

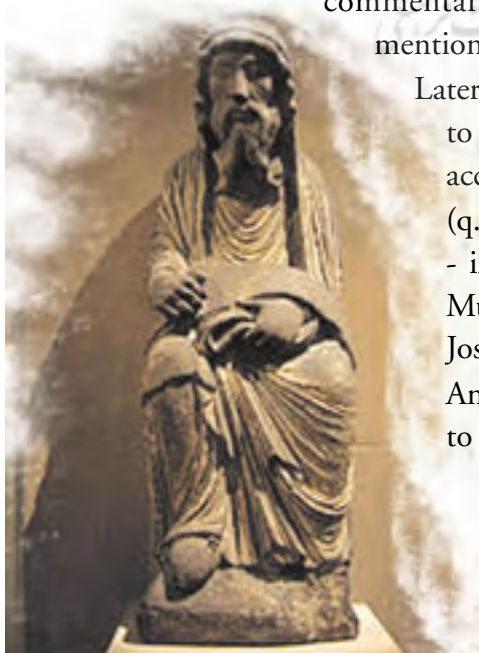
# Aaron

The brother and companion of Moses q.v. Aaron Harun b. Imran is mentioned by name twenty times in the Quran. He is given prophetic status alongside Moses, having received the criterion (q.v.) of revelation (furqan, Q 21: 48 - 9; cf. 19: 53; 7: 122; 23:45; 37: 114 - 20; and 20: 70 and 26: 48, containing the phrase, "We believe in the Lord of Moses and Aaron"; see Revelation and Inspiration), and is listed with a number of other prophets (Q 4: 163; 6: 84). Moses asked God to make Aaron his partner (wazir) in his affairs when he was commanded to go before Pharaoh (q.v.; Q 25:35; cf. 10: 75; 20: 29 - 36; 26: 13;28:35). Moses also asked God to let Aaron be his spokesman because he was so eloquent (Q 28: 34 - 5). The form of the name "Harun" is also known from early Arabic poetry and entered Arabic from Hebrew, likely via Syriac (see Foreign Vocabulary).

A focus of attention regarding Aaron in the Quran is the worship of the calf of gold (q.v.). The incident is mentioned twice. In the first account (Q 7: 148 - 57), the story is told as in Exodus 32, with the anger of Moses toward Aaron quite apparent even though his role was just that of an onlooker. In the second version, (Q 20: 83 - 98) a Samaritan (see Samaritans) is presented as the tempter of Israel (q.v.). He urged the people to throw their ornaments in the fire and he made the calf that was worshipped by the people, despite Aaron's advising them not to do so. Again, Moses' anger toward Aaron is apparent. Thus, it may be said that the Quran agrees with the Jewish biblical commentary (midrash) in reducing the blame upon Aaron, although that innocence is not connected, as it is in Jewish commentary, to Aaron's status as high priest, an idea not mentioned in the Quran (see Idolatry and Idolaters).

Later Islamic tradition has paid a good deal of attention to the death of Aaron. When Aaron died, the people accused Moses of having murdered him, but angels (q.v.) appeared - or other divine interventions took place - in order to alleviate their suspicions. According to Muslim legend, a similar accusation was lodged against Joshua in the death of Moses.

An issue related to Aaron which has proven to be subject to dispute since the early days of Islam is Q 19: 28, in



which Mary (q.v.), the mother of Jesus (q.v.), is called “the sister of Aaron” see also Q 3: 35, “a woman of Imran (q.v.)” and 66:12, “Mary, the daughter of Imran, who guarded her chastity”). In Muslim’s Sahih, K al - Adab, for example, there is a hadith from al - Mughira b. Shu’ba (d. 50/ 670 which indicates that the polemical nature of the charge of “errors” in the Quran existed from the earliest period of Muslim - Christian relations.

Al - Mughira said, “When I came to Najran (q.v.), the Christians asked me, ‘You read, “O sister of Aaron,” in the Quran, whereas Moses was born much before Jesus.’” When I came back to the messenger of God, I asked him about that, whereupon he said, ‘People used to give [to their children] the names of the messengers and [other] pious persons who had gone before them.’”

According to the biblical story, Aaron did have a sister called Miriam (who watched over the baby Moses in the bulrushes according to Exodus 2: 4 - 7; see Exodus 15: 20 - 1 for her name), But she was not, of course, the same as Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the Muslim tradition has never taken that to be the case. Al - Tabari (d 310 923. for example, in speaking of Mary, says that people reacted to her presentation of the baby Jesus by saying, “Sister of Aaron. Your father was not a wicked man and your mother was not unchaste. So what is your case, sister of Aaron?” This al - Tabari explains as follows: “[Mary] was descended from Aaron, the brother of Moses, so that this expression is the equivalent of saying, ‘O brother of such - and - such tribe; i.e. it indicates a familial relationship [but not necessarily the exact one indicated]” (Tarikh, i, 734; M. Permann (trans.), History, iv, 120). Other exegetes suggest that the Aaron referred to here is an otherwise unknown brother of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist(q.v.), who were related through their father Imran b. Matthan (see Baydawi, Anwar, ad Q 3: 30 - 1). See also Prophets and Prophethood.

**Andrew Rippin**

