

Extracts from Speech (TAZKEER BIL QURAN)

The Sixty-First Surah (61th); As-Saff (The Battle Array/The Rank)

An Introduction and explanation of verses 1 through 4

Delivered by: Ameer-e-Tanzeem-e-Islami, Hafiz Aakif Saeed, on Friday, 11th April 2014.

Ameer-e-Tanzeem, Hafiz Aakif Saeed, commenced the sermon entitled, "TAZKEER BIL QURAN" regarding the sixty-first (61st) Surah of the Qur'an, Al-Saff ('The Battle Array', which is also referred to as '*The Ranks*' in certain translations).

The Title of this Surah, according to some exegetes of the Qur'an, has been derived from the expression 'saffan' ("in [solid] ranks") occurring in verse 4, which cements the relationship of the Surah with battle. Surah Al-Hadid (Iron), chapter 57 of the Qur'an, which also commences with the same verse, with a little difference, too deals with battle between Truth (Haqq) and Falsehood (Batil). The names of both Surahs are evident to the aforementioned.

The discourse thus has to be opened with this introduction so that before hearing what is going to follow, one may well understand that Allah (SWT) is free from and far above the dependence on someone's faith, help and sacrifices for the functioning of His (SWT) Godhead. If He (SWT) exhorts the believers to adopt sincerity in Faith and urges them to exert their utmost for the success and victory of the Truth, that is for the sake of their own good; otherwise the Will of Allah (SWT) is accomplished by His (SWT) own Authority and by His (SWT) own Design, whether somebody makes no effort at all towards its implementation, and whether the whole world joins together to frustrate and resist it stubbornly.

In addition, this Surah is one of three Surahs in the Qur'an [the other two being (Surah 09) At-Tawbah and (Surah 48) Al-Fath] which are a testament to the universal Prophethood of Muhammad (SAW) and describe his mission of establishing Islam as a Deen superseding all rival politico-socio-economic systems.

An astonishing attribute in one of the verses of the Surah is that it goes beyond the norm of leaving ambiguous the affairs of the Hereafter and the final abode of humans in the afterlife, as found abundantly in other religions. It offers a 'trade' to the believers that will guarantee paradise! The details will be discussed when we reach the appropriate verse.

Last but not the least, this Surah provides Muslims with strategies related to politics, military, war and peace. It is striking to note that these vital aspects of the Surah and the subject matter that follows has been forsaken by Today's Muslim, consequently facing the predicament that he finds himself muddled in, solely due to the lack Faith in Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SWT), coupled by a lack of understanding regarding the Islamic ideology of politics, military strategy, war and peace; the penalty of which he is facing is not hidden from anyone.

Most exegetes of the Qur'an are of the opinion that the central idea, first enunciated in verse 2 and developed in the subsequent passages, is "Why do you say one thing and do another?" Thus, it is essentially a call to unity between professed belief and actual behavior.

The date of revelation cannot be established with absolute certainty, but it is probable that the Surah was revealed shortly after the near-defeat of the Muslims in the battle of Uhud – that is, towards the end of 3 AH. or the beginning of 4 AH, thus a Madinite Surah.

With this Introduction, the Ameer commenced the elucidation of the Surah, starting with verse 1.

I seek refuge of Allah (SWT) from the accursed Satan

In The Name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful

Verse 61:1

“All that is in the heavens and all that is on earth extol Allah's (SWT) limitless glory: for He alone is Almighty, Truly Wise!”

It has always been so that everything in the universe has proclaimed the truth that its Creator and Sustainer is free from any blemish and defect, any weakness, error or evil. He is glorified in His essence, He is glorified in His attributes, He is glorified in His works as well as His commands whether they relate to the creation, or to the religious law for mankind. The grammatical structure of certain words in the verse also signify that every particle in the universe has always been extolling the glory of its Creator and Sustainer in the past, is doing so at present and will continue to do the same eternally.

The word 'Aziz' signifies a mighty and powerful Being, Whose decrees cannot be prevented by any power in the world from being enforced, Whom no one can oppose and resist, Who has to be obeyed by everyone whether one likes it or not, Whose rebels cannot escape His accountability and punishment; while the word 'Hakim' signifies that whatever He does is done with wisdom. His creation, His administration and rule, His commands and guidance, all are based on wisdom. None of His works is tarnished by any tract of folly or ignorance.

Verses 61:2 and 61:3

These two verses when explained in unison give a better understanding of the perspective of their revelation and their implications for Muslims.

61:2

“O You who have attained faith! Why do you say one thing and do another?”

61:3

“Most loathsome is it in the sight of Allah (SWT) that you say what you do not do (and your action belies it)!”

One meaning of this passage is general as is apparent from its wording. It has a specific meaning too, which becomes evident when this verse is read along with the verse that follows.

The first meaning is that there should be complete conformity between a true Muslim's word and deed: he should carry into effect whatever he says, and when he has no intention of doing it, he should not say it. To say one thing and do another is one of the most hideous characteristics of man, in the sight of Allah (SWT). The Holy Prophet (SAW) has explained that when a person starts demonstrating this trait, it is a sign that he is no longer a true believer but has started sliding down the slippery path of hypocrisy. This, however, is a much general meaning of these verses.

As for their specific meaning, it becomes obvious when these two verses are read along with the verse that follows. The object is to reprove those people who talked much and made tall promises to fight and lay down their lives in the cause of Islam, but when the time came of their test and trial, they fled the battlefield. The commentators while explaining the background of the revelation of these verses have mentioned the different forms of weakness to which this rebuke by Allah (SWT) is made.

Ibn-e-Abbas (RA) says that before Qitaal was prescribed, there were some people among the Muslims who said: "Would that we could know the act that is most lovable in the sight of Allah (SWT), so that we would perform the same." But when they were told that it was waging a battle in the cause of Allah (SWT), it became most difficult for them to carry out their promise. Muqatil bin Hayyan (RA) has stated that in the Battle of Uhud these very people were put to the test, and they abandoned the Holy Prophet (SAW) and fled the battlefield. Ibn Zaid (RA) says that many of the people (hypocrites) made the Holy Prophet (SAW) believe that they would go out with him to fight the enemy whenever it was so required, but when the time of the test came their promises proved false. On their return to Madinah, the hypocrites in particular, boasted and bragged, saying. "We put up a brave fight and we achieved such and such a victory." It was these people who have been rebuked by Allah (SWT) in these verses.

Verse 61:4

“Verily, Allah loves [only] those who fight in His cause in ranks [as though they were built firm and compact] like a solid wall cemented with molten lead.”

Firstly, the verse describes several characteristics of those believers who are blessed with Allah's (SWT) good pleasure and approval, who are prepared to fight in His way, irrespective of the consequent dangers.

Secondly, it describes that Allah (SWT) likes that army of believers which has three characteristics:

- 1- It fights in Allah's way with full understanding, and does not fight for a cause disapproved by Allah;
- 2- It is not undisciplined, but is well-organized and well-arrayed for battle; and
- 3- It offers stiff resistance to the enemy as though it were "a solid structure cemented with molten lead". This quality in itself highly meaningful. No army can stand in the battle array like a "solid structure" unless it has the following traits:

- a) Complete agreement in the faith and the objective, which should smite soldiers and officers in a well-knit body.
- b) Confidence in one another sincerity, which cannot be created unless everybody is genuinely sincere in his aim and free from impure motives; otherwise the severe test of war will not allow anyone's insincerity to remain hidden, and when confidence is lost, the members of the army start suspecting instead of trusting one another.
- c) A high standard of morality without which neither can the officers and soldiers of the army have love and respect for each other, nor can they remain immune from mutual clashes and conflicts.
- d) Love of the common objective and a firm resolve to achieve it, which should inspire, the whole army with an invincible spirit of gallantry, devotion and self-sacrifice, so that it may actually face the enemy like a solid cemented structure in the battlefield. Such were the foundations on which a powerful military organization was raised under the leadership of the Holy Prophet (SAW). Mighty powers of the day clashed with it and were annihilated; no power of the world then could dare face it for centuries to come.

On this note, the Ameer concluded the introduction and elucidation of the verses 1 through 4 of the 61st Surah of the Qur'an, As-Saff, and Supplicated to Allah (SWT) to bestow on us the understanding of the Qur'an and make it easy for us to follow His (SWT) commandments and lead a righteous life. He coupled the supplication with Aameen!