
Chapter 11

“The Trap”

On Tuesday March 22nd, 2005, I had the privilege of going back to Iran with my brother Hamid. This date also happened to be in Farvardin, the first month in the Iranian calendar and the start of the New Year, or ‘Nowruz’.

We had been planning this trip for six months prior to our departure. I was so excited that I had my suitcases packed and ready months ahead! I hoped that God was leading me to my homeland this second time to have the same success as the first, and that the door would then be open for future trips as a Christian missionary. I was very anxious and excited, wanting to know what God had in store.



The day finally came and I met my brother at the airport in Charlotte, NC at about 3:00pm. Hamid’s wife Tina, my wife Ursa, my daughter Elizabeth, and my grandson Roman, were there to see us off. We prayed to God for our protection and safety, and for Him to bring us back home to our loved ones as soon as our visit was over. At 5:00pm, we

left Charlotte and flew by way of Memphis, Tennessee (TN) to Amsterdam via Northwest Airlines (NWA) and from there by Royal Dutch Airline (KLM) to Tehran, Iran.

We arrived in Tehran on Thursday March 24, 2005 at about 12:10am. We had two hot meals while we traveled and made it there on time without any problems or delays. The flight was great!

But just like my first trip in 2004, the same feeling came over me as we were about to step off the plane. It was dark outside and felt creepy and frightening! Laughter disappeared and quietness took over, but as we stepped out of the plane and walked down the steps, I heard a man's voice calling "Hello Uncle Said!"

It was my niece's husband, who worked at the airport. It sounded so pleasant to my ears to hear my name being called. I was comforted and encouraged by that friendly voice, especially hearing my own name! It truly lifted my spirits after feeling the loss of freedom in such a restricted atmosphere while being among strangers. What an awesome welcome to my homeland! After hearing that salutation, I smiled and walked down the steps toward the transit buses with renewed confidence.

We were then taken to the terminal where we had to have our passports checked. Hamid was in line ahead of me as we went through one by one. An officer with a stern face checked me in. He entered my Iranian passport number into a computer and stamped my passport. As we left the checkpoint and headed toward the baggage claim, I heard a voice echoing through the hallway as though it was coming through loud speakers, calling someone's name; "Mr.

Rabifar". We soon learned that he meant my last name "Rabiipour", but was pronouncing it incorrectly.

So at first we ignored it and continued on. By this time, a couple of my relatives were there with us. They had obtained special passes to greet us there before we entered the general terminal.

We were on the steps, going up toward the baggage claim, when I spotted a man with the upper part of his body stuck out of a window on the second floor, calling with a loud voice "Saiid!", and echoing all over the terminal. It did not sound as pleasant as the first time and did not feel comforting either, but since "Saiid" is a common name, I ignored it as well.

Finally, the man stuck his head out of the window one more time, calling my name for the third time "Mr. Rabiipour". This time he correctly pronounced my last name.

One of my relatives whispered into my ear, "Saiid, I think they are calling for you" Then he told me "wait, let me see what is going on."

By then, I was already at the luggage pickup and was searching for my luggage. Hamid had already started going toward where the call came from, and soon came face to face with a man holding a two-way radio on the ground level. Nader, one of my relatives was right behind Hamid.

Hamid introduced himself by his last name and asked the man how he could help?

The security man who was on the floor signaled the guy who was calling aloud through the open window using his two-way radio, asking; “Is it number one or number two?”

The voice responded that it was “two”.

1) *Serious* 2) *Not so serious*

The security personnel then asked for Hamid’s passport. *(If it had been a serious matter, they would have handcuffed him immediately and taken him to jail. When this happens to people, it could be the last time they see daylight for a long time! Hamid really showed his bravery by going forward as he did!)*

Hamid handed him his passport, questioning the security personnel as to what seemed to be the problem, but the question was ignored. He took Hamid’s passport, gave him a receipt, and instructed him to go to the passport office on Africa Street to pick up his passport in a few days. They would not volunteer any information as to why they had to keep his passport. And they failed to verify his first name to make sure he was who they wanted.

Hamid had a strong suspicion that they were after me and not him. He knew that he had not done anything wrong to cause any problems, besides, he had been to Iran several times before this trip and nothing had ever happened. But he went along and played their “game”. This action by my brother, and the mistakes of the authorities, enabled me to have more time to ponder what was going on rather than being ambushed by the unknown. I am grateful to this day for Hamid and his courageous action.

Hamid returned to the baggage claim where I was picking up our luggage. Nader and Ali-Reza (two of my relatives) were there with us as events were unfolding. The rest of our families were outside the restricted area waiting for us. We gathered all of our bags and went out of the terminal to where our families were waiting patiently. Outside of the terminal, our parents, our sisters and nieces, and nephews, all greeted us and showered us with many kisses and flowers. However, as a result of the security incident, we lost our excitement somewhat. There was no dancing on the streets like my first trip. There was no lamb sacrifice either. We simply walked to our cars and headed toward Karaj, the city where my parents resided.

We all gathered at my parent's house where I explained the situation to everyone. I told them that I was sure that they were looking for me, not Hamid, and that it most likely had to do with when I was in the Iranian Navy. I explained that I would find the best way to deal with the situation, but for now, I just wanted to enjoy and celebrate our visit with each other.

So, we visited, enjoyed delicious Iranian delicacies, danced, and were happy as much as we could be. I did not want to think negative thoughts, but it weighed heavy on my mind. I needed time to think and pray for the right course of action. I was a bit embarrassed, but it was beyond my control. I called my wife that night to tell her the news and the desperate need for her prayers and the prayers of all my family and brothers and sisters in Christ.

Would God answer our prayers?

“As soon as I heard his voice on the phone, I knew something was wrong. My heart sank as he told me what happened at the airport. “This can’t be happening” I thought. “Everything went so well on his first visit a year ago!” But this time was different and I heard the concern in his voice. We both knew that they meant to take his passport instead of Hamid’s and that it most likely had to do with his decision to stay here instead of returning to Iran after college. We tried to be optimistic and think that once he talked to them, it would all be straightened out in a timely manner and he would be on his merry way, but little did we know what lay ahead.

Before we hung up, we agreed that we needed to try to keep our faith strong and to offer prayer and praise to God in this situation. I assured Saiid that I would call and email everyone we knew to pray as well. The uncertainty of it all was hard, and I have to admit I felt this incredible feeling of helplessness. He was in a country that had no U.S. Embassy that I could contact for help. I wasn’t sure what the next step was; what to do or who to call. My mind was reeling as I tried to absorb what was happening. But I knew I had to do everything I could to help him.”

(Ursa)

The first few nights in my parent’s house, I tossed and turned almost all night thinking about my situation. I would pray to seek God’s wisdom, but for some reason I felt distanced and could not get the needed comfort from Him.

On February 25, 1983, the day I became a citizen of the United States, I was given an opportunity to change my

name, but, being proud of my heritage and my homeland and wanting to relate to my past, I saw no reason to change it.

The Judge in charge during my naturalization ceremony told us that this country was based on immigrants like us, and that diversity is good as long as there is unity and respect for each other.

I was not involved in anything illegal against Iran or anyone in that country. I did however, disagree with the way the Iranian Navy treated me and because of their lies I chose not to be part of their military force.

Many of my friends here in the USA respect me and my heritage and I have always promoted Iran and Iranian culture while living here. But the fact that they were planning on taking my Iranian passport away from me made me feel like a prisoner in my own birth country.

But for now I needed to rest. Everyone was sleeping but me. The change of location and jet lag didn't help matters, but I needed to stay quiet for the sake of the others. I had some ibuprofen and allergy medication with me to help me with my backache and sleeping, but they did not help. A few days later due to the stress I was under and the lack of sleep, and possibly taking too much medication, I became sick. I could not keep anything on my stomach and was taken to the local doctor's office. The doctor said that I was most likely suffering from food poisoning from something I ate. I was hooked up to an I.V. and was given some medication. I got better within a few hours and then I was allowed to go back to my parent's house.

The First Lie!

Early Saturday morning, Hamid, Ali, Nader and I got in Nader's car for Tehran to go to pick up Hamid's passport as they had told us to do at the airport. Nader had his own car and used it as a private Taxi cab. As a result, he was able to drive me around for the next two months. Ali also had a car of his own and was with us the whole time as well. Ali was a truck driver and owned his own truck, but since it was too much on his back he had hired someone to drive for him. That allowed him to stay at home and do the administrative part of the work. It was very generous of him to share his income between the two of them.

We located Africa Street and found the Passport Office. They told us that they did not have Hamid's passport, (this was a lie which we found out later.) They told us that we needed to go to the military courthouse to pick it up. So we then drove to the military courthouse located in Tehran at a place called "Ghasr".

Tehran is a very busy city and it is very difficult to find a parking place. We found ourselves driving around the block several times to find a spot to park our car. We finally had to park in an alley next to someone's house. I stayed in the car while Hamid, Nader and Ali went inside. At this time I was not involved since they kept Hamid's passport by mistake. We would later proceed to clear my name and try to solve my issues.

The military court was located in a six-story building with many small courtrooms on several of its floors. After running around and asking questions as to where to go, we finally reported to an office where the clerk of court was

familiar with our issue and in charge of our problem. He began by asking Hamid, "Did you have any problem with the military?"

Hamid answered, "No sir, I served and finished my two year service many years ago."

The clerk of court asked, "Do you have your discharge papers from the service with you?"

Hamid answered, "No sir, they are in America where I live."

The clerk went back and forth from one office to another, asking other questions of Hamid, and finally came back and said, "You are Hamid but we are looking for Saïd."

He then apologized to Hamid for the mix-up on the name and for his passport being confiscated at the airport. He said that the Iranian Navy had issued a complaint against Saïd. The clerk then told Hamid to go back to the passport office and that he would make a call to them to release his passport.

We both had two passports; an Iranian one and an American one. The Government of Iran would issue passports very easily to all Iranian born individuals who lived abroad. This way they could treat them as Iranians and according to their laws without violating another country's laws by harassing their citizens. That's why when I presented my passports to the officer in charge when we arrived to the airport, he did not even look at my American passport. It was also Hamid's Iranian passport that they confiscated.

Anyhow, this ordeal at the military court took at least two hours before we were finally able to leave. We then left the court house and back to the passport office to get Hamid's Iranian passport.

While we were in Tehran, we also did some sightseeing. We exchanged our money for Iranian Rials, and enjoyed the food in one of the restaurants there. The food in Iran is outstanding.

My parent's house is located in a city outside of Tehran called Karaj. There is a major six to eight lane highway that connects the two cities together. The distance is only about 45 miles from one city to the next, but because of the heavy traffic, it took us 2-3 hours each way. We had to travel on this road every time we needed to go to Tehran, which was almost every time the government offices were open.

By then we knew for sure that the Navy wanted to speak with me, so we started to look for the best possible means to approach the situation. So, Nader, Ali and I went to Tehran the following day. When we arrived at the Navy base, which is located in the northern part of Tehran, I stayed in the car while Nader and Ali went inside.

Nader and Ali spoke to Colonel Mirshekar, head of the personnel department, about my situation. He responded calmly and with confidence saying, "We usually work with people in this situation. He is not the first or the last person to go AWOL from the Navy. Other people in similar situations have had to pay a fine anywhere from 3,000-18,000 dollars, but Saiid himself has to come forward and introduce himself before we can touch any files".

With that information we went home and started making phone calls to the people we knew in the military for advice, searching for the best way to approach the Navy headquarters. As a result, it was suggested to us to speak with Mr. Ahmadi at the Information Department of the Navy, as he would guide us as to what steps we needed to follow. Therefore, we made an appointment to see him.

He received us well and directed us to a room. Nader, Ali and I went in. There was not anything in that room except a few old chairs with leather seats and a coffee table. It did not even have windows to the outside. After a very short interview, he requested that I write brief statement as to what happened thirty years ago. He wanted me to explain my reason for choosing to stay in the United States. After all, the Navy had sent me there for an education and expected me to come back and serve as an officer. I did as he requested. My Farsi was "rusty", so I asked Ali to write the letter as I dictated my story to him.

Mr. Ahmadi then asked us to give him a couple of days and then he would call us to come back for a continuance of our dialogue. We gave him a couple of phone numbers in order to communicate with us. He preferred a local number so they would not have to call long distance, so I gave them the number of one of my sisters, Farzaneh, who lived in Tehran.

As soon as we left the Navy base, I called Farzaneh to let her know we were there. She insisted for us to come there for lunch. We had a great time of fellowship at her home. The food, as usual, was great and we shared the events of the day with her.

My vacation was short and I did not have a lot of time to waste, so a few days later when I still had not heard from Mr. Ahmadi, we decided to head back toward the Navy Base to check on the status of my case. We got up early in the morning and left Karaj at 6:00am. Ironically on our way to Tehran, Ali's cellular phone rang. It was my sister Farzaneh, saying that someone from the Navy base had just called and wanted us to come. This time Hamid was also with us.

So the four of us went to the office of Mr. Ahmadi, but this time he did not come out to greet us. Instead, he sent someone else to inform us that we must go to the personnel office and speak with Colonel Ansari who was the assistant to Colonel Mirshekar, his commander. So it seemed we were back where we started.

Col. Ansari was a medium built man about 5'7", partly bald and enjoyed smoking his cigarettes. He also was a fast talking character! He welcomed and received us well, ordered some hot tea and personally went to look for my file since his assistants could not find it right away.

He opened my file and said: "Mr. Saiid, everything in your file seems to be in order and was completed for you four years ago. We are far ahead of the game and will not need to make any requests for numbers or amounts from any departments".

He was saying all this with lots of smiling, and in a pleasant manner. Nader was my spokesperson, so he asked him what was inside my file.

Col. Ansari disclosed that there were two things recorded in my file against me:

- 1) A three-year imprisonment that needed my attention, but it might fall under the amnesty given by the leader of the country.
- 2) Two or three figures which amounted to about 20k dollars, which is the amount of money the Navy had spent on me and needed to be paid back.

Col. Ansari then called Captain Hassanvand who supposedly specialized in and was familiar with the law, to come to his office. He agreed that sometime in 1979, right after the revolution, the leader of the country gave a general amnesty to all those who left the country and who worked for the government, including those who did not finish their military service. Nonetheless, I needed to go after that letter of amnesty and clear my name for good. As a result, they would have to introduce me to the military court by way of a letter. Col. Ansari ordered a letter to be written and to be signed by the commander in their department.

This letter took four and a half hours to be written and signed. We were there at the base from 9:00am until 2:30pm, waiting at Col. Ansari's office for the most part. He was very friendly toward us, but it appeared that his helpers were too slow and lazy. A few times, he had to chase after the letter he had delegated to others to type. He finally was able to obtain the signed letter at 2:00pm, which was right before they closed their office. The commander who signed the letter had been busy with meetings, a funeral, prayer at the mosque and lunch. But finally we had accomplished what we came for.

Even though this was a step in the right direction, I still was not sure I could trust them. It was too early for me to determine if they were scheming behind my back. I had to

trust what they were telling me. Col. Ansari put on a good show to impress us with his fast talk and led us to believe that he was working very diligently on my behalf, but we did not know how much of that was real or fake.

We left Col. Ansari's office with lots of hope. I felt very good about the outcome of our visit, and it encouraged me to continue doing whatever needed to be done in order for me to get home and to be able to make future trips to Iran. However, because of the Iranian New Year, we found ourselves dealing with many days when the government offices were closed due to the national celebration.

The 13th day of the first month of the New Year, Farvardin, is one of those days where all offices are closed. It is called "Nature Day" and is the last day of the two-week long Iranian celebration of Norooz (New Year). Most everyone gets out of their house with their families for a picnic. It is also a tradition for single ladies to tie grass leaves together and to make a wish to be wed (tie the knot!) in the year to come. We also decided to get together at Nader's house, since it was located out in the country. The roads were bumper to bumper with cars, buses and motorcycles. The streets that normally had little traffic on them were packed with cars and people. It seemed that every part of the countryside that you might find streams or rivers were occupied with families drinking their hot tea, smoking on water pipes and relaxing under shaded trees. Kids were playing, young people walking, talking, and enjoying the countryside.

We also got together with our families at home and enjoyed eating good food, played cards, danced and later walked in a huge vineyard close by. We sang songs and

joked about life today compared to what life used to be like 30 years ago. Hamid and I purposely planned our trip to correspond with this national holiday. It was a joyous time for our family reunion!

On Monday, April 4, 2005, after eleven days into my vacation, Ali, Nader and I started out early in the morning and went back to the military court. The traffic was heavy as usually, and the acrid exhaust fumes of cars and buses made breathing uncomfortable.

We finally arrived at our destination where the military court was located. After driving from one street to another and making a few circles, we found a space between two houses to park our car. Nader used a big padlock to lock the steering wheel to prevent anyone from "hot-wiring" it and driving it away. Then he set the car alarm and took the removable faceplate to his car radio, and with a prayer, we left the car. We had to walk a few blocks to the entrance. We went through a gate guarded with a few soldiers, and then to the reception room where they checked our identification cards. We received our passes and then went through a metal detector and a basic body search before going into the main lobby of the building. The building had six floors, so I was glad Nader was with me to read the signs to help us get to where we needed to go. Speaking and reading Farsi wasn't easy for me anymore.

We went straight to the clerk of court with the sealed letter Col. Ansari gave us and gave it to the clerk. The clerk sent us to see someone else in another office. She searched for my name in a file drawer, which they kept alphabetically, looking for my name, but could not find it. She then suggested for us to go to the lowest level (the basement)

where they keep all the older files. We went two floors below the main lobby to the basement and waited a long time for this office staff to search for my file. They could not find my name in any of their paper records or in their automated records by computer. They finally referred me back to the Navy.

By the time we left, it was about 1:00pm and there was not enough time to get to the Navy base since they closed their offices at 2:00pm. So, we called Col. Ansari using a cellular phone and told him about our dilemma. He prepared a copy of the naval court order, which included the three year imprisonment, and gave it to us so that the next day we could take it back to the military court.

We later learned that thirty years ago, the Navy had signed my discharge papers, but had attached a three-year imprisonment to the discharge. We obtained a copy of the court order and brought it back to the military court who then hand delivered it to the clerk of court. The ball started to roll. We went from one office to another so people could okay and sign the amnesty paper. Thankfully, no one gave me a hard time.

One person at one of the offices wanted to know the reason for my AWOL. I told him that it was a long story. With curiosity, he asked me to give him a brief version of it. So I briefly explained to him about my dissatisfaction with the school system, as well as my resignation from the school. I could tell by the look on his face that he was not satisfied with my answer, but I knew that the choice was not his to make since the amnesty paper had already been signed by others ahead of him.

Before the last person signed the amnesty papers, I was told that someone else wanted to see me, so Nader and I went to his office. There were actually two men there. Nader was told to leave the room, but when Nader objected by telling them that I might not be able to communicate well enough, he said, pointing to the palm of his hand, that he would make me talk. I could tell that Nader was a bit nervous by leaving me alone, but he had no choice but to obey. So Nader left the room and I was asked to sit down.

I did not know what to expect but I wasn't worried. They offered to bring me a cup of hot tea, but I declined and thanked them for their hospitality.

One of the men asked me when I was born, so I told him my birthday.

They both had a peculiar look on their faces. I didn't know what to make of it and waited to hear what the next question was going to be. Then the one who seemed to be the older enlightened me by saying "The reason I asked you to come in here was that your birth year is the same as mine and I wanted to meet you". They both chuckled and wanted to know what I did to stay in the shape I was in!

He looked like my father with a wrinkled face, missing a few teeth, and with gray hair. I was hoping not to say anything that would be insulting, so I told him it was the exercise! He immediately responded by saying, "Aha, that definitely helps one to stay younger." Then they both wished me well and we said goodbye to each other.

We finally had the last person sign and I was provided my amnesty papers in a sealed envelope to take back to the Navy. We left the military court and called Col. Ansari to

tell him about the amnesty papers, but he told me to bring it to his office the next day since it was getting late and we would not get there before he left for the day.

My experience there made me feel there were some good people in the government who desired to be compassionate and helpful toward others, and it seemed to be the nature of their hearts to be like that.

While we were still at the military court, I decided to introduce myself to a particular judge whom a good friend of mine had suggested I should meet for advice. He had dealt with many situations like mine and knew the problems that I may face.

First, he advised me that I should agree to pay the money they spent for me. He believed that the Navy would work with me in order for me to pay them back. He also forewarned me that they may require me to pay the money at the rate of thirty years ago, which I will explain later. He said that this is the sticky part because to this day no law or legislature had been passed concerning this subject and how to handle this issue. He said that it would be to the best interest of both parties if you could resolve this issue between you, but if an agreement was not reached, you may have to bring the matter before the court so we can settle it for you, but it may take a longer time.

The Judge advised me that if it came to that or if I felt that they were being unfair, I should object to their demands, and bring it to the court. He was very candid and to the point. I was very grateful for his advice and thanked him for his time. So I left the court house, full of hope and expectation.

The next day, Ali, Nader and I got up early in the morning and made our two hour trip to the Navy base in order to finish our work. I took this opportunity while traveling to and from Tehran to share what the Bible teaches about Christ with my brother-in laws.

As we traveled, Nader pointed to the writing right above a mosque that said, "**Islam is the only path to God**". He seemed to always have an answer for everything I said, but Ali on the other hand, was responding more positively concerning our discussions, and in many cases, he was even helping and agreeing with me.

At the Navy base, Col. Ansari sent a message to the gate to allow only one of us to go in with the letter of amnesty, so Nader went in for me. He gave him the letter and requested a copy for my records.

Nader had served in the military and knew what questions to ask. He objected to the \$20,000 Col. Ansari had given us previously and asked to see the signed and detailed documents in my file to see how they reached that amount.

Col. Ansari agreed right away that we had the right to see the documents, but he would need some time to write another letter to the education department to request a list of the expenses in more detail. On that note, Nader left his office and told him that he would call and check on things in a few days.

While my brother and I were in Iran, we visited many of our relatives and friends. I was not in the mood to do much shopping considering the situation I was in. I needed to save all the money I had just in case. Spending time with my family and friends was a joy and very comforting.

It was during one of those visits that I met my uncle for the first time. My aunt had remarried since I had been in the US so I had never had the chance to meet him. His work involved traveling in and out of the country and he had done this most of his adult life, therefore I had never had a chance to meet him when I was younger. With his travels, he had many opportunities to meet other people with other faiths. When he heard that I was a ‘born-again’ Christian, he immediately wanted to talk to me and ask some questions.

He told me that he had read the Bible several times and fell in love with Jesus Christ and his qualities. In his own view, and based on what he had read in the Bible, he could not believe that the God of the Bible was the same as in the Quran. He believed that maybe the ones who wrote the Quran changed many things in it and that is why it was so different from the Bible. I asked him how he came to this conclusion.

He said that what you read in the Quran and the history of mankind in Islam is so different from what the Bible teaches. Secondly he said Islam is a religion that came upon the nation of Iran by force of the sword. The people of Iran, before the Arab’s aggression, had a great religion with good and basic creeds such as, good talk, behavior and character. But today Islam has ‘two-faced’ religious leaders who proclaim that they care for their people, but instead they bring poverty to them while making themselves rich. There has been nothing fruitful from this tree, only thorns, even after more than twenty-five years of domination. This is what my uncle believed, and right or wrong, his perception was reality for him.

HOW ISLAM STARTED AS A RELIGION

In the seventh century, an Arabian named Mohammad claimed to have revelations from God, which ultimately gave rise to the Quran and the faith of Islam. Mohammad claimed that this faith was the final revelation of God, though he recognized the genuineness of earlier revelations given through Moses and Jesus, both of whom he considered great Prophets. Yet, they wish to kill their followers at the same time. **He enforced this new faith through the power of the sword** and eventually conquered many of the lands that had been largely Christian. These events eventually led to the Christian Crusades of the 11th through the 13th centuries, which led to even more bloodshed.

I asked my uncle, what he liked about Christianity and Christ. He told me that he sees the true God in the life of Jesus Christ. He always cared for humanity, he always loved mankind and no one ever came to him leaving empty handed. He never used His power against people. He drew people to Himself not by force or sword but by showing them love and compassion. I was so glad to hear my uncle talking like this because this was also the way I was drawn to Christ! **I asked him if he had shared this with his wife and children.** He said that he had not yet.

So when Hamid and I were invited to his house the following week, we shared the good news with the rest of our uncle's family.

On another occasion, I was in one of my sister's house and the subject of religion came up. Ali, one of my nephews brought his Quran to point out what it says about Jesus. His Quran was written in both Farsi and Arabic languages. I

welcomed his effort. The whole family was there, listening to what transpired between us.

He started to read from the chapter of Maryam, named after Mary the mother of Jesus. As he was reading, the first person of interest he talked about was Zechariah, the father of Yahya (John the Baptist), who is recorded as being a promised son in comparison to Jesus who was the Holy Promised Son, yet both are considered to be prophets in Islamic theology.

“O Zechariah, We give thee good news of a son, his name shall be Yahya. (Sura 19: Ayah 7)

But since Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were in their old age and past the age of child bearing, they needed assurance. The Quran states that Zechariah was told that he would be speechless for three nights, though he was not dumb, as a sign. Ayah (verse) 10

I told my nephew to stop and I asked him this question. In our Holy Scripture it is recorded that Zechariah was speechless for the entire time of Elizabeth’s pregnancy. Without questioning the Quran, which one do you think is a greater miracle from God?

He responded “Yours of course.” He continued reading until he reached ayah (verse) 19, where the angel is announcing to Mary “**the gift of a holy Son**”, which the word ‘holy’ was translated as “pure” in the Farsi language.

I asked him to stop so we could discuss the difference between just saying someone is pure and God saying Jesus is pure or holy. I asked him if he would agree that due to man’s limitations and knowledge we can only compare the

purity of one person to other. However, when God says that Jesus is holy (pure), that word carries a meaning beyond man's personal experience. It means that there is no sin, flaws or imperfection in Him. Just as God is Holy.

My nephew acknowledged my reasoning.

Therefore, this verse speaks of exactly that, the purity of Jesus, which corresponds with our Holy Scripture. Furthermore, **God has never called anyone else Holy or pure after the fall of Adam and Eve in the same way as Jesus.**

In ayahs (verses) 7-10, we see a miracle has taken place for Zechariah, yet the good news was only about a son, not a holy son!

God has called "good" to the things He has made. The creation story is an example, **but holiness only goes to His Son.** People through the ages have called other Prophets or Apostles holy, but I do not recall God calling anyone, except Jesus Christ Holy (Pure).

{Note: the word holy has two major meanings.

- 1) Divine, "for the Lord our God is holy"
- 2) Set apart, "holy temple" or "holy Prophet"

Except for Jesus, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. I went farther and explained other writings in the Quran that have not been explained correctly to people which I have already covered in my previous chapters. Unfortunately they could not understand me due to the preconceived state of their minds!

It is interesting that the Quran gives a few very distinctive qualities to Jesus that was not given even to Muhammad such as:

- 1) *Jesus is the Word of God (kalimullah in sura 3:45)*
- 2) *Jesus is The Spirit of God (Ruhullah in sura 21:91)*
- 3) *Jesus is born of virgin Mary as a Pure Son*
- 4) *Jesus will reappear to mankind again*

None of these unique claims were given to Muhammad whom they consider to be the last and the most superior to all other Prophets!

My brother in law finally asked this question; so, you mean “Jesus the Son of God” is not the result of a physical intimacy between God and Mary as we have been told!

I responded, of course not. Mary never had any physical contact with anyone. She was a virgin and remained a virgin. She married Joseph after the baby Jesus was born. He then told me that he understood.

Later he showed me a book of poetry he had and started reading it to me. He said that it was one of his favorite books. As he was reading, he came to a verse that mentioned Jesus as the Son of God. I said, “There it is in your own book too!” Then he realized what he was reading and told me that if his family knew he was reading this and what it actually meant, they would consider him an infidel. What a shame!