

The Quran's Women

One of the most powerful ways of combating the concept that women are unequal in Islam is to look at the verses where specific women are mentioned. There are many individual women mentioned in the Quran, both believers and disbelievers. A review of the verses about these women makes it clear that women, as well as men, are judged on their righteousness alone.

Please note that all of these verses are from Rashad Khalifa's translation because it is much easier to read.

Adam's Wife

Though the Bible names Adam's wife Eve, the Quran never mentions her by name. However, it does speak of her:

*We said, "O Adam, live with your wife in Paradise,
and eat therefrom generously, as you please,
but do not approach this tree, lest you sin."*

*But the devil duped them,
and caused their eviction therefrom.*

We said, "Go down as enemies of one another.

*On Earth shall be your habitation
and provision for awhile."*

(Quran: The Final Testament 2:35-36)

The Quran does not lay the blame for Adam's fall on Eve, as the Bible does. Rather, Satan duped both Adam and Eve into disobeying God.

Another narration of this same incident, in Quran 7:19-25, tells us that both Adam and Eve repented:

*They said, "Our Lord, we have wronged our souls,
and unless You forgive us
and have mercy on us, we will be losers."
(Quran: The Final Testament 7:23)*

Throughout the Quran, God is very even handed with Adam and Eve, making it clear that both were equally duped by Satan into disobedience:

*O children of Adam, do not let the devil dupe you
as he did when he caused the eviction
of your parents from Paradise,
and the removal of their garments
to expose their bodies.
He and his tribe see you, while you do not see them.
We appoint the devils as companions
of those who do not believe.
(Quran: The Final Testament 7:27)*

Satan duped both, and we need to take care that we do not fall into the same trap!

Noah's Wife & Lot's Wife

The wife of Noah is mentioned in the Quran only once:

*God cites as examples of those who disbelieved
the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot.
They were married to two of our righteous servants,
but they betrayed them and, consequently,
they could not help them at all against God.
The two of them were told, "Enter the Hellfire
with those who deserved it."
(Quran: The Final Testament 66:10)*

Right after this verse God cites the wife of Pharaoh and Mary as examples of believers. These verses make it clear that it does not matter who you are married to, be it a messenger of God or

an enemy of God like Pharaoh, each one of us is individually responsible for our belief.

Lot's wife is mentioned in several other verses in the Quran, always indicating that she was doomed with the transgressors. Here is an example of such a verse where the angels were sent to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah:

*(The angels) said,
 "O Lot, we are your Lord's messengers,
 and these people cannot touch you.
 You shall leave with your family during the night,
 and let not anyone of you look back, except your wife;
 she is condemned along
 with those who are condemned.
 Their appointed time is the morning.
 Is not the morning soon enough?"
 (Quran: The Final Testament 11:81)*

The frequency with which the doom of Lot's wife is mentioned seems noteworthy. It occurs eight times in the Quran, almost every time the story of Lot is told. This frequency seems to highlight again the fact that it doesn't matter who you are married to; each individual is totally responsible for his or her own belief.

Abraham's Wives

Neither of Abraham's wives is mentioned by name in the Quran. Nor is their story told in any real detail. This probably indicates that the general story as given in the Bible is fairly accurate. Ismail's mother Hagar is not referenced in the Quran except as part of Abraham's family:

*Recall that Abraham said, "My Lord,
 make this a peaceful land, and protect me
 and my children from worshipping idols.
 My Lord, they have misled so many people.
 As for those who follow me, they belong with me.
 As for those who disobey me,*

*You are Forgiver, Most Merciful.
"Our Lord, I have settled part of my family
in this plantless valley, at Your Sacred House.
Our Lord, they are to observe
the Contact Prayers (Salat),
so let throngs of people converge upon them,
and provide for them all kinds of fruits,
that they may be appreciative. "*
(Quran: The Final Testament 14:35-37)

Isaac's mother, Sarah, is mentioned twice. Both times are in reference to Isaac's birth. The Quran does not give her name. Here is one of those references:

*When our messengers went to Abraham
with good news, they said, "Peace."
He said, "Peace," and soon brought a roasted calf.
When he saw that their hands did not touch it,
he became suspicious and fearful of them.
They said, "Do not be afraid,
we are being dispatched to the people of Lot."
His wife was standing, and she laughed
when we gave her the good news about Isaac,
and after Isaac, Jacob.
She said, "Woe to me,
how could I bear a child at my age,
and here is my husband, an old man?
This is really strange!"
They said, "Do you find it strange for God?
God has bestowed His mercy and blessings upon you,
O inhabitants of the shrine.
He is Praiseworthy, Glorious."
(Quran: The Final Testament 11:69-73)*

Thus, Sarah was blessed miraculously with a child. This narration is comforting to me, for her human response to God's blessing reminds me that all of us can have doubts about those blessings at times, and still be righteous.

The Women In Joseph's Story

Joseph was Abraham's great grandson. His father, Jacob, had two wives. The envy and animosity among the sons of those different women is a good example of the difficulties that can arise in polygamous situations. Joseph's story is also a good example of the way in which God controls even the bad situations in His servants' lives for their ultimate good. Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt:

*The one who bought him in Egypt said to his wife,
 "Take good care of him. Maybe he can help us,
 or maybe we can adopt him."
 We thus established Joseph on earth,
 and we taught him the interpretation of dreams.
 God's command is always done,
 but most people do not know.
 When he reached maturity,
 we endowed him with wisdom and knowledge.
 We thus reward the righteous.
 The lady of the house where he lived
 tried to seduce him.
 She closed the doors and said, "I am all yours."
 He said, "May God protect me.
 He is my Lord, who gave me a good home.
 The transgressors never succeed."
 She almost succumbed to him,
 and he almost succumbed to her,
 if it were not that he saw a proof from his Lord.
 We thus diverted evil and sin away from him,
 for he was one of our devoted servants.
 The two of them raced towards the door, and,
 in the process, she tore his garment from the back.
 They found her husband at the door.
 She said, "What should be the punishment
 for one who wanted to molest your wife,
 except imprisonment or a painful punishment?"
 He said, "She is the one who tried to seduce me."*

*A witness from her family suggested:
"If his garment is torn from the front,
then she is telling the truth and he is a liar.
And if his garment is torn from the back,
then she lied, and he is telling the truth."
When her husband saw
that his garment was torn from the back,
he said, "This is a woman's scheme.
Indeed, your scheming is formidable.
"Joseph, disregard this incident.
As for you (my wife), you should seek
forgiveness for your sin.
You have committed an error."
(Quran: The Final Testament 12:21-29)*

In the verses that immediately follow these, we learn that Joseph was in the household of the governor, and it was the governor's own wife who tried to seduce him:

*Some women in the city gossiped:
The governor's wife is trying to seduce her servant.
She is deeply in love with him.
We see that she has gone astray."
When she heard of their gossip, she invited them,
prepared for them a comfortable place,
and gave each of them a knife.
She then said to him, "Enter their room."
When they saw him, they so admired him,
that they cut their hands.
They said, "Glory be to God,
this is not a human being; this is an honorable angel."
She said, "This is the one you blamed me
for falling in love with.
I did indeed try to seduce him, and he refused.
Unless he does what I command him to do,
he will surely go to prison, and will be debased."
He said, "My Lord, the prison is better
than giving in to them.*

*Unless You divert their scheming from me,
I may desire them and behave like the ignorant ones.”
His Lord answered his prayer and
diverted their scheming from him.
He is the Hearer, the Omniscient.
Later, they saw to it, despite the clear proofs,
that they should imprison him for awhile.
(Quran: The Final Testament 12:30-35)*

While in the prison Joseph interprets the king's dream and:

*The king said, “Bring him to me.”
When the messenger came to him, he said,
“Go back to your lord and ask him to investigate the women
who cut their hands. My Lord is fully aware of their schemes.”
(The king) said (to the women),
“What do you know about the incident when
you tried to seduce Joseph?”
They said, “God forbid; we did not know
of anything evil committed by him.”
The wife of the governor said, “Now the truth has prevailed.
I am the one who tried to seduce him,
and he was the truthful one.
“I hope that he will realize that I never betrayed him
in his absence, for God does not bless
the schemes of the betrayers.
“I do not claim innocence for myself.
The self is an advocate of vice, except for those
who have attained mercy from my Lord.
My Lord is Forgiver, Most Merciful.”
(Quran: The Final Testament 12:30-53)*

The governor's wife tempted Joseph, and ultimately it might be said that she was the cause of his imprisonment. Yet, God used that very imprisonment to Joseph's great benefit. The governor's wife also obviously benefited from the whole test by repenting and turning wholeheartedly to God. Her com-

ments on the self and the schemes of the betrayers show a great growth in righteousness and wisdom.

The Women In Moses' Story

Women played a critical role in Moses' life. The Quranic story starts with his mother, his foster mother and his sister:

*We inspired Moses' mother: "Nurse him,
and when you fear for his life,
throw him into the river without fear or grief.
We will return him to you,
and will make him one of the messengers."
Pharaoh's family picked him up,
only to have him lead the opposition
and to be a source of grief for them.
That is because Pharaoh, Hamaan,
and their troops were transgressors.
Pharaoh's wife said, "This can be
a joyous find for me and you.
Do not kill him, for he may be of some benefit for us,
or we may adopt him to be our son."
They had no idea.
The mind of Moses' mother was growing so anxious
that she almost gave away his identity.
But we strengthened her heart, to make her a believer.
She said to his sister, "Trace his path."
She watched him from afar,
while they did not perceive.
We forbade him from accepting all
the nursing mothers.
(His sister) then said, "I can show you a family
that can raise him
for you, and take good care of him."
Thus, we restored him to his mother,
in order to please her, remove her worries,
and to let her know that God's promise is the truth.*

*However, most of them do not know.
(Quran: The Final Testament 28:7-13)*

We see here examples of three quite remarkable women. Moses' mother was able to overcome her natural fears and follow God's inspiration to throw her baby into the river, even knowing that Pharaoh would pick him up. Then God rewarded her by returning her son to her.

Moses' sister, a young girl who probably knew nothing about Pharaoh except the horror stories she was bound to have heard, had the courage to follow her baby brother and to speak up to bring him back to his family.

Pharaoh's wife must have been quite a woman to have been able to convince Pharaoh not to kill the baby Moses, but raise him as essentially an Egyptian prince. We do know that she was a wonderful believer, because in another section of the Quran God cites her as an example of the believers:

*And God cites as an example of those who believed
the wife of Pharaoh.
She said, "My Lord, build a home for me
at You in Paradise,
and save me from Pharaoh and his works;
save me from the transgressing people."
(Quran: The Final Testament 66:11)*

Though we do not know too much about Moses' wife, we do know that God used her and her sister as a means of giving Moses a safe refuge in Midyan:

*He fled the city, afraid and watchful.
He said, "My Lord, save me
from the oppressive people."
As he traveled towards Midyan, he said,
"May my Lord guide me in the right path."
When he reached Midyan's water,
he found a crowd of people watering,*

*and noticed two women waiting on the side.
He said, "What is it that you need?"
They said, "We are not able to water,
until the crowd disperses,
and our father is an old man."
He watered for them, then turned to the shade,
saying, "My Lord, whatever provision you send to me,
I am in dire need for it."
Soon, one of the two women approached him, shyly,
and said, "My father invites you
to pay you for watering for us."
When he met him, and told him his story,
he said, "Have no fear.
You have been saved from the oppressive people."
One of the two women said, "O my father, hire him.
He is the best one to hire, for he is strong and honest."
He said, "I wish to offer one of my
two daughters for you to marry,
in return for working for me for eight pilgrimages;
if you make them ten,
it will be voluntary on your part.
I do not wish to make this matter too difficult for you.
You will find me, God willing, righteous."
He said, "It is an agreement between me and you.
Whichever period I fulfill,
you will not be averse to either one.
God is the guarantor of what we said."
(Quran: The Final Testament 28:21-28)*

Thus, we see that throughout Moses' formative years, God used women as an integral part of His protection and guidance of Moses.

Queen of Sheba

We mentioned the Queen of Sheba earlier in the book as an example of a wise female ruler. The significance of her exam-

ple should not be lost here. She clearly had the support of her people and ruled with consultation rather than dictatorship. She was a peacemaker, not anxious to endanger her people for her own glory. And when presented with the truth, she accepted it. Her story starts with the hoopoe's report to Solomon:

*...(The hoopoe) said,
"I have news that you do not have.
I brought to you from Sheba,
some important information.
"I found a woman ruling them,
who is blessed with everything,
and possesses a tremendous palace.
"I found her and her people
prostrating before the sun, instead of God.
The devil has adorned their works in their eyes,
and has repulsed them from the path;
consequently, they are not guided."
They should have been prostrating before God,
the One who manifests all the mysteries
in the heavens and the earth,
and the One who knows everything you conceal
and everything you declare.
God: there is no other god beside Him;
the Lord with the great dominion.
(Solomon) said, "We will see if you told the truth,
or if you are a liar.
"Take this letter from me, give it to them,
then watch for their response."
She said, "O my advisers,
I have received an honorable letter.
"It is from Solomon, and it is,
'In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.'
"Proclaiming: 'Do not be arrogant;
come to me as submitters.' "
She said, "O my advisers, counsel me in this matter.
I am not deciding anything until you advise me."*

*They said, "We possess the power,
we possess the fighting skills,
and the ultimate command is in your hand.
You decide what to do."
She said, "The kings corrupt any land they invade,
and subjugate its dignified people.
This is what they usually do.
"I am sending a gift to them;
let us see what the messengers come back with."
When the hoopoe returned to Solomon (he told him the news),
and he responded (to Sheba's people):
"Are you giving me money?
What God has given me is far better
than what He has given you.
You are the ones to rejoice in such gifts."
(To the hoopoe, he said,) "Go back to them
(and let them know that)
we will come to them with forces they cannot imagine.
We will evict them, humiliated and debased."
He said, "O you elders, which of you
can bring me her mansion,
before they arrive here as submitters?"
One afrit from the jinns said,
"I can bring it to you before you stand up.
I am powerful enough to do this."
The one who possessed knowledge from the book said,
"I can bring it to you in the blink of your eye."
When he saw it settled in front of him, he said,
"This is a blessing from my Lord,
whereby He tests me,
to show whether I am appreciative or unappreciative.
Whoever is appreciative
is appreciative for his own good,
and if one turns unappreciative,
then my Lord is in no need for him, Most Honorable."
He said, "Remodel her mansion for her.
Let us see if she will be guided,*

or continue with the misguided.”
When she arrived, she was asked,
“Does your mansion look like this?”
She said, “It seems that this is it.” (Solomon said,)
“We knew beforehand what she was going to do,
and we were already submitters.”
She had been diverted by worshipping idols
instead of God; she belonged to disbelieving people.
She was told, “Go inside the palace.”
When she saw its interior, she thought
it was a pool of water, and she (pulled up her dress,)
exposing her legs.
He said, “This interior is now paved with crystal.”
She said, “My Lord, I have wronged my soul.
I now submit with Solomon to God,
Lord of the universe.”
(Quran: The Final Testament 27:22-44)

When the queen of Sheba submitted and accepted the truth, her people followed her.

Mary & Her Mother

The Quran has a great deal of information about Mary. There is more about Mary than about most of the messengers God tells us about. He tells us that Mary is an example of the believers:

And God cites as an example of those who believed
the wife of Pharaoh....
Also Mary, the Amramite.
She maintained her chastity,
then we blew into her from our spirit.
She believed in the words of her Lord
and His scriptures;
she was obedient.
(Quran: The Final Testament 66:11-12)

Even before she was born, Mary's mother dedicated her to God:

*God has chosen Adam, Noah, the family of Abraham,
and the family of Amram
(as messengers) to the people.
They belong in the same progeny.
God is Hearer, Omniscient.
The wife of Amram said, "My Lord,
I have dedicated (the baby) in my belly to You, totally,
so accept from me. You are Hearer, Omniscient."
When she gave birth to her, she said,
"My Lord, I have given birth to a girl" –
God was fully aware of what she bore –
"The male is not the same as the female.
I have named her Mary, and I invoke Your protection
for her and her descendants from the rejected devil."
(Quran: The Final Testament 3:33-36)*

God accepted the dedication from Mary's mother. Her guardian, Zachariah, was so impressed by her that he prayed for such a good child:

*Her Lord accepted her a gracious acceptance,
and brought her up a gracious upbringing,
under the guardianship of Zachariah.
Whenever Zachariah entered her sanctuary
he found provisions with her.
He would ask, "Mary, where did you get this from?"
She would say, "It is from God. God provides
for whomever He chooses, without limits."
That is when Zachariah implored his Lord:
"My Lord, grant me such a good child;
You are the Hearer of the prayers."
(Quran: The Final Testament 3:37-38)*

As Mary grew, God continued to guide her. He sent His angels to her:

*The angels said, "O Mary, God has chosen you
and purified you. He has chosen you
from all the women.*

*"O Mary, you shall submit to your Lord,
and prostrate and bow down
with those who bow down."*

*This is news from the past that we reveal to you.
You were not there when they drew their raffles
to select Mary's guardian.*

*You were not present when they argued
with one another.*

*The angels said, "O Mary, God gives you good news:
a Word from Him whose name is*

'The Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary.

*He will be prominent in this life and in the Hereafter,
and one of those closest to Me.'*

*"He will speak to the people from the crib,
as well as an adult; he will be one of the righteous."*

*She said, "My Lord, how can I have a son,
when no man has touched me?"*

He said, "God thus creates whatever He wills.

To have anything done,

He simply says to it, 'Be,' and it is.

*"He will teach him the scripture, wisdom, the Torah,
and the Gospel."*

(Quran: The Final Testament 3:42-48)

And God then bestowed on Mary the honor of bearing a child through virgin birth—a child who was a prophet from birth:

Mention in the scripture Mary.

*She isolated herself from her family,
into an eastern location.*

*While a barrier separated her from them,
we sent to her our Spirit.*

He went to her in the form of a human being.

She said, "I seek refuge in the Most Gracious,

that you may be righteous."

*He said, "I am the messenger of your Lord,
to grant you a pure son."*

*She said, "How can I have a son,
when no man has touched me;
I have never been unchaste."*

*He said, "Thus said your Lord, 'It is easy for Me.
We will render him a sign for the people,
and mercy from us. This is a predestined matter.' "*
*When she bore him, she isolated herself
to a faraway place.*

*The birth process came to her
by the trunk of a palm tree.*

*She said, "(I am so ashamed;) I wish I were dead
before this happened, and completely forgotten."
(The infant) called her from beneath her, saying,
"Do not grieve. Your Lord has provided you
with a stream.*

*"If you shake the trunk of this palm tree,
it will drop ripe dates for you.*

"Eat and drink, and be happy.

*When you see anyone, say,
'I have made a vow of silence;*

I am not talking today to anyone.' "

She came to her family, carrying him.

*They said, "O Mary, you have committed something
that is totally unexpected.*

*"O descendant of Aaron,
your father was not a bad man,
nor was your mother unchaste."*

She pointed to him.

*They said, "How can we talk
with an infant in the crib?"*

*(The infant spoke and) said, "I am a servant of God.
He has given me the scripture,
and has appointed me a prophet."*

(Quran: The Final Testament 19:16-30)

Thus Mary was saved from the Torah's punishment for adultery: stoning to death. The fact of her giving birth while still a virgin was proven by the miracle of her son speaking as a newborn.

Given all that God tells us about Mary, the virgin birth, the honor of being the mother of a prophet from birth, etc., it is easy to see her as someone extra special. But God gives us her example as the example of a believer. This means that any believer can attain the same status with God that Mary has. Anyone can be as devoted to Him, anyone can worship Him as completely. It is something that all of us can and should strive for:

*The Messiah, son of Mary, is no more than
a messenger like the messengers before him,
and his mother was a saint.
Both of them used to eat the food.
Note how we explain the revelations for them,
and note how they still deviate!
(Quran: The Final Testament 5:75)*

Before you say to yourself, well, Mary was a saint, and I can never be that good, read this next verse:

*Those who obey God and the messenger
belong with those blessed by God –
the prophets, the saints, the martyrs,
and the righteous. These are the best company.
(Quran: The Final Testament 4:69)*

We all have the capability of being among that “best company” if we choose to strive to be one of the righteous!

Muhammad's Wives

For centuries Muslim women have looked to the Prophet's wives as role models. It is through his wives that a great many of his sayings, or *Hadith*, were supposedly originally transmitted. Many Muslims have come to revere them. But what do we

really know about them? Actually, very little, and much of what we think we know is probably inaccurate. However, the Quran does mention them several times.

They are to be respected:

*The prophet is closer to the believers
than they are to each other,
and his wives are like mothers to them.
The relatives ought to take care
of one another in accordance with God's scripture.
Thus, the believers shall take care of their relatives
who immigrate to them, provided they have
taken care of their own families first.
These are commandments of this scripture.
(Quran: The Final Testament 33:6)*

God tells us that the Prophet's wives are like our mothers. What does that mean for women who have been dead for over a thousand years? How do you treat your deceased mother (or in truth great, great... great grandmother whom you never met)? We have seen that God tells us to honor our parents (2:83, 6:151, etc.). Clearly there can be no personal interaction, so how can we honor women who are dead? I believe by respecting them and not attributing anything to them that they would not have done!

The Prophet's wives were very close to all the issues of early Islam. They knew, as few others did, the dangers of idolatry. They also knew what Muhammad really taught. It seems to me very disrespectful of them to believe that they would have gone against the clear teachings of the Quran to take anything but the scripture as a source of guidance. Therefore I do not believe that they would have intentionally begun the transmission of *Hadith*. Of course, as humans, they were bound to have shared from the experiences of their lives, speaking of their deceased husband as any woman would. But it is very different to recall events or discuss mutual memories and to relate the words or actions of the Prophet as a source of religious guidance. Would

we take the words of our own mothers about our deceased fathers as religious guidance? I hope not!

The wives of the Prophet were in a special position in the early days of Islam. Their actions and words could easily reflect negatively on the message. As a result, they were required to take extra precautions in their dealings with other people:

*O prophet, say to your wives,
"If you are seeking this life and its vanities,
then let me compensate you and
allow you to go amicably.
"But if you are seeking God and His messenger,
and the abode of the Hereafter,
then God has prepared for the righteous among you
a great recompense."
O wives of the prophet, if any of you commits
a gross sin, the retribution will be doubled for her.
This is easy for God to do.
Any one of you who obeys God and His messenger,
and leads a righteous life,
we will grant her double the recompense,
and we have prepared for her a generous provision.
O wives of the prophet, you are not the same as
any other women, if you observe righteousness.
(You have a greater responsibility.)
Therefore, you shall not speak too softly,
lest those with disease in their hearts
may get the wrong ideas;
you shall speak only righteousness.
You shall settle down in your homes,
and do not mingle with the people excessively,
like you used to do in the old days of ignorance.
You shall observe the Contact Prayers (Salat),
and give the obligatory charity (Zakat),
and obey God and His messenger.
God wishes to remove all unholiness from you,
O you who live around the Sacred Shrine,*

*and to purify you completely.
Remember what is being recited in your homes
of God's revelations and the wisdom inherent therein.
God is Sublime, Cognizant.
(Quran: The Final Testament 33:28-34)*

As mothers to the believers, their responsibility was greater, as well as their reward.

Given the Arab attitude toward feminine sexuality, it makes great sense that the prophet's wives should have set themselves apart from the people rather than risk endangering the reputation of the prophet, and the spread of the message. But the above verses make it clear that this was for wives of the prophet: "*O wives of the prophet, you are not the same as any other women, if you observe righteousness.*"

Because the prophet's wives were in such a delicate position, the believers were required to treat them with care:

*O you who believe, do not enter the prophet's homes
unless you are given permission to eat,
nor shall you force such an
invitation in any manner.
If you are invited, you may enter.
When you finish eating, you shall leave;
do not engage him in lengthy conversations.
This used to hurt the prophet,
and he was too shy to tell you.
But God does not shy away from the truth.
If you have to ask his wives for something,
ask them from behind a barrier.
This is purer for your hearts and their hearts.
You are not to hurt the messenger of God.
You shall not marry his wives after him,
for this would be a gross offense in the sight of God.
(Quran: The Final Testament 33:53)*

Even given all of the special circumstances of the wives of the prophet, they clearly were not kept totally sequestered from the rest of society. This is clear from the Quranic verse 33:33, as quoted above, where the wives are told not to mingle excessively with the people. Obviously they could mingle, just not excessively. The fact that they did still interact with the people is also illustrated by the following verse:

*O prophet, tell your wives, your daughters,
and the wives of the believers
that they shall lengthen their garments.
Thus, they will be recognized (as righteous women)
and avoid being insulted.
God is Forgiver, Most Merciful.
(Quran: The Final Testament 33:59)*

If they were never seen outside of their own house holds there would be no need for them to worry about being insulted.

God tells us that the prophet and his wives were like parents to the believers. He also makes it very clear that they were fallible human beings. The following verses illustrate this:

*O you prophet, why do you prohibit
what God has made lawful for you,
just to please your wives?
God is Forgiver, Merciful.
God has decreed for you the laws
dealing with your oaths.
God is your Lord, and He is the Omniscient,
Most Wise.
The prophet had trusted some of his wives
with a certain statement, then one of them spread it,
and God let him know about it.
He then informed his wife of part of the issue,
and disregarded part.
She asked him, "Who informed you of this?"*

*He said, "I was informed by the Omniscient,
Most Cognizant."
If the two of you repent to God,
then your hearts have listened.
But if you band together against him,
then God is his ally,
and so is Gabriel and the righteous believers.
Also, the angels are his helpers.
If he divorces you, his Lord will substitute
other wives in your place who are better than you;
submitters (Muslims), believers (Mu'mins), obedient, repentant,
worshipers, pious,
either previously married, or virgins.
(Quran: The Final Testament 66:1-5)*

These verses illustrate that there were difficulties within the prophet's marriages, as in any marriage. The prophet and his wives were only human.

There is one other set of verses which illustrate the prophet's human fallibility in reference to his wives. This has to do with his reticence to marry the divorced wife of his adopted son:

*Recall that you said to the one who was
blessed by God, and blessed by you, "
Keep your wife and reverence God,"
and you hid inside yourself
what God wished to proclaim.
Thus, you feared the people,
when you were supposed to fear only God.
When Zeid was completely through with his wife,
we had you marry her, in order to establish
the precedent that a man may marry the divorced
wife of his adopted son.
God's commands shall be done.
The prophet is not committing an error
by doing anything that is made lawful by God.
Such is God's system since the early generations.
God's command is a sacred duty.*

*Those who deliver God's messages,
and who reverence Him alone,
shall never fear anyone but God.
God is the most efficient reckoner.
(Quran: The Final Testament 33:37-39)*

There is one last set of verses having to do with the wives of the prophet that we should look at. They give us a glimpse at the society of the time:

*O prophet, we made lawful for you your wives
to whom you have paid their due dowry,
or what you already have, as granted to you by God.
Also lawful for you in marriage are
the daughters of your father's brothers,
the daughters of your father's sisters,
the daughters of your mother's brothers,
the daughters of your mother's sisters,
who have emigrated with you.
Also, if a believing woman gave herself
to the prophet – by forfeiting the dowry –
the prophet may marry her without a dowry,
if he so wishes.
However, her forfeiting of the dowry applies
only to the prophet, and not to the other believers.
We have already decreed their rights
in regard to their spouses
or what they already have.
This is to spare you any embarrassment.
God is Forgiver, Most Merciful.
You may gently shun any one of them,
and you may bring closer to you any one of them.
If you reconcile with any one you had estranged,
you commit no error.
In this way, they will be pleased, will have no grief,
and will be content with what
you equitably offer to all of them.
God knows what is in your hearts.*

*God is Omniscient, Clement.
Beyond the categories described to you,
you are enjoined from marrying any other women,
nor can you substitute a new wife
(from the prohibited categories),
no matter how much you admire their beauty.
You must be content with those already
made lawful to you.
God is watchful over all things.
(Quran: The Final Testament 33:50-52)*

From these verses it is clear that it was an honor to be married to the prophet. A woman might forfeit a dowry in order to be so honored, but the prophet might not wish to marry her. If that forfeiture were then to be generalized to anyone who would then chose to marry the woman, the prophet might feel compelled to marry her rather than having her lose her dowry. These verses prevented that situation from coming up.

Abee Lahab's Wife

One of the last chapters of the Quran is devoted to one of Muhammad's uncles and his wife. They were leaders of the persecution against the believers:

*Condemned are the works of Abee Lahab, and he is condemned.
His money and whatever he has accomplished
will never help him
He has incurred the blazing Hell.
Also his wife, who led the persecution.
She will be (resurrected) with a rope of thorns
around her neck.
(Quran: The Final Testament 111:1-5)*

Thus we see that women can be among the best of the best, like Mary and Pharaoh's wife. Or they can be among the worst of the worst like Lot's wife and the wife of Abee Lahab.

Let us strive to be among the best of the best!