
Maryam — The Daughter Allah Chose

A Mother's Vow, A Daughter Chosen

(We all know the story of how Prophet Eesa (Jesus) was born. But almost no one tells the story of how his mother (Maryam, also known as Mary) came into the world, and the quiet miracle that made everything else possible. Here is that story.)

Most of us know the story of the birth of Prophet Eesa (also known as Jesus), peace be upon him. We know that his birth was a miracle, that Maryam (also known as Mary) carried him without a father, and that Allah defended her through the infant who spoke from the cradle.

But before the birth of Eesa, there was another story that deserves our attention.

The birth of Maryam herself.

The Quran honors her as Maryam, daughter of Imran. She is the only woman mentioned by name in the entire Quran, and an entire surah carries her name. Allah dedicated verses of His eternal Book to a girl who, by the standards of her time, should have lived and died unknown.

That alone should make us pause.

A family chosen by Allah

In Surah Aal-e-Imran (family of Imran) in the Quran, Allah says He chose Adam, Nuh, the family of Ibrahim, and the family of Imran above the worlds.

Maryam's story did not begin suddenly. It began generations earlier, in a lineage Allah Himself had been preparing. We usually notice the miracle only when it becomes visible... such as the answered prayer, the opened door, and we think the story started there. But Allah's work usually begins much earlier, in quiet places, through people no one is watching.

The story of Maryam begins not with Maryam, but with her mother - a woman who longed for a child.

The mother who longed for a child

The Quran does not name Maryam's mother, but classical tafsir works such as Tafsir al-Tabari and Tafsir Ibn Kathir identify her as Hannah bint Faqudh. She had been barren for many years. The well-known narration describes her one day seeing a bird feeding its young in a tree. The longing she had carried in silence rose to the surface, and she turned to Allah in deep prayer and dua.

Here was a woman who had probably stopped expecting an answer to her dua. And then, one ordinary day, the prayer came back. That is often how Allah works. He answers our dua and prayers we have already let go of.

When she felt life stirring within her, she did something remarkable. Before that child was even born, she vowed that the long-awaited gift would belong fully to Allah.

Allah tells us in the Quran:

إِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَأَةُ عِمْرَانَ رَبِّ إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

“My Lord, indeed I have vowed to You what is in my womb, dedicated for Your service, so accept this from me. Indeed, You are the Hearing, the Knowing.” - Surah Aal-e-Imran, verse 35.

She had waited years for this child. And the very first thing she did when the answer came was give it back. When Allah finally gives us what we have been asking for, our instinct is to clutch it tightly. Hannah's instinct was to offer.

Here is something to remember. True gratitude sometimes is not only saying Alhamdulillah when something arrives. It is what we do with what arrives.

The daughter she did not expect

When the child was born, she was not a boy. Her mother says (as quoted in the Quran)

“My Lord, I have delivered a female...” - Surah Aal-e-Imran, verse 36.

The same verse then says that Allah knew best what she had delivered.

Classical tafsir explains that the mother of Maryam had expected a son because temple service (the temple here is reference to Bayt al-Maqdis in Jerusalem) was traditionally associated with males. So when she gave birth to a daughter, there was a quiet weight in her words. It was not disappointment in the child. It was confusion about the vow. How could she fulfill what she had promised? How could a daughter take a place that had always been reserved for sons?

But Allah knew what she had delivered.

And here is what's amazing. Her mother saw a complication. Allah saw Maryam. Her mother saw a vow that might not unfold as planned. Allah saw a soul He had already chosen above the women of the worlds.

This happens in our own lives. We ask Allah for something specific. The answer comes in a different form, and we assume we received less. We measure it against our expectation instead of measuring our expectation against His knowledge. The mother of Maryam thought she had received less. She had received more than she could have

imagined.

Her name and her mother's dua

Then her mother said (as quoted in the Quran):

فَلَمَّا وَضَعَتْهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَضَعْتُهَا أُنْثَىٰ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا وَضَعْتَ وَلَئِنَّ الذَّكَرَ
كَالْأُنْثَىٰ وَإِنِّي سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وَإِنِّي أُعِيذُهَا بِكَ وَذُرِّيَّتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

-----“I have named her Maryam, and I seek refuge for her in You and for her
descendants from Shaytan, the expelled.” - - Surah Aal-e-Imran, verse 36.

Before Maryam could speak, her mother had already drawn a circle of protection around her soul.

There is a hadith in Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim where the Prophet (may the peace and Allah's blessings be upon him) said that every child is touched by Shaytan at birth, except Maryam and her son (Eesa/Jesus). The scholars connect this directly to her mother's dua. **One sentence from a mother's heart, accepted by Allah, changed the spiritual destiny of two of the most honored figures in human history.**

Many of us worry about our children's grades, futures, and marriages. These are not wrong concerns. But the mother of Maryam teaches us where the real worry should live. Her first concern was not status, wealth, or success. It was Shaytan and his harm. And perhaps the deepest lesson here is this: the most powerful inheritance you can leave your child is the dua you made for them when no one was watching.

Allah accepted her beautifully

Surah Aal-e-Imran, verse 37 says

فَتَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَأَنْبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا وَكَفَّلَهَا زَكَرِيَّا كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا

الْمَحْرَابَ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا رِزْقًا قَالَ يَا مَرْيَمُ أَنَّى لَكِ هَذَا قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

that Allah accepted Maryam with a beautiful acceptance, caused her to grow in a good way, and placed her under the care of Prophet Zakariyya (peace be upon him).

Here is something amazing to note. Her mother offered. Allah accepted. Her mother worried. Allah honored. Her mother feared the vow could not be fulfilled. Allah fulfilled it in a way no one had imagined possible. Had Hannah given birth to the son she expected, we might never have heard of her at all. The story exists because Allah broke the convention.

The mother of Maryam never lived to see her daughter become the most exalted woman in human history. She made her vow, said her dua, and trusted Allah with the rest. The fruits of her sincerity ripened in a future she never witnessed.

That is something worth remembering when our own efforts feel invisible.

Why people wanted to care for Maryam

Tafsir Ibn Kathir explains that her father Imran had passed away before she was born. She came into the world an orphan from one of the most respected priestly families among the Children of Israel. The religious leaders argued over who would have the privilege of guardianship and settled it by lot. They cast their pens into the river Jordan, and Zakariyya's pen was the one that floated against the current.

The Quran tells us,

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

“And you were not with them when they cast their pens as to which of them should be responsible for Maryam, nor were you with them when they disputed.” - Surah Aal-e-Imran, verse 44

Imagine this. A child whose mother had once feared her vow could not be fulfilled was now the center of a dispute among prophets and priests. Allah does not just accept what we offer Him. He elevates it. As Surah Fatir, verse 2 reminds us, what Allah grants of mercy, no one can withhold.

Maryam in the mihrab

Maryam grew up in a chamber set apart for worship, the mihrab. The Quran says that whenever Prophet Zakariyya (peace be upon him) entered upon her, he found provision with her. He asked (as mentioned in the Quran):

فَتَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَأَنْبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا وَكَفَّلَهَا زَكَرِيَّا كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا رِزْقًا قَالَ يَا مَرْيَمُ أَنَّى لَكِ هَذَا قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

“O Maryam, from where is this?” She replied, “It is from Allah. Indeed, Allah provides for whom He wills without account.” (mentioned in *Surah Aal-e-Imran, verse 37*)

Tafsir works mention that this provision included summer fruits in winter and winter fruits in summer. But the deepest part of this scene is not the miracle. It is her answer.

“It is from Allah.”

She does not say “I have been blessed.” She does not pause to enjoy the credit. She points directly past herself to the One who provided. Maryam, even as a young girl, had already learned what most of us spend our lives trying to learn: we are not the source of anything good in our lives. We are only the address it gets delivered to.

And there is a beautiful detail that often gets missed. The very next thing the Quran tells

us is that Zakariyya, having seen Allah provide for Maryam in this extraordinary way, turned and prayed for a child of his own (a child he later got and was named Yahya). **Sometimes Allah's blessing to one person is meant to be a reminder for someone else. When you see Allah answering someone else's prayer, let it remind you to make your own dua again.**

How the Quran honors Maryam

Surah Aal-e-Imran, verse 42 tells us,

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

"O Maryam, indeed Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds."

This is a direct honor from Allah Himself. The Quran names her, defends her purity, and names an entire surah after her. The Prophet (may the peace and Allah's blessings be upon him) honored her too. In Sahih Muslim, he listed the four greatest women: Maryam, Asiya the wife of Pharaoh, Khadijah, and Fatimah.

Maryam is not honored simply because she was the mother of Eesa. She is honored because Allah chose her in her own right. Long before she became a mother, she was already Maryam, the chosen.

The story we should remember

Here is something that we should take from this story.

Her mother wanted a child. Allah gave her Maryam. Her mother expected a son. Allah gave her a daughter whose name would be recited (it's mentioned in the Quran) until the end of time. Her mother feared her vow could not unfold as planned. Allah accepted

her with a beautiful acceptance.

Before the miracle of Eesa's birth, there was the quiet miracle of Maryam's own beginning. A mother's dua. A vow made in gratitude. A daughter chosen beyond what anyone could see.

We do not always understand what Allah is giving us when He gives it. The mother of Maryam did not know, when she held that baby girl in her arms and quietly grieved the son she had expected, that she was holding the most exalted woman in the history of the world.

She did not know. But Allah knew. And He always knows.

May Allah give us the sincerity of Maryam's mother, the purity of Maryam, and the trust to accept what He gives us before we fully understand what He is preparing through it.

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References: Surah Aal-Imran 3:33-37, 3:42-44. Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim. Tafsir al-Tabari, Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qurtubi. Some narrative details drawn from Isra'iliyyat preserved in classical tafsir.