

The verse says:

22. “So she conceived him (Jesus) and withdrew with him to a distance place.”

In this regard the Qur’an implies that the pain of childbirth drove her to the stump of a withered palm-tree from which only that trunk had remained; i.e. it was a dry tree.

The verse says:

23. “And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree...”

In that condition, a storm of sadness and grief came over her pure being.

This storm was so turbulent, and the burden on her shoulder was so heavy, that, as the verse says:

“...She said: ‘Would I had died ere this, and had been a thing forgotten’.”

It is evident that it was not only the fear of future accusations that was pressing upon Mary’s heart, there were also other problems such as delivering a child alone in the desert with no midwife or friend as a helper.

There was no place to rest, nor water to drink, there was no food to eat, nor any means to take care of the child with what was available in the environment. These were all the discomforts that Mary had to tolerate.

Imam Amir-ul-Mu’mineen Ali (as) said:

“The best clothing of the religion is modesty.”[4](#)

Ali-ibn-Abitalib (as) said:

“Verily modesty and chastity are among the specialties of Faith, and both of them are the epithets of the noble and the method of the righteous.”[5](#)

Amir-ul-Mu’mineen Ali (as) said:

“The modesty of a man with himself is the fruit of Faith.”[6](#)

Hadrat Ali (as) said:

“Modesty is from Allah, the Pure, it protects (one) from the punishment of Hell Fire.”[7](#)

Surah Maryam – Verses 24 - 25

فَنَادَاهَا مِنْ تَحْتِهَا أَلَا تَحْزَنِي قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكِ تَحْتَكِ سَرِيًّا

وَهُزِّي إِلَيْكِ بِجِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسَاقِطُ عَلَيْكَ رَطْبًا جَنِيًّا

24. “Then (a voice) called out unto her from beneath her: ‘Grieve not! Verily your Lord has made a stream to flow beneath you’.”

25. “And shake the trunk of the palm-tree towards yourself. It will drop on you fresh ripe dates.”

The Qur’anic word /sariyya/ means ‘a small stream’; and the term /janiyya/ is applied for ‘a fruit which is ripe and ready to be picked off’.

Some commentators have said that the caller unto Mary has been Gabriel; but the context of the verses shows that the caller has been Jesus, in a manner that the mother hears his words and believes what he says, and, later with a calm mind, she tells people to ask about her chastity from the child in the cradle.

At the time of delivery and after it, women usually need tranquility, water and appropriate food, the things which have been mentioned in these verses.

The food which has been recommended in the Qur’an and by some Islamic tradition for the woman who has already delivered, is fresh ripe dates.

Also, the Prophet (S) said:

“The first food for the women who have already delivered, should be fresh dates”.[8](#)

Hadrat Ali (as) says:

“The best food for the pregnant woman is fresh dates, and there is no medical treatment for her better than dates”.[9](#)

This is a Divine trial. The day when Mary was sound, a heavenly food was sent down for her, but today, when she is pregnant and has no assistant, she must shake the palm-tree to get some food.

However, the verse says:

“Then (a voice) called out unto her from beneath her: ‘Grieve not! Verily your Lord has made a stream to flow beneath you’.”

Some commentators have said that the caller has been Jesus Himself (as), who, from beneath her, called out that she should not be grieved (Grieve not!), and she should not ask for death.

She ought to be sure that Allah would protect her from accusation and, by the miracles of Jesus (as), He removes all accusations from her. One of those miracles was that very spring which was found by one step of Gabriel or that of Jesus, from which she both drunk and expurgated herself.

Another miracle of Jesus (as) was that he called unto her to shake the trunk of the palm-tree, which had been dead for years, in order to become green alive again and give her fresh dates. Mary started at once and found that tree. She shook it when some fresh dates fell down for her.

The verse says:

“And shake the trunk of the palm-tree towards yourself. It will drop on you fresh ripe dates.”

It seemed that Allah intended to show her that the similitude of her and Jesus was the similitude of that palm-tree and the dates; meaning that Allah is powerful to cause the fresh dates to fall from a dry dead palm-tree, to gash water from a plain land, and He is powerful to bring a complete human out of the womb of a husbandless woman during a few hours.

This fact was made quietly manifest to Mary that that child was the great sign of Allah and also His condescension unto her, but she was amazed what to say to people so that it could remove the accusation from her. Then, the command of Allah came to her that ‘she should eat and drink’.

It is narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) that the best things which must be given to the ladies who have already conceived is dates and the dates produced in Medina in particular, but if it is not available, the fresh dates from other places might be given to them, or at least, some ordinary dates.^{[10](#)}

Mary was also commanded to drink the wholesome water of that spring, and to refresh her eyes by looking at that newborn child. What a refreshment of the eye can be better than this that Allah grants her a child with the rank of prophethood.

A child who spoke at the beginning time of his birthday, and who had great miracles such as restoring to life the dead, healing the blind, and the like of them.^{[11](#)}

Surah Maryam – Verse 26

فَكُلِّي وَاشْرَبِي وَعَيْنَا فِيمَا تَرَيْنَ مِنَ الْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا فَقُولِي إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أُكَلِّمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنْسِيًّا

26. “So eat and drink and refresh your eye; and if you meet any mortal, say: ‘Verily I have vowed a fast to the Beneficent (God), so never shall I speak today with any human being’.”

Mary’s keeping silence fasting before people was either for that they had not the capacity of her answer, or speaking with them would result a negative consequence, or in continuation of their questions and that Mary gave them their answers, they might suggest some other questions and new pretexts.

Imam Sadiq (as) said that fasting was not only an abstinence from eating and drinking, and then he recited the verse under discussion.

In this holy verse, Allah, the Pure, commands Mary to eat from that delicious and nutritive food and to drink from that wholesome water.

The verse says:

“So eat and drink...”

She was also commanded to refresh her eye by that newly born child and not to be worried about the future; and if anybody asked her regarding it, she would say by sign that she had kept fasting (a silence fasting) for Allah, the Beneficent, and that was why she could speak with no one.

The verse continues saying:

“...and refresh your eye; and if you meet any mortal, say: ‘Verily I have vowed a fast to the Beneficent (God), so never shall I speak today with any human being’.”

Therefore, she should have peace of mind from any points of view and should not let herself be grievous and sad.

From the text of the verse, it is understood that the fast of silence was something familiar to that community, so they did not object to it however this kind of fasting is not sanctioned in the religion of Islam.

It is narrated from Imam Ali-ibn-il-Hussayn (as) who said:

“A fast of Silence is prohibited.”

Ali-ibn-Abitalib (as) has narrated from the Prophet of Islam (S) who said:

“The first thing that a woman may eat after her delivery must be fresh dates.”

Some Islamic traditions denote that the best food for a pregnant woman, and her drug, is fresh dates.

Some Points

1. The hardships and inconveniences that Mary experienced during that short time, and the wonderful things that occurred to her, by the grace of Allah, trained her and made her prepared for fostering one of the Arch-prophets of Allah, so that she could afford her maternal duty in performing this great task very well.

The process of events led her up to the last stage of difficulties, which was so exacting that she did not see the distance between life and death to be more than one step. But suddenly the state of affairs changed.

Everyone hastened to help her, and she was assured a calm atmosphere. The command to shake the palm-tree to enjoy its fruit, teaches her, as well as all other human beings, this lesson that effort and endeavour should not be abandoned even in the most difficult moments of life.

This statement is an answer to those who think there should not have been any necessity for Mary, who had just given birth, to stand up and shake the palm-tree.

This view states that it would have been better if the same Lord, by Whose command the spring had gushed forth in front of her, and by Whose order the dry tree had yielded fruit, had sent a breeze to shake the branch of the tree so that the dates would fall.

They say that when Mary was healthy, heavenly fruits were sent to her sanctuary, and now when she was in dire physical and emotional difficulties, she had to shake the tree and pick up the fruit herself.

The commandment is far from without wisdom, to recapitulate, it shows that there is no bounty unless we use effort. In other words, when the difficulties come forth, everybody must apply his utmost effort, and that which is beyond his ability, he ought to seek it from Allah.

2. Why Mary hoped for Death? There is no doubt that hoping for death is not a proper thing to do, but sometimes calamities and terrible events occur in the course of a person's life when the taste of life becomes utterly bitter for him, especially when his own honour and sacred aims are in danger and he does not have the ability to defend them. In such circumstances he hopes for death in order to free himself of his spiritual tortures.

What was on Mary's mind from the beginning was that the birth of this child could make her lose all her respect and honour in the eyes of those mindless people, so she hoped for death and that she would be forgotten. This itself is a proof of the fact that she valued chastity and piety more than her very life, and would rather die than live without honour.

These kinds of thoughts, however, bothered her only for a short time. When she contemplated these couple of miracles of Allah, (gushing water and fructification of the dry palm-tree), all her fears and anxieties, disappeared and the light of certainty and tranquility filled her whole heart.

3. An Answer to a Question: Some sceptics say if miracles are only particular to prophets and Immaculate Imams, how could have those miracles appeared for Mary?

To solve this problem, some commentators count these miracles as those wrought by Jesus, and say that they were done as miracles preliminary to prophethood, which in Arabic are called: /'irhadat/.

But such questions need not be answered with answers such as these, because it is possible for supernatural events to occur in connection with people other than prophets and the Immaculate Imams. This is exactly what we call /kiramah/ 'extraordinary act', whereas a miracle is accompanied with /tahaddi/ 'a challenge' for it serves as a proof for a prophet or an Imam.

4. The Fast of Silence: The verses under discussion show that Mary was held to a vow of silence and, by the command of Allah, she refrained from speaking to the people for a particular duration until her child, Jesus, began speaking and defended her chastity. This state was more appropriate and effective from all respects.

The verse indicates that the vow of silence was a familiar habit for those people and as such they did not object to it from her.

This kind of fasting, however, is not lawful in the religion of Islam.

It is narrated from Imam Ali-ibn-il-Hussayn (as) that he said:

"The fast of silence is prohibited".[12](#)

And this prohibition reflects the difference between the conditions prevailing at that time and those at the time of the advent of Islam.

Nevertheless, one of the etiquettes of a perfect fast in Islam, of course, is that, when fasting the believer should protect his tongue from committing sins and doing what is disapproved and restrain his eyes from looking at any corruption.

Imam Sadiq (as) in a tradition has said:

“Verily fasting is not merely to restrain oneself from eating and drinking alone. Surely Mary said:

‘Verily I have vowed a fast to the Beneficent (God)’, i.e. the silence.

Therefore (when you are in fasting) protect your tongue, restrain your eyes from whatever is sin, be not envious of each other, and do not get into conflict.”[13](#)

5. A Nutritive Food: The verses under discussion clearly say that Allah sent fresh dates for Mary’s food at the time of childbirth. With this in mind, commentators have said that the best food for women after their childbirth is fresh dates.

This idea has been explicitly indicated as such in the Islamic literature as well. Imam Amir-ul-Mu’mineen Ali (as) has narrated from the holy Prophet of Islam (S) who said:

“The first thing a woman is to eat after childbirth should be fresh dates, since Allah told Mary:

‘And shake the trunk of the palm-tree towards yourself. It will drop on you fresh ripe dates’.”[14](#)

The explanation in some commentaries that cite this tradition implies that eating this food is not only useful for the mother, but will also affect her milk.

Again, it is understood from some Islamic traditions that the best food for a pregnant woman, as well as her medicine, is fresh dates,[15](#) and, if it is not available, ordinary dates can be used. But, moderation must be observed in everything, even in this matter.

Some scientists and food specialists say that dates are abundant in nutrition and have one of the healthiest sugars which can be used even by some diabetic patients.

The same scientists say that there are 13 vital substances and five kinds of vitamins found in dates, all of which make it a rich source of food.[16](#)

It is also well known that in such a state, women are intensely in need of some nutritive food which are full of vitamins.

With the progress of medical science, the importance of dates as a medicine has been proved.

Calcium is found in dates which is an important substance in strengthening bones and teeth. There is also phosphorus which is one of the main elements that make up man’s brain. It

hinders neurasthenia and fatigue. Dates contain potassium, the lack of which causes ulcers in the stomach.