were destroyed. Neither the heavens nor the earth wept for them. *It was said, 'Away with the wrong-doing people!'* (11: 44)

The Ark stopped on Mount Judi. *It was said, 'Nuh, get down in peace.'* (11: 48)

Nuh and the people of the Ark got down and walked on the earth in peace. Allah blessed the descendants of Nuh and they spread in the land and filled the earth. There were communities among them and there were Prophets and kings among them.

*Peace be upon Nuh among all beings!
Peace be upon Nuh among all the worlds!* (37: 79)

2. The Prophet Hud

After Nuh

Allah blessed the descendants of Nuh and they spread over the earth. One community from them was called 'Ad.

They were strong men with bodies like iron. They conquered everyone, and no-one was able to conquer them. They did not fear anyone but were feared by everyone.

Allah blessed the 'Ad in everything. Their camels and sheep filled the hills and valleys. Their horses filled the streets and footpaths of their cities. Their children filled the houses.

When the sheep and camels of the 'Ad went out to pasture, they made a very beautiful sight. When the children went out in the morning to play, they also made a very beautiful sight.

The land of the 'Ad was a fertile green land full of gardens and springs.

The 'Ad's rejection

But the 'Ad were not grateful to Allah for all these blessings. They forgot the story of the flood which they had heard from their fathers and whose traces they saw in the land. They forgot why Allah had sent the flood against the community of Nuh.

They began to worship idols as the community of Nuh had done. They carved them out of stone with their own hands and then prostrated themselves before them and worshipped them. They asked them for what they needed, prayed to them and sacrificed to them. They were following in the footsteps of Nuh's community.

Their intelligence did not keep them from worshipping idols. Their cleverness in the things of this world did not guide them in religion.

The tyranny of the 'Ad

The strength of the 'Ad became a curse for them and for the people because they did not believe in Allah and did not believe in the Next World.

What was to stop them from acting unjustly, from being tyrants and wronging people? They did not think anyone was above them. They did not fear any reckoning or punishment.

They were no better than wild animals. The high and great among them would wrong the low, the strong among them would live off the weak.

When they were angry, they were like mad elephants who kill whatever they meet in their way. When they made war, they destroyed every living thing. When they entered a village, they laid waste to it and made its mighty people lowly.

The weak were terrified of their evil and fled from their injustice. Their strength was a curse for them and for others. That is what happens with any people who do not fear Allah and do not believe in the Next World.

The castles of the 'Ad

The 'Ad did nothing but eat and drink, play and amuse themselves. They competed with each other in building high castles and spacious houses. They wasted their wealth on water, clay and stones. Whenever they saw an empty place or some high ground, they built a tall castle on it.

They built houses as if they were going to live forever and never die. They built castles without any need for them while some of the people could not find anything to eat or drink. The poor among them could not find anywhere to live while the houses of the rich were empty. Anyone who saw them and saw their castles would know straightaway that they did not believe in the Next World.

Hud the messenger

Allah wanted to send a messenger to the 'Ad. Allah does not like His slaves to disbelieve; He does not like cruelty and corruption in the earth.

The 'Ad did not use their intelligence for anything except eating and drinking, playing, amusing themselves and building houses. Their intelligence was wasted because they did not use it on religion. They did not understand and so they worshipped stones.

Allah wanted to send the 'Ad a messenger from among themselves to guide them, someone they would know and whose words they would understand.

Hud was that Messenger. He was born into a noble family and grew up intelligent and virtuous.

Hud's call

Hud stood up among his people and said, *'Oh my*

