

Surah al-Humazah (104)

سورة الحمزة

'The Defamer'

The surah derives its name from its containing the word *humazah*, meaning 'defamer'. Like the other Makkan surahs it is concerned with explaining matters of faith and what is related to faith. As the previous surah mentioned man's being a loser, this surah comes to explain some of the underlying reasons for this.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Beginning **by the name of Allah**, who is the First before all things.

The Compassionate, the Merciful, with a mercy that is continual and emphatic and embraces all things.

Woe to every defamer, backbiter (1)

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ ﴿١﴾

Woe (wayl) explains the evil condition of those it is said of. 'Defamer' is given for *humazah*, which is a person who slanders others and is over-critical of people without justification. The word derives from the origin of 'breaking', as if the defamer breaks a person and destroys his well-being.

Who gathers wealth and counts it; (2)

الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ ﴿٢﴾

He amasses property from wherever and counts it, to see how it has increased since he last counted it. That is the picture of a greedy person, a sinking soul, who persists in amassing wealth; and criticises people without exception.

He reckons his wealth makes him eternal. (3)

مَحْسَبٌ أَنَّ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ ﴿٣﴾

He thinks his wealth will make him stay in the world and protect him from mishap. For whenever a mishap befalls him he averts it by bribery, or by giving so as to forestall the wrongs he performs, or when illness befalls him, and so on. The meaning is that his action is the action of one who reckons such, for every person knows that he will die and that he has no escape from death.

Nay, indeed he shall be hurled into the shatterer; (4)

كَلَّا لَيُنْبَذَنَّ فِي الْأُخْطَمَةِ ﴿٤﴾

'Shatterer' is given for *hutamah*, a name of hell. Without any consideration or sympathy the fault-finding defamer shall be hurled there. It is called shatterer as it shatters and breaks everything. For Fire shall shatter and destroy his entity and his greatness.

And what will make thee comprehend what is the shatterer? (5)

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْأُخْطَمَةُ ﴿٥﴾

This is put to signify its importance and to convey the fact that it is impossible to comprehend until seen.

The explanation of what it is now follows:

The fire of Allah set ablaze, (6)

نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمَوْقَدَةُ ﴿٦﴾

How can man appreciate the might of the fire that has been kindled by Allah, glory be to Him, who is the most capable of punishing and chastising?

Which takes over the hearts; (7)

الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ ﴿٧﴾

That is, it takes over the hearts to burn the place from which arise their mockery and their love of wealth and of counting it, without spending it in the way of Allah, and for good ends.

Indeed over them it is closed, (8)

إِنبَا عَلَيْهِم مُّوَصَّدَةٌ ﴿٨﴾

Its doors will be shut over those sinners so that they shall have no hope of getting out.

In extended columns. (9)

فِي عَمَدٍ مُّمَدَّدَةٍ ﴿٩﴾

They shall be fettered in extended columns. It was the practice of ancient rulers to secure prisoners to long columns built into the ground or the wall. It is to increase the punishment and chastisement.