

Prophet Shu'aib (as)

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Shuaib, meaning: "who shows the right path." is an ancient Midianite Prophet in Islam, and the most revered prophet in the Druze faith. Shu'ayb is traditionally identified with the Biblical Jethro, (Moses' father-in-law). Shuaib is mentioned in the Qur'an a total of 11 times. He is believed to have lived after Ibrahim, and Muslims believe that he was sent as a prophet to a community: the Midianites, who are also known as the Ashab al Aykah (Companions of the Wood), since they used to worship a large tree. To the people, Shu'aib proclaimed the straight path and warned the people to end their fraudulent ways. When the community did not repent, God destroyed them.

Shu'aib is understood by Muslims to have been one of the few Arabian prophets mentioned by name in the Qur'an, the others being Saleh, Hud, and Muhammad. It is said that he was known by Muslims as "the eloquent preacher amongst the prophets", because he was, according to tradition, granted talent and eloquence in his language. The Druze revere Shu'aib as their chief prophet, and hold an annual pilgrimage to Nabi Shu'ayb, the purported location of his tomb, in the Lower Galilee.

### Historical context

The area to which Shu'aib was sent to is named 'Madyan in the Qur'an, known in English as Midian, which is frequently referred to in the Bible. The Midianites were said to be of Arab descent, though being neighbours of the

Biblical Canaanites, they intermixed with them. It is said they were a wandering tribe, and that their principal territory at the time of Moses was the Sinai Peninsula.

### Disputed identification with Jethro (Shu'aib)

Jethro is mentioned in the Bible ([Exodus 3:1](#)) as the father in law of Moses. Although Shu'aib is frequently identified with the Midianite priest Jethro, most modern scholars reject this identification. Classical commentators, such as Ibn Kathir, say Shu'aib was a great-grandson of Abraham: Shu'aib is believed to have been the son of Mikil, son of Issachar, son of Midian, son of Abraham. That would render impossible the identification with Jethro, who lived at the time of Moses, purportedly hundreds of years after Abraham.

### Prophecy in Midian



A map of Midian, the area where Shu'aib was sent to prophesy, in Islamic belief.

The Qur'an states that Shu'aib was appointed by God to be a prophet to the people of Midian. The people of this land were said to be especially notorious for cheating others through dishonesty, and for idolatry. Shuaib's prophecy mainly involved calling the Midianites to the correct path of God, and forbidding them to worship false gods. He also told his people to stop being dishonest in their daily activities. Although he preached and prophesied for a sustained period of time, the majority of the people refused to listen to him. Shu'aib, however, remained steadfast. He consistently preached powerfully against the wicked, reminding them of the punishment that had befallen upon the sinful before them. Shu'aib warned the people that their ignorance would lead to the destruction of Midian, giving historical examples of earlier prophets, including Noah, Hud, Saleh and Lot, all of whose people had been destroyed by God.

The people taunted Shu'aib and told him that, were it not for the prestigious family he came from, he would surely have been stoned to death. Shu'aib replied, "Is my family of more consideration with you than God?" When the Midianites refused to believe, they were destroyed by a mighty earthquake. The Qur'an, however, mentions that Shu'aib, and his believing companions, were rescued from the thunderous punishment.

### **Parallels with other Prophets**

Shuaib's mission is often mentioned in the Qur'an with the mission of Noah, Hud, Saleh and Lot. Scholars have pointed out that these five prophets exemplify the early prophetic missions: The prophet would be sent to his community; the community would pay no attention to his warning and would

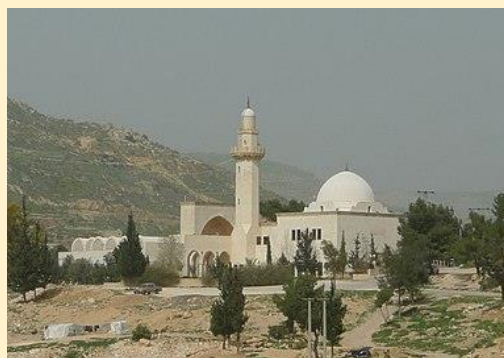
instead threaten him with punishment; after years of preaching, God would ask him to leave his community, while his people were subsequently destroyed in a punishment. Scholars chronologically interpret the listing of the five prophets, so Shu'aib was a descendant of Noah and Prophet Abraham.

### Claimed burial places of Shu'aib

One claimed tomb of Shu'aib is found in Jordan, 2 km (1.2 mi) west of the town of Mahis, in an area called, Wadi Shu'aib.

The Druze believe the tomb of Nabi Shu'aib is located near Hittin, in the Lower Galilee. Each year, on the 25th of April, the Druze gather at the site to discuss community affairs.

There is also a tomb in the southwest of Iran (in the village Guriyeh, Shushtar) which has been recorded as the tomb of Shu'aib.



The shrine of Shu'aib, as believed by the Druze and some Muslims, near Hittin in the Galilee.

