

Background and Revelation

Ibn Kathir identifies al-Masad as a Makkan surah. He records the report that the Prophet ﷺ gathered his people at al-Safa and warned them of severe punishment. Abu Lahab responded with hostility and words wishing ruin upon him, and the surah was revealed. This report appears in Sahih al-Bukhari. Abu Lahab was one of the Prophet's ﷺ paternal uncles, yet he actively opposed and harmed him. The surah describes the failure of that opposition and the punishment of Abu Lahab and his wife.

Tafsir of the Surah

Ayah 1: The ruin of Abu Lahab. Ibn Kathir explains the opening through loss, failure and the destruction of Abu Lahab's effort. He distinguishes the first declaration against him from the following confirmation of his ruin. His commentary describes Abu Lahab's persistent hostility to the Prophet ﷺ and the message. Close family connection did not make that rejection and active opposition harmless.

Ayah 2: Wealth and what he acquired. Ibn Kathir records the explanation of Ibn 'Abbas and other early commentators that what Abu Lahab acquired includes his children. The verse states that neither his wealth nor his gains will benefit him against the punishment. The worldly means on which a person may rely cannot purchase safety from Allah's judgement.

Ayah 3: A blazing Fire. The surah announces that Abu Lahab will enter a Fire of intense flame. Ibn Kathir explains its blazing and consuming character. The declaration answers the confidence and hostility described in the background of the surah. It is a warning that rank, possessions and family relationship cannot overturn the consequences of rejecting the Messenger ﷺ.

Ayah 4: His wife and her support for harm. Ibn Kathir identifies his wife as Umm Jamil, Arwa bint Harb. He describes her support for her husband's rejection and hostility. His commentary records explanations of carrying firewood that include carrying tales and placing thorns in the Prophet's ﷺ path, as well as her connection with the punishment in the Fire. The account concerns participation in deliberate harm, rather than family association by itself.

Ayah 5: The rope of masad. Ibn Kathir discusses masad as tightly twisted fibre or cord, and records explanations connected with her punishment in the Hereafter. The final image completes the announcement of humiliation for those who opposed the Prophet ﷺ with pride and persistence. At the end of his commentary, he notes their continued rejection after the surah's revelation as evidence supporting the truth of its announcement.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَتَبَّ



Memorised

Condemned are the hands of Abee Lahab, and he is condemned.

مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ، وَمَا كَسَبَ



Memorised

His wealth did not avail him, nor did what he acquired.

سَيَصْلَىٰ نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ



Memorised

He will burn in a Flaming Fire.

وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ حَمَّالَةَ الْحَطَبِ



Memorised

And his wife—the firewood carrier.

فِي جِيدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِّن مَّسَدٍ



Memorised

Around her neck is a rope of thorns.

Parent tafsir: adapted from Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim, 111:1-5.

Arabic commentary: quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/sura111-aya1.html

Revelation report: Sahih al-Bukhari 4971, cited by Ibn Kathir.

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