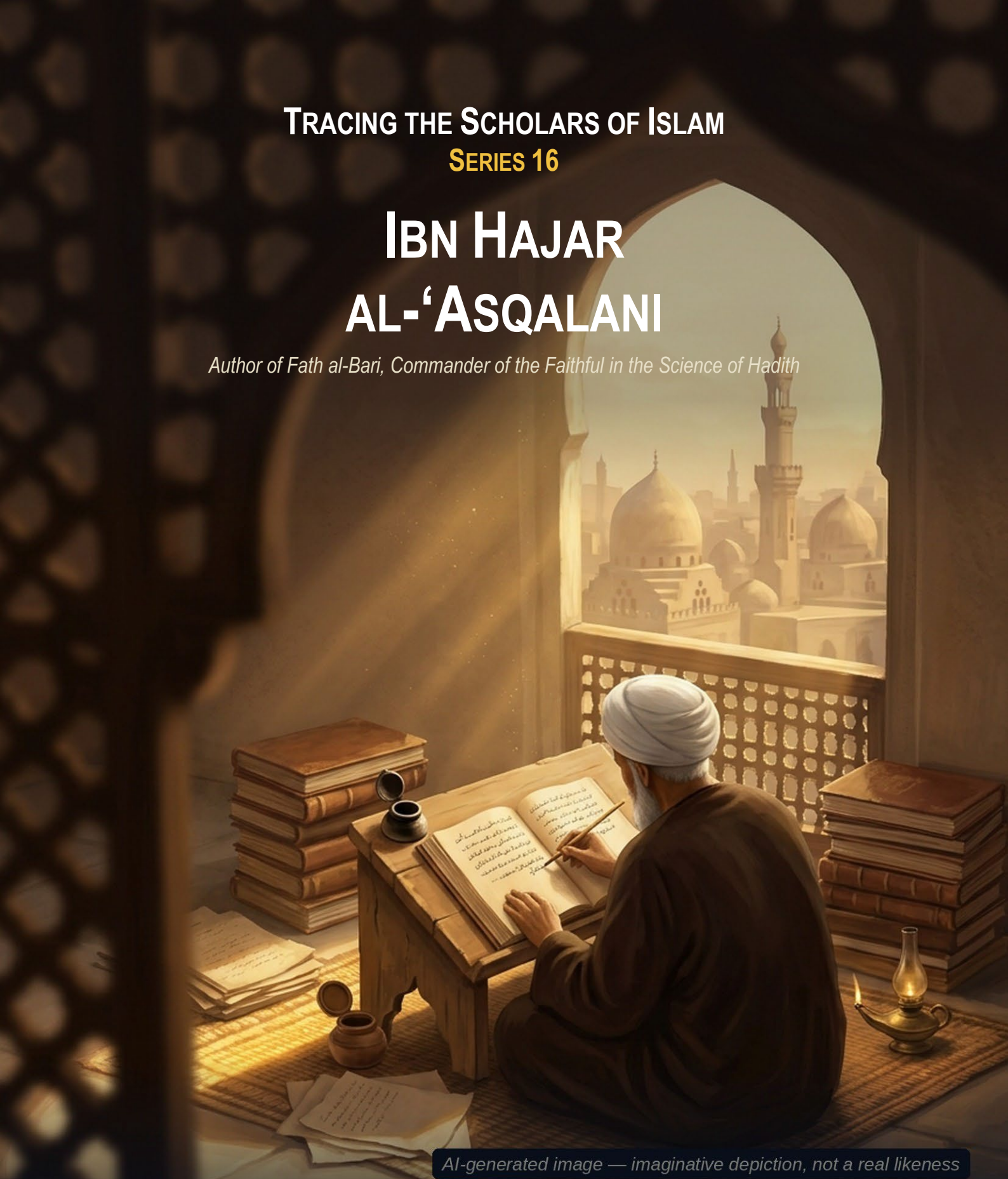
TRACING THE SCHOLARS OF ISLAM

SERIES 16

IBN HAJAR AL-'ASQALANI

Author of Fath al-Bari, Commander of the Faithful in the Science of Hadith



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Author of Fath al-Bari, Commander of the Faithful in the Science of Hadith

فَتَعَٰلَى ٱللَّهُ ٱلْمَلِكُ ٱلْحَقُّ ۗ وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِٱلْقُرْءَانِ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يُقْضَىٰٓ إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُۥ ۖ وَقُل رَّبِّ زِدْنِى عِلْمًا

"So high [above all] is Allah, the Sovereign, the Truth. And, [O Muhammad], do not hasten with [recitation of] the Qur'an before its revelation is completed to you, and say, "My Lord, increase me in knowledge."."

SURAH TAHA 20:114

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who taught man what he did not know. Blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, 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 sixteenth book of Tracing the Scholars of Islam tells the story of an orphan who grew up to become the most famous commentator on Sahih al-Bukhari. His books, Fath al-Bari and Bulugh al-Maram, are still studied in pondok schools and mosques across the Malay world. May his story deepen our love for the science of Hadith.

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ABOUT THE COVER OF THIS EBOOK

The cover of this eBook is an **image generated by artificial intelligence (AI)** — an ***imaginative depiction, not a real likeness*** of Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani. This label is also printed on the cover. This time we see him **from above**, from a gallery with a **carved wooden lattice (mashrabiya)**, and he is shown **from behind**, writing.

He sits cross-legged at a **low desk**, writing with a **reed pen** in an open manuscript — a symbol of ***Fath al-Bari***, the commentary on Sahih al-Bukhari composed over some twenty-five years. The **stacks of books**, scattered pages and **brass lamp** around him reflect a lifetime of scholarly work.

Through the window appear the **domes and minaret of Cairo** in the Mamluk era, late in the afternoon — the city where he was born, taught and died. The **sunlight** streaming in at an angle recalls the name of his book: *Fath* — an opening from Allah.

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CONTENTS

IBN HAJAR AL-'ASQALANI — *Introducing the scholar*

1. MY LORD, INCREASE ME IN KNOWLEDGE — *Taha 20:114; al-Mujadilah 58:11*

2. THE AGE: EGYPT AND SYRIA IN THE LATE MAMLUK ERA — *Timur and the plague*

3. WHO WAS IBN HAJAR AL-'ASQALANI? — *Name, orphanhood, Cairo; timeline*

4. A SISTER WHO BECAME A MOTHER, AND HIS YOUTH — *Sitt ar-Rakb; love of literature*

5. TEACHERS AND JOURNEYS IN SEARCH OF KNOWLEDGE — *Teacher-student diagram; Sahih al-Bukhari 71*

6. TEN YEARS WITH AL-'IRAQI — *Al-'Iraqi, al-Bulqini, Ibn al-Mulaqqin*

7. JOURNEYS TO YEMEN, THE HIJAZ AND SYRIA — *High chains of narration*

8. THE FAMILY OF IBN HAJAR — *Uns Khatun; Sahih al-Bukhari 1418*

9. THE PLAGUE AND THE BOOK BADHL AL-MA'UN — *Sahih al-Bukhari 3474; al-Baqarah 2:155–156*

10. FATH AL-BARI: TWENTY-FIVE YEARS WITH SAHIH AL-BUKHARI — *an-Nahl 16:44; Sahih al-Bukhari 1*

11. THE METHOD OF FATH AL-BARI — *Features; Hady as-Sari*

12. SCHOLARLY RIVALRY WITH BADR AD-DIN AL-'AYNI — *'Umdat al-Qari; etiquette of disagreement*

13. IBN HAJAR AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES: IBN KHALDUN AND AL-MAQRIZI — *Raf' al-Isr; Inba' al-Ghumr*

14. GUARDIAN OF THE PROPHET'S ﷺ HADITH — *Sahih al-Bukhari 3461; Taqrib at-Tahdhib*

15. VERIFY THE NEWS: NUKHBAT AL-FIKAR — *al-Hujurat 49:6; classification diagram*

16. BULUGH AL-MARAM IN THE MALAY WORLD — *Sahih al-Bukhari 887*

17. THE LEGACY OF IBN HAJAR IN THE MALAY WORLD — *Sahih Muslim 2699*

18. AL-ISABAH AND THE STANDING OF THE COMPANIONS — *Sahih al-Bukhari 3673*

19. THE MAJOR WORKS OF IBN HAJAR — *Table of works*

20. THE CHARACTER AND WORSHIP OF IBN HAJAR — *Sahih al-Bukhari 6412*

21. CHIEF JUDGE, AND HIS DEATH — *History note*

22. THE VERDICT OF THE SCHOLARS — *As-Sakhawi, as-Suyuti, ash-Shawkani*

23. ESTABLISHED REPORTS AND POPULAR STORIES — *Assessing the reports*

24. LESSONS AND CONCLUSION — *Thirteen lessons*

GLOSSARY AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

REFERENCES

SUPPORT & DONATIONS

Colour guide: green box = verses of the Qur'an; gold box = Hadith; brown box = history note (reports from the books of history and biography); blue table = comparison. Underlined blue narrator names can be clicked to open the narrator's page on sunnah.com.

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IBN HAJAR AL-'ASQALANI

The sixteenth book of **Tracing the Scholars of Islam** tells the story of ***al-Hafiz Shihab ad-Din Abu al-Fadl Ahmad ibn 'Ali ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani*** رحمه الله, author of ***Fath al-Bari***, the most celebrated commentary on Sahih al-Bukhari. Scholars gave him the title ***Amir al-Mu'minin fi al-Hadith***, the highest title for a scholar of Hadith.

In the Malay world, his name is known through ***Bulugh al-Maram***, a book of legal Hadith studied in pondok schools and mosques. He grew up as ***an orphan***, yet his knowledge became a reference for the entire Muslim world.

He lived in a difficult age: ***the invasion of Timur (Tamerlane)***, ***recurring waves of plague*** and the political turmoil of the Mamluk state. He lost his parents as a small child, and later lost several of his daughters. Yet it was in that very setting that he produced works that remain ***the principal references of Hadith scholarship*** today.

This eBook traces his life: his age and his family, his teachers and his journeys, his major books — ***Fath al-Bari, Bulugh al-Maram, Nukhbat al-Fikar and al-Isabah*** — and the lessons we can draw from them.

Note: The translation of Qur'anic verses in this eBook is that of Sahih International. The grading of each Hadith is stated in the Hadith box. Information from books of history and biography is **biographical report (not Hadith)** *and is placed in the brown "History Note" boxes. A cover image that shows the scholar is an AI-generated image and is marked as such. He is not the same person as* **Ibn Hajar al-Haytami** *(d. 974 AH), the Shafi'i jurist who wrote Tuhfat al-Muhtaj.*

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MY LORD, INCREASE ME IN KNOWLEDGE

SURAH TAHA 20:114

فَتَعَٰلَى ٱللَّهُ ٱلۡمَلِكُ ٱلۡحَقُّۗ وَلَا تَعۡجَلۡ بِٱلۡقُرۡءَانِ مِن قَبۡلِ أَن يُقۡضَىٰٓ إِلَيۡكَ وَحۡيُهُۥۖ وَقُل رَّبِّ زِدۡنِي عِلۡمٗا ١١٤

So high [above all] is Allah, the Sovereign, the Truth. And, [O Muhammad], do not hasten with [recitation of] the Qur'an before its revelation is completed to you, and say, "My Lord, increase me in knowledge."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/20:114

EXPLANATION OF VERSE 20:114

Allah taught His Messenger ﷺ to pray: ***"My Lord, increase me in knowledge"***. The only thing Allah commanded His Prophet to ask ***more*** of is knowledge. Ibn Hajar spent his life increasing in knowledge, until he had hundreds of teachers and left dozens of works. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 20:114.

The verse also teaches ***the etiquette of receiving revelation***: the Prophet ﷺ was told not to hasten with the Qur'an before its revelation was completed to him. Knowledge requires ***patience***, and that patience is visible in Ibn Hajar's life — twenty-five years for a single book, and decades of tireless teaching.

THE RANK OF THE PEOPLE OF KNOWLEDGE

The Qur'an places people of knowledge in a high rank:

SURAH AL-MUJADILAH 58:11

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمۡ تَفَسَّحُواْ فِي ٱلۡمَجَٰلِسِ فَٱفۡسَحُواْ يَفۡسَحِ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمۡۖ وَإِذَا قِيلَ ٱنشُزُواْ فَٱنشُزُواْ يَرۡفَعِ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ مِنكُمۡ وَٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلۡعِلۡمَ دَرَجَٰتٖۚ وَٱللَّهُ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُونَ خَبِيرٞ ١١

O you who have believed, when you are told, "Space yourselves" in assemblies, then make space; Allah will make space for you. And when you are told, "Arise," then arise; Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees. And Allah is Acquainted with what you do.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/58:11

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This verse mentions two groups whom Allah raises in rank: ***those who believe*** and ***those who were given knowledge***. Ibn Hajar was honoured by sultans, judges and common people alike, not for wealth or lineage, but for knowledge joined with faith. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 58:11.

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THE AGE: EGYPT AND SYRIA IN THE LATE MAMLUK ERA

Ibn Hajar was born in 773 AH, some ***one hundred and twenty years after the fall of Baghdad*** to the Mongols (656 AH). After that event, ***Cairo*** became the greatest centre of learning in the Muslim world. The ***Mamluk*** state that ruled Egypt and Syria built many ***madrasahs, khanqahs and mosques*** funded by endowments (waqf). Scholars from Andalusia, the Maghrib, Iraq and Syria migrated to Cairo.

In 784 AH, power passed to the ***Burji (Circassian) Mamluks***, beginning with Sultan ***az-Zahir Barquq***. The era was marked by frequent power struggles among the amirs, yet scholarly life continued to flourish. Many Mamluk sultans drew close to the scholars, and judgeships were given to scholars of all four schools of law.

> **HISTORY NOTE: THE INVASION OF TIMUR AND THE PLAGUE**
>
> The historical works of the period record that in ***803 AH*** (1401 CE), the army of ***Timur*** attacked and burned ***Damascus***. Many scholars and inhabitants were killed or taken captive. The historian ***Ibn Khaldun*** (see Book 36), who was in Damascus at the time, met Timur outside the city.
>
> Egypt and Syria were also struck by ***plague again and again*** after the Black Death (749 AH). The Mamluk chronicles mention several major outbreaks in Ibn Hajar's time, including the plague of ***833 AH*** in Cairo that claimed many lives. Famine and soaring prices also struck at the start of the ninth Hijri century.

LESSONS FROM THE AGE

Ibn Hajar did not live in calm times. Yet he ***did not wait for conditions to be perfect*** before learning and writing. The hardships of his age became the backdrop for works that have lasted more than five hundred years. This reminds us that ***the trials of our time are no excuse*** to stop seeking knowledge.

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WHO WAS IBN HAJAR AL-'ASQALANI?

His full name was ***Ahmad ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Kinani al-'Asqalani***, with the kunyah ***Abu al-Fadl*** and the title ***Shihab ad-Din***. He was ***born in the month of Sha'ban 773 AH*** (1372 CE) in ***Cairo***, Egypt. His family came from ***Ascalon ('Asqalan)*** in Palestine, hence the name al-'Asqalani. The name ***"Hajar"*** was ***the title of one of his ancestors***.

His father, ***Nur ad-Din 'Ali***, was a merchant who was also ***learned and a poet***. The family descended from the Arab tribe of ***Kinanah***, and had lived in Alexandria before moving to Cairo.

HISTORY NOTE: AN ORPHAN RAISED BY KNOWLEDGE

The books of biography mention that his mother died while he was still an infant, and his father ***died in 777 AH*** when he was about ***four years old***. He was raised by a merchant, ***Zaki ad-Din al-Kharrubi***, who became his guardian.

He ***memorised the Qur'an at the age of nine***. In 784 AH, his guardian took him to Makkah, where he stayed the following year. It is reported that he ***led the tarawih prayer*** in Makkah when he was about twelve years old.

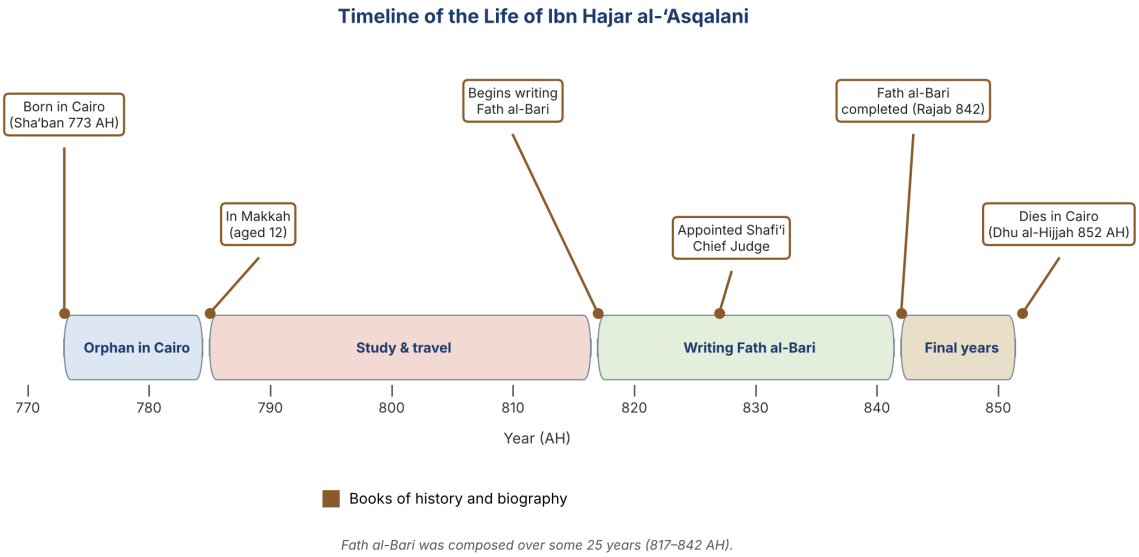


Figure 1: Timeline of the life of Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani.

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A SISTER WHO BECAME A MOTHER, AND HIS YOUTH

After the death of his parents, the person closest to Ibn Hajar was his elder sister, ***Sitt ar-Rakb***. She was a woman who ***could read and write, had memorised part of the Qur'an***, and had ***heard Hadith*** from the scholars.

> **HISTORY NOTE: "MY MOTHER AFTER MY MOTHER"**
>
> As-Sakhawi reports in ***al-Jawahir wa ad-Durar*** that Ibn Hajar described his sister as ***"my mother after my mother"*** because of her love and care. Sitt ar-Rakb died in ***798 AH***, and Ibn Hajar grieved deeply at her passing.
>
> His guardian, ***al-Kharrubi***, died in ***787 AH***, when Ibn Hajar was about fourteen. After that he was looked after by another executor, ***Shams ad-Din Ibn al-Qattan***, who also guided him to his teachers.

AN EARLY LOVE OF LITERATURE

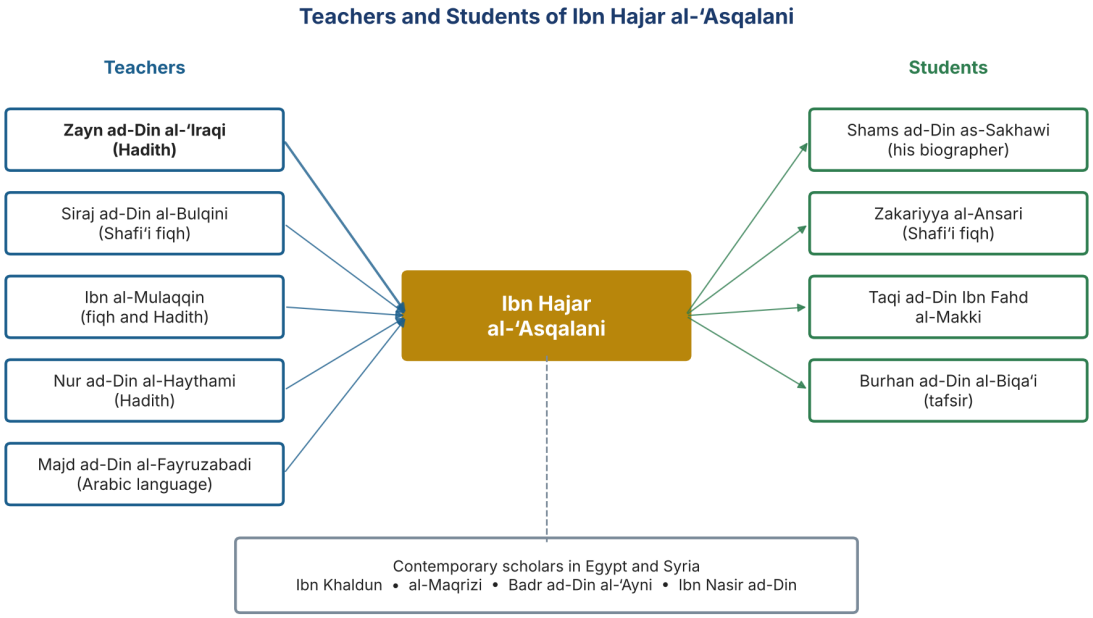
As a young man, Ibn Hajar was drawn to ***Arabic literature and poetry***. He memorised a great deal of poetry and composed his own, even leaving a ***diwan*** (collection of poems). Then, around ***793 AH***, he began to devote himself to ***the science of Hadith*** and never turned away from it again.

This shows that ***a person's interests can change and mature***. The skill in language and literature he gained in his youth later helped him explain the meanings of Hadith with great subtlety in Fath al-Bari.

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TEACHERS AND JOURNEYS IN SEARCH OF KNOWLEDGE

Ibn Hajar studied under the great scholars of his time: ***Zayn ad-Din al-'Iraqi*** in Hadith, ***Siraj ad-Din al-Bulqini*** and ***Ibn al-Mulaqqin*** in Shafi'i jurisprudence, ***Nur ad-Din al-Haythami*** in Hadith and ***Majd ad-Din al-Fayruzabadi***, compiler of the dictionary al-Qamus al-Muhit, in Arabic. His biographers counted ***more than six hundred teachers***, including more than fifty women.



Simplified diagram based on al-Jawahir wa ad-Durar (as-Sakhawi) and ad-Daw' al-Lami'.

Figure 2: Teachers, students and contemporaries of Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani.

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This dedication reflects the words of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 71

حَدَّثَنَا سَعِيدُ بْنُ عُفَيْرٍ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ وَهْبٍ، عَنْ يُونُسَ، عَنِ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، قَالَ قَالَ حُمَيْدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ سَمِعْتُ مُعَاوِيَةَ، خَطِيبًا يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ «مَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ بِهِ خَيْرًا يُفَقِّهْهُ فِي الدِّينِ، وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا قَاسِمٌ وَاللَّهُ يُعْطِي، وَلَنْ تَزَالَ هَذِهِ الأُمَّةُ قَائِمَةً عَلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ لاَ يَضُرُّهُمْ مَنْ خَالَفَهُمْ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ».

TRANSLATION:

Humayd ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman said: I heard Mu'awiyah رضى الله عنه delivering a sermon, saying: I heard the Prophet ﷺ say: **"Whoever Allah wishes good for, He gives him understanding of the religion.** I am only a distributor, and Allah is the One who gives. This Ummah will remain upright upon the command of Allah; those who oppose them will not harm them, until the command of Allah comes."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Sa'id ibn 'Ufayr, from 'Abdullah ibn Wahb, from Yunus ibn Yazid, from Ibn Shihab az-Zuhri, from Humayd ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman, from Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge, Hadith No. 71; also narrated by Muslim (No. 1037).

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:71

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Understanding of the religion is ***a sign that Allah wills good*** for a person. Ibn Hajar did not inherit great wealth, but Allah granted him knowledge and understanding that still benefit the Ummah today.

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TEN YEARS WITH AL-'IRAQI

The most influential teacher in Ibn Hajar's life was ***al-Hafiz Zayn ad-Din 'Abd ar-Rahim al-'Iraqi*** (d. 806 AH), the greatest Hadith scholar of Egypt in his day. Al-'Iraqi was known for reviving the ***majlis al-imla'***, the gathering for dictating Hadith with full chains, which had long been abandoned.

> **HISTORY NOTE: THE SUCCESSOR CHOSEN BY HIS TEACHER**
>
> The books of biography mention that Ibn Hajar studied with al-'Iraqi for about ***ten years***, beginning around 796 AH. He read the books of Hadith before him and received an ***ijazah*** in the science of Hadith.
>
> It is reported that when al-'Iraqi was asked, near his death, who was ***the greatest hafiz*** among his students, he named ***Ibn Hajar***, then his own son ***Wali ad-Din Abu Zur'ah***, then ***Nur ad-Din al-Haythami***.

AL-BULQINI AND IBN AL-MULAQQIN

In jurisprudence, Ibn Hajar studied with ***Siraj ad-Din al-Bulqini*** (d. 805 AH), a highly respected mujtahid of the Shafi'i school, and ***Ibn al-Mulaqqin*** (d. 804 AH), an exceptionally prolific author. From these two teachers he inherited ***a deep understanding of fiqh***, later visible in the legal discussions of Fath al-Bari and Bulugh al-Maram.

A LESSON IN CHOOSING TEACHERS

Ibn Hajar was not content with a single teacher. He took ***Hadith from its masters, fiqh from its masters, and language from its masters***. This teaches us to learn each discipline from those who have truly mastered it.

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JOURNEYS TO YEMEN, THE HIJAZ AND SYRIA

Like the Hadith scholars before him, Ibn Hajar ***travelled*** to hear Hadith directly from the narrators. He believed that a ***high ('ali) chain*** — one with fewer links back to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ — was worth seeking, however far away.

> **HISTORY NOTE: JOURNEYS OF LEARNING**
>
> The books of biography mention that around ***799–800 AH***, Ibn Hajar sailed to ***Yemen***. There he met ***al-Fayruzabadi***, then a judge in Zabid, and received from him the dictionary ***al-Qamus al-Muhit***.
>
> In ***802 AH***, he travelled to ***Syria***: Gaza, ar-Ramlah, Jerusalem, Hebron, Nablus and ***Damascus***, hearing Hadith from many scholars there — only a year before Damascus was destroyed by Timur.
>
> He also performed Hajj several times and heard Hadith in ***Makkah and Madinah***.

WHY DID TRAVEL MATTER?

In that age there was no internet or printing press. To hear a book with a connected chain, one had to ***meet its narrator in person***. Ibn Hajar's travels broadened his knowledge and made his chains ***highly prized***. The list of his teachers and chains is collected in the book ***al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras***.

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THE FAMILY OF IBN HAJAR

In ***798 AH***, Ibn Hajar married ***Uns Khatun***, the daughter of a government official, ***Karim ad-Din 'Abd al-Karim***. The marriage brought him stability and became a foundation for his life of learning.

> **HISTORY NOTE: UNS: A WIFE WHO NARRATED HADITH**
>
> As-Sakhawi mentions that Uns Khatun ***heard Hadith*** and obtained ***ijazahs*** from several scholars, including al-'Iraqi. Ibn Hajar compiled a ***mashyakhah*** (list of teachers and narrations) for her, and she ***held sessions for narrating Hadith*** attended by scholars, including as-Sakhawi himself.
>
> They were blessed with several ***daughters***, among them ***Zayn Khatun, Farhah, Ghaliyah, Rabi'ah and Fatimah***. Ibn Hajar taught his children and obtained Hadith ijazahs for them from an early age. He later had a son, ***Badr ad-Din Muhammad***.

Ibn Hajar did not raise his daughters as a burden. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ promised a great reward for anyone who treats daughters well:

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HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 1418 (MUTTAFAQ 'ALAYH)

حَدَّثَنَا بِشْرُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ، أَخْبَرَنَا مَعْمَرٌ، عَنِ الزُّهْرِيِّ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ أَبِي بَكْرِ بْنِ حَزْمٍ، عَنْ عُرْوَةَ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ ـ رضى الله عنها ـ قَالَتْ دَخَلَتِ امْرَأَةٌ مَعَهَا ابْنَتَانِ لَهَا تَسْأَلُ، فَلَمْ تَجِدْ عِنْدِي شَيْئًا غَيْرَ تَمْرَةٍ فَأَعْطَيْتُهَا إِيَّاهَا، فَقَسَمَتْهَا بَيْنَ ابْنَتَيْهَا وَلَمْ تَأْكُلْ مِنْهَا، ثُمَّ قَامَتْ فَخَرَجَتْ، فَدَخَلَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم عَلَيْنَا، فَأَخْبَرْتُهُ فَقَالَ «مَنِ ابْتُلِيَ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْبَنَاتِ بِشَىْءٍ كُنَّ لَهُ سِتْرًا مِنَ النَّارِ».

TRANSLATION:

'A'ishah رضى الله عنها said: A woman came with her two daughters, asking for help. I had nothing but a single date, so I gave it to her. She divided it between her two daughters and ate none of it herself, then got up and left. The Prophet ﷺ came in and I told him, and he said: **"Whoever is tried with any of these daughters (and treats them well), they will be a shield for him from the Fire."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Bishr ibn Muhammad, from 'Abdullah (ibn al-Mubarak), from Ma'mar, from az-Zuhri, from 'Abdullah ibn Abi Bakr ibn Hazm, from 'Urwah, from 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Zakat, Chapter: Give Charity Even With Half a Date, Hadith No. 1418. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 2629).

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:1418

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

A poor mother gave her only date to her two daughters. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ explained that daughters raised well will be ***a shield from the Fire***. Ibn Hajar's family shows that daughters and wives can also be ***scholars and narrators of Hadith***.

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THE PLAGUE AND THE BOOK BADHL AL-MA'UN

Plague struck Cairo again and again in Ibn Hajar's time. This calamity touched his own family directly.

HISTORY NOTE: THE LOSS OF HIS DAUGHTERS

The books of biography mention that ***several of Ibn Hajar's daughters died of the plague***. Among them was his daughter ***Zayn Khatun***, who died in the plague of ***833 AH*** while she was pregnant.

After this calamity, Ibn Hajar wrote ***Badhl al-Ma'un fi Fadl at-Ta'un*** (Offering Help on the Merit of the Plague). In it he gathered the Hadith on plague, discussed its rulings, and mentioned the death of his own children.

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One of the main Hadith Ibn Hajar discussed is the saying of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3474

حَدَّثَنَا مُوسَى بْنُ إِسْمَاعِيلَ، حَدَّثَنَا دَاوُدُ بْنُ أَبِي الْفُرَاتِ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ بُرَيْدَةَ، عَنْ يَحْيَى بْنِ يَعْمَرَ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ - رضى الله عنها - زَوْجِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَتْ سَأَلْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم عَنِ الطَّاعُونِ، فَأَخْبَرَنِي «أَنَّهُ عَذَابٌ يَبْعَثُهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ، وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ جَعَلَهُ رَحْمَةً لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ، لَيْسَ مِنْ أَحَدٍ يَقَعُ الطَّاعُونُ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي بَلَدِهِ صَابِرًا مُحْتَسِبًا، يَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ لاَ يُصِيبُهُ إِلاَّ مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ، إِلاَّ كَانَ لَهُ مِثْلُ أَجْرِ شَهِيدٍ».

TRANSLATION:

'A'ishah رضى الله عنها, wife of the Prophet ﷺ, said: I asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about the plague, and he told me: **"It is a punishment that Allah sends upon whomever He wills, and Allah has made it a mercy for the believers. There is no one in whose land the plague occurs and who stays in his land, patient and hoping for reward, knowing that nothing will befall him except what Allah has decreed for him, except that he will have the reward of a martyr."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Musa ibn Isma'il, from Dawud ibn Abi al-Furat, from 'Abdullah ibn Buraydah, from Yahya ibn Ya'mar, from 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Prophets, Hadith No. 3474.

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:3474

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

For the believer, plague is not merely a calamity but ***a mercy and an opportunity for the reward of a martyr*** — with three conditions: ***staying in one's land, being patient, and hoping for reward***, while trusting in Allah's decree. This Hadith was widely discussed again during ***the COVID-19 pandemic***, and the principle of not entering or leaving a plague-stricken area became a basis for the idea of quarantine.

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Allah speaks of the trial of loss of life and the attitude of the patient:

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:155–156

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُم بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ ٱلْخَوْفِ وَٱلْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ ٱلْأَمْوَٰلِ وَٱلْأَنفُسِ وَٱلثَّمَرَٰتِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ ٱلصَّٰبِرِينَ ﴿١٥٥﴾

And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient.

ٱلَّذِينَ إِذَآ أَصَٰبَتْهُم مُّصِيبَةٌ قَالُوٓا۟ إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّآ إِلَيْهِ رَٰجِعُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾

Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:155-156

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FATH AL-BARI: TWENTY-FIVE YEARS WITH SAHIH AL-BUKHARI

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was sent to explain the Qur'an to mankind:

SURAH AN-NAHL 16:44

بِٱلْبَيِّنَٰتِ وَٱلزُّبُرِ ۗ وَأَنزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ ٱلذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

[We sent them] with clear proofs and written ordinances. And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/16:44

The Sunnah explains the Qur'an, and scholars in turn explain the Sunnah. Ibn Hajar's greatest work, ***Fath al-Bari bi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari***, explains every Hadith in Sahih al-Bukhari: its chain, its meaning, its rulings and the views of the scholars. Its name means ***"The Opening from al-Bari (Allah, the Creator)"***.

HISTORY NOTE: A BOOK WRITTEN OVER A QUARTER OF A CENTURY

The books of biography mention that Ibn Hajar ***began composing Fath al-Bari in 817 AH*** and ***completed it at the beginning of Rajab 842 AH*** — some ***twenty-five years***. Before that he wrote its introduction, ***Hady as-Sari***.

When the book was complete, ***a great gathering*** was held outside Cairo in Sha'ban 842 AH, attended by scholars, judges and dignitaries. Historians described it as one of the greatest gatherings of that age.

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Like Sahih al-Bukhari itself, the commentary of Fath al-Bari begins with the Hadith on intention:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 1 — THE FIRST HADITH EXPLAINED IN FATH AL-BARI

حَدَّثَنَا الْحُمَيْدِيُّ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ الزُّبَيْرِ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ سَعِيدٍ الْأَنْصَارِيُّ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ التَّيْمِيُّ، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ عَلْقَمَةَ بْنَ وَقَّاصٍ اللَّيْثِيَّ، يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ عُمَرَ بْنَ الْخَطَّابِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَلَى الْمِنْبَرِ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، يَقُولُ «إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى، فَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى دُنْيَا يُصِيبُهَا أَوْ إِلَى امْرَأَةٍ يَنْكِحُهَا، فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى مَا هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِ».

TRANSLATION:

'Alqamah ibn Waqqas al-Laythi said: I heard 'Umar ibn al-Khattab رضى الله عنه say on the pulpit: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: **"Actions are only by intentions, and every person will have only what he intended. So whoever emigrated for worldly gain he would attain, or for a woman he would marry, his emigration is for that to which he emigrated."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from al-Humaydi 'Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr, from Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, from Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Ansari, from Muhammad ibn Ibrahim at-Taymi, from 'Alqamah ibn Waqqas al-Laythi, from 'Umar ibn al-Khattab رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Beginning of Revelation, Hadith No. 1 (the first Hadith of Sahih al-Bukhari); also narrated by Muslim (No. 1907).

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:1

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Imam al-Bukhari opened his book with the Hadith on intention, and Ibn Hajar explained it at length. Every student of knowledge is reminded to ***correct their intention***: to learn for the sake of Allah, not for fame or position.

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THE METHOD OF FATH AL-BARI

Why is Fath al-Bari considered the finest commentary? Later scholars point to several distinctive features:

FEATURE	EXPLANATION
Gathering all the routes of narration	Each Hadith is compared with other narrations in Sahih al-Bukhari and other books, so that obscure meanings become clear.
Explaining the chapter titles	Ibn Hajar explains why al-Bukhari placed a Hadith under a particular chapter title — "al-Bukhari's fiqh lies in his chapter titles".
Connecting the mu'allaq Hadith	Hadith mentioned without a full chain are given their connected chains; this work is collected in the book Taghliq at-Ta'liq.
Identifying narrators	Unclear narrator names are clarified and their biographies referenced.
Gathering the views of scholars	The views of the Companions, the Successors and the schools of fiqh are presented fairly.
Resolving apparent conflicts	Hadith that appear to contradict each other are brought together and reconciled.

HADY AS-SARI: AN INTRODUCTION THAT STANDS ALONE

The introduction to Fath al-Bari, ***Hady as-Sari***, is itself a major book. In it Ibn Hajar explains ***why al-Bukhari compiled his Sahih***, al-Bukhari's conditions, the meanings of difficult words, ***the names of narrators***, and ***defends the narrators*** criticised by some scholars. Many researchers read Hady as-Sari as an introduction to Sahih al-Bukhari.

A LESSON ABOUT SCHOLARLY WORK

Fath al-Bari was not written in one go. Ibn Hajar ***read and discussed it*** in sessions with his students, revising and adding to it. Quality scholarly work needs ***discussion, revision and time***.

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SCHOLARLY RIVALRY WITH BADR AD-DIN AL-'AYNI

In the same period, a great scholar of the Hanafi school, ***Badr ad-Din Mahmud al-'Ayni*** (d. 855 AH), also wrote a commentary on Sahih al-Bukhari titled ***'Umdat al-Qari***. Both scholars lived in Cairo, held high office, and had many students.

> **HISTORY NOTE: TWO COMMENTARIES, TWO SCHOLARS**
>
> The books of biography mention that al-'Ayni examined Fath al-Bari and ***criticised some of its explanations*** in 'Umdat al-Qari. Ibn Hajar answered those criticisms in the book ***Intiqad al-I'tirad***.
>
> Historians of the time also recorded ***the rivalry between them*** in matters of office and influence at the Mamluk court, including an exchange of a few satirical verses.

HOW HAS THE UMMAH JUDGED THIS RIVALRY?

The generations after them ***benefited from both commentaries***. Fath al-Bari is praised for its precision in chains and narrators, while 'Umdat al-Qari is praised for its linguistic and legal explanations. Both books are still read today.

The lesson: disagreement between scholars is ***normal***. What matters is that ***criticism is answered with evidence***, and that the Ummah takes the best from each side without reviling any scholar.

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IBN HAJAR AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES: IBN KHALDUN AND AL-MAQRIZI

Cairo in the early ninth Hijri century was full of great figures. Besides al-'Ayni, Ibn Hajar was a contemporary of ***'Abd ar-Rahman Ibn Khaldun*** (d. 808 AH), author of ***al-Muqaddimah*** (see Book 36), and the historian ***Taqi ad-Din al-Maqrizi*** (d. 845 AH), author of ***al-Khitat*** and ***as-Suluk***.

> **HISTORY NOTE: MEETING IBN KHALDUN**
>
> The books of biography mention that Ibn Hajar ***attended the sessions of Ibn Khaldun*** and benefited from him, especially in history. He wrote a biography of Ibn Khaldun in ***Raf' al-Isr 'an Qudat Misr***, because Ibn Khaldun had also served as Chief Judge of the Maliki school in Egypt.
>
> Ibn Hajar praised Ibn Khaldun's learning and eloquence, but also ***recorded the criticisms*** some Egyptian scholars made of his conduct as a judge — an example of ***balanced*** biographical writing that mentions both merits and shortcomings.

A FELLOW HISTORIAN: AL-MAQRIZI

Al-Maqrizi was slightly older than Ibn Hajar, and both studied under some of the same teachers. They ***narrated from each other*** and exchanged historical information. Ibn Hajar's annual chronicle, ***Inba' al-Ghumr***, and al-Maqrizi's as-Suluk are two main sources for understanding the Mamluk era.

LESSON: AN ENVIRONMENT OF LEARNING

Ibn Hajar grew up surrounded by great scholars. ***A good environment*** — teachers, friends and libraries — plays a major role in shaping a person. We too should choose ***friends and surroundings*** that encourage learning.

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GUARDIAN OF THE PROPHET'S ﷺ HADITH

Besides Fath al-Bari, Ibn Hajar wrote ***Tahdhib at-Tahdhib*** and ***Taqrib at-Tahdhib*** (biographies of narrators), ***Lisan al-Mizan*** (disputed narrators), ***at-Talkhis al-Habir*** (sourcing the Hadith of fiqh books) and ***al-Matalib al-'Aliyah***. His biographers list ***more than one hundred and fifty*** of his works.

These books on narrators became ***tools for distinguishing authentic Hadith from fabricated ones***. This is a great trust, for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave a stern warning:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3461

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو عَاصِمٍ الضَّحَّاكُ بْنُ مَخْلَدٍ، أَخْبَرَنَا الأَوْزَاعِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا حَسَّانُ بْنُ عَطِيَّةَ، عَنْ أَبِي كَبْشَةَ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «بَلِّغُوا عَنِّي وَلَوْ آيَةً، وَحَدِّثُوا عَنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلاَ حَرَجَ، وَمَنْ كَذَبَ عَلَىَّ مُتَعَمِّدًا فَلْيَتَبَوَّأْ مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ».

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr رضى الله عنهما reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Convey from me, even if it is a single verse. And narrate from the Children of Israel, there is no harm (in it). And whoever lies about me deliberately, let him take his seat in the Fire."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Abu 'Asim ad-Dahhak ibn Makhlad, from al-Awza'i, from Hassan ibn 'Atiyyah, from Abu Kabshah as-Saluli, from 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Prophets, Hadith No. 3461.

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:3461

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

We are commanded to ***convey*** even a single verse, yet forbidden to ***lie*** in the Prophet's ﷺ name. Ibn Hajar's works help the Ummah verify a Hadith before spreading it — an important lesson in the age of social media.

TAQRIB AT-TAHDHIB: ONE LINE FOR EACH NARRATOR

In ***Taqrib at-Tahdhib***, Ibn Hajar summarised the biographies of some ***nine thousand narrators*** in one or two lines each, giving each narrator a ***grade***: "thiqah", "saduq", "da'if" and so on. This small book remains ***a daily reference*** for Hadith researchers today.

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In ***Lisan al-Mizan***, Ibn Hajar took adh-Dhahabi's Mizan al-I'tidal and ***added to, corrected and updated*** its information on disputed narrators. This shows a scholarly etiquette: honouring the work of earlier scholars while ***completing it***, not tearing it down.

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VERIFY THE NEWS: NUKHBAT AL-FIKAR

The Qur'an teaches Muslims to ***verify*** news before accepting it:

SURAH AL-HUJURAT 49:6

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ إِن جَآءَكُمۡ فَاسِقُۢ بِنَبَإٖ فَتَبَيَّنُوٓاْ أَن تُصِيبُواْ قَوۡمَۢا بِجَهَٰلَةٖ فَتُصۡبِحُواْ عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلۡتُمۡ نَٰدِمِينَ ٦

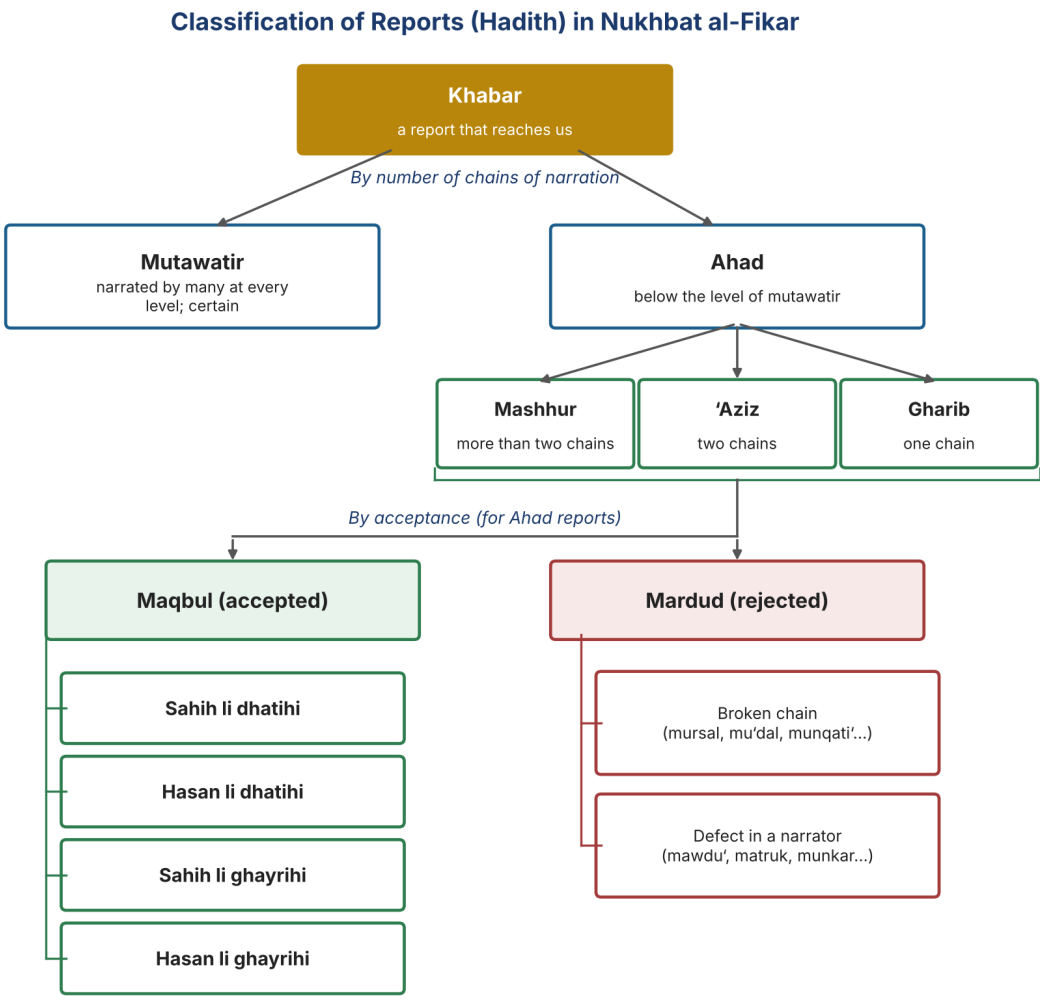
O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/49:6

This verse is a foundation of ***the science of Hadith terminology (mustalah)***, the science of assessing narrations. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 49:6. Ibn Hajar wrote a short treatise that became the core text of this science: ***Nukhbat al-Fikar fi Mustalah Ahl al-Athar***, and then wrote his own commentary on it, ***Nuzhat an-Nazar***.

The strength of Nukhbat al-Fikar is its ***logical arrangement***: every report is divided by the number of its chains, then by its acceptance, then by the reasons for its rejection. Figure 3 summarises this classification.

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Simplified diagram based on Nukhbat al-Fikar and its commentary, Nuzhat an-Nazar (Ibn Hajar).

Figure 3: Classification of reports (Hadith) in Nukhbat al-Fikar.

BASIC TERMS

TERM	BRIEF MEANING
Sahih	Connected chain, upright and precise narrators, with no irregularity (shudhudh) and no hidden defect ('illah).
Hasan	Like sahih, but a narrator's precision is slightly lower.
Da'if	Does not meet the conditions of sahih or hasan.
Mawdu'	Fabricated — invented and falsely attributed to the Prophet ﷺ.
Shadh	A narration of a trustworthy narrator that contradicts a stronger one.
'Illah	A hidden defect that damages a narration.

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BULUGH AL-MARAM IN THE MALAY WORLD

The book of Ibn Hajar closest to the Malay community is ***Bulugh al-Maram min Adillat al-Ahkam***. It gathers ***more than one thousand three hundred legal Hadith***, arranged by chapters of fiqh: purification, prayer, zakat, fasting, Hajj, transactions, marriage, criminal law, through to manners and character. After each Hadith, Ibn Hajar names ***who narrated it*** and sometimes ***its grading***.

COMMENTARIES AND TRANSLATIONS

Many scholars wrote commentaries on it. The most famous is ***Subul as-Salam*** by ***Muhammad ibn Isma'il as-San'ani*** (d. 1182 AH). In Malaysia and Indonesia, the commentary ***Ibanat al-Ahkam*** and many ***Malay and Indonesian translations*** are widely used in pondok schools, religious schools and mosque classes.

The chapter on purification in Bulugh al-Maram contains a ***chapter on the siwak***, which includes Hadith such as the following:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 887 (MUTTAFAQ 'ALAYH)

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ يُوسُفَ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنَا مَالِكٌ، عَنْ أَبِي الزِّنَادِ، عَنِ الأَعْرَجِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «لَوْلاَ أَنْ أَشُقَّ عَلَى أُمَّتِي ـ أَوْ عَلَى النَّاسِ ـ لأَمَرْتُهُمْ بِالسِّوَاكِ مَعَ كُلِّ صَلاَةٍ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"Were it not that I would burden my Ummah — or the people — I would have commanded them to use the siwak (tooth-stick) for every prayer."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Abdullah ibn Yusuf, from Malik, from Abu az-Zinad, from al-A'raj, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Friday Prayer, Chapter: The Siwak on Friday, Hadith No. 887. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 252).

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:887

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

This Hadith shows ***the compassion of the Messenger of Allah*** ﷺ for his Ummah: he did not make obligatory what would be a burden. It also shows ***oral hygiene*** as part of worship. Modern studies of the siwak stick (*Salvadora persica*) have found antibacterial compounds that support dental health.

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Bulugh al-Maram is also ***a model for studying legal Hadith***: students learn the evidence for each ruling of fiqh, know its source, and learn to respect differences of opinion among the schools.

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THE LEGACY OF IBN HAJAR IN THE MALAY WORLD

Ibn Hajar's knowledge reached the Malay world through a long ***chain of teachers and students***. Many students from Patani, Kelantan, Aceh, Java and Sumatra studied in ***Makkah and Madinah***, then returned home with books of Hadith and ***chains of narration*** connected to the great scholars, including Ibn Hajar.

> **HISTORY NOTE: CHAINS FROM MAKKAH TO THE MALAY WORLD**
>
> Among the Malay-world scholars renowned for chains of narration was ***Shaykh Muhammad Yasin al-Fadani*** (d. 1410 AH), born in Makkah to a family from Padang, Sumatra, and known as ***Musnid ad-Dunya***. He compiled chains for the books of Hadith, including chains passing through Ibn Hajar, and granted ijazahs to many students from the Malay world.
>
> Books of Hadith such as ***Bulugh al-Maram*** were then taught in pondok schools and mosques across the region, and translated into Malay and Indonesian.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ promised a great merit for whoever travels the path of knowledge and gathers to study the Book of Allah:

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HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2699

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ يَحْيَى التَّمِيمِيُّ، وَأَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ وَمُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْعَلاَءِ الْهَمْدَانِيُّ - وَاللَّفْظُ لِيَحْيَى - قَالَ يَحْيَى أَخْبَرَنَا وَقَالَ الآخَرَانِ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو مُعَاوِيَةَ، عَنِ الأَعْمَشِ، عَنْ أَبِي صَالِحٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «مَنْ نَفَّسَ عَنْ مُؤْمِنٍ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرَبِ الدُّنْيَا نَفَّسَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرَبِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَمَنْ يَسَّرَ عَلَى مُعْسِرٍ يَسَّرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ وَمَنْ سَتَرَ مُسْلِمًا سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ فِي عَوْنِ الْعَبْدِ مَا كَانَ الْعَبْدُ فِي عَوْنِ أَخِيهِ وَمَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِهِ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَمَا اجْتَمَعَ قَوْمٌ فِي بَيْتٍ مِنْ بُيُوتِ اللَّهِ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَيَتَدَارَسُونَهُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِلاَّ نَزَلَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّكِينَةُ وَغَشِيَتْهُمُ الرَّحْمَةُ وَحَفَّتْهُمُ الْمَلاَئِكَةُ وَذَكَرَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِيمَنْ عِنْدَهُ وَمَنْ بَطَّأَ بِهِ عَمَلُهُ لَمْ يُسْرِعْ بِهِ نَسَبُهُ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"Whoever relieves a believer of a hardship of this world, Allah will relieve him of a hardship of the Day of Resurrection. Whoever makes things easy for one in difficulty, Allah will make things easy for him in this world and the Hereafter. Whoever conceals (the faults of) a Muslim, Allah will conceal (his faults) in this world and the Hereafter. Allah helps His servant as long as the servant helps his brother. Whoever follows a path seeking knowledge, Allah will make easy for him, through it, a path to Paradise. No people gather in one of the houses of Allah, reciting the Book of Allah and studying it among themselves, except that tranquillity descends upon them, mercy covers them, the angels surround them, and Allah mentions them among those who are with Him. And whoever is slowed down by his deeds will not be hastened forward by his lineage."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya ibn Yahya at-Tamimi, Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah and Muhammad ibn al-'Ala' al-Hamdani, from Abu Mu'awiyah, from al-A'mash, from Abu Salih, from Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Remembrance and Supplication, chapter on the virtue of gathering to recite the Qur'an and remember Allah, Hadith No. 2699.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim, the second most authentic book of Hadith after Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2699a

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Every student who travels far to Makkah, Cairo or a village pondok is walking ***a path to Paradise***. Gatherings of knowledge in mosques and suraus are surrounded by ***tranquillity, mercy and the angels***.

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The Hadith also reminds us that ***lineage does not hasten*** one whose deeds are slow — Ibn Hajar, an orphan, was raised by his knowledge and deeds.

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AL-ISABAH AND THE STANDING OF THE COMPANIONS

Ibn Hajar also compiled the most complete encyclopaedia of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ: ***al-Isabah fi Tamyiz as-Sahabah***. It contains ***more than ten thousand entries***, arranged alphabetically, and distinguishes those who were truly Companions from those mistakenly counted as Companions.

Ibn Hajar compiled this work because the Companions hold a very high standing in Islam. They are ***the link between the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the Ummah***. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3673 (MUTTAFAQ 'ALAYH)

حَدَّثَنَا آدَمُ بْنُ أَبِي إِيَاسٍ، حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، عَنِ الأَعْمَشِ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ ذَكْوَانَ، يُحَدِّثُ عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ قَالَ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم «لاَ تَسُبُّوا أَصْحَابِي، فَلَوْ أَنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ أَنْفَقَ مِثْلَ أُحُدٍ ذَهَبًا مَا بَلَغَ مُدَّ أَحَدِهِمْ وَلاَ نَصِيفَهُ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri رضى الله عنه said: The Prophet ﷺ said: **"Do not revile my Companions. If one of you were to spend gold equal to Mount Uhud, it would not reach a mudd (handful) of one of them, nor even half of it."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Adam ibn Abi Iyas, from Shu'bah, from al-A'mash, from Dhakwan (Abu Salih), from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Virtues of the Companions, Hadith No. 3673. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 2541).

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:3673

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

A mountain of gold given in charity by later generations does not equal a handful spent by the Companions, because they sacrificed ***when Islam was weak*** and passed the religion on to us. Ibn Hajar affirms in al-Isabah that ***all the Companions are upright*** in narration. Honouring them means honouring the path that brought the Qur'an and the Sunnah to us.

WORKS OF HISTORY

Ibn Hajar was also ***a historian***. He wrote ***ad-Durar al-Kaminah*** (biographies of notables of the eighth Hijri century), ***Inba' al-Ghumr*** (an annual chronicle of his own time) and ***Raf' al-Isr*** (biographies of the judges of Egypt). These works are important sources for the history of the Mamluk era.

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THE MAJOR WORKS OF IBN HAJAR

As-Sakhawi lists ***more than one hundred and fifty works*** by Ibn Hajar, from multi-volume books to short treatises. The table below summarises his best-known works by field.

BOOK	FIELD AND DESCRIPTION
Fath al-Bari	Commentary on Sahih al-Bukhari; composed 817–842 AH.
Hady as-Sari	Introduction to Fath al-Bari.
Taghliq at-Ta'liq	Connecting the chains of the mu'allaq Hadith in Sahih al-Bukhari.
Bulugh al-Maram	A collection of legal Hadith arranged by fiqh chapters.
Nukhbat al-Fikar and Nuzhat an-Nazar	Core text and commentary in Hadith terminology.
Tahdhib at-Tahdhib and Taqrib at-Tahdhib	Biographies and grades of the narrators of the six books.
Lisan al-Mizan	Disputed narrators.
Al-Isabah fi Tamyiz as-Sahabah	Encyclopaedia of the Companions.
At-Talkhis al-Habir	Sourcing the Hadith in Shafi'i fiqh books.
Al-Matalib al-'Aliyah	Additional Hadith from the musnad collections.
Ad-Durar al-Kaminah	Biographies of figures of the eighth Hijri century.
Inba' al-Ghumr	Annual chronicle of events in his time.
Badhl al-Ma'un	Hadith and rulings on the plague.

THE SECRET OF HIS PRODUCTIVITY

How could a busy judge write so much? His biographers point to ***discipline with time***: he divided his day between worship, teaching, judging and writing, and ***never let time pass without benefit***.

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THE CHARACTER AND WORSHIP OF IBN HAJAR

HISTORY NOTE: A PORTRAIT BY HIS STUDENT

As-Sakhawi describes his teacher as someone who ***fasted voluntarily and prayed at night often***, ***was humble***, gentle in speech, and ***fond of courteous humour*** with his students.

He is also described as ***generous*** to students and the poor, and as one who ***guarded his tongue*** from backbiting, even against those who harmed him.

GUARDING TIME

Ibn Hajar's care with his time recalls the saying of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 6412

حَدَّثَنَا الْمَكِّيُّ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ ـ هُوَ ابْنُ أَبِي هِنْدٍ ـ عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ قَالَ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم « نِعْمَتَانِ مَغْبُونٌ فِيهِمَا كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ، الصِّحَّةُ وَالْفَرَاغُ ». قَالَ عَبَّاسٌ الْعَنْبَرِيُّ حَدَّثَنَا صَفْوَانُ بْنُ عِيسَى، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ سَعِيدِ بْنِ أَبِي هِنْدٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، سَمِعْتُ ابْنَ عَبَّاسٍ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم مِثْلَهُ.

TRANSLATION:

Ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنهما said: The Prophet ﷺ said: **"There are two blessings in which many people are deceived: health and free time."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from al-Makki ibn Ibrahim, from 'Abdullah ibn Sa'id ibn Abi Hind, from his father, Sa'id ibn Abi Hind, from 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Heart-Softeners (Kitab al-Riqaq), chapter "There is no life except the life of the Hereafter", Hadith No. 6412.

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:6412

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Many people ***lose out*** on two blessings: health and free time. Ibn Hajar used both for knowledge, so that its fruits are still enjoyed more than five hundred years later.

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CHIEF JUDGE, AND HIS DEATH

HISTORY NOTE: A JUDGE WHO AT FIRST REFUSED

The books of biography mention that Ibn Hajar ***at first declined the office of judge***. In Muharram 827 AH, he was appointed ***Qadi al-Qudat (Chief Judge) of the Shafi'i school*** in Egypt. He was dismissed and reappointed several times, serving a total of about ***twenty-one years***, and resigned in 852 AH.

He ***died at the end of Dhu al-Hijjah 852 AH*** (February 1449 CE) in Cairo, and was buried in the ***al-Qarafah*** cemetery. It is reported that the dignitaries ***competed with one another to carry his bier***.

REFLECTION

High office did not cut Ibn Hajar off from knowledge. Throughout his years as a judge, he ***kept teaching and writing***, including completing Fath al-Bari. He also taught in several great madrasahs of Cairo, including ***al-Madrasah al-Baybarsiyyah*** and ***the Mu'ayyad Mosque***, and held ***dictation sessions*** of Hadith like his teacher al-'Iraqi.

A JUDGE WHO FEARED OFFICE

Ibn Hajar's initial refusal of the judgeship reminds us that office is ***a trust***, not an honour. Many early scholars fled from judgeships for fear of failing to be just. When he accepted it, he strove to fulfil it and ***laid it down when the time came***.

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THE VERDICT OF THE SCHOLARS

Ibn Hajar received extraordinary praise from the scholars of his time and after. The titles given to him include ***Shaykh al-Islam***, ***al-Hafiz*** and ***Amir al-Mu'minin fi al-Hadith***.

HISTORY NOTE: WORDS OF THE SCHOLARS

His student ***as-Sakhawi*** (d. 902 AH) compiled a vast biography of his teacher, ***al-Jawahir wa ad-Durar fi Tarjamat Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Hajar***. He portrays Ibn Hajar as ***the imam of the huffaz*** of his time, respected by friend and rival alike.

Jalal ad-Din as-Suyuti (d. 911 AH), in Dhayl Tabaqat al-Huffaz, describes him as ***the imam of the huffaz in his time***, whose knowledge of Hadith was unmatched.

Ash-Shawkani (d. 1250 AH), in ***al-Badr at-Tali'***, notes that Ibn Hajar's works spread widely and were accepted by scholars throughout the Muslim world.

STUDENTS WHO CARRIED ON HIS KNOWLEDGE

Among Ibn Hajar's students were ***as-Sakhawi*** (author of ad-Daw' al-Lami'), ***Zakariyya al-Ansari*** (author of Fath al-Wahhab and Asna al-Matalib, major references in Shafi'i fiqh) and ***Burhan ad-Din al-Biqa'i*** (author of the tafsir Nazm ad-Durar). Through them, Ibn Hajar's knowledge reached the scholars of Makkah and from there ***the scholars of the Malay world*** who studied there.

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ESTABLISHED REPORTS AND POPULAR STORIES

Several stories about Ibn Hajar are widely told, especially in the Malay world. The table below separates what is established from what needs checking.

STORIES AND THEIR STATUS

POPULAR STATEMENT	STATUS
Born in Cairo in 773 AH and died there in 852 AH.	Established in the books of biography.
Fath al-Bari was composed from 817 AH to 842 AH.	Established in the books of biography.
He was a weak student who saw drops of water hollowing a stone, and so was called "Ibn Hajar" (son of the stone).	No basis in the books of biography. "Hajar" was the title of one of his ancestors, and he was known to be bright from childhood.
He drank Zamzam water intending to reach the memorisation of adh-Dhahabi.	Reported by his biographers. The Hadith "Zamzam water is for whatever it is drunk for" (Ibn Majah 3062) has a disputed grading.
He led tarawih in Makkah at the age of 12.	Reported in the books of biography.
Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani wrote Tuhfat al-Muhtaj.	Incorrect; that was Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (d. 974 AH), a different scholar.

REFLECTION — THE STONE STORY AND HONESTY

The story of the stone and the water drops carries a lesson about perseverance, but it ***should not be attributed to Ibn Hajar*** without evidence. His real story — an orphan who memorised the Qur'an at nine — is inspiring enough.

This attitude is itself Ibn Hajar's legacy: ***every report must be verified***, whether a Hadith of the Prophet ﷺ or a story about a scholar.

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

LESSONS FROM THIS EBOOK

First: Ask Allah for more knowledge (20:114).

Second: Knowledge raises the rank of the believers (58:11).

Third: Understanding of the religion is a sign of good from Allah (Sahih al-Bukhari 71).

Fourth: Correct your intention in seeking knowledge and in deeds (Sahih al-Bukhari 1).

Fifth: Convey knowledge, but never lie in the Prophet's ﷺ name (Sahih al-Bukhari 3461).

Sixth: Verify every report before accepting and spreading it (49:6).

Seventh: Raise daughters well — they become a shield from the Fire (Sahih al-Bukhari 1418).

Eighth: Be patient in plague and calamity — Allah makes it a mercy for the believers (Sahih al-Bukhari 3474; 2:155–156).

Ninth: Honour the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ (Sahih al-Bukhari 3673).

Tenth: Keep clean as part of worship (Sahih al-Bukhari 887).

Eleventh: Being an orphan is no barrier — with dedication, an orphan can become a reference for the Ummah.

Twelfth: Meet disagreement with evidence and courtesy, as in the rivalry of Fath al-Bari and 'Umdat al-Qari.

Thirteenth: Make use of health and free time before they are lost (Sahih al-Bukhari 6412).

CONCLUSION

Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani رحمه الله died in Cairo in 852 AH. Fath al-Bari and Bulugh al-Maram are still read throughout the Muslim world, including the Malay world. With this book, the group of **the Imams** in Tracing the Scholars of Islam is complete. The next book, in sha Allah, begins the group of **scientists** with ***Jabir ibn Hayyan***. Wallahu a'lam.

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GLOSSARY AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GLOSSARY

TERM	MEANING
Sharh	A commentary on a book; Fath al-Bari is a sharh of Sahih al-Bukhari.
Al-Hafiz	A title for a Hadith scholar who has memorised and mastered a vast number of Hadith with their chains.
Majlis al-imla'	A gathering where Hadith are dictated with their chains to students.
Ijazah	A teacher's permission to a student to narrate Hadith or a book from him.
'Ali chain	A chain with few links between the narrator and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.
Mashyakhah	A book listing a person's teachers and their narrations from them.
Mu'allaq	A Hadith mentioned without the beginning of its chain.
Rijal	The science of the biographies and standing of Hadith narrators.
Qadi al-Qudat	Chief Judge; the highest judicial office of a school of law in Mamluk Egypt.
Ta'un	Plague; an epidemic disease causing mass death.
Sanad	The chain of narrators that transmits a Hadith or a book from teacher to student.
Takhrij	Tracing a Hadith to its original sources and assessing its grading.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Ibn Hajar lost his parents as a small child. What helped him succeed despite being an orphan?

2. Why did Ibn Hajar learn from different teachers for each discipline? How can we follow his example?

3. How does Sahih al-Bukhari 3474 help us face an epidemic such as COVID-19?

4. What does the rivalry between Ibn Hajar and al-'Ayni teach us about the etiquette of disagreement?

5. Before sharing a "Hadith" on social media, what steps should we take, based on verse 49:6?

6. Ibn Hajar's wife and daughters also studied and narrated Hadith. What does this mean for the education of women today?

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7. Ibn Hajar wrote Badhl al-Ma'un after losing his children. How can we turn a calamity into a motivation to do good?

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as-Sakhawi, al-Jawahir wa ad-Durar fi Tarjamat Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Hajar; as-Sakhawi, ad-Daw' al-Lami'; as-Suyuti, Dhayl Tabaqat al-Huffaz; ash-Shawkani, al-Badr at-Tali'.

Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, Fath al-Bari, Hady as-Sari, Nukhbat al-Fikar and Nuzhat an-Nazar, Bulugh al-Maram, al-Isabah, Badhl al-Ma'un, Inba' al-Ghumr.

Midad, "Ibn Hajar fi Sutur". https://midad.com/article/203807

Tarajm, "Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani". https://tarajm.com/people/16643

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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."

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."

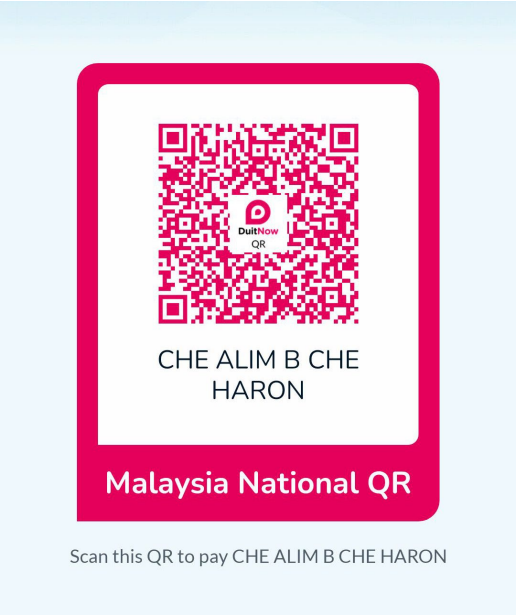
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REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Wills (Kitab al-Wasiyyah), chapter on the reward that reaches a person after his death, Hadith No. 1631.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:1631

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