

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Surah Al-Humazah

The Traducer · Makki · 9 ayat — reflections on surah
104 of the Qur'an

QURAN

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Surah Al-Humazah

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الهمزة — Al-Humazah, “The Traducer”. Surah 104 of 114, revealed in Makkah, 9 ayat. The full text and a recitation are on the web edition at deen2u.com/quran/104/.

ONE

The surah in brief

A warning against every slanderer and backbiter who hoards wealth, thinking it will make him immortal. Instead he will be flung into the Crushing Fire of Allah that rises over the hearts, closed in upon them in outstretched columns.

Al-Humazah condemns the one who habitually slanders and mocks people, who amasses wealth and counts it obsessively, imagining it will make him immortal. The surah shatters that illusion: he will be flung into 'the Crusher,' a fire kindled by God that mounts over the hearts. That fire is described as closing in upon them in outstretched columns, sealing them in. It draws a tight line between the abuse of tongue and wealth in this life and a punishment fitted to the crushing arrogance behind it.

TWO

Its themes

- Slander and mockery
- Hoarding wealth
- Illusion of immortality
- The Crushing Fire
- Fire over the hearts

THREE

Key verses

Woe to every (kind of) scandal-monger and-backbiter,

Qur'an 104:1

Woe to the backbiter and faultfinder — the habit of belittling others is grave enough to open a surah of ruin.

Thinking that his wealth would make him last for ever!

Qur'an 104:3

He thinks his wealth made him immortal; hoarding often breeds the delusion that money can hold death at bay.

(It is) the Fire of (the Wrath of) Allah kindled (to a blaze),

Qur'an 104:6

The fire is 'kindled by God' — a punishment shaped directly by divine will, not a mere natural consequence.

The which doth mount (Right) to the Hearts:

Qur'an 104:7

It mounts up over the hearts — the very organ of arrogance and contempt is where the fire strikes deepest.

FOUR

Reading it closely

Context & character

Al-Humazah is a Makkan surah named after a word in its first verse — humazah, the habitual slanderer, paired with lumazah, the habitual faultfinder. Both are intensive forms in Arabic, describing not someone who slips into backbiting once but someone whose very character is to belittle and demean others. The surah opens with wayl — woe, a cry of doom — against this type, and then traces the connection between his contempt for people and his obsession with wealth.

The mood is one of moral disgust turning into vivid warning. The surah paints a portrait — the sneering, wealth-counting mocker who imagines his money has made him untouchable — and then, with unusual specificity, describes the fire prepared for exactly that heart. It is one of the Qur'an's sharpest studies of how arrogance, cruelty, and greed grow from a single root.

How the surah unfolds

The surah begins by pronouncing woe on 'every slanderer and faultfinder' (104:1) — note 'every,' so this is a type, not one named individual, though early reports connect the description to certain wealthy Meccans who mocked the Prophet ﷺ and the weak believers. The two words together cover the whole range of contempt: humazah tends toward mockery by gesture and deed, lumazah toward mockery by tongue and word — the eye-roll and the cutting remark.

The next verses reveal the engine underneath the behaviour: the one who has gathered wealth and counted it over, thinking that his wealth will make him immortal (104:2–3). The picture is precise — a man fingering his hoard, tallying it repeatedly, and drawing from it a fantasy of permanence. His mockery of others flows directly from this: wealth has made him feel superior and safe, so he looks down on those without it.

Then the rebuttal and the sentence fall together. No indeed — he will surely be flung into al-Hutamah (104:4). And, as with al-Qari'ah, the surah pauses to ask: and what will make you grasp what al-Hutamah is? (104:5). The answer: the kindled fire of Allah, which mounts up over the hearts (104:6–7). The surah closes by sealing the image — it is closed in upon them, in columns outstretched (104:8–9) — the fire shut over them like a lid, or the damned bound in elongated pillars of flame.

The major themes, in depth

Contempt as a moral disease. The surah treats mockery not as a bad habit but as a settled corruption of character — hence the intensive forms humazah lumazah. To make a practice of belittling people is to place oneself above them and to deny the dignity Allah gave every human being. The Qur'an elsewhere (as in Surat al-Hujurat) forbids ridicule precisely because the mocker may be despising someone better than himself. Here the surah exposes what usually feeds the sneer: a sense of superiority borrowed from possessions, status, or numbers. Cruelty toward people and pride in wealth are shown to be two faces of one heart.

The delusion of wealth as immortality. The line 'he thinks his wealth has made him immortal' (104:3) names a very old self-deception. Wealth cannot postpone death by an hour, yet the wealthy man behaves as though his hoard is a wall against mortality and accountability. Ibn Kathir and others note the futility captured here: the man counts his money as though the counting itself extends his life, when in truth every count brings him nearer the grave he refuses to imagine. The surah punctures the fantasy with a single 'no indeed' (kalla).

The fire that reaches the heart. The description of al-Hutamah — from a root meaning to crush and shatter — is strikingly targeted. It is a fire that 'mounts up over the hearts' (104:7). Commentators dwell on this: the punishment is aimed at the very organ where the sin lived. The contempt, the greed, the delusion of permanence were all diseases of the heart, and the Fire is described as reaching precisely there, penetrating past the surface to the seat of the crime. The closing image of the fire 'closed over' the damned in 'outstretched columns' completes the reversal: the man who thought himself free, safe, and above others is sealed in, confined, and bound.

Points of reflection

Al-Humazah is a mirror for anyone who has ever felt safe behind their possessions or superior in their judgement of others. It links two sins we usually keep in separate compartments — how we treat people and how we relate to money — and shows them growing from the same soil of arrogance. The tongue that belittles and the hand that hoards and counts belong, the surah says, to one diseased heart.

Its remedy is implied in its diagnosis. If contempt grows from imagined superiority, the cure is to see every person as a soul before Allah and oneself as equally mortal and accountable. If greed grows from imagining wealth as a shield against death, the cure is to hold wealth as a trust to be spent in ways that will actually last. The surah wants to reach the reader before the Fire does — to soften the heart now, while it can still be softened, so that it is not the heart the Fire mounts over later.

FIVE

Carrying it

1. Guard the tongue from mockery and backbiting as a serious sin.
2. Do not let wealth become an object of obsessive counting and false security.
3. Reject the illusion that money can shield anyone from death.
4. Purify the heart, for it is the seat of the pride this surah condemns.

Where this reading draws from. Ibn Kathir, al-Tabari, al-Sa'di. A summary is not a tafsir: for the verse-by-verse treatment go to the works themselves, or to the close studies at deen2u.com/tadabbur/.