

يَتَّيِّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيْتُمْ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا زَحٰٓقًا فَلَا تُوَلُّوهُمُ الْاَدْبَارَ



*Al-Anfal (The Spoils of War) 8:15*

**O You Who Believe!**

- When you meet the unbelievers in hostile array, never turn your backs to them.

## **Commentary**

Allamah Taba Tabai (AR)

These verses are about the commandments and admonishments that are related to the battle of Badr. They ask the Muslims to be God fearing and never to oppose God and His Messenger so that they may never be the subject of God's anger or wrath. They record the incident of Badr and the help and obligation that God bestowed upon the believers.

Mir Ahmed Ali (AR) and Aqa Mahdi Puya (AR)

To turn one's back to the enemy in the battlefield is a shameful sin. Refer to the commentary of *Ali Imran*: 121, 122, 128, 140 to 142, 144, 151 to 156 and 166 to 168 and *Bara-at*: 25 to 27 to know about those who either used to watch the fighting from a safe distance or run away from the scene of battle when defeat appeared to them as a certainty.

Immediately after the conquest of Makkah, the pagan idolaters, under the command of Malik bin Awf, organised a great gathering of 4000 soldiers near Hunayn which is on the road to Tayf from Makkah to make plans for attacking the Holy Prophet. The Holy Prophet, with a force of 12000, marched towards Hunayn. For the first time the Muslims had tremendous odds in their favour. On leaving the narrow oasis of Hunayn the road enters winding gorges, suitable for ambushes. As soon as the Muslim vanguard entered the hilly country, the enemy fell upon them with full fury and caused havoc with their arrows from their places of concealment. Many were slain, and many ran away from the battle as they had done in the battle of Uhad. Those who were acclaimed as the heroes of Islam, after the departure of the Holy Prophet from this world, were among the deserters.

Abu Qatada says:

The Muslims took to flight. I was also among them. Suddenly I saw Umar ibn Khattab among those who were running away. I asked him: 'What has happened?' He said: *It is the will of Allah.*

(Sahih Bukhari Vol. 3, p. 45.)

According to some traditions Ali ibn abi Talib, Abbas ibn Abd al Muttalib, Abu Sufyan ibn Harith and Abdullah ibn Masud were the only four persons who stayed with the Holy Prophet. Some say there were ten persons who did not run away. Ali stood in front of the Holy Prophet and stopped every attack made by the enemy to slay him. The Holy Prophet called those who were deserting to come back. Some of them returned and joined Ali to launch a counter attack on the enemy. When Ali killed Abu Jarul, the standard bearer of the enemy army, a general retreat began to take place among the invaders, which soon turned into chaos and then flight. In this way a most crushing defeat was inflicted on the enemy.

After the battle, on the instructions of the Holy Prophet, the spoils of war taken by the Muslims, were returned to those who embraced Islam. Some refused to comply with his orders. In such cases the Holy Prophet compensated them.

When one companion protested that the Holy Prophet had not done justice in the matter of distributing the spoils of war, some people wanted to kill him, but the Holy Prophet stopped them and said: *Wait. Such people, on their own, one day will go out of the true faith, then the best of men among you will kill him.* And that man was killed by Ali in the battle of Nahrawan.

Aqa Mahdi Puya says:

The believers who stayed with the Holy Prophet on the day of Hunayn also received the divine tranquillity (sakinah), along with the Holy Prophet. In verse 40 of this surah it is said that the companion of the Holy Prophet in the cave was deprived of this tranquillity.

Ayatullah Sayyid Kamal Faqih Imani and a Group of Muslim Scholars

The Arabic word /zahf/ means: ' to crawl, creep ' and ' to dig on the ground '. Since the movement and advance of a large army from the distance seems that it crawls and proceeds, it is called such.

The abundance of the forces of the enemy cannot be taken as an allowance to flee from the battle-field.

The verse says:

*“ O you who have Faith! when you meet those who disbelieve (to attack ) in battle, then do not turn your backs to them.”*

Imam Ridha (AS) , upon the philosophy of the banning of escape (from the battle-field ) , in a tradition has said:

Flight is the weakness of religion, contempt of the leader of the Truth, encouraging the enemy, and wiping out the school of law.

(Nur-uth-Thaqalayn)

Among the advantages that Ali-ibn-Abitalib (AS) had, and to which as an example he himself sometimes referred, was the very matter of flight from the battle-field. He has said:

*“ Verily I have never fled from (the abundance of enemy in ) any battle (although I have participated in many battle-fields ) , and none combated me save that I satiated the earth from his blood.”*