

## Surah Humazah, Chapter 104

(The Slanderer)

Number of Verses: 9

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

#### ***In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful***

This Surah is a Meccan Surah and condemns all sorts of scandal, and backbiting, and all those who do their best to gather and pile up wealth; for which they lose the whole value of their humanity, and defame, insult and mock those who do not possess that (wealth).

These selfish people, who are arrogant with their wealth, enjoy talking or suggesting evil of men or women by word, innuendo, behaviour, mimicry, sarcasm, or insult.

At the end of the Surah, the painful destiny of theirs is referred to. It says that they will be disgracefully thrown into Hell. Before their other belongings, the blazing fire of Hell will begin burning, withering their hearts and minds; the center of all their pride and arrogance. This ceaseless fire will be with them forever.

### [The Virtue of Studying Surah Humazah](#)

On the virtue of reciting this Surah, a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) says:

*"He who recites this Surah will be rewarded 'ten good deeds' as many as the number of those who mocked Muhammad (S) and his companions".* [1](#)

Also, a tradition from Imam Sadiq (as) denotes that he who recites it in any of his obligatory prayers,

poverty will stay away from him, sustenance will approach him, and a hideous death will be repelled from him.<sup>2</sup>

## Surah Humazah, Verses 1-9

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

*In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful*

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ

الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ

يَحْسَبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ

كَأَلَّا لِيُنْبَذَنَّ فِي الْحُطَمَةِ

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْحُطَمَةُ

نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمَوْقَدَةُ

الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ

إِنَّهَا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّوَصَّدَةٌ

فِي عَمَدٍ مُمَدَّدَةٍ

1. "Woe to every backbiter, slanderer",
2. "Who amasses wealth and hoards it,"
3. "Thinking that his wealth will make him immortal".

4. *"Nay, he will certainly be hurled into the 'Hutamah' "*
5. *"And what makes you know what the 'Hutamah' is"?*
6. *"(It is) a fire kindled by Allah",*
7. *"Which rises above the hearts".*
8. *"Surely it will be closed over upon them",*
9. *"In columns outstretched".*

### The Occasion of Revelation

A group of commentators have said that the verses of this Surah were revealed against Walid-ibn-i-Muqayyarah who used to backbite the holy Prophet (S) and made sarcastic remarks and mocked him (S).

Some others believe that they are said against some of the chiefs of the pagan Arabs and the known enemies of Islam, such as: Akhnas-ibn-i-Shariq, Umiyat-ibn-i-Khalaf, and 'As-ibn-i-wa'il.

But, even if we accept these occasions of revelation, again the generality of the meaning of the verses remains unchanged, and it covers all those who have these characteristics.

### Woe to Every Backbiter, Slanderer!

This Surah begins with the strongest terms of a threatening nature.

It says:

***"Woe to Every Backbiter, Slanderer!"***

They are those who sting others with their speech, behaviour, mimicry, or sarcasm at their backs or in front of them. They mock them and defame them with evil motives.

The Arabic terms /humazah/ and /lumazah/, both, are in 'the intensive amplification form'. The term /humazah/ is based on /hamz/ which originally means 'to break', and since backbiters and slanderers break the personality of others, the term /humazah/ is used for them. The term /lumazah/ is derived from /lamz/ with the meaning of 'to backbite' and 'defame'.

Commentators are divided in saying that these two terms refer to one meaning, 'backbiters', and therefore, these two are mentioned for emphasis; or there may be a difference between them.

But, some have said that the term /humazah/ means 'backbiter' and /lumazah/ means 'fault-finder'.

Further, some others believe that the term /humazah/ means 'those who make innuendos with their hands and face when trying to find faults in others', and /lumazah/ is meant for those who do this action with their tongues.

Also, some have meant the first term in the sense of 'fault-finding' in the face of people, and the second when done at their backs.

Again, some think the first means 'apparent fault-finding' and the second means 'subtle fault-finding done with the eyes and eyebrows'.

And sometimes, both of the terms have been meant 'the one who defames people by using low titles for them'.

But, from all of the above ideas it is understood that these two terms are used in the same sense with a vast meaning, so that it includes any fault-finding, defaming, backbiting, sarcasm, and mockery by tongue or mimicry.

In any event, the term

***/wayll 'woe'***

is a strong threat against this group of people, and basically, the Qur'an takes a serious stance on these kind of persons, and there are some special meanings against them in it which are not said for any other sin similar to that.

For example, in Surah Tauba, No 9, verse 80, after threatening those blind-hearted hypocrites with a 'grievous penalty' for their ridicule of the Believers, it says:

***"Whether thou ask for their forgiveness, or not, (their sin is unforgivable): If you ask seventy times for their forgiveness, Allah will not forgive them..."***

Similar to this idea in Surah Munafiqun, No 63, verse 5, about the hypocrites who mocked the holy Prophet (S) it says:

***"And when it is said to them, 'Come, the Apostle of Allah will pray for your forgiveness', they turn aside their heads, and thou wouldn't see them turning away their faces in arrogance".***

Basically, from the point of Islam, the honour of people is considered highly respectable, hence, anything that causes them to be insulted is a great sin.

A tradition from the holy Prophet (S) says:

***"The lowest (one amongst) people is he who insults people".<sup>3</sup>***

Then, it refers to the source of their hideous behaviour.

It often originates from arrogance and pride caused by wealth, saying:

***"Who amasses wealth and hoards it".***

He likes wealth so much so that he always counts his golden coins, or other things among his riches, and enjoys them as if each of them is an idol for himself, and wealth is the center of everything in his personality. It is natural that such a foolish, astray person always mock, the poor believing people.

The term /addadah/ is originally based on /'add/ with the sense of 'to number, reckon'. Some have said that it may be based on /'uddah/ 'provision' with the meaning of 'preparing and storing properties for future difficult days'.

Some have also rendered it into abstinence and maintenance. But, the first comment; is the most clear of all.

At any rate, the verse refers to those who pile up wealth not as a means of help, but, as a goal. They observe no limit or condition in gathering it, gathering it whether it is lawful or unlawful, by honourable or dishonourable ways, from their own right or others' rights, oppressively, and they know it as the only sign of dignity and personality.

They do not want wealth to use for their necessities, that is why they never become satisfied and however much they increase their wealth they are more eager and avaricious to make it greater.

Otherwise, gathering wealth on a reasonable scale and through lawful means not only is not blameworthy, in Islam, but, it is sometimes referred to in the Holy Qur'an as

***'the Bounty of Allah'***,

such as Surah Jumu'ah, No. 62, Verse 10 says:

***"...And seek the Bounty of Allah..."***,

and in another occurrence it is rendered to /xayr/ 'good':

***"It is prescribed, when death approaches any of you, if he leave any goods, that he make a bequest..."***<sup>4</sup>

Such wealth is, certainly, neither a cause of rebelling, nor a means of pride, nor an excuse for mocking others. But, the wealth which is the object of worship and is the final goal and invites its owner to rebellion, such as Qarun, is shame and scorn; is misery and adversity; is the cause of being far from Allah and dwelling in Hell-fire.

Gathering this kind of wealth, in abundance, is usually not possible except by committing numerous sins.

A tradition from Ali-ibn-Musa-ar-Rida (as) says:

***"Wealth is not piled up but with five qualities: Intense stinginess, endless hope, dominant greed, breaking off connections with one's kindred, and preferring this world to the next world"***<sup>5</sup>

Those who are gracious and not tied up in infinite hopes, observe the laws of the lawful and unlawful, serve their kindred, and do not hoard wealth, usually have considerable income.

***"Thinking that his wealth will make him immortal".***

It is interesting that the verb /axladah/, here is in the past tense form with the meaning that he thinks his wealth has made him as an immortal creature, – neither death nor sickness nor incidents can produce difficulties for him, because he thinks money, which he has in abundance, can solve every problem.

What a false imagination! Qarun had such treasures that

***"Their keys would have been a burden to a body of strong men"***

but, at the time of the rush of divine punishment, that wealth could not postpone his death even for a little while and Allah caused a short earthquake suddenly to swallow up him and his treasure:

***"Then, We caused the earth to swallow up him and his house; and he had not (the least little) party to help him against Allah, nor could he defend himself "[6](#)."***

The Pharaohs of Egypt had the most abundant of riches for, themselves, but, as Surah Dukhan, No. 44, verses 25–27 state:

***"How many were the gardens and springs they left behind,"***

***"And corn-fields and noble buildings,"***

***"And wealth (and conveniences of life), wherein they had taken such delight".***

They were easily delivered to others during a short time:

***"Thus (was their end) and We made other people inherit (those things)"[7](#)***

That is why, in the Hereafter, when the curtains will be removed and they realize their previous big mistake, they cry in agony saying:

***"Of no profit to me has been my wealth!"***

***"My power has perished from me!"[8](#).***

In general, man dislikes destruction or mortality and tends to immortality and perpetuality. The existence of this very tendency helps us, In the discussions of Resurrection to know that Man has been created for eternity, otherwise he would not have the instinct of the love of perpetuality.

But, this arrogant, selfish, mamonish Man sometimes finds his perpetuality in some things that are just the cause of his destruction; for example, he considers wealth, which is often the enemy of his being, as a means of eternity.

This statement makes it clear that the thought of perpetuity by the means of wealth is a reason for gathering it, and gathering wealth is also a factor for having the right to mock others; or so they think.

To respond to this group of people, the Holy Qur'an says:

***"Nay! He will certainly be hurled into the Hutamah,"***

***"And what makes you know what the Hutamah is?"***

***"(It is) a fire kindled by Allah"***

***"Which rises above the hearts..."***

The term /layunbthanna/ is based on /nabth/. As Raqib says in Mufradat, it means 'to discard something because of its being an insignificant or small amount'.

That is, Allah will throw these proud, arrogant, selfish, self-content fellows; in the form of mean, unworthy creatures, into the Hell-fire so that they may see the fruit of their pride.

The term /hutamah/ is an amplification form based on the word /hatam/ with the meaning of 'to wreck; break to pieces' which shows that the blazing fire of Hell breaks their limbs violently, although some Islamic narrations denote that /hutaman/ is not the name of the whole Hell, but it is the name of an extraordinarily hot part of it.<sup>9</sup>

Using the phrase /narallah/, here shows the greatness of the fire, and the term /muqadah/ is an evidence to refer to the continuity of that fire kindled to a blaze.

It is a wonder that this fire, in spite of the fires in this world that first burn the skin and then, penetrate inside to burn inner tissue, burns the heart and interior of the mind and bones, first, and then, comes to the other parts.

What kind of fire is this fire whose first effect appears on the heart of Man? What kind of fire is it which burns inside before outside? Everything of the Hereafter is surprising and different from that of this world, even the effect of its blazing fire.

And why does the fire of the Wrath of Allah not dominate their hearts first and before occupying their other limbs when, in this world, they put pain in the hearts of the believers with their mockeries, backbitings, fault-findings, slanders and taunts. ?

### **Divine Justice Requires a Penalty on Them Similar to Their Behaviors**

***"Surely it will be closed over upon them,"***

The term /mu'sadah/ is derived from /isad/ with the meaning of 'to close a door firmly', hence, the rooms made inside the mountains for gathering riches therein were termed / wasid/.

In fact, the same as they kept their riches in safes, locked indoors and in secret storage, Allah, too, puts

them in a punishment shut up in Hell without having a door to flee from.

And, finally, it says:

***"In columns outstretched"***

The term /'amad/ is the plural form of /amud/ which means 'pillar, or any tall thing like a wooden pole, post, or shaft', and the term /mumaddadah/ means 'extended, stretched (out)'.

A group of commentators believe that this idea refers to the<sup>1</sup> long iron nails by which the doors of Hell are fastened so that no exit might be found.

So, it is an emphasis on the previous verse which says:

***"Surely it will be closed over upon them".***

Also, some others have cited that this idea refers to a kind of torture and punishment, similar to the act of putting a person in stocks and fetters; a chain by which a person or an animal is confined by the feet. And this is the result of the tortures that they used against the innocent people in this world.

Furthermore, a third commentary is also given with reference to the new explorations which says that the blazing flames of Hell-fire are upon them in the form of some tall, stretched pillar shaped beams.

These commentators say that it is proven in modern research that X-rays, different from other rays which expand in the conical shape, spread in cylindrical shape just like a pillar, and it is interesting to note that this ray penetrates through the whole entity of Man, and even goes into the heart and that is why it is used for taking photos of the inside of the body. It is understood that there is a ray in Hell rising from the blazing fire, therein, which is not unlike the above-mentioned ray.

Among these commentaries, the first one is the most appropriate.

## **Explanations**

### **Pride, the Origin of Great Sin**

Arrogance or self-aggrandizement is a great pest which is considered to be the source of many vices; neglecting Allah, ingratitude of the bounties from Him, drawn into lusts, detracting from the character of others and mocking the believers are all the fruit of this hideous quality.

When persons of little capacity find themselves in some position of prestige they become enveloped by pride and arrogance so that they consider others of no value, and this quality causes them to be separated from the society and the society deserts them, too.

Then, they live in their own imaginations and think that they are somewhat different from others, and

count themselves among 'the nearest to Allah' which causes them to think of others' honour, character, and even, lives as unworthy and they continue to commit their slandering, backbiting, and fault-finding against them, in order to increase their own dignity, or so they think.

A tradition from the holy Prophet (S) denotes that he said:

*"On the Night journey (of Ascension) I saw a group of people (of Hell) whose flesh of their sides were taken and they were made to eat it, being told to eat what they used to eat of the flesh of their brothers. I asked Gabriel who they were, and he answered that they were backbiters; slanderers, from my community."*[10](#)

### **The Lust For Amassing Wealth**

There are many different ideas given about the quality of amassing wealth in the way of excess and deficiency. Some consider wealth so important that they think it is the key to solving any difficult problem. So, it is no wonder that they are always busy gathering wealth without any pause and without observing any limit or condition for it. Therefore, the status of lawful and unlawful riches is indifferent in their eyes.

In contrast to them, there are some people who do not give any importance or value to wealth. They praise poverty as a valuable quality and believe that wealth is still a hindrance for piety and being near to Allah.

But, besides these two contradictory ideas, which are on the two ends of 'excess' and 'deficiency', what is understood from the Qur'an and the Islamic narrations is that wealth is praiseworthy, but, with some conditions: First of all, it should be a means of service, not a goal.

The second is that wealth should not make Man its captive and dependant, but he should control it and be its master.

The third condition is that wealth should be earned through lawful ways and be spent on the path of gaining Allah's satisfaction.

Love for this kind of wealth not only is not mammonism, but it is evidence for the love of the next world. That is why we see, in a tradition, that when Imam Sadiq (as) was condemning 'gold' and 'silver', one of his Muslim followers wondered what he meant and asked him about it.

He (as) replied:

*"It is the 'gold' by which Faith (religion) disappears and it is the silver which causes blasphemy".*[11](#)

There are some avaricious people who are always busy piling up wealth until the end of their lives, and finally, the wealth will be left for others to take advantage of its benefit, while they, without enjoying

anything, must give the account of it.

A tradition from Hazrat Ali (as) denotes that he was asked:

*"Who is the most sorrowful of people?"*

And he replied:

*"The one who sees his wealth in the scales of others, and Allah brings him into Hell because of his wealth, but He brings his heir into Heaven, (for spending that wealth on charity)".* [12](#)

Yes, people are different when facing riches. Some of them worship it as an idol, while some others use it as a means for their salvation.

We conclude this subject with an expressive statement from Ibn-Abbas who said:

*"When the first gold and silver coins were made on the Earth, Satan looked at them and after observing them, took them and put them on his eyes and then on his chest.*

Then, he squealed happily and put them, again, on his chest and said (to them):

*'You are the light of my eyes and the fruit of my heart. When the sons of Adam love you it does not matter to me that they do not worship idols; it is enough for me that they love you (since you are the greatest idols)''.* [13](#)

## Supplication

*O Lord! Save us from the negligence originating from wealth, position, and lusts.*

*O Lord! Make us free from the mastership of Satan over us and from being the slaves of coins; gold or silver.*

*O Lord! Hell-fire is shattering so that it is impossible to be free from it, but with your Grace. Bestow Your Grace on us.*

*Amin, O Cherisher of the Worlds.*

[1.](#) Majma'-al-Bayan. vol. 10. p. 536.

[2.](#) Ibid.

[3.](#) Bihar-ul-Anwar. vol. 75. p. 142,

[4.](#) Surah Baqarah, No. 2, Verse 180

[5.](#) Nur-uth- Thaqaalayn, vol. 5, p. 668, Tradition 8.

[6.](#) Surah Qasas, No. 28, verse 81

[7.](#) Surah Dukhan, No. 44, verse 28

[8.](#) Surah Haqqah, No. 69, verse 28, 29

[9.](#) Nur-uth-Thaqaalayn, vol, 3, p. 17 and 19, traditions 60 and 64.

[10.](#) Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, vol. 5, p 667, tradition 5

[11.](#) Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol 73. p 142

[12.](#) Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol 73. p 142

[13.](#) Ibid p 137 tradition 3

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