

An account of Maryam, the mother of 'Isa

Allah, the most high declares in Qur'an,

“When a woman of 'Imran said, My Lord! Surely I vow to Thee what is in my womb, to be devoted (to thy service); accept therefore from me, surely Thou art the Hearing, the knowing.” (3:35)

'Imran's wife Hanna was the maternal grandmother of 'Isa and he was different from 'Imran the father of Musa. He was the son of Masaan and Hanna's sister Aaisha was Zakariyya's wife. Yahya and Maryam were cousins.

'Imran's wife had taken a vow that she would devote her child that is in her womb (whether boy or a girl) in the service of Jerusalem or for the prayer in the mosque. (A devoted child cannot leave the place). 'Ali ibn Ibrahim has stated that Allah is Knowing and Hearing. Ayyashi has written: According to a tradition 'Imran's wife vowed that she will devote her child in the service of Jerusalem. (He or she worked as a keeper of the mosque and he was strictly prohibited to go out from the mosque.)

Regarding Hanna, the mother of Maryam it is said,

“So when she brought forth, she said, My Lord! Surely I have brought forth a female- and Allah knows best what she brought forth- and the male is not like the female, and I have named it Maryam, and I command her and her offspring into Thy protection from the accused Satan.” (3:36)

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq said, female is not like male as (when female comes in menstrual period, she cannot stay in mosque. She must leave the place and go away) and the keeper of mosque should not go out. (And Hanna said, I have named her Maryam, Maryam means virgin. I have given her in the protection of Allah.)

The Qur'an says,

“So her Lord accepted her with a good acceptance and made her grow up a good growing.” (3:36)

It is said that she was growing day by day in wisdom with others. When she completed nine years she became perfect in prayers and in fasting. She became more perfect than others in worship.

In continuation of Ayat 36, Allah gave her in the charge of Zakariyya . It is stated that Maryam 's mother brought her, wrapping her in a piece of cloth and said that she has devoted her for the service of Jerusalem. Maryam was the daughter of Prophet so the other people said they would take charge of her, to look after her. But Zakariyya said that Allah has appointed him as her guardian, "as my wife is Maryam 's aunt." Other scholars said, "You are not, but her mother is a rightful person." To find out the right person they decided to cast their pens in flowing water. They all were twenty-nine. The pens were very heavy, made up of iron and were used for writing the verses of Torah. They cast their pens in flowing water one by one, Zakariyya also cast his pen. All the pens sank. Only the pen of Zakariyya floated.

The Qur'an further states, "Whenever Zakariyya entered the sanctuary to (see) her, he found with her food. He said, O Maryam! Whence comes this to you? She said, It is from Allah. Surely Allah gives to whom He pleases without measure."

Imam said, "She was not drinking milk but getting her provision from Allah." Imam al-Baqir said that, many people tried to take charge of Maryam but Zakariyya's pen remained afloat and he became her guardian. Then Zakariyya brought her in the mosque. When she came of age, (menstruating), Allah ordered Zakariyya to keep her in a separate part of the mosque. Maryam was a very beautiful lady. When she was standing for prayer the house illuminated with Divine light. Whenever Zakariyya went to see Maryam he found fruits of different seasons with her, when he inquired about the fruits of summer in winter and winter fruits in summer Maryam replied, "It is from Allah. Surely Allah gives to whom he pleases without measures." Zakariyya prayed to Allah to grant him a virtuous offspring.

According to Imam as-Sadiq Allah revealed to 'Imran that he would be bestowed with a son, who will give sight to the blind, he will cure the lepers and bring the dead to life with his order. "I will send him as My apostle to the people of The Israelites."

'Imran gave the good news to his wife Hanna and she was pregnant. She thought that Allah has given the good news of a male child. So she decided that she would devote the child (whether boy or girl) in the service of Jerusalem. When Maryam was born, she said, "O Allah! I delivered a female child. And a Prophet can't be female." When Allah blessed Maryam with a son 'Isa it was the fulfillment of His promise to 'Imran.

According to another tradition people asked Imam al-Ridha if Allah had any information about anything, can anyone go against of it? Imam said, "Yes, in the period of Musa, Allah ordered the Israelites not to enter a holy place. The people obeyed and didn't enter but their grandsons entered did. In the same way 'Imran was informed by Allah, he will bestow him a son in a particular month of a year and the son would be a Prophet. And he went somewhere else."

When Maryam was born in 'Imran's house and Zakariyya took charge of her, some said, "'Imran is a true Prophet of Allah and some said he wasn't." When 'Isa was born, people who believed, said, "What Allah promised to 'Imran was true."

According to another tradition people asked Imam al-Baqir if 'Imran was a Prophet? Imam replied, "Yes, he was a Prophet sent by Allah to his community. And Hanna was the wife of 'Imran and Hanana was the wife of Zakariyya . They both were sisters. Hanna was the mother of Maryam and Yahya was the son of Zakariyya . And 'Isa was the son of Maryam.

'Isa was the son of Yahya aunt's daughter (Hanna) and Yahya was the son of Maryam's aunt. So they both were maternal cousins.¹

Regarding the religious book, Isma'il Zohfi a follower of Imam al-Baqir asked him that others say one cannot pray in menstrual period and can't fast during the period. What is true? Imam replied him giving him example of Maryam that the mother of Maryam will devote her child in service of Jerusalem and one devoted to Jerusalem did not come out. When Maryam was brought up by Zakariyya and many people demanded the guardianship of Maryam they cast their pens with their names in the sea. All pens sunk except Zakariyya's. Zakariyya took charge of her and looked after her until she grew up. As a woman she could not stay in a mosque during menses and can't pray. But it is true that she had to stay in a mosque, as she was pure and virgin.²

Allah says,

O Maryam! keep to obedience to your Lord and humble yourself, and bow down with those who bow. "This is of the announcements relating to the unseen which we reveal to you; and you were not with them, when they cast their pens (to decide) which of them should have Maryam in his charge and you were not with them when they contented one with another." (3:43-44)

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir said that the casting of pens in water was for the guardianship of Maryam whose parents were dead and she was an orphan. And in last part states the affair of the guardianship of 'Isa

According to another tradition the first time lots were drawn for Maryam and they were six person who cast their pens.

al-Qutb al-Rawandi has stated that Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq said, "Maryam had protected herself from evil since five hundred years before the birth of 'Isa. Maryam's mother decided to devote her child in the service of Jerusalem. When Maryam born, she was brought up in Jerusalem. When she grew up she served the worshippers, Allah the high, ordered Zakariyya to make arrangement for her veil and curtain in the mosque. So that she can conceal herself from strangers. Only Zakariyya was visiting her. She lived for 500 years after her father's death."³

According to Imam al-Baqir, 'Ali asked Fatimah for food. Fatimah said that by Allah, she had nothing to give since three days. Imam asked, why she did not inform him. She said that her father Prophet forbade

her to make too many requests.

After that 'Ali came out of his house and met one of his followers, Miqdad. Imam inquired where he was going in the hot afternoon. He said, "Because of hunger." Imam 'Ali said that he had also come out of his house for the same thing. Imam 'Ali gave him a Dirham, which he had borrowed and returned empty-handed. He saw the Prophet sitting and Fatimah in prayers. He found that there was a tray of food, covered with a cloth. After prayers she brought it before them. When they uncovered it they saw meat dish and hot chapattis. Imam 'Ali inquired from where it had come? Fatimah replied, "It is from Allah. Surely Allah gives to whom He pleases without measures." The Holy Prophet said, "Shall I show you your and Fatimah's example? Imam said, "Yes." Prophet said, "O 'Ali, your status and example is like Zakariyya when he saw the seasonal fruits of different seasons near Maryam He inquired about them. When you asked Fatimah for this and she answered you."

By the grace of Allah the family of Prophet were having food for one month from that tray. Imam al-Baqir said that tray was still with them. This will be discussed in the chapter of the family of Prophet and in the miracle of Fatimah.⁴

Ibn 'Abbas has stated that once the Holy Prophet informed his family about cruelty and oppression on Fatimah after him, and said that angels will weep in sorrow and grief, as they revealed to Maryam and will say, "O Fatimah Allah has given you superiority above all the women of the world. O Fatimah! Pray to Allah, prostrate and bow the forehead on the pray mat. When you will be crush under the falling door, you will suffer great pain. Then by the permission of Allah, Maryam will come for your treatment."

According to a tradition, some people asked Imam Ja'far as- Sadiq who gave the last bath (ghusl) to Fatimah? Imam said, "Amir al-Mu'minin. As she was an infallible, sinless lady. So Imam 'Ali gave her last bath of her body. In this way 'Isa gave the last bath to his mother Maryam ."⁵

1. There are different opinions in different books (hadith) that the mother of Yahya was the sister of Maryam and another tradition says, she was an aunt. It is difficult to understand the proper relationship.

2. It is very difficult to solve this problem. In the book Behaarul Anwaar it is indicated that the daughters of Prophets were not having menstrual course and it will be discussed in the chapter of Faṣimah. Some hadith indicates that they were having menstrual course (Qur'an says (3:42) O Maryam! Surely Allah has chosen you and purified you and chose you above the women of the world." Allah says, O Maryam! Keep to obedience to your Lord and humble yourself, and bow down with those who bow."

Allah has kept her pure and chosen her above the women of the world. Allah says twice regarding the status of Maryam in His holy book. First He chose her from the Prophet's family and made her most respectable above the all women of the world. 'Isa was born by Allah's will without father and secondly Allah has recorded 'Isa's events for the last Prophet. According to reliable sources Allah has given Excellency to Faṣimah the daughter of Prophet Muhammad al-Musṣafa above the women of the world. Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq has stated Faṣimah was called Muhadditha because Angels visited her and spoke to her. As the (Angels) were visiting Maryam and talking with her.

It was said: Faṣimah I have chosen you, given you superiority above all the women of the world. O Faṣimah, Pray to Allah, prostrate and bow down in Allah's adoration." Even Angels were conversed with Faṣimah. One night, while speaking to the

Angels, Faṣīmah said, 'Maryam is superior on all the women of the world.' Angels said, 'Maryam was superior in the period of 'Isa but Allah the glorious has given you superiority with on all the women of the world until the day of judgment.'

It is related that one day the Prophet drew four lines on the ground and asked the followers, "Do you know, why I have drawn these four lines?" The followers said, "No, Allah and His Prophet know better." Prophet said, "These lines indicate four best ladies of the Heaven. 1) Khadijah bint Khuwaylid 2) Faṣīmah my daughter 3) Maryam bint 'Imran 4) Aasiya Bint Mazahim, the wife of the Pharaoh."

According to Imam Musa al-Kā'im the Holy Prophet has said that Allah has appointed these four with all His bounties, and in all respects, above all the women of the world. They are Maryam Aasiya Khadijah and Faṣīmah.

3. Such a great age of Maryam is against established belief.
4. From the ancient writings we come to know what was happening in the past will be happen in future. Allah sent bounties from the heaven for Maryam as well as for Faṣīmah.
5. More incidents of Maryam will be discussed in the chapter of 'Isa.

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