

Model Women in the Holy Qur'an

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As inferred from the Holy Qur'an, pious women can be models both for women and men, the most outstanding model women being of course Her Holiness Fatimah (SA), Her Holiness Khadija (SA), Her Holiness Maryam/Mary (SA), Asiyah, the daughters of Prophet Sho'aib (AS), and the mother of Her Holiness Maryam (SA). In this short article, we will talk about Her Holiness Asiyah, the daughters of Prophet Sho'aib (AS) and Her Holiness Maryam's mother; since talking about the virtues of Her Holiness Fatimah (SA) and her esteemed mother requires much greater space and many more pages.

Asiyah – Wife of Pharaoh(Fir'aun), Symbol of Patience and Perseverance

“God has (also) made up a parable for those who believe, concerning Pharaoh's wife when she said: ‘My Lord, build a house for me in the Garden alongside You, and save me from Pharaoh and his action. Save me from such wrongdoing folk!’ ” The Holy Qur'an; al-Tahrim, 11

In this verse of the Holy Qur'an, the wife of Pharaoh– the tyrant has been introduced as a believing woman of a very high spiritual level. Certainly her gaining such a lofty position has been due to certain sublime qualities of hers: faith in Allah - the One God, in the Prophethood of Prophet Musa (AS) and perseverance in defending that faith. According to authentic accounts, Asiyah persisted in her faith greatly, even in the face of the pressures by Pharaoh who threatened her with death by burning in fire if she refused to disbelieve in One God and in His Prophet. And she eventually was put to death at Pharaoh's order

for her faith and indeed achieved that house in the Paradise along with God, and was saved from Pharaoh and his action....”

A very significant point to be mentioned here is that Asiyah believed in God and His Messenger, Prophet Musa (AS) while she was living in the luxurious palace of Pharaoh and so none of the luxuries around could prevent her from believing in Allah - The One and Only God and in His Prophet. From this verse we can conclude that it is possible for one, whether a woman or a man to be born and living in plenty and yet avoid being distracted by the same from true faith and piety.

Also, since Asiyah prayed to God and asked Him for deliverance from the clutches of her disbelieving torturers while she was under severe torture, it becomes clear that a true believer keeps her/his faith in God even under very hard conditions, as Asiyah did. Certainly such resistance is not possible unless one has firm unwavering faith in her/his God.

Hanna – Maryam’s Mother, Ideal Mother

According to Imam al-Sadiq (AS), the name of Her Holiness Maryam (SA)’s mother was Hanna. About Hanna, we can say that she has been referred to as a virtuous woman in two chapters of the Holy Qur’an; in chapter 3 and in chapter 19 (Maryam). The fact that Hanna has been such a great woman is a proof of the greatness of the daughter she gave birth to –Maryam (SA). So, Hanna should be regarded as a model woman and a symbol of piety by the believers. In the Holy Qur’an (3: 35-36), we read about her sincere prayer to Allah - the prayer which was heard by Allah most graciously: *“Thus a woman [from the House] of ‘Imran said: ‘My Lord! I have freely consecrated whatever is in my womb to You. Accept it from me; You are Alert, Aware!’ When she gave birth, she said: “My Lord! I have given birth to a daughter. ‘- (God was*

quite Aware of what she had given birth to, for a male is not like a female) – “I have named her Mary, and ask You to protect her and her offspring from Satan the Outcast.’ ” Al-i ‘Imran, 35-36

These verses obviously show the impression and role played by parents in raising and educating daughters and sons. It can rightly be claimed that being born to such a woman of chastity and piety has been a cause of Maryam (SA)’s attaining such a high level. And as we read about Prophet Sulaiman (AS)'s prayer in the Holy Qur’an: *“So he smiled, laughing at its statement, and said: “My Lord, arrange things for me so I shall act grateful for Your favour which You have bestowed upon me and my parents, and so I may act so honorably that You will approve of it. Admit me through Your mercy among Your honourable servants.”* Al-Naml, 19

Also we read about Prophet Zachariah’s prayer to Allah in the Holy Qur’an: *“With that Zachariah appealed to his Lord; he said: ‘My Lord, grant me goodly offspring from Your presence, for You are the Hearer of Appeals.’ ”* Al-i ‘Imran, 38

These verses obviously prove that the faith and virtues of parents can have immense effects upon their children. Here, it is worthwhile to mention a hadith narrated from Imam Ali (AS) about prayer of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to Allah for blessing the marriage of his exalted daughter, Her Holiness Fatimah (SA) with Imam Ali (AS). Imam Ali (AS) said: “Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) came to me and addressed me thus, ‘O Ali! Get up, in the Name of Allah! May Allah’s blessings be upon you! Get up and ask Allah for His blessings. Indeed there is no power but His, so rely on Him. And then Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) took me to Fatimah (SA), told us to sit down, and then prayed for us so: ‘O Allah! These two are the best loved of your servants to me. So, I beseech You to honour them, bless their offsprings and place guards

from Yourself for them. I beseech You to protect them and their offsprings against the cursed Satan”.

Prophet Sho'aib (AS)'s Daughters, Symbols of Chastity and Pious

As we know, Islam attaches great significance to chastity and modesty. Imam al-Baqir (AS) has been quoted: “Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) said that Allah loves the patient and chaste people.” Prophet Sho’aib (AS)’s daughters have been mentioned as ladies of modesty and chastity in the Holy Qur’an (Chapter 28) and this shows their position to Allah. Let’s focus on these Divine words to understand the significance of behaving chastely (verses 23-28 of Chapter 28). These verses talk about, among other things, both the manly and chaste behaviour of Prophet Musa (AS) and the modesty, bashfulness and chastity of the daughters of Prophet Sho’aib (AS). Also, from verse 26 of that chapter it can be inferred that a woman of faith, integrity and wisdom can play significant beneficial roles, as was the case with those two esteemed ladies. From the words addressed to Prophet Sho’aib (AS) by his daughter (28: 26) (strong, trustworthy), we can learn that anybody who is to be trusted with a work should possess these two qualities, as elsewhere in the Holy Qur’an (Chapter 12: 55) we read that Prophet Yusuf (AS) mentions his being knowledgeable and trustworthy (as qualities required by an overseer).

“He said: ‘place me over the storehouses in the land. I will be a careful overseer.’ ” The Holy Qur’an; al- Yusuf, 55

All these divine words lead us to conclude, among other things, that Islam desires piety, chastity and honourable life for both men and women, that Islam does not prohibit women’s social activities in so far as they behave chastely and avoid unnecessary, immoral contact with men, and of course that the Holy Qur’an, being Allah’s Words, urges us to follow in the footsteps of the great Model men and women whose words and virtues are indeed illuminating lights of guidance.