Al-Islam.org
Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project
Published on *Al-Islam.org* (https://www.al-islam.org)

Battle of Zatul Salasil

Ali bin Ibrahim, Shaykh Tusi, Shaykh Tabarsi and Qutub Rawandi etc. and all Shia and Sunni tradition scholars and commentators have narrated from Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) and Ibn Abbas that twelve thousand mounted men, of the valley of Yabis, assembled and covenanted upon oath, that they would not separate till they had slain Muhammad and Ali (a.s.).

Jibraeel informed the Prophet of the danger which threatened him, and ordered that Abu Bakr and four thousand Muhajireen and Ansaris should be sent against the army of Yabis. The Prophet accordingly ascended the pulpit, and announced the communication made to him, and exhorted the people to engage in the expedition with vigor on Monday.

Muslims made the necessary preparation and the Holy Prophet (S) gave Abu Bakr order to summon the enemy to embrace Islam, and if they would not accept it, to kill their fighting men, take their women and children prisoners, plunder their property, and destroy their houses and fields. Abu Bakr advanced by easy marches till he came up with the enemy, who send a detachment of two hundred armed men, demanding who the Muslims were, and what was their object, and furthermore, to have a parley with their chief.

Abu Bakr, with a party of his men, appeared to parley with the infidels, whom he advised to embrace Islam, but they swore by Laat and Uzza that were it not for some relationship between them they would kill him. "Go back," said they "and reckon it a great favor that we have nothing to do with you, though we will slay Muhammad and his brother, Ali."

Abu Bakr hereupon represented to his army the vastly superior power and advantages of the enemy, and ordered a retreat. The army replied, "You act contrary to the commands of the Prophet, fear Allah and fight with them." He replied, "I know what you are ignorant of," and marched his men back to Medina.

The Prophet rebuked him for his disobedience and cowardice, and then announced to the people, that he was divinely commanded to send Umar with four thousand mounted men on this expedition. Umar's fortune was precisely like that of Abu Bakr, and he received the same rebuke.

The Prophet now sent Ali with an army of Muhajireen and Ansaris against the formidable foe. Ali made such forced marches through unusual route that his men feared their horses would be quite exhausted, and themselves left behind through fatigue. He encouraged his army by saying that the Prophet had commanded him victory.

Ali encamped on approaching the enemy, and they send out their detachment of two hundred men, to demand who he was, and what was his object. He replied: “I am Ali bin Abi Talib, the cousin and brother of the Prophet, and his messenger to summon you to testify to the divine Unity, and to the prophethood of the Prophet; therefore, embrace Islam and share the prosperity and adversity of Muslims.”

The infidels replied: “You are just the man we wanted to encounter; get ready for battle, and be assured we shall slay you and your army. Let the only treaty between us be to meet in deadly onset tomorrow, at breakfast time.” “Woe to you!” retorted Ali; “Do you think you can frighten me by your superior numbers?

I look to the aid of Allah, angels and Muslims, and verily, there is no might or power, but in the Almighty Allah.” The parley ended, and both parties retired to their respective camps. Ali ordered the horses to be attended to, barley to be given them, to have them saddled and remain in readiness.

At earliest dawn the Muslims performed prayers, and it was yet dark when Ali attacked the enemy, whom he utterly routed. According to the command of the Prophet, he slew their fighting men, took their women and children prisoners, plundered their goods, destroyed their houses, and then returned to Medina.

On the morning of the victory, Jibraeel came to the Prophet and informed about the victory of Imam Ali (a.s.) and the Prophet mounted the pulpit and announced Ali’s triumph, and that only two Muslims were slain in the engagement. The Prophet and people of Medina went out several miles to meet Ali and his victorious army on their return.

The Prophet and Ali dismounted from their horses, the Prophet embraced the hero, and kissed him between his eyes. According to Imam Ja’far Sadiq (a.s.) the Muslims had never before taken such valuable spoils, except at Khyber. Thus the Almighty Allah revealed Surah Adiyat:

وَالْعَادِيَاتِ ضَبْحًا ﴿١﴾

“I swear by the runners breathing pantingly...”

فَالْمُورِيَاتِ قَدْحًا ﴿٢﴾

“Then those that produce fire striking...”

فَالْمُغِيرَاتِ صُبْحًا ﴿٣﴾

“Then those that make raids at morning...”

فَأَثَرْنَ بِهِ نَقْعًا ﴿٤﴾ فَوَسَطْنَ بِهِ جَمْعًا ﴿٥﴾

“Then thereby raise dust. Then rush thereby upon an assembly...”

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُودٌ ﴿٦﴾

“Most surely man is ungrateful to his Lord.”

وَإِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ لَشَهِيدٌ ﴿٧﴾

“And most surely he is a witness of that

وَإِنَّهُ لِحُبِّ الْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيدٌ ﴿٨﴾

“And most surely he is tenacious in the love of wealth.”

أَفَلَا يَعْلَمُ إِذَا بُعْثِرَ مَا فِي الْقُبُورِ ﴿٩﴾

“Does he not then know when what is in the graves is raised...”

وَحُصِّلَ مَا فِي الصُّدُورِ ﴿١٠﴾

"And what is in the breasts is made apparent?"

إِنَّ رَبَّهُمْ بِهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَخَبِيرٌ ﴿١١﴾

"Most surely their Lord that day shall be fully aware of them."

Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) said: "These verses were revealed about the hypocrisy of Abu Bakr and Umar who denied the bounties of the Almighty Allah and when they reached the Yabis valley they found the love of world opposing the command of God and His Prophet, so at the end of the Surah, the Almighty Allah informed that He is aware their infidelity and hypocrisy and that He will expose them on Judgment Day and recompense them.

Shaykh Mufeed has narrated with regard to the expedition of Zatul Salasil that one day a desert Arab came to the Prophet and reported that a party of Arabs had gathered in Ramal Valley and made an agreement to attack Medina. The Holy Prophet (S) collected the Muslims and told them that a party of disbelievers has plotted to attack them and they must be prepared to defend themselves. Ashab Suffa volunteered in sincerity.

The Holy Prophet (S) drew lots from the eighty persons and appointed Abu Bakr as their chief and gave him the standard, instructing him to punish the Bani Sulaym. Idolaters had appointed watches on mountain peaks. Since Abu Bakr traveled by the highway he was at once detected and they armed themselves. When Abu Bakr reached the heavily wooded and rocky land and the infidels lived in a valley that was difficult to enter.

When Abu Bakr attempted to enter it, the disbelievers came out and slain many Muslims. At last Abu Bakr had to return unsuccessful from there. Then the Messenger of Allah (S) gave the standard to Umar and sent him on the same expedition. He also followed the usual route and was soon detected by the disbeliever who hid beneath the trees and rocks. When Umar stepped into their valley, they came out and drove him away.

When he also returned unsuccessful; the Holy Prophet (S) was extremely aggrieved. Amr Aas said: "O Messenger of Allah (S), please send me as the result of a battle depends on trickery, perhaps I can overcome them through my cunning." He was also sent and he also followed the usual road and he also returned defeated. According to another report, Khalid bin Walid was sent instead of Amr.

Thus the Holy Prophet (S) was aggrieved for many days and he continued to condemn them. Then he called Imam Ali (a.s.) and gave him the Islamic standard and said: O Lord, now I have appointed one who is a fighter and he never flees from the battle. O Lord, You know that I am Your Messenger.

So help him for the sake of my sanctity and make him victorious. According to another report, Amirul

Momineen (a.s.) came to Lady Fatima (s.a.) and asked for his special headwear and she asked where he was being sent to by her father. “Ramal Valley,” said the Imam. Lady Fatima (s.a.) was worried for the difficult expedition.

Meanwhile the Messenger of Allah (S) arrived and asked her why she was crying. He asked: “Do you think that your husband will be killed? Insha Allah it will not be so.” Imam Ali (a.s.) said: “Do you not want me to be killed and be rewarded with Paradise?” Thus he set out for the expedition and the Holy Prophet (S) accompanied him upto Masjid Ahzab. Amirul Momineen (a.s.) was astride a red horse and had a Yemeni sheet over his shoulders. He held the Khati spear aloft.

The Messenger of Allah (S) prayed for their success and returned and also sent Abu Bakr, Umar, Amr Aas or Khalid bin Walid with him. Imam Ali (a.s.) took the Iraq route leaving the usual highway. Companions thought that he was heading somewhere else. Amirul Momineen (a.s.) took them through a secret route.

They traveled during the nights and hid themselves in mountain passes during daytime. Amr Aas saw that the Imam was following an appropriate procedure which was sure to yield victory, so he was overcome with jealousy. He told Umar, Abu Bakr and other men that Ali is ignorant of these paths, while we are experts of this terrain, “which is infested by wild beasts, which are more dangerous for our forces, so you must stop him from taking this route.”

People reported this talk to Amirul Momineen (a.s.) who said: “One who obeys Allah and His Prophet should follow me and one who intends to oppose Allah and His Prophet may go by any road he likes. All fell silent and followed the Imam. They passed mountain passes during the nights and concealed themselves during the day.

The Almighty Allah made the wild beasts obedient to the Imam and they did not harm the Muslims. Till the Imam reached upto the enemy territory. Ali (a.s.) told his men to tie up the snouts of the horses so that they may not make noises. So Muslims were stopped and he proceeded. When Umar saw that victory was near, he said: “There are many wolves, lions and wild beasts in this valley. Ask Ali to permit us to scale the mountain face.”

Abu Bakr tried to discuss the matter with Imam Ali (a.s.) but he paid no attention to him. Umar said: “Why should we kill ourselves? Come, let us climb up from this valley. Muslims said: “The Holy Prophet (S) ordered us to obey Ali. We will not disobey him and follow your ideas. This went on till the morning. Amirul Momineen (a.s.) launched a surprise attack and killed the men, took their women and children as prisoners.

Tied their remaining men in chains and ropes; that is why this battle is known as the Battle of Zatul Salasil. The field of battle was five marches from Medina. That same morning, the Holy Prophet (S) came out and prayed the Morning Prayer with the people. In the first rakat he recited Surah Adiyat. He said: “It is a chapter just revealed on me and the Almighty Allah has informed me that Ali has overcome

the enemies," and he explained the jealousy of Amr Aas as jealousy to him.

And *Qunud* is in the meaning of *Husud* and that is the love of world which was very strong in one who feared the animals. And in another report instead of Amr, Khalid bin Walid is mentioned. And according to the report of Ali bin Ibrahim the one who is jealous is a denier of bounty and they are Abu Bakr, Umar and Amr Aas who said that there are many wild beasts and they should take the usual road.

Thus Shaykh Mufeed has narrated that the Holy Prophet (S) informed the companions about the victory of Imam Ali (a.s.) and with them came out to welcome them outside Medina. Companions stood in two rows. When Imam Ali (a.s.) looked at the Holy Prophet (S), he jumped from his mount and ran to meet the Messenger of Allah (S) and kissed the feet and stirrups of the Prophet. The Holy Prophet (S) said: "Ali, get mounted as Allah and His Messenger are pleased with you."

Imam Ali (a.s.) was moved to tears and they returned happily from there. War booty was distributed among Muslims. The Prophet asked some of the army what they had observed in their chief during the expedition. They replied, "We saw nothing bad in him, but his conduct was strange in one particular way; in every prayer we performed with him, he recited the Surah: Say, God is one God; the eternal God, he begets not, neither is he begotten: and there is not any one like unto Him."

The Prophet inquired of Ali for what reason he did this. He said it was because he had a very great affection for that chapter: "and Allah loves you with a like warmth," replied the Prophet. "Verily, were it not that I fear a community of my followers will say of you, what the Christians affirm of Isa, I would this day declare some things in your praise, so that you would pass no company that would not gather the dust on which you tread, for the blessing it confers."

Furat bin Ibrahim in his *Tafsir*, has narrated from Salman Farsi that one day the elder companions except for Imam Ali (a.s.) were present in the house of the Prophet. Suddenly a desert Arab came and said: "O Messenger of Allah (S), I am from Bani Lakham and people of Bani Khatham tribe have formed an army under the command of Harith bin Makida.

They have, along with 500 fighters, sworn by Laat and Uzza that they will attack Medina and slay you with your companions." The Prophet was extremely worried and he asked his companions who will volunteer for this expedition to remove their evil, "I will guarantee Paradise for him." No one replied. The second time he offered them twelve palaces in Paradise. But no one responded. Meanwhile Ali (a.s.) arrived and he asked why the Prophet was so disconcerted. He told him that he had offered twelve palaces for one who will take up this task. Imam Ali (a.s.) said: "Please describe those palaces."

Another tradition says that the Prophet promised twelve palaces in Paradise to any one who would defeat the people of Yabis, and Ali accepting the offer, desired to hear a description of the palaces. The Prophet said they were of gold and silver bricks, with a cement of musk and amber. The pebbles around them are pearls and rubies, the earth saffron, its hillocks camphor, and through the court of each palace, flow rivers of honey, wine, milk and water; the banks are adorned with various trees, and with pearls and

coral.

On the margin of those celestial streams are bowers consisting each of one entire, hollow, transparent pearls. In each of those bowers is a throne with emerald feet, and adorned with ruby. On each throne sits a Hourie arrayed in seventy green robes and seventy yellow robes of so fine a texture, and she is herself so transparent, that the marrow of her ankle, notwithstanding her robes and flesh and bone, is as distinctly visible as a flame in a glass vessel, Each Hourie has seventy lock of hair, every one under the care of the maid who perfumes the lock with the censer which Allah has created to smoke with perfume without the presence of fire.

No mortal olfactory has ever breathed such incense as is there exhaled. “My father and mother be your sacrifice!” exclaimed Ali, “I will undertake the expedition”. The Prophet said: “O Ali, all this has been promised to you. Get up and march forward,” One hundred and fifty men were asked to accompany the Imam. Abbas said: “O Messenger of Allah (S), you are giving him only 150 men while the enemy force comprises of 500 fighters?”

And one of them is Harith bin Makida who is alone equal to 500 men?” The Messenger of Allah (S) said: “By Allah, even if they had been as numerous as particles of dust, Ali would have gone alone to fight them and without any doubt had been victorious over them and would have brought their prisoners to me.

After that the Holy Prophet (S) arranged the forces and said: “Go, the Almighty Allah would protect you from all sides. And He is my Caliph on you. That instead of me, He is with you.” So Amirul Momineen (a.s.) set out from there.

Thus Imam Ali (a.s.) set out from there and when they reached till Zanhashib which is at one Farsakh from Medina, night fell and the army lost its way. Amirul Momineen (a.s.) looked at the sky and prayed: “O guide of all those who are lost and savior of all those who drown and the deliverer of all the aggrieved, do not make injustice overpower us and do not make the enemies victorious over us and guide us to the path of righteousness.”

The Almighty Allah made their horses’ feet strike against the stones in such a manner that it created so much sparking that their way became clear. At that juncture, the Almighty Allah revealed Surah Adiyat. In the morning, Amirul Momineen (a.s.) recited the Azan and when the enemies heard it, they said: “Perhaps some shepherd is remembering Allah on the mountains.

When they heard: I witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, they said: “This shepherd seems to be a followers of that magician liar (refuge of Allah!).” Among the principles of Ali (a.s.) was that he never began the battle till the complete morning had dawned and the angels of the day had not come down. Thus when he concluded his prayer and the day dawned, the standard was raised and the disbelievers saw and remarked to themselves: “The one you had been waiting for is here. It is Muhammad, who has come with his followers.”

A daring youth, who was most heretical and inimical came out from them and challenged: “O followers of magicians and liars, which of is Muhammad? Come out, so that I can fight you.” Imam Ali (a.s.) came to confront him and said: “May your mother mourn for you, you are a liar and a magician and Muhammad (S) is sent from the Almighty Allah with truth?”

“Who are you?” asked that shameless infidel. He replied: “I am Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s.), cousin and son-in-law of the Messenger of Allah (S). “So you are his close kin, so it is same whether I kill him or slay you,” said the accursed man and he launched an attack reciting a Rajaz. The Imam also recited a Rajaz and attacked. They exchanged a couple of blows and in the third blow Imam Ali (a.s.) dispatched him to Hell.

Then he called for another contestant. That accursed man’s brother came out and Imam Ali (a.s.) slew him in one blow and again asked for a competitor. Chief of the army, Harith bin Makida who was considered equal to 500 men, emerged and the Almighty Allah had remarked about him that:

إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُودٌ

“Most surely man is ungrateful to his Lord.”[1]

He recited a Rajaz and attacked Imam Ali (a.s.). The Imam repelled his blow and gave him a slash which split him into two and then again asked for a contestant. His cousin, Amr bin Fatak came out and reciting the Rajaz, attacked the Imam. Ali (a.s.) dispatched him to his brother in the first blow. After that he asked for another contestant but no one came out to confront him. So the valiant Imam attacked those deviated wolves and fell their fighters, took their children captives and plundered their wealth and took all of them to Medina.

When the Holy Prophet (S) received the good news of victory, he came out with companions to welcome the victors and met them at a distance of one Farsakh. The Holy Prophet (S) cleaned the dust from the face of Imam Ali (a.s.) and kissed his forehead and wept and said: “O Ali, I thank Allah, Who strengthened by arms with you and supported me. O Ali, like Musa (a.s.) prayed to Allah, to strengthen his arms by his brother and make him share his prophethood, I also asked the same from the Almighty Allah and He approved it.”

Then he turned to the companions and said: “Do not ridicule me about the love of Ali, because I love him by the command of Allah. O Ali, one who has befriended you has befriended me and one who has loved me has loved the Almighty Allah and one who loves the Almighty Allah is loved by Him and accommodates them in Paradise. O Ali, one who is inimical to you, has been inimical to me. And one who is inimical to me, is inimical to the Almighty Allah. And the Almighty Allah hates and curses one who hates Him. And He will not accept any deed of the enemies of Ali (a.s.). It is mentioned in another report

that Imam Ali (a.s.) killed a hundred and twenty men from them.

---

1. Surah Adiyat 100:6

Source URL:
https://www.al-islam.org/hayat-al-qulub-vol-2-allamah-muhammad-baqir-al-majlisi/battle-zatul-salasil