

UNIT

D

CHAPTER

FIVE

A Threat From The North: The Battle Of Mu'tah

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- 1 What nations and tribes used to live to the north of Arabia?
- 2 Where is Mu'tah?
- 3 What were the events that led to the Battle of Mu'tah?
- 4 Who were the commanders of the Muslim army?
- 5 How did the Battle come about?
- 6 Which commander became well-known after this battle?
- 7 What lessons do we learn from the events of this battle?

VOCABULARY

Shaheed شهيد

Shuhadaa' شهداء

Ash- Shahadah الشهادة

An-Nasr النصر

PLACES TO REMEMBER

Mu'tah مؤتة

PEOPLE TO REMEMBER

Zaid Ibn Harithah زيد بن حارثة

Ja'far Ibn Abi Talib جعفر بن أبي طالب

Abdullah ibn Rawahah عبد الله بن رواحة

Khalid Ibn-ul-Waleed خالد بن الوليد

Saifullah سيف الله

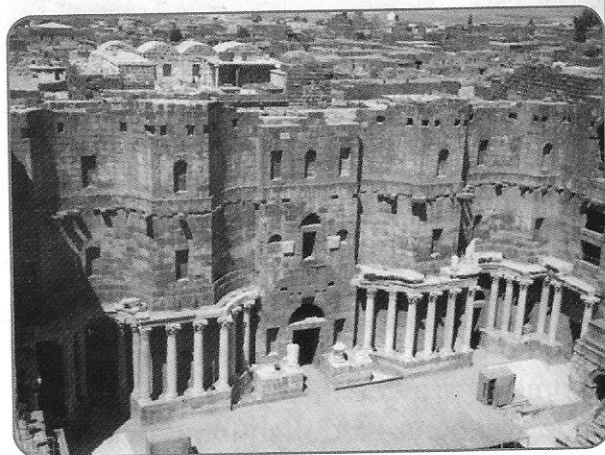
Asmaa' Bint Omays أسماء بنت عميس

Hostile Enemies to the North

The Quraysh was not the only tribe which was hostile towards Muslims in Arabia. Some tribes in the north of Arabia were also enemies of Islam and Muslims. Also, the Romans in Syria and Palestine were considering waging war against the Muslims.

In the month of Jumada Al-Oula of the eighth year after Hijrah, just three months after the Prophet ﷺ had returned from his Umrah to Makkah, the Prophet ﷺ sent fifteen men as peaceful messengers of Islam to one of the tribes at the border with Syria. The Muslims' friendly greetings were met by aggression.

Another set back occurred when the Prophet had sent Dihyah Al-Kalbi to the governor of Bosra, in Syria with his letter to Caesar, the ruler of the Roman Empire. The letter had remained unanswered so a second messenger was sent to Bosra again. Before the message reached Bosra, a chief of the Ghassanid tribe captured the messenger and put him to death. Arabs and the people of the surrounding nations always used to exercise respect towards message carriers even if they were dispatched from a nation they happened to be at war with at the time. So the act of killing a Muslim messenger was extreme and unconventional and could certainly not go unpunished. However, there was a risk to retaliation against the Ghassanids because they were close allies of Caesar.



▲ *Bosra, an ancient city in Syria.*

The Muslim Army Heads North

The Prophet ﷺ decided to raise an army of three thousand men and appointed Zaid Ibn Harithah their commander. Rasoolullah ﷺ instructed that if Zaid should be killed, Ja'far Ibn Abi Talib should take his place. The Prophet ﷺ also named Abdullah ibn Rawahah as the third commander if Ja'far were to be killed. If the three men were all to die then the men in the army would be at liberty to choose their own commander.

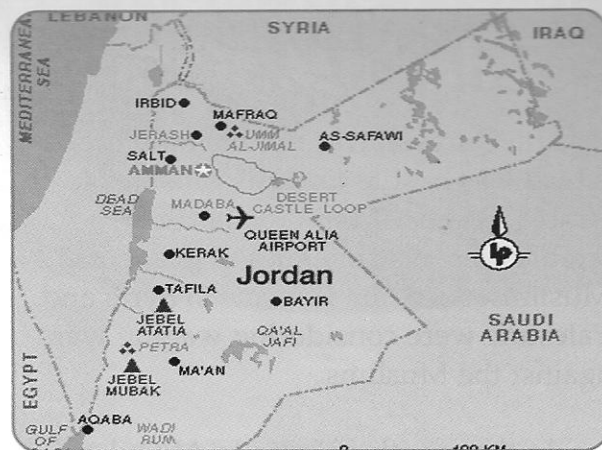
The Muslim army proceeded to march to battle and when they reached Ma'an, a city in the south of present day Jordan, they heard disturbing news. They learned that the northern tribes were very strong and had gathered one hundred thousand fighters. Also, the

Roman Army had joined them with an additional one hundred thousand soldiers. Thus the enemy soldiers were two hundred thousand men strong.

Zaid ibn Harithah, the leader of the small Muslim army, decided to stop and hold a war council. Most of the men wanted to send the Prophet ﷺ a message of what they heard about the enemy's huge army. The Prophet ﷺ would either order the men to return home or provide them with more men and weapons. Abdullah Ibn Rawahah rose up and reminded the war council that what they were about to do is Jihad or struggle (in this case a military struggle) for the sake of God. He also said: "We have before us one of the two good things; either An-Nasr النَّصْر (victory) or Ash-Shahadah الشَّهَادَة (martyrdom). Then we will join our brothers who were martyrs before us and be their companions in the gardens of paradise."

The Muslim army was moved by the message of Abdullah Ibn Rawahah's statement, so they continued marching on towards the enemy. As they came towards the Dead Sea they could see the enemy army. The Muslims could see that they were greatly outnumbered by a huge army of a size which they had never before been confronted.

During the Battle of Badr in the 2nd year after Hijrah, the Muslims were three hundred and fourteen while Quraysh's army was about one thousand fighters. In Uhud Battle in 3rd year after Hijrah, Muslims were around



▲ *Jordan map locating Ma'an and Mu'tah*

one thousand while the enemies were about two thousand. The largest army ever to attack Muslims was eight thousand strong at the Battle of the Trench. Now the enemy's army was a massive two hundred thousand fighters.

The two Armies Meet in Mu'tah

When Zaid Ibn Harithah saw the many enemy soldiers, he gave orders for the Muslims to withdraw to Mu'tah, a village south of Jordan now. Here they organized themselves and prepared for the battle. The enemy army followed the Muslim army towards Mu'tah and shortly after, as they were getting closer, Zaid gave the order to attack. Zaid, with the battle standard in his hand, led his men into combat. He fought the enemy courageously and fiercely and was wounded many times until he fell as a great Shaheed شهيد or Martyr.

Muslim Commanders are Martyred

When Zaid was martyred, Ja'far ibn abi Talib became the commander of the army. He mounted his horse, spurred it on, then called out:

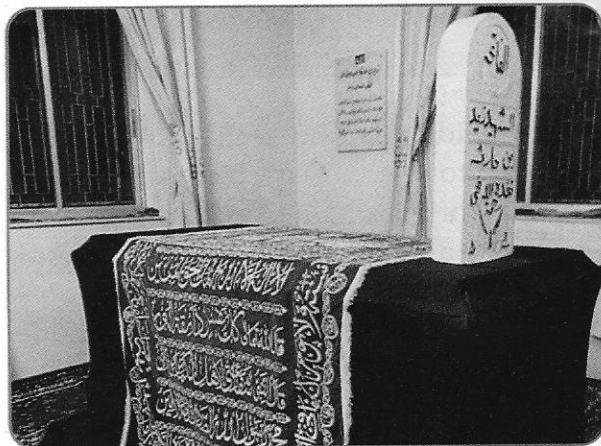
"How wonderful is Paradise as it draws near! How pleasant and cool is its drink! Punishment for the Byzantines is not far away!"

Ja'far carried the flag, charged against the enemies, and penetrated deep into the Byzantine ranks. After a tremendous fight, Ja'far lost his right hand so he carried the flag with his left hand which he later lost as well. He refused to give up and managed to keep the standard raised with what remained of his arms. He nobly fell as another great shaheed. Rasoolullah ﷺ said that Allah gave Ja'far two wings with which he will fly everywhere in Jannah. After the death of Ja'far, Abdullah Ibn Rawahah assumed the leadership of the Muslim army. At first Abdullah hesitated when he saw the waves of the enemy fighters. However, he promptly regained his courage and started to chant,

My soul, I swear you will get in
You will get in, or I'll force you, then
The enemies came to cause our demise
Why then I see you hate the paradise

Oh my soul, if you are not killed here, you will
later die

The time of death is now, it just came by
Whatever you wished for is now given to you
You will be on the straight path like the other
two*



▲ Tomb of Zaid ibn Harithah (R)
in the village of Mu'tah in
Jordan

* Referring to Zaid and Ja'far

He then led the army until he was killed as another great martyr. Now, the three main leaders of the Muslim army were martyred. The tombs of the three commanders and other Shuhadaa' شهداء or martyrs who fell in this battle are now in the township of Mu'tah in Jordan.

The Two Armies Stop the Fight

After the death of Abdullah, the Muslim army chose Khalid ibn-ul-Waleed as their commander. Khalid had great military skills and experience. During the fight, he succeeded in killing many of the enemy fighters and he broke nine swords during combat. He knew that his small Muslim army could not achieve victory in this battle against the huge enemy army so he decided to

withdraw in order to avoid losing many more Muslim warriors.

Khalid, however, realized that he needed to secure a safe and honorable retreat for his small army. During the night he altered the formations of the different brigades. He switched the right wing with the left wing and the front with the rear. This made the Muslim army appear different from the enemy's view. The generals of the enemy army actually thought that the Muslims had received backup overnight. That made the Romans and their Arab allies consider retreating.

The Muslim army was able to withdraw without suffering any greater loss. The Roman army also decided to stop fighting to avoid more casualties. Although the enemy had a great power edge over the Muslims they gained no advantage from it.

In a way the battle was a victory for Khalid because he was able to withdraw the Muslims without suffering too much causality. According to historical accounts, the Muslims had only twelve martyrs whilst the enemy sustained many more casualties than that.

The Prophet ﷺ received the news about the battle as it happened from Allah through Angel Jibreel. He learned about the loss of the three courageous commanders and how Khalid ibn-ul-Waleed led the Muslim army after them. When the Prophet ﷺ told his companions about the battle and the deaths of Zaid, Ja'far and Abdullah he said: "Then one of God's Swords took the standard, and God opened up the

way for them." Khalid ibn-ul-Waleed then came to be called سيف الله Saifullah or "the sword of God".

Condolences to the Martyrs' Families

The Prophet ﷺ went to the house of Ja'far to meet with his wife Asmaa' bint Omays and her children. "Oh Asmaa'," he said, "bring me Ja'far's sons." Asmaa' duly brought her sons to him and the Prophet ﷺ kissed them and tears began to flow from his eyes. Asmaa' became concerned "Oh Messenger of God," she said "you are dearer to me than my father and my mother, what makes you cry? Has news reached you about Ja'far and his companions?" "They were all martyred today," said the Prophet ﷺ. Asmaa' was overcome with sadness and she began crying. When the Prophet returned to his house he ordered food to be prepared for the family of Ja'far. He also consoled the families of Zaid, Abdullah and other martyrs.

The Prophet ﷺ was so moved by the deaths of the three leaders that tears would flow from his eyes whenever he described the battle.

That same night the Prophet ﷺ had a vision of Paradise. He saw that Zaid, Ja'far, Abdullah, and other martyrs were there. He saw Ja'far flying with wings like an angel. When he went to the mosque in the morning to offer fajr prayer he did not feel much sorrow and sadness. His vision showed that the martyrs were all in paradise.

سورة آل عمران

Surat-ul-Iman 169-171

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أحيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾
فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ
مَنْ خَلْفَهُمْ أَلَّا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١٧٠﴾ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِنِعْمَةِ
اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧١﴾

Translation

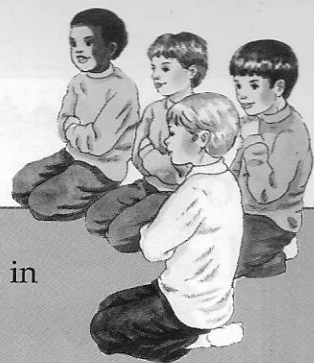
[3:169] And do not think of those who were killed in Allah's way as dead; nay, they are alive (and) are provided with sustenance from their Lord;

[3:170] They are happy with what Allah has given them out of His grace and they rejoice for the sake of those who are behind them who have not yet joined them, that they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.

[3:171] They rejoice on account of favor from Allah and (His) grace, and that Allah will not waste the reward of the believers.



FAITH IN ACTION



- ★ Always do your best to serve Muslims in the best manner possible to you
- ★ Always offer your sincere condolences to the families that lose their loved ones. Also help them by providing them food during the few days following their tragedy.



Hadeeth Shareef

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله صلى
الله عليه وسلم:
" مَنْ قُتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ ، وَمَنْ مَاتَ فِي
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ "

رواه مسلم

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that Rasoolullah ﷺ said:

Whoever is killed for the sake of Allah is a martyr,
and whoever dies for the sake of Allah is a martyr.

Reported in Muslim

CHAPTER REVIEW

Projects and Activities



1. Type a one-page life story of one of the following Sahabah:
 - Zaid Ibn Harithah
 - Asmaa' Bint Omays
 - Abdullah Ibn Rawahah
2. The town of Mu'tah, is located in Jordan, one of the Muslim Countries. Prepare a country profile on this country that includes pictures of the Islamic landmarks there.

Stretch Your Mind



1. Khalid Ibn-ul-Waleed ordered the withdrawal of the Muslim army from the battle. Was that an act of cowardice or wisdom? Explain your answer?
2. Imagine you were a neighbor of a person who lost his father during Jihad against a hostile enemy. How would you console that boy?

Study Questions

- 1 What caused the Battle of Mu'tah?
- 2 When did the Battle of Mu'tah happen and where?
- 3 Who were the enemies of Muslims in Mu'tah?
- 4 Who were the commanders in this battle?
- 5 Who was Saifullah? What role did he play in the battle?
- 6 How did the Muslims end the war?
- 7 What is Martyrdom?