

THE BATTLE OF YARMUK

The Sahābah of the Prophet ﷺ are the most virtuous group of people to walk the face of the earth after the Ambiyā' عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَام. They have been praised in numerous verses of the Qur'ān as well as the noble Hadīth of the Prophet ﷺ. Their great feats and services for Islam can fill volumes, both during the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ and after his demise. It was they who were chosen to accompany the Prophet ﷺ and to be his Companions, an honour for which they sacrificed their lives and wealth. They set the standard for devotion and dedication to the Dīn, for which every Muslim should strive for. We are encouraged to emulate them and follow in their footsteps. Truly they are our Heroes, worthy of emulation.

WORTHY OF EMULATION

'Abd Allāh ibn Masūd said, "If anyone follows someone's custom let him follow the custom of one who is dead, for one cannot be sure of the living not being led astray. Those to follow are Muhammad's Companions who were the most excellent among the people, purest in heart, most profound in knowledge, most unassuming, whom Allah chose for companionship with His Prophet and to establish His religion. So, recognise their excellence, follow their traces, and hold as fast as you can to their character and way of life, for they followed right guidance." [Mishkāt al-Masābih]

FACING OFF AGAINST THE SUPERPOWERS

In taking this dīn to the rest of the world, they had to face off against the various superpowers of that time: the Persians and the Romans. Armies were despatched to Iraq to deal with the Persians and to Syria as well, to deal with the Romans. The Sahābah in both these regions were met with initial success, the mighty Persians and Romans suffering defeat at the hands of a small Muslim force. This enraged them and their hostilities only intensified. Greatly outnumbered, the Muslims in Iraq finally suffered defeat against the Persians.

SAYYIDUNĀ KHĀLID IBN WALĪD SENT TO IRAQ

Khālid ibn Walīd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ had just defeated the 40 000 strong army of the apostate Musaylamah—the Liar, in the Battle of Yamāmah, when Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ ordered him to assist the Muslims in Iraq. Without any hesitation Khālid ibn Walīd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ prepared his army for this perilous march of over 1000 km from Yamāmah to Iraq. After this gruelling journey, Khālid and his men رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ did not even have time to catch their breath when they were flung into battle. These reinforcements, and the arrival of Khālid ibn Walīd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ boosted the morale of the Muslims

and infused them with fervour and courage. The tides turned against the Persians and the Muslims attained victory after victory.

TIDES TURNS AGAINST THE MUSLIMS IN SYRIA

While things had been restored in Iraq, the situation in Syria was now turning against the Muslims. The Romans had initially not taken the Muslims seriously and thought defeating them would be no challenge at all. As a result, a number of regions came under Muslim control. The Roman Emperor Heraclius, now fearing he would lose Syria entirely, sent reinforcements to his garrisons in the region. And, thus, the Muslims were slowly being driven back.

SAYYIDUNĀ KHĀLID IBN WALĪD SENT TO SYRIA

Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ when informed of the situation instructed Khālid ibn Walīd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ to now take an army to Syria. Khālid ibn Walīد رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ had just finished defeating the Persian army in his 14th major battle against them, when this message arrived. Khālid رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, Sayf Allāh (the sword of Allah) readied his army for another arduous journey.

MARCHING ACROSS THE DESERT

Sayyidunā Khālid رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ could not take his army across the regular route as this would alert the Romans of his movements, so he marched approximately 1300 km from Hirah in Iraq to Busrā in Syria, 300 km of the journey across the Syrian desert which is one of the most arid deserts in the world. And once again, upon arrival in Syria gets straight into battle, turning the tides back in favour of the Muslims. [al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah]

ROMAN REINFORCEMENTS

Seeing no other option now, Heraclius decides to send a huge force of over 240 000 men under his most experienced generals to annihilate the Muslims once and for all. The Sahābah had been fighting in various regions in Syria, decide now to consolidate all of their forces in one place. The Sahābah rally together at a place called Yarmūk. Additional reinforcements from Hijāz arrive, strengthening their numbers to 40 000. Even with these reinforcements they are still outnumbered 6:1.

BATTLE OF YARMŪK

The commander of the Roman army, sought to meet Khālid رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ before the battle and haughtily said to Khālid, "We know that you have been driven out of your native land due to hunger and poverty. We



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shall give each one of you ten gold coins, garments, and food, then you may return to your land. Next year we will send you the same.” Khālīd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ listened to these insults calmly and then responded, “It is not hunger that has driven us out but we are a people who drink blood and we have learnt that no blood is as good as Roman blood, so, we have come for it.” [al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah]

THE BATTLE BEGINS

Among the 240 000 Roman army were 60 000 Christian Arabs. The Roman generals decided to send the 60 000 Christian Arabs forward first. The Sahābah consulted on how to proceed, and Khālīd ibn Walīd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said that the Romans were only sending a small contingent from their forces, if they were to be engaged with the entire army, the remaining forces will flank them while the Muslims are distracted with fighting. Khālīd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ advised that a small contingent should be sent to fight them, which he was prepared to lead. When asked how many men he needed, Khālīd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ replied, “Give me 30 men!” Abū Sufyān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ cautioned him saying that 30 against 60 000 were impossible odds and that he rather take 60, so that each man will only have to only fight a 1000 as opposed to fighting 2000. Khālīd ibn Walīd is after all Sayfullāh—the Sword of Allah—as the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ had named him, and he instantly replied, “O Abu Sufyan, you were so brave in pre-Islamic times so do not be cowardly in Islam. See which Muslim warriors I will select and you will see that they are such men who have gifted their lives to Allah and desire nothing through their fighting except Allah himself. Allah knows who possesses these qualities and it will be His responsibility to aid him even if he were to cross repulsive fires.” [Futūh al-Shām]

However, Abū 'Ubaydah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ agreed with Abū Sufyān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and instructed Khālīd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ to take 60 men instead. Khālīd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ with his small group of 60 handpicked soldiers from the Muhājirīn and Ansār delivered a resounding defeat to the contingent of 60 000. [Ibn 'Asākir]

SIX DAYS OF BATTLE

The Battle of Yarmūk lasted six days, 40 000 Sahābah against a Roman army of 240 000, every move, every decision one which could result in victory or defeat. Allah's سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى mercy and assistance descended, and despite the odds being against them, the Sahābah were victorious. This was a humiliating defeat for the Romans, one from which they could not recover. The remaining cities in Syria were quickly covered with the flag of Tawhīd after this encounter. May Allah reward these personalities abundantly, because of whose steadfastness the dīn of Islam spread. 3000 Sahābah were martyred in this Battle. [al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah]

THE BATTLE OF AJNADAYN

After the Battle of Yarmūk, the Sahābah continued their conquest of Syria and region after region came under the banner of Tawhīd with very little resistance from the Romans, until the Battle of Ajnadayn. The leader of the Muslims was Sayyidunā 'Amr ibn al-'Ās رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ with a force of only 10 000 men, while the commander of the Romans was Artabūn, one of their most intelligent and shrewdest commanders, with a force of 100 000. Sayyidunā 'Amr ibn al-'Ās رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ asked Sayyidunā 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ to send reinforcements, citing also that the Commander of the Romans was Artabūn. However, 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ wrote back to 'Amr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ saying, “We have sent against the Roman Artabūn the Arab Artabūn [referring to 'Amr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ], let us see who wins.” It was the ultimate battle of wits, cunning, and strategy; and 'Amr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ overpowered his opponent in all these arenas. Thus, with the help of Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى another resounding defeat was given to the Romans which was just as significant as the victory in the Battle of Yarmūk. It was this victory that opened the doors to al-Masjid al-Aqsā; 'Amr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ proceeding immediately from his victory at Ajnadayn to lay siege to Jerusalem. [al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah]

Whenever al-Masjid al-Aqsā is spoken of, usually it is the name of Salāh al-Dīn that comes to mind, and understandably so, as he is the great general who liberated it from the Crusaders. Similarly, Constantinople is regarded as an Ottoman achievement. Without a doubt, these victories that came later deserve to be lauded and their leaders praised and held in esteem. But we should never lose sight of the fact that the ground work for every victory that the Muslims achieved was laid by the noble Sahābah. It was they who set the standard for self-sacrifice, courage, and bravery. It is from their glorious achievements that all who came after them drew strength. Truly they are the originals, the first heroes, and those most worthy of emulation.

Sayyidunā 'Abd Allāh ibn Masūd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said it best:

Those to follow are Muhammad's Companions who were the most excellent among the people, purest in heart, most profound in knowledge, most unassuming, whom Allah chose for companionship with His Prophet and to establish His religion.

Lastly, we say as the poet said:

These are my forefathers, so bring for me the likes of them.

May Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى inspire us to follow in the footsteps of these great personalities and infuse within us a deep love for them, the disciples of Muhammad صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, and for their teacher and mentor Sayyidunā Muhammad صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, and may He unite us with all of them in the everlasting gardens of Paradise.



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