

## CLASS 12

## PROPHETS UZAIR, ZAKARIAH &amp; YAHYA عليه صلعم

## PROPHET UZAIR (EZRA) عليه صلعم

**Uzair عليه صلعم Sleeps For 100 Years**

Ishaaq Ibn Bishr reported, on the authority of Ibn' Abbas and others, that Uzair was a saint and a wise man. He went out one day to his own farm, as was his custom. About noon he came to a deserted, ruined place and felt the heat. He entered the ruined town and dismounted his donkey, taking figs and grapes in his basket. He went under the shade of the khaiba tree and ate his food. Then he got up to look at what remained of the ruins. The people had long been lost, and he saw bones. *"Oh! How will Allah ever bring it to life after its death?"* (2:259)

He said this not out of doubt but out of curiosity. Allah sent the Angel of Death to take his life. He remained dead for one hundred years.

After one hundred years had passed and there had been changes in Israelite affairs, Allah sent an angel upon Uzair to revive his heart and his eyes in order for him to feel and see how Allah revives the dead. The angel said: "For how long did you sleep?" He said: "A day or part of a day." He said this because he knew he had slept early in the afternoon and woke up late in the afternoon. The angel said: "You remained asleep for one hundred years." He ate and drank the food which he had prepared before he was overtaken by that long sleep. Then the angel revived his donkey.

Almighty Allah said: *"And look at your donkey! Thus We have made of you a sign for the people. Look at the bones, how We bring them together and clothe them with flesh." When this was clearly shown to him he said: "I know now that Allah is able to do all things." (Ch 2:259)*

**Uzair عليه صلعم Returns Home**

He rode on his donkey and entered his native place, but the people did not recognize him, nor did his household, except the maid, now an old woman. He asked her: "Is this the house of Uzair?" She said: "Yes, but the people have long forgotten Uzair." He said: "I am Uzair, Allah had taken my life for a one hundred years and has now returned it to me." She said: "Uzair used to be answered when he prayed to Allah. Pray to cure me of blindness if you are Uzair." He prayed for her and massaged her eyes and took her by the hand. "Get up by the power of Allah," he said. The crippled woman stood up and walked; she opened her eyes and saw; her blindness was gone. She said: "I bear witness that you are Uzair."

**Lesson**

Allah grants life and death whenever he wishes and it is very easy for him to rise them from the dead.



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Sisters – Umm Maryam  
+966 58 280 9853

Brothers – Abu Sahl Ansari  
+966 57 817 1372

## PROPHET ZAKARIYAH (ZECHARIAH) عليه صلعم

Centuries passed after the death of Sulaiman عليه صلعم, and the Muslim kingdom rose and fell. The temple of Sulaiman AS disappeared over the generations, and in its vicinity, the modern day Bait-al Maqdis was erected.

The final group of Prophets and Messengers descended from Ishaq عليه صلعم: Zakariya عليه صلعم, Yahya عليه صلعم and Isa عليه صلعم are interlinked, both by blood relationship and by the proximity in time and location. To fully understand the connection between these Prophets, it is best to read all of their stories together.

During this time, Bani Israel had reverted to their characteristics of stirring mischief amongst each other, and more seriously, they also started initiating blasphemy against Allah SWT. They claimed that Allah was stingy, *astaghfirullah al adzeem*, and that Allah withheld from them. These claims are the direct opposite of Allah's attributes of generosity. After all that Allah had given to them throughout the generations, this was how they displayed their thanks and gratitude towards Allah. These constant accusations provoked the anger of Allah upon them.

Their claims of stinginess are even contained in current Jewish and Christian scriptures. The original scriptures revealed to Musa عليه صلعم and Dawud عليه صلعم had been manipulated to such an extent that they now assert that when Allah had completed the creation of the earth, He was too tired to rule the earth. This is why the Old Testament (which was originally based on the Taurat and Zabur, but has been manipulated and falsified by Bani Israel) claim that after the final day of creation, God took a rest – again, being total blasphemy as it depicted Allah as being incompetent instead of omnipotent.

Additionally, the Jews claimed that Allah had granted authority to the Jewish scholars to rule the earth, and to issue rulings which would supersede and override the teachings of Musa عليه صلعم. Bani Israel had elevated itself to be the chosen people of Allah above other races, in direct contradiction of the teachings of racial equality in Islam.

Such was their immense arrogance that they claimed to know more than Allah, but there is nothing new in this pattern of behaviour. This is why, generation after generation, Prophets and Messengers were sent to Bani Israel to lead them of the right path, but within time, they would deviate until yet another Prophet was sent down to their community to guide them afresh. Yet, repeatedly, Bani Israel disobeyed from the smallest things to the largest issues, continuously rejecting the messages, signs and commands of Allah.

In the last era of the Prophets descended from Ishaq عليه صلعم, their behaviour worsened and they even resorted to murdering the Messengers and Prophets.



## THE GUARDIANSHIP OF MARYAM عليه صلعم

During this time, there lived amongst Bani Israel a man by the name of 'Imran. He was so renowned for his piety that his was considered to be one of the best of the families of all time. He was not a Prophet or Messenger, but his household was so noble and elevated in Allah's kingdom that there is even an entire chapter in the Qur'an named after it.

'Imran had a pious wife, and her sister was married to Zakariya عليه صلعم, a prophet.

The Qur'an does not provide accounts of Zakariya's عليه صلعم childhood or youth. Hence, the story of Zakariya عليه صلعم begins in his late adulthood, when he was elderly. He was a Prophet and Messenger of Bani Israel. He is a direct descendant of Dawud عليه صلعم and Sulaiman عليه صلعم and his activities were centred in Bait-al Maqdis, where the temple of Sulaiman عليه صلعم once stood.

It is confirmed by authentic Hadith that Zakariya عليه صلعم was a carpenter. He led a simple life, and like majority of his brothers in prophethood, was of limited financial means.

Although he lived an austere life, Zakariya عليه صلعم was constantly in a state of gratitude to Allah, and was intensely humble in his demeanour. Similar to his distant ancestor, Ibrahim عليه صلعم, he and his wife had already reached an extreme old age without having any children.

Meanwhile, the wife of 'Imran, his sister in law, or his wife's sister, gave birth to Maryam عليه صلعم, and she pledged to dedicate Maryam AS towards pure servitude to Allah. Shortly after the birth of Maryam عليه صلعم (or in some accounts, before she was born), her father, 'Imran, passed away. This sparked off a dispute within Bani Israel on her guardianship.

Zakariya عليه صلعم should have been the obvious choice. He was her uncle by marriage, and moreover, was a Prophet whose moral character and piety were beyond question. No one else had his merit of character. But true to their argumentative nature, Bani Israel disputed this choice, for they wanted the prestige of raising 'Imran's daughter.

Zakariya عليه صلعم kept silent and maintained his good manner. The people eventually agreed that they should cast lots to decide the matter. All the candidates wrote down their names on pens (or wooden writing instruments), and put them in a container. A child was sent to pick one of the pens at random. The pen that was selected bore Zakariya's عليه صلعم name.

Dissatisfied at the outcome, some of them asked for the cast to be repeated. This time, the claimants put all their pens in the river. The pen that would swim against the current would win the guardianship. Again, it was the pen of Zakariya عليه صلعم that won.

Still stubborn and quarrelsome, they demanded a third round. This time, they decided that whichever pen swam with the current would win the cast. Yet again, it was only Zakariya's عليه صلعم pen that differed

from the rest, swimming with the current while the other pens drifted upstream. Observe the power of Allah: people may plot and plan, but what is written will take place.

*And you were not with them when they cast their pens as to which of them should be responsible for Maryam. Nor were you with them when they disputed.* (Al Qur'an 3:44)

Thus Bani Israel had no choice but to acknowledge that Zakariya عليه صلعم was the undisputed champion and was entitled to assume the guardianship of Maryam AS.

The years had taken their toll on the Prophet Zakariyah عليه صلعم. He was now old and bent with age, in his nineties. Despite his feebleness, he went to the temple daily to deliver his sermons.

Zakariyah عليه صلعم was not a rich man, but he was always ready to help those in need. His one disappointment in life was that he had no children, for his wife was barren. This worried him, for he feared there was no one after him to carry out his work. The people needed a strong leader, for it they were left on their own, they would move away from Allah's teachings and change the Holy Laws to suit themselves.

### **Zakariyah عليه صلعم Talks to Maryam (Mary)**

During one of his visits to the temple, he went to check on Mary, who was living in a secluded room of the temple. He was surprised to find fresh out of season fruit in her room. Besides him, no one had entry to her room. When he inquired, she told him that the fruit was from Allah. She found it every morning. But why was he so surprised, she asked him. Did he not know that Allah provides without measure for whom He wills?

This noble girl had opened this eyes to a startling idea. Could he not ask his Lord to bless him with a child in his old age? Even if his wife was past childbearing age, nothing was impossible for his Gracious Lord!

### **Zakariyah عليه صلعم Asks for a Son - Quranic**

Allah the Almighty revealed:

*'Kaf, Ha, Ya, Ain, Sad, (These letters are one of the miracles of the Quran, and none but Allah Alone knows their meanings). This is a mention of the Mercy of your Lord to His slave Zakariyah. When he called out his Lord (Allah) - a call in secret, saying: "My Lord! Indeed my bones have grown feeble, and gray hair has spread on my head, and I have never been unblest in my invocation to You, O my Lord! And Verily! I fear my relatives after me, since my wife is barren. So give me from Yourself an heir, - who shall inherit me, and inherit also the posterity of Jacob (inheritance of the religious knowledge and Prophethood, not the wealth, etc.) And make him, my Lord, one with whom You are Well-pleased!"*

*Allah said: "O Zakariyah! Verily, We give you the glad tidings of a son. His name will be Yahya (Yahya). We have given that name to none before him. "*

*He said: "My Lord! How can I have a son, when my wife is barren, and I have reached the extreme old age."*

*He said: "So (it will be). Your Lord says, It is easy for Me. Certainly I have created you before, when you had been nothing. "*

*Zakariyah said: "My Lord! Appoint for me a sign. "*

*He said: "Your sign is that you shall not speak unto mankind for three nights, though having no bodily defect."*

*Then he came out to his people from Al Mihrab (a praying place or a private room, etc.), he told them by signs to glorify Allah's Praises in the morning and in the afternoon.*

*It was said to his son: "O Yahya! Hold fast to the Scripture (The Torah). "And We gave him wisdom while yet a child, and made him sympathetic to men as a mercy or a grant from Us, and pure from sins (Yahya) and he was righteous, and dutiful towards his parents, and he was neither an arrogant nor disobedient (to Allah or to his parents). And Salamun (peace) on him the day he was born, the day he dies, and the day he will be raised up to life again! (Ch 19:1-15 Quran)*

Almighty Allah also said:

*"At that time Zakariyah invoked his Lord, saying: "O my Lord! Grant me from You, a good offspring. You are indeed the All-Hearer of invocation. "*

*Then the angels called him, while he was standing in prayer in Al- Mihrab ( a praying place or a private room), saying: "Allah gives you glad tidings of Yahya confirming (believing in) the Word from Allah ("Be!" - and he was! (i.e. the creation of Isa (Jesus), son of Mariam (Mary), noble keeping away from sexual relations with women, a Prophet, from among the righteous. "*

*He said: "O my Lord! How can I have a son when I am very old, and my wife is barren? " Allah said: "Thus Allah does what He wills. " He said: "O my Lord! Make a sign for me. "Allah said: "Your sign is that you shall not speak to mankind for three days except with signals. And remember your Lord much (by praising Him again and again), and glorify Him in the afternoon and in the morning. " (Ch 3:38-41 Quran).*

## LESSONS

- *Have Tawakkul, Allah is the Only Planner.* We should realize that if something is meant to be, no amount of human effort can change the results. Allah is always the best planner, and while we as human beings, plot and plan, it is ultimately the plot and plan of Allah that overrides all else.
- *The Ultimate Legacy,* the ultimate gift that one can hope for in a child is someone who can continue to spread the legacy of Islam. Zakariya عليه صلعم did not want a son to inherit his wealth, land or financial empire, for he had none. However, he wanted his progeny to inherit the knowledge of Islam so that the legacy of *da'wah* can continue.
- *Making children work for Islam,* How many mothers have children for the sake of servitude to Allah? Infact when the children are born, the children are suffocated with *dunia* from all sides. The emphasis of upbringing is concentrated on secular education and worldly achievements, with little or no awareness of Allah.
- *The Power of Belief,* Allah can provide for whom He wants, at His own will. We learn the value of a person in Allah's esteem when he gets closer to Allah and what Allah can do for him. The root and the conditions do not belong to this earth, but rather are in the hands of Allah. Allah can will anything to happen, and Allah can also erase any obstacles. Yet, why are we so reluctant to turn to Him in the time of need, believing in the hopelessness of the circumstances instead of the unlimited power of Allah? It is because our faith is so weak that our first recourse is to rely on ourselves, or others, who are just as limited as we. We rarely rely on Allah because deep down, many of us disbelieve in Allah's ability to deliver.

## PROPHET YAHYA (JOHN) عليه صلعم

### Yahya's Childhood

Yahya عليه صلعم was born a stranger to the world of children who used to amuse themselves, as he was serious all the time. Most children took delight in torturing animals whereas, he was merciful to them. He fed the animals from his food until there was nothing left for him, and he just ate fruit or leaves of trees. Yahya عليه صلعم loved reading since childhood. When he grew up, Allah the Exalted called upon him:

"O Yahya! Hold fast to the Scripture (The Torah). "And We gave him wisdom while yet a child". (Ch 19:12 Quran).



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Sisters – Umm Maryam  
+966 58 280 9853

Brothers – Abu Sahl Ansari  
+966 57 817 1372

## Yahya's Qualities

Allah guided him to read the Book of Jurisprudence closely; thus, he became the wisest and most knowledgeable man of that time. Therefore, Allah the Almighty endowed him with the faculties of passing judgments on people's affairs, interpreting the secrets of religion, guiding people to the right path, and warning them against the wrong one.

Yahya عليه صلعم reached maturity. His compassion for his parents, as well as for all people and all creatures, increased greatly. He called people to repent their sins.

There are quite a number of traditions told about Yahya عليه صلعم. Ibn Asaker related that one time his parents were looking for him and found him at the Jordan River. When they met him, they wept sorely, seeing his great devotion to Allah, Great and Majestic.

Ibn Wahb said that, according to Malik, grass was the food of Yahya Ibn Zakariyah عليه صلعم, and he wept sorely in fear of Allah. A chain of narrators reported that Idris Al Khawlawi said: "Shall I not tell you he who had the best food? It is Yahya Ibn Zakariyah عليه صلعم, who joined the beasts at dinner, fearing to mix with men."

## Why Yahya Always Wept

Ibn Mubarak stated that Wahb Ibn Al-Ward narrated that Zakariyah عليه صلعم did not see his son for three days. He found him weeping inside a grave which he had dug and in which he resided. "My son, I have been searching for you, and you are dwelling in this grave weeping!" "O father, did you not tell me that between Paradise and Hell is only a span, and it will not be crossed except by tears of weepers?" He said to him: "Weep then, my son." Then they wept together.

Other narrations say that Yahya عليه صلعم said: "The dwellers of Paradise are sleepless out of the sweetness of Allah's bounty; that is why the faithful must be sleepless because of Allah's love in their hearts. How far between the two luxuries, how far between them?"

They say Yahya عليه صلعم wept so much that tears marked his cheeks.



### Yahya's عليه صلعم Love of Nature

He found comfort in the open and never cared about food. He ate leaves, herbs, and sometimes locusts. He slept anywhere in the mountains or in holes in the ground. He sometimes would find a lion or a bear as he entered a cave, but being deeply absorbed in praising Allah, he never heeded them. The beasts easily recognized Yahya عليه صلعم as the prophet who cared for all the creatures, so they would leave the cave, bowing their heads.

Yahya عليه صلعم sometimes fed those beasts, out of mercy, from his food and was satisfied with prayers as food for his soul. He would spend the night crying and praising Allah for His blessings.

When Yahya عليه صلعم called people to worship Allah, he made them cry out of love and submission, arresting their hearts with the truthfulness of his words.

A conflict took place between Yahya عليه صلعم and the authorities at that time. A tyrant king, Herod Antipas, the ruler of Palestine, was in love with Salome, his brother's daughter. He was planning to marry his beautiful niece. The marriage was encouraged by her mother and by some of the learned men of Zion, either out of fear or to gain favor with the ruler.

On hearing the ruler's plan, Yahya عليه صلعم pronounced that such a marriage would be incestuous. He would not approve it under any circumstance, as it was against the Law of the Torah.

### Yahya's Cruel Death

Yahya's pronouncement spread like wildfire. Salome was angry, for it was her ambition to rule the kingdom with her uncle. She plotted to achieve her aim. Dressing attractively, she sang and danced before her uncle. Her arousing Herod's lust. Embracing her, he offered to fulfill whatever she desired. At once she told him: "I would love to have the head of Yahya عليه صلعم, because he has defiled your honor and mine throughout the land. If you grant me this wish, I shall be very happy and will offer myself to you." Bewitched by her charm, he submitted to her monstrous request. Yahya عليه صلعم was executed and his head was brought to Salome. The cruel woman gloated with delight. But the death of Allah's beloved prophet was avenged. Not only she, but all the children of Israel were severely punished by invading armies which destroyed their kingdom.



## Lessons

- There is nothing to be ashamed of if living a very frugal life, and that one does not have to indulge in a luxurious lifestyle to gain the pleasure of Allah
- The humiliation of the physical body is not something that we should worry about, on the condition that our soul, status of the heart, and strength of our faith grants us the closeness and pleasure of Allah.
- Continued Disobedience Through the passage of time, Bani Israel became increasingly bold in their disobedience, to the extent that they were willing to murder Prophets with their own hands. As we come close to the conclusion of our series on the Prophets and Messengers, the question that remains for us is: Why did Allah grant us numerous examples of the disbelievers, the criminals and the disobedient, starting from the first generation of mankind born on earth, all the way to the despicable behaviour of Bani Israel, and later the behaviour of the Quraish (before they submitted to Islam)? These all provide stern warnings for us, for each of the stories describe their characteristics to the point that they became spiritually blind: arrogant, envious, stingy, leading to hypocrisy and disbelief. Allah will never guide those who are oppressors, or are stingy or arrogant. The Bani Israel during this time strayed so far from fear of Allah that they were willing to kill Prophets with their own hands and their actions are condemned by Allah until the end of time.

May Allah protect us from all these evil qualities, and make us amongst the rightly guided, *ameen*.