

## The People of Saba

### Introduction

The land of Saba, also known as Sheba, was a kingdom in southwestern Arabia, Its capital, at least in the middle period, was Ma'rib, east of present-day Sanaa, in Yemen. Saba is mentioned in the Bible also, in Job 1:13-15, Isaiah 45:14, and Joel 3:4-8. In its prime Saba was known as a wealthy kingdom which grew rich through trade along the incense routes between southern Arabia and the port of Gaza. Most historical references – including the story of the Queen of Sheba – refer to Saba's wealth and success in trade.

Imam al-Sadiq (a) says that the nation of Sabah inhabited towns close to each other so that they could interact among themselves. They were very prosperous and had flourishing agriculture. Streams irrigated their townships and there was an economic upsurge. But these people denied Allah's bounty and invited a change to occur in their fortunes. The Almighty sent a flood on them and it destroyed their towns, submerged their houses and ravaged their properties. In place of their orchards Allah caused to grow the plantations that He has mentioned.

It has been narrated that a dam of stone and lime was built through which canals supplied water to the Kingdom of Saba. This dam had ducts at regular intervals and by opening and closing the ducts water supply was regulated to any given town of the Saba Kingdom. On both sides of the city were flourishing orchards comprising of an area of ten days' travel. The orchards were thick with trees laden with fruits and decked with flowers. If one traveled from one side to the other he would not be able to see the sun for ten days at a stretch. When the inhabitants of this flourishing kingdom began to transgress, disobey the commands of their Lord, not heed the advice of righteous people and did not desist from their evil deeds the Almighty sent giant rats that began to dig at the dam and remove huge stones from it, tossing them aside, though each stone was so heavy that even a strong and healthy man could not lift it. Witnessing such a scenario many people fled the city leaving behind their belongings and properties. The rats continued to dig at the dam until it leveled and a flooded the country. The flood destroyed the city, uprooted the trees carrying them away as mentioned by Allah in the description of Saba.

The people of Saba lived happy and joyful lives that were full of blessings; their sustenance was abundant and their trees and plants very fruitful. Allah sent messengers to them, instructing them to eat from what He had provided for them and show gratitude towards Him, as well as to worship Him alone and believe in His oneness. They adhered to these instructions for a while, but then shunned His commandments, and were thus punished by a flood on their land.

#### Useful Links

[http://en.wikishia.net/view/Flood\\_of\\_Arim](http://en.wikishia.net/view/Flood_of_Arim)

<https://www.islamweb.net/en/article/163931/the-story-of-saba> (not a Shia source)

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Saba-ancient-kingdom-Arabia>