

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Surah An-Nas

Mankind · Makki · 6 ayat — reflections on surah 114 of the Qur'an

QURAN

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Surah An-Nas

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الناس — An-Nas, “Mankind”. Surah 114 of 114, revealed in Makkah, 6 ayat. The full text and a recitation are on the web edition at deen2u.com/quran/114/.

ONE

The surah in brief

Seeking refuge in Allah as Lord, King, and God of mankind from the whispering of the retreating whisperer — Shaytan — who casts evil suggestions into the hearts of people, whether from among the jinn or from mankind.

An-Nas, the second surah of refuge, seeks shelter in God under three of His attributes — the Lord of mankind, the King of mankind, the God of mankind — before naming the single evil it counters. That evil is the whisperer who withdraws (al-waswas al-khannas), retreating when God is remembered and returning when the heart forgets. This whisperer works from among both jinn and men, insinuating temptation into the breasts of people. The surah teaches that the antidote to the inner whisper is remembrance of God, who owns, rules, and is worshipped by all mankind.

TWO

Its themes

- Seeking refuge in God
- Lordship, kingship, and divinity
- The withdrawing whisperer
- Whispers in the breast
- Jinn and human temptation

THREE

Key verses

Say: I seek refuge with the Lord and Cherisher of Mankind,

Qur'an 114:1

Refuge begins with 'Lord of mankind' — the same God who nurtures you is the One to whom you flee for protection.

The god (or judge) of Mankind,-

Qur'an 114:3

He is named 'God of mankind,' the only One rightly worshipped, so refuge in Him uproots every rival in the heart.

From the mischief of the Whisperer (of Evil), who withdraws (after his whisper),-

Qur'an 114:4

The whisperer 'withdraws' at God's remembrance — dhikr is the exact force that drives temptation back.

Among Jinns and among men.

Qur'an 114:6

The whispers come 'from jinn and mankind,' warning that harmful suggestion can reach us through people as much as through Satan.

FOUR

Reading it closely

Context & character

An-Nas — 'Mankind' — is the final surah of the Qur'an and the second of the two Mu'awwidhatayn, the pair of protective surahs revealed together. Where al-Falaq sought refuge from a range of external harms, An-Nas concentrates entirely on a single, deeper enemy: the whisperer who works from within the human breast. It is fitting that the Qur'an, which opened with al-Fatihah's plea for guidance on the straight path, closes with a plea for protection from the one who tries to pull the heart off that path.

Its character is that of an intimate, urgent supplication against the most persistent of foes — the internal enemy, the source of the whispers that erode faith and stir sin. The Prophet ﷺ recited it, together with al-Falaq, for protection at night, in illness, and as a regular practice. That the Book of guidance should end on this note — seeking refuge from the whisperer — is deeply telling: the last word of the Qur'an is a plea for the heart to be kept safe.

How the surah unfolds

The surah opens by invoking Allah through three titles, each linked to mankind, building in a deliberate crescendo. Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind (114:1) — Rabb al-nas, the Lord who creates, sustains, and nurtures people. Then: the King of mankind (114:2) — Malik al-nas, the Sovereign who owns and commands them. Then: the God of mankind (114:3) — Ilah al-nas,

the sole true object of their worship. The commentators note how these three ascend from lordship, to kingship, to divinity — the fullest way of naming the One in whom refuge is sought, and a subtle rebuke to any lesser thing a person might turn to.

Having named the refuge with such fullness, the surah then names the enemy: from the evil of the retreating whisperer (114:4) — al-waswas al-khannas. Waswas is the whisper — the low, repeated suggestion that plants doubt and temptation. Khannas describes one who retreats and withdraws, then returns: the commentators explain that this whisperer draws back when a person remembers Allah, and slips forward again the moment they grow heedless.

Then the surah locates precisely where this enemy strikes: the one who whispers in the breasts of mankind (114:5) — not in the ears from outside, but in the sudur, the chests, the innermost seat of thought and desire. And finally it identifies who this whisperer may be: from among the jinn and mankind (114:6). The whisper comes not only from the unseen tempter (Shaytan) but also from human beings who whisper temptation, doubt, and corruption to one another. The surah — and the Qur'an — closes on the word al-nas, mankind, the very word that has echoed through all six verses.

The major themes, in depth

The internal enemy. Where al-Falaq dealt with harms that come to a person from outside, An-Nas turns to the subtler and more dangerous battlefield: the human heart. The waswas — the whisper — does not attack the body but the will, the belief, the intention. It suggests doubt about Allah, tempts toward sin, and

stirs the false thoughts that lead a soul astray. Al-Sa'di observes that this is the most severe of enemies precisely because it works from within, in the very place where a person's faith and choices are formed. The surah takes this threat with the utmost seriousness, devoting the entire Qur'an's final plea to it.

The retreating whisperer — khannas. The description of the enemy as khannas, 'the one who retreats,' is full of practical wisdom. The commentators explain that the whisperer draws back and shrinks away when the servant remembers Allah, and steals forward again when the servant becomes heedless. This teaches the believer both the enemy's weakness and the means of defence: the whisper has no power to compel, only to suggest, and it flees before the remembrance of Allah. The battle is therefore not hopeless but ongoing — a matter of keeping the heart occupied with God so that the whisperer finds no opening. Its retreating nature also explains its persistence: it does not attack once and depart, but returns whenever vigilance drops.

The threefold refuge and the two kinds of whisperer. The surah's three names for Allah — Lord, King, God (114:1-3) — are not repetition but a complete portrait of the One who alone can guard the heart: He nurtures mankind, He rules them, and He alone deserves their worship. This fullness is set against the enemy's two sources named at the end: 'from among the jinn and mankind' (114:6). The whisper comes both from the unseen Shaytan and from human beings who play the same role — those who sow doubt, normalise sin, and lead others astray with their words. Ibn Kathir notes this pairing: there are devils among

people as there are among the jinn. The believer is thus taught to seek refuge from temptation in every form it wears, whispered from the unseen or spoken by a human tongue.

Points of reflection

That the Qur'an ends here is itself a lesson. The Book that came to guide humanity closes by teaching humanity to guard the one place where guidance is either kept or lost — the heart. All the light of revelation can be undone in a soul that leaves the whisperer unopposed. An-Nas leaves the believer with the essential daily task: to protect the inner life, where faith lives, from the erosion of doubt and temptation.

Its practical gift is the knowledge of how the enemy works and how it is defeated. The whisperer is khannas — it retreats before the remembrance of Allah. So the surah's remedy is woven into its own words: to seek refuge in the Lord, King, and God of mankind, and to keep the heart alive with His remembrance so that the whisper finds no room to settle. The believer is not asked to conquer this enemy by strength but to shelter from it in Allah — turning, at the very last verse of the Book, to the only One who can keep the human heart safe from within.

FIVE

Carrying it

1. Counter inner whispers with the remembrance of God, which makes them retreat.
2. Take refuge in God through His names of Lord, King, and God of mankind.
3. Be alert that temptation comes both from the unseen and from human company.
4. Guard the heart, for it is the battlefield where the whisperer works.

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/.