

Surah al-Masad (111)

سورة المسد

'The Palm-Fibre'

The surah derives its name from its containing the word *masad*, meaning '(coarse) palm-fibre', and for the same reason it is also called *Abi Lahab*. Like the other Makkan surahs it is concerned with matters of faith. Whereas the previous surah spoke of the victory of Allah bestowed upon His Prophet, this surah speaks of how He, glory be to Him, suffices the Prophet against his enemies.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah ... A beginning in the name of Allah who comprises all the attributes of perfection.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful, who bestows grace and mercy upon the servants.

One of the people who persecuted the Prophet was his uncle *Abi Lahab*, often hurling stones at him. His wife, called *Umm Jumayl*, would carry thorns and suchlike during the night and spread them on the Prophet's path, so that when he left his house the thorns would prick his blessed feet. And so this surah was revealed.

Perish the hands of Abi Lahab, and perish he, (1)

تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَتَبَّ ۝

The verse speaks of his hands on account of the sins he committed being committed with his hands. The second 'perish' is for emphasis it is in reference to *Abi Lahab* himself, meaning may his hands perish, and may he perish.

His wealth and what he has earned will enrich him not, (2)

مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ ۝

He will find no assistance in fending off the chastisement from his wealth and the deeds he has performed, namely his disbelief, sinning and persecuting the Prophet.

He shall enter in a fire of flames, (3)

سَيَصْلَىٰ نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ ۝

In the hereafter, he shall enter the fire and remain there permanently, a fire that is raging and flaming. Appropriate for one called 'Father of flame' (*abi lahab*) on account of how his cheeks would flare up with the redness of his lustre.

And his wife, the bearer of firewood, (4)

وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ حَمَّالَةَ الْحَطَبِ ۝

That is, and may his wife perish, meaning she who carries firewood. She earned this title on account of her carrying the thorns, that are normally used for firewood and kindling.

On her neck a rope of palm-fibre. (5)

فِي جِيدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِّن مَّسَدٍ ۝

That is, on the neck of his wife, *Umm Jumayl*, who was the sister of the infamous *Abu Sufyan*. It seems she will tie the thorns in a bundle with a rope and attach the rope to her neck.