

CHAPTER 101

Al-Qāri‘ah: The Calamity

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 11 verses)

The repelling *Calamity* of this chapter, which gives it its title, is the same as the shaking of the last chapter but one. The date of revelation is also about the same.

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent,
the Merciful.

1 The calamity!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

2 What is the calamity?

الْقَارِعَةُ ۝

3 And what will make thee know
how terrible is the calamity?^a

مَا الْقَارِعَةُ ۝

4 The day wherein men will be as
scattered moths,

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْقَارِعَةُ ۝

5 And the mountains will be as
carded wool.^a

يَوْمَ يَكُونُ النَّاسُ كَالْفَرَاشِ

الْمَبْثُوثِ ۝

6 Then as for him whose measure
(of good deeds) is heavy,

وَتَكُونُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ الْمَنْفُوشِ ۝

فَأَمَّا مَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ ۝

3a. *Al-Qāri‘ah* (from *qar‘*, meaning *striking with severity*) signifies a very great calamity, and the word occurs without the definite article *al* in 13:31, where it is said: “And as for those who disbelieve, disaster (*qāri‘ah*) will not cease to afflict them ... until the promise of Allāh come to pass”. This use of the word *qāri‘ah* shows that the word signifies one of those great calamities which befell the Quraysh from time to time, and *al* is added to indicate that it is the *promised* calamity. In 69:4, *al-qāri‘ah* signifies the great calamity which destroys a nation, i.e., their doom. *Al-qāri‘ah* is also a name of the day of Resurrection or of the great Calamity which will destroy this earth, after which comes the Resurrection.

5a. This description may also apply to the doom of the opponents of Truth; see 13:31a.

7 He will live a pleasant life.

فَهُوَ فِي عَيْشَةٍ رَّاضِيَةٍ ۝

8 And as for him whose measure
(of good deeds) is light,

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ ۝

9 The abyss is a mother to him.^a

فَأُمُّهُ هَاوِيَةٌ ۝

10 And what will make thee know
what that is?

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا هِيَ ۝

11 A burning Fire.

نَارٌ حَامِيَةٌ ۝

9a. *Hāwiyah* (from *hawā*, *he made it to fall down*) signifies a *deep place of which the bottom cannot be reached* or *abyss* (LL). The word *umm* means primarily a *mother*, and in all secondary significances some idea of the primary significance is retained. Thus among its various secondary significances are *source, origin, foundation, support, efficient cause of subsistence, anything to which other things are collected together, the main part of a thing, a man who has charge of the food and service of a people* (LL). A place of habitation or abode is also called *umm* (LL), because it grants protection to a man, as does the mother to a babe. The abyss, or hell, is here called a mother to indicate that man's connection with hell is similar to that of a baby with its mother, viz., that his abode there fits him for progress in the spiritual world — he being brought up, as it were, in the bosom of hell, as a child is brought up in the bosom of its mother, and that his stay in hell is only for a time, as the child draws nourishment from his mother only for a time.



CHAPTER 102

Al-Takāthur: The Abundance of Wealth

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 8 verses)

This chapter, which is appropriately entitled *The Abundance of Wealth*, from the occurrence of the word abundance in the first verse, states that vying one with another to have wealth and more wealth is the great impediment which keeps men away from the real object of life; and therefore, to make them realize it, it is sometimes necessary to divest them of some of these comforts. It is for this reason that Divine wisdom sometimes requires disasters to be brought upon men. Hence this chapter is closely connected with the previous chapters, which speak of disasters. The truth of what is stated here was never so clearly realized by the world as it is today. The chapter is one of the earliest revelations.

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent,
the Merciful.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1 Abundance diverts you,

أَلْهَكُمُ التَّكَاثُرُ ۝

2 Until you come to the graves.^a

حَتَّىٰ تَرَاؤُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ ۝

3 Nay, you will soon know,

كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ۝

4 Nay, again, you will soon know.

ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ۝

5 Nay, would that you knew with a
certain knowledge!^a

كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ ۝

2a. *Takāthur* (from *kathura*, it became abundant or multiplied) means contending together for superiority in (the amount or number of) property or children or men (LL). According to Rz, the measure of *tafā'ul* stands sometimes for the *fi'l* itself, and *takāthur* thus may mean *increase* or *abundance of wealth*, etc. *Coming to the graves* stands for *death*. The significance therefore is that vying one with another in increase of wealth diverts a man from the real object of life until he meets death.

5a. When a man dies, he then comes to know that the acquisition of wealth was in no way the real object of his life. But if he had proceeded on the basis of certain knowledge, he could have seen this in this very life.

6 You will certainly see hell;

لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ ﴿٦﴾

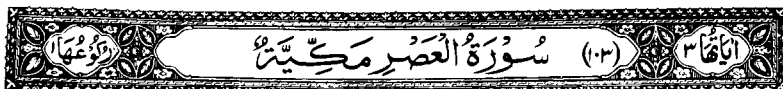
7 Then you will see it with certainty of sight;

ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ ﴿٧﴾

8 Then on that day you shall certainly be questioned about the boons.^a

ثُمَّ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٨﴾

8a. Verses 5–8 are considered as disclosing three degrees of certainty — *‘ilm al-yaqin*, *‘ain al-yaqin* and *haqq al-yaqin*, i.e., *certainty by inference*, *certainty by sight* and *certainty by realization*. A man can by inference attain to a certainty of the existence of hell in this very life (vv. 5 and 6); after his death he will see hell with his own eyes (v. 7); but a perfect manifestation of it will be realized by him on the day of Resurrection (v. 8). *Being questioned about the boons* implies *tasting of the punishment* for failing to make right use of what was granted to man. But the words may also be taken as applying to this life. By pondering on the very nature of evil a man can become certain of hell, this being the certainty by inference. Then he can acquire a certain knowledge by sight, by seeing the fate of others. Lastly, he is made to realize it by disasters being brought upon himself.



CHAPTER 103

Al-‘Aṣr: The Time

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 3 verses)

This chapter draws attention to the testimony of *Time* in showing that those alone prosper who accept the Truth, and hence its title. As against those spoken of in the last chapter, those who are led away from the real object of life by making the acquisition of wealth its goal, we are here told that only those prosper who accept the Truth and exhort others to it. The chapter is one of the earliest revelations.

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ۝
the Merciful.

1 By the time! —

وَالْعَصْرِ ۝

2 Surely man is in loss,

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِفِي خُسْرٍ ۝

3 Except those who believe and do good, and exhort one another to Truth, and exhort one another to patience.^a

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ ۝

3a. The testimony of time is threefold; the flight of time affords the testimony that it is only those who do not waste the opportunity of doing good that reap the benefit; the light which shines along the path of bygone ages shows us that those who did good and enjoined good on others prospered, while the evildoers were brought to naught; lastly, the time of the Holy Prophet afforded the clearest and most conclusive evidence that the believers and doers of good were successful, while their opponents sustained evident loss. *‘Aṣr* signifies *time* or *succession of ages* (LL). Some, however, understand by *al-‘aṣr* the time of the Holy Prophet, and an authentic saying of his, in which he compares his own time to *‘aṣr*, or the *afternoon* (B), supports this interpretation. In fact, both significances hold good. While taking time in a general sense, it is true that every man who is not engaged in doing some permanent and lasting good is really losing every minute that passes away; the time of the Holy Prophet in which a great spiritual resurrection was brought about affords the clearest evidence that those who did not respond to the Prophet’s call were the losers, while the faithful brought about a revolution in the whole world by exhorting goodness and patience on others. The enjoining of patience on each other follows the direction to enjoin Truth, because the preaching of Truth brings man face to face with difficulties, and unless he is patient and forbearing under hardships, he cannot adhere to the Truth.



CHAPTER 104

Al-Humazah: The Slanderer

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 9 verses)

As opposed to those who are spoken of in the last chapter as believing, doing good and enjoining truth and patience, we have here a description of those who, instead of doing any permanent good, amass wealth, and instead of enjoining truth, slander others; hence the name of the chapter *Al-Humazah* or *The Slanderer*, occurring in the first verse. It is one of the earliest revelations.

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent,
the Merciful.

- 1 Woe to every slanderer, defamer!^a
- 2 Who amasses wealth and counts it^a—
- 3 He thinks that his wealth will make him abide.^a
- 4 Nay, he will certainly be hurled into the crushing disaster;^a

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ ۝١

الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ ۝٢

يَحْسَبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ ۝٣

كَلَّا لَيُدْبَسَنَّ فِي الْعُطْمَةِ ۝٤

1a. The slanderers and defamers are condemned here generally, with particular reference to the opponents, who started their persecution of the Holy Prophet by bitterly slandering and defaming him, so that the pilgrims coming to Makkah from afar should not listen to his teachings. Just as goodness and patience are combined in the previous chapter as the two qualities which are the foundations on which human character should be built, the amassing of wealth and defaming are combined here as the two evils which lead ultimately to disaster.

2a. 'Addada-hū signifies *he considered it a provision against the casualties of fortune* (LA). It also means *he reckoned or counted it* (LL). It is a succinct but exact picture of the material civilization of our day.

3a. By *abiding* is meant *abiding in prosperity, or lasting forever*.

4a, see next page.

5 And what will make thee realize
what the crushing disaster is?

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْحَطْمَةُ ۝

6 It is the Fire kindled by Allāh,

نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمَوْقَدَةُ ۝

7 Which rises over the hearts.^a

الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ ۝

8 Surely it is closed in on them,

إِنَّهَا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّوَصَدَةٌ ۝

9 In extended columns.^a

فِي عَمَدٍ مُمَدَّدَةٍ ۝

4a. *Al-ḥuṭamah* is derived from *ḥaṭīma*, meaning *it became broken into pieces* (LL). The name is applied to *hell*, because it crushes everything that is cast into it. It includes both hell and other disasters which, it is prophesied, would crush the wealthy defamers of the Truth, their punishment being called by this name because they wanted to *crush* the Truth.

7a. The Fire of hell is described as *rising over the hearts*, showing that it is within the heart of man that the origin of hell-fire lies. A man's hell is thus within his own heart in this life.

9a. It is inordinate desires *extending* beyond all limits that give rise to *extended* columns of fire. Spiritually they may be witnessed in this life, but they assume a palpable shape in the next.



CHAPTER 105

Al-Fil: The Elephant

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 5 verses)

This chapter is entitled *Al-Fil* or *The Elephant*, on account of the presence of one or more elephants in the army which invaded Makkah with the object of destroying the Ka'bah. This happened in the year in which the Prophet was born. This army met with a crushing disaster, and was annihilated — thus did the *Crushing Disaster* of the last chapter overtake an iniquitous people. It is one of the earliest revelations.

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent,
the Merciful.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1 Hast thou not seen how thy Lord
dealt with the possessors of the ele-
phant?^a

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْفِيلِ ۗ

1a. The reference is to the memorable invasion of Makkah by Abrahah, the Christian viceroy in Yaman of the King of Abyssinia. Abrahah's object was to destroy the Ka'bah so as to divert Arab religious enthusiasm and Arab trade to Ṣan'ā, where he had built a magnificent cathedral for the purpose. This army is known in Arabia as the *aṣḥāb al-Fil*, or *the possessors of the Elephant*, because of the presence in it of one or more elephants. The year in which the invasion took place is known as the year of the Elephant, being the year 570 of the Christian era, and coinciding with the year of the Holy Prophet's birth. Unable to defend the Holy House against the huge army, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib thus prayed aloud, leaning upon the door of the Ka'bah: "Defend, O Lord, Thine own House! and suffer not the Cross to triumph over the Ka'bah" (Zurqāni). Then the whole population of Makkah repaired to the hills around the Holy City. Meanwhile a virulent form of small-pox, or some other pestilence, broke out in Abrahah's army with such severity that the army retreated "in confusion and dismay", many of them, being unable to find their way back, perishing in the valleys, while a part was swept away by floods (Muir's *Life of Muḥammad*, Introduction, p. c.). There seems to be also an allusion to the circumstance that, in protecting the Ka'bah against an enemy, though idols were worshipped there at the time, Almighty God had shown a purpose in its preservation. The coincidence of this year with the year of the Prophet's birth no doubt furnishes the key to that purpose, because the Arabs not only knew that the Sacred House had Abraham's blessing, but also

- 2 Did He not cause their war to end in confusion? **أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ كَيْدَهُمْ فِي تَضْلِيلٍ ۝٢**
- 3 And send against them birds in flocks? **وَأَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا أَبَابِيلَ ۝٣**
- 4 Casting at them decreed stones — **تَرْمِيهِمْ بِحِجَارَةٍ مِّن سِجِّيلٍ ۝٤**
- 5 So He rendered them like straw eaten up?^a **فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَّأْكُولٍ ۝٥**

that Abraham had prayed for the appearance of a prophet from among them who should purify the House. The mention of the incident thus conveyed a warning to the Quraish that, if the Lord had destroyed an army on account of its intention to demolish His Sacred House, would He leave those alone who wanted to destroy His Prophet?

5a. There is no authentic ḥadīth as to how Abrahah's army was destroyed. According to 'Ikrimah, everyone at whom a stone was flung was affected with small-pox (RM). A report from Ya'qūb to the same effect is narrated by Ibn Kathir. Thus it was a virulent small-pox that broke out in the invading army while yet a little distance from Makkah, and the result was that Abrahah himself being affected with the pestilence, the whole army fled in a state of confusion, leaving the corpses of the dead for the birds to feast on. The words *tarmi-him bi-hijarat-in* may mean *the birds cast at them stones* or *flung them against stones*, the reference in the latter case being to the birds tearing off flesh from their bodies. For *hijarat-in min sijjil*, see 11:82c. For birds as indicating the destruction of an enemy, see 16:79a.



CHAPTER 106

Al-Quraish: The Quraish

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 4 verses)

This chapter is closely connected with the last, and in fact continues the subject-matter, reminding the Quraish of the great benefits conferred on them because of their guardianship of the Ka'bah. For this reason the two chapters were sometimes read together, leading some to think that this is a portion of the previous chapter. The date of revelation is also the same.

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent,
the Merciful.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1 For the protection of the
Quraish^a—

إِلَّا يَلْفُ قُرَيْشٍ ۝

2 Their protection during their jour-
neys in the winter and the summer.^a

إِنْفِهِمْ رِحْلَةَ الشِّتَاءِ وَالصَّيْفِ ۝

1a. *Quraish* is the name given to the tribe descended from Naḍr ibn Kanānah. According to some the word *Quraish* is the diminutive of *qarsh*, a big animal of the sea, which eats others but is not itself eaten. The Quraish were settled at Makkah and had charge of the Sacred House, to which pilgrims resorted from all parts of Arabia, and therefore, being guardians of the Holy House, they enjoyed special honour among the tribes of Arabia. Moreover Makkah had thus become the centre of Arabia, bringing prosperity to the Quraish.

The first verse of this chapter is connected with the last chapter, the significance being that the Divine protection of the Ka'bah and the destruction of its enemies was a special favour granted to the Quraish, for it led to their protection. It is a fact that, as stated in the last chapter, being guardians of the Ka'bah, they were respected when they set out on their journeys, while within the sacred territory they enjoyed an unparalleled security.

2a. The protection mentioned in the last note was of special use to them in their journeys northward to Syria and southward to Yaman, the former of which was undertaken in the summer and the latter in winter, to carry on their trade.

3 So let them serve the Lord of this House,

فَلْيَعْبُدُوا رَبَّ هَذَا الْبَيْتِ ۖ

4 Who feeds them against hunger, and gives them security against fear.^a

الَّذِي أَطْعَمَهُمْ مِنْ جُوعٍ ۖ وَ
أَمَّنَّهُمْ مِنْ خَوْفٍ ۙ

4a. Feeding against hunger and granting security against fear were the two special favours conferred on the Quraish through the sacredness of the Ka'bah, because the pilgrimage gave a special impetus to their trade and the necessities of life were brought to their very doors, while they were totally secure from all fear of attack, to which the other Arab tribes were constantly exposed.



CHAPTER 107

Al-Mā'ūn: Acts of Kindness

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 7 verses)

This chapter gives expression to the prominence which Islām gives to helping the needy and uplifting the poor. Anyone who pays no attention to this is spoken of as belying *religion*. Prayer to God and help of the poor are repeatedly spoken of in the Holy Qur'ān as the two foundations of Islām, but here we are told that even prayer is a mere show, if it does not generate feelings of love and sympathy for humanity. Hence its title *al-Mā'ūn* or *Acts of Kindness*, the word itself occurring in the last verse. It is one of the very early Makkan revelations.

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent,
the Merciful.

1 Hast thou seen him who belies
religion?

2 That is the one who is rough to
the orphan,

3 And urges not the feeding of the
needy.^a

4 So woe to the praying ones,

5 Who are unmindful of their
prayer!^a

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

اَسْرَأَيْتَ الَّذِیْ یُكَذِّبُ بِالْذِّیْنِ

فَذٰلِكَ الَّذِیْ یَدْعُ الْیَتِیْمَ

وَ لَا یَحْضُ عَلٰی طَعَامِ الْیَسٰكِیْنِ

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُصَلِّیْنَ

الَّذِیْنَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُوْنَ

3a. *Din* is generally taken here as meaning *judgment*, but I would prefer its more well-known significance, *religion*. Not taking care of orphans and helping the needy is really a denial of religion. Vv. 4–7 make it clear that praying to God is useless, a mere show, unless one is kind to orphans and helps the needy.

5a. Being *unmindful* of prayer means not paying heed to the *spirit* of prayer, which is described in the two previous verses as being the help of the orphan and the needy.

6 Who do (good) to be seen,

الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَآءُونَ ﴿٦﴾

7 And refrain from acts of kindness!^a

وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ ﴿٧﴾

7a. *Al-Mā'ūn* is explained by Bukhārī as meaning *al-Ma'rūf kullu-hū*, i.e., every good or kind deed. And it is added that according to 'Ikrimah, its highest form is obligatory zakāt and lowest lending of a thing or giving any useful thing to another (B. 65 :cvii). The root is *ma'n*, which means a useful or easy thing. Having regard to what is said in the opening verses, *al-Mā'ūn* includes all acts of kindness done to fellow-men.