

Sūrah 111

Revealed in Makkah

Al-Masad/Al-Lahab

The Palm Fiber/The Firebrand

Introduction

This sūrah is about the punishment of two of enemies of the Prophet (S). One enemy was Abu Lahab, an uncle of the Prophet (S); the other was Abu Lahab's wife. They were powerful and important people in Makkah. Both of them insulted, and ridiculed the Prophet (S), and wanted to harm him in many ways. This sūrah tells us that those who want to harm the Muslims or Islam actually harm themselves.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Bismi-llāhi-r raḥmāni-r raḥīm

In the name of Allah, the Most-Kind, the Most-Rewarding.

تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَتَبَّ

Tabbat yadā abī
lahabiw wa tabb.

1. Let the two hands of
Abu Lahab perish, and
let him perish!

مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا

Mā aghnā ‘anhu
māluhū wa mā kasab.

2. His wealth and what he
earns will not benefit
him anything.

كَسَبَ

سَيَصْلَىٰ نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ

Sa-yaṣlā nāraḥ dhāta
lahab,—

3. He will soon undergo
roasting in the fire full
of flames—

وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ حَمَّالَةَ الْحَطَبِ

-wa-mra’atuhu.
Ḥammālata-l ḥaṭab;

4. and his wife. The
carrier of firewood;

فِي جِيدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِّن مَّسَدٍ

fī jīdihā ḥablum min
masad.

5. around her neck will be
a rope of twisted palm-
fiber.

Explanation

1. This verse says two things will be destroyed—the two hands of Abu Lahab and Abu Lahab himself. This man's real name was *Abdul 'Uzzā* which meant servant of 'Uzzā. *Al-'Uzza* was an important idol

for the pagan Arabs. People called him Abu Lahab because of his reddish skin complexion. The hands of Abu Lahab means his power, wealth and strength.

2. Abu Lahab's power came from his wealth, which he earned by doing many trade activities. His wealth and power was of no use to him because he opposed the truth and the teachings of Allāh.
3. Because of his opposition to Islam, on the Day of Judgment Abu Lahab will be thrown in the flaming fire of Hell. He will burn in the fire as his punishment.
4. Abu Lahab's wife was *Umm Jamil bint Harb*. She was a sister of *Abū Sufyan*, who was also an enemy of the Prophet (S) for a long time. She used to lay thorny bushes on the path of our Prophet (S), speak bad words against him and make poems to ridicule him. As a partner in the evil activities of her husband, she will also suffer a similar punishment. During her life, she laid thorny bushes in the path of the Prophet (S), but in the Hereafter she will carry firewood for her own burning.
5. The wife of Abu Lahab used to carry the thorny bushes tied with a rope. The word *masad* means twisted ropes made of fibers from palm trees. She carried the ropes to harm the Prophet (S). In the Hereafter the ropes will wrap around her neck to suffocate her. In other words, her evil activities will come back to haunt her and cause her own suffering.

Words to know

Yadā: two hands. *Yadd*: might, power.

Nār: fire, burning flame. *Nūr*: light.

Kasaba: he earned. *Iktasaba*: he earned a sin. *Mā kasabat qulūbukum*: what your hearts have earned.

Habl: rope. *Habala*: tie with a rope. *Hibāl*: treaty, agreement, pact. *Habli-llāh*: pact with Allāh.

Sūrah Al-Masad/Al-Lahab

Word-by-word meaning

الرَّحِيمِ

the Most-Rewarding

الرَّحْمَنِ

the Most-Kind

اللَّهِ

Allāh

بِسْمِ

In the name of

وَتَبَّ

and let him perish.

أَبِي لَهَبٍ

Abu Lahab

يَدَا

hands of

تَبَّتْ

Perish

مَالِهِ

his wealth

عَنْهُ

to him

أَغْنَى

benefitted

مَا

not

نَارًا

fire

سَيَصَلَّى

soon will enter

كَسَبَ

earned.

وَمَا

and what

حَمَّالَةٌ

carrier

وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ

And his wife

هَبِ

flame.

ذَاتَ

of

حَبْلٌ

rope

جِيدِهَا

her neck

فِي

Around

الْحَطَبِ

the firewood

مَسَدٌ

twisted palm-fiber.

مِّنْ

from

A few applications of the message:

The message of this sūrah is much more than the fates of two evil people. Allāh wants to let everybody understand the results of their actions. Those who do or support the evil deeds will face similar results. Their punishment will be similar to their bad deeds. Abu Lahab's temper was fiery towards the Prophet (S). People called him "lahab" because of his reddish skin and fiery nature, but in the Hereafter he will burn in fierce fire, also known as *lahab*.

When Abu Lahab's wife used to lay the thorny bushes in the path of the Prophet (S), he did not seek revenge or play dirty tricks on her. He used to remove the thorny bushes without complaining. He knew Allāh is the best Judge and that He would deal with the sinners. In the Hereafter, the thorny bushes and ropes will wrap around her neck and cause her to suffocate to death.

In this life, we may come across opposition, hatred, and enmity from many people. We should remember that as long as we remain righteous, Allāh will take the right course of action. If a person hates us, becomes jealous and an enemy, or spreads bad words about us, there is so much that we can do. Whatever way bad people want to harm us will come back to harm them in the Hereafter but with greater intensity.

Questions:

1. Who was Abu Lahab?
2. Why were Abu Lahab and his wife against Prophet Muhammad (S)?
3. What will happen to those who support the evil activities of others?
4. What did the Prophet (S) do when Abu Lahab's wife laid thorny bushes in his way?
5. How will our bad deeds affect us in the Hereafter?