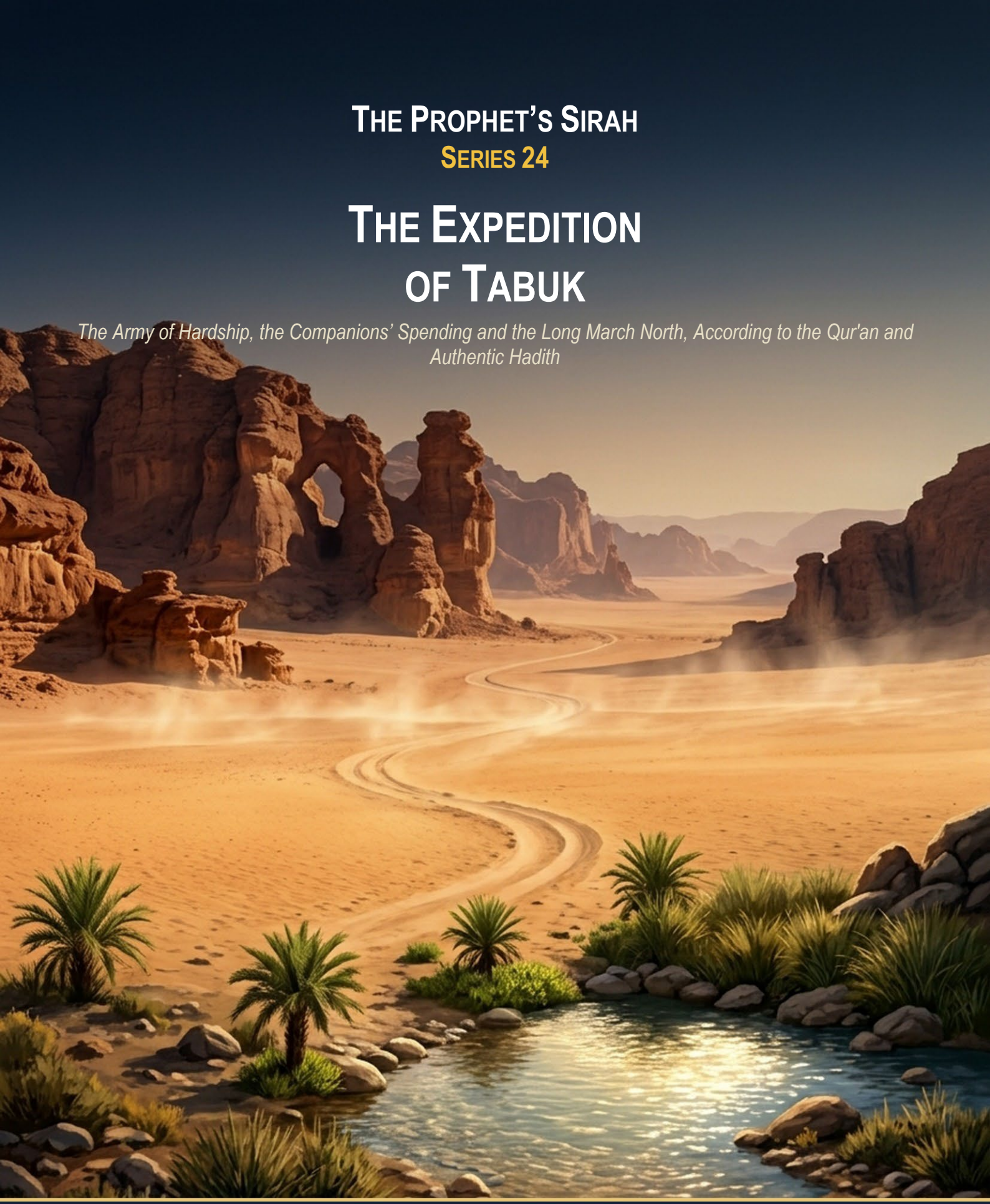
THE PROPHET'S SIRAH

SERIES 24

# THE EXPEDITION OF TABUK

*The Army of Hardship, the Companions' Spending and the Long March North, According to the Qur'an and Authentic Hadith*




HJ CHE ALIM HJ CHE HARON

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## THE PROPHET'S SIRAH

### SERIES 24

# THE EXPEDITION OF TABUK

*The Army of Hardship, the Companions' Spending and the Long March North, According to the Qur'an and Authentic Hadith*

ٱنفِرُواْ خِفَافًا وَثِقَالًا وَجَٰهِدُواْ بِأَمۡوَٰلِكُمۡ وَأَنفُسِكُمۡ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِۚ ذَٰلِكُمۡ خَيۡرٞ لَّكُمۡ إِن كُنتُمۡ تَعۡلَمُونَ

"Go forth, whether light or heavy, and strive with your wealth and your lives in the cause of Allah. That is better for you, if you only knew."

SURAH AT-TAUBAH 9:41

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who turned in forgiveness to the Prophet and the Muhajirun and Ansar who followed him in the hour of hardship. Blessings and peace be upon our master, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, who led the Army of Hardship across the desert in scorching summer heat, 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 twenty-fourth book of The Prophet's Sirah tells of the Expedition of Tabuk: the call in summer, the spending of 'Uthman and the Companions, those who wept for lack of mounts, the excuses of the hypocrites, al-Hijr the land of Thamud, and the spring of Tabuk. 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 vast, dry desert under the blazing summer sun**, with **air shimmering in the heat**. In the distance rise **majestic sandstone mountains** in reddish-brown, eroded into cliffs and a natural rock arch. A winding trail crosses the sand, and in the foreground lies **a small, clear spring**, ringed by stones, green plants and a few small palms.

The desert recalls the march of more than seven hundred kilometres to **Tabuk** in summer, which gave the army its name **Jaysh al-'Usrah** — the Army of Hardship (At-Tawbah 9:117). The sandstone mountains recall **al-Hijr**, the land of Thamud who carved homes from the mountains (Al-Hijr 15:82), while the small spring recalls **the spring of Tabuk** that gushed through the blessing of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ (Sahih Muslim 706).

**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 EXPEDITION OF TABUK** — *Introduction*

**1. AFTER THE YEAR OF VICTORY** — *Figure; sirah books*

**2. NEWS FROM SYRIA** — *Sirah books*

**3. AN OPEN CALL** — *Sahih al-Bukhari 4418*

**4. SUMMER HEAT AND RIPENING DATES** — *At-Tawbah 9:38, 9:41*

**5. JAYSH AL-'USRAH: THE ARMY OF HARDSHIP** — *At-Tawbah 9:117; figure*

**6. THE SPENDING OF 'UTHMAN IBN 'AFFAN** — *Jami' at-Tirmidhi 3701*

**7. ABU BAKR AND 'UMAR COMPETE** — *Jami' at-Tirmidhi 3675; sirah books*

**8. A SA' OF DATES** — *At-Tawbah 9:79; Sahih al-Bukhari 4668*

**9. THOSE WHO WEPT** — *At-Tawbah 9:91–92*

**10. MOUNTS FOR THE ASH'ARIS** — *Sahih al-Bukhari 4415*

**11. THE EXCUSES OF THE HYPOCRITES** — *At-Tawbah 9:42, 9:49*

**12. "DO NOT GO FORTH IN THE HEAT"** — *At-Tawbah 9:81*

**13. RECOGNISING THE DISEASE OF HYPOCRISY** — *Sahih al-Bukhari 33, 34, 657; Sahih Muslim 2784*

**14. 'ALI: AS HARUN WAS TO MUSA** — *Sahih al-Bukhari 4416*

**15. ABU KHAYTHAMAH AND ABU DHARR** — *Sahih Muslim 2769; sirah books*

**16. AL-HIJR: THE LAND OF THAMUD** — *Sahih al-Bukhari 3378; Al-Hijr 15:80–84*

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**17. "DO NOT ENTER EXCEPT WEEPING"** — *Sahih al-Bukhari 4419–4420*

**18. THE SPRING OF TABUK** — *Sahih Muslim 706; figure*

**19. COMBINING PRAYERS ON A JOURNEY** — *Sahih Muslim 706*

**20. A FIERCE WIND AND A WOMAN'S GARDEN** — *Sahih al-Bukhari 1481*

**21. THE TREATY WITH AYLAH** — *Sahih al-Bukhari 1481; At-Tawbah 9:29*

**22. KHALID TO DUMAT AL-JANDAL** — *Sahih al-Bukhari 2616; sirah books*

**23. TWENTY DAYS AT TABUK** — *Sunan Abi Dawud 1235*

**24. THE PLOT AT THE PASS OF 'AQABAH** — *Sahih Muslim 2779; sirah books*

**25. "WE WERE ONLY CHATTING AND JOKING"** — *At-Tawbah 9:65–66*

**26. THOSE HELD BACK BY EXCUSE** — *Sahih al-Bukhari 4423*

**27. "THIS IS TABAH": RETURN TO MADINAH** — *Sahih al-Bukhari 1481*

**28. SURAH AT-TAWBAH: REVELATION ALONG THE WAY** — *Table; Tafsir Ibn Kathir*

**29. MU'TAH AND TABUK** — *Table*

**30. SOURCES OF THE STORY** — *Table*

**31. 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 EXPEDITION OF TABUK

The year 8 AH ended with victory after victory: Makkah was opened, Hunayn was won, and Arab tribes began coming to embrace Islam. But the year 9 AH brought a different test — one that sifted out who truly believed and who merely followed the tide. That test was ***the Expedition of Tabuk***.

This Book 24 tells of the march of more than ***seven hundred kilometres*** north to face the Roman empire, in ***scorching summer heat***, just as the dates of Madinah were ripening. It is a story of extraordinary ***spending***, the ***tears*** of those who could not go, the ***excuses*** of the hypocrites, and ***miracles*** along the way. The story of the three Companions who stayed behind — including Ka'b ibn Malik — will be told in Book 25.

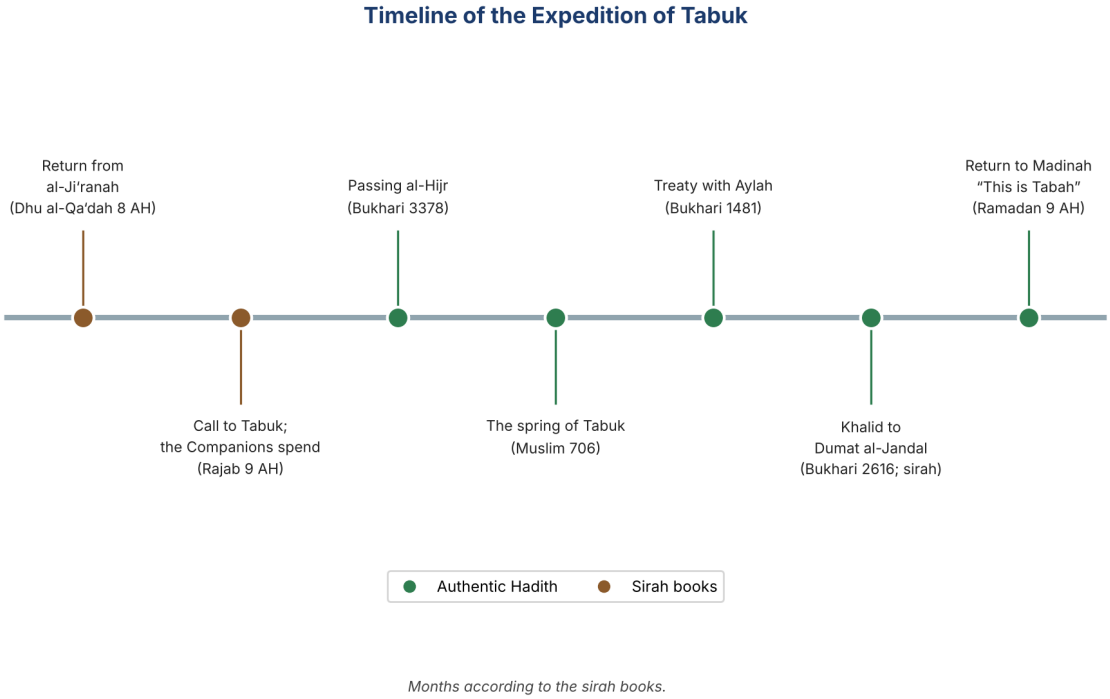



*Figure 1: Timeline of the Expedition of Tabuk.*

*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 — such as news of the Roman army gathering, al-Jadd ibn Qays's excuse, and the story of Abu Dharr walking alone — is placed in brown "Sirah Note" boxes, since most of it is narrated without a connected chain or with a debated one.*

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## AFTER THE YEAR OF VICTORY

After returning from al-Ji'ranah at the end of 8 AH, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stayed in Madinah for some months. Islam spread rapidly across Arabia. From the south to the centre, tribes that had once waited now came to Islam.

But in the north, on the borders of Syria, stood a world power: ***the Byzantine Roman empire***. Two years earlier, three thousand Muslims had faced the Romans and their Arab allies at ***Mu'tah*** (Book 19), and three commanders fell as martyrs. Rome would not sit still while a new power rose south of its frontier.

The Expedition of Tabuk took place in ***Rajab 9 AH*** according to the sirah books. It was ***the last campaign*** the Messenger of Allah ﷺ led in person, and the largest army he ever commanded.

The months between Hunayn and Tabuk were not empty. The Prophet ﷺ sent collectors to gather zakat from the tribes that had embraced Islam, dispatched small expeditions to remove the last idols, and received the first delegations. Islam was moving from a community defending itself to a state organising the life of a whole people.

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## NEWS FROM SYRIA

**SIRAH NOTE: THE ROMAN ARMY GATHERING**

The sirah authors relate that news reached Madinah through Nabataean traders bringing oil from Syria that ***Rome was gathering a great army***, along with Christian Arab tribes such as Lakhm, Judham, 'Amilah and Ghassan, and that their vanguard had reached al-Balqa'.

Some scholars note that the news was not fully accurate, since when the Muslims reached Tabuk they did not find the Roman army. These details are ***sirah reports*** (al-Waqidi and Ibn Sa'd).

**REFERENCES:**

Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah (from Ibn Ishaq) — chapter on the Expedition of Tabuk; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah.

al-Waqidi, al-Maghazi; Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat al-Kubra — the Expedition of Tabuk.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not wait for the enemy to come to Madinah. He chose ***to go out and meet it*** at the frontier. This decision was not only military strategy, but also ***a message*** to all of Arabia and to Rome: the Muslims did not fear even the greatest power of the day.

The lesson: ***news must be verified***, yet vigilance is still needed. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ took precautions based on the information available, and Allah filled the journey with wisdom even though no battle took place.

Tabuk itself lies about halfway between Madinah and Damascus, in the far north-west of the Arabian Peninsula. In the Prophet's ﷺ time it was a watering place on the caravan route to Syria, on the edge of lands under Byzantine influence. For an army on foot and camelback, the journey of some 700 kilometres would take around two weeks each way through some of the harshest terrain in Arabia.

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## AN OPEN CALL

The Prophet's ﷺ usual practice when setting out on a campaign was ***to conceal his destination*** — as we saw in the Conquest of Makkah (Book 20). But Tabuk was different. Ka'b ibn Malik رضى الله عنه relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ rarely intended a campaign without concealing it by mentioning another place, ***until this campaign***: he fought it in intense heat, facing a long journey and desert, and a numerous enemy, so he ***made the matter clear to the Muslims*** so they could prepare (Sahih al-Bukhari 4418).

Why the difference? Because ***the preparation required was immense***. A long journey in summer needed water, food, camels and abundant supplies. Everyone had to know what lay ahead to prepare properly. Honesty about the hardship also ***sifted*** people — only the truly faithful would answer.

The lesson for every leader: sometimes ***secrecy*** is needed, and sometimes ***transparency*** comes first. Wisdom is knowing which to use when. When a task demands great sacrifice, people have a right to know what is being asked of them.

The phrase "a numerous enemy" is significant. The Byzantine empire had only recently defeated Persia after a long war, and was at the height of its confidence. To march against such a power was, in human terms, an enormous risk. The Companions' readiness to go shows how completely their trust had shifted from numbers and wealth to Allah and His Messenger ﷺ.

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## SUMMER HEAT AND RIPENING DATES

The call to Tabuk came at the hardest possible time. Summer was at its peak, and ***the dates of Madinah were nearly ripe*** — the moment Madinah's people waited for all year, since dates were their main livelihood. Ka'b ibn Malik mentions that he set out ***"when the fruits and the shade were at their best"***.

Some felt reluctant to go out, and Allah rebuked them: ***"what is [the matter] with you that, when you are told to go forth in the cause of Allah, you adhere heavily to the earth? Are you satisfied with the life of this world rather than the Hereafter?"*** (At-Tawbah 9:38) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:38.

And Allah commanded: ***"Go forth, whether light or heavy"*** (At-Tawbah 9:41) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:41.

The test of Tabuk was a test between ***this world and the Hereafter*** in its starkest form: the shade of trees and ripening dates on one side, the scorching desert and a mighty enemy on the other. Each of us will face our own "Tabuk" — a moment when obedience to Allah requires us to leave a comfort right before our eyes.

It is worth noting that the Arabic word nafara used in these verses means to rush forth together in response to a call. The image is of a whole community rising at once, like a flock taking flight. The believer's response to Allah's call is not slow and grudging, but swift and wholehearted.

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## JAYSH AL-'USRAH: THE ARMY OF HARDSHIP

The army of Tabuk is known by a name the Qur'an preserved: ***Jaysh al-'Usrah*** — the Army of Hardship. Allah says:

***"Allah has already forgiven the Prophet and the Muhajireen and the Ansar who followed him in the hour of difficulty"*** (At-Tawbah 9:117) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:117.

The hardship covered every aspect: ***a shortage of mounts*** so that several men took turns riding one camel, ***a shortage of food*** so that a single date was shared between two, and ***a shortage of water*** in the burning heat. Ibn Kathir cites a report in which 'Umar رضى الله عنه related that they were so thirsty that some slaughtered their camels and squeezed out their stomach contents to drink.

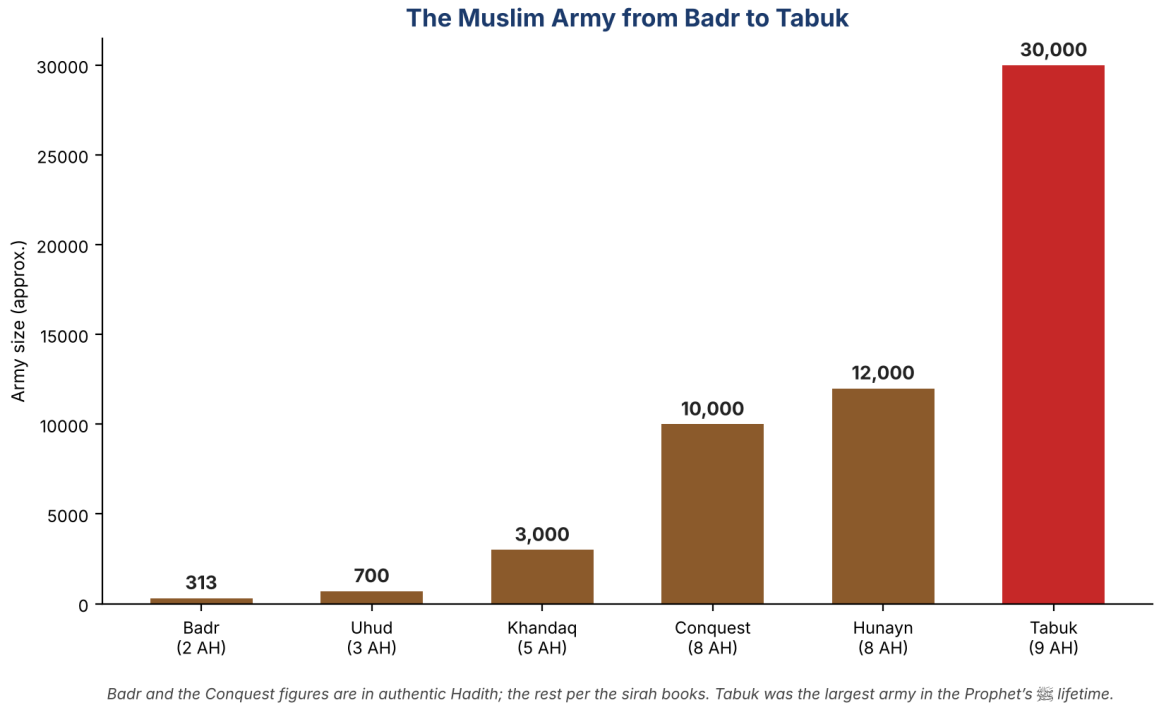



*Figure 2: The Muslim army from Badr to Tabuk.*

Yet despite such great hardship, the sirah books state that the army numbered about ***thirty thousand men*** — the largest in the Prophet's ﷺ lifetime. See the difference from Badr: in seven years, a community once 313 strong had become a power able to face a world empire.

A single camel carrying a rider, water and supplies could make the difference between life and death on such a march. This is why the Prophet ﷺ placed such weight on equipping the army: every mount provided meant another believer who could join, and every waterskin meant a chance of surviving the desert. Spending was not a side matter; it was the backbone of the campaign.

The growth of the army also reflected the growth of trust: at Badr, few expected a battle; at Uhud, some turned back; at the Trench, the hypocrites slipped away. By Tabuk, tens of thousands answered a call

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they knew would be hard. Yet the chapters that follow show that even within so large an army, hearts still varied — and the Qur'an would expose each of them.

A large army, however, also brings its own dangers. At Hunayn, only months earlier, some Muslims had been pleased with their own great numbers, and Allah reminded them: "when your great number pleased you, but it did not avail you at all" (At-Tawbah 9:25). The Companions who marched to Tabuk carried that lesson with them: numbers are a blessing to be grateful for, not a source of pride. What would decide the outcome was not the size of the army, but the sincerity of those within it.

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## THE SPENDING OF 'UTHMAN IBN 'AFFAN

An army that size needed great funding. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ called the Companions to spend, and said: ***"Whoever equips the Army of Hardship will have Paradise."*** And ***'Uthman ibn 'Affan*** رضى الله عنه equipped it (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Wills, before Hadith No. 2778, as a ta'liq). 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Samurah رضى الله عنه witnessed an unforgettable moment:

**HADITH — JAMI' AL-TIRMIDHI, NO. 3701**

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ إِسْمَاعِيلَ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا الْحَسَنُ بْنُ وَاقِعٍ الرَّمْلِيُّ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا ضَمْرَةُ بْنُ رَبِيعَةَ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ شَوْذَبٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ الْقَاسِمِ، عَنْ كَثِيرٍ، مَوْلَى عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ سَمُرَةَ عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ ابْنِ سَمُرَةَ، قَالَ جَاءَ عُثْمَانُ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم بِأَلْفِ دِينَارٍ - قَالَ الْحَسَنُ بْنُ وَاقِعٍ وَكَانَ فِي مَوْضِعٍ آخَرَ مِنْ كِتَابِي فِي كُمِّهِ حِينَ جَهَّزَ جَيْشَ الْعُسْرَةِ فَنَثَرَهَا فِي حِجْرِهِ. قَالَ عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ فَرَأَيْتُ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يُقَلِّبُهَا فِي حِجْرِهِ وَيَقُولُ «مَا ضَرَّ عُثْمَانَ مَا عَمِلَ بَعْدَ الْيَوْمِ». مَرَّتَيْنِ.

**TRANSLATION:**

'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Samurah رضى الله عنه said: 'Uthman came to the Prophet ﷺ with ***a thousand dinars*** — al-Hasan ibn Waqi' said: in another place in my notes, (the dinars were) in his sleeve — ***when he equipped the Army of Hardship (Jaysh al-'Usrah)***, and scattered them in his lap. 'Abd ar-Rahman said: I saw the Prophet ﷺ turning them over in his lap and saying: ***"Nothing 'Uthman does after today will harm him."***

He said it twice.

**CHAIN OF NARRATION:** Narrated by Imam at-Tirmidhi: from Muhammad ibn Isma'il (al-Bukhari), from al-Hasan ibn Waqi' ar-Ramli, from Damrah ibn Rabi'ah, from 'Abdullah ibn Shawdhab, from 'Abdullah ibn al-Qasim, from Kathir, freedman of 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Samurah, from 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Samurah رضى الله عنه.

**REFERENCE:** Narrated by Imam at-Tirmidhi in Jami' at-Tirmidhi, Chapters on Virtues, Chapter: The Virtues of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, Hadith No. 3701; also Ahmad No. 20630.

**GRADE:** HASAN — Imam at-Tirmidhi graded it hasan gharib; graded hasan by Shaykh al-Albani and Darussalam.

*Source:* https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi:3701

### LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

***"Nothing 'Uthman does after today will harm him."*** Scholars explain that this is ***glad tidings*** that 'Uthman's deed that day was so great that it secured his forgiveness and rank — not permission to sin, like the similar words about the people of Badr (Book 20).

The sirah books mention that 'Uthman contributed ***hundreds of camels with their saddles and gear***, besides those thousand dinars. 'Uthman's wealth was not for himself, but for ***the religion of Allah***. He was also the one who bought the well of Rumah and endowed it for the Muslims. This is the example of a believing businessman: ***wealth in the hand, not in the heart***.

'Uthman's generosity was not a single moment. He was known throughout his life for freeing slaves, feeding the poor and supporting every good cause. When he later became the third caliph, he oversaw the compilation of the Qur'an into a single standard copy — the mushaf we still read today. The hand that equipped the Army of Hardship also preserved the Book of Allah for all generations.

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## ABU BAKR AND 'UMAR COMPETE

**SIRAH NOTE: "I LEFT THEM ALLAH AND HIS MESSENGER"**

'Umar ibn al-Khattab رضى الله عنه related that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ ordered them to give charity, and at the time 'Umar had wealth. He said to himself: "Today I will outdo Abu Bakr, if ever I can." He brought ***half his wealth***. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked: "What have you left for your family?" He said: "The same amount." Then Abu Bakr came with ***all his wealth***. He asked: "What have you left for your family?" Abu Bakr said: ***"I have left them Allah and His Messenger."*** 'Umar said: "I will never outdo him in anything." (Jami' at-Tirmidhi 3675, graded hasan by al-Albani)

This Hadith does not mention Tabuk explicitly; ***the sirah authors*** link it to the preparation of the Army of Hardship. So it is placed in this Note.

**REFERENCES:**

Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah (from Ibn Ishaq) — chapter on the Expedition of Tabuk; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah.

This story portrays healthy ***competition in good***. 'Umar did not envy Abu Bakr out of spite, but wanted to be first in obedience. And when outdone, he acknowledged his friend's superiority graciously. Allah says: ***"So for this let the competitors compete"*** (Al-Mutaffifin 83:26).

Note too that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ ***accepted*** all of Abu Bakr's wealth, knowing the strength of his faith and trust, yet in other cases he advised Companions not to give away all their wealth (as with Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, Sahih al-Bukhari 2742). The ruling differs according to ***a person's circumstances and strength of faith***.

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## A SA' OF DATES

Not every Companion was rich like 'Uthman and Abu Bakr. Many were poor, yet they too wanted to contribute. Abu Mas'ud al-Ansari رضى الله عنه related that when the verse on charity was revealed, they worked carrying loads on their backs to earn wages, and then gave charity. A man came with a large donation, and the hypocrites said: ***"He is showing off."*** Another man came with ***a sa' of dates***, and they said: ***"Allah has no need of this man's sa'."*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 4668)

Then Allah revealed a verse defending them: ***"Those who criticize the contributors among the believers concerning [their] charities and [criticize] the ones who find nothing [to spend] except their effort, so they ridicule them - Allah will ridicule them"*** (At-Tawbah 9:79) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:79.

The hypocrites were never satisfied: those who gave much were accused of showing off, those who gave little were mocked. But Allah weighs ***sincerity and effort***, not amount. A sa' of dates from one who toiled to earn it may weigh more with Allah than a thousand dinars from one who is insincere.

The lesson: ***never belittle a small charity***, and do not busy yourself judging others' intentions. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"Protect yourselves from the Fire even with half a date"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 1417).

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## THOSE WHO WEPT

Among the most moving scenes in the preparation for Tabuk was a group of poor Companions who came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asking for mounts, since they could not afford them. When he had nothing to give, they went back ***weeping***. Allah immortalised their tears in the Qur'an:

***"Nor [is there blame] upon those who, when they came to you that you might give them mounts, you said, "I can find nothing for you to ride upon." They turned back while their eyes overflowed with tears out of grief that they could not find something to spend"*** (At-Tawbah 9:92) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:92.

The sirah books call them ***al-Bakka'un*** — the Weepers — and name seven of them from the Ansar and others. They wept not for being denied wealth, but for ***missing the chance to strive in the cause of Allah***. Compare them with the hypocrites who searched for excuses not to go.

The preceding verse sets out the principle of excuse in Islam: ***"There is not upon the weak or upon the ill or upon those who do not find anything to spend any discomfort when they are sincere to Allah and His Messenger"*** (At-Tawbah 9:91) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:91.

The tears of al-Bakka'un are a reminder that sincerity sometimes shows itself in what we cannot do. Some had wealth but no will; these had the will but no wealth. Allah knew the difference, and He honoured the latter in His Book until the end of time. Their names were preserved not for great deeds, but for great longing.

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## MOUNTS FOR THE ASH'ARIS

One of the groups that came asking for mounts was ***the Ash'aris*** from Yemen, represented by Abu Musa al-Ash'ari رضى الله عنه. Abu Musa recounts the incident honestly, including his sorrow:

**HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4415**

حَدَّثَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْعَلاَءِ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو أُسَامَةَ، عَنْ بُرَيْدِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ أَبِي بُرْدَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي بُرْدَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي مُوسَى ـ رضى الله عنه ـ قَالَ أَرْسَلَنِي أَصْحَابِي إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم أَسْأَلُهُ الْحُمْلاَنَ لَهُمْ، إِذْ هُمْ مَعَهُ فِي جَيْشِ الْعُسْرَةِ وَهْىَ غَزْوَةُ تَبُوكَ فَقُلْتُ يَا نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ، إِنَّ أَصْحَابِي أَرْسَلُونِي إِلَيْكَ لِتَحْمِلَهُمْ. فَقَالَ «وَاللَّهِ لاَ أَحْمِلُكُمْ عَلَى شَىْءٍ». وَوَافَقْتُهُ، وَهْوَ غَضْبَانُ وَلاَ أَشْعُرُ، وَرَجَعْتُ حَزِينًا مِنْ مَنْعِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم، وَمِنْ مَخَافَةِ أَنْ يَكُونَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم وَجَدَ فِي نَفْسِهِ عَلَىَّ، فَرَجَعْتُ إِلَى أَصْحَابِي فَأَخْبَرْتُهُمُ الَّذِي قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم، فَلَمْ أَلْبَثْ إِلاَّ سُوَيْعَةً إِذْ سَمِعْتُ بِلاَلاً يُنَادِي أَىْ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ قَيْسٍ. فَأَجَبْتُهُ، فَقَالَ أَجِبْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَدْعُوكَ، فَلَمَّا أَتَيْتُهُ، قَالَ «خُذْ هَذَيْنِ الْقَرِينَيْنِ ـ وَهَذَيْنِ الْقَرِينَيْنِ لِسِتَّةِ أَبْعِرَةٍ ابْتَاعَهُنَّ حِينَئِذٍ مِنْ سَعْدٍ ـ فَانْطَلِقْ بِهِنَّ إِلَى أَصْحَابِكَ فَقُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ ـ أَوْ قَالَ إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم ـ يَحْمِلُكُمْ عَلَى هَؤُلاَءِ فَارْكَبُوهُنَّ». فَانْطَلَقْتُ إِلَيْهِمْ بِهِنَّ، فَقُلْتُ إِنَّ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَحْمِلُكُمْ عَلَى هَؤُلاَءِ وَلَكِنِّي وَاللَّهِ لاَ أَدَعُكُمْ حَتَّى يَنْطَلِقَ مَعِي بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَى مَنْ سَمِعَ مَقَالَةَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم لاَ تَظُنُّوا أَنِّي حَدَّثْتُكُمْ شَيْئًا لَمْ يَقُلْهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَقَالُوا لِي إِنَّكَ عِنْدَنَا لَمُصَدَّقٌ، وَلَنَفْعَلَنَّ مَا أَحْبَبْتَ. فَانْطَلَقَ أَبُو مُوسَى بِنَفَرٍ مِنْهُمْ حَتَّى أَتَوُا الَّذِينَ سَمِعُوا قَوْلَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم مَنْعَهُ إِيَّاهُمْ، ثُمَّ إِعْطَاءَهُمْ بَعْدُ، فَحَدَّثُوهُمْ بِمِثْلِ مَا حَدَّثَهُمْ بِهِ أَبُو مُوسَى.

**TRANSLATION:**

Abu Musa رضى الله عنه said: My companions sent me to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to ask him for ***mounts*** for them, since they wished to go with him in ***the Army of Hardship, which was the Expedition of Tabuk***. I said: "O Prophet of Allah, my companions have sent me to you to give them mounts." He said: **"By Allah, I will not give you any mounts."** I had met him while he was angry without realising it. I returned sad at the Prophet's ﷺ refusal, and fearing he might be displeased with me. I went back to my companions and told

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them what the Prophet ﷺ had said. Shortly after, I heard Bilal calling: "O 'Abdullah ibn Qays!" I answered, and he said: "Answer the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, he is calling you." When I came, he said: **"Take these two pairs and these two pairs"** — six camels he had just bought from Sa'd — **"and take them to your companions and say: Allah — or the Messenger of Allah ﷺ — gives you these to ride, so ride them."** I took them to them and said: "The Prophet ﷺ gives you these to ride. But by Allah, I will not leave you until some of you go with me to those who heard the words of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, so that you do not think I told you something the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not say." They said: "You are trusted among us, but we will do as you wish." So Abu Musa went with some of them to those who had heard the Messenger of Allah's ﷺ refusal and then his giving, and they told them the same as Abu Musa had told them.

**CHAIN OF NARRATION:** Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Muhammad ibn al-'Ala', from Abu Usamah Hammad ibn Usamah, from Burayd ibn 'Abdullah, from Abu Burdah, from Abu Musa al-Ash'ari رضى الله عنه.

**REFERENCE:** Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Military Expeditions (al-Maghazi), Chapter: The Expedition of Tabuk, Hadith No. 4415; also Nos. 3133, 6623 and Muslim No. 1649.

**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:4415

## LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ at first swore he would not give mounts, since there truly were none at the time, and he was angry over another matter. But when camels came, he gave. In another narration he explained: ***"I do not swear an oath about something and then see something better than it, except that I do what is better and expiate my oath"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 6623).

Note too ***Abu Musa's care*** in conveying the news: he did not want his people to think he had invented the Prophet's ﷺ words, so he took them to other witnesses. This is the Companions' spirit of ***safeguarding the truth of what is narrated*** — the spirit that became the foundation of the science of Hadith.

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## THE EXCUSES OF THE HYPOCRITES

If Tabuk revealed the sincerity of the Companions, it also ***exposed the true face of the hypocrites***. A large part of Surah At-Tawbah was revealed about this event, so that the surah is also called ***al-Fadihah*** — "the Exposer" — because it uncovered the secrets of their hearts one by one. Allah says:

***"Had it been an easy gain and a moderate trip, the hypocrites would have followed you, but distant to them was the journey"*** (At-Tawbah 9:42) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:42.

This verse portrays the hypocrite's soul precisely: they were willing to follow if ***the gain was easy and the journey short***. At Hunayn there were spoils; at Tabuk there was only heat, distance and danger. So they began inventing excuses.

***"And among them is he who says, "Permit me [to remain at home] and do not put me to trial." Unquestionably, into trial they have fallen"*** (At-Tawbah 9:49) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:49.

**SIRAH NOTE: AL-JADD IBN QAYS**

The scholars of tafsir and sirah relate that this verse was revealed about ***al-Jadd ibn Qays*** of Banu Salimah. When called to Tabuk, he said: "Permit me to stay and do not tempt me. My people know no man is more drawn to women than I; I fear that if I see the women of Rome, I will not be able to restrain myself." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ turned away from him and said: "I permit you."

This report is mentioned by Ibn Ishaq and in the tafsir of at-Tabari and Ibn Kathir with several chains; ***the strength of some is debated***, but its meaning is well known among the commentators.

**REFERENCES:**

Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah (from Ibn Ishaq) — chapter on the Expedition of Tabuk; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah.
Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim, At-Tawbah 9:49. https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/9/49

See the irony: he asked not to be "tempted" by the women of Rome, yet by staying behind he ***had fallen into a greater trial*** — the trial of abandoning the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. An excuse that looks pious can be a blanket over laziness and fear.

The sirah books mention that the hypocrites who sought leave to stay numbered ***some eighty men***, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ accepted their outward excuses and left the secrets of their hearts to Allah.

This is the Islamic principle of dealing with people: ***we judge by the outward***, and Allah handles what is hidden.

Allah later addressed His Messenger ﷺ regarding them: "May Allah pardon you, [O Muhammad]; why did you give them permission [to remain behind]? [You should not have] until it was evident to you who were truthful and you knew [who were] the liars" (At-Tawbah 9:43).

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## "DO NOT GO FORTH IN THE HEAT"

The hypocrites were not content with staying behind; they also ***incited others*** not to go. Allah recorded their words and answered them with one shattering sentence:

***"Those who remained behind rejoiced in their staying [at home] after [the departure of] the Messenger of Allah and disliked to strive with their wealth and their lives in the cause of Allah and said, "Do not go forth in the heat." Say, "The fire of Hell is more intensive in heat" - if they would but understand"*** (At-Tawbah 9:81) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:81.

***"The fire of Hell is more intensive in heat."*** This comparison puts everything on its true scale. The heat of the Tabuk desert would pass within weeks; the heat avoided by abandoning obedience may lead to a heat that never ends.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also said that the fire of this world is only ***one part of seventy parts*** of the fire of Hell (Sahih al-Bukhari 3265). The Companions who grasped this reality did not fear the desert sun; they feared something far more terrible.

The lesson for us: whenever we look for an excuse to abandon a duty because it is ***hard, tiring or uncomfortable***, ask ourselves this Qur'anic question. Rising for Fajr in the cold, fasting in the heat, or giving charity when tight — all are small compared to what they protect us from.

History repeats this pattern in every age. Whenever the call to a good cause becomes costly — whether in time, money or comfort — some will always say "not now", "it is too hot", or "it is too far". The Qur'an does not merely record what the hypocrites said in Madinah; it holds up a mirror to every generation, so that each of us can ask which of the two groups we would have joined.

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## RECOGNISING THE DISEASE OF HYPOCRISY

The events of Tabuk taught the Muslims ***to recognise the traits of hypocrisy***, not to accuse others, but ***to examine themselves***. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ explained its signs in several sahih Hadith. He said:

***"The signs of a hypocrite are three: when he speaks he lies, when he promises he breaks it, and when he is entrusted he betrays"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 33).

In another narration he added one more trait: ***"when he disputes he transgresses"***, and said that whoever has one of these traits has ***a branch of hypocrisy*** until he leaves it (Sahih al-Bukhari 34). Scholars distinguish between ***nifaq i'tiqadi*** (hypocrisy of belief — concealing disbelief, like the hypocrites of Tabuk) and ***nifaq 'amali*** (hypocrisy of deeds — bad traits that may be found in a Muslim).

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also said: ***"No prayer is heavier on the hypocrites than Fajr and 'Isha'; if they knew what is in them, they would come even if crawling"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 657). Just as the heat of Tabuk exposed them, ***the darkness of Fajr and 'Isha'*** also exposes who truly believes.

He described the hypocrite as ***"like a sheep wavering between two flocks, going to this one once and to that one once"*** (Sahih Muslim 2784). That was their state in Madinah: sometimes with the Muslims, sometimes with the enemy, without conviction.

The Companions themselves greatly feared hypocrisy. Ibn Abi Mulaykah said: ***"I met thirty of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, all of them fearing hypocrisy for themselves"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Faith, as a ta'liq). If those who marched to Tabuk were afraid, how much more should we be.

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## 'ALI: AS HARUN WAS TO MUSA

Before setting out, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ needed to appoint someone to look after Madinah and his family. The sirah books mention that Muhammad ibn Maslamah was appointed over Madinah, and ***'Ali ibn Abi Talib*** رضى الله عنه was left to look after the Prophet's family. For a warrior like 'Ali, staying behind was very hard:

**HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4416**

حَدَّثَنَا مُسَدَّدٌ، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى، عَنْ شُعْبَةَ، عَنِ الْحَكَمِ، عَنْ مُصْعَبِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم خَرَجَ إِلَى تَبُوكَ، وَاسْتَخْلَفَ عَلِيًّا فَقَالَ أَتُخَلِّفُنِي فِي الصِّبْيَانِ وَالنِّسَاءِ قَالَ «أَلاَ تَرْضَى أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنِّي بِمَنْزِلَةِ هَارُونَ مِنْ مُوسَى إِلاَّ أَنَّهُ لَيْسَ نَبِيٌّ بَعْدِي».
وَقَالَ أَبُو دَاوُدَ حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ عَنِ الْحَكَمِ سَمِعْتُ مُصْعَبًا.

**TRANSLATION:**

Mus'ab ibn Sa'd narrated from his father (Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas رضى الله عنه) that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ set out for Tabuk and ***appointed 'Ali as his deputy*** (in Madinah). 'Ali said: "Do you leave me behind with the children and the women?" He said: ***"Are you not pleased to be to me as Harun was to Musa, except that there is no prophet after me?"*** (Abu Dawud at-Tayalisi narrated it with the wording: "al-Hakam said: I heard Mus'ab.")

**CHAIN OF NARRATION:** Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Musaddad ibn Musarhad, from Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Qattan, from Shu'bah ibn al-Hajjaj, from al-Hakam ibn 'Utaybah, from Mus'ab ibn Sa'd, from his father Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas رضى الله عنه.

**REFERENCE:** Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Military Expeditions (al-Maghazi), Chapter: The Expedition of Tabuk, Hadith No. 4416; also No. 3706 and Muslim No. 2404.

**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:4416

### LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

The sirah books mention that the hypocrites spread a rumour: ***"He left him behind because he dislikes him."*** So 'Ali took up his weapons and caught up with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ at al-Jurf. There the Prophet ﷺ spoke the words that became one of 'Ali's greatest virtues.

The Prophet Musa عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ left his brother Harun عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ to look after his people when he went to commune with his Lord for forty nights (Al-A'raf 7:142). So was 'Ali to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: ***a trusted***

***deputy***. But he added firmly: ***"except that there is no prophet after me"*** — closing off any misunderstanding about prophethood.

The lesson: ***every role in the faith has its value***. The one who fights on the field and the one who guards at home both serve. Sometimes the least glamorous task is the greatest trust.

'Ali's response is also instructive. He did not argue or sulk; once the Prophet ﷺ explained, he accepted wholeheartedly and returned to Madinah to carry out his duty. Obedience is not only marching when we are sent, but also staying when we are asked to stay. Many of us find it easier to do a visible, celebrated task than to quietly fulfil the one we have been given.

This Hadith is among the most famous virtues of 'Ali, and scholars across the Muslim community have cited it with love. At the same time, they read it in its context: the Prophet ﷺ was speaking of a deputyship during his absence, just as Harun deputised for Musa. It shows 'Ali's rank and closeness to the Prophet ﷺ, and Ahl as-Sunnah honour him as the fourth of the rightly guided caliphs.

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## ABU KHAYTHAMAH AND ABU DHARR

The army began to move, and some sincere Companions fell behind because they were slow to prepare. One of them was ***Abu Khaythamah al-Ansari*** رضى الله عنه. In the long Hadith of Ka'b ibn Malik, it is related that while the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was sitting at Tabuk, a man in white was seen approaching from afar through the mirage. He said: ***"Be Abu Khaythamah!"*** And it was indeed Abu Khaythamah al-Ansari — ***the man who had given a sa' of dates in charity and been mocked by the hypocrites*** (Sahih Muslim 2769).

See how Allah connects the stories: the poor man mocked for a sa' of dates (Chapter 8) is the same man who crossed the desert alone to join the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The hypocrites mocked, but ***Allah raised him***.

**SIRAH NOTE: ABU KHAYTHAMAH'S SHADE AND WIVES; ABU DHARR WALKING ALONE**

Ibn Ishaq relates that Abu Khaythamah returned to his garden on a hot day and found his two wives had sprinkled water in the shaded hut and prepared cool water and food. He said: ***"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is in the blazing sun and hot wind, while Abu Khaythamah is in cool shade, with food ready and beautiful women? This is not fair!"*** So he readied his camel and followed him.

Ibn Ishaq also relates that ***Abu Dharr*** رضى الله عنه fell behind because his camel was weak, so he carried his belongings and ***walked alone on foot***. When he appeared in the distance, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Be Abu Dharr!" Then he said: ***"May Allah have mercy on Abu Dharr; he walks alone, will die alone, and will be resurrected alone."*** Both stories are ***sirah reports***; the Abu Dharr story in particular is narrated with a weak chain.

**REFERENCES:**

Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah (from Ibn Ishaq) — chapter on the Expedition of Tabuk; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah.

Abu Khaythamah's story shows that falling behind is not the end. He had stayed, but he caught himself before it was too late, and the moment of awakening came when he compared his comfort with the hardship of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Every believer needs such moments of honest comparison: "Is it fair that I rest while the work of Islam needs me?"

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## AL-HIJR: THE LAND OF THAMUD

On the way north, the Muslim army passed through an extraordinary region: ***al-Hijr***, the land of Thamud, the people of the Prophet Salih عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ. There stood houses carved into rock mountains — remains of a once-mighty civilisation, destroyed for denying their messenger. Allah says:

***"And certainly did the companions of Thamud deny the messengers"*** (Al-Hijr 15:80) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 15:80.

***"And they used to carve from the mountains, houses, feeling secure"*** (Al-Hijr 15:82) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 15:82.

***"But the shriek seized them at early morning"*** (Al-Hijr 15:83) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 15:83.

The exhausted, thirsty Companions found wells there, drew water and made dough. But the Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave a surprising command:

**HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3378**

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ مِسْكِينٍ أَبُو الْحَسَنِ، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ حَسَّانَ بْنِ حَيَّانَ أَبُو زَكَرِيَّاءَ، حَدَّثَنَا سُلَيْمَانُ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ دِينَارٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ عُمَرَ ـ رضى الله عنهما أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم لَمَّا نَزَلَ الْحِجْرَ فِي غَزْوَةِ تَبُوكَ أَمَرَهُمْ أَنْ لاَ يَشْرَبُوا مِنْ بِئْرِهَا، وَلاَ يَسْتَقُوا مِنْهَا فَقَالُوا قَدْ عَجَنَّا مِنْهَا، وَاسْتَقَيْنَا. فَأَمَرَهُمْ أَنْ يَطْرَحُوا ذَلِكَ الْعَجِينَ وَيُهَرِيقُوا ذَلِكَ الْمَاءَ. وَيُرْوَى عَنْ سَبْرَةَ بْنِ مَعْبَدٍ وَأَبِي الشُّمُوسِ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم أَمَرَ بِإِلْقَاءِ الطَّعَامِ. وَقَالَ أَبُو ذَرٍّ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم «مَنِ اعْتَجَنَ بِمَائِهِ».

**TRANSLATION:**

Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهما narrated that when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ halted at ***al-Hijr*** during the Expedition of Tabuk, he ordered them ***not to drink from its well nor draw water from it***. They said: "We have already kneaded dough with it and drawn its water." So he ordered them ***to throw away that dough and pour out that water***. (Al-Bukhari said:) It is also narrated from Sabrah ibn Ma'bad and Abu ash-Shumus that the Prophet ﷺ ordered the food to be thrown away; and Abu Dharr narrated from the Prophet ﷺ: "Whoever kneaded dough with its water."

**CHAIN OF NARRATION:** Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Muhammad ibn Miskin, from Yahya ibn Hassan, from Sulayman ibn Bilal, from 'Abdullah ibn Dinar, from 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهما.

**REFERENCE:** Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Prophets, Chapter: "And to Thamud their brother Salih", Hadith No. 3378; also Nos. 3379–3381, 4419–4420 and Muslim No. 2981.

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**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:3378

## LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

In thirst and hunger, ***throwing away water and bread*** was a great sacrifice. Yet the Companions obeyed without question. Another narration in Sahih al-Bukhari (3379) mentions that he ordered them to draw water from ***the well from which the she-camel of the Prophet Salih had drunk*** — showing that the prohibition was not about water itself, but about ***a place under Allah's wrath***.

Today the site of al-Hijr (Mada'in Salih) in northern Saudi Arabia is ***a tourist attraction***. Scholars remind us that the Prophet's ﷺ etiquette at this place was to pass through ***taking a lesson***, not to enjoy and make merry at a place once struck by punishment.

The episode also teaches that obedience sometimes means giving up something we have already invested in. The Companions had drawn the water and kneaded the dough; their effort was real. Yet when the command came, they let it go. How often do we cling to something only because we have already spent time or money on it, even after learning that it displeases Allah?

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## "DO NOT ENTER EXCEPT WEEPING"

Passing the dwellings of Thamud, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave a soul-stirring warning. 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهما narrates that he said: ***"Do not enter the dwellings of those who wronged themselves except weeping, lest what befell them befall you."*** Then he ***covered his head and hastened his pace*** until he had crossed the valley (Sahih al-Bukhari 4419; 4420).

Weeping here is not merely tears, but ***a fearful and mindful heart***: fear of the same punishment, and awareness that the strength of Thamud — who carved mountains into homes — could not save them at all. ***"So nothing availed them [from] what they used to earn"*** (Al-Hijr 15:84).

This was ***a history lesson*** taught by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ on site. History is not a story to memorise, but ***a mirror*** in which to see ourselves. Every proud civilisation that forgets Allah will end like al-Hijr — ruins that people visit.

Scholars derive from this Hadith that it is ***disliked to stop or stay overnight*** without need at places once struck by punishment, and that one should ***pass through them quickly*** while taking a lesson.

The Prophet ﷺ covering his head and hastening his pace also teaches that emotions such as fear and humility have a place in worship. The believer does not pass the signs of Allah's punishment like a careless tourist, but with a heart that trembles and a step that hurries away from what displeases his Lord.

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## THE SPRING OF TABUK

After the long march, the Muslim army approached its destination. Mu'adh ibn Jabal رضى الله عنه narrates what happened at ***the spring of Tabuk***:

**HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 706**

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ الدَّارِمِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو عَلِيٍّ الْحَنَفِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا مَالِكٌ، - وَهُوَ ابْنُ أَنَسٍ - عَنْ أَبِي الزُّبَيْرِ الْمَكِّيِّ، أَنَّ أَبَا الطُّفَيْلِ، عَامِرَ بْنَ وَاثِلَةَ أَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّ مُعَاذَ بْنَ جَبَلٍ أَخْبَرَهُ قَالَ خَرَجْنَا مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم عَامَ غَزْوَةِ تَبُوكَ فَكَانَ يَجْمَعُ الصَّلاَةَ فَصَلَّى الظُّهْرَ وَالْعَصْرَ جَمِيعًا وَالْمَغْرِبَ وَالْعِشَاءَ جَمِيعًا حَتَّى إِذَا كَانَ يَوْمًا أَخَّرَ الصَّلاَةَ ثُمَّ خَرَجَ فَصَلَّى الظُّهْرَ وَالْعَصْرَ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ دَخَلَ ثُمَّ خَرَجَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَصَلَّى الْمَغْرِبَ وَالْعِشَاءَ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ قَالَ «إِنَّكُمْ سَتَأْتُونَ غَدًا إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ عَيْنَ تَبُوكَ وَإِنَّكُمْ لَنْ تَأْتُوهَا حَتَّى يُضْحِيَ النَّهَارُ فَمَنْ جَاءَهَا مِنْكُمْ فَلاَ يَمَسَّ مِنْ مَائِهَا شَيْئًا حَتَّى آتِيَ». فَجِئْنَاهَا وَقَدْ سَبَقَنَا إِلَيْهَا رَجُلاَنِ وَالْعَيْنُ مِثْلُ الشِّرَاكِ تَبِضُّ بِشَىْءٍ مِنْ مَاءٍ - قَالَ - فَسَأَلَهُمَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «هَلْ مَسَسْتُمَا مِنْ مَائِهَا شَيْئًا». قَالاَ نَعَمْ. فَسَبَّهُمَا النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم وَقَالَ لَهُمَا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَقُولَ - قَالَ - ثُمَّ غَرَفُوا بِأَيْدِيهِمْ مِنَ الْعَيْنِ قَلِيلاً قَلِيلاً حَتَّى اجْتَمَعَ فِي شَىْءٍ - قَالَ - وَغَسَلَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم فِيهِ يَدَيْهِ وَوَجْهَهُ ثُمَّ أَعَادَهُ فِيهَا فَجَرَتِ الْعَيْنُ بِمَاءٍ مُنْهَمِرٍ أَوْ قَالَ غَزِيرٍ - شَكَّ أَبُو عَلِيٍّ أَيُّهُمَا قَالَ - حَتَّى اسْتَقَى النَّاسُ ثُمَّ قَالَ «يُوشِكُ يَا مُعَاذُ إِنْ طَالَتْ بِكَ حَيَاةٌ أَنْ تَرَى مَا هَا هُنَا قَدْ مُلِئَ جِنَانًا».

**TRANSLATION:**

Mu'adh ibn Jabal رضى الله عنه said: We went out with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in the year of the Expedition of Tabuk. He ***combined the prayers***: he prayed Zuhr and 'Asr together, and Maghrib and 'Isha' together. One day he delayed the prayer, then came out and prayed Zuhr and 'Asr together, then went in, then came out after that and prayed Maghrib and 'Isha' together. Then he said: **"Tomorrow, if Allah wills, you will reach the spring of Tabuk, and you will not reach it until the forenoon. Whoever of you gets there, let him not touch any of its water until I come."** We reached it, and two men had got there before us. ***The spring was as thin as a sandal strap, trickling a little water.*** The Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked them: **"Did you touch any of its water?"** They said: "Yes." The Prophet ﷺ rebuked them and said to them what Allah willed him to say. Then they scooped from the spring with their hands little by little until some was gathered

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in a vessel. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ washed his hands and face in it, then poured it back into the spring.

***And the spring gushed with abundant water***, until the people drew their fill. Then he said: ***"Soon, O Mu'adh, if your life is long, you will see this place filled with gardens."***

**CHAIN OF NARRATION:** Narrated by Imam Muslim: from 'Abdullah ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman ad-Darimi, from Abu 'Ali al-Hanafi, from Malik ibn Anas, from Abu az-Zubayr al-Makki, from Abu at-Tufayl 'Amir ibn Wathilah, from Mu'adh ibn Jabal رضى الله عنه.

**REFERENCE:** Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtues, Chapter: The Prophet's ﷺ Miracles, Hadith No. 706; also Malik in al-Muwatta'.

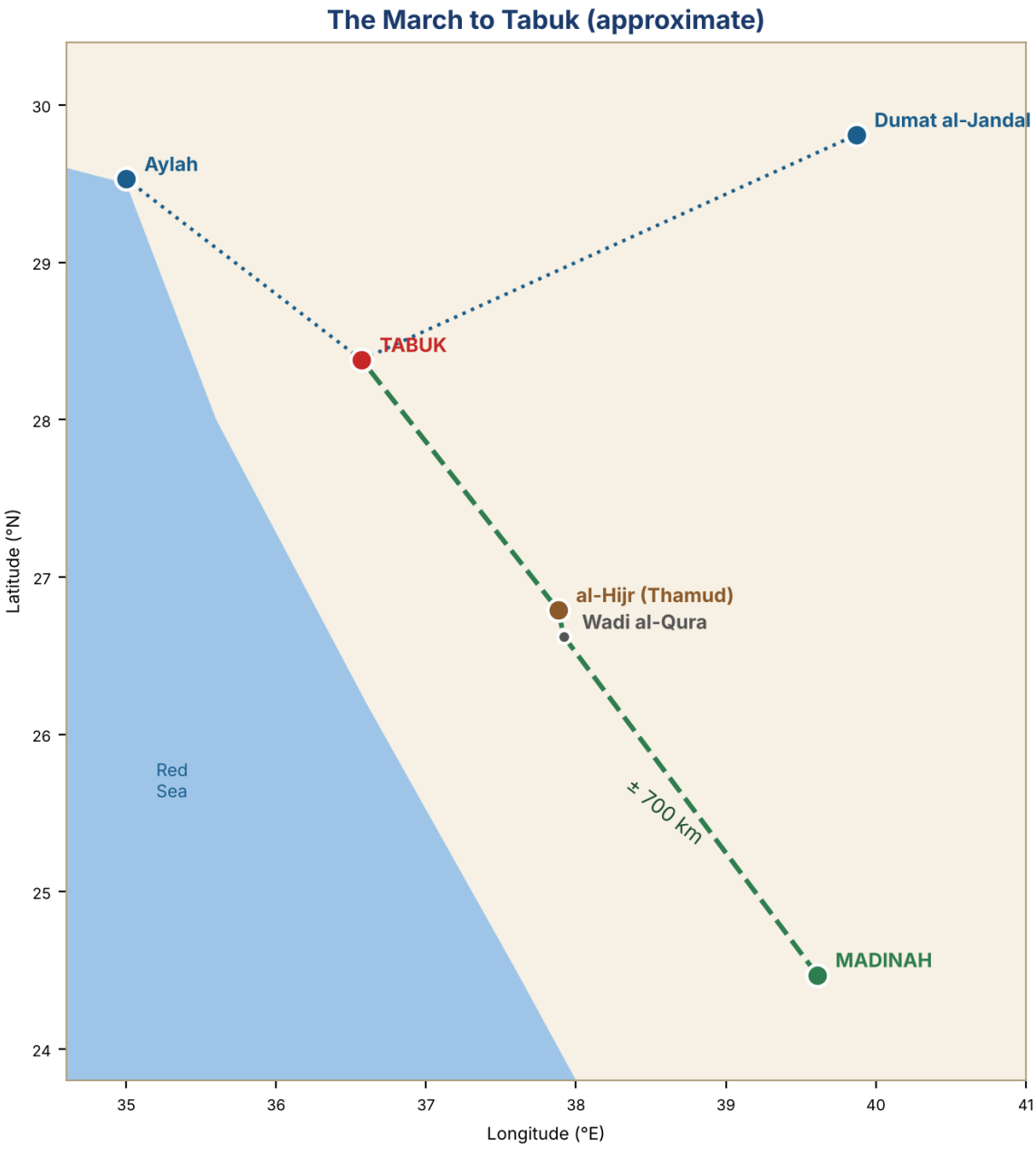
**GRADE:** SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

*Source:* https://sunnah.com/muslim:706c

## LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

The spring was flowing only ***drop by drop***, like a fine thread. They scooped up a little at a time until some was gathered, then the Messenger of Allah ﷺ washed his face and hands with it and returned it to the spring. Then ***the spring gushed with abundant water***, and everyone drank.

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*Dotted lines: the treaty with Aylah and Khalid's detachment to Dumat al-Jandal. Positions are approximate.*

*Figure 3: The route from Madinah to Tabuk.*

Then he said to Mu'adh: ***"It may be, O Mu'adh, if you live long, that you will see this place filled with gardens."*** Today, the Tabuk region in northern Saudi Arabia is known for ***vast farmland*** — wheat, fruit and flowers — making it one of the country's important agricultural areas.

Note too his instruction: ***"Let no one touch its water at all until I come."*** Two men went ahead and touched it, and he rebuked them. Discipline in managing ***scarce water*** for thirty thousand people was a matter of life and death.

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## COMBINING PRAYERS ON A JOURNEY

The same Hadith of Mu'adh contains ***an important point of fiqh***: throughout the journey to Tabuk, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ ***combined prayers*** — Zuhr with 'Asr, and Maghrib with 'Isha'. This is among the main proofs that combining is permitted for the traveller.

In another narration in Sahih Muslim from Mu'adh, when asked why he did so, the answer was: ***"He wanted that his community not be put in hardship."*** This is the spirit of Islamic law: ***ease in hardship***. Allah says: ***"Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship"*** (Al-Baqarah 2:185).

| SITUATION | PRAYERS THAT MAY BE COMBINED |
|---|---|
| Traveller (on a journey) | Zuhr + 'Asr; Maghrib + 'Isha' |
| Jam' taqdim (advanced) | Performed in the time of the first prayer |
| Jam' ta'khir (delayed) | Performed in the time of the second prayer |
| Cannot be combined | Fajr; 'Asr with Maghrib |

Travellers today — truck drivers, pilots, students returning home — may take this concession. It is not a sign of weak faith, but ***following the Sunnah*** of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, practised by him on the hardest journey of his life.

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## A FIERCE WIND AND A WOMAN'S GARDEN

Abu Humayd as-Sa'idi رضى الله عنه narrates a Hadith that contains ***several miracles*** on the way to and from Tabuk:

**HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 1481**

حَدَّثَنَا سَهْلُ بْنُ بَكَّارٍ، حَدَّثَنَا وُهَيْبٌ، عَنْ عَمْرِو بْنِ يَحْيَى، عَنْ عَبَّاسٍ السَّاعِدِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِي حُمَيْدٍ السَّاعِدِيِّ، قَالَ غَزَوْنَا مَعَ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم غَزْوَةَ تَبُوكَ فَلَمَّا جَاءَ وَادِي الْقُرَى إِذَا امْرَأَةٌ فِي حَدِيقَةٍ لَهَا فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم لأَصْحَابِهِ «اخْرُصُوا». وَخَرَصَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم عَشَرَةَ أَوْسُقٍ فَقَالَ لَهَا «أَحْصِي مَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا». فَلَمَّا أَتَيْنَا تَبُوكَ قَالَ «أَمَا إِنَّهَا سَتَهُبُّ اللَّيْلَةَ رِيحٌ شَدِيدَةٌ فَلاَ يَقُومَنَّ أَحَدٌ، وَمَنْ كَانَ مَعَهُ بَعِيرٌ فَلْيَعْقِلْهُ». فَعَقَلْنَاهَا وَهَبَّتْ رِيحٌ شَدِيدَةٌ فَقَامَ رَجُلٌ فَأَلْقَتْهُ بِجَبَلِ طَيِّئٍ ـ وَأَهْدَى مَلِكُ أَيْلَةَ لِلنَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم بَغْلَةً بَيْضَاءَ، وَكَسَاهُ بُرْدًا وَكَتَبَ لَهُ بِبَحْرِهِمْ ـ فَلَمَّا أَتَى وَادِي الْقُرَى قَالَ لِلْمَرْأَةِ « كَمْ جَاءَ حَدِيقَتُكِ». قَالَتْ عَشَرَةَ أَوْسُقٍ خَرْصَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم «إِنِّي مُتَعَجِّلٌ إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ، فَمَنْ أَرَادَ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ يَتَعَجَّلَ مَعِي فَلْيَتَعَجَّلْ». فَلَمَّا ـ قَالَ ابْنُ بَكَّارٍ كَلِمَةً مَعْنَاهَا ـ أَشْرَفَ عَلَى الْمَدِينَةِ قَالَ «هَذِهِ طَابَةُ». فَلَمَّا رَأَى أُحُدًا قَالَ «هَذَا جَبَيْلٌ يُحِبُّنَا وَنُحِبُّهُ، أَلاَ أُخْبِرُكُمْ بِخَيْرِ دُورِ الأَنْصَارِ». قَالُوا بَلَى. قَالَ «دُورُ بَنِي النَّجَّارِ، ثُمَّ دُورُ بَنِي عَبْدِ الأَشْهَلِ، ثُمَّ دُورُ بَنِي سَاعِدَةَ، أَوْ دُورُ بَنِي الْحَارِثِ بْنِ الْخَزْرَجِ، وَفِي كُلِّ دُورِ الأَنْصَارِ ـ يَعْنِي ـ خَيْرًا». وَقَالَ سُلَيْمَانُ بْنُ بِلاَلٍ حَدَّثَنِي عَمْرٌو، «ثُمَّ دَارُ بَنِي الْحَارِثِ، ثُمَّ بَنِي سَاعِدَةَ». وَقَالَ سُلَيْمَانُ عَنْ سَعْدِ بْنِ سَعِيدٍ، عَنْ عُمَارَةَ بْنِ غَزِيَّةَ، عَنْ عَبَّاسٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «أُحُدٌ جَبَلٌ يُحِبُّنَا وَنُحِبُّهُ». قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ كُلُّ بُسْتَانٍ عَلَيْهِ حَائِطٌ فَهُوَ حَدِيقَةٌ، وَمَا لَمْ يَكُنْ عَلَيْهِ حَائِطٌ لَمْ يَقُلْ حَدِيقَةٌ.

**TRANSLATION:**

Abu Humayd as-Sa'idi رضى الله عنه said: We went on the Expedition of Tabuk with the Prophet ﷺ. When he reached ***Wadi al-Qura***, there was a woman in her garden. The Prophet ﷺ said to his Companions: **"Estimate (its yield)."** The Messenger of Allah ﷺ estimated it at ***ten wasqs***, and said to her: **"Count what it**

**produces."** When we reached Tabuk, he said: **"A strong wind will blow tonight, so let no one stand up, and whoever has a camel, let him tie it."** So we tied them. A strong wind blew, and a man stood up, ***and the wind threw him onto the mountain of Tayyi'***. The king of ***Aylah*** presented the Prophet ﷺ with a white mule, and he clothed him with a cloak and wrote him a document concerning his land. When he came back to Wadi al-Qura, he asked the woman: **"How much did your garden yield?"** She said: "Ten wasqs, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ estimated." The Prophet ﷺ said: **"I am hastening to Madinah; whoever of you wishes to hasten with me, let him do so."** When he came within sight of Madinah, he said: ***"This is Tabah (the good)."*** When he saw Uhud, he said: ***"This is a mountain that loves us and we love it."*** Then he said: **"Shall I tell you the best of the Ansar's homes?"** They said: "Yes." He said: **"The homes of Banu an-Najjar, then the homes of Banu 'Abd al-Ashhal, then the homes of Banu Sa'idah or the homes of Banu al-Harith ibn al-Khazraj, and in all the homes of the Ansar there is good."** (Al-Bukhari also cites other narrations with the same meaning, and explains that "hadiqah" is a walled garden.)

**CHAIN OF NARRATION:** Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Sahl ibn Bakkar, from Wuhayb ibn Khalid, from 'Amr ibn Yahya al-Mazini, from 'Abbas ibn Sahl as-Sa'idi, from Abu Humayd as-Sa'idi رضى الله عنه.

**REFERENCE:** Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Zakah, Chapter: Estimating Dates, Hadith No. 1481; also Nos. 3161, 4422 and Muslim No. 1392.

**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:1481

## LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

***The first miracle:*** The Messenger of Allah ﷺ estimated the yield of the woman's garden in Wadi al-Qura at ten wasq. On the way back, the woman reported that the yield was exactly ***ten wasq***. It also shows the practice of ***khars*** (estimating date yields), the basis for calculating zakat on fruit.

***The second miracle:*** He foretold that ***a fierce wind would blow*** that night and ordered everyone not to stand and to tie their camels. The wind indeed came, and ***a man who stood up was carried away*** to the mountains of Tayyi'. Obedience saved; disobedience brought danger.

The lesson: the Messenger of Allah ﷺ ***gave early warning*** and clear safety instructions. In modern terms, this is ***risk management***. Following safety instructions — whether storm, flood or epidemic warnings — is part of following the Sunnah.

The Hadith also shows the Prophet's ﷺ care for the woman of Wadi al-Qura: he asked her to measure her harvest, and on the way back he asked about it again. He did not forget a single woman and her small garden while leading thirty thousand men. Great leadership is not only about grand strategy, but also about remembering the small people along the way.

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## THE TREATY WITH AYLAH

The Hadith of Abu Humayd also mentions an important political event: ***the king of Aylah*** (today Aqaba in Jordan, at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba) came and gave the Messenger of Allah ﷺ ***a white mule***, and the Prophet ﷺ clothed him with a cloak and ***wrote him a treaty for their land*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 1481).

The sirah books give the king's name as ***Yuhannah ibn Ru'bah***, and say that the people of Jarba' and Adhruh also came to make treaties. They agreed to pay ***jizyah***, and in return their lives, property, ships and caravans ***were guaranteed safety***.

These treaties accord with the verse revealed in the same period: ***"[fight] until they give the jizyah willingly while they are humbled"*** (At-Tawbah 9:29) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:29.

Jizyah is not plunder, but ***a protection payment*** that allowed the People of the Book to keep their religion under the shelter of the Islamic state, exempt from military service, with their safety guaranteed. This was among the foundations of ***coexistence*** between Muslims and non-Muslims in Islamic history.

Without battle, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ ***extended the influence of Islam*** to the borders of Syria. The northern tribes now knew there was a new power, just and strong. Sometimes ***the greatest victory is won without drawing a sword***.

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## KHALID TO DUMAT AL-JANDAL

From Tabuk, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent ***Khalid ibn al-Walid*** رضى الله عنه with about four hundred and twenty horsemen to ***Dumat al-Jandal***, an important northern fortress (today al-Jawf in Saudi Arabia) ruled by ***Ukaydir ibn 'Abd al-Malik***, a Christian Arab king.

> **SIRAH NOTE: THE WILD CATTLE ON A MOONLIT NIGHT**
>
> The sirah authors relate that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to Khalid: ***"You will find him hunting wild cattle."*** On a moonlit night, while Ukaydir was on the roof of his palace with his wife, a herd of wild cattle came rubbing their horns against the palace gate. Ukaydir came down and rode out to hunt, and was captured by Khalid's troop. His brother Hassan was killed in the brief skirmish.
>
> Ukaydir was brought to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who ***spared his life*** and made a peace treaty with him in return for jizyah. These details are ***sirah reports*** (Ibn Ishaq and al-Waqidi).
>
> **REFERENCES:**
> Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah (from Ibn Ishaq) — chapter on the Expedition of Tabuk; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah.
> al-Waqidi, al-Maghazi — Khalid's expedition to Dumat al-Jandal.

This event is confirmed by sahih Hadith. Anas ibn Malik رضى الله عنه narrates that ***Ukaydir of Dumah gave the Prophet ﷺ a silk robe***. People marvelled at its beauty, and he said: ***"By the One in whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, the handkerchiefs of Sa'd ibn Mu'adh in Paradise are better than this"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 2616).

See how the Messenger of Allah ﷺ ***redirected*** the Companions' gaze. While they were dazzled by a king's silk, he reminded them of Sa'd ibn Mu'adh — the Ansari leader martyred from a wound received at the Battle of the Trench (Books 12–13). Merely ***his handkerchiefs*** in Paradise are nobler than the costliest garments of this world.

The silk robe also carries a legal lesson: silk is forbidden for Muslim men to wear, yet the Prophet ﷺ accepted it as a gift, and in other narrations distributed such garments to be used by women or sold. Accepting gifts from non-Muslim rulers was part of his diplomacy, and the ruling on its use was applied with wisdom.

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## TWENTY DAYS AT TABUK

Jabir ibn 'Abdillah رضى الله عنهما narrates: ***"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ stayed at Tabuk for twenty days, shortening the prayer"*** (Sunan Abi Dawud 1235, graded sahih by an-Nawawi and al-Albani).

During those twenty days, ***the Roman army did not appear***. Whether the news of their gathering was inaccurate, or they chose not to face so large and determined an army, the result was the same: the Muslims ***held the field without battle***. The Arab border tribes saw that the Roman empire did not dare come out.

> **SIRAH NOTE: CONSULTATION: ADVANCE OR RETURN?**
>
> The sirah authors relate that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ consulted the Companions about advancing further into Syria. 'Umar ibn al-Khattab رضى الله عنه said: "O Messenger of Allah, if you have been commanded to advance, then advance." He said: "Had I been commanded, I would not have asked your opinion." 'Umar then advised returning, since Rome had a large army and there was not a single Muslim there, and their coming to Tabuk had ***sufficiently intimidated the enemy***. This report is mentioned by al-Waqidi.
>
> **REFERENCES:**
> Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah (from Ibn Ishaq) — chapter on the Expedition of Tabuk; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah.

The lesson: ***victory does not always mean fighting***. Achieving a strategic aim without bloodshed is wisdom. And great decisions are made through ***shura***, even by a Prophet.

Twenty days was a long time for an army of thirty thousand to remain in the desert. Yet it was not idle: delegations came, treaties were signed, and the northern frontier was secured. The Prophet ﷺ used this time to build relationships rather than merely to wait for an enemy, turning a military expedition into a diplomatic one.

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## THE PLOT AT THE PASS OF 'AQABAH

On the way back from Tabuk, an event took place that revealed how deep the hatred of some hypocrites ran. In Sahih Muslim, Abu at-Tufayl relates a dispute between a man from ***"the people of al-'Aqabah"*** and Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman رضى الله عنه. Hudhayfah said they numbered ***fourteen or fifteen***, and testified that twelve of them were ***enemies of Allah and His Messenger in this world and the Hereafter***. In the same narration it is mentioned that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ once said on a journey: "The water is little, so let no one reach it before me," then found that some people had gone ahead, and he cursed them (Sahih Muslim 2779).

**SIRAH NOTE: MASKED MEN ON THE MOUNTAIN PATH**

The sirah authors relate that as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ crossed the pass of 'Aqabah at night, he ordered the army to take the valley route while he himself took the narrow mountain path. ***'Ammar ibn Yasir*** led his camel by the rein in front, and ***Hudhayfah*** drove it from behind. A group of ***masked*** men tried to approach to push him into the ravine. Hudhayfah struck the faces of their camels, and they fled.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ told Hudhayfah their names in secret, which is why Hudhayfah was called ***"the keeper of the Messenger's ﷺ secret"***. The details of this story are ***sirah reports*** and in the Musnad of Ahmad with debated chains; its basis is confirmed by Sahih Muslim 2779.

**REFERENCES:**
Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah (from Ibn Ishaq) — chapter on the Expedition of Tabuk; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah.

Though he knew their names, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ ***did not kill them***. In another incident he explained: ***"So that people will not say that Muhammad kills his companions"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 4905). He protected ***the good name of the call*** even against an enemy within.

The incident at 'Aqabah also shows Hudhayfah's unique place among the Companions. In later years, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab would watch whether Hudhayfah attended a funeral prayer; if Hudhayfah did not pray over someone, 'Umar would not either. Even 'Umar, in his humility, once asked him: "By Allah, am I among them?" Hudhayfah answered that he was not, and that he would tell no one else after him.

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## "WE WERE ONLY CHATTING AND JOKING"

Along the way, some hypocrites ***mocked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the Companions***. When confronted, they gave a now-famous excuse. Allah says:

***"And if you ask them, they will surely say, "We were only conversing and playing." Say, "Is it Allah and His verses and His Messenger that you were mocking"*** (At-Tawbah 9:65) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:65.

***"Make no excuse; you have disbelieved after your belief"*** (At-Tawbah 9:66) — Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:66.

**SIRAH NOTE: "WE HAVE NEVER SEEN THE LIKE OF OUR RECITERS"**

Ibn Jarir at-Tabari and Ibn Abi Hatim narrate from Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهما that during the Expedition of Tabuk a man said in a gathering: ***"We have never seen the like of these reciters of ours — the greediest of stomach, the most lying of tongue, and the most cowardly when meeting the enemy"*** — referring to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the Companions. When the news reached him, the man came clinging to the saddle strap of the Prophet's camel, his feet stumbling on the stones, saying: "We were only chatting and joking." He simply recited this verse, and did not turn to him.

Some scholars graded this report hasan; it is placed in this Note because it is not in the Sahih collections.

**REFERENCES:**

Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim, At-Tawbah 9:65–66. https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/9/65

Scholars take this verse as proof that ***mocking Allah, His verses and His Messenger*** is no small matter, even in jest. Religion is not material for comedy. In the age of social media, where jokes about religion spread easily, this verse is ***a very relevant warning***.

Yet the next part of the verse also opens a door: ***"If We pardon one faction of you…"*** The commentators mention a man named Makhshi ibn Humayyir who repented and was forgiven. The door of repentance is always open to the one who sincerely returns.

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## THOSE HELD BACK BY EXCUSE

As he approached Madinah on the way back, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ spoke words honouring those who could not go out because of ***genuine excuse***:

**HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4423**

حَدَّثَنَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ، أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ، أَخْبَرَنَا حُمَيْدٌ الطَّوِيلُ، عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم رَجَعَ مِنْ غَزْوَةِ تَبُوكَ فَدَنَا مِنَ الْمَدِينَةِ فَقَالَ «إِنَّ بِالْمَدِينَةِ أَقْوَامًا مَا سِرْتُمْ مَسِيرًا وَلاَ قَطَعْتُمْ وَادِيًا إِلاَّ كَانُوا مَعَكُمْ». قَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَهُمْ بِالْمَدِينَةِ قَالَ «وَهُمْ بِالْمَدِينَةِ، حَبَسَهُمُ الْعُذْرُ».

**TRANSLATION:**

Anas ibn Malik رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ returned from the Expedition of Tabuk, and when he drew near Madinah he said: ***"In Madinah there are people who, whenever you travelled any distance or crossed any valley, were with you."*** They said: "O Messenger of Allah, while they were in Madinah?" He said: ***"While they were in Madinah; they were held back by a valid excuse."***

**CHAIN OF NARRATION:** Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Marwazi, from 'Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak, from Humayd at-Tawil, from Anas ibn Malik رضى الله عنه.

**REFERENCE:** Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Military Expeditions (al-Maghazi), Hadith No. 4423; also No. 2839 and Muslim No. 1911 (from Jabir).

**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:4423

### LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

This is ***the nobility of intention***. The Companions who wept because they could not go (Chapter 9) did not take a single step towards Tabuk, yet they ***shared the reward of every step***. Allah weighs the heart, not merely the limbs.

This Hadith also consoles every Muslim ***held back from good*** by illness, old age, family responsibility or lack of means. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said in another Hadith: ***"When a servant falls ill or travels, there is written for him the like of what he used to do when resident and healthy"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 2996).

But the difference is clear: those with excuse ***grieved*** at not being able to go, while the hypocrites ***rejoiced*** at staying behind (At-Tawbah 9:81). The measure of our sincerity is: how do we feel when we miss a chance to worship?

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The scholars derived from this Hadith a well-known principle: a person is rewarded according to his sincere intention when he is genuinely unable to act. The Prophet ﷺ said: "Actions are only by intentions, and every person will have only what he intended" (Sahih al-Bukhari 1). The one who truly intends good but is prevented by a real obstacle is not deprived of its reward.

This Hadith also teaches that those who remain at home with a genuine excuse share in the reward only because of their sincere grief. It is not the mere staying that earns reward, but the longing that accompanies it. The same outward act — staying in Madinah — was worship for some and hypocrisy for others, depending entirely on the heart.

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## "THIS IS TABAH": RETURN TO MADINAH

When Madinah came into view in the distance, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said lovingly: ***"This is Tabah (the good Madinah)."*** And when he saw Mount Uhud, he said: ***"This is a mountain that loves us and we love it"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 1481).

In the same Hadith, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said as he drew near: ***"I am hastening to Madinah; whoever wishes to hasten with me, let him hasten."*** Longing for one's homeland and place of worship is a natural feeling that does not conflict with faith.

**SIRAH NOTE: THE CHILDREN'S SONG AT THANIYYAT AL-WADA'**

As-Sa'ib ibn Yazid رضى الله عنه narrates: ***"I remember going out with the children to Thaniyyat al-Wada' to meet the Messenger of Allah ﷺ when he returned from the Expedition of Tabuk"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 4427).

The famous song "Tala'a al-badru 'alayna" is often linked to the Hijrah, but some scholars such as Ibn al-Qayyim held it more likely that it was sung ***on the return from Tabuk***, since Thaniyyat al-Wada' lies on the Syrian side. The report of the song itself ***has no sahih chain***.

**REFERENCES:**
Ibn al-Qayyim, Zad al-Ma'ad — section on the Expedition of Tabuk.

On arriving in Madinah, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ went straight to ***the mosque*** and prayed two rak'ahs, then sat to receive people. There more than eighty who had stayed behind came with excuses — and there began the story of ***three truthful Companions***, to be told in Book 25.

The return from Tabuk also completed a turning point in Arabia. After this, delegations from across the peninsula began coming to Madinah in such numbers that the following year became known as 'Am al-Wufud — the Year of Delegations. The march that seemed fruitless to the hypocrites, with no battle and no spoils, in fact opened the hearts and doors of the whole of Arabia.

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## SURAH AT-TAWBAH: REVELATION ALONG THE WAY

Tabuk is the only campaign about which ***most of a whole surah*** was revealed. Ibn Kathir and other commentators mention that verses from the middle of Surah At-Tawbah were revealed before, during and after the march to Tabuk, accompanying each stage — as though revelation ***marched with the army***.

| VERSES | THEME |
|---|---|
| 9:29 | Command to face the People of the Book; jizyah |
| 9:38–41 | Rebuke to those reluctant to go forth |
| 9:42–57 | The excuses and traits of the hypocrites |
| 9:64–66 | The hypocrites' mockery on the journey |
| 9:79–83 | Mocking charity; "do not go forth in the heat" |
| 9:91–92 | Those with excuse and those who wept |
| 9:94–96 | The hypocrites' excuses after the return |
| 9:107–110 | Masjid ad-Dirar |
| 9:117–118 | Repentance of the Prophet, Muhajirun, Ansar and the three |

This table shows how the Qur'an ***followed events as they happened***: calling before departure, exposing secrets during the journey, and weighing each group after the return. It also shows that Surah At-Tawbah is not merely a surah about war, but a surah about ***honesty of the heart***.

Note too that this sequence ends with ***the verses of repentance*** (9:117–118). Though the surah is severe towards the hypocrites, the door of repentance stays open — and the repentance of the three Companions who stayed behind will be the main subject of Book 25. Verses 9:107–110 on Masjid ad-Dirar will also be explained in the same book.

Scholars also mention that Surah At-Tawbah is among ***the last surahs revealed***, and it is the only surah that does not begin with the basmalah. The wisdom behind this will be discussed in Book 27, when we tell of the declaration of Bara'ah during the Hajj season of 9 AH.

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## MU'TAH AND TABUK

Tabuk was the second time the Muslims marched against Rome. A comparison with Mu'tah shows how far the community had grown in ***less than two years***:

| ASPECT | MU'TAH (8 AH) → TABUK (9 AH) |
|---|---|
| Leader | Zayd, Ja'far, Ibn Rawahah → the Prophet ﷺ himself |
| Army size | About 3,000 → about 30,000 |
| Fighting | Fierce battle → no battle |
| Losses | Three commanders martyred → none |
| Outcome | Army saved by Khalid → border tribes submit |
| Revelation | No specific verses → much of At-Tawbah |

If Mu'tah was ***a test of courage***, Tabuk was ***a test of sincerity***. At Mu'tah the enemy was in front; at Tabuk the greatest enemy was ***the self*** — the heat, the distance, the date gardens, and the whispers of the hypocrites.

Tabuk also paved the way for ***the opening of Syria*** in the time of Abu Bakr and 'Umar. The route the Messenger of Allah ﷺ took to Tabuk was later followed by the Muslim armies that liberated Jerusalem.

Tabuk also shows how the Prophet ﷺ combined preparation with reliance on Allah. He gathered the largest army of his life, organised supplies, appointed deputies and gave careful instructions about water and wind. Yet the outcome — the retreat of the Romans and the submission of the border towns — came without a single battle. The believer prepares fully, then leaves the result to Allah.

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## SOURCES OF THE STORY

The story of Tabuk is narrated in many sources of differing grades. The table below summarises them:

| EVENT | SOURCE AND GRADE |
|---|---|
| The open call and the heat | Sahih al-Bukhari 4418 — sahih |
| 'Uthman's spending | Jami' at-Tirmidhi 3701 — hasan |
| Abu Bakr and 'Umar | Jami' at-Tirmidhi 3675 — hasan; Tabuk link: sirah |
| The Ash'aris | Sahih al-Bukhari 4415 — sahih |
| 'Ali like Harun | Sahih al-Bukhari 4416 — sahih |
| Abu Khaythamah | Sahih Muslim 2769 — sahih |
| Abu Dharr walking alone | Ibn Ishaq — weak chain |
| Al-Hijr | Sahih al-Bukhari 3378, 4419 — sahih |
| Spring of Tabuk and combining | Sahih Muslim 706 — sahih |
| The wind and Aylah | Sahih al-Bukhari 1481 — sahih |
| Ukaydir and the silk robe | Sahih al-Bukhari 2616 — sahih; details: sirah |
| Twenty days at Tabuk | Sunan Abi Dawud 1235 — sahih |
| The people of al-'Aqabah | Sahih Muslim 2779 — sahih; details: sirah |
| Those with excuse | Sahih al-Bukhari 4423 — sahih |
| News of the Roman army | al-Waqidi, Ibn Sa'd — sirah |

Most of the main events of Tabuk are supported by ***sahih Hadith***, while the additional details come from the books of sirah. We accept the sahih with confidence, and convey the sirah reports while stating their grade.

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## LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

Tabuk was a campaign without a battle, yet it was among ***the greatest tests*** in the sirah. It divided the ranks of the Muslims into clear groups: those who spent all they had, those who wept because they could not go, those who fell behind through negligence, and those who invented excuses out of hypocrisy.

| LESSON | FROM TABUK |
|---|---|
| Transparent leadership | An open call about the hardship |
| Spending without limit | 'Uthman, Abu Bakr and 'Umar |
| Small charity, great worth | Abu Khaythamah's sa' of dates |
| Sincere intention | The tears of al-Bakka'un |
| Beware of excuses | "Do not go forth in the heat" |
| Learning from history | Weeping at al-Hijr |
| Ease in the law | Combining and shortening prayers |
| Victory without bloodshed | The treaties of Aylah and Dumah |
| Religion is no joke | At-Tawbah 9:65–66 |

### TABUK IN OUR LIVES

Each of us will face our own "Tabuk": a moment when obedience asks us to leave comfort behind — shade, a garden about to be harvested, or a longed-for rest. At that moment, we can be 'Uthman who spent, Abu Khaythamah who rose and followed, al-Bakka'un who wept because they could not, or — Allah forbid — those who said ***"do not go forth in the heat"***. The choice is always ours.

In sha Allah, the series **The Prophet's Sirah** will continue with ***Book 25 — Ka'b ibn Malik and Masjid ad-Dirar***: the story of three Companions who stayed behind and chose to tell the truth, fifty nights of boycott, repentance accepted from the heavens, and a mosque built to divide the Muslims. 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 رضي 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 رضي 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."

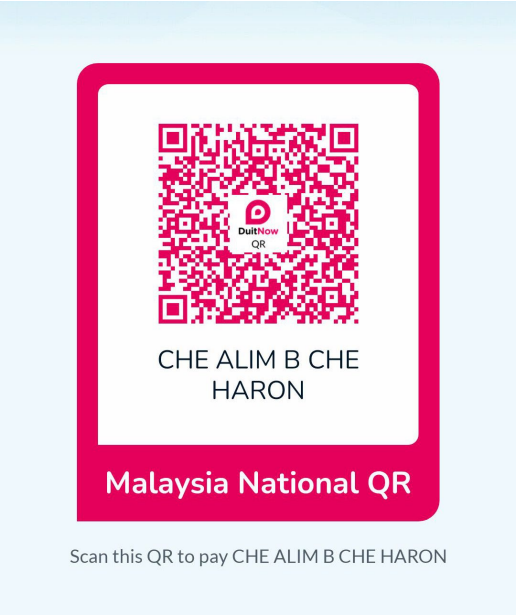
**CHAIN OF NARRATION:** Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه .

**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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