The Battle of Badr

In the middle of Jamadil Awwal of 2 A.H., a report was received in Madinah that a trade caravan was going from Makkah to Syria under the leadership of Abu Sufyan.

The Holy Prophet (S) decided to send two men to find out more facts about this caravan. He told them to find out about its route, the number of guards, as well as the nature of the goods they were carrying. The two men gathered the following information:

1. It was a big caravan and all the Makkans had shares in its goods.
2. The leader of the caravan was Abu Sufyan and it was guarded by 40 men.
3. The goods were loaded on 1,000 camels and were valued at about 50,000 Dinars.

The Quraysh had confiscated the property of all the Muslims who had migrated from Makkah, and therefore the Holy Prophet (S) decided to also seize the property of the Makkans as compensation. Although the Muslims pursued Abu Sufyan, they could not reach him. However, the time of the return of the caravan was almost certain because the Quraysh always used to return from Syria to Makkah in the early autumn.

The Holy Prophet (S) left Madinah and proceeded towards the valley of Badr, 80 miles away, where he awaited the return of the caravan.

Abu Sufyan realized that the Muslims would wait for him at Badr which was a stopping place on the route to Makkah, so he sent an urgent message to Makkah for help. The Makkans immediately sent out a large army under the command of Abu Jahl to fight the Muslims at Badr. The Holy Prophet (S) was informed of the march of the Makkahn army and he asked the Muslims what they thought about engaging in a battle. Although some Muslims wanted to return to Madinah, Miqdaad, who was a true Muslim, stood up and declared, "O Prophet of Allah, we are with you and we shall fight."

Meanwhile Abu Sufyan decided to take a longer route back home, and avoid Badr. Once he was safely in Makkah, he sent a message to Abu Jahl to return, but Abu Jahl was too proud to go back and wanted to crush the Muslims with his large army.
The two armies clashed on 17th of Mahe Ramadhan 2 A.H. The Muslim army consisted of 313 soldiers, having between them only 2 horses and 70 camels. The Makkahn army had 900 soldiers, 100 horses and 700 camels. They were much better equipped than the Muslims.

According to Arab custom, there was single combat before the battle began. Three famous warriors, Utbah bin Rabiyyah, Shaybah bin Rabiyyah and Walid bin Utbah challenged the Muslims. Three Muslims, Awf, Ma'uz and Abdullah Rawahah came forward. Because these men were from the Ansar of Madinah, Utbah said, "We have no fight with you. Send us our equals."

The Holy Prophet (S) then sent 'Ubaydah, Hamza and Imam Ali (A). Ubaydah faced Utbah, Hamza faced Shaybah and Imam Ali (A) faced Walid. Hamza and Imam Ali (A) soon killed their opponents, but Ubaydah was badly hurt and later died. Imam Ali (A) then killed Utbah. The Quraysh were disturbed to see the skill of the Muslim warriors and began to attack together.

The Holy Prophet (S) held back his small army and ordered them to fire arrows at the enemy. This organized attack broke up the ranks of the Makkans and, seeing their confusion, the Holy Prophet (S) ordered a general attack. The Muslims began to fight with confidence and the valley of Badr rang with the sounds of battle. Then Imam Ali (A) tore into the heart of the Makkahn army, killing enemy soldiers with terrifying ease. His power and skill with the sword struck terror into the hearts of the Makkans, who began to flee.

Before long, the battle was over and the Muslims had achieved a great victory, despite being outnumbered.

In this battle the Muslims lost 14 men, while 70 Makkans, including their chiefs Abu Jahl, Nawfal, Umayyah and others were killed. Out of these, Imam Ali (A) killed 36 men himself and helped in killing several others.

70 prisoners were taken by the Muslims. The prisoners were treated with much kindness by the citizens of Madinah and some became Muslims. "Blessing be on the men of Madinah", said one of these prisoners in later days, "they made us ride, while they themselves walked, they gave us wheat and bread to eat when there was little of it; contenting themselves with dates".
The rich prisoners paid ransom and were set free. Others were asked to teach 10 children each to read and write while the rest were released by the Holy Prophet (S), and allowed to return to Makkah.

The victory at Badr strengthened the faith of the Muslims and warned the unbelievers of Makkah that Islam was now a force to be reckoned with. During the same year Allah sent down the command making fasting compulsory on Muslims. The following verse of the Holy Qur'an was revealed in this respect:

*The month of Ramadhan (is) that in which the Qur'an was sent down; a guidance for mankind and clear evidence of guidance and discrimination (between right and wrong). So whoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein, and whoever is ill or on a journey, (he shall fast) the same number of other days... Baqarah, 2:185*

**The Three Ghazwas**

The news of the defeat of the Quraysh by the Muslims in the Battle of Badr spread throughout Arabia. In Makkah, the unbelievers were shocked at their defeat and many said they would not rest till they took revenge for their dead companions. The rich Jews of Madinah, Khyber and Wadiul Quraa became alarmed at the rapid increase in the power and popularity of the Muslims. For these reasons, these two groups became deadly enemies of the Muslims.

The Jews of Bani Qaynqa lived in Madinah with the Muslims, and they controlled most of the businesses in the city. To try to break the strength of the Muslims, they spread rumors against Islam and made fun of the verses of the Holy Qur'an.

The Holy Prophet (S) decided to bring an end to their harmful activities and delivered a warning speech to the Jews in the market-place of Bani Qaynqa. He said to them, "The fate of the Quraysh serves them right. It is a lesson to you as well. I am afraid the same fate will overtake you if you continue with your ways. There are many religious scholars amongst you, and they will confirm that I am the Prophet of Allah because this fact is recorded in your own Book, the Tawrat".

Instead of remaining silent at the words of the Holy Prophet (S), the proud Jews replied that they were not as weak as the Quraysh and went on to say many disrespectful things. In reply, the Holy Prophet (S) reminded them of the Islamic Constitution that governed the city of Madinah and warned them not to break the law.

The Jews were overconfident due to their strength, so they continued to act arrogantly against the Muslims. They were waiting for an excuse to force the Muslims into attack. One day a Muslim woman went to the market place of the Bani Qaynqa and a Jew shopkeeper demanded that she remove her veil
so that he could see her face. When the lady refused, somebody stitched up her dress in such a way that when she rose, a part of her body was revealed. On seeing the poor woman being insulted in this shameful manner, a Muslim who was present struck the shopkeeper and killed him. At once all the Jews turned on the Muslim and put him to death.

When the Muslims learnt of the massed attack of the Jews on a single Muslim they were extremely angry. The Jews realized that the situation was now serious and so they left their businesses and took refuge in their homes in strong forts outside Madinah. The Holy Prophet (S) ordered the Muslims to lay siege on the forts and after 15 days, the Jews surrendered. In return for mercy, the Jews agreed to leave their weapons and wealth behind and leave Madinah forever.

Although the Muslims were now free of the poisonous influence of the Bani Qaynqaa, several other plots were being hatched against them all the time and brief accounts of some Ghazwas are given below. Ghazwa means a battle in which the Holy Prophet (S) himself participated.

1. **Ghazwatul Kadar.**
   The tribe of Bani Salim lived in an area called Kadar. News reached Madinah that the people of that tribe were gathering arms to attack the Muslims. The Holy Prophet (S) went with a small army towards Kadar. The enemies, however, scattered when they heard of his march and the Holy Prophet (S) returned without any fighting. Later, he sent a second force and this time they engaged the Bani Salim in battle and returned to Madinah victorious.

2. **Ghazwatus Saweeq.**
   Abu Sufyan in Makkah had vowed to take revenge for the defeat at Badr and came out with 200 men to cause trouble. He did not have an army strong enough to attack Madinah directly, so with the help of the chief of the Jewish tribe of Bani Nuzayr, he attacked the Muslims in the region of Ariz. He killed one Muslim and set fire to a palm grove. When the Holy Prophet (S) heard about the incident he came out with a group of men and pursued Abu Sufyan and his warriors. The enemy ran away, leaving behind bags of "Saweeq", (a food prepared with flour and palm dates). The Muslims took possession of these bags and gave this Ghazwa the name Ghazwatus Saweeq.

3. **Ghazwa Zil Amr.**
   Reports were received in Madinah that the tribe of Ghaftaan had gathered to attack the Muslims and conquer Madinah. The Holy Prophet (S) came out with 450 men to face the enemy. The enemy lost heart and ran to hide in the mountains. In the meantime, due to heavy rain, the clothes of the Holy Prophet (S) had become wet, so he took off some of his clothes and put them to dry on a tree branch. One of the enemy saw that the Holy Prophet (S) was unarmed, so he came down from the mountain and
threatened him with a sword, saying, "Who can save you today?" The Holy Prophet (S) calmly replied, "Allah." The man was so stunned by this confident reply that he lost his nerve and began to tremble. At once the Holy Prophet (S) grabbed the sword and said to him, "And who can save you now?" The man was an idol worshipper and knew that his wooden gods could not help him and he admitted, "None can save me."

The Holy Prophet (S) did not take any action against this man and he became a Muslim and stayed steadfast to the religion till his last days.

In these early days of Islam, the Muslims were called to defend their religion time and time again. But they never gave in to the pressure from their neighboring tribes, who could not stand and watch the increasing strength of Islam.