

The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

MADA'IN SALEH - THE QURANIC ZIYARAH (VISIT) OF PETRA'S SISTER SITE

Joseph A Islam

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EXCERPTS FROM MY TRAVEL BLOG

Many pilgrims flock to visit certain sites during their visits to Makkah and Madinah. Pilgrims pack tour buses, private taxis and a whole industry rests on the demands of these visitors to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

As tour operators make claims based on [Islamic secondary sources](#), pilgrims accept these narratives without much critical thought or to the provenance of the information they receive. Suffice to say, that albeit there may indeed be a central core of truth to some of these narratives, many details are fleshed with stories which often appear quite incredulous.

Whatever the level of veracity of these sources, what is saddening to note is that the true 'ziyarah' (visit) instructed by God is often left abandoned in favour of sites attributed to **certain personalities** who are only known through later [Islamic secondary sources](#).

God instructs mankind:

قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ سُنَنٌ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكْذِبِينَ .

003.137

"Many were the ways of life that have passed away before you, then travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who rejected the truth"

027.069

"Say: "Travel through the earth and see what has been the end of those guilty"

030.042

"Say: "Travel through the earth and see what has been the end of those before (you): Most of them worshipped others besides God."

In the spirit of these verses from the Quran, we drove over 400km from Madinah in Saudi Arabia to the north near Al Ula and towards the general direction of Tabuk and the Israeli and Jordanian border. Here lay the older sister site to Petra, Mada'in Saleh.



Illustration - Joseph Islam
Approximate - Not to scale

Understood to be the location where the messenger Saleh's ^(pbuh) community were utterly destroyed, the site proved to be a forceful reminder of the power of God's wrath when it comes to destroy a people. Albeit a UNESCO world heritage site today, the plateau remains largely inaccessible and

prohibited within the kingdom of Saudi Arabia for visitation without **specific permission** from appropriate authorities.

The site covered a wide expanse and felt less concentrated than my visit to Petra in Jordan. It was also devoid of tourism which almost left the site and its dwellings in total silence. With this eerie lull, one could not help but feel the power of the following verse:

019.098

"And how many (countless) generations before them have We destroyed? Can you find a single one of them (now) or hear (so much as) a sound from them?"



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040.082

"Do they not travel through the earth and see what was the end of those before them? They were more numerous than these and superior in strength and in the traces / impressions / tracks (they have left) in the land. But all that they used to earn availed them not"

040.083

"For when their messengers came to them with clear signs, they exulted in such knowledge (and skill) as they possessed, and there beset them that which they used to mock.

040.084

"But when they saw Our punishment, they said: "We believe in God, alone - and we reject the partners we used to join with Him."

040.085

"But their professing the faith when they (actually) saw Our punishment was not going to profit them. (Such has been) God's way of dealing with His servants (from the most ancient times). And even thus did the rejecters of God perish (utterly)!"

Sadly, arguably one of the best sites for ziyarah in Saudi Arabia (after the pilgrim sites), and which finds direct sanction from the Quran, remains at best unknown, and at worst, abandoned by many Muslims.

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