

# Beams of Illumination from the Divine Revelation

(JUZ' AMMA - THE LAST SECTION OF THE QUR'AN)



xkep

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

# Chapter 1

## Surat al Humazah

### The Slanderer In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Most Merciful

These particular ayats were addressed specifically to the people, several names of whom have been suggested, who were against the Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*. They were all people of great wealth and supposed strength who constantly bragged about their might and wealth and mocked the Muslims.

#### 1. Woe to every slanderer and backbiter!

*Wayl* means "affliction, distress," and is translated as the exclamation, "Woe!" It evokes one of the rivers of the Fire. "Woe to every slanderer or defamer! " In human nature there exists the tendency to seek reassurance, and therefore we seek only those companions who reinforce the validity of our actions.

*Humazah* means "a slanderer," or "back-biter." In the Arabic language the *hamzah* is a glottal stop, and the *hamzat ash-shayatin* are the evil suggestions of the devil, the subtle whispers that we find within us.

*Lumazah* means "a fault-finder," and comes from the verb *lamaza*, which means "to give someone a wink, to speak ill of someone, criticize, censure, backbite, defame." The person who defames reveals his own weakness and announces his insecurity in the same way that the haughtiness of a man declares his deep uncertainty about himself. If he was totally certain that he was on the right path, if he acknowledged his dependence

on Allah and realized that everyone would come to know the truth fully and absolutely, he would not give in to these subtle enticements to slander others. The truth of it is that his slander and arrogance reveal his sickness and disease, hence the warning of woe to him, the warning that he will be destroyed.

## **2. Who amasses wealth and counts it (as a provision);**

This ayah refers to those who collect wealth and take refuge and reinforcement in constantly counting it. Persistently accumulating and looking at what one has is another form of looking for security. The men of Allah say, "He who loves wealth is a hypocrite, and he who keeps wealth is ignorant." The proof of *nifaq* (hypocrisy) and *jahl* (ignorance) is in the collection and retention of *mal* (wealth).

## **3. He thinks that his wealth will make him immortal.**

*Hasaba* means "to calculate, to reckon." He imagines that he moves closer to *khuld* (eternity) by counting and watching over what he wrongly imagines will give him longevity and permanency. His is a perverted worship. The Eternal is another attribute of Allah: *Al-Khalid*. We all want to know the Eternal because only in that way will we be secure in the knowledge that only eternity exists. It is he who has completely slipped off the path who believes that what he has accumulated gives him security.

## **4. Nay! He will certainly be hurled into the crushing Hell.**

*Nabadha* means "to hurl, throw away, to reject, cast out, abandon." By casting out what is useless or dangerous, we are protected from the evil in them.

*Hutamah* is another name for Hell, means "a crushing disaster," and comes from *hatama*, "to shatter, crush, destroy." Most certainly, a person who takes refuge in his health, in his wealth, or in anything of the visible world, does not trust that the hand of The Invisible is behind the visible. He will be cast out into that which causes nothing but destruction.

## **5. And what will make you comprehend what the crushing Hell is?**

And what do you know of it? Another connotation of *hatamah* comes from the verb in its second form, where it means "to break," implying that the object involved in the breaking, or crushing, is solid to begin with.

#### **6. The fire of Allah, ignited,**

The crushing disaster is the Fire of Allah that is forever lit.

#### **7. Which rises up to the hearts.**

#### **8. Certainly it will be shut tightly around them.**

And that Fire of Allah is locked within the heart of man. It is the fire which causes him to be at a loss, to try to take refuge in material security, wealth and power. We see this in the present state of our culture, in that we have completely taken refuge in our imaginations and calculations. In this culture we imagine that what is of greatest importance is what is tangible or visible, but the visible is not the sum of what there is in this world; it is only one aspect of it, one manifestation of reality. There are other forces or powers behind the scenes.

#### **9. In outstretched columns.**

The Fire will tightly encircle the heart in extended columns, and form a burning wall created by the heart itself through its own ignorance. Some men of Allah talk about two types of fire: the fire that burns and inflicts pain, causing nothing but destruction, and the fire of knowledge. One normally interprets this *surah*, however, as being addressed to the people who are at a loss. Their hearts are locked up in the fire of the final, revealed knowledge.

Just as this *surah* is about those who take refuge in the discernable and material world and believe that there is nothing beyond it, the next *surah* explains by example the falseness of their beliefs.

# Chapter 2

## Surat al Fil

### The Elephant In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Most Merciful

This *surah* refers to the event that took place, as far as we know, in the year of the birth of the Prophet, *salla-llihu alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*. Although many people talked about it at the time, very few of the actual details of the event have come down to us. We know that people were very jealous of the residents of Mecca and the Quraysh, who, as guardians of the house of Sayyidna Ibrahim, *alayhi-s-salam*, that is, the House of God, held a position of great honor among the Arabs. One of their rivals was the Emperor of Abyssinia. Through his viceroy Abraha in the Yemen, he built what he believed was another Ka'bah, this time in San'a, to compete with the one in Mecca. This second ka'bah did not attract pilgrims in the numbers the Emperor had hoped for, and so he sent a huge army, headed by elephants, to destroy the Ka'bah in Mecca. He believed that San'a could thus become the most important center of pilgrimage in that part of the world.

#### **1. Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with the possessors of the elephant?**

What is of relevance here is the confrontation between apparent strength and power of great magnitude with its direct opposite. The lesson is that real power is not measurable by ordinary means. The destruction of the army which had been sent to destroy the Ka'bah was not a miracle but, rather it was a natural phenomenon which heralded the birth of the Prophet, *salla-llahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, the shining forth of that great Light in the midst of darkness.

To understand the significance of the elephant we must realize that what weapons people possessed at that time were flimsy and scarce. In a land where warriors had, at most, a few thin spears and bent swords, the possession of an elephant meant that its possessor was regarded almost as an emperor.

## **2. Did He not cause their strategy to end in confusion?**

*Kayd* means "an artful plot," or "scheme." Did Allah not make their plot go awry?

## **3. And send down flocks of flying creatures onto them,**

*Ababil* means "flocks," and it does not necessarily only refer to birds but also to large, overwhelming numbers.

## **4. Pelting them with stones of baked clay.**

*Sijjil* means "stones like lumps of dry clay." It is related to the verb *sajala*, which means "to record, write down," or "document." There are many interpretations of this ayah. We do not know what this phenomenon was, whether an actual storm brought a swarm of tiny creatures that inflicted this large army with *sijjil*, which penetrated their flesh, or whether a disease suddenly came upon them (many illnesses such as measles and small pox were not identified in those days), perhaps brought by birds and insects. Despite the fact that this occurrence was widely known and discussed, we still do not know the nature of the affliction, because at that time people's understanding of natural phenomenon was not as ours is now. We know only that this mighty army was suddenly, totally, and utterly devastated, just as it was approaching the Ka'bah.

## **5. So He made them as devoured straw.**

The result of the attack was that the enormous army became like leftover stalks and leaves of grain or grass after having been beaten to a stubble and was razed to the ground. In some of the numerous descriptions, it is said that after this destruction the ground appeared as if a flat

sheet made up of the thousands of men of the enemy army and their elephants had been laid down on it.

# Chapter 3

## Surat Quraysh

### The Quraysh In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Most Merciful

Surat Quraysh is related to the previous *surah*, and traditionally many people recite the two *surahs* together as one.

This *surah* is concerned with the state of the people of Quraysh, as though the protection that came to them grew out of the uniting and the joining together of their hearts, for the purpose of enabling the Quraysh to become content and reconciled among themselves.

#### 1. For the protection of the Quraysh

*Ilaf* is a verbal noun which means "keeping, protecting." *Alifa*, the verbal root, means "to be acquainted, be familiar, to be or get accustomed to," as well as "to be fond of." It has the additional connotation of uniting. *Allafa bayna qulubihim* means "he brought together their hearts," because that familiarity, that contentment with each other, that comradeship, grew out of knowledge.

#### 2. Their protection during their trading caravans in the winter and the summer

This ayah refers to the fact that the people of Quraysh would gather to outfit their winter and summer caravans. Outwardly they practiced constant movement, travelling during the winter and summer seasons. In the winter they headed south to the Yemen, and in the summer they travelled north to Syria. Winter and summer represent the dual aspects of life. Night and day were created for us so that we may sleep



peacefully at night and work during the day in order that we, as human beings, can function, fluctuating constantly between two levels, between opposites.

### **3. So let them worship the Lord of this house,**

The event of the elephant brought about the destruction of Abraha's army and enabled those of the Quraysh who were *iniman*, who were the keepers of the Ka'bah, known as the people of Bani Hashim, to continue to worship the Lord of the House, the Lord of the Ka'bah.

### **4. Who feeds them against hunger and gives them security from fear.**

This refers to those who have received the outer, gross, existential necessities, so that their physical hunger as well as their hunger for knowledge and the Source of certainty is satisfied, and therefore their fear is alleviated. They are brought into the peace of *iman*, into the state of trust in the perfection of all that befalls them, and thus they are able to keep the door of worship open for the benefit of the rest of their society. There are many traditions which say that as long as there are people whose worship is true, their community, their society, will be safe, and that Allah's protection of them will be according to the extent of their *tawakkul* (dependence on Allah).

# Chapter 4

## Surat al Ma'un

### The Daily Necessities In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Most Merciful

The majority of the following *surahs*, including this one, are regarded as Meccan, but a number of the ayats, such as Surat An-Nasr, whose place of origin is very clear, are said to have been revealed in Madinah.

**1. Have you seen him who belies the life transaction (*din*)?**

**2. He is the one who rejects the orphan,**

Allah is asking, "Do you not see, do you not witness the one who denies the true *din*, the true way of living, the true way of worship, the true way of conduct?" Historically, many people were specifically identified in connection with the descent of this *surah*, including Abu Sufyan. These were people who had been asked by the one who was an outcast, the *yatim*, or orphan, to help him. They were people who were wealthy, people who could give help. This ayah applies to all of us now when we deny knowledge of a personal and direct nature, knowledge that there is only One Reality. In this respect, we are all subject to that state of rejection.

**3. And does not urge the feeding of the bereft.**

These people do not help, nor do they encourage others to do so. *Miskin* describes a person who has even given up on being *faqir* (needy), a person whose *faqir*, whose poverty, has caused him to give up any rest or comfort whatsoever. He has dwelt in poverty to the point of absolute surrender in which no aspiration remains.

#### **4. So woe to the praying ones!**

This is the true state of every one of us. If we regard our true state as that of *faqr*, of spiritual poverty, if we look at our helplessness in every respect, and if we totally submit inwardly, then we must recognize that we are all *miskin*. Recognizing this fact, we have to outwardly help those who are immersed in that state of total poverty.

#### **5. Those who are neglectful of their prayers,**

*Saha* means "to be forgetful, neglectful, heedless," and "to be negligent." *Sahin* means "forgetful or inadvertent." *Sajdat as-sahw* (the prostration of forgetfulness) is the practice of Muslims who miss one of the *rakat* of a proscribed prayer by which they must make up for that forgetfulness by performing an added prostration.

This ayah refers to those who are not aware of the reality behind the prayers and who miss the meaning of *salah*. Outwardly, it means those who do the *salah* hypocritically, for others to see, who simply perform the outer movements as though trying to please someone looking on. The highest *ihsan* (supreme excellence) is real *`ubudiyah* (worship, service), and real *`ubudiyah* manifests in the outward, sincere establishment of the five prayers. The people referred to here, however, miss the point of the prayers; they miss the oceans of light that emanate from that repeated act.

#### **6. Those who wish to be seen,**

#### **7. And refuse the daily necessities (to their fellow men).**

Outwardly this is the least a person can do, to donate from his property, to share his goods with others for their sustenance. At that time this ayah was an injunction upon everyone to share. *Maun* in everyday Arabic usage means "the plate upon which food is served," and by extension means any useful article.

The meaning of this *surah* is that we must use every tool that is available to help others reduce their outer afflictions until they recognize the truth of the *din* which is incumbent upon them.

# Chapter 5

## Surat al Kawthar

### The Heavenly Fountain of Abundance In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Most Merciful

1. Certainly, We have given you the heavenly fountain of abundance.

*Kawthar* is derived from the root *kathara* which means "to exceed in number, to be much, many or numerous," and also "to increase, to multiply, or to grow." The traditional description of *Kawthar* is that of a spring in Paradise, a spring fed by the rivers of love between Allah and the Muhammadi light, a spring to which we all have access if we but step in.

One of the slanderous accusations hurled against the blessed Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, was that he bore no sons or heirs. This *surah* demonstrates that he was the most prolific of men and that from his children and his grandchildren came thousands upon thousands of descendants. We do not know how many they number because many of them, out of fear or oppression, never spoke of their noble descent.

*Kawthar* is that point beyond which there can be no further increase. There we will experience the inseparable bliss of knowledge of the One and Only Reality. We will be completely overwhelmed by that knowledge and nothing can be greater than it in this realm of existence.

*Kawthar* also implies the shoreless ocean of mercy, and of course there is nothing beyond the unfathomable. This final greatness is *al Kawthar*.

## **2. Therefore pray to your Lord and Sustainer, and make a sacrifice.**

*Wa'nhar* (and make a sacrifice) cannot be taken at face value. The definition ordinarily given for *anhar* - slaughter or sacrifice - is derived from the root *nahara*, which means "to cut the throat, to slaughter."

*Yawm an-nahr* is the Day of Sacrifice (10th of Dhu'l-hijjah), and on it we perform the sacrifice by cutting the throat of the sacrificial animal at the jugular vein, releasing its spirit in acknowledgment of the Master of the Spirits and of all the worlds. If we look at it in relation to this act, *nahr* could also imply our sacrifice of the afflictions that others put upon us, the affliction of slander, or of reputation, or of whatever else may be inflicted upon us.

Amir al-Mu'minin `Ali's, *alayhi-s-salam*, interpretation of *nahr* was not at all concerned with the sacrifice of the `Id. *Nahr*, he explained, concerns the inner and outer aspects of supplication in prayer, and the innate nature of *salah* which comes from this sacrifice, rather than the actual sacrifice itself.

## **3. Certainly, your enemy is the one who will be without posterity.**

This ayah refers to that individual who, by our traditions, was known to have vilified the blessed Prophet by saying that he had no heirs or sons. It was revealed to the Prophet that the son whom this enemy accepted as his own was in fact not sired by him.

The meaning here is that he who renounces the Divine Light is himself cut off from that light by his renunciation. He who denies the truth that there is no other way of existence and of survival except through submitting to the One and Only Sustainer is himself cut off from that river, from that life-sustaining spring. It is for this reason that we pray, "May Allah gather us together at the pool of *Kawthar*." The pool of *Kawthar* can be tasted here and now, for it is in fact an elevated and pure state existing within the heart. It is illumined by the light of the most blessed being, Sayyidna Muhammad, *salla-llahu alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, through intense love for him and through an intense and sincere attempt to imitate his *sunnah*.

# Chapter 6

## Surat al Kafirun

### The Deniers of Truth In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Most Merciful

This *surah* pertains historically to a time when there was an attempt on the part of some of the unbelievers to enter into an exchange with the Prophet, *salla-llahu alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, in order to draw him and the Muslims with him back into their old habits of idolatry. They proposed to worship Allah for one year, following the teachings of the Prophet, and the following year they, the Prophet and Muslims included, would worship the traditional idols. They would thus alternate their practices until one way proved true to either party. Thus, according to the *kafir* way of thinking, if the Prophet's teachings were true, they would obtain benefit from following them, but if the *kafirun*'s practices were true, then they and the Muslims would benefit from worshipping the idols and most importantly, Islam would no longer be a threat to them. This *surah* is the reply of those who have trust and faith to those who do not.

**1. Say: O you who deny the truth!**

**2. I do not worship what you worship,**

This is the affirmative stand of a person who is in a state of 'man, who has come to trust that he will recognize and taste the mercy of the One Creator. Therefore, he tells those who are in denial, in *kufr*, "I do not worship what you worship." The person in *iman*, rather, worships that Source which gives him direct inner nourishment, keeps him safe from the darkneses which overwhelm others and gives him illumination and

enlightenment. That Source increases him in *iman* by virtue of his *`ubadiyah* (worship) and protects him from all harm. Worship makes his journey *mu`abbad* (easy, level, offering no resistance). By the recognition of his humility he is carried closer and closer to the Source of that spring.

### **3. And you do not worship what I worship.**

In other words, "you have no access to that Source which I worship. You do not worship that subtle energy from which all these attributes emanate."

### **4. And I will not worship what you worship,**

"Nor will I ever, nor can I ever, having been enlightened, having had openings, having had knowledge of Allah, look up to or adore that which you worship."

### **5. Nor will you worship what I worship.**

"Nor will you ever in the future worship the truth which I worship." This is a prophecy which shows that those who are *inkufr* will persist in *kufr*. There are people who have been created as fuel for the Fire, as it says repeatedly in the Qur'an, and this fact cannot be altered. They will persist despite attempts to dissuade them, despite all efforts made to draw them into the light of the *din*.

### **6. To you your religion and to me my religion!**

The person of faith and trust, who is in a state of perfect equanimity and who knows that everything is in the hands of Allah, says in conclusion, "You have your way of transacting, the way which you choose to replenish yourself and interact with other people, with whatever entity you consider as absolute - and I have my way! " Then those of faith and firm belief join hands following the perfected method of the Muham-madi model. They are not illumined from without; their illumination comes from within. They walk along the shores of the sea of lights and these shores have their boundaries. This is the way of the *mumin*, the way of perfect trust.

## Surat an Nasr

### The Help

#### In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Most Merciful

This is probably the last surah that was revealed intact, and it was revealed two months before the Prophet's death, *salla-llahu alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, when the Muslims entered Mecca in what is known as the "farewell Pilgrimage." At the final stage of this *hajj*, or pilgrimage, the chiefs of the Quraysh, who had fought against Islam to the very end, took refuge inside the Ka'bah, and the Prophet, together with his followers, surrounded them. Finally, however, the Quraysh were reprieved and the chiefs came out of the Ka'bah as if they had been resurrected from the grave, so imminent had been their deaths.

#### 1. When there comes the help of Allah, and victory!

*Nasr*, from the verb *nasara*, means "victory, help, aid." The events surrounding the revelation of this surah were significant because they presented many possibilities of great confrontations, which were always resolved in favor of the Muslims. People used to doubt the Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, especially in moments of weakness and difficulty, asking, "When will the aid of Allah come?" When the real outer victories occur and are matched with what we know inwardly, then there is an inner victory as well.

#### 2. And you see mankind entering the religion of Allah in hosts,

Peoples, whole tribes, came into Islam not long after this, and joined hands with the Muslims.



**3. Then glorify the praises of your Lord and seek forgiveness of Him - certainly, He is the One Who turns again and again (to mercy).**

No matter what form these victories take, be they inward or outward, man must seek forgiveness, protection, safety and containment by *tawbah* (turning in repentance); and he must recognize that Allah is the One Who turns again and again in mercy towards man, so that he may return to his divine origin. Man must repent and return to the peaceful Source of all, for there is only One Reality encompassing all things. Whenever there is an inner opening, we can see the meaning of this surah, and whenever there is an inner enlightenment for us, whatever may be its scale, magnitude, or type, that opening is a victory for us over our *nafs*, over the obstacles that we have imagined for ourselves. Victory does not mean overcoming *kufr* in our society or taking over the entire country and declaring it an "Islamic State." That is not our responsibility: it is Allah's. Our responsibility is to overcome ourselves, to have victory over our selves by *dhikr* and the true awareness of the nature of our *nafs*.

This is a very important surah, especially for those who are in the forefront of the inner battle. As human beings, we all want openings and signs to give us encouragement in our struggle. May Allah increase our openings. May Allah give us nothing but opening upon opening, so that we see that in reality there are no doors and no gates barring our way to the Face of Allah!

## Surat al Lahab

### The Flame

#### In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Most Merciful

#### 1. May the two hands of Abu Lahab perish, and may he perish!

*Tabba* means "to be lost, to lose," and "to perish," or "to be destroyed." Abu Lahab was one of the uncles of the Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*. He was a vibrant, fiery being, handsome and dangerous, like a tiger. He upheld the old traditions, and defended them in a dogmatic, fanatical way. Whatever his hands put forth, whatever his actions were, whatever his direction was, he was to be at a loss.

#### 2. His wealth and what he gains will be of no use!

Whatever he earned, whatever he possessed of power, was to be of no avail.

#### 3. He will be plunged into flaming fire,

He was destined for the ultimate Fire, just as in this life he burned with his agitation, his fiery hatred and his disappointments and frustrations.

#### 4. And his wife, the carrier of fire-wood,

The wife of Abu Lahab was the sister of Abu Sufyan. *Hatab* means "firewood," the implication being, in the phrase "carrier of fire-wood," that she incited people against each other by carrying tales back and forth to fuel and fan gossip, and to create agitation. She used to throw

small thorny bushes along the path which the Prophet, *salla-llahu alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, used to take to the mosque, so that in the dark of the early morning he would step on them. What it implies is that her inner discontentment showed itself in whatever she did outwardly, and her inner thorns were carried outwardly on her back.

#### **5. Upon her neck is a halter of strong twisted palm-fiber!**

*Jid* describes the part of the neck where the necklace mark is. *Masad* normally means a twisted palm-frond. What this means is that what she dragged about with her, what was around her neck, was a heavily twisted chain of her own making.

# Chapter 9

## Surat al Ikhlas

### The Unity

#### In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Most Merciful

Amir al-Mu'minin Sayyidna 'Ali, `alayhi-s-salam, said that there is no interpretation for this surah because its meaning is not at all veiled. Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn, `alayhimu-s-salam, were asked to comment on it, and each one gave a different interpretation of some of the words. There is very little we can say about this surah, although there have been reams of pages written about it.

We will follow in the footsteps of our Imam 'Ali and we will make as brief an interpretation as possible. This surah is one of the most important ever revealed. There are many reports about this surah, especially in the traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt.

During one of the battles the odds were overwhelmingly against Amir al-Mu'minin, yet everything went smoothly for him. When the people who had fought next to him were asked what had happened, they replied that all he did was recite *Qul huwa'llahu ahad*, "Say: He, Allah, is One."

#### **1 Say: He, Allah, is One.**

This is an injunction upon us to say it, whether we know the truth of it or not. Whatever degree of knowledge we may possess, He, Allah, is One.

#### **2 Allah, the Eternal Refuge of all.**

The Divine Name *as-Samad* means "eternal, forever," although it implies more than that. *Samada* means "to be high or elevated."

### **3 He begets not, nor is He begotten.**

The meaning of this ayah is very clear. Allah is above involvement. He is above coming from something or having something come from Him, and nothing can be associated with Him. He is at a distance from all that we can discern as having an attribute. He is the immediate and sustaining Cause of all that we can discern, yet He is not involved in the creation in any way as a "creature."

### **4 And like Him there is none.**

*Kufuwan* meaning "equal, like," is derived from *Kafa*, "to be enough, sufficient." Allah is sufficient unto Himself. The name *as-Samad*, also means "self-supporting, self-sustaining, self-containing." There is no *mithal* (likeness) of Allah. Allah is the Name to which all attributes and Divine Names point.

Nothing more can be said about this surah. We must read and reread it, and the more we do this, the deeper will grow our understanding.

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# Chapter 10

## Surat al Falaq

### The Day Break In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Most Merciful

#### 1. Say: I take refuge in the Lord of the day break,

*Falaqa* means "to split, tear asunder, dispel the shadows of the night." *A'udhu* means "I take refuge." We take refuge from our ignorance, from the darkness of our *nafs*, and from our doubts. We take refuge from our uncertainties and insecurities in the Lord, the Sustainer, Who continues to sustain knowledge, certainty, light, and illumination. We seek refuge in the One Who brings forth the dawn after the darkness of night.

#### 2. From the evil of what He has created,

Here we are appealing to Allah, *ar-Rahim* (the Most Merciful), because we must make a subjective judgement. We accept that in this realm of duality there are aspects which please and comfort us, and other aspects which displease us and bring about suffering. There are aspects which we consider conducive to our well-being and aspects which we consider detrimental to us and thus we take refuge in the Lord of all creation from that part of His creation which we consider to be harmful.

#### 3. And from the evil of intense darkness when it comes,

We take refuge from the night, from gloom and darkness, from that which we do not know. We also take refuge from self-doubt. The reference here is to what is both familiar and unknown, to that with which we have a connection and with which we do not.

#### **4. And from the evil of those who blow on knots,**

We take refuge from powers whose functioning we do not comprehend. We take refuge from the magicians, from the women who blow on knots to bring about magical events, and who call upon forces in this existence which we do not fully comprehend and which are invisible to us, such as the jinn.

We take refuge in Allah, the One Who opens to us the dawn of relief and knowledge, from these entities that can afflict us in this life. We know that invisible forces do exist and that black magic and other forms of magic are practiced in many places. There are many forces that can be called upon and brought into play, but those of us who want to go to the Source of all powers, take refuge in the Lord of the dawn.

The two surahs, Ikhlas and Falaq, were often recited by our Imams. According to our traditions, Surat al-Ikhlas was often recited by the blessed Prophet, *salla-llahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, for the Imams Hasan and Husayn. These surahs remind us to strive for an inner state of *i'man*, to walk straight ahead toward our objective, to the *wahad al-ahad*, the Single and Unique One, to sing nothing but the song of the One.

If we do this, we will have no interest in dabbling in these other phenomena, because the gross phenomena will not be viewed by us as having any intrinsic reality. It must be remembered that however powerful a magician may be, there will always be another magician who will overcome him. In the case of Sayyidna Musa, *'alayhi-s-salam*, it is well known that the *muwahhid* (the man of unity), overcame all the Pharaoh's magicians by another power which had nothing to do with the play of magic.

#### **5. And from the evil of the envier when he envies.**

*Hasad* means "envy," which is considered to be one of the worst afflictions of the *nafs* and one of the worst self-inflicted troubles for man, because it can grow rampant. The fire of envy will fuel itself constantly and can never be put out, because there will always be someone else who will have something that we cannot have.



Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali, `alayhi-s-salam, was asked about Hasud, a man whose envy was causing havoc among the people. "What can we do with him?" they asked, "He should be punished!" Amir 'Ali answered, `*Ma fihi yakfihi*," "What is in him is enough of a punishment for him."

The *hasid* (envier) will never win nor will he ever profit. Keep us safe, O Lord, from the evil of this attitude which has its seed in every heart! If it were not in our hearts right now, we would be unable to understand it. We all have felt a spark of it in our life, but if we are fortunate, it remains a spark which can be smothered and covered over with generosity and other positive attributes. If we do not fight against envy at all times, it will constantly be inflamed and will take us over completely.

# Chapter 1

## Surat an Nas

### Mankind In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Most Merciful

The final part of the Qur'an is concerned with taking refuge, while the beginning of the Qur'an is concerned with the recognition that the only path to success is that of glorification, supplication and praise.

The arrangement of the surahs in the Qur'an is a perfect one which was made by the perfect man, the Prophet Muhammad, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*. The very fact that he arranged them provides the proof of the Qur'an's unity and completion. The revelation brought to mankind different aspects of the Tablet, or Book of Reality, on different days, in different months, and under different conditions. These diverse aspects, however, all reflected the one and only Light, and only the Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*, knew how they were to be arranged in accordance with the only model which exists. Thus the last two steps of the revelation from Allah urge man to seek refuge in Allah, the Lord and Sustainer of all His creation.

#### 1. Say: I take refuge in the Lord of mankind,

*Nas* means "people, mankind." Its root word *anisa* is similar to the word *nasiya*, which means "to forget," denoting one aspect of man's nature. The attribute of forgetfulness can, however, be used to full advantage when we forget what is of no use to us. Thus we are better able to remember what is of priority to us. In this way we will not forget that at any moment we may die.

## 2. The King of mankind,

## 3. The God of mankind,

We take refuge in the Lord, in the Creator of this entity called "man," who contains within himself both the higher attributes and the lower attributes. We take refuge in Allah from the lower attributes, from the attributes which cause us loss, which cause us further forgetfulness.

## 4. From the evil whisperings of the elusive shaytan,

There is a great deal written about the word *waswas* which are subtle whisperings in one's innermost that incite one to evil. In one reference ten meanings are given for *al-waswasah*, denoting ten different attributes of the whisperer. If we overcome them we will understand the shirk of *waswas*, and we will be able to truly take refuge from it.

*Waswas* is an onomatopoeic word imitative of the sound of whispering. Whispering is one of the actions which, in our *din* and in our *adab*, is very much repudiated, because something worth saying should be shared by saying it out loud.

*Khannas* is an epithet of shaytan, and means "slinking away," specifically, when the Name of Allah is mentioned.

There are sources or rivers which feed the *waswas*. just as the Garden has underground rivers which feed it, so too has the *waswas*. One of these rivers is *hirs* (greed or covetousness). That river can be fought, blocked, and dammed by *tawakkul wa qana* (trustful dependence (on Allah) and contentment).

Another river is *amal*, which means "expectation." This river, too, can be dammed by constant remembrance, *dhikr*. Our hope for things of this world can be stopped by remembering that each breath may be our last. This remembrance will cut the flow of that river which feeds the whisperer who pours distracting suggestions into our ears.

The third river is *shahawat ad-dunya* or "worldly desires." These desires can be killed by remembering that the *ni'am* (favors, bounties) will all

eventually leave us, and that the *hisab*(account) will have to be made by us. We will have to account for the way in which we spent the bounty and goodness that was given to us. It will be a lengthy account - we are told 50 thousand years- in which every minute detail will be reviewed and examined, and in which even something as seemingly minor as a twitch can be a witness for or against us.

The fourth river, or source, of *waswas* is *tahsil*, meaning "acquisition." This river can be stopped by seeing the justice of each person's situation. What a person reaps arises from the justice of his own situation, and we cannot alter it.

The fifth river is *bala'*, "affliction." The flow of this can be stemmed by not looking at the affliction in a situation, but rather by seeing the bestowal of the good in it.

The sixth river is *kibr*, or "pride," which can be fought by humility. Whenever *kibr* rises up in us, we should immediately call upon the humility within ourselves, so that we break its effect on us.

The seventh river is *tahqir*, that which entices us to belittle the honorable position of the believers, as well as anything that the believer possesses, anything that is in his domain, and that which is *halal* (permitted) for him and *haram* (forbidden) for others. This river can be stopped by considering their honor to be great and by respecting it.

The eighth source of *waswas* is the love of *dunya* (this world), including the desire to be acknowledged and admired by others. This love and desire can be undone by bringing oneself to the state of abasement.

The ninth source of *waswas* which encourages shaytan is separation and stinginess (*bukhl*). This can be fought by generosity. *Sakha'* means "giving according to what the occasion demands;" *jud* means "giving without being asked;" and *karam* is "giving whatever has been asked." These three are attributes of Allah. The fourth is *ithar*, "giving what one needs oneself," and this is an attribute which only man can have. Allah cannot have this attribute, for Allah has no need whatsoever of anything. Thus, we can take on this final attribute, which is a great aid for our inner, upward mobility toward that noble state which befits the khalifah, or viceregent, of Allah.

## **5 Who whispers in the innermost hearts of mankind,**

*Sadr* (plural of *sudur*) is the "chest or breast," that part of one which faces what confronts one. It is where the battles and dramas take place. It must be remembered that every drama is self-created. Every imaginable human role stirs in the breast of man: the king, the despot, the afflicted, the jealous, the strong, the doubter, and the complainer. We have to take refuge from these, take refuge in the Lord Whose mercy brings us to the recognition that everything which occurs, visible and invisible, occurs according to a just system, according to perfect laws which govern this passage, this journey through the creation. The laws in this existence are self enforced; there is no need for wardens.

## **6. From jinn and mankind.**

*Jinnah* is synonymous with *jinn*, and means "the unseen, hidden forces of power." *Jannah* (the Garden) is derived from the same root and it refers to the most desirable place to be, a garden, which, in the desert culture of the Arabs of that time where the average temperature was 100 degrees, was a place where there was shade, and where the ground could not be seen for the thick foliage of the trees. The ground was "hidden" by the growth and thus it refers to a hidden state. The jinn are also hidden, and they have their limitations and their states, just as men do.

Therefore, we are asking for refuge, for protection from any energies whose nature we do not understand, and whose creation is not visible or discernable by us.

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IN THE AGE OF INFORMATION  
IGNORANCE IS A CHOICE

*"Wisdom is the lost property of the Believer,  
let him claim it wherever he finds it"*

*Imam Ali (as)*