

Quran Appreciation - Fall Term (Sep – Dec 2017)

The Story of Lady Hannah and Lady Maryam (a)

Historical Details

Lady Hannah was the daughter of Faquth. She was married to Imrān who was a Messenger sent to the Banū Israel (Note: The Banū Israel are the children of Israel, another name for Nabī Ya‘qūb (a). From his twelve children came the twelve tribes of the Banū Israel who settled in Egypt after Nabī Yusūf was established there). Her sister Eisha was married to Nabī Zakariyyā (a). The family of Imrān were the descendants of Nabī Ibrahim (a). These were a special people, chosen by God for Prophethood and Divine leadership. Allah says: *Indeed Allah chose Adam and Nūh, and the progeny of Ibrahim and the progeny of Imran above all the nations; offspring, one from the other, and Allah is all-bearing, all-knowing.* (Sūra Āl-i Imrān, 3:33-34). This verse also proves the excellence of Holy Prophet’s family, i.e. the Ahlul Bayt. Imam Ali al-Ridhā (a) said to Caliph Ma’mūn, “Indeed Allah has clearly described, in His decisive Book, the excellence of the (said) offspring over all the people. Ma’mūn asked, ‘where is it in the Book of Allah?’ al-Ridhā (a) recited these verses (*Al-Mizān*, v. 5, p. 249).

Imran was the maternal grandfather of Nabī Isā. Imran was also the name of the father of Nabī Mūsā and Harūn. However that Imrān is a different person. Between Prophet Mūsā and Prophet Isa there were other Prophets, namely; Prophets Dawood, Sulayman, Yūnus, Zakariyyā and Yahyā, *alialhymus salaam*.

Lady Hannah became old and had no children. She prayed that the Almighty may grant her a child. According to Imam al-Sadiq (a), Allah revealed to Imran that he would be bestowed with a son who will give sight to the blind, who would 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”, Allah told him. Imran gave the good news to his wife Hannah. She thought that Allah had given them the good news of a male child. However she gave birth to a daughter, Maryam. When Allah blessed Maryam with a son Isa it was the fulfillment of His promise to Imran. Sadly, Imran died around a month before the baby was born.

When Lady Hannah was expecting her child she vowed that she would devote the child to the service of God. It was the custom at that time that families of the Banū Israel would dedicate their baby boys to the temple. They would be brought to Jerusalem where they lived in Baytul Maqdis (Note: Also known as al-Aqsa mosque, or the Furthest Mosque. It is mentioned in first verse of Sūra Isrā (Q 17:1). It is the third holiest site in Islam located in the city of Jerusalem). There they would be looked after by the priests. The children would

serve the temple and the worshippers of the temple. When these children reached adolescence they were given the choice of continuing to stay or leave the temple.

Lady Hannah gave birth to a female child. She named her Maryam, meaning servant, or worshipper. Lady Hannah wanted to fulfill her vow and brought her to the temple. She handed her over to the people who looked after the temple. Each of the Rabbis wanted guardianship over her since she was the daughter of their Messenger. Nabī Zakariyyā suggested that he should get the role since he was the uncle. But the Rabbis decided to cast lots, as was usual at that time. Nineteen men came to the Jordan River. They threw their arrows, or their pens whereby they used to write the Torah, in the water. The pen or arrow belonging to Zakariyyā surfaced over the water while the rest were submerged. Allah says in the Quran: *You were not with them when they cast their pens (to decide) which of them should have Maryam in his charge* (Sūra Āl-i Imrān, 3:44)

Thus Nabī Zakariyyā became the guardian of Lady Maryam. It is possible that when she was a baby she was looked after by her mother or a wet nurse. Some people say she lived with her mother for the first three years. As a child Lady Maryam lived inside the temple. She served the worshippers and the priests of the temple. She gained religious knowledge and was a very spiritual person. She spent a lot of time in worship of God. When she became older, Nabī Zakariyyā built a special room inside the mosque for her. He visited her sometimes. Whenever he entered to see her, he noticed that she had unseasonable fruits, that is, summer fruits were with her during the winter, and vice versa, so he would ask her where she had received them from, and she would say that they were from Allah, from the fruits of Paradise.

Sources:

Āytaullāh Nāsir Makārim Shirāzī (ed), *Tafsīr-e Namūneh*
God's Emissaries, Adam to Jesus, Shaykh Rizwan Arastu