

(.Badr: First Battle In Islam (624 A.D

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Quraish had begun grand-scale preparations to attack Medina. The trade caravan which had gone to Syria that year headed by Abu Sufyan was extraordinarily equipped. Every Quraishite put all his savings in that caravan, and it was decided that the profit accrued that year would be given to the traders to spend on arms, horses, and other items of war to battle the Muslims of Medina.

This news did cause a great deal of anxiety in Medina. As Abu Sufyan was returning from Syria, he feared that the Muslims might intercept his trade caravan. He sent a messenger well in advance to inform the leaders of Quraish of his fears. Upon receiving the message, a well-equipped army of one thousand Meccans marched towards Medina under the command of Abu Jahl.

They had reached Badr (200 miles from Mecca and 80 miles from Medina) when news came that the trade caravan was passing just three miles on the seaside from the Quraishites' camp, and that it had not encountered any attack from the Muslims yet. But since the Meccans were so eager to battle Muhammad and his followers, they decided to proceed towards Medina anyway. After all, was not the objective of sending such a trade caravan this very battle?! So, why should they go back to Mecca when they had one thousand well-equipped warriors among them who were sufficient to teach the Muslims a lesson?! They camped at the stream of Badr. Now let us see what was happening in Medina. When news came that the trade caravan was coming from Syria (on the north side) and that the Meccan army was marching towards Medina (from the south), the Muslims thought that they would be crushed between these two enemy groups.

Now, there were two options before the Muslims in Medina: to either save themselves from being overwhelmed by the Meccans with all their resources from the rich Syrian trade, or choose another alternative (one which had the least danger for the time being and which also promised a rich booty): fall upon the Quraishi caravan returning from Syria richly laden and led by Abu Sufyan with only 40 not so well-armed men. From a worldly point of view, this latter course was the safest and the most lucrative, and many Muslims preferred it. The other alternative, which was actually adopted on the recommendation of the Prophet as guided by God, was to leave the booty alone and to march out boldly against the well-armed and well-equipped Quraishite army of 1,000 men coming from Mecca.

The Prophet, as usual, consulted with his companions in this regard. Abu Bakr said, "The Prophet knows better, but it has come to my knowledge that Quarish are fast approaching. They are only two stages from us." "Omar ibn al-Khattab added, "O Messenger of Allah! The prestige of Quraish is involved in this affair. They have never bent their haughty necks to servitude. Since becoming infidels, they have never turned believers. They are sure to set themselves stubbornly against you. You should, therefore, have adequate equipment of war to meet them." "Omar's statements did not please the Prophet at all, and signs of indignation were visible on his face.

Al-Miqdad ibn 'Amr^[1] then addressed the Prophet thus: "We should not repeat what the Children of Israel had said to Moses, that is, 'Go, you and your Lord, to fight while we sit here waiting.' Rather, by God Who sent you to guide us, we should say: 'Go you and your Lord to fight and we shall fight your foe on your right and on your left, in front of you and behind you, till the Lord grants you victory.' Hearing this speech of Miqdad, the Prophet smiled and blessed him.

Now the Prophet turned to the Ansar to see what they had to say. They formed the majority of his fighting force. He was apprehensive lest they should say that they had pledged to assist him only in repulsing any attack against their city, Medina. But Sa'd ibn Mu'ath^[2] stood up on behalf of the Ansar and said to him that they had received him as the Prophet of God and had sworn allegiance to him, promising to obey him. They, therefore, were all ready to follow him, to do whatever pleased him, though it were to throw themselves into the sea. The Prophet appreciated this statement and made it known to everyone that he had decided to face the Meccan forces, assuring them of victory.

This situation is described in the following ayats of the Qur'an: Just as your Lord caused you (O Muhammad to go forth from your house with the truth, though a party of the believers were averse thereto; they disputed with you about the truth after it had become clear, (and they went forth) as if they were being driven to death while they looked (at it). And when Allah promised you one of the two parties that it shall be yours, and you loved that the one not armed should be yours, and Allah desired to manifest the truth of what was true by His words and to cut off the root of the unbelievers, so that He may manifest the truth of what was true and show the falsehood of what was false, even though the guilty ones disliked it.(Qur'an, 8:5-8)

These verses clearly show that the Meccan army was already on its way long before the Muslims came out of Medina to defend themselves. Also, they clearly show that although some Muslims desired to avoid the Meccan army and to attack the trade caravan, that idea was not accepted, and that the decided aim and objective of their march was to fight the

Meccan army which was already on its way.

This clearly belies the vicious and mischievous propaganda of Western writers who claim that the Prophet had intended to attack the trade caravan of Quraish and that Quraish had come out only to protect it. The verses of the Qur'an provide an authentic contemporary record of the events of Badr. If there is any writing by anyone which goes against this Divine account, it must be thrown out of the window.

You may wonder why the enemies of Islam labour so much to present this battle of Badr as one in which the Quraishites (poor souls were aiming at only protecting their trade caravan. The reason is this: It was the first battle between the pagan Quraishites and the Muslims, and if the responsibility of this first battle is laid on the heads of the Muslims, then all subsequent battles could be portrayed as being the continuation of this battle and, thus, the Prophet could be presented as a warrior prophet who by his plundering designs compelled the "peace-loving" Meccans to fight!

'Anyhow, let us go back to our narrative. The Meccan army was in control of the stream of Badr, and the ground of their campsite was of firm clay. Contrarily, the Muslims were far from the stream and thus experienced difficulty in finding water. To make matters worse, many Muslims had nocturnal discharge while asleep and became "unclean" (najis). And the ground under them was sandy which was likely to prevent fast running during the battle. God helped them by sending rain which provided them with water enough for their needs and made the sandy ground firm for them, while the firm clay of the Meccans' side became muddy and slippery, making their stand and maneuvers difficult.

Referring to this, Allah says in the Qur'an: (Remember) when He caused drowsiness to fall on you as a security from Him and sent down upon you water from the cloud so that He might thereby purify you and take away from you the uncleanness of Satan, so that He might fortify your hearts and keep (your) footsteps thereby firm.(Qur'an, 8:11)

In this background, look at the insinuation of some Western "scholars' who have written that the Prophet had taken control of the stream of Badr and by refusing water to the Meccans, reduced them to defeat!

Anyhow, the facts of the actual battle are, in short, as follows: With an ill-equipped body of three hundred and thirteen persons, 61 from the Aws and 170 from the Khazraj, having among them only two horses and seventy camels (which they rode by turn), the Prophet proceeded to Badr, about eighty miles from Medina, to meet the Meccan army. Young Ali was the standard-bearer. The forces met on Friday, the 17th of the month of Ramadan, 2 A.H. (March 16, 624 A.D.). According to the customs of the Arabs, three Quraishite warriors challenged their

opponents to individual duels. They were 'Otbah, Abu Sufyan's father-in-law and father of Hind who tried to chew Hamzah's liver, as the reader will come to know later, al-Walid, 'Otbah's son, and Shaybah, brother of 'Otbah, all Umayyads.

They enjoyed a great deal of influence in their tribe. Three Ansar stepped forward accepting their challenge, but the Quraishites refused to accept them as their equals and instead invited the "Meccan renegades," as they called them, to come out to meet them on the battlefield. Ali and 'Obaydah, both cousins of the Prophet, as well as Hamzah the valiant, his uncle, all Hashemites, responded to the challenge, and the fight between these six men broke out. It was a fierce and prolonged contest. Ali and Hamzah succeeded in the end in overpowering their opponents, al-Walid and Shaybah respectively, whom they slew. Then they went to aid 'Obaydah who was severely wounded and nearly overpowered by 'Otbah. They killed 'Otbah and captured 'Obaydah who died of his wounds four days later.

After these individual duels, a pitched battle ensued. The stakes were high. Both forces fought valiantly but the Muslims were animated by holy zeal. In the thick of the battle, the Prophet was watching the progress of the battle intensely; he prayed to God, earnestly beseeching Him thus: "O Lord, forget not Thy promise of assistance! O Lord! If this small band were to perish, there will be none to worship Thee."

Coming out of his canopy, he cast a handful of gravel into the air towards the enemy saying, "Confusion seize their faces!" He called out to his men saying, "Courage, my children! Close your ranks! Discharge your arrows, and the day is yours!" According to Abu al-Fida', both armies heard his voice. The pagans imagined that they saw angelic warriors; the Quraishi line wavered, and a number of their most brave and distinguished men fell.

Allah describes this battle in the following verses: (Remember) when you sought aid from your Lord, so He answered you: I will assist you with a thousand angels following one another. And Allah only gave it as a good news and so that your hearts might thereby be at ease, and victory is only from Allah; surely Allah is Mighty, Wise. (Qur'an, 8:9-10)

The Muslims got the upper hand. Their leader, the Prophet, sat under a canopy thatched with palm branches which was erected and closely guarded by Sa'd ibn Mu'ath. Abu Bakr did not join the ranks of the fighters but sat by the Prophet's side. The Meccan pagans took to flight in a shameful manner. In their haste, they threw their armour away, abandoning their transport animals with all their camping gear and equipment. They suffered a miserable defeat. They were driven back, leaving seventy dead, including a number of their notable chiefs and the most brave of their men. The Muslims dug up a deep pit wherein they threw the corpses of the slain Meccan pagans, including those of 'Otbah, Shaybah, al-Walid (Khalid's father; read above

his story and how Allah condemned him), Umayyah, and Abu Jahl.

The Prophet addressed them thus: "O 'Otbah! O Shaybah! O Walid! O Umayyah! O Abu Jahl! Alas! Have you found what your gods promised you to be the truth?! What my Lord promised me I have found to be true! Woe unto you! You rejected me, your Prophet! You cast me forth while others gave me refuge; you fought me while others came to my help!" "O Prophet!" said "Omar ibn al-Khattab, who was standing by his side, "Do you really speak to the dead?!" "Yes," the Prophet replied, "for they realize what I spoke to them better than you." All this is recorded

in Madarij al-Nubuwwah and Rawdat al-Ahbab.

Half of these seventy were killed by Ali ibn Abu Talib alone. It was his first war. Seventy others were taken prisoners. The Muslim force had lost only fourteen men, six from the Muhajirun and eight from the Ansar.

The prisoners were treated with exceptional kindness with the exception of a couple who were most notorious; these were 'Oqbah ibn Abu Mu'eet and al-Nathr ibn al-Harith, who had to be beheaded. Even the hostile critic Muir says: "In pursuance of Mahomet's commands, the citizens of Medina and such of the refugees as possessed houses received the prisoners and treated them with much consideration.

'Blessings be on the men of Medina', said one of these prisoners in later days, 'they made us ride while they themselves walked; they gave us wheaten bread to eat when there was little of it, contenting themselves with dates.'" The more affluent prisoners paid ransom and were set free. The others were asked to teach ten persons each to read and write and this teaching was to count as their ransom. After all, in these times of progress and enlightenment, with all the charters and agreements on the treatment of prisoners of war, history does not record another instance even remotely as generous and as humane as the Muslims' treatment of the prisoners taken in their very first encounter about fourteen hundred years ago.

Among the captives were 'Abbas, an uncle of the Prophet, Nawfal ibn al-Harith, and Aqil ibn Abu Talib, both cousins of the Prophet, and Abul-'As ibn al-Rabee', husband of Zainab daughter of Khadija and Muhammad's step-daughter. 'Abbas was stoutly built; he was a man of tall stature. He was captured by Abul Yasar, a man relatively thin, lean, and short! When asked how a man so small could overpower him, 'Abbas said that his captor looked to him at the time like a giant.

Indeed, there was a Sign (of Divine interference) for you in the two hosts (that) met together in the (Badr) encounter: one party fighting in the way of Allah and the other unbelieving, whom they saw twice as many (or as big) as themselves with the sight of the eye, and Allah strengthens with His aid whomsoever He pleases; most surely there is a lesson in this for

those who have sight.(Qur'an, 4:13)

'Abbas saw the size of Abul Yasar appearing to him twice as big as he actually was, and he was not big at all... 'Abbas was asked to pay ransom for himself and for his nephews Nawfal and Aqil. He replied that if he paid up the ransom, he would be reduced to begging alms of Quraish for the rest of his life. But to his great astonishment, the Prophet revealed to him the secret of the gold which he had entrusted to his wife at midnight before departing with the

Meccan army! Then he recited the following verse of Surat al-Anfal:

O Prophet! Say to the captives in your hands: If Allah knows of anything good in your hearts, He will give you better than what has been taken away from you and will forgive you, and Allah

is most Forgiving, most Merciful.(Qur'an, 8:70)

'Abbas was now convinced beyond the shadow of doubt that his nephew was neither a pretender nor an ordinary man; how else did he know about what went on between him and his wife in the depth of the night? He admitted that nobody could know of that incident except God, so he readily embraced Islam, and so did his nephews. A few years later, when he found himself a man of considerable wealth, he reflected on the verse cited above and admitted that

the prophecy was fulfilled.

In order to secure the release of Abul 'as, his wife Zainab sent some of her jewelry, including a necklace given to her by her mother Khadija, wife of the Prophet, as a wedding gift. The Prophet identified the necklace as soon as he saw it. Sadly reflecting upon Khadija, he returned it to Abul 'as, asking him to give it back to Zainab. He released him without any ransom on one condition: that he bring Zainab to him. Zayd ibn Harithah escorted Abul 'as back to Mecca, and after a few days, both men came back together with Zainab, the Prophet's step-daughter. Zainab, now a Muslim, refused to go back to her pagan husband unless he accepted Islam. He embraced Islam six years later in 630 A.D. after the conquest of Mecca by the Muslims and

after appearing before the Prophet as a prisoner of war for the second time.

Quraish's defeat at Badr was the death blow to Abu Lahab, the only Hashemite who was a bitter opponent of the Prophet, and he died of grief one week after the battle at the loss of his friends and relatives, especially al-Walid, Shaybah and 'Otbah.

Battle and Aftermath

The battle of Badr was remarkable in more ways than one. It demonstrated the great devotion of the disciples to their cause and their complete faith in the Prophet and his mission. Stood before them in the Meccan ranks were many of their close relatives, sons, fathers, or uncles. Thus, the Prophet's uncle 'Abbas, Ali's brother 'Aqil, Abu Bakr's son, Huthaifah's father and

"Omar's maternal uncle, to name a few, figured in the Meccan army. Yet the disciples never faltered. Personal feelings and sentiments were subordinated to the supreme cause. Such was the material from which Islam arose. The battle also proved that mere numerical superiority and matching valour are of no avail if the cause is not righteous. God helps those who make sacrifices in His cause.

The battle of Badr had far-reaching consequences. Till then, the Muslims were a harassed band avoiding any major conflict. This victory gave them confidence in their physical power. They could now meet force with force^[3]. They were soon recognized as a power to be reckoned with and smaller tribes were cautioned against joining forces against them. This victory dealt a severe blow to the prestige of Quraish. A number of their chiefs, such as Abu Jahl, 'Otbah, Shaibah, Zam'ah, 'As ibn Hisham, and Umayyah ibn Khalaf had been killed and, consequently, Abu Sufyan became their undisputed chieftain.

'Abdullah ibn Ubay and his oscillating followers professed Islam, though in name only, and as munafiqun (hypocrites), they were always a source of danger. The Jews of Medina and its vicinity were alarmed at the new power that had emerged. Their enmity towards the Muslims, however, did not abate, and a Jewish tribe, Banu Qinaqa', had to be punished not long after Badr as will be discussed later. The ignominy of the defeat made the Meccans more bitter and furious and the cry of "Revenge!" was on all lips.

Notes:

[1] Al-Miqdad ibn `Amr is very well known in history as al-Miqdad ibn al-Aswad al-Kindi (of Banu Kindah). His date of birth is unknown, but he died in 33 A.H./653 A.D. He was one of the earliest converts to Islam who received a great deal of persecution and torture at the hands of pagan Meccans. He is so famous that writers use only his first name when they write about him. He participated in the battles of Badr, Uhud, al-Khandaq (moat), and in all expeditions. He is one of those who boycotted the "election" of Abu Bakr as the successor to the Prophet, knowing, having been there, that Ali had already been appointed by the Prophet for the job.

[2] He is one of the greatest figures in early Islamic history, one of the pillars upon which Islam was erected although he was in the company of the Prophet for a short period of time (only 5 years). An entire volume can be written about his merits. His full name is Abu `Amr Sa'd ibn Mu'ath ibn Imri'ul-Qays (the famous poet) ibn Zayd ibn `Abdul-Ashhal ibn Jasham ibn al-Harith ibn al-Khazraj ibn al-Thubayt.

The full name of his last ancestor (al-Thubayt) is: `Amr ibn Malik ibn al-Aws al-Ansari al-Awsi al-Ashhal. His mother's name was Kabsha daughter of Rafi'.. She was one of the companions

of the Prophet. The date of his birth is unknown, but he died in 5 A.H./626 A.D. He is one of the dignitaries of Medina who participated in the Battle of Badr, and he is famous for his love for the Prophet's Progeny (Ahl al-Bayt), so much so that even Imam Hasan al-`Askari praises him.

He accepted Islam at the hands of the great sahabi Mus`ab ibn `Omayr after the first Pledge of Aqaba, that is, in 622 A.D. The Prophet loved him so much that he cursed his murderer, Haban ibn al-`Arqa (al-Arqa being the name of his mother; his father's name is unknown), who shot him with an arrow during the Battle of the Khandaq. He died one month after being shot under the weight of his wound. He is the one who arbitrated the Muslims' conflict with Banu Qurayzah, the Jews of Medina.

The Prophet once said about him after his death, Each mourner lies save one that mourns Sa`d ibn Mu`ath. This is recorded in Al-Isiti`ab where we are told that the Prophet ordered a tent erected for Sa`d inside the Medina mosque after his receiving the injury from the arrow so that he would visit him every day. Surely Sa`d deserves more space in this book, but we pray the Almighty to forgive us for our shortcomings and to reward Sa`d on our behalf with the best of His rewards, Allahomma Ameen.

[3] The Muslims of today, with rare exceptions, are helpless and spineless because they abandoned their creed and became the friends, servants, stooges and allies of the Western enemies of Islam. This is why they cannot face force with force. This is why when our Muslim sisters in Bosnia were raped and their children and men massacred, the reaction of the Muslim world was almost totally muted; Muslims are toothless; they are Muslims only in name. It is only when Muslims are able to meet force with force that they will earn the respect of the world community. There is no room for weaklings except in the cemetery. Might is still right; it has ...always been so, and it will always remain so