

## Lessons from Surah al-Qari'ah

Muaz Billoo

أَلْقَارِعَةُ ﴿١﴾ مَا أَلْقَارِعَةُ ﴿٢﴾ وَمَا أَدْرَبْتَكَ مَا أَلْقَارِعَةُ  
﴿٣﴾ يَوْمَ يَكُونُ النَّاسُ كَالْفَرَاشِ الْمَبْثُوثِ ﴿٤﴾  
وَتَكُونُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ الْمَنْفُوشِ ﴿٥﴾ فَأَمَّا  
مَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ ﴿٦﴾ فَهُوَ فِي عِيشَةٍ رَاضِيَةٍ  
﴿٧﴾ وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ ﴿٨﴾ فَأُمَّهُ هَاوِيَةٌ  
﴿٩﴾ وَمَا أَدْرَبْتَكَ مَا هِيَ ﴿١٠﴾ نَارٌ حَامِيَةٌ ﴿١١﴾

**Translation:** The striking event! What is the striking event? What will make you know what is the striking event? On that day, mankind will be like scattered moths, and the mountains will be like carded wool. So as for the one whose scale will be heavy, he will live a happy life. And as for the one whose scale will be light, his abode will be an abyss. What will make you know what that (abyss) is? (It is) a blazing fire.

Surah al-Qari'ah is a Makki surah, and as such primarily discusses the state of humanity on the Day of Judgment. Allah ﷻ warns us about the impending Day of Judgment and describes those who will succeed and those who will fail.

**The striking event! What is the striking event? What will make you know what is the striking event?**

The word after which the surah is named, i.e. Qari'ah, is among the names of the Day of Judgment.<sup>1</sup> Literally, قَرَعَ means “to strike.” Some exegetes have said that the Day of Judgment has been given this name because it will strike at the hearts with its terrifying sights and sounds.<sup>2</sup> Allah ﷻ mentions the “striking event” three times, and with each consecutive phrase

<sup>1</sup> As explained by ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas ؓ in *Tafsir al-Tabari* 24/592

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Tashil li ‘Ulum al-Tanzil* 2/603

emphasizes its grandeur.<sup>3</sup> As a person recites these three verses, he should feel an increased focus towards his preparation for that day. Allah ﷻ would not emphasize such a day three times if it was insignificant.

### **On that day, people will be like scattered moths.**

By understanding the state of humanity, we will be able to come to better realize the severity of the Day of Judgment. Back then they didn't have light bulbs and electricity. Instead, they had oil lamps. Moths would gather around oil lamps, gradually encroaching the fire in the lamp, until they would burn and die. We also notice that when large groups of moths are frightened, they start climbing on top of one other, and their "society" quickly deteriorates into instability and chaos. Similarly, if humanity doesn't turn back to its creator, it will march itself towards the fire of Jahannam, just as moths continuously fly towards burning lamps. Although sins may be tempting, they are representative of the fire of Jahannam. Just as moths are drawn to the fires in lamps which easily burns and kills them, we are also drawn to worldly temptations that can burn us in this world and the hereafter. Additionally, we come to know what state humanity will be in on the Day of Judgment: a state of chaos, instability, and confusion. It will be every man and woman for themselves. Whatever problems and issues we face in this world are insignificant to the indescribable pain and tension we will face on the Day of Judgment. This world is temporary. The hereafter is permanent.<sup>4</sup>

### **The mountains will be like carded wool.**

Not only will humanity be reduced to a state of chaos and confusion, but even the most powerful objects we can observe will be reduced to wool-like dust. When we look at mountains, we feel tiny and miniscule. These gargantuan, towering figures have stood as symbols of strength and resilience in the eyes of man. Yet, Allah ﷻ reminds us that true power lies with Allah ﷻ. All other powers and strength are inconsequential compared to the power of Allah ﷻ. The mountains have been likened to carded wool in the sense that the mountains will be crushed to dust, and the various pieces and parts of the mountain will be scattered and floating in the sky whereas the land will be flattened out for judgment.<sup>5</sup> This world is nothing; we must direct our attention towards connecting with to Allah ﷻ, the All-Powerful.

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<sup>3</sup> *Tafsir Muqatil ibn Sulaiman* 4/811

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Tashil li 'Ulum al-Tanzil* 2/603 and *Ruh al-Ma'ani* 29/286

<sup>5</sup> *Ruh al-Ma'ani* 29/286

**As for the one whose scale will be heavy, he will live a happy life.**

Our deeds will be weighed, not counted. An abundance of optional prayers does not necessitate that one's scale will be heavier than a person who did fewer. The weight of our actions depends on numerous factors, such as ensuring that the actions are in accordance with the guidelines of Allah ﷻ and His messenger ﷺ, sincerity, focus, humility, etc. We must ensure that our actions have quality over quantity. This does not mean that in our attempt to perfect quality, we will skimp out on the direct commands and obligations of Allah ﷻ. For example, none can say that his Zuhr salah had such a high standard of quality that he need not pray the other salahs. This is a direct violation of the command of Allah ﷻ and in fact demonstrates a lack of quality in his salah. The ayah emphasizes that the path to success on the Day of Judgment requires engagement with good deeds. Some examples of good deeds include prayer, charity, recitation of Qur'an, and remembrance of Allah ﷻ. Some good deeds that are often forgotten are being good to the parents, maintaining ties of kinship, being good to one's spouse, keeping clean, being honest in business dealings, etc.

**As for the one whose scale will be light, then his abode will be an abyss. What will make you know what it (the abyss) is? (It is) a blazing fire.**

Whenever Allah ﷻ mentions His punishment, he usually couples it with His mercy, and whenever He mentions His mercy, he usually couples it with His punishment. This is done to prevent us from falling into complacency and hopelessness. The believer lives in between hope and fear. He is hopeful of Allah's ﷻ mercy, yet he is aware there is no guarantee of his being safe from Allah ﷻ's punishment. In this set of verses, we learn who will fail on the Day of Judgment: those whose scale of deeds will be light. Why will their scale of deeds be light? Their sins outweighed their good deeds. We seek Allah's ﷻ forgiveness from our sins, but if we indulge our entire lives in sin, then we will fail and fall into Jahannam. Some obvious sins include associating partners with Allah ﷻ, lying, stealing, promiscuity, etc. Some sins that are often forgotten include disrespecting the parents, violating others rights, cheating and lying in business, etc. It is imperative we don't infringe upon others' rights. If we continuously speak ill of others behind their backs (backbiting), hurt them, then such people will come on the Day of Judgment demanding vengeance. Thus, Allah ﷻ will give away his good deeds to them. When such a person runs out of good deeds, Allah ﷻ will start loading his scale of sins with their sins. When it comes to infringing the rights of others, the general rule is that Allah ﷻ will not forgive such a person until those whose rights were violated forgive the one who violated. In summary, we must ensure that we abstain from anything that will lead to our scale of deeds being light on that day.