

Khalifa Umar bin al-Khattab - Battle of Badr

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The first battle between the Muslims and the Quraish of Mecca took place at Badr sixty miles from Madina on the trade route to Syria. A divine revelation had prepared the Muslims for Jihad. The revelation was:

"Fight in the way of God, with those who fight against you; but transgress not, for God loveth not the transgressors."

It was a cold day in January 624 A.D. when the Holy Prophet and his army reached the valley of Badr. Intelligence was brought that the Quraish army was encamped beyond a sandhill at the other end of the narrow plain.

The Muslims hastened to take possession of the only stream of water in the valley. The Muslims prayed to God for help. The Holy Prophet prayed, "O Lord, forget not Thy promise of assistance, for if this little band were to perish; there will be none to offer thee worship."

The Muslim army consisted of 313 men. They had only two horses and 70 camels. The Quraish army consisted of a thousand persons, and they had a cavalry of 200 horsemen and 100 camels. The Muslims were poorly equipped, but the Quraish were well armed.

The battle began early in the morning. The heralds of the Quraish stepped forward and poured insults and abuses on the Muslims. The Muslims replied with the shouts of "Allah-oAkbar."

Then three of the Quraish leaders Utba, Shaiba, and Walid stepped forward and challenged the Muslims to single combat. The challenge was accepted by Ali, Ubaida, and Hamza on behalf of the Muslims. In the duels that followed Ali killed Walid; Ubaida killed Shaiba; and Hamza killed Ttba. The Quraish army was stunned at the death of its three chosen leaders.

Then the general battle began. The ground on which the Muslims stood was hard and firm, being the sloping ground of a hill, while the Quraish were encamped on a sandy soil. Rain had fallen during the previous night. It had softened the ground where the Quraish stood and hardened the ground under the Muslims. The Quraish found the soil difficult to tread upon, and this was a great handicap for them. The Quraish were cut off from all water, as the only stream and the source of water was in the occupation of the Muslims. When the battle began the sun stared in the face of the Quraish warriors, which greatly confused them. The Muslims fought with the sun at their back, and this was a great advantage for them.

When the battle was at its height, the Holy Prophet picked up a handful of pebbles and threw them in the direction of the enemy saying, "Confusion seize them!"

And then a dust storm arose. It blew into the faces of the Quraish warriors. At this stage the Holy Prophet ordered a general charge. The Muslims rushed forward borne on the crest of the dust storm. Soon the hard-pressed Quraish fled in disorderly rout. The battle ended in the victory for the Muslims. Seventy men of the Quraish lay dead on the battle field. Only fourteen Muslims were martyred. Seventy persons from among the Quraish were captured alive. The rest of the Quraish escaped and fled to Mecca. The booty that the Muslims were able to capture comprised 11 camels, 14 horses, and considerable equipment and armour.

Throughout this battle Umar was the right hand of the Holy Prophet. Among the Quraish who took part in the battle all tribes of the Quraish were represented except the Banu Adi the tribe to which Umar

belonged. No person from the Banu Adi fought against the Muslims at the battle of Badr, and this was attributed to the great regard in which Umar was held by his clan. On the other hand many persons belonging to Banu Adi who had been converted to Islam fought on the side of the Muslims under the leadership of Umar.

Among the Quraish who fought against the Muslims was Asi bin Hisham bin Mughirah a respectable Quraish noble. He was a brother of the mother of Umar and his maternal uncle. Umar maintained that all ties of relationship had ceased to exist between the Muslims and the polytheists. He singled out his maternal uncle and killed him in the battle.

The first person to be martyred in the battle was Mahja, a slave of Umar Umar thus came to claim the honour that the first Muslim to be martyred in the cause of Islam was a slave who belonged to him.

The Muslims returned to Madina along with the Quraish captives. Out of the prisoners many were eminent Quraish nobles. These included Abbas an uncle of the Holy Prophet; Aqil a brother of Ali; Abul Aas and Walid bin al-Walid. The sight of these chieftains coming as humble prisoners was very touching. On seeing them Saudah a wife of the Holy Prophet observed, "You come as prisoners; why did you not die on the battle-field?"

The Holy Prophet consulted his companions as to how these captives should be treated. Umar took the strong line and urged that unless these persons accepted Islam they should be killed. He suggested that each Muslim should kill his own kinsman among the prisoners; that Hamzah should kill Abbas and Ali should sever the head of Aqil.

Abu Bakr took the softer line. He suggested that they should be set free on ransom.

The Holy Prophet said that as God had given them victory, it was necessary for them to show mercy to the fallen enemy. He, therefore, agreed to set the captives free on ransom.

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