

The Battle of Uhud

The battle of Uhud was a reprisal against the Muslims following the battle of Badr. Some of the leading members of Quraysh such as Abu Jahl, Utbah, Shaiba, Walid, Umayya bin Khalaf, and Hanzala bin Abu Sufyan, had been killed in the battle of Badr. After the death of Abu Jahl, leadership of the Makkans had passed on to his compeer, Abu Sufyan, who was the chief of the clan of Banu Umayya.

There was profound sorrow in Makkah at the loss of so many chiefs but Abu Sufyan had forbidden the bereaved families to cry and to lament their losses. Tears, he knew, could wash away malevolence from the hearts. But time and tears, he asserted, would not be allowed to heal the wounds received by the Makkan aristocracy at Badr. He himself had taken an oath that he would remain a stranger to every pleasure until he had paid the Muslims back in their own coin. He and the other leaders of the Quraysh spent a whole year of feverish activity in which they equipped and trained a new army.

One year after the battle of Badr, the new army of the idolaters of Makkah was ready to take the field against the Muslims. In March 625 Abu Sufyan left Makkah at the head of three thousand seasoned warriors. Most of them were foot soldiers but they were supported by a strong contingent of cavalry. Also accompanying the army, was a band of warlike women. Their duty was to wage “psychological warfare” against the Muslims by reading poetry and by singing amatory songs to spur the courage and the will-to-fight of the soldiers.

They knew that nothing held such terror for the Arabs as the jibes of women for cowardice, and they also knew that nothing was so efficacious to turn them into utterly reckless fighters as the promise of physical love. These amazons included the wives of Abu Sufyan and Amr bin Aas, and the sister of Khalid bin Walid.

D. S. Margoliouth

Abu Sufyan appears to have done his best, and, as a substitute for military music, caused or permitted the army to be followed by a company of ladies, who, by threatening and promising, were to keep the courage of the troops to its proper level; for nothing did the refugee from the battle-field dread more than the reproaches of his women-folk. The Kuraishite ladies did some certainly curious service.

The wife of Abu Sufyan made the suggestion that the body of Mohammed's mother should be exhumed and kept as hostage; but the Kuraish rejected this suggestion (of which the practicability was surely doubtful) for fear of reprisals. (*Mohammed and the Rise of Islam, 1931*)

As if the heavy overtones of sex introduced by the women of the Quraysh were not enough, Abu Sufyan invested his campaign with “religious sanctity” as well. To leave no doubt in anyone’s mind that he was engaged in a holy war against the Muslims, he placed Hubal, the idol that the clan of Banu Umayya worshipped as its supreme deity, on a camel, and carried it with him into the battle. Hubal's duty was to boost the morale of the idolaters by his presence in the battle-field.

Sex and religion were the two new components mobilized by the Quraysh in their war against Mohammed and Islam.

Betty Kelen

In one howdah rode Hubal, on holiday from the Kaaba. Abu Sufyan had well grasped that quite apart from considerations of revenge and caravan routes, he was engaged in a holy war. (*Muhammad, the Messenger of God, 1975*)

Muhammad Mustafa, the Prophet of Islam, also heard reports of the impending invasion of Medina by the Makkans, and he too ordered his followers to prepare themselves for defense. Seven hundred Muslims were ready to follow him into battle.

The prophet stationed his army with the mountain of Uhud in its rear so that it stood facing Medina. When the Makkan army came up, it took its position in front of the Muslims so that it was standing between them and Medina which was in its rear.

Sir William Muir

Abu Sufyan, as hereditary leader, brought up the Meccan army; and facing Ohod, marshaled it in front of Mohammed. The banner was borne by Talha son of Abd al Ozza. The right wing was commanded by Khalid; the left by Ikrima son of Abu Jahl. Amr bin Aas was over the Coreishite horse. (*The Life of Mohammed, 1877*)

Sir John Glubb

The Muslims advanced with 700 men against 3000 warriors from Mecca. Moreover, while the Muslims could muster only one hundred men with coats of chain-mail, and no horses, Quraish and their allies included 700 men in armor and 200 horsemen.

Wishing to cover their rear in view of their small numbers, the Muslims posted themselves at the foot of Mt. Ohad. Their right flank and rear were covered by the mountains, but their left flank lay in open ground and was thus exposed to a charge by the enemy cavalry. To guard against this, Mohammed

posted fifty archers on this flank, with orders on no account to leave their post, from which they could protect the Muslim left wing from the Quraish horse.

The Meccans drew up their line facing the Muslims in such a way that the latter, with their backs to Ohad, were facing Medina, while the Quraish line confronted them with Medina in its rear, thereby interposing between the Muslims and the town.

Quraish had brought a number of women with them, riding in camel-litters. These now, as the two lines drew towards one another, proceeded to rouse the enthusiasm of the Meccans, beating upon tambourines, reciting martial poetry and letting down their long hair. (*The Great Arab Conquests*)

The battle of Uhud began just as the battle of Badr had begun, with a Makkan warrior advancing from his lines and challenging the Muslims to single combat.

Sir William Muir

Flourishing the Coreishite banner, Talha, the standard-bearer of the Meccan army, advanced, and challenged the enemy to single combat. Ali stepped forth, and, rushing on him, with one blow of his sword brought him to the ground. Mohammed, who had intently watched the rapid combat, exclaimed, with a loud voice: Great is the Lord! and the cry, repeated, arose in an overwhelming shout from the whole Muslim army. (*Life of Mohammed, London, 1877*)

Muhammad Husayn Haykal

Talha ibn Abu Talha, carrier of the Meccan flag, sprang forward asking the Muslims to duel with him. Ali ibn Abi Talib advanced forth to fight with him. The encounter was soon over as Ali struck his enemy a single fatal stroke. Exalted, the Prophet and the Muslims yelled, "God is Great." (*The Life of Muhammad, 1935, Cairo*)

R.V.C. Bodley

The Meccans, generously assisted by the women who had brought their timbrels, flung insults at the Moslems. These were alternated by Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan, who led triumphant choruses as she danced round the idol which perched on the camel.

Talha, the hereditary standard-bearer of the Koreishites, was the first Meccan challenger. As he stepped out of Abu Sufyan's ranks, Ali stepped out of Mohammed's. The two men met in the middle of 'no man's land.' Without words or preliminary flourishes the duel began. Talha never stood a chance. Ali's scimitar flashed in the morning sun and the head of the standard-bearer leaped from his shoulder and rolled away on the sand.

'Allah-o-Akbar!' cried Mohammed. 'Allah-o-Akbar!' 'Allah-o-Akbar!' echoed from the eagerly watching Moslems. (*The Messenger, the Life of Mohammed, New York, 1946*)

Sir John Glubb

The two lines drew up opposite one another. Talha ibn Abdul Uzza, of Abdul Dar, burning with resentment at the taunts of Abu Sufyan, and bearing the standard of Quraish, stepped out before the line and challenged any Muslim to single combat. Ali ran forward and slew him with a single slash of his sword, the *Quraish standard falling to the ground*. From the Muslim line rose a great shout, Allah-o-Akbar, God is Most Great.” (*The Life and Times of Mohammed*)

This is one of the most dramatic scenes in the history of Islam. Muhammad, the Messenger of God, was watching his cousin, Ali, in action, and was thrilled by his swift victory. When the tremendous stroke of Ali's sword killed the pagan general, Muhammad shouted Allah-o-Akbar, and the battle-cry was taken up by the whole army of Islam.

Ali's irresistible stroke had caused the standard of the Makkans, the emblem of idolatry and polytheism, to fall into the dust. He had won the first round for Islam, and had dealt the death blow to the morale of the Quraysh.

When Ali returned to his lines, Talha's brother, Uthman ibn Abu Talha, made an attempt to retrieve the Makkan banner. But Hamza came out of the Muslim line, and killed him.

Muhammad Husayn Haykal

When Ali ibn Abu Talib killed the carrier of Makkan flag, Talhah ibn Abu Talha, it was immediately raised again by Uthman ibn Abu Talha. And when Uthman fell at the hands of Hamzah, it was raised again by Abu Sa'd ibn Abu Talhah. At the moment he raised the Makkan flag he shouted at the Muslims. “Do you pretend that your martyrs are in paradise and ours in hell? By God, you lie! If anyone of you truly believes such a story, let him come forward and fight with me.” His challenge attracted Ali who killed him on the spot. The Banu Abd al Dar kept on carrying the Makkan flag until they lost nine men. (*The Life of Muhammad*)

Ali, the young lion, alone had killed eight standard-bearers of the idolaters of Makkah.

Ibn Atheer, the Arab historian, writes in his *Tarikh Kamil* “The man who killed the standard-bearers (of the pagans) was Ali.” After the death of the ninth of his standard-bearers, Abu Sufyan ordered his army to advance and to attack the Muslim formations. When the Prophet noticed the enemy moving, he also alerted the Muslims. He held a sword in his hand, and offered it to anyone who would bring honor to it. Some hopefuls moved toward him to take it but he withheld it from them.

Muhammad ibn Ishaq

The Apostle wore two coats of mail on the day of the battle of Uhad, and he took up a sword and brandished it saying: “Who will take this sword with its right?” (use it as it ought and deserves to be used). Some men got up to take it but he withheld it from them until Abu Dujana Simak b. Kharasha,

brother of B. Saida, got up to take it.

Umar got up to take it, saying: "I will take it with its right," but the Prophet turned away from him and brandished it a second time using the same words. Then Zubayr b. al-Awwam got up and he too was rejected, and the two of them were much mortified. (*The Life of the Messenger of God*)

The Prophet gave the sword to Abu Dujana, an Ansari. He took it and used it as it ought to have been used. He justified the confidence his master had placed in him. The Makkan women were squatting on top of their camels and were watching the swift action.

When their army advanced to charge the Muslims, they also moved into action. They began to incite their warriors to kill the Muslims. They sang songs which were full of invitation and scorn – invitation to the heroes and scorn for the cowards. With their music and highly suggestive poetry, they whipped up the impetuous sons of the desert into fighting furies.

Betty Kelen

Perched on the summits of many camels were little huts, or howdahs, in which rode a squadron of women well trained by Hind to sing warlike ballads that would keep their menfolk in a fever pitch of rage and discourage cowardice.

The battle was joined. Hind and her women moved forward with the troops, scattering about the field as closely as they dared to the fighting men, beating their tambourines with terrible clash and shouting:

"Daughters of the shining Morning Star,

Watching you from silken beds we are,

Thrash them! in our arms we'll fold you;

Run, and nevermore we'll hold you."

(Muhammad, the Messenger of God)

Muhammad Husayn Haykal

Before Islam women (in Arabia) used to show themselves off not only to their husbands but to any other men they pleased. They used to go out into the open country singly or in groups and meet with men and youths without hindrance or sense of shame. They exchanged with them glances of passion and expressions of love and desire. This was done with such blaze frankness and lack of shame that Hind, wife of Abu Sufyan, had no scruples whatever about singing on such a public and grave occasion as the Day of Uhud.

"Advance forward and we shall embrace you!

Advance forward and we shall spread the carpets for you!

Turn your backs and we shall avoid you!

Turn your backs and we shall never come to you.”

Among a number of tribes, adultery was not at all regarded as a serious crime. Flirting and courting were common practices. Despite the prominent position of Abu Sufyan and his society, the chroniclers tell, concerning his wife, a great many tales of love and passion with other men without implying any stain on her reputation...” (*The Life of Muhammad, Cairo, 1935*)

The Makkans had better equipment and they were more numerous than the Muslims. Furthermore, the presence, in the battlefield, of their deity, Hubal, and their women, was assurance that their morale would not sag, especially, after the latter had introduced into the struggle, the new and the deadly component of temptation.

But notwithstanding these tangible and intangible advantages, the Makkans were making little, if any, progress. In fact, at the beginning, the battle appeared to be going against them.

D. S. Margoliouth

It appears too that at the commencement events were going as the Prophet had imagined. The champions of Badr, Ali and Hamza, dealt out death as unsparingly as before; the heroism of the Kuraish compelled them to meet these champions in a series of single combats, in which their own champions were killed, and their overthrow spread discomfiture and panic. (*Mohammed and the Rise of Islam, London, 1931*)

The charge of Ali, Hamza and Abu Dujana spread panic and consternation in the ranks of the Makkans, and they began to waver. The Muslims pressed their advantage.

Sir John Glubb

Ali ibn Abu Talib pressed on undismayed into the enemy ranks – it was Badr again; the Muslims were invincible. (*The Great Arab Conquests, 1963*)

Ali had broken the ranks of the Quraysh, and he was already deep inside their lines. Unable to resist his attack, they began to yield ground. Not far from him, his uncle, Hamza, was busy hacking his way through the dense mass of the enemy. Between them, they were grinding the army of Quraysh.

It was at this time that two incidents occurred which caused a reversal in the fortunes of the Muslims, and which wrested victory from their grasp. The first of them was the death of Hamza.

Hinda, the wife of Abu Sufyan, had brought with her from Makkah, a certain Wahshi, an Ethiopian slave, to kill Hamza, and had promised to give him not only his freedom but also much gold, silver and silk in

the event of his success. He was noted for his skill in the use of his “national” weapon, the javelin.

Wahshi hid behind a rock awaiting an opportune moment, and it soon came. Just when Hamza killed an idolater, and lunged after another, Wahshi stood up, took deadly aim, and hurled the missile weapon against which there was no defense. The javelin caught Hamza in the groin. He fell on the ground and died almost immediately.

The other incident involved the main body of the army of Medina. The unsteadiness and the confusion of the army of Makkah had become very much visible at this time, and the Muslims assumed that they had already won a victory. In great anxiety not to miss the opportunity to plunder the enemy, they forgot their discipline. This maneuver was seen by the archers who had been posted by the Prophet at the strategic pass.

They also imagined that the enemy had already been beaten, and was in retreat. They thought that if their comrades in the battle-field captured the baggage of the enemy, then they themselves would lose their share of the booty. This fear prompted them to descend into the plain below against the express orders of the Prophet. Their captain, Abdullah ibn Jubayr, adjured them not to abandon the pass but they paid no heed, and swept into the valley. Their love of booty cost the Muslims victory in the battle of Uhud!

Presently, a Makkan general, one Khalid bin al-Walid, noticed that the strategic pass to the left of the army of Medina was unguarded. He immediately seized the opportunity to attack the handful of the pickets still at the pass, with his cavalry. The pickets fought bravely but all of them including Abdullah ibn Jubayr, were overpowered, and were killed. Once Khalid captured the pass, he attacked the army of Medina from the rear.

The army of Medina was busy in gathering booty, utterly oblivious of everything else. Suddenly, it was startled by the charge of the Makkan cavalry in its rear. Abu Sufyan also noticed the maneuver of Khalid, and the bewilderment of the Muslims. He rallied his troops, returned to the scene of action and launched a frontal attack upon them. They now found themselves caught in a pincer movement of the enemy, and they panicked. It was now their turn to be routed. They started running but not knowing in what direction to run, and everyone ran every which way.

The surprise was not confined merely to the rank-and-file of the Muslim army; it was total. Some of the leading companions of the Prophet were also carried away with others before the charge of the enemy. Among the fugitives were both Abu Bakr and Umar.

It is reported by Anas bin Nadhr, the uncle of Anas bin Malik, that Abu Bakr said in later times that when the Muslims fled from the battle of Uhud, and left the Messenger of God, he was the first one to return to him. Umar often said that when the Muslims were defeated in Uhud, he ran and climbed up a hill (Tabari, *History*, vol. IV, p. 96). Some of the companions managed to reach Medina and others sought refuge in the mountain caves and gullies.

Uthman bin Affan, the future third khalifa of the Muslims, had not taken part in the battle of Badr but he was present in Uhud. However, he found the clangor of sword and spear a little too much for his nerves, and was among the first fugitives.

Shaikh Muhammad Khidhri Buck says in his biography of the Prophet that Uthman was a bashful man, and that though he fled from the battle-field, he did not enter Medina. His bashfulness prevented him from doing so.

As the Muslims ran past the Prophet, he tried to stop them but no one seemed to listen. In a short time the tables were turned on them, and victory was wrenched out of their hands. It was the price they had to pay for their disobedience to their Prophet, and for their obsession with gathering booty.

Following is the testimony of Qur'an on the conduct of the Muslims in the battle of Uhud:

Behold! You were climbing up the high ground, without even casting a side glance at any one, and the Apostle in your rear was calling you back. there did God give you one distress after another by way of requital, to teach you not to grieve for the booty that had escaped you, and for (the ill) that had befallen you. For God is well aware of All that you do. (Chapter 3; verse 153)

The Prophet had given the banner of Islam to his uncle, Masaab ibn Umayr, in the battle of Uhud. He was killed by the enemy, and the banner of Islam fell on the ground. When Ali noticed the banner falling, he rushed forward, picked it up, and raised it high once again.

Washington Irving

Hamza was transfixed by the lance of Wahshi, an Ethiopian slave, who had been promised his freedom if he should kill Hamza. Mosaab ibn Omair, also, who bore the standard of Mohammed, was laid low, *but Ali seized the sacred banner, and bore it aloft amidst the storm of battle.*

As Mosaab resembled the Prophet in person, a shout was put up by the enemy that Mohammed was slain. The Koreishites were inspired with redoubled ardor at the sound; the Moslems fled in despair, bearing with them Abu Bakr and Omar, who were wounded. *(The Life of Mohammed)*

Muhammad Husayn Haykal

Those who thought that Muhammad had perished, including Abu Bakr and Umar, went toward the mountain and sat down. When Anas ibn al-Nadr inquired why they were giving up so soon, and was told that the Prophet of God had been killed, he retorted: "And what would you do with yourselves and your lives after Muhammad died? Rise, and die like he did." He turned, charged against the enemy, and fought gallantly (until he was killed). *(The Life of Muhammad, 1935, Cairo)*

Most of the Muslims had fled from the battle-field but Ali was still fighting. He was carrying the banner of Islam in one hand, and the sword in the other. He too heard the cry "Muhammad is dead." But it only

made him more reckless of his own life.

The Prophet, however, was in another part of the battlefield. He had been wounded, and his head and face were bleeding. A few Muslims, mainly the Ansar, were defending him. It was this little group, and its battle cries that caught Ali's attention. He tore his way through the enemy lines and came up to his comrades-in-arms.

They stood surrounding the Prophet, and led by Abu Dujana, were doing the best they could to shield him from the missile weapons of the enemy. Ali was thrilled to see his master alive but he had no time to exchange greetings. The idolaters had renewed their attacks, and now it was Ali who had to beat them back. They charged repeatedly but he repulsed them each time.

Muhammad Husayn Haykal

...when somebody raised the cry that Muhammad was killed, chaos reigned supreme, Muslim morale plunged to the bottom and Muslim soldiers fought sporadically and purposelessly. This chaos was responsible for their killing of Husayl ibn Jabir Abu Hudhayfah by mistake, *as everyone sought to save his own skin by taking flight except such men as Ali ibn Abu Talib whom God had guided and protected.* (*The Life of Muhammad, 1935, Cairo*)

In the battle of Uhud, many of the companions who were touted to be very brave and faithful, turned their backs upon the enemy, and ran for cover. But there were a few who did not run. One of them was Umm Ammarra Ansariyya, a lady from Medina. She was a fearless believer, and all Islam can be justly proud of her courage. She was noted for her skills as a surgeon and a nurse, and came to Uhud with the army of Medina.

At the beginning of the battle, Umm Ammarra brought water for the soldiers or tended them if they were wounded. But when the Muslims were defeated and they fled from the battle-field, her role changed from that of a nurse to that of a warrior. At one time the enemy brought archers to shower arrows upon the Prophet. Umm Ammarra seized an enormous shield and held it before him to protect him from the flying missiles.

Shortly later, the Makkans charged with swords and spears whereupon Umm Ammarra threw away the shield, and attacked them with a sword. One idolater came dangerously close to the Prophet but she came in front of him, and when he (the idolater) struck, the blow fell upon her shoulder. Though she was wounded, she was undismayed, and resolutely stood between the Prophet and his enemies, defying them and defying death.

Presently there was a momentary lull in fighting. Taking advantage of it, Ali took the Prophet away from the danger spot to a ravine where he could get some rest, and where his wounds could be dressed.

D. S. Margoliouth

The doughty Ali with (some) other brave men finding him (the Prophet) huddled him into a ravine where he could be tended. (*Mohammed and the Rise of Islam*)

Fatima Zahra, the daughter of the Prophet, came from the city with a group of Muslim women when she heard the news of the defeat of the Muslims. Ali brought water in the hollow of his shield, and Fatima Zahra washed blood from the face of her father, and dressed his wounds.

The Role of the Makkan Women

The rout of the Muslims from the battle-field was an invitation to the ladies from Makkah to seek and to find gratification of their blood-lust upon the bodies of the martyrs. They cut their noses, ears, hands and feet, and they cut open their abdomens, removed the organs, and made necklaces with them as trophies of war.

Muhammad ibn Ishaq

Saleh bin Kaysan told me that Hind, daughter of Utba, and the women with her, mutilated the dead companions of the Prophet. They cut their ears and noses and Hind made them into anklets and collars and she gave her (own) anklets, collars and pendants to Wahshi, the slave of Jubayr b. Mutim. She cut out Hamza's liver and chewed it, but she could not swallow it and threw it away.

Al-Hulays b. Zabban, brother of the B. al-Harith b. Abdu Manat, who was then chief of the black troops, passed by Abu Sufyan as he was striking the corner of Hamza's mouth with the point of his spear, saying: "Taste that, you rebel." Hulays exclaimed, "O Banu Kinana, is this the chief of Quraysh acting thus with his dead cousin as you see?" (*The Life of the Messenger of God*)

Seventy-five Muslims were killed in the battle of Uhud, and bodies of most of them were mutilated by Hinda and the other harpies from Makkah.

The hatred of Muhammad, Ali and Hamza was a fire that consumed Hinda. Though Hamza alone was the victim of her cannibalistic appetites in the battle of Uhud, Muhammad and Ali could not expect any different treatment from her if they had fallen into her hands. She transmitted her hatred of Muhammad and Ali to her children and grandchildren, and the generations to come.

The Withdrawal of the Makkan Army

After the first shock of defeat had passed, some of the Muslims returned to the battle-field. Abu Bakr and Umar were among them. They also went into the ravine where Ali had taken the Prophet.

At this moment, Abu Sufyan who was ready to return to Makkah, is reported to have come near the ravine. Standing at the foot of the hills, he exchanged a few remarks with Umar.

Sir John Glubb

...the Quraish could have climbed Mount Uhud at the cost of a few casualties and possibly killed the Messenger of God and the little group of devoted followers who had remained with him. When Abu Sofian asked Umar ibn al-Khattab if Mohammed were dead, he had replied, "No, by God, he can hear you speaking." But it never occurred to Abu Sofian to take advantage of this dangerous breach of security.

The cold-blooded brutality of these killings (in the battle of Uhud) illustrates once more the extraordinary contrast between the easy-going and often chivalrous warfare of the Arabs and the brutalities of their blood-feuds. Abu Sofian talks familiarly with Umar ibn al-Khattab on the battle-field of Uhud, for neither had killed a relative of the other. But Abu Sofian's wife, Hinda, the daughter of Utba ibn Rabia, mutilates the dead body of Hamza, who had killed her father. (*The Life and Times of Mohammed*)

The Quraysh had, ostensibly accomplished their mission. They had defeated the Muslims and had salvaged their honor. Thus satisfied with themselves, they left the battle-field and marched toward their hometown in the south. But the Prophet, still not sure about their intentions, sent Ali to watch them from a distance and to report their movements to him.

Ali returned and informed the Prophet that the Quraysh had bypassed Medina, and were moving toward Makkah. This reassured the Prophet. The Muslims then descended from the hill, prayed over their dead, and buried them.

Ali and the Battle of Uhud

In the battle of Uhud, Ali killed the first standard-bearer of the pagan army. When the standard-bearer fell to the ground, the standard also fell with him. Ali thus felled the emblem of paganism.

Later, when the battle was raging, the pagans killed Masaab ibn Umayr, the standard-bearer of the army of Islam. Masaab fell to the ground, and the standard fell with him. But the very next moment, Ali was on the scene; he lifted the fallen banner from the ground, and unfurled it once again. He was thus as much a symbol of the destruction of idolatry and polytheism as he was the symbol of the rise and rebirth of Islam.

In Uhud, friend and foe both beheld with their own eyes the fantastic deeds of Ali's heroism and chivalry, and his devotion to his master, Muhammad, the Messenger of God. Ali fought the battle of Uhud with the famous sword, Dhu'l-Fiqar.

Muhammad ibn Ishaq

The Prophet's sword was called Dhu'l-Fiqar. A traditionalist told me that I. Abu Najih said, 'Someone called out in the battle of Uhud:

There is no sword but Dhu'l-Fiqar

And there is no hero like Ali.'

(The Life of the Messenger of God)

In Ali's grip, Dhu'l-Fiqar was the lightning that struck and consumed paganism, idolatry and polytheism. But to Islam, it was the bringer of new hope, new vigor, new life, and honor, glory and victory. Commenting upon the events of Uhad, following the rout of the Muslims when the Prophet was beleaguered by his enemies, M. Shibli, the Indian historian, says:

It was a most critical moment in the history of Islam. The idolaters charged upon the Messenger of God like furies but each time they were repelled by the edge of the Dhu'l-Fiqar.

Shibli further says that the idolaters came like "dark and threatening clouds ready to burst upon the Muslims." If Ali had not blunted the Makkan offensive, then this cloudburst would have hit Medina, and Islam would have been carried away in the spate of idolatry. If Ali too had failed in his duty as many others did, the idolaters would have killed the Messenger of God, and they would have extinguished the flame of Islam.

But Ali and a handful of other Muslims, including Abu Dujana and Umm Ammarra Ansariyya, averted this catastrophe. In this lamentable battle, 75 Muslims were killed. Out of them four were Muhajirs, and the rest were Ansars.

The Martyrs of Uhad

The most tragic episode of the battle of Uhad was the death of Hamza and the mutilation of his body. After the departure of the Makkans, the Prophet went to see the corpse of his uncle. The ears and the nose had been cut; the abdomen had been slit open, and its organs had been removed. He was overwhelmed with sorrow to see the martyr's body in that state, and ordered it to be covered.

Hinda, the wife of Abu Sufyan and the mother of Muawiya, is called the "liver-eater" in the history of Islam. Ibn Ishaq says that she chewed up the liver of Hamza but could not swallow it. But Ibn Abdul Birr says in his book, *Al-Isti'ab*, that she actually made a fire in the battle-field, roasted Hamza's liver on it, and ate it!

When the Prophet returned to Medina, he heard the heart-rending lamentations of the members of the bereaved families. The kith and kin of the martyrs of Uhad were mourning their dead. He exclaimed: "Alas! there is no one to mourn the death of my uncle, Hamza." The leaders of the Ansar, upon hearing this remark, went to their homes, and ordered their women to go to the house of the Prophet, and lament the death of his uncle.

Presently a crowd of women of Medina gathered in the house of Muhammad, and they all wept over the tragic death of Hamza, the hero of Islam. The Prophet invoked the blessings of God upon them all.

Thereafter it became a custom in Medina that whenever anyone died, his mourners began their lamentations with dirges on Hamza. The people of Medina mourned first for Hamza and then they mourned for their own dead.

Muhammad ibn Ishaq

The Prophet passed by the quarters of the Banu Abdul Ashal and Zafar and he heard them wailing for the dead. His eyes filled with tears and he said: "But there are no weeping women for Hamza." When Sa'd bin Mu'adh and Usayd b. Hudayr came back to the quarter, they ordered their women to gird themselves and to go and weep for the Prophet's uncle. (*The Life of the Messenger of God*)

Besides Hamza, three other Muhajirs won the crown of martyrdom in the battle of Uhad. They were Abdullah ibn Jahash, a cousin of the Prophet; Masaab ibn Umayr, an uncle of the Prophet; and Shams ibn Uthman. The losses of the Ansar were very heavy. They left seventy-one dead on the field, and many more wounded. May God bless them all.

The battle of Uhad was the climactic moment of pagan opposition to Islam. Though victorious in the battle, the Quraysh were unable to follow up and to exploit their victory, and their gains were soon dissipated.

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