

SUMMER IMMERSION

THE BATTLEFIELDS OF FAITH



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SESSION 3

Historical Background

- The Battle of Qadisiyyah (against the Sasanian Persian Empire) occurred shortly after the Battle of Yarmuk (against the Byzantine Roman Empire), despite the Persian campaign beginning before the Yarmuk expedition.
- The Persian Campaigns
 - Phase 1: Caliph Abu Bakr
 - The initial push into Persia culminated successfully with the capture of Al-Hira (near modern Kufa, Iraq).
 - Phase 2: Caliph Umar
 - Expansion continued under his caliphate, featuring the decisive Arab victory at Qadisiyyah.
- The Roman (Byzantine) Campaigns
 - Phase 1: Caliph Abu Bakr & Umar
 - The pivotal Battle of Yarmuk took place in 636 CE during the early caliphates.
 - Phase 2: Sultan Mehmed II
 - A second, much later phase took place in 1453 CE, marked by the fall of Constantinople.

The Prelude to the Battle of Yarmuk

- Before the legendary Battle of Yarmuk, Khalid ibn al-Walid solidified his military legacy by collapsing the Sasanian Persian Empire. His exceptional tactics took the Romans (Byzantines) completely by surprise, making him a major threat.

- Recognizing Khalid's genius, Caliph Abu Bakr famously praised him: "Our lion faced off against their lion and he beat him to the prey. Women will never give birth to the likes of Khalid ibn al-Walid again."
- Roman Preparations and Strategy:
 - Alarmed by the Muslim conquests, the Romans declared: "Those Arabian horses are not going to find their way onto Roman lands."
 - Heraclius's plan was to divide and conquer the Muslim army. Their primary tactic was to bog down the Caliphate's forces, preventing them from utilizing their swift cavalry to penetrate Roman territory.
 - Knowing of the strategic mind of Abu Bakr, Heraclius spent a long time preparing to crush the Muslim armies before they could advance.
 - Heraclius gathered eight imperial armies and six garrisons across Palestine, Syria, and Jordan. He stationed his mightiest imperial army in Jordan at Yarmuk, while keeping other forces in the Levant ready to strike directly at Madinah.
- The Four Divisions: Abu Bakr's Strategic Vision
 - At this crucial juncture, Khalid ibn al-Walid was actively dismantling the Persian forces in Iraq with 20,000 men, a campaign that stunned both neighboring empires.
 - Recognizing the sheer scale of the Roman mobilization, Abu Bakr carefully monitored the situation and initiated critical defensive maneuvers to protect the heart of the state.
 - Inspired by Shurahbil ibn Hasana's dream, Abu Bakr boldly dispatched four divisions into Ash-Sham, igniting the Muslim conquest.

- Shurahbil ibn Hasana dreamt Abu Bakr climbed a high mountain, descended into a lush land with streams and fortresses, rallied the Muslims with assurances of victory, received a flag as army commander, fought until enemies sued for peace, and that Abu Bakr would conquer lands with his companions.
- The strategic deployments of the four commanders proceeded as follows:
 - Yazid ibn Abu Sufyan:
 - Assigned to lead his corps into Damascus, where he secured two major initial victories.
 - Amr ibn al-As:
 - Directed to march into the southern territories of Palestine, setting the stage for campaigns near Ajnadayn.
 - He sent a support unit under Abdullah ibn Umar, safely securing a dangerous route, though the stronghold garrison at Ajnadayn stalled further advance.
 - Abu Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrah:
 - Assigned to Hims, one of the region's most important cities.
 - He was also designated as the overall supreme commander of the consolidated legions should a major battle occur.
 - Shurahbil ibn Hasana:
 - Initially assigned to Amman, Jordan. He advanced to Busra, where his forces were besieged and effectively stalled.

- While the various corps encountered heavy Byzantine resistance, Abu Bakr organized a council of Companions in Madinah to reassess strategies, as Heraclius was also actively maneuvering his troops.
- Before Abu Bakr dispatched official state forces from Madinah, several independent Muslim armies had already mobilized to the frontiers. Among them, Khalid ibn Sa'id advanced and attacked, but he was ultimately intercepted and defeated by a Roman force commanded by Vahan.
- Khalid ibn al-Walid's Redeployment from Iraq
 - Upon hearing that the Roman commanders were overconfident, arrogant, and sensing victory against the halted Muslim front, Abu Bakr inspired the Muslims with the slogan:

"والله لأنسين الروم وساوس الشيطان بخالد بن الوليد"

"By Allah, I will make the Romans forget the whispers of Shaytan with Khalid ibn al-Walid."

- Abu Bakr used this phrase to boost the morale of the Muslim armies and express his absolute confidence in the military genius of Khalid ibn al-Walid.
- Abu Bakr dispatched an urgent message to Khalid in Iraq, instructing him to secretly march half his forces to the Levant to reinforce the struggling Muslim army. He also directed Khalid to leave the remaining troops in Iraq under Al-Muthanna ibn Haritha, making sure the garrison was filled with fighters of equal caliber to those departing.
- Khalid summoned the expert local guide, Rafi ibn Umair, who was instrumental in navigating the Muslim army to bypass the traditional Roman-controlled border.

- Instead of the conventional 20-day coastal route that was heavily fortified by the Roman military, he guided the army through the waterless, barren Land of Samawa. This daring shortcut was meant to take just six days.
- To survive the deadly, unconventional trek, Khalid relied on brilliant survival tactics. This was widely regarded as one of his greatest tactical feats.
 - Camel strategy:
 - Letting the camels drink their fill before the waterless stretch of the desert.
 - They then slaughtered camels to access the emergency water stored inside them.
 - Locating hidden water sources:
 - Identifying and rationing scarce water pockets.
 - By the fourth day of this seemingly impossible journey, the exhausted but determined army successfully located a hidden watering source, preventing a total disaster.
- The Five-Day Miracle: How Khalid Shocked the Romans
 - Khalid and his men accomplished a five-day shortcut that completely shocked Roman forces, enabling them to swiftly slice through the defenses and capture Busra where Shurahbil was stuck.
 - From there, his army assisted Abu Ubaidah in capturing Hims, swept through to aid Yazid, and ultimately united with other commanders to capture Damascus. Khalid then continued south to support 'Amr ibn al-As at Ajnadayn.
 - This was the first major pitched battle between the cross and the crescent. The clash resulted in a decisive victory for the Muslim army who were against the vastly superior Roman army.

- Following the victory at Ajnadayn, Khalid dispatched a detailed letter to Abu Bakr in Madinah.
 - He described the Byzantine forces swearing on crosses to fight to the death and detailed the battle's progression and formally announced the crushing defeat of the Byzantine army.
 - He officially announced the redirection of the armies toward the Yarmuk river valley.
- This move toward Yarmuk was exactly what Abu Bakr had envisioned: a concentrated, decisive battle to shatter Byzantine control over the region.
- Moving away from fragmented, localized skirmishes to the plains of Yarmuk, allowed the Muslim forces to unite against Heraclius's incoming imperial reinforcements.
- Overjoyed by the triumph and filled with deep admiration for Khalid's unmatched tactical genius, Abu Bakr expressed his profound appreciation, stating that "the coolness to my eyes" had been brought about.
- Shortly after this monumental campaign, Abu Bakr passed away and designated Umar as the next Caliph.
- Umar's Succession and the Transition of Command
 - When Umar succeeded as Caliph, he immediately removed Khalid ibn al-Walid from supreme command to prevent the Muslim army from developing a dangerous belief that victory came from Khalid rather than Allah. He then appointed Abu Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrah to lead the forces in Ash-Sham.
 - Abu Ubaidah did not reveal the Caliph's letter of the announcement of Abu Bakr's passing and his appointment to Khalid. When Khalid learned about it, he accepted the demotion without protest or resentment. He immediately handed supreme command over to Abu Ubaidah and pledged to serve as his subordinate.

- Due to Abu Ubaidah's extreme humility and respect for Khalid, the transition was remarkably smooth. As the new commander in chief, Abu Ubaidah effectively ceded battlefield command to Khalid while handling the administrative and political duties.
- The strategic synergy between Abu Ubaidah and Khalid paved the way for the Battle of Yarmuk. This clash was preceded by months of negotiations, as both sides delayed the confrontation to avoid a devastating and bloody conflict.

