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Battle of Khaybar

The Battle of Khaybar took place in the 7th year of Hijrah. The opponents in this battle were the Jews of Khaybar. This battle came about because the Jews had amassed an army of 10000 and were ready to attack Medina. Among these 10000 were included some tribes of Jews who had taken part in hostilities against the Muslims in cooperation with the Quraish infidels. The less numbered Muslims decided to confront the large numbered Jews and the Muslims moved to Khaybar. The chief of the Fort of Khaybar was Marhab; and his brother Harith was a well-known warrior like Marhab.

Thus, these two brothers were well-known brave warriors and apparently had no equal. During this engagement, the Holy Prophet (S) was having a migraine and was therefore in his tent, but the Muslim army launched attacks for three days yet returned defeated. This continued for three days and whichever Muslim fighter went to confront the Jews, was killed by Harith. When two people used to be killed, no one from the Muslim army had the guts to go further companions for cowardice while his companions used to hold him responsible.

The Muslim army suffered this degradation for three days. Everyday, it had become a routine for the Muslim army to go to the battlefield, attack and suffer defeat and then return to their camps dejected. One day Abu Bakr took a contingent and attacked Khaybar but he returned defeated. In the same way, Umar launched an attack twice but both the times returned completely unsuccessful.[1] Marhab and Harith pursued the Muslim army and chased them upto their camps and quite often the Holy Prophet (S) who was in the tent nearby learnt of these developments. It seems that Marhab and Harith were great warriors of their time because Umar could not bear to face them even for a short while.[2] Shah Abdul Aziz writes that Umar used to return every time and blame his companions for cowardice while his companions used to hold him responsible.[3]

Thus, the army of Islam was involved in terrible difficulties in this way and they did not know what to do. The cause of their problems was that till now, the Holy Prophet (S) had not been able to accompany them in the battle. Ali (a.s.) had remained behind in Medina due to sore eyes. That is why he was apparently not fit to participate in the war, but he came to the army of Allah to contribute to the help of the Prophet.

Doubtlessly, this is true faith and assistance of Islam! Glory be to Allah, he could not bear separation from the Prophet, even during an illness and he was so eager to offer his services that he came from Medina to the Muslim camps at Khaybar, but due to the severity of the discomfort, he could not fight for three days. When the army of Islam was defeated for the third consecutive day, the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“Tomorrow, I will hand over the flag of the Islamic army to a person who is brave and who does not flee from the battlefield. That is one who is absolutely courageous and never bolts from the field. One who loves Allah and the Messenger and Allah and the Messenger love him. He will not return till Allah does not grant victory at his hands.”

This is what happened. And that prophetic tradition is mentioned in Sahih Bukhari, Khasais Nasai and Tabari.[4] But the Holy Prophet (S) gave the standard to a person who had already been tested in the battles of Badr, Uhud and Khandaq and one who had till date, continued to save the religion of Allah from destruction.

Anyway, the next morning the Holy Prophet (S) applied his saliva to the sore eyes of Ali (a.s.), which cured him completely. He then handed him the standard and gave permission to initiate the battle. After this, the Holy Prophet (S) recited the famous words of supplication: “Call Ali, the one who shows extraordinary wonders of God…” (Naade A’liyyan maz’haral ajaaibi…)

The valiant warrior rushed to the battlefield, engaged his opponents in combat and soon dispatched Marhab and Harith to Hellfire, then he uprooted the gate of Khaybar and conquered the fort. The followers of Ali (a.s.) should know that such unimaginable feats are not possible without divine help. Without any doubt, Ali (a.s.) was helped by Allah. If it had not been so, it would have been impossible for him to perform such feats. How can a person who lived on barley bread and fasted often, rout the enemies of Islam time and again? How can he subdue a warrior like Amr bin Abde Wudd? How can he slay people like Marhab and Harith? And in addition to that, he uproots the gate weighing 700 mounds, and then used this gate as a shield to deflect the strikes of the foes.

O people of justice! Do you think such feats are possible without divine help? It is well known to people who know that the uprooting of the gate of Khaybar is a historical fact and it is not a work of fiction. It is recorded in history. Even the historians who are among the opponents of Islam have recorded this incident in their books.

Washington Irving has recorded this incident in his book on Islamic history. Thus, it is surprising that people of later generations have started to consider it fictional and tend to ignore this achievement of Ali (a.s.). In view of the writer, only such people can deny such incidents, who have not brought faith in the Messenger of Allah (S), because when the Holy Prophet (S) had called Ali (a.s.) as, “one who shows extraordinary wonders” (Mazharul Ajaaib) on the basis of divine revelation, one who does not accept it to be true, cannot be considered a Muslim.

In short, in this battle also, Ali (a.s.) offered such incomparable services to Islam that were not offered by anyone else. Yet, the opponents of Ali (a.s.) refrain from confessing to the bravery of Ali (a.s.). While they are bent to make Abu Bakr and Umar the bravest ones of the companions and the most brave ones of men, as apparent from the writings of Suyuti. O God! There is indeed something like justice!

Abu Bakr and Umar had no connection with valor and bravery. In such a condition, neither Abu Bakr nor Umar could be called the bravest ones. They did not perform any feat during the lifetime of the Prophet, which can make them eligible to be called the bravest ones. Leave alone being the bravest ones, how can a person like Ali (a.s.), who never fled from the battlefield and continued to often rout the enemies of Islam, should be considered inferior to those who always bolted from battles and did not even scratch the enemy of Islam. Now the readers are invited to study the account of the Battle of Hunayn.

1. Ref. Tarikh Khamis
2. Ref. Izalatul Khifa
3. Ref. Tarikh Tabari Pg. 579; Mustadrakul Hakim
4. Pg. 1579

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