

## **Sura 8: Al-Anfal (The Spoils of War)**

### **In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy**

Following the two Meccan Suras of Al-An'am (Chapter 6) and Al-A'raf, (Chapter 7) we come to the Sura titled Al-Anfal which is a Medinian Sura. It should be noted that we have chosen to follow the order of the Suras as they appear in the Qur'anic text. We did not choose to follow the chronological order of the revelation because there is no definite authentic tradition that determines the correct chronological order of the revelation of the different Suras in the Qur'an. Authentic traditions which show the time of revelation of a specific verse or a number of verses exist only in few cases. It may be interesting to study the historical progress of the Islamic call by following the verses of the Qur'an in a chronological order. However, such feat is extremely difficult to achieve and would result in a mostly unsubstantiated order. It is then better to follow the order of the Suras as given in the well accepted Qur'anic text that we have today.

The Sura titled Al-Anfal (The Spoils of War) was revealed after the revelation of Surat Al-Baqara (Chapter 2). As a matter of fact, it was exactly revealed during the battle of Badr which took place during the month of Ramadan in the second year Hijri. We remind the reader that the order of revelation of the Suras is assigned on the basis of the order of revelation of the opening verses in each Sura. It is known that the revelation of the verses of Surat Al-Baqara continued for about nine years, during this period other Suras were revealed including Surat Al-Anfal.

Some narratives claim that verses 30 to 36 were revealed in Mecca. These narratives may have been based on the fact that these verses deal with issues that were relevant to the Meccan period before the migration to Medina took place. However, this should not be considered enough of a reason to support such claim. Many of the verses that were revealed in Medina deal with issues which relate to events that happened in Mecca before the migration to Medina took place. Verse 26 in this Sura supports our opinion, *"Remember when you were a small band, despised through the land, and afraid that people might extirpate you, how He sheltered you, strengthened you with His help, and provided you of the good things, that you might be thankful."* (8:26) Verse 36, which is supposed to have been revealed in Mecca according to this narrative, deals with an issue that occurred after the battle of Badr when the disbelievers were preparing for the battle of Uhud, *"The disbelievers spend their wealth to avert people from the path of God. They will continue to spend it; then it will be a source of intense regret for them and they will be conquered. The disbelievers will be gathered together to Hell."* (8:36)

So, this Sura was revealed during the battle of Badr which was a milestone in the history of the Islamic movement. God called the day of Badr, *"the day of the criterion, the day when the two armies met."* (8:41) God also designated it as a demarcation point between believers and disbelievers, in this life as well as in the Hereafter, *"These two antagonists disputed with each other about their Lord. But those who deny (their Lord), for them will be cut out garments of fire, over their heads will be poured out boiling water melting*

*their insides, as well as (their) skins. In addition, there will be maces of iron (to punish) them. Every time they wish to get away therefrom, from anguish, they will be forced back therein, and (it will be said), 'Taste the torment of burning.' God will admit those who believe and do righteous deeds, to gardens beneath which rivers flow. They shall be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and pearls; and their garments there will be made from silk. For they have been guided (in this life) to the purest of speeches; they have been guided to the path of Him who is Worthy of (all) Praise.*" (22:19-24) It has been narrated that these verses came down to describe the two armies who met in the battle of Badr. These verses describe the end which each group will meet, in this life as well as in the Hereafter.

We will be able to appreciate the dimensions of this battle only if we look at it from the perspective of the concept of striving (Jihad) in Islam. We need to understand that it was simply one of the links in the chain of striving in the way of God. We need to understand the reasons for and the objectives of striving in Islam. We will not be able to understand this, unless we understand the nature of the religion of Islam.

Imam Ibn El-Qaiem summarized the nature of striving in Islam in his book entitled (Zad El-Ma'ad), in a chapter entitled, *"A chapter on the Prophet's (PBUH) model of behavior in dealing with the disbelievers and the hypocrites from the time he was sent until the time he died."*

The first revelation he (Muhammad, PBUH) received from his Lord commanded him to read in the name of his Lord who created. This command proclaimed the beginning of his assignment as a prophet. This verse indicated that he was only commanded to read to himself, he was not commanded to deliver the message yet. Then the verse, *"You, wrapped in your cloak, arise and give warning,"* (74:1-2) was revealed. God appointed him (Muhammad, PBUH) a prophet using the word, *"Read,"* and God appointed him a messenger with the word, *"You, wrapped in your cloak."* God then gave him the command to warn. Muhammad (PBUH) was commanded to start with the call to his kinsfolk, then proceed to the surrounding Arab tribes, then to all Arabs, then to the rest of the world. He continued in the beginning to call people to Islam peacefully. He was commanded to persevere and forgive the persecution. Then, he was commanded to migrate to Medina and was given permission to fight only those who fought him. Then he was commanded to fight the idolaters in Arabia so that the religion becomes pure to God.

The disbelievers were then divided into three categories: those who had a peace treaty with the Muslims, those who were at war with the Muslims, and those who were given a pledge to be protected by the Muslim state.

The Prophet (PBUH) was commanded to fulfill the conditions of the peace treaty that he concluded with the first category. He was asked to announce the annulment of the treaty, if he suspected treacherous behavior by the disbelievers. The Prophet (PBUH) was not allowed to start a fight until he had made his

intentions public. He was also commanded to fight those who abrogate their peace treaty with the Muslims.

These rules were detailed in the Surat Al-Tawbah (Chapter 9). The Prophet (PBUH) was commanded to fight his enemies of the people of the Scripture until they surrender and pay the Poll tax or accept Islam. He was also commanded to strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and treat them harshly. He strove against the disbelievers with the sword and against the hypocrites with a clear convincing argument. He was commanded to abrogate the peace treaty with the disbelievers before fighting them.

The command classified those who had a peace treaty with the Muslims into three categories: a group who betrayed the treaty, a group who had a treaty valid for a specific period of time, and a group who did not have a treaty with Muslims but did not start any hostilities against them either. The Prophet (PBUH) was commanded to fight the first group, to fulfill the term of the treaty between him and the second group, and to give the third group an amnesty period of four months before he would fight them. Members of the third category accepted Islam at the end of the four months. The people of the Scripture accepted to pay the poll tax. Thus, people of the land became divided into three groups: Muslims, peaceful non-Muslims, and frightened enemy.

The Prophet (PBUH) was commanded to accept the hypocrites' statement of being Muslims at its face value, only God is privy to their intentions. He was commanded to strive against them using eloquent speeches, to turn away from them, and to treat them harshly. However, he was commanded not to perform funeral prayers for their dead, nor to seek forgiveness for them because even if he would ask God to forgive them, God will not forgive them. (Zad El-M'ad)

Those who try to apologize for the concept of striving in Islam do not understand the difference between two basic Islamic principles: let there be no compulsion in religion and fighting oppression which does not allow people the freedom of religion. Islam does not seek to change people's faith by force. Jihad has not been instituted to force people to accept Islam; it is instead the obligatory duty of Muslims to fight oppression, whether those who are oppressed are Muslims or non-Muslims. Freedom of faith is guaranteed to every human being. The principle of freedom of faith goes hand in hand with the concept of free will.

Islam came to announce the end of humankind's enslavement on earth by proclaiming God as the only one that deserves to be worshiped. This meant that Islam came to start a revolution against all forms of enslavement and oppression of people. It is a call to disinvest those who want to control others of their power. Systems which allow people to control their fellow human beings through manmade laws are systems which allow enslavement. These rulers have usurped the role of God. Islam came to abolish the kingdom of humankind and establish the kingdom of God. In Qur'anic terms, *"It is He who is God in heaven and God on earth; and He is the Wise, the Omniscient."* (43:84)

*“The command is for none but God. He has commanded that you worship none but Him, that is the right religion...” (12:40) “Say, ‘People of the Scripture, come to common terms between us and you: that we worship none but God, that we associate no partners with Him; that we do not establish, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than God.’ If then they turn back, say, ‘Bear witness that we have submitted to God’s will.’” (3:64)*

The kingdom of God does not mean accepting the rule of a theocratic government, but it means that the government should rule according to God’s law. Everything is referred to God for His ruling according to the law that He has decreed.

Establishing God’s kingdom on earth, removing the kingdom of humankind from power, and establishing God’s law as the law of the land will not happen peacefully. Those who are in power, who usurped God’s role, and who are controlling other human beings will not give up all of this voluntarily. This is the reality of life which this religion came to deal with. It was therefore, important that the “proclamation” should be supported by a “movement” to address the realities of human life on earth.

The proclamation confronted the prevailing ideologies, but the movement was confronted with material obstacles. The ruling power, the social system, and the established traditions are some of these obstacles. This religion is a message for all humanity, and it came to free all humankind on earth. God is not the Lord of the Arabs alone. God is the Lord of the worlds. This religion wants to establish the fact that only God deserves to be worshiped. This frees people from being enslaved by other human beings. The major act of enslavement is embodied in ignoring God’s law and allowing manmade laws to govern people.

Al-Tirmidhi narrated, on the authority of ‘Adiey bin Hatem (RA) that ‘Adiey, who had previously converted to Christianity, fled to Syria upon receiving a call to Islam. His sister and a group of her people were captured by Muslims. The Prophet (PBUH) freed ‘Adiey’s sister and later she embraced Islam. She went to her brother and convinced him to adopt Islam, which he did. ‘Adiey (RA) then went to visit the Prophet (PBUH). Upon entering the Mosque to meet the Prophet (PBUH), he heard him reciting a verse, *“They take their scholars and their monks as lords besides God,” (9:31)*. ‘Adiey (RA) said to the Prophet (PBUH), *“They did not worship their scholars and monks.”* The Prophet (PBUH) responded, *“Did they (the scholars) not change what was rendered lawful (by God) to become unlawful and what was unlawful to become lawful, and the people followed their ruling. This is the interpretation of the verse.”*

The interpretation that the Prophet (PBUH) gave for this verse is unequivocal in rendering as disbelievers those who follow manmade laws which contravene God’s law.

It was therefore, imperative that Islam would take the necessary steps to change the reality of human life which runs against its proclamation. It was important to take measures which allow all people to have access to the proclamation and allow them to choose freely. Islam came to free humankind from all forms of enslavement to anyone

except God. Humankind should serve God only. The Islamic proclamation and movement aim at guaranteeing that each and every human being enjoys the right of the freedom of religion.

The battle of Badr was not the first battle between the Muslims and the idolaters of Mecca. This battle was preceded by a number of minor encounters between the two groups. Only one of these minor encounters involved real fighting. All these encounters followed the Islamic protocol for striving. It is true that all these encounters involved only the tribe of Quraish which expelled the Prophet (PBUH) and did not observe the sanctity of the Sacred Mosque, but the basic objective of striving in Islam is to free people from the persecution of tyrants and to establish their right to the freedom of religion. At that time, Quraish was the tyrant who persecuted people and deprived them of the right to adopt the religion they choose.

Let us review briefly the events of the Battle of Badr before we discuss the Sura so we can appreciate the ambience which surrounded the revelation of the verses of this Sura. This will help us understand the goals of the Sura. We can also comprehend the dual purpose of the verses: to describe the events as if they were unfolding and to direct and guide the events as well. One cannot completely understand Qur'anic verses by studying the language in which they were written only but one needs also to live the history and understand the dynamics of the environment in which these verses were revealed. Understanding the context of the revelation provides a necessary ingredient to understand the intent of the verses.

Ibn Ishaq narrated that, "The Messenger of God (PBUH) came to know that Abu Sufian bin Harb was leading a group of about thirty to forty men bringing a big caravan with goods that belong to Quraish from Syria to Mecca. The Messenger (PBUH) arranged an expedition to capture the caravan. He said to his companions, 'Go seek this caravan which carries goods for Quraish, it may be that God enables you to capture it as spoils of war.' Some people obliged, while others were indolent because they understood that the command sounded like they have a choice to join the expedition or not." Ibn El-Qaiem said, "The total number of those who participated in the battle of Badr was about three hundred and seventeen: eighty-six from the migrants, sixty-one from the tribe of Al-Aws, and hundred and seventy from the tribe of Al-Khazraj. The participants from the tribe of Al-Aws were less in number than the participants from the tribe of Al-Khazraj because the residence of the tribe of Al-Aws was far. However, the men from Al-Aws were stronger and more persistent in war than the men from the tribe of Al-Khazraj. The call to join the expedition was made in a hurry which left no time to prepare for people who wanted to join the expedition. The Prophet (PBUH) said, 'Only those who have readily available mounts should follow us.' When some asked for permission to go to bring their mounts, he did not give permission. So, the expedition was assembled in a hurry with very little preparation. The call came suddenly. It was God's will to bring them together with their enemy without previous planning."

Abu Sufian had his own intelligence apparatus who brought him news about the Muslims' campaign. When he came to know that Muhammad (PBUH) is preparing an

expedition to attack his caravan, he employed a person by the name Damdam Al-Ghafary to go to Mecca to alert Quraish of the impending danger posed by the Muslims and to exhort them to form an army to defend their caravan.

Al-Maquerizi described in his book (Imta' Al-Asma', Bringing Pleasure to the Listeners) the reaction of Quraish to the news that Damdam brought. They were shocked to hear Damdam lamenting with a loud voice the lost caravan and warning the people of Quraish that they will lose all the money that they invested in the caravan if they do not hurry to defend it against Muhammad's expedition. A group of the chiefs of Quraish started a fund-raising campaign to organize an army. They exhorted people to join the army to fight the "apostates" meaning the Muslims. Anyone who was not able or did not want to join the army supported another one to fight on his behalf. 'Atikah bint Abd Al-Muttalib saw a dream which foretold a perilous encounter for Quraish. This dream discouraged many men to join the army. However, the chiefs were finally able to form an army of nine hundred and fifty fighters of those one hundred were well equipped knights. The army had seven hundred camels.

In the meantime, Abu Sufian decided to take a detour thus changing the caravan route to escape the Muslim's expedition. Abu Sufian diverted his caravan away from the traditional route that caravans between Syria and Mecca normally used. He took a route along the coast, thus avoiding the expedition and was able to escape with the caravan unhurt. Not aware of this development, the Quraishite army went towards the regular caravan route. They were met with Qais bin Imroi Al-Qais, who told them that the caravan was able to escape and they should go back to Mecca. He warned them that they may be slaughtered at the hands of the Yathribites (the people of Medina). However, Abu Jahl insisted that the army should continue until they reach Badr. He said, "By God, we will not go back until we reach Badr. We will stay for three days to celebrate, eat, drink, and listen to music and songs, so that the Arabs would fear us." When Qais went back to Abu Sufian to tell him about Abu Jahl's decision, he said, "My People, this is Abu Jahl's way of thinking. He did not want to return back because of his arrogance. Arrogance is a bad character and a bad omen. If Muhammad defeated our army, we will be humiliated."

Ibn Ishaq mentioned that Al-Akhnas bin Shuraiq Al-Thaqafi said to Bani Zahra (he had an alliance with them), "Bani Zahara, God has saved your share of the goods. That was the objective for which you joined the Qurashite army. You do not need to fight so go back to your homes." The people from Bani Zahara heeded the advice and abandoned the army. Al-Maquerizi also mentioned that Taleb bin Abi Taleb was among the people who joined the army but decided to return back after he had heard that the caravan arrived Mecca safely.

Ibn Ishaq narrated that, "The Prophet (PBUH) and his companions left Medina sometime during the month of Ramadan. They had a total of seventy camels, so they used to have turns riding these camels. The Prophet (PBUH), 'Ali bin Abi Taleb and Marthad Al-Ghanawi shared one camel; and Abu Bakr, 'Umar and Abd Al- Rahman bin 'Aouf shared another."

Al-Maquerizi mentioned that,

Upon arrival at the wells of Badr, the Messenger of God (PBUH) received the news of the Qurashite army. He asked his companions for advice. Abu Bakr (RA) gave an eloquent speech, then ‘Umar (RA) gave an eloquent speech, he said, “Messenger of God, this is Quraish coming in its glory, by God they were never defeated before, by God, they never believed, and they will not capitulate easily. They will fight you so prepare yourself for a fierce fight.” Al-Miqdad bin ‘Amr (RA) said, “Messenger of God, go forward on the mission that has been decreed by God, we are with you. By God, we will never say to you what the Children of Israel said to their prophet, ‘Go, you and your Lord to fight, we are sitting right here.’ But we are going to say, ‘Go, you and your Lord to fight, we are going to fight alongside you.’ By God, if you ask us to walk with you until you reach Berk Al-Ghamad (a place near Yemen) we would walk with you.” The Messenger of God (PBUH) thanked him and asked again for advice. He wanted to know the stance of Al-Ansar (the original people of Medina). He did not know if they will join the fight because the terms of the agreement with Al-Ansar only stated their obligation to defend the Prophet and the Muslims if attacked within the boundaries of Medina. Sa’d bin Mo’az (RA) said, “I answer for the Ansar. Do you want us to join you in fighting Quraish?” The Messenger said, “Yes.” Sa’d said, “It seems that the original purpose of the expedition has been changed by a revelation. We believed in you, we bore witness that what you brought is the truth, and we gave you our pledges to listen to you and to obey you. So, go forward to achieve the objective you aspire to attain. By God, who sent you with the truth, if you cross this sea we will cross it with you, no one will remain behind. Give your gift to whomever you wish, deprive from your gift whomever you wish, and take from our wealth whatever you desire. By God, we love to give you as a gift whatever wealth we have. I never came this road before, but we are not afraid to meet our enemy on the battlefield tomorrow. You will find us perseverant in the battle and truthful in our words. I ask God to show you some of our deeds which will please you.” When Sa’d finished his speech, the Messenger of God (PBUH) said, “Go with the blessing of God. God promised me one of the two groups. By God, I see now their images as they will meet their death in battle.” The Muslims realized then that they will be fighting Quraish. Messenger’s words filled them with hope for victory. The Prophet (PBUH) gave the banners under which Muslims will fight to three people: Mosa’b bin ‘Umair (RA), ‘Ali bin Abi Taleb (RA), and Sa’d bin Mo’az (RA). He then asked people to prepare their arms.

The Messenger (PBUH) and his army arrived at a well in the area of Badr closest to Medina on the evening of Friday, the seventeenth of Ramadan. The Messenger (PBUH) sent ‘Ali (RA), Al-Zubair (RA), and Sa’d bin Abi Waqas (RA) on a reconnaissance mission. He pointed to a small hill and said, “I hope you find news at that hill.” They went there and found three young men from Quraish getting

water for the army, they captured two of them and the third managed to escape. The man who fled went back to the Qurashite with the news that Muhammad's (PBUH) men took hold of the well. The two who were captured were taken back to the Prophet (PBUH). They told the Prophet (PBUH) that Quraish's army is camping behind the hill and their assignment was to bring water to army. He asked them how many camels they slaughter each day, they told him that one day they slaughter ten camels and the following day they slaughter nine camels. The Prophet (PBUH) said to his companions, "The army is between nine hundred and a thousand."

The Prophet (PBUH) then asked his companions about the best place for the army to camp. Al-Habbab bin Al-Mundher bin Al-Jamoo (RA) said to the Prophet (PBUH), "Let us go to the well closest to the Qurashite army. I know a well full of sweet water, we can then camp in front of it. This way, our army will be able to access the water to drink but their army will not be able to reach any of the wells to get water to drink." The Prophet agreed and they camped at the place that Al-Habbab (RA) suggested. Rain came down which solidified the ground on the side of the believers but the ground on the side of the disbelievers became slippery. The rain was a blessing for the believers and was a curse on the disbelievers. Then the believers experienced a state of slumber.

A tent was built as a command quarter for the Messenger (PBUH) and Sa'd bin Mo'az (RA) stood guard in front of it. The Messenger (PBUH) surveyed the battlefield, telling his companions the place where each one of the disbelievers will meet his death. Each prophecy made by the Messenger of God (PBUH) happened exactly as he mentioned. The Messenger (PBUH) organized the believers for the battle then went into his command quarters together with Abu Bakr (RA).

Ibn Ishaq said, "When the Messenger (PBUH) saw the Qurashite army standing at a nearby small hill, he prayed God saying, 'God, here it is Quraish coming with all its might and pride to fight You and to deny Your Messenger. God, I pray for the victory You have promised. God, smite them today.'"

Khofaf Al-Ghafary, seeing the Qurashite army passing by, gave them food. He also offered to join the army to fight the Muslims. The army chiefs thanked him and said, "If it is the people we are fighting, we are more powerful than them, but if it is God we are fighting (as Muhammad claims) no human power could fight God."

The Messenger (PBUH) allowed some men from Quraish to drink from his well. It was narrated that all of them perished in the battle afterwards except for Hakim bin Hezam (RA) who survived and accepted Islam.

It was also narrated by Ibn Ishaq that, "The Qurashites sent 'Umar bin al-Wahb El-Jamhi on a reconnaissance mission. He reported, 'The Muslims are around 300 men armed with swords. They are full of determination to win. Each one of them is determined to kill one

of you before he would be killed.’ He then asked the chiefs of Quraish to contemplate what they want to do, having been warned that they will suffer major losses if they fight.”

When Hakim bin Hezam heard El-Jarhi’s report he tried to convince the chiefs of Quraish to rethink the situation and to refrain from fighting the Muslims. He was able to get some of the chiefs to side with him, however, Abu Jahl was able to stem the tide of dissent and to stay the course.

Ibn Ishaq narrated that, “Al-Aswad Al-Makhzoumi was an ill-mannered person, he swore to fight the Muslims until he is either killed, or he would kill them and drank from the well they kept for themselves. Hamza bin Abd El-Muttalib (RA) killed Al-Aswad. Next came out ‘Utba bin Rabee’a, his brother Shaiba and his son Al-Waleed requesting a duel with three of the Muslims. Three young men from Al-Ansar came out to fight them. However, when ‘Utba realized that their opponents were from Al-Ansar, he cried out, ‘Although we respect you, but we want to fight our equals from Quraish.’ The Messenger (PBUH) commanded ‘Ubaida bin Al-Hareth (RA), Hamza bin Abd El-Muttalib (RA), and ‘Ali bin Abi Taleb (RA) to fight them. The three Qurashite duelers were killed. ‘Ubaida (RA) was wounded so Hamza (RA) and ‘Ali (RA) attacked his opponent and killed him.”

The two armies moved closer to each other; however, the Messenger (PBUH) commanded his companions not to engage the Qurashites until he commanded them to do so. He told them to defend themselves by throwing arrows at the Qurashites. He arranged the Muslim army in rows and went back together with Abu Bakr (RA) to his tent. The Messenger (PBUH) was engaged in an intense prayer to God for victory. He appealed to God saying, “God, if the Muslims were to be destroyed today, no one will remain to serve You.” Abu Bakr (RA) and ‘Abd-Allah bin Rawaha (RA) were trying to comfort the Messenger (PBUH) but he continued to pray. The Messenger then came out of his tent and exhorted the Muslims to fight hard. He said, “I swear with Him who holds my soul in His hand, God will admit to paradise whoever perseveres in fighting the idolaters and dies moving forward on the battlefield.” The Messenger (PBUH) then took a palm-full of dust and threw at the Qurashites saying, “God mar your faces.” The Muslims attacked and the Qurashites were defeated. Many of the idolaters were taken captives.

The Messenger then asked the fighters to bring back the spoils that they collected. An argument then ensued between those who fought and those who were protecting the Messenger (PBUH). This dispute was one of the topics dealt with in this Sura.

Ibn Ishaq said, “I have been told on the authority of Abd-El-Rahman bin Al-Hareth that ‘Ubada bin El-Samet said, ‘Sura Al-Anfal dealt with the dispute that ensued among the companions who participated in the battle of Badr. We argued about how to distribute the spoils of war, so God took that right from us and gave it to the Messenger (PBUH). The Messenger (PBUH) gave each one of us an equal share.’”

Ibn Ishaq also narrated, on the authority of Nabeeh bin Wahb (RA), that, “The Messenger (PBUH) distributed the captives among his companions and said, ‘Take good care of the

captives.’ The companions obeyed the Messenger’s (PBUH) command and took good care of the captives to the extent that they would give them the best food they had.”

This is a summary of the events of the battle of Badr during which Surat Al-Anfal was revealed. The Sura described some of these events and illustrated the divine intervention which directed these events and made this battle a turning point in the history of humankind.

This battle was the first major battle between the Muslims and the idolaters of Mecca in which the Muslims had won a great victory over their enemy. However, initially the objective of the Muslims was not to engage in a battle with the idolaters. The initial objective was to capture Quraish’s caravan as a substitute for the wealth that they were forced to leave behind in Mecca when they were forced out of their homes and their families. However, God’s plan was different. God wanted this battle to be a turning point in the history of the struggle between the truth and falsehood. Muslims had been persecuted by the idolaters of Mecca; they were driven out of their homes and their country; their wealth was confiscated. The relationship between the idolaters (the tyrants) and the Muslims (victims) changed dramatically as a result of the victory in the battle of Badr. The battle taught the Muslims the practical application of the principle of putting their trust in God. They were taught that perseverance is an integral part of achieving success. They were taught that the divine plan will eventually lead to victory even though conditions may be difficult in the beginning. The Sura also included guiding principles regarding the laws of peace and war, the distribution of the spoils of war, treating the captives, covenants and treaties, and the elements of victory and loss in war. The Sura also juxtaposed the living conditions of the Muslims before and after the battle and reminded the Muslims of the fulfillment of God’s promise which resulted in their victory.

## **Verses 1 - 29**

*1. They ask you (Prophet) about (the distribution of) the spoils of war. Say, “The decision concerning the distribution of the spoils is for God and the Messenger. So be conscious of God and mend the relations between yourselves. Obey God and His Messenger, if you are true believers.”*

*2. The believers are those, whose hearts tremble with awe when God is mentioned, whose faith is strengthened when they hear His revelations are recited to them, and who put their trust in their Lord.*

*3. Who establish regular prayers and spend out of what We have bestowed on them.*

*4. Those are the true believers. For them are high levels of honor with their Lord, forgiveness, and generous provision.*

*5. Just as your Lord brought you out of your house in truth, even though a party among the believers disliked it;*

6. *Disputing with you concerning the truth after it was made manifest, as if they were being driven to death while they were looking on.*
7. *And when God promised you one of the two bands (of the enemy), that it should be yours. You wished that the unarmed one should be yours, but God willed to establish the truth according to His words and to cut off the roots of the disbelievers.*
8. *That He might establish the truth and abolish falsehood, even if the criminals disliked.*
9. *Remember when you sought the help of your Lord, and He answered you, "I will assist you with a thousand of the angels, following one another."*
10. *God made it a message of hope and a reassurance to your hearts. Victory comes only by the help of God. Certainly, God is Eminent, Wise.*
11. *Remember when He made the slumber fall on you as a reassurance from Him and sent down water from the sky to purify you, to remove from you the fear of Satan, to strengthen your hearts, and to make your feet firm thereby.*
12. *Remember when your Lord inspired the angels (saying), "I am with you. Make those who believe stand firm. I will cast terror into the hearts of the disbelievers. Strike above their necks and smite of them every fingertip."*
13. *That is because they opposed God and His Messenger. Whoever opposes God and His Messenger – indeed God is severe in punishment.*
14. *Thus (will it be said), "Taste you then of the (torment)." Certainly, for the disbelievers is the torment of the Fire.*
15. *Believers, when you meet the disbelievers in battle, never turn your back to them.*
16. *Whoso on that day turns his back to them - unless it be in a stratagem of war, or to retreat to a troop (of his own) - he truly has incurred on himself the wrath of God, and his refuge is Hell – what an evil destination.*
17. *It is not you who slew them; it was God who slew them. And you did not throw when you threw, but it was God who threw, that He might test the believers by a gracious trial from Himself. Certainly, God is All-Hearing, Omniscient.*
18. *That, and also (know) that indeed, God is He who weakens the plotting of the disbelievers.*
19. *(Disbelievers,) If you sought a judgment, now has the judgment come to you. If you desist (from wrong), it will be best for you, and if you return (to the attack), so shall We. Not the least good will your forces be to you even if they were multiplied. Verily, God is with the believers.*

20. *Believers, obey God and His Messenger, and do not turn away from him when you hear him speak.*

21. *Do not be like those who say, “We hear,” but they do not listen.*

22. *Indeed, the worst of beasts in the sight of God are the deaf, the dumb, and those who do not understand.*

23. *Had God known of any good in them He would have made them hear, but had He made them hear they would have turned away, averse.*

24. *Believers, respond to God and His Messenger, when he calls you to that which will give you life; and know that God comes in between a human being and his own heart, and that it is He to whom you shall (all) be gathered.*

25. *And fear a trial, which does not affect, in particular, only those of you who do wrong, and know that God is severe in punishment.*

26. *Remember when you were a small band, despised through the land, and afraid that people might extirpate you, how He sheltered you, strengthened you with His help, and provided you of the good things, that you might be thankful.*

27. *Believers, do not betray God and the Messenger, nor misappropriate knowingly things entrusted to you.*

28. *And know that your possessions and your progeny are but a trial; and that with God is immense reward.*

29. *Believers, if you remain conscious of God, He will grant you a criterion (to judge between right and wrong), absolve you of all your sins, and forgive you. God is the possessor of Great Grace. (8:1-29)*

*“They ask you (Prophet) about (the distribution of) the spoils of war. Say, ‘The decision concerning the distribution of the spoils is for God and the Messenger.’ So be conscious of God and mend the relations between yourselves. Obey God and His Messenger, if you are true believers. The believers are those, whose hearts tremble with awe when God is mentioned, whose faith is strengthened when they hear His revelations are recited to them, and who put their trust in their Lord. Who establish regular prayers and spend out of what We have bestowed on them. Those are the true believers. For them are high levels of honor with their Lord, forgiveness, and generous provision.”* El-Thawri narrated on the authority of Abi Saleh, that Ibn Abbas (RA) said, “On the day of Badr, the Messenger (PBUH) defined the reward for those who fought in the battle, each according to his achievement. Sa’d bin ‘Ubada (RA) objected saying to the Prophet (PBUH), ‘If you give those who fought what you indicated, nothing will be left for those who stayed around you to protect you. We did not stay behind because we were not interested in earning a reward nor were we cowards. We were afraid that the enemy would come

around from the back, so we stayed behind to protect you against enemy attacks.’” The two groups continued to argue together until these verses were revealed.

Imam Ahmed narrated on the authority of Mo’aweeyah (RA), that Sa’d bin Abi Waqas (RA) said, “On the day of Badr my brother ‘Umair (RA) was killed. I then fought Sa’eed bin Al-Ass and killed him and took his sword. I took the sword to the Prophet (PBUH) who commanded that I turn the sword to the collection of the spoils. I was devastated for the death of my brother and the confiscation of my gain. Very soon after this, the first verses of Surat Al-Anfal were revealed and the Prophet (PBUH) told me to go and get back the sword that I won in the battle.”

Imam Ahmed also narrated on the authority of Aswad bin ‘Amer, that Sa’d bin Malek (RA) said to the Prophet (PBUH), “Messenger of God, I completed my fight safely today, so give me this sword (which I gained in my fight). The Messenger (PBUH) said, ‘This sword is not yours and it is not mine, so put it back with the rest of the spoils of war,’ which I did. I then heard the Prophet (PBUH) saying that he received a revelation and I should go get the sword.”

All these stories describe the atmosphere which surrounded the revelation of this Sura. It may be shocking to read this story and realize how much those who fought the battle of Badr were obsessed by a strong interest in the gains from the battle. The army that fought this battle was comprised of those who migrated from Mecca leaving all their belongings behind their backs and fleeing with their faith and those who were the original inhabitants of Medina who gladly hosted their brethren who came to them from Mecca and gladly shared their wealth with them. Details of these stories shed some light on this strange phenomenon. According to the norms of the day, the allocation of the spoils of war should be commensurate with the effort that a fighter expended in the battle. The share in the spoils of war was considered to be a measure of the valor of the fighter. It was a testament to the fighter’s courage and effort. This testament had a special significance for the Muslims especially when it came from the Prophet (PBUH) himself. Their obsession with this achievement made them forget the noble characters that they were commanded to exercise towards each other. When the verses of Surat Al-Anfal were revealed, they were suddenly reminded of their transgression. The reminder came in two forms: a physical action and a long lecture. The action was taken by assigning the authority of the distribution of the spoils to the Prophet (PBUH). The lecture started by these verses and continued throughout the Sura to remind them of the behavior that went amiss.

The message to those who disputed about the distribution of the spoils of war, which woke them up, was a reminder of their duty to remain conscious of God. God knows best. The best way to divert the focus off the material gains is to remind people of a higher calling: their duty to remain conscious of God. God consciousness is the key to the hearts of the believers, *“So be conscious of God, and mend the relations between yourselves.”* This message softened their hearts and reminded them of the duty to obey God and His Messenger.

The first step is to obey God's verdict regarding the distribution of the spoils of war. The spoils are not theirs. The spoils of war are the property of God and His Messenger. God and His Messenger have the right to dispose of it as they wish. Taking the right to dispose of the spoils off their hands removed the source of contention between them. Now they should go back and treat each other in a brotherly way as they used to do before this issue arose. The verse challenged the believers to listen and obey, *"if you are true believers."* Belief is not a lip service. Belief is an action. It was said, "Belief is not wishful thinking nor it is a superficial quality. Belief is something that rests deep in the heart and is reflected in the deed." The verses then continued to elaborate on the characteristics of the believers, *"The believers are those, whose hearts tremble with awe when God is mentioned, whose faith is strengthened when they hear His revelations are recited to them, and who put their trust in their Lord. Who establish regular prayers and spend out of what We have bestowed on them. Those are the true believers. For them are high levels of honor with their Lord, forgiveness, and generous provision."* The construction of the Qur'anic expression is very precise in its meaning. It indicates that the list of attributes mentioned in the verses constitutes the characteristics which a believer should enjoy. Anyone who does not enjoy all these characteristics is not a believer. This meaning was emphasized by the sentence, *"Those are the true believers."* Pointing to the fact that one can be either a true believer or a disbeliever. There is nothing in between.

The believers' hearts tremble in awe when God's commands are mentioned. Remembering God's majesty and their own shortcomings is a strong incentive for the believers to work hard seeking the pleasure of God. The believers' faith is strengthened when they listen to the verses of the Qur'an being recited. Qur'an finds its way to the hearts of the believers unobstructed to fill them with calmness and certitude. Disbelief forms a barrier that blocks the link through which Qur'an reaches the heart. The companions of the Prophet (PBUH) used to say, *"We learnt how to believe before we learnt the Qur'an."* Through their faith they were able to delve into the mystery of the Qur'an, sense its beauty, and taste its sweetness. That is how they were able to live according to the Qur'an. The sweet taste of the Qur'an was enhanced by the fact that they were able to translate faith into action guided by practical Qur'anic directives. It is no longer possible to experience the feelings of the first generation who witnessed the process of the revelation of the Qur'an. But every group of Muslims whose aim is to establish an Islamic way of life should be able to taste the sweetness of translating faith into action in the same way as the first generation.

Believers know how to put their trust in God, and never to associate anything with Him. Imam Ibn Katheer commented on this saying, "They have no hope in anyone but God. They seek help from no one but God. He is their only refuge. They ask no one but Him. They know that whatever He wills will be, and whatever He does not wish will not be. He is the absolute owner of the kingdom. He has no partners and His decrees cannot be appealed. He is swift in reckoning." Sa'id bin Jubair said, "Putting one's trust in God is the epitome of belief." But trusting in God does not imply that a person does not do his/her best to achieve a result. Doing one's best is a sign of the belief in God. God created the means to reach an end. Using the means that God created is an act of obedience to God. Once a person did his/her best by using the means that God created

then he/she should trust God with the result. A believer should not think that the results are contingent only on the means. God decides the results and He is the one who created the means. He commanded us to use the means which He created and leave the attainment of the results for Him to decide. This frees the believer from being obsessed by the means and forgetting who created them.

Prayers are a visible expression of belief. Belief rests deep in the heart and should be reflected on the deeds of the believer; the first visible reflection is seen in establishing prayers. Establishing prayers means more than just performing prayers. Prayers are a communication between God and the believer. To establish prayers is to perform it in a way which reflects the sanctity of the meeting and makes it a testament of the belief in God.

Believers spend out of that which God gave them. The wealth is God's wealth. God entrusted them with the wealth to be used in addressing their needs and to spend some of it in the sake of God.

These are the characteristics which identify the believers: the belief in the Oneness of God, the continuous remembrance of God, the feeling of awe when listening to God's verses, trusting in God, establishing prayers, and spending in God's way. This list of characteristics is not exhaustive, other characteristics were mentioned in other places in the Qur'an, but these are the characteristics which are relevant to the situation addressed by these verses. The verses stated that those who do not enjoy these characteristics lost the sense of true belief.

The early Muslims realized that it is incumbent on the individual to seek and find the essence of true belief. Belief is not a proclamation, a lip service, nor wishful thinking. Al-Hafez El-Tabarani narrated on the authority of Abu Kareeb, that Al-Hareth bin Malek Al-Ansari (RA) said, "I came across the Messenger of God (PBUH) one morning, he asked me, 'Hareth, how are you this morning?' I answered, 'I feel I am a true believer.' The Messenger (PBUH) said, 'Be careful of what you say. Each matter has an essence. What is the essence of your belief?' I said, 'I withdraw myself from this worldly life. I spend the night praying and the day fasting. It is as if I see the throne of my Lord, and as if I see the people of paradise enjoying their lives and the people of Hell suffering.' The Messenger (PBUH) said, 'Hareth, you have known the essence of belief, so keep it up.' He said that three times." Al-Hareth (RA) described his feelings and how these feelings drove him to act. His actions reflected his deep sense of belief.

*"Just as your Lord brought you out of your house in truth, even though a party among the believers disliked it, disputing with you concerning the truth after it was made manifest, as if they were being driven to death while they were looking on. And when God promised you one of the two bands (of the enemy), that it should be yours. You wished that the unarmed one should be yours, but God willed to establish the truth according to His words and to cut off the roots of the disbelievers. That He might establish the truth and abolish falsehood, even if the criminals disliked."* We have reviewed the details of the battle of Badr and mentioned how Abu Bakr (RA) and 'Umar

(RA) gave good counsel to the Messenger (PBUH) when he asked for advice on whether to fight or not. Al-Miqdad bin ‘Amr (RA) said to the Messenger (PBUH), “Messenger of God, go forward to fulfill the command of your Lord. By God, we will not say to you as the Children of Israel said to their prophet, ‘You and your Lord go and fight, we are going to wait right *here*.’ We will say to you, ‘You and your Lord, go and fight, we are going with you.’” When Sa’d bin Mo’az (RA) realized that the Prophet (PBUH) is waiting to hear the opinion of Al-Ansar, he reassured the Prophet (PBUH) that Al-Ansar are with him. However, the opinions of Abu Bakr (RA), ‘Umar (RA), Al-Miqdad (RA), and Sa’d (RA) did not reflect the views of all Muslims in the army. Some Muslims objected to the decision to fight. They hated being dragged into a fight they did not prepare for. They came out after the caravan. When they realized that the caravan escaped and that Quraish has sent a huge army to fight them they hated the encounter, *“as if they were being driven to a death they while they were looking on.”*

Al-Hafez bin Mardaweih narrated that Abi Ayoub Al-Ansari (RA) said, “While we were in Medina, the Messenger (PBUH) said, ‘I was told that Abu Sufian is leading a caravan for Quraish, would you like to go after it? God may enable you to win it.’ We agreed. We went after the caravan, however, after walking for about two days, the Messenger (PBUH) said, ‘The people (Quraish) were told about us, what would you say if we had to fight them?’ We said, ‘By God, we are no equal to them. We only came after the caravan.’ The Messenger (PBUH) repeated his question, and we repeated the same answer. Al-Miqdad (RA) the said, ‘We will not say to you as the Children of Israel said to their prophet, ‘You and your Lord go and fight, we are going to wait right *here*.’ We will say to you, ‘You and your Lord, go and fight, we are going with you.’ We (Al-Ansar) wished that we said what Al-Miqdad (RA) had just said. This was when the verse, *‘Just as your Lord brought you out of your house in truth, even though a party among the believers disliked it.’*”

This tradition describes what was going in the minds and hearts of some of the Muslims. They hated to fight as if, *“they were being driven to death.”* Even after the truth had been made manifest to them and they were promised victory over one of the two bands. However, it was clear that they had no choice but to fight after they came to know that the caravan was able to escape.

This illustrates the first reaction of human nature when faced with danger even for those who have a strong faith. It makes us aware of the frailness and vulnerability of human beings. We should be realistic in our expectations of people. However, we should also not despair of the ability of the believers to overcome such frailness and to regain their composure after the first shock. That was what the people of Badr did. They came together and won. They thus, deserved what the Prophet (PBUH) said about them, “It may be that God looked upon the people of Badr and said to them, ‘I have forgiven whatever you do.’”

They desired that the unarmed one should be theirs. But *“God willed to establish the truth according to His words and to cut off the roots of the disbelievers.”* God wanted that the encounter becomes an encounter between truth and falsehood. So that truth

prevails and falsehood would be rooted out. God wanted the divine project to prevail over tyranny. This battle was a part of the process of the birth of the Muslim nation. After Badr, the Muslim nation stood on equal footing with the mighty Quraish. This could not have happened unless the Muslims won the battle of Badr. The Muslims needed this victory to prove to themselves that they are able to face a bigger power in the field and win the battle. The enemy needed this to realize that the few Muslims who fled Mecca escaping persecution are now a force to contend with.

In hindsight, this was by all means better for the Muslims than if they had been able to capture the caravan. Winning the caravan might have been a good project for the short term but winning the battle was much more impressive and effective in the long term.

*“Remember when you sought the help of your Lord, and He answered you, ‘I will assist you with a thousand of the angels, following one another.’ God made it a message of hope, and a reassurance to your hearts. Victory comes only by the help of God. Certainly, God is Eminent, Wise. Remember when He made the slumber fall on you as a reassurance from Him and sent down water from the sky to purify you, to remove from you the fear of Satan, to strengthen your hearts, and to make your feet firm thereby. Remember when your Lord inspired the angels (saying), ‘I am with you. Make those who believe stand firm. I will cast terror into the hearts of the disbelievers. Strike above their necks and smite of them every fingertip.’ That is because they opposed God and His Messenger. Whoever opposes God and His Messenger – indeed God is severe in punishment. Thus (will it be said), ‘Taste you then of the (torment). Certainly, for the disbelievers is the torment of the Fire.’”* Imam Ahmed narrated, on the authority of ‘Umar bin El-Khatab (RA), the story of God’s help. He said, “The Messenger (PBUH) looked at the battlefield on the day of Badr. He estimated the number of the Muslims to be about three hundred and the number of the idolaters of Mecca to be more than one thousand. He then faced the Qibla and started praying. He said, ‘God, I ask you to fulfill the promise You made to me. God, if Your will is to destroy this band of Muslims, You will never be worshipped on earth again.’ He was so immersed in his prayer that he did not realize that his coat had slipped off his shoulders. Abu Bakr (RA) put the coat back on him and started comforting him saying, ‘Prophet of God, your Lord will fulfill His promise.’ This was when the verse, *‘Remember when you sought the help of your Lord, and He answered you, ‘I will assist you with a thousand of the angels, following one another,’* was revealed.”

There are many narrations that describe the details of how the angels fought alongside the believers. However, it suffices to take recourse to the verses of the Qur’an instead of citing unauthentic narrations dealing with the unseen. God responded favorably to the prayer of His Messenger. This was a glad tiding to reassure the believers. Although they were asked to do their best, they should know that victory is in the hand of God and is not contingent only on the means.

The slumber that fell on the believers before the start of the fight is an amazing psychological state that could not have happened except by the will of God. The believers panicked when they found out that they were fighting a much stronger and better

equipped army. Suddenly they were taken by slumber and when they woke up, they were engulfed in a state of tranquility and serenity. The same experience was repeated in the battle of Uhud.

The story of the water, *“and sent down water from the sky to purify you, to remove from you the fear of Satan, to strengthen your hearts, and to make your feet firm thereby,”* tells of another form of God’s support for the believers. This happened before the Muslims took their final camp site as suggested by Al-Habbab bin Al-Mundher (RA). It is known that when the Muslims reached the area of Badr (which had several wells), the Prophet (PBUH) commanded his companions to camp at the well closest to Medina. This left a number of wells between the Muslims and the idolaters of Mecca. Al-Habbab (RA) asked the Prophet (PBUH), “Messenger of God, were you commanded by God to camp here? Or is this your own choice?” The Messenger (PBUH) said, “It is not a command of God but it is my choice.” Al-Habbab (RA) said, “Then, this is not the best place to camp. Let us move forward to a place where we can have as many wells as we can behind us and we block the remaining wells between us and Quraish. This way, we can avail ourselves of the water and they would have no a source of water to drink.” The Messenger (PBUH) commanded the Muslims to set camp according to Al-Habbab’s (RA) advice.

The rain came down during the night before they changed camp site. They needed the water to purify themselves for prayers and to make the ground firm under their feet. God supported them with spiritual as well as material help. Then came the help of the angels, *“Remember when your Lord inspired the angels (saying), ‘I am with you. Make those who believe stand firm. I will cast terror into the hearts of the disbelievers. Strike above their necks and smite of them every fingertip.’”* It was a great experience, God told the angels, *“I am with you.”* We believe that angels exist, but we do not know anything about them except what has been mentioned in the Qur’an about them. We know that they were commanded to fight alongside the believers and they did, because they do whatever God commands them to do. However, we do not know how they fought. God promised to cast fear in the hearts of the disbelievers and again we do not know how this happened.

*“That is because they opposed God and His Messenger. Whoever opposes God and His Messenger – indeed God is severe in punishment. Thus (will it be said), ‘Taste you then of the (torment). Certainly, for the disbelievers is the torment of the Fire.’”* It was not a coincidence that the believers won the battle and overcame the disbelievers by the support of God. The disbelievers chose to fight God and His Messenger, so they deserved to be punished. This is the rule.

*“Believers, when you meet the disbelievers in battle, never turn your backs to them. Whoso on that day turns his back to them - unless it be in a stratagem of war, or to retreat to a troop (of his own) - he truly has incurred on himself the wrath of God, and his refuge is Hell – what an evil destination.”* This verse carried a dire warning for the believers. The believers are told to stand firm in the battle field and not to flee the field unless they were following a strategy that allowed them to take a better position to continue fighting. Those who flee the battle ground are doomed.

The scholars agreed that this is a general rule that applies to Muslim armies. Fleeing a battlefield is one of the seven calamities. It was narrated by Al-Bukhary on the authority of Abu Hurriarah (RA) that the Messenger of God (PBUH) said, "Avoid the seven calamities." When he was asked what the seven calamities are? he said, "Associating partners with God, sorcery, killing the soul that God has forbidden except for a legitimate reason, usury, devouring the wealth of an orphan, fleeing the battlefield, slandering chaste believing women."

A believing heart is a steadfast heart; it will not be overcome by any earthly power because it derives its strength from God. A believing heart may feel insecure when faced with an overwhelming crisis, but it recovers very quickly. Fleeing the battlefield is not a thought that would be entertained by a believing heart because it knows that the time of death has been previously ordained by God. Fleeing the battlefield will not change this fact. This is not an extraordinary burden for such a heart. When the believers face their enemy on the battle ground, they know that they fight backed by the power of God which their enemy cannot avail themselves of. They know that they belong to God dead or alive.

The verses continued to warn the believers of the consequences of fleeing the battlefield, and to explain God's role in achieving victory, "*It is not you who slew them; it was God who slew them. And you did not throw when you threw, but it was God who threw, that He might test the believers by a gracious trial from Himself. Certainly, God is All-Hearing, Omniscient.*" It was God's plan that the believers win this battle. The battle was a test for the believers to give them the chance to achieve God's reward and blessing. God heard the believer's call for help, and He responded favorably to their call. He continued to bless them with His favor. God's favor was meant to strengthen the believers and to weaken their enemy, "*That, and also (know) that indeed, God is Who weakens the plotting of the disbelievers.*"

"*(Disbelievers,) if you sought a judgment, now has the judgment come to you. If you desist (from wrong), it will be best for you, and if you return (to the attack), so shall We. Not the least good will your forces be to you even if they were multiplied. Verily, God is with the believers.*" The verse addressed the disbelievers denying them any hope that God would rule in their favor. God's rule has already been decreed against the disbelievers who fought God and His Messenger. However, they were given a second chance, "*If you desist (from wrong), it will be best for you,*" But if they persist, then "*Not the least good will your forces be to you even if they were multiplied.*" God is with believers.

"*Believers, obey God and His Messenger, and do not turn away from him when you hear him speak. Do not be like those who say, 'We hear,' but they do not listen. Indeed, the worst of beasts in the sight of God are the deaf, the dumb, and those who do not understand. Had God known of any good in them He would have made them hear, but had He made them hear they would have turned away, averse.*" This was a command to

the believers. They should obey God and His Messenger. They should not turn away from him when he recites God's verses to them. The command comes at the end of the verses discussing the events of the battle. These events exhibited clearly to the believers God's role in helping them. They were able secure victory only by the grace of God who supported them and weakened their enemy. There is no room now for any hesitation in expressing complete obedience to God and His Messenger. Only those who have no intellect and are unable to reason do not see the necessity of expressing obedience to God and His Messenger. Those who did not understand the lesson are similar to the beasts who do not think, hear, nor speak. God knew that such people are unable to reason and benefit from what they hear and see, *"Had God known of any good in them He would have made them hear, but had He made them hear they would have turned away, averse."* They have corrupted the initial natural disposition that God gave them. They closed their hearts and prevented God's guidance to reach them. Even if God made them to hear, they will not respond rightly to the commands.

*"Believers, respond to God and His Messenger, when he calls you to that which will give you life; and know that God comes in between a man and his own heart, and that it is He to whom you shall (all) be gathered. And fear a trial, which does not affect, in particular, only those of you who do wrong, and know that God is severe in punishment. Remember when you were a small band, despised through the land, and afraid that people might extirpate you, how He sheltered, strengthened you with His help, and provided you of the good things, that you might be thankful."* The Messenger of God (PBUH) only calls the believers to that which will give them life. It is a call to a life full of meaning. He is calling them to a faith that gives life to hearts and minds. It is a faith which frees the hearts and minds from beliefs based on superstition and ignorance, a faith that frees the human beings from being enslaved by anyone and anything except God. He is calling them to abide by God's law which proclaims the freedom of all humankind and honors all humankind. It is a law under which all people are equal. No individual oppresses a people, no class oppresses a nation, no race oppresses another race, and no people oppress other people. Freedom and equality are guaranteed for all people.

The Messenger (PBUH) is calling to a way of life that guarantees freedom of thought and encourages the creativity of humankind. It frees the intellect of all shackles within the framework of the initial natural human disposition. This is a framework which God designed to protect wasting time and energy in useless pursuits.

The Messenger (PBUH) is calling the believers to be proud of their faith and their way of life and to feel secure by putting their trust in God. He is calling them to help all human beings in obtaining their freedom and in saving them from the tyranny of the tyrants. He is calling them to struggle in the way of God to establish His right to be worshipped on earth and to destroy all false deities. This is the call to life that the Messenger (PBUH) proclaimed to the believers.

*“And know that God comes in between a human being and his own heart.”* It is a frightening image which exhibits the dimensions of God’s power. God is able to control the heart of a person and do whatever He wants with it, while that person becomes helpless, unable to control his/her own heart. This is an image which impels the human being to be always alert to the feelings that fill his/her heart, fearing to entertain the slightest desire to slip away from God’s grace. This is a great danger. Even the infallible Messenger of God (PBUH) used to pray, “God, it is You who control the hearts, make my heart to be steadfast on Your way.” This is an image which shakes the heart of the believer, a shaking which would spread to engulf the whole body.

There is no escape from God, your hearts are under His control, and you will be gathered to Him, *“that it is He to Whom you shall (all) be gathered.”* However, the call here is made to people who are free to choose. The consequences of denying the invitation and ignoring the call are explained, *“And fear a trial, which does not affect, in particular; only those of you who do wrong, and know that God is severe in punishment.”* The trial is a test. A nation which allows oppression in any form, does not stand up against the tyrants, and allows corruption is a nation which deserves to be punished as a whole. Islam encourages collective action against tyrants. It does not allow turning a blind eye to corruption and transgression.

*“Remember when you were a small band, despised through the land, and afraid that people might extirpate you, how He sheltered you, strengthened you with His help, and provided you of the good things, that you might be thankful.”* Remember this so that you realize that the Messenger (PBUH) is calling you to a good life. Remember this so that you do not shy away from standing up in face of corruption and oppression. Remember how weak you were before you were commanded to fight and how did you hate fighting the disbelievers, then you won and were honored and got your reward. God provided you with good things and gave you the opportunity to be grateful to Him so He would reward you again for being grateful.

The expression, *“afraid that people might extirpate you,”* paints an image for the believers as a small and weak group who were overcome with fear and apprehension, anticipating harm to befall them at the hands of their enemy. Then their lot changed, and they became safe and secure, enjoying the newly acquired strength and good provision. The change happened when God, *“sheltered you, strengthened you with His help, and provided you of the good things, that you might be thankful.”*

*“Believers, do not betray God and the Messenger, nor misappropriate knowingly things entrusted to you. And know that your possessions and your progeny are but a trial; and that with God is immense reward.”* To abdicate the responsibility that God commanded the Muslim nation to undertake is a betrayal of the covenant of God. The main objective of this religion is to establish the concept of the Oneness of God. Muhammad’s (PBUH) message is the way to establish this truth. The human race, over its long history, never doubted the existence of God. The problem was associating partners with God. Sometime people believed in other gods whom they worshipped, and very often they allowed other

human beings to control their lives; they treated them as gods. The basic objective of this religion is to establish the concept of the Oneness of God.

Abandoning this objective is construed as a betrayal of the believer's covenant with God. Muslims are warned not to betray God by abandoning their responsibility. The pledge that a Muslim undertook when he/she accepted Islam is not a lip service. Islam is not words and supplication to be recited without real conviction. It is a complete and comprehensive way of life. It is a way of life based on the belief in the Oneness of God. The basic principles underlying this way of life include the right of God to be worshipped alone, the use of God's law in shaping the laws which govern the society, resisting tyrants until they stop oppressing people, establishing justice in society on the basis of the rule of law, and establishing a flourishing civilization on earth. This is the mandate of a believer and whoever does not undertake this mandate has betrayed God's covenant which he/she pledged to observe. It is not easy to undertake such a responsibility. Undertaking such a responsibility requires perseverance and sacrifice. It requires perseverance and steadfastness in resisting the temptation posed by wealth and progeny, "*And know that your possessions and your progeny are but a trial;*" This Qur'an uses a style to address the human beings which is based on the knowledge of the Creator of His creatures. The Creator knows the deep secrets of the human soul and the inner thoughts of the human intellect. The Creator is aware of human weaknesses and He knows that the love of wealth and children is one of the weak points of the human being. The verse alludes to the fact that wealth and children are gifts from God. These are gifts that God bestowed on His servants to test them. Will they be grateful or will they be thankless? The trial can come in the form of either abundance or scarcity, "*and we test you with evil and with good as trial.*" (21:35)

Having alerted the believers to the impending test, God provides the support that can help them succeed in the test, "*and that with God is immense reward.*"

The final message in this passage to the believers is to remain conscious of God, "*Believers, if you remain conscious of God, He will grant you a criterion (to judge between right and wrong), absolve you of all your sins, and forgive you. God is the possessor of Great Grace.*" This is the sustenance that the believers need to support them on the road. It is the provision that arouses the hearts from their sleep and provides beacons to guide them along the way. It is a fact that God consciousness provides the heart with the light (a criterion) that shows the road to the believer, but it is a fact that only those who experienced it would know it.

The sound initial natural human disposition can easily discover the truth. The road to the truth is fogged by caprice and vain desires. One cannot overcome caprice by a logical argument. Only God consciousness can drive caprice away. This is how the heart acquires the light (criterion) which makes the heart able to differentiate between truth and falsehood. It is a priceless gift from God, "*the possessor of Great bounty.*"

## **Verses: 30 to 40**

30. Remember how the disbelievers plotted against you, to take you captive, to slay you, or to evict you. They schemed and God also schemed. God is certainly the best of schemers.

31. When Our revelations are recited to them, they say, "We have heard this (before), we could say (words) like these, if we wanted to. This is nothing but ancient fables."

32. Remember when they said, "God, if this is indeed the truth from You, then rain down on us a shower of stones from the sky or send us a grievous torment."

33. But God was not going to torment them while you were among them; nor was He going to torment them while they seek forgiveness.

34. Why should God not torment them, when they bar people from the Sacred Mosque and they are not its guardians? Only those who are God conscious (deserve) to be its guardians; but most of them do not know.

35. Their prayer at the House (of God) is nothing but whistling and clapping of hands. So, taste the torment because you disbelieved.

36. The disbelievers spend their wealth to avert people from the path of God. They will continue to spend it; then it will be a source of intense regret for them and they will be conquered. The disbelievers will be gathered together to Hell.

37. In order that God may separate the wicked from the good and place the wicked, one on top of another, heaping them all together, and consign them to Hell. They will be the losers.

38. Say (Prophet) to the disbelievers, if they desist, their past will be forgiven; but if they persist, then the precedent of those who went before them has already taken place.

39. And fight them on until there is no oppression and the religion is all for God. But if they cease, then God sees what they do.

40. If they turn away, be sure that God is your Patron. Excellent is the Patron and excellent is the Helper. (8:30-40)

"Remember how the disbelievers plotted against you, to take you captive, to slay you, or to evict you. They schemed and God also schemed. God is certainly the best of schemers." The verse brings to mind the situation in Mecca just before Hijra (migration to Medina) took place. It carried a message of hope in the future. It was a reminder of God's infinite power and wisdom in planning. The Muslims who were listening to these verses as they were being revealed experienced the situations before and after Hijra. They were able to still remember the experience of living in Mecca, a life of insecurity, fear and apprehension. They could compare between the two states, as their situation changed from persecution to freedom, from fear to security, and from weakness to strength. The

Qurashites were contemplating different schemes: do they tie the Messenger (PBUH) down and imprison him until he dies, do they kill him, or do they exile him to a place far away from Mecca? They finally decided that they should kill him. They selected a number of strong young men, one from each tribe, to form the assassination team. This team was assigned to kill Muhammad (PBUH) in one collective strike. This way the crime would fall on all the tribes. Banu Hashem would not be able to seek revenge, since they will not be able to fight all the tribes which participated in killing the Messenger (PBUH).

But “*They schemed and God also schemed.*” One can see with the eye of imagination the chiefs conspiring in their meeting completely unaware of God’s plan which was designed to thwart their scheme. It is an ironic image but, in the meantime, it is a fearful one. It is a reminder of the helplessness of the weak human beings in face of the overwhelming power of God.

“*When Our revelations are recited to them, they say, ‘We have heard this (before), we could say (words) like these, if we wanted to. This is nothing but ancient fables.’*” Ibn Katheer mentioned in his interpretation of the Qur’an on the authority of Sa’eed bin Jubair (RA) and others that the person who said this was Al-Nadhr bin El-Hareth. He said, “Al-Nadhr went to Persia and studied the history of their previous kings. When he came back to Mecca, he used to watch the Messenger (PBUH) as he was reciting the Qur’an to people. Once the Messenger (PBUH) had finished his recitation, Al-Nadhr would sit in the same place and start reciting the fables that he learned in Persia. Then he would ask his listeners who do they think is a better storyteller, he or Muhammad (PBUH).” Al-Nadhr was captured in the battle of Badr and was executed by the Muslims.

The Qur’an tells very often of how the disbelievers called the Qur’an “ancient fables.” This was one of the tactics that they used to fight back the Qur’an. The Qur’an was successful in reaching and touching the initial natural human disposition. The message of the truth was delivered and received. The chiefs felt threatened and they were looking for tactics to bedevil the people. This was one of these tactics.

The verses continue to describe the amazing tenacity of the disbelievers in opposing the truth. Their arrogant defiance made them challenge God, “*Remember when they said, ‘God, if this is indeed the truth from You, then rain down on us a shower of stones from the sky, or send us a grievous torment.’*” Instead of asking for guidance, they made this strange request. Those who have a sound initial natural disposition ask God to guide them to the truth. They would incline to the truth when they recognize it. But the disbelievers in their arrogant refusal of the truth would rather be destroyed by a shower of stones from sky or punished by a grievous torment than to follow the truth brought by the Messenger (PBUH).

God’s response was that even though they deserve whatever torment they wished for, God will not annihilate them with torment (as was done to peoples before them) as long

as the Prophet (PBUH) continued to call them to guidance, since there was still a chance that they may turn around and seek forgiveness, *“But God was not going to torment them while you were among them; nor was He going to torment them while they seek forgiveness.”* It is God’s mercy that protected them from being destroyed as a result of their obstinacy which allowed them to bar Muslims from visiting and worshipping God in the Sacred Mosque, *“Why should God not torment them, when they bar people from the Sacred Mosque and they are not its guardians? Only those who are God conscious (deserve) to be its guardians; but most of them do not know.”* They claimed that they are the guardians of the Sacred Mosque and allowed themselves to bar Muslims from it, but they were neither the guardians of the Sacred Mosque nor they deserved to be. Even their prayers at the Mosque were a mockery and empty of respect to the Mosque, *“Their prayer at the House (of God) is nothing but whistling and clapping of hands. So, taste the torment because you disbelieved.”* They should then taste the torment if they do not desist.

*“The disbelievers spend their wealth to avert people from the path of God. They will continue to spend it; then it will be a source of intense regret for them and they will be conquered. The disbelievers will be gathered together to Hell. In order that God may separate the wicked from the good and place the wicked, one on top of another, heaping them all together, and consign them to Hell. They will be the losers.”*

This verse described the actions that the disbelievers embarked upon after their failure in the battle of Badr. Muhammad bin Ishaq narrated on the authority of El-Zuhary and others, they said, “When the remnants of the Quraishite army returned to Mecca after the battle of Badr a group of the disbelievers, which included of ‘Abd-Allah bin Rabia’h, ‘Ekremah bin Abi Jahl, and Safwan bin Omayah in addition to people whose fathers and sons were killed in the battle of Badr, went to Abi Sufian bin Harb who led the caravan to safety and asked him and the merchants who profited from this caravan to pledge some of their profits to prepare an army to attack the Muslims in revenge for the loss of their relatives who died in the battle of Badr.” This verse came down to warn the disbelievers that the money that they were collecting to prepare an army to attack the Muslims will only be a source of great grief for them. At the end, they will lose their wealth in this life and end up in Hell fire in the Hereafter.

*“Say (Prophet) to the disbelievers, if they desist, their past will be forgiven; but if they persist, then the precedent of those who went before them has already taken place. And fight them on until there is no oppression and the religion is all for God. But if they cease, then God sees what they do. If they turn away, be sure that God is your Patron. Excellent is the Patron and excellent is the Helper.”* The Qur’an commanded the Prophet (PBUH), to tell the disbelievers that they were given a second chance. They were given a chance to stop their attacks on Muslims and to seek God’s forgiveness. If they desist, then all previous mischief will be forgiven. But if they persist, then God’s law will take its course.

The verse commanded the believers to fight the disbelievers, *“And fight them on until there is no oppression and the religion is all for God. But if they cease, then God sees what they do. If they turn away, be sure that God is your Patron. Excellent is the Patron and excellent is the Helper.”* The verse enunciates some of the rules of fighting in the way of God. However, these were not the final rules. These rules were supplemented with the rules given in Surat Al-Tawbah (Chapter 9). Islam is a dynamic movement. Its rules continuously evolve to be able to deal with the ever-changing requirements of the situation. However, the rule enunciated in, *“And fight them on until there is no oppression and the religion is all for God,”* states a general rule that should be always applied in face of the ever-present ignorant society. It is important to understand what is meant by, *“the religion is all for God.”* It means the removal of the physical barriers set up by the tyrants who want to oppress and enslave people. Without these barriers people will be able to choose freely what to believe in. This is the only way that freedom of faith will be guaranteed.

### **Verses: 41 to 54**

*41. And know that one fifth of all the battle gains is for God, the Messenger, near relatives, orphans, the needy, and the wayfarer; if you believe in God and in that which We have sent down to Our servant on the day of the criterion, the day when the two armies met. God has power over all things.*

*42. When you were on the near bank (of the valley), and they were on the far side, and the caravan was below you. Even if you had made a mutual appointment to meet, you would certainly have failed in keeping the appointment. But (thus you met), that God might bring about something that has already been ordained; so that he who would perish might perish by a clear proof, and he who would live might live by a clear proof; and most surely God is All-Hearing, Omniscient.*

*43. Remember (Prophet) when God showed them to you in your dream as few; if He had shown them to you as many, you would have certainly faltered, and you would have certainly disputed the matter; but God saved (you). He knows well what is in the breasts.*

*44. And remember when you met, He showed them to you as few in your eyes, and He made you appear as contemptible in their eyes, so that God might accomplish a matter already destined. To God all things are brought back.*

*45. Believers, when you meet an army, stand firm, and remember God much; that you may succeed.*

*46. And obey God and His Messenger; and do not dispute one with another lest you lose heart and your power desert you; and persevere. God is with those who are perseverant.*

*47. And do not be like those who came forth from their homes boastfully and showing off to people, to hinder them from the path of God. God’s knowledge encompasses all that they do.*

48. Remember when Satan made their deeds seem fair to them, and said, "No one among people can overcome you this day, for I am your protector." But when the two armies came in sight of each other, he turned on his heels, and said, "I disassociate myself from you; I see what you do not see; I fear God. God is severe in punishment."

49. When the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a disease say, "These were deluded by their religion." Whoso puts his trust in God, God is indeed Eminent, Wise.

50. If you could see, when the angels took the souls of the disbelievers, (how) they did smite their faces and their backs, (saying), "Taste the torment of the blazing Fire."

51. This is because of the deeds which your (own) hands sent forth; for God is never unjust to His servants.

52. They are like the people of Pharaoh and those before them. They rejected the revelations of God, and God seized them for their crimes. God is indeed Strong, and severe in punishment.

53. That is because God will never change the blessings which He has bestowed on a people until they change what is in themselves. Verily, God is All-Hearing, Omniscient.

54. In the same manner as Pharaoh's people and those before them; they denied the revelations of their Lord, therefore We destroyed them on account of their sins and We drowned Pharaoh's people, and they were all wrongdoers. (8:41-54)

"And know that one fifth of all the battle gains is for God, the Messenger, near relatives, orphans, the needy, and the wayfarer; if you believe in God and in that which We have sent down to Our servant on the day of the criterion, the day when the two armies met. God has power over all things." There are many variant opinions in the books of jurisprudence regarding the definitions of the "battle gains" and the "Anfal," whether they are the same thing or not. There are also discussions on how to distribute the one fifth of the battle gains which is left for God, the Messenger, near relatives, orphans, the needy, and the wayfarer. We will not comment on the jurisprudence rules that can be derived from this verse, and we will leave that to books on jurisprudence. In addition, the discussion of the battle gains is really an academic endeavor. The issue of battle gains is not an issue that touches upon the daily lives of Muslims. At the moment there is no Muslim nation in the world to which these rules would apply.

The general rule that the verse indicates is that battle gains are to be divided into five portions: four portions are divided among those who fought the battle, and the allocation of the fifth portion is left to the discretion of God and His Messenger (PBUH). However, the verse introduces the criteria which can be used to differentiate between believers and disbelievers. The verse bases the entitlement of the Muslims who fought in the battle of Badr to be described as "believers" on their acceptance of God's ruling regarding the distribution of the battle gains. Thus, the condition for becoming a believer is to accept and apply the divine law. Disbelief is simply refusal to accept and apply divine law.

The battle of Badr (the battle that was started, planned, and executed under divine guidance) was certainly a demarcation point and a milestone (a criterion) which differentiated the truth from falsehood. It provided a demarcation point between the truth (which is the basis of the creation of the heavens and earth, which supports the sound initial natural disposition of all living things, and which is the symbol of the Oneness of God) and the falsehood supported by the tyrants.

It was a criterion which differentiated between truth represented by the belief in the absolute Oneness of God and the falsehood which is represented by associating partners with God.

It was a milestone in the history of Islam. It separated two different eras in the history of the Islamic movement: the era of perseverance, preparation, and anticipation and the era of maturity, taking initiative, and forward motion. It was a milestone at which Islam assumed its identity as a new way of life, a new project for humankind, a new order for the society, and a new form for governing. This is a milestone which gave rise to a new Islamic perspective, the perspective of Islam as a universal proclamation for liberating the human being and destroying the tyrants.

The battle of Badr provided a change in the Islamic perspective on the kernels of victory and defeat. The battle between Quraish and the Muslims, started with Quraish having all the means of victory while the Muslims had all the reasons for defeat. This was reflected in the comments made by the hypocrites, who said, *"These were deluded by their religion."* God wanted the first battle, between the few believers and the many disbelievers, to start this way to manifest the difference between two different perspectives on the kernels of victory and defeat. One perspective considers the strong faith as the kernel of victory, while the other considers the numbers of fighters and the magnitude of the equipment as the means to victory. This demonstrated to people that the ultimate victory belongs to strong and sound faith. The believers should not delay the engagement with the falsehood until they attain the same level of apparent material power as their enemy, because they have another power which will tip the balance in their favor. This statement is a fact proven on the battlefield, not merely words uttered.

There is also another dimension to the fact that the battle of Badr is considered a criterion between truth and falsehood. This was the dimension which was stated early in the Sura, *"And when God promised you one of the two bands (of the enemy), that it should be yours. You wished that the unarmed one should be yours, but God willed to establish the truth according to His words and to cut off the roots of the disbelievers. That He might establish the truth and abolish falsehood, even if the criminals disliked."* The original objective of the Muslim expedition was to capture the caravan, but God wanted them to fight the Quraishite army instead. The reason behind this change in objective is that this was the way to establish the truth and to eradicate falsehood. This statement points out a major fact: the truth could not be established by issuing a manifesto nor by stating a theoretical belief. Falsehood had to be eradicated before the truth could be established. The forces of the truth should overcome the forces of falsehood on the battle ground. This religion uses a dynamic approach to deal with the realities of life.

The truth has been established, and the falsehood has been eradicated on the battle ground. The actual victory was then the criterion which differentiated between the truth and falsehood. This is the criterion which the verses alluded to in its narrative. This is the truth which was behind the will of God in bringing the Prophet (PBUH) with the truth to the battle ground, allowing the caravan to evade the pursuit of Muslims, and bringing the army of Quraish to fight the Muslims.

*“When you were on the near bank (of the valley), and they were on the far side, and the caravan was below you. Even if you had made a mutual appointment to meet, you would certainly have failed in keeping the appointment. But (thus you met), that God might bring about something that has already been ordained; so that he who would perish might perish by a clear proof, and he who would live might live by a clear proof; and most surely God is All-Hearing, Omniscient. Remember (Prophet) when God showed them to you in your dream as few; if He had shown them to you as many, you would have certainly faltered, and you would have certainly disputed the matter; but God saved (you). He knows well what is in the breasts. And remember when you met, He showed them to you as few in your eyes, and He made you appear as contemptible in their eyes, so that God might accomplish a matter already destined. To God all things are brought back.”* Reading these verses, one can see with the eyes of imagination the troops lined up against each other. One can sense the divine planning in the background, moving people around in a strategic way. The divine plan was to belittle the number in each group in the eyes of the other group. This was so that the Muslims would not be scared to fight a much larger army than theirs and the disbelievers would become lax in fighting what they think a much smaller army than theirs. The timing of the meeting was divinely ordained as well to achieve a pre-ordained decree, and the Muslims were the tool to make this achievement. What was it that God decreed? *“So that he who would perish might perish by a clear proof, and he who would live might live by a clear proof.”* The word “perish” could be construed to mean death or to mean disbelief. Thus, perish may refer to physical death or spiritual death. Similarly, the word “live” could be construed to mean the literal meaning of being alive or it can be used to indicate a person who has a live faith. It seems that in these verses the words life and perish refer to belief and disbelief, as they were used in the verse, *“Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness from which he can never come out?”* (6:122) In this verse life and death were used to mean a state of belief and disbelief, respectively. The reason we choose this interpretation of the words “perish” and “live” here is that God called the battle of Badr the “Day of the Criterion” in which God differentiated between truth and falsehood. So, the choice of belief or disbelief would be based on a clear proof that would be gleaned from the battle.

The way the battle was conducted shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that the divine power was behind the planning and the execution of the battle. If the battle was left to human measures the Muslims would have never won. The disbelievers themselves said to their ally who offered to support them with fighters from his tribe, “If it is the people we are fighting, we are more powerful than them, but if it is God we are fighting (as

Muhammad claims) no human power could fight God.” They soon realized that they were fighting God, as they were told by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

This is what comes to mind when one reads these verses, but there is also another meaning. A battle in which the army of the truth conquers the army of falsehood and establishes the truth in reality after it had been established in the believers’ consciousness is a means for opening up the eyes and minds of people to see the truth. This clarifies all misunderstandings and removes all doubts. It provides the people with clear evidence to enable them to make their choice: to believe or not to believe. God is certainly, *“All-Hearing, Omniscient.”*

*“Remember (Prophet) when God showed them to you in your dream as few; if He had shown them to you as many, you would have certainly faltered, and you would have certainly disputed the matter; but God saved (you). He knows well what is in the breasts.”* It was the divine planning which made the Messenger (PBUH) see in his dream that the army of disbelievers is small in number. When he told the believers about his dream, they were reassured and encouraged to fight. In this verse, God told His Prophet (PBUH) that this was deliberate because had the believers known of the true size of the army of the disbelievers they would have been discouraged and they would have faltered. This would have had catastrophic consequences but, *“God saved (you). He knows well what is in the breasts.”*

The dream was not a lie, because even if they were large in number they were few in effectiveness. This was the true message that was delivered in the dream: the disbelievers are weak and can be easily conquered by the believers. When the two armies met, the same message was delivered to the fighting armies. This was the divine plan to get the two sides to fight.

*“Believers, when you meet an army, stand firm, and remember God much; that you may succeed. And obey God and His Messenger; and do not dispute one with another lest you lose heart and your power desert you; and persevere. God is with those who are perseverant. And do not be like those who came forth from their homes boastfully and showing off to people, to hinder them from the path of God. God’s knowledge encompasses all that they do.”* These are the true kernels of victory: to persevere and to be steadfast in facing the enemy, to continuously remember God, to obey God and His Messenger, to avoid disputes, to persevere, and to avoid showing off.

Being perseverant and steadfast is the first step towards victory. The army who is perseverant and steadfast is the army who will win the battle. The believers should know that their enemy suffers as much as they suffer but they do not have hope in God as the believers have. The disbelievers do not get the divine support that the believers were promised to get. If they persevere for another moment, their enemy will crumble. Is there anything that can shake the ground under the feet of the believers when they are certain they will get one of the two excellent results: martyrdom or victory?

Remembrance of God at the time of battle provides the believer with constant guidance and continuous training. Obedience to God and His Messenger guarantees that the believers engage in the battle with hearts submitting to the will of God. This will eliminate any tendency for disputes to arise. Disputes arise when orders emanate from multiple sources. Submitting to God and His Messenger eliminates personal whims and desires. Disputes arise when personal whims and desires take control and prevent objective dialogue from taking place, not from a genuine difference of opinion. Any army should exercise a great deal of discipline hence the requirement to obey God and His Messenger (PBUH).

The last piece of instruction was to avoid arrogance and showing off. The believers fight for the sake of God. They fight to destroy the tyrants and establish God's right to be worshipped alone. The believers fight to proclaim the liberation of the human being and free humankind from the shackles of all types of slavery. They fight to protect people against oppression. They do not fight to control people or for the mere love of aggression against people. The believers do not fight for any worldly gain.

It was Quraish who came out to fight in arrogance as was demonstrated by Abu Jahl who refused to go back to Mecca after he was told that the caravan escaped and that there were no longer reasons for fighting. He was adamant to engage in a battle with the Muslims. He said, "By God, we will not go back to Mecca. We will go camp at Badr for three days. We will slaughter animals, eat, drink, and listen to music. This way the Arabs would continue to fear us." When the messenger, whom Abu Sufian sent to tell Abu Jahl that the caravan escaped and that there is no longer a need to fight, came back with Abu Jahl's answer Abu Sufian said, "This is characteristic of Abu Jahl, he hated to change his mind because he was a tyrant. Tyranny is a bad trait and a bad omen. If Muhammad wins, we will be ever humiliated." It did happen and Muhammad (PBUH) won and the disbelievers were humiliated. God is aware of what they do, "*God's knowledge encompasses all that they do.*"

*"Remember when Satan made their deeds seem fair to them, and said, 'No one among people can overcome you this day, for I am your protector.' But when the two armies came in sight of each other, he turned on his heels, and said, 'I disassociate myself from you; I see what you do not see; I fear God. God is severe in punishment.'"* The verse states that Satan enticed the disbelievers to think that what they were doing was the right thing. This enticement encouraged them to prepare to fight the believers. However, when the fight was about to start, "*he turned on his heels, and said, 'I disassociate myself from you; I see what you do not see; I fear God. God is severe in punishment.'*" We accept the truth of this statement. However, we have no way of knowing how this took place. I am not in agreement with the interpretations made by Sheikh Muhammad Abdu and Sheikh Rasheed Reda for this verse. They belong to a school which tries to find logical material explanations for events which belong to the unseen.

The hypocrites thought that the believers were doomed, "*When the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a disease say, 'These were deluded by their religion.'*" Whoso puts his

*trust in God, God is indeed Eminent, Wise.*” The hypocrites were people who adopted Islam, but their faith was weak. They joined the Muslim army reluctantly. When they saw the Qurashite army they thought that the Muslims had been deluded. The hypocrites and those in whose hearts are a disease had no insight to make them perceive the true kernels of victory and defeat. They were only able to judge on the basis of the superficial balance of material power. They were unable to understand how deep faith and strong trust in God could change this balance of power. Only believing hearts are able to perceive the complete set of forces that will decide the final result of war. These forces include both the material as well as the spiritual forces, because believing hearts realize that “*Whoso puts his trust in God, God is indeed Eminent, Wise.*” The believers are always asked to include the effect of faith and creed in the balance of power and to see with the insight of a believer how this effect is able to change the balance. They were asked to use God’s light as their guide. They were asked not to fear the material power of the tyrants. God will always be there to support the believers who put their trust in Him, “*Whoso puts his trust in God, God is indeed Eminent, Wise.*”

*“If you could see, when the angels took the souls of the disbelievers, (how) they did smite their faces and their backs, (saying), ‘Taste the torment of the blazing Fire.’ This is because of the deeds which your (own) hands sent forth; for God is never unjust to His servants.”* It may be that these two verses were describing what happened to the disbelievers as they were dying in the battle of Badr. The verses could also be giving a description of what will happen to the disbelievers whenever and wherever they die. The expression, “*If you could see,*” is used to address anyone who could see. The verses paint a fearful image for the death of the disbelievers, having the souls taken away in humiliation. The Qur’anic style changed to a dialogue between the angels and the disbelievers. The angels will address the disbelievers as if they were present, “*Taste the torment of the blazing Fire.*” You have not been wronged; you only reap the result of what you had done.

These verses give rise to a question: do the disbelievers suffer the torment of the blazing fire immediately after they die, or will it be postponed till the Day of Judgment? Both explanations are equally probable. This is one of the matters of the unseen. Only God has knowledge of the answer. We are obliged to believe in the certainty of its occurrence.

The verses continued to relate the response of the disbelievers to other disbelievers, “*They are like the people of Pharaoh and those before them. They rejected the revelations of God, and God seized them for their crimes. God is indeed Strong and severe in punishment.*” All people are judged according to the same divine standard, whatever happened to the disbelievers in the battle of Badr did happen to other disbelievers before them, like the people of Pharaoh, “*They rejected the revelations of God, and God seized them for their crimes. God is indeed Strong and severe in punishment.*” God bestowed upon them his blessings, gave them abundant provisions, and appointed them kings and rulers. This was a test to see whether they would be grateful or thankless. But they were thankless and they became tyrants, oppressing people and spreading injustice. They rejected God’s revelations. So, they deserved to be

punished. *“That is because God will never change the blessings which He has bestowed on a people until they change what is in themselves. Verily God is All-Hearing, Omniscient.”* They were destroyed when they rejected the revelations. God could have destroyed them even before they were given the revelations, but the divine law is, *“nor do We punish until We had sent a Messenger (to give warning).”*

We need to stop here for a moment and discuss this verse, *“God will never change the blessings which He has bestowed on a people until they change what is in themselves.”* It outlines God’s justice in holding people to account. He would not take away a blessing that He had previously bestowed on them unless they change their intentions, behavior, and where they stand. When they fail the test and declare their ingratitude then they deserve to be deprived of the blessings of God. The verse also indicates that the destiny that has been pre-ordained is linked to human behavior. This destiny will not take place until the human behave in a certain way that makes him/her deserve the pre-ordained destiny. This is in a way an honor that God bestowed on humankind. It is the responsibility of humankind to appreciate this honor and to strive to earn the blessings of God by showing gratitude to Him.

This major truth represents one of the dimensions of the Islamic perspective of the nature of humankind, the relationship between humankind and the will of God, and the relationship between humankind and the universe. It is clear from this verse that God values humankind. It also becomes clear that humankind has a role in shaping their own destiny as well as what is happening around them. The intentions, actions, and behavior of humankind are effective tools in shaping their destiny, with the will of God and according to His pre-ordained destiny. God honored humankind by bestowing on them this effective role in contrast to the negative role that humankind is thought to play in the materialistic approach to life. In the materialistic approach, humankind is hopelessly lost in the dialectic materialism.

This truth also establishes the principle that the recompense is always commensurate with the deeds which is a sign of the divine justice, *“God is never unjust to His servants.”*

*“In the same manner as Pharaoh’s people and those before them; they denied the revelations of their Lord, therefore We destroyed them on account of their sins and We drowned Pharaoh’s people, and they were all wrongdoers.”* Praise be God the Lord of the worlds.

## **Verses: 55 to 75**

*55. The worst of creatures in the sight of God are those who disbelieve and will not believe.*

*56. The ones with whom you made a covenant, but they break their covenant every time, and they are not conscious of God.*

*57. Therefore, if you gain dominance over them in war, then disperse those who are behind them (by making them an example), that they may be mindful.*

*58. If you (have a reason to) fear treachery from a group, throw back (their covenant) to them, (so as to be) on equal terms. Indeed, God does not love the treacherous.*

*59. Let not the disbelievers think that they have won. They will never escape.*

*60. Prepare for them all you can muster of (armed) force and of horses tethered, that thereby you may terrify the enemy of God and your enemy, and others beside them whom you do not know. God knows them. Whatsoever you spend in the way of God it will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged.*

*61. But if they incline to peace, incline you also to it, and put your trust in God. He is the All-Hearing, the Omniscient.*

*62. And if they intend to deceive you, verily God is sufficient for you. It is He who strengthened you with His help and with the believers.*

*63. And (moreover) He has put affection between their hearts. If you had spent all that is in the earth you could not have put affection between their hearts, but God has done it. He is Eminent, Wise.*

*64. Prophet, God is Sufficient for you and those who follow you of the believers.*

*65. Prophet, exhort the believers to fight. If there be of you twenty perseverant, they shall overcome two hundred and if there be of you a hundred (perseverant) they shall overcome a thousand of those who disbelieved, because they (the disbelievers) are people who do not understand.*

*66. Now has God lightened your burden, for He knows that there is weakness in you. So, if there be of you a hundred perseverant, they shall overcome two hundred, and if there be of you a thousand (perseverant) they shall overcome two thousand by God's permission. God is with the perseverant.*

*67. It is not fitting for a prophet that he should have prisoners of war until he has thoroughly subdued the land. You desire the temporal goods of this world; but God desires the Hereafter. And God is Eminent, Wise.*

*68. Had it not been previously ordained by God, an awful torment would have befallen you for the (ransom) that you took.*

*69. Now enjoy what you have won, as lawful and good, and remain conscious of God. God is All-Forgiving, Giver of Mercy.*

70. Prophet, say to those captives who are in your hands, "If God knows any good in your hearts, He will give you something better than what has been taken from you, and He will forgive you. God is All-Forgiving, Giver of Mercy."

71. And if they intend to betray you, indeed, they have betrayed God before, but He gave (you) power over them. God is Omniscient, Wise.

72. Those who believed, and emigrated, and strove with their wealth and their lives in the cause of God, as well as those who sheltered and aided, these are (all) friends and protectors, one of another. As to those who believed but did not emigrate, you owe no duty of protection to them until they emigrate; but if they seek your aid in religion, it is your duty to help them, except against a people with whom you have a treaty of mutual alliance. Indeed, God is All-Seeing of what you do.

73. And those who disbelieve are protectors one of another - If you do not do the same, there will be persecution in the land, and great corruption.

74. Those who believed, and emigrated, and strove in the cause of God as well as those who sheltered and aided, these are the true believers. For them, is forgiveness of sins and a provision most generous.

75. And those who afterwards believed and emigrated and strove along with you, they are of you; and those of (blood) relationship are more entitled (to inheritance) in God's Book. God knows of all things. (8:55-75)

"The worst of creatures in the sight of God are those who disbelieve and will not believe. The ones with whom you made a covenant, but they break their covenant every time, and they are not conscious of God. Therefore, if you gain dominance over them in war, then disperse those who are behind them (by making them an example), that they may be mindful. If you (have a reason to) fear treachery from a group, throw back (their covenant) to them, (so as to be) on equal terms. Indeed, God does not love the treacherous. Let not the disbelievers think that they have won. They will never escape. Prepare for them all you can muster of (armed) force and of horses tethered, that thereby you may terrify the enemy of God and your enemy, and others beside them whom you do not know. God knows them. Whatsoever you spend in the way of God it will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged. But if they incline to peace, incline you also to it, and put your trust in God. He is the All-Hearing, the Omniscient. And if they intend to deceive you, verily God is sufficient for you. It is He who strengthened you with His help and with the believers. And (moreover) He has put affection between their hearts. If you had spent all that is in the earth you could not have put affection between their hearts, but God has done it. He is Eminent, Wise."

These verses address a situation that faced the fledgling Muslim community in Medina. They established the rules which delineate the dealings with external states and organizations. The rules organize the relationships between the Muslim state and other

states. These rules continue to apply. Verses in Surat Al-Tawba (Chapter 9) came later on to amend these rules and to state the details of the final protocol for war and peace between Muslims and other states.

The rules stated that the Muslim state can have peace agreements with other non-Muslim states. The Muslim state should respect these agreements and take them very seriously. However, if it came to be known that the other state is using such an agreement to camouflage their aggressive intent and is actively involved in the preparation for war against the Muslims, then the Muslims should announce the annulment of the agreement. The Muslims then are able to respond to the aggression posed by its enemy in whatever way they feel appropriate. The Muslim state should retain its peaceful relationship with those who choose to have peaceful relationships with the Muslims. This is obviously a reasonable and realistic approach to international relations.

*“The worst of creatures in the sight of God are those who disbelieve and will not believe. The ones with whom you made a covenant, but they break their covenant every time, and they are not conscious of God.”* The word “creature” which is used in this verse includes any creature that walks on earth. However, the use of this word in reference to a human being is an aspersion. It denigrates those who are in a state of mind which prevents them from accepting the truth and from honoring their agreements. They keep reneging on their agreements over and over again.

There are several narratives which identify those whom the verse is referring to. One narrative indicated that the verse refers to one of the Jewish tribes of Medina. Another narrative stated that the verse refers to Arab tribes living near Medina. It does not matter to whom the reference was made, the verse delineated general rules to be followed in similar situations.

Those who rejected faith and were obstinate in their rejection, corrupted the initial natural human disposition that God gave them. Having lost aspects of their human nature, they resist any binding constraints which usually come with an agreement, just like beasts who roam around freely resisting any constraints. They are even worse than beasts, because beasts are controlled by their own initial natural disposition while these human beings have broken every constraint.

These people could not be trusted. Their just recompense is to take away from them the security that they took away from others, *“Therefore if you gain dominance over them in war, then disperse those who are behind them (by making them an example), that they may be mindful.”* It is a strange expression. It paints a picture of overwhelming fear which acts as a deterrent to those who are contemplating aggression but have not yet started to rethink their plans against the Muslims.

This is the nature of the divine project which needs to be instilled in the hearts of Muslims. This religion should be strong, and it should be respected so that it will be able to destroy the tyrants who fight it and try to stop its movement to free people on earth.

This is the first rule regarding those who breach their peace agreement with the Muslims. The second rule deals with the case when the Muslims anticipate treacherous behavior from a party that has a peace agreement with them, *“If you (have a reason to) fear treachery from a group, throw back (their covenant) to them, (so as to be) on equal terms. Indeed, God does not love the treacherous.”* Muslims should honor their pledges and agreements. If there is a threat that the people, with whom a peace agreement has been ratified, would breach their agreement then Muslims should take a proactive step and proclaim the annulment of the agreement. This is an honorable way to deal with an enemy in such a situation. Muslims should behave in an honorable manner even when dealing with a treacherous enemy. Declaring the agreement null and void brings the conflict to light instead of scheming in the dark. Muslims should not launch a surprise attack against an enemy, with whom they had a peace agreement, before they announce that the agreement has become null and void.

Islam promotes high ethical behavior. Islam does not permit treachery and treason. Islam does not approve of the principle that the results justify the means. Muslims should uphold these principles because, *“God does not love the treacherous.”*

We have to put these laws and rules in perspective. These rules were established at a time when people fighting each other were required only to observe one law: the law of the jungle. Islam introduced the concept and rules of a just war while Europe was still immersed in its medieval traditions.

Qur'an then assured the Muslims and promised them a victory over their disbelieving enemy, *“Let not the disbelievers think that they have won. They will never escape.”* Betrayal and treachery will not avail them of victory nor will they be able to escape. God will support the believers and will not acquit the treacherous. The disbelievers will never be able to frustrate God and they will never be able to frustrate the believers because God is on the side of the believers. Those who behave ethically will always win over the unethical, as long as they are sincerely devoted to God.

Islam, however, commands its followers to use all possible material tools necessary for the achievement of victory. This is the solid ground that the Muslims should stand on before high expectations in victory are granted by God, *“Prepare for them all you can muster of (armed) force and of horses tethered, that thereby you may terrify the enemy of God and your enemy, and others beside them whom you do not know. God knows them. Whatsoever you spend in the way of God it will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged.”* The obligation to prepare all material means necessary for the achievement of victory is part of the obligation to fight in the way of God. The verse commands the believers to amass all sorts of material means that can make them superior over their enemy in the battlefield. The verse mentions horses because they were the familiar war equipment at that time. However, the general statement, *“Prepare for them all you can muster of (armed) force,”* encompasses all sorts of war equipment.

Islam needed force and power to free people from the tyranny of the tyrant. This power provides security to the believers and allows them to practice their faith freely without

being subjected to oppression or persecution. It deters any attempt of the enemy of Islam to attack the Muslim state. It fills the hearts of the enemy of Islam with fear so they would not entertain any notion of standing in the way of the spread of Islam. Power is also necessary to destroy the tyrants who assume godship, do not acknowledge the supremacy of God, and force human beings to follow their self-made rules.

Let us explore the limits of the command, *“Prepare for them all you can muster of (armed) force.”* The command implies that all means should be explored and prepared. Muslims should not ignore any means within their reach. The first objective of this command is to, *“terrify the enemy of God and your enemy, and others beside them whom you do not know. God knows them.”* This preparation needs money. Therefore, the command for fighting in the way of God has been conjoined with the command to spend in the way of God. This spending should be made with the sole intention of seeking the pleasure of God. This removes any doubt that Islam engages in wars which aim at achieving any worldly gains. Islam does not condone wars which are waged by a nation to exploit people, to open markets for its products, to conquer and humiliate other nations, or to establish the supremacy of its race or ethnicity. God does not want a nation, a race, a class, or a people to rule over another nation or a people. God wants to establish the supremacy of His law. God does not need people to worship Him, but the supremacy of His law paves the road for happiness, freedom, and dignity for all people on earth.

The third rule that these verses indicate is the rule regarding how to deal with those who want to establish peaceful relations with the Muslim camp, *“But if they incline to peace, incline you also to it, and put your trust in God. He is the All-Hearing, the Omniscient.”* The term used to describe this interest in peace is a gentle expression: *if they incline to peace*. It paints an image of the elegant motion of a wing which points nicely to the objective of establishing peace. The command to Muslims to incline to peace is conjoint with command to put their trust in God; He hears everything and knows all secrets. Putting their trust in God provides a safety net for the believers.

*“And if they intend to deceive you, verily God is Sufficient for you. It is He who strengthened you with His help and with the believers. And (moreover) He has put affection between their hearts. If you had spent all that is in the earth you could not have put affection between their hearts, but God has done it. He is Eminent, Wise.”* The Qur’an addressed the Prophet (PBUH) saying that, *“God is Sufficient for you,”* God supported you in achieving victory and He supported you by making the believers, who fulfilled their pledge to God, a force to reckon with. They were a disparate group, but God united them together. This was the state of the Arabs before Islam. They were always fighting each other for one reason or another, but when they adopted Islam, they became one brotherhood. This was a miracle. Only God was able to do it through the faith of Islam. The antagonists became friends. The Prophet (PBUH) has been reported to have said, *“The status of some of God’s servants, who were neither prophets nor martyrs, will be the envy of the prophets and martyrs on the Day of Judgment.”* The companions asked the Prophet (PBUH), *“Will you tell us who these people are?”* He said, *“Those who love each other. They were motivated to share this love because they shared the spirit God. They were neither kin nor did they have business interests that brought them*

together. Their faces will have lights, and they will walk with this light. They will not fear when people will be frightened and they will not grieve when people are saddened.” The Prophet (PBUH) has also been quoted to have said, “When a Muslim takes the hand of his fellow Muslim to greet him when they meet, both their sins will fall off as the leaves fall off a tree on a windy fall day. God will forgive all their sins even if these sins were like the foam on sea surface.”

*“Prophet, God is Sufficient for you and those who follow you of the believers. Prophet, exhort the believers to fight. If there be of you twenty perseverant, they shall overcome two hundred, and if there be of you a hundred (perseverant) they shall overcome a thousand of those who disbelieved, because they (the disbelievers) are people who do not understand. Now has God lightened your burden, for He knows that there is weakness in you. So if there be of you a hundred perseverant, they shall overcome two hundred, and if there be of you a thousand (perseverant) they shall overcome two thousand by God’s permission. God is with the perseverant.”* These verses bring to mind the image of a tiny force represented by those who oppose God’s army standing in the face of the mighty power of God. Such trivial force stands no chance in front of the overwhelming power of God. The result is then easy to predict as reflected in, *“Prophet, God is Sufficient for you and those who follow you of the believers.”* Then a command which exhorts the believers to fight is issued, *“Prophet, exhort the believers to fight.”* They are on par with their enemy, even though they are much fewer in number, *“If there be of you twenty perseverant, they shall overcome two hundred, and if there be of you a hundred (perseverant) they shall overcome a thousand of those who disbelieved,”* Why can they overcome a much bigger army, *“because they (the disbelievers) are people who do not understand.”* On the face of it, one may not be able to perceive that a relationship between understanding and winning a battle exists. However, the relationship between the two is real and strong. The believers understand their program, they understand the purpose of their lives, they understand the relationship between the true God and His servants, and they accept the supremacy of God. The believers understand that they are guided by God’s guidance, they are the vicegerents of God on earth, and they are given the task of bringing guidance to people to take them from the realm of the worship of the creatures to the realm of worship of the Creator. They understand that their task is to establish a flourishing and sustainable life on earth, a life that is ruled with justice. They understand that their task is to establish the kingdom of God on earth, a kingdom based on justice. This understanding fills the hearts of the believers with light, confidence, strength, and certainty. It motivates them to fight their enemy who do not understand. The ratio one to ten is the standard for the measure of strength between the believers who do understand and the disbelievers who do not understand. For the weak among Muslims the ratio is reduced to one to two, *“Now has God lightened your burden, for He knows that there is weakness in you. So if there be of you a hundred perseverant, they shall overcome two hundred, and if there be of you a thousand (perseverant) they shall overcome two thousand by God’s permission. God is with the perseverant.”*

*“It is not fitting for a prophet that he should have prisoners of war until he has thoroughly subdued the land. You desire the temporal goods of this world; but God desires the Hereafter. And God is Eminent, Wise. Had it not been previously ordained by*

*God, an awful torment would have befallen you for the (ransom) that you took. Now enjoy what you have won, as lawful and good, and remain conscious of God. God is All-Forgiving, Giver of Mercy. Prophet, say to those captives who are in your hands, 'If God knows any good in your hearts, He will give you something better than what has been taken from you, and He will forgive you. God is All-Forgiving, Giver of Mercy.' And if they intend to betray you, indeed, they have betrayed God before, but He gave (you) power over them. God is Omniscient, Wise."* Ibn Ishaq narrated in his account of the battle of Badr, "The Prophet (PBUH) was in his tent surveying the battle ground, while Sa'd bin Mo'az (RA) together with other companions were standing guard at the tent's door when the Muslim army overpowered the disbelievers and Muslims started taking the disbelievers captives. The Prophet (PBUH) sensed that Sa'd (RA) did not like what he saw. He asked Sa'd (RA), 'I can see in your face that you are not happy with what the Muslims are doing.' Sa'd (RA) said, 'Yes, by God, Messenger of God. This is our first battle with the disbelievers. We should have finished off the men instead of taking them captives.'"

Imam Ahmed narrated on the authority of 'Ali bin Hashem, that Anas (RA) said, "The Prophet (PBUH) asked his companions to advise him what to do with the men that were taken captives in the battle of Badr. 'Umar bin Al-Khattab (RA) said, 'Messenger of God, they should be executed.' The Prophet (PBUH) declined this advice and said, 'Not long ago, these people were your brethren. Today, God has given you power over them.' 'Umar (RA) repeated his suggestion again and the Prophet (PBUH) ignored it for the second time. Abu Bakr (RA) said, 'Messenger of God, I suggest that you forgive them and accept a ransom from each one of them.' The Prophet (PBUH) was pleased with this suggestion and freed the captives for a ransom. It was then that the verse, 'Had it not been previously ordained by God, an awful torment would have befallen you for the (ransom) that you took.'"

Al-Aa'mash narrated on the authority of 'Umar bin Murrah that Abd-Allah (RA) said, "The Messenger of God (PBUH) asked his companions what to do with the enemy combatants who were taken as captives after the battle of Badr. Abu Bakr (RA) said, 'Messenger of God, these are your people and your family do not execute them and ask them to repent, may God accept their repentance.' 'Umar (RA) said, 'Messenger of God, these are people who rejected you and exiled you, they deserve to be executed.' Abd-Allah bin Rawahah (RA) said, 'Set up a big fire and throw them into it.' The Prophet (PBUH) did not comment and went into his tent. The Muslims were wondering which advice would the Prophet (PBUH) follow. When the Prophet (PBUH) came out of his tent, he said, 'God softens hearts of some men, and their hearts become softer than milk; and God hardens hearts of others until their hearts become harder than a rock. Abu Bakr (RA) you follow the example of Prophet Abraham (PBUH) who said (to God), "Whoever followed me is from me and whoever disobeyed me, You are the All-Forgiving the Giver of Mercy," and the example of Prophet Jesus (PBUH) who said (to God), "If You torment them, they are your servants but if You forgive them, You are certainly the Eminent, Wise." 'Umar (RA) you follow the example of Prophet Moses (PBUH) who said (to God), "Our Lord, obliterate their wealth and harden their hearts so that they will not believe until they see the painful punishment," and the example of Prophet Noah

(PBUH) who said (to God), “My Lord, do not leave upon earth from among the disbelievers an inhabitant.” I say they either pay the ransom or would be killed.” Ibn Maso’od (RA) said, “I said to the Messenger of God, ‘Messenger of God, make an exception for Suhail bin Baidaa because he accepted Islam.’ I was never so frightened in my life as I was frightened that day that stones would fall from the sky on top of my head (because I said this).” The Prophet (PBUH) said, “with the exception of Suhail bin Baidaa.” Then the verse, *“It is not fitting for a prophet that he should have prisoners of war until he has thoroughly subdued the land,”* was revealed.” (This tradition was narrated by Imam Ahmed and Termidhi).

The verse reprimanded the Prophet (PBUH) and the Muslims for taking prisoners of war and freeing them later for a ransom, before making sure that the enemy has been completely subdued. Those prisoners of war who were freed will go back to join the ranks of the disbelievers’ army and will continue to fight the Muslims. The battle of Badr was the first battle, in a long war, between the disbelievers and the believers. The believers were still very few in number. The freed prisoners of war would most certainly join the ranks of the disbelievers’ army again to fight the believers. This puts the believers at a disadvantage because they were few in number in comparison with their enemy. Another principle may have been behind the reprimand that needed to be established. This is the principle which was outlined in ‘Umar’s (RA) statement, “So that God would know that we do not harbor any kind feelings towards the disbelievers.”

God has forgiven the believers who fought in the battle of Badr and bestowed His grace upon them, so He gave them the permission to enjoy the gains of the battle including the ransom they received. They were also reminded to remain conscious of God, *“Now enjoy what you have won, as lawful and good, and remain conscious of God. God is All-Forgiving, Giver of Mercy.”*

The verses made a proposition to the captives, a proposition that could have touched their hearts with kindness and filled them with light and hope. The proposition promised a future better than their past, a life more dignified than they had before, and a gain that would compensate what they had already lost, *“Prophet, say to those captives who are in your hands, ‘If God knows any good in your hearts, He will give you something better than what has been taken from you, and He will forgive you. God is All-Forgiving, Giver of Mercy.’”*

This grace is contingent on the sincerity of their hearts. If their hearts are opened to receive the light of the truth, then God will bestow all His blessings on them. However, the promise of hope is followed by a warning, *“And if they intend to betray you, indeed, they have betrayed God before, but He gave (you) power over them. God is Omniscient, Wise.”*

They did betray God before because they associated partners with Him and did not take Him as their only Lord. This is a betrayal of the covenant that all human beings pledged to their Creator. They should remember that their betrayal to God was the cause of their

captivity, and their punishment will be greater if they harbor an intention to betray the Messenger (PBUH). God knows what they harbor in themselves and He is Wise.

The Sura ends with a lesson about the nature of the bonds between people in a Muslim society and the rules and regulations that control these bonds. The relationships that bond Muslims together are not formed by blood relationships, patriotism, ethnicity, history, language, economic interests, or nationalism. The bond that binds Muslims together in one community is a bond that is rooted in sharing the same faith, the same leadership, and the membership in the same dynamic movement. Those who believed and migrated to the house of Hijra and Islam leaving behind all their belongings, their homes, their interests, and strived for the sake of God with their wealth and their lives; and those who joined them in the same faith, accepted them in their land, opened up their homes for them, supported them, and joined their movement are protectors of one another.

The Muslim community does not owe those who believed but did not migrate any obligation for protection. They believed but they did not completely devote themselves to the faith. They did not obey the leadership, nor did they follow the organization. These are the main principles that govern the relationship between Muslims as enunciated in the following verses, *“Those who believed, and emigrated, and strove with their wealth and their lives in the cause of God, as well as those who sheltered and aided, these are (all) friends and protectors, one of another. As to those who believed but did not emigrate, you owe no duty of protection to them until they emigrate; but if they seek your aid in religion, it is your duty to help them, except against a people with whom you have a treaty of mutual alliance. Indeed, God is All-Seeing of what you do. And those who disbelieve are protectors one of another - If you do not do the same, there will be persecution in the land, and great corruption. Those who believed, and emigrated, and strove in the cause of God as well as those who sheltered and aided, these are the true believers. For them, is forgiveness of sins and a provision most generous. And those who afterwards believed and emigrated and strove along with you, they are of you; and those of (blood) relationship are more entitled (to inheritance) in God’s Book. God knows of all things.”*

The brotherhood pact that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) established between the Muslims in the fledgling Muslim society at the time of Hijra and which continued till the time of the battle of Badr replaced the blood relationship that they acquired by birth. It implied that those who enter into a brotherhood pact can inherit, support, and be responsible for paying ransom money if required for each other. When the Muslim state was established and became recognized as a state after the battle of Badr the rights of inheritance attained by virtue of brotherhood pacts were revoked.

The verses refer to the migration from Mecca to Medina for those who were able to migrate but chose not to migrate. The Muslim state did not have any obligation to protect Muslims who were able to migrate but chose to stay in Mecca because they cared more for their interests or their families than for their faith. However, the Muslim state is obligated to help those Muslims, if they were persecuted because of their faith provided

that those who persecuted them did not have a peace agreement with the Muslim state. A Muslim state should keep its word and should respect its agreements with others.

*“Those who believed, and emigrated, and strove with their wealth and their lives in the cause of God, as well as those who sheltered and aided, these are (all) friends and protectors, one of another. As to those who believed but did not emigrate, you owe no duty of protection to them until they emigrate; but if they seek your aid in religion, it is your duty to help them, except against a people with whom you have a treaty of mutual alliance. Indeed, God is All-Seeing of what you do. And those who disbelieve are protectors one of another - If you do not do the same, there will be persecution in the land, and great corruption.”* Once a person made the proclamation that he/she bears witness that *“there is no deity but God, and that Muhammad is His messenger,”* the loyalty to a family, a nation, a people, or a tribe is replaced by the loyalty to the Messenger (PBUH). The Messenger (PBUH) brought these individuals together into the fold of a new fledgling community which persevered in the face of the persecution of the idolatrous tribal community. The common faith, which they strongly believed in, was the binding principle which brought all Muslims together into one community. When the Muslims migrated to Medina, the Prophet (PBUH) established the brotherhood pacts between the Muslims of Mecca and the Muslims of Medina.

*“Those who believed, and emigrated, and strove in the cause of God as well as those who sheltered and aided, these are the true believers. For them, is forgiveness of sins and a provision most generous.”* These are the true believers. Islam is not established by a mere oral announcement, a proclamation of faith, or even by performing its rituals. Islam is established by adopting it as a dynamic way of life for the community. Those who live according to the Islamic way of life are the true believers. God will provide for them generously. They will be compensated generously for the money that they spent in hosting the migrants and in preparing for the war.

Those who became believers afterwards, migrated, and strived in the way of God will be counted among the early believers, *“And those who afterwards believed and emigrated and strove along with you, they are of you; and those of (blood) relationship are more entitled (to inheritance) in God’s Book. God knows of all things.”*

The requirement for Hijra remained valid until the Muslims captured Mecca. After the opening of Mecca, the whole Arab land came under the control of Muslims and the need for Hijra ceased to exist.

The establishment of the state and the community in the early days of Islam required the use of certain rules to organize the relationships within the community and to meet the special requirements of the fledgling society. One of these rules was that brotherhood in faith took priority over blood relationship among family members, which was reflected in the laws of inheritance adopted after Hijra. After the battle of Badr temporary inheritance laws were revoked, *“those of (blood) relationship are more entitled (to inheritance) in God’s Book.”* This was a natural step after the community became well established and

there was no need to institute special measures to meet the consequences of Hijra. “*God knows of all things.*”

Islam sought to bring people together around the solidarity in faith. This solidarity is aimed at promoting the value of the human being. It is a solidarity based on free choice and not on compulsion. The human being is unable to change his/her sex, ethnic roots, or his/ her color of skin, but he/she is able to choose his/her faith. Ethnicity, language, and color of skin cannot be changed once the individual has been born, but a human being has the free will to adopt whatever faith he/she believes in. This concept dignifies human beings.