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THE
HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER

CHAPTER 104

SURAH AL-HUMAZAH

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By

ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

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HOLY QURAN

CHAPTER

104

SURAH AL-HUMAZAH

ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

Introduction and Summary

This Makkan Surah condemns all sorts of scandal, backbiting, and selfish hoarding of wealth, as destroying the hearts and affections of men

C.284 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

*Woe to the man or woman who deals
In scandal, in word or act, or by insults
Or suggestions. Woe to the backbiter, e'en*

*If his tale is true, for the taint is in his motive.
Woe to the miser who blocks up the channels
Of use and service and dams up his wealth,
As if he could remain in possession
For all time1 The Fire of Wrath will envelop them
And wither up their hearts and minds, and consume
That largeness of life which is the portion of mankind.*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ (١)

1. Woe to every (kind of) scandalmonger and backbiter,

C6266. Three vices are here condemned in the strongest terms:

1. scandal-mongering, talking or suggesting evil of men or women by word or innuendo, or behaviour, or mimicry, or sarcasm, or insult;
2. detracting from their character behind their backs, even if the things suggested are true, where the motive is evil;
3. piling up wealth, not for use and service to those who need it, but in miserly hoards, as if such hoards can prolong the miser's life or give him immortality: miserliness is itself a kind of scandal.

الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ (٢)

2. Who pileth up wealth and layeth it by,

يَحْسَبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ (٣)

3. Thinking that his wealth would make him last for ever!

كُلًّا لِيُنْبَذَنَّ فِي الْحُطَمَةِ (٤)

4. By no means!

He will be sure to be thrown into that which breaks to pieces.

C6267. Hutamah: that which smashes or breaks to pieces: an apt description of the three anti-social vices condemned.

For scandal-mongering and backbiting make any sort of cohesion or mutual confidence impossible; and the miser's hoards up the channels of economic service and charity, and the circulation of good-will among men.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْحُطَمَةُ (٥)

5. And what will explain to thee that which Breaks to Pieces?

نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمُوقَدَّةُ (٦)

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

الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ (٧)

7. The which doth mount (Right) to the Hearts:

C6268. This Fire of Punishment mounts right up to the hearts and minds of such men, and shuts them out of the love of their fellows.

"Heart" in Arabic means not only the seat of affection, pity, charity, etc., but also of understanding and intelligent appreciation of things.

إِنَّهَا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّوَصَّدَةٌ (٨)

8. It shall be made into a vault over them,

فِي عَمَدٍ مُّمَدَّدَةٍ (٩)

9. In columns outstretched.

C6269. Those guilty of these vices will be choked and suffocated, for this Vault of Fire will cover them all over, and its scorching columns will extend over a far wider area than they imagine.