

# *Mary, the Virgin, A Sign of Allah (A real Ayatollah)*

Whoever reads the Qur'an carefully, finds in it unique verses and striking expressions about Christ and his mother:

***"She guarded her virginity, so we breathed into her of our spirit and made her and her Son a sign to the worlds" (Sura al-Anbiya' 21:91).***

In a series of Old Testament prophets, the Virgin Mary appears as the closing climax (Sura al-Anbiya' 21:50-91). She is a distinguished person, for she heard and received the revelation of Allah. In addition, the spirit of Allah came into her, so Christ was born of her. This is why the Qur'an calls her **"a sign of Allah"**, not only to the people of this world, but also to the angels and the demons of the other world. **The spirit of Allah became a man in her!** Therefore her Son had the authority to drive out demons from the possessed, to heal the sick, to forgive the repentant their sins and to anoint the justified with the spirit of Allah. Christ was born blameless of the Holy Spirit into our corrupt world. Mary was the eye of the needle through which Allah sent him. This is why Sura 19 is entitled "Sura Maryam".

It is astonishing that Mary is the *only* woman whose name appears in the Qur'an. The mother of Muhammad or the names of his wives are not recorded in it. Other women mentioned in the Qur'an are only as linked to their husbands - such as the wife of 'Imran and the wife of Pharaoh. The Virgin Mary is worthy of careful inquiry about her relatives, her son and the ways of her life.

## **Mary's Family According to the Qur'an**

We read about her father 'Imran, that Allah chose and selected him with Adam, Noah and Abraham out of all other people and that he shall hand down this privilege to his seed and consequently to Mary and her Son.

***"Allah chose Adam and Noah and the house of Abraham and the house of 'Imran above all beings, the seed of one another; Allah hears, and knows" (Sura Al 'Imran 3:33-34).***

According to the Qur'an, the wife of 'Imran expected a baby and presented the embryo who was in her womb, as an offering to Allah, before it was born. Yet, when she gave birth to a girl, she was sorry and called her **Mary**, "the bitter one", for she knew that a female, according to the Qur'an, is only worth half as much as a man (Suras al-Baqara 2:282; al-Nisa' 4:11). In spite of this degradation, she delivered the newborn girl, her offspring under the protection of the Almighty, that she and her son may be protected from any evil influence of Satan.

***"When the wife of 'Imran said, 'My Lord I have vowed to you, in dedication, what is within my womb. Receive this from me; you are the all-hearing omniscient. And when she gave***

*birth to her she said, 'My Lord, I have given birth to her, a female.' And Allah knew what she had given birth to (because) the male is not as the female. 'And I have named her Mary, and commend her to you with her seed, to protect them from the accursed Satan" (Sura Al 'Imran 3:35-36).*

The people of the village where Mary lived call her, later on, **daughter of 'Imran** (*Sura al-Tahrim 66:12*) and **Aaron's sister** (*Sura Maryam 19:28*). This specification can help us to determine her relations with the members of her family in the Torah. In the Book of Numbers, we read that her father's name was *Amram*, her mother's *Jochebed*, and her brothers' *Aaron* and *Moses*.

*"And Kohath begot Amram. The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and to Amram she bore Aaron and Moses and their sister Miriam" (Numbers 26:58-59).*

In the Torah, we can read about three notable events in the life of Maryam, the daughter of 'Imran:

- v Miriam saved, with the help of her mother Jochebed, her youngest brother Moses, when Pharaoh had given the order to kill every newborn male of the tribe of Jacob. Then the mother made a vessel (a small basket) of bulrushes for him, covered it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it among the reeds by the river's bank. His sister stood afar off, to know what would happen to him. They purposely hid Moses in a place where the daughter of Pharaoh used to come down to the river to bathe. And while her maidens were walking along the riverside, they suddenly saw the basket among the reeds and the baby inside. Maybe he was weeping on account of hunger or thirst. The maidens took the basket to the daughter of Pharaoh, who had compassion on him when she recognized that he was one of the rejected children of the Hebrews. Then Miriam, Moses' sister, drew near and asked kindly, "Do you need a wet nurse for the child?" Pharaoh's daughter ordered her to bring such a nurse immediately. Miriam went away quickly to bring her mother. Pharaoh's daughter agreed to entrust Jochebed with the child and gave her wages for nursing him. The princess had adopted the child and concerned herself in bringing him up. So he was adopted into Pharaoh's house where he received the best education in the Nile Valley (*Exodus 2:1-10; Sura al-Qasas 28:11-13*).
- v Miriam and all the children of Jacob were saved by the Lord from the soldiers of Pharaoh. The waters of one of the branches of the Red Sea were driven back by a violent storm and the refugees crossed the Sea on dry ground. Pharaoh's entire army, however, drowned when the Sea came back. After this great rescue, Moses began to praise his Lord before his people. Also, Miriam took the timbrel to sing and give praise to their Lord and Savior. Thus, Miriam was *the imam of all women* in prayer (*Exodus 15:20-21*).
- v Miriam and Aaron opposed Moses and spoke openly against him when Moses married a foreign black Ethiopian woman. Moses maybe thought that he would be able to rule over the tribes without partiality. The Lord punished Miriam so that she became leprous. But Moses prayed for his rebellious sister and she was healed after seven days of repentance and isolation in the wilderness (*Numbers 12:1-15*).

## Who is Zacharias, Mary's Father by Adoption?

In the Qur'an, we read that Allah received Mary with favor, for she was faithful in prayer. Zacharias, her father by adoption, was made responsible for her:

*"Her Lord received the child with gracious favour, and by his goodness she grew up like a nice plant, Zacharias taking charge of her. Whenever Zacharias went into her in the sanctuary, he found her provisioned. 'Mary', he said, 'how does this come to you?' 'From Allah,' she said. Truly Allah provisions whomsoever he will without reckoning" (Sura Al 'Imran 3:37).*

This and other verses from the Qur'an make clear that Muhammad speaks about another Mary, Christ's mother. **Mary, the sister of Aaron**, lived first in Egypt, then she fled with her people to the wilderness where she died 1350 years before Christ (*Numbers 20:1*). The first Mary belongs to the tribe of Levi, which is the tribe of priesthood; whereas **Mary, the mother of Christ**, lived in the days of Zacharias who ministered as an appointed priest in the Jerusalem temple. This second Mary belongs to a tribe other than that of the daughter of 'Imran. She was descended from the royal tribe of David. Christ's mother did not flee from Egypt as Aaron's sister did, and did not walk with her people through the Wilderness of Sinai. She lived one-hundred kilometers North of Jerusalem in Nazareth, a town in Galilee. However, these two Marys were made *one* in the revelation of Muhammad.

Despite his old age, Zacharias became Yahya's father; that is the father of John the Baptist, who prepared the way for the Son of Mary. When John faced King Herod and rebuked his adultery, the prophet who cried out in the wilderness was imprisoned at the king's order, then beheaded. (*Suras Al 'Imran 3:38-41; Maryam 19:3-15; Luke 1:5-80 Matthew 14:1-12 among others*).

## The Surprise in the Life of the Virgin Mary

According to the Qur'an, the angels of Allah appeared and spoke to the praying Mary and addressed her with a heavenly revelation:

*"When the angels said, 'Mary, Allah has chosen you, and purified you; he has chosen you above all women in the worlds. Mary, be obedient to your Lord, prostrating and bowing before him" (Al 'Imran 3:42-43).*

In this verse, Muhammad testifies explicitly that Mary is the best woman in this world and in the next. She is *"the unique woman"* who became an example and imam to all other Muslim women. According to the Qur'an, she was not pure in herself, but Allah purified her by his choice and call.

The angel Jibril (and other angels) in the Qur'an, all of a sudden, appeared to Mary and announced to her the remarkable verse:

***"When the angels said, 'Mary, Allah gives you good tidings of a Word from Him whose name is Christ, 'Isa, Son of Mary; highly honored in this world and the next, and of those brought near to Allah' (Al 'Imran 3:45).***

Mary was fearful at this revelation and took refuge in the All-Merciful to protect her from this strange messenger (*Sura Maryam 19:19*). But the angel continued his call and confirmed to her that he was specially sent to grant her a boy most pure. Mary disputed this promise and confessed that no man had touched her:

***"She said, 'How shall I have a son and no man has touched me, neither have I been unchaste?' " (Sura Maryam 19:20).***

He, who penetrates into the conversation between Jibril and Mary in the Qur'an, finds striking principles:

- v The Virgin Mary talked directly with Jibril, the messenger of Allah, and he answered her; thus, she is considered in the Qur'an a prophetess, having received a revelation from the Almighty Allah. Moreover, Allah put his own word in her and made her **a sign** unto all creatures.
- v **Allah** has personally sent his good news to Mary that Christ would be born of her. Who will dare stop Allah from speaking or revealing? His revelation was not brought in the form of a threat, or as a warning or an ordinance, but in the form of **good tidings** of the birth of the "Word of Allah" incarnate in Christ.
- v The Virgin Mary could not immediately recognize the secret of this declaration. She contested the claim that she would give birth to a child. Mary testified that she was a pure virgin, never touched by man, nor raped. Both the Qur'an and the Gospel confirm together **the virginity of Mary**, mother of Christ.
- v In the Gospel the angel explained to her, ***"with God nothing will be impossible"*** (*Luke 1:37*). According to the Qur'an, Allah himself breathed into her so that she gave birth to a sinless boy most pure (*Suras al-Nisa' 4:171; Maryam 19:19; al-Anbiya' 21:91; al-Tahrim 66:12*).

## **The Names and Titles of Christ As Announced to the Virgin Mary**

The first name of Christ that appears in the above mentioned Qur'anic revelation (*Sura Al 'Imram 3:45*) is ***"A Word of Allah"***. The Son of Mary was not an ordinary prophet like other prophets, for he was not born of an earthly father. He was born of the word of Allah; he was the incarnate word of Allah and a "walking spirit" of Allah in the form of a man. Some scholars question this fact. Yet, both the Qur'an and the Gospel agree that Allah's word and spirit became flesh in the Son of Mary. He is the walking word of Allah and his

visible spirit. In him, dwells the full authority of the word of Allah: his creating power, his healing mercy, the authority to forgive sins, his mercy to comfort the sorrowful, his ability to renew the corrupt, and his right to judge all sinners.

Christ lived out what he said. There was no difference between his words and his deeds. He was born sinless and remained pure without blemish. Allah's will was evident in him. He who memorizes his words and delves into his signs can experience the power of the Holy Creator.

## Christ - The Anointed One

The second title of the Son of Mary in Jibril's announcement is *the Christ*, the anointed one with the Spirit of Allah and his power. In the Old Testament, kings, priests and prophets were anointed with the oil of gladness as an external sign that they had received the power of the Holy Spirit. The title *Christ* means literally: *the one who is anointed with the Holy Spirit*, as the Son of Mary testified of himself in Nazareth:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).*

With his Holy Spirit, Christ touches those who admit and confess their sin and corruption, and believe in his substitutionary atonement for them. He grants repenting sinners the privilege to ask him for this spiritual anointment, for Christ came to renew lost sinners. He is able to sanctify them if they trust him. Then he imparts his own life into them and supports them with divine power for effective service.

## 'Isa or Jesus?

In the Qur'an, the name for the Son of Mary is *"'Isa"*. Some scholars state that this form of his name goes back to the Syriac pronunciation of the Aramaic word for **Jesus**. However, in the Gospel, the angel Gabriel ordered Joseph, his father by adoption, to call the newborn child *"Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins"* (Matthew 1:21). This unique name appears 975 times in the New Testament. In the Son of Mary, Allah prepared a perfect purification for all men from all their sins and the deliverance from God's wrath on the Day of Judgment. 'Isa was born to die, as a substitute for all men, so that his atonement should justify whoever believes in him. The substitution for sinners is the mystery in the name of Jesus. It was for this reason that he was born. God sanctifies, freely, whoever accepts the redemption of Christ, which is available for everybody. In the name of **Jesus**, we find the great plan of God for justifying and renewing the world. This unique name also contains the power to execute this plan in all its details.

## The Son of Mary

The fourth title of Christ in this verse is *"the Son of Mary"* which is, in fact, a name of disgrace. His father's name was unknown; therefore, he was called after his mother. The Qur'an justifies the Virgin Mary several times and testifies that the birth of her Son was completed to Allah's satisfaction and pleasure, as Christ testifies in the Qur'an:

***"Peace be upon Me, the day I was born, and the day I will die, and the day I am raised up alive!" (Sura Maryam 19:33).***

Divine peace rested upon Mary and her son from his birth until his resurrection. In addition, the Qur'an testifies twice that no man has touched Mary, neither has she been unchaste. Yet, Allah breathed into her of his Spirit, for she had kept her virginity. Christ has no earthly father, but the holy God laid his word and his spirit in the Virgin Mary.

On the basis of this fact we also have the right to call the Son of Mary a son by the spirit of Allah, or a "spiritual" Son of Allah, taking into consideration that no intercourse had taken place. Any physical encounter here remains unthinkable. Since this term can hardly be accepted by the Semites, the Qur'an calls him ***"the Son of Mary"***. However the Holy Spirit preserved his life, death, and resurrection in the peace of Allah. The Son of Mary also wants to equip us and share with us his own right of spiritual Sonship, and sanctify us for our adoption by Allah, if we open our souls to the spirit of his holy love.

### **He is Highly Respected In This and in the Other World**

In addition to the four above-mentioned characteristics, the Qur'an entitles Christ as ***"a highly respected person in this and in the other world"***. 1.6 billion Christians and 1.3 billion Muslims, around the world, honor the one who is born of the Spirit of Allah. His humility, love, purity and gentleness have attracted and impressed many seekers after truth. Yet, we can recognize his high character only in so far as we are changed into his example. The Torah calls the One who was born of the Spirit of God the Slave of the Lord, because he reconciled us with the Holy One and established everlasting peace with God.

Jesus teaches us in his Gospel:

***"Whoever exalts himself will be humbled,  
and he who humbles himself will be exalted"***  
(Matthew 23:12).

***"The Son of Man did not come to be served,  
but to serve,  
and to give His life a ransom for many"*** (Matthew 20:28).

The angels in heaven praise the Son of Mary for his atonement. He reconciled the world with the Holy One and opened wide for us the door to Allah our spiritual Father. None can enter into the realms of divine peace - save by the Son of Mary, the highly respected one in this world and the next.

### **He is One of Those Brought Near to Allah**

The Almighty raised the Son of Mary to himself, because of his kindness, mercy, patience and atonement for many. The Qur'an testifies twice to the fact that **Christ is alive** and that **he lives with Allah!** (*Suras Al 'Imran 3:55; al-Nisa' 4:158*). Death could not find power over him, because he lived without sin and overcame the enemy of life. The Son of Mary bears eternal life in himself, and offers his Spirit to whoever trusts him.

According to the Qur'an, Allah speaks to Christ personally and answers him immediately (*Sura al-Ma'ida 5:110-118*). The Son of Mary is the sole Intercessor, the Mediator and the atoning Redeemer to his followers before Allah. He will never die. He lives forever, for he is the word of Allah and the Spirit. He went back to his place of origin. Christ draws his faithful followers after him and changes their natures from pride into humility and from selfishness into servants of the needy. He will bring them near to Allah. Are you with him or against him?

## Mary's Hymn of Praise

According to the Gospel, after the angel Gabriel had clarified to Mary the secrets of the birth of her Son and revealed to her his unique name, title and attributes, Mary agreed, in her obedience of faith, to the Lord's plan of redemption (*Luke 2:34-38*).

Then, the virgin traveled with haste to the house of Zacharias, the priest and his wife Elizabeth, who, in spite of her old age, became pregnant too by the Lord's favor. There, Mary praised and magnified the Lord with her famous song, the Magnificat, which millions of people repeat in their prayers. The words of this hymn indicate her deep meditation into the holy books. She recognized the essence of the Lord of the covenant and his just ways with mankind, so she worshipped him and sang:

**'My soul magnifies the Lord,  
And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.**

**For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;  
For behold,  
henceforth all generations will call me blessed.  
For He who is mighty has done great things for me,  
And Holy is His name.  
And His mercy is on those who fear Him  
From generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with His arm;  
He has scattered the proud  
in the imagination of their hearts.  
He has put down the mighty from their thrones,  
And exalted the lowly.  
He has filled the hungry with good things,  
And the rich He has sent away empty...  
As He spoke to our fathers  
To Abraham and to his seed forever. "**  
(Luke 1:46-55)

**Do You Want to Know More  
About the Virgin Mary and her Unique Son?**

To anyone who wishes to delve deeper into the above-mentioned historical facts, we are prepared to send, on request and free of charge, the Gospel of Christ together with comments on it and relevant prayers.

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GPO Box: 3507, Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh.

Internet: [www.fountain-of-light.org](http://www.fountain-of-light.org)  
E-mail: [fountain@fountain-of-light.org](mailto:fountain@fountain-of-light.org)