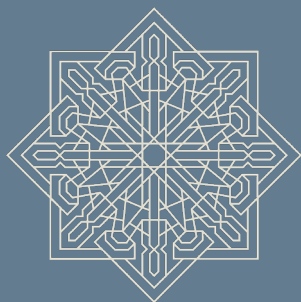


BATTLE OF BADR

THE DAY OF CRITERION



HAFIZ ATHER HUSSAIN AL-AZHARI

وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ بِبَدْرِ وَأَنْتُمْ أَذِلَّةٌ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

INDEED, ALLAH MADE YOU VICTORIOUS AT BADR WHEN YOU WERE [VASTLY] OUTNUMBERED. SO BE MINDFUL OF ALLAH, PERHAPS YOU WILL BE GRATEFUL.

SŪRAH ĀL 'IMRĀN 3:123

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

This battle is mentioned in the Qur'an, 3:123.

It took place on the 17th Ramadan in 2 AH.

The Muslims numbered 313; whilst the Quraysh numbered approx. 1000.

It is referred to as يوم الفرقان (*yawm al-furqān*), or The Day of Criterion.



“Indeed, Allah made you victorious at Badr when you were [vastly] outnumbered. So, be mindful of Allah, perhaps you will be grateful (3:123).”

وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَأَنْتُمْ أَذِلَّةٌ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

Badr is a place about eighty miles west of al-Madina al-Munawwara. It is the site where the first battle with non-Muslims occurred in Islam. Allah refers to the day as *Yawm al-Furqān*, or ‘The Day of Criterion.’ The battle occurred on the 17th of Ramadan, in the second year of Hijrah (“Emigration”).

What were the circumstances and background leading up to the battle?

After enduring great hardship, oppression and harm in Makkah, the permission to fight back was granted not long after the Prophet ﷺ migrated to al-Madina.

However, in the early period, the Muslims were not ready to fight fully-fledged wars against the enemies of Islam, in particular, the people of Quraysh. So instead, the Muslims opted for the smaller option of raids. Trading caravans from Makkah to Syria were somewhat vulnerable, especially in the spring and early summer

months when their trade with Syria was most active. Permission was granted to raid these caravans.

Information gathering proved difficult. Sometimes the Makkans would change their travel routes at the last minute in order to avert the Muslims. One rich caravan returning from Syria was that of Umayyah, a staunch enemy of Islam. He had one hundred armed men with him and stock and merchandise loaded on two-thousand five hundred camels. The Prophet ﷺ sent out two hundred men, but there was no encounter in the end. Three months later, they missed Abū Sufyān on the Red Sea coast, but the Muslims knew he would be returning soon, perhaps with a more significant load of merchandise.

Abū Sufyān's caravan

Abū Sufyān was returning from a successful trading trip to Syria. The Prophet ﷺ sent Ṭalḥa and Sa'īd ؓ to the coastal town of Hawrā', west of al-Madina, to report the whereabouts of the caravan. According to this information, the Prophet ﷺ would then intercept the caravan.

Back in al-Madina however, someone had secretly informed Abū Sufyān of the Prophet's plans ؓ, either a hypocrite or a Jew. Abū Sufyān then hired a man called Damdam. He paid him well in gold to travel to Makkah as soon as possible and to inform Quraysh that he and his stock was under attack.

In the end, the Prophet ﷺ did not wait for the information from the two scouts Ṭalḥa and Sa'īd. He set out from al-Madina, with 313 men, 70 camels and three horses on the 12th of Ramadan. His destination was Badr to the west of al-Madina, where he hoped to intercept Abū Sufyān. In the Prophet's ؓ absence, the blind Companion Ibn Umm Maktūm was told to lead the prayers. The Prophet ﷺ did not ride his camel exclusively. Like everyone else, he shared between walking and riding with 'Alī and Abū Lubāba ؓ.

Back in Makkah

Damdām reached Makkah and dramatically informed them that Abū Sufyān was under attack. This led to uproar in the city, not least because this caravan was one of the richest of the year. An army of about 1000 men and 100 horses were quickly put together and plans

were drawn up to save the caravan and attack Muhammad ﷺ. In short every single person of Quraysh participated or sent a substitute. They even sent dancing slave girls too for entertainment purposes. Observers say the party was the embodiment of pride and vanity.

Meanwhile, the Prophet ﷺ sent two scouts forward to Badr ahead of him to gather information. At Badr they halted at a hill above the well and overheard a conversation of two girls talking about how the caravan was due to arrive in town the next day. The scouts quickly returned to the Prophet ﷺ with this news.

Had they stayed there a little longer, they would have seen Abū Sufyān there. He moved ahead of his caravan in order to see whether the route was safe to proceed. When he got to Badr, he asked the locals if they had seen someone peculiar. They informed him that two riders had appeared recently near the well. Abū Sufyān went there and saw some camel dung. He picked it up, broke it up and saw date stones. Immediately, he recognised the stones as ones from al-Madina. He quickly returned to his caravan and changed the intended route in order to avoid Badr altogether.

As the scouts returned to the Prophet ﷺ to inform him the caravan was coming the next day, news also reached the Prophet that Quraysh had set out an army ready to rescue the caravan. Hence, the Prophet ﷺ held a consultation meeting with his Companions. Abu Bakr and ‘Umar ؓ spoke in favour of advancing and the *muhājirūn* voiced the same opinion. The *Anṣār* (Medinese Muslims) too agreed to advance with the Prophet ﷺ. In fact all voiced the sentiments of sacrifice for the sake of Islam and the Prophet ﷺ. Remember facing Quraysh was something the Muslims did not expect and so they were not prepared for it.

When the Prophet ﷺ neared Badr, he sent ‘Alī, Zubayr and Sa‘d to the well of Badr to learn whether the Quraysh army had reached there or not. There they came across two men who were loading water onto their camels for the army of Quraysh. They captured the two men and brought them to the Prophet ﷺ. From his questioning and interrogation, the Prophet ﷺ learned that (i) the army was nearing, just behind the hill in fact (ii) they were between 900 and 1000 in

numbers (iii) the name of the leaders of Quraysh that were coming, such as ‘Abd Shams, Abū Jahl, Umayyah and Suhayl.

Whilst the Muslims and Quraysh gathered near Badr, Abū Sufyān had escaped danger and proceeded along the coast in safety. He sent a messenger to Quraysh that the caravan was safe, and there was no need for them to intervene any longer. Rather than accepting this news and returning, Abū Jahl showed great pride and said:

‘By God we shall not return until we have been at Badr. Three days we will stay there, we will slaughter camels and feast and make flow the wine and the songstresses shall play and sing for us; and the Arabs will hear how we marched forth and of our mighty gathering, and they shall stand in awe of us forever. Onwards to Badr!’

Not all the Makkans agreed with Abū Jahl. Many returned back to Makkah.

The Prophet ﷺ hastened to Badr with his Companions and as he did so, rain began to fall. This was a good sign. It refreshed the Muslims and made the soft sand firmer to move quickly. Furthermore, the same rain made things difficult for the enemies, who had still yet to climb a hill. The Prophet ﷺ reached a well at Badr and told his Companions to camp. A Companion, al-Ḥubāb ibn al-Mundhir, suggested to the Prophet ﷺ to advance a little further to a larger well, which would then also cut off the enemies supply. This was on the evening of the 16th of Ramadan. Allah blessed the believers with a peaceful night sleep, something mentioned in the Qur’an too. However, as ‘Ali reports, the Prophet ﷺ spent most of the night in worship underneath a tree.

The Day of Badr

As soon as it dawned, Quraysh climbed the hill of al-‘Aqanqal and the sun had risen by the time they reached the top. The Prophet ﷺ saw them there and prayed for victory to Allah over the arrogant Qurayshis.

The Quraysh sent ‘Umayr of Jumah to estimate the number of Muslims and see if there were more Muslims than were visible from

afar. He returned with the news that there were no Muslims other than the ones they could see. But at the same time, he warned them that he knew they would be competitive and vicious in the battle. Abu Jahl quickly turned the tone and urged his men to attack the Muslims.

Suhayl [from the Makkans] had brought his son along ‘Abd-Allāh. He did so because he knew he had inclinations towards Islam, so he brought him to keep an eye on him. Just before the battle, ‘Abd-Allāh managed to sneak across to the Muslims.

The Prophet ﷺ passed before his army, straightening the ranks and encouraging them. He had an arrow in his hand and gave a slight prick to Sawād with it to ensure he was in line. Surprisingly, Sawād spoke up and complained ‘O Messenger of Allah! That has just hurt me. And since you were sent with justice and fairness, let me take my revenge.’ The Prophet ﷺ gave him the arrow and laid bare his belly for him to make things equal. Sawād dropped to his knees and kissed the blessed belly of the Prophet ﷺ. ‘What made you do that O Sawād?’ he asked. He replied, ‘We are about to go into battle [where there is no guarantee of life]. I wanted one of my last actions to be my body touching yours [knowing that this would protect me from the fire of hell].’

If Sawād saw salvation in simply touching the Prophet’s body, then what is the fate of Lady Āmina, who held the Prophet ﷺ in her womb for nine months?

A light slumber came over the Prophet ﷺ, and as he woke, he gave the good news to Abū Bakr ؓ that Allah would send Jibrīl and the other angels to assist the Muslims at Badr.

Aswad made the first move, aiming to attack the cistern that the Muslims guarded. Ḥamza killed him with two blows.

‘Utbah, Shaybah (his brother) and Walīd (his son) stepped forward from the enemies to challenge for combat. From the Muslims, Awf, Mu‘awwidh (his brother) and ‘Abd-Allāh ibn Rawāḥa. All were *Anṣār*, and the enemies called for the Prophet ﷺ to present people from familiar tribes [from Makkah]. So the Prophet ﷺ sent forth ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Ḥārith, Ḥamza and ‘Alī. Ḥamza and ‘Alī quickly overcame their enemies, but as ‘Ubaydah brought his duel to the

ground, he swept his sword at his feet and injured him. Ḥamza and ‘Alī brought their wounded back to the camp.

Quraysh then fired the first arrow of the battle. Miḥjā ibn Ṣāliḥ, the freedman of ‘Umar fell to the ground, as did Ḥāritha. ‘Awf surged forward to fight, and at the same time, the Prophet ﷺ picked up a handful of pebbles and hurled them towards the enemies. ‘Awf fought courageously until he was granted martyrdom as did ‘Umayr. ‘Ubaydah died too from his injuries, bringing the toll to five. Only nine more Muslims died that day.

The Muslims fought with great bravery and courage. One Companion called Ukāshah found that his sword broke in his hand. He went to the Prophet ﷺ to solve this problem. The Prophet of Allah gave him a wooden club and told him to fight with it. It worked like a gleaming, sharp sword in Badr and the rest of the battles afterwards. It was given the name al-‘Awn, meaning divine help.

Throughout the battle, the Prophet ﷺ prayed devoutly to his Lord. ‘Alī reports that every time he saw him, the Prophet was reciting *Yā Ḥayyu Yā Qayyūm* (O Living, O Sustainer). Other Companions report that they never saw the Prophet ﷺ more intense in worship and *du‘ā* than the day of Badr. Yet he also physically participated in the battle too. Alī reports that no one went closer to the enemies than the Prophet ﷺ.

As Allah had promised, the Muslims were assisted by the angels, and many of the Companions felt their presence. Two men from a local tribe went to the top of a nearby hill to see the battle, hoping to loot the place after the battle. A cloud swept by them, filled with the sound of galloping horses. One of the men fell dead instantly, most likely of a heart attack.

Similarly, one of the Muslims was pursuing an enemy and was about to slay him. He found that his head flew away from his body before his sword could reach him. Jibrīl led the angels, wearing a yellow turban, whereas the other angels wore white.

Most of the Quraysh fled, but about fifty were killed, and about fifty were held captive. The Prophet ﷺ mentioned to his Companions the names of those enemies whose lives should be spared. Since the number of Quraysh was larger, there was always a possibility that

they might re-group and attack again. Hence the Prophet told his Companions to remain alert.

Though a general feeling of forgiveness was given, Abū Jahl's case was different, as he was such a staunch enemy of Islam. 'Abd-Allāh ibn Mas'ūd was instructed to go to the battlefield and find his body. Abū Jahl still had enough life in him to recognise 'Abd-Allāh. He cut off his head and brought it to the Prophet ﷺ.

'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf had some precious coats of mail when he captured another sworn enemy, Umayyah, who was with his son 'Alī. He reminded himself that he would be more precious alive, as Quraysh would give a ransom for his return. As he took them back to the camp, Bilāl saw Umayyah and screamed, 'Umayyah! The head of disbelief! May I not live if he survives!' The *Anṣār* Muslims approached and killed them.

All the bodies of the infidels were still buried in a pit. The booty was given all to the Prophet ﷺ, who divided it equally. He then sent 'Abd-Allāh ibn Rawāḥa to al-Madina to give them glad tidings of the victory, whilst he stayed another night in Badr. That evening, he went to the pit and conversed with the slain, asking if they had indeed got what had been promised. When the Companions questioned this act, he told them that they [the dead] could hear just as well as the alive, though they could not reply.

If the cursed infidels can hear in a pit, why cannot the Prophet ﷺ hear your salutations from his blessed grave?

There is another point worthy of mention too. Just one day earlier, the Prophet ﷺ went around the battlefield, pointing to where he knew where each enemy would die. Reports say that the Makkans died in the exact spots.

The next morning, the Prophet ﷺ set off for al-Madina. With him, two enemies of Islam, Nadr and 'Uqbah were now captives. The Muslims knew they could receive a handsome ransom if they returned them to Makkah. Yet at the same time, they also knew they would urge the Makkans to re-group and attack the Muslims. On route, they were killed.

There was happiness and elation in al-Madina, except amongst the Jews and hypocrites. But there was one piece of sad news. The

daughter of the Prophet, Ruqayya, had died, and ‘Uthmān had just returned from her burial.