

SŪRAH 101

Al-Qāri`ah

(The Striker)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of God, the Lord of Grace, the Ever Merciful.

The Striker! (1)

أَلْقَارِعَةُ ﴿١﴾

What is the Striker? (2)

مَا أَلْقَارِعَةُ ﴿٢﴾

Would that you knew what the Striker is! (3)

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا أَلْقَارِعَةُ ﴿٣﴾

The day when people will be scattered moths, (4)

يَوْمَ يَكُونُ النَّاسُ كَالْفَرَاشِ الْمَبْثُوثِ

and the mountains like tufts of carded wool. (5)

وَتَكُونُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ الْمَنْفُوشِ ﴿٤﴾

Then he whose weight [of good deeds] is heavy in the balance, (6)

فَأَمَّا مَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ ﴿٥﴾

shall enjoy a happy life. (7)

فَهُوَ فِي عِيشَةٍ رَاضِيَةٍ ﴿٦﴾

But he whose weight is light in the balance, (8)

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ ﴿٧﴾

shall have the abyss for his home. (9)

فَأْمُرْ هَاوِيَةً ﴿٩﴾

Would that you knew what this is like! (10)

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا هِيَ ﴿١٠﴾

It is a scorching fire. (11)

نَارٌ حَامِيَةٌ ﴿١١﴾

Overview

Al-Qāri`ah, or the Striker, means the resurrection. Elsewhere in the Qur`ān it is given names such as the Overwhelming One, the Deafening Shout, the Stunning Blast and the Enveloper. The term *al-Qāri`ah* also connotes hitting and knocking hard. It knocks people's hearts with its engulfing horror.

The *sūrah* as a whole deals with the Striker, its essence, what takes place in it and what it eventually leads to. Thus the *sūrah* portrays one of the scenes of the Day of Resurrection.

The scene portrayed here is one of horror directly affecting man and mountains. In this scene people look dwarfish in spite of their great number. For they are like scattered moths. They fly here and there having no power or weight, going through the dilemma of moths which rush to destruction, having no aim or purpose.

On the other hand, the mountains, which used to be firm and solidly based, seem to be like carded wool carried away by winds, and even by a light breeze. Thus, it is in harmony with this image that the Day of Resurrection is described as the one that strikes or knocks out. The connotations used and the rhythm are in consonance with the effects of the Striker on both people and mountains. The *sūrah* spreads an air of awe and expectation about the outcome of reckoning.

Determination of People's Fates

"The Striker! What is the Striker! Would that you knew what the Striker is!" (Verses 1-3) This *sūrah* starts with the single word, *al-Qāri`ah*, rendered in English as the Striker. It is thrown like a shot, without any further information, predicate or adjective. As such it creates through its sound and connotations an ambiance of awe and apprehension.

The word is immediately followed by a question suggesting alarm: "What is the Striker?" (Verse 2) It is that dreadful and formidable thing which arouses curiosity and questioning. Then comes the answer in the form of a cryptic exclamation: "Would that you knew what the Striker is!" It is too great to be comprehended or imagined. Then

follows the answer which states what takes place in it but refrains from stating its exact nature: *"The day when people will be scattered moths, and the mountains like tufts of carded wool."* (Verses 4-5)

This is the first scene of the Striker, a scene that leaves people's hearts in panic and makes limbs tremble with fear. The listener feels that everything he clings to in this world is flying all around him like dust. Then comes the end of all mankind. *"Then he whose weight [of good deeds] is heavy in the balance, shall enjoy a happy life. But he whose weight is light in the balance, shall have the abyss for his home. Would that you knew what this is like! It is a scorching fire."* (Verses 6-11)

It is useful for us to consider the weights, whether heavy or light. This means that there are standards which God credits with being valuable and others that are valueless. This is the general meaning of the statement which the *sūrah* wants to convey. However, God knows best the exact nature of the balance determining such weights. To indulge in a sophisticated, logical and linguistic argument about the meaning of the Qur'ānic term, *mawāzīn*, used here is in itself a departure from the Qur'ānic spirit and indicates that the reader is not interested in the Qur'ān or in Islam.

"Then he whose weight [of good deeds] is heavy in the balance", according to God's measures and evaluation, *"shall enjoy a happy life."* God makes this statement general without any detailed information. Thus, the statement imparts to man the connotations of content and satisfaction or, indeed, pure happiness.

"But he whose weight is light in the balance," according to God's same measure and evaluation, *"shall have the abyss for his home."* The Arabic text uses the term, *umm*, 'mother', for what is rendered here as 'home'. It is to his mother that a child turns for help and protection as he seeks shelter and security at home. But such people with light measure can only turn and resort to the abyss! The expression is a fine one, beautifully ordered. It also has a shade of obscurity preparing the way for subsequent clarification which adds to the depth of the intended effect: *"Would that you knew what this is like."* (Verse 10) It is again the cryptic exclamation used often in the Qur'ān which emphasizes that it is beyond comprehension and vision. Then comes the answer in the closing note: *"It is a scorching fire."* (Verse 11)

Such is the mother of any person whose weight of good deeds is light. This is his mother to whom he turns for help and protection and for security and comfort. But what does he find with such a mother? He finds nothing but the abyss and a scorching fire. The expression here makes a sudden jolt to represent the hard reality.