

Tafseer Surah al-Masad (المسد)

Notes on Nouman Ali Khan's Concise Commentary of the Quran

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Introduction

- This surah criticizes Abu Lahab, the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) paternal uncle, and his wife
 - The flame part of the fire is called *lahab* in Arabic
 - There are a number of opinions on why Abu Lahab was given this nickname:
 - He had a very bad and explosive temper
 - He used to get drunk often
 - He had a reddish complexion and hair
 - Abu Lahab and his wife were both next door neighbors of the Prophet (pbuh)
 - They turned against him after he received revelation and began to call people to Islam
 - Abu Lahab used to start cursing at him whenever he heard him recite the Quran next door
 - He and his wife would also at times throw trash onto his house next door. Their houses were separated by a wall
- About Abu Lahab
 - He was the treasurer of the *ka'bah* and one of its custodians
 - Some have said that he used to embezzle some of the funds into his personal wealth
 - He was a businessman by profession
 - He was described as having a reddish complexion and good looking
 - There is a debate whether he had the nickname Abu Lahab before the revelation of this surah or not
 - If not, then it means Allah gave him that nickname
 - Two of his sons were married to the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) two daughters
 - They both were married before the revelation came down
 - He asked his sons to divorce Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) daughters, otherwise, he told them that he would never speak to them again. They both complied
 - It is unclear if this happened before or after Surah Lahab came down
 - Some said he had an exaggerated temper
 - He was obsessed with accumulating wealth
 - When the Prophet's (pbuh) son Qasim died, Abu Lahab came out and celebrated saying that Muhammad's name will not continue
 - He was most likely the first person to publicly humiliate the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
 - There is a difference as to how he died. The following are some views:
 - He eventually died of an infection after being hit on the head with a stick

- He died a week after Badr due to catching a disease. His corpse lay in his house for three days because no one wanted to get close to it due to fear of catching the disease
- About Abu Lahab's wife
 - Her name was 'Urwah
 - She was the granddaughter of 'Umayyah, who was a big deal during that time in Arabia
 - She used to flaunt this fact of her life a lot because she was very proud of it
 - One of the main reasons she backed her husband against Muhammad (pbuh) was so that Abu Lahab could retain his wealth
 - She wanted to continue her lifestyle. She loved to show off her wealth to others

Tafseer of the Verses

1. **May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined, and ruined is he**

- a. Some interpreted this as a curse against him. It is a form of supplication saying, 'May Allah curse him'
- b. Some interpreted it to mean that both of his hands have literally started to deteriorate or will definitely fall apart
 - i. This is because the word *tabb* in the Arabic language comes from a word meaning something that breaks down after a while
- c. Why mention his hands?
 - i. Hands are something used for earning
 1. It is as if everything that Abu Lahab had built for himself in life will break down before him
- d. Why single him out by name?
 - i. Because of Allah's love for His messenger. It is a warning that those who hurt His messenger are especially targeted by Him

2. **His wealth will not avail him or that which he gained**

- a. Meaning how did all that wealth benefit him from Allah's punishment?
 - i. Also includes intangible things like respect and honor which he had in his society. Such things also did not benefit him
- b. Some said "that which he gained" refers to his kids
 - i. Meaning even his own kids cannot save him from Allah's punishment

3. **He will [enter to] burn in a Fire of [blazing] flame**

- a. Meaning he will be cast into the fire just like his nickname

4. **And his wife [as well] - the carrier of firewood**

- a. During that time, girls from the lowest class used to collect and carry firewood on their backs. They used to bring them back to the town and go back to search for some more
 - i. So it is a form of insult towards her because she thought herself to be of a very high class and status
- b. Some said this is an indication for her going to hell as well with her husband
 - i. Just as she used to encourage and fuel Abu Lahab to harm Muhammad (pbuh) in this life, in the afterlife she will carry wood in hell to fuel both of their fires

- c. Some said “firewood” here refers to evil and insulting words that she used against the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
 - i. So the meaning would become ‘the carrier of insults and evil words’

5. Around her neck is a rope of [twisted] fiber

- a. The Arabic word *jeed* (neck)
 - i. It means neck of a woman decorated with necklaces
 - 1. Some said this verse means that Allah replaced her necklace(s) with a rope
- b. The Arabic word *masad* ([twisted] fiber)
 - i. When a rope is perfectly twisted, it is called *masad*
 - ii. It is also used to describe a material that does not burn easily
 - 1. So it means the rope around her neck will not burn away in hell
- c. Some said it means that the rope around her neck will be twisted tightly in hell so that she cannot get any words out. This is a punishment for her using insulting words against the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
 - i. This is because the word *habl* (rope) can also refer to the jugular vein. So it is as if to say that inside of her decorated neck is a twisted rope