

SURAH AS A STORY



Surah Al-Ma'un

Small Kindnesses

The complete journey — the prayer that fails —
told the way a loving elder shares it with a child

()



Surah No. 107 • 7 Ayahs • Meccan

NOORANI ILM

nooraniilm.com • free sadaqah jariyah ebook

The Surah at a Glance

Ara'aytal-lazee yukazzibu bid-deen

1. Have you seen the one who denies the Recompense?

Fa-zaalikal-lazee yadu''ul-yateem

2. That is the one who drives away the orphan

Wa laa yahuddu 'alaa ta'aamil-miskeen

3. and does not encourage the feeding of the poor.

*Fa-waylul-lil-musalleen. Allazeena hum 'an
salaatihim saahoon*

- 4-5. So woe to those who pray — those who are heedless
of their prayer,

Allazeena hum yuraaa'oon

6. those who make a show (of their deeds),

Wa yamna'oonal-maa'oon

7. and withhold small kindnesses.

Listen to the Arabic recitation of this Surah, ayah by ayah, with the Qari
— free on nooraniilm.com (Read & Recite section).

Have You Seen Him?



Beta, this surah opens with a question that pulls you in like a hand on your sleeve: 'ARA'AYTAL-LAZI YUKAZZIBU BID-DEEN — HAVE YOU SEEN the one who DENIES the Recompense?'

Beta, 'ad-deen' here means the Day of Judgement, the reckoning, the requital. And Allah asks: have you SEEN him — as though pointing at a man in a crowd. Look at that one. Do you want to know what a denier of the Judgement looks like?

And now, beta, prepare yourself — because the answer is not what anyone expects. Allah does not say: he is the one who argues against resurrection, or who mocks the Book, or who curses the Prophet ﷺ.

He identifies him by TWO ORDINARY BEHAVIOURS: 'FA-ZALIKAL-LAZI YADU''UL-YATEEM — THAT is the one who DRIVES AWAY THE ORPHAN — WA LA YAHUDDU 'ALA TA'AMIL-MISKEEN — and does NOT ENCOURAGE the feeding of the POOR.'



Beta, understand the enormity of what has just been said. According to this surah, the real evidence of whether a person believes in the Day of Judgement is not in his tongue — it is in how he treats a child with no father, and whether he cares that people are hungry.

'YADU''U' — from 'da'', to push away roughly, to shove, to repel. Not merely 'he does not help the orphan' — he PUSHES him away. Picture it, beta: a child comes to the door with a need, and a hand shoves him back. Or the modern version: the relative's orphaned son who is treated as a nuisance, given the smallest room, spoken to sharply, made to feel that his existence is an inconvenience.

And the second: 'la yahuddu' — he does not URGE, does not push others toward feeding the poor. Beta, as we saw in Surah Al-Haqqah, the crime is not only failing to feed — it is failing to even ADVOCATE for the hungry. Not one word of encouragement. Not one 'brother, let's help that man'.



Beta, why does denial of the Judgement show itself here, of all places? Because the orphan and the poor man are exactly the people who CANNOT PAY YOU BACK. They cannot promote you, invite you, praise you, or return the favour. So how you treat them reveals whether you are truly working for an unseen reward — or only for returns you can see.

Woe to Those Who Pray

And now, beta, comes the ayah that has shaken worshippers for fourteen centuries: 'FA-WAYLUN LIL-MUSALLEEN — SO WOE TO THOSE WHO PRAY.'

Beta, read that again. WOE — destruction — to those who PRAY? To the people on the prayer mat?

This is one of the most arresting sentences in the Quran. Anyone hearing it would stop breathing for a moment. And then the qualification arrives immediately, and it explains everything:



'ALLAZINA HUM 'AN SALATIHIM SAHOON — those who are HEEDLESS OF their prayer.'

Beta, look at the exact preposition, because the scholars built a whole understanding on it. Allah does not say 'FEE salatihim sahoon' — heedless IN their prayer. He says 'AN salatihim' — heedless ABOUT their prayer, regarding it.

That distinction matters. Beta, everyone's mind wanders IN prayer sometimes — a thought about work, a memory, a distraction. That is human, and the Prophet ﷺ taught us how to deal with it. That is not what this ayah is condemning.

What is condemned is heedlessness ABOUT the prayer itself: not caring whether it happens, delaying it until its time is nearly gone, treating it as an item to be dropped whenever anything else appears, praying it as a hurried formality with no thought of Whom one is standing before.



The scholars described these as: those who delay it past its time, who pray without khushu', who pray only when people are watching. Beta, in other words: the prayer is on their schedule, but not in their heart.

'ALLAZINA HUM YURA'OON — those who make a SHOW of it.'

And here, beta, is the hinge of the whole surah: RIYA — showing off. This is the man who prays beautifully when observed and carelessly when alone. Whose charity is announced. Whose good deeds need an audience.

The Prophet ﷺ called riya 'ash-shirk al-asghar' — the LESSER SHIRK — and said it was what he feared most for his ummah. And he warned that on that Day, a man who fought, a man who gave, and a scholar will each be told: you did it so that it would be SAID of you — and it WAS said. Take your reward; you already collected it.

Beta, that is the most frightening idea in this surah: a person can complete every ritual and receive nothing, because the payment was already taken in this world —



in the form of people's admiration.

And They Withhold Small Kindnesses

And the surah's final ayah, beta, is the one that ties it all together: 'WA YAMNA'OONAL-MA'OON — and they WITHHOLD AL-MA'OON.'

'Ma'oon', beta, is explained by the companions and the scholars in beautifully practical terms: the small things people lend each other. A bucket. A pot. A rope. Salt. A tool for an afternoon. Ibn Mas'ud (radiyallahu anhu) said it is the axe, the pot, the bucket, and things of that sort. Others explained it as zakah, and others as any small assistance.

Beta, in today's terms: the phone charger. The ladder. The spare key. The lift to the station. Five minutes to help someone carry something up the stairs. The small favour that costs you almost nothing.

And here is the terrible portrait the surah has completed. This man PRAYS — he is in the row, his



name is on the list. He performs his religion visibly. And yet: he shoves the orphan, he says nothing about the hungry, and he will not lend his neighbour a bucket.

Beta, do you see what Allah is teaching? A religion that produces no kindness has failed, no matter how many rak'ahs it contains. The prayer was designed to soften a man. If a man prays for forty years and still cannot lend a pot to his neighbour, then something between him and his salah has broken.

And that is why the surah begins with 'the one who denies the Recompense' and ends with a withheld bucket. The two are the same person. Because a man who truly believed that every atom is recorded would never refuse a small kindness — it costs him nothing and it is worth everything.

Beta, take three practical things from this surah.

FIRST — audit your salah's TIME, not just its count. Is it the appointment you organise your day around, or the thing you fit in when nothing else is happening?



SECOND — audit your audience. Ask: would I do this deed exactly the same way if nobody ever found out? And a beautiful protection the scholars mention: keep some deeds entirely secret, permanently, so that a part of your record is untouched by anyone's opinion.

THIRD — make the small kindnesses easy for people. Be the person others feel comfortable asking. Lend the thing. Give the lift. Answer the message. Beta, the last ayah of this surah tells you that Allah counts these — and their absence is listed alongside the denial of Judgement Day itself.

What This Surah Teaches Us

- 1.** Belief in the Day of Judgement is proven by behaviour, not by argument.
- 2.** How you treat those who cannot repay you reveals whether you truly work for an unseen reward.
- 3.** Never push away an orphan — and never be silent about the hungry.



4. The condemnation is heedlessness ABOUT prayer, not a wandering thought inside it: guard its time and its place in your heart.

5. Riya is the lesser shirk and what the Prophet ﷺ feared most for us — those who perform for people are paid by people.

6. Keep some deeds permanently secret, so part of your record belongs to Allah alone.

7. A religion that produces no small kindnesses has failed — lend the bucket.

Ya Allah, purify our prayers of showing off, soften our hands toward the orphan and the poor, and never let us withhold small good. Ameen.

— This is a simplified, faithful retelling for understanding, based on the Quran's translation and established tafseer (Ibn Kathir and others). For deeper study, always read with a qualified teacher. —

Noorani Ilm • nooraniilm.com • Free to share — sadaqah jariyah

