

239212 - Why did the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and his two companions flee from the battlefield and hide in the cave?

the question

According to Sahih Muslim, Book of Jihad & Expeditions,

4413.

It has been reported on the authority of Anas b. Malik that (when the enemy got the upper hand) on the day of the Battle of Uhud, the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) was left with only seven men from the ansar and two men from the Quraish. When the enemy advanced towards him and overwhelmed him, he said: Whoso turns them away from us will attain Paradise or will be my Companion in Paradise. A man from the Ansar came forward and fought (the enemy) until he was killed. The enemy advanced and overwhelmed him again and he repeated the words: Whoso turns them away, from us will attain Paradise or will be my Companion in Paradise. A man from the Ansar came forward and fought until he was killed. This state continued until the seven Ansar were killed (one after the other). Now, the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said to his two Companions: We have not done justice to our Companions.

Did the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) endanger the lives of those 7 Ansar to protect his own? That seems unfair. Why couldnt they all just hide or leave, since its OK to leave the battlefield if the enemy outnumbered tremendously. What is the wisdom behind this decision? And, why did the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and his 2 companions leave the battle field & seek refuge in the cave?

Detailed answer

The worst thing that a reader or researcher can do is give himself the right to pass judgement upon the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) or upon one of his companions, on the basis of an incident that he reads about in some report, without bearing in mind what happened before and after that, and without examining or understanding the context, even if

the whole story is not narrated in that particular report. What the critic must do is try to think about it and find out about it, and put together the pieces of the story that is assumed to have taken place. Only then will he be able to form an objective and fair-minded picture of what happened.

When you read the hadith of Anas ibn Maalik (may Allah be pleased with him), which says that on the day of Uhud the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was left with only seven men of the Ansaar and two men of Quraysh.

When they were surrounded, he said: “Who will repel them from us and Paradise will be his, or he will be my companion in Paradise?” One of the Ansaari men went forward and fought until he was killed... and that continued until all seven had been killed. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to his two companions: “We have not been fair to our companions”,

the first thing you should bear in mind is that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was not to be accused by any of his companions or any of the Muslims. He (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was the Messenger of light, guidance, and mercy to all of mankind, and the future of all of humanity is connected to his call; the fate of all religions is connected to his religion. Therefore Allah ended all divine messages with him, and raised him in status and renown throughout the world, and He protected him from people, by the means that He, may He be glorified and exalted, decreed.

Therefore his companions (may Allah be pleased with them) would love to sacrifice their lives and their wealth for him, with no hesitation or resentment whatsoever, because by protecting the Prophet of Allah, they would be protecting the light of Tawheed, justice, righteousness and goodness throughout the world. By means of such sacrifices the message of Islam continued, and the Muslim ummah was shaped and formed, and attained the highest possible level of glory, justice, knowledge and peace. All of that was due to the immense sacrifices made by the noble Sahaabah (may Allah be pleased with them).

Therefore it is not possible for any Muslim – let alone any Sahaabi who was defending al-Madinah al-Munawwarah alongside the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) – to think of his Prophet in anything but the most perfect terms, or to think of his own life as being more deserving of protection and being given precedence than the life of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

Furthermore, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was the best example and the best model, for he took up arms and joined his companions in defending the sanctity of the Muslims, warding off the efforts of the haters and wrongdoers, and protecting Muslim lives, honour and wealth against the ignorant tyranny of Quraysh and their arrogance in the land. Because of his courage, his companions felt more secure by being near him when the fighting grew intense.

Ahmad (1346) narrated that ‘Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said: When fighting grew intense and the two groups met in battle, we sought protection by drawing close to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace, you), and none of us was closer to the enemy than him.

Shaykh Ahmad Shaakir said in his commentary on al-Musnad: Its isnaad is saheeh.

Al-Bukhaari (2627) and Muslim (2307) narrated that Anas ibn Maalik said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was the best of people, and he was the most generous of people and the most courageous of people. One night the people of Madinah were in a state of panic, and some people went out towards the sound. They were met by the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), who was coming back, as he had gone towards the sound before them. He was riding the horse of Abu Talhah bareback, with his sword around his neck, and he said: “Do not be afraid, do not be afraid.”

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

From this hadith we learn several things, one of which is that it highlights the courage of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), because he hastened to go out towards the enemy before all the people, and because he went out and found out what was going on, and came back before the people got there. End quote.

What is meant by riding a horse bareback is that it had no saddle on it. This is reflective of his perfect courage (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

During the battle of Hunayn, when most of the Sahaabah fled from the battlefield, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) started urging his mule on towards the enemy, saying: "I am the Prophet and no lie; I am the son of 'Abd al-Muttalib." Al-Baraa' ibn 'Aazib (may Allah be pleased with him) said: No one among the people was seen to be more courageous on that day than him. Narrated by al-Bukhaari (3042) and Muslim (1776).

But the calamities suffered by the Muslims at Uhud were great indeed. The cheek of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was injured, he was bleeding and his tooth had been broken. He himself fought and defended his companions in the most difficult circumstances. He – may my father and mother be sacrificed for him, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him – was at the head, protecting their lives, standing between them and the aggressors of Quraysh; he did not stay safe and sound in his house or his tent at that critical moment.

What the questioner is confused about is the final moments of that incident, which were very painful and difficult for the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and his noble Companions. He was exhausted from fighting and bearing arms, and his wound was bleeding with no treatment or anything that could stop the bleeding. He fell in a hole, and a link of chain mail got embedded in his cheek and could not be removed. His iron helmet was broken on his head, and large rocks were being hurled at him, until rumours spread that he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) had been killed, because of what he went through of hardships. He – may my father and mother be sacrificed for him – was approaching the age of sixty, and undoubtedly could not have the physical strength and endurance that a young man would have.

Ibn Hishaam (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Ibn Ishaq said: The Muslims were put to flight and the enemy slew many of them. It was a day of trial and testing in which Allah honoured several with martyrdom, until the enemy reached the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). He was hit with a stone so

that he fell on his side and one of his teeth was smashed, his face scored, and his lip injured. The man who wounded him was ‘Utbah ibn Abi Waqqaas.

Ibn Ishaq said: Humayd at-Taweel told me, from Anas ibn Maalik: The incisor of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was broken on the Day of Uhud, and his face was scored. The blood began to run down his face and he began to wipe it away, saying the while: “How can people prosper who have stained their Prophet’s face with blood while he was calling them to their Lord?” So Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, revealed concerning that the words (interpretation of the meaning):

“Not for you (O Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), but for Allâh) is the decision; whether He turns in mercy to (pardons) them or punishes them; verily, they are the Zâlimûn (polytheists, disobedients, and wrong-doers)”

[Aal ‘Imraan 3:128].

Ibn Hishaam said: Rabeeh ibn ‘Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn Abi Sa‘eed al-Khudri narrated from his father, from Abu Sa‘eed al-Khudri that ‘Utbah ibn Abi Waqqaas hit the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) with a stone on that day, and broke his lower right incisor and wounded him in his lower lip, and that ‘Abdullah ibn Shihaab az-Zuhri struck him on the forehead, and Ibn Qam’ah wounded his cheek, so two links of chain mail became embedded in his cheek. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) fell in a hole that had been made by Abu ‘Aamir so that the Muslims would fall into it without realising. ‘Ali ibn Abi Taalib (may Allah be pleased with him) took the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) by the hand and Talhah ibn ‘Ubaydullah lifted him up until he was standing upright.

End quote from Seerat Ibn Hishaam (2/79).

When the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) had suffered so much hardship and a group of the mushrikeen gathered around him, wanting to kill him, in addition to what he had already gone through, a group of his noble companions rallied around him to defend him with their lives, as Ibn Hazm said: The mushrikeen caught up with the Messenger of

Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and a group of the Muslims (may Allah be pleased with them) charged to his defence, of whom there were seven – and it was said that there were more – until they were all killed. The last of them was ‘Amaarah ibn Yazeed ibn as-Sakan.

End quote from Jawaami‘ as-Seerah (p. 127)

In that situation, what is wrong with him (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) seeking help and support from his companions?

What is wrong with it if those who were fighting for the sake of Allah cooperated to ward off aggression and defend one another, as all fighters do, the strong helping the injured, and protecting one another?

Over and above all of that, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was holding firm to the rope of Allah and trusting that He would protect him; he was taking all possible measures to achieve that, which included asking his companions to help him in that, so that the call of truth would not die in its infancy and the wrongdoers and aggressors would not prevail, after having crossed desert and wilderness from Makkah to Madinah, seeking to commit aggression and wreak havoc upon the believers in their safe and secure city, and so that the disbelievers would not divert them from their religion and impose upon them the fetters of shirk and jaahiliyyah in which there is no goodness, no ethics, no truth and no true religion.

This is a brief glimpse into that painful scene, and it is sufficient to explain the reason that prompted the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) to honour his companions by urging them to come and defend him, by saying: “Who will repel them from us and Paradise will be his?” The impact of what had befallen him (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) – as it says in as-Seerah al-Halabiyyah (2/322, 324) – meant that he could not climb upon a rock in order to protect himself, until Talhah (may Allah be pleased with him) helped him, and on that day he led his companions in prayer whilst seated.

What we think is that what was not mentioned in any of the reports was even more serious and grievous, because war at that time would inflict serious and painful physical injuries for which

there would be no treatment. If the questioner had imagined the pain that could be caused by swords and wounds and borne in mind the well-known military principle which says that fighters and their commanders are more aware of the circumstances of their battle than others, he would not have dared to blame or criticise the way in which the defence plan was drawn up on the basis of a single report taken out of context. Rather, even if he read all of history, he would never be able to truly understand what happened as the people involved themselves understood it, except only approximately. In that case he will understand that his doubt and questioning were not appropriate.

With regard to the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), “We have not been fair to our companions (ma ansafna as-haabana)”, that does not mean that he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) endangered their lives to protect his own. Rather what is meant is a rebuke to the two men of Quraysh who did not go forward to defend him too. They should all have participated in defending and protecting him, and should not have fallen short in that important duty that should not have been carried out only by the Ansaar who went forth one after another until all seven were martyred.

One of the scholars said that the more correct vowelising of this phrase is ma ansafana as-haabuna (meaning: our companions have not been fair to us), referring to those of the Sahaabah who fled and left him (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) to face this wounding and attempt to kill him by himself.

Al-Qaadi ‘Iyaad said:

With regard to the battle of Uhud, if we read the phrase as “ma ansafna as-haabana (we have not been fair to our companions)”, as we have vowelised it, then it refers to the Ansaar who fought in his defence and were all killed, whilst others were not. Some of the narrators of the book of Muslim vowelised it so that it reads “ma ansafana as-haabuna (our companions have not been fair to us),” which refers to those who fled and left him with only a few people. And Allah knows best.

End quote from Mashaariq al-Anwaar ‘ala Sihaah al-Athaar (2/16)

Ibn al-Jawzi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This may be difficult for some people to understand, so they ask: how could he instruct them to fight and then say, We have not been fair to our companions? Was he ever anything but fair?

The response to that is: people were obliged to protect the Messenger of Allah with their lives, so when he said: “Who will repel them from us?” all of them should have hastened to respond, so for some of them to lag behind was not fair.

It may be that he was referring to the two Qurashi men, because they left the Ansaar to do that on their own.

End quote from Kashf al-Mushkil min Hadith as-Saheehayn (3/305)

Imam an-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

What this means is: Quraysh have not been fair to the Ansaar, because the two Qurashis did not go out and fight; rather the Ansaar went out, one after another.

End quote from Sharh Muslim (12/147)

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

If the word is read as ansafna (so what is meant is “we have not been fair”), then what is meant is when the Ansaar went out to fight one after another until they were all killed, but the two Qurashi men did not go out, he said that – meaning: Quraysh have not been fair to the Ansaar.

If the word is read as ansafana (so that what is meant is “[they] have not been fair to us”), then what is meant is the companions who fled and deserted the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) so that he was left alone with a few men, and they were killed one after another. They were not fair to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and those who stood firm with him.

End quote from Zaad al-Ma‘aad (3/183).

There is no dispute among all people that the commander in a battle is in a unique position, unlike anyone else, and he is to be surrounded by protective measures to defend him, such as are not available to other soldiers, and that if the commander is captured or killed, it is one of the greatest blows to the army and may well be the cause of its defeat, both psychologically and militarily, so how can he be compared to others?

So how about if the commander is the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), may my father and mother be sacrificed for him?

And Allah knows best.