

Surah al-Maʿun (107)

سورة الماعون

'The Assistance'

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *maʿun*, meaning worldly bounties. As to whether the surah is Makkan or Madinan, views are diverse. In any case, the surah deals with matters of faith and related issues. As the previous surah spoke of Allah's blessings on the Quraysh, this surah comes to deter them from disbelief and disobedience after receiving these liberal blessings.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

We seek help *by the name of Allah*, that He be for us an aid in the important things in our life, and after death;

the Compassionate, the Merciful ... He who has an encompassing mercy that embraces all things, in general, and believers in particular.

Have thou seen him who belies the Requital? (1)

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالدِّينِ ﴿١﴾

'Requital' is given for *diya*, which means recompense, although it may mean the religion of Islam. The question is rhetorical, conveying outrage. It means: How does he call it a lie when there are so many signs proving its validity and its taking place?

That is he who repels the orphan, (2)

فَذَلِكَ الَّذِي يَدْعُ الْيَتِيمَ ﴿٢﴾

The person who calls the judgement a lie repels the orphan, puts him off with severity, instead of being kind to him. For to consider the judgement a lie results in actions that are harsh and base.

And urges not the feeding of the destitute. (3)

وَلَا يَحْضُ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمَسْكِينِ ﴿٣﴾

He does not incite and urge people to feed the destitute, whose poverty keeps them from being active and working. This urging, although other than in 'urging to the good' (*amr bil-ma'ruf*) and suchlike it is not obligatory, nevertheless its absence indicates a spiritual bareness and a drying up of the spring of virtues in the heart, such as is inseparable from disbelief. It is related that some of the disbelievers of the Quraysh acted like this when an orphan approached them seeking help; they would repel him harshly, and would act the same way with the poor.

[He who repels the orphan, and urges not the feeding of the pauper is the one who belies the Requital. It is the essence of belief that matters, and the mere claim is not sufficient, as this is emphasised in the following:]

So woe to those who pray, (4)

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ ﴿٤﴾

Since repelling the orphan and not urging the feeding of the poor are cause for censure and rebuke, it is clear that whoever acts in the name of Islam and yet is far from Islam is most deserving of the censure and rebuke. For the hypocrite is in a worse condition than the disbeliever.

Those who are neglectful of their prayer, (5)

الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ ﴿٥﴾

That is, they are heedless of their prayers and do not give attention to their prayers, for lack of attention occasions neglect.

Those who show off, (6)

الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاءُونَ ﴿٦﴾

When they pray they pray for the sake of being seen, not for the sake of Allah, glory be to Him. Some have said that the meaning is that when there was none to see them they would not pray, but when there was someone there they would pray to be seen.

And withhold assistance. (7)

وَيَمْتَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ ﴿٧﴾

'Assistance' is given for *maʿun*, meaning everything in which there is a benefit for people. The meaning is that they refuse to part with their good things, which is caused by their lacking of firm faith in the heart.