

## 7 Daughters and Parents

All women start out as daughters of their parents. As we saw in the last chapter, many Muslims do not value or treat their daughters the same way they do their sons. Among the pagan Arabs, this difference may have been even more pronounced than in modern times. They abandoned female newborns in the dust, as we just saw in Chapter 6, but ironically they also attributed daughters to God, as shown by the following Quranic verse:

*They even assign daughters to God, be He glorified, while they prefer for themselves what they like.*  
(Quran: The Final Testament 16:57)

This verse tells us they desired sons. The verses in 37:149-154 tell us they made the angels into God's daughters then show their understanding did not make sense. Similar verses exist (17:40, 43:16, 53:19-23 and 6:100).

The modern preference for sons over daughters among many Muslims makes no more sense than the pagan Arabs' preference. But the real issue remains that God sees women and men as equal in His eyes. So why do we humans make a distinction between them and elevate one over the other? Shouldn't we use God as our example?

Human nature does not always allow for this. Looking at my own family I can see why many people have gender preferences. My parents brought up three daughters, which left my father as the only male in our nuclear family. Of course, he wanted a son. What father doesn't? They want someone to take fishing and do "manly" things with and someone to carry on the family name.

For some reason, my father picked me as his favorite—perhaps because I looked more like him than my sisters did. As a result, I became his helper when he repaired things around the house, his listener when he wanted to talk something out, his hiking partner, and we did other things together as well.

Unlike most girls, I really did not get to know my mother well until I was out of college, even though we used to attend lectures together at the local university when I still attended high school. We even drove, just the two of us, to a Native American Indian pow wow in northern Arizona. But it wasn't until I had my own apartment that we really began having deep conversations about things that mattered to us.

I'm very thankful I had those times with her before she died and I wish we could have started earlier. I also am aware most girls have a different kind of relationship with their mothers. Often they develop deep friendships or they may have a love-hate relationship. Whatever the case, if one follows the Quran, we must treat both of our parents well as the following verse shows:

*Your Lord has decreed that you shall not worship except Him, and your parents shall be honored. As long as one or both of them live, you shall never say to them, "Uff" (the slightest gesture of annoyance), nor shall you shout at them; you shall treat them amicably. And lower for them the wings of humility, and kindness, and say, "My Lord,*

*have mercy on them, for they have raised me from infancy.”*  
(*Quran: The Final Testament 17:23-24*)

I do not remember there ever being many problems with any of us girls and our mother. However, the relationship between my sisters with our father did not always go as well. He tended to have a much stricter manner with them than he did with me. This caused some issues later among us girls. Thankfully it never got bad like Joseph's situation.

As the Quran tells the story, his brothers actually threw him into a well and abandoned him there because of the jealousy they felt toward him. They did this because they thought their father favored Joseph. God saved him and blessed his life. You can read his story in Chapter 12 of the Quran and also in the Bible's Genesis Chapter 37.

In the Quran, God tells us some stories of daughters. In the last chapter, we saw some of Mary's story and her mother's wishes for her. Chapter 25 of this book has much more of her story.

Also, the story of Moses has two groups of verses involving daughters. The first is in Verses 20:40-41 (and also in the Biblical book of Exodus) when his mother followed God's command to put him in a box and put it in the river. She then sent his sister after him, and by God's grace, somehow this young girl from the oppressed Children of Israel convinced Pharaoh's household to use Moses' mother as his wet-nurse. Thus God gave him back to his anxious mother. Can you imagine what kind of courage it must have taken for both his mother and sister to deal with those in Pharaoh's household? Pharaoh decreed death for all of the Israelite baby boys and now they found themselves dealing with those who would have killed Moses. Pharaoh thought of himself as a god and their people were just slaves. Only God could provide them with such courage.

The second set of verses covers the time after Moses grew up in Pharaoh's household. He killed a man while trying to help an Israelite. When he fled to Midyan, he found himself by a body of water. Two sisters had to wait to water their father's flock. He watered their flock and they later came back to offer their family's hospitality in return. Ultimately he married one of the daughters. That story occurs in Verses 28:15-28.

The next verse shows us just how terribly Pharaoh persecuted the Children of Israel:

*Recall that we saved you from Pharaoh's people who inflicted upon you the worst persecution, slaying your sons and sparing your daughters. That was an exacting test from your Lord.*  
(*Quran: The Final Testament 2:49*)

The Quran tells this same story of persecution in Verses 7:127, 7:141, 14:6, 28:4, and 40:25. Even now this would be a horrendous thing, but in the time of Moses, when his people lived as Pharaoh's slaves, it left all of those girls with much less protection from their slave masters.

In a different vein, God also tells us what inheritance daughters should receive in Verse 4:11 and other verses, which you can find in Chapter 13 of this book.

He tells us about the marriage prohibitions relating to daughters in Verse 2:221, which I quote in Chapter 9. He also gave the prophet Muhammad specific commandments about which daughters of his relatives he could marry in Verse 33:50.

In Verse 33:59, as quoted in Chapter 5, God tells the prophet to inform his daughters and the other believing women to lengthen their garments.

The next verse tells us who provides us with daughters and sons:

*To God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He creates whatever He wills, granting daughters to whomever He wills, and granting sons to whomever He wills.*

*(Quran: The Final Testament 42:49)*

Finally, we find a number of verses dealing with the daughters of Lot. The homosexual men of their community had no interest in his daughters. We find this story in Verses 11:78-79 and 15:71.

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Now we have covered the verses about daughters; but what does God tell us about a daughter's duties to her parents?

The Quran does not separate a daughter's duties from those of a son. Both must honor their parents as Verses 17:23-24, quoted earlier in this chapter, show. Six other verses exist with the same message: 2:83, 6:151, 19:14, 29:8, 46:15, and 31:14; the last two verses both speak of the mother and her special task of bearing and taking care of us as infants.

The first verse discusses the mother's role in our early lives. It also tells us what we should say when we reach the age of forty:

*We enjoined the human being to honor his parents. His mother bore him arduously, gave birth to him arduously, and took intimate care of him for thirty months. When he reaches maturity, and reaches the age of forty, he should say, "My Lord, direct me to appreciate the blessings You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and to do the righteous works that please You. Let my children be righteous as well. I have repented to You; I am a submitter."*

*(Quran: The Final Testament 46:15)*

The second verse states how long a mother normally nurses her child:

*We enjoined the human being to honor his parents. His mother bore him, and the load got heavier and heavier. It takes two years (of intensive care) until weaning. You shall be appreciative of Me, and of your parents. To Me is the ultimate destiny.*

*(Quran: The Final Testament 31:14)*

I believe the extra work and pain a mother goes through explains why she receives a larger portion of the inheritance that is not covered by the will from her children than goes to other females, as you will find in our Chapter 13 on inheritance.

Parents do far more than act as a means for God to bring us into this world. Through them, we come to interact with our society and the world. We learn almost everything from them and other family members until we reach school age. Even when we go to school our parents usually provide, or fail to provide, a good environment for our learning and growth. They teach us their worldview in a variety of ways, sometimes consciously and sometimes just by how they handle things. To a large degree, we become what we see in our parents—again sometimes consciously but not always.

I am amazed at how many of my parents' traits and habits I picked up as a child. Sometimes I do something that suddenly takes me back to them doing the same thing. For instance, my father had a way of running his thumb along the tips of his fingers on the same hand. He started with the pinky and slid up all four fingers. As I am concentrating on a problem I will often catch myself doing that and smile.

Also, my mother loved to feel the soft dry tops of grasses and other plants along a trail. I do the same thing and enjoy both their feel and the memory of her doing this.

In both cases, these habits bring pleasant memories. But I am sure I also have some of their bad traits, which I am less aware of. As an example, I have worked very hard to diminish my tendency toward my father's judgmental nature. Fortunately, I had my mother's nonjudgmental nature as a counterbalance.

It also amazes me that with all of the modeling and influence from our parents sometimes people turn out the opposite of their parents. The Quran gives us a very good example of this in the following verse:

*Then there is the one who says to his parents, "Woe to you; are you telling me that (after death) I will come back to life? How come those who died before us never come back?" The parents would cry for God's help and say, "Woe to you; please believe! God's promise is the truth." He would say, "Tales from the past!"*  
(Quran: The Final Testament 46:17)

Praise God, this does not always happen, though we know prophets Adam and Noah both had at least one very unrighteous child (please see 5:27-31 and 11:42-43).

Both parents play a very large role in our lives, but our mother will always have a special place in my heart and the hearts of most of my friends. We nestled safely in her womb for nine months and in that time her body fed ours; we heard her voice and her heartbeat with our tiny ears, which developed early in our fetal growth. And probably most of us gazed into her eyes before anyone else's as our eyes begin to focus after birth.

Is it any wonder mothers hold a special place for us?

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*Everyone has a different relationship with their parents. For sister Lydia, what she says here about the way she related to her parents and the love and closeness during her mother's passing comes close to echoing my own experiences.*

## **My Mom**

I had a wonderful relationship with my Mom. I had many friends growing up who were always at war with their parents, but that was never a problem for me. I wouldn't say I never got angry or frustrated with her—I'm not sure anyone can grow up without some moments of misunderstanding—but they were minor and brief. I loved her and always knew that she loved me. She nurtured me and supported me. My Dad, too, was loving and supportive, but a little more remote. It was always Mom that I turned to for encouragement and advice.

So, I had no hesitation to travel across the country to be with her when I knew her end was coming. She had cancer and while the chemo had helped for a while, it had reached the point where nothing would stop it. I wanted to be there. So, I moved back into my bedroom and settled down to wait. I would stay for however long it took.

It was a precious time, almost exactly one month, though it seemed both much shorter and much longer. It was often intense and sad, but mostly it was wonderful. I'm so thankful God gave me the opportunity to do things for her, to give back for all the years she had cared for me so lovingly. I had let her wash my hair long after I was old enough to do it myself. Now, I could wash hers. I could rub lotion into her back, which got sore from lying down so much. As I did, I remembered all the times she had rubbed Vick's on my chest to ease my cough or sore throat.

We talked a lot. We laughed and reminisced about all the places we'd been as a family, all the beautiful sites we'd been blessed to see. I was able to tell her how much I loved her; how much I appreciated all she had done for me; how much I would miss her. And I reassured her that I would be okay. She had done her job, and done it well. She could rest and let go.

The morning that she departed this world, all the family was there. My Dad, my brother, sister and me. We all took turns saying goodbye. She had lapsed into a coma, but I believe she still heard us, felt the love. I know I felt it. It was a gift to have that time. Over twenty years later, it's still a precious memory.

—Lydia, U.S.A.

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*God tells us to honor our parents in both the Bible and the Quran. I as Iman share my story of the way in which I tried to honor and care for my father.*

## **Taking Care Of An Aging Parent**

When in his mid-eighties my father began to have mini-strokes and he became delusional and needed someone with him, especially at night. For about a week I tried to care for him myself, but soon found it was impossible to work full time and give him the constant care he really needed. Fortunately, in the state of Arizona where we lived, they had a wonderful program to place elders needing care in private homes and after the

couple of months required to deal with all the paperwork, etc., to get him qualified for that program my sister and I found a wonderful home for him. He flourished for about four years in the care of Olga who he said was better to him than his own mother had ever been. She was a warm and motherly woman of Hispanic descent who cooked wonderful food that my father loved—something that made his life much richer and happier. I've often felt that God rewarded him there with Olga for all of the painful times he had as a young man in his own family of origin.

I have always been very thankful to God that He provided that assistance for us. But that kind of assistance is not always available to others. Or in some cases, a sister may decide that she has the ability to care for a parent on her own and wishes to do so. In doing so she is honoring her parent as the Quran tells us to do in verses 2:83 and 6:151.

—*Iman, U.S.A.*

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While in my experience, most daughters have good relationships with their parents, at least most of the time; my relationship seemed better than many. My parents were both exceptional people—sensitive, intelligent, artistic, well-informed, charitable, and caring. Of course, they were not saints and they had their faults as we all do. To me, they were my models and as I grew into an adult, also my dear friends. We held similar basic values in almost all areas. Probably our differences in our faiths provided the only important exception, though they were both very spiritual. My mother actually enjoyed joining our mosque community when we went on picnics and became fond of a number of the members.

At times different Muslim friends helped my parents in various ways ranging from cooking meals to checking to see if they need anything when I was away. So both my father and mother had plenty of positive contact with my spiritual family and they, in turn, came to know my folks.

This sharing of my two families with each other gave me great joy at the time and still allows me to share wonderful memories of my parent with my mosque sisters and brothers. That sharing strengthens both those memories and my bonds with my spiritual family, providing a double blessing, praise God!