

Guiding Light Selections From the Holy Qur'an

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Translation

*In the name of Allah, Most Gracious,
Most Merciful.*

قرآن کریم

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1. Now the 'Ad behaved
Arrogantly through the land,
Against (all) truth and reason,
And said: "Who is superior
To us in *strength*? What!
Did they not see that
God, Who created them,
Was superior to them
In *strength*? But they
Continued to reject Our Signs!
Sūrah Fuṣṣilat (41:15)

• فَأَمَّا عَادُ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ
بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَقَالُوا مَنْ أَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً
أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي
خَلَقَهُمْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً
وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ
سورة فصلت (١٥:٤١)

2. Against them make ready
Your strength to the utmost
Of your power, including
Steads of war, to strike terror
Into (the hearts of) the enemies,
Of God and your enemies
And others besides, whom
Ye may not know, but whom
God doth know. Whatever
Ye shall spend in the Cause
Of God, shall be repaid
Unto you, and ye shall not
Be treated unjustly.
Sūrah Al Anfal (8:60)

• وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ
مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ
تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ
وَالْآخَرِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ
وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
يُؤْتِكُمْ إِيَّاهُ وَتَنْتَظِمُونَ
سورة الأنفال (٦٠ : ٨)

3. He said: "(The power) in which
My Lord has established me
Is better (than tribute):
Help me therefore with *strength*
(And labour): I will
Erect a strong barrier
Between you and them:

• قَالَ مَا مَكَّنِّي فِيهِ رَبِّي خَيْرٌ
فَأَعِينُونِي بِقُوَّةٍ أَلْجَلَّ
بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ رَدْمًا

the Qur'an explains and applies the concept of power to wealth and children. We find that this use of a term followed by an explanation of its meaning and an illustration of its use in concrete terms is true in the rest of the verses quoted above. The important point that we would like to make in this commentary is that students of the social and human sciences should understand and appreciate the Qur'anic use of verbal nouns. They should look at them conceptually as areas of study, investigate them, and try to understand their scope, magnitude and application.

To make our point clear we will take a general look at the following verses:

10. Let not the Unbelievers
Think that they can
Get the better (of the godly):
They will never frustrate (them).
- وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
سَبَقُوا آلَهُمْ لَآ يَعْزِرُونَ
11. Against them make ready
Your strength to the utmost
Of your power, including
Steads of war, to strike terror
Into (the hearts of) the enemies,
Of Allah and your enemies,
And others besides, whom
Ye may not know, but whom
Allah doth know. Whatever
Ye shall spend in the Cause
Of Allah, shall be repaid
Unto you, and ye shall not
Be treated unjustly.
- وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ
مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ
تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ. عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ
وَالْآخَرِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ لَنَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ
وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
يُؤْتِكُمْ إِيَّاهُكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَأَنْظَلُمُونَ
12. But if the enemy
Incline towards peace,
Do thou (also) incline
Towards peace, and trust
In Allah: for He is the One
That hereth and knoweth
(All things).
- وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلَامِ
فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ
إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ
13. Should they intend
To deceive thee—verily Allah
Sufficeth thee: He it is
That hath strengthened thee
With His aid and
With (the company of)
The Believers;
- وَإِنْ يُرِيدُوا أَنْ يَخْدَعُوكَ
فَأِنَّكَ حَسْبُكَ اللَّهُ هُوَ الَّذِي آيَدُكَ
بِنَصْرِهِ وَبِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ
14. And (moreover) He hath put
Affection between their hearts:
Not if thou hadst spent
- وَاللَّفَافِ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ لَوْ أَنْفَقْتَ

All that is in the earth,
 Couldst thou have produced
 That affection, but Allah
 Hath done it: for He
 Is Exalted in might, Wise.

مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مَا أَلْفَتَ
 بَيْتَ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ
 أَلْفَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

15. O Prophet! Sufficient
 Unto thee is Allah—
 (Unto thee) and unto those
 Who follow thee
 Among the Believers

• يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَسْبُكَ اللَّهُ
 وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

16. O Prophet! rouse the Believers
 To the fight. If there are
 Twenty amongst you, patient
 And persevering, they will
 Vanquish two hundred: if a hundred,

• يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
 عَلَى الْقِتَالِ إِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ
 عَشْرُونَ صَابِرُونَ
 يَغْلِبُوا مِائَتِينَ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ

17. They will vanquish a thousand
 Of the Unbelievers: for these
 Are a people without understanding

مِائَةٌ يَغْلِبُوا أَلْفًا مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
 بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ

18. For the present, Allah
 Hath lightened your (task).
 For He knoweth that there is
 A weak spot in you:
 But (even so), if there are
 A hundred of you, patient
 And persevering, they will
 Vanquish two hundred, and if
 A thousand, they will vanquish
 Two thousand, with the leave
 Of Allah: for Allah is with those
 Who patiently persevere.
Sūrah Al Anfāl (8:59-66)

• أَتَنْخَفَفَ اللَّهُ عَنْكُمْ
 وَعَلِمَ أَنَّ فِيكُمْ ضَعْفًا
 فَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ
 يَغْلِبُوا مِائَتَيْنِ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أَلْفٌ
 يَغْلِبُوا أَلْفَيْنِ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ
 وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ
 (سورة الأنفال (٨): ٥٩-٦٦)

In these verses we find the Qur'anic discussion of power is in relation to war and confrontation. Looking at these verses we see that the Qur'an deals with aspects of physical power in terms of trained and ever-ready horses and cavalry as well as finance which were, in the time of the Prophet, very important components of military power. It also talks in terms of moral power—faith, solidarity and affection as well as patience and perseverance which are implied in the words *al-mu'min*, *allaḥa* and *al-sabirin*.

Looking closely at the last two verses (8:65-66) and referring to the classical works of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and commentary on the Qur'an (*taf-sīr*) by great scholars of the past such as Shafi'i in his book of jurisprudence, *al-Umm* and Ibn Kathīr in his book of commentary *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, it is

interesting to note that they did not pay much attention to the conceptual aspects of these verses related to power. The loss of power (*daf*) was the focus of their attention which they directed to the physical and operational aspects of the particular situation. That is why the conclusion they drew from their study and analysis of these verses was that Muslim fighters should not retreat and turn their backs on the enemy as long as they were no more than double the number of the Muslims. The emphasis here was on physical power, in particular the number of fighters.

In the contemporary world with our awareness of the concept of power and its numerous physical and moral components, applications, interrelations and dynamics, we can understand an additional dimension of these verses which actually emphasize the concept of power involved and the different components and dynamics that explain the change from a ratio of one to ten to a ratio of one to two. The reason for this great reduction in the ratio is the changes in the other components of power relationships between the Muslims and their enemies at a particular point in time.

In a conceptual study of these verses focusing on the concept of power it becomes clear that in fact these verses minimize the importance attached to the number of fighters and draw our attention to other factors of power; both the physical aspects of power such as armor, and the moral aspects such as faith and perseverance. Through pointing out the loss of the other factors of power (*dafan*) it shows that the number of fighters is of limited significance and the value and effectiveness of numbers could change drastically. In this case the ratio changes from one to ten to one to two. This is opposed to the conclusions of the jurists who emphasized the number of fighters, ignoring completely the other aspects of power.

The wider and more important lesson involved in this commentary is the importance of the conceptual study of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Muslim social scientists should give proper attention to concepts and theorization in their study of the Qur'an and Sunnah. They should study the application, interrelationship and dynamics of these concepts related to contemporary conditions and realities. The benefits and knowledge derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah would then be much more useful and functional. The functional and the operational dimensions are very much needed for any successful Muslim performance in the future.

The effects of the Muslim lack of attention to the theoretical and conceptual aspects of the Qur'an and Sunnah have been detrimental and because of this we have not been able to face changing situations and achieve an Islamic civilizational presence in the recent centuries.

It is important for Muslim scientists and intellectuals to pay attention to and carry out investigation and analysis on information, issues, principles and concepts of the revealed knowledge contained in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Muslim intellectuals have to study, understand, theorize and relate to their contemporary situation in order to better understand revealed knowledge and to avoid gross mistakes and great losses in order to attain wider and better horizons of human life and civilization.

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