

Background and Meaning

Ibn Kathir identifies al-Humazah as a Makkan surah. Its opening condemns the person who attacks and belittles others, and its next ayat describe someone absorbed in collecting and counting wealth. Ibn Kathir records several explanations of the two opening terms. Their shared concern is harmful contempt expressed through words, actions or gestures. Although particular individuals are mentioned in some reports, he also records Mujahid's explanation that the warning is general. The parent should therefore read the character being described, rather than restrict the lesson to one named opponent.

Tafsir of the Surah

Ayah 1: Humazah and lumazah. Ibn Kathir explains that the opening words concern disparaging people and finding fault with them. He records differences over which word refers to speech, conduct, attacking someone to their face or speaking against them behind their back. Some explanations mention the tongue, while others include the hand and the eye. These reports describe a common pattern of contempt: people are mocked and diminished through more than spoken insults alone.

Ayah 2-3: Gathering wealth and imagining permanence. The person described collects possessions and repeatedly counts them. Ibn Kathir relates this to the Qur'anic description of gathering and hoarding. He also records an explanation in which wealth occupies a person during the day. The next ayah exposes the false expectation that accumulated wealth will make its owner last forever. Money cannot secure the permanence imagined by the person condemned in the passage.

Ayah 4-5: The crushing punishment. Allah rejects that expectation and declares that this person will be cast into al-Hutamah. Ibn Kathir explains the name through its crushing effect upon those within it. The repeated question about al-Hutamah prepares the reader for the explanation that follows. The passage moves from the person's confidence in possessions to the punishment from which those possessions cannot provide protection.

Ayah 6-7: The Fire that reaches the hearts. The surah identifies al-Hutamah as Allah's kindled Fire, reaching the hearts. Ibn Kathir transmits explanations emphasising how deeply the punishment penetrates. The description makes clear that the threat is no superficial injury. It answers the inward arrogance and false security described earlier with a warning that reaches the person's inner being as well as the body.

Ayah 8-9: Enclosure and extended columns. Ibn Kathir explains mu'sadah as closed over those inside. He records several explanations of the extended columns, including interpretations connected with the fastening of the enclosure and the punishment within it. The reports differ in detail, but the conclusion presents confinement from which wealth offers no escape. The whole surah holds together contempt for people, absorption in possessions, the illusion of permanence and accountability before Allah.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ

١

Memorised

Woe to every slanderer backbiter.

الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ،

٢

Memorised

Who gathers wealth and counts it over.

يَحْسَبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ،

٣

Memorised

Thinking that his wealth has made him immortal.

كَأَلَّا لَيُنْبَذَنَّ فِي الْحُطَمَةِ

٤

Memorised

By no means. He will be thrown into the Crusher.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْحُطَمَةُ

٥

Memorised

And what will make you realize what the Crusher is?

نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمَوْقَدَةُ

٦

Memorised

Allah's kindled Fire.



الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ



That laps to the hearts.

إِنَّهَا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّوَصَّدَةٌ



It closes in on them.

فِي عَمَدٍ مُمَدَّدَةٍ



In extended columns.

Parent tafsir: adapted from Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim, 104:1-9.

Arabic commentary: quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/sura104-aya1.html

Translation by Talal Itani, ClearQuran.com · wording unchanged · CC BY-ND 4.0.

Reuse permissions: clearquran.com/download/

