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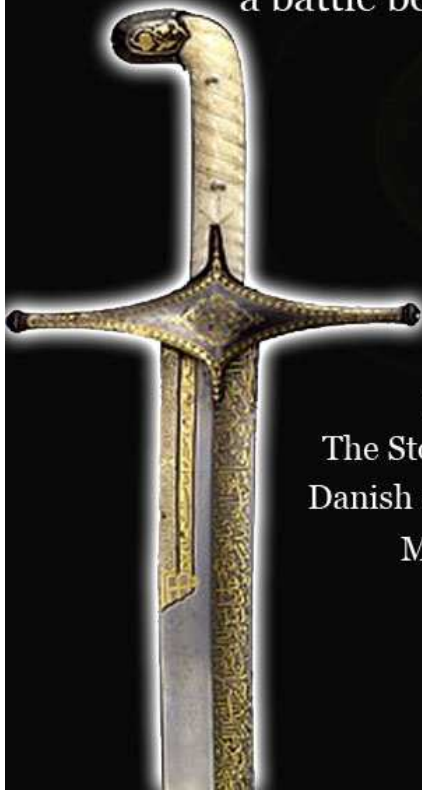
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## The Battle of Badr

a battle between Truth and Falsehood



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## **The Battle of Badr - a battle between Truth and falsehood**

*The Most Decisive Battle Between Truth & Falsehood*

*Compiled by Shawana A Aziz*

Life in Makkah was becoming difficult for the Muslims. The growing oppression and tortures of the Kuffar became unbearable. The Muslims were prevented from worshiping Allah. Consequently, Allah, the Exalted, revealed orders to migrate. The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) and his companions secretly planned to escape the watchful disbelievers, who intended to kill the Prophet and his companions in their own homeland and thus bring an end to the religion of Islam. But Allah, the Exalted, aided His Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) to immigrate to al-Medina. This carefully planned and prudent escape of Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) and the Sahabah created great anxiety and rancor in the hearts of the disbelievers.

The new abode of Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam), al-Medina, integrated the commercial routes to Makkah. The trade caravans of the disbelievers passing near al-Medina now faced serious danger. The disbelievers had already experienced the love and devotion of the Sahabah for Allah and His Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam). They knew that the Sahabah were always ready to sacrifice everything they had for the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam). Thus, in order to safeguard their trade, the disbelievers undertook all possible efforts to expel the Muslims from al-Medina.

They sent a serious ultimatum to the chief of the disbelievers in al-Medina, Abdullah Ibn Ubai Ibn Sahul, ordering him to fight or drive out the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) from al-Medina. Otherwise, they would attack their city and destroy their people. However, the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) cautioned Abdullah and his men from taking any cruel steps against the Muslims and as a result of his cowardice, Abdullah withheld his devilish plan. The disbelievers of Makkah also sent a note to the Ansaar (the Muslims of al-Medina who aided Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam)) threatening to put them to death if they helped the Prophet or defended him. But the Ansaar loved Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) more than their lives and therefore paid no heed to the threats.

### Permission to Fight the Kuffar - The First Order of Jihad

For 10 years, while in Makkah, the Muslims were prohibited to openly fight the Kuffar because the disbelievers were greater in number and the Muslims were very few. Were the Muslims to fight the disbelievers in Makkah, the results would have been disastrous. But when the disbelievers went to extremes in their transgression that they forced Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) and his companions to leave the most sacred place, resolved to kill the Prophet and sent threats to the Muslims in al-Medina; Allah revealed verses of the Qur'aan giving permission to the Muslims to fight the disbelievers. Now the Muslims had the support of the Ansaar, they had a place where Islam prevailed and where they could retreat. It was an appropriate time for Jihad.

"Permission to fight is given to those (i.e. believers against those disbelievers), who are fighting them, (and) because they (believers) have been wronged, and surely Allah is Able to give them (believers) victory." [(22): 39]

Following the orders of Allah, the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) decided to first bring the commercial routes to Makkah under control. For which, he (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) signed a peace treaty with the Jews and other neighboring tribes. He (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) also sent groups of Sahabah from time to time to ambush the caravans along their commercial routes. The intent was to caution the disbelievers that Muslims had become strong and any cruel act against the Muslims, whether those who were left in Makkah or those who resided in al-Medina, might cause danger to their trade and livelihood. The disbelievers realized the real danger of the Muslims, and as a result they were discouraged.

Meanwhile, Allah, the All Wise, equipped the Muslims in al-Medina for war against the enemies. He revealed Qur'aanic verses encouraging the Muslims for Jihad (fighting in the way of Allah), and teaching them ways of fighting. "And fight, in the way of Allah those who fight you; but transgress not the limits. Truly, Allah likes not the transgressors. And kill them wherever you find them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out" [(2): 190]

#### Reason of the Battle of Badr

In Ramadhan 2 A.H., the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) was informed that Abu Sufyan (who was still a disbeliever and later accepted Islam), was traveling for trade from Syria. He was approaching Makkah with 50 thousand gold Deenaar guarded by 40 men.

While escaping from Makkah, the Muslims were forced to leave behind all their wealth and possession. The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) saw this caravan as an opportunity to get back some of their wealth. He (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) called for his companions and marched towards the main road leading to Makkah and turned towards Badr. His (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) intent was only to capture the wealth and not war. But Allah, the Exalted, in His Great Wisdom, willed for them to fight.

On the other hand, Abu Sufyan knew that his route was not safe. He was further informed by his men about the Prophet's movement. He immediately sent a man to Makkah asking for help. The man reached Makkah, cut off the nose and ears of the camel, turned its saddle upside down, tore off his shirt from front and back (this was their way of warning about enemies) and cried, 'O Quraysh! Your goods are with Abu Sufyan. The caravan is being stopped by Muhammad (r) and his companions. I cannot say what would have happened to them. Help! Help!' The disbelievers shocked with the news rushed for Abu Sufyan's help. They took with them a huge army of 1,300 well-equipped soldiers, including 100 horsemen and a large number of camels to fight the Muslims.

Meanwhile, Abu Sufyan changed his route; he turned away from the main road that passed near al-Medina towards Red Sea and thus was out of the reach of the Muslims. When he found himself completely out of danger, he again sent a messenger to the people of Makkah on their way, informing them of his escape and asking them to return back. The Makkan army desired to return back but Abu Jahl, insisted to march up till Badr and said: "No by Allah! We will not go back until we proceed to the well of Badr, slaughter camels, drink liquor and female singers sing for us. This way Arabs will always talk about our stance and what we did on that day." Now the disbelievers wanted to humiliate the Muslims, punish them and prevent them from stopping their caravans in the future. They marched towards Badr and encamped on the bank of the valley.

The news of the caravan's escape and approaching of a big army reached Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam). It was a disturbing news, for the small unequipped Muslim army was no match to the huge well-equipped army of the disbelievers. The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) immediately called for a meeting and discussed the situation with his companions. He informed them of the gravity of the situation and explained that it was necessary to fight the Kuffar or else they would easily take over al-Medina and certainly cause destruction. He (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) then asked the Sahabah for their advice.

Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) received revelation from Allah. It was not necessary for him to consult with the Sahabah and seek their advice. But this practice of Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) reflects a very important characteristic of the Muslim leader, i.e. discussing and seeking advice of other knowledgeable Muslims. A Muslim leader should not make decision merely based upon his opinion. Rather, he should first consult with other knowledgeable Muslims, seek their advice and then make appropriate decisions.

The Muhajiroon (pl. of Muhajir) assured Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) that they would fight along with him until the last breath. The first one to speak was Abu Bakr

(radhiallahu anhu), then Umar Ibn al-Khattab (radhiallahu anhu) and then al-Miqdad Ibn Amr (radhiallahu anhu) got up and said:

"O Messenger of Allah! Proceed where Allah directs you to, for we are with you. We will not say as the children of Israel said to Moosa (alaihi-salaam), 'Go you and your Lord and fight and we will stay here.', Rather we shall say, "Go you and your Lord and fight and we will fight along with you. By Allah! If you were to take us to Bark al-Ghimad, we will still fight with determination against its defender until you gained it." The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) was pleased with the response of the Muhajiroon but the Muhajiroon only consisted of a small portion of the army.

It was natural for the Muhajiroon to fight against the disbelievers of Makkah because they were unjustly treated by them and thrown out of their homeland and property. Moreover, the Muhajiroon had already passed their test of faith in Allah and shown their love for the Prophet, when they forsake their family, relatives, property and homeland and migrated to al-Medina not fearing the consequences. The real test was now for the Ansaar, who had promised to protect the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) within their territories (al-Medina) and therefore, they were not obliged to fight outside al-Medina. So, Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) further said: "Advice me my men!" By this he wanted the Ansaar to express their view.

Upon this, Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh stood up and said: "By Allah, I feel you want us (the Ansaar) to speak." The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: "Oh, yes!" Sa'd said: "O Prophet of Allah! We believe in you and we testify that you are the true Messenger of Allah. We bear witness that what you have been given is the Truth. We give you our firm pledge of obedience and sacrifice.

We will obey you most willingly in whatever you command us, and by Allah, Who has sent you with Truth, if you ask us to cross this sea (Red Sea), we will do that most readily and not a man of us will stay behind, We hope that Allah will show you through our hands those deeds of courage, which will please your eyes. Kindly lead us to the battlefield in the Name of Allah!"

Shaytan makes Evil seem fair and makes false promises

When the disbelievers prepared to march towards al-Medina, Shaytan came to the disbelievers in the form of Suraqah Ibn Malik and made their evil action of fighting the Muslims seem fair to them. He encouraged them for the battle by making them believe that no one could defeat them. "And (remember) when Shaytan made their (evil) deeds seem fair to them and said: "No one of mankind can overcome you today!" He also promised them to protect Makkah from the enemies in their absence and said, "and verily, I am your neighbor." [ (8): 48]

Allah says about the promises of Shaytan, "He (Shaytan) makes promises to them, and arouses in them false desires; and Shaytan's promises are nothing but deception." [(4): 120]

It is from the tricks of Shaytan that he makes false promises to the people and makes them believe that they are winners in this world and the Hereafter. But Allah states, on the Day of Judgment, "Shaytan will say when the matter has been decided. Verily, Allah promised you a promise of truth. And I too promised you, but I betrayed you. I had no authority over you!" and those who follow the whispers of Shaytan Allah says, "the dwelling of such (people) is Hell, and they will find no way of escape from it." [(4): 120] See Tafseer Ibn Katheer.

Lack of Means of the Muslims and the well-equipped huge army of the disbelievers

The Muslim army was not more than 313-317 men, including 82-86 Muhajir (the Emigrants from Makkah) and the others were the Ansaar. They had only two horses and 70 camels to ride. Most of them did not even possess simple weapons to fight; some had swords but no bows and arrows, while others possessed spears but no swords. The army was not well equipped, nor well prepared for war. Moreover, the Muslims were old, sick, starving and

weak. But pleased with the words and willingness of the Sahabah to fight the disbelievers and putting all trust in Allah, the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) marched towards the wells of Badr.

When the Muslims encamped at Badr, the disbelievers sent one of their men, Umar Ibn Wahab Jumani, to spy about their number and strength. He reported that the Muslims were not more than 310 men. Hearing this, the disbelievers increased in their arrogance and pride and showed no desire to fight the Muslims. Utbah, Ibn Rabi'ah remarked, 'Let us go back without a fight.' Meaning the low number of the Muslims was no match for the large and well-equipped army of the Makkans. But they knew that the Sahabah were too brave to surrender and thus they would fight until the last man killing the largest number of polytheists possible. However, Abu Jahl opposed them and expressed his firm determination to kill them no matter how few they were!

Ibn Abbas (radhiallahu anhu) said, "When the two armies drew closer to each other, Allah made the Muslims look fewer in the eyes of the idolaters and the idolaters look few in the eyes of the Muslims. The idolaters said: "These people (Muslims) are deceived by their religion." [Soorah al-Anfal (8): 49]

Because they thought that Muslims were few. They believed without doubts that they would defeat the Muslims, Allah said: "But whosoever puts his trust in Allah, then surely, Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise." [Soorah al-Anfal (8): 49] [See Tafseer Ibn Katheer]

In the evening, the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) sent Ali Ibn Abi Talib, az-Zubari Ibn al-Awam and Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqqas to inquire about the location of the enemies. Two men were seen drawing water from the wells of Badr. Upon question, they admitted that they were carrying water for the Makkani army. But some Companions were not pleased with this answer, since they thought that the boys belonged to Abu Sufyan. So they beat the two boys, who finally said that they belonged to Abu Sufyan. When Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) was informed, he said angrily, "on telling the truth, you beat them, and on lying you released them!" Then he (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) himself spoke to the two boys, who informed him about the army's location, leaders and that they were so huge that they slaughter ten camels everyday to feed their men. The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) then turned towards the Muslims and said: "The Quraysh has sent you their most precious lives."

#### Allah's Blessing for the believers

Before the Muslims arrived at Badr, the disbelievers had already taken over the raised piece of land and so the Muslims had to take the low lying sandy spot. And between them remained a sandy piece of land. Ibn Abbas (radhiallahu anhu) said: "Muslims felt weak and the Shaytan cast frustration into their hearts. He whispered to them, 'You claim that you are Allah's supporters and that His Messenger is among you! However, the disbelievers have taken over the water resource from you, while you pray needing purity!' Allah sent down heavy rain allowing the Muslims to drink and use it for purity. Allah also removed Shaytan's whisper and made the sand firm when rain fell on it, and the Muslims walked on the sand along with their animals, until they reached the enemy." [At-Tabaree (13: 423)]

So, Allah sent rain as a blessing for the believers, but for the disbelievers, the rain was an obstacle that prevented them from further progress. Allah mentions this great blessing in the Qur'aan: "and He caused rain to descend on you from the sky to clean you thereby and to remove from you the Rijz (whispering, evil suggestions, etc.) of Shaytan, and to strengthen your hearts, and make your feet firm thereby." [Soorah al-Anfal (8): 11]

The blessing of rain strengthened the believer's hearts and encouraged them to fight the enemies of Allah. They experienced a sense of security. Then Allah descended another blessing on them; slumber overcame the Muslims and they slept sound the whole night without fear. "(Remember) when He covered you with a slumber as a security from Him"

[Soorah al-Anfal (8): 11] The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) spent the whole night in supplication and prayer.

#### First Day of the Battle

In the morning, Allah Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) called the Sahabah to offer the prayer and then positioned them for the battle. He (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) ordered them not to start fighting unless he ordered them. On the other side, the Quraysh also prepared for the war. When the two parties approached each other, Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) supplicated to Allah saying: "O Allah! The proud and arrogant Quraysh are already here disobeying you and belying Your Messenger. O Allah! I am waiting for Your victory which You have promised me. I beseech You Allah to defeat them (the enemies)."

Abu Jahl also prayed saying, "Our Lord, whichever of the two parties was less kind to his relatives, and brought us what we do not know, then destroy him tomorrow." Allah says about this supplication of Abu Jahl: "(O disbelievers) if you ask for a judgment, now has the judgment come unto you" [Soorah al-Anfal (8): 19]

Imam Ibn Katheer (rahimahullah) writes in the Tafseer of this verse, 'Allah says to the disbelievers, if you ask for a judgment (between truth and falsehood) and a decision between you and your believing enemies, and you got what you asked for.' Meaning Allah accepted their supplication and distinguished the truthful and gave victory to Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam).

The battle started when a man from the disbeliever swore to drink water from the water basin of the Muslims, to destroy it or die for it. Hamzah Ibn Abdul Mutallib (radhiallahu anhu) struck his leg with his sword and killed him inside the basin.

Then three men from the disbelievers, Utbah Ibn Rabi'a, his brother Shaibah and his son al-Waleed stepped forward. Three young men from the Ansaar came forward but the Quraysh (disbelievers of Makkah) yelled they wanted the heads of their cousins. The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) then sent Ubaidah Ibn al-Harith, Hamzah (his uncle) and Ali Ibn Abi Talib (his cousin) to fight. Hamzah (radhiallahu anhu) killed Shaibah and Ali (radhiallahu anhu) killed al-Waleed. Ubaidah was seriously wounded but Hamzah fell upon Utbah and cut off his head. In this way, in one on one combat, the disbelievers lost many of their brave men. So, they decided to attack the Muslims as a whole. The Muslims were ordered to carry out a defensive war. They supplicated to Allah and invoked His Help and fought bravely as they were ordered.

#### Allah's Help

Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) continuously prayed to Allah day and night. When the battle became very crucial, he (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) supplicate saying, "O Allah! Should this group (of Muslims) be defeated today, You will no longer be worshipped."

He (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) stretched forth his hand and supplicated to Allah until his cloak fell off his shoulders. Abu Bakr (radhiallahu anhu) came up to him, picked his cloak, and put it back on his shoulders and said: "O Prophet of Allah! You have cried out enough to your Lord. He will surely fulfill what He has promised you." [Saheeh al-Bukharee and an-Nasa'ee]

Immediately, Allah responded to the supplication and sent Angels for help, Allah says: "(Remember) when you sought help of your Lord and He answered you saying, 'I will help you with a thousand Angels each behind the other in succession.'" [Soorah al-Anfal (8): 9]

The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) raised his head and said cheerily: "O Abu Bakr, glad tidings are there for you; Allah's victory has approached, by Allah I can see Jibreel on his mount in the thick of a sandstorm." Then he recited the verse: "Their multitude will be put to flight and they will show their backs." [Soorah al-Qamar (54): 45]

Many narrations speak about the appearance of Angels in the battle of Badr. It is mentioned in Saheeh Muslim that Ibn Abbas (radhiallahu anhu) said: "While on that day a Muslim from the Ansaar was chasing a disbeliever, he heard over him the swashing of a whip and the voice of the rider saying: 'Go ahead Haizum.' He looked at the disbelievers who had fell on the ground on his back. The man came to Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) and related the incident, upon which Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: "You have told the truth. This was the help from the third Heaven."

Another incident is reported, where another man from the Ansaar captured Abbas Ibn Abdul Mutalib, who said: "O Messenger of Allah! By Allah this man did not capture me. I was captured by a man who was bald and had the most handsome face, and who was riding a horse. I cannot see him here among the people." The man from the Ansaar said: 'I captured him, O Messenger of Allah!' The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) replied: "Be quite, Allah, the All-Might, strengthened you with the help of a noble Angel."

It is also reported that after the battle, the people used to recognize those who were killed by the Angels, by wounds over their necks, finger and toes, because those parts had a mark as if they were branded by Fire.

Angel Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) approached Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) and asked him to take a handful of dust and throw at the enemies.

The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) threw the dust saying, "Confusion seize their faces!" A violent sandstorm blew into the eyes of the enemies and the handful of sand entered the eyes of the idolaters, each one of them was struck by some of it, and it distracted them making each of them busy. Allah says regarding it:

"And you (O Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam)) threw not when you did throw but Allah threw." [Soorah al-Anfal (8): 17]

meaning the handful of sand which Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) threw at the disbelievers was not by his (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) power and strength that it reached the eyes of the pagans, who were disturbed and made busy by it. But it is Allah, Who should be praised and glorified because He helped the Prophet to perform this act.

Iblees (Shaytan), who was in the form of Suraqah Ibn Malik, saw the Angels helping the Muslims and "ran away and said: "Verily, I have nothing to do with you"

Ibn Abbas said: 'On the day of Badr, Shaytan as well as his flag holders and soldiers, accompanied the idolaters. He whispered to the hearts of the idolaters, 'None can defeat you this day and I will help you.' When they met and Shaytan saw Angels coming to their aid and the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) took a handful of sand and threw it at the faces of the idolaters, causing them to retreat. Jibreel u came towards Shaytan but when Shaytan, while holding the hand of a Mushrik man, saw him, he withdrew his hand and ran away with his soldiers. That man asked him, 'O Suraqah! You claimed that you are our neighbor.' He said: "Verily, I see what you see not. Verily, I fear Allah for Allah is severe in punishment." [Soorah al-Anfal (8): 48]

Another great Help from Allah was that He placed terror and fright in the hearts of the disbelievers. This is why instead of being greater in number and being well-equipped and loaded with weapons, the disbelievers fled the battlefield in awe. "Verily, I am with you, so keep firm those who have believed. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who have disbelieved, so strike them over the necks, and smite over all their fingers and toes." [Soorah al-Anfal (8): 12]

Instances of the Sahabah's Bravery and Devotion

Only after Allah affirmed that He will suffice, aid, support and help the believers against their enemies, the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) gave clear order to counter attack the disbelievers reciting the verse, "And be quick for forgiveness from your Lord, and for Paradise as wide as are the Heavens and the Earth." [Soorah aali-Imran (3): 133]

Allah said: "O Prophet! Urge the believers to fight!" The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) encouraged his companions to fight. The courage and desire for Paradise and willingness to fight the disbelievers that Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) instilled in his companions is evident from the actions of the Sahabah.

Narrated Anas Ibn Malik (radhiallahu anhu), "The polytheists advanced (towards us), and the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: "Rise to enter Paradise which is equal in width to the Heavens and the Earth."

Umar Ibn al-Humam al-Ansari (radhiallahu anhu) said: "O Messenger of Allah! Is Paradise equal in extent to the Heavens and the Earth?" He said: 'Yes.' Umar said: 'Excellent! Excellent!' The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) asked him: "What makes you say, 'Excellent! Excellent!'" He said: "O Messenger of Allah, nothing but the desire that I may be among its residents." He said: "You are (surely) among its residents." He took some dates from his bag and began to eat them. Then he said: "If I were to live until I had eaten all these dates of mine, it would be a long life." (The narrator said) He threw away all the dates he had with him. Then he fought the enemies until he was killed." [Saheeh Muslim (4680)]

Mu'adh Ibn Amr, a young man from the Ansaar came across Abu Jahl in the battle and struck his leg so forcefully that his leg was cut off from the shin. When Ikrimah, the son of Abu Jahl, saw his father injured, he fell upon Mu'adh and nearly separated his arm from his shoulder. Mu'adh fought the whole day with the hanging arm and when it gave him more trouble, he put his arm under his feet and pulled it apart by force.

Abu Jahl, the Pharaoh of this Nation, died at the hands of two young Muslims

Abdur Rahmaan al-Awf (radhiallahu anhu) related, 'I was in the thick of the battle when two youths, still seemingly inexperienced in the art of fighting, one on the right and the second on the left. One of them spoke in a secret voice asking me to show him Abu Jahl. I asked him about his intention, to which he replied that he had a strong desire to engage with Abu Jahl in a combat until either of them was killed. It was something incredible. I turned to the left and the other expressed a similar desire. I directly pointed at their target. They both rushed towards Abu Jahl and without hesitation struck him together and brought him down to earth. They went back to Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam), each claiming that he had killed Abu Jahl. The Prophet saw both their swords and said: "You both have killed him."

At the end of the battle, Abdullah Ibn Mas'oud, saw Abu Jahl at the verge of death. He stepped on his neck and said: "Have you seen how Allah has disgraced you?"

But look how arrogant is this enemy of Allah, he replied to Ibn Mas'oud saying: "I am not disgraced. I am no more than a man killed by his own people on the battlefield." The disbelievers were so terrified that they even left behind their chief and fled the battlefield. When Ibn Mas'oud was about to cut off his head, he said: "Cut off my head from near the shoulders so that it looks bigger than the heads of all others and it is seen as the head of the chief. Ibn Mas'oud cut off his head and took it to Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam), who praised Allah upon seeing it. He (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) later said when he saw his dead body: "This is the Pharaoh of this nation."

Victory for the Believers

With the help of Allah, Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) and his companions fought bravely until the Quraysh suffered great loss and fled the battlefield. They lost 70 of their best men and 70 were taken as prisoners by the Muslims. Only fourteen Muslims were martyred in this battle: "And remember when you were few and were reckoned weak in the

land and were afraid that men might kidnap you, but He provided a safe place for you, strengthened you with His help, and provided you with good things so that you might be grateful." [Soorah al-Anfal (8): 26]

After the battle of Badr, the Muslims emerged as one powerful nation.

#### Lessons from the Battle of Badr

The Battle of Badr is a great example from our history that teaches; 'victory does not depend on numbers or collecting weapons and shields - Victory is from Allah.'

"How often has a small group overcome a might host by Allah's leave. And Allah is with the patient." [Soorah al-Baqarah (2): 249]

However, Allah only grants victory to those who believe in Him and put their complete trust in Him. Allah sent blessing and help to the believers in the battle of Badr and made them victorious over the disbelieving pagans only after putting them to trial! Allah tested the Muslims for ten years in Makkah and then He tested them again by the order to migrate to al-Medina leaving behind all possessions.

It was the result of the strong trust of the Sahabah in Allah that they willingly marched towards the battlefield, even though they knew that the disbelievers had come with huge army and weaponry.

It was their craving for Allah's Pleasure and Paradise that they proclaimed: "We will fight along with you. By Allah! If you were to take us to Bark al-Ghimad, we will still fight with determination against its defender until you gained it." So after Allah had tested them, He made them stand firm against their enemies, and granted them the courage to fight them. It was only by the Help of Allah and His Blessings that the Muslims could defeat the disbeliever who were three time greater in number and well-equipped.

Otherwise, in the times of Jahiliyyah (ignorance - the time before Islam), these very same people were the weakest of people found on the face of the earth as Imam Ibn Katheer (rahimahullah) mentions the statement of Qatadah Ibn Di'amah as-Sadusi in the Tafseer of Soorah al-Anfal (8): 26, 'Arabs were the weakest of the weak, had the toughest life, the emptiest stomach, the barest skin and the most obvious misguidance. Those who lived among them lived in misery; those who died went to the Fire. They were being eaten up, but unable to eat others! By Allah! We do not know of a people on the face of the earth at that time who had a worse life than them. When Allah brought Islam, He made it dominant on the earth and thus bringing provisions and leadership for them over the necks of people. It is through Islam that Allah granted all what you see, so thank Him for His favors, for your Lord is One Who bestows favors and likes praise.'

It was due to their cowardice that when Abrahah attacked their most sacred city, Makkah, and resolved to demolish the Ka'bah; they evacuated Makkah and ran away with their wives and children to mountain tops. But when they embraced Islam, believed in Allah, avoided sins and purely followed the teaching of Allah's Messenger - Allah made them the rulers of the world. They triumphed at the time of Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) and after his death. The Kuffar feared the Muslims!

But when the Muslims abandoned the life of righteousness and adopted sins, Allah, the Exalted, snatched away His Blessings from them and they were left to their state of misery. However, even today, if we Muslims were to believe in Allah and put complete trust in Him Alone, then Allah will help the Muslims over the Kuffar. It is the result of our sins that in many parts of the world Muslims are being oppressed by the Kuffar and subjugated to hardships.

Today, if we show willingness to sacrifice our wealth and lives for the sake of Allah, and purely follow the teachings of Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam), Allah will remove our hardships and grant us victory and supremacy over the Kuffar.

Allah says: "Allah has promised those among you who believe and do righteous good deeds, that He will certainly grant them succession to (the present rulers) in the earth, as He granted it to those who before them, and He will grant them the authority to practice their religion that which He has chosen for them (i.e. Islam). And He will surely give them in exchange security after their fear (provided) they (believers) worship Me and do not associate anything (in worship) with Me. But whosoever disbelieves after this, they are the Fasiqun (rebellious, disobedient to Allah)." [Soorah an-Nur (24): 55]

## **Badr Battle: A Lesson to Remember**

By Adil Salahi

The Battle of Badr was the first major clash between the young Islamic state in Madinah and the Quraish, the predominant Arab tribe which had opposed Islam ever since its very first day.

As such, its importance cannot be exaggerated. A win for the Quraish might have tempted them to march on to Madinah to put an end to Islam altogether. A victory for the Muslims, on the other hand, would establish them as a major force in Arabia on a parallel level with the Quraish. This explains the Prophet's earnest prayers for a complete victory.

The Muslims were aware that nothing less than a clear victory could serve their purpose. Hence they went into battle, eager to prove that numerical and material strength could not withstand the power of faith. Having seen two of the most distinguished figures in the Quraish, Utbah and Shaybah, fall in the initial duels, they went for other leading figures.

Umayyah ibn Khalaf was the chief of the Jumah clan. In the early days of Islam, he assumed a leading role in torturing the new Muslims in an attempt to force them to renounce their new religion. His main victim was Bilal, who endured a great deal of hardship from Umayyah until he was finally bought by Abu Bakr, who set him free.

As related earlier, Umayyah did not want to join the Quraish army but he was shamed into joining it by one of the Quraishi hard-liners. As the battle broke out, Umayyah was keen to save his own life. He was therefore pleased to come across Abdul-Rahman ibn Awf, one of those who adopted Islam in its very early days.

Abdul-Rahman, who was an old friend of Umayyah, was carrying a few armor plates. Umayyah asked him: "Would you like to take me instead of your armor plates? This would be a much better deal for you."

Abdul-Rahman agreed, threw away the armor plates he was carrying, and moved to lead Umayyah and his son Ali away from the battlefield to a place where they could be safe as captives.

As they walked together, Umayyah remarked that the most notable thing about the battle was that the Muslims were not keen to take prisoners, who could bring them a great deal of money in ransom.

At that moment Bilal saw Umayyah being led away. He shouted: "Umayyah, head of idolatry, may I perish if he survives!"

He then drew near to them. Abdul-Rahman made it clear to Bilal that the two men were his prisoners and should not be harmed.

Bilal repeated his determination to avenge himself on Umayyah. When Abdul-Rahman implied that he would defend his captives, Bilal appealed to the Ansar: "Supporters of God's cause! Here is Umayyah, head of idolatry! May I perish if he survives."

A group of the Ansar surrounded them. Abdul-Rahman tried to protect them, but one of the Ansar struck Ali, Umayyah's son, on the leg. He fell down. His father uttered a loud cry, and both he and his son were killed instantly.

Abu Jahl himself was among those killed in Badr. A man from the Ansar called Muadh ibn Amr reported that during the battle he noticed that several men from the Quraish stood in a circle round Abu Jahl and said to one another: "Abul-Hakam (that was his name among the Quraish) shall not be reached."

Muadh said:

When I heard them saying that, I resolved to get to him. I made a determined attack towards him and when he was within my reach I struck him with my

sword once, which was enough to send half his leg high into the air, as a date stone flies from underneath the date-stone crusher.

His son, Ikrimah, struck back at me and cut off my arm, which remained attached to my body by a thin piece of my skin. I was prevented by the raging battle from coming back on him. I, however, kept on fighting for the rest of the day, pulling my arm behind me.

When it became too troublesome I bent down and put my hand under my foot and stood up to cut off my arm.

Muadh lived more than thirty years after that day.

Later during the battle, another Ansari, Muawwad ibn Al-Harith, passed Abu Jahl and hit him hard until he could not get up. He then left him, not quite dead. When the battle was over, the Prophet asked some of the Muslims to look for Abu Jahl among the dead.

The man who found him was Abdullah ibn Masud, a little man who used to be a shepherd in Makkah and was once at the receiving end of Abu Jahl's aggression against the Muslims.

Abdullah put his foot on his neck and said: "You enemy of God, haven't you been humiliated?"

Abu Jahl replied: "How? I am only a man killed by his people. Tell me, who has secured victory in battle?"

Abdullah told him that victory belonged to "God and His Messenger".

He then chopped Abu Jahl's head off and took it to the Prophet. That was the end of the arch-enemy of Islam.

Many leading Quraish personalities met their death in Badr. Both moderates and hard-liners suffered, for both were in the same camp.

Those mentioned, like Utbah, Shaybah, Umayyah, Abu Jahl, Abu Al-Bakhtari, were only a few from the leading class who were killed.

Others, like Zamah ibn Al-Aswad and the two brothers Nabih and Munbih, sons of Al-Hajjaj, met the same fate. The Muslims simply launched a fierce attack which no Quraish army could have hoped to repel. It is not surprising, therefore, that at the end of the day the Quraish losses amounted to 70 dead and 70 taken prisoner.

Fourteen Muslims fell as martyrs in the battle. These figures can be taken as evidence of the ferocity of the battle and the sort of effort the Muslims put into achieving their resounding victory. After all, they were outnumbered three to one, yet they managed to claim nearly half their own number either killed or taken captive.

### **Reasons of Victory**

Muslims believe that such a remarkable victory was certainly achieved with the help of God. A number of factors combined to make it possible.

Firstly, the Muslims were fighting under one command. The Prophet himself was their commander-in-chief. His sense of timing was superb. The relationship between commander and soldier was exemplary. Discipline among the Muslim forces was of the type any army commander would love to have.

All these aspects made the Muslim army highly efficient: this compensated for its numerical weakness.

While the Prophet consulted his companions before every step he took, the unbelievers lacked unity of purpose. A large number of notables were in the army, but the most distinguished among them were Utbah and Abu Jahl.

The views of these two men were widely different. Suffice it to say that one of them, Utbah, felt compelled to start the battle because the other, Abu Jahl, tried hard to make him appear cowardly.

Secondly, the Prophet marched from Madinah to Badr using a strategy similar to the one adopted today in desert warfare. He also sent out patrols to gather information. Thirdly, the goals of the two camps were worlds apart. The Muslims wanted to ensure freedom of thought, worship and expression for everyone. The message of Islam had suffered much repression by the Quraish for a decade and a half.

Now it was time for the Quraish to be taught a lesson in respecting man's basic rights. The Quraish's goals were simply those outlined by Abu Jahl.

When many in the Quraish army wanted to go back home after having learnt that Abu Sufyan's caravan was safe, Abu Jahl said:

We will march on to Badr and stay there for three days. We will slaughter camels for food, organize a big feast and make it open to everyone to come and eat.

We will drink much wine and will be entertained by singers and dancers. When this is known, all Arabian tribes will hold us in awe for the rest of time.

These cannot be the goals of a serious army; this is a short-sighted objective of people driven by conceit.

Lastly, morale among the Muslims was sky-high, even among those who had their first taste of battle at Badr. Good equipment and numerical strength cannot win a battle if morale is low. This is true of all wars, both ancient and modern.

When the battle was over and the Quraish army withdrew, having suffered a rushing defeat, the Prophet ordered the burial of the dead. The 14 Muslim martyrs were buried in graves dug for them by their brethren. A disused well which had dried up was used to bury the enemy soldiers.

When all 70 of them were buried, the Prophet stood at their grave and said, "People of the well! Have you seen how God's promises always come true? God's promise to me has certainly been fulfilled."

Some of the Prophet's companions wondered how he could speak to the dead. He said: "They now know that what God has promised is fulfilled."

The Prophet then sent Abdullah ibn Rawahah and Zaid ibn Harithah to convey the good news to the people of Madinah.

Usamah ibn Zaid mentions that his father arrived to give the news of victory shortly after the burial of Ruqayyah, the Prophet's daughter who was married to Uthman ibn Affan.

She was ill when the Prophet set out from Madinah. He asked her husband, Uthman, not to join the expedition. Instead, he was to stay and look after her. Uthman later married the Prophet's third daughter, Umm Kulthum.

## **The Story of the Prisoners of the Battle of Badr**

*By Shaykh Safi ur-Rahmaan Mubarakfoori*

*From Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtoom*

On their way back to Madinah, at a large sand hill, the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam divided the spoils equally among the fighters after he had taken Al-Khums (one-fifth). When they reached As-Safra', he ordered that two of the prisoners should be killed. They were An-Nadr bin Al-Harith and 'Uqbah bin Abi Muait, because they had persecuted the Muslims in Makkah, and harboured deep hatred towards Allaah and His Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam . In a nutshell, they were criminals of war in modern terminology, and their execution was an awesome lesson to oppressors. 'Uqbah forgot his pride and cried out, "Who will look after my children O Messenger of Allaah?" The Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam answered, "The Fire (of Hell)." Did 'Uqbah not remember the day when he had thrown the entrails of a sheep onto the head of the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam while he was prostrating himself in prayer, and Fatimah had come and washed it off him? He had also strangled the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam with his cloak if it had not been for Abu Bakr to intervene and release the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam . The heads of both criminals were struck off by Alee bin Abi Taleeb.

The Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam exhorted the Muslims to treat the prisoners so well to such an extent that the captors used to give the captives their bread (the more valued part of the meal) and keep the dates for themselves.

Prisoners of war constituted a problem awaiting resolution because it was a new phenomenon in the history of Islaam. The Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam consulted Abu Bakr and Umar bin Al-Khattab as to what he should do with the prisoners. Abu Bakr suggested that he should ransom them, explaining this by saying: "They are after all our relatives, and this money would give us strength against the disbelievers, moreover, Allaah could guide them to Islaam." Umar advised killing them, saying, "They are the leaders of Kufr (disbelief)." The Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam preferred Abu Bakr's suggestion to that of Umar's. The following day, Umar called on the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam and Abu Bakr to see them weeping. He showed extreme astonishment and inquired about the situation so that he might weep if it was worth weeping for, or else he would feign weeping.

"It is not for a Prophet that he should have prisoners of war (and free them with ransom) until he had made a great slaughter (among his enemies) in the land. You desire the good of this world (i.e. the money of ransom for freeing the captives), but Allaah desires (for you) the Hereafter. And Allaah is All-Mighty, All-Wise. Were it not a previous ordainment from Allaah, a severe torment would have touched you for what you took." [Qur'aan 8:67-68]

The previous Divine ordainment went as follows,

"Thereafter (is the time) either for generosity (i.e. free them without ransom) or ransom." [Qur'aan 47:4]

Which included an area providing permission to take ransom, that is why no penalty was imposed. They were rebuked only for taking prisoners before subduing all the land of disbelief. Apart from this, the polytheists taken to Madinah were not only prisoners of war but rather archcriminals of war whom modern war penal law brings to justice to receive their due sentence of death or prison for life.

The ransom for the prisoners ranged between 4000 and 1000 Dirhams in accordance with the captive's financial situation. Another form of ransom assumed an educational dimension; most of the Makkans, unlike the Madinese, were literate and so each prisoner who could not afford the ransom was entrusted with ten children to teach them the art of writing and reading. Once the child had been proficient enough, the instructor would be set free. Another clan of prisoners were released unransomed on grounds of being hard up. Zainab, the

daughter of the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam , paid the ransom of her husband Abul-'As with a necklace. The Muslims released her prisoner and returned the necklace in deference to the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam but on condition that Abul-'As allow Zainab to migrate to Madinah, which he actually did.

In captivity, there was also an eloquent orator called Suhail bin 'Amr. Umar suggested that they pull out his front teeth to disable him from speaking, but the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam turned down his suggestion for fear Quraish should retaliate in the same manner on one hand, and on the other for fear of Allaah's wrath on the Day of Resurrection.

Sa'd bin An-Nu'man, a lesser pilgrim detained in Makkah, was released in return for setting Abu Sufyan's son, a captive, free.

The Story of the 600-700 Jews Beheaded by the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam at Bani Quraiza in 5 AH

The Bani Quraiza was a tribe of Jews in a district of Madinah that betrayed the Muslims and sided with the enemy during the Battle of Ahzaab (also known as the Battle of the Confederates and the Battle of the Trench). The Sealed Nectar describes what happened to them immediately after the Battle of Ahzaab:

Archangel Gabriel, on the very day the Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam came back to Madinah after the previous battle, and while he was washing in Umm Salama's house, visited him asking that he should unsheathe his sword and head for the habitation of the seditious Banu Quraiza and fight them. Gabriel noted that he with a procession of angels would go ahead to shake their forts and cast fear in their hearts.

The Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam , immediately summoned the prayer caller and ordered him to announce fresh hostilities against Banu Quraiza, instituted Ibn Umm Maktum as a ruler of Madinah, and entrusted the banner of war to Alee bin Abi Taleeb who marched towards the appointed target and came close enough to hear the Jews abusing the Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam , who on his part set out at the head of three thousand infantry men and thirty horsemen of Ansar (Helpers) and Muhajireen (Emigrants). On their way to encounter the enemy, the afternoon prayer was due. Some Muslims refused to observe it until they had defeated the enemy, while others offered it in its proper time, as usual. The Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam objected to neither. When they reached the habitations of Banu Quraiza, they laid tight siege to their forts. Seeing this terrible situation they were in, the chief of the Jews Ka'b bin Asad offered them three alternatives: to embrace Islaam, and consequently their life, wealth, women and children would be in full security, and reminded them that such behaviour would not be incongruous with what they had read in their books about the veracity of Muhammad's Prophethood; to kill their children and women and then challenge the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam and his followers to the sword to either exterminate the Muslims or be exterminated, or as a third possibility to take Muhammad sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam and his people by surprise on Saturday - a day mutually understood to witness no fighting.

None of those alternatives appealed them, so their chief, angrily and indignantly, turned to them saying: "You have never been decisive in decision-making since you were born." The gloomy future already visible, they made contacts with some Muslims, who had maintained good relation with them, in order to learn about their fate in the light of the current circumstances. They requested that Abu Lubaba be despatched to them for advice. On his arrival, the men began to implore, women and children to cry desperately. In answer to their demand for advice he pointed to his throat saying it was homicide awaiting them. He then immediately re-awakened that he had betrayed the Prophet's trust, so he headed directly for the mosque in Madinah and tied himself to a wooden tall pole swearing that no one would untie him save the Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam , and added that he would never enter the habitation of Banu Quraiza in recompense for the deadly mistake he made. When the Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam was informed of this incident, he said, " I

would have begged Allaah to forgive him if he had asked me, but since he had tied himself out of his own free will, then it was Allaah Who would turn to him in forgiveness."

The Jews of Banu Quraiza could have endured the siege much longer because food and water were plentifully available and their strongholds were greatly fortified, whereas the Muslims were in the wild bare land suffering a lot from cold and hunger, let alone too much fatigue consequent on endless warfare operations that had started even before the battle of Confederates. Nevertheless, this was a battle of nerves, for Allaah had cast fear in the the Jews' hearts, and their morale had almost collapsed especially when two Muslim heroes, Alee bin Abi TAleeb and Az-Zubair bin 'Awwam proceeded with Alee swearing that he would never stop until he had either stormed their garrisons or been martyred like Hamza (a former Muslim martyr).

In the light of this reluctance, they had nothing except to comply with the Messenger's judgement. The Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam ordered that the men should be handcuffed, and this was done under the supervision of Muhammad bin Salamah Al-Ansari while the women and children were isolated in confinement. Thereupon Al-Aws tribe interceded begging the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam to be lenient toward them. He suggested that Sa'd bin Mu'adh, a former ally, be deputed to give verdict about them, and they agreed.

Sa'd meanwhile stayed behind in Madinah due to a serious wound he sustained in the Confederates Battle. He was summoned and brought on a donkey. On his way to the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam , the Jews used to exhort him to be lenient in his judgement on account of former friendship. Sa'd remained silent but when they persisted he uttered: "It is time for Sa'd not to be afraid of the blame of the blamers." On hearing this decisive attitude, some of them returned to Madinah waiting for a desperate doom.

On arrival, he Aleeghted with the help of some men. He was informed that the Jews had agreed to accept his verdict about them. He immediately wondered if his judgement would pass on all the people present, the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam included, turning his face away in honour of him. The reply was positive.

He decided that all the able-bodied male persons belonging to the tribe should be killed, women and children taken prisoners and their wealth divided among the Muslim fighters. The Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam accepted his judgement saying that Sa'd had adjudged by the Command of Allaah. In fact, the Jews deserved that severe punitive action for the ugly treachery they had harboured against Islaam, and the large arsenal they have amassed and which consisted of one thousand and five hundred swords, two thousand spears, three hundred armours and five hundred shields, all of which went into the hands of the Muslims. Trenches were dug in the bazaar of Madinah and a number of Jews between six and seven hundred were beheaded therein. Hot beds of intrigue and treachery were thus exterminated once and for all.

Huyai, a chief criminal of war, a devil of Bani Nadir and Safiyah's father, had joined the ranks of Banu Quraiza when Quraish and Ghatfan defected, was admitted into the audience of the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam with his hands tied to his neck with a rope. In audacious defiance, he declared obstinate enmity to the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam but admitted that Allaah's Will was to be fulfilled and added that he was resigned to his fate. He was ordered to sit down, and was beheaded on the spot.

Only one woman of the Jews was killed because she had killed a Muslim warrior by flinging a grinding stone upon him. A few elements of the enemy embraced Islaam and their lives, wealth and children were spared. As for the spoils of the war, the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam divided them, after putting a fifth aside, in accordance with Allaah's injunctions. Three shares went to the horseman and one to the infantry fighter. Women captives were sent to Najd to be bartered with horses and weaponry.

After the war with Banu Quraiza had been settled and they had been defeated, Sa'd bin Mu'adh's wish was gratified and he gave his last breath. In response to his supplication 'Aishah narrated, Sa'd's wounds began to bleed from the front part of his neck while he was in his tent which the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam had pitched for him in the mosque so that he would be in close proximity in order to inquire about and watch his well-being closely. The people were not scared except when the blood flowed towards them, and in the Mosque along with Sa'd's tent, there was the tent of Banu Ghifar. They said: O people of the tent, what is it that is coming to us from you? Lo! it was Sa'd's wound that was bleeding and he died thereon.

Jabir narrated that the Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam had said: *"The Throne of the Compassionate shook for the death of Sa'd bin Mu'adh."* When his bier was carried, At-Tirmidhi said: The hypocrites alleged it was too light. The Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam retorted: *"The angels are carrying him."*

In the process of the sieze laid to Banu Quraiza, one man of the Muslims, Khallad bin Suwaid was killed when a women of the Jews dropped the grinding stone on him, and another, Abu Sinan bin Mihsan, the brother of 'Ukasha, died.

Abu Lubaba stayed tied for six nights. His wife used to untie him at prayer times and then he tied himself again to the pole. One early morning, Allaah the All-Forgiving revealed a verse to the Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam to the effect that Allaah had turned to Abu Lubaba with forgiveness. The Muslims rushed to release him but he insisted that the Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam himself do it. And this was done shortly before the morning prayer.

This Military Expedition took place in the month of Dhul Qa'dah in the year five Hijri (5AH), and the siege of Banu Quraiza's forts lasted for 25 days. The Chapter of Confederates (Qur'aan, Surah 33) was revealed containing Allaah's Words concerning the basic issues relating to the believers and hypocrites during the battle of the Confederates, and the consequences of the treachery and breaching of covenants by the Jews.

## **Danish daily issues apology over prophet drawing**

By JAN M. OLSEN

The Associated Press

Friday, February 26, 2010; 10:13 AM

COPENHAGEN -- A Danish newspaper on Friday apologized for offending Muslims by reprinting a cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad with a bomb-shaped turban, rekindling heated debate about the limits of freedom of speech.

Danish daily Politiken said its apology was part of a settlement with a Saudi lawyer representing eight Muslim groups in the Middle East and Australia.

It drew strong criticism among Danish media, which previously had stood united in rejecting calls to apologize for 12 Muhammad cartoons that sparked fierce protests in the Muslim world four years ago.

Prime Minister Lars Loekke Rasmussen expressed surprise at Politiken's move, saying he was worried that Danish media no longer were "standing shoulder to shoulder" on the issue.

Politiken said it did not mean to offend Muslims in Denmark or elsewhere when it reprinted one of the most controversial cartoons, showing Muhammad wearing a turban shaped like a bomb with a lit fuse. Islamic law generally opposes any depiction of the prophet, even favorable, for fear it could lead to idolatry.

Politiken was among several Danish newspapers that reprinted the cartoon in 2008 after police uncovered an alleged plot to kill its creator, Danish cartoonist Kurt Westergaard.

In a statement, Politiken said it "recognizes and deplores" Muslims were offended by the caricature.

"We apologize to anyone who was offended by our decision to reprint the cartoon drawing," it said.

Politiken editor in chief Toeger Seidenfaden told The Associated Press that the paper was apologizing for the offense caused by the cartoon - not the decision to reprint it.

"We have the right to print Kurt Westergaard's drawings, we have the right to print the original 12 drawings, we have the right to print all the caricatures in the world," he said. "We apologize for the offense which the reprint has caused. That is what we apologize for."

Seidenfaden said Politiken considered the statement a "unique chance" to foster a dialogue on the issue and reduce tensions between Denmark and the Muslim world.

Critics blasted the decision.

"Politiken's pathetic prostrating before a Saudi lawyer takes the first prize in stupidity," said Joern Mikkelsen, editor in chief of Jyllands-Posten, which first printed the 12 cartoons.

At Copenhagen newspaper Berlingske Tidende, chief editor Lisbeth Knudsen called the apology "embarrassing and shameful." And Mogens Blicher Bjerregaard, head of the Danish Union of Journalists, said Politiken was "kneeling before opponents of the freedom of press."

Westergaard, who earlier this year had to lock himself inside a safe room when an ax-wielding attacker broke into his home, said he believed the apology was prompted by fear.

"I fear this is a setback for the freedom of speech," Westergaard told AP.

The apology was welcomed by Muslim leaders in Denmark.

"It is beyond any doubt that they have offended some people. It is a nice and human gesture that the newspaper apologizes," said Abdul Wahid Petersen, a moderate imam.

The drawings brought Denmark on a collision course with the Muslim world, with fiery attacks in 2006 against Danish embassies and Muslim leaders demanding an apology from the Danish government, which said it couldn't interfere with Denmark's independent media.

It also put Denmark in the cross-hairs of extremists. Police say they have foiled at least three planned attacks targeting Westergaard or Jyllands-Posten.

The Saudi lawyer representing the Muslim groups, Faisal Yamani, has been demanding apologies from 11 Danish newspapers that reprinted the cartoon. Politiken is the only one so far to have reached a settlement.

"Both parties express their satisfaction with this amicable understanding and settlement, and express the hope that it may in some degree contribute to defusing the present tense situation," Yamani and Seidenfaden said in a joint news release.

## **Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time**

*By Karen Armstrong*

The history of a religious tradition is a continuous dialogue between a transcendent reality and current events in the mundane sphere. The faithful scrutinize the sacred past, looking for lessons that speak directly to the conditions of their lives. Most religions have a figurehead, an individual who expresses the ideals of the faith in human form. In contemplating the serenity of the Buddha, Buddhists see the supreme reality of Nirvana to which each of them aspires; in Jesus, Christians glimpse the divine presence as a force for goodness and compassion in the world. These paradigmatic personalities shed light on the often dark conditions in which most of us seek salvation in our flawed world. They tell us what a human being can be.

Muslims have always understood this. Their scripture, Qur'an, gave them a mission: to create a just and decent society, in which all members were treated with respect. The political well being of the Muslim community was, and is, a matter of supreme importance. Like any religious ideal, it is almost insuperably difficult to fulfill, but after each failure, Muslims have tried to get up and begin again. Many Islamic rituals, philosophies, doctrines, sacred texts, and shrines are the result of frequently anguished and self-critical contemplation of the political events of Islamic society.

The life of the Prophet Muhammad (c. 570-632 CE) was as crucial to the unfolding Islamic ideal as it is today. His career revealed the inscrutable God's activity in the world, and illustrated the perfect surrender (in Arabic, the word for "surrender" is *islam*) that every human being should make to the divine. Beginning during the Prophet's lifetime, Muslims had to strive to understand the meaning of his life and apply it to their own. A little more than a hundred years after Muhammad's death, as Islam continued to spread to new territories and gain converts, Muslim scholars began to compile the great collections of Muhammad's sayings (*ahadith*) and customary practice (*sunnah*), which would form the basis of Muslim law. The *sunnah* taught Muslims to imitate the way Muhammad spoke, ate, loved, washed, and worshipped, so that in the smallest details of their daily existence, they reproduced his life on earth in the hope that they would acquire his internal disposition of total surrender to God.

At about the same time, in the eighth and ninth centuries, the first Muslim historians began to write about the life of the Prophet Muhammad: Muhammad ibn Ishaq (d. 767); Muhammad ibn 'Umar al-Waqidi (d. c. 820); Muhammad ibn Sa'd (d. 845); and Abu Jarir at-Tabari (d. 923). These historians were not simply relying on their own memories and impressions, but were attempting a serious historical reconstruction. They included earlier documents in their narratives, traced oral traditions back to their original source, and, though they revered Muhammad as a man of God, they were not entirely uncritical. Largely as a result of their efforts, we know more about Muhammad than about nearly any other founder of a major religious tradition. These early sources are indispensable to any biographer of the Prophet.

The work of Muhammad's first biographers would probably not satisfy a modern historian. They were men of their time and often included stories of a miraculous and legendary nature that we would interpret differently today. But they were aware of the complexity of their material. They did not promote one theory or interpretation of events at the expense of others. Sometimes they put two quite different versions of an incident side by side, and gave equal weight to each account, so that readers could make up their own minds. They did not always agree with the traditions they included, but were trying to tell the story of their Prophet as honestly and truthfully as they could. There are lacunae in their accounts. We know practically nothing about Muhammad's early life before he began to receive what he believed were revelations from God at the age of forty. Inevitably, pious legends developed about Muhammad's birth, childhood, and youth, but these clearly have symbolic rather than historical value.

There is also very little material about Muhammad's early political career in Mecca. At that time, he was a relatively obscure figure, and nobody thought it worthwhile to make note of his activities. Our main source of information is the scripture that he brought to the Arabs. For some twenty-three years, from about 610 to his death in 632, Muhammad claimed that he was the recipient of direct messages from God, which were collected into the text that became

known as the Qur'an. It does not contain a straightforward account of Muhammad's life, of course, but came to the Prophet piecemeal, line by line, verse by verse, chapter by chapter. Sometimes the revelations dealt with a particular situation in Mecca or Medina. In the Qur'an, God answered Muhammad's critics; he reviewed their arguments; he explained the deeper significance of a battle or a conflict within the community. As each new set of verses was revealed to Muhammad, the Muslims learned it by heart, and those who were literate wrote it down. The first official compilation of the Qur'an was made in about 650, twenty years after Muhammad's death, and achieved canonical status.

The Qur'an is the holy word of God, and its authority remains absolute. But Muslims know that it is not always easy to interpret. Its laws were designed for a small community, but a century after their Prophet's death, Muslims ruled a vast empire, stretching from the Himalayas to the Pyrenees. Their circumstances were entirely different from those of the Prophet and the first Muslims, and Islam had to change and adapt. The first essays in Muslim history were written to address current perplexities. How could Muslims apply the Prophet's insights and practice to their own times? When the early biographers told the story of his life, they tried to explain some of the passages in the Qur'an by reproducing the historical context in which these particular revelations had come down to Muhammad. By understanding what had prompted a particular Qur'anic teaching, they could relate it to their own situation by means of a disciplined process of analogy. The historians and thinkers of the time believed that learning about the Prophet's struggles to make the word of God audible in the seventh century would help them to preserve his spirit in their own. From the very start, writing about the Prophet Muhammad was never a wholly antiquarian pursuit. The process continues today. Some Muslim fundamentalists have based their militant ideology on the life of Muhammad; Muslim extremists believe that he would have condoned and admired their atrocities. Other Muslims are appalled by these claims, and point to the extraordinary pluralism of the Qur'an, which condemns aggression and sees all rightly guided religions as deriving from the one God. We have a long history of Islamophobia in Western culture that dates back to the time of the Crusades. In the twelfth century, Christian monks in Europe insisted that Islam was a violent religion of the sword, and that Muhammad was a charlatan who imposed his religion on a reluctant world by force of arms; they called him a lecher and a sexual pervert. This distorted version of the Prophet's life became one of the received ideas of the West, and Western people have always found it difficult to see Muhammad in a more objective light. Since the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11th, 2001, members of the Christian Right in the United States and some sectors of the Western media have continued this tradition of hostility, claiming that Muhammad was irredeemably addicted to war. Some have gone so far as to claim that he was a terrorist and a pedophile.

We can no longer afford to indulge this type of bigotry, because it is a gift to extremists who can use such statements to "prove" that the Western world is indeed engaged on a new crusade against the Islamic world. Muhammad was not a man of violence. We must approach his life in a balanced way, in order to appreciate his considerable achievements. To cultivate an inaccurate prejudice damages the tolerance, liberality, and compassion that are supposed to characterize Western culture.

Strangely, events that took place in seventh-century Arabia have much to teach us about the events of our time and their underlying significance-far more, in fact, than the facile sound bites of politicians. Muhammad was not trying to impose religious orthodoxy- he was not much interested in metaphysics-but to change people's hearts and minds. He called the prevailing spirit of his time jahiliyyah. Muslims usually understand this to mean the "Time of Ignorance," that is, the pre-Islamic period in Arabia. But, as recent research shows, Muhammad used the term jahiliyyah to refer not to an historical era but to a state of mind that caused violence and terror in seventh-century Arabia. Jahiliyyah, I would argue, is also much in evidence in the West today as well as in the Muslim world.

Paradoxically, Muhammad became a timeless personality because he was so rooted in his own period. We cannot understand his achievement unless we appreciate what he was up against. In order to see what he can contribute to our own predicament, we must enter the tragic world that made him a prophet nearly fourteen hundred years ago, on a lonely mountain top just outside the holy city of Mecca.

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