

## **Khalifa Umar bin al-Khattab - Expansion of Islam and Military Campaigns**

### ***Battle Of The Meadow Of Brocade***

Khalid felt very bitter that while he had taken the city of Damascus by sword, the fruit of his labour had been snatched away by clever diplomacy of Thomas and the large heartedness of Abu Ubaida. He was also sad that the Commander of the Byzantine forces, Thomas and his Deputy Harbees had escaped. Khalid had wanted to kill them. The Muslim soldiers were also dissatisfied that the Byzantines had carried away all valuable property leaving no booty for the Muslim soldiers.

Jonah highly grieved at his rejection by his bride waited on Khalid in a state of desperation. He suggested that if the Muslims could help him in getting his bride, he could lead them by some short cuts where they could intercept the Byzantine convoy after three days, the period of grace allowed to the Byzantines. The idea appealed to Khalid. He mustered his mobile guard, and decided to follow the convoy.

When the truce allowed for three days was over, the Muslims caught up with the Byzantine convoy at Al Abrash, a short distance from Antioch. Here rain had fallen, and the convoy had dispersed on the plateau seeking shelter from the inclement weather. Their goods lay in the open. So many bundles of brocade lay scattered on the ground that the plain came to be known as 'Marj-ud-Deebaj' the Meadow of Brocade.

The Muslim forces attacked the convoy from all the four sides. There was much slaughter and bloodshed. Khalid duelled with Thomas and Harbees, and killed both of them. After some fighting the Byzantine resistance collapsed.

Jonah found his beloved, and wanted her to accompany him. She refused. She took out a dagger from the folds of her dress, and stabbed herself with it. She expired in the hands of Jonah. Jonah took the oath that he would remain faithful to the memory of his beloved, and would not marry any other girl.

Some ladies in the convoy were captured. Khalid offered the most beautiful lady out of these to Jonah to make his wife. Seeing the lady chosen for him by Khalid, Jonah said that the lady was the widow of Thomas, and the daughter of Heraclius, and he could not have her.

The Muslims marched back with their spoils and captives. When they were a day's march from Damascus, they met a small party of riders. From this party a Byzantine noble stepped forward and said:

"I am the ambassador of Heraclius the Byzantine emperor. You have killed his son-in-law and captured his daughter. He requests you to return his daughter to him, either on the payment of ransom, or as a gift."

At this address, Khalid was touched. He said:

"Take her as a gift; there will be no ransom."

The ambassador took the daughter of Heraclius, offering profuse thanks. Thereafter the Byzantines marched back to Antioch.

The following day Khalid and his force reached Damascus loaded with spoils. The booty was distributed to the Muslim soldiers.

Thereafter Khalid sat to write a detailed report to the Caliph about the conquest of Damascus. The letter was addressed to Abu Bakr, and therein Khalid reported as to how Damascus had been conquered, how Abu Ubaida had been deceived by the Byzantines; and how he had taken the revenge by pouncing upon

the convoy after three days, the period stipulated by the truce. When Khalid was about to hand this letter to a messenger to carry it to Madina, Abu Ubaida waited on Khalid to say that Abu Bakr was dead, and that the new Caliph Umar had passed orders deposing Khalid from the high command and vesting the command in him (Abu Ubaida).

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*Source : Alim.org-Umar bin al-Khattab History*