

Khalifa Abu Bakr - Conquest of Makkah and After

Battles of Hunain and Taif

Tribes of Hawaiian and Thaqeef. After the fall of Makkah the neighboring tribes of Hawazin and Thaqeef had to choose between Islam and war against the Muslims. They chose the war path, and the two tribes along with their allies mustered in considerable strength at Autas to the east of Makkah. The coalition was led by Malik bin Auf a fiery commander of considerable skill.

The Muslim Force. When the Holy Prophet came to know of the hostile intention of the tribes, he decided to take action against them. On a cold day in January 63 C.E. the Muslim force set out from Makkah. The force comprised 12,000 persons fully armed. Of these 10,000 were from Madina who had attacked Makkah, and 2,000 were the newly converted Muslims from Makkah. It was a large army, and as Abu Bakr saw it, he is reported to have said in some unguarded moment "It is a splendid army; who can defeat it."

Battle of Hunain. This boast was not liked by God, and later things happened which made Abu Bakr regret such a boast. As on the way to Autas the Muslim army passed through the valley of Hunain some eleven miles north east of Makkah, a rain of arrows fell on it let loose by a group of archers of the hostile tribes that lay hid in the mountain pass. Taken unaware the advance guard of the Muslim army fled in panic. There was considerable confusion, and camels, horses and men ran into one another to seek cover.

The Holy Prophet stood firm. There were only nine companions around him including Abu Bakr. All the rest had fled. Under the instructions of the Holy Prophet, Abbas shouted at the top of his voice, "O Muslims come to the Prophet of Allah." The call was heard by the Muslim soldiers and they gathered by the side of the Holy Prophet. When the Muslims had gathered in sufficient number, the Holy Prophet ordered a charge against the enemy. In the hand to hand fight that followed, the tribes were routed and they fled to Autas.

Confrontation at Autas. The Holy Prophet posted a contingent to guard the Hunain pass, and led the main army to Autas. In the confrontation at Autas the tribes could not with stand the Muslim onslaught. Finding the resistance useless the tribes broke the camp and retired to Taif. Abu Bakr thanked God for the victory, but he was in a chastened mood. He humbly prayed before God, and asked for forgiveness for having boasted about the invincibility of the Muslim army.

Battle of Taif. Abu Bakr was commissioned by the Holy Prophet to lead the attack against Taif. From Autas the Muslim force marched to Taif. The tribes shut themselves in the fort and refused to come out in the open. The Muslims employed catapults to throw stones in the town, but this did not lead to any tangible results. The Muslims tried the testudo device whereunder a group of soldiers shielded by a cover of cowhide advanced to set fire to the gate. The enemy threw red hot scraps of iron on the testudo which made it ineffective. The siege dragged on for two weeks and still here was no sign of the fall of the fort. The Holy Prophet held a council of war. Abu Bakr advised that the siege might be raised and that God would Himself make arrangements for the fall of the fort. The advice was accepted, and in February 630 C.E. the siege of Taif was raised and the Muslim army withdrew to Makkah. A few days later, Malik bin Auf the chief of Taif came to Makkah and became a Muslim. Thereafter all the people of Taif accepted Islam. Thus the forecast of Abu Bakr came to be fulfilled, and God Himself arranged for the surrender of Taif to Islam.

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