

Surah 14. Ibrahim

Asad: HAVE THE STORIES of those [deniers of the truth] who lived before you never yet come within your ken - [the stories of] the people of Noah, and of [the tribes of] 'Ad and Thamud, and of those who came after them? None knows them [now] save God.⁹ There came unto them their apostles with all evidence of the truth - but they covered their mouths with their hands¹⁰ and answered: "Behold, we refuse to regard as true the message with which you [claim to] have been entrusted; and, behold, we are in grave doubt, amounting to suspicion, about [the meaning of] your call to us!"¹¹

Malik: Have you not heard the information of those who passed away before you, the people of Nuh (Noah), `Ad and Thamud, and those who came after them? Allah Alone knows them. Their Rasools came to them with clear signs; but they bit their hands with their mouths and said: "Certainly we reject the Message with which you have been sent and certainly we strongly doubt the faith to which you invite us."

Pickthall: Hath not the history of those before you reached you: the folk of Noah. and (the tribes of) Aad and Thamud, and those after them? None save Allah knoweth them. Their messengers came unto them with clear proofs, but they thrust their hands into their mouths, and said: Lo! we disbelieve in that wherewith ye have been sent, and lo! we are in grave doubt concerning that to which ye call us.

Yusuf Ali: Has not the story reached you (O people!) of those who (went) before you? of the people of Noah and `Ad and Thamud? and of those who (came) after them? None knows them but Allah. To them came apostles with Clear (Signs); but they put their hands up to their mouths and said: "We do deny (the mission) on which ye have been sent and we are really in suspicious (disquieting) doubt as to that to which ye invite us." 1882 1883 1884

Transliteration: Alam yatikum nabao allatheena min qablikum qawmi noohin waAAadin wathamooda waallatheena min baAAdihim la yaAAalamuhum illa Allahu jaathum rusuluhum bialbayyinati faraddoo aydiahum fee afwahihim waqaloo inna kafarna bima orsiltum bihi wainna lafee shakkin mimma tadAAoonana ilayhi mureebun

Khatab:

Have you not ?already? received the stories of those who were before you: the people of Noah, 'Âd, Thamûd, and those after them? Only Allah knows how many they were. Their messengers came to them with clear proofs, but they put their hands over their mouths¹ and said, "We totally reject what you have been sent with, and we are certainly in alarming doubt about what you are inviting us to."

Author Comments

9 - I.e., they have disappeared from the face of the earth, and none save God knows today how many they were and how they lived. See verse {14} and note [18] below.

10 - Lit., "they put their hands into their mouths" - an idiomatic phrase indicating one's inability to refute a reasonable proposition by cogent, logical counter-arguments: for the out-of-hand rejection of the apostles' message by their recalcitrant compatriots cannot by any means be regarded as an "argument".

11 - See surah {11}, note [92]. It is to be noted that whereas in [11:62](#) this reply is placed in the mouth of people of one particular community - the Thamud - and is phrased in the singular ("thy call to us"), it appears here in the plural ("your call to us") and represents the gist of the answers given by various communities to various prophets. This generalization, underlying the entire subsequent account and containing echos of several Qur'anic narratives relating to the experiences of individual apostles of earlier times, is obviously meant to bring out the symptomatic character of the attitude referred to: the stubborn attitude of people who either deny God altogether, or- while not consciously denying His existence - yet feel compelled to interpose all manner of imaginary "mediators" (thought to be divine or semi-divine) between themselves and Him, thus denying, by implication, His omniscience and omnipotence.

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This can mean that the disbelievers bit their own hands in rage, or they covered their own mouths mockingly, or that they put their hands over their messengers' mouths to silence them.

1882 - Even the names of all the Prophets are not known to men, much less the details of their story. If some "news" of them (for the word translated "story" may also be translated "news") reaches us, it is to give us spiritual instruction for our own lives.

1883 - That is, either that the Unbelievers metaphorically put their hands up to the mouths of the Prophets to try to prevent them from proclaiming their Message, or that the Unbelievers put up their fingers to their own mouths, as much as to say "Don't listen to them," or bite their own fingers in token of incontinent rage. Whatever construction we adopt, the meaning is that they were intolerant of their prophets even as the Quraish were intolerant of Al-Mustafa and did all they could to suppress Allah's Truth.

1884 - Cf. xi. 62. The distinction between Shakk and raib may be noted. Shakk is intellectual doubt, a doubt as to fact; is it so, or is it not? Raib is something more than intellectual doubt; a suspicion that there

is fraud or deception; something that upsets your moral belief and causes a disquiet in your soul. In lii. 30, it is used as equivalent to "calamity" or "disaster", some punishment or evil. Both kinds of doubts and suspicions are hinted at against Prophets of Allah.

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