

Quran Appreciation - Fall Term (Sep - Dec 2017)

The Story of Lady Hannah and Lady Maryam (a)

Spirituality of Lady Maryam

Verses for the session

وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفَاكِ عَلَى نِسَاءِ
الْعَالَمِينَ

And when the angels said: O Maryam! surely Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of of the world.

يَا مَرْيَمُ اقْنُتِي لِرَبِّكِ وَاسْجُدِي وَارْكَعِي مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ

O Maryam! be obedient to your Lord and humble yourself, and bow down with those who bow.

ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يُلْقُونَ أَقْلَامَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ يَكْفُلُ
مَرْيَمَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ

This is of the announcements relating to the unseen which We reveal to you. 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 argued one with another.

(Sura Aale Imran, verses 42-44)

Reflections

- When did the angels speak to Lady Maryam? Is she the best of all the women of the world?
- Why is the word 'chosen you' repeated twice in the first verse?
- Prostration comes before ruku' in the second verse. That is not the order of salaah.
- Why were pens thrown? And what were they arguing about?

Cross reference verses

- 1) Lady Maryam - 66:11-12

Tafsir

These verses talk about the high status of Lady Maryam. She reached it through her Taqwa, her worship and her spirituality. The angels came to talk to her and gave her the good news of being chosen by Allah, chosen for the special mission of giving birth miraculously to a Prophet of Allah. Note that the angels don't always come to talk to Prophets only, and that even a woman can reach such a sublime position.

She is given three good news by the angels; that she is chosen, purified, and chosen over the women of the world. The word 'chosen' is repeated twice, one to denote a general choosing as in being special, and the other as chosen over the women of the world to give birth to a miraculous baby which no-one before her or after her would do.

Being chosen here does not contradict the hadith that says Fatima (a) is the chief of the women of the world. When Imam Sadiq (a) was asked about it he said; Maryam (a) was the chief of the women of the world at her time while Fatima (a) is the chief of all the women of the world, from the first ones to the last ones. Note that Hadith mentions four women as the greatest of all women; Lady Aasiya, Lady Maryam, Lady Khadija and Lady Fatima (a). Out of them Fatima (a) is the chief of all the women of the world.

These words of the angels are a reminder from Allah that he was fulfilling His promise to Hannah of accepting her daughter. He had accepted her, chosen her for His special service, and purified her by protecting her and her progeny from Shaytan per the du'a of her mother.

In the following verse the angels tell her to thank Allah for this special blessing by being obedient, and prostrating and bowing to Him. There are three commands, or three responsibilities, in response to the three blessings she has received;

- 1) 'uqnuti' from the word qunoot. This means humble obedience and submissiveness. It can refer to supplication, worship, obedience. The same word in Fiqh is used for the prayer recited in the second rakaat of salaah
- 2) Prostrate - a position of complete humility. Know that all you have is from Allah.
- 3) Bow with those who bow down. The ruku is also a humble position of obedience. It is a physical manifestation of humility, like the sajdah. Note that the verse says bow down with those who bow. It could refer to congregational prayers or it could also mean just join with people who are obedient and perform the ruku. Keep their company and associate with such people.

The order (sajdah first and then ruku) does not imply the order of salaah. It is positions of obedience which are mentioned. Those who have a high position have high responsibilities also. The best ways to thank Allah are through prayer, sajdah and ruku.

The last verse of this passage tells the Prophet that although he was not there when this happened and the story has not been narrated authentically in other places, he has received knowledge of this from Allah. He was not present when the priests of the temple threw their pens in the water to see whose name would be picked for guardianship of Lady Maryam, and they argued about it. Each wanted to take on that position of honour. Although he was not there he knew about it through revelation.

Sajdah

The closest one can get to Allah (SWT) is when he is in Sajdah; this is because Allah (SWT) Himself has said, ‘Perform Sajdah and get closer (to Me)’
Hadith of Imam Ridha (a)

Whenever we perform Sajdah, we must try to lengthen it as much as possible. Sajdah reminds Shaytan about his disobedience to Allah (SWT) and the reason for his banishment from Paradise.

Imam Ja’ffar al-Sadiq (a) has said, “Verily when a servant prolongs his prostrations in a manner that no one sees him, Shaytan says: ‘Woe unto me! They are obedient and I disobeyed. They prostrated and I refused’.”

{A group of people came to the Holy Prophet (s) and said, “O Messenger of Allah! Take a guarantee from your Lord that we shall enter Paradise”. The Holy Prophet (s) said to them, “With a condition that you will co-operate with me in prolonging your Sajdahs”.

Important Lessons

- 1) Allah chooses people when they deserve it through their actions.
- 2) A conversation with angels is a spiritual honor granted by Allah.
- 3) Ruku and Sajdah are important ways to show humbleness, gratitude, and obedience.

Ideas

- 1) Children can write out the three blessings and three commands that Lady Maryam received from the angels.
- 2) Discuss the importance of Ruku and Sajdah in salaah, and Sajdah of Shukr after salaah.

Check these links:

<https://www.al-islam.org/commentary-prayer-professor-muhsin-qaraati/bowing-down-ruku-and-prostration-sujud>

Sources:

Tafsir Namune, Ayt. Nasir Makarim Shirazi

Tafsire Nur, Aghae Muhsin Qaraati

Shaykh Rizwan Arastu, God's Emissaries

<https://smma59.wordpress.com/2006/11/19/importance-of-sajdah-2/>