

worldly and spiritual, would be completed by them. Allah answered his prayer; whilst he was standing in his chamber worshipping and beseeching his Lord, the angels called out to him: ﴿Allah gives you glad tidings of Yaḥyā, who will believe in a word from Allah﴾ that is, in 'Eesā (ﷺ), because he was created by means of a word from Allah ('Be!' and he was).

﴿He will be a leader﴾ that is, he will have such a beautiful and perfect character that he would be elevated to the position of a noble leader, and matters would be referred to him for advice and decisions.

﴿and abstinent [from women]﴾ that is, he is prevented from intimacy with women because he has no desire for them, as he is preoccupied with serving and obeying his Lord.

﴿a Prophet from among the righteous﴾. What tidings could be greater than tidings of this son with his perfect qualities, who would be a Prophet from among the righteous?

In his great joy, Zakariyā said:

﴿O my Lord, how can I have a son, when old age has overtaken me, and my wife is barren?﴾ and either of these two matters could be a cause of not being able to have a child, so how about when both are present? But Allah told him that this would be a miracle, as He said: ﴿Thus Allah does whatever He wills﴾. Just as He has decreed that children come into being by various means, including procreation, if He wills to bring them into existence without the usual means, He will do so, because nothing is too difficult for Him. In haste and seeking certainty, Zakariyā (ﷺ) said: ﴿O my Lord! Give me a sign﴾ that is, a sign that this child will come.

﴿He said: Your sign will be that you will not speak to people for three days except through gestures﴾ that is, your tongue will be prevented from speaking, without there being any physical problem, so you will only be able to communicate by means of gestures; this is a great sign, that you will not be able to speak. This is an amazing contrast: just as He may prevent causes from leading to effects even when