

## Al-Anfal

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

### Introduction

This is the first surah of the second group according to the *Makkan-Madinan* division. This group consists of two surahs forming a pair; surah *Al-Anfal* and surah *At-Tauba*. This surah was revealed in 2 A.H after the Battle of *Badr* and it has 75 ayat and 10 sections in all.

Since it contains a detailed and comprehensive review of the battle, it appears that most probably it was revealed all at the same time. But it is also possible that some *ayaat* might have been revealed at a later date and then were incorporated in this surah. One of the similarities that these two *Madinan* surahs have between them is that they mark some important events which resulted in the punishment and retribution of the disbelievers. The first such event was the Battle of *Badr*, the details of which we find in this surah. In this Battle Allah (SWT) gave victory as a Divine favor and blessing to the Muslims and destroyed and humiliated the proud and arrogant *Quraysh* of *Makkah*. The second such event was the conquest of *Makkah*, which we will comment upon (*Insh'Allah*) in surah *At-Tauba*.

(1) "They ask you about the spoils of war. Say: "The spoils are for Allah (SWT) and the Messenger (SAW)." So fear Allah (SWT) and adjust all matters of difference among you." After Allah (SWT) gave Muslims victory over the disbelievers at *Badr*, they had collected a great amount of spoils left by the disbelievers. The distribution of these spoils led to a difference of opinion among the noble Companions (RAA), for those who collected the spoils said that only they have the share in it, because this was the practice before the advent of Islam. Then, Allah (SWT) revealed this *ayah*, which made it clear that the spoils belonged to Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW) and no one holds a claim on them, while the right to their disposal rests with His Messenger (SAW) and he can distribute as he wishes. The Prophet (SAW) then distributed the spoils equally over all participants of the Battle as ordained Divinely. Then Allah (SWT) commanded the Muslims to settle these matters of disputes between themselves and not to argue with each other or

differ and fear Him alone. Then He said: *“And obey Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW), if you are believers.”* i.e. the obedience of the believers should be total and perfect, for if they have such virtues, their disputes will automatically be resolved between them.

(2) *“The believers are only those who, when Allah (SWT) is mentioned, feel a tremor in their hearts and when His revelations are recited unto them, they increase their Faith.”* The present *ayah* along with the next one describes some of the attributes of a true believer. The first attribute described here is the fear of Allah (SWT). It is stated that one of the quality of a true believer is that when the name of Allah (SWT) is mentioned in front of him, his heart is filled with awe and thus implements what He has commanded. This is because of the realization of Allah’s greatness and his love for Him. The second attribute of a true believer described here is that when the *Qur’an* is recited before him, it increases him in his faith and strengthens it. Then Allah (SWT) said: *“And they put their trust in their Lord.”* This is another of the qualities of a believer, who puts his whole trust in Allah (SWT), for they know that whatever He wills, will occur and whatever He does not will, never occurs.

(3) *“Who establish prayer and spend out of that We have provided them.”* This *ayah* describes two of the most important traits of a believer, that they are never neglectful of performing their regular prayers and they spend in the way of Allah (SWT) i.e. obligatory charity and *Sadaqah (voluntary charity)*, from the provisions and wealth that He has provided them with.

(4) *“It is they who are the believers in truth. For them are grades of dignity with their Lord, and Forgiveness and a generous provision.”* Mentioned in the previous ayaat were the qualities of a true believer, here Allah (SWT) mentions their reward in this life and in the Hereafter.

(5) *“As your Lord caused you to go out from your home with the truth, and verily, a party among the believers disliked it.”* As the Companions of the Prophet (RAA) encountered a mutual difference at the time of the distribution of the spoils, similarly at the beginning of the Battle of *Badr*, some of the people disliked the idea of

advancing towards the enemy. But when the Divine decree of their Lord came which commanded them to fight, they all obeyed His command and went along with the Prophet (SAW).

(6) *“Disputing with you concerning the truth after it was made manifest, as if they were being driven to death, while they were looking (at it).”* When the Prophet (SAW) came to know that Abu Sufyan was on his way to *Makkah* with a trading caravan loaded with goods and merchandize, it occurred to him that this was the time to confront the caravan and get their hands on to the merchandize, so that to break the back bone of the *Quraysh* of *Makkah*, whose lives depended on this trade. But this information also reached Abu Sufyan that the Prophet (SAW) along with his Companions (RAA) is waiting in ambush to attack the caravan. Therefore, he immediately sent someone to *Makkah* to tell them about the danger faced by the caravan. When the messenger reached the *Quraysh*, they gathered all their people and prepared a strong armed force and started to march towards *Badr*. In the meantime, Abu Sufyan also changed his route to avoid any danger and headed towards *Makkah*. When the news of one thousand strong army of *Makkah* reached the Prophet (SAW), he immediately consulted his Companions (RAA) to decide whether to fight with the *Quraysh* army or go after the caravan, for he also gave them the good news that Allah (SWT) has promised them victory over one of the groups, the caravan or the army. Most of the Companions (RAA) immediately pledged their obedience to whatever the Messenger (SAW) wished, who was also in the favor of fighting with the army. On the other hand, some of the Companions (RAA) were a little hesitant and they advised to first attack the caravan and then fight the army for they did not come here to fight and thus were not fully prepared for the battle. This is what this *ayah* refers to when it was said that they argued about the truth. But with the background of the Battle in mind we come to know that it was not the Companions (RAA) who had disobeyed their Prophet (SAW), but the matter of fact was that they did not feel sure that the course recommended was the right course and thus hesitated in taking the decision, when they were consulted.

(7) *“And (remember) when Allah (SWT) promised you one of the two parties that it should be yours.”* This again refers to the same event mentioned in the previous *ayaat*.

Allah (SWT) promised the Muslims victory over one of the two, the caravan or the advancing army of the *Quraysh*. Then He said: *"You wished that the one not armed should be yours, but Allah (SWT) willed to justify the truth by His Words and to cut off the roots of the disbelievers."* i.e. referring to those Companions (RAA) who wanted to advance towards the unarmed caravan, which was much easier and convenient for them, instead of facing the enemy. But this *ayah* states that Allah (SWT) intended it otherwise, so that the truth is established and the very root of the disbelievers is cut off and they are completely annihilated .

(8) *"That He might cause the truth to triumph and bring falsehood to nothing, even though the criminals hate it."* It has further been clarified in this *ayah* that the reason for the Muslims to fight the *Quraysh* army was that Allah (SWT) wanted to make the Muslims and His religion triumph over them and make Islam dominant over all other religions. The truth should triumph and falsehood be discomfited, though the wrongdoers wished otherwise.

(9) *"(Remember) when you sought help of your Lord and He answered you (saying): "I will help you with a thousand of the angels following one another in succession.""* There were only three hundred and thirteen Muslims, mostly unarmed who stood combat against the thousand strong army of the *Quraysh*. When the Prophet (SAW) saw the army of the disbelievers being nearly three times stronger than the Muslims, he prostrated before Allah (SWT) and invoked Him for help and support and he kept on supplicating for a long time. At that time, Abu Bakr (RAA) stepped forward and asked the Prophet (SAW) to stop and not to worry, for Allah (SWT) will surely respond to his prayer. Then, the Prophet (SAW) raised his head and went out giving the good tidings of victory for the Muslims, for Allah (SWT) accepted his prayer and promised the Muslims help of one thousand angels coming one after the another to destroy the disbelievers.

(10) *"Allah (SWT) made it as glad tidings, and that your hearts be at rest therewith. And there is no victory except from Allah (SWT). Verily, Allah (SWT) is All-Mighty, All-Wise."* i.e. Allah (SWT) is able to give victory to the Muslims without the need of sending the angels, but He sent down angels to support the Muslims, so that by this good

news they feel comfort and reassurance in their hearts, for surely He is the possessor of All-Might and perfect Wisdom.

(11) *"(Remember) when you were overcome by slumber, a token of His protection and He caused water to descend on you from the sky, to clean you thereby and to remove from you the filth of Satan, and to strengthen your hearts, and make your feet firm thereby."* Mentioned here are the blessings which Allah (SWT) bestowed on the believers before the Battle. Allah (SWT) cast slumber on the believers as a sign of peace and tranquility for them which caused them to go to short-sleep (drowsiness). The second blessing that Allah (SWT) bestowed upon the Muslims was that He sent down rain upon them, so that they used the water to drink and purify themselves. He also removed from them the whisperings and instigations of the Satan, strengthened their heart by giving them courage and patience to fight their enemies and made their feet firm.

(12) *"(Remember) when your Lord inspired the angels, "Verily, I am with you, so keep firm those who have believed." "* This is the command that Allah (SWT) gave to His angels that He sent for the help of the believers. He commanded them to make the believers firmer and strengthen their battle against their enemies. Then Allah (SWT) said to the angels: *"I will cast terror into the hearts of those who have disbelieved, so strike them over the necks, and smite over all their fingers."* The angels were commanded to participate in the battle themselves and destroy and tear apart the disbelievers upon whom He has already cast fear and humiliation.

(13) *"This is because they defied and disobeyed Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW). And whoever defies and disobeys Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW), then verily, Allah (SWT) is Severe in punishment."* This was and has always been the reason for the confrontation between Islam and *Kufr*.

(14) *"This is the torment, so taste it, and surely for the disbelievers is the torment of the Fire."* i.e. this is only a small punishment for the idolators, while they should realize that the punishment in the Hereafter which is due to come for the disbelievers is much more lasting and severe.

(15) *“O you who believe! When you meet those who disbelieve, in a battle-field, never turn your backs to them.”* This *ayah* implies that when Muslims are engaged in a battle against the enemies of Islam, then it is not permissible for them to turn back and run away from the battlefield.

(16) *“And whoever turns his back to them on such a day - unless it be a stratagem of war, or to retreat to a troop (of his own), - he indeed has drawn upon himself wrath from Allah (SWT). And his abode is Hell, and worst indeed is that destination!”* However, there are two exceptions to this rule viz., they can turn back from the battlefield as a part of some strategic move or can move back to join a detachment for additional support and then resume attacking afresh. But other than these situations, it is not permissible for a Muslim to turn back from the battlefield. And those who indeed turn back, then for them will be the sever punishment of Hellfire, which is a very evil abode indeed.

(17) *“You killed them not, but Allah (SWT) killed them.”* This indeed is a reminder from Allah (SWT) for the Muslims that the victory of the battle of *Badr* was not the result of their own effort, but it was Allah (SWT) Who helped them and supported them and made them victorious over their enemies. They were fewer in number and weaker in strength, but nothing can occur without the will of Allah (SWT). Then Allah (SWT) said: *“And you threw not when you did throw but Allah (SWT) threw.”* This refers to the miraculous event when the Prophet (SAW) threw a handful of dust towards the *Quraysh* army. Allah (SWT) made this dust enter the eyes of the disbelievers, thus causing a rampage in the army. Then He said: *“That He might richly reward the believers through a fair trial from Him.”* i.e. He blessed them with this victory as a favor for them. *“Verily, Allah (SWT) is All-Hearer, All-Knower.”* i.e. Allah (SWT) hears and knows the prayers and supplications of His servants and He knows who deserve His help and support.

(18) *“This (is the fact) and surely, Allah (SWT) weakens the deceitful plots of the disbelievers.”* i.e. all their plans and plots that they devised against the believers were rendered ineffective through this victory.

(19) *"If you ask for a judgment, now has the judgment come unto you and if you cease, it will be better for you, and if you return, so shall We return, and your forces will be of no avail to you, however numerous it be, and verily, Allah (SWT) is with the believers."* When the disbelievers marched towards the Muslims, their leader Abu Jahl prayed to Allah (SWT) for the victory for the most superior out of the two armies and to the most noble and guided. They were under the false impression that they were the most superior and the guided ones, therefore they thought that they were praying for themselves. They also declared that day to be the *Day of Furqan* i.e. the criterion, which will decide as to who was true and who was false. Thus Allah (SWT) said to them in this *ayah* that the verdict that you prayed for is before you, for the truth has triumphed and falsehood has been defeated. Therefore, if you return from your wickedness and disbelief, it will be much better for you in this life and the Hereafter. But if you persist in your disbelief and rebellion, then He will repeat the defeat that you suffered in the Battle of *Badr*, even if you gather all of your forces against the Muslims, for how can any force or power avail you, when He is with the believers.

(20) *"O you who believe! Obey Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW), and turn not away from him while you are hearing."* In this *ayah* Muslims have been commanded to obey Allah (SWT) His Messenger (SAW). They have been asked not to do anything that would take them away from the path of obedience and that they should listen to the message of truth brought by this noble Messenger (SAW).

(21) *"And be not like those who say: "We have heard," but they hear not."* i.e. be not like the hypocrites who profess to have faith but the reality is that they do not believe. They give no heed to what they hear.

(22) *"Verily! The worst of (moving) living creatures with Allah (SWT) are the deaf and the dumb, those who understand not."* i.e. those people who do not use their intellect or reason to listen to the truth and they are like animals who have eyes to see but cannot see the truth and are dumb and devoid of reason.

(23) *"Had Allah (SWT) known of any good in them, He would indeed have made them listen, and even if He had made them listen, they would but have turned away, averse."* i.e. if they had

any virtue in them with sound intentions, then Allah (SWT) would surely have blessed them with the ability to listen and understand the truth, but this did not happen because Allah (SWT) knows that there is no good in them and they had no desire to listen to the truth. And even if they were made to listen to the truth, they would have turned away and refused to register it.

(24) *“O you who believe! Answer Allah (SWT) and (His) Messenger (SAW) when he calls you to that which will give you life.”* Allah (SWT) has commanded the believers to obey Him and His Messenger (SAW) and that they should give their response in deed and life to the call of duty, for it gives life. If the call of duty refers to *Jihad* then it will mean that the Muslims should respond to the call of *Jihad* and fight for the cause, for that call leads to real life i.e. the eternal life of the Hereafter. *“And know that Allah (SWT) comes in between a person and his heart.”* This *ayah* means that if a person repeatedly rejects the call of Allah (SWT) towards guidance even when his heart has testified that it is the Truth, then Allah (SWT) puts a seal on his heart and lets him grope blindly in the darkness. *“And verily to Him you shall (all) be gathered.”* i.e. on the *Day of Resurrection* in His presence you shall all be gathered.

(25) *“And fear the affliction which affects not in particular (only) those of you who do wrong.”* This *ayah* is a stern warning for the believers who are only busy with themselves and do not promote virtue and forbid evil, for a Muslim should not allow any crime or sin to prevail in their society. It states that when an affliction or oppression is sent down on the sinners and the criminals, it is not necessarily restricted to them. Rather it also encompasses those who have committed no sin, for they abandoned their duty of preventing the evil-doers from committing sins. In the end of this *ayah* Allah (SWT) again warned His servants from His punishment and said: *“And know that Allah (SWT) is Severe in punishment.”* Know that Allah's punishment is stern.

(26) *“And remember when you were few and were reckoned weak in the land, and were afraid that men might kidnap you, but He provided a safe place for you, strengthened you with His Help, and provided you with good things so that you might be grateful.”* Allah (SWT) reminds the Muslims of their state when they were weak and oppressed and were

overpowered by the idolators of *Makkah*. But then Allah (SWT) blessed them with power and confidence by giving them shelter in *Madinah* where He allowed them to settle in a safe resort. Then He gave them brothers like the *Ansar of Madinah* who helped them giving refuge and support to them and even parted with their wealth and property for them in obedience to Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW). The purpose behind all these Divine blessings was to give them an opportunity to show gratefulness to their Lord.

In a way this *ayah* is also applicable to the Muslims of the subcontinent in the times of British colonialism. They were oppressed and persecuted by the Hindus as well as by the British. Thus they prayed to Allah (SWT) for an independent state where they could practice their religion in freedom and implement the laws according to what He has commanded. Allah (SWT) granted them Pakistan, made them greater in number when they were few and made them strong when they were weak. He gave them sustenance and livelihood and a safe place to live so that they show gratitude to Him and establish His Deen.

(27) *“O you who believe! Betray not Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW), nor betray knowingly your trusts.”* i.e. all the duties that He has ordained for you.

(28) *“And know that your possessions and your children are but a trial.”* i.e. Allah (SWT) puts you to test through His blessings like your wealth and children. These blessings can sometimes become the cause of heedlessness towards Allah (SWT) and these very children and property become your punishment. This is how He makes these blessings a trial for you, so that to disclose those amongst you who are grateful and obedient to their Lord and those who lack zeal and show ingratitude to Him. *“And that surely with Allah (SWT) is a great reward.”* i.e. a person’s love for His property and children should not make him heedless of Allah’s obedience, for the best of reward is with Him.