

## Fast 12: Women in Islam — 5: Position in sight of God

- Chapter 19 of the Quran is entitled *Maryam* or Mary. In it the story of Mary is introduced by the words:

“And mention Mary in the Book.”  
(19:16)

وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ

A few verses later the histories of Abraham and Moses are related in this chapter and each of these is introduced by the same expression:

“And mention Abraham in the Book.”  
(19:41)

وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ

“And mention Moses in the Book.”  
(19:51)

وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَى

No distinction is drawn between how these two great prophets are mentioned and how Mary is mentioned.

- In chapter 21 of the Quran, entitled *Prophets*, histories of various prophets are related as examples in verses 51 to 90, from Abraham, through to Zacharias and John who appeared just before Jesus. Verse 91 then mentions Mary and Jesus as follows:

“And she who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into her of Our inspiration, and made her and her son a sign for the nations.” (21:91)

وَالَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنفَخْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ رُوحِنَا وَجَعَلْنَاهَا وَابْنَهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ

﴿٩١﴾

Again here, Mary is mentioned along with the great, former prophets. And she is said to have been made by God as a sign for the nations of mankind, along with her son, i.e., Jesus. ‘Sign’ means something from which people learn a lesson.

- In the Quran, two women from the past are cited as good examples for Muslims to follow, one who was at a lower level of faith and one who was at a higher level:

“And Allah sets forth an example for those who believe — the wife of Pharaoh, when she said: My Lord, build for me a house with You in the Garden and deliver me from Pharaoh and his work, and deliver me from the wrongdoing people.

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا امْرَأَاتٍ فِرْعَوْنَ إِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١١﴾

And Mary, the daughter of Amran, who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into him of Our inspiration, and she accepted the truth of the words of her Lord and His Books, and she was of the obedient ones.” (66:11–12)

وَمَرْيَمَ ابْنَتَ عِمْرَانَ الَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا  
فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِنَا وَصَدَّقَتْ  
بِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُتِبَ عَلَيْهَا مِنَ الْقَنُوتَيْنِ



In 66:11 Pharaoh’s wife typifies the believer who is not yet free from the bondage of sin, just as Pharaoh’s wife, who was a believer, was in the grip of the evil Pharaoh. But such a believer prays to be delivered from the evil from which he is not free. In 66:12 Mary typifies the highest grade of believer. As she guarded her chastity, he guards himself against all low desires, and therefore receives inspiration from God.

- Chapter 58 of the Quran is entitled *al-Mujadilah* or ‘The Woman who pleads’. A woman’s husband separated her from him by an old Arab custom by calling her as his mother. Under this unjust custom, she ceased to hold the status of wife but she was not divorced and therefore not free to marry elsewhere. And the husband could take her back whenever he wanted! This woman complained to the Holy Prophet, but he could not intervene as he had no revelation about it. Allah then revealed to him:

“Allah indeed has **heard the plea of her who pleads with you about her husband and complains to Allah**; and Allah hears the contentions of both of you. Surely Allah is Hearing, Seeing. Those of you who put away their wives by calling them their mothers — they are not their mothers. None are their mothers except those who gave them birth, and they utter indeed a hateful word and a lie. And surely Allah is Pardoning, Forgiving.” (58:1–2)

قَدْ سَمِعَ اللَّهُ قَوْلَ الَّتِي تُجَادِلُكَ فِي زَوْجِهَا وَ  
تَشْتَكِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ يَسْمَعُ تَحَاوُرَكُمَا  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١﴾  
الَّذِينَ يُظَاهِرُونَ مِنْكُمْ مِمَّنِ نَسَا إِلَهُمَّ مَا هُنَّ  
أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ إِنْ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ إِلَّا الْآلِيَّةُ وَلَدْنَهُمْ  
إِنَّهُمْ لَيَقُولُونَ مُنْكَرًا مِنَ الْقَوْلِ وَزُورًا  
وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَفُوفٌ غَفُورٌ ﴿٢﴾

As stated here, Allah Himself heard the woman’s complaint and sent revelation to the Holy Prophet condemning that custom. The revelation went on to say that those husbands who then wanted to take back their wives must first repent by performing some act of general charity as penance. The voice of an ordinary woman was heard by Allah and He sent His ruling to His Prophet to redress her complaint.