



A Critical Review of the entry "Women and the Quran" in Encyclopedia of the Quran

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Abstract

"Women and the Quran" is the title of an entry written by Dr. Ruth Roded in the Encyclopedia of the Quran [EQ]. She has attempted to give a picture of women from the Quranic point of view. The author started with the verses that address men and women about their religious duties and explored women's creation, and spiritual, social, and economic status in depth. She has also mentioned a large number of Quranic verses which refer to women. Dr. Roded has also paid special attention to some female characters such as Zulaykha, Al-Azīz's wife, and Bilqis, the Queen of Saba, and has collected Quranic exegesis and narratives about these figures which look like "Isra'iliyyāt" rather than authentic sources. Despite her previous Islamic studies and writings, she has made major mistakes in this article. Some of her important declarations definitely need to be analyzed and criticized.

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Academic Biography

Ruth Roded is a senior Professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and a member of the Asian African Studies Association at this University. In 1984, about 23 years ago, she obtained her doctorate from the University of Denver in the State of Colorado, USA. Her doctoral dissertation was about "The tradition and changes in Syria during the last decades of the Ottoman Rule".

One of her current research and teaching areas is women in Islam and the Middle East. She is the author of many works related to women in Islam, gender issues, educated women in Islam, the lives of prominent women (such as Safiyya, Sudeh, Umm Kulthum, Umm Salma), criticism of the book "The Wives of the Prophet by Aisha bint Al-Shati, the life of the Holy Prophet (in terms of gender and masculinity), the Ottoman government, the scholars of Damascus during the time of the Ottomans, mosques, waqf, etc.

An Overview of the entry

Ruth Roded started her article titled "Women and the Quran" thus: Only one woman is actually named in the Qurān, but a large number of verses refer to women. A long chapter of the Qurān is titled "The Women" (Q 4, Sūrat al-Nisā) and contains a great deal of material relating to gender (q.v.), but numerous verses (q.v.) in other chapters (see sura) are also gender-related."

In another section of the article under the sub-heading:

"Spiritual equality, symbolic weakness, and social reality", she wrote: "In the spiritual realm, women and men are regarded in the Qur'ān for the most part as equal in the eyes of God and as having similar religious duties. A large number of verses are addressed to the believing men and the believing women or, conversely, the hypocritical men and the hypocritical women as well as the idolatrous men and idolatrous women. ... Both are admonished to believe in God and do good works (Q 16:97; 40:40; cf. 4:124) in order to enter paradise. The giving of alms is specifically required of both women and men (cited above and again in Q 57:18). Moreover, the women's oath of allegiance to the Prophet is described (Q 60:12; see contracts and alliances). Like men, believing and righteous women will go to heaven while the wrong-doers will suffer in hell, but women's fate in

the afterlife is associated with that of their husbands. (Q 36:55-6; 37:22; 43:70)

Most problematic are a number of verses that promise believers in paradise modest, beautiful women who are sometimes explicitly described as virgins. (Q 37:48; 38:52; 52:20; 55:56, 72, 74; 56:22, 36; 78:33)

After these lines, Ruth Roded concluded and wrote: “Symbolically, the concept of woman in the Qur’ān is undoubtedly that of a being who is considered to be weak, flawed or passive”. She added thus: “Menstruation, a prime signifier of the female, is an illness or an impurity (Q 2:222; 4:43). Not surprisingly, the earth is female and humans consider themselves her masters (e.g., Q 39:69). Thus, the much-quoted verse “Your women are a tilth for you, so go to your tilth as you will” (Q 2: 223) may be understood as the obverse of the earth-woman metaphor. Women’s subaltern status is reflected in verses that position them among orphans, children and men who are too weak to fight (Q 4:2-3, 75, 98, 127). Women’s dependency is expressed not only in the fact that they are not named (except for Mary) but also that they are almost always ascribed to men as mother of, wife of, “women of,” and so on, all forms of linkage to men.

In social issues, the position of women in the Quran has two aspects: positive and negative. In this section, Dr [Mrs.] Roded pointed out the verses in which the preference of boys over girls - and burying girls alive as the sins of the polytheists - is condemned.

Concerning verse 34 of Quran 4, she dealt with the issue of the maintenance of women by men and wrote: “Gender relations are most succinctly expressed in a phrase that has been widely quoted throughout the centuries to support the superiority of men over women.”

Thereafter, she dealt with the issue of giving testimony and wrote thus: *Women’s testimony is another ambivalent issue in the Qur’ān. When two male witnesses are required but no men are available, the testimony of one man and two women is specified. The reason for this inequality is clearly stated in the relevant verse (Q 2:282), “so that if one of them errs, the other can remind her.” In other words, women are reliable enough to provide legal testimony but their memory is not as accurate as that of men.*

The author later mentioned the separation of women from men, and she wrote: *The seclusion of virtuous Muslim women and their*

separation from men who are not their kin are rooted in the interpretation of a number of rather obscure Qur'ānic verses. The wives of the Prophet are ordered to "stay in your houses" (Q 33:33) and subsequently most legists explicated rules which prohibited women from traveling more than three days walking distance without the permission of their male guardians and, even then, only when accompanied by a chaperon. Another exegetical question is whether the instruction refers only to the Prophet's wives or to other Muslim women as well.

The continuation of the verse commands the women to dress modestly (see clothing), pray regularly (see prayer), give to the poor, and obey God and his messenger, and these are surely not requirements restricted to the wives of the Prophet. Thus, one could deduce that the order to stay in your houses (or alternately to be honorable or quiet) may be extrapolated to apply to all Muslim women. Conversely, the verse ordering the believers to speak to the wives of the Prophet from behind a curtain also prohibits them from marrying the Prophet's widows after his death (q 33:53; see veil; widow), a limitation unique to the Prophet's wives. In this case, separating women from male visitors by a curtain, a hijāb would logically apply only to the Prophet's wives.

On the occasion of the revelation of this blessed verse, she wrote: *A simple reading of the verse implies that some of the early Muslims entered the Prophet's house at all times of the day and night, without asking permission, and stayed around talking. The Prophet was too shy to ask them to leave but God revealed an injunction against this improper behavior. In Qur'ānic exegesis (see exegesis of the Quran: classical and medieval), the circumstances upon which the verse was revealed (Asbāb al nuzūl) indicated that some visitors bothered the Prophet's wives to the point of sexual harassment.*

Ruth Roded dealt with the issue of hijab in this section and considered the related verses to be full of ambiguity, she wrote: *This imprecision and difference of opinion among major exegetes continued for centuries. And she concluded thus: In sum, the overall image of women in the Qur'ān is ambivalent. They are autonomous in religious obligations and economic affairs but are subject to men in the social sphere. Women are also objectified, most notably as one of the rewards for men in the hereafter (see eschatology). Women's modesty is specified in greater detail than that of men, albeit in terms that were obscure even to the earliest legists. This implies either that women's sexuality is more threatening than men's or that women require more guidance to protect their modesty.*

The author under the sub-heading "Legal material relating to women and gender" pointed to polygamy, fixed-term marriage, slave girls, adultery, homosexuality, inheritance, and the property rights of women, she writes: *Homosexuality and sodomy are discussed in the Qur'ān in the many references to Lot and his family, who were the only ones of their people who repented their lewd acts and were spared by God. Those who did not change their ways are severely condemned and both parties to a homosexual relationship are to be strictly punished (Q 4:16; 7:81).*

On the economic rights of women, Ruth Roded wrote: *The unusually liberal property rights of women anchored in the Qur'ān have been the subject of much speculation. Classical Muslim scholars explained that, since the inheritance rules follow a section dealing with care for orphans, they reflect concern for the kin of Muslims who died in battles for the sake of Islam. In view of the fact that these relatives of fallen Muslim heroes would revert to the care of their families who most likely were anti-Muslim, it was deemed important to provide for them economically. Some modern scholars of early Islam (such as Goitein and Stern) have suggested that, in the mercantile city of Mecca before the advent of Islam, women had certain rights of inheritance, citing the vast property of the widow Khadija and a number of other women. Thus, the social reality at the time and place of the Quran's revelation could have influenced the economic provisions regarding women. The association made between women, orphans and children in the Qur'ān suggests that women were regarded as weaker social entities and therefore providing for their welfare was viewed as an ethical act. Women's inheritance of half the portion of a man logically follows from men's double financial responsibility to support their wives. Some have argued that women were generally not as economically encumbered as men were and therefore required fewer financial resources. In any case, the Qur'ānic inheritance rules, while providing women with a crucial source of income, are also a concrete reflection of their subordinate status.*

In the next paragraph, the author started a subheading of the article with the title: "Female characters in Qur'ānic narratives", thus: *Some narratives in the Qur'ān are about pre-Islamic figures such as Adam and Eve, Joseph and Azīz's wife, the wife of Pharaoh who was Moses' stepmother, Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and Mary, mother of Jesus. They project a variety of roles and images of women and have been the subject of various interpretations and amplifications. Some of these could change the dominant precedent or role model that emerges from the holy text.*

Some narratives of the creation do not mention the first man's partner, but other verses state that God created man and his mate from a single soul. Adam alone is granted an exceptional position among the angels and the creatures, but this appears to be an indication of his status as a prophet rather than as a male.

Both Adam and his wife, however, are instructed to dwell in the garden and both are warned not to eat of the tree of immortality. Most importantly, in the Qur'ānic version, both Adam and his wife are tempted by Satan, both eat of the tree and both are expelled (Only in one verse, Q 20:120, is Adam alone tempted.)

Moreover, for the most part, Adam repents his disobedience and is forgiven and given guidance by his lord. Only in one verse, do Adam and his wife admit their guilt and beg for forgiveness (Q 7:23). In short, the Qur'ānic text describes the creation of the first woman (when it is referred to at all) as contemporaneous and similar to that of the first man.

She is not responsible for tempting him, and if there is any unequal guilt, it is Adam who bears a greater degree of culpability. Moreover, the gender issue in the story of Adam and his wife may be viewed as marginal to the main Qur'ānic message of the covenant between God and humanity, and his forgiving of the folly of both male and female believers (Q 7:172-3; 33:72-3).

On the story of creation in the Quran, Dr. [Mrs] Ruth Roded made references to Quranic exegeses and narrations and she writes that the role of Eve (Hawwā) is portrayed negatively in this regard, she is held responsible for Adam's temptation and fall. This is because she deliberately deceiving him. Ruth Roded writes all the negative and derogatory ideas about Eve here and concludes as follows: Thus, in contrast to the Qur'ānic text, classical Islamic scholars portrayed the first woman as a threat to her husband and by extension to all humankind.

Three columns of this article are devoted to the story of Yusuf and Aziz's wife, and the author has written a lot about the sentence "*The guile of women is great*", such as: In the exegesis of the Qur'ān, the focus of the story of Joseph and Zulaykha was often shifted from a tale about a prophet overcoming adversity to an account of the dangers of female sexuality and women's cunning as embodied in the Arabic term 'kayd' which appears no less than seven times in the narrative (Q 12:28, 33, 34, 50, 52). The unbridled sexuality and guile of women are amplified in Islamic histories and stories of the prophets, and these are genres that tended toward embellishment and were not restricted by the rules of the Islamic sciences.

She wrote about Joseph in another place, thus: *Al-Azīz's wife*

confesses and affirms his honesty and virtue. But Joseph admits that he was inclined to evil and thanks the lord for helping him to overcome his human instincts (Q 12:53). Joseph is taken into the king's service, becomes custodian of the storehouses, takes revenge on his brothers and performs a miracle.

Concerning Āsiya, the wife of Pharaoh, Mrs. Roded wrote: *Among the women related to Moses in the Qur'ān, Pharaoh's wife attained the most prominence as an example to believers because of her having convinced Pharaoh not to kill the infant Moses.*

Concerning the Queen of Sheba, she wrote: *The Queen of Sheba appears in the Qur'ān as a sovereign ruler who engaged in political negotiations with the wise and knowledgeable Solomon. ...The Queen of Sheba seems at first to be hesitant about making a decision on her own, but the Qur'ānic text leaves no doubt that she is capable of independent reasoning in affairs of state and that her decisions have legitimacy. Her acumen seems equal to Solomon's when she passes the test of the throne that he has prepared for her. In the anecdote about the glass floor that appears as water, however, he clearly bests her by ruse and humiliates her as well. Nevertheless, it is intriguing that at the end of the Qur'ānic story, the two submit together to God.*

Regarding the glass surface, Ruth Roded wrote: *The vivid picture of Bilqīs standing in the water before Solomon revealing her hairy legs (or whether she had donkey's feet), surely undermines her image as a capable, independent ruler.*

"Ruth Roded" concluded this part of his article by mentioning Maryam, the wives of the Prophets mentioned in the Quran and the wives of the Prophet of Islam. She wrote about Aisha: *Perhaps the most famous story elucidating a Qur'ānic passage is that of the slander against Āisha, the Prophet's wife, which explains the stringent rules for proving adultery and the harsh penalty for unsubstantiated allegations against a woman (Q 24:4-26). Shūis point out that, since Aisha is not actually mentioned in the Qur'ān, she was never exonerated of the accusation of adultery.*

Here, the author has addressed Quran 58 [Surah Al-Mujadalah] and the story that is mentioned there, and finally, she has returned to the issue of the women of the Prophet of God. She wrote: *These commentaries and ḥadīth traditions of the words and deeds of the Prophet have served as the basis for numerous anecdotes about the jealousy, covetousness and scheming of the women of his household. While a polygynous family undoubtedly provides fertile ground for petty intrigues, it would seem that the classical male Muslim scholars relished interpretations that highlighted harem politics.*

In the last part of the article, the author mentioned early and late women commentators and introduced commentators with feminist viewpoints of the Quran. She mentioned Aisha, Hafsa and other women at the beginning of Islam who played a role in the transmission of the Quran. She introduced Dr. Aisha Abd al-Rahman bint al-Shati as the first female commentator. She referred to Mumtaz Ali, Mohammad Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi, Mohammad Abdo, Mohammad Rashid Reza, Mahmoud Abbas al-Akkad, Maududi, Seyyed Qutb, Amina and Doud Mohsen as commentators of the Quran with a feminist reading, and she also mentioned the women's magazine in Tehran, edited by Shahla Shart, in which the verses of the Quran are interpreted according to the needs of women: *The magazine's editor, Shahla Sherkat, and other women well-versed in the Qur'ān have championed the right of women to use Ijtihād or independent reasoning, thereby challenging the primacy of the clergy in the realm of interpretation.*

The author wrote in the last sentences as a concluding part: *Trans-global media have also facilitated the dissemination of new readings of the Qur'ān. A second generation of Islamic feminists have begun to cite the pioneering exegesis of women who have reinterpreted the Qur'ān and no longer have to analyze the holy text themselves.* (Roded, 5/523)

A Critical Review

The article has strong and positive points in the sense that it points to the Quran's defense of women's right to life and combating female infanticide, as well as the legal recognition of women's economic rights. However, many shortcomings of the article by Dr. "Ruth Roded" are due to her little information, lack of understanding of the facts, or its denial; even if she did not intentionally paint a negative outlook of Islam, she has definitely created this feeling in the Muslim reader.

a. General Review

Most of her sources in composing this article are the literary works of Western authors who perhaps are very alien to the essence of Islam like herself or did not want to be familiar with it! She does not indicate the addresses of the exegetical and narrative points that she cited. She does not take into consideration the context of the verses and her conclusions are superficial. In several places in this article, she referred to the Quran verses as silent and ambiguous...; whereas the verses are

clear and it is obvious that the ambiguity created is due to her little knowledge in those fields. In view of the extent of Mrs. Roded's shortcomings in this article, it is necessary to review and critically analyze it in detail.

b.) Detailed Reviews

1. After mentioning the beautiful verses regarding the spiritual excellence of women and that God regards them as equal to men in the realm of spirituality, the author referred to three blessed verses (Quran 36: 55, 56; 37: 22; 43: 70) and she concluded that the fate of women in the Hereafter depends on that of their husbands. In verses 55 and 56 of Quran 36 [Surah Yāsin], God says: *"Indeed today the inhabitants of paradise rejoice in their engagements. Indeed, today the inhabitants of paradise rejoice in their engagements."*

In verse 22 of Quran 37 [Surah al-Ṣāffāt], He says: *"Muster the wrongdoers and their mates and what they used to worship."* In verse 70 of Quran 43 [Surah Zukhruf], He says: *"Enter paradise, you and your spouses, rejoicing."*

These blessed verses do not indicate any form of dependence, rather God says that the inmates of Paradise; that is, the men of Paradise and their wives who were believers and inmates of Paradise, reside in Paradise; Unlike the men who wronged themselves and their wives who wronged themselves and both of them are inmates of Hell. God has said in many verses: *"Whoever acts righteously, [whether] male or female, should he be faithful, We shall revive him with a good life and pay them their reward by the best of what they used to do."* (Quran 16: 97)

Other blessed Quranic verses such as Quran 40: 40 and Quran 4: 124 explain that both men and women will be rewarded for their good deeds.

"Indeed, the charitable men and women and those who lend Allah a good loan—it shall be multiplied for them, and there will be a noble reward for them." (Quran 57: 18)

"Indeed, the Muslim men and the Muslim women, the faithful men and the faithful women, the obedient men and the obedient women ... Allah holds in store for them forgiveness and a great reward." (Quran 33: 35)

Also, there are verses in the Holy Quran according to which a

wicked woman is separated from her husband, who is an inmate of Paradise and has a completely different destiny, such as: *"Thereupon We delivered him and his family, except his wife; she was one of those who remained behind."* (Quran 7: 83)

It is never the case that a bad man attracts a good woman to himself. Asiyah, Pharaoh's wife, gets a house with God, while Pharaoh is among the drowned and perished in this world and the Hereafter: *"My Lord! Build me a home near You in paradise, and deliver me from Pharaoh and his conduct, and deliver me from the wrongdoing lot."* (Quran 66: 11)

2. Monthly menses of women is an illness and impurity, women are likened to the field (land) and are placed next to orphans, children, and weak men. She referred to two Quranic verses concerning women's monthly menstruation:

"They ask you concerning [intercourse during] menses. Say, 'It is hurtful.' So, keep away from wives during the menses." (Quran 2: 222)

And,

"But if you are sick or on a journey, or any of you has come from the toilet, or you have touched women, and you cannot find water, then make your ablution on clean ground." (Quran 4: 43)

The verse of Quran 4 [Surah al-Nisa] has nothing to do with menstruation and does indicate "contamination" and "illness" of women. It seems she understood from *"Or you have touched women ... then make your ablution on clean ground"* that when you touch menstruating women, you should clean yourself. In the Torah, the Book of Leviticus, it is stated that *"Whoever touches a menstruating woman is unclean until evening... Whoever touches her bed, you should wash your clothes and..."* (Makārim Shīrāzī, 1374 SH, 2/173). Perhaps Mrs. "Roded" had this notion in mind and interpreted *"When you have touched women"* like this; whereas such expressions are also found in other places of the Quran, including the next verse of the same Chapter: *"Say, 'It is hurtful.' So, keep away from wives during the menses"*. This verse refers to menstruation as a nuisance and hardship for a woman. "During menstruation, a woman is not physically ready for sexual intercourse, and a mood disorder occurs for a woman and makes her inactive towards sexual intercourse. In addition, during these days, when the woman's uterus is in the state of discharging blood,

it is therefore not ready to accept the sperm. According to the opinion of scientists, the transfer of contaminated blood from the man's duct may make him sterile forever (Qara'ati, 1381 SH, 353)

The expression "...till they are clean. And when they become clean, go into them..." is an indication to show that what is not permissible and which abstinence is obligatory, is only sexual intercourse, not interaction [with her]. Otherwise, it would be said: "And when they become clean, relate with them." (Hāshimī, 1379 SH, 99-100)

In light of this, menstruation for women is neither an illness nor a contamination; rather, the tradition of creation is based on women menstruating so that the human race remains. Of course, statements similar to what Dr. Roded says about menstruating women have been mentioned in the narrations, but the author does not refer to those narrations.

In the book titled *Shakhsiyat wa huqūq zan dar Islām* [The Personality and the Rights of Women in Islam], Mahdi Mehrīzī discussed in detail those narrations that are eight in number and he examined their chain of narration [Sanad] and implication. He wrote that, from these eight hadiths, three are *Mursal hadith* [i.e., a hadith with a broken link] and four of them, apart from being broken-linked hadith [*Mursal hadith*], have not been verified and authenticated. It is only one hadith that is authentic, which based on it, Imam Musa Kāzīm (a.s) responded to a question on whether menstruating women can sit in the bed of a sick dying patient and he (a.s) said: There is no problem, she can sit and take care of him. However, at the point of dying, she should be separated from him, because the angels are troubled by her presence. (Mehrīzī, 1382 SH, 124-125)

3. Likening a woman to a field is one of the points that is unpleasant to Dr. [Mrs.] Roded, and she considers it a reason for the low status of women and her dependence on men. Whereas, the matter is not like that, because the usage of unique similes in the Quran is one of the most beautiful manifestations of the expressive miracles of this Holy Book. Almighty God pointed to subtle points in this blessed verse: "Your women are a tith for you", which meanings include: One of the most significant objectives of marriage and the main function of the family is procreation. A woman is not a means of extinguishing a man's lust

and whims, and choosing the right wife is very important, "A woman is the founder of settlements and the investor of history, the sender of otherworldly gifts: *"Your women are a tilth for you ... and send ahead for your souls"*, if you produce a pure generation, you will gain yourself: *"and send ahead for your souls"*, carnal desires must be controlled with piety: *"Whenever you like ... and be Godwary."* (Ibid, 355)

4. Dr. (Mrs.) Roded writes: Putting women [in the verse] alongside the orphans, children and the weak men who are incapable of fighting is an indication of their inferiority and degraded status. Whereas,

First: Being an orphan, a child, and getting old is not a reason to be inferior.

Second: Orphans, children, and the elderly have a special place and special rights in the Quran, and they are in no way inferior or second-class citizens in the sight of God. An orphan is a unique child and God has repeatedly mentioned his/her rights and the duties of believers towards him/her and ordered the Holy Prophet (PBUH) to be grateful for all the blessings, including guidance: *"Did He not find you astray, and guide you?"*; shelter: *"Did He not find you an orphan, and shelter you?"*; family and wealth: *"Did He not find you needy, and enrich you?"* and the most significant of all, the Prophethood and that God wants his pleasure: *"Soon your Lord will give you [that with which] you will be pleased."* (Quran 93: 5)

Care for the orphan and do not drive him/her away: "So, as for the orphan, do not oppress him." (Quran 93: 6) The Holy Prophet himself was an orphan and God swears by his life. According to the order of Islam, all believers have a heavy responsibility towards orphans.

Islam has many commands concerning children, their care, and upbringing before birth and during infancy until adulthood. According to these guidelines, the child is so respectable and dear that if he is removed from his place in the mosque so that a newcomer who is older or a distinguished person sits in his place, his place is considered to be usurped and the prayer [offered therein] is void.

An order has also been issued about the elderly: *"Lower the wing of humility to them, mercifully, and say, 'My Lord! Have*

mercy on them, just as they reared me when I was [a] small [child]!" (Quran 17: 24) Whoever does not respect the elderly and does not show love to the child, has stayed away from the realm of this holy religion.

Therefore, being placed next to these groups is not a flaw for a woman, it is rather due to her tenderness and fragility; just like a vulnerable orphan, a child who is delicate and fragile, and an elderly person who has a weak physical condition and these verses says that a woman also has special conditions and must be respected. We Muslims consider these verses to be a sign of God's attention to women, but Dr. (Mrs.) Roded considered it to pay little attention to her!

5. In another section, the author referred to Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) concerning homosexuality and wrote: "Lot and his family repented over their abominable act and God forgave them!"

Whereas, the doctrine of dignity and infallibility of the Prophets is preserved in the Holy Quran. Islam believes that "The Prophets are the chosen individuals of God among the people. They are the highest and best human figures who have reached the position of Messengership and Prophethood. They are the chosen servants of God and distinguished human beings because it is only the chosen human beings who become a Messenger and a Prophet of God. They receive the message that is devoid of error, mistake and free from falsehood and ignorance and keep it with honesty and convey it with perfect accuracy." (Javādi Āmoli, 1379 SH, 43)

No prophet has been accused in the Quran of acting against the status of Prophethood and Messengership. Prophet Lot says to his people: "*And Lot, when he said to his people, 'What! Do you commit an outrage none in the world ever committed before you?! Indeed, you come to men with desire instead of women! Indeed, you are a profligate lot.'*" (Quran 7: 80-81) In this way, Prophet Lot condemns the ugly act of his people.

6. Dr. [Mrs.] Roded mentioned with surprise the women's right to property and cannot accept that 1400 years ago, Muslim women could inherit, own their property, make a bequest on their property, and consider what they acquired as their personal property because she knew that the women achieved these freedoms in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the Western societies.

Here the virtues and excellences cannot be denied, what is to be done? Now this virtue should be snatched from the Quran and attributed to other places, so she wrote:

First, these rights were given to women at certain times.

Second, before the advent of Islam, the women also used to inherit in Mecca and Medina.

Third, because women are considered weak and incapable creatures and are mentioned alongside the children and orphans, taking care of them is therefore considered a moral act.

Concerning the conditions of that time, she also wrote: "For the sake of Islam, Muslim men were killed in wars, and there was a risk that their relatives would return to a family that was most likely against Islam. Therefore, financial aid should have been given to the relatives of those who were killed, and they should have been supported with this aid."

In the period of the revelation of the Quran, women's exclusion from inheritance was prevalent in every part of the world and all traditional ethnic groups and nations, and a woman as a wife, mother, sister, or daughter did not inherit, and if in an exceptional case, something was given to a woman, it was given to her under other pretenses. In the same way, they did not give inheritance to young children and orphans; except in some cases such as parentage and permanent guardianship.

This custom was common everywhere. Arab people also considered women to be absolutely deprived of inheritance. (Ṭabātabā'ī, 1382 SH, 358) They gave inheritance to someone who could fight. Therefore, Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abi Ḥātim narrated from Ibn Abbas as follows: When the Verse of Farād - the shares that God intended for the inheritance of the sons and daughters and parents - was revealed, the people did not like it, or at least, some protested on why the inheritance should be given to those who cannot fight anyone and gain booty? (Suyūṭī, 1983, 2/125)

Among the Arab people before Islam, women were sometimes inherited as property. Therefore, this claim that in that era and before the advent of Islam, women used to inherit, and using the wealth of Hazrat Khadija as proof to establish that, is a claim without a piece of evidence. Of course, we do not deny the exceptions in any society. In the same period of Jahiliyyah among the Arabs, where the general custom was that women and those

who could not fight were not given an inheritance, it rarely happened that a woman also got an inheritance.

It is stated in the book "Al-Mirāth fī Shariat al-Islāmiyyah" that the first person who gave inheritance to a daughter was 'Āmir ibn Jusham ibn Ḥabīb, and this was considered a rare act in history (Al-Jundi, n.d, 37-42). Therefore, all the historical evidence proves that in the pre-Islamic Arab custom, inheritance was not given to women. Regarding Lady Khadija's wealth, no evidence has been provided that her property was an inheritance. In addition, it is not logical to argue that women used to inherit in that era simply because of the existence of one or more rich women; while all the historical evidence is contrary to that.

7. Dr. [Mrs.] Ruth Roded, wrote: A woman inherits, but half of that of the men! In the end, she also concluded thus: Although the laws of inheritance in Islam provide a crucial source of income for women, it [also] reflects their inferior and subordinate position! These statements show her lack of information [about Islam], because:

The criterion of inheritance in Islam was not being a male or female, otherwise, men should have inherited twice as much as women in all cases, whereas, there are cases where men and women inherit equally and, in some cases, the inheritance of women is even more, such as:

1. Parents: Each inherits one-sixth.
2. Maternal siblings [Male and female] and their children: They inherit equally.
3. Maternal grandparents: They inherit equally.
4. Uncle and aunt: They inherit equally (Mehriẓī, 1382 SH, 467).

Concerning the cases where the woman's share is more than that of the man, it can be mentioned that when the deceased has no other heirs other than father and daughter. Here the father takes one-sixth and the daughter takes more than that. Other cases are mentioned in the Jurisprudence books, the important thing is that, contrary to the prevailing custom of that time, a wife has a legal presence like a husband with all classes of inheritance, and the criterion was never based on being a woman or a man, but the criterion of benefits and loses, that is, anyone who suffers the most benefits the most [in inheritance].

If a man pays alimony and dowry, and the basic jihad is

obligatory on him, and he must bear the cost of war, and the dowry of a mature lady is the responsibility of men, then some kind of balance in the distribution of wealth between men and women should be established through inheritance. Therefore, the arrangement made by Islam is very fair and the laws of inheritance never place women in a low and subordinate position.

8. One of the surprising topics for the author is the story of creation and the verses of the Quran regarding the wife of Adam (peace be upon him). Similarly, other Prophets and the women who are mentioned with them.

The author expresses the beautiful verses of the Quran regarding the creation of the first man and woman. The fact that Adam's wife is equal and symmetrical with him in creation is not the reason for his temptation, Adam bears more of the guilt, and the main issue in this story is not being a woman or a man, but rather God's covenant with mankind. These have made Mrs. Roded surprised. She mentioned everything here but without concluding, just like she did in all other sections, she moved into the quotation of hadiths and wrote: "But in the exegetical traditions, the role of women in creation is completely negative." She compiled the narrations in which the woman is depicted completely similar to what we have read in the Holy Bible, she collected them from nowhere and without giving any references. Perhaps her main worry is that these Quranic figures may dominate the images and models of personalities introduced by the Bible, she wrote: *"Some of these could change the dominant precedent or role model that emerges from the holy text"*.

After the story of creation, the author discussed the story of Prophet Yusuf (peace be upon him) and we shall respond to her two mistakes in this story. From the blessed verse 53 of Quran 12 [Surah Yusuf]: *"Yet I do not absolve my [own carnal] soul, for the [carnal] soul indeed prompts [men] to evil, except inasmuch as my Lord has mercy. Indeed, my Lord is all-forgiving, all-merciful"*, she understood that Prophet Yusuf [Joseph] had confessed his inclination towards sin. However, this statement might be a continuation of Zuleikha's statement when she said: *"...It was I who solicited him, and he is indeed telling the truth. [Joseph said], [I initiated] this [inquiry], that he may know that I did not betray him in his absence and that Allah does not further*

the schemes of the treacherous. ' "Yet I do not absolve my [own carnal] soul..." (Quran 12: 51-53)

It is mentioned in the Tafsir Nemuneh thus:

Affiliating these two statements to Prophet Yusuf is so unlikely and contrary to the exoteric aspect of the verse and it is incompatible with any of the literary criteria.

- a) The determiner "That" which comes at the beginning of the verse [Quran 12: 52] is actually to mention the reason for the previous statement, which is nothing but the statement of the Egyptian chieftain's wife, and attributing this to the statements of Prophet Yusuf, which are mentioned in the previous verses and separated from this, is very strange.
- b) If these two verses are the statements of Prophet Yusuf, there will be a kind of contradiction in it, because Yusuf said on the one hand *"I had not betrayed the Egyptian chieftain's wife"*, and on the other hand, he says: *"I do not exonerate myself, because the rebellious soul commands evil."*
- c) Such statements are said by someone who had a slip or flaw in his action, no matter how small, whereas, we know that Prophet Yusuf did not have any slip or flaw.
- d) If what is meant [by these statements] is to let the Egyptian Chief aware that he [Yusuf] is innocent, he has achieved this from the beginning (after the testimony of that witness) and therefore he [the Egyptian Chief] said to his wife: Ask for forgiveness for your sin. However, if what is meant [by these statements] is to say to the King that he didn't betray, and resorting to this excuse that betraying the Egyptian chieftain's wife is tantamount to betraying the Powerful King seems like a weak and illusory excuse. In short, the connection and relationship of the verses show that all of these are the statements of the Egyptian Chief, which is just to awaken his consciousness and confess to these facts.

Even if these statements are attributed to Prophet Yusuf, Quranic exegetes have stated that the expression: *"Yet I do not absolve my [own carnal] soul, for the [carnal] soul indeed prompts [men] to evil"* meant that Yusuf considered his immunity from sin to be with the divine support; not out of his own volition.

He did not want to say that he sinned with this sentence: "*Yet I do not absolve my [own carnal] soul*", rather based on the expression: "*except inasmuch as my Lord has mercy*" is in the position of expressing the reality that if I did not sin; it was not because of his personal strength; because everyone's ego is an inducement to sin, but my non-contaminated by sin was due to God's grace and mercy (Hāshimī 1379 SH, 8/446).

9. Dr. [Mrs.] Roded wrote about Prophet Yusuf thus: "He takes revenge on his brothers...", which is also incorrect because Prophet Yusuf (peace be upon him) not only did not take revenge but also attributed the ugly act of his brothers to Satan, so that they don't feel embarrassed and live thereafter happily and contentedly with him. Again, she attributed the actions of Yusuf's brothers to their lack of knowledge, as they did not know at that time.

"He said, 'Have you realized what you did to Joseph and his brother when you were senseless?'" (Quran 12: 89)

"He was certainly gracious to me when He brought me out of the prison and brought you over from the desert after that Satan had incited ill feeling between me and my brothers. Indeed, my Lord is all-attentive in bringing about what He wishes." (Quran 12: 100)

10. Drs. [Mrs.] Roded mentions Lady Asiya, Pharaoh's wife, who is introduced in the Quran as a model for all believers and wrote: This position was given to her because she convinced Pharaoh not to kill the baby Moses! Whereas she gained this noble status when she believed in God, embraced the tortures of Pharaoh, and despite all this hardship, her faith [in God] did not waver and she attained the highest positions in spirituality, to an extent that she requested from God thus: "*Allah cites an example of the faithful: the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, 'My Lord! Build me a home near You in paradise, and deliver me from Pharaoh and his conduct, and deliver me from the wrongdoing lot.'*" (Quran 66: 11)

In this way, Lady Asiya gained proximity to God and became the chosen one. Of course, these noble statuses are established for women in the Quran, to the extent that Zakariya, a Prophet and chosen servant of God (peace be upon him) admired the statuses of Maryam.

11. The author wrote concerning the "story of slander" against

Lady Aisha thus: *"The Shia believe that Aisha was never acquitted of the charge of adultery because her name was never mentioned in the Quran."* Mrs. Roded does not provide any evidence here either but she summarizes the matter in just a sentence and this does not conform to scientific research methods.

For the information of Mrs. Roded, it must be said that Shia does not consider Aisha as an accused [in the story] at all which will necessitate her to be acquitted of any crime. All the narrations that are mentioned in Sunni sources about the "story of slander", their chain of narration is linked to Aisha. The chain of narration is so weak that it is not even considered reliable by the Sunnis themselves.

Ibn Abbas and Ibn Zubayr - the narrators of the hadith on the "story of slander" - were minors in the year of the event (the year of the invasion of Bani al-Mustaliq). In addition, Ibn Abbas was not in Medina that year, because he got to Medina in the eighth year of the Hijrah. Therefore, these two witnesses about the event were not present, but they only quoted the story from Aisha. Abu Hurairah, who was another narrator of the hadith became a Muslim during the Battle of Khaybar, which was after the invasion of Banu al-Mustaliq. He also narrated the story from either Aisha or Ka'b al-Ahbar. Therefore, there is no sound and reliable narration concerning the "story of slander" and the accusation against Aisha. Apart from the weakness of the chain of narration of the hadiths, their content is also unacceptable, because several reasons show that the content of the hadiths is far beyond the dignity and status of the Messenger of God (PBUHH), such as the doubtfulness of the Prophet of God until the last moment, his consultation with Osama ibn Zayd while Zayd was alive, and the verses that strongly condemn the group of slanderers and rumor mongers because they did not provide an excuse when they heard the lie [in the first instance] and say instead that the allegation was an obvious lie, and that, it is not possible for the beloved Prophet of Islam (PBUHH) to be part of this discussion.

Another occasion of revelation of the verse that both Shia and Sunni have narrated is related to Maria al-Qibtiyya, which also has many problems in terms of its chains of narration and the content, and one can never rely on their false content and

unreliable chains of narration (Payām Zan Journal, 2015, 250).

In any case, it is important to inform Dr. [Mrs.] Ruth Roded that Shia never accused Aisha of adultery and considered her to be completely absolved of the act of defying chastity.

In Mrs. Ruth Roded's article, there are other topics such as the testimony of women, women staying at home, hijab, harassment and sexual abuse of the wives of the Prophet by Muslims, fixed-term marriage, slave women, eating from the tree of immortality by Adam and Eve and some points about feminist viewpoints of the Quran. However, we are contended with this but hopefully, other debatable contents of her article shall be addressed in separate research.

In another part of her article, Dr. [Mrs.] Ruth Roded mentioned the separation and non-mixing of men and women, based on verse 33 of Quran 33 [Surah Al-Ahzāb]: "*Stay in your houses*" which was addressed to the wives of the Prophet of Islam (PBUHH), and she concluded that women should stay at home and gave the reason that: "*The continuation of this verse, the women are enjoined to wear modest clothes, observe prayer, pay zakat, and obey God and His Messenger, and from which it can be concluded that the command "Stay in your houses" can be inferred to refer to all Muslim women.*" (Roded, 5/525)

A few points can be mentioned here:

Most Quranic exegetes consider the address in this part of the glorious verse to be related only to the wives of the Holy Prophet (PBUHH), as the presence of Muslim women in various political, social, and cultural scenes from the beginning of Islam until now confirms this opinion. In addition, women's economic independence, permission to do business, the divine limits of dressing, hijab, not showing off, lowliness in speech and gazing, and many teachings and guidelines about the rights and duties [of women] are proof to establish the presence and activity of women in society.

However, even though Islam has considered women's social presence with the observation of the rules and conditions as permissible and even necessary in some cases, at the same time, her most important duties are motherhood and wifhood because a mother is the main pillar of the family. The family is the most basic social structure in the education and formation of the

personality of people to such an extent that the root of human happiness and misery should be sought in the family.

Therefore, whenever the occupation of a woman and her going out [for work] conflict with her role as a mother, Islam prefers staying at home to going out, and this is if negative economic and cultural factors, especially poverty, class inequality, divorce, the exploitation, humiliation, and oppression of women have been reduced to the minimum possible level so that women do not have to bear the heavy burden of employment to get rid of these kinds of problems.

At the same time that Islam respects legitimate motives such as meeting the economic needs of the family and helping the societal needs, it rejects extravagance, unlimited prosperity, complete resemblance with men, and unhealthy competition with husbands. (Bustān, 1385 SH, 81)

Islam allowed the woman to leave the house, but not to "*destroy the home*". It preserves her personality, dignity, and delicate duty as a mother and wife and does not force her to do things against her natural will. This is just in contrast to the atmosphere full of various contradictions that have been designed for women in which "*women admire what they don't like!*" (Hansen, 1402 SH, 97)

In the United States of America, a poll conducted by the Los Angeles Times, which surprised feminists, showed that 79% of working American women with children would quit their jobs if they could stay home with their children (Gardner, 1396 SH, 220).

In Sweden, to satisfy the appetite of tax-hungry bureaucracy, staying at home is considered treason, 53% of women in one survey did not want to work outside the home at all. (Ibid, 219)

In the Islamic system, a woman is considered a human being who has all the facilities and tools for human advancement and to reach the peak of servitude. In such a system, the value is neither sitting at home nor leaving it; rather, a Muslim woman must seek to observe basic values according to her duties and the prevailing conditions of society.

In another part of her article, Dr. [Mrs.] Ruth Roded while referring to verse 282 of Quran 2 [Surah Al-Baqarah], wrote: "*The testimony of women is another two-sided issue in the Quran. When two male witnesses are needed but two men are not*

available, the testimony of one man and two women is sufficient, and the reason for that is clearly stated in the Quran that if one of them makes a mistake or forgets, the other will remind her. In other words, women are reliable in legal testimony, but their memory is not considered as accurate and correct as that of men." (Roded, 5/525)

In response to her, we briefly state thus:

a) *In the blessed verse 282 of Quran 2 [Surah Al-Baqarah]: "And take as witness two witnesses from your men, and if there are not two men, then a man and two women—from those whom you approve as witnesses—so that if one of the two defaults the other will remind her"*, the Arabic term "*dilāl*", which she considered the reason for the inequality of men and women in testimony, means to lose, to hide, to waste, to go astray and to forget, etc. Some Quranic exegetes have interpreted it as forgetfulness while others interpreted it to mean deviation.

According to the first possibility, the pronoun in the expression "*one of the two*" refers to women in both cases and according to Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, the first pronoun is related to one of the women indeterminately while the second pronoun is related to one of the women clearly.

However, according to the second possibility, the first pronoun refers to the testimony itself and the second pronoun refers to women. Considering that some lexicographers have not mentioned forgetfulness among the meanings of the Arabic term "*dilāl*" and in addition, the severalty of the source references is more appropriate than the repetition, the second possibility has more strength. The term "*dilāl*" in any of the two meanings that are used, its justification is not mentioned in the verse, and what was said by the Quranic exegetes is mostly based on speculation and assumption (the personality and the rights of women in Islam); just as Dr. Ruth Roded has speculated and concluded that women's memory is not accurate and correct, whereas, from the exoteric aspect of the verse - according to what was said - such a meaning could never be derived.

b) In the Holy Quran, there are other cases related to testimony, in which there is no mention of male or female witnesses, such as verse 2 of Quran 65 [Surah Ṭalāq], and verses 6 and 15 of Quran 4 [Surah Nisā].

It is stated in the Encyclopedia of Seerah that the Quran has given guidelines in eight places (six on testimony and two on oath) regarding testimony and in most cases, there is no mention of the gender of the witnesses, so, it is completely unfair if it is inferred from the use of plural masculine pronouns such as "*Minkum*" that only male witnesses' opinions have been considered in these verses of the Quran. (Afzalur Rahman, 1981, 7/467)

It should be mentioned here that there are verses in the Quran that are not assigned to a special class [gender], such as the verses that talk about people or humans. There are also verses in which men are mentioned, such as verses in which the masculine plural pronoun is used, but there are verses in which the term "people" is used. This kind of usage is based on colloquial culture. When they want to speak, they say that "people say so and so", the term "people" is not the opposite of the term "women", but it refers to "masses". This colloquial culture is an international custom and it is interpreted as such. Therefore, in verses such as 6 and 15 of Quran 4 [Surah Nisā], the Quran does not absolutely refer to whether the witnesses are male or female.

c) If the testimony of two women compared to one man is considered to be a defect in the memory and character of a woman, what do we say about two male witnesses "*and take as witness two witnesses from your men*" (Quran 2: 282) or four male witnesses in another case? Is a single man alone could not be trusted? Is there any defect in his intellect and memory or his religion, which made them to be two or four?

The truth is that these cases should never be seen as a tool to negatively evaluate a woman's character; because it is completely unfair that without understanding the spirit of Islam, and the spirit of the Quran as a set of guidelines for training the hearts and souls of human beings, she presented arbitrary analyzes with cross-cutting approaches.

d) In cases where a woman has more nobility than a man, such as being a witness to the delivery and birth of a child, for example, when a child was born and thereafter died, which (affects her inheritance), the testimony of a single woman (a midwife) is exclusively accepted. (Davodi, 1382 SH, 353)

According to what has been briefly stated, it can be said that

Islamic law has drawn the rulings in a precise manner according to the specific mental-psychological conditions and social situations of men and women, and the purpose of the Sacred Legislator [Allah] is to promulgate a suitable legal system to guide people to God.

13. Dr. [Mrs.] Roded on page 537 of her article introduced Dr. Ayesha Abd al-Rahman bint al-Shati (1913-96) as the first female Quranic exegete, whereas the Tafsīr titled *'Makhzan al-Irfan'* written by Seyyida Nusrat, the daughter of Seyyid Muhammad Ali Amin, who died in 1403 at the age of 90 in Isfahan, Iran had been written before the Tafsīr of Bint al-Shāti.

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