



The Saudis, even in their defeat, were heroes who wrote history with their blood

Battle of Bessel..

The Saudi epic battle that proved to the Ottomans that souls are the first fortresses of the homeland

The Saudis valiantly defended their first country against the invaders of the Turks, despite the fact that the Ottomans equipped their armies with powerful equipment and an uninterrupted supply of military soldiers and mercenaries, and all their states were in a state of alert to achieve their goal of overthrowing the capital of the first Saudi state, Diriyah. The Battle of Basel, in which the Saudis scored an unparalleled glory in the era of the first Saudi state.

Wadi Basel is located between Taif and Al Baha, in the middle of the distance between Turubah and Taif, and is surrounded by a mountain range that forms a natural barrier for those heading to Turubah and Najd.

The Battle of Basel took place in this valley two years after the defeat of the Ottoman army in the second battle of Turubah, which the Ottoman commander Mustafa Bey thought it was within his reach, until the Saudis tasted him the bitterness of defeat and forced him to retreat. Despite the defeat of the Ottomans in Turubah, they rushed to prepare other military campaigns, but this time under the leadership of the Ottoman governor of Egypt, Muhammad Ali Pasha in person, trying to break the fear in the hearts of his soldiers who began to collapse before the strikes of the Saudis, and in order to personally eliminate the Saudis in Hijaz. Taif in particular, whose fall would open a road to the capital of the first Saudi state, Diriyah.

The Battle of Basel took place in January (1815 AD) between the forces of the first Saudi state led by Prince Faisal bin Saud bin Abdulaziz and the Ottoman army led by the Ottoman governor Muhammad Ali Pasha, who marched to invade the Saudis on the orders of the Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II, after the first Saudi state was able to bring Asir and Hijaz together.

Historians described Basel as the greatest epic battles of the first Saudi state with the Ottomans, due to its military details and the forces mobilized for it, and because it was a cornerstone that opened the way for the invading Ottomans to pounce on Diriyah.

Muhammad Ali Pasha promised the Ottoman Sultan in Istanbul to eliminate the first Saudi state, which exhausted the Sultan's forces in Iraq, Al-Ahsa and the Levant, and because it turned into a threat to his sultanate.

Muhammad Ali faced Prince Faisal bin Saud, commander of the Saudi forces, on behalf of his father, Imam Saud, who died days before the decisive battle, continuing the march under the banner of his brother Imam Abdullah bin Saud.

The Saudis marched from Najd with their leader Faisal bin Saud, and other numbers from different tribes who owed allegiance to the first Saudi state joined him. The Saudi leader Tami bin Shuaib and a large number of Asir tribes, Fahd bin Salem bin Shakban from Bisha, and Ibn Dahman came with him along with many battalions from the horsemen of Ghamid tribe, and Muslat bin Qatanan al-Sabi'i from Ranyah, Ibn Hatamil from Shahrhan, Bakhrush bin Alas from Zahran, and many other leaders of the Hijaz tribes and their knights. These forces were about twenty-five thousand.

The epic battle began with a meticulous Saudi plan to eliminate the Ottoman army and Muhammad Ali Pasha; so, they rumored that an army was advancing from Qunfudhah towards Jeddah in an effort to seize it, which confused the Ottoman army and prompted many of them to flee. After this diversion put on by the Saudis against the Turks and directing their attention towards Al-Qunfudah They attacked the Turks at Bessel and broke through the lines of the Ottoman army, which prompted Muhammad Ali Pasha to retreat.

Muhammad Ali tried his best, through his cavalry, to affect the plan of the Saudis, but he failed. After the first day of the battle had passed and the Turkish cavalry failed to make any progress, Muhammad Ali realized the strength of the Saudis and feared defeat; so, he hatched another plan, gathered his commanders, and ordered them to advance towards the Saudi posts, and when they reached the nearest point of engagement, they fired them up and retreated as if they were defeated, without any organization towards the valley - in an attempt to deceive the Saudi of their escape.

The Ottoman army executed the plan as hatched by the Pasha, and as soon as the Saudis saw the Turks retreating and the confusion among them, they left their fortified mountain posts and went down to the plain, and this is what Muhammad Ali expected, until the Saudis moved away from the mountains where they barricaded themselves and fighting from, so he sent his knights and stationed his forces and artillery over the mountains and bombed the Saudi army so that the battle ends in his favor.

Muhammad Ali made sure that most of his army would be North African Desert mercenaries who were experienced and trained to fight in the desert, as their number reached about twenty thousand fighters, including 1200 knights on their horses, hundreds of cannons and thousands of modern rifles that were not available to the Saudi army, in addition to 3000 camels from Levant, and 2,000 people from Libya to carry supplies that were estimated to be enough to fight two whole months.

Most of the Saudi army was from Saudi tribes, most of whose knights came to defend their state and homeland under one banner to fight the Ottoman occupier, and the Saudi forces were more than 25 thousand fighters, most of them infantry, in addition to old and personal rifles and without cannons.

The Battle of Basel was recorded as one of the major battles waged by the first Saudi state in defending its lands against the invading Ottoman occupier, who came from outside the Arabian Peninsula with its men, equipment, mercenaries and modern weapons, to occupy lands he did not own and had no right to. At a historical stage in the life of the Arabian Peninsula during which it was united under the Saudi flag, the battle was not the only confrontation with the Ottoman occupier, but rather was part of a major war whose battles took place throughout the territory of the Saudi state, from Medina and Yanbu to Jeddah and Makkah, and along the coast of the Red Sea in Qunfudhah, Tihama and Asir.

The Turkish trick caused the Saudi forces to descend from the high mountains, with a desire to eliminate the Turks once and for all and to arrest Muhammad Ali, which made them forget the correct military system they had adopted, and the surprise that awaited them when this large number of Turkish cavalries emerged and the artillery bombardment, all that made them lose the ability to resist.

The End of the Battle:

After the end of the battle, part of Faisal bin Saud's army retreated to Turubah, while the rest dispersed and returned to their areas, especially to Al-Baha and Asir, and Muhammad Ali's army followed them to Turubah, and when Prince Faisal knew of this, he retreated from it to Ranyah, and from there to Najd, while Muhammad Ali continued marching, occupying Turubah, Ranyah, Bisha and Asir.

The Ottomans committed major massacres against the prisoners of the Saudi army, and Muhammad Ali Pasha placed a reward of 6 gold pounds for each head of a Saudi fighter. In a few hours, five thousand severed heads of the Saudi martyrs who were martyred on the battlefield were piled up in front of him.

Despite the bitterness of defeat and the dispersal of the knights and their retreat inward, the Saudis made history full of heroic actions that history still preserves to today, including that the knight Fahd bin Salem bin Shakban from Bisha and some of his hundreds of men managed to penetrate the Turkish blockade and retreat safely to their areas. Also, Commander Ibn Raqosh, one of the leaders of Zahran, killed a number of the Ottoman governor's officers with his own hands, and when he lost his horse, he waited until he had the opportunity to throw a Turkish cavalry off his horse, so he rode it and retreated with his fighters to his home. The Asiri forces set the greatest example of sacrifice, as the sources say that many of them were found dead tied with ropes in the mountains adjacent to Wadi Basel, after they tied their own feet, swearing by God not to flee away from the Turks, and they fought until the last breath, to remain in that condition and end up being a symbol of the great martyrs of the homeland, who wrote history with their blood.

The Ottoman governor committed a human massacre by cutting off 5,000 heads of Saudi prisoners.

Historians know it as the greatest Saudi epic battles against the Ottoman occupier.

The martyrs handcuffed themselves in the battlefield, in the face of death.

References:

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