

The Birth of Jesus

1. It is reported that Abu Basir said, “I asked Abu Ja‘far (‘a) about ‘Imran, whether he was a prophet. He said, ‘Yes. He was a prophet and an apostle to his people. And Hannah, the wife of ‘Imran and Hananah, the wife of Zachariah were sisters.

Mary was born to ‘Imran from Hannah, and John (‘a) was born to Zachariah from Hananah. Mary gave birth to Jesus (‘a) and Jesus (‘a) was the son of the daughter of John’s aunt. John (‘a) was the son of the aunt of Mary. And the aunt of one’s mother is like one’s aunt.”¹

2. It is reported that Ya‘qub ibn Ja‘far ibn Ibrahim said, “I was close to Abu al-Hasan Musa (‘a) when a Christian came to him. We were at ‘Uraid. The Christian said to him, ‘I came to you from a far land and have had a difficult journey. I have been asking my Lord for thirty years to guide me to the best religion and the best servants and the most knowledgeable of them.

In a dream someone came to me and described a man for me who was in the upper regions of Damascus. I went until I reached him. Then I spoke with him. He said, “I am the most knowledgeable among the people of my religion, but there is one who is more knowledgeable than I.”

I said, “Guide me to the one who is more knowledgeable than you. I do not care how long the journey; a long distance is not too far for me. I have read the Gospels, all of them, the Psalms of David, and I have read four books of the Torah, and I have read the Qur’an outwardly, until I learned all of it.”

Then the scholar said to me, “If you want to study about Christianity, I am the most knowledgeable person among the Arabs and non-Arabs. If you want to study about Judaism, Bati ibn Shurahbil al-Samiri is the most knowledgeable of men today.

If you want knowledge of Islam, knowledge of the Torah and knowledge of the Gospel and the Psalms, and the book of Hud, and all of what has been sent down to every prophet in your time and the times of others... I will guide you to him, so go to him, even if you have to walk...”

Abu Ibrahim [Imam Musa Kadhim (‘a)] said to him, “I will inform you of something that only a few people know who have read the books. Tell me what is the name of the mother of Mary, and the day on which

Mary was breathed into, and what hour of the day, and on what day Mary gave birth to Jesus (‘a) and what hour of the day?” The Christian said, “I do not know.”

Abu Ibrahim said, “As for the mother of Mary, her name was Mirtha, in Arabic, Wahibah (gift). As for the day on which Mary conceived, it was Friday at noon, and that was the day that the *Ruh al-Amin* (the trustworthy spirit) came down, and there is no festival better than this for Muslims.

Allah, the Blessed and Almighty, magnified it, and Muhammad (S) magnified it and He ordered that it should be a holiday, and it was Friday. As for the day on which Mary was born, it was Tuesday, at four thirty in the afternoon. And do you know what was the river beside which Mary gave birth to Jesus (‘a)?” He said, “No.” He said, “It was the Euphrates, and beside it were date palms and grape vines. There is nothing like the grapes and date palms near the Euphrates...”²

3. It is reported that Abu ‘Abd Allah (‘a) said, “If we tell you something about one of us, but you do not find it so, but it is so of his child or grandchild, then do not deny what we said. Verily, Allah revealed to Imran, ‘I will grant you a boy, blessed, who will cure the blind and the leper and who will raise the dead by My permission.

And I will set him as an Apostle to the Children of Israel.’ Then he related this to his wife Hannah, the mother of Mary. When she became pregnant with Mary, she thought that her burden was a boy. When she delivered a female, she said, ‘O my Lord! Verily I have delivered a female, and the male is not like the female, for a girl will not be a prophet.’ Allah said:

And Allah knows better what has been delivered (3:36)

When Allah granted Jesus (‘a) to Mary, it was he of whom Allah had given glad tidings to Imran and had promised him.

So, if we tell you something about one of us, but it is in his child or grandchild, do not deny it. When Mary became grown, she went into the cloister (*mihrab*) and put a covering over herself so no one saw her. Zachariah came to her in the cloister, and found that she had summer fruit in the winter and winter fruit in the summer.

He said to her, ‘Whence to you is this?’ She said, ‘It is from Allah. Verily Allah provides for whomsoever He wants without measure.’ When the angels said:

O Mary! Verily Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds (3:42)

He said that Mary was twice chosen. The first choosing was her selection [with glad tidings given to Imran], but the second was that she became pregnant without a man. So, she was chosen over all the women of the world.”³

4. It is reported that Isma‘il al–Ju‘fi said that Abu Ja‘far said, “When the wife of ‘Imran vowed that what was in her womb would be dedicated, [and what was meant was that he would be] dedicated to the mosque, when he was delivered he would enter the mosque and never leave, (then when Mary was born, [her mother] said,

My Lord! I have delivered a female. And Allah knows best what she delivered. And the male is not like the female, and I have named her Mary, and I commend her to Your protection from the cast off Satan and also her offspring. (3:36)

Then the prophets cast lots and the lot fell to Zachariah, and he was the husband of her sister and her custodian, and she was brought to the mosque. When she matured to when a woman menstruates, she was the most beautiful of women, and when she prayed, the cloister became bright by her light.

Then Zachariah entered and found that before her there was winter fruit in the summer and summer fruit in the winter. Then he said:

From whence is this?’ She said, ‘It is from Allah. (3:37)

Because of this, Zachariah prayed to his Lord,

And verily I fear my kindred after me, and my wife is barren. (19:5)

and so on with what Allah mentioned of the story of Zachariah and John.”⁴

5. Layth ibn Sa‘d said, “I said to Ka‘b, who was with Mu‘awiyah, ‘How would you describe the birth of the Prophet (S)? Do you see any excellence in his progeny?’ Then Ka‘b turned to Mu‘awiyah, to see what he wanted.

Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent, put [these words] on his tongue, ‘O Abu Ishaq, may Allah have mercy on you, say whatever you know.’ Ka‘b said, ‘I have read seventy–two books all of which were sent from heaven, and I have read the entire scripture of Daniel. In all of them I have found mention of the birth of the Prophet and his progeny.

The name of the Prophet is also known there. No prophet was born with angels being sent down, except Jesus and Ahmad, may the blessings of Allah be with them both. The covering of heaven was not drawn for any woman except Mary and Aminah, the mother of Ahmad. Angels guarded no pregnant women except Mary, the mother of the Messiah, and Aminah, the mother of Ahmad (S)....”⁵

6. It is reported that Imam Al–Ridha’ (‘a) said to al–Mukari, “...Do you not know that, verily, Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, revealed to ‘Imran, ‘I will grant you a boy,’ but He granted him Mary and He granted Jesus to Mary. So, Jesus is from Mary and Mary is from Jesus. Jesus and Mary are a single thing. I am from my father and my father from me. I and my father are a single thing.”⁶

7. It is reported that Abu ‘Abdullah (‘a) said, “By Allah! In the Qur’an Allah related Jesus the son of Mary to Abraham (‘a) from his mother’s side.” Then he recited this verse,

and of his [Abraham’s] descendants David and Solomon and Job and Joseph and Aaron, and thus do We reward those who do good./ And Zachariah and John and Jesus and Elias, everyone was of the good. (6:84–85)⁷

8. Abu Basir said, “I said to Abu ‘Abd Allah (‘a), ‘Why did Allah create Jesus without any father and created the other people by fathers and mothers?’ He said, ‘So that the people would know all of His power and its perfection, and so that they would know that He has power to create a creature without a male. Likewise, He has power to create one without a male or female, and He, the Mighty and Magnificent, did that so it would be known that He has power over all things.’”⁸

9. Salman al-Farsi reported that when the Prophet died, the catholicos came... He said to ‘Ali the son of Abu Talib, “This is true. Inform me about what your prophet said about the Christ and his being a creature. How did he confirm the creation for him and reject the divinity from him and made necessary imperfection for him?”

The Commander of the Faithful said, “He confirmed the creation for him by his destiny and shape, that is necessary for him, changing from one state to another, increase and decrease that are not separated from him. He did not reject his prophethood, infallibility, perfection and confirmation. It is revealed from Allah that Jesus is like Adam whom Allah created him from clay, then said to him, ‘Be.’ So he was.’...”⁹

10. Al-Ahwal said, “I asked Abu ‘Abd Allah (‘a) about the spirit that was in Adam (‘a) [mentioned in the *ayah*] in which Allah says,

When I straightened him and blew in him from My spirit. Qur’an (15:29 and 38:72)

He answered, ‘This is a created spirit and the spirit that was in Jesus was created.’”¹⁰

11. Hamran ibn A‘yan said, “I asked Abu Ja‘far about what Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent, said, and about the spirit from Him. He said: ‘It is something created that Allah created with His wisdom in Adam and Jesus.’”¹¹

12. It is reported that Abu ‘Abd Allah (‘a) said, “Verily, Mary bore Jesus for nine hours, each hour of which was a month.”¹²

13. Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn-‘Ali al-Thani (the second) said, “Al-Husayn was born in al-Madinah Tuesday, five days before Jamadi al-‘Ula, three years after al-Hijrah. His mother became pregnant with al-Husayn fifteen nights after his birthday and she was pregnant during six months and then she bore him. And no baby was born in six months except him and Jesus the son of Mary.”¹³

14. Shami asked the Commander of the Faithful about the six creatures that were never in a womb. He

said, “Adam and Eve, the ram of Abraham, the snake of Moses, the she-camel of Salih and the bat that Jesus the son of Mary made and then it flew by the permission of Allah.”¹⁴

15. It is reported that Al-Sadiq (‘a) said, “When Christ was born, Allah kept his birth secret, and hid him, for Mary, when she bore him, she withdrew to a remote place. (19:22) Then Zachariah and her aunt came searching for her, until they came upon her when she put down what was in her belly and said,

Oh! Would that I had died before this, and had been forgotten in oblivion (19:23)

Then Allah, may his remembrance be exalted, opened the tongue of Jesus to excuse his mother and to manifest her authority. When he appeared calamities and persecution had become intense against the children of Israel, and the tyrants and oppressors fell upon them, until the affair of Christ as reported by Allah took place...”¹⁵

16. It is reported that Wahab al-Yamani said: “A Jew asked the Prophet this question: ‘O Muhammad! Were you, according to the Mother of the Book, a prophet before you were created?’ He answered, ‘Yes.’ He said, ‘And were these, your faithful companions, with you before they were created?’

He answered, ‘Yes.’ He said, ‘What was the matter with you that you did not speak wisdom when you came out of your mother’s belly, like Jesus the son of Mary spoke, as you claim, while you were a prophet before that?’

The Prophet (S) answered, ‘Verily, my affair was not like the affair of Jesus (‘a). Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent, created Jesus the son of Mary of a mother without any father, just as He created Adam without a father or mother.

And if Jesus (‘a) did not speak wisdom when he came out of his mother’s belly, there would not have been any excuse for his mother before the people, because she had brought him without a father, and the people would take her as they do those women who had married [outside the law]. So, Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent, made his speech as an excuse for his mother.”¹⁶

17. Al-Shami asked the Commander of the Faithful, “Which of the prophets were created by Allah circumcised?” He said, “Allah created Adam (‘a) circumcised, and Seth (‘a) was born circumcised, and Idris, Noah, Sam ibn Nuh, Abraham, David, Solomon, Lot, Ismael, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, may the blessings of Allah be with all of them.”¹⁷

18. It is reported that Hasan ibn ‘Ali al-Washsha’ said, “I was with my father and I was a youth, and we spent the night with Imam Al-Ridha’ (‘a). It was the night of the twenty-fifth of Dhu al-Qa’dah and he said to my father, ‘On the night of the twenty-fifth of Dhu al-Qa’dah Abraham was born and on it Jesus the son of Mary was born, and on it the earth beneath the Ka’bah became broadened. Whoever fasts of that day, it is as if he were to fast for sixty months.”¹⁸

19. It is reported that Imam Baqir (‘a) said, “When the Commander of the Faithful was returning from

battle with the Kharajites he came upon a monk in a monastery. He said, 'O monk! May I come down?' The monk said to him, 'Do not come down here with your troops.' He said, 'Why not?' He said, 'Because no one should come down here except a prophet or the successor of a prophet along with his troops who fight in the way of Allah. We have read this in our books...'

He continued, 'I have found your characteristics in the Gospel, and that you will come down in the land of Buratha, the house of Mary, the place of Jesus.' The Commander of the Faithful said, 'Stop! Do not say anything to us.' Then he went to a spot and he said, 'Stamp your feet here.' And he himself did this. A spring gushed up from there. He said, 'This is the fountain of Mary, to where she was led. Dig here seventeen cubits.'

A white rock was discovered. He said, 'Mary put Jesus down from her shoulder onto this rock, and there she prayed.' Then the Commander of the Faithful placed the rock somewhere and prayed beside it. He stayed there for four days and said his prayers there in their complete form. The tents of the troops were placed around it within earshot. Then he said, 'The land of Buratha is here, the house of Mary. This is a holy place at which the prophets prayed.'"19

20. Mufaddal reported in a lengthy narration from Al-Sadiq ('a), "Then Abu 'Abd Allah ('a) took a breath and said, 'O Mufaddal! The places on the earth boasted among themselves,...

Allah revealed, "... It [Karbala] is a blessed place from which Moses was called from a bush, it is a hill where Mary and Christ found refuge, at which there is a river where the head of Husayn was washed and where Mary washed Jesus ('a), and where Mary washed herself after giving birth to Jesus. It is the best place from which the Apostle of Allah (S) ascended when he was absent, and for our *Shi'ah* there are blessings until the appearance of the *Qa'im* ('a).'"20

21. The Prophet (S) said, "When a woman gives birth, the first thing she should eat is a sweet fresh half-ripe date (*rutab*) or a ripe date (*tamr*). If there were anything better than this, Allah, the Exalted, would have given it to Mary when Jesus ('a) was born."21

22. It is reported that (for hardship with labor) Al-Sadiq ('a) said, "After the *bismillah* it should be written, 'Mary bore Jesus.

He it is Who created you from dust, then from a life-germ, then from a clot, then He brings you forth as a babe, then that you may reach your full strength, then that you may be old (40:67);

Verily, with difficulty is ease/ Verily with difficulty is ease (94:5-6);

and may the blessings of Allah be with Muhammad and his progeny and may He offer him greetings of peace.22

23. Al-Baqir ('a) said, "Verily, it was announced to Mary [that she would bear] Jesus. She was in the sanctuary when the Sure Spirit (*al-Ruhr al-Amino*) became like a sound human. She said, 'I take refuge

in the Merciful from you, if you are God-wary.’ He said, ‘I am but a messenger come from your Lord, to give you a boy most pure.’ Then he blew into her breast and she became pregnant with Jesus. But he did not stay until she bore [the child]...

Ibis came that night and it was said to him that a child had been born that night, and that there was no idol on the earth that did not fall on its face. Ibis went to the East and West in search of him. Then he found him in a room of a convent. The angels surrounded him. He tried to get close to him. The angels shouted, “Get away!” He said to them, “Who is his father?” They said, “His case is like that of Adam.” Ibis said, “Verily, I will mislead four fifths of the people by him.”²³

24. It is reported that Abu ‘Abd Allah Al-Sadiq (‘a) said, “The devil, may Allah curse him, used to pass through the seven heavens. When Jesus was born, he was barred from three heavens....”²⁴

25. It is reported that Abu ‘Abd Allah (‘a) said, “The Prophet (S) prohibited Muslims from having four names:²⁵ Abu ‘Isa (father of Jesus), Abu al-Hakim (father of the Governor), Abu Mali (father of the King), and Abu al-Qassim (father of Qassim) if his first name is Muhammad²⁶.”²⁷

26. It is reported that the Prophet (S) said, “Between Moses and David there were five hundred years, and between David and Jesus, one thousand one hundred years.”²⁸

27. Abu al-Rabi‘ reported that Nafi‘ said, “O Muhammad bin ‘Ail! I have read the Torah, the Gospel and the Psalms and the Furqan, and I have learned what is permitted and forbidden in them. I have come to ask you a question that none can answer but a prophet, the successor of a prophet or the progeny of a prophet.”

Then Abu Ja‘far raised his head and said, “Ask whatever is on your mind.” He said, “Inform me how many years were between Jesus and Muhammad?” He said, “Should I inform you according to what I say, or according to what you say?” He said, “Inform me of both.” He said, “According to what I say, there were five hundred years, but according to what you say, there were six hundred....”²⁹

28. It is reported that Abu ‘Abd Allah (‘a) said, “Between Jesus and Muhammad there were five hundred years, of which two hundred fifty were without any prophet or any manifest teacher (*‘alim zahir*).” [The narrator said,] I said, “What were they?” He said, “They clung to the religion of Jesus (‘a).” I said, “What were they?” He said, “Believers.” Then he said, “The earth is never without a teacher (*‘alim*) in it.”³⁰

29. Ya‘qub ibn Shu‘ayb said “I said to Abu-‘Abd-Allah (‘a), ‘What do you say about a group whose leader has died?’ He said to me, “Do not you read the Book of Allah (Qur’an):

Why should not a company from every party of them go forth that they may acquire understanding in religion, and that they may warn their people when they return unto them so that they may be cautious?” (9: 122)

I said “May I be your sacrifice! Then what should those who are waiting do until the scholars come

back?” He said to me, “Did you not know that there were two hundred fifty years between Muhammad and Jesus (may Allah bless both of them)? During this time some groups died believing the religion of Jesus expecting the religion of Muhammad, and Allah gave them their wages twice.”³¹

30. It is reported that Abu al-Hasan Al-Ridha' ('a) said: “...And all of the eleven Imams after the prophet were killed, some by the sword, the Commander of the Faithful and Husayn, peace be with them, and the rest by poison. The tyrants of their times killed every one of them, and indeed this was done to them, truly, not like anything the extremists (*ghulah*) or the delegators (*mufawidah*), may Allah curse them.

They say, ‘They (the Imams) were not really killed, and it was only a likeness of their affair that appeared to them.’ So, they lied, may the wrath of Allah be upon them.

Indeed, the affair of none of the prophets of Allah and His authorities, peace be with them, appeared doubtful to the people, except the affair of Jesus the son of Mary ('a) alone, for he was raised from the earth alive and his soul was taken between heaven and earth, then he was raised to heaven and his soul was returned to him, and that is what the saying of Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent, is about:

When Allah said: “O Jesus! I will take you to Me, and I will raise you to Me (3:55)

And Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent, said, narrating the speech of Jesus on the Resurrection Day,

And I was a witness over them, so long as I was among them, but when You took me to Yourself, You were Yourself the watcher over them. You Yourself are witness over everything (5: 117)

And since it is permitted that all of the prophets and His messengers and authorities after Adam ('a) were born of fathers and mothers, but among them Jesus was born without any father, it will be permitted that his affair appeared doubtful to the people, but not the affairs of the other prophets and authorities, peace be with them.

Likewise, it was permitted for him to be born without a father, but not the others. Allah, the mighty and magnificent, only wanted to make his affair as a sign and mark for it to be known by this that He has power over all things.”³²

31. It is narrated that Yasir al-Khadim said: “I heard [Imam] Al-Ridha' ('a) say, ‘The most terrifying events for creatures are three: the day one is born and comes out of his mother’s belly and sees the world, the day he dies and sees the afterlife and its people, and the day he is raised and sees laws he did not see in this world, and Allah made John secure in these three events and protected him from fear, and He said,

Peace be with him the day he was born and the day he dies and the day he is raised to life (19: 15)

And Jesus the son of Mary made himself secure in these three events, and he said,

1. Bihar, 14, 202, 14
2. Kafi, 1, 478, 4
3. Bihar, 14, 199, 8
4. Bihar, 14, 204, 18
5. Bihar, 15, 261, 12
6. Faqih, 3, 155, 3564
7. Bihar, 93, 243, 8
8. Bihar, 14, 218, 23
9. Khara'ij Wa al-Jara'ih, 2, 554
10. Kafi, 1, 133, 1
11. Bihar, 4, 12, 4
12. Kafi 8, 332, 516
13. Dala'il al-Imama, 71
14. Bihar, 11, 385, 9
15. Bihar, 14, 213, 10
16. Bihar, 14, 215, 16
17. Bihar, 15, 296, 32
18. Faqih, 2, 89, 1814
19. Bihar, 33, 438, 645
20. Bihar, 53, 1-11
21. Bihar, 59, 295
22. Micah, 159
23. Bihar, 14, 215, 14
24. Bihar, 15, 257, 9
25. The kind of name mentioned here is the qunya, which is used as a term of respect and takes the form 'father of...', 'son of...', 'mother of...', etc.
26. No one is permitted to have the name Muhammad Abu al-Qasim because these are the first names and qunya of the Prophet (S).
27. Bihar, 16, 401
28. Bihar, 13, 363, 1
29. Kafi, 8, 120, 93
30. Bihar, 23, 33, 54
31. Bihar, 27, 298, 10
32. Bihar, 25, 117
33. Bihar, 14, 246, 26

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