

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ ٱللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَاءَتْكُمْ جُنُودٌ  
فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا وَجُنُودًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا وَكَانَ ٱللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرًا



*Al-Ahzab (The Confederates) 33:9*

**O You Who Believe!**

- Remember the Grace of Allah, (bestowed) on you.
- When there came down on you hosts (to overwhelm you).
- But We sent against them a hurricane and forces that you did not see.
- But Allah sees (clearly) all that you do.

**Commentary**

Allamah Taba Tabai (AR)

The incidence of the Battle of the trench, Bani Qureiza and the reason for it: *The protection of the oath and breaking it.*

God said, " *O you who believe! Remember the bounty of God to you when the hosts came upon you.*"

The believers are being reminded about the days of the Trench when they were helped (by God) and the hosts of the idolaters were stopped, even though they were a confederacy of many tribes like Ghatfan, Quraysh, Ahabesh, Kanana and the Jewish tribes of Bani Qureiza and Naseer who had surrounded them from above and below. So God sent a wind upon them and sent the angels to humiliate them.

God said, " *O you who believe! Remember the bounty of God to you.*"

The term "iz" denotes the side to which the bounty was given.

When the hosts came upon you or when each of the tribes of Ghatfan and Quraysh and others attacked you, *we sent*, this speaks about the bounty of the helping hosts. *the wind* speaks of the icy winds that blow in cold and dark wintry nights. *The invisible helpers* means the angels who had come to humiliate the idolaters.

### **A Discussion on Hadith**

Majmaul Bayan records that Muhammad bin Ka'b Alqarty and other commentators have said that it is about the Battle of the Trench. Some people from among the Jews including Salam bin Abil Haqiq and Hai bin Akhtab were with Bani Nazeer. The entire group came to Makkah to the Quraysh and invited them to fight against the Messenger of Islam. They said, *We are with you and against him till such time that we completely destroy or kill him.* The Quraysh replied, " O Jews You are first the people of the book (so tell us), is our religion better or Mohammad's?" The Jews replied, " Your religion is better than his. You are closer to the truth." It is about these people that God revealed the verse.

The Quraysh were very elated on hearing this (from the Jews) and expressed their agreement to their proposal. The Jews gathered together and went out to meet the tribe of Bani Ghatfan to invite them to this war. They apprised them of their own alliance and also that of the Quraysh. The Quraysh came out led by their leader Abu Sufyan bin Harb, and Ghatfan were lead by their leader Ai'nia bin Hasin bin Hazaifa bin Badr. The Bani Mara were led by Haris bin Auf and Musar bin Jalah Alashjai' with their brave friends. and they wrote to Bani Asad's Taliha with whom their were friends. The Quraysh wrote to the tribe of Bani Saleem and Abu Aour Salma and his friends came out to help.

After hearing all these details the messenger on the advice of Salman Farsi had trenches dug around the city of Madina. This was the first battle in which Salman Farsi had joined the messenger and he was a free man on that day. Salman Farsi said, " O Messenger of God in Faras (Iran) whenever we were surrounded we used to dig trenches." The Messenger accepted his advice and asked his followers to do so.

The proof of the Messenger's Prophet hood became apparent by digging the trenches and Abu Abdallah Alhafiz has quoted Kathir bin Abdallah bin Umar bin Auf Almazini who says, *My father has quoted his father who said,*

The Messenger selected ten persons to dig the trench of forty lengths that were marked. Salman Farsi was a powerfully built person and this led to a dispute between the Muhajirs and Ansars. Ansars said Salman was one of them and the Muhajirs claimed likewise. The messenger then said,

Salman belongs to us Ahlulbayt.

Umru bin Auf has narrated,

I, with Salman Farsi, Huzaifa bin Yaman, Nu'man bin Maqraf with ten persons from the Ansars, had to dig forty lengths of the Trench. During the process we reached a spot where God had placed a round white boulder and broke our instruments. We were in a spot of bother so we asked Salman Farsi to inform the Messenger about this stone because it was easy for us to return if we so decided but if the Messenger orders otherwise then we cannot disobey.

So Salman presented himself to the Messenger when he was sitting below the canopy. He said,

O Messenger of God, a white stone has come out in the trench (and has broken our instrument striking it) making it very difficult for us. Please advise us about it.

The Messenger came and went down into the trench. He struck the stone with a spade. A light came out that lit the entire neighborhood. It seemed that lamps had been lit in the night. The Messenger raised his voice in exultation and then the Muslims too chanted *Allahu Akbar*.

The Messenger struck it a second time and again the light lit up; he then struck it a third time and once again the light shone forth. Salman asked him, *may my parents be sacrificed upon you O Messenger, what is that I behold?* The Messenger answered,

- When it shone the first time it was God revealing to me the victory at Yemen.
- The second time I was told about the victory granted to me on Syria and north western Africa (Maghrib) .
- And the third time my Lord gave me the victory over the east.

So go and inform the Muslims about it.

The Muslims on hearing exclaimed, " God's promise is always true!" When the confederates were seen the believers said, " This is what the Messenger has promised about. God and his Messenger have declared very truly." The hypocrites retorted, *What are you exclaiming surprise about? You are being told untruths. You are being informed that the Messenger in Yathrib is looking at the palaces of Iesra at Khiza and Qasur conquered by you while you are just digging the trenches? You do not have the power to prove it to be right or make it happen!*

In the same way, Abdullah Hafiz on the authority of Abdulwahid bin Aiman alMakhzumi has narrated those signs of prophet hood that were manifest in those days. He said, " I have heard from Jabir bin Abdullah when he said: On the day of the Trench we were busy digging, we found a cove like a mountain, I asked the messenger " O Messenger of God we have this problem!" He answered, " sprinkle water on it."

The Messenger stood up even though he had tied a slab on his stomach because of hunger. He took the spade and thrice he struck in the name of God and it was shattered to pieces. I asked him, " Please allow me to go home", which he kindly accepted. I came to the house and asked my wife if she had anything to eat and she said she had three kilos of grain and a lamb. She grinded and kneaded the grain for bread and I slaughtered the lamb and handed the meat over to her. I returned to the Messenger, sat there for an hour and then again took my leave.

The food was ready when I returned to the house so I returned to the Messenger and invited him home with two of his companions for the food was ready. He asked about the quantity and answered truthfully. He then invited all the Muslims to come to my house and then came but I felt very embarrassed (as God well knows) because the food was made out of just three kilos of grain and a lamb and the Messenger was bringing all the Muslims to eat it. I came back to my wife and said that today I would be very insulted because the Messenger was bringing all the people. My wife said,

*Did the Messenger ask you about the quantity of the food that is prepared? I told her yes he did and my wife then said, The Messenger knows best that you have truthfully told him what was prepared. Jabir said that he was relieved after hearing this. When the messenger arrived he asked for the meat and then rented them into pieces and started distributing the pieces among the people and every one ate fully sated. He then came back to the utensil of meat and saw that it was as if nothing had been taken out of it. He then said, " Eat and take as much as you can" so they ate and I gave them takeaways. Bukhari has narrated this tradition. in his Sahih.*

After the trench was made the Quraysh reached Jaraf and the adjoining desert with ten thousands Ethiopians and their confederates Bani Kanana and the Tribe of Thama together with the Gatifan from Najd. The Messenger started forth with three thousand Muslims who made Maslah their rearguard and the Messenger camped at the place. The trench was now between the two forces.

In the meantime the enemy of God Hai bin Akhtab al Naseeri met with the lead of Bani Nazeer Ka'b bin Asaralfarti who had already made an agreement with the Messenger. So when he heard the voice of Hai bin Akhtab he closed the gates of his fortress. Hai asked to be let in but Ka'b refused so he said, " O Ka'b open the gates!" Ka'b shouted back, " God's curse be upon you wretched one, I have already made an agreement with Muhammad that I do not want to break. I have not seen anything in him(Muhammad) but loyalty and truth." Hai pleaded " May you be cursed, at least open the gate I want to speak to you." Ka'b said, " I cannot do so". so Hai retorted, " It is okay if you have kept it closed for others also or else you do not want to even dine with me?" Ka'b opened the gates and Hai on entering said," Curse be on you. I have brought the respect for the time for you, for I have brought the leaders of Quraysh and Ghatfan to you and they have made a pact with me that they will not rest till they have killed Muhammad and his companions ."

Ka'b said, " Let uohammad and me alone as we are for I have not seen anything in him but loyalty and truth." But Hai too remain adamant on his stand and he convinced him that if he returned the people of Ghatfan and Qurasyh and join together in the same fortress then the will share all inequalities that may befall them.

So Ka'b broke his covenant with the Messenger and thus became free. On hearing what had conspired the Messenger sent Sa'ad bin Ma'az bin Nu'man bin Amirial Qais, Abdullah al Ashal the leader of the tribe of Aus, Sa'ad bin I'bada bin Sa'da bin Ka'b bin khazrarj the leader of khazraj, together with Abdullah bin Rawah and Khulat bin Jubair to ascertain the truth o the news. If the news is true then they should shout a prearranged dialogue so that I will know but keep it a secret from the people, but if they are still loyal then they should announce it to their friends. These people went there and found the rumor to be true, for ka'b and his friends said, " there is no pact between us and Muhammad!" So these people returned and informed the Messenger that those people had reneged . The messenger said, " God has tested us! O Muslims there is great tidings for you. There will be a great trial for you!"

Fear became all prevalent and the enemy came from above and below them. The Muslims started speculating and there was a dispute between some hypocrites. The Messenger and the idolaters camped there for twenty days or more, but there was no fight between them excepting for some spearing. The prime warriors of the Quraysh, Umr bin Abdu, bin Amir bin Lavi, Akramah bin Abu Jahal, Zarar bin Khatab, Habir bin Abi Wahab, and Nofal bin Abdullah were busy fighting and while they crossed the houses of the Bani Kanana they said, *O sons of Kanana prepare for Battle. You will know today who is the best cavalry man, they kept on till the reached the trench and then halted.*

On seeing the trench they said, ' By God this is a deception that does not befool us and they entered the trench from it narrowest point.

In the meantime Ali bin Abi Talib came out to face the enemy led by Umr bin Abd who had also fought at Badr but came out again to meet his fate on the day of the trench.

He was considered to be equal to a thousand cavalry men and was called *faras Belel*, because once he was riding with the Quraysh and when they reached Belel, which is a valley close to Badr . On that day Bani Bakar stood against the Quraysh and barred their path. It was on this day that he became famous as Faras Belel. Ibn Ishaq has narrated that Umr ibn Abd was proclaiming in a loud voice, *Who is there who will come out to fight me?* Hazrat Ali was wearing an Armour, and he requested the Messenger, *O my Prophet I am willing to fight him.* The messenger waived his hand in dismissal and said, *This is Umr! Please sit down.*

Umr shouted again, *is there any one who will come out to fight me?*, and he was shouting at regular intervals *Where is your Paradise that you fancy. The one who is killed among you enters it?*

Again Hazrat Ali stood up and said, *O My Prophet, I am suffice for him.*

The Third time Umr shouted, *I am tired of calling out to you. Why doesn't some one come out to fight me? I stand here. Bravery and valor is only in me!*

Hazrat Ali stood up again and asked, *O Messenger of Allah I am enough for him.* The Messenger said, *This is Umr.* Hazrat Ali humbly said, *Even if he is Umr* and asked for the permission to fight and this time the messenger gave the permission he was pleading for.

Hazrat Ali came out declaring, Do not be hasty verily I come towards you and I am not helpless in answering your challenge. I am a person of great will power and determination and I am farsighted. Truth is the cause of the emancipation of every successful person. I wish desire to fight (you).

Umr asked him, " Who are you?' He answered, " I am Ali". Umr then asked, " Son of Abd Manaf?" Hazrat Ali said, " I am Ali ibn Abi Talib bin Abdul Muttalib bin Hashim bin Abd Manaf. Umr then said, " O my brother's son where are your paternal uncles who are elder than you because I do not want to shed your blood?"

Hazrat Ali retorted, " But By God I do not feel it wrong to shed your blood."

Umr got down from his steed in anger and raised his sword, which shone like a flame. He strode menacingly towards Hazrat Ali who readied his sword too. Umr attacked and his sword grazed Hazrat Ali's head. Hazrat Ali then struck and was successful for Umr fell down on the ground.

The narration is the same in Huzaifa's version that Hazrat Ali struck Umr's legs with his sword and he fell down on his back. Then, there started a fierce fight between them and then Hazrat Ali was heard proclaiming *Allahu Akbar*. The Messenger on hearing it said, *By the Great entity that holds my life in his divine control (Ali) has slain him*. Then Umar bin Khattab raised his voice and said *O Messenger of God! Ali has beheaded Umr!* Hazrat Ali later presented himself to the Messenger his face radiant with joy.

Huzaifa narrates, the Messenger then said, *O Ali, be enlightened that if your deed today is weighed against the deeds of the entire Ummah then your deed will be heavier*. This was because there was not a single house of the idolaters where they did not mourn the death of Umr and there was not a single house of the Muslim that had not gained respect from this death.

Sufian Suri, quoting Zaid Thani, Marah, and Abdullah Ibn Masud that he used to recite have narrated a similar hadith,

The Lord through Ali has saved the Mumins from fighting.

His companions crossed the trench with their horses and they went quickly when they saw Nufil bin Abdullah Ala'zi in it and they started stoning him. The Muslims were told to enter the trench and kill him. Zubair bin Alawam did kill him. Ibn Ishaq narrates,

Hazrat Ali speared him through his collarbone and he died in the trench.

The idolaters sent a considerable sum of money to the Messenger so that they could take back their dead, but he refused and said, *they are yours. We do not take money for the dead*, and Hazrat Ali recited a few verses.

Ibn Ishaq narrates that he was killed by the 4 arrows of Hanan bin Qais bin alArfa Saeed bin Ma'z who said, " I am Ibn al Arfa and cut his eyebrows." Sa'd said, *The Lord of the Universe put your face in Hell. Lord, if you protect me from the war with Quraysh then save me, for, to me there is no other nation more deserving that I battle with than the one that denied your Messenger and exiled him. If you have decided a war between us and them then make it the cause of my martyrdom but do not give me death till my eyes are happy seeing their destruction*.

The narrator says, Naim bin Masud Ashjai came to the Messenger and said, " O Messenger of God I have accepted Islam but no one in my tribe knows about it so what do you order me to do?" The Messenger answered, " You are the sole and unique one so do what you can do for us. War is nothing but strategy and deception."

Naim bin Masud came to the tribe of Bani Qureiza and said to them, *I am your friend but By God you and your allies the Quraysh are not equals of Muhammad. Indeed your city is yours and contains your wealth, wives and children and the Quraysh and Ghatfan have their own cities. They have come here and joined you till they find it suitable and will return to their cities if they find it unsuitable, leaving you at the mercy of a person whom you do not have the power to face. Do not go to war until you have some of their notable person as ransom and you will not be regarded successful until you have killed Muhammad.* They agreed that he has given them sound advice.

Naim then went to Abu Sufian and the notables of the Quraysh and said to them, *O people of Quraysh you know the reason for my coming here and also the opinion I hold about Muhammad. I have come to advise you about it. But keep my visit a secret.*

They agreed that they will do as he wants. He said,

*You know the Bani Qureiza are embarrassed about what has transpired between them and Muhammad. You send them a message telling them that they will not be happy until we send some of our notables to them as ransom to be killed in case of contravention. We will then join you and fight the enemy till we oust them from your city. It will be better that you refuse if they ask you to ransom your elders.*

Naim then went to the tribe of Ghatfan and said, " O people of Ghatfan I am your man" and then told them what he had told the Quraysh. The next day (the first Saturday of the month of Shawwal) Abu Sufyan sent Akramah bin Abu Jahal with a declaration with the message, " Indeed Abu Sufyan tells you, O Jew, Karah and Rakhaf have been killed and we do not have a place to reside in so let us go to Muhammad so that we exterminate him." The Jews replied " Today is Saturday and we do no work today and despite being your ally we cannot fight to help you. You send some of your reliable men to us as ransom till the time we are rid of Muhammad."

Abu Sufyan said, " By God Abu Naim has scared us." He then sent a reply to them, " We will not give you a single person. You may fight him (Muhammad) and oust him or avoid war." The Jews then said, " By God this is what Naim had told us." And they sent back a message " Until you give some person as ransom we will not fight together with you."

God shamed them by sending a blizzard on them in the cold nights and they retreated.

Muhammad bin Ka'b narrates that Huzaifa bin Al Iman has narrated, " The hardships, hunger and fear that we experienced on the day of the Trench is known only to God. During this period we saw the Messenger pray and after which he said," Whoever gives me news about them (the enemy), God will befriend him in Paradise." Huzaifa says, " By God due to fear and hunger none from us volunteered but when I saw this I volunteered by saying, "Yes I volunteer". The Messenger said, " Go and bring me the news about this confederacy and do not do anything else until you return."

Huzaifa says, " After I had reached them God sent down a blizzard that created chaos among the troops. None of the tents remained standing, all fires had died, and the food vats were scattered but I remained still. Then came Abu Sufyan on his steed and said, " O Quraysh, each one of you keep an eye on another close to you. One person appeared close to me and I asked him, " Who are you ?" He said he was so-and so and Abu Sufyan came back on his mount and said, " O people of Quraysh, By God you have no shelter left, your infantry and cavalry are dead. The Banu Qureiza and this blizzard has created havoc among us and left us with nothing." He quickly remounted his ride.

I said to myself, had I shot arrows at this enemy of God and killed I would have done something good. So I paced my arrow and was about to shoot when I remembered what the Holy Messenger had told me; that I should do nothing more until I came back. So I desisted and returned to the Messenger who was praying, but when he sensed me close by he made space between his legs and I went closer. He asked me for my report after he finished his prayers and I told him all I knew.

And Sulaiman Sard narrates something similar that the Messenger after knowing the details about the confederates said, *Now we will fight them but they cannot fight us.*

And this was proven true. The Quraysh did not fight him afterwards but he fought them till such time that God granted him the victory at Makkah.

*The Compiler says*

Tabari in Majmaul Bayan has recorded this incident and we have mentioned it in short. Qummi in his commentary has mentioned something close, while Durre Manthur has mentioned various hadiths about this event.

In Majmaul Bayan Zuhri has narrated on the authority of Abdul Rahman bin Ka'b who quotes his father who says, " When the Messenger left the Trench his hardships too left him and he had a bath. Jibril appeared and said to him, " God has removed the pain of war from you."

On hearing this the Messenger loudly said the Takbir and told his men not to say the Asr prayer until the tribe of Qureiza appeared. The people were not armed but the Bani Qureiza did not come till sunset.

The people started fighting amongst themselves, and some said that the Messenger had desired that we should not say the Asr prayer until we meet the Bani Qureiza so we stand on his order and this is no sin. Some of them said their prayer while others didn't. The sun set and when the Bani Qureiza arrived they said their prayers. The Messenger was not severe on either of the groups.

Urwa narrates that the Messenger gave the flag to Hazrat Ali and sent him to the forefront to go to the fortress of Bani Qureiza and he did. The Messenger passed the Bani Ghalam Ansars who were waiting for him. They thought that he told them that a thousand horsemen passed them by so they said only Wahab Kalbi passed us riding his mule. The Messenger then told them that it was not Wahab Kalbi but Jibril who has been sent to scare the Bani Qureiza.

They said when Hazrat passed their fortress he heard them speak ill of the Messenger so he returned to him and said, " O Messenger of God, this cannot be for you cannot be one of them." The Messenger said, " I assume that you have heard them speak something painful about me." Hazrat Ali said, " Yes O Messenger of God, this is correct, but if they had seen me they would not have spoken in this manner."

When the Messenger reached their fortress he addressed them in these words, " O Monkeys and brothers of pigs, did God send his punishment upon you?" They answered,

" O Abul Qasim you are not unaware." The Messenger then laid siege to their fortress for 25 nights till such time that he put untold hardships on them and God put a fear that overawed them.

Haiy bin Akhtab had entered the fortress of the Bani Qureiza after the return of the tribes of Ghatfan and Quraysh. When they realized that the Messenger would not leave till he had destroyed them Ka'b bin Asad said, " O Jews you now observe that which has been imposed on you. I am giving you three options and you can choose anyone of them.

*That we should swear allegiance to him (the Messenger) and admit that this is the Prophet that was to come. It is mentioned that you find in your books so now you should think of your wives and children and your belief.*

They said, " we cannot renege from the Torah nor can we exchange it.' He then said, " Now that you deny allegiance, then come let us kill our wives and children and then raise our swords, for we will be free of any anxiety and responsibility and fight Muhammad till God decides between us. If we are killed we will not die worrying about them and we are victorious then we will get new wives and children."

They said, " Should we then kill our innocent children for there will be no joy left in a life without them?" He said, " Well if you don't want to do this also then today is the eve of Saturday and Muhammad and his friends will be content (about us) and we will be able to beguile them." They said, " Should we create mischief? We will then be blamed for what has taken place before us and the result of those aberrations are known to you." He then said, " None of you whom his mother has given birth to has spent a single night of such a calm."

Zuhri says that when they asked the Messenger to appoint someone as a ruler among them he said, " You may take any one of my companions." They chose Sa'ad bin Ma'az and the Messenger was pleased about it. They objected to the ruling of Sa'ad bin Ma'az, so the Messenger asked his people to arm themselves. The Messenger then chose the meeting under his own canopy and the house of Usama.

The Messenger called Sa'ad and told him that all those who had fought against him and Islam will be killed and their children and women will be enslaved; their wealth would be distributed as war booty but their land will be given only to the Muhajirs since the Ansars were already landowners. The Messenger loudly said the Takbir and said to Sa'ad, " You have promulgated God's commandment amongst them." Some have narrated that he said, " You have surely considered the world and the heavens when you pronounced your judgment."

So the Messenger had all those who fought against him killed and they were according to some 600 people, some say 450 while others say 750 persons.

They asked Ka'b bin Asad as they were being taken to the Messenger, " O Ka'ab tell us how will we be treated?" Ka'b answered, " Did you not say at every stage. Don't you see he who invites will not be separated and those who leave from amongst you will not be called back?" You will be slain. When the enemy of God Yahya bin Akhtab was brought he was wounded all over and when he saw the Messenger he said, " By God I do not censure my soul for being against you but the person whom God insults stays insulted." He then addressed the people; " O People There is nothing wrong in God and His book nor in his supremacy and power that was endowed on the Bain Israel." He then knelt down and his head was severed. The Messenger then distributed their women, children and their wealth amongst the Muslims. The prisoners left were sent with Sa'ad bin Zaid Ansari to Najd to be sold and exchanged for weapons.

It is said that after the Bain Querieza had been shamed, Sa'ad bin Ma'az wounds started bleeding and the Messenger returned him to his own tent, which was pitched in the mosque's premises. Jabir bin Abdullah narrates that Jibril came to the Messenger and said, " Who is this pious person on whose death the doors of heavens have been flung open while the Rash trembles?" The Messenger came to the tent after the soul of Sa'ad bin Ma'az had been taken.

*Compiler's words*

Qummi has dealt with this incident in details in his commentary that says, ' When Ka'ab bin Asad raised his hands towards his neck, the Messenger saw him and said, " O Ka'ab Did you benefit from the advice of the wise man who came to you from Syria?"

He answered, *I have given up imbibing wine and have come towards the man of dates (The Messenger) who was ordained at Makkah and he would migrate from Bahira. He who will be content with dates, who will ride the mule without saddle, whose eyes will be red and between his shoulders will be the seal of his Prophet hood, he will rise his sword on his shoulders and whoever among you brothers meets him will not bother. He will rule over the infantry and the cavalry.*

He continued, " O Mohammad! This will surely happen. Had the Jews not censured me I would have wailed at the time of being slain, believed in you and would have stood witness but I want to die on the religion of the Bani Israel." The Messenger then said, " Take him away and slay him", so he was killed.

It is written in the commentary of Qummi that the Messenger fought with them for three days and night at a placed called Bardin and said, " Give them the best food and water and be kind to the prisoners", till they were all killed. It is these people for whom God has revealed this verse, "And He drove down those of the followers of the Book who backed them from their fortresses and He cast awe into their hearts; some you killed and you took captive another part. And He made you heirs to their land and their dwellings and their property, and (to) a land which you have not yet trodden, and Allah has power over all things.

Abul Qasim AlHaskani has quoted, Umar bin Thabit, who has quoted Abu Ishaq that Hazrat Ali said the verse,

*Those men who fulfilled their covenant with God, has been reveled about us. By God we are those who wait but never changed anything.*

### Mir Ahmed Ali (AR) and Aqa Mahdi Puya (AR)

Verses 20, 22 and 23 and this verse refer to the battle of Khandaq. The surah Al Ahzab takes its name from the army of the allied clans which came against the Muslims in the 5th year of the Hijrah. The pagans of Makkah, the Jews and bedouin Arabs entered into an unholy alliance came with a force of 10,000 men and besieged the Muslim community in Madina. This battle has been described in detail in the commentary of Baqarah: 214 and 251.

A trench (khandaq) was dug round Madina, as advised by Salman, by the order of the Holy Prophet. When Ali ibn abi Talib killed Amr bin Abdwud in single combat the whole army of 10,000 men went back to Makka without further fighting. This type of unique retreat after the defeat of one warrior never happened in the history except in the time of Prophet Dawud when he killed Jalut. Ali's triumph became so decisive that the pagans of Makka or their allies never made any attempt thereafter to attack Muslims in Madina.

It is reported that at the time of digging the trench a stone in the earth was found which neither could be removed nor broken. The people went to the Holy Prophet to seek his help. He came and struck it thrice with an axe, each time a flashing spark sparkled from the stone and people saw the glimpses of Syria, Madina and Yeman, one after another. The stone was broken. The Holy Prophet told them Allah would grant the Muslims victories over those towns.

The weak in faith and the hypocrites, who were expecting certain end of the Holy Prophet, openly accused him of telling morale boasting lies to keep the people in delusion. There was no food in the city. Jabir bin Abdullah had a lamb and a little quantity of corn. The Holy Prophet asked him to prepare whatever food he could from those provisions. The people were invited to eat the prepared food in batches of ten. They all came as advised and ate to their full satisfaction, yet the quantity remained as it was. During the nearly 3 weeks blockade the hypocrites left no stone unturned to demoralise the people through rumours and to convince them that the best course was to go to their homes and save themselves from utter annihilation.

The enemy was struck dumb with astonishment because this mode of defence was not known to the Arabs, and they were at a loss to understand how to overcome the difficulty. At length a select party of the besiegers' horsemen found out a narrow part of the ditch which was not guarded. Amr bin Abdwud, Nawafal bin Abdullah, Darar bin Khattab and Ikrima bin Abu Jahl succeeded in leaping over the trench. Amr, reining forward towards the Muslims, challenged them to single combat. What followed after this challenge has been mentioned in the commentary of al Baqarah : 214 and 251.

When Ali and Amr stood face to face Amr said to Ali:

By God, I do not like to put you to death because your father was my friend, and I enjoyed many a feast at his dinner table.

Ali replied:

There could be no friendship between belief and disbelief, so by Allah, I am here to kill you.

Amr was described by the Holy Prophet as the personification of infidelity, nevertheless even such a person had a moral sense to give respect and have consideration for the son of the man who treated him well. But the so-called followers of the Holy Prophet, who not only guided them to the right path but also took them out from the darkness of ignorance and depths of degradation to the light of civilisation, harassed, persecuted and killed his children in Karbala. And after Karbala till his last son and inheritor Imam Mahdi al Qa-im was taken up by Allah, as Isa was taken up to heaven, to make him invisible.

The Holy Prophet said:

It is a struggle between faith and infidelity, the embodiment of faith shall crush the entirety of infidelity.

At last the voice of Ali, pronouncing Allahu Akbar, was heard, which was a signal of his victory. The divine decree (There is no god save Allah; Muhammad is the messenger of Allah and Ali is his supporter) which the Holy Prophet saw inscribed in letters of celestial light on heavens in the night of mi-raj (see commentary of Bani Israil: 1) was found by him fulfilled on every such occasion.

Beholding the fate of their renowned champion, his comrades in the enterprise rushed back to escape, spurred their horses and crossed the ditch except Nawfal who fell in the ditch.

The Holy Prophet said:

The victory of Ali on the day of the ditch is much more in worth than the devotional worship performed by the created beings of both the worlds (seen and unseen) till the day of judgement.

Then there was a piercing blast of the cold east wind, the enemy's tents were torn up, their fires were extinguished, the sand and rain beat in their faces, and they were terrified by the signs against them.

All the above noted events and those mentioned in the commentary of al Baqarah: 214 and 251 are mentioned in Tarikh al Khamis; Madarij al Nabuwah; Mustadrak of Hakim, Firduws al Akhbar Rawdat al Ahbab; Izalatal Khifa and Habib al Siyar and the histories by Ibn Athir and Abul Fida.

Juwari-ah daughter of Harith Mustalaqa.

It is reported that Abu Bakr and Umar bin Khattab had expressed their displeasure to their daughters and reprimanded them for their unjustified demands and their insolent behaviour. Once Ali tried to put fear of Allah in their hearts but A-isha lost her temper and used harsh words to insult him. Then and there the Holy Prophet gave authority to Ali to divorce any of his wives on his behalf. See commentary of At Tahrir: 1 to 5.

Bukhari in his commentary of Tahrir in his Sahih records several traditions as related by Umar stating that the two women who were insolent and haughty towards the Holy Prophet were A-isha and Hafsa. It refers to her address to the Holy Prophet: "I smell maghafir (a kind of flower having a very bad odour) from you." She said this in order to prevent him from visiting the house of Zaynab and eating honey there.

When some malevolent persons falsely accused Mariyah mother of Ibrahim, A-isha supported the accusers and tried in vain to confirm the false blame, but Allah absolved them (the Prophet and Mariyah) and saved them from injustice through Imam Ali. Those who want to know the details of the unhappy incident should refer to the account of Mariyah in Hakim's Mustadrak, vol. 4, p. 30; or Dhahabi's Talkhis al Mustadrak.

Aqa Mahdi Puya says:

Due to the unbecoming, envious and avaricious behaviour of the wives referred to in verses 28 to 34 they have not been included in the clause of purification of Ahl ul Bayt in verse 33, in which the highest degree of purification has been bestowed only on the Ahl ul Bayt. This is the reason that in all these verses the wives of the Holy Prophet are referred to in personal plural pronoun in feminine gender, but in the clause of purification the pronoun is plural in masculine gender, just as in verse 73 of Hud.

In verse 5 of at Tahrir it is stated that the Holy Prophet had discretionary power to divorce any of his wife, and if he did so Allah would give him better women as his wives in place of the existing wives. When evident unbecoming misconduct has been proved against the wives, the element of rijs (pollution) is established, therefore as they could be divorced and no more be the Holy Prophet's wives, they were not included in the Ahl ul Bayt.

As the wives of the Holy Prophet they were expected not only to display refinement, decency and decorum but also imbibe moral and spiritual excellence in their character because of their close and constant association with the Holy Prophet; and if they did not, their punishment in the hereafter would be doubled (greater in degree), because as the wives of the Holy Prophet they should have been models of piety for other women. Refer to the commentary of Nur: 26.

To the good and obedient wives Allah will give double reward and a honourable sustenance.

It has been made clear to the wives of the Holy Prophet that mere association with him does not give them any privilege unless they obey the Holy Prophet and safeguard themselves against evil. Although they have been declared "the mothers of the believers", yet they are warned not to be too friendly lest some one is moved with desire. In this there is guidance for all women that they should keep all men at arm's length-not to give even a slight unconscious indication of possible complaisance.