

# **Al-Anfal** [The Spoils]

## **Madinan Period**

*In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate*

[1] They ask you concerning the spoils of war.<sup>1</sup> Tell them: "The spoils of war belong to Allah and the Messenger. So fear Allah, and set things right among you, and obey Allah and His Messenger if you are true believers."<sup>2</sup>

[2] The true believers are those who, when Allah's name is mentioned, their hearts quake, and when His verses are recited to them their faith grows, and who put their trust in their Lord,

*1. The word anfal, which is the plural of nafal, stands for that which is extra, that which is over and above what is obligatory. If this extra is from the servant, it denotes that additional service which he voluntarily renders over and above what is obligatory. On the other hand, when this extra is from the master, it denotes the additional reward which the master awards his servant over and above what he is entitled to. The word anfal used here implies the spoils of the Battle of Badr. What is being conveyed here by using the word anfal is, in fact, that all wrangling about spoils is out of place since it concerns not what they are entitled to, but the additional rewards that they will receive from God.*

*2. The clarification was occasioned by the fact that prior to the revelation concerning the distribution of the spoils of the battle different groups of the believers had started laying claim to their respective shares in the booty.*

[3] who establish Prayer and spend out of what We have provided them.

[4] Such indeed are true believers. They have high ranks with their Lord and forgiveness for their sins and an honourable sustenance.

[5] (Now with regard to the spoils the same situation exists as when) your Lord brought you forth from your home in a righteous cause while a party among the believers was much averse to it.

[6] They disputed with you about the Truth after that had become evident, as if they were being driven to death with their eyes Wide open.

[7] And recall when Allah promised you that one of the two hosts would fall to you,<sup>3</sup> and you wished that the one without arms should fall into your hands. But Allah sought to confirm the Truth by His words and to annihilate the last remnant of the unbelievers

[8] so that He might prove the Truth to be true and the false to be false, however much the evil-doers might dislike it.

[9] And recall when you implored your Lord for help and He responded to you: "I will indeed reinforce you with a thousand angels, Coming host after host."

[10] Allah meant this as glad tidings and in order that your hearts may be set at rest. For every help comes from Allah alone. Surely Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.

[11] And recall when Allah brought on you drowsiness, giving you a feeling of peace and security (coming) from Him,<sup>4</sup> and He sent down rain upon you from the sky that He might thereby cleanse you and take away the pollution of Satan from you and strengthen your hearts and steady your feet.

3. This refers to the trading caravan of the Quraysh returning from Syria, or the Quraysh army from Makkah advancing on Madinah.

4. *In the Battle of Uhud the Muslims passed through a similar experience. (See Al- Imran 3:154 above.)*

[12] And recall when your Lord inspired the angels: "I am certainly with you. So make firm the feet of those who believe. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. So strike at their necks and strike at every pore and tip."<sup>5</sup>

[13] This is because they defied Allah and His Messenger. Whoever defies Allah and His Messenger must know that Allah is severe in punishment.

[14] That is your punishment (from Allah).<sup>6</sup> So taste this punishment, and know that the chastisement of the Fire awaits the unbelievers.

[15] Believers, whenever you encounter a hostile force of unbelievers, do not turn your backs to them in flight.

[16] For he who turns his back on them on such an occasion - except that it be for tactical reasons, or turning to join another company - he shall incur the wrath of Allah and Hell shall be his abode. It is an evil destination.

5. *In recounting the events of the Battle of Badr, the Qur'an aims to explain the significance of the word al-anfal (spoils of war). In the opening verse of the surah the Muslims were told that they should not deem the spoils to be a reward for their toil. Rather, the spoils should constitute a special reward granted to the Muslims by God, to Whom the spoils rightfully belong. The events recounted here support this. The Muslims could reflect on the course of events and see for themselves to what extent the victory they had achieved was due to God's favour, and to what extent it was due to their own efforts. Therefore, it was for God and not the Muslims to decide how the spoils should be distributed.*

6. *Here the discourse is suddenly directed to the unbelievers who were routed at Badr.*

[17] So the fact is that it was not you, but it was Allah Who killed them; and it was not you when you threw (sand at them), but it was Allah Who threw it,<sup>7</sup> (and the believers were employed for the task) that He might cause the believers to successfully pass through this test. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

[18] This is His manner of dealing with you. As for the unbelievers, Allah will surely undermine their designs.

[19] (Tell the unbelievers): "If you have sought a judgement, then surely a judgement has come to you.<sup>8</sup> And if you desist from disobedience, it is all the better for you. But if you revert to your mischief, We will again chastise you; and your host, howsoever numerous, will never be of any avail to you. Know well, Allah is with the believers."

[20] Believers! Obey Allah and His Messenger and do not turn away from him after you hear his command.

[21] And do not be like those who say: "We hear," though they do not hearken.

*7. This refers to the occasion when the armies of the Muslims and the unbelievers stood face to face in the Battle of Badr and were on the verge of actual fighting. At that moment, the Prophet (peace be on him) threw a handful of dust at the enemy saying: "May their faces be scorched," So saying the Prophet (peace be on him) made a gesture and the Muslims started their charge. The incident is being recalled to emphasize that though the dust was thrown by the Messenger (peace be on him), it was in fact the hand of God that struck.*

*8. Before marching out from Makkah the unbelievers held the covering of the Ka'bah and prayed: "O God! Grant victory to the better of the two parties."*

[22] Indeed the worst kind of all beasts in the sight of Allah are the people who are deaf and dumb and who do not understand.

[23] And had Allah known any good in them He would surely have made them hear; but (considering what they are) even if He made them hear, they would have surely turned away in aversion.

[24] Believers! Respond to Allah, and respond to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life. Know well that Allah stands between a person and his heart, and it is to Him that all of you shall be mustered.

[25] And guard against the mischief that will bring punishment not only to the wrong-doers among you.<sup>9</sup> Know well that Allah is severe in punishment.

[26] And recall when you were few in number and deemed weak in the land, when you were fearful lest people do away with you. And then He provided you refuge, strengthened you with His help, and provided you sustenance with, good things that you may be grateful.

[27] Believers! Do not be unfaithful to Allah and the Messenger, nor be knowingly unfaithful to your trusts.<sup>10</sup>

[28] Know well that your belongings and your children are but a trial, and that there lies a mighty reward with Allah.

*9. This refers to those widespread social evils whose baneful effects are not confined only to those addicted to them, but which affect even those who put up with the evils just by dint of bearing to live in an evil society.*

*10. "Trusts" embrace all the responsibilities which are imparted to someone because he is trusted. These might consist of obligations arising out of an agreement or a collective*

*covenant. It might also consist of the secrets of a group. It might also consist of personal or collective property, or any office or position which might be bestowed upon a person by the group.*

[29] Believers! If you fear Allah He will grant you a criterion<sup>11</sup> and will cleanse you of your sins and forgive you. Allah is the Lord of abounding bounty.

[30] And recall how those who disbelieved schemed against you to take you captive, or kill you, or drive you away.<sup>12</sup> They schemed and Allah also schemed. Allah is the best of those who scheme.

[31] And when Our verses are recited to them, they say: "We have heard. We could, if we willed, compose the like of it. They are nothing but fables of the ancient times."

[32] And also recall when they said: "O Allah! If this indeed be the Truth from You, then rain down stones upon us from heaven, or bring upon us a painful chastisement."

[33] But Allah was not to chastise them while you are in their midst; nor was Allah going to chastise them while they sought His forgiveness.

[34] But why should Allah not chastise them now when they are hindering people from the Holy Mosque, even though they are not even its true guardians? For its true guardians are none but the God-fearing, though most of them do not know that.

*11. "Criterion" signifies that which enables one to distinguish the true from the false, the real from the fake. This is the shade of meaning conveyed by the Qur'anic term "furqan". If a man is God-fearing and tries his best to refrain from acts which displease God, God will create in him the ability to discern for himself at every step which attitude is proper and which is not; which is the path of truth and leads one to God, and which is false and leads one to Satan.*

*12. This refers to the situation when the Quraysh became certain that Muhammad (peace be on him), too, would migrate to Madinah. They realized that once he left Makkah he would be beyond their reach and they would be confronted with a formidable threat. So they convened a council to decide on a decisive course of action to thwart the menace posed by the Muslims.*

[35] Their Prayer at the House is nothing but whistling and hand-clapping. Taste, then, the chastisement for your denying the Truth,

[36] Surely those who deny the Truth spend their wealth to hinder people from the Way of Allah. They will continue to so spend until their efforts become a source of intense regret for them, and then they will be vanquished, and then these deniers of the Truth will be driven to Hell,

[37] so that Allah may separate the bad from the good, and join together all those who are bad into a pile, one upon another, and cast them into Hell. They, it is they, who are the losers.

[38] (O Prophet), tell the unbelievers that if they desist from evil, their past deeds shall be forgiven and if they revert to their past ways, then it is well known what happened with the people of the past.

[39] And fight against them until the mischief ends and the way prescribed by Allah - the whole of it - prevails. Then, if they give up mischief, surely Allah sees what they do.

[40] But if they turn away, then know well that Allah is your Protector - an excellent Protector and an excellent Helper.

[41] Know that one-fifth of the spoils that you obtain<sup>13</sup> belongs to Allah and to the Messenger and to the near of kin, to the orphans and the needy, and the wayfarer. This you must observe if you truly believe in Allah and in what We sent down on Our servant on the day when the true was distinguished from the false, the day on which the two armies met in battle.<sup>14</sup> Allah has power over all things.

*13. This verse lays down the law for distributing the spoils of war. Spoils of war, as mentioned earlier, essentially belong to God and His Messenger. (See verse 1 above.) They alone have the right to dispose of them.*

*14. This refers to the support and help from God on the occasion of the Battle of Badr which brought about victory for the Muslims, and won them the spoils of battle.*

[42] And recall when you were encamped at the nearer end of the valley (of Badr) and they were at the farther end and the caravan was below you (along the seaside). Had you made a mutual appointment to meet in an encounter, you would have declined. But the encounter was brought about so that Allah might accomplish what He had decreed, and that he who was to perish should perish through a clear proof, and who was to survive might survive through a clear proof. Surely Allah is All- Hearing, All-Knowing,

[43] And recall when Allah showed them to you in your dream to be few in number.<sup>15</sup> And had He showed them to you to be numerous, you would have flagged and disagreed with one another about fighting them. But Allah saved you. Surely Allah knows what is hidden in the breasts.

*15. This refers to the time when the Prophet (peace be on him) was leaving Madinah along with the Muslims, or was on his way to Badr for the encounter with the Quraysh and did not have any definite information about the strength of the enemy. In a dream, however, the Prophet (peace be on him) had a vision of the enemy. On the basis of that vision, the Prophet (peace be on him) estimated that the enemy was not too powerful.*

[44] And recall when He made them appear to be few in your eyes when you met them in the battle just as He lessened you in their eyes so that Allah might accomplish what had been decreed. To Allah are all matters referred for decision.

[45] Believers! When you encounter a host in battle, stand firm and remember Allah much that you may triumph.

[46] And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not quarrel with one another lest you should lose courage and your power depart. Be steadfast; <sup>16</sup> surely Allah is with those who remain steadfast.

[47] And be not like those who came forth from their homes exulting, with a desire to be seen by people as full of strength, and hindering others from the Way of Allah. Allah encompasses all that they do.

[48] And recall when Satan made their works seem fair to them and said: "None shall overcome you today and I am your supporter." But when the two armies faced each other, he turned on his heels, and said: "Surely I am quit of you for I behold that which you do not. Indeed I fear Allah, and Allah is stern in punishment."

*16. The believers were asked to exercise self-restraint. They were required to refrain from haste, panic, consternation, greed and uncalled-for enthusiasm. They were counselled to proceed cool-headedly and to take well-considered decisions. They were also asked not to relent an inch even in the face of grave dangers; refrain from acting rashly under provocation; to desist from taking hasty action out of impatience. They were also asked to exercise control over themselves lest they were tempted by worldly gains. All these instructions are implicit in the Qur'anic directive of "steadfastness" given to the Muslims. God extends all help and support to those who exercise "steadfastness" (sabr) in the above sense.*

[49] And recall when the hypocrites and those whose hearts were diseased said: "Their faith has deluded these (believers)."<sup>17</sup> But he who puts his trust in Allah shall find Allah All-Mighty, All-Wise.

[50] And if you could only see when the angels took away the souls of the unbelievers, striking them on their faces and backs, saying: "Taste the torment of burning.

[51] This is your punishment for what your hands have wrought. Allah is not unjust in the least to His creatures."

[52] Their case is like that of the people of Pharaoh and those before them. They denied the signs of Allah and so Allah seized them for their sins. Surely Allah is All-Powerful, Most Stern in retribution.

[53] This happened because Allah is not one to change the favour which He has bestowed upon a people until they have changed their attitude. Surely Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

[54] Their case is like that of the people of Pharaoh and those before them: they rejected the signs of their Lord as false and so We destroyed them for their sins, and caused the people of Pharaoh to drown. For all of them were wrong-doers.

*17. Observing that a small band of resourceless Muslims was getting ready to confront the powerful Quraysh, the hypocrites as well as those who were heedless of God and cared only for worldly interests, often tended to say to one another that the religious passion of the Muslims had driven them to utter fanaticism and zealotry. They were sure that the Muslims*

would face a total rout on the battlefield. They were puzzled by how the Prophet (peace be on him), in whom the Muslims believed, had cast such a spell over them that they were altogether incapable of rational calculation and were hence rushing straight into the very mouth of death.

[55] Surely the worst moving creatures in the sight of Allah are those who definitively denied the Truth and are therefore in no way prepared to accept it,

[56] (especially) those with Whom you entered into a covenant and then they broke their covenant time after time, and who do not fear Allah.<sup>18</sup>

[57] So if you meet them in war, make of them a fearsome example for those who follow them<sup>19</sup> that they may be admonished.

[58] And if you fear treachery from any people (with whom you have a covenant) then publicly throw their covenant at them<sup>20</sup> Allah does not love the treacherous.

[59] Let not the deniers of the Truth be deluded that they will gain any advantage. Surely they can never overcome Us!

*18. This refers especially to the Jews. After arriving in Madinah, the Prophet (peace be on him) concluded a treaty of mutual co-operation and good neighbourliness with them. But in spite of that they were actively hostile towards the Prophet (peace be on him) and the Muslims. This is evident from the fact that they lost no time after the Battle of Badr to incite the Quraysh to wreak vengeance upon the Muslims.*

*19. The verse makes it lawful for Muslims to feel absolved of the obligations of a treaty with a people who, despite that alliance, threw the obligations of the treaty overboard and engaged in acts of hostility against the Muslims. It would even be lawful for the Muslims to engage in hostilities against them. Likewise, if the Muslims are engaged in hostilities against a people and the non-Muslims who are bound in treaties of alliance or friendship with the Muslims array themselves on the side of the enemy and fight against the Muslims, it would be lawful for the Muslims to treat them as enemies and kill them.*

*20. This means that the Muslims should publicly announce that the treaty stands annulled as it is being violated by them.*

[60] Make ready for an encounter against them all the forces and well-readied horses you can muster<sup>21</sup> so that you may overawe the enemies of Allah and your own enemies and others besides them of whom you are unaware but of whom Allah is aware. Whatever you may spend in the cause of Allah shall be fully repaid to you, and you shall not be wronged.

[61] If they incline to peace, incline you as well to it, and trust in Allah. Surely He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

[62] And should they seek to deceive you, Allah is sufficient for you. He it is Who strengthened you with His succour and the believers

[63] and joined their hearts. Had you given away all the riches of the earth you could not have joined their hearts, but it is Allah Who joined their hearts. Indeed He is All-Mighty, All-Wise.

[64] O Prophet! Allah is sufficient for you and the believers who follow you.

[65] O Prophet! Rouse the believers to fighting. If there be twenty of you who persevere, they shall vanquish two hundred; and if there be of you a hundred, they shall vanquish a thousand of those who disbelieve, for they are a people who lack understanding.<sup>22</sup>

[66] Allah has now lightened your burden for He found weakness in you. So if there be a hundred of you who persevere, they shall vanquish two hundred; and if there be a thousand of you they shall, by the leave of Allah, vanquish two thousand.<sup>23</sup> Allah is with those who persevere.

*21. Muslims should be equipped with military resources and should have a standing army in a state of preparedness in order that it may be used when needed. Never should it happen that the Muslims are caught unawares and have to hurriedly look around right and left to build up their defences and collect arms and supplies in order to meet the challenge of the enemy. For then it might be too late and the enemy might have accomplished its purpose.*

*22. What is nowadays called morale has been described as "understanding" in the Qur'an. The word in this context refers to the one who is fully cognizant of his objective, who is quite clear in his mind that the cause for which he has staked his life is much more valuable than his own life, and hence if that cause is left unrealized, his life will lose all its worth and meaning. Such a conscious, committed person actually becomes many times more powerful than he who fights without any consciousness of his cause, even though the two might be comparable in physical strength.*

*23. This does not mean that since the faith of Muslims had declined, their ten times superiority over the unbelievers had been reduced to twice only. What it means is that ideally a Muslim is ten times stronger than an unbeliever. However, since the Muslims had not as yet been thoroughly trained and had not reached the desired level of maturity in their understanding, they are asked not to feel uneasy at least at challenging an enemy which is twice as strong. It should be borne in mind that the Qur'anic directive was given in 2 A.H. /624 CE. When most of the Muslims, being recent converts to Islam, had undergone little training.*

[67] It behoves not a Prophet to take captives until he has sufficiently suppressed the enemies in the land. You merely seek the gains of the world whereas Allah desires (for you the good) of the Hereafter. Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.

[68] Had there not been a previous decree from Allah, a stern punishment would have afflicted you for what you have taken.

[69] So eat that which you have obtained -for it is lawful and clean -and fear Allah.<sup>24</sup> Surely Allah is Ever Forgiving, Most Merciful.

24. *The preliminary instructions about war given in surah Muhammad (47:4) before the Battle of Badr had allowed ransom for release of prisoners of war. But the permission presupposed the crushing of the enemy's might before the vanquished were taken prisoners. Their capture at Badr and the acceptance of ransom for their release, though lawful, fell short of the stipulation that the enemy be completely crushed before any prisoners were taken and the spoils of war were collected. God disapproved of this negligence on the part of Muslims. If they had strictly followed the command of God and chased the fleeing enemy the Quraysh could have been dealt a death blow once and for all.*

[70] O Prophet! Say to the captives in your hands: "If Allah finds any goodness in your hearts He will give you that which is better than what has been taken away from you, and He will forgive you. Allah is Ever Forgiving, Most Merciful."

[71] But if they seek to betray you, know that they had already betrayed Allah. Therefore He made you prevail over them. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

[72] Surely those who believed and migrated and strove hard in the way of Allah with their possessions and their lives, and those that sheltered and helped them –they alone are the true allies of one another. And those who believed but did not migrate (to *Dar al-Islam*), you are under no obligation of alliance unless they migrate.<sup>25</sup> And should they seek help from you in the matter of religion, it is incumbent on you to provide help unless it be against a people with whom you have a pact.<sup>26</sup> Allah is cognizant of all that you do.

25. *The Arabic word walahah denotes the relationship of kinship, support, succour, protection, friendship, and guardianship. In the context of the present verse the word signifies the relationship of mutual support between the Islamic state and its citizens, and among the citizens themselves. Thus, this verse lays down that in a political and constitutional sense; only those Muslims who live within the territorial boundaries of the Islamic state will enjoy the privileges of walahah (guardianship) of the Islamic state. As for Muslims who are settled in a non-Islamic state, they are excluded from its political and constitutional guardianship. The non-existence of a walahah relationship has numerous legal implications which cannot be spelled out here.*

26. *The Muslims living outside the Islamic state have no political bond with the Islamic state. This verse, however, does emphasize that those Muslims are not free of the bond of religious brotherhood. If Muslims living in a non-Islamic state are persecuted and seek help from the Islamic state or its citizens, it is incumbent upon the latter to help the persecuted Muslims. While helping one's brethren-in-faith the Muslims are expected to act scrupulously. This help should be rendered without violating international obligations and with due regard to the requirements of moral propriety. If the Islamic state happens to be bound in a treaty relationship with a nation which inflicts wrong on Muslims, the oppressed Muslims will not be helped in a manner which is inconsistent with the moral obligations incumbent on the Islamic state as a result of that treaty.*

[73] And those who disbelieve, they are allies of one another; and unless you act likewise, there will be oppression in the world and great corruption.<sup>27</sup>

[74] Those who believe and have migrated and strove in the way of Allah, and those who gave them refuge and help-it is they who are the true believers. Theirs shall be forgiveness and honourable sustenance.

*27. The world would become full of mischief and disorder if the Muslims of Dar al-Islam (a) failed to help one another; (b) failed to provide political support and protection to the Muslims who have settled down in non-Islamic states and have not migrated to Dar al-Islam; (c) failed to help the Muslims living under oppression in territories outside Dar al-Islam when they ask for it, and (d) failed to sever their friendly ties with the unbelievers.*

[75] And those who believed afterwards and migrated and strove along with you: they belong to you. But those related by blood are nearer to one another according to the Book of Allah.<sup>28</sup> Allah has knowledge of everything.

*28. The purpose of the verse is to make it clear that the basis of inheritance is blood relationship and marriage rather than the mere bond of Islamic brotherhood. This statement finds an elaboration in the saying of the Prophet (peace be on him) that only Muslim relatives will inherit one another. The law does not countenance inheritance between Muslims and non-Muslims.*