

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - Battle of Khyber

The battle

The Jews were caught in surprise at the appearance of the Muslim force. The Prophet asked them to submit. They ridiculed the offer and said that their forts were impregnable, and that they would teach the Muslims bitter lesson. They shut themselves in their forts and the Muslims besieged them. The first battle took place on the fort called Naim. The Muslim force was commanded by Muhammad b Muslimah. The battle was fierce. The Muslim Commander was martyred, but the fort was captured. In the following days they captured other small fortresses. The main fort of the Jews was Qamus, and it was regarded as impregnable. The siege dragged on for twenty-one days, but the Jews held out. The Holy Prophet sent a force under the command of Abu Bakr to overpower the Jews, but the mission did not succeed. The Holy Prophet changed the Commander every day, but the fort proved to be a hard nut to crack. With the failure of successive missions, the Holy Prophet said that the following day he would entrust the command to a person who was the beloved of Allah as well as His Prophet, and who would conquer the fort. The following day when the Muslim forces assembled to lead the attack, all were anxious to know as to who was to have the honor of commanding the Muslim forces, and winning the victory that day. The honor fell to the lot of Ali. The Holy Prophet put the armor on Ali with his own hands. He handed him the standard, and after praying for the victory of the Muslims, the Holy Prophet commanded the Muslims forces to attack the fort in the name of God. As the Muslim forces came close to the fort, the Jew warrior Marhab emerged out of the fort, and challenged Ali to a duel. Marhab also known as Abu Ablit and Antar enjoyed reputation as a great warrior equivalent to a thousand men. Marhab sang the battle song: "I am Abu Ablit; My name is Antar. I am armed to the teeth. My home is Khyber. I am a lion whom none can face. "

Ali accepted the challenge with the battle song: "I am Ali, the lion of God. I fight in the name of God. Be prepared for your doom. He awaits you." The day, Ali appeared to be endowed with unusual extraordinary power. He killed Marhab in no time. Thereafter another Jewish warrior Rabih b Abu Aqiq stepped forward to challenge Ali. Rabih charged at Ali, but he missed the mark. Thereafter Ali charged at his adversary with the speed of lightning and severed his head with the stroke of his sword. Thereafter another Jew warrior stepped forward. He sang as he rushed at Ali: "I am Yasir I am a ferocious lion. None can escape my claws. In reply, Ali said: "O Infidel, your death calls you. I invoke the aid of God and strike the heads of those who come to oppose me " Yasir aimed a blow at Ali, but Ali warded off the blow with great dexterity. Then Ali attacked and Yasir fell dead. The death of three successive Jew warriors unnerved the Jews and they ran back to shut themselves in the fort. Before the Jews could shut the gate of the fort, Ali struck at the gate and uprooted it. Thereafter the Muslim force rushed inside the fort and massacred the Jews who resisted them. Ali performed prodigies of valor and killed a large number of the Jews. The Jews could not withstand the onslaught of the Muslims for long. Soon their resistance broke down and they laid down arms and sued for terms. Thus the fort which was regarded as impregnable fell before the might of Ali. According to legend, Ali exhibited supernatural strength that day and was most ferocious than the fiercest of lions. Verily, he was the "Lion of Allah".

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