



## Battle of Uhud: Lessons and Insights

This Battle of Uhud took place on the 7<sup>th</sup> of Shawwal, A.H. 3, which would be January, 625 C.E. . The Battle of Uhud was a great testing time for the young Muslims community. Their mettle and the wisdom and strength if their leader were shown in the battle of Badr, in which the Makkans suffered a crushing defeat. The Makkans were ready to wipe out their disgrace and annihilate Madinah. To this end they collected a large force and marched towards Madinah. They numbered, some, 3000 fighting men under Abu Sufyan, and they were so confident of Victory that their women-folk came with them, and showed the most shameful savagery at the end of the Battle. To meet the threatened danger the Messenger of Allah (saw), with his usual foresight, courage and initiative, resolved to take his station at the foot of Mount Uhud. The Muslims numbered some 700-1000 men. There was also treachery on the part of 300 hypocrites who turned back with Abdullah Ibn Ubai before the starting of the battle. Even though there still remained a small band of hypocrites among the seven hundred who accompanied the Holy Prophet. They played their part and did their worst to create mischief and chaos in the ranks of the Believers during the Battle. This was the first clear indication of the fact that within the fold of the Muslim Community there was quite a large number of saboteurs who were always ready to conspire with the external enemies to harm their own brethren.

A torrent bed was to their south, and the passes in the hills at the back, were filled with 50 archers to prevent the enemy attacking from the rear. The enemy were set the task of attacking the walls of Madinah with the Muslims at the rear. In the beginning the battle went well with the Muslims. The enemy wavered, but the Muslims archers in disobedience of their orders, left their posts to join in the pursuit of collecting the booty. The enemy took advantage of the open left and there was some hand to hand combat in which the numbers were told in favor of the enemy. Though the devices of the hypocrites had played a great part in the set-back at Uhud, the weaknesses of the Muslims themselves contributed no less to it. And it was but natural that the Muslims should show signs of moral weakness for they were a new community which had only recently been formed on a new ideology and had not as yet got a thorough moral training. Naturally in this second hard test of their physical and moral strength, some weaknesses came to the surface.

Many of the Emigrants and the Helpers were killed. But there was no real defeat for the Muslims for even if they had lost some family and friends they know they will be in Jannah. Amongst the Muslim martyrs was the gallant Hamza (ra) a brother of the Prophet's (saw) father. It was his body along with others that had been mutilated by Hind (Abu Sufyan's wife) and other pagans. The Messenger of Allah (saw), himself was wounded in his head, his face, his knee, and his front mouth where he had lost a tooth. He also had two rings of his shield penetrated inside of his cheek. Had it not been for his firmness, courage, and coolness, all would have been lost. As it was, the Prophet (saw) in spite of his wounds, and many of the wounded Muslims, inspired by his example, returned to the field the next day, and Abu Sufyan and his army thought it most prudent to withdraw. A total of 70 Muslims were martyred on that day and

most of them had been the Helpers (Ansar). Madinah was saved, but a lesson in faith, constancy, firmness, and steadfastness was learnt by the Muslims.

As we should have learnt by this summary of the Battle of Uhud, Islam does not come easy and Allah does always give us total victory. The reason being that if we Muslims would always have victory then many of us would forget about the One who gave us that victory and instead we would fill up with pride, and the other reason being that great many pretenders to faith will enter Islam and consequently the demarcation of the true believers and hypocrites will be blurred. Therefore we must always remember that happiness comes from Allah but difficulties are what we bestow upon ourselves like the archers did. These lessons and some more will be further discussed in this essay.

The first lesson that was learned by the Muslims in this battle, is the fact that they cannot depend on or trust anyone except Allah (swt). For when they trusted the group led by Abdullah Ibn Ubai it turned out that they were indeed hypocrites. They turned their backs and they did not participate in the battle. When Abdullah bin Haram tried to stop them and convince them to come back and fight, they claimed, "If we had known you would really fight we would have not turned back".

To which the following two verses were revealed.

**And the Hypocrites also. These were told: "Come fight in the way of Allah or (at least) drive (the foe from your city)." They say: "had we known how to fighting would take place we would certainly have followed you. They were that day nearer to unbelief than to faith saying with their lips what was not in their hearts. But Allah hath full knowledge of all they conceal. (3:167)**

**Remember two of your parties meditated cowardice; but Allah was their Protector and in Allah should the faithful (ever) put their trust. (3:121)**

**(O Muslims!) Then what is the matter within you that you are divided. Into two parties about the hypocrites? Allah has cast them back (to disbelief) Because of what they have earned. (4:88)**

The second lesson to be learnt from is the willingness and courage of the Muslims to fight in the cause of Allah. It must be understood that our life and death is in Allah's (azw) hands and wherever we are He can take our life away. Therefore we must willingly fight in His cause with might and courage, and we must not let any worldly affairs get in our way. An example of this is the willingness of Hanzalah, who was a young man and had been married the day before the battle. He had one night to spend with his new wife Jamila who had a dream that night showing her that Hanzalah would be martyred. So in the morning the couple made their ablutions and did their fajr prayers, Jamila clung on to Hanzalah when he was going to leave but soon enough he tore away from her embrace and without even repeating his ablutions he left for the battle and indeed he was martyred. This shows that he had enough control over his "nafs" that he did not let it get in the way when he wanted to take part in Jihad. Another example of courage is, when the Prophet (saw) took out a brandished sword and asked, "Who will take this sword, together with its right?". To this Umar b al-Khattab, Az-Zubair b Al-Awwam, and Abu Dujana Sammak b Kharsha stepped forward. But the sword was handed to Abu Dujana because he was a valiant man who

gloried in battle, and his red turban was known to be "the turban of death". When he put it on, winding it around his helmet, they knew this meant to inflict great harm upon the enemy. During this battle he did kill a lot of the pagans and paid the due of the sword, which was that, the blade on it had to be "bent" . Regarding these courageous men some versus were revealed.

**Among the Believers are men who have been true to their Covenant with Allah: of them some have completed their vow to (the extreme) and some (still) wait, but they have never changed (their determination) in the least: That Allah may reward the men of Truth for their Truth and punish the Hypocrites if that be His Will or turn to them in Mercy, for Allah is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful. (33:23-24)**

**"Those who responded (To the call) of Allah And the Apostle (Muhammad), After being wounded, For those of them Who did good deeds And refrained from wrong, there is a great reward." (3.172)**

There also ahadeeth showing how much these Muslims wanted to be martyred, one of them is as follows:

**Narrated Jabir bin Abdullah: On the day of the battle of Uhud, a man came to the Prophet and said, "Can you tell me where I will be if I should get martyred?" The Prophet replied, "In Paradise." The man threw away some dates he was carrying in his hand, and fought till he was martyred . (Bukhari)**

The next lesson to be learned is that unlike other religions, Islam gives women all their rights. In this battle there were women present who helped the injured and who even fought. The number one example is of Nusaybah Umm Imarah Al-Ansariah. She came to attend to the wounds of the injured and to give them water, such as Aisha bint Abu Bakr and Umm Sulaim (ra) did, along with Umm Saleet.

**Narrated Anas b Malik: "I saw Aisha bint Abu Bakr and Umm Sulaim. Their garments were gathered up so I could see their anklets. They carried water bags on their shoulders and emptied them into the mouths of people. Then they would come back and do the same". Umar (ra) said:" Umm Saleet used to carry water bags to us on Uhud day. (Bukhari)**

Umm Imarah was given special recognition for this battle. She encountered Ibn Qami'a in combat, and sustained a light wound on her shoulder, but she herself also struck him with her sword several times but he survived because he was wearing two armors. She however, went on striking until her wounds counted twelve. She asked the Prophet to supplicate that Allah let her and her family accompany him in Paradise and so he did. The Prophet (saw) later said about her, **"I did not look to my right nor my left on the day of Uhud, but I saw her defending me."**

Another aspect of Islamic wars is the right that the Muslims have to attack the enemy. The Muslims did not start their attacking on the pagans until the pagans made their first move, and then they, directed by their leader (saw) started to fight back. For in Jihad if the opposition hurts the Muslims and wounds them then the Muslims must make sure that they take revenge, meaning hurt the opposition back. For this is an

order from Allah (swt), when the pagans were killing and hurting so many Muslims, Allah (swt) sent His revelation down to tell them to fight back equally.

**If a wound hath touched you be sure a similar wound hath touched the others. Such days (of varying fortunes) We give to men and men by turns: that Allah may know those that believe and that He may take to Himself from your ranks martyr-witnesses (to Truth). And Allah loveth not those that do wrong. (3:140)**

The way the Muslims differ from the unbelievers, regarding this issue, is that they do not inflict harm upon the women and the children. The unbelievers on the other hand would kill any Muslim that they came across, their prime goal being our beloved Prophet (saw). When Abu Dujana was fighting he was indeed fulfilling his word to kill the maximum amount of mushriks possible. Az-Zubair was quite upset that the sword was given to Abu Dujana instead of to himself. So he decided he would closely watch to see if Abu Dujana was indeed keeping his word. As he observed, nobody stood in Abu Dujana's way but to be slain and killed. He killed the mushriks in one of the highest numbers. But at one point, into the thick of the battle, he rushed to kill a person who was inciting the enemy to fight the Muslims. Upon this the person shrieked and lo! It was a woman. Abu Dujana spared her, saying: " I respect the Prophet's (saw) sword too much to use on a woman." The woman was Hind bint Utbah.

**Describing the same incident, Az-Zubair said: " I saw Abu Dujana raising his sword over the parting part of Hind bint Utbah's head, then he moved it off. I said to myself Allah and His Messenger know best." (ie.know why he acted like that)**

This is only enough proof that even though Abu Dujana had enough hatred to kill one of the most evil women of that battle, he did not for the sake of Allah and His Messenger (saw). This is an example of why we do not kill the women.

Next comes another lesson regarding the protection of your leader. The Muslims in this battle had to keep in mind that whatever happened to them was with the will of Allah and therefor they had to keep their duty to the Messenger of Allah (saw) and keep him under their protection. For they knew that if something were to happen to him most of the followers would lose hope and surrender to their enemy. This is what happened in the following ahadeeth:

**Narrated by Aisha (ra): On the day (of the battle) of Uhud when the pagans were defeated, Satan shouted, "O slaves of Allah! Beware of the forces at your back," and on that the Muslims of the front files fought with the Muslims of the back files (thinking they were pagans). Hudhaifa looked back to see his father "Al-Yaman," (being attacked by the Muslims). He shouted, "O Allah's slaves! My father! My father!" By Allah, they did not stop till they killed him. Hudhaifa said, "May Allah forgive you."**

This has caused major chaos amongst the Muslims and many of them were killed. During this time the Prophet (saw) was left with twelve men around him when he was attacked he called to them to come back but it was too late.

**Narrated Al Bara bin Azib: The Prophet appointed Abdullah bin Jubair as the commander of the cavalry archers on the day of the battle of Uhud. Then they returned defeated, and that is what is referred to by Allah's Statement: "And the Apostle (Muhammad) in your rear was calling you." (3.153)**

Then someone shouted out, "Muhammed has been slain!" To this some fighters lost total faith and stopped fighting. Some of them even fled back to Madinah and others kept on fighting to which the following hadeeth refers to.

**Narrated Anas:**

**His uncle (Anas bin An-Nadr) encountered the day of Uhud battle. The Muslims fled and he said, "O Allah! I appeal to You to excuse me for what these people (i.e. the Muslims) have done, and I am clear from what the pagans have done." Then he went forward with his sword and met Sad bin Mu'adh (fleeing), and asked him, "Where are you going, O Sad? I detect a smell of Paradise before Uhud." Then he proceeded on and was martyred. Nobody was able to recognize him till his sister recognized him by a mole on his body or by the tips of his fingers. He had over 80 wounds Caused by stabbing, striking or shooting with arrows. (Bukhari)**

This is why the protection of our beloved Prophet (saw) was so vital. If his death had not been announced then all these problems wouldn't have occur. There were however the twelve loyal fighters who stuck by him (saw) even if they got martyred doing so. They included Abu Bakr, Umar b Al-Khattab, Ali b Abi Talib and others. At one point though, there were only two or three Emigrants by his side. The following are some examples:

**Narrated by Anas: On the day of the battle of Uhud, the people ran away, leaving the Prophet , but Abu Talha was shielding the Prophet with his shield in front of him. Abu Talha was a strong, experienced archer who used to keep his arrow bow strong and well stretched. On that day he broke two or three arrow bows. If any man passed by carrying a quiver full of arrows, the Prophet would say to him, "Empty it in front of Abu Talha." When the Prophet started looking at the enemy by raising his head, Abu Talha said, "O Allah's Prophet! Let my parents be sacrificed for your sake! Please don't raise your head and make it visible, lest an arrow of the enemy should hit you. Let my neck and chest be wounded instead of yours." (Bukhari)**

**In a version of Abu Uthman (ra), he said: "At that time there were none with the Messenger of Allah (saw) except Talha b Ubaidallah and Sa'ad b Abi Waqas. (Bukhari)**

It is also stated that Abu Dujana stood as a human shield for the Prophet (saw) to protect him from the polytheists and he took the arrows upon his back.

The next two lessons represent this whole entire battle. They are two great lessons and the main reasons for why the Muslims did not gain full victory in this battle. They are two rules that represent Islam and Jihad both.

The first being, whatever happens, the fighter must NEVER disobey the orders given from their head or leader. Disobedience of the prudent discerning leader, leads to loss in battle. The archers on top of the mountain did this exactly. Rasool'Allah (saw) gave firm, clear orders as to what the archers were supposed to do, in this following hadeeth:

**Narrated Al Bara bin Azib: The Prophet appointed 'Abdullah bin Jubair as the commander of the infantry men (archers) who were fifty on the day (of the battle) of Uhud. He instructed them, "Stick to your place, and don't leave it even if you see birds snatching us, till I send for you; and if you see that we have defeated the infidels and made them flee, even then you should not leave your place till I send for you....."**

Even with this clear order, when the pagans were defeated and their women were fleeing most of the archers decided to move from there places and celebrate their victory. Even though their commander tried to stop them, they did not listen. The hadeeth continues:

**'Then the infidels were defeated. By Allah, I saw the women fleeing lifting up their clothes revealing their leg-bangles and their legs. So, the companions of 'Abdullah bin Jubair said, ".....Your companions have become victorious, what are you waiting for now?" 'Abdullah bin Jubair said, "Have you forgotten what Allah's Apostle said to you?" They replied, "By Allah! We will go to the people (i.e. the enemy) and collect our share from the war booty." But when they went to them, they were forced to turn back defeated. At that time Allah's Apostle in their rear was calling them back. Only twelve men remained with the Prophet and the infidels martyred seventy men from us.'** (Bukhari)

As they did this, Allah was testing them. Khalid b Walid saw them move and along with his men, he attacked from the side, killing a large amount of Muslims and making some of them flee for their lives not paying any attention to the Prophet (saw) who was calling them back. This is when the Makkans started claiming victory of the battle. To this event Allah (azw) sent down the following verses:

**Allah verily made good His promise unto you when ye routed them by His leave, until (the moment) when your courage failed you, and ye disagreed about the order and ye disobeyed, after He had shown you that for which ye long. Some of you desired the world, and some of you desired the Hereafter. Therefore He made you flee from them, that He might try you. Yet now He hath forgiven you. Allah is a Lord of Kindness to believers. (3:152)**

**When ye climbed (the hill) and paid no heed to anyone, while the Messenger, in your rear, was calling you (to fight). Therefore He rewarded you grief for (his) grief, that (He might teach) you not to sorrow either for that which ye missed or for that which befell you. Allah is Informed of what ye do. (3:153)**

Had the archers stayed in their places, as the Messenger of Allah (saw) ordered them, the polytheists would not have had the opportunity to circle around and turn their defeat into victory at the end of the battle. We know that when Allah gave them victory it was a blessing but when he gave them defeat it was a test. Always disobedience leads to lost chances and victory for the enemy. Allah has warned the

believers of the punishment which awaits them should they disobey their Messenger. Allah (swt) said:

**Make not the calling of the messenger among you as your calling one of another. Allah knoweth those of you who steal away, hiding themselves. And let those who conspire to evade orders beware lest grief or painful punishment befall them. (24:63)**

The second rule is to never be greedy. Materialism and greed in booty and any other situation leads to failure and defeat. The only reason the archers left their posts at the battle was because they so all that booty lying in the open waiting for them. This same thing happened in Hunain when the Muslims won at the beginning. Some of the Muslims, overcome by greed, stopped pursuing the enemy which was their sole purpose of coming to Uhud. The success of the Muslims depends on the obedience of the Prophet (saw). As long as they carry out his commands, Allah will help them in facing all kinds of odds. But when they will set aside his commands in their pursuit for worldly riches, they are bound to come to grief. Another relevant issue of great significance says that it is customary for Prophets to be tried with different adversities; nevertheless, the final outcome is positively in their favor. As Allah says:

**Did ye think that ye would enter heaven without Allah testing those of you who fought hard (in His cause) and remained steadfast? (3:142)**

**And slacken not in following up the enemy: if ye are suffering hardships they are suffering similar hardships; but ye have hope from Allah while they have none. And Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom. (4:104)**

After discussing all the lessons and insights of the Battle of Uhud, there is one final lesson. That is the lesson of patience (sabr) for the lost lives of the loved ones. It was the greatest test for the Muslims at the end of the battle to find out about the martyrs. Some were strong and others grieved. Fathers, brothers, uncles, husbands and grandfathers were all lost. Even the Prophet (saw) grieved over the body of his uncle Hamza (ra), who had been one of the greatest martyrs of all time. His body had been badly mutilated by Hind bint Utbah. Seeing his body made the Prophet curse the Makkans, "Never have I felt more anger than I feel now," he said, "and when next Allah gives me a victory, over Quraish I will mutilate thirty of their dead." But soon after this came a revelation from Allah, saying:

**"If ye punish, then punish with the like of that wherewith ye were afflicted. But if ye endure patiently, verily it is better for the patient. Endure thou patiently (O Muhammad). Thine endurance is only by (the help of) Allah. Grieve not for them, and be not in distress because of that which they devise." (16:126-127)**

Most of the families of the martyrs were extremely patient for they knew that the martyrs were promised paradise, and as long as their Prophet (saw) was safe, they were content with Allah's wishes. They knew that if death had to come upon those fighters it would have come even if they were sitting in their homes. This was in contradiction to what the hypocrites said, like the following verses indicate:

**(They are) the ones that say (of their brethren slain) while they themselves sit (at ease): "If only they had listened to us they would not have been slain." Say:**

**"Avert death from your own selves if ye speak the truth." Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. Nay they live finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord. They rejoice in the bounty provided by Allah: and with regard to those left behind who have not yet joined them (in their bliss) the (martyrs) glory in the fact that on them is no fear nor have they (cause to) grieve. (3:168-170)**

In conclusion the end of the Battle was in fact glorious and victorious. For the Muslims had been successful in protecting the Prophet (saw) and they knew they had the advantage over the kuffar when it came to Allah (swt). For the killed Muslims would be promised Jannah and the kuffar would be promised the fire of Jahannum. They had learned from their mistakes and they now knew not to make the same mistakes again. They helped condole each other and helped the burial of the bodies in right there on the grounds of Uhud. When Allah (swt) sent down the verses of allowing four wives, it was indeed for the purpose of helping those who lost their heads of the families and their mehrams. It helped a lot of the widowed women who got support for themselves along with their orphan children by being married to the men of Madinah.

Allah is Truly Ar-Rehman and Ar-Rahim

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