

## Chapter 114: AL-NAS (The Mankind)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate

*“Say: "I seek refuge with the Lord of mankind (1), the King of mankind (2), the God of mankind (3), from the mischief of the slinking whisperer (4), who whispers (evil) into the hearts of men (5), from among jinn and mankind. (6)”*

### Overview:

This surah is named after the word ‘al-nas’ (the mankind) that recurs throughout. The period of revelation is disputed. There are various reports supporting both views; that it was revealed in Makkah and in Madinah. In any case, there is a consensus that this surah and the previous one (al-Falaq) were revealed on a single occasion; and together they are called ‘mu’awwidhatayn’, the twin shelters or sanctuaries. For certain explanations that reconcile these conflicting views, see the commentary on surah al-Falaq.

The type of evil noted in this surah is the evil whisperers among jinn and men. The literal meaning of jinn is “something hidden or veiled from sight.” The jinn are a species of invisible conscious beings that are, like men, charged with divine obligations. They were created before Adam and Eve, and were responsible for cultivating and improving the world. They might have been created while the Earth was still a body of fire. This suggestion may be supported by the verse which states that jinn are created from smokeless fire (55:15).

Although science does not yet accept the existence of invisible beings and restricts itself to the material world, we think it is worth considering the possibility that evil spirits play some part in certain physical illnesses such as cancer, and mental illnesses such as schizophrenia. We constantly hear of cases that those who suffer from a mental illness, epilepsy, or even cancer recover by reciting certain prayers. Such cases are serious and significant, and should not be denied or dismissed by attributing them to suggestion. When science finally accepts the existence of the metaphysical realm and the influence of metaphysical forces, its practitioners will be able to remove existing obstructions and to make far greater advances and fewer mistakes.

Today, the doors to the metaphysical worlds are only slightly ajar. We are barely at the beginning of contact with jinn. However, one day we will feel constrained to enter these worlds to solve many of their problems pertaining to this world. There are verses in the Qur’an about the kingdom of prophet Solomon which point to the final limits of humanity’s use of jinn and devils. These verses also suggest that a day will come when we will use them in many jobs, especially in communication. It is quite probable that they also will be employed in security affairs, mining and metal-work, even in space studies and historical research. Since jinn can live about 1,000 years, they may be useful in establishing certain historical facts. (Gulen, Essentials)

The jinn we know as satan had been in the company of angels, acting and worshipping as they did before his obedience and sincerity were tested through Adam. When God tested him and the angels by commanding them to prostrate before Adam, the seeds of his self-conceit and

disobedience had blossomed and swallowed him. He replied in his vanity: "I am better than him. You created me from fire, whilst him you did create of clay." (38:76). This marked the beginning of an unending war between the satan and the human kind.

Like a battery's two poles, the human heart (the center of spiritual intellect) has two central points or poles. One receives angelic inspiration, and the other is vulnerable to satan's whispering. The involuntary evil thoughts, fancies, and ideas are usually the result of satan's whispering. But satan only whispers and suggests, he cannot force one to indulge in evil and sin. The safest way to protect one's self against such evils is to have a strong loyalty to Allah and His messenger, peace and blessings be upon him. This requires holding fast to the principles of Islam. The ignorance, neglect of worship and sinfulness are invitations to satan's arrows. (Gulen, Essentials)

The mother of faithful, A'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, reported that Allah's messenger would recite the last three surahs of the Qur'an (Ikhlas, Falaq, and Nas) when getting into bed to sleep, breath into his joined palms and would, starting with his head, run his palms over his face and his body as far as he could reach. He repeated this three times. For the etiquette of reciting supplications and seeking medical treatment in case of an illness in general, see the commentary on surah al-Falaq.

#### Reason of Revelation:

The preferred view is that the two surahs were sent down in Makkah around the time when the hostility against Rasulallah touched its extreme limits as the Makkan chiefs were frustrated by the spread of Islam. They were filled with hatred against him, holding secret consultations to kill him, working magic and casting charms on him for his destruction, whisper evil thoughts into the minds and hearts of the people of their tribes against him and the Qur'an so that they become suspicious of him and flee him. Other reports about the reason of revelation are listed in the commentary on surah al-Falaq.

#### Main Themes:

Qur'an is kindly and affectionately calling on believers to take refuge in the care of Allah through which they will feel safe and at peace. It is as if He is saying to them: I know that you are weak and helpless, and are surrounded by foes and fears. Come to Me for safety, contentment and peace. Rasulallah is instructed in this surah to teach his followers how to seek refuge in Allah, who has control over all creation including mankind and jinn, from whisperers of evil in particular. This divine support for the believer leading to protection and security is essential for his spiritual life and sound worship. Therefore, the three of the four main themes of the Qur'an (tawhid, nubuwwah, and 'ibadah, except possibly hashr) are evidently represented in the surah.

#### Style:

The style of the surah is in full harmony with the meaning of affection shown for believers, and that of might capable of providing an unfailing shelter as explained above.

The word 'sharr' (evil) is used for the fifth time here (in addition to the four in the previous surah), but referring to a different type of evil: the evil whisperers whether they are from among satans (unbelieving jinn) or mankind. The style of the surah prompts to mind, by presenting the

relevant divine attributes such as the Lord, the Sovereign and the Deity of mankind, the unending battle between Adam (man) and Iblis (satan), and discloses the nature and sneaky ways of evil whisperers so that the faithful servants of Allah may guard against their harm.

The 's' sound, for example, is repeated throughout the surah providing a charming example of what is called alliteration. This melodious pronunciation together with the repetition of certain words and sounds help make one realize the insidious and cunning ways of mischievous whisperer, likens him to a stealthy serpent, and gives a sense of alert to seek for a strong refuge. It is as if the recitation of the surah provides a miraculous remedy for invalidating the harms of evil whisperers, and bringing the faithful back to his senses. Moreover, the surah as a whole rhymes beautifully as each verse ends in the same phrase 'naas.' The words 'waswas' and 'yuwaswisu' that occur in verses 4 and 5 are derived from the same root 'w-s-w-s' (to whisper) which is an example of so-called 'rhyme of derivation.' The perfect harmony between the meaning and the wording, and all the literary arts and artistic styles add to the captivating beauty of this surah.

It is interesting to note that the number of letters (without repetition) in this last surah of the Qur'an is 22, which is the same as that of the first surah, the Fatihah of the Qur'an. There are many mysterious and hidden treasures in this surah (and in the whole Qur'an) that open themselves to sincere and dedicated researchers.

#### Noble Meaning:

1. (قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ) “Say: I seek refuge with the Lord of mankind”
2. (مَلِكِ النَّاسِ) “the Sovereign of mankind”
3. (إِلَهِ النَّاسِ) “the Deity of mankind”

The word 'qul' (say) indicates that the primary addressee of the surah is Rasulullah himself, but every believer is also an addressee through him. The repetition of the word 'naas' (mankind) three times associated with the names of Allah indicates the value of the humankind in the sight of Allah, and his distinct, honorable place in His creation.

The surah is instructing a prayer to implore Allah's protection by three divine attributes: His lordship, sovereignty and divinity. All things are created by Him alone, owned by Him, and are subservient to Him. Seeking refuge by three distinct attributes indicates the magnitude of the potential danger in treacherous ways of this enemy of mankind. Indeed, the evil spirits and those who follow them take the path of misguidance, they can cause great destruction with a small act, and they can violate the rights of many creatures and cause much harm with a small deed.

Construction is difficult and expensive, yet destruction is easy. It takes great time and effort to build a house by joint work of many people, but a match can put it in fire and completely destroy it in an hour. In addition, the recitation of these relevant divine attributes consoles the faithful that the One whose refuge has been sought; the Sustainer, the King and the Deity of mankind has full power over all things, can fully protect and save believers from these evils.

Let's turn to Badiuzzaman for another explanation: A sultan has different titles in the spheres of his government, and different styles and attributes among the classes of his subjects, and different names and signs in the levels of his rule. For example, he is the Just Judge in the judiciary, Sultan in the civil service, Commander-in-Chief in the army, and Caliph in the learned establishment. On the other hand, if someone is both a teacher, and a policeman, and a clerk of the court, and an inspector in the civil service, in each office he has both relations, and duties, and obligations, and salaries, and responsibilities, and promotion, and enemies and rivals who are the cause of his failures. And he appears before the king, and he sees the king with many titles. And he seeks help from him with many tongues. And he has recourse to many of the ruler's titles, and seeks his help in many forms in order to be saved from the evil of his enemies. In just the same way, the man who manifests many Names and is charged with many duties and afflicted with many enemies, invokes many of the Names in his prayers and supplications. It is due to this mystery that the surah commands that we take refuge with God through three titles, and the basmalah shows the seeking of help through three Names. (Badiuzzaman, 24<sup>th</sup> Word)

4. (مِنْ شَرِّ الْوَسْوَاسِ الْخَنَّاسِ) “*from the evil of the retreating whisperer*”

The word ‘sharr’ (evil) is used for loss, trouble and affliction as well as for the means which cause losses, injuries and afflictions.

The word ‘waswas’ suggests a meaning of repetition, it means one who whispers evil suggestions over and over again, as one may not be tempted by just one attempt, in such a way that the one who is being whispered may not understand its source. As for the word ‘khannas’, it is derived from ‘khunus’, which means to hide after appearing and to retreat after coming into view. It is in the intensive form, and would imply the one who behaves thus does it very frequently. Therefore if he fails in his attempt, he withdraws, then returns for a second and third and the next attempt over and over again.

In this connection, one should also keep in mind that evil suggestion is not whispered only from outside by the satans from among men and jinn, but also by the self from within. One should also seek refuge in Allah from the evils of his self.

It should be realized that an evil suggestion is the starting point of an evil act. By repetition it creates a desire for evil, which turns into an intention for evil, and grows in intensity and becomes a resolution for evil, which finally results in (God forbid) an act of evil. Therefore, the meaning of seeking Allah's refuge from the evil of the whisperer is imploring Allah to nip the evil in the bud.

5. (الَّذِي يُوسْوِسُ فِي صُدُورِ النَّاسِ) “*who whispers [evil] into the breasts of mankind*”

Qur'an reports that satan does everything he can to seduce man: “Then I shall come upon them from before and behind, from their right and their left, and You will not find most of them grateful.” (7:17)

The satan approaches from the left and tries, working on our animal aspect and our feelings and faculties, to lead us into sin and evil. When he approaches us from the front, he causes us to

despair about the future, whispers that the Day of Judgment will never come, and that whatever religions say about the Hereafter is mere fiction. He also suggests that religion is outdated and obsolete, and thus of no use for anyone living now or in the future. When he comes upon us from behind, he tries to make us deny prophethood and other essentials of belief, like God's existence and unity, divine scriptures and angels. Through his whispers and suggestions, satan tries to sever completely our contact with religion and lead us into sin.

Satan tries to seduce devout, practicing believers by coming upon them from their right and tempting them to ego and pride. He whispers that they are wonderful believers, and gradually causes them to fall through self-conceit and the desire to be praised for their good deeds. If they attribute their accomplishments and good deeds to themselves and criticize others, they have fallen under satan's influence. This is a perilous temptation for believers, and so they must be incessantly alert to this tactic.

If satan cannot seduce devout believers, he whispers disagreeable thoughts and fancies to them. If they dwell on such ideas, satan pesters them until they fall into doubt about their belief or despair of ever leading a virtuous life. Believers who are pestered with such involuntary thoughts, fancies, and doubts should know that they are involuntary and that their hearts have no part in them. Just as pirates attack treasure ships, thieves rob rich people, satan uses his evil suggestions to harm them. This shows that such thoughts and suggestions do not come from, and are not approved of or adopted by the heart of the believer. It might even be said that satan's evil suggestions are beneficial, for they keep believers always on ready to resist temptation and to continue their struggle against the carnal self and satan. This causes them to make spiritual progress. (Gulen, Essentials of Islamic Faith)

5. (مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَ النَّاسِ) *“from among the jinn and the mankind”*

The advances in electronic media technology such as internet, newspaper, radio, cellular telephone, satellite TV, etc. has reached to levels beyond imagination today. The use of such tools and means has folded many times the damages of whispering and spreading evil. It is needless to say that such technology may be a great blessing if used properly to educate people, however it is often used today by men to inflict great harms to the foundations of the society, family, faith and virtue. These whisperers can make the falsehood appear to people as the truth, or wickedness as smartness as if they work magic. Such people rightly deserve the title of “satans from among humankind” and the believers should implore Allah's protection from their mischief just as they do from the harms of venomous serpents and devils.

~~~000~~~

May Allah protect us from the mischief of the jinn and men and their evil whispers. May Allah protect us from the harms of our carnal selves. May peace and blessings of Allah be upon His messenger, on his pure family and companions, and on all his noble brothers in messengership.