

Surah Ma'un, Chapter 107

(Neighbourly Needs)

Number of Verses: 7

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

Many commentators believe that this Surah was revealed at Mecca. The tone of the verses, which are short and awakening about the Hereafter, and the deeds of the deniers of the Judgement Day, attests to this idea.

On the whole, the deeds and characteristics of the deniers of the Hereafter are stated in five references. Consequently, they deny the Final Judgement, repulse giving charity on the path of Allah, or helping the orphan and the indigent. They are heedless of their prayers, by saying them only hypocritically, and refuse to supply even neighbourly needs.

[Occasion of the Revelation](#)

On the occasion of the Surah's revelation, some have said that it was revealed about Abu-Sufyan who used to slaughter two big camels every day from which he and his men ate. But one day it happened that an orphan came to his door and asked for some help. Abu-Sufyan beat him with his stick and repulsed him.

Some others have said that the verse was revealed about Walid-ibn-i-Muqayrah or 'As-ibn-i-Wa'il.

The Virtue of Studying the Surah

On the virtue of the recitation of the Surah, a tradition narrated from Imam Baqir (as) says:

"He who recites it (Surah Ma'un) in his obligatory and optional¹ prayers, Allah accepts his prayers and his fasting, and does not count the (evil) acts he committed in this world."²

Surah Ma'un, Verses 1-7

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالْءَدِیْنِ

فَذَلِكَ الَّذِي يَدْعُ الْیْتِیْمَ

وَلَا یَحْضُرُ عَلَی طَعَامِ الْمِسْءِیْنِ

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُصَلِّیْنَ

الَّذِیْنَ هُمْ عَن صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ

الَّذِیْنَ هُمْ یُرَءَوْنَ

وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ

1. "Have you seen him who denies the Final Judgement?"
2. "Then such is the man who repulses the orphan (with harshness),"
3. "And encourages not the feeding of the indigent."
4. "So woe to those praying ones,"
5. "Who are careless of their prayers,"

6. ***“Those who (want but) to be seen (of men),”***

7. ***“But refuse (to supply) (even) neighbourly needs.”***

The Harmful Fruit of the Denial of the Hereafter

In this Surah, at first, the holy Prophet (S) is addressed and some unfortunate reflections of the denial of the Hereafter, in the deeds of the rejectors, are expressed.

“Have you seen him who denies the Final Judgement?”

“Then such is the man who repulses the orphan (with harshness),”

“And encourages not the feeding of the indigent.”

The purpose of using the term /din/, in this verse, is for the Day of the Final Judgement; its denial as well as the Great Court, therein, which has a very bad effect on the acts of the rejectors of it. In this Surah, five effects out of these effects, such as, repulsing the orphan with harshness, and the lack of encouraging others to the feeding of the indigent, are referred to.

Some have said that /din/, here may mean the Qur'an or the religion, Islam, but the first meaning seems more appropriate.

Similar to this sense is seen in Surah Infitar, No. 82, verse 9:

“Nay, but you disbelieve in the (day of) reckoning,”

and also in Surah Tin, No. 95 verse 7:

“What then makes you reject thereafter the last Judgement?”

that, taking into consideration other verses of these Suras, the purpose of using the word /din/, is for 'the Day of Judgement'.

The term /yadu' is based on /da'a/ with the meaning of 'to push, drive away with violence'; and the term /yahudd/ is derived from /hadda/ which means 'to urge, prompt'. Raqib cites in his book, Mufradat, that /hass/ is an urging in movement and travelling, but /hadd/ is not so'.

At any rate, since these two terms are used in the future tense, the case indicates the continuity of their action, in regard to the orphan and the indigent.

Again, the substantial point, here is that when we are dealing with the orphan, affection and humane treatment is more significant than food, because an orphan must tolerate the lack of affection and spiritual feeding rather than the bodily food which is in the secondary stage. Of course, feeding the needy, mentioned in these verses, is one of the most important good actions, so that, if we cannot feed a needy one we must encourage others to do so.

Those who lack Faith in the Resurrection and the Reckoning in that Great Court and receiving reward and punishment dare to commit sin and therefore, all kinds of vice can be seen in their behaviour.

"So woe to those praying ones,"

"Who are careless of their prayers."

They neither consider any value for their prescribed daily canonical prayers, nor lay stress on its proper time, nor observe its conditions and rites.

The term /sahun/ is derived from /sahw/ which originally means 'a mistake which is done unintentionally or neglectfully' whether one is guilty in its preparation or not. In the first case, one is not excused, but in the second case one is. here the purpose is negligence with guilt.

We should note that it does not say 'they make mistakes unintentionally in their prayer' which happens, in any case, for everyone, but it says that they are careless of their essential prayers, totally.

It is clear that if it happens once or occasionally, it may be of negligence, but he who always forgets his prayers and lets it be forgotten, it is obvious that he does not take it seriously or he has no fear of people, or the like.

In addition to what was said, there are some other commentaries cited on the purpose of /sahun/ mentioned in this verse. Among them are regarding those who do not offer the daily prayers punctually, and let the exact time for the prayers elapse, to pass their time away in idleness or in worldly business and enjoyments.

Or those who pray to show their prayerfulness and would-be piety to the public, but, do not do it when they are alone. (This idea is mentioned in the next verse).

Of course, all these meanings can be combined whereas, the first commentary seems more fitting.

In any case, when these kind of neglectful praying ones deserve the wrath of Allah, what can be the state of those who never pray?

"Those who (want but) to be seen (of men),"

"But refuse (to supply) (even) neighbourly needs".

It is certain that one of the headsprings of pretence and hypocrisy is the lack of Faith in the Day of Judgement and disbelief in the divine recompense, otherwise, how can a person leave the rewards of Allah and pay attention to the mere pleasure of people?

The term /ma'un/ is based on /ma'n/ with the meaning of 'a little thing'. Many commentators believe that the purpose of it, here is for things of insignificant price that people, especially neighbors, take from each other; things like salt, water, matches for fire, dishes, and the like, which are the necessities of life.

It is self-evident that a person who withholds giving such insignificant things to others is a very miserly, faithless one. These things do not cost too much, but, they are sometimes very helpful, so when they refuse to give them this produces some notable difficulties in the lives of people.

Some believe that the purpose of /ma'un/ is poor-rate, alms, because alms, in comparison with total wealth, is often a little.

The occurrence of these two things (hypocrisy and refusing to supply neighborly needs), being cited together, refers to the idea that whatever is for Allah, they do to show people, and whatever is for people, they refuse to give them, and thus, they pay no right to its owner.

We conclude this subject with a tradition from the holy Prophet (S) who is reported to have said:

"The person who refuses to supply his neighborly needs, on the Day of judgement Allah will refuse to give him His goodness and leaves him to himself, and what a bad case it is for the one whom He leaves to himself".³

Explanation: Subjects Discussed in this Surah

A collection of low qualities are under discussion, in this short Surah, which are the signs of infidelity and meanness in anyone who possesses them. It is interesting that all of them are subdivisions to the rejection of the Hereafter; that is, the Recompense or the Day of Retribution.

The qualities of despising the orphan, refusing to feed the needy, being heedless of the prescribed prayers, hypocrisy, not being cooperative with people even in giving them insignificant materials, form this collection.

Thus, it illustrates the miserly, self-conceit and showy persons who have neither connection with people nor join with the Creator. They carry no light of Faith and responsibility in their entity. They neither think of the divine rewards nor are they in fear of His punishment.

A Great Social Pest; Pretense and Hypocrisy

The value of any action depends upon the motive of that action. In other words, from the viewpoint of Islam, the basis of every action is formed by intention; 'pure' intention, of course.

In Islam, actions, before anything else, are judged by their motives. It is one of the fundamental principles of law in all ages and environments that motives and intentions are the criterions by which actions of men are judged.

So, actions are held to be good or bad, just or unjust, criminal or innocent according to the motives, in order to define them as good or bad, just or unjust, criminal or innocent.

If a man gives away something in charity with the intention of seeking the satisfaction of Allah, he will certainly be rewarded by Allah; but if he does it to become prominent, in the public eye or hypocritically, for show, he may be able to attain that object, but with no benefit in the Next World which is the goal. in a Muslim's life⁴.

There is a tradition from the holy Prophet (S) who is narrated to have said:

"Actions are to be judged by intentions. There is surely for man what he intends. So, whosoever fights for Allah in the Holy War his reward is with Allah, the Almighty, the Glorious; and whosoever's fight is for this world which he seeks or even for a hobble rope (of a camel) to gain, he may have only that (and no more)". ⁵

Islamic traditions and narrations on the criticizing of hypocrisy are many; among which are the following:

1. A tradition from the holy Prophet (S) says:

"There will come a time for people when their inward aspects are filthy, and their outward appearances seem charming. This is because of their greed, in this world, and not in gaining the rewards with Allah. Their religion will be hypocrisy. They do not have the fear of Allah, and He will punish them with a grievous chastisement. Then, whenever they call on Allah, like (the behavior of) a drowned person, their supplication will never be accepted". ⁶

2. Another tradition from Imam Sadiq (as) says that he told one of his companions, by the name of /zurarah/:

"O Zurarah, anyone whose actions are for the sake of people, the reward is for the people (to give it). Every hypocrisy is polytheism". ⁷

3. The holy Prophet (S) has been narrated to have said in a tradition:

"On the Day of Judgement, the hypocrite will be called by four names: O' pagan, O' sinner, O' treacherous, and O' loser; your deed was of no avail, and your recompense was cancelled; there is no rescue for you today; ask your recompense from the one for whom you used to act". ⁸

Supplication

O Lord! Purity in intention is very difficult; help us on this path, Yourself.

O Lord! We seek from You such a Faith that will cause us to think that but for Your recompense and punishment on Your Way, the pleasure or hatred of people will be indifferent for us.

O Lord! Forgive us whatever sin we have committed on this path.

¹. "Supererogatory. has been used for this type of prayer, however, since this word, also, means something depreciative or

offensive, 'optional was preferred as it is optional"

[2.](#) Majma-al-Bayan. vol 10, p. 546.

[3.](#) Nur-uth-Thaqalayn. vol. 5. p. 679.

[4.](#) see 42:20

[5.](#) Wasa'il-ush-Shi'ah, vol. 1, p. 35, tradition 10.

[6.](#) Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, Chapter 'Hypocrisy', tradition 14.

[7.](#) Wasa'il-ush-Shi'ah, vol. 1, p. 49, tradition 11.

[8.](#) Ibid, p. 51, tradition 16.

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