

Muhammad (Muhammad) - The Third Major Battle with the Quraish

In the same year, the enemies of Islam made every possible attempt to stir up the tribes against the Muslims. The Jews also took an active, if hidden, part in those intrigues. An army of ten thousand well-equipped men, marched towards Medina under the command of Abu Sufyan. They encamped near Mount Uhud, a few miles from the city. The Muslims could gather only an army of three thousand men. Seeing their inferiority in numbers on the one hand, and the turbulence of the Hypocrites within the town on the other, they preferred to remain on the defensive. They dug a deep moat round the unprotected quarters of Medina and encamped outside the city with a trench in front of them.

They relied for safety of the other side upon their allies, the Quraiza, who possessed several fortresses at a short distance towards the south and were bound by the compact to assist the Muslims against any raiders. These Jews, however, were induced by the idolaters to violate their pledge and to join the Quraish. As these Jews were acquainted with the locality and could materially assist the raiders, and as the Hypocrites within the walls of the city were waiting for an opportunity to play their part, the situation of the Muslims was most dangerous.

The siege had already lasted for twenty days. The enemy made great efforts to cross the trench, but every attempt was fiercely repulsed by the small Muslim force. Disunion was now rife in the midst of the besieging army. Their horses were perishing fast, and provisions were becoming less every day. During the night, a storm of wind and rain caused their tents to be overthrown and their lights extinguished. Abu Sufyan and the majority of his army fled, and the rest took refuge with the Quraiza.

The Muslims, though they were satisfied with the failure of their enemies, could not help thinking that the victory was unsatisfactory so long as the Quraiza, who had violated their sworn pledge, remained so near. The Jews might at any time surprise Medina from their side. The Muslims felt it their duty to demand an explanation of the violation of the pledge. This was utterly refused. Consequently, the Jews were besieged and compelled to surrender at discretion. They only asked that their punishment should be left to the judgment of Sad Ibn Muadh, the prince of the tribe of Aws. This chief, who was a fierce soldier, had been wounded in the attack and, indeed, died of his wounds the following day. Infuriated by the treacherous conduct of the Bani Quraiza, he gave judgment that the fighting men should be put to death and that the women and children should become the slaves of the Muslims. The sentence was carried into execution.

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