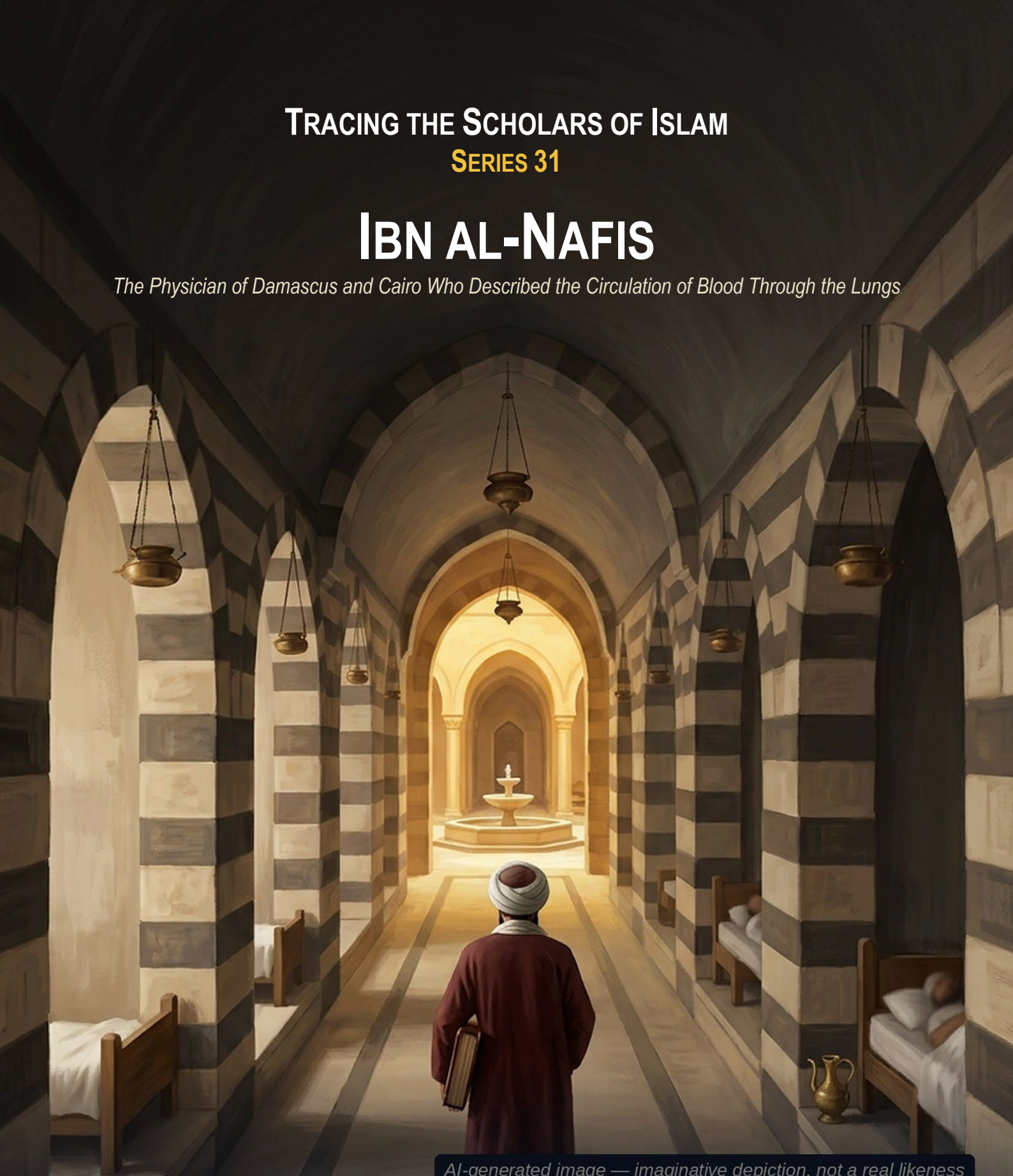
Tracing the Scholars of Islam

Series 31

Ibn al-Nafis

The Physician of Damascus and Cairo Who Described the Circulation of Blood Through the Lungs



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

TRACING THE SCHOLARS OF ISLAM

SERIES 31

IBN AL-NAFIS

The Physician of Damascus and Cairo Who Described the Circulation of Blood Through the Lungs

وَفِيٓ أَنفُسِكُمۡۚ أَفَلَا تُبۡصِرُونَ

"And in yourselves. Then will you not see?."

SURAH ADH-DHARIYAT 51:21

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who placed signs of His greatness within ourselves. 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 thirty-first book of Tracing the Scholars of Islam tells the story of a physician and jurist who dared to differ from Galen and Ibn Sina on the basis of observation, and who endowed his house and books to a hospital. May his story teach us to reflect on ourselves as a sign of Allah's greatness.

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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 al-Nafis. This label is also printed on the cover. This time we stand **at the end of a long corridor** and look straight ahead — **one-point perspective**.

The corridor is imagined as part of the **al-Mansuri Hospital** in Cairo, with Mamluk-style **striped dark and light stone** (ablaq), pointed arches and hanging **bronze lamps**. Through the arches on either side we glimpse **patients' beds**.

Ibn al-Nafis **walks away from us**, seen from behind, carrying **a large book** — heading towards a **bright courtyard with a fountain** at the end of the corridor. It symbolises the journey of knowledge towards the light.

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CONTENTS

IBN AL-NAFIS — *Introducing the scholar*

1. AND IN YOURSELVES — *adh-Dhariyat 51:21; Fussilat 41:53*

2. THE BREATH OF THE SOUL AND THE GIFT OF THE SENSES — *as-Sajdah 32:9; al-Isra' 17:85*

3. THE AGE: AYYUBIDS AND MAMLUKS — *The great hospitals*

4. WHO WAS IBN AL-NAFIS? — *Timeline; list of works*

5. STUDYING AT THE NURI HOSPITAL — *Sahih Muslim 2699*

6. BLOOD THROUGH THE LUNGS — *Pulmonary circulation chart*

7. DARING TO DIFFER FROM GALEN AND IBN SINA — *Sahih Muslim 55*

8. OBSERVATION, REASONING AND THE QUESTION OF DISSECTION — *Scientific method*

9. A LUMP OF FLESH — *Sahih al-Bukhari 52; al-Hajj 22:46*

10. THE HEART TODAY — *WHO facts; Sahih al-Bukhari 6412*

11. FOR EVERY DISEASE THERE IS A CURE — *Sahih Muslim 2204*

12. NOT A MEDICINE, BUT A DISEASE — *Sahih Muslim 1984*

13. A PHYSICIAN WHO WAS ALSO A JURIST — *Sahih al-Bukhari 71*

14. AL-SHAMIL AND THE BOOK OF THE EYE — *A medical encyclopedia*

15. AL-RISALA AL-KAMILIYYA — *The boy on a lonely island*

16. AN ENDOWMENT FOR KNOWLEDGE — *al-Baqarah 2:261*

17. REDISCOVERED IN 1924 — *Chain of discovery chart*

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

19. LESSONS AND CONCLUSION — *Twelve 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 AL-NAFIS

The thirty-first book of **Tracing the Scholars of Islam** tells the story of ***'Ala' ad-Din Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn Abi al-Hazm al-Qurashi***, known as ***Ibn al-Nafis***. He was a physician from ***Damascus*** who later became chief physician in ***Cairo***.

He is the first person known to have described the ***circulation of blood through the lungs*** (pulmonary circulation), about ***three and a half centuries*** before William Harvey. He was also a ***Shafi'i jurist*** who taught law and wrote on the science of Hadith.

This eBook also covers the ***Ayyubid and Mamluk era***, the ***great hospitals*** where he studied and worked, his courage in ***differing from Galen and Ibn Sina*** on the basis of evidence, the ***al-Shamil encyclopedia***, the story of ***al-Risala al-Kamiliyya***, the ***endowment*** of his house and books, and how his discovery was ***rediscovered in 1924***.

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. His year of birth is an estimate. This eBook is* **not medical advice***; seek treatment from a qualified doctor.*

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AND IN YOURSELVES

SURAH ADH-DHARIYAT 51:21

وَفِيٓ أَنفُسِكُمۡۚ أَفَلَا تُبۡصِرُونَ ٢١

And in yourselves. Then will you not see?

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/51:21

Allah says: ***"And in yourselves. Then will you not see"***? The human body is full of ***signs of Allah's greatness*** — the beating heart, the flowing blood, the breathing lungs. Ibn al-Nafis spent his life ***reflecting on and studying*** these signs. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 51:21.

The verse does not merely ask us to ***look***, but to ***see and reflect***. A physician examining the heart, and a student reading about the circulation of blood, can both make that knowledge ***a path to knowing the Creator***.

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SIGNS IN THE HORIZONS AND WITHIN OURSELVES

SURAH FUSSILAT 41:53

سَنُرِيهِمْ ءَايَٰتِنَا فِى ٱلْءَافَاقِ وَفِىٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ ٱلْحَقُّ ۗ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُۥ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴿٥٣﴾

We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/41:53

Allah promises: ***"We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 41:53.

This verse names ***two fields*** of Allah's signs: the vast universe outside us, and the human body itself. Muslim scholars studied both — ***al-Biruni*** and ***al-Battani*** studied the heavens, while ***Ibn Sina***, ***al-Zahrawi*** and ***Ibn al-Nafis*** studied the human body.

FIELD OF SIGNS	EXAMPLES STUDIED BY MUSLIM SCHOLARS
In the horizons (the universe)	The motion of stars and planets, the size of the earth, light and the rainbow.
Within ourselves (the body)	The heart, lungs, eyes, nerves and circulation of blood.
Within ourselves (mind and soul)	Character, psychology and how people think.

Ibn al-Nafis chose to reflect on the ***signs within ourselves***. The result was one of the most important discoveries in the history of medicine.

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THE BREATH OF THE SOUL AND THE GIFT OF THE SENSES

SURAH AS-SAJDAH 32:9

ثُمَّ سَوَّىٰهُ وَنَفَخَ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِهِۦ ۖ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ ٱلسَّمْعَ وَٱلْأَبْصَٰرَ وَٱلْأَفْـِٔدَةَ ۚ
قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ٩

Then He proportioned him and breathed into him from His [created] soul and made for you hearing and vision and hearts; little are you grateful.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/32:9

After proportioning the human being, Allah ***"breathed into him from His [created] soul"*** and ***"made for you hearing and vision and hearts"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 32:9.

The human body is a ***physical frame*** that can be studied: heart, blood, lungs and nerves. But life itself is a gift from Allah through the ***soul*** He breathed into it.

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HUMAN KNOWLEDGE OF THE SOUL IS VERY LITTLE

SURAH AL-ISRA' 17:85

وَيَسْـَٔلُونَكَ عَنِ ٱلرُّوحِۖ قُلِ ٱلرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّى وَمَآ أُوتِيتُم مِّنَ ٱلْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٨٥﴾

And they ask you, [O Muhammad], about the soul. Say, "The soul is of the affair of my Lord. And mankind have not been given of knowledge except a little."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/17:85

Allah says: ***"The soul is of the affair of my Lord. And mankind have not been given of knowledge except a little"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 17:85.

This is the ***etiquette*** of a Muslim scholar. Ibn al-Nafis studied the heart and lungs carefully, yet he knew that the ***reality of the soul*** lies beyond human knowledge. A doctor can treat the body, but only Allah gives and takes life.

MATTER	ATTITUDE OF THE MUSLIM SCHOLAR
Body: heart, blood, lungs	Studied through observation and reasoning.
Hearing, sight, intellect	Appreciated and used to seek knowledge.
The soul	The affair of Allah; accepted with faith and humility.

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THE AGE: AYYUBIDS AND MAMLUKS

Ibn al-Nafis was born in the time of the ***Ayyubid state*** founded by ***Salah ad-Din al-Ayyubi*** (Saladin). He later lived under the ***Mamluk state*** in Egypt and Syria.

It was an age of great challenges. The ***Crusaders*** were still on the Syrian coast, and in ***1258 CE*** the ***Mongols*** destroyed Baghdad. In ***1260 CE*** the Mamluk army defeated the Mongols at the ***Battle of 'Ayn Jalut***, and Cairo became a major centre of learning.

HISTORY NOTE: THE GREAT HOSPITALS

Muslim rulers built large ***bimaristans*** (hospitals). Patients were treated ***free of charge***, and the hospital was also a ***medical school*** with a library and teachers.

Ibn al-Nafis studied and worked in three great hospitals: the ***Nuri*** in Damascus, and the ***Nasiri*** and ***Mansuri*** in Cairo.

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J. B. West (2008), "Ibn al-Nafis, the pulmonary circulation, and the Islamic Golden Age", J Appl Physiol.
https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2612469/

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THREE HOSPITALS IN THE LIFE OF IBN AL-NAFIS

HOSPITAL	DESCRIPTION
Bimaristan al-Nuri, Damascus	Built by Nur ad-Din Zangi in the 12th century CE. Where Ibn al-Nafis studied medicine.
Bimaristan al-Nasiri, Cairo	Associated with Salah ad-Din al-Ayyubi. Ibn al-Nafis became its chief physician.
Bimaristan al-Mansuri, Cairo	Built by Sultan Qalawun in 1284–1285 CE. Ibn al-Nafis became its chief physician.

These hospitals had ***separate wards*** for men and women, and for fevers, eye diseases, wounds and mental illness. They show how highly Islamic civilisation ***valued human life***.

MAJOR EVENTS IN THE TIME OF IBN AL-NAFIS

YEAR	EVENT
c. 1213 CE	Ibn al-Nafis is born in Damascus under the Ayyubids.
1236 CE	He moves to Cairo.
1250 CE	The Mamluks begin to rule Egypt.
1258 CE	The Mongols destroy Baghdad.
1260 CE	The Mamluks defeat the Mongols at ‘Ayn Jalut.
1284–1285 CE	Sultan Qalawun builds the Mansuri Hospital.
1288 CE	Ibn al-Nafis dies in Cairo.

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WHO WAS IBN AL-NAFIS?

Ibn al-Nafis ***was born around 1213 CE*** in ***Damascus*** (sources vary between 1210 and 1213 CE). His lineage ***al-Qurashi*** links him to Quraysh, while ***al-Nafis*** was his family name. He was also titled ***'Ala' ad-Din***.

In ***1236 CE*** he moved to ***Cairo***. He became chief physician at the ***Nasiri Hospital***, then at the ***Mansuri Hospital***, and was personal physician to ***Sultan Baybars***. He also taught Shafi'i jurisprudence at the ***Masruriyya madrasa***. He ***died in Cairo in 1288 CE***.

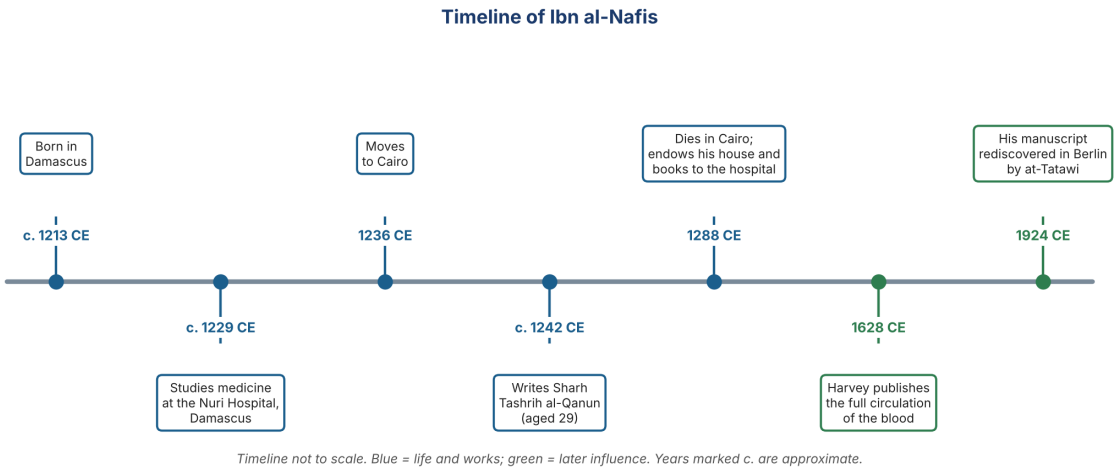


Figure 1: Timeline of Ibn al-Nafis.

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THE WORKS OF IBN AL-NAFIS

WORK	FIELD
Sharh Tashrih al-Qanun	Commentary on the anatomy of Ibn Sina's al-Qanun; contains the description of pulmonary circulation.
Al-Shamil fi as-Sina'a at-Tibbiyya	A huge medical encyclopedia; never fully completed.
Al-Mujaz fi at-Tibb	A summary of al-Qanun; widely read and commented on.
Al-Muhadhdhab fi al-Kuhl al-Mujarrab	Ophthalmology (eye medicine).
Sharh Fusul Buqrat	Commentary on the medical aphorisms of Hippocrates.
Al-Risala al-Kamiliyya	A philosophical story on the Prophet's ﷺ biography and reason.
Works on law, Hadith and language	Including a summary of the principles of Hadith.

This list shows that Ibn al-Nafis was a scholar of ***wide learning***: medicine, law, Hadith, language and philosophy.

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STUDYING AT THE NURI HOSPITAL

As a young man, Ibn al-Nafis began studying medicine at the ***Nuri Hospital*** in Damascus. Biographical reports name his teacher as ***Muhadhdhab ad-Din ad-Dakhwar***, a famous physician who endowed his house to become a medical school.

He also studied ***Shafi'i jurisprudence***, ***Arabic*** and ***Hadith***. Learning in a hospital meant students saw real patients — ***knowledge and practice*** went hand in hand.

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 one of the hardships of this world, Allah will relieve him of one of the hardships 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 covers the faults of a Muslim, Allah will cover his faults in this world and the Hereafter. Allah helps His servant as long as the servant helps his brother. **Whoever follows a path in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him 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 held back 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 Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

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

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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

Whoever travels a path in search of knowledge, Allah makes easy for him a path to Paradise. Ibn al-Nafis's journey from Damascus to Cairo was a journey of knowledge. The Hadith also mentions the reward of ***relieving others' hardships*** — the daily work of a doctor.

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A MEDICAL SCHOOL IN THE HOSPITAL

FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
Learning at the bedside	Students followed their teacher examining patients on the wards.
Library	Large hospitals held collections of medical books.
Lectures	Teachers read and explained books such as al-Qanun.
Examinations	Physicians had to be tested before being allowed to treat.

This system produced many physicians. Some of its principles — ***learning at the bedside*** — are still used in training doctors today.

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BLOOD THROUGH THE LUNGS

At the age of ***29***, Ibn al-Nafis wrote ***Sharh Tashrih al-Qanun*** — a commentary on the anatomy chapters of Ibn Sina's al-Qanun (Book 28). Galen and Ibn Sina held that blood passed through ***tiny pores*** in the wall between the two chambers of the heart.

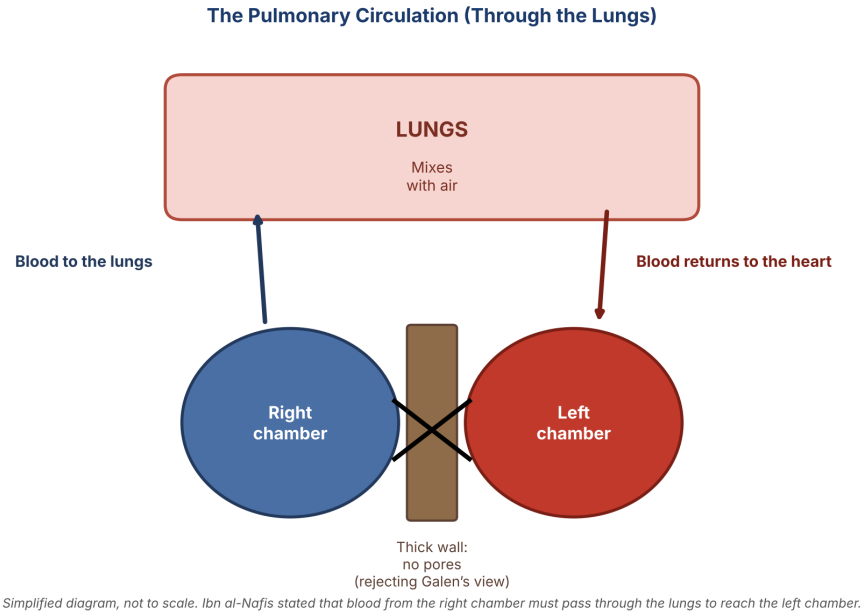


Figure 2: Pulmonary circulation through the lungs.

Ibn al-Nafis rejected this: the wall is ***thick and has no pores***. Blood from the right chamber must go ***to the lungs***, mix with air, then return to the ***left chamber***.

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STEP BY STEP

STEP	IBN AL-NAFIS'S DESCRIPTION
1. Right chamber of the heart	Blood is sent out through a vessel to the lungs (pulmonary artery).
2. Lungs	Blood is refined and mixed with air.
3. Returning vessel	Blood returns through a vessel to the left chamber (pulmonary vein).
4. Left chamber of the heart	Blood is sent to the whole body.

He also stated that there must be ***small passages (manafidh)*** between the arterial and venous vessels in the lungs. These tiny vessels (capillaries) were only seen under the microscope by ***Marcello Malpighi*** about ***400 years*** later (J. B. West, 2008).

THE HEART IS FED BY ITS OWN VESSELS

Ibn Sina held that the heart was nourished by the blood in its right chamber. Ibn al-Nafis held that the heart is nourished through ***blood vessels in its own wall*** — now known as the ***coronary vessels***. When these vessels are blocked, a ***heart attack*** occurs.

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DARING TO DIFFER FROM GALEN AND IBN SINA

Galen was a Greek physician honoured for more than ***a thousand years***, and Ibn Sina was called ***ash-Shaykh ar-Ra'is***. Yet Ibn al-Nafis did not accept their views blindly.

ISSUE	THE OLD VIEW AND IBN AL-NAFIS'S VIEW
Wall between the two chambers	Old: has tiny pores. Ibn al-Nafis: thick, with no pores.
Blood's path to the left chamber	Old: through the wall. Ibn al-Nafis: through the lungs.
Number of heart chambers	Ibn Sina: three. Ibn al-Nafis: only two.
Nourishment of the heart	Old: from blood in the right chamber. Ibn al-Nafis: through vessels in its wall.

He differed with ***good manners*** — he wrote a commentary on Ibn Sina's book, respected him, yet stated the truth as he saw it.

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THE RELIGION IS SINCERE COUNSEL

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 55 — THE 7TH HADITH OF AL-ARBA'IN AN-NAWAWIYYAH

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبَّادٍ الْمَكِّيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، قَالَ قُلْتُ لِسُهَيْلٍ إِنَّ عَمْرًا حَدَّثَنَا عَنِ الْقَعْقَاعِ، عَنْ أَبِيكَ، قَالَ وَرَجَوْتُ أَنْ يُسْقِطَ، عَنِّي رَجُلاً قَالَ فَقَالَ سَمِعْتُهُ مِنَ الَّذِي سَمِعَهُ مِنْهُ أَبِي كَانَ صَدِيقًا لَهُ بِالشَّامِ ثُمَّ حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ عَنْ سُهَيْلٍ عَنْ عَطَاءِ بْنِ يَزِيدَ عَنْ تَمِيمٍ الدَّارِيِّ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «الدِّينُ النَّصِيحَةُ» قُلْنَا لِمَنْ قَالَ «لِلَّهِ وَلِكِتَابِهِ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلأَئِمَّةِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَعَامَّتِهِمْ».

TRANSLATION:

Tamim ad-Dari رضى الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"The religion is sincere counsel (nasihah)."**

We said: "To whom?" He said: **"To Allah, to His Book, to His Messenger, to the leaders of the Muslims and to their common people."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Muhammad ibn 'Abbad al-Makki, from Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, from Suhayl ibn Abi Salih, from 'Ata' ibn Yazid al-Laythi, from Tamim ad-Dari رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Faith, Hadith No. 55; the 7th Hadith of al-Arba'in an-Nawawiyyah.

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

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:55a

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

The religion is sincere counsel — which includes ***stating the truth*** sincerely and courteously. Correcting a great figure's error is not disrespect; it is ***counsel for the Ummah***, so that mistaken knowledge is not passed on.

A student who finds an error in a textbook can follow Ibn al-Nafis's example: ***check carefully, present the evidence, and keep good manners***.

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OBSERVATION, REASONING AND THE QUESTION OF DISSECTION

How did Ibn al-Nafis reach his conclusion? He combined ***anatomical observation***, ***reasoning*** and knowledge of the ***function of organs***.

HISTORY NOTE: DID HE DISSECT?

In the introduction to Sharh Tashrih al-Qanun, Ibn al-Nafis wrote that he ***refrained from dissecting human bodies*** out of respect for the Shari'ah and out of ***compassion*** for the human body.

Yet some modern scholars think his description of the thick heart wall suggests ***direct observation***, perhaps of animals. The question is ***still debated***.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Ibn al-Nafis". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibn_al-Nafis

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THE METHOD OF IBN AL-NAFIS

STEP	EXAMPLE
Reading earlier views	Studying Galen and Ibn Sina carefully.
Observing	Seeing the thick heart wall with no pores.
Reasoning	If there are no pores, blood must take another path.
Concluding	Blood passes through the lungs.
Writing honestly	Stating his own view even when it differs.

This method is close to the modern ***scientific method***: observe, form a hypothesis, test it with reasoning and evidence, then report.

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A LUMP OF FLESH

Ibn al-Nafis studied the ***heart*** as a bodily organ. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ spoke of a lump of flesh in the body that determines whether the whole body is sound or corrupt:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 52

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو نُعَيْمٍ، حَدَّثَنَا زَكَرِيَّاءُ، عَنْ عَامِرٍ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ النُّعْمَانَ بْنَ بَشِيرٍ، يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ «الْحَلاَلُ بَيِّنٌ وَالْحَرَامُ بَيِّنٌ، وَبَيْنَهُمَا مُشَبَّهَاتٌ لاَ يَعْلَمُهَا كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ، فَمَنِ اتَّقَى الْمُشَبَّهَاتِ اسْتَبْرَأَ لِدِينِهِ وَعِرْضِهِ، وَمَنْ وَقَعَ فِي الشُّبُهَاتِ كَرَاعٍ يَرْعَى حَوْلَ الْحِمَى، يُوشِكُ أَنْ يُوَاقِعَهُ. أَلاَ وَإِنَّ لِكُلِّ مَلِكٍ حِمًى، أَلاَ إِنَّ حِمَى اللَّهِ فِي أَرْضِهِ مَحَارِمُهُ، أَلاَ وَإِنَّ فِي الْجَسَدِ مُضْغَةً إِذَا صَلَحَتْ صَلَحَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ، وَإِذَا فَسَدَتْ فَسَدَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ. أَلاَ وَهِيَ الْقَلْبُ».

TRANSLATION:

An-Nu'man ibn Bashir رضى الله عنهما said: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: "The lawful is clear and the unlawful is clear, and between them are doubtful matters that many people do not know. Whoever avoids the doubtful matters has protected his religion and his honour… **Indeed, in the body there is a piece of flesh; if it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Indeed, it is the heart.**"

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Abu Nu'aym al-Fadl ibn Dukayn, from Zakariyya ibn Abi Za'idah, from 'Amir ash-Sha'bi, from an-Nu'man ibn Bashir رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Faith, Hadith No. 52; also narrated by Muslim (No. 1599).

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:52

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

If it is sound, the whole body is sound; if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt — truly, it is the heart. Doctors treat the beating heart, but every Muslim must also guard the ***heart*** of faith.

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SURAH AL-HAJJ 22:46

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا۟ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَآ أَوْ ءَاذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا ۖ فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى ٱلْأَبْصَٰرُ وَلَٰكِن تَعْمَى ٱلْقُلُوبُ ٱلَّتِى فِى ٱلصُّدُورِ ﴿٤٦﴾

So have they not traveled through the earth and have hearts by which to reason and ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/22:46

"it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts". Tafsir Ibn Kathir 22:46.

TWO KINDS OF CARE FOR THE HEART

THE HEART AS AN ORGAN	THE HEART AS THE SEAT OF FAITH
Eat in moderation	Keep up prayer and remembrance of Allah.
Exercise and stay active	Avoid envy and jealousy.
Do not smoke	Repent and seek forgiveness.
Get enough sleep	Read and reflect on the Qur'an.

These two kinds of care are ***connected***. A healthy body helps worship, and a peaceful heart helps health.

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THE HEART TODAY

The human heart beats about ***70 times a minute***, which is over ***100,000 times a day***, without stopping throughout life. Each beat sends blood to the lungs and to the whole body — exactly as Ibn al-Nafis described.

According to the ***World Health Organization (WHO)***, heart and blood vessel diseases caused about ***19.8 million deaths*** in 2022 — around ***32%*** of all deaths worldwide. Most can be prevented by addressing ***diet, physical activity, tobacco and alcohol*** (WHO: Cardiovascular diseases).

RISK FACTOR (WHO)	PREVENTION
Unhealthy diet	Reduce salt, sugar and fat; eat more vegetables and fruit.
Physical inactivity	Exercise regularly.
Tobacco use	Stop smoking.
Alcohol	Avoid it completely — it is also forbidden.

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TWO BLESSINGS MANY PEOPLE NEGLECT

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 Softening of Hearts, 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

Health and free time are two blessings that are often forgotten. A healthy heart is a blessing we only feel when it begins to fail. Use the time of health to ***worship and care for the body***.

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FOR EVERY DISEASE THERE IS A CURE

As chief physician, Ibn al-Nafis treated thousands of patients. Islam encourages its followers to ***seek treatment*** and to study medicines:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2204

حَدَّثَنَا هَارُونُ بْنُ مَعْرُوفٍ، وَأَبُو الطَّاهِرِ، وَأَحْمَدُ بْنُ عِيسَى، قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ وَهْبٍ، أَخْبَرَنِي عَمْرٌو، - وَهُوَ ابْنُ الْحَارِثِ - عَنْ عَبْدِ رَبِّهِ بْنِ سَعِيدٍ، عَنْ أَبِي الزُّبَيْرِ، عَنْ جَابِرٍ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم أَنَّهُ قَالَ « لِكُلِّ دَاءٍ دَوَاءٌ فَإِذَا أُصِيبَ دَوَاءُ الدَّاءِ بَرَأَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ ».

TRANSLATION:

Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah رضى الله عنهما narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **“For every disease there is a cure. When the cure matches the disease, it is healed by the permission of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic.”**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Harun ibn Ma‘ruf, Abu at-Tahir and Ahmad ibn ‘Isa, from ‘Abdullah ibn Wahb, from ‘Amr ibn al-Harith, from ‘Abd Rabbih ibn Sa‘id, from Abu az-Zubayr, from Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Greetings (Kitab as-Salam), chapter: every disease has a cure, Hadith No. 2204.

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

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2204

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

For every disease there is a cure, and healing happens ***by the permission of Allah***. This Hadith urged Muslim physicians to study and search for cures, while placing their trust in Allah.

SURAH AL-MA’IDAH 5:32

مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَٰلِكَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَىٰ بَنِيٓ إِسْرَٰٓءِيلَ أَنَّهُۥ مَن قَتَلَ نَفْسًۢا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ ٱلنَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَآ أَحْيَا ٱلنَّاسَ

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جَمِيعًا ۚ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا بِٱلْبَيِّنَٰتِ ثُمَّ إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُم بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

Because of that, We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely. And our messengers had certainly come to them with clear proofs. Then indeed many of them, [even] after that, throughout the land, were transgressors.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/5:32

Allah says: ***"whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 5:32.

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NOT A MEDICINE, BUT A DISEASE

Ibn al-Nafis was a physician who was also a jurist. He understood that not everything thought to be a medicine is lawful or beneficial. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ made this clear about wine:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1984

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْمُثَنَّى، وَمُحَمَّدُ بْنُ بَشَّارٍ، - وَاللَّفْظُ لاِبْنِ الْمُثَنَّى - قَالاَ حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ جَعْفَرٍ، حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، عَنْ سِمَاكِ بْنِ حَرْبٍ، عَنْ عَلْقَمَةَ بْنِ وَائِلٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، وَائِلٍ الْحَضْرَمِيِّ، أَنَّ طَارِقَ بْنَ سُوَيْدٍ الْجُعْفِيَّ، سَأَلَ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم عَنِ الْخَمْرِ فَنَهَاهُ أَوْ كَرِهَ أَنْ يَصْنَعَهَا فَقَالَ إِنَّمَا أَصْنَعُهَا لِلدَّوَاءِ فَقَالَ «إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ بِدَوَاءٍ وَلَكِنَّهُ دَاءٌ».

TRANSLATION:

Wa'il al-Hadrami رضى الله عنه reported that Tariq ibn Suwayd al-Ju'fi asked the Prophet ﷺ about wine. He forbade it, or disliked that he should make it. Tariq said: "I only make it as a medicine." He said: **"It is not a medicine; rather, it is a disease."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Muhammad ibn al-Muthanna and Muhammad ibn Bashshar, from Muhammad ibn Ja'far, from Shu'bah, from Simak ibn Harb, from 'Alqamah ibn Wa'il, from his father Wa'il al-Hadrami رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Drinks (Kitab al-Ashribah), chapter on the prohibition of using wine as a remedy; it is not a remedy, Hadith No. 1984.

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

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:1984

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Wine is not a medicine, but a disease. Islam encourages seeking treatment, but ***with what is lawful***.

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MODERN EVIDENCE OF ALCOHOL'S HARM

According to the ***WHO***, alcohol causes about ***2.6 million deaths*** a year (2019 data). Alcohol damages the ***liver***, ***brain*** and ***heart***, and is linked to several cancers (WHO, 2024).

ORGAN	EFFECT OF ALCOHOL
Liver	Fatty liver, inflammation and cirrhosis.
Heart	High blood pressure and irregular heartbeat.
Brain	Damages memory and judgement.
Society	Accidents, violence and broken families.

The Prophet's ﷺ words of more than 1,400 years ago are now supported by ***global health data***.

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A PHYSICIAN WHO WAS ALSO A JURIST

Ibn al-Nafis was not only a physician. As-Subki listed him in ***Tabaqat ash-Shafi'iyya al-Kubra*** among the scholars of the Shafi'i school. He taught law at the ***Masruriyya madrasa*** in Cairo and wrote on the ***principles of Hadith***.

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 71 (MUTTAFAQ 'ALAIH)

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 nation 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 Ibn Wahb, from Yunus, from Ibn Shihab az-Zuhri, from Humayd ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman, from Mu'awiyah 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

Whoever Allah wishes good for, He gives him understanding of the religion. Religious knowledge guides medical knowledge: what is lawful, how to protect a patient's privacy, and how to act with ***excellence (ihsan)***.

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RELIGIOUS AND WORLDLY KNOWLEDGE COMPLETE EACH OTHER

SURAH AZ-ZUMAR 39:9

أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَٰنِتٌ ءَانَآءَ ٱلَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَآئِمًا يَحْذَرُ ٱلْءَاخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُواْ رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِۦۗ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِى ٱلَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَٱلَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَۗ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُوْلُواْ ٱلْأَلْبَٰبِ ٩

Is one who is devoutly obedient during periods of the night, prostrating and standing [in prayer], fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord, [like one who does not]? Say, "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" Only they will remember [who are] people of understanding.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/39:9

"Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" Tafsir Ibn Kathir 39:9.

HOW JURISPRUDENCE HELPS THE DOCTOR	EXAMPLE
Rulings on medicines	Refusing medicines made from forbidden substances such as wine.
Etiquette of treatment	Protecting the patient's modesty and dignity.
Worship of the sick	How to pray and purify oneself when ill.
Trust	Keeping the patient's condition confidential.

Ibn al-Nafis shows that a Muslim can be a ***world-class expert*** and ***understand the religion*** at the same time.

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AL-SHAMIL AND THE BOOK OF THE EYE

Ibn al-Nafis's greatest work was ***al-Shamil fi as-Sina'a at-Tibbiyya*** (The Comprehensive Book on the Art of Medicine). Some biographical sources say he planned ***300 volumes*** and completed about ***80***.

HISTORY NOTE: A LOST ENCYCLOPEDIA

Most volumes of al-Shamil ***have been lost***. A small part survives in manuscripts, including sections on ***surgery*** and treatment.

Biographical reports say Ibn al-Nafis wrote from ***memory***, without consulting books, because of his vast learning.

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Wikipedia, "Ibn al-Nafis". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibn_al-Nafis

AL-MUHADHDHAB FI AL-KUHL

Ibn al-Nafis also wrote ***al-Muhadhdhab fi al-Kuhl al-Mujarrab***, a book on ***eye medicine***. It describes eye diseases and their treatment based on experience.

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THE EYE: A BLESSING MENTIONED IN THE QUR'AN

SURAH AN-NAHL 16:78

وَٱللَّهُ أَخۡرَجَكُم مِّنۢ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَٰتِكُمۡ لَا تَعۡلَمُونَ شَيۡـٔٗا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ ٱلسَّمۡعَ وَٱلۡأَبۡصَٰرَ وَٱلۡأَفۡـِٔدَةَ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَشۡكُرُونَ ٧٨

And Allah has extracted you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He made for you hearing and vision and intellect that perhaps you would be grateful.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/16:78

Allah ***"has extracted you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing"***, then gave hearing, sight and intellect, ***"that perhaps you would be grateful"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 16:78.

Ibn al-Nafis's book on the eye continued the tradition of ***Hunayn ibn Ishaq*** and ***Ibn al-Haytham***, who studied the eye and light. Caring for our eyes is one way of ***thanking Allah for the gift of sight***.

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AL-RISALA AL-KAMILIYYA

Ibn al-Nafis also wrote a philosophical story, ***al-Risala al-Kamiliyya fi as-Sira an-Nabawiyya***. It is known in the West as ***Theologus Autodidactus***.

It tells of a boy named ***Kamil*** who grows up ***alone on an island***. Using his reason, he observes nature and comes to believe in a ***Creator***. Later he meets people and learns about ***prophethood*** and the life of the Prophet ﷺ.

HISTORY NOTE: A REPLY TO IBN TUFAYL

The story is regarded as a ***reply*** to ***Hayy ibn Yaqzan*** by Ibn Tufayl of al-Andalus.

Ibn Tufayl stressed that reason alone can reach the truth. Ibn al-Nafis stressed that reason ***needs revelation and prophethood*** to reach complete guidance. Some scholars count it among the ***earliest Arabic novels***.

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REASON AND REVELATION

REASON	REVELATION
Observes nature and thinks.	Gives certain guidance.
Can recognise that there is a Creator.	Teaches how to worship the Creator.
Limited to what can be perceived.	Informs about the unseen.

The lesson of this story: ***reason is a blessing*** that must be used, but it reaches perfection when ***guided by revelation***.

SURAH TA-HA 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

The prayer taught by the Qur'an: ***"My Lord, increase me in knowledge."*** Tafsir Ibn Kathir 20:114.

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AN ENDOWMENT FOR KNOWLEDGE

Before he died, Ibn al-Nafis ***endowed his house, library and books*** to the ***Mansuri Hospital*** in Cairo, so that his knowledge would continue to benefit physicians and patients.

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

Allah likens those who spend in His way to ***"a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes"***, each spike holding a hundred grains. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:261.

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HISTORY NOTE: THE MEDICINE HE REFUSED

Biographical reports say that during his final illness he ***refused a medicine containing wine***, saying he did not wish to meet Allah with wine in his body.

The story is ***well known but comes from biographical narration***.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Ibn al-Nafis". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibn_al-Nafis

ENDOWMENTS IN ISLAMIC CIVILISATION

TYPE OF ENDOWMENT	EXAMPLE
Hospitals	The Nuri and Mansuri bimaristans.
Libraries	Ibn al-Nafis's books for the Mansuri Hospital.
Schools	Ad-Dakhwar's house made into a medical school.
Today	Endowments for hospitals, universities and scholarships.

An endowment (waqf) is a way for ***reward to keep flowing*** after death. We can give according to our means — even a single book.

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REDISCOVERED IN 1924

After Ibn al-Nafis died, his description of the circulation of blood ***was forgotten*** in Europe. In the 16th century CE, several European physicians described the same thing.

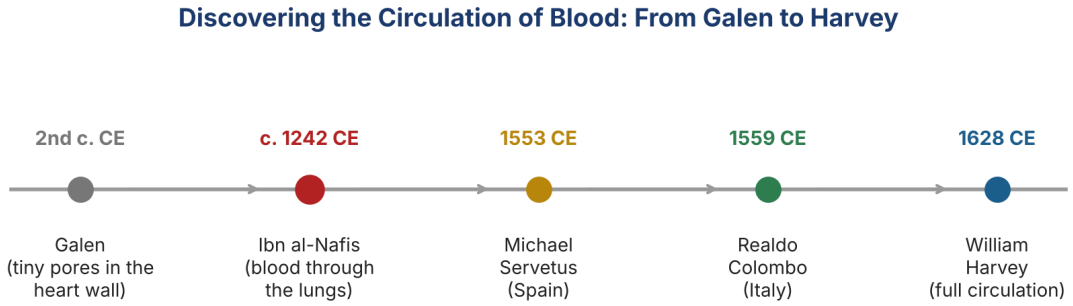


Figure 3: The chain of discovery of the circulation of blood.

In ***1924***, an Egyptian physician, ***Muhyi ad-Din at-Tatawi***, found a manuscript of Sharh Tashrih al-Qanun in the ***Prussian State Library, Berlin***, while writing his doctoral thesis at the University of Freiburg. Since then the world has rediscovered Ibn al-Nafis (J. B. West, 2008).

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WHO CAME FIRST?

FIGURE	CONTRIBUTION
Galen (2nd c. CE)	Blood passes through tiny pores in the heart wall.
Ibn al-Nafis (c. 1242 CE)	Blood passes through the lungs; the heart wall has no pores.
Michael Servetus (1553 CE)	Described the passage of blood through the lungs.
Realdo Colombo (1559 CE)	Described the same in a book of anatomy.
William Harvey (1628 CE)	Proved the circulation of blood through the whole body.
Marcello Malpighi (1661 CE)	Saw the lung capillaries under the microscope.

Did Servetus or Colombo read a translation of Ibn al-Nafis? There is ***no certain evidence***, and scholars are still studying it. What is certain is that Ibn al-Nafis ***came about three centuries before them***.

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ESTABLISHED REPORTS AND POPULAR STORIES

The table below separates what is established from what needs checking about Ibn al-Nafis.

STORIES AND THEIR STATUS

POPULAR STATEMENT	STATUS
Ibn al-Nafis described the circulation of blood through the lungs.	Established. Written in Sharh Tashrih al-Qanun, which still exists.
His manuscript was rediscovered in Berlin in 1924.	Established. Found by the Egyptian physician Muhyi ad-Din at-Tatawi.
He planned al-Shamil in 300 volumes and completed 80.	Reported in biographical sources; only a small part survives.
He refused a medicine containing alcohol near his death.	Well known in biographical narration; cannot be fully verified.
He never dissected at all.	He said so himself; modern scholars still debate it.
Servetus copied from Ibn al-Nafis.	No certain evidence; still being studied.
He discovered the circulation of blood through the whole body.	Inaccurate. He described pulmonary circulation; full circulation was described by Harvey (1628 CE).

REFLECTION — HONOURING WITHOUT EXAGGERATING

Ibn al-Nafis dared to differ from Galen and Ibn Sina because of ***evidence***. We honour him in the same way: holding to what is established, and marking what is uncertain.

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

LESSONS FROM THIS EBOOK

First: Within ourselves are signs of Allah's greatness (51:21; 41:53).

Second: Human knowledge of the soul is very little — be humble (32:9; 17:85).

Third: Travel the path of knowledge, and Allah eases the path to Paradise (Sahih Muslim 2699).

Fourth: The religion is sincere counsel — state the truth with good manners (Sahih Muslim 55).

Fifth: Observe, reason, then conclude — the method of Ibn al-Nafis.

Sixth: Guard the heart — if it is sound, the whole body is sound (Sahih al-Bukhari 52; 22:46).

Seventh: Value health and free time (Sahih al-Bukhari 6412).

Eighth: For every disease there is a cure — seek treatment and trust in Allah (Sahih Muslim 2204).

Ninth: Wine is not a medicine, but a disease (Sahih Muslim 1984).

Tenth: Understand the religion alongside worldly knowledge (Sahih al-Bukhari 71; 39:9).

Eleventh: Reason guided by revelation — the lesson of al-Risala al-Kamiliyya.

Twelfth: Endow knowledge so that its benefit continues (2:261).

CONCLUSION

Ibn al-Nafis died in Cairo in 1288 CE. His discovery was forgotten for centuries before being rediscovered in 1924. The next book of **Tracing the Scholars of Islam**, in sha' Allah, will tell the story of ***'Abbas ibn Firnas***, the Andalusian scholar said to have attempted flight. Wallahu a'lam.

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GLOSSARY AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GLOSSARY

TERM	MEANING
Pulmonary circulation	The path of blood from the heart to the lungs and back to the heart.
Pulmonary artery	The vessel carrying blood from the right chamber of the heart to the lungs.
Pulmonary vein	The vessel carrying blood from the lungs to the left chamber of the heart.
Capillary	A very fine blood vessel between an artery and a vein.
Coronary vessels	Blood vessels that nourish the heart muscle.
Bimaristan	A hospital in Islamic civilisation.
Waqf	Property given permanently for the public good.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What signs of Allah's greatness can we see within ourselves (51:21)?

2. Why did Ibn al-Nafis dare to differ from Galen and Ibn Sina?

3. How can we correct someone's mistake with good manners?

4. What two kinds of care for the heart should a Muslim practise?

5. What small endowment could you make today?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Count your pulse for one minute, then work out how many times your heart beats in a day.

Activity 2: Draw a diagram of pulmonary circulation: right chamber, lungs, left chamber.

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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 .

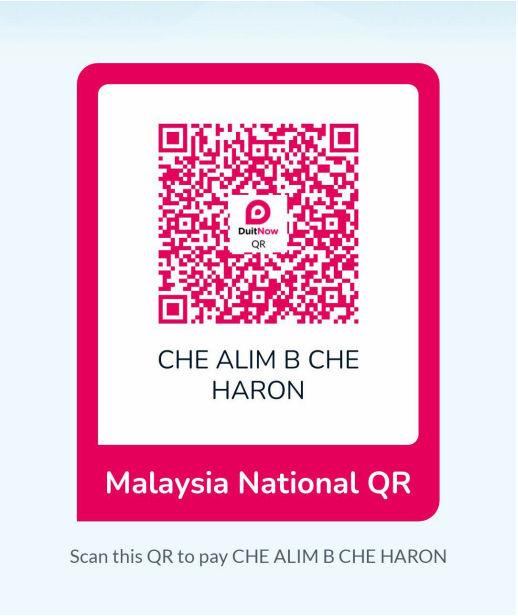
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GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

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

JAZAKUMULLAHU KHAIRAN KATHIRA

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