

Background and Meaning

Ibn Kathir identifies al-Ma'un as a Makkan surah. Its opening concerns denial of the final return and recompense. That denial is shown through harshness towards an orphan and lack of concern for feeding someone in need. The surah then warns people who neglect their prayers, show off and withhold assistance. Its seven ayat bring worship and treatment of people together. The title comes from the final ayah and includes the ordinary help and useful things people can provide for one another.

Tafsir of the Surah

Ayat 1-3: Denial of judgement and treatment of the vulnerable. Ibn Kathir explains al-din here as the return to Allah and recompense. The person described pushes the orphan away, wrongs the orphan's rights and does not show kindness. The next verse concerns failure even to encourage feeding the poor person who lacks what is needed to live. The opening presents conduct that reveals disregard for accountability and mercy towards those in need.

Ayat 4-5: Heedlessness concerning prayer. Ibn Kathir records explanations concerning those who pray publicly but neglect prayer privately, abandon it or let its appointed time pass. He also discusses habitual delay, neglect of its conditions and pillars, and lack of attentiveness. The warning must be read with the qualifying verse that follows it. It is directed at people heedless of their prayers, not a condemnation of prayer itself.

Ayah 5: Understanding the wording carefully. Ibn Kathir records 'Ata' ibn Dinar's distinction between being heedless of prayer and experiencing forgetfulness within prayer. The discussion concerns neglect in a person's approach to the obligation. His commentary includes concern for observing the proper time, fulfilling the prayer and remembering Allah within it. This distinction helps the parent explain the warning without treating every moment of distraction as identical to the conduct described.

Ayah 6: Worship performed to be seen. The next quality is showing off. Ibn Kathir connects the passage with the Qur'anic description of hypocrites rising reluctantly for prayer, seeking people's notice and remembering Allah little. The concern is the purpose behind worship. An outward act may be visible while its intention is directed towards the approval of people rather than Allah.

Ayah 7: Withholding al-ma'un. Ibn Kathir records explanations including zakah and everyday items lent to others, such as a pot, bucket or tool. He regards these explanations as meeting in the refusal to help through property or benefit. Such ordinary assistance matters, even when the item remains the owner's and is returned. The conclusion brings together the two failures described throughout the surah: deficient worship of Allah and refusal to benefit His creation.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالدِّينِ

١

Memorised

Have you considered him who denies the religion?

فَذَلِكَ الَّذِي يَدُعُّ الْيَتِيمَ

٢

Memorised

It is he who mistreats the orphan.

وَلَا يَحُضُّ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ

٣

Memorised

And does not encourage the feeding of the poor.

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ

٤

Memorised

So woe to those who pray.

الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ

٥

Memorised

Those who are heedless of their prayers.

الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَآؤْنَ

٦

Memorised

Those who put on the appearance.



وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ



And withhold the assistance.

Parent tafsir: adapted from Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim, 107:1-7.

Arabic commentary: quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/sura107-aya1.html

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