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“The collapse of Diriyah and the heroic epics led by Imam Abdullah bin Saud”

It was written in modern history about many Saudi icons and leaders that the people of this country will not forget, given their outstanding heroism in the most severe conditions that the Saudi state went through in its first and darkest phase. The most prominent of these leaders is Prince Abdullah bin Saud, the eldest son of Imam Saud bin Abdulaziz bin Muhammad and his crown prince, who was raised in Diriyah, the capital of the Saudi state.

He received his first education from the school of his father, Imam Saud, the most prominent imam of the Saudi state, and he learned a lot from him. Through this, his personality, his entity, his handling, his political savvy, and his handling of events were formed. He was educated by a number of sheikhs, scholars and teachers. Since he was young, he grew up loving equestrian, horse riding, using weapons, leading armies and crowds, dealing with events, launching raids, and confronting enemies and saboteurs from inside and outside the country.

The features of Prince Abdullah bin Saud's personality became more prominent after his assumption of power. He showed the traits of a successful leader and administrator, a smart politician, and a military leader who was confident in Allah and in himself. He was a brave hero of the Saudi state. Since his father, Imam Saud, assigned him to lead the army to confront some outlaw tribes, deter them and return them to the right path, he completely acquired the features of a successful political, military and administrative leader. These features are what qualified him to assume the Imamate later and deter the invading of the barbaric Turkish campaigns with glory and honor.

His political savvy and military cunning were evident in deterring the invading Turkish army on the territory of the Saudi state in its first campaign. That campaign was led by Ahmed Toson bin Muhammad Ali Pasha, the governor of Ottoman Egypt, with a large army in which he mobilized from all the states of the Ottoman Empire and marched with them from the side of land and sea. Yanbu port was the base for the launch of that invading army to fight the Saudi state.

The Saudi historian Ibn Bishr says about this: The number of that army was estimated to have reached more than fourteen thousand fighters with many horses, and they were armed with guns and equipped with cannons and various combat weapons. Prince Abdullah bin Saud, by order of his father, Imam Saud, confronted the barbaric Turkish campaign and the fierce attack on the homeland. He was able to organize his army in an appropriate military manner, in which he confused the enemies and eliminated them.

After the Turkish campaign reached Wadi Al-Safraa, the Saudi forces prepared an ambush for it, which numbered, according to Ibn Bishr, about eighteen thousand fighters. Prince Abdullah divided his army into two divisions, a division led by him to confront the invading campaign, and another division that hides behind the valley to be summoned if the Saudi army falters. After three days of war and maneuvers between the two parties, Prince Abdullah summoned the Second Division to besiege the invading army and destroy it from both sides. The battle ended with the defeat of Ahmed Toson in a humiliating manner, as about five thousand men of his army were killed. The Saudis seized great things, seven cannons and dozens of weapons, ammunition, equipment and money, which was confirmed by Ibn Bishr when he said: “Only those riding horses were the ones who survived and returned with the pasha”. Toson returned defeated, thinking only of reaching Yanbu.

From there, he asked his father, Muhammad Ali Pasha, to provide him with military supplies. Egypt's supplies arrived from Muhammad Ali, who was affected by the great defeat inflicted on him by the Saudi Prince Abdullah bin Saud, who proved his military ability in the confrontation with the brutal enemy. Prince Abdullah bin Saud assumed the Imamate after the death of his father, Imam Saud, in the year 1227 AH / 1812 AD, to begin a new phase experienced by Imam Abdullah bin Saud during his rule which lasted four and a half years. He spent that period in a series of battles and heroic epics against the brutal Turkish campaigns, as a firm leader, striving for the sake of Allah, in order to preserve the unity and prestige of the state, with perseverance and power.

In 1230 AH / 1815 AD, the Saudi forces were able to stop the progress of Toson's campaign inside the territory of the Saudi state, after marching towards Al-Rass. The Turkish leader realized his mistake in penetrating into the middle of the peninsula and the Najd region, due to his ignorance of the desert wars that the people of the region know well, so Toson asked to conclude a peace agreement with Imam Abdullah bin Saud. On his part, the imam sent a delegation to negotiate with Muhammad Ali Pasha. The delegation arrived in Cairo in 1231 AH / 1851 AD, and during that period the invading forces withdrew from Al-Qassim to Medina, but the Saudi delegation was unsuccessful in completing the final peace process between the two parties.

The truce did not last long between the Saudi state and the Turks, as Muhammad Ali Pasha conducted his second major campaign led by his son Ibrahim Pasha (The bloody), in 1231 AH / 1816 AD. The campaign was equipped with large new military equipment, and foreign military experts, led by the French officer Visser, who served as a Staff Officer for Ibrahim's brutal army, in addition to a group of Italian doctors, with the aim of avoiding previous mistakes.

The boldness, valor and heroism of Imam Abdullah bin Saud appeared when he confronted the campaign of the butcher Ibrahim Pasha since its arrival at Hanakia in Jumada II of 1232 AH / 1817 AD. Although there was a difference in strength between the two sides in favor of the invaders, he tried his best to limit their progress. The confrontation between them was very violent, so he preferred logical thinking and preserving his army, so used a new and different military strategy based on luring the invading forces into the depth of the Arabian Peninsula in an attempt to implicate and eliminate them.

After the campaign reached Al-Rass and besieged it, Imam Abdullah bin Saud sent military aid to confront that campaign, end the siege, and support its people. Ibn Bishr says about this matter: “The Turk soldiers came with Ibrahim Pasha and camped at Al-Rass for the remaining five days of Sha'ban (1232 AH / 1817 AD), accordingly; its people resisted and fought against him”. The siege of Al-Rass lasted for nearly five months, forcing the people of Al-Rass and the Saudi forces to ask for reconciliation. After the surrender of Al-Rass by way of reconciliation in favor of the invading forces, the towns of Al-Qassim and Al-Washm fell successively. This prompted Imam Abdullah bin Saud to decide to defend Diriyah, which is the capital, symbol, and political entity of his state.

THE HEROIC EPICS IN DIRIYAH:

Diriyah is the capital of the Saudi state. It is a fortified city with strong castles and a circumference of about twelve kilometers and a wall fortified with towers. Diriyah, under the leadership of Imam Abdullah bin Saud, witnessed an era of heroism and unforgettable epics in defending it with all its military and human capabilities. Therefore, Diriyah withstood under the powerful Saudi leadership. The butcher Ibrahim Pasha reached it in the month of Jumada II of 1233 AH / 1818 AD, to impose a siege on it, which was followed by ramming it with cannons mercilessly for two whole months without achieving tangible progress.

The steadfastness of Imam Abdullah bin Saud and the people of Diriyah was a steadfastness that history recorded for them and showed heroic features in the resistance and struggle against the invaders. Bab Samhan, Al-Turaif neighborhood, Al-Bujairi and others remain witnesses to this matter. Diriyah, under its leadership, provided lessons in endurance and patience in confronting the barbaric Turkish forces that do not take into account the soul and the people, and which are supported from inside and outside while Diriyah is suffering from an unjust siege.

There is no doubt that this case is one of the aspects of the moral crisis experienced by the barbaric Turkish army in its war against the Saudis, even if it claims the correctness of its case and its victorious appearance. Ibn Bishr tells us about that war and the savagery of the invader, saying: “He dispersed his soldiers towards the crowds of the people of Diriyah, and war broke out between them and its fire ignited, and its evil flew into the sky. Bombs, fire, and cannons varied, and the shrapnel fell on those crowds like rain. The fighting intensified, the heroes clashed, and the war between the Turks and the people of Diriyah had its ups and downs”.

This is a small part of the fierceness of those battles fought by Diriyah, the capital of the first Saudi state, led by the heroes from the family of Al Saud, the rest of Diriyah's residents and notables, and the valiant men from the Najdi towns. Al-Tarif Mosque remains a witness to the heroism of Imam Abdullah bin Saud in confronting the aggressors and fighting the oppressive invaders, as he directed the cannons against them and what he had of equipment and ammunition, despite their scarcity, but as Ibn Bishr says: “After that, a large number abandoned Abdullah and they were more than those who stayed with him. He gave them money but they took it and fled. When he found the matter turned against him, he decided to put himself at risk and negotiate with the Turks to preserve the women, children and money, so he sent to the Pasha and asked for reconciliation”.

The surrender of Imam Abdullah bin Saud was heroic by all accounts, aimed at the mercy of the people and the place from an enemy who lacked the meanings of humanity and magnanimity. That was the will of Allah, and the imam went with some scholars and leaders of the Saudi state to Istanbul to die there as martyrs for the cause of monotheism and true faith. They followed the correct approach that the ancestor of the nation was upon and defended it. Imam Abdullah bin Saud was martyred patiently and did not show any signs of fear or shame. He was not afraid of death because he knew that the death follows the will of Allah and that Allah gives the martyr a great place in heaven. Some may imagine that this is the end of the first Saudi state with its collapse, but in fact it was the collapse of the invader and the defeat of his morals, and the pride of the homeland, which soon began to launch again by steadfastness and defense of principles. This led to the establishment of the Saudi state in its second contemporary phase.