

SUMMER IMMERSION

THE BATTLEFIELDS OF FAITH



Mufti Sultan Mohiuddin

SESSION 5

Prior to the Battle of Qadisiyyah

- Background in Iraq:
 - Following the Ridda Wars, Caliph Abu Bakr ordered Khalid ibn al-Walid to invade the Sasanian frontier province of Iraq.
 - When Khalid arrived in Iraq with his main army from Yamama, he coordinated with local commander, Al-Muthanna ibn Haritha, whose existing forces joined Khalid's incoming army and successfully captured Al-Hira; a capital city of the Sasanian Empire.
 - After capturing Al-Hira, Khalid secretly left his army in Iraq, traveled to Makkah to perform the Hajj, and then returned back to his troops before anyone noticed his absence.
 - Abu Bakr redirected Khalid and his army to lead reinforcements to the Syrian front to help the Muslim commanders face the Byzantine forces.
 - Khalid took effective command during the Battle of Yarmuk, leading the Muslim forces to a decisive victory over the Byzantine Empire that caused Heraclius to retreat to Constantinople.
 - The Persian Empire planned to reclaim their territories while Khalid was away from the Iraq front.

- The Persian Empire Sought to Regain Control:
 - Rustam Farrokhzad, the Sassanian general, placed the young prince Yazdegerd III (a descendant of Khosroes) on the Sassanian throne to save the falling empire.
 - The newly enthroned king commands Rustam to push back Muslim forces in Iraq and reclaim lost territories like Al-Hira.
 - Rustam deployed a large Persian army under other generals. They aimed to reverse Muslim gains in Iraq and restore old Sassanian control.
 - The Persians attempted to rally local populations, re-establish imperial control, and coordinate regional defenses against the advancing Muslim forces.
- Mobilization of Muslims in Madinah:
 - News reached Madinah that Rustam and Persians leaders had mobilized a massive force and instigated local revolts on the Iraqi front, coinciding with the Battle of Yarmuk on the Byzantine front.
 - Umar ibn al-Khattab gathered the people of Madinah, announced a public call to arms, and asked who was ready to march out to face the Persian threat.
 - When no one raised their hand, Abu Ubaid ibn Mas'ud al-Thaqafi stepped forward immediately to answer the call.
 - He is the brother of Urwah ibn Mas'ud, a chieftain of Ta'if from the Banu Thaqif tribe, who negotiated on behalf of the Quraysh during Hudaibiyyah. Urwah later embraced Islam, called his people to the faith, but was martyred when he was shot with an arrow while calling the morning prayer in Ta'if.

- Because Abu Ubaid volunteered first and showed immense courage, Umar appointed him as the commander-in-chief of the force despite his inexperience. Following his lead and willingness to march, other Companions quickly stepped forward to enlist in the army.
- Military Engagements in Iraq:
 - Abu Ubaid ibn Mas'ud al-Thaqafi first encountered the Persian army of approximately 50,000 men and their commander Jaban at Namariq. The outcome was a victory for the Muslims, forcing Jaban to retreat across the Euphrates.
 - Jaban was captured and unrecognized by a Muslim soldier. He offered an exchange or ransom to win freedom without revealing his high command status.
 - When Jaban was re-encountered later, Abu Ubaid refused to re-enslave or harm him, stating that a pledge granted by any Muslim — even to an enemy — must be honored.
 - Abu Ubaid let Jaban go free. Jaban became a Muslim because of this honesty, and many in his entourage did the same.
 - Abu Ubaid advanced to Kaskar, resulting in another successful engagement for the Muslim forces.
 - Abu Ubaid then moved forward to the territory of Barosma, securing another victory. He won four major battles in a period of one month.
 - Rather than a widespread hostile insurrection against the Muslims, the local populations favored the stability brought by the Muslim administration due to the rogue behavior and unrest stirred by Persian commanders.

- The Battle of the Bridge:
 - Abu Ubaid advanced to the fifth battle, the Battle of the Bridge, with the Persian Empire under the command of Bahman Jaduya, who was once defeated by Khalid ibn al-Walid. Their forces reached up to 100,000 men.
 - A Persian envoy approached Abu Ubaid across the river and claimed that the Muslims were only brave because they were fighting on the edge of the desert, or suggested that either the Persians would cross to the Muslim side or the Muslims should cross to theirs.
 - Provoked by the taunt, Abu Ubaid ignored the advice of his senior advisors and field commanders (like Al-Muthanna) who warned against breaking their formation.
 - Abu Ubaid crossed the Euphrates to face the main Persian army, where many Muslims were shot by a sea of arrows, while others drowned.
 - His men who managed to cross found war elephants waiting for them. This terrified the Arab cavalry horses so they threw or bolted with their riders, causing chaos.
 - Abu Ubaid ordered his men to dismount, target the elephants. However, they were struck and trampled on instead. He charged the lead elephant, a white elephant, which then grabbed him by its trunk and crushed him.
 - Following Abu Ubaid's death, his brother and three of his sons successively took up the standard and command, and were likewise killed fighting the elephants.
 - Amid the panic, a Companion wanted to cut the bridge to force a last stand, but Al-Muthanna stopped him.
 - Al-Muthanna took charge of the remaining forces, covering the chaotic retreat. He fought to protect the crossing and managed to withdraw the Muslim army across the Euphrates despite heavy losses.

- Upon receiving the grim news in Madinah, Umar wept and expressed sorrow, stating that he wished he could have helped Abu Ubaid.
- This battle marked a severe defeat for the Muslim army after winning prior major battles. Accounts estimate around 7,000 Muslim deaths.

The Battle of Qadisiyyah

- Introduction:
 - In response to Abu Ubaid's defeat, Umar organized a large, unified army to face the Persian Empire, which led directly to the decisive Battle of Qadisiyyah and the eventual capture of the Persian capital, Madain.
 - Umar intended to personally lead the army to the Iraqi front, but Abdur Rahman ibn Awf and other senior companions convinced him to stay in Madinah and instead appoint Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas as the commander-in-chief.
 - The council agreed and Sa'd was chosen to lead the forces to Qadisiyyah. Umar personally warned Sa'd not to be fooled if people said he was the Prophet's maternal uncle or companion, reminding him that obedience to Allah is the only true connection.
 - Sa'd was instructed to maintain regular contact, sending messengers back to Madinah to update the Umar on all major developments, and Umar responded by sending reinforcements wave after wave.
 - Sa'd was a skilled warrior, despite his severe illness — suffering from sciatica and painful boils. Although he could not ride or sit upright comfortably, he was stationed inside a high room. He directed troops by sight and sent written orders, while his wife Salma bint Yarfa aided him closely by relaying messages and supporting his command.