SAMPLE

Maryam: The Chosen Woman

The Story of Maryam in the Quran

Aira Aurora

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Introduction

Maryam (Mary) — the mother of Isa (Jesus) — is the only woman mentioned by name in the Quran. Her name appears thirty-four times. She has a surah named after her (Surah 19, Maryam). She is described as "chosen above the women of the worlds" (3:42). She is the recipient of angelic communication. She is the model of purity, trust, and submission.

This book — the first in The Honored Ones series — is devoted entirely to Maryam. The NurOne series covered the twenty-five prophets named in the Quran. The Honored Ones series covers the other figures honored by the Quran — the men and women who are not prophets but who are chosen, tested, and exalted by Allah. Maryam is the first and greatest of these honored ones.

Maryam's story in the Quran spans several surahs: Al Imran (3), Maryam (19), Al-Anbiya (21), Al-Mu'minun (23), At-Tahrim (66), and others. She is mentioned in the context of her birth (3:35-37), her guardianship by Zakariya (3:37), the annunciation of Isa (3:42-47, 19:16-21), the birth under the palm tree (19:22-26), the return to her people and the vindication by Isa's cradle speech (19:27-33), and her pairing with Asiya as an example for all believers (66:11-12).

The question of whether Maryam was a prophet is debated among scholars. The majority position is that she was not a prophet but was given a special divine gift (karamah) — angelic communication and the miraculous birth. A minority position argues that she was a prophet, citing the direct communication she received and the word wahy used in reference to her. This book presents both positions without taking a definitive stance.

Maryam's story is not just a biography — it is a theological statement. Her purity, her trust, her submission, and her suffering are the model for every believer. The woman who was chosen above all women is the model for all people — male and female, in every time, in every place. The book traces her story through the Quran, explores her qualities and her lessons, and presents her as the first light in The Honored Ones series — the light of the chosen woman, the light of Maryam.

Chapter 1: The Lineage of Maryam

The Quran introduces Maryam through her family — the family of Imran:

"Indeed, Allah chose Adam and Nuh and the family of Ibrahim and the family of Imran over the worlds — descendants, some of them from others. And Allah is Hearing, Knowing" (3:33-34).

The verse places the family of Imran alongside Adam, Nuh, and Ibrahim — the greatest prophetic families. Maryam is not an isolated figure; she comes from a lineage chosen by Allah. The family of Imran is the family of prophethood and righteousness — the family that produced Maryam, who produced Isa, the Messiah.

The Quran tells the story of Maryam's mother — a woman whose name is not given in the Quran (tradition identifies her as Hannah or Anna):

"[Mention, O Muhammad], when the wife of Imran said: My Lord, indeed I have pledged to You what is in my womb, dedicated [to Your service], so accept this from me. Indeed, You are the Hearing, the Knowing" (3:35).

The mother of Maryam pledged her unborn child to the service of Allah — a vow of dedication. She expected a boy (who would serve in the temple). When she gave birth to a girl, she said:

"But when she delivered her, she said: My Lord, I have delivered a female. And Allah was most knowing of what she delivered. And the male is not like the female. And I have named her Maryam, and I seek refuge for her in You and for her descendants from Satan, the expelled" (3:36).

The naming is significant: "Maryam" — a name that means "one who worships" or "one who serves." The mother sought refuge for her daughter from Satan — a prayer that, according to Hadith, was answered: "No child is born except that Satan touches it, except Maryam and her son" (Bukhari).

The Quran says:

"So her Lord accepted her with good acceptance and caused her to grow in a good manner and put her in the care of Zakariya" (3:37).

The acceptance is the divine response to the mother's vow. Allah accepted the girl — the girl who was not the boy her mother expected — and caused her to grow in a good manner. The growth is the divine nurture: Allah raised Maryam. The girl who was dedicated to Allah was raised by Allah.

Maryam was placed in the care of Zakariya — the prophet who would later

pray for his own son, Yahya. The placement is significant: Maryam, the girl dedicated to Allah, is raised by a prophet. The prophet becomes her guardian, her teacher, and her protector.

The Quran records a remarkable detail about Maryam's childhood:

"Every time Zakariya entered upon her in the prayer chamber, he found with her provision. He said: O Maryam, from where is this [coming] to you? She said: It is from Allah. Indeed, Allah provides for whom He wills without account"

(3:37).

The provision — food that appeared without explanation — is the first miracle associated with Maryam. She is a girl who receives divine provision in the prayer chamber. The provision is the sign: the girl who was dedicated to Allah is sustained by Allah. Zakariya, the prophet, sees the sign and is moved — the next verse (3:38) records his prayer for a son, inspired by the miracle he witnessed in Maryam's chamber.

The lineage of Maryam — from the family of Imran, through a mother who vowed, to a prophet who guarded — establishes her as a figure of divine election from before birth. She was not an ordinary woman who happened to be chosen; she was chosen before she was born, dedicated before she was named, and nurtured by Allah before she could speak. The lineage is the foundation: the woman who was chosen above all women was prepared for the choosing from the womb.

The Quran mentions that Maryam was placed in a prayer chamber (mihrab) — a private space for worship. The prayer chamber is the symbol of Maryam's life: a woman who lived in the presence of Allah, secluded for devotion, sustained by divine provision. The mihrab is not a punishment or a prison; it is a sanctuary — the place where Maryam worshiped, where the provision came, and where Zakariya witnessed the miracle.

The prayer chamber is also the place of preparation. The woman who would bear the Messiah was prepared in the mihrab — the place of seclusion, devotion, and divine intimacy. The preparation is the pattern: the person who is chosen for a great task is first prepared in solitude. Maryam's years in the mihrab were the years that made her ready for the annunciation, the birth, and the vindication. The solitude was not loneliness; the solitude was the school.

The Quran mentions that Maryam's guardianship was determined by drawing lots:

"And you were not with them when they cast their pens to decide who would

take care of Maryam, nor were you with them when they disputed" (3:44).

The lots — the casting of pens — was the method of determining who would have the honor of caring for Maryam. The dispute was real: the righteous men of the community wanted the honor, and they cast lots to decide. The lot fell to Zakariya — the prophet who was already her guardian by family connection.

The mention of the lots teaches a lesson: the honor of caring for the chosen is itself an honor. The men of the community disputed not over wealth or power but over who would have the privilege of raising Maryam. The person who serves the honored ones is the person who is honored by the service. The caretaker of Maryam was Zakariya — and Zakariya's own prayer for a son (3:38) was inspired by what he witnessed in Maryam's chamber.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aira Aurora is an independent researcher and writer specializing in Quranic studies. Her work focuses on close reading of the Quranic text, exploring its themes, narratives, and moral framework with attention to both the original Arabic and the broader human context.

The NurOne master series is her primary project -- a multi-sub-series exploration of the Quran covering prophets, people, places, events, lessons, commands, signs, the unseen, the hereafter, and everyday life. Each book is a close reading of the Quranic verses on a specific topic, presented in clear, accessible language.

Her work is published under the pen name Aira Aurora.

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