

Surah al-Qaṣīʿah (101)

‘The Shudderer’

سورة الفارعة

Al-qaṣīʿah, meaning one that shudders, or makes shudder. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with matters of faith. As Surah al-ʿAdiyat concluded by delivering a warning to the disobedient, this surah explains the events of the resurrection, of which the warning is delivered.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

We begin **by the name of Allah**, He who comprises all the qualities of perfection; that we place it as a maxim for ourselves in our actions and enterprises. For there is nothing more worthy of being placed as a maxim for one who acknowledges his Lord.

The Compassionate, the Merciful, who graces His servants with mercy and forgiveness.

The Shudderer! (1)

الْقَارِعَةُ ۝١

The Shudderer (*al-qaṣīʿah*) is one of the names of the resurrection, for that event will make the hearts shudder with fear, and humankind will shudder at the chastisement, and the mountains will shudder till they are flat.

What is the Shudderer? (2)

مَا الْقَارِعَةُ ۝٢

This question is rhetorical, having the purpose of increasing its status and giving gravity to its importance.

And what will make thee comprehend what is the Shudderer? (3)

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْقَارِعَةُ ۝٣

Again, this is for heightening its grandeur. It means that it is so awesome that you cannot know it, cannot understand it, until you see it.

The day when humankind will be like the scattered swarm, (4)

يَوْمَ يَكُونُ النَّاسُ كَالْفَرَاشِ الْمَبْثُوثِ ۝٤

‘Swarm’ is given for *al-farash*, meaning the tumult of locusts when they swarm, some of them above others. ‘Scattered’ is given for *mabthuth*. For that day people will be like a swarm in their numbers, their agitation and their diffusion.

And the mountains will be like teased wool. (5)

وَتَكُونُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ الْمَنْفُوشِ ۝٥

The mountains will be plucked from their positions and shattered till they are like light, soft, coloured wool. Coloured on account of how the mountains are coloured, some white, some red, some black and so on.

So as for him whose balances are heavy: (6)

فَأَمَّا مَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ ۝٦

That is, whose good deeds are heavier and many. ‘Balances’ is given for *mawazin*, which is in the plural form on account of there being different balances, scales, for every good act. So there is a balance for the prayer, a balance for doing good to parents, and so on. ‘Balances’ is used for the meter to indicate the measure of one’s good deeds and their extent, or the lack of them.

So he is in a contented life. (7)

فَهُوَ فِي عِيشَةٍ رَاضِيَةٍ ۝٧

That is, his life will be possessed of pleasure, giving pleasure to he who leads it. The attribution of being pleased to the life itself – when clearly it is the person leading that life who is pleased – is metaphoric.

But as for him whose balances are light: (8)

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ ۝٨

His acts of goodness few, his evil deeds many:

His home is an abyss. (9)

فَأُمُّهُرْ هَاوِيَةٌ ﴿٩﴾

His home is the fire. Just as a child is accommodated by his mother so shall the disobedient be accommodated by hell.

And what will make thee comprehend what that is? (10)

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا هِيَ ﴿١٠﴾

The question form has the purpose of giving grandeur and importance to the chastisement of the fire. Even the Prophet, or the listener, does not comprehend the reality of it, or the details of its terrors. [During one of his Ascensions, the Prophet saw and understood the terror of the fire.]

A raging fire! (11)

نَارٌ حَامِيَةٌ ﴿١١﴾

A fire that has reached the peak of its intensity, its heat and its blaze.