



حبر أبيض  
WHITE INK



**Dr. Abdul Haq Al Sanabi**



# The Ottoman military campaigns against the first Saudi state

The liberation of the Two Holy Mosques by the rulers of Diriyah constituted a severe blow, and a severe insult to the Ottoman Porte, which mobilized all its governors in the region to re-occupy Mecca and Medina, as they are the center of the Islamic world's power that grants religious and political legitimacy to the servants of the holy sites. Accordingly, eliminating the Saudi state and restoring control of the Two Holy Mosques for the Ottoman Sultan was a matter of existence that was not negotiable or bargained.

It seems that the desire of the Ottoman Porte met with the goals of Sharif Ghalib, who looked forward to the return of pilgrims from the wealthy Ottoman provinces. The absence of those pilgrims affected the Hijazi merchants, who were receiving royalties on the pilgrimage caravans. Hence, materialistic ambitions overcame religious impulses and established an objective alliance between Muhammad Ali Pasha and Sharif Ghalib, who received the blessing of the Ottoman Sultan.

It can be said that the collapse of the first Saudi state was not as easy as depicted in the biased Ottoman writings. Rather, the war was on both sides, during which the armies of Diriyah recorded epics that are still mentioned in fair writings, some of which we will present according to the temporal contexts of their occurrence.

## **Wadi Al-Safraa Battle:**

Al-Safraa Battle, which broke out between the Saudis and the Ottoman armies in 1812 AD, is considered one of the greatest epics that the Arabs wrote in the face of Ottoman arrogance and pride. Through it, the Diriyah armies presented heroic epics in defending the religion and the possession of the countries of Islam and Muslims.

The beginning of the battle was marked by the landing of the Ottomans, led by Toson Pasha, on the coasts of Yanbu, along with 10,000 fighters of mercenaries who had brought them from the occupied Arab areas with the aim of reoccupying Medina. On the other hand, when the armies of Diriyah knew the progress of the invading armies, they moved to them. The two groups met in the area of Wadi Al-Safraa. A fierce battle took place in which the Saudi army fought fiercely under the leadership of Prince Abdullah bin Saud, Masoud bin Mudian, Jaber bin Jabara and Saudi military leaders of the first rank.

The Saudi shrewdness led Prince Abdullah to give orders to dig a large trench to prevent the progress of the mercenary army, and then took positions on the hills surrounding the place to monitor the enemy's movements. It is what put the Ottoman armies in a trap after luring them to the depth of the valley to attack them from three directions, which caused the invaders to lose their balance in three days and hastened their defeat, leaving behind more than five thousand dead with their equipment.

## **The First battle of Turbah:**

After the fall of the Two Holy Mosques, the Saudi army decided to retreat towards the Najd lands because they know its paths, and they could confront the forces of the governor of Egypt in various areas of operations and away from their supply points and transportation lines, and then eliminate them and prepare to recover the Hejaz lands.

It should be noted that the first battle of Turbah represents an exceptional memory in the collective imagination of Saudi society, given the decisive role played by a female figure named Ghalia Al-Baqamiah. She taught the colonial armies lessons in martial arts and how to sacrifice all that is valuable. She proved that Arab women are no less brave and shrewd than men, especially when it comes to defending homeland possession and devotion to the Sultan.

The first battle of Turbah is one of the great epics fought by the armies of the Saudi state led by Faisal bin Saud against the Egyptian armies led by Mustafa Bey, the prince of Hajj. The latter was supported by some tribes that broke the pledge of allegiance and allied themselves with the Turks. According to al-Jabarti, the first battle of Turbah lasted eight days and ended with a humiliating defeat for Mustafa Bey, as he did not win anything from this campaign except the defeat and humiliation that hastened his summons to Egypt.

## **The Second battle of Turbah:**

At the end of October 1813 AD, after the first setback of Turbah, Muhammad Ali Pasha sent his son Toson from Taif to seize Turbah and return it to the rule of the Ottomans. After a siege that lasted four days and heavy artillery bombardment, the campaign failed to storm the city walls because of the good preparation of the Saudi armies and the mismanagement of war by Toson Pasha, who exhausted his soldiers on the way in the battles against Otaiba tribe. At that time, Diriyah's armies succeeded in converting the defensive tactic into an offensive one that surprised the Egyptian armies and inflicted heavy losses on them that prompted them to flee, leaving behind many dead, tents and supplies.

## **The Battle of Bessel**

The great losses that the armies of Muhammad Ali Pasha received prompted him to regroup his forces in Jeddah, as he worked on training them for a full three months in order to prepare them for the next confrontation against the Saudi forces, which would break out in 1815 AD at the Bessel region. The importance of Bessel lies in considering it a strategic location in the middle of Turkish supply and transportation lines, and its results would benefit the first Saudi state and also the Ottoman governor in Egypt, who considered that losing this battle meant the end of his dynasty's rule in Egypt.

At first, the Saudi armies were victorious and inflicted great losses on the Ottoman armies, which prompted Muhammad Ali Pasha personally to lead other reinforcements in the direction of Bessel. In spite of this, some soldiers' lack of discipline and their haste for victory led them to fall into the trap set by Muhammad Ali Pasha for them. He lured them to the plains through the maneuver of withdrawal to return and perform a wide detour that succeeded in creating confusion in the Saudi camp, and penetrating one of the sides of the Diriyah armies (the direction of Zahran and Ghamed). Faisal bin Saud's army was defeated and returned to Turbah with the hope of regrouping its forces, but he found that the people dispersed after the battle.

In general, it can be said that the armies of Diriyah stood as an impenetrable dam against the repeated campaigns of the Ottoman armies. However, Muhammad Ali's possession of the most important weapon in the war at the time, which was artillery, and the great capabilities he used to win over some Arab tribes led to the defeat of the first Saudi state.

However, the pages of history tell us that the confrontations between the two sides would not stop at the massacres of the Ottomans in Bessel, Diriyah and others. Rather, the Arab epic rejecting the foreign colonization of the region in all its forms would continue, and the responsibility for the confrontation would be held by a unique generation that refused to lay down its arms before the last Ottoman occupier was expelled from the Arabian Peninsula.