

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: SŪRAT *Al-Lahab* or *Al-Masad* 111

This very early Makkan Sūra, though it is referred in the first instance to a particular incident in a cruel and relentless persecution, carries the general lesson that cruelty ultimately ruins itself. The man who rages against holy things is burnt up in his own rage. His hands, which are the instruments of his action, perish, and he perishes himself. No boasted wealth or position will save him.

Al-Lahab, or The Flame.

*In the name of Allah, Most Gracious,
Most Merciful.*

1. Perish the hands
Of the Father of Flame!⁶²⁹⁴
Perish he!
2. No profit to him
From all his wealth,
And all his gains!
3. Burnt soon will he be
In a Fire
Of blazing Flame!
4. His wife shall carry
The (crackling) wood—
As fuel!—⁶²⁹⁵
5. A twisted rope
Of palm-leaf fibre
Round her (own) neck!

سُورَةُ الْمَسَدِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَتَبَّ ۝١

مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ ۝٢

سَيَصْلَىٰ نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ ۝٣

وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ حَمَّالَةَ الْحَطَبِ ۝٤

فِي جِيدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِّن مَّسَدٍ ۝٥

6294. *Abū Lahab*, "Father of Flame", was the nick-name of an uncle of the holy Prophet, from his fiery hot temper and his ruddy complexion. He was one of the most inveterate enemies of early Islam. When the holy Prophet called together the Quraish and his own kith and kin to come and listen to his preaching and his warning against the sins of his people, the "Father of Flame" flared up and cursed the holy Prophet, saying "Perdition to thee!" According to the English saying, "the causeless curse will not come". His words were futile, but his power and strength were equally futile. The star of Islam rose higher and higher every day, and its persecutors dwindled in strength and power. Many of the leaders of persecution perished at Badr, and Abū Lahab himself perished a week after Badr, consumed with grief and his own fiery passions. Verse 3 was prophetic of his end in this very life, though it also refers to the Hereafter.

6295. Abū Lahab's wife was a woman of equally passionate spite and cruelty against the sacred person of the holy Prophet. She used to tie bundles of thorns with ropes of twisted palm-leaf fibre and carry them and strew them about on dark nights in the paths which the Prophet was expected to take, in order to cause him bodily injury. "To carry firewood" may also be symbolical for carrying tales between people to embroil them. This was also one of her vices. But she was laying up for herself another kind of Fire and another kind of Rope, the Fire of Punishment, and the Rope of Slavery to Evil. Thus does Evil prepare its own fate. This is the general lesson of sustained craft and cruel wrong-doing recoiling on the wrong-doer's head. See also Introduction to this Sūra.