

Surah 7, al-Araf [The Heights], Mecca 39

The Quran's Text & Yusuf Ali's Translation:

وَإِلَى مَدْيَنَ ... ^{up}

7: 85. To the Madyan people

... أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا...

We sent Shu'aib, one of their own brethren:

... قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ ...

he said:

"O my people! worship God;

Ye have no other god but Him.

قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ ...

Now hath come unto you a clear (sign) from your Lord!

... فَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيزَانَ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ...

**Give just measure and weight,
nor withhold from the people the things
that are their due;**

... وَلَا تَفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا...

and do no mischief on the earth after it
has been set in order:

ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾

that will be best for you, if ye have faith.

Transliteration *Wa ila_ madyana akha_hum
syu'aiba_(n), qa_la ya_ qaumi'budulla_ha ma_ lakum min
ila_hin gairuh(u_), qad ja_'atkum bayyinatun mir rabbikum fa
auful kaila wal miza_na wa la_ tabkhasun na_sa asyya_'ahum
wa la_ tufsidu_ fil ardi ba'da*

Muhammad Asad's Translation:

7: 85Give, therefore, full measure and weight [in all your dealings], and do not deprive people of what is rightfully theirs; and do not spread corruption on earth after it has been so well ordered: this is for your own good.....

Muhammad Pitkthall's Translation:

And unto Midian (We sent) their brother, Shueyeb. He said: O my people! Serve Allah. Ye have no other God save Him. Lo! a clear proof hath come unto you from your Lord; so **give full measure and full weight and wrong not mankind in their**

goods, and work not confusion in the earth after the fair ordering thereof. That will be better for you, if ye are believers.

Ali's comments:

1053. "Madyan" may be identified with "Midian". Midian and the Midianites are frequently mentioned in the Old Testament, though the particular incident here mentioned belongs to Arab rather than to Jewish tradition. The Midianites were of Arab race, though, as neighbors of the Canaanites, they probably intermixed with them. They were a wandering tribe: it was Midianite merchants to whom Joseph was sold into slavery, and who took him to Egypt.

Their principal territory in the time of Moses was in the northeast of the Sinai Peninsula, and cast of the Amalekites. Under Moses the Israelites waged a war of extermination against them: they slew the kings of Midian, slaughtered all the males, burnt their cities and castles, and captured their cattle (Num. 31:7-11).

This sounds like total extermination. Yet a few generations afterwards, they were so powerful that the Israelites for their sins were delivered into the captivity of the Midianites for seven years: both the Midianites and their camels were without number: and the Israelites hid from them in "dens..... caves, and strongholds" (Judges 7:1-6).

Gideon destroyed them again, (Judges 7:1-25), say about two centuries after Moses. As the decisive battle was near the hill of Moreh, not far south of Mount Tabor, we may localize the Midianites on this occasion in the northern parts of the Jordan valley, at least 200 miles north of the Sinai Peninsula.

This and the previous destruction under Moses were local, and mention no town of Midian. In later times there was a town of Madyan on the east side of the Gulf of 'Aqabah. It is mentioned in Josephus, Eusebius, and Ptolemy: (Encyclopedia of Islam). Then it disappears from geography.

In Muslim times it was a revived town with quite a different kind of population, but it never flourished. The Midianites disappeared from history.

1054. Shu'ayb belongs to Arab rather than to Jewish tradition, to which he is unknown. His identification with Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, has no warrant, and I reject it. There is no similarity either in names or incidents, and there are chronological difficulties (see n. 1064 below).

If, as the Commentators tell us, Shu'ayb was in the fourth generation from Abraham, being a great-grandson of Madyan (a son of Abraham), he would be only about a century from the time of Abraham, whereas the Hebrew Bible would give us a period of four to six centuries between Abraham and Moses. The mere fact that Jathro was a Midianite and that another name, Hobab, is mentioned for a father-in-law of Moses in Num 10:29, is slender ground for identification.

As the Midianites were mainly a nomad tribe, we need not be surprised that their destruction in one or two settlements did not affect their life in wandering sections of the tribe in other geographical regions. Shu'ayb's mission was apparently in one of the settled towns of the Midianites, which was completely destroyed by an earthquake (7:91).

If this happened in the century after Abraham, there is no difficulty in supposing that they were again a numerous tribe, three or five centuries later, in the time of Moses (see last note). As they were a mixed wandering tribe, both their

resilience and their eventual absorption can be easily understood. But the destruction of the settlement or settlements (if the Wood or Aykah was a separate settlement, see n. 2000 to 15:78) to which Shu'ayb was sent to preach was complete, and no traces of it now remain.

The name of the highest mountain of Yemen, Nabi Shu'ayb (11,000 ft.) has probably no connection with the geographical territory of the nomad Midianites, unless we suppose that their wanderings extended so far south from the territories mentioned in the last note.