THE PROPHET'S SIRAH

SERIES 12

THE BATTLE OF THE TRENCH

Al-Ahzab: The Trench, Patience and Allah's Help, According to the Qur'an and Authentic Hadith



HJ CHE ALIM HJ CHE HARON

AK (KELANTAN)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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لَّقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ ٱللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَٱلْيَوْمَ ٱلْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ ٱللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

"There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often."

SURAH AL-AHZAB 33:21

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who alone defeated the Confederates, and helped His servant when hearts reached the throats. Blessings and peace be upon our master, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and upon his family and his Companions.

This eBook is specially dedicated to my beloved wife,

ZAHARAH MOHD LATIF;

my dear children,

MUHAMMAD HAFIZ, NOOR HAZWANI, ABDUL HAKIM, NOOR HIDAYAH, NOR AQILA and **NOR ATIQAH**;

and my sons- and daughters-in-law,

FAZILAH, MALEK, HANIN, FAIRIZAL and **FIRWAN**.

This twelfth book of The Prophet's Sirah tells of the Battle of the Trench: a trench dug by hungry hands, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ carrying earth with his Companions, a confederacy of ten thousand, and the wind that Allah sent. May this knowledge be 'ilmun yuntafa'u bih, knowledge that brings benefit.

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ABOUT THE COVER OF THIS EBOOK

This eBook's cover does not depict any human being or animal. It shows **a long trench** dug across **a stony plain** on a cold dusk, with **mounds of earth** along its banks and **a rocky hill** behind. In the sky, **a fierce wind** sweeps dust beneath heavy grey clouds; **a faint crescent moon** peeps through a gap, and pale light glows on the horizon.

The trench is al-Khandaq, dug by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his Companions with hungry hands; the hill behind recalls Mount Sal', where his tent stood. The storm wind symbolises the wind Allah sent against the Confederates: "We sent upon them a wind and armies [of angels] you did not see" (Al-Ahzab 33:9). The crescent behind the clouds recalls the cold night when Hudhayfah was sent out, and the light on the horizon symbolises relief after the siege.

The **dark blue band** at the bottom, framed by **fine gold lines**, is where the author's name appears.

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CONTENTS

THE BATTLE OF THE TRENCH — *Introduction*
1. THE CONFEDERACY OF AL-AHZAB — *Al-Ahzab 33:10*
2. THE PROPOSAL TO DIG A TRENCH — *Sirah books*
3. DIGGING ON A COLD MORNING — *Sahih al-Bukhari 2834*
4. DUST ON THE PROPHET'S ﷺ BELLY — *Sahih al-Bukhari 4104*
5. THE GREAT ROCK THAT BECAME SAND — *Sahih al-Bukhari 4101*
6. JABIR'S MEAL — *Sahih al-Bukhari 4102*
7. THE CONFEDERATES ARRIVE — *Al-Ahzab 33:10*
8. HEARTS REACHED THE THROATS — *Al-Ahzab 33:11*
9. THE HYPOCRITES' EXCUSES — *Al-Ahzab 33:12–13*
10. "THIS IS WHAT ALLAH PROMISED" — *Al-Ahzab 33:22*
11. BANU QURAYZAH AND AZ-ZUBAYR THE HAWARI — *Sahih al-Bukhari 2846*
12. 'ALI AND 'AMR IBN 'ABD WUDD — *Sirah books*
13. THE MISSED PRAYER — *Sahih al-Bukhari 4111*
14. SA'D IBN MU'ADH IS WOUNDED — *Sahih al-Bukhari 4122*
15. NU'AYM IBN MAS'UD — *Sahih al-Bukhari 3030*
16. THE PRAYER AGAINST THE CONFEDERATES — *Sahih al-Bukhari 2933*
17. HUDHAYFAH'S NIGHT — *Sahih Muslim 1788*
18. THE WIND AND THE UNSEEN ARMIES — *Al-Ahzab 33:9*
19. ALLAH ALONE DEFEATED THEM — *Sahih al-Bukhari 4114*
20. "NOW WE WILL GO AGAINST THEM" — *Sahih al-Bukhari 4109*
21. THE EXCELLENT PATTERN — *Al-Ahzab 33:21*
22. JIBRIL HAD NOT LAID DOWN ARMS — *Sahih al-Bukhari 4117*
23. SOURCES OF THE TRENCH STORIES — *Figure; table*
24. VERSES OF SURAH AL-AHZAB ABOUT THE TRENCH — *Al-Ahzab 33:9–27; Sahih al-Bukhari 4784*
25. WOMEN, YOUTHS AND THE WOUNDED — *Sahih al-Bukhari 2664, 463*
26. PEOPLE OF THE TRENCH AND THE TALKS WITH GHATAFAN — *Tables; books of sirah*
27. THE BATTLEFIELD OF THE TRENCH TODAY — *Geography table; al-Adab al-Mufrad 704*
28. TIMELINE OF THE BATTLE OF THE TRENCH — *Table*
29. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BATTLE OF THE TRENCH — *12 questions*
30. LESSONS AND CONCLUSION
REFERENCES
SUPPORT & DONATIONS

Colour guide: green box = verses of the Qur'an; gold box = Hadith; brown box = sirah note (report from the books of sirah); blue table = comparison. Underlined blue narrator names can be clicked to open the narrator's page on sunnah.com.

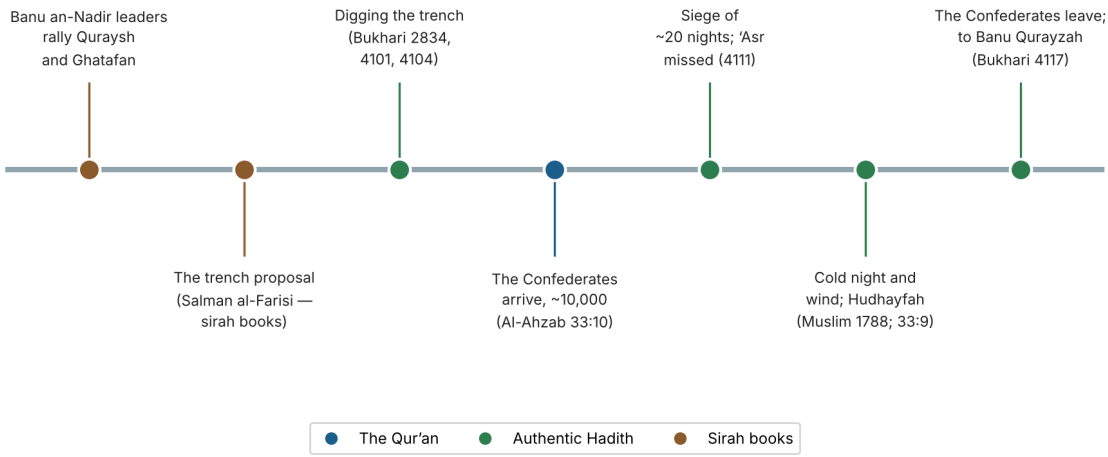
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THE BATTLE OF THE TRENCH

The eleventh book of The Prophet's Sirah ended with the appointed meeting at Badr that Quraysh failed to keep. But in ***Shawwal of 5 AH***, Quraysh returned — this time not alone. They brought ***a confederacy of Arab tribes*** (al-Ahzab) some ten thousand strong, three times the Muslim army, to wipe out Madinah for ever.

The Muslims did not go out to meet them in the open as at Badr and Uhud. Instead they ***dug a trench*** — something the Arabs had never seen. The story is preserved in ***Surah Al-Ahzab*** (33:9–27), and authentic Hadith records its moments: the Messenger of Allah ﷺ carrying earth until dust covered his belly, a stone tied to his belly from hunger, and a bitterly cold night when Allah's wind came.

Timeline of the Battle of the Trench (Shawwal 5 AH)



Well-known date: Shawwal 5 AH (March 627 CE); Musa ibn 'Uqbah gives 4 AH, as cited by al-Bukhari.

Figure 1: Timeline of the Battle of the Trench.

Note: The Qur'anic translation in this eBook is Sahih International. The grade of every Hadith is stated in its box. Information from the books of sirah is placed in brown "Sirah Note" boxes, and historical facts come with source links.

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THE CONFEDERACY OF AL-AHZAB

After their expulsion from Madinah (Book 11), the leaders of ***Banu an-Nadir*** in Khaybar did not stay idle. The sirah books say ***Huyayy ibn Akhtab*** and other Jewish chiefs went to Makkah and urged Quraysh to fight Madinah again, then to the tribe of ***Ghatafan*** in Najd with the promise of half of Khaybar's date harvest.

GROUP	ROLE (SIRAH BOOKS)
Quraysh and allies	Led by Abu Sufyan; came from the south-west
Ghatafan (Fazarah, Murrah, Ashja')	Led by 'Uyaynah ibn Hisn; came from the east (Najd)
Banu Sulaym and Banu Asad	Allied tribes
Leaders of Banu an-Nadir	Instigators and planners of the alliance

The Qur'an describes their coming from different directions: ***"[Remember] when they came at you from above you and from below you"***Tafsir Ibn Kathir 33:10.

Ibn Kathir reports that "from above you" means ***Ghatafan*** from the east, and "from below you" means ***Quraysh*** from the west. The lesson: falsehood will ***unite*** despite differing interests when its aim is to fight the truth.

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THE PROPOSAL TO DIG A TRENCH

When news of the Confederates reached Madinah, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ ***consulted*** the Companions, as was his custom. The enemy was three times larger; meeting them in the open was very dangerous.

SIRAH NOTE: SALMAN AL-FARISI'S PROPOSAL

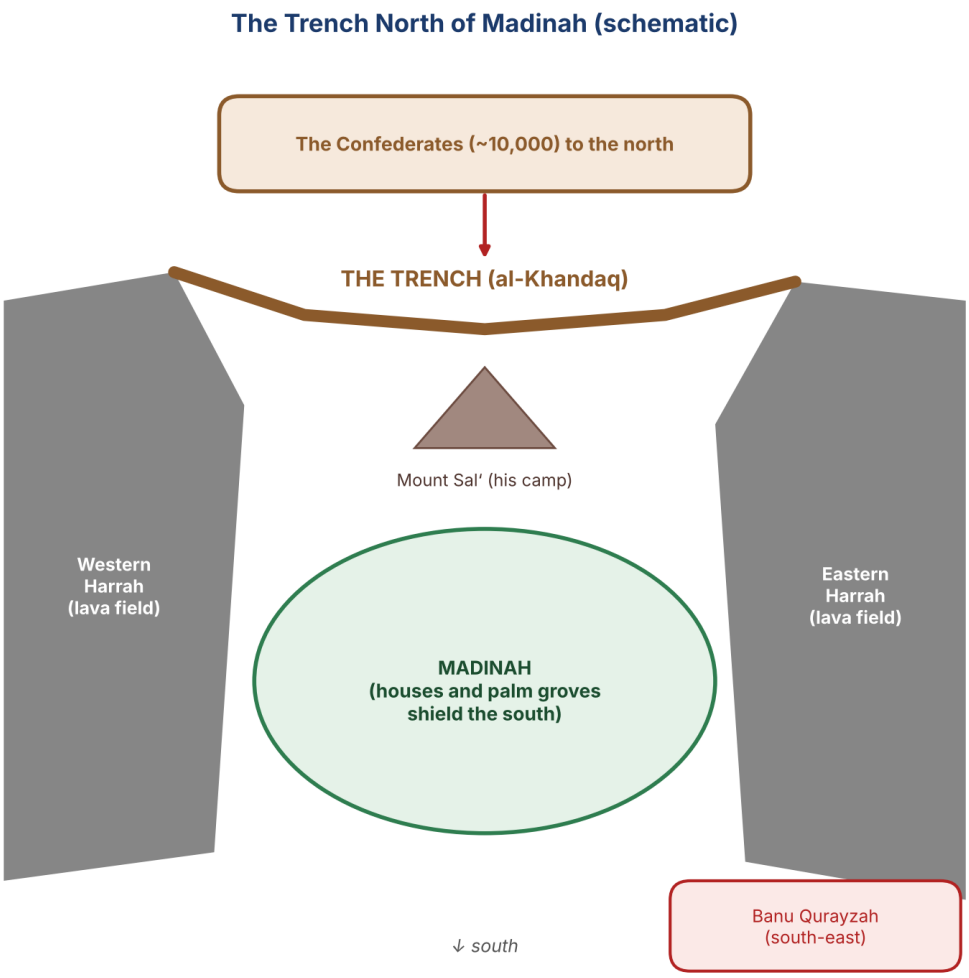
The sirah books say that ***Salman al-Farisi*** رضى الله عنه proposed: "O Messenger of Allah, in Persia, when we were besieged, we dug a trench around us." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ accepted, and the trench was dug on the open ***north*** side of Madinah, while the other sides were protected by ***lava fields (harrah)***, houses and palm groves.

The sirah books also say every ten men were assigned ***forty cubits*** to dig. These details are well known in the sirah reports, but are not found in Sahih al-Bukhari or Muslim.

REFERENCES:

Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat al-Kubra; al-Waqidi, al-Maghazi; Wikipedia, "Battle of the Trench".
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Trench

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Schematic only; positions approximate. The trench was dug on the open north side; other sides were protected by lava fields, houses and orchards.

Figure 2: The trench north of Madinah (schematic).

The lesson: the Messenger of Allah ﷺ accepted ***a good idea*** even when it came from another nation's practice. Wisdom may be taken from any source, as long as it does not conflict with the Law.

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DIGGING ON A COLD MORNING

Digging a trench several kilometres long with simple tools, in cold weather and on empty stomachs, was gruelling work. Anas رضى الله عنه described the scene:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 2834

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا مُعَاوِيَةُ بْنُ عَمْرٍو، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو إِسْحَاقَ، عَنْ حُمَيْدٍ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَنَسًا ـ رضى الله عنه ـ يَقُولُ خَرَجَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم إِلَى الْخَنْدَقِ فَإِذَا الْمُهَاجِرُونَ وَالأَنْصَارُ يَحْفِرُونَ فِي غَدَاةٍ بَارِدَةٍ، فَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ عَبِيدٌ يَعْمَلُونَ ذَلِكَ لَهُمْ، فَلَمَّا رَأَى مَا بِهِمْ مِنَ النَّصَبِ وَالْجُوعِ قَالَ اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّ الْعَيْشَ عَيْشُ الآخِرَهْ فَاغْفِرْ لِلأَنْصَارِ وَالْمُهَاجِرَهْ. فَقَالُوا مُجِيبِينَ لَهُ نَحْنُ الَّذِينَ بَايَعُوا مُحَمَّدًا عَلَى الْجِهَادِ مَا بَقِينَا أَبَدًا

TRANSLATION:

Anas رضى الله عنه said: **The Messenger of Allah ﷺ went out to the trench and saw the Muhajirun and the Ansar digging on a very cold morning, for they had no slaves to do it for them. When he saw their fatigue and hunger, he said: "O Allah, the (real) life is the life of the Hereafter; so forgive the Ansar and the Muhajirun."** They replied: ***"We are those who pledged to Muhammad to strive in jihad as long as we live."***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Abdullah ibn Muhammad, from Mu'awiyah ibn 'Amr, from Abu Ishaq (al-Fazari), from Humayd, from Anas ibn Malik رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Jihad, Chapter on Digging the Trench, Hadith No. 2834; also No. 4099.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:2834

A LEADER WHO WORKED ALONGSIDE

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not merely watch from afar. He ***dug and carried earth*** with the Companions (Chapter 4). His prayer turned their eyes from worldly hardship to ***the real life of the Hereafter***.

The Companions' reply shows ***high spirit*** even in exhaustion: they reminded themselves of their pledge to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The lesson: heavy work grows light when leader and followers carry it ***together***, and the aim is the Hereafter.

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DUST ON THE PROPHET'S ﷺ BELLY

Al-Bara' ibn 'Azib رضى الله عنه saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ working at the trench himself:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4104

حَدَّثَنَا مُسْلِمُ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، عَنْ أَبِي إِسْحَاقَ، عَنِ الْبَرَاءِ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ قَالَ كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَنْقُلُ التُّرَابَ يَوْمَ الْخَنْدَقِ حَتَّى أَغْمَرَ بَطْنَهُ أَوِ اغْبَرَّ بَطْنُهُ يَقُولُ وَاللَّهِ لَوْلاَ اللَّهُ مَا اهْتَدَيْنَا وَلاَ تَصَدَّقْنَا وَلاَ صَلَّيْنَا فَأَنْزِلَنْ سَكِينَةً عَلَيْنَا وَثَبِّتِ الأَقْدَامَ إِنْ لاَقَيْنَا إِنَّ الأُلَى قَدْ بَغَوْا عَلَيْنَا إِذَا أَرَادُوا فِتْنَةً أَبَيْنَا وَرَفَعَ بِهَا صَوْتَهُ أَبَيْنَا أَبَيْنَا.

TRANSLATION:

Al-Bara' رضى الله عنه said: **The Prophet ﷺ was carrying earth on the day of the Trench until his belly was covered with dust, and he was reciting: "By Allah, were it not for Allah, we would not have been guided, nor given charity, nor prayed. So send down tranquillity upon us, and make our feet firm if we meet (the enemy). They have wronged us; if they intend affliction, we refuse."** He would raise his voice at the words: ***"Abayna, abayna!"*** (We refuse, we refuse!).

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Muslim ibn Ibrahim, from Shu'bah, from Abu Ishaq, from al-Bara' ibn 'Azib رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Military Expeditions (al-Maghazi), Chapter on the Battle of the Trench, Hadith No. 4104; also No. 4106.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:4104

In another narration al-Bara' said the dust had covered the skin of his belly so that he could not see it, and he recited ***the verses of 'Abdullah ibn Rawahah*** while carrying earth (Sahih al-Bukhari 4106).

WORDS IN THE VERSES	THEIR MEANING
"Were it not for Allah, we would not be guided"	Guidance is Allah's gift, not our effort alone
"Send down tranquillity upon us"	Asking for sakinah in the face of danger
"Make our feet firm"	Asking for steadfastness in battle
"Abayna, abayna!"	We refuse to submit to oppression

The lesson: remembrance and good verse ***lift the spirit*** in hard labour. A leader covered in dust alongside his people is more beloved than one who only gives orders.

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THE GREAT ROCK THAT BECAME SAND

While digging, the Companions came upon a rock too hard to break. They brought the problem to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Jabir ibn 'Abdullah رضى الله عنهما related what happened, including what followed at his home:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4101

حَدَّثَنَا خَلاَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْوَاحِدِ بْنُ أَيْمَنَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، قَالَ أَتَيْتُ جَابِرًا ـ رضى الله عنه ـ فَقَالَ إِنَّا يَوْمَ الْخَنْدَقِ نَحْفِرُ فَعَرَضَتْ كُدْيَةٌ شَدِيدَةٌ، فَجَاءُوا النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَقَالُوا هَذِهِ كُدْيَةٌ عَرَضَتْ فِي الْخَنْدَقِ، فَقَالَ أَنَا نَازِلٌ. ثُمَّ قَامَ وَبَطْنُهُ مَعْصُوبٌ بِحَجَرٍ، وَلَبِثْنَا ثَلاَثَةَ أَيَّامٍ لاَ نَذُوقُ ذَوَاقًا، فَأَخَذَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم الْمِعْوَلَ فَضَرَبَ، فَعَادَ كَثِيبًا أَهْيَلَ أَوْ أَهْيَمَ، فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ائْذَنْ لِي إِلَى الْبَيْتِ. فَقُلْتُ لاِمْرَأَتِي رَأَيْتُ بِالنَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم شَيْئًا، مَا كَانَ فِي ذَلِكَ صَبْرٌ، فَعِنْدَكِ شَىْءٌ قَالَتْ عِنْدِي شَعِيرٌ وَعَنَاقٌ. فَذَبَحْتُ الْعَنَاقَ وَطَحَنَتِ الشَّعِيرَ، حَتَّى جَعَلْنَا اللَّحْمَ فِي الْبُرْمَةِ، ثُمَّ جِئْتُ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم وَالْعَجِينُ قَدِ انْكَسَرَ، وَالْبُرْمَةُ بَيْنَ الأَثَافِيِّ قَدْ كَادَتْ أَنْ تَنْضَجَ فَقُلْتُ طُعَيِّمٌ لِي، فَقُمْ أَنْتَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَرَجُلٌ أَوْ رَجُلاَنِ. قَالَ كَمْ هُوَ. فَذَكَرْتُ لَهُ، قَالَ كَثِيرٌ طَيِّبٌ. قَالَ قُلْ لَهَا لاَ تَنْزِعِ الْبُرْمَةَ وَلاَ الْخُبْزَ مِنَ التَّنُّورِ حَتَّى آتِيَ. فَقَالَ قُومُوا. فَقَامَ الْمُهَاجِرُونَ وَالأَنْصَارُ، فَلَمَّا دَخَلَ عَلَى امْرَأَتِهِ قَالَ وَيْحَكِ جَاءَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم بِالْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالأَنْصَارِ وَمَنْ مَعَهُمْ. قَالَتْ هَلْ سَأَلَكَ قُلْتُ نَعَمْ. فَقَالَ ادْخُلُوا وَلاَ تَضَاغَطُوا. فَجَعَلَ يَكْسِرُ الْخُبْزَ وَيَجْعَلُ عَلَيْهِ اللَّحْمَ، وَيُخَمِّرُ الْبُرْمَةَ وَالتَّنُّورَ إِذَا أَخَذَ مِنْهُ، وَيُقَرِّبُ إِلَى أَصْحَابِهِ ثُمَّ يَنْزِعُ، فَلَمْ يَزَلْ يَكْسِرُ الْخُبْزَ وَيَغْرِفُ حَتَّى شَبِعُوا وَبَقِيَ بَقِيَّةٌ قَالَ كُلِي هَذَا وَأَهْدِي، فَإِنَّ النَّاسَ أَصَابَتْهُمْ مَجَاعَةٌ.

TRANSLATION:

Jabir رضى الله عنه said: **We were digging on the day of the Trench and came upon a very hard rock. They went to the Prophet ﷺ and said: "There is a hard rock blocking the trench." He said: "I will come down." He rose, with a stone tied to his belly, for we had not tasted food for three days. The Prophet ﷺ took the pickaxe and struck the rock, and it became like crumbling sand.** I said: "O Messenger of Allah, allow me to go home." I said to my wife: "I saw the Prophet ﷺ in a state I cannot bear. Do you have

anything?" She said: "I have some barley and a young goat." I slaughtered the goat and she ground the barley, and we put the meat in the pot. Then I came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: "I have a little food; come, O Messenger of Allah, with one or two men." He asked: "How much?" I told him. He said: **"Plenty and good. Tell her not to take the pot off the fire nor take the bread out of the oven until I come."** Then he said: "Get up!" So the Muhajirun and the Ansar got up… He began breaking the bread and putting meat on it, covering the pot and the oven whenever he took from them. ***He kept breaking bread and ladling until they all ate their fill, and some was left over.*** He said: "Eat this and give gifts of it, for the people have been struck by hunger."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Khallad ibn Yahya, from 'Abd al-Wahid ibn Ayman, from his father Ayman al-Habashi, from Jabir ibn 'Abdullah رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Military Expeditions, Chapter on the Battle of the Trench, Hadith No. 4101. The translation is partly abridged.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:4101

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A STONE ON HIS BELLY

Notice this small detail: ***a stone was tied to the Prophet's ﷺ belly***, for three days had passed without food. The Arabs tied a stone to the belly to ease hunger and keep the back straight. The leader of this nation went hungry just like his followers — even more.

SIRAH NOTE: GLAD TIDINGS WHILE STRIKING THE ROCK

In the narration of ***Sunan an-Nasa'i 3176*** (graded hasan), each time the Messenger of Allah ﷺ struck the rock a light flashed and a third of it broke, as he recited: "The word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and justice." He gave news that his nation would open the lands of ***Kisra (Persia)*** and ***Caesar (Rome)***. The narration of the ***Musnad of Ahmad*** from al-Bara' mentions the keys of ***Sham, Persia and Yemen***.

At that time the Muslims were hungry and about to be besieged — yet the Messenger of Allah ﷺ looked far ahead. Within a few decades, the promise came true.

REFERENCES:

Sunan an-Nasa'i 3176; Musnad Ahmad. https://sunnah.com/nasai:3176

The lesson: problems too heavy for us are taken to ***the leader and to Allah***. And a believer's hope does not die even when his stomach is empty.

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THE HUNGER OF THE PROPHET ﷺ AND HIS COMPANIONS

The stone tied to the belly was no isolated event. Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه swore: ***"By Allah… sometimes I would lie on the ground from hunger, and sometimes I would tie a stone to my belly from hunger."*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 6452). And 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها said: ***"The family of Muhammad never ate their fill of wheat bread for three consecutive days from the time he came to Madinah until he died."*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 5416).

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ chose to live ***simply*** though he led a state. The hunger at the Trench was not only because Madinah was poor, but because he always ***put others first*** — and because the siege cut off supplies. The lesson: luxury is not the measure of success; these hungry Companions changed the history of the world.

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JABIR'S MEAL

Jabir's hadith above contains one of the Prophet's ﷺ best-known ***miracles***. In another narration Jabir says the food was only ***one sa' of barley*** and a young goat, and his wife whispered: "Do not disgrace me before the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his Companions!" But he called aloud: ***"O people of the Trench! Jabir has prepared food — come!"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 4102).

He spat a little into the dough and the pot, praying for blessing. Jabir swore: ***they were a thousand***, all ate their fill and left, while the pot was still bubbling full and the dough still being baked as before (Sahih al-Bukhari 4102).

LESSON	FROM JABIR'S MEAL
A Companion's care	Jabir could not bear to see the Prophet ﷺ hungry
A just leader	He would not eat alone; all the people of the Trench were invited
Blessing	A little food fed a thousand
Sharing	"Eat and give gifts, for the people are struck by hunger"

The lesson: ***blessing*** lies not in the amount of food, but in sincere giving and an answered prayer. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught that a leader eats ***after*** his people are fed.

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THE CONFEDERATES ARRIVE

The trench was dug in a short time — the sirah books and Wikipedia mention about ***six days***. Soon after, the Confederate army arrived. They were astonished to see a trench blocking their cavalry: "This is a stratagem the Arabs have never used!" (sirah books).

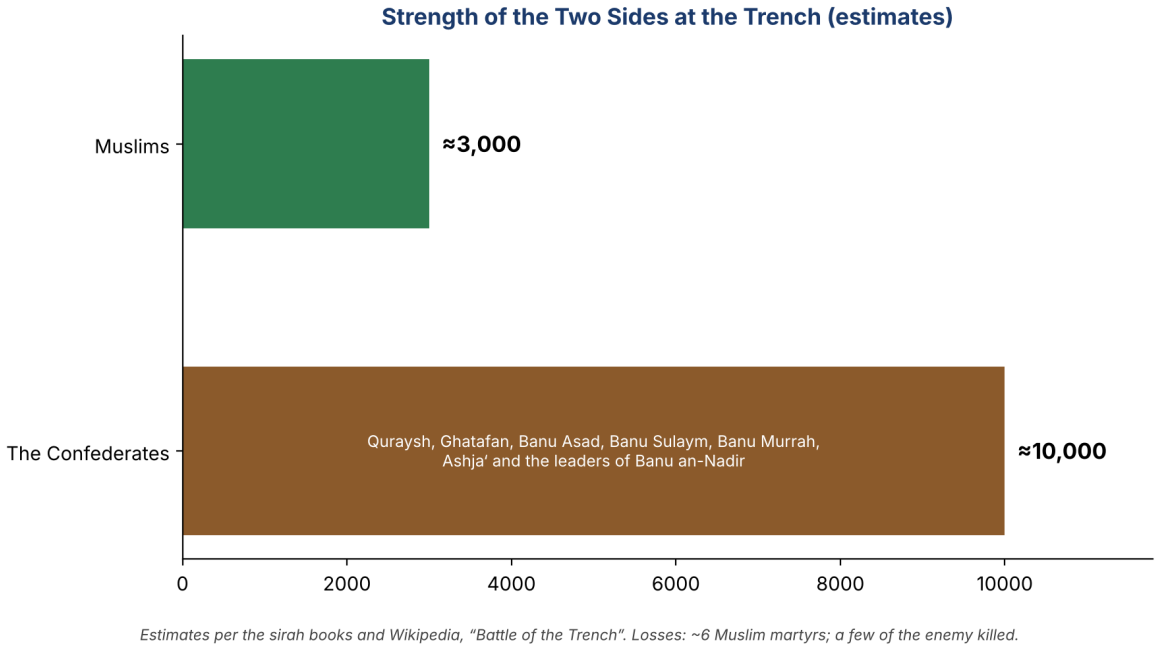


Figure 3: Strength of the two sides at the Trench (estimates).

SIRAH NOTE: A LONG SIEGE

The sirah books say the Muslims, some ***three thousand*** strong, camped at the foot of ***Mount Sal'***, with the hill at their backs and the trench before them. The siege lasted about ***twenty nights*** (some reports say nearly a month). No major battle took place; there were only exchanges of arrows and a few attempts to cross the trench.

REFERENCES:

Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah; Wikipedia, "Battle of the Trench".
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Trench

The lesson: ***wise preparation*** can make up for a lack of numbers. The trench turned a dangerous open battle into a siege that wore down the enemy itself.

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HEARTS REACHED THE THROATS

The siege was the heaviest ***test of faith*** since the hijrah. The enemy in front, hunger within, cold weather, and news of betrayal behind. Allah describes that state precisely:

"when eyes shifted [in fear], and hearts reached the throats and you assumed about Allah [various] assumptions"Tafsir Ibn Kathir 33:10.

"There the believers were tested and shaken with a severe shaking"Tafsir Ibn Kathir 33:11.

QUR'ANIC EXPRESSION	ITS MEANING
"Eyes shifted"	Fear that makes the gaze wander
"Hearts reached the throats"	Anxiety at its peak (literal Arabic image)
"Various assumptions about Allah"	Some certain, some doubting
"Shaken with a severe shaking"	A test that sifts faith

The Qur'an does not hide the Companions' fear; it acknowledges they were ***human*** and could be afraid. The lesson: faith does not mean having no fear, but ***standing firm*** even when the heart is shaken.

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THE HYPOCRITES' EXCUSES

A heavy test ***reveals what is in the heart***. While the believers held firm, the hypocrites began to speak. Allah recorded their words:

"the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is disease said, "Allah and His Messenger did not promise us except delusion"."Tafsir Ibn Kathir 33:12.

Some of them looked for excuses to go home: ***""Indeed, our houses are unprotected," while they were not exposed. They did not intend except to flee"***Tafsir Ibn Kathir 33:13.

SIRAH NOTE: "WE WERE PROMISED KISRA'S TREASURES…"

Ibn Kathir and the sirah books mention that a hypocrite named ***Mu'attib ibn Qushayr*** mocked: "Muhammad promises us the treasures of Kisra and Caesar, while none of us dares go out to relieve himself!" This mockery referred to the glad tidings when he struck the rock (Chapter 5).

REFERENCES:

Tafsir Ibn Kathir 33:12; Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah. https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/33/12

The lesson: the hypocrites judged Allah's promise by ***the present situation***, while the believers judged the present situation by ***Allah's promise***. The promise was true: within less than twenty years, the treasures of Kisra and Caesar were brought to Madinah.

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"THIS IS WHAT ALLAH PROMISED"

The same sight — ten thousand soldiers across the trench — produced a very different reaction in the hearts of the believers:

"This is what Allah and His Messenger had promised us, and Allah and His Messenger spoke the truth"Tafsir Ibn Kathir 33:22.

THE HYPOCRITES (33:12)	THE BELIEVERS (33:22)
"Allah and His Messenger promised only delusion"	"This is what Allah and His Messenger promised"
Looked for excuses to go home	Held their post at the trench
The test increased doubt	"It increased them only in faith and acceptance"

What promise is meant? Ibn Kathir mentions it refers to Allah's promise that believers will surely be tested before being given victory, as He says in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:214): "Or do you think that you will enter Paradise while such [trial] has not yet come to you as came to those who passed on before you?"

The lesson: the same trial can ***increase one person's faith*** and ***increase another's doubt***. What makes the difference is certainty in Allah's promise.

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"WHEN IS THE HELP OF ALLAH?"

The verse Ibn Kathir explains as the "promise" in 33:22 reads: ***"They were touched by poverty and hardship and were shaken until [even their] messenger and those who believed with him said, "When is the help of Allah?" Unquestionably, the help of Allah is near"***Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:214.

Notice the matching words: this verse says earlier believers were ***"shaken"***, and Al-Ahzab 33:11 says the Muslims at the Trench were ***"shaken with a severe shaking"***. So when the shaking truly came, the believers recognised it as ***a sign*** that Allah's help was near — not a sign that Allah had abandoned them.

The lesson: understanding the Qur'an prepares the heart for trials. One who knows ***Allah's way*** — that trial comes before victory — does not easily despair.

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BANU QURAYZAH AND AZ-ZUBAYR THE HAWARI

In the midst of the siege came the most alarming news: ***Banu Qurayzah***, the last Jewish tribe in Madinah bound by a peace treaty, were reported to have ***broken their covenant*** and sided with the Confederates. Their position was on the south side of Madinah — behind the Muslims, near the homes of the women and children.

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 2846

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو نُعَيْمٍ، حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ الْمُنْكَدِرِ، عَنْ جَابِرٍ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ قَالَ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم مَنْ يَأْتِينِي بِخَبَرِ الْقَوْمِ يَوْمَ الأَحْزَابِ. قَالَ الزُّبَيْرُ أَنَا. ثُمَّ قَالَ مَنْ يَأْتِينِي بِخَبَرِ الْقَوْمِ. قَالَ الزُّبَيْرُ أَنَا. فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم إِنَّ لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ حَوَارِيًّا، وَحَوَارِيَّ الزُّبَيْرُ.

TRANSLATION:

Jabir رضى الله عنه said: **The Prophet ﷺ said on the day of al-Ahzab: "Who will bring me news of the people?" Az-Zubayr said: "I will." He asked again: "Who will bring me news of the people?" Az-Zubayr said: "I will." Then the Prophet ﷺ said: "Every prophet has a hawari (devoted helper), and my hawari is az-Zubayr."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Abu Nu'aym, from Sufyan (ath-Thawri), from Muhammad ibn al-Munkadir, from Jabir ibn 'Abdullah رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Jihad, Hadith No. 2846; also No. 4113.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:2846

SIRAH NOTE: HUYAYY IBN AKHTAB AND KA'B IBN ASAD

The sirah books say ***Huyayy ibn Akhtab***, leader of Banu an-Nadir, went to ***Ka'b ibn Asad***, chief of Banu Qurayzah, and persuaded him until he agreed to break the treaty with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He sent ***Sa'd ibn Mu'adh*** and ***Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah*** to confirm the news, and they found the betrayal was true.

Ibn Hajar in Fath al-Bari mentions that the news az-Zubayr went to fetch in the hadith above was news of ***Banu Qurayzah***.

REFERENCES:

Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah; Ibn Hajar, Fath al-Bari, commentary on hadith 2846.

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The lesson: in danger, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ sought ***accurate information*** before acting, and honoured the Companion who stepped forward — az-Zubayr was called ***"hawari"***, a devoted helper, like the disciples of the Prophet 'Isa عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ.

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'ALI AND 'AMR IBN 'ABD WUDD

Though the trench blocked a major assault, a few enemy horsemen managed to cross at a narrow point. The sirah books record a famous episode:

SIRAH NOTE: 'ALI IBN ABI TALIB FACES 'AMR IBN 'ABD WUDD

'Amr ibn 'Abd Wudd, a Quraysh warrior famed for his might, crossed the trench with a few horsemen and challenged the Muslims to single combat. The young ***'Ali ibn Abi Talib*** رضى الله عنه answered the challenge.

'Ali first called him to Islam, but 'Amr refused. They fought, and 'Ali killed him; the other horsemen fled back across the trench.

This story is well known in the sirah books (Ibn Ishaq) and histories, but is ***not found in Sahih al-Bukhari or Muslim***. Some of its details — such as the long dialogue — are disputed by researchers.

REFERENCES:
Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah, chapter on the Trench.

Notice that even in a duel, 'Ali ***first called to Islam*** — in line with the Prophet's ﷺ instruction to every commander (Sahih Muslim 1731; Book 11). The lesson: a Muslim's aim is ***guidance***, not mere victory.

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THE MISSED PRAYER

On one day of the siege, the enemy's attacks and arrows were so relentless that the Muslims ***could not pray 'Asr*** until the sun had set. 'Ali رضى الله عنه narrated the Prophet's ﷺ words:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4111

حَدَّثَنَا إِسْحَاقُ، حَدَّثَنَا رَوْحٌ، حَدَّثَنَا هِشَامٌ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدٍ، عَنْ عَبِيدَةَ، عَنْ عَلِيٍّ - رضى الله عنه - عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم أَنَّهُ قَالَ يَوْمَ الْخَنْدَقِ مَلأَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ بُيُوتَهُمْ وَقُبُورَهُمْ نَارًا كَمَا شَغَلُونَا عَنْ صَلاَةِ الْوُسْطَى حَتَّى غَابَتِ الشَّمْسُ.

TRANSLATION:

'Ali رضى الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said on the day of the Trench: **"May Allah fill their houses and their graves with fire, as they kept us busy from the middle prayer ('Asr) until the sun had set."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Ishaq (ibn Mansur), from Rawh (ibn 'Ubadah), from Hisham (ibn Hassan), from Muhammad (ibn Sirin), from 'Abidah (as-Salmani), from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Military Expeditions (al-Maghazi), Chapter on the Battle of the Trench, Hadith No. 4111.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:4111

Jabir رضى الله عنه narrated that 'Umar came after sunset cursing the disbelievers of Quraysh and said: "O Messenger of Allah, I could barely pray 'Asr before the sun set." He said: ***"By Allah, I have not prayed it either."*** So they performed ablution, and he prayed ***'Asr after sunset***, then prayed Maghrib (Sahih al-Bukhari 596).

The hadith of 'Ali above is also evidence that ***the middle prayer*** in the following verse is 'Asr: ***"Maintain with care the [obligatory] prayers and [in particular] the middle prayer"*** Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:238.

Scholars mention this happened ***before the fear prayer was revealed*** according to some views, or because the attacks left no room. The lesson: the Prophet's ﷺ grief at missing the prayer time shows how ***great the place of prayer*** is — and a missed prayer must be made up as soon as possible, in its order.

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THE RULING ON A MISSED PRAYER

The events of the Trench became a basis for the ruling on ***making up prayers***. Anas رضى الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: ***"Whoever forgets a prayer should pray it when he remembers it; there is no expiation for it except that."*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 597).

POINT	EXPLANATION
Duty to make up	A missed prayer must be made up; it does not lapse
Promptly	"When he remembers" — do not delay without reason
In order	He prayed 'Asr first, then Maghrib (Bukhari 596)
In congregation	Missed prayers may be made up in congregation, as at the Trench

Scholars distinguish between ***missing a prayer with an excuse*** (forgetting, sleeping, being prevented as at the Trench), which is not sinful, and ***abandoning it deliberately***, which is a major sin. The lesson: even in war, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not let a single prayer pass without making it up.

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SA'D IBN MU'ADH IS WOUNDED

Among the wounded at the Trench was ***Sa'd ibn Mu'adh*** رضى الله عنه, chief of the Aws and one of the most honoured men of the Ansar. 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها narrated that ***Sa'd was shot by a man of Quraysh named Hibban ibn al-'Ariqah, right in the vein of his arm***. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ pitched ***a tent in the mosque*** for him so he could visit him closely (Sahih al-Bukhari 4122).

SA'D'S PRAYER

In the same hadith, Sa'd prayed: ***"O Allah, You know that nothing is dearer to me than striving in Your cause against a people who denied Your Messenger and drove him out. O Allah, if any fighting with Quraysh remains, keep me alive to fight them; but if You have ended it, then let this wound burst and make my death through it."*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 4122).

The rest of Sa'd's story — his judgement on Banu Qurayzah and his death — will be told in Book 13, in sha Allah. The lesson: the Messenger of Allah ﷺ ***cared for his wounded Companion*** with love, and Sa'd entrusted his end entirely to Allah.

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THE THRONE SHOOK AT SA'D'S DEATH

Sa'd's wound at the Trench led to his death not long after, as he had asked. Jabir رضى الله عنه said: I heard the Prophet ﷺ say: ***"The Throne of the Most Merciful shook at the death of Sa'd ibn Mu'adh."*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 3803).

Sa'd embraced Islam at the hands of ***Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr*** (Book 10), and his whole clan, Banu 'Abd al-Ashhal, embraced Islam with him. In only about six years of Islam, he became one of the highest-ranking Companions. The lesson: a person's worth with Allah is not measured by ***the length of his life***, but by ***his earnestness and sincerity***.

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NU'AYM IBN MAS'UD

The Confederate alliance looked solid, but Allah broke it ***from within***. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"War is deceit."*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 3030).

SIRAH NOTE: THE STRATAGEM OF NU'AYM IBN MAS'UD

The sirah books say ***Nu'aym ibn Mas'ud al-Ashja'i***, a Ghatafan leader respected by all sides, came secretly to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and declared his Islam, while his people did not yet know. He said to him: "You are only one man; so weaken their (alliance) as best you can."

Nu'aym went to ***Banu Qurayzah*** and advised them to demand hostages from Quraysh as a guarantee, since Quraysh might abandon them. Then he went to ***Quraysh and Ghatafan*** and told them Qurayzah regretted their move and wanted to hand hostages to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. When Qurayzah did demand hostages, both sides ***grew suspicious of each other***, and the alliance cracked.

REFERENCES:

Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah; Wikipedia, "Battle of the Trench".
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Trench

Scholars explain that ***stratagem in war*** — such as concealing plans or misleading the enemy — is permitted, but ***breaking a covenant*** remains forbidden. The lesson: one sincere person, even alone, can be the means by which Allah changes a situation.

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THE LIMITS OF "DECEIT" IN ISLAM

Islam is very strict about honesty, yet allows ***limited exceptions***. Umm Kulthum bint 'Uqbah رضى الله عنها narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"He is not a liar who reconciles between people, conveying good or saying good."*** Ibn Shihab said the concession is only in three cases: ***in war, in reconciling people, and in what spouses say to each other*** (Sahih Muslim 2605).

PERMITTED	NOT PERMITTED
Concealing war plans	Breaking a sealed covenant
Misleading the enemy about positions	Killing one granted safe conduct
Splitting an enemy alliance	Cheating in trade and trusts

The lesson: "deceit" in war means ***strategy***, not ***treachery***. Nu'aym broke no covenant; he used wisdom to save lives and stop a war.

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THE PRAYER AGAINST THE CONFEDERATES

Alongside effort — the trench, the guarding and the strategy — the Messenger of Allah ﷺ never stopped ***praying***. 'Abdullah ibn Abi Awfa رضى الله عنهما narrated his prayer:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 2933

حَدَّثَنَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ، أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ، أَخْبَرَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ بْنُ أَبِي خَالِدٍ، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ أَبِي أَوْفَى ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ يَقُولُ دَعَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَوْمَ الأَحْزَابِ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِينَ فَقَالَ اللَّهُمَّ مُنْزِلَ الْكِتَابِ سَرِيعَ الْحِسَابِ، اللَّهُمَّ اهْزِمِ الأَحْزَابَ، اللَّهُمَّ اهْزِمْهُمْ وَزَلْزِلْهُمْ.

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn Abi Awfa رضى الله عنهما said: **The Messenger of Allah ﷺ invoked against the polytheists on the day of al-Ahzab: "O Allah, Revealer of the Book, Swift in reckoning, defeat al-Ahzab. O Allah, defeat them and shake them."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Ahmad ibn Muhammad, from 'Abdullah (ibn al-Mubarak), from Isma'il ibn Abi Khalid, from 'Abdullah ibn Abi Awfa رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Jihad, Chapter on Invoking Defeat on the Polytheists, Hadith No. 2933.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:2933

ALLAH'S NAMES IN THE PRAYER	LINK TO THE SITUATION
"Revealer of the Book"	The One who revealed the Book will surely help its bearer
"Swift in reckoning"	Allah can repay the enemy swiftly
"Defeat them and shake them"	A request answered with wind and division

This prayer was ***answered***: Allah defeated them and shook them — with division from within (Chapter 15) and wind from the sky (Chapter 18). The lesson: prayer is no substitute for effort, and effort no substitute for prayer; the two go together.

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HUDHAYFAH'S NIGHT

Towards the end of the siege came a bitterly cold and windy night. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ needed someone to cross to the enemy camp and bring news. ***Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman*** رضى الله عنه — whose father was martyred at Uhud (Book 10) — told of that night:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1788

حَدَّثَنَا زُهَيْرُ بْنُ حَرْبٍ، وَإِسْحَاقُ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، جَمِيعًا عَنْ جَرِيرٍ، قَالَ زُهَيْرٌ حَدَّثَنَا جَرِيرٌ، عَنِ الأَعْمَشِ، عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ التَّيْمِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، قَالَ كُنَّا عِنْدَ حُذَيْفَةَ فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ لَوْ أَدْرَكْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَاتَلْتُ مَعَهُ وَأَبْلَيْتُ فَقَالَ حُذَيْفَةُ أَنْتَ كُنْتَ تَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ لَقَدْ رَأَيْتُنَا مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم لَيْلَةَ الأَحْزَابِ وَأَخَذَتْنَا رِيحٌ شَدِيدَةٌ وَقُرٌّ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم أَلاَ رَجُلٌ يَأْتِينِي بِخَبَرِ الْقَوْمِ جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ مَعِي يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ. فَسَكَتْنَا فَلَمْ يُجِبْهُ مِنَّا أَحَدٌ ثُمَّ قَالَ أَلاَ رَجُلٌ يَأْتِينَا بِخَبَرِ الْقَوْمِ جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ مَعِي يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ. فَسَكَتْنَا فَلَمْ يُجِبْهُ مِنَّا أَحَدٌ ثُمَّ قَالَ أَلاَ رَجُلٌ يَأْتِينَا بِخَبَرِ الْقَوْمِ جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ مَعِي يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ. فَسَكَتْنَا فَلَمْ يُجِبْهُ مِنَّا أَحَدٌ فَقَالَ قُمْ يَا حُذَيْفَةُ فَأْتِنَا بِخَبَرِ الْقَوْمِ. فَلَمْ أَجِدْ بُدًّا إِذْ دَعَانِي بِاسْمِي أَنْ أَقُومَ قَالَ اذْهَبْ فَأْتِنِي بِخَبَرِ الْقَوْمِ وَلاَ تَذْعَرْهُمْ عَلَىَّ. فَلَمَّا وَلَّيْتُ مِنْ عِنْدِهِ جَعَلْتُ كَأَنَّمَا أَمْشِي فِي حَمَّامٍ حَتَّى أَتَيْتُهُمْ فَرَأَيْتُ أَبَا سُفْيَانَ يَصْلِي ظَهْرَهُ بِالنَّارِ فَوَضَعْتُ سَهْمًا فِي كَبِدِ الْقَوْسِ فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَرْمِيَهُ فَذَكَرْتُ قَوْلَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم وَلاَ تَذْعَرْهُمْ عَلَىَّ. وَلَوْ رَمَيْتُهُ لأَصَبْتُهُ فَرَجَعْتُ وَأَنَا أَمْشِي فِي مِثْلِ الْحَمَّامِ فَلَمَّا أَتَيْتُهُ فَأَخْبَرْتُهُ بِخَبَرِ الْقَوْمِ وَفَرَغْتُ قُرِرْتُ فَأَلْبَسَنِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم مِنْ فَضْلِ عَبَاءَةٍ كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِ يُصَلِّي فِيهَا فَلَمْ أَزَلْ نَائِمًا حَتَّى أَصْبَحْتُ فَلَمَّا أَصْبَحْتُ قَالَ قُمْ يَا نَوْمَانُ.

TRANSLATION:

Ibrahim at-Taymi narrated from his father: We were with Hudhayfah, and a man said: "Had I met the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, I would have fought beside him with all my strength." Hudhayfah said: "Would you have done that? **I was with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ on the night of al-Ahzab, and we were struck by a fierce wind and bitter cold. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: 'Is there a man who will bring me news of the people — Allah will place him with me on the Day of Resurrection?'** We all kept silent; none of us answered" — three times. Then he said: **"Get up, Hudhayfah, bring me news of the people, and do not**

provoke them against me." Hudhayfah said: "When I left him, I felt as if I were walking in a warm bath, until I reached them. I saw Abu Sufyan warming his back at a fire. I set an arrow in my bow to shoot him, then remembered the words of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: 'Do not provoke them.' Had I shot, I would have hit him.

I returned, still as if walking in a warm bath. When I had given him the news and finished, I felt cold again. ***The Messenger of Allah ﷺ covered me with the spare part of the cloak he wore for prayer, and I slept until morning. When morning came, he said: 'Get up, O heavy sleeper!'***"

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Zuhayr ibn Harb and Ishaq ibn Ibrahim, from Jarir, from al-A'mash, from Ibrahim at-Taymi, from his father Yazid ibn Sharik at-Taymi, from Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Jihad, Chapter on the Battle of al-Ahzab, Hadith No. 1788.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim, the second most authentic book of Hadith after Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:1788

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WARMTH IN OBEDIENCE

Notice: before being called, no one answered, from extreme cold and fear. But when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ ***called him by name***, Hudhayfah rose — and throughout his mission he felt ***warm as if in a hot bath***. The cold returned as soon as his task was done.

Hudhayfah also ***held back*** from shooting Abu Sufyan though the chance was there, obeying the instruction: "Do not provoke them." The lesson: obeying the leader's orders — even when an opportunity looks tempting — is part of victory. And Allah ***eases*** the task of the obedient.

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HUDHAYFAH: KEEPER OF THE PROPHET'S ﷺ SECRET

The Prophet's ﷺ trust in Hudhayfah on the night of the Trench was no coincidence. Years later, Abu ad-Darda' رضى الله عنه asked a man from Kufah: ***"Is there not among you the keeper of the secret which no one else knows, namely Hudhayfah?"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 3743).

Scholars mention that the secret concerned ***the names of the hypocrites***, which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ told him. Hudhayfah guarded it faithfully. The night of the Trench shows the two qualities that made him fit for it: ***courage*** to cross into the enemy camp, and ***discipline*** to hold back his arrow from Abu Sufyan.

The lesson: great trusts are given to those who have ***proven themselves*** in small and difficult ones.

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THE WIND AND THE UNSEEN ARMIES

That same night, Allah sent ***a fierce, cold wind*** upon the Confederate camp. Allah says:

"remember the favor of Allah upon you when armies came to [attack] you and We sent upon them a wind and armies [of angels] you did not see"Tafsir Ibn Kathir 33:9.

Ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنهما narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: ***"I was given victory by the saba (east wind), and the people of 'Ad were destroyed by the dabur (west wind)."*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 4105). Imam al-Bukhari placed this hadith in the chapter on the Battle of the Trench.

SIRAH NOTE: THE WIND'S EFFECT ON THE ENEMY CAMP

The sirah books say the wind ***put out the fires***, blew away the tents and overturned the cooking pots of the Confederates, while the Muslim camp was sheltered. Abu Sufyan finally called out: "O Quraysh, you are no longer in a place fit to stay… so depart, for I am departing."

REFERENCES:

Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah; Wikipedia, "Battle of the Trench".
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Trench

The lesson: Allah has ***unseen armies*** — wind, angels, fear in the enemy's hearts. The same kind of wind once destroyed the rebellious people of 'Ad; now it became help for the believers.

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WIND AND COLD: A SCIENTIFIC NOTE

Hudhayfah's hadith says the Muslims were ***struck by a fierce wind and bitter cold*** (Sahih Muslim 1788). Modern science explains why wind makes a cold night feel far harsher: the US National Weather Service (NWS) explains that ***as the wind increases, it draws heat from the body, driving down skin temperature*** and eventually internal body temperature — known as ***the "wind chill" effect*** (NWS, Understanding Wind Chill).

AIR TEMPERATURE	WIND SPEED → FELT TEMPERATURE (NWS EXAMPLE)
0°F (≈ −18°C)	15 mph (≈ 24 km/h) → −19°F (≈ −28°C)

For the Confederate army camped on the open plain without shelter, their fires blown out by the wind, the effect was punishing. The Muslims were more sheltered at the foot of Mount Sal'. This is part of the ***"armies you did not see"*** (33:9) — laws of nature that Allah created, set in motion at the right moment.

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ALLAH ALONE DEFEATED THEM

The next morning, the Confederate camp was ***empty***. The alliance of ten thousand went home without any victory. Allah says:

"And Allah repelled those who disbelieved, in their rage, not having obtained any good. And sufficient was Allah for the believers in battle"Tafsir Ibn Kathir 33:25.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would afterwards repeat a remembrance recalling this event:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4114

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ، عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم كَانَ يَقُولُ لاَ إِلَهَ إِلاَّ اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ، أَعَزَّ جُنْدَهُ، وَنَصَرَ عَبْدَهُ وَغَلَبَ الأَحْزَابَ وَحْدَهُ، فَلاَ شَىْءَ بَعْدَهُ.

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to say: **"There is no god but Allah, alone; He honoured His army, gave victory to His servant, and He alone defeated al-Ahzab. So there is nothing after Him."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Qutaybah ibn Sa'id, from al-Layth, from Sa'id ibn Abi Sa'id (al-Maqburi), from his father Abu Sa'id al-Maqburi, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Military Expeditions (al-Maghazi), Chapter on the Battle of the Trench, Hadith No. 4114.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:4114

This remembrance says ***"He alone defeated al-Ahzab"*** — not the trench, not the army, not the strategy. All these were only means; the One who defeated them was Allah. He also used to say it when returning from journeys, Hajj and 'Umrah, according to other narrations in Sahih al-Bukhari.

The lesson: after striving to the utmost, the believer ***attributes victory to Allah***, not to himself. That is tawhid in success.

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THE REMEMBRANCE ON RETURNING FROM A JOURNEY

'Abdullah ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهما narrated that when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ returned from a campaign, Hajj or 'Umrah, he said takbir three times at every high place, then said: ***"There is no god but Allah, alone, without partner. His is the dominion and His is the praise, and He is over all things competent. We return, repenting, worshipping, prostrating, and praising our Lord. Allah has fulfilled His promise, helped His servant, and He alone defeated al-Ahzab."*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 1797).

This remembrance is still practised by pilgrims today. Each time they say it, they ***remember the Battle of the Trench*** — how Allah saved Madinah without a great battle. The lesson: victory is remembered with ***remembrance and gratitude***, not with pride.

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"NOW WE WILL GO AGAINST THEM"

The defeat of the Confederates was ***a turning point*** in the history of Islam. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ stated it clearly:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4109

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو نُعَيْمٍ، حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، عَنْ أَبِي إِسْحَاقَ، عَنْ سُلَيْمَانَ بْنِ صُرَدٍ، قَالَ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَوْمَ الأَحْزَابِ نَغْزُوهُمْ وَلاَ يَغْزُونَنَا.

TRANSLATION:

Sulayman ibn Surad رضى الله عنه said: **The Prophet ﷺ said on the day of al-Ahzab: "Now we will go out against them, and they will not come against us."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Abu Nu'aym, from Sufyan (ath-Thawri), from Abu Ishaq, from Sulayman ibn Surad رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Military Expeditions (al-Maghazi), Chapter on the Battle of the Trench, Hadith No. 4109.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:4109

BEFORE THE TRENCH	AFTER THE TRENCH
Quraysh attacked Madinah (Badr, Uhud, Trench)	Quraysh never again attacked Madinah
The Muslims defended	The Muslims took the initiative
Tribes allied against Madinah	Tribes began coming to make peace and embrace Islam

This saying ***came true***: Quraysh never attacked Madinah again. A year later, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself set out for Makkah for 'Umrah, leading to the Treaty of Hudaybiyah and finally the opening of Makkah. The lesson: patience in the heaviest trial is often ***the door to a great victory***.

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THE EXCELLENT PATTERN

In the midst of the verses on the Battle of the Trench, Allah placed a verse that became ***a great principle*** in every Muslim's life:

"There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern"Tafsir Ibn Kathir 33:21.

Ibn Kathir says this verse is ***a great foundation*** for following the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in his words, deeds and states. And it was revealed in the context of the Trench — because there his example was most clearly seen:

HIS EXAMPLE AT THE TRENCH	EVIDENCE
Consulting and accepting good ideas	The trench proposal (Chapter 2)
Working alongside the Companions	Dust covering his belly (Bukhari 4104)
Bearing the same hunger	A stone tied to his belly (Bukhari 4101)
Putting others first	A thousand ate first (Bukhari 4102)
Praying and relying on Allah	The prayer against al-Ahzab (Bukhari 2933)
Attributing victory to Allah	"He alone defeated al-Ahzab" (Bukhari 4114)

The verse also names who takes that example: ***whoever hopes in Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah often***. The lesson: following the sunnah is not mere outward imitation, but flows from hope in the Hereafter and constant remembrance.

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JIBRIL HAD NOT LAID DOWN ARMS

The Muslims returned home full of gratitude and exhaustion. But before they could rest, a new command came from heaven. 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها narrated:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4117

حَدَّثَنِي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ نُمَيْرٍ، عَنْ هِشَامٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ ـ رضى الله عنها ـ قَالَتْ لَمَّا رَجَعَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم مِنَ الْخَنْدَقِ وَوَضَعَ السِّلاَحَ وَاغْتَسَلَ، أَتَاهُ جِبْرِيلُ ـ عَلَيْهِ السَّلاَمُ ـ فَقَالَ قَدْ وَضَعْتَ السِّلاَحَ وَاللَّهِ مَا وَضَعْنَاهُ، فَاخْرُجْ إِلَيْهِمْ. قَالَ فَإِلَى أَيْنَ. قَالَ هَا هُنَا، وَأَشَارَ إِلَى بَنِي قُرَيْظَةَ، فَخَرَجَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم إِلَيْهِمْ.

TRANSLATION:

'A'ishah رضى الله عنها said: **When the Prophet ﷺ returned from the Trench, laid down his arms and bathed, Jibril came and said: "You have laid down your arms? By Allah, we (the angels) have not laid them down. Go out to them."** The Prophet ﷺ asked: "Where?" Jibril said: "There," pointing towards Banu Qurayzah. So the Prophet ﷺ went out to them.

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Abdullah ibn Abi Shaybah, from Ibn Numayr, from Hisham (ibn 'Urwah), from his father 'Urwah ibn az-Zubayr, from 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Military Expeditions, Chapter on the Prophet's ﷺ Return From al-Ahzab, Hadith No. 4117.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:4117

The Qur'an mentions the end of the tribe that betrayed the covenant: ***"And He brought down those who supported them among the People of the Scripture from their fortresses and cast terror into their hearts"*** Tafsir Ibn Kathir 33:26.

The siege of Banu Qurayzah, the judgement of Sa'd ibn Mu'adh and his death will be told in ***Book 13***, in sha Allah. The lesson here: the angels ***were still in arms*** when people had laid theirs down — Allah's matter is not finished until justice is done against betrayal.

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"NONE SHOULD PRAY 'ASR EXCEPT AT BANU QURAYZAH"

Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهما narrated that on the day of al-Ahzab the Prophet ﷺ said: ***"None of you should pray 'Asr except at Banu Qurayzah."*** 'Asr came while some were still on the way. Some said: "We will not pray until we get there." Others said: "Rather, we will pray; he did not mean that." When this was mentioned to the Prophet ﷺ, ***he did not blame either group.*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 4119).

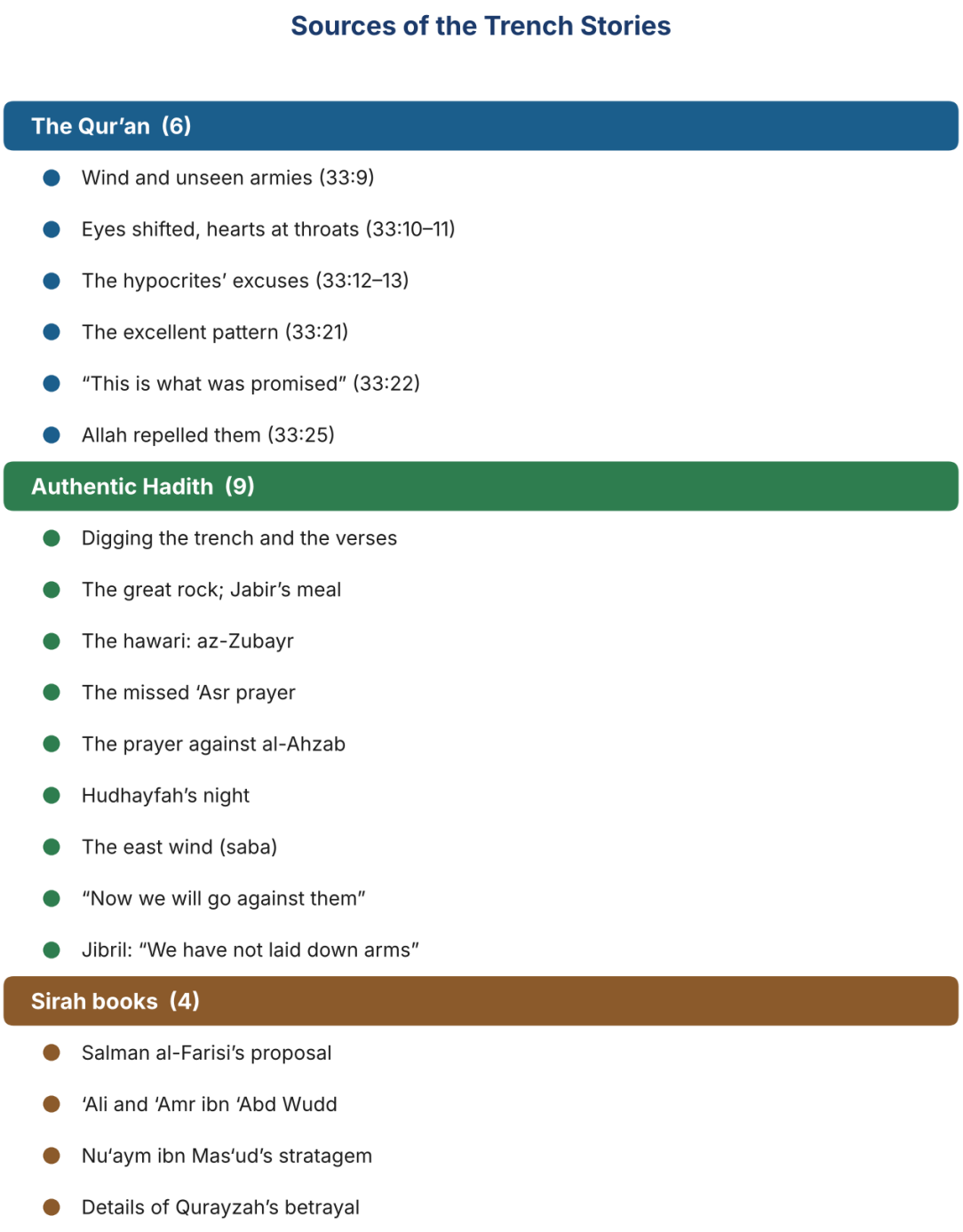
FIRST GROUP	SECOND GROUP
Held to the literal words	Held to the intent: hurry to Banu Qurayzah
Prayed after arriving	Prayed on time on the way
Not blamed	Not blamed

Scholars take this hadith as evidence that ***differences of ijtihad*** based on evidence and good intention should not cause division. The lesson: in matters open to differing views, we ***show broad-mindedness***, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did towards both groups.

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SOURCES OF THE TRENCH STORIES

The story of the Trench reaches us through three kinds of sources of differing strength. This eBook distinguishes them so the reader knows ***what is certain*** and ***what is well known***:



Sirah-book stories are mentioned with their status explained in the relevant chapters.

Figure 4: The status of sources for the Trench stories in this eBook.

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STORY	SOURCE AND STATUS
Wind and unseen armies; hearts at throats; hypocrites; the promise; the pattern	The Qur'an (Al-Ahzab 33:9–26) — certain
Digging; the dust; the great rock; Jabir's meal	Sahih al-Bukhari 2834, 4104, 4101, 4102 — sahih
Az-Zubayr; 'Asr prayer; Sa'd wounded; the prayer; the east wind	Sahih al-Bukhari 2846, 4111, 596, 4122, 2933, 4105 — sahih
Hudhayfah's night	Sahih Muslim 1788 — sahih
The light while striking the rock	Sunan an-Nasa'i 3176 — hasan
Salman and the trench; 'Ali and 'Amr; Nu'aym; Qurayzah details	Sirah books (Ibn Ishaq, al-Waqidi) — well known, chains vary
Date of the battle	Well known: Shawwal 5 AH; Musa ibn 'Uqbah: 4 AH

Stories from the sirah books are not necessarily false; they are transmitted by trusted sirah scholars. Yet they are ***not on the level*** of the Qur'an and sahih hadith. This eBook ***does not include*** Isra'iliyyat or clearly fabricated reports.

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VERSES OF SURAH AL-AHZAB ABOUT THE TRENCH

The Battle of the Trench is among the battles the Qur'an describes at greatest length. Nineteen verses of Surah Al-Ahzab (33:9–27) portray it from many angles: the state of the enemy, the feelings of the believers, the excuses of the hypocrites, the example of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the outcome of the battle. The table below maps those verses to the chapters of this eBook.

VERSE	CONTENT	CHAPTER
33:9	A reminder of blessing: the wind and armies that could not be seen	18
33:10	The enemy came from above and below; eyes grew wild and hearts reached the throats	1, 7, 8
33:11	The believers were tested and shaken with a severe shaking	8
33:12–13	The hypocrites: "a delusion"; asking leave to go home because "our houses are exposed"	9
33:14–17	The reality of the hypocrites: fleeing does not save anyone from death	9
33:18–20	Those who held others back and were stingy in war	9
33:21	The Messenger of Allah ﷺ, an excellent pattern	21
33:22	The believers: "This is what Allah and His Messenger promised us"	10
33:23–24	Men who were true to their covenant with Allah	24
33:25	Allah repelled the disbelievers and spared the believers from fighting	19
33:26–27	The People of the Book who helped the enemy were brought down from their forts	22; Series 13

"AMONG THE BELIEVERS ARE MEN…"

In the middle of the verses about the Trench, Allah praises the faithful: "Among the believers are men true to what they promised Allah. Among them is he who has fulfilled his vow (to the death), and among them is he who awaits his turn. And they did not alter (the terms of their commitment) by any alteration" (Al-Ahzab 33:23).

Anas ibn Malik رضى الله عنه said the Companions held that this verse was revealed about his uncle, Anas ibn an-Nadr, who fell at Uhud, and those like him (Sahih al-Bukhari 2805; Series 10). The verse is placed within the story of the Trench because it describes the true character of believers in times of trial: they do not change.

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HADITH: THE VERSE FOUND WITH KHUZAYMAH

Zayd ibn Thabit رضى الله عنه said: When we were copying the mushaf, I missed a verse of Surah Al-Ahzab that I used to hear the Messenger of Allah ﷺ recite. I found it only with Khuzaymah ibn Thabit al-Ansari, whose testimony the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had made equal to the testimony of two men. The verse was: "Among the believers are men true to what they promised Allah."

Grade: AUTHENTIC — Sahih al-Bukhari 4784.

This Hadith shows how carefully the Companions compiled the Qur'an: the verse was already memorised and had been heard, yet Zayd still sought a witnessed written copy. The verse about those faithful to their covenant was preserved by those faithful to their trust.

LESSONS

The Qur'an does not merely record the history of the Trench; it weighs the heart of every group. When we read Surah Al-Ahzab, we can ask ourselves: in life's trials, are we with those who say "this is what Allah promised", or with those who say "our houses are exposed"?

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WOMEN, YOUTHS AND THE WOUNDED

The siege of the Trench involved the whole population of Madinah, not only the fighters at the edge of the trench. Women and children were placed in the forts (atam) inside the city, young men volunteered, and the wounded were cared for close to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

IBN 'UMAR ACCEPTED AT FIFTEEN

HADITH: IBN 'UMAR ON THE DAY OF THE TRENCH

Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهما said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ inspected me on the day of Uhud when I was fourteen, and he did not permit me. Then he inspected me on the day of the Trench when I was fifteen, and he permitted me.

Grade: AUTHENTIC — Sahih al-Bukhari 2664; Sahih Muslim 1868.

Scholars, among them 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, took this Hadith as evidence that the age of fifteen is the boundary between childhood and adulthood in matters of responsibility. The youth turned away at Uhud (Series 10) now stood at the trench beside the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

A TENT INSIDE THE MOSQUE

HADITH: A TENT FOR SA'D IBN MU'ADH

'A'ishah رضى الله عنها said: Sa'd (ibn Mu'adh) was wounded on the day of the Trench in the vein of his arm (al-akhal), so the Messenger of Allah ﷺ pitched a tent inside the mosque so that he could visit him from nearby.

Grade: AUTHENTIC — Sahih al-Bukhari 463.

SIRAH NOTE: RUFAYDAH AL-ASLAMIYYAH

Ibn Ishaq mentions that the tent belonged to a woman named Rufaydah of the tribe of Aslam, who tended the wounded seeking reward from Allah. Rufaydah's name is not mentioned in Sahih al-Bukhari; it comes from the narrations of the books of sirah.

Reference: Ibn Hisham, al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah, chapter on the Trench; Wikipedia, "Rufaida Al-Aslamia".

The Prophet's Mosque was not only a place of prayer; it was also a place of care and compassion. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ wanted his wounded Companion close by, so that he could visit him even while busy leading the defence of the city.

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SAFIYYAH BINT 'ABD AL-MUTTALIB AT THE FORT

SIRAH NOTE: THE COURAGE OF SAFIYYAH

The books of sirah mention that Safiyyah bint 'Abd al-Muttalib رضى الله عنها, the aunt of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and mother of az-Zubayr, was in one of the forts with the women and children. When a Jewish man was seen circling the fort to spy on it while the men were busy at the trench, Safiyyah herself went down and killed him, to protect the women inside.

This story is narrated by Ibn Ishaq from Hisham ibn 'Urwah from his father (a mursal chain). Some additional details in certain versions are disputed by scholars; this eBook mentions only its essence.

Reference: Ibn Hisham, al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah, chapter on the Trench; Wikipedia, "Safiyya bint Abd al-Muttalib".

LESSONS

The victory of the Trench was built by the whole community: eager youths, brave women and sincere carers, alongside the fighters. Everyone had a role, and no contribution is small in the sight of Allah.

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PEOPLE OF THE TRENCH AND THE TALKS WITH GHATAFAN

The story of the Trench involves many people on both sides. The tables below summarise their roles according to the Qur'an, the Hadith and the books of sirah (especially Ibn Hisham).

THE MUSLIMS

PERSON	ROLE AT THE TRENCH	CHAPTER
Salman al-Farisi	Proposed the trench (sirah narration)	2
Sa'd ibn Mu'adh	Chief of Aws; wounded; rejected the offer to Ghatafan	14, 25, 26
Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah	Chief of Khazraj; with Sa'd ibn Mu'adh in the talks	26
'Ali ibn Abi Talib	Faced 'Amr ibn 'Abd Wudd (sirah narration)	12
Az-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwam	Hawari of the Messenger ﷺ; scouted Banu Qurayzah	11
Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman	Sent to the enemy camp on the cold night	17
Jabir ibn 'Abdullah	The blessed meal; narrator of the prayer at Masjid al-Fath	6, 27
Nu'aym ibn Mas'ud	Split the Confederate alliance (sirah narration)	15
'Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum	Appointed over Madinah (according to Ibn Hisham)	—
'Abdullah ibn 'Umar	Accepted to take part at fifteen	25
Safiyyah bint 'Abd al-Muttalib	Defended the women's fort (sirah narration)	25

LEADERS OF THE CONFEDERATES

PERSON	TRIBE AND ROLE	LATER FATE
Abu Sufyan ibn Harb	Leader of Quraysh and commander of the alliance	Embraced Islam at the Conquest of Makkah
'Uyaynah ibn Hisn	Chief of Fazarah (Ghatafan)	Embraced Islam later
Al-Harith ibn 'Awf	Chief of Banu Murrah (Ghatafan)	Embraced Islam later
Tulayhah ibn Khuwaylid	Chief of Banu Asad	Apostatised and claimed prophethood, then repented
Huyayy ibn Akhtab	Leader of Banu an-Nadir; instigator of the alliance	Series 13
Ka'b ibn Asad	Chief of Banu Qurayzah; broke the treaty	Series 13
'Amr ibn 'Abd Wudd	Champion of Quraysh	Killed at the edge of the trench

Notice the last column: many leaders who came to wipe out Islam later embraced Islam themselves. The door of guidance is not closed to anyone while life remains.

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THE OFFER OF A THIRD OF MADINAH'S DATES

SIRAH NOTE: TALKS WITH GHATAFAN

Ibn Ishaq narrates that when the siege grew heavy, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ considered offering a third of Madinah's date harvest to the two leaders of Ghatafan, 'Uyaynah ibn Hisn and al-Harith ibn 'Awf, so that they would withdraw. Before the agreement was sealed, he consulted Sa'd ibn Mu'adh and Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah.

The two Sa'ds asked: "O Messenger of Allah, is this a command from Allah that we must obey, or something you like, or something you are doing for our sake?" He replied that it was to lighten their burden. Sa'd ibn Mu'adh said that even when they were idolaters, Ghatafan never ate a single date of Madinah except as guests or by buying it; now that Allah had honoured them with Islam, they would not hand over their wealth. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ accepted this view, and the offer was not pursued.

Grade: a narration of the books of sirah (Ibn Ishaq from 'Asim ibn 'Umar ibn Qatadah and az-Zuhri) with a mursal chain; it is well known but not found in Sahih al-Bukhari or Muslim.

Reference: Ibn Hisham, al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah, chapter on the Trench; al-Mubarakfuri, al-Rahiq al-Makhtum.

LESSONS

Although this narration comes from the books of sirah, it agrees with the authentic principle of shura: the Messenger of Allah ﷺ distinguished between revelation that must be obeyed and personal opinion that may be discussed. A good leader listens to those who will bear the consequences of his decision.

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THE BATTLEFIELD OF THE TRENCH TODAY

The trench was filled in long ago, and its area now lies in the middle of modern Madinah. Yet some geographical landmarks can still be identified from the books of Madinah's history.

PLACE	DESCRIPTION	STATUS OF INFORMATION
Mount Sal'	A small hill north-west of the Prophet's Mosque; the Muslims camped at its foot, with the hill behind them and the trench in front	Books of sirah; location identified
Line of the trench	Across the open northern side of Madinah, between Harrat Waqim in the east and Harrat al-Wabrah in the west; other sides were protected by lava fields, orchards and houses	Books of sirah; exact line estimated
Masjid al-Fath	On the western slope of Mount Sal'; where the Messenger of Allah ﷺ made supplication according to the Hadith of Jabir	Hadith (al-Adab al-Mufrad 704)
Nearby small mosques	Named after Salman, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Ali and Fatimah; known together as "the Seven Mosques"	Local tradition; no authentic narration about the naming
Settlement of Banu Qurayzah	South-east of Madinah, behind the Muslim lines	Books of sirah; Series 13

HADITH: SUPPLICATION AT MASJID AL-FATH

Jabir ibn 'Abdullah رضى الله عنهما said that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ made supplication in this mosque — Masjid al-Fath — on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, and it was answered on Wednesday between the two prayers (Zuhr and 'Asr). Jabir said: "No important, difficult matter came to me except that I chose that time, made supplication, and found it answered."

Grade: HASAN according to al-Albani (Sahih al-Adab al-Mufrad 545); some scholars consider it weak because of the narrator Kathir ibn Zayd — al-Adab al-Mufrad 704; Musnad Ahmad 14563.

Scholars remind us that there is no specific evidence making prayer at, or visits to, the "Seven Mosques" a sunnah or an act of worship in itself. Visiting historical places to take lessons is permissible, but it is not made an obligation or a special ritual. Reference: Wikipedia, "The Seven Mosques".

LESSONS

The trench is gone, but the Qur'an and the Hadith preserve its story more lastingly than earth and stone. Historical places help us imagine events, but the true lesson comes from revelation.

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TIMELINE OF THE BATTLE OF THE TRENCH

The well-known date is Shawwal, 5 AH (Musa ibn 'Uqbah places it in 4 AH). The sequence below is approximate, based on the Hadith and the books of sirah; the siege is estimated at about twenty nights, and some narrations mention nearly a month.

TIME	EVENT	CHAPTER
Rabi' al-Awwal 4 AH	Banu an-Nadir expelled from Madinah to Khaybar (Series 11)	1
Early 5 AH	Huyayy ibn Akhtab and the leaders of Banu an-Nadir incite Quraysh and Ghatafan	1
Shawwal 5 AH	News of the Confederates; consultation and the proposal of the trench	2
Shawwal 5 AH	The trench is dug in the cold; the great rock and Jabir's meal	3–6
Shawwal 5 AH	The Confederates arrive and besiege Madinah	7–8
During the siege	Banu Qurayzah break the treaty; az-Zubayr scouts	11
During the siege	Skirmishes at the trench; 'Amr ibn 'Abd Wudd is killed	12
During the siege	The 'Asr prayer is missed; Sa'd ibn Mu'adh is wounded	13–14
During the siege	Talks with Ghatafan that were not pursued (sirah narration)	26
During the siege	The stratagem of Nu'aym ibn Mas'ud	15
Monday–Wednesday	The supplication of the Messenger ﷺ against the Confederates; answered on Wednesday	16, 27
The last night	Hudhayfah is sent; the wind strikes the enemy camp	17–18
The next morning	The Confederates withdraw; "Now we will go against them"	19–20
The same day	Jibril comes; the order to march to Banu Qurayzah (Series 13)	22

LESSONS

The timeline shows that victory did not come in a single day. It came after weeks of digging, keeping watch, hunger and cold, together with repeated supplication. Allah's help came at its appointed time, after effort and patience had been completed.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BATTLE OF THE TRENCH

1. WHY IS THIS BATTLE CALLED BOTH THE TRENCH (KHANDAQ) AND AL-AHZAB?

"Khandaq" means trench, the defensive strategy of the Muslims. "Al-Ahzab" means the allied factions: Quraysh, Ghatafan and other tribes. The second name is also the name of the 33rd surah of the Qur'an.

2. HOW LARGE WERE THE TWO ARMIES?

According to the books of sirah, the Confederate army numbered about ten thousand, and the Muslims about three thousand. These figures are well known in the sirah, but they are not stated in the Qur'an or in authentic Hadith.

3. HOW LONG DID THE SIEGE LAST?

The sirah narrations differ: some say about twenty nights, others nearly a month. The Qur'an does not state its length; what is certain is that it lasted long enough for "hearts to reach the throats" (Al-Ahzab 33:10).

4. HOW MANY WERE KILLED?

According to Ibn Ishaq, six Muslims were martyred, including Sa'd ibn Mu'adh who died later from his wound, and three idolaters were killed, including 'Amr ibn 'Abd Wudd. These figures come from the books of sirah. The small number of dead shows that the Trench was a battle of patience, not of swords.

5. IS IT TRUE THAT FOUR PRAYERS WERE MISSED ON THE DAY OF THE TRENCH?

What is authentic in Sahih al-Bukhari is that the 'Asr prayer was missed until sunset (Sahih al-Bukhari 596; chapter 13). The narration that four prayers were missed is in Jami' al-Tirmidhi 179 from Abu 'Ubaydah from his father Ibn Mas'ud; its chain is ***broken (munqati')*** because Abu 'Ubaydah did not hear from his father. Some scholars reconcile the two by saying they happened on different days.

6. MAY WE DELAY PRAYER BECAUSE OF TODAY'S BUSYNESS?

No. Scholars explain that the event at the Trench happened in an extraordinary state of war and, according to many scholars, before the prayer of fear was fully legislated. After that, Allah commanded prayer in every situation according to one's ability, even while walking or riding (Al-Baqarah 2:239; Series 11). The sorrow of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ at missing that prayer shows how great its place is.

7. IS THE STORY OF THE LIGHT WHEN THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH ﷺ STRUCK THE ROCK TRUE?

The story of the great rock turning to sand is in Sahih al-Bukhari 4101. The addition about the light and the glad tidings of the conquest of Syria, Persia and Yemen is in Sunan al-Nasa'i 3176, graded hasan (chapter 5). Those tidings were fulfilled in the time of the caliphs after him.

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8. DID ANGELS ALSO FIGHT AT THE TRENCH?

The Qur'an mentions "armies you did not see" (Al-Ahzab 33:9). Ibn Kathir explains that they were the angels who shook the enemy and cast terror into their hearts. No authentic narration says the angels fought directly at the Trench as they did at Badr.

9. DID THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH ﷺ REALLY OFFER A THIRD OF MADINAH'S DATES TO GHATAFAN?

This story comes from a narration of the books of sirah with a mursal chain (chapter 26). According to that narration, the offer was only considered and never sealed, because Sa'd ibn Mu'adh and Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah rejected it and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ accepted their view.

10. IS IT RECOMMENDED TO VISIT THE "SEVEN MOSQUES" IN MADINAH?

There is no specific evidence making a visit to those mosques an act of worship in itself. The Hadith of Jabir about the supplication of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ at Masjid al-Fath (chapter 27) is graded hasan by al-Albani and disputed by other scholars; it concerns the time of supplication, not an obligation to visit a place. Visiting them to take lessons is permissible.

11. WHY IS BANU QURAYZAH DISCUSSED IN A SEPARATE SERIES?

Because the betrayal of Banu Qurayzah, their siege, the judgement of Sa'd ibn Mu'adh and Sa'd's death form one long story with its own rulings. It will be told in Series 13, in sha' Allah, with reference to Al-Ahzab 33:26–27 and authentic Hadith.

12. WHY IS THE TRENCH CONSIDERED A TURNING POINT IN THE SIRAH?

After the Trench, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Now we will go against them, and they will not come against us" (Sahih al-Bukhari 4109; chapter 20). Quraysh never attacked Madinah again. Two years later came the Treaty of Hudaybiyah (Series 15), and after it the Conquest of Makkah.

LESSONS

These questions show the importance of distinguishing what is certain from the Qur'an and authentic Hadith from what is well known in the books of sirah. In this way we take the lessons of the Trench with confidence and honesty, without adding or taking away.

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

The Battle of the Trench was not a great clash of swords; it was ***a battle of patience***. The Muslims did not win by numbers or weapons, but by unity, effort, prayer and reliance — and then Allah Himself defeated their enemy.

LESSON	FROM THE TRENCH
Consultation and good ideas	The trench proposal accepted
A leader among his people	The Prophet ﷺ digging, dusty and hungry
The blessing of sharing	Jabir's meal fed a thousand
Trials distinguish hearts	Hypocrites (33:12) and believers (33:22)
The place of prayer	Grief at the missed 'Asr prayer
Obedience brings ease	Hudhayfah warm in the cold
Allah's unseen armies	Wind and angels (33:9)
Victory belongs to Allah	"He alone defeated al-Ahzab"

THE TRENCH IN OUR LIVES

Sometimes we are besieged by problems from every side — "from above you and from below you". The Trench teaches us to ***dig our own trench***: to prepare wisely, unite with good people, be patient in cold and hunger, and pray much — then leave the outcome to Allah.

In sha Allah, the series **The Prophet's Sirah** will continue with ***Book 13*** — Banu Qurayzah and the events after the Trench. And Allah knows best.

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SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:261

مَّثَلُ ٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمۡوَٰلَهُمۡ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنۢبَتَتۡ سَبۡعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنۢبُلَةٖ مِّاْئَةُ حَبَّةٖۗ وَٱللَّهُ يُضَٰعِفُ لِمَن يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ٢٦١

The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:261

SURAH SABA' 34:39

قُلۡ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبۡسُطُ ٱلرِّزۡقَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهِۦ وَيَقۡدِرُ لَهُۥۚ وَمَآ أَنفَقۡتُم مِّن شَيۡءٖ فَهُوَ يُخۡلِفُهُۥۖ وَهُوَ خَيۡرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ ٣٩

Say, "Indeed, my Lord extends provision for whom He wills of His servants and restricts [it] for him. But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will compensate it; and He is the best of providers."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/34:39

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2588

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، وَابْنُ، حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - وَهُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلاَّ عِزًّا وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلاَّ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Charity does not decrease wealth.

Allah does not increase a servant who forgives except in honour. And no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises him in rank."

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CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue, Good Manners and Joining the Ties of Kinship (Kitab al-Birr wa al-Silah wa al-Adab), chapter on the encouragement of forgiveness and humility, Hadith No. 2588.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2588

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1631

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ - يَعْنِي ابْنَ سَعِيدٍ - وَابْنُ حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - هُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « إِذَا مَاتَ الإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلاَّ مِنْ ثَلاَثَةٍ إِلاَّ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: an ongoing charity, knowledge that is benefited from, or a righteous child who prays for him."

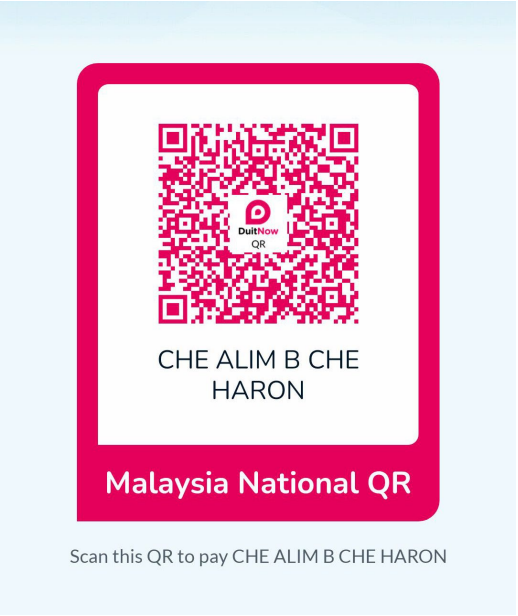
CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Wills (Kitab al-Wasiyyah), chapter on the reward that reaches a person after his death, Hadith No. 1631.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:1631

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