

Surah 9. At-Tauba

Asad: Indeed, God has succoured you on many battlefields, [when you were few;] and [He did so, too,] on the Day of Hunayn, when you took pride in your great numbers and they proved of no avail whatever to you - for the earth, despite all its vastness, became [too] narrow for you and you turned back, retreating:³³

Malik: Allah has indeed helped you in many battlefields and (recently) on the day of Hunain: when you were proud of your great numbers (the Muslim army was 12,000 strong and the unbelievers were only 4,000), but the numbers availed you nothing. The earth, with all its vastness, seemed to close in upon you, and you turned your backs and fled.

Pickthall: Allah hath given you victory on many fields and on the day of Huneyn, when ye exulted in your multitude but it availed you naught, and the earth, vast as it is, was straitened for you; then ye turned back in flight;

Yusuf Ali: Assuredly Allah did help you in many battle-fields and on the day of Hunain: Behold! your great numbers elated you but they availed you naught: the land for all that it is wide did constrain you and ye turned back in retreat. ^{1274 1275}

Transliteration: Laqad naṣarakumu Allāhu fee mawāṭina katheeratin wayawma hunaynin ith aAAjabatkum kathratukum falam tughni AAankum shayan wadaqat AAalaykumu alardu bima rahubat thumma wallaytum mudbireena

Khatab:

Indeed Allah has given you ?believers? victory on many battlefields, even at the Battle of ?unain¹ when you took pride in your great numbers, but they proved of no advantage to you. The earth, despite its vastness, seemed to close in on you, then you turned back in retreat.

Author Comments

33 - The battle of Hunayn, a valley situated on one of the roads leading from Mecca to Ta'if, took place in the year 8 H., shortly after the conquest of Mecca by the Muslims. The latter's opponents were the pagan tribes of Hawazin (in whose territory the valley lay) and their allies, the Banu Thaqif. The Muslim army - reinforced by many newly-converted Meccans - comprised about twelve thousand men, whereas the Hawazin and Thaqif had only one-third of that number at their disposal. Relying on their great numerical superiority, the Muslims were over-confident and, apparently, careless. In the narrow defiles beyond the oasis of Hunayn they fell into an ambush prepared by the tribesmen and began to retreat in disorder after heavy losses had been inflicted on them by the bedouin archers. It was only the example of the Prophet and his early adherents (the Meccan muhajirun and the ansar from Medina) that saved the day and turned the initial rout of the Muslims into a decisive victory. It is to this battle that verses {25} and {26} refer, pointing out that true succour can come only from God, and that great numbers, ties of kinship and worldly wealth are of no avail if they are "dearer to you than God and His Apostle and the struggle in His cause" (see preceding verse).

After the Muslims' victory in Mecca in 8 A.H/630 C.E., almost all Arab tribes pledged allegiance to the Prophet (?) except some tribes such as Hawâzin and Thaqîf. Both tribes decided to attack the Muslims, so the Prophet (?) led an army of 12 000 soldiers to attack the two tribes. Since that was the largest Muslim army ever mobilized, some Muslims expressed their conviction that such an army could not be defeated. However, on the way to battle, the Muslim army was ambushed and most soldiers fled, except for the Prophet (?) and a few loyalists. Eventually, the Muslims were re-organized and won a decisive battle.

1274 - Hunain is on the road to Taif from Makkah about fourteen miles to the east of Makkah. It is a valley in the mountainous country between Makkah and Taif. Immediately after the conquest of Makkah, (A.H. 8), the Pagan idolaters, who were surprised and chagrined at the wonderful reception which Islam was receiving, organised a great gathering near Taif to concert plans for attacking the Prophet. The Hawazin and the Thaqif tribes took the lead and prepared a great expedition for Makkah, boasting of their strength and military skill. There was on the other hand a wave of confident enthusiasm among the Muslims at Makkah, in which the new Muslims joined. The enemy forces numbered about 4,000 but the Muslim force reached a total of ten or twelve thousand, as every one wished to join. The battle was joined at Hunain, as described in the next note.

1275 - For the first time the Muslims had at Hunain tremendous odds in their favour. But this itself constituted a danger. Many in their ranks had more enthusiasm than wisdom, more a spirit of elation than of faith and confidence in the righteousness of their cause. The enemy had the advantage of knowing the ground thoroughly. They laid an ambush in which the advance guard of the Muslim forces was caught. The country is hilly, in which the enemy concealed himself. As soon as the Muslim vanguard entered the Hunain valley, the enemy fell upon them with fury and caused havoc with their arrows from their places of concealment. In such ground the numbers of the Muslims were themselves a disadvantage. Many were slain, and many turned back in confusion and retreat. But the Prophet, as ever, was calm in his wisdom and faith. He rallied his forces and inflicted the most crushing defeat on the enemy.

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