

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

8th Taraweeh Summary, Ramadan 1447 Hijri

Summary of Verses 8:1 – 9:93

(Sura Anfal is a Madinan Sura)

Sura Al-Anfal (The Spoils of War) (Verses 8:1-75)

What qualities define believers? *“Believers are those who, when Allah is mentioned, feel a tremor in their hearts, and when they hear His signs rehearsed, find their faith strengthened, and put all their trust in their Lord, who establish regular prayers and spend freely out of the gifts We have given them for sustenance. Such are the true believers. They have grades of dignity with their Lord, and forgiveness, and generous sustenance.”* (8:2-4)

This clear description of believers was revealed after the Muslim victory at the Battle of Badr. Al-Anfal (The Spoils of War) details the planning, strategy, internal debates, and ultimately, the victory of Muslims who, with Allah’s help, defeated a larger and better-equipped Quraish army. In fighting for the truth, the lesson is that believers should not be distracted by thoughts of worldly possessions, whether the spoils of war or other forms of material gain, but should be guided by faith and strength. Additionally, revelations repeatedly urge us to use reason while warning us to avoid irrationality: *“Indeed, the worst of creatures in Allah’s sight are the deaf and dumb who do not use reason.”* (8:22)

This verse clearly shows that we need to use our five senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell), reason, and revelation to gain a deep, holistic understanding of life and the universe we live in. Those who claim Islam opposes the use of reason do not realize that reason is a core part of our

faith. We believe because it is rational to believe. Not believing would be the irrational choice.

(In some verses of the Quran, Allah provides the reason for His Command, such as when He tells us that *"O believers! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you so that you may become mindful of Allah"* (2:183) or, *"Do not come anywhere near adultery, for it is a shameful deed and an evil, opening the road to other evils"* (17:32) or, *"Indeed, prayer prevents indecency and wickedness."* (29:45) But there are also verses where Allah commands us to do certain things without explaining a reason. One such verse is (17:23), which asks us to respect our parents. Still, we see that the Quran encourages using reason and critical thinking to understand its teachings, even when specific reasons are not explicitly provided. Divine commands are based on Allah's infinite knowledge and wisdom and may not be immediately clear to human understanding.

We may hide what is in our hearts from other people but we cannot hide it from All-Knowing Allah because He is present between our hearts and us. We may project an image of goodness to the world but if there is hypocrisy in it - an avatar of kindness to the world but a monster to the family at home, for example - Allah knows it. *"O you who believe! Give your response to Allah and His messenger when He calls you to that which will give you life. And know that Allah comes between a man and his heart, and that it is to Him that you will be gathered."* (8:24)

In case victory in the Battle of Badr made Muslims arrogant and turned them away from the One who made the victory possible, Allah warns and reminds them what true success consists of: *"Believers, do not betray the trust of Allah and the Messenger, nor knowingly violate your trust. Know you that your wealth and your children are but a trial and that it is Allah with Whom*

lies your highest reward.” (8:27-28)

Given the fundamental importance of *Taqwa* in the life of a believer, it is worth repeating that this word and its various forms and nuances appear about 190 times in the Quran, either as a noun, a verb or a derivative. Scholars say that one of the best ways to deepen our understanding of the Quran is to be particularly attentive to verses in which the word *Taqwa* and its variations appear and try to understand their meanings in context. *Taqwa* is sometimes loosely translated as ‘fear,’ as in fear of incurring the displeasure of Allah whom we most love, but its meaning is broader and deeper. It can mean awe, wonder, reverence, consciousness, mindfulness, shield, protection, piety, connecting with Allah, righteousness, a heightened state of worship, a profound spiritual awakening, and a holistic combination of these qualities.

In (8:29), for example, we read the word ‘*tattaqullaha*’ and the verse translates as “*O you who have attained to faith: If you remain conscious of Allah, He will endow you with a criterion to discern the true from the false, and will remove your bad deeds, and will forgive you your sins, for Allah is limitless in His bounty.*”

Badr was the first battle between the pagan Quraish and the young Muslim community of Madinah. It forced the Quraish to confront the reality that Prophet Muhammad’s (s.a.w) movement was not temporary but the start of a new spiritual, political, and social order, with ‘*Taqwa*’ as its driving force. It took several more years for Islam’s monotheism to replace Arabia’s polytheism, but the transformation had begun at Badr and there would be no stopping it.

The Sura offers clear guidance to Muslims for achieving victory when war is

forced on them: *"Believers, when you meet an enemy, be firm and remember Allah in abundance, so that you may succeed. Obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute with one another, lest you weaken and lose your strength, and remain steadfast because Allah is with those who patiently persevere. Do not be like those who departed from their homes in pursuit of vanity and keep others from the path of Allah."* (8:45-47)

For the Muslim community, the Battle of Badr also served as a catalyst for turning words and ideas into action. Believers must first conquer their inner fears before they can consider defeating those who wage war against them. This truth is timeless: Unless we work to improve what is within us, we will never be deserving of Allah's mercy: *"Allah will never change the favor which He has bestowed on a people until they change their own inner selves. Allah is All-hearing and All-knowing."* (8:53) If the enemy genuinely desires peace, Muslims should respond in kind. *"... if they incline toward peace, you also incline toward peace. And trust in Allah. Surely, He is All-hearing, All-knowing. Should they intend to deceive you (by their show of peace), Allah is sufficient for you."* (8:61) We are once again reminded that *"Allah is with those who patiently persevere."* (8:66)

* (Sura At-Taubah is a Madinan Sura)

Sura At-Taubah (Repentance) (Verses 9:1-93)

This Sura continues the overarching theme of conflict between believers and nonbelievers, highlighting the moral distinctions between them. It explains how to conduct war, emphasizes the sanctity of treaties, and grants sanctuary to those who deny the truth out of ignorance. It condemns the cowardice and hypocrisy of those who ignore the call to confront aggression, such as in the Tabuk expedition, and stresses the need to fight those who persistently engage in unprovoked aggression and armed confrontation with Muslims. Believers must demonstrate their worthiness of Allah's guidance to

achieve true success: *"The mosques of Allah shall be visited and maintained by such as believe in Allah and the Last Day, establish regular prayers, and pay zakat, and fear none except Allah. It is they who are expected to be on true guidance."* (9:18) We test ourselves according to the criteria Allah has set for us. *"Say: If it is that your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your mates, or your kin, the wealth that you have gained, the commerce in which you fear a decline, or the dwellings in which you take pleasure, are dearer to you than Allah and His messenger, or the striving in His cause, then wait until Allah brings about His decision; and Allah guides not the rebellious."* (9:24)

Note particularly the mention of wealth, businesses and homes. How often do we become consumed by our fleeting worldly successes and possessions, feeling as if we control our destiny? The Quran reminds us to keep life's purpose in clear focus and not be among those who rebel, confusing striving for Allah's cause with worldly achievement. We can maintain the right perspective by ensuring that our love for Allah exceeds our love for anyone or anything else. If we prioritize our earthly ties, comforts, profits, and pleasures over Allah, His purpose will move forward with or without us. Ultimately, we would be the ones deprived of Allah's guidance and blessings.

The unfortunate human tendency to find pleasure from the misfortunes of others – schadenfreude – must not tempt believers if they want to remain on the Straight Path. This is indicated by the attitude of the hypocrites toward the Prophet (s.a.w) during the Tabuk expedition and the Prophet's response on behalf of the believers through Divine revelation: *"If good befalls you, it grieves them but if a misfortune befalls you, they say: 'We took our precautions beforehand,' and they turn away rejoicing. Say: 'Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us. He is our*

protector. ' And on Allah let the believers put their trust." (9:50-51)

Note the word *Tawaqqul* in verse (9:51). It means to place our complete trust in Allah. It does not refer to external action but to an internal state of mind. Of course, we must take whatever action is necessary to defend ourselves, fight for justice, strive to achieve our goals, and infuse life with meaning and purpose. However, such actions flow from a *Tawaqqul* mindset.

When we practice *Tawaqqul*, our hearts find peace. No matter what loss we suffer — whether in wealth, possessions, or lives — we must believe that nothing happens without Allah's decree. *Tawaqqul* embodies this spiritual mindset. We make an effort and seek Allah's help, rather than being lazy and blaming kismet. If we don't get what we want, we say *Alhamdu Lillah* and move forward. Even if we face setbacks, Allah may reward us with something better than we can imagine. With *Tawaqqul*, we confidently say, "*Surely with hardship comes ease, with hardship comes ease.*" (94:5-6)

Who are deserving of charity, of *sadaqah*? "*Sadaqah are for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer the funds, for those whose hearts have been reconciled to truth, for those in bondage and debt, in the cause of Allah, and for the wayfarer. This is an obligation prescribed by Allah. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.*" (9:60)

Notice that this type of charity is *Fard*, or obligatory. Scholars distinguish between obligatory *sadaqah* and voluntary *sadaqah*. In verse (9:60), we are reminded to fulfill the requirements of the obligatory *sadaqah*, that is, *Zakat*, which purifies our wealth. However, Muslims are encouraged to engage in year-round voluntary *sadaqah* to help the needy, irrespective of their faith, according to their means.

(*Zakat* is an obligatory charity and is one of Islam's five pillars. It requires financially capable Muslims to give at least 2.5% of their wealth to eight categories as defined in (9:60): the poor, the needy, *Zakat* administrators, those who embrace Islam, those who are in debt or some form of bondage, the traveler and for the sake of Allah. Other verses containing reference to *Zakat* include (7:156), (9:18), (19:31), (19:55), (21:73), (23:4), (27:3), (30:39), (31:4), (41:7), and (73:20) Regarding *Zakat* administrators, this mainly refers to any Muslim country with a formal government office entrusted with equitable distribution of *Zakat* funds to the needy. The State pays the salaries of these administrators. They are not compensated from the *Zakat* fund itself. Many so-called "Zakat-enabled" charities, especially in the West, use *Zakat* funds to pay employee salaries. This is not permissible.)

The contrast between hypocrites and believers is made vivid: "*The hypocrites, men and women, are alike. They enjoin evil and forbid what is just and tighten their purse's strings. They have forgotten Allah, so He has forgotten them ...*" (9:67)

On the other hand, "*the believers, men and women, are protecting friends one of another. They encourage what is just and forbid what is evil. They observe regular prayers, pay zakat and obey Allah and His messenger. On them will Allah pour His mercy, for Allah is exalted in power, wise.*" (9:71)

Believing men and women protect each other's honor and dignity. If one is absent from a gathering, the other defends their honor. Believing men and women avoid those who backbite, slander, promote cruelty and cynicism, and plot nefarious schemes. Instead, they look out for each other and love each other to gain Allah's pleasure. The verse hints at the importance of choosing one's friends wisely, for the company we keep often shapes the

path we take in life. It also suggests that if we are kind and gentle with others, Allah will be kind and gentle with us.

What is the ultimate goal of a believer? Yes, believers aspire to *Jannatul-Firdous* in the Hereafter but is that the ultimate goal? No, the ultimate goal for believers is to gain the pleasure of Allah: "*Allah has promised believers, men and women, gardens beneath which rivers flow, to dwell therein, and beautiful mansions in gardens of everlasting stay. But the greatest bliss is the good pleasure of Allah. That is the supreme triumph!*" (9:72)

(Note the profound truth of these words: "*The greatest bliss is the good pleasure of Allah.*" This is the purpose of a believer's life. This is what gives life its meaning. We earn Allah's pleasure when we back words with action, not through dreamy aspirations or wishful thinking. This purpose must be central to our lives as we dedicate our time, talent, and energy to pursuing worthy goals. For additional references that reinforce this theme, see also (2:165), (3:14), and (4:114). Combine these verses with "*You alone we worship, and from You alone we seek help*" (1:5), and it becomes clear how the transcendent goals of our lives are unambiguously defined within a holistic framework. Think also of what we recite in every prayer as part of *Attahiyatu: Attahiyyatu lillahi was-salawatu wat-taiyyibatu ...* "All good deeds and acts of worship are for the pleasure of Allah.")

Often, during difficult times, we promise Allah that we will become charitable if He blesses us with His bounty. However, when He does bless us, we often become miserly and forget our promise. We become hypocrites. Instead of blaming others, we should look deep into our hearts and ask: Have we shown gratitude to Allah for His blessings by sharing with the needy? If not, we should recognize the serious consequences awaiting us: "Among them are people who made a covenant with Allah that if He bestowed on them His

bounty, they would give generously to charity, and be among the righteous. But when He did give His bounty, they became misers and turned away from their promise, unwilling to fulfill it. So He has embedded hypocrisy in their hearts..." (9:75-77).

For the hypocrites and cowards among Muslims, the Quran clearly warns: *"Believers, what is the matter with you that, when you are asked to go forth in the cause of Allah, you cling heavily to the earth? Do you prefer the life of this world to the Hereafter? But little is the comfort of this life, compared to the Hereafter..."* (9:38) and *"Let not their wealth nor their sons dazzle you: in reality, Allah's plan is to punish them with these things in this life ..."* (9:85)

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