

Surat al-Qasas Verse 9

وَقَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ فِرْعَوْنَ قُرْتُ عَيْنٍ لِي وَلَكَ ۗ لَا تَقْتُلُوهُ عَسَىٰ أَن يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ وَلَدًا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

Q 28:9 *And Fir'awn's wife said: A source of comfort to me and you. Do not slay him, maybe he will be useful to us or we may take him for a son. But they were not aware.*

Questions for Reflection

- 1) Why did the wife of Fir'awn think the baby would be a source of comfort for them?
- 2) What did she mean by saying 'he may be useful to us'?
- 3) What were they not aware of?

(Act out the conversation. What replies do you think she may be getting from Fir'awn? How does she persuade him?)

Wife of Fir'awn

Āsīya, the wife of Fir'awn, was the daughter of Muzāhim b. 'Ubayd. She is praised in the Quran and Hadith. She is known as one of the four great women of Islam. Although Āsīya lived in the Pharaoh's palace, she believed in God. When she saw the miracle of Prophet Mūsā she believed in him. She hid her faith from Fir'awn. When he eventually found out he told her to give up worshipping One God. She refused to do so and was tortured and killed by him.

Bībī Āsīya had been relaxing by the river Nile that day with a group of her women. They spent the day there, enjoying the water and exploring the plants on the shores. When she saw the wooden casket floating close by, she was curious. She went close to it and saw that it had a baby inside. Her heart was immediately touched by the sight of the baby and she asked her women to pull the casket out of the water. Bībī Āsīya took the baby.

When Fir'awn came by later to take his wife back to their palace he saw the baby in her arms. From his skin color and appearance, he knew it was a baby from the Banu Israel. He was skeptical of why the baby was in a casket and was thrown into the Nile. He knew that someone had tried to save the baby's life. The shadow of an impending enemy who would take his kingdom began to loom over him and he was determined not to let that happen. His guards around him also encouraged that, saying that the same rule they had applied in killing all the baby boys of the Banu Israel should also now be implemented.

Fir'awn would have ordered his guards to kill the baby but Āsīya pleaded with him. They had no children of their own and she desperately wanted one. She told him they could take him in as a slave or maybe adopt him as a son. He was reluctant at first but finally gave in. He allowed her to take the baby. They decided to name the baby Mūsā, an Egyptian word meaning one who is saved from the water. It can also mean a newborn baby.

This verse shows the important role women played in the story of Prophet Mūsā (his mother, sister, wife, Bībī Āsīya, etc. InshāAllāh will come in future verses). They also are instrumental in society. Many important decisions – both positive and negative- have been taken by men because of the women in their lives. It also shows the importance of a good suggestion before an evil decision takes place. It is important to speak up and give good alternatives before the other party rushes to do wrong. It can sometimes have an impact and stop the negative action. Bībī Āsīya uses emotional attachment to affect Fir‘awn, telling him the baby could bring them the joy they were missing in not having children. She suggests that her husband not kill him – as was the case with the brother of Prophet Yusuf who told his brothers not to kill him.

The verse ends by saying that they did all this but were not aware. They did not know that:

- 1) God’s plan would always be in place despite all their (Fir‘awn’s) plans.
- 2) They were not fully in control.
- 3) The enemy they were afraid of was the same baby they were taking home.
- 4) Prophet Mūsā would be brought up in their home and would see first-hand the oppression and cruelty of Fir‘awn.

The amazing truth this story shows is that sometimes the destruction of those who reject and oppose God is not by outside forces. They themselves destroy themselves through their actions. This shows the incredible power of the Almighty. He affects their minds and hearts in a way that they willingly, and whole heartedly, take up actions which lead to their fall. With their own hands they gather firewood for a fire that will burn them.

Connecting topics

- 1) Bībī Āsīya in the Quran – Sūra al-Tahrīm, 66:11

For a detailed discussion on Āsīya and her determination see:

<https://www.al-islam.org/message-thaqalayn/vol-17-no-3-autumn-2016/woman-paradise-rebellious-queen-pharaoh-part-2/woman>

- 2) Women affecting the decisions of men. From the story of Karbala: (i) the wife of Zuhayr bin Qayn, (ii) the mother of Wahab. See

<http://messageofthaqalayn.com/index.php/archive/volume-15/volume-15-number-3/199-the-role-of-the-women-of-ashura>

- 3) People destroying themselves. Societies that slide into immorality, dysfunctional families, self -destruction . . .etc.

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/aug/19/how-destroy-society/>

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20190218-are-we-on-the-road-to-civilisation-collapse>