Tracing the Scholars of Islam

Series 30

Ibn Zuhr

The Great Physician of Seville, Pioneer of Animal Testing and Dietetics



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

TRACING THE SCHOLARS OF ISLAM

SERIES 30

IBN ZUHR

The Great Physician of Seville, Pioneer of Animal Testing and Dietetics

فَلْيَنظُرِ ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِهِۦٓ

"Then let mankind look at his food."

SURAH 'ABASA 80:24

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who provides us with good food. 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 thirtieth book of Tracing the Scholars of Islam tells the story of a physician from a family of physicians spanning six generations, who learned from his father and taught his son. May his story remind us that knowledge and manners are inherited at home.

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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 Zuhr. This label is also printed on the cover. This time we look **through the leaves and flowers of medicinal plants** — sage, lavender, mint and poppies — in the foreground, into a **herb garden in Seville** in the morning.

Ibn Zuhr kneels beside a herb bed, **seen from behind**, showing a sprig of a plant to **his son**, who holds a basket of herbs. The scene symbolises the ***Banu Zuhr*** family, who passed down medicine ***from father to son*** for six generations.

Behind them are a **white wall with a horseshoe-arched doorway**, a **tiled water channel** and **orange trees** — features of the gardens of al-Andalus.

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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 ZUHR

The thirtieth book of **Tracing the Scholars of Islam** tells the story of ***Abu Marwan 'Abd al-Malik ibn Zuhr***, known in the West as ***Avenzoar***. He was a great physician of ***Seville***, al-Andalus, and a friend of ***Ibn Rushd*** (Book 14).

He is famous for ***testing treatments on animals*** before humans, for emphasising ***nutrition and dietary management***, and for his careful descriptions of several diseases.

This eBook also describes ***the Banu Zuhr family***, physicians for six generations, ***his trial in prison***, ***diet by season***, ***feeding patients who cannot swallow***, his ***rejection of superstition***, and the ***women physicians*** of his family.

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 modern research is **biographical narration (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. This eBook is* **not medical advice***; seek treatment from a qualified doctor.*

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LET MAN LOOK AT HIS FOOD

SURAH 'ABASA 80:24

فَلۡيَنظُرِ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنُ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِهِۦٓ ٢٤

Then let mankind look at his food.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/80:24

Allah commands: ***"Then let mankind look at his food"***. Food is ***a blessing*** worth reflecting on — and also ***a medicine*** when properly managed. This was a field Ibn Zuhr greatly emphasised. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 80:24.

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FROM RAIN TO PLATE

SURAH 'ABASA 80:25–32

أَنَّا صَبَبْنَا ٱلْمَآءَ صَبًّا ﴿٢٥﴾

How We poured down water in torrents?

ثُمَّ شَقَقْنَا ٱلْأَرْضَ شَقًّا ﴿٢٦﴾

Then We broke open the earth, splitting [it with sprouts].

فَأَنۢبَتْنَا فِيهَا حَبًّا ﴿٢٧﴾

And caused to grow within it grain.

وَعِنَبًا وَقَضْبًا ﴿٢٨﴾

And grapes and herbage.

وَزَيْتُونًا وَنَخْلًا ﴿٢٩﴾

And olive and palm trees.

وَحَدَآئِقَ غُلْبًا ﴿٣٠﴾

And gardens of dense shrubbery.

وَفَٰكِهَةً وَأَبًّا ﴿٣١﴾

And fruit and grass.

مَّتَٰعًا لَّكُمْ وَلِأَنْعَٰمِكُمْ ﴿٣٢﴾

[As] enjoyment for you and your grazing livestock.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/80:25-32

These verses mention ***rain***, ***the split earth***, ***grain***, ***grapes and herbage***, ***olives and palms***, ***gardens***, ***fruit*** and ***grass — "[As] enjoyment for you and your grazing livestock"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 80:25.

Every mouthful passes through a long ***chain of blessings***: rain, soil, plants, farmers and traders. Reflecting on this chain increases ***gratitude*** and teaches us ***not to waste***.

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FOOD THAT IS LAWFUL AND GOOD

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:168

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ كُلُواْ مِمَّا فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ حَلَٰلٗا طَيِّبٗا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُواْ خُطُوَٰتِ ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنِۚ إِنَّهُۥ لَكُمۡ عَدُوّٞ مُّبِينٌ ١٦٨

O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful and good and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:168

Allah commands all mankind: ***"eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful and good"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:168.

Halal refers to the ruling; ***tayyib*** (good) refers to quality — clean, nourishing and harmless. Ibn Zuhr wrote about ***the quality of food***: how to cook, store and choose food that suits the body.

LESSON

Lawful food is ***not necessarily*** healthy if eaten to excess or prepared badly. A Muslim chooses food that is ***halal and tayyib***.

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HALAL AND TAYYIB IN DAILY LIFE

EXAMPLE	HALAL AND TAYYIB?
Rice and fish cooked cleanly	Halal and tayyib.
Halal food that is stale or contaminated	Halal, but not tayyib — it can cause harm.
Halal food eaten to excess every day	Halal, but less tayyib for health.
Fresh, washed fruit	Halal and tayyib.

The principle of ***halalan tayyiban*** teaches us to care for both ***the ruling*** and ***health***. Ibn Zuhr, as a physician, strongly emphasised the ***tayyib*** aspect — the quality and suitability of food.

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BACKGROUND: THE ALMORAVIDS AND ALMOHADS

In Ibn Zuhr's time, al-Andalus was ruled in turn by two states from ***the Maghrib*** (North Africa).

> **HISTORY NOTE: TWO STATES**
>
> The ***Almoravids*** (al-Murabitun) of Marrakesh crossed into al-Andalus in the late 11th century CE to help the Muslims face the Christian kingdoms of the north.
>
> In the mid-12th century CE, the ***Almohads*** (al-Muwahhidun) replaced the Almoravids. They patronised scholars such as ***Ibn Tufayl*** and ***Ibn Rushd***, and also ***Ibn Zuhr***.

LESSON

Ibn Zuhr lived through ***changes of government*** and ***uncertain politics***. Yet he kept ***treating and writing***. Beneficial knowledge is needed in every situation.

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SEVILLE IN IBN ZUHR'S TIME

FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
The Guadalquivir	A great river (al-Wadi al-Kabir) that served as a trade route.
Gardens and orchards	Herb gardens, orange trees and well-ordered water channels.
The Great Mosque of Seville	Built by the Almohads; its minaret is now known as the Giralda.
A centre of learning	Home to many physicians, jurists and poets.

Seville was one of the largest cities of al-Andalus in the 12th century CE. Its herb gardens were ***living laboratories*** for physicians like Ibn Zuhr.

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WHO WAS IBN ZUHR?

Ibn Zuhr was ***born in 1094 CE*** in ***Seville***, into the ***Banu Zuhr*** family, which produced physicians for ***six generations in a row***. He studied religion and literature, then learned medicine from his father, ***Abu al-'Ala' Zuhr***.

He served the ***Almoravid*** rulers, but was later ***imprisoned in Marrakesh*** (1140 CE). After the ***Almohads*** took Seville (1147 CE), he served again and wrote. He ***died in Seville in 1162 CE***.

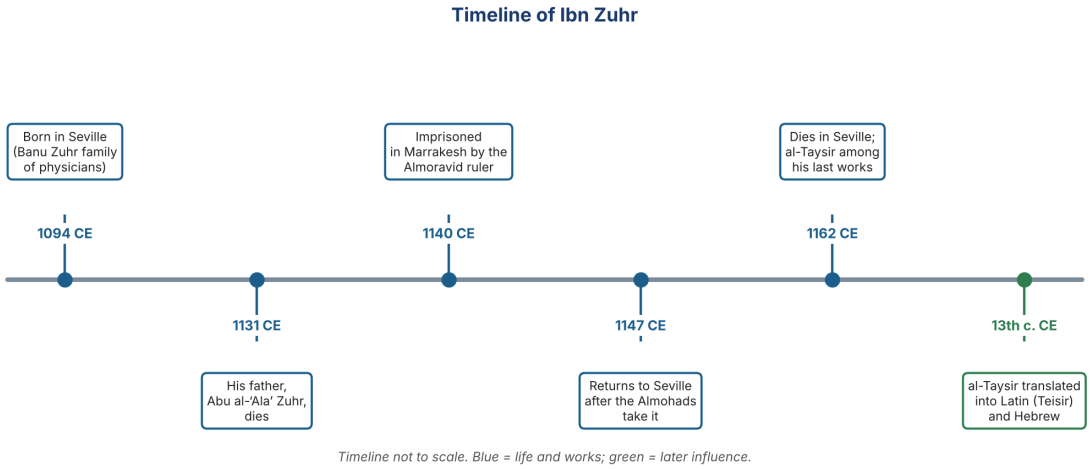


Figure 1: Timeline of Ibn Zuhr.

HISTORY NOTE: TWO FRIENDS, TWO BOOKS

Ibn Zuhr wrote his greatest book, ***al-Taysir fi al-Mudawat wa al-Tadbir*** (The Book of Simplification Concerning Therapeutics and Diet), at the request of his friend ***Ibn Rushd***. Ibn Rushd wrote ***al-Kulliyat*** on the general principles of medicine, while al-Taysir described ***the treatment of diseases one by one***. The two books were later printed together in Latin.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Ibn Zuhr". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibn_Zuhr

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MAJOR WORKS

WORK	DESCRIPTION
al-Taysir fi al-Mudawat wa al-Tadbir	A book on treating diseases one by one; his greatest work.
Kitab al-Aghdhiya	A book on food and diet, written for the Almohad ruler.
Kitab al-Iqtisad	An early book on general therapy and health.
Short treatises	On particular diseases and remedies.

His books were written in ***clear language***, based on ***clinical experience*** — not merely copying the views of earlier writers.

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SIX GENERATIONS OF PHYSICIANS

The ***Banu Zuhr*** family of al-Andalus was famous for producing physicians ***from one generation to the next***. Ibn Zuhr learned from his father, and taught his son.

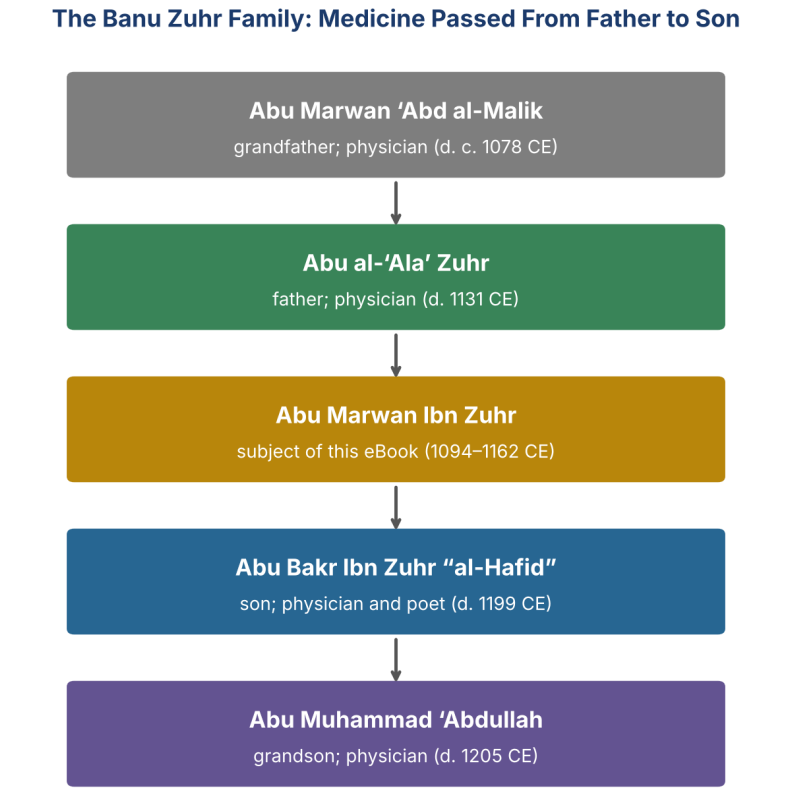


Figure 2: Several generations of the Banu Zuhr family.

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SURAH AT-TAHRIM 66:6

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ قُوٓاْ أَنفُسَكُمۡ وَأَهۡلِيكُمۡ نَارٗا وَقُودُهَا ٱلنَّاسُ وَٱلۡحِجَارَةُ عَلَيۡهَا مَلَٰٓئِكَةٌ غِلَاظٞ شِدَادٞ لَّا يَعۡصُونَ ٱللَّهَ مَآ أَمَرَهُمۡ وَيَفۡعَلُونَ مَا يُؤۡمَرُونَ

٦

O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, over which are [appointed] angels, harsh and severe; they do not disobey Allah in what He commands them but do what they are commanded.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/66:6

Allah commands: ***"protect yourselves and your families from a Fire"***. This verse places ***the responsibility of education*** on every head of a family. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 66:6.

LESSON

The home is ***the first school***. The Banu Zuhr family passed on ***knowledge, manners and skill*** from father to son. Parents today can also make the home the place where ***love of learning*** begins.

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PASSING ON KNOWLEDGE TODAY

WAY	EXAMPLE IN THE FAMILY
Reading together	Reading books and the Qur'an with children every day.
Storytelling	Telling the stories of scholars and scientists.
Setting an example	Parents who love learning are role models.
Teaching skills	Cooking, building or gardening with children.
Encouraging questions	Answering children's questions patiently.

The Banu Zuhr family need not be imitated in medicine, but in ***the spirit of passing on knowledge and manners***.

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O BOY, MENTION THE NAME OF ALLAH

Ibn Zuhr's knowledge was passed ***from father to son***. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself taught a child table manners that were simple yet lasted a lifetime:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 5376

حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، أَخْبَرَنَا سُفْيَانُ، قَالَ الْوَلِيدُ بْنُ كَثِيرٍ أَخْبَرَنِي أَنَّهُ، سَمِعَ وَهْبَ بْنَ كَيْسَانَ، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ عُمَرَ بْنَ أَبِي سَلَمَةَ، يَقُولُ كُنْتُ غُلاَمًا فِي حَجْرِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم وَكَانَتْ يَدِي تَطِيشُ فِي الصَّحْفَةِ فَقَالَ لِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «يَا غُلاَمُ سَمِّ اللَّهَ، وَكُلْ بِيَمِينِكَ وَكُلْ مِمَّا يَلِيكَ». فَمَا زَالَتْ تِلْكَ طِعْمَتِي بَعْدُ.

TRANSLATION:

'Umar ibn Abi Salamah رضى الله عنهما said: "When I was a boy under the care of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, my hand used to wander about in the dish. So the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to me: **O boy, mention the name of Allah, eat with your right hand, and eat from what is nearest to you.** That has been my way of eating ever since."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Ali ibn 'Abdullah, from Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, from al-Walid ibn Kathir, from Wahb ibn Kaysan, from 'Umar ibn Abi Salamah رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Foods (Kitab al-At'imah), chapter on mentioning the name of Allah when eating and eating with the right hand, Hadith No. 5376.

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:5376

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Mention the name of Allah, eat with your right hand, and eat from what is near you. Gentle teaching in childhood becomes lifelong practice — 'Umar ibn Abi Salama said that was how he ate from that day on. So too the Banu Zuhr family: ***knowledge and manners are passed on at home***.

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TABLE MANNERS FOR CHILDREN

MANNER	HOW TO TEACH IT
Saying Bismillah	Parents say it aloud so children hear and copy.
Eating with the right hand	A gentle reminder at every meal.
Eating from what is near	Not taking food from in front of others.
Not wasting	Take a little, and add more if needed.
Giving thanks	Reciting the supplication after eating.

These manners are not only ***sunnah***, but also help with ***cleanliness and moderate eating***.

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TRIAL IN A MARRAKESH PRISON

In ***1140 CE***, Ibn Zuhr was ***imprisoned in Marrakesh*** by the Almoravid ruler, and his property is said to have been seized. He endured this trial until the Almohads took power.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:286

لَا يُكَلِّفُ ٱللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۚ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا ٱكْتَسَبَتْ ۗ رَبَّنَا
لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَآ إِن نَّسِينَآ أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا ۚ رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَآ إِصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُۥ عَلَى
ٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِنَا ۚ رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِۦ ۖ وَٱعْفُ عَنَّا وَٱغْفِرْ لَنَا
وَٱرْحَمْنَآ ۚ أَنتَ مَوْلَىٰنَا فَٱنصُرْنَا عَلَى ٱلْقَوْمِ ٱلْكَٰفِرِينَ ﴿٢٨٦﴾

Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity. It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained, and it will bear [the consequence of] what [evil] it has earned. "Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred. Our Lord, and lay not upon us a burden like that which You laid upon those before us. Our Lord, and burden us not with that which we have no ability to bear. And pardon us; and forgive us; and have mercy upon us. You are our protector, so give us victory over the disbelieving people."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:286

Allah says: ***"Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:286.

LESSON

Trial did not stop Ibn Zuhr's journey of knowledge. After his release, he went on to ***write his greatest work***. Patience in trial often opens ***wider doors***.

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SCHOLARS TESTED WITH PRISON

FIGURE	TRIAL
Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal	Imprisoned and flogged for defending the creed.
Ibn Sina (Book 28)	Once imprisoned, yet kept writing.
Ibn Zuhr	Imprisoned in Marrakesh, then wrote his greatest work.
Ibn Taymiyya	Imprisoned several times and died in prison in Damascus.

History shows that many scholars were ***tested***, yet ***their knowledge lived on***. Their patience is an example for later generations.

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EAT AND DRINK, BUT BE NOT EXCESSIVE

Ibn Zuhr wrote a book on ***food and dietary management***, arranging kinds of food and suggesting diets by season. The Qur'an had laid down the basic principle:

SURAH AL-A'RAF 7:31

۞ يَٰبَنِيٓ ءَادَمَ خُذُواْ زِينَتَكُمۡ عِندَ كُلِّ مَسۡجِدٖ وَكُلُواْ وَٱشۡرَبُواْ وَلَا تُسۡرِفُوٓاْۚ إِنَّهُۥ لَا يُحِبُّ ٱلۡمُسۡرِفِينَ ٣١

O children of Adam, take your adornment at every masjid, and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/7:31

"eat and drink, but be not excessive" — indeed, Allah does not like those who go to excess. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 7:31 The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also taught moderation in eating, as in the Hadith on the next page.

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HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 5393

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ بَشَّارٍ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الصَّمَدِ، حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، عَنْ وَاقِدِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ، عَنْ نَافِعٍ، قَالَ كَانَ ابْنُ عُمَرَ لاَ يَأْكُلُ حَتَّى يُؤْتَى بِمِسْكِينٍ يَأْكُلُ مَعَهُ، فَأَدْخَلْتُ رَجُلاً يَأْكُلُ معه فَأَكَلَ كَثِيرًا فَقَالَ يَا نَافِعُ لاَ تُدْخِلْ هَذَا عَلَيَّ سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ «الْمُؤْمِنُ يَأْكُلُ فِي مِعًى وَاحِدٍ وَالْكَافِرُ يَأْكُلُ فِي سَبْعَةِ أَمْعَاءٍ».

TRANSLATION:

Nafi‘ said: Ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنهما would not eat until a poor person was brought to eat with him. Once I brought in a man to eat with him, and the man ate a great deal. Ibn ‘Umar said: “O Nafi‘, do not bring this man in to me. I heard the Prophet ﷺ say: **The believer eats in one intestine, and the disbeliever eats in seven intestines.**”

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Muhammad ibn Bashshar, from ‘Abd as-Samad, from Shu‘bah, from Waqid ibn Muhammad, from Nafi‘, from Ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Foods (Kitab al-At‘imah), chapter: a believer eats in one intestine, Hadith No. 5393.

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:5393

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

The believer eats with one intestine — that is, eats moderately, not greedily. Ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنهما always ***invited the poor*** to eat with him. Moderate eating protects health, and sharing food protects the heart.

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KITAB AL-AGHDHIYA: FOOD AND THE SEASONS

In ***Kitab al-Aghdhiya*** (The Book of Foods), Ibn Zuhr described ***the properties of foods***, how to cook them, and which foods suit each ***season***, ***age*** and ***bodily condition***.

SEASON	GENERAL ADVICE IN OLD MEDICINE
Summer	Cooling, easily digested foods; drink enough water.
Winter	More nourishing foods that warm the body.
Spring	Fewer heavy foods; plenty of vegetables and fruit.
Autumn	Moderate food; protecting the body from changing weather.

Caution: the table above is ***a historical record*** of old medicine. Modern nutrition is based on scientific research into ***nutrients*** such as protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins and minerals.

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A HEALTHY PLATE TODAY

PART	BRIEF GUIDE
Half the plate	Vegetables and fruit.
A quarter of the plate	Grains, preferably whole grains.
A quarter of the plate	Protein: fish, chicken, eggs or legumes.
Drinks	Plain water; less sugar.

This guide resembles the ***healthy plate*** recommended by the Malaysian Ministry of Health. Its principle agrees with the teaching of ***moderation*** in the Qur'an and the advice of Muslim physicians such as Ibn Zuhr.

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TEST BEFORE TREATING

Ibn Zuhr was very cautious. When there was a dispute about the safety of opening the windpipe (***tracheotomy***), he is reported to have ***tested it on a goat*** first.

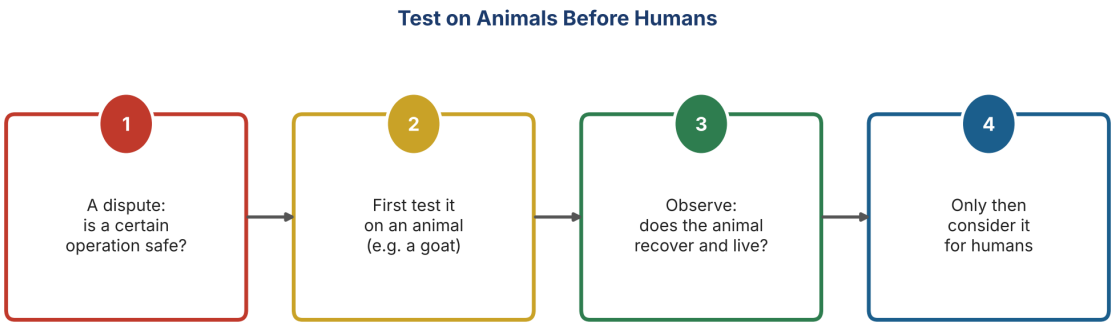


Figure 3: Test on animals before humans.

Ibn Zuhr greatly respected Galen, but ***rejected superstition*** and the absurd remedies of astrologers. Maimonides called him ***"unique in his age"***.

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THE ETHICS OF ANIMAL TESTING TODAY

PRINCIPLE	MEANING
Replace	Use other methods such as computer models or cells where possible.
Reduce	Use the smallest number of animals.
Refine	Reduce pain and distress for the animals.

Islam also forbids ***tormenting animals***. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught ihsan even in slaughter. So every test on animals must be done with ***a right purpose*** and ***compassion***.

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DISEASES HE DESCRIBED

In al-Taysir, Ibn Zuhr gave careful clinical descriptions of several diseases, based on ***his own observation***.

DISEASE	IBN ZUHR'S DESCRIPTION
Inflammation of the pericardium	Among the earliest clinical descriptions of inflammation around the heart.
Middle-ear infection	Signs and treatment of a discharging, painful ear.
Cancer of the oesophagus and stomach	A description of growths that block food.
Scabies	Mentions tiny mites removed from the skin.

LESSON

Accurate and honest descriptions help later doctors recognise disease. Every good clinical record is ***a trust*** for future generations.

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SCABIES TODAY

MATTER	DESCRIPTION
Cause	A tiny mite that burrows into the skin.
Signs	Severe itching, especially at night, and a small rash.
Spread	Through close contact and sharing clothes or bedding.
Treatment	Creams or tablets prescribed by a doctor.
Prevention	Personal hygiene; washing clothes and sheets in hot water.

Scabies still affects many people worldwide (WHO: Scabies). Ibn Zuhr's early description of tiny mites shows ***the precision of his observation***.

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FEEDING PATIENTS WHO CANNOT SWALLOW

For patients unable to swallow because of disease of the throat or stomach, Ibn Zuhr suggested ***providing nourishment by other routes*** to keep the patient alive. This is one of the early ideas of ***artificial feeding***.

> **HISTORY NOTE: AN IDEA AHEAD OF ITS TIME**
>
> Ibn Zuhr described the use of ***a tube*** and ways of giving liquid food to patients who could not eat by mouth.
>
> The description is ***brief***, and the technology of the time was very limited, but it shows his ***concern*** for the patient's life.

TODAY

Modern hospitals use ***feeding tubes*** through the nose or directly into the stomach, as well as ***nutrition through the veins***. The aim is the same: ***ensuring the patient receives nourishment*** until recovery.

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REJECTING SUPERSTITION

In Ibn Zuhr's time, many believed in ***amulets***, ***astrologers*** and absurd remedies. Ibn Zuhr rejected these practices and held to ***observation and experience***. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ warned against fortune-tellers:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2230

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْمُثَنَّى الْعَنَزِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى، - يَعْنِي ابْنَ سَعِيدٍ - عَنْ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ، عَنْ نَافِعٍ، عَنْ صَفِيَّةَ، عَنْ بَعْضِ أَزْوَاجِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «مَنْ أَتَى عَرَّافًا فَسَأَلَهُ عَنْ شَىْءٍ لَمْ تُقْبَلْ لَهُ صَلاَةٌ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً».

TRANSLATION:

One of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ رضى الله عنهن narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Whoever goes to a fortune-teller ('arraf) and asks him about anything, his prayer will not be accepted for forty nights."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Muhammad ibn al-Muthanna al-'Anazi, from Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Qattan, from 'Ubaydullah ibn 'Umar, from Nafi', from Safiyyah bint Abi 'Ubayd, from one of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ رضى الله عنهن.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Greetings (Kitab as-Salam), Hadith No. 2230.

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

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2230

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Consulting ***a fortune-teller*** is a grave matter. A Muslim seeks remedies in ways that are ***lawful and based on knowledge***, and trusts in Allah — not in predictions.

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SEEKING TREATMENT THE RIGHT WAY

PRACTICE	EXPLANATION
See a qualified doctor	For accurate diagnosis and treatment.
Use registered medicines	Medicines tested for safety.
Pray and trust Allah	Healing comes from Allah.
Authentic ruqyah	Recitation of the Qur'an and supplications taught by the Prophet ﷺ.
Avoid superstition	No reliance on amulets, charms or predictions.

Islam combines ***effort*** with ***trust in Allah***. Seeking treatment with knowledge is part of the ***sunnah***, while superstition harms both ***faith*** and ***health***.

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TWO FRIENDS: IBN ZUHR AND IBN RUSHD

Ibn Zuhr and ***Ibn Rushd*** (Book 14) were two friends who ***complemented each other***. Ibn Rushd praised Ibn Zuhr as the greatest physician after Galen, and suggested that their books be read together.

SURAH AZ-ZUKHRUF 43:67

ٱلْأَخِلَّآءُ يَوْمَئِذٍۭ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ إِلَّا ٱلْمُتَّقِينَ ٦٧

Close friends, that Day, will be enemies to each other, except for the righteous.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/43:67

Allah says: ***"Close friends, that Day, will be enemies to each other, except for the righteous"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 43:67.

LESSON

Good friendship is friendship that ***leads to knowledge and piety***. These two friends produced works read for centuries.

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QUALITIES OF A GOOD FRIEND

QUALITY	EXAMPLE
Calling to good	Reminding about prayer and seeking knowledge.
Honest and trustworthy	Speaking the truth even when bitter.
Helping in hardship	Visiting when ill and helping when tested.
Valuing a friend's merits	As Ibn Rushd praised Ibn Zuhr's knowledge.

The friendship of Ibn Zuhr and Ibn Rushd produced ***two complementary books***. Choose friends who bring us ***closer to Allah and to knowledge***.

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WOMEN PHYSICIANS OF THE ZUHR FAMILY

Ibn Abi Usaybi'a reports that ***the sister*** of Abu Bakr Ibn Zuhr al-Hafid (Ibn Zuhr's son) and ***her daughter*** were also skilled in medicine, especially ***childbirth***, and treated the women of the Almohad court.

SURAH AT-TAWBAH 9:71

وَٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَٱلْمُؤْمِنَٰتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ يَأْمُرُونَ بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ
عَنِ ٱلْمُنكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ ٱللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُۥٓ ۚ
أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ ٱللَّهُ ۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٧١﴾

The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayer and give zakah and obey Allah and His Messenger. Those - Allah will have mercy upon them. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/9:71

Allah says: ***"The believing men and believing women are allies of one another"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:71.

LESSON

Muslim women have also contributed to ***knowledge and medicine***. Women doctors and midwives are much needed to treat female patients while ***preserving dignity and modesty***.

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WOMEN IN THE HISTORY OF ISLAMIC MEDICINE

FIGURE	CONTRIBUTION
Rufayda al-Aslamiyya	Tended wounded Companions in the Prophet's ﷺ time; often called an early nurse of Islam.
Nusayba bint Ka'b	Tended the wounded at the Battle of Uhud.
Al-Shifa' bint 'Abdullah	Known for her learning; taught women to write.
Women of the Banu Zuhr family	Women physicians and midwives in al-Andalus in the 12th century CE.

Note: the information above is ***sirah and biographical narration***, not Hadith. It shows that Muslim women have long ***served in caring for the sick***.

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FROM SEVILLE TO EUROPE

Al-Taysir was translated into ***Hebrew*** and then into ***Latin*** (around 1280 CE) under the title ***Theisir***. It was printed in ***Venice*** in the late 15th century CE, often together with Ibn Rushd's ***al-Kulliyat***.

BOOK	INFLUENCE
al-Taysir (Theisir)	Read by European physicians for centuries.
al-Aghdhiya	A reference on food and diet in al-Andalus and the Maghrib.
Ibn Rushd's praise	Considered him the greatest physician after Galen.

Ibn Zuhr showed that Islamic medicine in al-Andalus emphasised ***clinical experience*** and ***patient safety*** (Britannica: Ibn Zuhr).

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HIS LEGACY TODAY

LEGACY	DESCRIPTION
Animal testing	The principle of testing before treating humans became a foundation of medical research.
Clinical nutrition	The idea of feeding patients who cannot swallow.
The science of nutrition	Emphasising food as part of treatment.
A family of learning	An example of how knowledge is passed on at home.

Ibn Zuhr's legacy is ***patient safety*** and ***moderation in eating*** — two values highly relevant today.

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ESTABLISHED REPORTS AND POPULAR STORIES

The table below separates what is established from what needs checking about Ibn Zuhr.

STORIES AND THEIR STATUS

POPULAR STATEMENT	STATUS
Ibn Zuhr wrote al-Taysir at Ibn Rushd's request.	Established. Mentioned in the book itself and in biographical sources.
The Banu Zuhr family produced physicians for six generations.	Established in Andalusian biographical sources.
He was imprisoned in Marrakesh.	Established in biographical sources; the reasons are less clear.
He tested tracheotomy on a goat.	Reported in al-Taysir and modern studies; famous.
He was the first to discover the scabies mite.	A popular claim; early descriptions of the mite are also linked to other physicians. Needs checking.
He invented tube feeding.	Exaggerated. He was among the first to describe the idea, but briefly.
He rejected all of Galen's views.	Incorrect. He respected Galen, but rejected superstition.

REFLECTION — HONOURING WITHOUT EXAGGERATING

Ibn Zuhr himself tested before believing. We honour him in the same way: holding to what is established, and marking what is still uncertain.

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

LESSONS FROM THIS EBOOK

First: Reflect on our food — a blessing and a medicine from Allah (80:24–32).

Second: Eat what is lawful and good (2:168).

Third: Protect yourself and your family — the home is the first school (66:6).

Fourth: Teach children manners from a young age (Sahih al-Bukhari 5376).

Fifth: Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity (2:286).

Sixth: Eat and drink, but be not excessive (7:31; Sahih al-Bukhari 5393).

Seventh: Test first, then treat — patient safety comes first.

Eighth: Avoid fortune-tellers and superstition (Sahih Muslim 2230).

Ninth: Make friends on the basis of piety (43:67).

Tenth: Believing men and women support one another (9:71).

Eleventh: Record and describe honestly for the benefit of future generations.

CONCLUSION

Ibn Zuhr died in Seville in 1162 CE. His al-Taysir was read in Latin and Hebrew for centuries. The next book of **Tracing the Scholars of Islam**, in sha Allah, will tell the story of ***Ibn al-Nafis***, who described the pulmonary circulation. Wallahu a'lam.

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GLOSSARY AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GLOSSARY

TERM	MEANING
Tayyib	Good, clean and nourishing.
Diet	The arrangement of food taken for health.
Tracheotomy	An operation opening the windpipe in the neck.
Animal testing	Testing a treatment on animals before humans.
Artificial feeding	Giving nourishment through a tube or the veins.
Superstition	Absurd beliefs not based on revelation or knowledge.
Almoravids	A Maghribi state that ruled al-Andalus in the 11th–12th centuries CE.
Almohads	The state that replaced the Almoravids in the 12th century CE.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What can we reflect on when we look at the food in front of us (80:24)?

2. What is the difference between food that is halal and food that is tayyib?

3. Why did Ibn Zuhr test treatments on animals first?

4. How can the family be the first school for children?

5. Why must a Muslim avoid fortune-tellers and superstition?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: List the foods you ate today. For each, think about where it came from — rain, soil, farmers and traders.

Activity 2: Teach table manners to a younger sibling or child: saying Bismillah, eating with the right hand and not wasting.

Activity 3: Arrange a “healthy plate” for your family’s dinner and compare it with an ordinary plate.

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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 رضى 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 رضى 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."

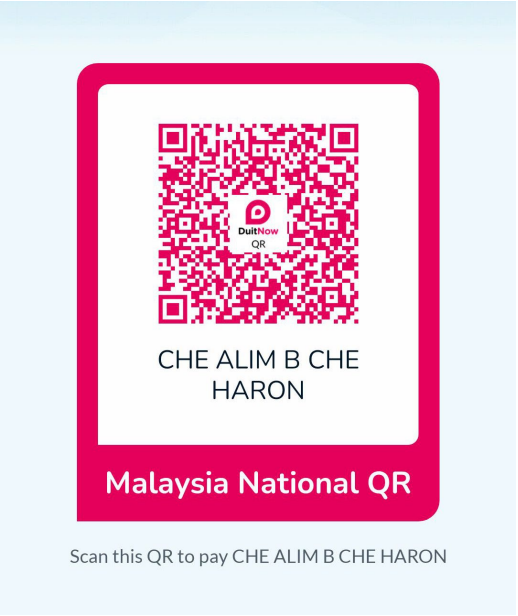
CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

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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