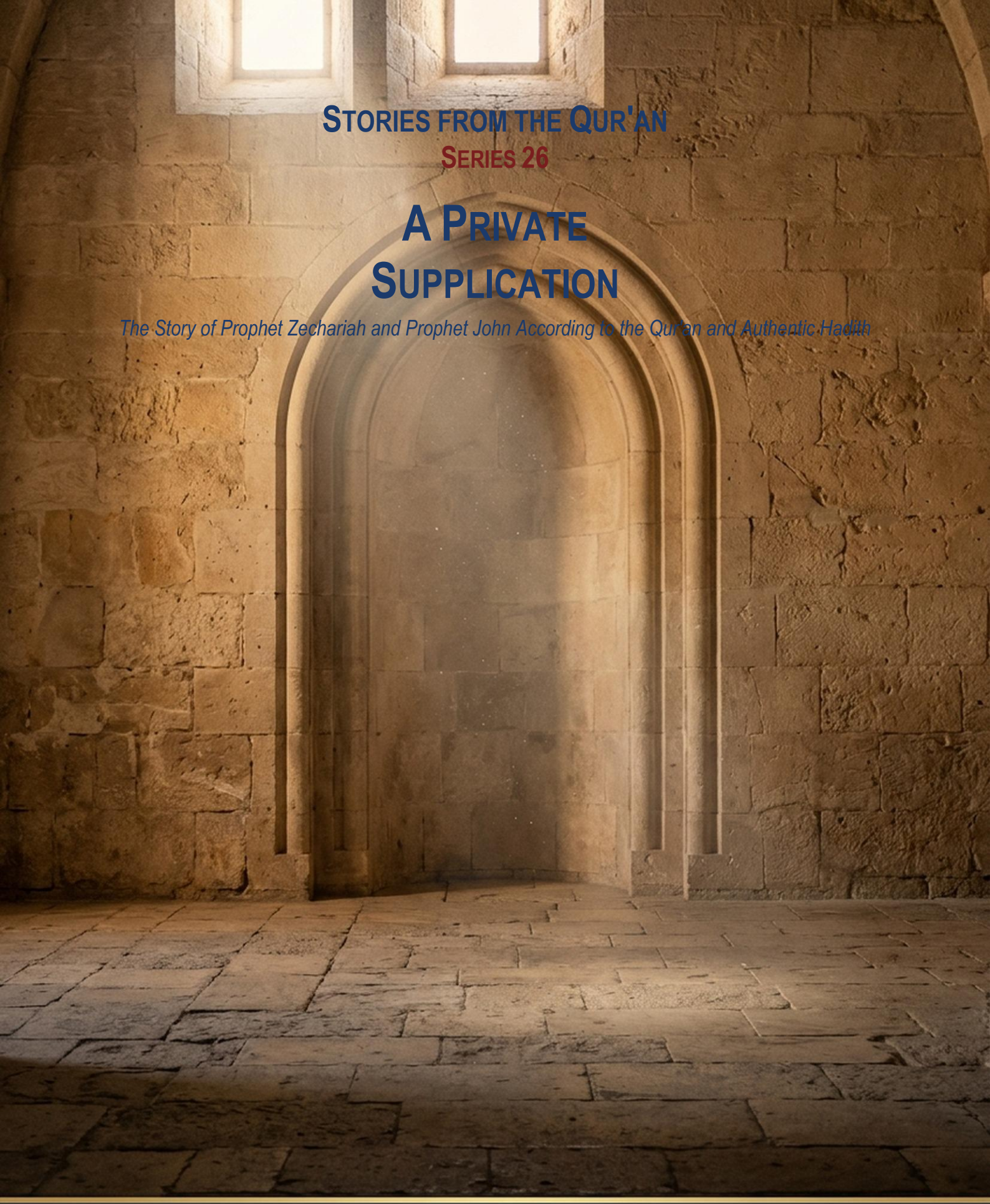


Stories from the Qur'an
Series 26

A Private Supplication

The Story of Prophet Zechariah and Prophet John According to the Qur'an and Authentic Hadith

Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron
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quranscience.my

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

STORIES FROM THE QUR'AN

SERIES 26

A PRIVATE SUPPLICATION

The Story of Prophet Zechariah and Prophet John According to the Qur'an and Authentic Hadith

وَزَكَرِيَّآ إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُۥ رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْنِي فَرْدًا وَأَنتَ خَيْرُ ٱلْوَٰرِثِينَ

"And [mention] Zechariah, when he called to his Lord, "My Lord, do not leave me alone [with no heir], while you are the best of inheritors."."

SURAH AL-ANBIYA' 21:89

HJ CHE ALIM HJ CHE HARON

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, the All-Hearing and Near, who never disappoints a servant who calls upon Him, and who is the best of inheritors. Blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who taught us that a supplication is answered as long as we are not hasty, and upon his family and his Companions.

This eBook is specially dedicated to my beloved wife,

ZAHARAH MOHD LATIF;

my dear children,

MUHAMMAD HAFIZ, NOOR HAZWANI, ABDUL HAKIM, NOOR HIDAYAH, NOR AQILA and **NOR ATIQAH**;

and my sons- and daughters-in-law,

FAZILAH, MALEK, HANIN, FAIRIZAL and **FIRWAN**.

May Allah grant us righteous offspring who pray for us after we are gone, and make us servants who never despair of His mercy. May this knowledge be ‘ilmun yuntafa‘u bih, knowledge that brings benefit.

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ABOUT THE COVER OF THIS EBOOK

The cover of this eBook does not depict any human being. It shows the **scenery** of a **quiet stone prayer hall**, with **an arched prayer niche (mihrab)** lit by the soft light of dawn.

The scene is taken from the story of Prophet Zechariah عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ, who called to his Lord ***"a private supplication"*** (19:3), and whom the angels called ***"while he was standing in prayer in the chamber"*** (3:39).

The cover does not depict any prophet, angel or figure. The **dark blue band** at the bottom, framed by **fine gold lines**, is where the author's name appears.

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Colour guide: green box = verses of the Qur'an; gold box = Hadith; brown box = archaeological note; blue table = comparison. Underlined blue narrator names can be clicked to open the narrator's page on sunnah.com.

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A PRIVATE SUPPLICATION

In Series 25, the people of Sheba were given every blessing yet turned away. This series takes us to a servant who was the opposite: ***Prophet Zechariah (Zakariyya)*** عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ, an old man whose bones had weakened and whose wife was barren — yet who ***never despaired*** of supplication.

His story is told in three surahs: Ali 'Imran, Maryam and Al-Anbiya'. Surah Maryam opens it with the words: ***"a mention of the mercy of your Lord to His servant Zechariah"*** (19:2). This is the story of ***a private supplication*** — and how Allah answered it with a son named ***John (Yahya)***.

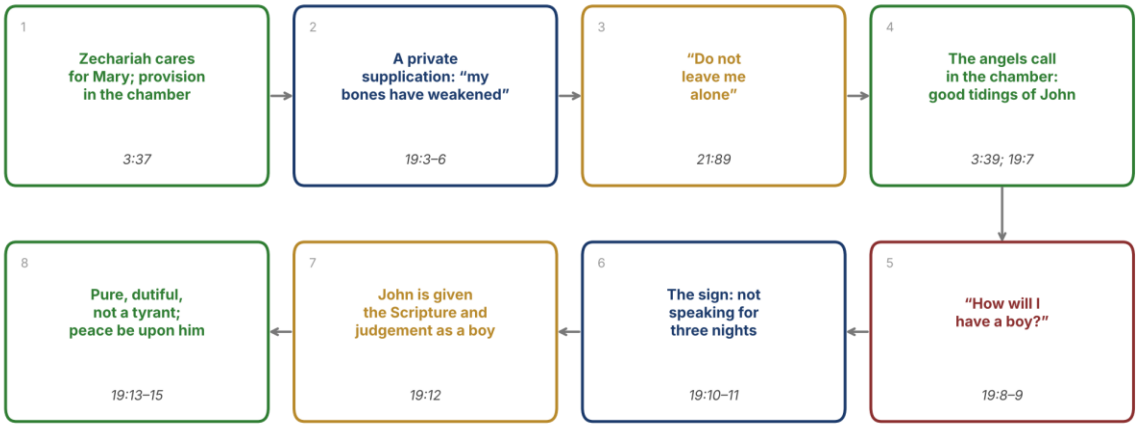


Figure 1: The flow of the story of Prophet Zechariah and Prophet John — from provision in the prayer chamber to peace upon John.

Note: The translation of the Qur'anic verses in this eBook is Sahih International. The translations of the Hadith are our own, from the Arabic text. The grade of each Hadith is stated in its Hadith box, with a link to sunnah.com.

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PROVISION IN THE PRAYER CHAMBER

SURAH ALI 'IMRAN 3:37

فَتَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَأَنۢبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا وَكَفَّلَهَا زَكَرِيَّاۖ كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ
عَلَيۡهَا زَكَرِيَّا ٱلۡمِحۡرَابَ وَجَدَ عِندَهَا رِزۡقٗاۖ قَالَ يَٰمَرۡيَمُ أَنَّىٰ لَكِ هَٰذَاۖ قَالَتۡ هُوَ
مِنۡ عِندِ ٱللَّهِۖ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَرۡزُقُ مَن يَشَآءُ بِغَيۡرِ حِسَابٖ ٣٧

So her Lord accepted her with good acceptance and caused her to grow in a good manner and put her in the care of Zechariah. Every time Zechariah entered upon her in the prayer chamber, he found with her provision. He said, "O Mary, from where is this [coming] to you?" She said, "It is from Allah. Indeed, Allah provides for whom He wills without account."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/3:37

EXPLANATION OF VERSE 3:37 — THE GUARDIAN OF MARY

First: A great trust. ***"put her in the care of Zechariah"***. Mary, whom her mother had vowed to the service of the house of worship, was placed in the care of Prophet Zechariah عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 3:37

Second: Extraordinary provision. ***"Every time Zechariah entered upon her in the prayer chamber, he found with her provision"***. So he asked: ***"O Mary, from where is this [coming] to you?"***.

Third: An answer that changed everything. ***"Indeed, Allah provides for whom He wills without account"***. The answer of a young girl became ***the spark*** of an old prophet's supplication.

Prophet Zechariah عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ himself did not live on what others gave him. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ mentioned his work:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2379

حَدَّثَنَا هَدَّابُ بْنُ خَالِدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا حَمَّادُ بْنُ سَلَمَةَ، عَنْ ثَابِتٍ، عَنْ أَبِي رَافِعٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « كَانَ زَكَرِيَّاءُ نَجَّارًا ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"Zechariah was a carpenter."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Haddab ibn Khalid, from Hammad ibn Salamah, from Thabit al-Bunani, from Abu Rafi' al-Sa'igh, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtues (Kitab al-Fada'il), chapter on the virtues of Zechariah, Hadith No. 2379.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim, the second most authentic book of Hadith after Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2379

A prophet who ***worked with his own hands***, yet whose heart always depended on Allah.

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A PRIVATE SUPPLICATION

SURAH MARYAM 19:2

ذِكْرُ رَحْمَتِ رَبِّكَ عَبْدَهُۥ زَكَرِيَّآ ﴿٢﴾

[This is] a mention of the mercy of your Lord to His servant Zechariah.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/19:2

SURAH MARYAM 19:3

إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُۥ نِدَآءً خَفِيًّا ﴿٣﴾

When he called to his Lord a private supplication?

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/19:3

EXPLANATION OF VERSE 19:3 — THE FIRST MANNER OF SUPPLICATION

First: "Nidā'an khafiyyā". ***"When he called to his Lord a private supplication"***. The commentators mention that a private supplication is closer to ***sincerity***, and further from showing off. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 19:3

Second: A general command. This manner is not only for Prophet Zechariah عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: ***"Call upon your Lord in humility and privately"*** (7:55).

Third: Allah is Near. ***"indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me"*** (2:186). The Messenger of Allah ﷺ corrected the Companions who raised their voices in remembrance:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 2992

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يُوسُفَ، حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، عَنْ عَاصِمٍ، عَنْ أَبِي عُثْمَانَ، عَنْ أَبِي مُوسَى الأَشْعَرِيِّ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ قَالَ كُنَّا مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم، فَكُنَّا إِذَا أَشْرَفْنَا عَلَى وَادٍ هَلَّلْنَا وَكَبَّرْنَا ارْتَفَعَتْ أَصْوَاتُنَا، فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم « يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، ارْبَعُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ، فَإِنَّكُمْ لاَ تَدْعُونَ أَصَمَّ وَلاَ غَائِبًا، إِنَّهُ مَعَكُمْ، إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ قَرِيبٌ، تَبَارَكَ اسْمُهُ وَتَعَالَى جَدُّهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Musa al-Ash'ari رضى الله عنه said: We were with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and whenever we climbed up a valley we would say tahlil and takbir in loud voices. So the Prophet ﷺ said: **"O people, be gentle with yourselves (lower your voices), for you are not calling upon one who is deaf or absent. Indeed, He is with you; indeed, He is All-Hearing and Near. Blessed is His name and exalted is His majesty."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Firyabi, from Sufyan al-Thawri, from 'Asim al-Ahwal, from Abu 'Uthman al-Nahdi, from Abu Musa al-Ash'ari رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Jihad and Expeditions, chapter on the dislike of raising the voice in takbir, Hadith No. 2992. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 2704).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:2992

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"NEVER HAVE I BEEN UNHAPPY"

SURAH MARYAM 19:4

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَهَنَ ٱلْعَظْمُ مِنِّي وَٱشْتَعَلَ ٱلرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا وَلَمْ أَكُنۢ بِدُعَآئِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا ﴿٤﴾

He said, "My Lord, indeed my bones have weakened, and my head has filled with white, and never have I been in my supplication to You, my Lord, unhappy."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/19:4

EXPLANATION OF VERSE 19:4 — HUMILITY AND CERTAINTY

First: Admitting weakness. ***"My Lord, indeed my bones have weakened, and my head has filled with white"***. Prophet Zechariah عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ began his supplication by mentioning ***his weakness***, not his merits.

Second: Seeking means through Allah's past kindness. ***"never have I been in my supplication to You, my Lord, unhappy"***. He mentioned that Allah had ***never*** disappointed him before — so he hoped Allah would not disappoint him this time. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 19:4

Third: Not being hasty. Prophet Zechariah عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ kept supplicating into old age. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ mentioned one reason a supplication is not answered:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 6340

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ يُوسُفَ، أَخْبَرَنَا مَالِكٌ، عَنِ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، عَنْ أَبِي عُبَيْدٍ، مَوْلَى ابْنِ أَزْهَرَ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « يُسْتَجَابُ لأَحَدِكُمْ مَا لَمْ يَعْجَلْ يَقُولُ دَعَوْتُ فَلَمْ يُسْتَجَبْ لِي ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"The supplication of any one of you is answered as long as he is not hasty, saying: I supplicated, but it was not answered for me."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Abdullah ibn Yusuf al-Tinnisi, from Malik ibn Anas, from Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, from Abu 'Ubayd, the freed slave of Ibn Azhar, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Supplications (Kitab al-Da'awat), chapter "The supplication is answered as long as one is not hasty", Hadith No. 6340. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 2735).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6340

FEAR FOR AN HEIR

SURAH MARYAM 19:5

وَإِنِّي خِفْتُ ٱلْمَوَٰلِيَ مِن وَرَآءِي وَكَانَتِ ٱمْرَأَتِي عَاقِرًا فَهَبْ لِي مِن لَّدُنكَ وَلِيًّا ۝٥

And indeed, I fear the successors after me, and my wife has been barren, so give me from Yourself an heir.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/19:5

SURAH MARYAM 19:6

يَرِثُنِي وَيَرِثُ مِنْ ءَالِ يَعْقُوبَ ۖ وَٱجْعَلْهُ رَبِّ رَضِيًّا ۝٦

Who will inherit me and inherit from the family of Jacob. And make him, my Lord, pleasing [to You].

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/19:6

EXPLANATION OF VERSES 19:5–6 — A SUPPLICATION FOR RELIGION, NOT WEALTH

First: A prophet's concern. ***"And indeed, I fear the successors after me"***. What he feared for was ***the religion***, not wealth.

Second: The inheritance of prophethood. ***"Who will inherit me and inherit from the family of Jacob"***. The commentators explain that the inheritance meant is ***knowledge and prophethood***, for the prophets do not leave wealth as inheritance. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 19:6

Third: "Do not leave me alone". ***"My Lord, do not leave me alone [with no heir], while you are the best of inheritors"*** (21:89). Even while asking for a child, he affirmed that ***Allah is the best of inheritors***.

A righteous child is a deed that does not end after death:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1631

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، - يَعْنِي ابْنَ سَعِيدٍ - وَابْنُ حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - هُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « إِذَا مَاتَ الإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلاَّ مِنْ ثَلاَثَةٍ إِلاَّ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: ongoing charity, knowledge that is benefited from, or a righteous child who prays for him."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya ibn Ayyub, Qutaybah ibn Sa'id and 'Ali ibn Hujr, from Isma'il ibn Ja'far, from al-'Ala' ibn 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Wills (Kitab al-Wasiyyah), chapter on the reward that reaches a person after death, Hadith No. 1631.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim, the second most authentic book of Hadith after Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:1631

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GOOD TIDINGS: JOHN

SURAH ALI 'IMRAN 3:38

هُنَالِكَ دَعَا زَكَرِيَّا رَبَّهُۥ ۖ قَالَ رَبِّ هَبْ لِى مِن لَّدُنكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً ۖ إِنَّكَ سَمِيعُ ٱلدُّعَآءِ ﴿٣٨﴾

At that, Zechariah called upon his Lord, saying, "My Lord, grant me from Yourself a good offspring. Indeed, You are the Hearer of supplication."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/3:38

SURAH ALI 'IMRAN 3:39

فَنَادَتْهُ ٱلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ وَهُوَ قَآئِمٌ يُصَلِّى فِى ٱلْمِحْرَابِ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكَ بِيَحْيَىٰ مُصَدِّقًۢا بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ وَسَيِّدًا وَحَصُورًا وَنَبِيًّا مِّنَ ٱلصَّٰلِحِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾

So the angels called him while he was standing in prayer in the chamber, "Indeed, Allah gives you good tidings of John, confirming a word from Allah and [who will be] honorable, abstaining [from women], and a prophet from among the righteous."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/3:39

EXPLANATION OF VERSES 3:39 AND 19:7 — A SUPPLICATION ANSWERED IN THE PRAYER CHAMBER

First: Answered during worship. ***"So the angels called him while he was standing in prayer in the chamber"***. The answer came ***while he was in prayer***.

Second: A name from above. ***"a boy whose name will be John. We have not assigned to any before [this] name"*** (19:7). Allah Himself gave him his name. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 19:7

Third: The qualities of John. ***"confirming a word from Allah and [who will be] honorable, abstaining [from women], and a prophet from among the righteous"***. "A word from Allah" is Prophet Jesus عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ, according to the majority of commentators. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 3:39

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"IT IS EASY FOR ME"

SURAH MARYAM 19:8

قَالَ رَبِّ أَنَّىٰ يَكُونُ لِي غُلَٰمٌ وَكَانَتِ ٱمْرَأَتِي عَاقِرًا وَقَدْ بَلَغْتُ مِنَ ٱلْكِبَرِ عِتِيًّا ﴿٨﴾

He said, "My Lord, how will I have a boy when my wife has been barren and I have reached extreme old age."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/19:8

SURAH MARYAM 19:9

قَالَ كَذَٰلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّنٌ وَقَدْ خَلَقْتُكَ مِن قَبْلُ وَلَمْ تَكُ شَيْـًٔا ﴿٩﴾

[An angel] said, "Thus [it will be]; your Lord says, 'It is easy for Me, for I created you before, while you were nothing.'"

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/19:9

EXPLANATION OF VERSES 19:8–9 AND 3:40 — GRATEFUL WONDER

First: A question of wonder, not doubt. ***"My Lord, how will I have a boy when my wife has been barren and I have reached extreme old age"***. The commentators explain that this question came from ***joy and amazement***, not doubt in Allah's power. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 19:8

Second: A brief answer. ***"Such is Allah; He does what He wills"*** (3:40).

Third: Proof from oneself. ***"It is easy for Me, for I created you before, while you were nothing"***. The One who creates from nothing can more easily create from what already exists.

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THE SIGN: THREE NIGHTS WITHOUT SPEECH

SURAH MARYAM 19:10

قَالَ رَبِّ ٱجۡعَل لِّيٓ ءَايَةٗۚ قَالَ ءَايَتُكَ أَلَّا تُكَلِّمَ ٱلنَّاسَ ثَلَٰثَ لَيَالٖ سَوِيّٗا ١٠

[Zechariah] said, "My Lord, make for me a sign." He said, "Your sign is that you will not speak to the people for three nights, [being] sound."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/19:10

SURAH MARYAM 19:11

فَخَرَجَ عَلَىٰ قَوۡمِهِۦ مِنَ ٱلۡمِحۡرَابِ فَأَوۡحَىٰٓ إِلَيۡهِمۡ أَن سَبِّحُواْ بُكۡرَةٗ وَعَشِيّٗا ١١

So he came out to his people from the prayer chamber and signaled to them to exalt [Allah] in the morning and afternoon.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/19:11

EXPLANATION OF VERSES 19:10–11 AND 3:41 — A TONGUE ONLY FOR REMEMBRANCE

First: The sign requested. ***"My Lord, make for me a sign"***.

Second: Silent while sound. ***"Your sign is that you will not speak to the people for three nights, [being] sound"***. His tongue was not ill — he simply could not speak to people. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 19:10

Third: Yet remembrance did not stop. ***"And remember your Lord much and exalt [Him with praise] in the evening and the morning"*** (3:41). Then he came out to his people: ***"signaled to them to exalt [Allah] in the morning and afternoon"***.

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JOHN: THE SCRIPTURE AND JUDGEMENT

SURAH MARYAM 19:12

يَٰيَحۡيَىٰ خُذِ ٱلۡكِتَٰبَ بِقُوَّةٖۖ وَءَاتَيۡنَٰهُ ٱلۡحُكۡمَ صَبِيّٗا ١٢

[Allah] said, "O John, take the Scripture with determination." And We gave him judgement [while yet] a boy.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/19:12

SURAH MARYAM 19:13

وَحَنَانٗا مِّن لَّدُنَّا وَزَكَوٰةٗۖ وَكَانَ تَقِيّٗا ١٣

And affection from Us and purity, and he was fearing of Allah.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/19:13

SURAH MARYAM 19:14

وَبَرَّۢا بِوَٰلِدَيۡهِ وَلَمۡ يَكُن جَبَّارًا عَصِيّٗا ١٤

And dutiful to his parents, and he was not a disobedient tyrant.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/19:14

SURAH MARYAM 19:15

وَسَلَٰمٌ عَلَيۡهِ يَوۡمَ وُلِدَ وَيَوۡمَ يَمُوتُ وَيَوۡمَ يُبۡعَثُ حَيّٗا ١٥

And peace be upon him the day he was born and the day he dies and the day he is raised alive.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/19:15

EXPLANATION OF VERSES 19:12–15 — THE CHILD WHO WAS PRAYED FOR

First: Holding the Scripture firmly. ***"O John, take the Scripture with determination." And We gave him judgement [while yet] a boy"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 19:12

Second: Affection, purity and piety. ***"And affection from Us and purity, and he was fearing of Allah"***.

Third: A dutiful son. ***"And dutiful to his parents, and he was not a disobedient tyrant"***. This is the answer to the supplication ***"make him, my Lord, pleasing [to You]"*** (19:6).

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Fourth: Peace at three moments. ***"And peace be upon him the day he was born and the day he dies and the day he is raised alive"***. The three loneliest moments for a human being — Allah guaranteed peace for John at all three. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 19:15

HASTENING TO GOOD DEEDS

SURAH AL-ANBIYA' 21:90

فَٱسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُۥ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُۥ يَحْيَىٰ وَأَصْلَحْنَا لَهُۥ زَوْجَهُۥٓ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا۟ يُسَـٰرِعُونَ فِى
ٱلْخَيْرَٰتِ وَيَدْعُونَنَا رَغَبًا وَرَهَبًا ۖ وَكَانُوا۟ لَنَا خَـٰشِعِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

So We responded to him, and We gave to him John, and amended for him his wife. Indeed, they used to hasten to good deeds and supplicate Us in hope and fear, and they were to Us humbly submissive.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/21:90

EXPLANATION OF VERSE 21:90 — THE SECRET OF AN ANSWERED SUPPLICATION

First: The supplication answered. ***"So We responded to him, and We gave to him John, and amended for him his wife"***.

Second: Three qualities of this family. ***"Indeed, they used to hasten to good deeds and supplicate Us in hope and fear, and they were to Us humbly submissive"***. ***Hastening, hope and fear, humility*** — this is the secret behind an answered supplication. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 21:90

Third: Among the righteous. ***"And Zechariah and John and Jesus and Elias - and all were of the righteous"*** (6:85).

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WHAT THE QUR'AN DOES NOT TELL

The story of Prophet Zechariah and Prophet John عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ is adorned with many added tales. Following Sahih al-Bukhari 4485 (Series 1), we do not add outside details.

THE POPULAR STORY AND WHAT REVELATION SAYS

THE POPULAR STORY	WHAT THE QUR'AN AND AUTHENTIC HADITH SAY
Prophet Zechariah hid inside a tree, and the tree was sawn in two with him inside.	Not mentioned in the Qur'an or authentic Hadith. This story is not established.
Prophet John was killed for forbidding a king's marriage, and his head was served on a platter.	The Qur'an does not detail the death of Prophet John; it only says "peace be upon him… the day he dies" (19:15).
Zechariah and his wife were a specific age.	The Qur'an only says "I have reached extreme old age" (19:8). Specific numbers are not established.
The head of Prophet John is kept in a specific place.	Not mentioned in the Qur'an or authentic Hadith. See the Archaeological Note below.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTE: THE UMAYYAD MOSQUE, DAMASCUS

Inside the **Umayyad Mosque in Damascus** is a structure known as the **Shrine of Prophet John (Yahya)**. Architectural studies show the site has a layered history: an Aramaean temple (of Hadad), then the Roman **Temple of Jupiter**, then the **Church of St John** in the late 4th century CE, and finally the **mosque** built by the Caliph al-Walid I between **705–715 CE** (Sobczak, 2015; Flood, 2001).

Recent scholarship describes the mosque as built on an earlier Byzantine church **honouring the grave of St John** (Lefebure, 2026). This shows the long-standing **reverence** for Prophet John عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ over the centuries — not proof of the location of his body.

Claim not included. The claim that the head or body of Prophet John عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ is actually in Damascus, or in Sebastia (Palestine), or anywhere else, is **not included**, because there is no solid archaeological evidence and no authentic text.

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THE MANNERS OF A PROPHET'S SUPPLICATION

The story of Prophet Zechariah عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ is ***a school of supplication***. An old man, his wife barren, his bones weakened — yet he supplicated privately, humbly, with certainty, and for a good purpose. And Allah answered with something ***never assigned before***.

FOUR MANNERS OF SUPPLICATION FROM THIS STORY

	The Words of Zechariah	The Lesson
Private (19:3)	"When he called to his Lord a private supplication"	Allah is All-Hearing and Near (Sahih al-Bukhari 2992)
Humility (19:4)	"My bones have weakened, and my head has filled with white"	Admitting one's weakness before Allah
Certainty (19:4)	"Never have I been in my supplication to You... unhappy"	Do not be hasty or despair (Sahih al-Bukhari 6340)
A good purpose (19:5–6)	"Who will inherit me and inherit from the family of Jacob"	A righteous child who prays (Sahih Muslim 1631)

Figure 2: The manners of Zechariah's supplication and their lessons.

LESSONS FROM THIS STORY

First: Allah's provision is not bound by ordinary means. (3:37).

Second: Working with one's own hands is the way of the prophets. (Sahih Muslim 2379).

Third: Supplicate privately; Allah is All-Hearing and Near. (19:3; 7:55; Sahih al-Bukhari 2992).

Fourth: Begin a supplication by admitting your weakness. (19:4).

Fifth: Do not be hasty and do not despair. (19:4; Sahih al-Bukhari 6340).

Sixth: Ask for offspring for the sake of religion, not the world. (19:5–6; Sahih Muslim 1631).

Seventh: Nothing is impossible for Allah. (19:9; 3:40).

Eighth: Hasten to good, in hope and fear, with humility. (21:90).

CONCLUSION

Each of us has something we have been praying for over many years. The story of Prophet Zechariah عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ teaches us to keep praying — privately, humbly and with certainty — for the Lord who heard the supplication in that prayer chamber is the same Lord who hears ours.

May Allah not leave us ***alone***, and He is ***the best of inheritors***. Amin.

In sha Allah, the series **Stories from the Qur'an** will continue with the next story — with the same method: the Qur'an, authentic Hadith, and solid archaeological findings only.

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SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:261

مَّثَلُ ٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمۡوَٰلَهُمۡ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنۢبَتَتۡ سَبۡعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنۢبُلَةٖ مِّاْئَةُ حَبَّةٖۗ وَٱللَّهُ يُضَٰعِفُ لِمَن يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ٢٦١

The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:261

SURAH SABA' 34:39

قُلۡ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبۡسُطُ ٱلرِّزۡقَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهِۦ وَيَقۡدِرُ لَهُۥۚ وَمَآ أَنفَقۡتُم مِّن شَيۡءٖ فَهُوَ يُخۡلِفُهُۥۖ وَهُوَ خَيۡرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ ٣٩

Say, "Indeed, my Lord extends provision for whom He wills of His servants and restricts [it] for him. But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will compensate it; and He is the best of providers."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/34:39

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2588

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، وَابْنُ، حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - وَهُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلاَّ عِزًّا وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلاَّ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Charity does not decrease wealth.

Allah does not increase a servant who forgives except in honour. And no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises him in rank."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue, Good Manners and Joining the Ties of Kinship (Kitab al-Birr wa al-Silah wa al-Adab), chapter on the encouragement of forgiveness and humility, Hadith No. 2588.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2588

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1631

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ - يَعْنِي ابْنَ سَعِيدٍ - وَابْنُ حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - هُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « إِذَا مَاتَ الإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلاَّ مِنْ ثَلاَثَةٍ إِلاَّ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: an ongoing charity, knowledge that is benefited from, or a righteous child who prays for him."

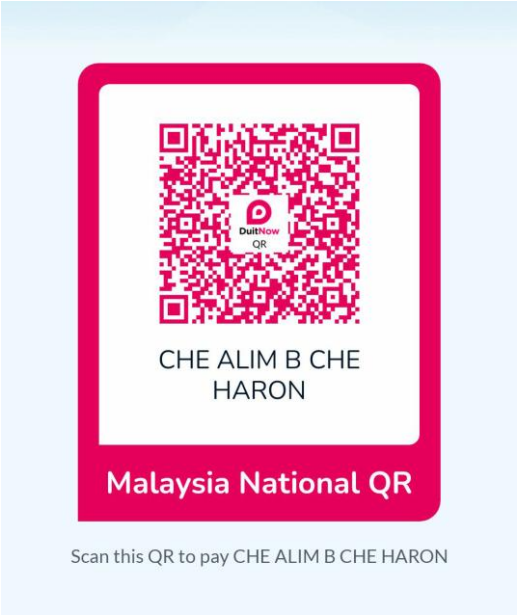
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GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:1631

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