

25 The Quran's Women

Looking at the verses where the Quran mentions specific women provides one of the most powerful ways of combating the concept of women's inequality in Islam. The Quran mentions many women, both believers and disbelievers. A review of the verses about these women shows how God judges women as well as men on their righteousness alone.

Adam's Wife

Though the Bible names Adam's wife Eve the Quran never mentions her by name. However, it does speak of her:

We said, "O Adam, live with your wife in Paradise, and eat therefrom generously, as you please, but do not approach this tree, lest you sin."

But the devil duped them, and caused their eviction therefrom. We said, "Go down as enemies of one another. On Earth shall be your habitation and provision for awhile."

(Quran: The Final Testament 2:35-36)

The Quran does not lay the blame for Adam's fall on Eve as the Bible does. Rather Satan duped both Adam and Eve into disobeying God.

Another narration of this same incident in the Quran, in verses 7:19-25, tells us both Adam and Eve repented:

They said, "Our Lord, we have wronged our souls, and unless You forgive us and have mercy on us, we will be losers."

(Quran: The Final Testament 7:23)

Throughout the Quran God deals very even-handedly with Adam and Eve, making it clear Satan duped both into disobedience:

O children of Adam, do not let the devil dupe you as he did when he caused the eviction of your parents from Paradise, and the removal of their garments to expose their bodies. He and his tribe see you, while you do not see them. We appoint the devils as companions of those who do not believe.

(Quran: The Final Testament 7:27)

Satan duped both and we need to take care we do not fall into the same trap. Note that humans can become devils, as 6:112 indicates. Thus, other people can influence us in a devilish manner.

Noah's Wife & Lot's Wife

The Quran mentions the wife of Noah only once:

God cites as examples of those who disbelieved the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were married to two of our righteous servants, but they betrayed them and, consequently, they could not help them at all against God. The two of them were told,

“Enter the Hellfire with those who deserved it.”
(Quran: The Final Testament 66:10)

Right after this verse God cites the wife of Pharaoh and Mary as examples of believers. These verses clarify it does not matter who you marry, be it a messenger of God or an enemy of God like Pharaoh. Each of us holds responsibility for our own belief and our own soul. However, women also have a duty to themselves and their future children to choose good husbands.

Several other verses in the Quran mention Lot’s wife, always indicating she remained doomed with the transgressors. The following gives an example of such a verse. Here the angels went to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah:

(The angels) said, “O Lot, we are your Lord’s messengers, and these people cannot touch you. You shall leave with your family during the night, and let not anyone of you look back, except your wife; she is condemned along with those who are condemned. Their appointed time is the morning. Is not the morning soon enough?”
(Quran: The Final Testament 11:81)

The frequency with which the Quran mentions the doom of Lot’s wife seems noteworthy. It occurs eight times, almost every time it tells the story of Lot. This frequency seems to highlight again the fact that it doesn’t matter who you marry; each individual has total responsibility for his or her own belief.

Abraham’s Wives

The Quran mentions neither of Abraham’s wives by name. Nor does it tell their stories in any real detail. This probably indicates the general story and the wives’ names given in the Bible are fairly accurate. The Quran mentions Ismail’s mother Hagar in the following only as part of Abraham’s family:

“Our Lord, I have settled part of my family in this plantless valley, at Your Sacred House. Our Lord, they are to observe the Contact Prayers (Salat), so let throngs of people converge upon them, and provide for them all kinds of fruits, that they may be appreciative.”
(Quran: The Final Testament 14:37)

The Quran mentions Isaac’s mother Sarah twice, both times in reference to Isaac’s birth. It does not give her name as you see in the following of these references when angel messengers went to Abraham:

His wife was standing, and she laughed when we gave her the good news about Isaac, and after Isaac, Jacob.

She said, “Woe to me, how could I bear a child at my age, and here is my husband, an old man? This is really strange!”

They said, “Do you find it strange for God? God has bestowed His mercy and blessings upon you, O inhabitants of the shrine. He is Praiseworthy, Glorious.”
(Quran: The Final Testament 11:71-73)

Thus God blessed Sarah miraculously with a child. This narration comforts me, for her human response to God's blessing reminds me all of us can have doubts about those blessings at times and still be righteous.

The Women in Joseph's Story

Abraham's great grandson, Joseph, whose father Jacob had two wives, came into the world as the 13th of 14 sons. The envy and animosity among the sons of those two different women gives us a good example of the difficulties that can arise in polygamous marriages. Joseph's story also provides a good example of the way in which God controls even bad situations in His servants' lives for their ultimate good. His own brothers put him in a well. The caravan that found him sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt:

The one who bought him in Egypt said to his wife, "Take good care of him. Maybe he can help us, or maybe we can adopt him."...

The lady of the house where he lived tried to seduce him. She closed the doors and said, "I am all yours." He said, "May God protect me. He is my Lord, who gave me a good home. The transgressors never succeed."

She almost succumbed to him, and he almost succumbed to her, if it were not that he saw a proof from his Lord. We thus diverted evil and sin away from him, for he was one of our devoted servants.

The two of them raced towards the door, and, in the process, she tore his garment from the back. They found her husband at the door. She said, "What should be the punishment for one who wanted to molest your wife, except imprisonment or a painful punishment?"

He said, "She is the one who tried to seduce me." A witness from her family suggested: "If his garment is torn from the front, then she is telling the truth and he is a liar.

And if his garment is torn from the back, then she lied, and he is telling the truth."

When her husband saw that his garment was torn from the back, he said, "This is a woman's scheme. Indeed, your scheming is formidable.

"Joseph, disregard this incident. As for you (my wife), you should seek forgiveness for your sin. You have committed an error."
(*Quran: The Final Testament 12:21-29*)

In the verses immediately following these, we learn Joseph ended up in the household of the governor. The governor's own wife had tried to seduce him:

Some women in the city gossiped: The governor's wife is trying to seduce her servant. She is deeply in love with him. We see that she has gone astray."

When she heard of their gossip, she invited them, prepared for them a comfortable place, and gave each of them a knife. She then said to him, "Enter their room." When they saw him, they so admired him, that they cut their hands. They said, "Glory be to God, this is not a human being; this is an honorable angel."

She said, "This is the one you blamed me for falling in love with. I did indeed try to seduce him, and he refused. Unless he does what I command him to do, he will surely go to prison, and will be debased."

He said, "My Lord, the prison is better than giving in to them. Unless You divert their scheming from me, I may desire them and behave like the ignorant ones." His Lord answered his prayer and diverted their scheming from him. He is the Hearer, the Omniscient.

Later, they saw to it, despite the clear proofs, that they should imprison him for awhile.

(Quran: The Final Testament 12:30-35)

While in the prison, Joseph interpreted the king's dream and then:

The king said, "Bring him to me." When the messenger came to him, he said, "Go back to your lord and ask him to investigate the women who cut their hands. My Lord is fully aware of their schemes."

(The king) said (to the women), "What do you know about the incident when you tried to seduce Joseph?" They said, "God forbid; we did not know of anything evil committed by him." The wife of the governor said, "Now the truth has prevailed. I am the one who tried to seduce him, and he was the truthful one.

"I hope that he will realize that I never betrayed him in his absence, for God does not bless the schemes of the betrayers.

"I do not claim innocence for myself. The self is an advocate of vice, except for those who have attained mercy from my Lord. My Lord is Forgiver, Most Merciful." (Quran: The Final Testament 12:50-53)

The governor's wife tempted Joseph and ultimately it might be said she caused his imprisonment. Yet God used that very imprisonment to Joseph's great benefit. The governor's wife also obviously benefited from the whole test by repenting and turning wholeheartedly to God. Her comments on the self and the schemes of the betrayers show her great growth in righteousness and wisdom.

The Women in Moses' Story

Women played a crucial role in Moses' life. Chronologically the Quranic story starts with his mother, his foster mother and his sister:

We inspired Moses' mother: "Nurse him, and when you fear for his life, throw him into the river without fear or grief. We will return him to you, and will make him one of the messengers."

Pharaoh's family picked him up, only to have him lead the opposition and to be a source of grief for them. That is because Pharaoh, Hamaan, and their troops were transgressors.

Pharaoh's wife said, "This can be a joyous find for me and you. Do not kill him, for he may be of some benefit for us, or we may adopt him to be our son." They had no idea.

The mind of Moses' mother was growing so anxious that she almost gave away his identity. But we strengthened her heart, to make her a believer.

She said to his sister, "Trace his path." She watched him from afar, while they did not perceive.

We forbade him from accepting all the nursing mothers. (His sister) then said, "I can show you a family that can raise him for you, and take good care of him."

Thus, we restored him to his mother, in order to please her, remove her worries, and to let her know that God's promise is the truth. However, most of them do not know. (Quran: The Final Testament 28:7-13)

We see here examples of two remarkable women and an amazing young girl. Moses' mother overcame her natural fears and followed God's inspiration to throw her baby into the river, not knowing what would happen to him. Then God rewarded her by returning her son to her.

As the above verses tell us, Pharaoh's family picked the baby out of the river. Moses' sister, a young girl who probably knew nothing about Pharaoh except the horror stories she must have heard, had the courage to follow her baby brother and to speak up to bring him back to his family.

Pharaoh's wife must have been quite a woman to convince Pharaoh not to kill the baby Moses but raise him essentially as an Egyptian prince. We do know she provides a model of a wonderful believer because in another section of the Quran God cites her as an example of the believers:

And God cites as an example of those who believed the wife of Pharaoh. She said, "My Lord, build a home for me at You in Paradise, and save me from Pharaoh and his works; save me from the transgressing people." (Quran: The Final Testament 66:11)

Though we do not know too much about Moses' wife we do know God used her and her sister as a means of giving Moses a safe refuge in Midyan:

He fled the city, afraid and watchful. He said, "My Lord, save me from the oppressive people."

As he traveled towards Midyan, he said, "May my Lord guide me in the right path."

When he reached Midyan's water, he found a crowd of people watering, and noticed two women waiting on the side. He said, "What is it that you need?" They said, "We are not able to water, until the crowd disperses, and our father is an old man."

He watered for them, then turned to the shade, saying, "My Lord, whatever provision you send to me, I am in dire need for it."

Soon, one of the two women approached him, shyly, and said, "My father invites you to pay you for watering for us." When he met him, and told him his story, he said, "Have no fear. You have been saved from the oppressive people."

One of the two women said, "O my father, hire him. He is the best one to hire, for he is strong and honest."

He said, "I wish to offer one of my two daughters for you to marry, in return for working for me for eight pilgrimages; if you make them ten, it will be voluntary on your part. I do not wish to make this matter too difficult for you. You will find me, God willing, righteous."

*He said, "It is an agreement between me and you. Whichever period I fulfill, you will not be averse to either one. God is the guarantor of what we said."
(Quran: The Final Testament 28:21-28)*

Thus, we see throughout Moses' formative years God used women as important parts of His protection and guidance.

Queen of Sheba

We mentioned the Queen of Sheba earlier in Chapter 22 as an example of a wise female ruler. The significance of her example should not be lost here. She clearly had the support of her people and ruled with consultation rather than dictatorship. She became a peacemaker, not anxious to endanger her people for her own glory. And when presented with the truth she accepted it. Her story starts with the hoopoe bird's report to Solomon:

...(The hoopoe) said, "I have news that you do not have. I brought to you from Sheba, some important information.

"I found a woman ruling them, who is blessed with everything, and possesses a tremendous palace.

*"I found her and her people prostrating before the sun, instead of God. The devil has adorned their works in their eyes, and has repulsed them from the path; consequently, they are not guided."....
(Quran: The Final Testament 27:22-24)*

The hoopoe then speaks of God's power before Solomon tells him to take a letter to Sheba and wait for their response:

She said, "O my advisers, I have received an honorable letter.

"It is from Solomon, and it is, 'In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.'

"Proclaiming: 'Do not be arrogant; come to me as submitters.'"

She said, "O my advisers, counsel me in this matter. I am not deciding anything until you advise me."

They said, "We possess the power, we possess the fighting skills, and the ultimate command is in your hand. You decide what to do."

She said, "The kings corrupt any land they invade, and subjugate its dignified people. This is what they usually do.

*"I am sending a gift to them; let us see what the messengers come back with."
(Quran: The Final Testament 27:29-35)*

When the hoopoe went back and told Solomon to expect the queen's gift, he ordered the bird:

.... *"Go back to them (and let them know that) we will come to them with forces they cannot imagine. We will evict them, humiliated and debased."*

He said, "O you elders, which of you can bring me her mansion, before they arrive here as submitters?"

.... *The one [jinn] who possessed knowledge from the book said, "I can bring it to you in the blink of your eye." When he saw it settled in front of him, he said, "This is a blessing from my Lord, whereby He tests me, to show whether I am appreciative or unappreciative. Whoever is appreciative is appreciative for his own good, and if one turns unappreciative, then my Lord is in no need for him, Most Honorable."*

He said, "Remodel her mansion for her. Let us see if she will be guided, or continue with the misguided."

When she arrived, she was asked, "Does your mansion look like this?" She said, "It seems that this is it."

She had been diverted by worshiping idols instead of God; she belonged to disbelieving people.

*She was told, "Go inside the palace." When she saw its interior, she thought it was a pool of water, and she (pulled up her dress,) exposing her legs. He said, "This interior is now paved with crystal." She said, "My Lord, I have wronged my soul. I now submit with Solomon to God, Lord of the universe."
(Quran: The Final Testament 27:37-44)*

Thus, the queen of Sheba submitted and accepted the truth.

Mary & Her Mother

The Quran has a great deal of information about Mary. It provides more about Mary than about most of the messengers God tells us about. He tells us Mary provides an example of the believers:

*And God cites as an example of those who believed the wife of Pharaoh.... Also Mary, the Amramite. She maintained her chastity, then we blew into her from our spirit. She believed in the words of her Lord and His scriptures; she was obedient.
(Quran: The Final Testament 66:11-12)*

Even before she was born Mary's mother, here described as the wife of Amran, dedicated Mary to God:

The wife of Amram said, "My Lord, I have dedicated (the baby) in my belly to You, totally, so accept from me. You are Hearer, Omniscient."

*When she gave birth to her, she said, "My Lord, I have given birth to a girl"—God was fully aware of what she bore—"The male is not the same as the female. I have named her Mary, and I invoke Your protection for her and her descendants from the rejected devil."
(Quran: The Final Testament 3:35-36)*

God accepted the dedication from Mary's mother. Mary so impressed her guardian Zachariah it caused him to pray for such a good child:

Her Lord accepted her a gracious acceptance, and brought her up a gracious upbringing, under the guardianship of Zachariah. Whenever Zachariah entered her sanctuary he found provisions with her. He would ask, "Mary, where did you get this from?" She would say, "It is from God. God provides for whomever He chooses, without limits."

That is when Zachariah implored his Lord: "My Lord, grant me such a good child; You are the Hearer of the prayers."
(Quran: The Final Testament 3:37-38)

As Mary grew God continued to guide her. He sent His angels to her:

The angels said, "O Mary, God has chosen you and purified you. He has chosen you from all the women.

"O Mary, you shall submit to your Lord, and prostrate and bow down with those who bow down."....

The angels said, "O Mary, God gives you good news: a Word from Him whose name is 'The Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary. He will be prominent in this life and in the Hereafter, and one of those closest to Me.'

"He will speak to the people from the crib, as well as an adult; he will be one of the righteous."

She said, "My Lord, how can I have a son, when no man has touched me?" He said, "God thus creates whatever He wills. To have anything done, He simply says to it, 'Be,' and it is.

"He will teach him the scripture, wisdom, the Torah, and the Gospel."
(Quran: The Final Testament 3:42-48)

God then bestowed on Mary the honor of bearing a child through virgin birth—a child who became a prophet from birth. When God's angel came to her to tell her that she would give birth to Jesus she was amazed:

She said, "How can I have a son, when no man has touched me; I have never been unchaste."

He said, "Thus said your Lord, 'It is easy for Me. We will render him a sign for the people, and mercy from us. This is a predestined matter.'"

When she bore him, she isolated herself to a faraway place. The birth process came to her by the trunk of a palm tree. She said, "(I am so ashamed;) I wish I were dead before this happened, and completely forgotten."

(The infant) called her from beneath her, saying, "Do not grieve. Your Lord has provided you with a stream.

"If you shake the trunk of this palm tree, it will drop ripe dates for you.

"Eat and drink, and be happy. When you see anyone, say, 'I have made a vow of silence; I am not talking today to anyone.'"

She came to her family, carrying him. They said, “O Mary, you have committed something that is totally unexpected.

“O descendant of Aaron, your father was not a bad man, nor was your mother unchaste.”

She pointed to him. They said, “How can we talk with an infant in the crib?” (The infant spoke and) said, “I am a servant of God. He has given me the scripture, and has appointed me a prophet.”
(Quran: The Final Testament 19:20-30)

Thus, God saved Mary from the Torah’s punishment for adultery: death. The miracle of her son speaking as a newborn proved the fact of her giving birth while still a virgin.

Given all that God tells us about Mary, the virgin birth, the honor of being the mother of a prophet from birth, etc., we can see why some view her as extra special. But God gives us her example as that of a believer. This means any believer can strive to attain the same status with God that Mary has. Anyone can work to be as devoted to Him; anyone can hope to worship Him as completely. All of us can and should strive for Mary’s rank:

The Messiah, son of Mary, is no more than a messenger like the messengers before him, and his mother was a saint. Both of them used to eat the food. Note how we explain the revelations for them, and note how they still deviate!
(Quran: The Final Testament 5:75)

Before you say to yourself, “Well Mary was a saint and I can never be that good”, please read this verse:

Those who obey God and the messenger belong with those blessed by God—the prophets, the saints, the martyrs, and the righteous. These are the best company.
(Quran: The Final Testament 4:69)

We all have the capability of being among “the best company” if we choose to strive to be one of the righteous.

Muhammad’s Wives

For centuries Muslim women have looked to the Prophet’s wives as role models. His wives supposedly originally transmitted a great many of his sayings or Hadith. Many Muslims have come to revere them. But what do we really know about them? Actually, very little and much of what we think we know is probably inaccurate. However, the Quran does mention them several times.

We should respect them and appreciate what they did when they were alive:

The prophet is closer to the believers than they are to each other, and his wives are like mothers to them. The relatives ought to take care of one another in accordance with God’s scripture. Thus, the believers shall take care of their relatives who immigrate to them, provided they have taken care of their own families first. These are commandments of this scripture.
(Quran: The Final Testament 33:6)

God tells us the Prophet's wives acted like mothers to the believers of their time. What does that mean for women who have been dead for over a thousand years? How do you treat your deceased mother (or in truth great, great... great grandmother whom you never met)? We have seen God tells us to honor our parents (2:83, 6:151, etc.). There can be no personal interaction with them now, so how can we honor dead women? I believe by respecting them, not making them too important, and not attributing anything to them they would not have done.

The Prophet's wives became very close to all the issues of early Islam. They knew as few others did the dangers of idolatry. They also knew what Muhammad really taught. It seems very disrespectful of them to believe they would have gone against the clear teachings of the Quran to take anything but the scripture as a source of guidance. Therefore I do not believe they intentionally began the transmission of Hadith. Of course as humans they shared from the experiences of their lives, speaking of their deceased husband as any woman would. But it becomes very different to recall events or discuss mutual memories and to relate the words or actions of the Prophet as a source of religious guidance. Would we take the words of our own mothers about our deceased fathers as a source of religious guidance? I hope not!

The wives of the Prophet found themselves in a special position in the early days of Islam. Their actions and words could easily reflect negatively on the message. As a result God required them to take extra precautions in their dealings with other people:

O prophet, say to your wives, "If you are seeking this life and its vanities, then let me compensate you and allow you to go amicably.

"But if you are seeking God and His messenger, and the abode of the Hereafter, then God has prepared for the righteous among you a great recompense."

O wives of the prophet, if any of you commits a gross sin, the retribution will be doubled for her. This is easy for God to do.

Any one of you who obeys God and His messenger, and leads a righteous life, we will grant her double the recompense, and we have prepared for her a generous provision.

O wives of the prophet, you are not the same as any other women, if you observe righteousness. (You have a greater responsibility.) Therefore, you shall not speak too softly, lest those with disease in their hearts may get the wrong ideas; you shall speak only righteousness.

You shall settle down in your homes, and do not mingle with the people excessively, like you used to do in the old days of ignorance. You shall observe the Contact Prayers (Salat), and give the obligatory charity (Zakat), and obey God and His messenger. God wishes to remove all unholiness from you, O you who live around the Sacred Shrine, and to purify you completely.

*Remember what is being recited in your homes of God's revelations and the wisdom inherent therein. God is Sublime, Cognizant.
(Quran: The Final Testament 33:28-34)*

As “mothers to the believers” they lived with greater responsibility, as well as receiving a greater reward.

Given the frequent Arab attitude toward feminine sexuality it makes great sense that the prophet’s wives would have set themselves apart from the people rather than risk endangering the reputation of the prophet and the spread of the message. But the above verses clarify this applied only to the wives of the prophet, not all Muslim women: “*O wives of the prophet, you are not the same as any other women, if you observe righteousness.*”

Because the prophet’s wives lived in such a delicate position the believers needed to treat them with care and behind a barrier:

O you who believe, do not enter the prophet’s homes unless you are given permission to eat, nor shall you force such an invitation in any manner. If you are invited, you may enter. When you finish eating, you shall leave; do not engage him in lengthy conversations. This used to hurt the prophet, and he was too shy to tell you. But God does not shy away from the truth. If you have to ask his wives for something, ask them from behind a barrier. This is purer for your hearts and their hearts. You are not to hurt the messenger of God. You shall not marry his wives after him, for this would be a gross offense in the sight of God.
(Quran: The Final Testament 33:53)

Even given all of the special circumstances of the wives of the prophet they clearly did not stay totally sequestered from the rest of society. Quranic verse 33:33, quoted above, where God tells them not to mingle excessively with the people shows this. They could mingle, just not excessively. The following verse shows that they still interacted with the people:

O prophet, tell your wives, your daughters, and the wives of the believers that they shall lengthen their garments. Thus, they will be recognized (as righteous women) and avoid being insulted. God is Forgiver, Most Merciful.
(Quran: The Final Testament 33:59)

If no one ever saw them outside of their own households they would not need to worry about being insulted.

We also learn that the prophet and his wives made serious errors, as the following verses illustrate:

O you prophet, why do you prohibit what God has made lawful for you, just to please your wives? God is Forgiver, Merciful.

God has decreed for you the laws dealing with your oaths. God is your Lord, and He is the Omniscient, Most Wise.

The prophet had trusted some of his wives with a certain statement, then one of them spread it, and God let him know about it. He then informed his wife of part of the issue, and disregarded part. She asked him, “Who informed you of this?” He said, “I was informed by the Omniscient, Most Cognizant.”

If the two of you repent to God, then your hearts have listened. But if you band together against him, then God is his ally, and so is Gabriel and the righteous believers. Also, the angels are his helpers.

*If he divorces you, his Lord will substitute other wives in your place who are better than you; submitters (Muslims), believers (Mu'mins), obedient, repentant, worshipers, pious, either previously married, or virgins.
(Quran: The Final Testament 66:1-5)*

These verses show difficulties within the prophet's marriages as in any marriage. The prophet and his wives were only human.

The prophet's human fallibility in reference to his wives shows in another set of verses. They have to do with his hesitance to marry the divorced wife of his adopted son:

Recall that you said to the one who was blessed by God, and blessed by you, "Keep your wife and reverence God," and you hid inside yourself what God wished to proclaim. Thus, you feared the people, when you were supposed to fear only God. When Zeid was completely through with his wife, we had you marry her, in order to establish the precedent that a man may marry the divorced wife of his adopted son. God's commands shall be done.

*The prophet is not committing an error by doing anything that is made lawful by God. Such is God's system since the early generations. God's command is a sacred duty. Those who deliver God's messages, and who reverence Him alone, shall never fear anyone but God. God is the most efficient reckoner.
(Quran: The Final Testament 33:37-39)*

One last set of verses having to do with the wives of the prophet exists that I want to look at. They give us a glimpse at the society of the time:

O prophet, we made lawful for you your wives to whom you have paid their due dowry, or what you already have, as granted to you by God. Also lawful for you in marriage are the daughters of your father's brothers, the daughters of your father's sisters, the daughters of your mother's brothers, the daughters of your mother's sisters, who have emigrated with you. Also, if a believing woman gave herself to the prophet—by forfeiting the dowry—the prophet may marry her without a dowry, if he so wishes. However, her forfeiting of the dowry applies only to the prophet, and not to the other believers. We have already decreed their rights in regard to their spouses or what they already have. This is to spare you any embarrassment. God is Forgiver, Most Merciful.

You may gently shun any one of them, and you may bring closer to you any one of them. If you reconcile with any one you had estranged, you commit no error. In this way, they will be pleased, will have no grief, and will be content with what you equitably offer to all of them. God knows what is in your hearts. God is Omniscient, Clement.

*Beyond the categories described to you, you are enjoined from marrying any other women, nor can you substitute a new wife (from the prohibited categories), no matter how much you admire their beauty. You must be content with those already made lawful to you. God is watchful over all things.
(Quran: The Final Testament 33:50-52)*

These verses show us that God made an exception for the prophet in His normal requirement of a dowry to be paid to the bride. And they show that, like other marriages, those of the prophet had times of greater closeness than at other times. However, the prophet, like all men in polygamous marriages, had to be equitable to his wives. God also required Muhammad to be content with the wives allowed to him.

Abee Lahab's Wife

God devotes one of the last chapters of the Quran to one of Muhammad's uncles and his wife. They led the persecution of the believers:

Condemned are the works of Abee Lahab, and he is condemned.

His money and whatever he has accomplished will never help him.

He has incurred the blazing Hell.

Also his wife, who led the persecution.

She will be (resurrected) with a rope of thorns around her neck.

(Quran: The Final Testament 111:1-5)

Thus we see that women can be among the best of the best like Mary and Pharaoh's wife. Or they can be among the worst of the worst like Lot's wife and the wife of Abee Lahab.

Let us strive to be among the best of the best.

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I find reading about the women mentioned in the Quran inspiring. Talking with sisters in my mosque I discovered that I am not the only one. Here sister G shares her story about one of the women God tells us quite bit about.

My Wish

Who would you like to meet in Heaven? I've thought about that some and obvious names pop up like Abraham and Jesus. I'd love to meet the magicians who stood up to Pharaoh's horrible threats. And that brings me to one woman I'd love to say hello to and get her story. That's Pharaoh's wife. Imagine living in luxurious palaces (not one but several), having servants galore to wait on your every need. Imagine being married to the most powerful man in the world. Then imagine trying to be righteous in the face of all that arrogance, wealth, oppression, power, resources—anything you want at your fingertips. But the thing you want most is to be righteous. How can you achieve that in such an environment?

It must have been a fine line for her to walk. She can't have been comfortable with the way Pharaoh treated people. Yet she must have had to stifle her protests or risk severe punishment. She had influence over him, since she convinced him to take in the baby Moses, even though it was his decree to kill the *Israelite* male children born that

year. But she must have had to be mostly silent and perhaps use her influence quietly in private.

She's unnamed in the Quran, yet she's put forward as an example of a believer. [66:11] *And God cites as an example of those who believed the wife of Pharaoh. She said, "My Lord, build a home for me at You in Paradise, and save me from Pharaoh and his works; save me from the transgressing people."*

Her only hope must have come through constant prayer. She, most likely, had no choice in marrying him, since he was the Pharaoh, but she had a choice on how to live with those circumstances and she chose to seek God and the Last Day, and let God take care of Pharaoh.

I would love the chance to speak to her and tell her how much I admire her strength and perseverance.

—G, U.S.A.

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Most of us have our heroes and heroines. Sometimes we have a hard time deciding on our favorite, and I, as Iman shares this.

My Quranic Heroines

I can relate to probably all of the righteous women in the Quran. For instance, clearly the young woman who became the wife of Moses and her sister spent a great deal of time out in nature—one of my favorite pastimes. And the women who traveled with Noah on the ark spent many days at sea, another form of being in nature.

Mary and her mother were clearly very devoted to God and willing to sacrifice in important ways for Him. Mary's mother dedicated her to God knowing that she would be raised by someone else—a guardian—meaning that she would miss much of her daughter's growing years. Mary also missed a normal family life as a child and then surrendered to God's will and bore Jesus though to have a child while unmarried was punishable by death according to the laws of the Torah. While I hope I never have to give up a beloved person in my life as Mary's mother did and I cannot imagine having to bear a child knowing that you might be killed because of it, I can greatly admire both women for their ability to pass those tests.

Each righteous woman mentioned in the Quran has qualities to admire and try to imitate. But perhaps the woman who most impresses me is Moses' mother. I am certain that her ability to put him—her helpless infant—into the river was God's gift to her. Even so, how many of us would be able to do the same?

Then she had to deal with Pharaoh's household knowing that if anyone realized Moses was her real son that both of their lives would be in peril. What courage this woman had!

I wonder what happened to her after Moses grew to the point of no longer needing to be nursed. Did they remain in touch? The Quran doesn't say, but it seems possible since Moses knew his brother and was aware that he himself was one of the Children of Israel. Then, once Moses left Egypt, where was his mother? Did she get to know his family?

I know that if it were important for us to know God would have told us, but still I am curious. Somehow I feel an affinity for this Jewish woman whose name I don't even know. In some ways, she has become a role model, like the characters of storybooks sometimes do. And though she lived all of those thousands of years ago, I want to know that she was happy when she did live.

At least I can be sure that she will be happy on the Day of Resurrection because Verse 28:10 tells us that God made her a believer. I guess that is all that really counts for any righteous woman.

—*Iman, U.S.A.*

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God tells us that Muhammad was the last prophet (33:40), which means that there will not be any more scriptures revealed. However, that does not mean that each of us cannot strive to inspire others as the women in the Quran have inspired me.

I believe God gives us their stories partly to encourage us to try to follow their examples. Those stories also teach us important lessons, which we can apply to our own lives. But the most important function they play in my life is that of reminding me of their humanity. Since I am also human I can work to grow as strong, wise, pious, pure, honest and righteous as the best of them, God willing.

Whether or not I attain that goal depends on how important it becomes to me. Am I willing to sacrifice what looks alluring in this life for God, as the righteous women of the Quran did? Or will I let myself get caught up in the illusions of this world and Satan's traps.

I do not know the future so I cannot answer that question. I can only ask God's help in becoming as righteous and pleasing to Him as I can. And I know you can do the same.