For some issues relating to \textit{al-Nās}, see the introduction to \textit{Sūrah} 113. Like the previous \textit{sūrah}, this \textit{sūrah} takes its name from what the Prophet is told to swear by in the first verse, in this case \textit{mankind}. Together these two \textit{sūrah}s are known as \textit{al-Muʿāwwidhatān}, “The Two Protectors,” since their recitation together is thought to provide protection from all manner of evil and misfortune. Regarding the exalted status of the two \textit{sūrah}s, the Prophet said, “God has sent verses down upon me of which none has seen their like: \textit{Say, ‘I seek refuge in the Lord of the daybreak’} to the end of the \textit{sūrah} and, \textit{Say, ‘I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind’} to the end of the \textit{sūrah}” \textparentheses{Q}.

\textbf{In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful}

\begin{enumerate}
\item Say, “I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind, \item the King of mankind, \item the God of mankind, \item from the evil of the stealthy whisperer, \item who whispers into the breasts of mankind, \item from jinn and mankind.”
\end{enumerate}

\textbf{Commentary}

\begin{enumerate}
\item Say, “I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind,
the King of mankind,

the God of mankind,

1–3 These three verses are seen as an indication that, in order to find true refuge from Satan, people must recognize the complete sovereignty of God, that He is the only One to be worshipped and the only One upon Whom they can call for help, unlike those who take others as lords apart from God (9:31; Sh). From a Quranic perspective, it is by forgetting that God is the Lord, King or Sovereign, and God of mankind that human beings arrogate self-sufficiency to themselves, as when Pharaoh declares, *I am your lord most high* (79:24), *Is not the sovereignty of Egypt mine* (43:51), and *I know of no god for you other than myself* (28:38). Thus it is as if human beings are here being ordered to seek refuge from the illusion of self-sufficiency that is the root of all sin through acknowledging their complete dependence on God by saying, “Oh my Lord! Oh my King! Oh my God!” (R).

***

from the evil of the stealthy whisperer,

4 Satan is here described as the stealthy whisperer because he withdraws from the heart whenever one remembers God and whispers to it whenever one is heedless of God (Bg, R, Sh). Technically whispering (waswasah) refers to something said quietly and repeatedly. Here it is taken to indicate all manner of temptation. The first sin of Adam and Eve was to listen to the whispers of Satan (7:20). Elsewhere Satan is described as the Deluder (31:33; 35:5); he seduces (47:25), causes people to forget (6:68; 12:42; 18:63; 58:19) or to slip (3:155), makes what is evil seem fair (6:43; 8:48; 16:63; 27:24; 29:38), desires to lead astray (4:60), and incites to evil (12:100). He is thus described in many verses as a manifest enemy (e.g., 2:168, 208; 6:142; 7:22; 12:5; 17:53).

***

who whispers into the breasts of mankind,

5 Here it is Satan who whispers into the breasts of mankind, but elsewhere it is the soul that is described as whispering (50:16), prompting to evil (5:30; 20:96), and seducing (12:18). However, the reference here is not to the soul as such, but to
the passionate soul, or the soul that commands to evil (al-nafs al-ʿammārah bi-l-suʿ; 12:53), regarding which a famous hadīth says, “Truly Satan flows in the blood of the son of Adam” (Q). From one perspective, it is Satan who suggests, tempts, prompts, and whispers, and the passionate soul then follows the caprices that arise rather than the commands of God. From another perspective, only the soul that commands to evil has this propensity. In this vein, 43:36 says, And whosoever turns blindly away from the remembrance of the Compassionate, We assign to him a satan who is then a companion unto him (see also 7:27); regarding the soul that commands to evil, see 12:53c; 75:1–2c; 89:27c.

***

6 from jinn and mankind.”

6 This verse refers to what whispers into the souls of jinn and mankind, or to the jinn who whisper into the souls of people and to people who heed the advice of their own whispering soul rather than the Guidance of God and thus fail to take God as their Lord, King, and God. It can also be seen as a reference to both the jinn and people who whisper into souls (Q, R), since there are said to be satans from among mankind and jinn (6:112). It may also indicate what whispers into the “breasts” of both the jinn and mankind, for although nās (here translated mankind) is usually taken as a reference to human beings, there is a hadīth stating that there was a “people” (nās) among the jinn, in the same way that the word rijāl, which usually designates human men, is also used in reference to individuals (rijāl) among the jinn in 72:6 (R, Sh). Vv. 5–6 also have the meaning of seeking refuge from the one who whispers into the breasts of mankind and seeking refuge from the jinn and from mankind (Sh).