

The First Battle of Badr

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This is about the first battle of Badr fought by the Best of Mankind [Muhammad].

It took place a few days after the battle of 'Ushayra.¹

When Kurz ibn Jābir came up to

Madina, the Prophet came out and he ran away!

He followed him up to Mount Safwān.

[Kurz] later became his companion and repented.

The place where the Prophet ended the chase is called Badr,

The First One. This is what is trustworthy!

Ḥaydara [‘Alī] held the flag on that day.

The Prophet did not see anyone and returned with his army!

The Great Battle of Badr

This Great Battle of Badr is the day of the Criterion.²

It is the day that Islam triumphed. This is no joke!

Though Muslims were outnumbered by their adversaries,

God helped them to be victorious over their adversaries.

God told them: "And God has given you victory!"³

The enemies retreated thanks to God's help.

This battle was more significant than the previous and

following ones, for it was the day the faith was honored!

¹ *Badar* is a Wolofization of the Arabic *Badr*, which is the name of the valley where the first major battle between Muslims and non-Muslims occurred.

² Here the poet used the Islamic concept *Furqān*, which means *Criterion, Discernment*. It refers specifically to the Quran.

³ Q 3:123.

It was the Great Battle of Badr that enlightened many places.

The Prophet led his army into battle on a Sunday,
the twelfth day of the month of Ramadan.

It was the eighteen months after
the Prophet's companionship with the Anṣār⁴ who fought in this battle of Badr.

They had not participated in the earlier battles.
For this reason, this Badr Battle was so painful for the Anṣār,
who were sincere to the Prophet and endured their suffering courageously.

The number of his companions was three hundred
and thirteen men with equal rewards.

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There were eight companions who did not participate,
but they received equal rewards for they contributed to the effort.

They only had three horses mounted by Zubayru
Marzhadu and Miqdād.⁵ These were righteous people!

They were in possession of
only seventy camels. These were honorable people!

The enemies were three times their number.⁶

They were about one thousand men with one hundred horses.

⁴ *Al-Anṣār* (*The Helpers* in Arabic) refers to the inhabitants of Madina who welcomed and supported Prophet Muhammad and his followers when they emigrated to Madina due to their persecution in Mecca.

⁵ *Zubayru*, also known as *Zubayru ibn al-Awam* (594-656) or *Zoubairou*, was the cousin and companion of Prophet Muhammad, and one of the ten people he had promised paradise. *Marzhadu*, also spelled *Marzadou* or *Marsadou*, was a companion of Prophet Muhammad who fought two battles and died four years after the exile. *Miqdād*, also spelled *Miqdād ibn Asw* or *Mikbdad Ibnou Asw*, was another companion of the Prophet and one of the first seven people to embrace Islam.

⁶ The poet used the Wolof word *kem* here, which multiplies a number by three.

They had one hundred and seven camels.

Yet they retreated in the face of the courageous men.

Spray the nicest perfume over their graves!

May God, the Merciful, bestow on them boundless blessings!

May peace, blessings and baraka be

upon him [the Prophet], and may God bestow blessings on my words!

This battle of Badr took place on a Friday,

on the twelfth day of a difficult month of Ramadan.

After God ordered the Prophet to fight

his enemies and hypocrites,⁷ he did not rest.

It is this verse that led the Messenger of God

to fight Abū Jahlin in Badr, in the name of God.

Abū Sufyān led the caravan on that day.⁸

They were returning from Shaam with his relatives.

But the Meccans had already sent another army [for backup].

The Prophet intercepted their army with his army.

He marched with his army from Madina to Rawḥā before realizing that

Abū Jahlin had an even bigger army!

The Prophet made his companions target

one of the weakest points of his adversaries.

⁷ Q 66:9.

⁸ *Abū Jablīn*, also spelled as *Abu Jabl* or *Abou Jabline* (570-624), was equally known as *ʿAmr ibn Ḥishām* and *Abū al-Ḥakām*. He was a Quraysh chief and the toughest opponent of Prophet Muhammad. *Abū Sufyān* ou *Abou Soufiane* (565-653) was a chief merchant from the Quraysh group and a staunch opponent of Muhammad when he announced his prophetic mission. However, he later converted to Islam.

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It was on that day that the Quran said: "God has

promised them."⁹ The Prophet asserted his authority on that day.

After the revelation, his companion, Al-Ṣiddīq told him: "Please, proceed

and we will follow your command."¹⁰

Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb added: "Messenger of God,

I swear that we will never disobey your orders."¹¹

Miqdād also added: "Messenger of God, proceed with your orders.

We will never betray you. We will do whatever you ask.

We will not say what the people of Israel

had said to Mūsā. We will follow your instructions."¹²

When Mūsā asked them to fight, they told him:

"You and your God, go do the fighting while we wait here."

"We will never tell you and God to go do the fighting.

God willing, we will fight in every battle that you fight.

We swear by the Lord who sent you with a truthful message.

If you order us to jump into the sea of al-Ghimādi, we won't hesitate."¹³

The sea in Ḥabash is called al-Ghimādi.

Miqdād added: "If you so ordered, we would jump into it!

⁹ Q 14:22.

¹⁰ *Al-Ṣiddīq* or *Sidīk* (also spelled *Sadīk*) means in Arabic the righteous, the truthful. It is the nickname of *Abū Bakr* also spelled *Aboubacar* or *Aboubaker*, *Boubacar* or *Babacar*. He was the companion of Prophet Muhammad and the first Caliph of the Muslims.

¹¹ *Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb* refers to *ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb*, a companion of Prophet Muhammad. He served as the second Caliph after the death of the Prophet.

¹² As this story goes, the people of Israel refused to follow *Prophet Mūsā* (Moses) in battle. See Q 5:24.

¹³ *Barka al-Ghimādi* is part of the Red Sea separating *Yemen* and *Ḥabash* (present-day Ethiopia).

We are prepared to fight the enemy to death.”

The Prophet told them that the King of Ḥabash is righteous, due to gratitude.¹⁴

It was there that [the Prophet] said: “O, Mankind!”

And Sa ‘du, the most senior of the Ansār thought he was talking to them.¹⁵

He replied: “Yes, we believe in you.

We have entrusted you with our lives. Lead us anywhere you wish.

Know that if you cross the ocean, we’ll do the same.

And no suffering would ever make us betray you!

We have accepted your message as truthful,

for we have confirmed its veracity and your righteousness.”

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Spray the nicest perfume over his [the Prophet’s] sacred grave.

May God the Merciful bestow on him boundless blessings!

May peace, blessings and baraka be upon him.

May God bestow blessings on my words!

The Prophet was pleased with his soldiers and prayed for them.

Then he ordered them to move closer to Badr, and they marched.

When they arrived in Badar, the enemies were already in Xaswa.¹⁶

There he told his soldiers those who will die in combat.

The Prophet pitched a tent there and sat inside with Abū Bakr.

¹⁴ Here the poet refers to the Ethiopian Christian King, *Al-Najashi* (reign 614-631 CE) who offered asylum to persecuted Muslims in the nascent days of Islam.

¹⁵ *Sa ‘du* is also spelled *Sabdou*, *Sadou*, *Sa ‘du ibn Qays*, or *Sadou Ibnou Khaïssou*, was a companion of Muhammad and the most senior Anṣārs leader.

¹⁶ *Jebel xaswa* in Arabic is the name of the mountain located in the valley of Badr.

The two armies fought to death like lions.

Among the enemies, it was 'Utbatu who first stood up,

followed by Shayba and Walīd looking for someone to kill.¹⁷

Then young Ansār men came all the way to Ḥuyaj

to ensure that the Quraysh never break their oath.

Then 'Ubayda,¹⁸ Ḥamza and 'Alī,

the three Hāshimites, stood up.

Ḥamza killed Shayba, and Ḥaydara ['Alī]

killed Walīd. But 'Utbatu was wounded.

'Ubayda and 'Utbatu stabbed each other.

When they met, they clashed.

'Alī and Ḥamza attacked 'Utbatu,

and killed him quickly and carried away 'Ubayda.

It is there that the two armies engaged each other with spears,

and swords. Arrows flew from everywhere.

When the armies met, the Prophet noticed that the enemies

outnumbered honorable Muslim fighters by three times,

he then made a special prayer and ask for God's

assistance in his tent till his prayer was answered.

¹⁷ 'Utbatu, also spelled *Outbatou*, was the father-in-law of Abū Sufyān. *Shayba* also known as *Shayba ibn Rabi'ah* or *Saiba ibnou Rabia* was the brother of 'Utbatu, who never converted, although three of his children became Muslims. *Walīd* was the son of 'Utbatu.

¹⁸ 'Ubayda, or 'Ubayda *ibn al-Harith* also spelled *Oubaida ibnou Abi Haris*, was the companion and cousin of Muhammad. He was also known for shooting the first arrow of Islam and the first martyr in the battle of Badr. *Ḥamza*, also known as *Ḥamza ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib* or *Amza ibnou Abdoul Muttalib*, was Muhammad's paternal uncle who took his defense when he was persecuted by Meccans.

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He said in his prayer: "My Lord, if you let down

this army, Your Greatness will not be known!"

He became sleepy and had a vision of Angel Gabriel

descending from the heavens with thousands of angels!

It is then that the Prophet woke up smiling and said: "Rejoice Mbaye,¹⁹

for Angel Gabriel and his army are coming to assist us!"

The dust rose as Gabriel rode a horse called Ḥayzūm,

encouraging [the Prophet] by telling him to move ahead.

Then the Prophet exited his tent and said: "As one, we can defend ourselves."²⁰

"Today the enemies will be defeated."

The angels wondered how to fight with human beings

to kill them. Then a Quranic verse was revealed.

It said: "Strike their neck and their fingertips."²¹

Then the fight intensified.

It is then that half of the Prophet's army deployed their weapons.

The enemies retreated to counterattack with their weapons.

"You threw not, when you threw"²² It was this verse

that lead enemies to retreat as did many others.

¹⁹ *Mbaye* is the Wolof name for *Abū Bakr*, the companion of the Prophet.

²⁰ Q 54:44.

²¹ Q 8:12.

²² The poet only gave a phrase of the Quranic verse here, expecting readers to know the rest. The full Quranic verse is: "And you did not kill them, but it was Allah who killed them. And you threw not, [O Muhammad], when you threw, but it was Allah who threw that He might test the believers with a good test. Indeed, Allah is Hearing and Knowing." See Q 8:17.

Spray the nicest perfume over his [the Prophet's] sacred grave.

May God the Merciful bestow on him boundless blessings!

May peace, blessings and baraka be upon him.

May God bestow blessings on my words!

They lost seven people on that day,

and about twenty-one of them were made prisoners.

Ibn 'Abbās said that angels never fought,

except in Badr.²³ But they did not run away from the later battles.

In the later battles, the angels offered them protection

till they were ready and determined to fight.

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On the day of Badr their victory was decisive,

in contrast to Ḥunayn when they initially had to retreat.

Five thousand angels came on that day.

They came from God,²⁴ one after the other.

As they arrived, you could see a Muslim fighter pull his sword,

and the head of an enemy falling without the sword hitting him. What a miracle!

Shuhaylu, son of Ḥunayf, reported it.

I am retelling the story for him. Don't discount what I said!

When they wanted to sort out those killed by humans

and those killed by the angels,

²³ *Ibn 'Abbās*, also known as *Abdallah ibn abbas* or *Abdoulaye Ibnou Abasse* (619-687), was the son of *'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib*, the uncle of Muhammad. He was recognized as an authority in Islamic scholarship and Quranic exegesis.

²⁴ Here the poet uses the word *Kun (Be!)*, which refers to the creative power of God in Islam. See Q 16:40.

they sought counsel from the Worthy of Emulation [Muhammad].

He told them to look for corpses with black spots on their necks
and their teeth, for only those killed by angels would have black spots.

On that day, the Prophet held some sand, "when the two armies met,"²⁵
and threw it to his enemies who ran away due to fear!

The sand touched all their faces.

He then recited "may their sight be veiled," and they became disoriented!

Let me praise 'Ukāsha ibn al-Muḥṣin who fought
so hard that day till his sword broke and kept on fighting with a piece of wood!

The Prophet took a piece of wood and gave it to him,
which became his best sword he fought with for the rest of his life.

The piece of wood became a sword with a white metal called 'Awnu.
It was a long, beautiful and robust sword.

He used it in the battlefield [of Badr] in which God assisted Muslims.
He used it till his death as a martyr among martyrs.

In all the battles he fought, he used the sword,
till he fell on the battlefield. This man earned a precious reward.

On that day, Ma'ādh ibn 'Amr²⁶ came
to the Prophet with his amputated arm on his head and told him it was cut off.

²⁵ Q 8:41 and Q 3:166.

²⁶ *Ma'adh ibn 'Amr*, also spelled *Mabasse* or *Moubasse Ibnou Amar*, was the son of *Abū Jablin* and companion of Muhammad who converted to Islam with his mother and his two sisters.

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‘Ikrimatu²⁷ wounded him badly till only little skin was left on his arm.

The Prophet prayed and spit on the wound, and it fully healed.

Ma ‘ādh later lived long and outlived the Prophet.

He witnessed ‘Uthmān’s rule as a Caliph. What a miracle!

Spray the nicest perfume over his grave.

May God, the Merciful, bestow on him boundless blessings!

May peace, blessings and baraka

be upon him, and may God bestow blessings on my words!

The Prophet told his followers to dump into the well called Qalib²⁸

all the dead bodies of the enemies.

He told those in the well: “This is your reward.

You must be pleased with me for I offered you the best reward.”

He then added: “You are in bad company.

You rejected me unlike those who believe in my prophethood.”

‘Umar then asked him: “O Prophet, how can you talk to the dead?”

He replied: “I am assisted by God, The Lord!

But they could not respond; they would if they could.”

Qatādata²⁹ said: “Their souls had been returned to them

in order to shame, humiliate, and mock them,

and to punish them, make them losers, and dishonor them.”

²⁷ ‘Ikrimatu is also spelled *Ikeramatou*. ‘Uthmān also spelled *Othman* or *Ousmane*, was Muhammad’s companion, son-in-law, and the third Caliph of Islam.

²⁸ *Qalib* in Arabic is the name of the well near the battlefield of Badr.

²⁹ *Qatāda* (581-644), also spelled *Khatadata*, was an Anṣār archer who fought in the battles of Badr and Uḥud.

Ibn Marzūq reported on the miracles of Badr

that pilgrims told him that if you walk in the valley of Badr

till now, if you listen carefully, you will still hear pitiful voices [of those in the well]

that sound like those of dignitaries. What a miracle!

This highlights again the glory of Islam.

Ibn Marzūq himself did not initially believe this story.

The day he walked at the place and heard himself the pitiful voices

was when he finally confirmed the accuracy of the story.

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The Prophet ended the battle of Badr

in the last days of Ramadan. What a resilient man!

It coincided with the start of Shawwāl,³⁰ the time of Eid al-Fitr.

The Prophet announced the news to the people of Madīna by sending Zayd ibn Ḥārith³¹ to share the great news.

It coincided with when ‘Usmān had just laid to rest Ruqaya,³² the daughter of the righteous Prophet that ‘Usmān first married.

After her death, the Prophet offered her the hand of Kalthūm.

Seven years later, she also died. Thus, ‘Usmān lost two lights.

‘Uthmān rightfully deserved them as spouses.

May peace and blessings of God be upon the Prophet,

³⁰ *Shawwāl* is the tenth month of the Muslim lunar calendar.

³¹ *Zayd ibn Ḥārith*, also known as *Zaydu* (581-629), was the slave of *Khadija* and an adoptive son of Prophet Muhammad. He is the third person after *Khadija* and ‘*Alī* to embrace Islam.

³² *Ruqaya* also spelled as *Rokbaya* and *Kalthūm* or *Umm Kalthūm* or *Kalsoum*, were the two daughters of Prophet Muhammad who were successively the spouses of ‘*Uthmān*. *Boroom Yaari leer yi* in Wolof or *Zul-nūrayni* in Arabic (The one with the two lights, i.e., *Ruqaya* and *Kalthūm*) is a nickname given to ‘*Uthmān*.

and upon his virtuous and enduring companions.

Bestow your blessings upon the Prophet, O The Sublime One!

And give us a beautiful ending in life, O The Ultimate Supporter!

Ahmadu Kayre³³ has now told the story of the battle of Badr.

May he be able to compose another poem on Uḥud, for it is a must!

Hear my prayer: "O My Lord, offer me knowledge

that is blessed from Yourself. Help me!"³⁴

Spray the nicest perfume over his [Prophet Muhammad's] grave.

May God, the Merciful, bestow on him boundless blessings.

May peace, blessings and baraka

be upon him, and may God bestow blessings on my words!

We have now finished the poem on Badr. We will compose

the one on Uḥud after Badr. May our work be well rewarded!

I swear, it is my love of the Best of Mankind that led me

to eulogize his battles and his great courageous companions,

for all the men who had fought for the Prophet

were like adult lions in battle!

³³ *Ahmadu Kayre*, *Sëriñ Maam Moor Kayre* or *Serigne Mame Mor Kayré* (1869-1951) is the poet's name. He was a disciple of Bamba and the oldest Murid Wolof Ajami poet. He specialized in hagiography and Islamic topography, including finding the right places to build mosques. See Fallou Ngom, *Muslims Beyond the Arab World: The Odyssey of 'Ajami and the Muridiyya* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 22.

³⁴ Q 11 :113.