

## **Kiramat (Generosity) and the Status of Woman in Qur'an**

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**Abstract:** The story of the creation of man and woman in the Qur'an differs in fundamental ways from the story of creation in the Bible. The Qur'an explains that, contiguous with the creation of Adam, was the creation of his mate from the same material and essence. These two, Adam and Eve, hold equal positions as Allah's khalafah(vicegerent) on earth. This article discusses the Kiramat(generosity) of women in the Qur'an with respect to their creation, status, understanding, ability to be guided, devoutness to God, and freedom to choose. It delineates the specific expression of kiramat for women in modest dress, behavior and in procreation. Her role as a mother places a unique burden upon her, not only to maintain her own status before Allah, but also to safeguard the spiritual health of children and prepare them to assume the role of vicegerent of Allah in the future.

**Key words:** Kiramat, Woman, Qur'an, Vicegerent, Adam, Eve.

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## Introduction

In recent decades the spotlight shining in the Muslim world has often narrowed its focus onto the perceived role of women in Islam. Much is made of the cultural differences between Muslim and non-Muslim societies and the teachings of Islam, while the status of woman before God is ignored. If there is to be an informed discussion of the status that Islam accords women and how that fits within the cultural milieu, it must begin with an examination of the Qur'an and the evolutionary improvement of humankind described therein.

The status of woman in much of the world at the time when Islam burst upon the scene was inferior to man. Some societies even positioned women inferior to men on the scale of humanity. In the Old Testament, Eve, the secondary creature fashioned from the rib of Adam is portrayed as innately inferior to him (Genesis 2:23: 'And Adam said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man (Bible,2:23), with a weakness for temptation. Although she had not been created when Adam was warned away from the tree of knowledge (Bible, Genesis 2:17), she is nevertheless held responsible for falling victim to the wiles of the Serpent and for the expulsion of Adam from the garden (B, Genesis 3:11-12). Her status in Judaism and Christianity reflected the teachings of the Old Testament. When Islam appeared, the Qur'an provided an enlightened visage of woman that reinstated her innate value and standing.

Moreover, her station is the same human station as that of Adam: Allah's khali-fah. Thus, it can be said that woman is equally responsible to carry the weight of accountability alongside man to reach completion. The purpose of her creation, as is man's, is to fulfill her responsibilities here on earth and worship Allah: 'I did not create the jinn<sup>2</sup> and the humans except that they may worship Me'(Az-Zaryat,56).

This article discusses the creation of woman based on the Qur'an. She is, thus, a human being with the kiramat, or honor, and the capacity to reach a high spiritual station before Allah as well as men.

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2- Jinn is one of God's creations which is not from mud and normally is invisible for human beings. There are good and bad kinds of them like humans as Qur'an asserts some of them believe in the Prophet and Quran when some of them do not (Surah Al-Jinn (27)).

### **Relation between Kiramat and the Creation of Humankind**

Based on the teachings of Quran, Kiramat or 'generosity' is defined as 'honor and greatness in the existence and inner being of a person with the condition that he/she feels no superiority or pride in him/herself (Muṣṭafawī, 1368/1989, pp. 10 & 46). This term has also been translated as 'distinction' (Muṭn, 1362 /1982, p.3.2929) and 'repulsion from meanness and lowliness while having an exalted disposition' (Javādī Āmolī 1372/1990). Allah has honored humans with kiramat in their creation so that they may attain His divine destination in generosity of spirit.

The Old Testament describes the creation of Eve as being from the left rib of Adam. Genesis 2: 21-2 says, 'And Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof: and the rib, which Jehovah God had taken from the man, made him a woman, and brought her unto the man.' These words show man to be the primary object of creation and woman to be secondary.

By contrast, the Qur'an, though it was during a time of ignorance and low societal position for women, explains the creation of Adam and his mate as being the same in essence: 'O mankind! 'Be wary of your Lord who created you from a single soul, and created its mate from it, and from the two of them, scattered numerous men and women' (An-Nisaa,1).

Also: 'He created you (all) from a single Person, and then created of like nature His mate... (Az-Zumar,6).

Allah, after describing in the Qur'an the creation of the heavens and earth and life on them, announces to the angels that He will create a khalifah (vicegerent) on the earth: 'And when your Lord said to the angels, 'Indeed I am going to set a viceroy (khalifah) on the earth' (Al-Baqarah,30). Lexicographers have given the following meanings for khalifah: 'A khalifah is someone who takes the place of his predecessors' (Farāhīdī (1405/1985, 4. 267) 'A khalifah sits in the place of another whether that person is absent, dead, or disabled, or the khalifah has become the deputy and vicegerent because of his nobility. It is in this last capacity that Allah has made humans His khalifah on earth (Rāghib Isfahānī, 1392/1972, pp.293-294).

Commentators on the Qur'an have said: 'khalifah...means assuming the status/ position of someone before him. This is why a sultan is also called a khalifah; because he is the successor of the sultan who came before him' (Tabari, 1409/1990,

p.1. 93). 'Khalifah is a person who succeeds another and stands in his place (Fakhridin Rāzī, no date, p.2.165). 'Khilafat means something sitting in the place of something else, and this occurs when the khalifah assumes all of the qualities, actions and rulings of the one he is taking the place of' (Tabātabā'īyy, 1390/1970, p.1. 115). Khalifah, from the root khalf, means a person who takes the place of another, assuming his status, and settling his affairs (Tāliqānī, no date, p.1, 112).

Some commentators believe that 'the mentioned khilafah is not specific to Adam himself, but that his descendant share equal status with him in this matter (Zamakhsharī, 1407/1987, p.1. 124). Some verses of the Qur'an confirm this generalization, for example: 'Then We made you successors (khalā'if) on the earth after them that We may observe how you will act (Yunus, 14) (Tabātabā'īyy, 1390/1970, p. 1. 116). Thus, it can be said that this kiramah, which is an exalted position, applies to all of humankind, including the wife of Adam and their descendants. Hazrat Zahra - the Daughter of Messenger of Allah- is also a typical person to bear this title as she was a complete human.

Allah, by bestowing this kiramah on humankind, has made him/her His vicegerent on earth (Al-Baqarah, 30). It is the utmost kiramah that humans can reach the rank of khilafah and vicegerent of Allah. Since, as defined earlier, a successor is someone who possesses the abilities and attributes of the one he succeeds; hence, humans must possess exalted attributes to qualify as Allah's deputy. Allah has said:

'Certainly We have honoured (karramn) the Children of Adam... (Al-Isra, 70). Ayatollah Sadr has written: 'Such a khilafah [possessing kiramah] was not just for Adam himself, but for all genders of mankind (Sadr, 1979, p.13). In describing this designation, He is Allah's deputy in carrying out His rulings and commands (Tabarsi, 1403/1983, 1, 93; Alūsī, 1990, p.33). It is narrated that Ibn Mas'od (the companion of Prophet Mohammad) said: 'It was Allah's will to place His successor on the earth to carry out His orders among His creatures. And, this successor was Adam and his descendants (Tusi, no date, 1. 92-93). Shaykh Tūsī writes: 'What is meant by Allah's successor is someone who brings forth the fruits, makes the rivers flow, cultivates crops, and makes the earth habitable (Ibid). As can be seen, Shaykh Tūsī defines human being's kiramah of being the successor of Allah on earth to be the foundation of humankind's struggles and exertions.

The human is the vicegerent of Allah, who has declared in the Qur'an: 'Blessed is the name of your Lord, the Majestic, the Munificent (karim)!(Ar-Rahman,78). Allah, who possesses the attribute of kiramāt, is the teacher of humankind. His guidance and His plan are in the hands of a noble envoy; as the Qur'an states, 'in the hands of envoys, noble (karim) and pious' (Abasa, 15-16) ( DelshādTehrānī, 1380/2001, p.206). Kiramāt, then, is a quality of the envoys also. The most complete human beings are those who are the most magnanimous. Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad As-Sadiq (pbuh<sup>3</sup>) narrated from his father:' An angel descended to the Messenger of God [Prophet Muhammad] and said, 'You are the most magnanimous being of all of the inhabitants of the earth and skies (Majlisī, 1403/1983, 27. 11).

After Allah announces that He will put His vicegerent on earth, He describes this vicegerent in a number of verses in the Qur'an. From the verses, it becomes clear that fulfilling the position of vicegerent is not a task for a single human. Foremost, it requires succeeding generations and an increase in population, which demands a mate. Their progeny form families and societies living on the earth and partaking of Allah's blessings. Societies carry out Allah's commands and ordinances. Thus, Adam's mate is a companion and equal before Allah to traverse the stages of life and reach spiritual completion. She was created as a helpmate to share in the duties and obligations of the divine khalifah.

### **Kiramāt in the Creation of Women**

The Qur'an introduces man and woman to be from one substance and essence, while the Old Testament portrays woman as an off-shoot of Adam. TabāTabā'iy has written about this: Although this matter [the creation of Eve from the rib of Adam] in itself is not impossible [for Allah], the verses from the Qur'an are empty of this meaning (Tabātabā'iy, 1390/1970, 4.136, 147).

The story of Eve being created from the side of Adam is not explicit in the Qur'an. The phrase 'then made from it its mate' should not be assumed to have the same meaning as the story of Genesis. Zurārah ibn A'īn asked Ja'fare bin Mohammad (pbuh) about the creation of Eve saying: 'Some people say Allah created Eve from the lower left rib of Adam.' The Imam replied: 'Allah is free of such a connotation and is above it. Is it said that Allah does not have the ability to create Adam's

3- Peace be upon him.

mate from other than his rib? This is a pretext of common folk to imply that one part of Adam mated with another part (Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, 1425/2004, 1. 66).

In other verses it is stated:

'It is He who created you from a single soul and made from it its mate, that he might find comfort in her (Al-A'raf, 189,237).

From these verses, we learn that one factor demonstrating the kiramah and the status of woman in creation is her ability to bring comfort and peace. Humankind stands in need of such and the modern world, more than ever, prays for it. The Qur'an also states:

'And of His signs is that He created for you mates from your own selves that you may take comfort in them... (Ar-Rum, 21).

It can be said that the root of a man's attraction to a woman and of finding comfort in her proximity is the affection and kindness that Allah has created between them. This divinely bestowed affection and benevolence is separate from carnal desires (Javādī Āmolī. 1372/1990, p.39).

Thus, man and woman have been created from one essence. The kiramah which Allah has bestowed on all humankind applies to woman also. As the Qur'an states: 'Certainly We have honored (karramnā) the Children of Adam and carried them over land and sea, and provided them all the good things, and given them an advantage over many of those We have created with a complete preference' (Al-Isra,70).

Tabataba'iy writes: 'The intention of "honoring" is to bestow favor and nobility on a person by giving them a characteristic not present in others. This characteristic is the difference between 'honoring' and 'giving excellence', because honoring is specific to the one honored and does not relate to other individuals. Only the honored individual is considered to possess this nobility and generosity. By contrast, 'giving excellence' implies that the one whom excellence is bestowed upon becomes better than others, although he shares possession of the gift with them. The characteristic that humans possess above other creatures is reason or wisdom ('aql). With this quality, humans can differentiate between good and bad, useful and harmful, decent and indecent. Other God-given gifts such as mastery over other creatures and talents used to reach various goals, like speaking and writing, may be obtained with the use of wisdom. Humankind is honored because Adam was created by Allah and Allah's prophets were chosen from among humankind,

particularly the Seal of the Prophets [Muhammad (pbuh)]. All of these are spiritual honors, his superiority and excellence is in comparison to all other creatures, even the best of them, whether mineral, plant, animal, or jinn (Tabātabā'īyy, 1390/1970, 13.166-167).

Some people raise questions about verse (ayah) 34 of Chapter (Surah) An-Nisa, as it says: 'Men are the protectors and maintainers [Qawwamun] of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means'.

In the original Arabic verse, the word used is Qawwamun, plural of Qawwam, which means: one who stands firm in another's business, protects his interests, and looks after his affairs. This is about the relationship between a wife and a husband in a family environment, which is necessary for the affairs of a family, and is not a general case between men and women in the society. Moreover, it is exactly another reason for the kiramat of women in the point of view of our Lord as He is the Most Merciful and the Most gracious which took heavy responsibilities from the shoulder of women. Women, then, are provided with calmness to account for their personal and family requirements particularly due to the fact that pregnancy and raising children is a great duty in its place.

Kiramah and the Position of Woman with Regard to Insight and Understanding

Understanding and awareness are the tools of kiramat and the superiority of humans over all other creatures. When addressing humankind, the Qur'an uses the term 'soul' (nafs) which includes both men and women. If, as this indicates, the spirit and realm of woman is no different from man's, then their path to spiritual completion is also similar. Women, similar to men, can reach the same heights of human kiramat by increasing their insight and understanding of Allah, disciplining their spirit, and training in Gnosticism ('irfan). Conversely, like men, women can also be misguided and go astray. The Qur'anic verses pertaining to the temptations of Satan apply to both the sexes:

'But Satan tempted them (both)...' (Al-A'raf, 20).

'Then he brought about their fall by deception...' (Al-A'raf, 22).

'Then Satan caused them (both) to stumble from it...' (Al-Baqara, 36).

#### **4. Disobeying Allah's Commands Brings Loss of Kiramat**

In the Qur'an, Adam and his mate are forbidden by divine command from approaching and eating from a tree; but, at the evil suggestion of Satan, they disobey. Allah's directive to Adam is: 'O Adam, dwell with your mate in paradise, and eat thereof whence you wish; but do not approach this tree, let you should be among the wrong doers.' (Al-A'raf, 9). Their act of disobedience causes their nakedness and carnal desires to become apparent to them.

At the time of their creation, the level of woman's and man's kiramah is so high that Allah places them in paradise, near Himself; however, their disobedience in approaching the tree causes them to become wrong doers, and they become aware of their carnal inclinations and begin to sew the leaves of the garden together to cover their nakedness. Disobeying Divine commands has brought about their loss of kiramah before Allah. This demonstrates that the merit and generosity of a person, then, is achieved through obedience to Allah.

The Qur'anic story unfolds: 'Then Satan caused them to stumble from it, and he dislodged them from what they were in; "and we said, Get down, being enemies of one another! On the earth shall be your abode and sustenance for a time. Then Adam received certain words from his Lord, and he turned to him clemently. Indeed He is the All-clement, the All-merciful. We said, "Get down from it, all together!..."'(Al-Baqara, 36-38). In this verse, 'get down from' (hubut) means to fall or drop with an accompanying lowering of position, as the plunge or fall of a rock. When it applies to a person, it means to be held in contempt or low esteem. This is the opposite of 'descend' (inzal) which is used for honored things, as in the descent of angels and the Qur'an (Rāghib Isfahānī. 1392/1972, p. 832).

Hubut means moving something from one place to a lower position. This demonstrates that the "drop" mentioned in this verse is a spiritual decline, not a descent in physical position from one place to another (Tabātabā'īyy, 1390/1970, 8. pp. 29-30).

Thus, woman has an equal status compared to man in acquiring kiramah, as well as in increasing or losing it. There is no basis in the creation story for the assumption that the punishment for disobedience or committing evil is greater for a woman than for a man. Had Adam and his mate obeyed Allah and not disobeyed Him, they would not have lost their generosity, status, and position of nearness to Allah in heaven.



In general, it can be stated that the human being's kiramāt lies in obedience to Allah. Humankind must be taught to bow only before Allah and to serve Him so that one's kiramāt is not diminished and she/he can reach fulfillment. By obeying Allah, humankind can achieve spiritual greatness and be cleansed of meanness. True generosity lies in obeying and serving Allah; this is true merit. It pulls a person up and helps him/her to reach true prosperity, which is eternal proximity to Allah's mercy. It lies in fearing Allah, revering Him and striving for righteousness. Allah has introduced righteousness as the path to achieving kiramāt and the most righteous are the most magnanimous. He says: '...indeed the noblest (akram) of you in the sight of Allah is the most God wary among you (Al-Hujurat, 13; DelshādTehrānī. 1380/2001, p.208; Tabātabā'īyy, 1390/1970, pp.18. 327).

The Qur'an advises the wives of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) to obey Allah and His Messenger: 'O wives of the Prophet! Whoever of you commits a gross indecency, her punishment shall be doubled, and that is easy for Allah. But whoever of you is obedient to Allah and His Apostle and acts righteously, we shall give her a two - fold reward, and We hold a noble provision in store for her.O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other women: if you are wary [of Allah], then do not be complaisant in your speech, lest he in whose heart is a sickness should aspire, and speak honorable words. Stay in your houses and do not display your finery with the display of the former [days of] ignorance. Maintain the prayer and pay zakat, and obey Allah and His Apostle (Al-Ahzab, 30-33).

This verse states that obedience to Allah and good deeds earn noble sustenance. This includes material and spiritual sustenance. One upon whom Allah bestows a noble provision is indeed an honored individual. The meaning inherent in the above verse is that the Prophet's wives are a role model for other women; and consequently, women should follow their example.

'The word "obedient" (qunut) here means "humility". Some say it means "doing as you are told", and others say it means "diligence and perseverance in acts of worship accompanied by humility". The words "in store" (i'tād) mean "have prepared" and the obvious meaning of "noble provision" (rizqe karīm) is heaven. Thus, the meaning of this verse is: Each of you wives of the Messenger of Allah, for the sake of God and His Messenger, "be humble" or "be diligent in worship and humble before God and the Messenger" and do good deeds. She will be rewarded twice, or

twice as much, and a noble provision, meaning heaven, will be prepared for her."In this verse, the first person plural is used for Allah ("We shall give her" and "We hold") to show that the individuals mentioned are close to Allah and that He has made them esteemed. Similarly, the use of the third person in reference to Allah in the preceding verse demonstrates that those who commit crime and adultery are far from Allah, having no value or respect before Him, even if they are the Prophet's wives(Ṭabāṭabā'iy, 1390/1970, 16. 308).

An honorable person does not disobey Allah, the Most-magnanimous, whose kiramah is inherent. Such a man does not disgrace his kiramah with sin. 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (pbuh) has said: 'Desires and base urges are abject and despicable for one with generosity of spirit (Dashtī & Muḥammadī, 1406/1986, p.124).

### **Free Choice and Free will are Indicators of Kiramat**

Free choice and free will are two concepts which apply equally to man and woman in the Qur'anic narration of the account of Adam. Their eating from the forbidden tree demonstrates their ability to act in opposition to the command of Allah. It can also be concluded that it is possible for humankind to oppose the injunctions of Allah in response to the temptations of Satan. The forbidden tree gave humankind understanding and awareness (Sharī'atī, 1361/1982. pp. 318-319).

The freedom which Allah bestowed upon humankind has been bestowed upon no other creature, not even the angels. This in itself attests to the kiramah of humankind in comparison to the rest of creation, and it has been bestowed equally upon woman and man. In Islamic law (shariat) freedom for each group is dispensed in proportion to their responsibilities, rights, abilities, and needs. Allah's justice covers all laws and regulations. The standard of merit is not based on being male or female. The Qur'an portrays human worth as a value that rises above gender. It is the human spirit which is addressed, not its masculinity or femininity. Imam Khomeini wrote: 'Women possess free will in the same way that men have free will, Allah has created woman free and with kiramah (Khomeynī, 1368/1988, 11. 254).

### **The Kiramat of Women and her Capacity for Guidance**

Allah does not discriminate between His subjects in the matter of Divine guidance. Both men and women have the ability to accept guidance. The extent of an indi-

vidual's ability depends upon her/his merit and preparedness. Allah has bestowed upon all creatures intuitive guidance (*hidayat-e takvini*) to discern right from wrong, safe from dangerous. The Qur'an states: 'Our Lord is He who gave everything its creation and then guided it' (Ta-Ha,50). In addition to *hidayat-e takvini*, He has also bestowed upon humankind *hidayat-e tashri'iyy*, guidance provided by instructions from the prophets and Divine books that guides human beings toward completion and protects their honor and *kiramah*.

Thus, the story of Adam and Eve continues: 'should any guidance come to you from Me, those who follow My guidance shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve (Al-Baqarah, 38). This is addressed to both of them equally; there is no difference in the guidance they receive and in their following of the guidance. In summary, the only difference is in an individual's willingness to accept guidance. Divine guidance is for all humankind; thus, whoever heeds Allah's commands and prohibitions and uses these to direct his/her actions will be guided. Once again; there is no difference in this between men and women.

Another important aspect is that woman is the source of creation. Bearing and raising children, she can be a guide for her children, husband, and the men in her family. Imam Khomayni has said: 'Woman is the trainer of society. People are raised in the laps of women. The proper place for the first stage of life for men and women are the lap of mother. The educator of humankind is woman. The prosperity and misfortune of a country depend on its women. Women, with their proper training, raise people; and, with their proper training, they civilize their country. The origin of all success arises from the laps of women. Woman is the origin of all decency (Khomayni, 1368/1988, 6. 186).

### **The Kiramat of Woman and Modest Dress**

In the Qur'anic verses about Adam and Eve, their failure to obey Allah's commands caused their awareness of their nakedness and their decline from their proximity to Allah. Their decline in *kiramah* and dignity was reflected in their nakedness; it was a symptom of their diminished status. Thus, covering nakedness and modesty are reflections of *kiramah* and self-worth.

Restraint and modest behavior have been enjoined upon Muslim men and women by Allah via the Prophet and the Qur'an to preserve and increase their *kiramah*.

The Qur'an directs believers: 'Tell the faithful men to cast down their looks and to guard their private parts. That is more decent for them. Allah is indeed well aware of what they do. And tell the faithful women to cast down their looks and to guard their private parts, and not to display their charms, except for what is outward, and let them draw their veils over their bosoms... (An-Nur, 30-31).

To preserve man's and woman's worth and sublime virtue, Allah has prescribed covering the body and modest behavior. He encourages woman to cover her physical attributes and distance herself from men to preserve and enhance her status. Javadi Amoli comments: 'Woman's Islamic dress is a divine truth. Woman's purity is a divine right which has no connection to others. Woman is the caretaker of divine trust and is called the trustee of Allah's rights in the Qur'an (An-Nisa, 34). This status, sanctity, and liberty which are Allah's right, He has bestowed upon woman (Javādī Āmolī. 1374/1995, p.435).

In order to protect the honor and status of the wives of the Messenger of God it is stated, 'O wives of the Prophet! Do not be complaisant in your speech, lest he in whose heart is a sickness should aspire, and speak honorable words (Al-Ahzab, 32). The wives of the Prophet, as exemplars for all women, are told to be correct in their speech and to speak honorable words so that men who would succumb to their base yearnings would not find a reason to do so. Woman is not as easily led astray by her passions as is man. The secondary inference in these verses is that women as a whole have pure hearts. The main inference is that, on the Day of Judgment, the righteous and those with pure hearts will be safe. Yearning after someone outside of the marital tie is a disease which the Qur'an implies is found in men. There is no mention of it being found in women. Therefore, it can be concluded that women, in general, are not susceptible to this particular disease; their hearts (nature) are pure (Javādī Āmolī. 1374/1995, p.435).

In order to protect their special status and position as the wives of the most eminent member of society, Allah's Prophet, they have been encouraged to not display their beauty, to safeguard themselves and avoid mixing with men in society. The Qur'an advises: 'Stay in your houses and do not display your finery with the display of the former [days of] ignorance. Maintain the prayer...' (Al-Ahzab, 33), of course in Ayah 32, Allah has told the wives of prophet are not like any of the Other women, so this regulation are related to them not all women.

## 8. Kiramat, Procreation and the Status of Woman

The Qur'an declares that all human beings are descended from Adam and Eve: 'O mankind! Be wary of your Lord who created you from a single soul, and created its mate from it, and from the two of them, scattered numerous men and women (An-Nisa, 1).' These two had equal status in the propagation of humankind; however, the role of woman in procreation places a greater burden upon her and a greater responsibility. By enduring nine months of pregnancy and the rigors of childbirth to add one person to the human population, she provides an invaluable service to humankind. After pregnancy and giving birth, she navigates the infancy and childhood of her offspring with all their accompanying hardships. And if she strives to train and educate her child, acquaint her/him with Allah, faith, right and wrong, the permitted and the forbidden, she has performed the highest service to society. The Qur'an addresses this: 'We have enjoined man to be kind to his parents. His mother has carried him in travail, and bore him in travail, and his gestation and weaning take thirty months (Al-Ahqaf, 15).

Children are directed to treat their parents well, especially their mothers, in recognition of the sacrifices she has made to raise them. Adults are enjoined to treat their parents with dignity and mercy, even in their old age, a demonstration of the kiramat bestowed upon them: 'Should they reach old age at your side—one or both—do not say to them, "Fie!" and do not chide them, but speak to them noble words (karimi) (Al-Israa, 23).

### Conclusion

Allah has created man and woman from the same material and essence and endowed them with kiramat as a prerequisite for their positions as the vicegerents of Allah on earth. The kiramat of men and women is enhanced by following the guidance of Allah and His Messenger. Striving to adhere to Allah's guidance increases kiramat; however, failure to heed Allah's guidance and disobedience to His directives will bring about the loss of kiramat. Woman's and man's kiramat, in their nearness to Allah, is reflected in the choices they make, their willingness to be guided, their restraint from the illegal distractions of the carnal self that can be tempted by Satan, and their role as progenitors and educators of the succeeding generations. Sex differences between man and woman oblige her to protect her kiramat from

man's desires through modest dress and minimizing social contacts with men. Her role as a mother places a unique burden upon her, not only to maintain her own status before Allah, but also to safeguard the spiritual health of her children and prepare them to assume the role of vicegerent of Allah in the future.

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