

Sura Shu'ara

1. The first ayat of this sura is has three letters of the Arabic alphabet. Can you circle these letters?

ا ب ت ث ج ح خ د ذ ر ز س ش
ص ض ط ظ ع غ ف ق ك ل م ن ه
و ي

2. What is the meaning of 'shu'ara' and in which ayat is the word first mentioned?

Ayat #224 – shu'ara means poets.

Why do you think the sura has been given this name?

Whenever Prophet Muhammad (saw) cited the verses and suras of the Holy Quran, the pagan Meccans simply dismissed him as a 'poet', and the traditional poets responded with mocking expressions and messages; this sura not only seeks to reassure the Prophet but it also constitutes a comprehensive response to the Meccan poets (as well as others who blindly followed them) and to all those who ignored the Prophet and the Divine Revelation.

3. What role did 'shu'ara' have in pre-Islamic Arabia?

In pre-Islamic Arabia a poet was not merely a person who composed poetry, but rather one who was part of a spectrum of supernaturally affected individuals that included soothsayers and those who were possessed or mad. When the Quran distances itself from poetry, it is not to deny that the Quran has identifiable formal beauty, as many of its sections reflect the highest poetic eloquence, or that it employs allegory and symbolism and so has much overlap with what anyone would call poetry. It is rather to say that in the context of the Arabia in which the Quran was revealed, it did not fit in with what was considered 'shi'r' at that time which is something quite different to 'poetry' as used in English today (The Study Quran by Seyyed Hossein Nasr)

4. In terms of numbers of ayats, how does Sura Shu'ara compare to other suras in the Holy Quran?

This Sura has the second most ayats (227 in total), the first being Sura Baqarah which has 286 ayats.

5. This sura gives the biographies of which seven prophets as examples from the past?

Prophet Musa, Prophet Ibrahim, Prophet Nuh, Prophet Hud, Prophet Salih, Prophet Lut and Prophet Shuayb

Several of these prophets introduce themselves to the people they are meant to guide in a similar fashion. Give the English translation of this introduction.

‘Truly I am a trustworthy messenger unto you. So reverence/fear God and obey me. And I ask not of you any reward for it; my reward lies only with the Lord of the worlds.’

6. According to this sura, many of the accusations and excuses given by the peoples of the past to the messengers sent to guide them are similar to the accusations and excuses made by the Meccans to Prophet Muhammad (saw). List them below. (Hint: you can refer back to previous quizzes to help you remember some of the issues the Meccans had with the Holy Prophet)

Prophet Muhammad (saw) was accused of being a magician as was Prophet Musa and Prophet Shuayb.

Prophet Muhammad (saw) was called mad/crazy as was Prophet Musa

The Meccans claimed they were doing the right thing because it is what their forefathers did, just as the people of Prophet Ibrahim and the people of Prophet Hud claimed.

Prophet Muhammad (saw) was looked down upon by the Meccans because of lack of wealth, as was Prophet Nuh.

The Meccans claimed that Prophet Muhammad (saw) was just a normal human being and wanted further proof just as the people of Prophet Salih and people of Prophet Shuayb did before them.

7. According to this sura, how was Prophet Muhammad (saw) inclined to feel about the response he received from the Meccans when he tried to guide them?

Hurt and upset. In ayat #3 as well as other places in this sura, Allah (swt) seeks to reassure Prophet Muhammad (saw). In this ayat specifically, he is being cautioned against hurting his soul through worry and concern over whether his people will embrace his message (The Study Quran by Seyyed Hossein Nasr)

8. These verses are repeated throughout this sura, at the end of the story of each of the various prophets cited; what is their English translation?

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً^ط وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ
وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ

'Truly in that is a sign, but most of them are not believers. And truly thy Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.'

9. What key concept is Allah (swt) highlighting for us in ayats #198-199?

Prophets are not foreigners to the people to whom they are sent, but are rather known to them

What is Allah (swt) highlighting in ayats #208-209 of this sura?

The idea that He did not destroy any people without first having given them a chance to be righteous

10. What is the concluding message given at the end of this sura?

The concluding message is that the verses and suras recited by the Prophet Mohamed (saw) constitutes Allah's (swt) Revelation to humankind; those who respond positively (total trust in Allah (swt), being conscious of Him all the time, doing right and avoiding the wrong) and those who reject Divine Guidance will bear their consequences just as have the peoples of the past.

Bonus: A haiku (俳句 *high-koo*) is a short three-line poem that uses sensory language to capture a feeling or image. Haiku poetry was originally developed by Japanese poets. They are often inspired by nature, a moment of beauty, or a poignant experience. Write a haiku about the Holy Month of Ramadhan!