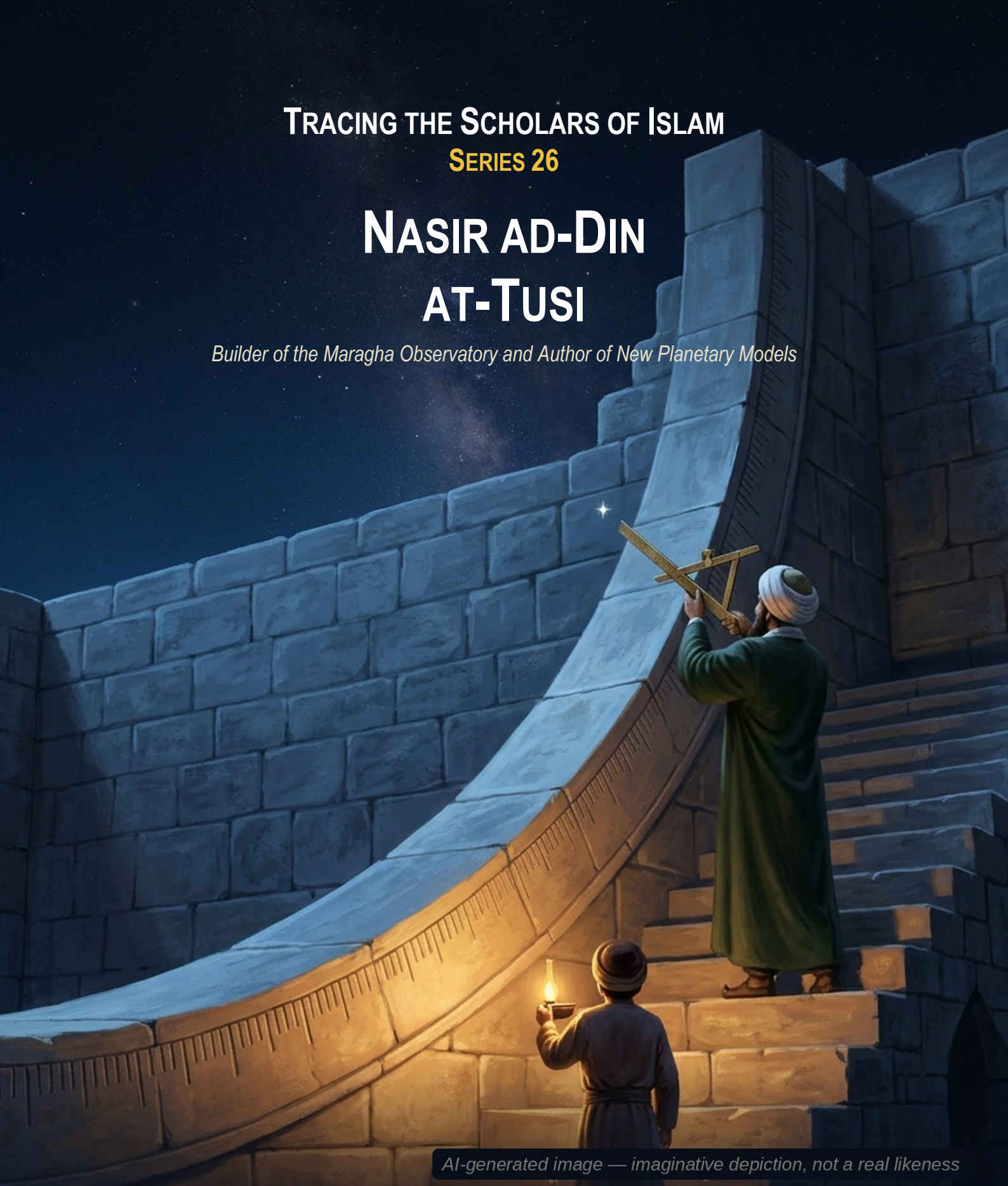
TRACING THE SCHOLARS OF ISLAM

SERIES 26

NASIR AD-DIN AT-TUSI

Builder of the Maragha Observatory and Author of New Planetary Models



AI-generated image — imaginative depiction, not a real likeness

HJ CHE ALIM HJ CHE HARON

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

TRACING THE SCHOLARS OF ISLAM

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NASIR AD-DIN AT-TUSI

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ٱلشَّمْسُ وَٱلْقَمَرُ بِحُسْبَانٍ

"The sun and the moon [move] by precise calculation."

SURAH AR-RAHMAN 55:5

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who made the sun and the moon move by precise calculation. 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 twenty-sixth book of Tracing the Scholars of Islam tells the story of a scholar who built the greatest observatory of his age amid the storm of the Mongol wars, and saved treasures of knowledge for the generations after him. May his story teach us to guard knowledge in every circumstance.

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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 Nasir ad-Din at-Tusi. This label is also printed on the cover. This time we look **from below, upwards**, at night, from the foot of a **huge curved stone arc** — the mural quadrant of the Maragha Observatory — marked with degree lines.

On the stone steps, at-Tusi raises a **brass sighting rule** (alidade) towards a **bright star**. Below him, a **young student** holds an **oil lamp**. The sky above is full of stars with the faint band of the ***Milky Way***.

The warm lamplight and the cool moonlight symbolise ***knowledge and perseverance*** — observing the stars night after night, without a telescope, using only carefully built instruments.

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CONTENTS

NASIR AL-DIN AL-TUSI — *Introducing the scholar*

1. THE SUN AND MOON MOVE BY CALCULATION — *ar-Rahman 55:5; al-An'am 6:97*

2. A HEAVEN BUILT WITHOUT RIFTS — *Qaf 50:6; as-Saffat 37:6*

3. BACKGROUND: THE MONGOL STORM — *Hulagu Khan; Alamut*

4. WHO WAS NASIR AL-DIN AL-TUSI? — *Timeline; list of works*

5. THE FALL OF BAGHDAD AND THE TRIAL OF THE UMMAH — *al-Baqarah 2:155–156; Sahih al-Bukhari 5641*

6. THE MARAGHA OBSERVATORY — *Instruments; waqf; Sahih Muslim 1631*

7. AN INTERNATIONAL TEAM OF SCHOLARS — *Sahih al-Bukhari 481*

8. THE LIBRARY AND WRITTEN KNOWLEDGE — *Sahih al-Bukhari 113*

9. THE ZIJ-I ILKHANI — *The Maragha astronomical tables*

10. TRIGONOMETRY IN ITS OWN RIGHT — *Kitab al-Shakl al-Qatta'*

11. THE PROBLEM OF PTOLEMY'S EQUANT — *Ptolemy's model figure*

12. THE TUSI COUPLE — *Ya-Sin 36:40; planetary model figure*

13. FROM MARAGHA TO COPERNICUS — *Chain of models figure*

14. THE MILKY WAY: A MULTITUDE OF STARS — *Al-Tusi's view*

15. EUCLID'S PARALLEL POSTULATE — *Al-Tusi's mathematics*

16. AKHLAQ-I NASIRI — *Sahih al-Bukhari 6035*

17. THE ETIQUETTE OF STUDENTS — *Sahih al-Bukhari 71*

18. THE LEGACY OF AL-TUSI — *A lunar crater; an asteroid*

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

20. LESSONS AND CONCLUSION — *Eleven 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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NASIR AL-DIN AL-TUSI

The twenty-sixth book of **Tracing the Scholars of Islam** tells the story of ***Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi***, better known as ***Nasir al-Din al-Tusi***. He was an astronomer, mathematician and philosopher who built the ***Maragha Observatory***, one of the greatest centres of scientific research in the 13th century CE.

He is famous for the planetary model known as the ***"Tusi couple"***, for making ***trigonometry*** a science in its own right, and for ***saving books and scholars*** amid the devastation of the Mongol invasions.

This eBook also explains ***the fall of Baghdad***, ***the Maragha team of scholars***, ***the problem of the equant***, his view of ***the Milky Way***, his study of ***Euclid's parallel postulate***, and his books on ***ethics*** and ***the etiquette of students***.

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. Al-Tusi followed the* **Imami Shi'i** *school; this eBook focuses on his scientific contributions.*

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THE SUN AND MOON MOVE BY CALCULATION

SURAH AR-RAHMAN 55:5

ٱلشَّمۡسُ وَٱلۡقَمَرُ بِحُسۡبَانٖ ٥

The sun and the moon [move] by precise calculation.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/55:5

This short verse states: ***"The sun and the moon [move] by precise calculation"***. Because their motion is orderly, it ***can be observed and calculated***. That was the main work of the Maragha Observatory: observing the sun, moon and planets, and compiling accurate tables. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 55:5.

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THE STARS AS GUIDES

SURAH AL-AN'AM 6:97

وَهُوَ ٱلَّذِى جَعَلَ لَكُمُ ٱلنُّجُومَ لِتَهْتَدُوا۟ بِهَا فِى ظُلُمَٰتِ ٱلْبَرِّ وَٱلْبَحْرِ ۗ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا ٱلْءَايَٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾

And it is He who placed for you the stars that you may be guided by them through the darknesses of the land and sea. We have detailed the signs for a people who know.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/6:97

Allah ***"placed for you the stars that you may be guided by them through the darknesses of the land and sea"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 6:97.

Muslim sailors and travellers used ***star tables*** to find their way. Tables such as the ***Zij-i Ilkhani*** from Maragha helped them know the positions of the stars more precisely.

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A HEAVEN BUILT WITHOUT RIFTS

SURAH QAF 50:6

أَفَلَمْ يَنظُرُوٓاْ إِلَى ٱلسَّمَآءِ فَوْقَهُمْ كَيْفَ بَنَيْنَٰهَا وَزَيَّنَّٰهَا وَمَا لَهَا مِن فُرُوجٍ ٦

Have they not looked at the heaven above them - how We structured it and adorned it and [how] it has no rifts?

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/50:6

Allah asks: ***"Have they not looked at the heaven above them"*** — how He structured it, adorned it, and ***"it has no rifts"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 50:6.

SURAH AS-SAFFAT 37:6

إِنَّا زَيَّنَّا ٱلسَّمَآءَ ٱلدُّنْيَا بِزِينَةٍ ٱلْكَوَاكِبِ ٦

Indeed, We have adorned the nearest heaven with an adornment of stars.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/37:6

Allah ***"adorned the nearest heaven with an adornment of stars"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 37:6.

LESSON

The astronomers of Maragha spent ***night after night*** looking at the sky. Careful observation is a response to the call of the Qur'an: ***look at the heavens and reflect***.

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BACKGROUND: THE MONGOL STORM

The 13th century CE was a very hard time for the Islamic world. ***Mongol*** armies from East Asia attacked region after region, destroying great cities such as ***Bukhara, Samarkand, Nishapur*** and finally ***Baghdad***.

> **HISTORY NOTE: FROM GENGHIS KHAN TO HULAGU**
>
> ***Genghis Khan*** began his attacks on Central Asia in ***1219 CE***. His grandson ***Hulagu Khan*** was sent west to conquer Iran and Iraq.
>
> In ***1256 CE***, Hulagu captured the fortresses of ***Alamut*** in the mountains of northern Iran. He then marched on Baghdad. The ***Ilkhanate*** he founded later ruled Iran, and a few generations later its rulers ***embraced Islam***.

LESSON

Even in the darkest times, knowledge can be ***saved and rebuilt***. Al-Tusi's story shows that ***scholarly work does not stop*** even when the world around is collapsing.

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CITIES AND LIBRARIES DESTROYED

CITY	EVENT
Bukhara (1220 CE)	Captured and burned; a famous Samanid centre of learning.
Samarkand (1220 CE)	Captured; many craftsmen and scholars were taken east.
Nishapur (1221 CE)	Destroyed; a city where al-Tusi had once studied.
Baghdad (1258 CE)	The Abbasid capital fell; many books and libraries were lost.

Some later sources say the waters of the Tigris turned ***black with the ink*** of books thrown into it. This image is ***famous***, but may be figurative. What is certain is that the loss of knowledge at that time was ***immense***.

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WHO WAS NASIR AL-DIN AL-TUSI?

Al-Tusi was ***born on 18 February 1201 CE*** in ***Tus***, Khurasan (now in Iran). He studied mathematics, astronomy and philosophy from childhood. As a young man he served in the fortresses of ***Quhistan*** and ***Alamut***, where he wrote his book of ethics, ***Akhlaq-i Nasiri*** (1235 CE).

HISTORY NOTE: IN THE MIDST OF THE MONGOL STORM

In ***1256 CE***, the Mongol army under ***Hulagu Khan*** captured Alamut. Al-Tusi then served Hulagu as astronomer and adviser. In ***1258 CE***, Baghdad fell to the Mongols — one of the greatest tragedies in Islamic history.

Al-Tusi's role in that event ***is disputed by historians***. Some sources accuse him of collaborating with the Mongols; others say he was merely a captive made into an adviser, who used his position to ***save books and scholars***. We cannot be fully certain.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Nasir al-Din al-Tusi". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nasir_al-Din_al-Tusi

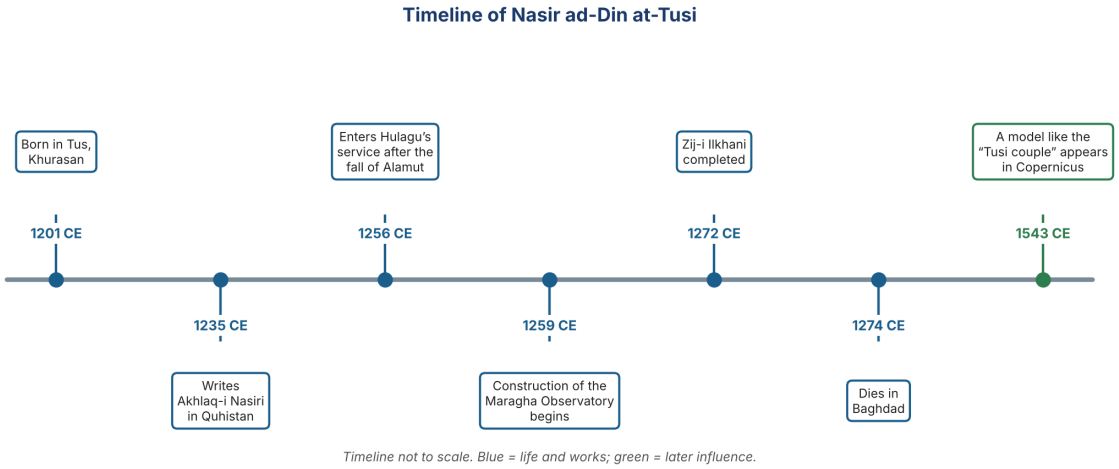


Figure 1: Timeline of Nasir al-Din al-Tusi.

MAJOR WORKS

WORK	DESCRIPTION
Tahrir al-Majisti (1247 CE)	A recension of Ptolemy's Almagest; the Tusi couple first appears.
al-Tadhkira fi 'Ilm al-Hay'a (1261 CE)	A summary of astronomy; new planetary models.
Kitab al-Shakl al-Qatta'	Plane and spherical trigonometry as a science of its own.
Zij-i Ilkhani (1272 CE)	Astronomical tables from the Maragha observations.
Akhlaq-i Nasiri (1235 CE)	A book of ethics in Persian.
Adab al-Muta'allimin	A treatise on the etiquette of students (attributed to him).

Al-Tusi is said to have written ***more than 150 works*** in Arabic and Persian, covering astronomy, mathematics, philosophy, logic and ethics.

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YEARS OF STUDY

Al-Tusi's father was a jurist in Tus. He encouraged his son to study ***many sciences***, not only religious ones. Al-Tusi later studied in ***Nishapur***, one of the greatest centres of learning in Khurasan, and is said to have studied in ***Mosul*** with the mathematician ***Kamal al-Din ibn Yunus***.

Travelling from city to city to seek knowledge was ***a tradition of Muslim scholars***. Al-Tusi brought knowledge from Khurasan, Iraq and Syria and gathered it at Maragha.

LESSON

Parents who encourage their children to study ***many fields of knowledge*** can raise people who greatly benefit the ummah.

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THE FALL OF BAGHDAD AND THE TRIAL OF THE UMMAH

In ***February 1258 CE***, Baghdad — the capital of the Abbasid caliphate for five centuries — fell to the Mongols. Caliph ***al-Musta'sim*** was killed, many inhabitants perished, and many books were destroyed.

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

Allah says: ***"We will surely test you with something of fear"***, hunger and loss of wealth and lives. The patient are those who say: ***"Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:155.

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The Messenger of Allah ﷺ reminded us that every hardship that befalls a Muslim brings reward:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 5641

حَدَّثَنِي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْمَلِكِ بْنُ عَمْرٍو، حَدَّثَنَا زُهَيْرُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَمْرِو بْنِ حَلْحَلَةَ، عَنْ عَطَاءِ بْنِ يَسَارٍ، عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ، وَعَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَا يُصِيبُ الْمُسْلِمَ مِنْ نَصَبٍ وَلاَ وَصَبٍ وَلاَ هَمٍّ وَلاَ حُزْنٍ وَلاَ أَذًى وَلاَ غَمٍّ حَتَّى الشَّوْكَةِ يُشَاكُهَا، إِلاَّ كَفَّرَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ خَطَايَاهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri and Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنهما narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"No fatigue, illness, worry, sorrow, harm or distress befalls a Muslim — even a thorn that pricks him — except that Allah expiates some of his sins by it."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Abdullah ibn Muhammad, from 'Abd al-Malik ibn 'Amr, from Zuhair ibn Muhammad, from Muhammad ibn 'Amr ibn Halhalah, from 'Ata' ibn Yasar, from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri and Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Sick, chapter on the expiation of sins through illness, Hadith No. 5641. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 2573).

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:5641

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

A great calamity like the fall of Baghdad is ***a trial***. The ummah later ***rose again*** — Maragha was built, books were copied anew, and a few generations later the Mongol rulers themselves ***embraced Islam***.

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THE MARAGHA OBSERVATORY

In ***1259 CE***, with funds from Hulagu, al-Tusi began building the ***Maragha Observatory*** on a hill in north-western Iran. ***Large observing instruments*** were built there, including a mural quadrant shaped like a stone arc, as on the cover of this eBook.

The observatory also had ***a large library***. Many historians regard it as an early example of ***a research institution*** — a place where scholars worked together, sharing instruments, books and data (Wikipedia: Maragheh observatory).

OBSERVING INSTRUMENTS

INSTRUMENT	USE
Mural quadrant	A large stone arc for measuring the altitude of the sun and stars.
Armillary sphere	Metal rings representing the circles of the sky.
Solstitial instrument	Measuring the sun's position on the longest and shortest days.
Astrolabe	A portable instrument for measuring angles and telling time.

The instrument maker ***Mu'ayyad al-Din al-'Urdi*** of Damascus wrote a treatise on the Maragha instruments. The ruins of the observatory can still be seen at ***Maragheh, Iran***.

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FUNDED BY WAQF

The Maragha Observatory was funded partly by ***waqf revenues***. Al-Tusi was given charge of the endowments of the Ilkhanate, and part of the income paid for ***scholars' salaries, instruments and books***. The waqf system made institutions of learning ***sustainable***, not dependent solely on the generosity of one ruler.

Waqf is charity whose reward keeps flowing, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

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: ongoing charity, knowledge that is benefited from, or a righteous child who prays for him."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya ibn Ayyub, Qutaybah ibn Sa'id and 'Ali ibn Hujr, from Isma'il ibn Ja'far, from al-'Ala' ibn 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 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 death, Hadith No. 1631.

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

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

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Ongoing charity, beneficial knowledge and a righteous child — all three come together in an endowed institution of learning. Mosques, schools and waqf libraries are ***an investment for the Hereafter***.

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AN INTERNATIONAL TEAM OF SCHOLARS

Al-Tusi gathered ***a team of scholars*** from many lands. They worked together, complementing each other's expertise.

SCHOLAR	CONTRIBUTION AT MARAGHA
Mu'ayyad al-Din al-'Urdi	Instrument maker from Damascus; devised the "'Urdi lemma" in planetary models.
Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi	Astronomer and optics scholar; explained the rainbow together with his student.
Najm al-Din al-Katibi	Logician and philosopher.
Fu Mengzhi	An astronomer from China who brought knowledge of the Chinese calendar.

Cooperation like this reminds us of the saying of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ:

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HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 481

حَدَّثَنَا خَلاَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، عَنْ أَبِي بُرْدَةَ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ أَبِي بُرْدَةَ، عَنْ جَدِّهِ، عَنْ أَبِي مُوسَى، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ كَالْبُنْيَانِ، يَشُدُّ بَعْضُهُ بَعْضًا». وَشَبَّكَ أَصَابِعَهُ.

TRANSLATION:

Abu Musa al-Ash'ari رضى الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"A believer to another believer is like a building, each part strengthening the other."** And he interlaced his fingers.

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Khallad ibn Yahya, from Sufyan ath-Thawri, from Burayd ibn 'Abdullah ibn Abi Burdah, from his grandfather Abu Burdah ibn Abi Musa, from Abu Musa al-Ash'ari رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Prayer (Kitab as-Salah), Hadith No. 481; also narrated by Muslim (No. 2585).

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:481

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Believers ***strengthen one another*** like the bricks of a building. The Maragha Observatory succeeded through ***teamwork***, not through one figure alone.

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THE LIBRARY AND WRITTEN KNOWLEDGE

Al-Tusi wrote more than a hundred works, and worked to ***collect and copy books*** at Maragha. The importance of writing knowledge down was recognised in the time of the Companions:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 113

حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا عَمْرٌو، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي وَهْبُ بْنُ مُنَبِّهٍ، عَنْ أَخِيهِ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ، يَقُولُ مَا مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم أَحَدٌ أَكْثَرَ حَدِيثًا عَنْهُ مِنِّي، إِلاَّ مَا كَانَ مِنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ يَكْتُبُ وَلاَ أَكْتُبُ. تَابَعَهُ مَعْمَرٌ عَنْ هَمَّامٍ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ.

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه said: "There is none among the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ who narrated more Hadith from him than I, except 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr, **for he used to write and I did not write**."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Ali ibn 'Abdullah, from Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, from 'Amr ibn Dinar, from Wahb ibn Munabbih, from his brother Hammam ibn Munabbih, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه. It is corroborated by Ma'mar from Hammam from Abu Hurayrah.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge (Kitab al-'Ilm), chapter on the writing of knowledge, Hadith No. 113.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari. It is the statement of a Companion (Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه) about the writing of Hadith in the Prophet's ﷺ time.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:113

LESSONS FROM THIS REPORT

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه acknowledged the merit of 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr رضى الله عنهما because ***he wrote things down***. Written knowledge ***lasts longer*** and reaches the next generations. That is why libraries and writing were so important in Islamic civilisation.

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THE ZIJ-I ILKHANI

The results of some ***12 years*** of observation at Maragha were compiled in the ***Zij-i Ilkhani***, completed in ***1272 CE***. A "zij" is a book of astronomical tables.

HISTORY NOTE: THE CONTENTS OF THE ZIJ-I ILKHANI

This zij contains ***tables of planetary positions***, ***a star catalogue***, methods for ***calendars*** (including the Hijri, Persian and Chinese calendars), and methods for calculating ***eclipses***.

The Zij-i Ilkhani was widely used for centuries, and was translated and commented on by later astronomers.

WHY WERE TABLES IMPORTANT?

Astronomical tables let people calculate ***prayer times***, ***the start of the Hijri months*** and ***the qiblah*** without observing the sky every night themselves. Knowledge gathered by a few experts ***benefits everyone***.

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STARS WITH ARABIC NAMES

The star catalogues of Islamic zijes left a legacy of ***Arabic names*** still used by astronomers around the world today.

MODERN NAME	ARABIC ORIGIN
Aldebaran	al-Dabaran — “the follower” (of the Pleiades).
Altair	al-Ta’ir — “the flying one” (the eagle).
Vega	al-Waqi‘ — “the swooping one” (the eagle).
Rigel	Rijl — “the foot” (of Orion).
Deneb	Dhanab — “the tail” (of the swan).

Every time modern astronomers use these names, they ***repeat the legacy*** of Islamic astronomy (Britannica: star names).

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TRIGONOMETRY IN ITS OWN RIGHT

Before al-Tusi, trigonometry was usually treated as part of ***astronomy***. In ***Kitab al-Shakl al-Qatta'*** (Treatise on the Quadrilateral), al-Tusi presented it as ***a branch of mathematics in its own right***.

> **HISTORY NOTE: THE LAW OF SINES**
>
> Al-Tusi set out the ***law of sines*** for plane and spherical triangles in full. For a plane triangle, the law states that ***a ÷ sin A = b ÷ sin B = c ÷ sin C***.
>
> His book was translated into Latin and influenced European mathematicians such as ***Regiomontanus*** in the 15th century CE (Britannica: trigonometry).

LESSON

A science that was once just ***a tool*** can grow into ***a field of its own*** when studied deeply. Trigonometry is now used in engineering, navigation and technology.

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AN EXAMPLE OF THE LAW OF SINES

Two surveyors stand at points ***A*** and ***B***, ***100 m*** apart. They sight a tree across a river. The angle at A is ***60°*** and the angle at B is ***70°***, so the angle at the tree is ***50°***.

By the law of sines, the distance from A to the tree = ***100 × sin 70° ÷ sin 50° ≈ 123 m***. The width of the river can be found ***without crossing it***. This is the method of ***triangulation*** used to draw maps for centuries.

LESSON

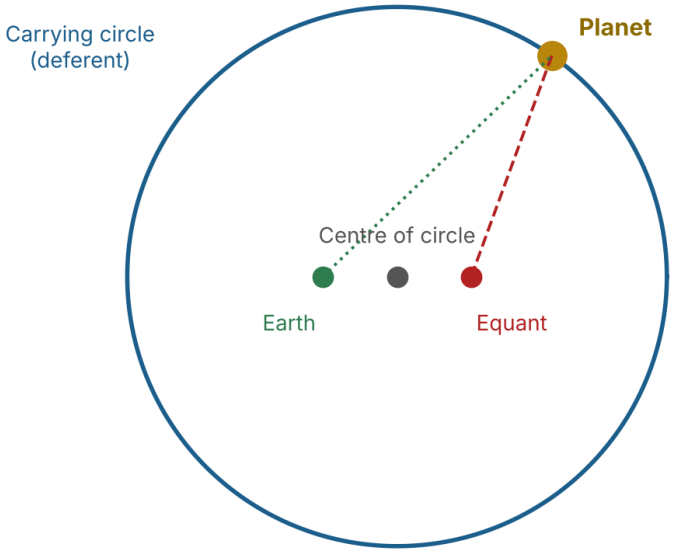
Mathematics lets us ***measure what cannot be reached***. Al-Tusi organised this knowledge so that it is easy to learn and use.

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THE PROBLEM OF PTOLEMY'S EQUANT

Ptolemy's planetary model (2nd century CE) placed the earth near the centre of a planet's carrying circle. To fit the model to observations, Ptolemy added a special point called ***the "equant"***.

Ptolemy's Model: Earth, Centre and the "Equant"



The planet appears to move uniformly only when seen from the equant point — not from the centre of its own circle. Al-Tusi saw this as contradicting the principle of uniform circular motion, and sought another solution.

Figure 2: Ptolemy's model — the earth, the centre of the circle and the equant point.

The problem was that the planet moves ***uniformly*** only when seen from the equant — not from the centre of its own circle. To the astronomers of Maragha, this ***contradicted*** the physical principles they held. They sought ***a more consistent model***.

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THE TUSI COUPLE

In his book ***al-Tadhkira fi 'Ilm al-Hay'a***, al-Tusi introduced a geometric device now known as ***the Tusi couple***: a small circle rolling inside a large circle whose radius is ***twice as great***.

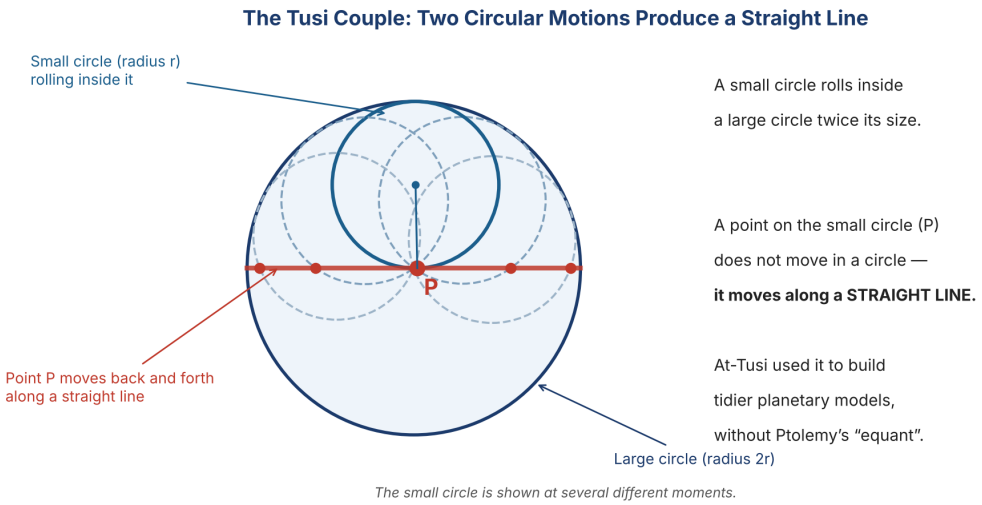


Figure 3: The Tusi couple — two circular motions produce straight-line motion.

As a result, a point on the small circle moves ***back and forth in a straight line*** — using only circular motion. This device made planetary models ***without the equant*** possible (Wikipedia: Tusi couple).

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SURAH YA-SIN 36:40

لَا ٱلشَّمۡسُ يَنۢبَغِي لَهَآ أَن تُدۡرِكَ ٱلۡقَمَرَ وَلَا ٱلَّيۡلُ سَابِقُ ٱلنَّهَارِۚ وَكُلّٞ فِي فَلَكٖ يَسۡبَحُونَ ٤٠

It is not allowable for the sun to reach the moon, nor does the night overtake the day, but each, in an orbit, is swimming.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/36:40

The Qur'an describes each heavenly body: ***"each, in an orbit, is swimming"*** — moving in perfect order. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 36:40.

Today the principle of the Tusi couple is used in some ***machine mechanisms*** that convert rotary motion into straight-line motion.

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FROM MARAGHA TO COPERNICUS

After al-Tusi, Muslim astronomers continued to improve planetary models. ***Ibn al-Shatir*** of Damascus (14th century CE) produced a model ***without the equant*** that is strikingly similar to that of ***Copernicus***.

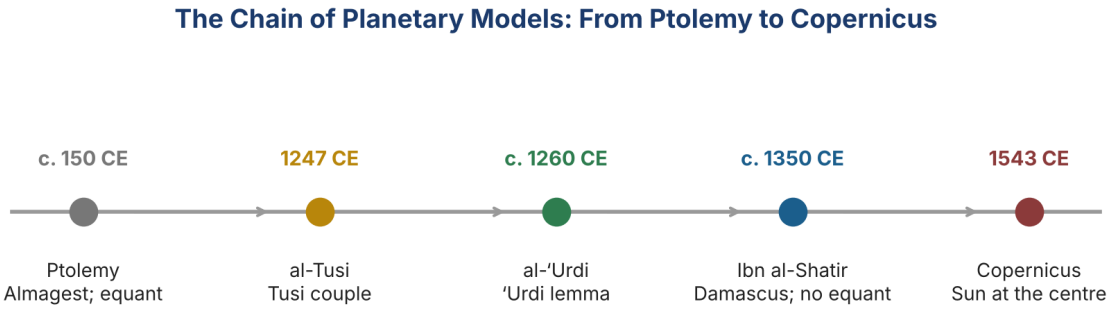


Figure 4: The chain of planetary models from Ptolemy to Copernicus.

Almost three centuries after al-Tusi, the Tusi couple appears in the work of ***Copernicus*** (1543 CE). Whether he learned it from al-Tusi's work or found it independently ***is still being studied*** by historians of science.

LESSON

The scientific revolution in Europe ***did not begin from nothing***. It was built on the work of many scholars, including those of Maragha and Damascus.

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THE MILKY WAY: A MULTITUDE OF STARS

In al-Tusi's time, many thought the ***Milky Way*** — the faint band of light in the night sky — was an atmospheric phenomenon. In ***al-Tadhkira***, al-Tusi wrote that the Milky Way consists of ***a great many small, closely packed stars***, so that it looks like a cloud.

This view was confirmed by ***Galileo*** with a telescope in ***1610 CE***. Today we know the Milky Way galaxy contains ***hundreds of billions of stars*** (Britannica: Milky Way Galaxy).

LESSON

Careful reasoning can run ahead of instruments. Even without a telescope, al-Tusi reached ***an accurate conclusion*** from observation and argument.

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OUR GALAXY TODAY

FACT	APPROXIMATE VALUE
Shape	A barred spiral galaxy.
Diameter	c. 100,000 light-years.
Number of stars	Hundreds of billions.
Position of the sun	c. 26,000 light-years from the galactic centre.

The Qur'an says the nearest heaven is adorned with ***"an adornment of stars"*** (37:6). The farther people explore, the wider that ***adornment*** appears, and the smaller we become before ***the greatness of Allah***.

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EUCLID'S PARALLEL POSTULATE

Euclid built his geometry on five postulates. The fifth — about ***parallel lines*** — seemed less obvious than the others. Many mathematicians tried to prove it from the other four.

> **HISTORY NOTE: AL-TUSI'S STUDY**
>
> Al-Tusi wrote on the parallel postulate and tried to prove it. A work attributed to him (or to his son, ***Sadr al-Din***) was printed in ***Rome in 1594 CE***.
>
> This work was read by European mathematicians such as ***John Wallis*** and ***Giovanni Saccheri***, whose studies eventually opened the way to ***non-Euclidean geometry*** in the 19th century CE.

LESSON

Something that seems "obvious" must still be ***tested***. The question of parallel lines led to new geometries now used in Einstein's ***theory of relativity***.

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AKHLAQ-I NASIRI

Besides science, al-Tusi wrote ***Akhlaq-i Nasiri***, a book of ethics in Persian that was widely read for centuries. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ set the measure of human goodness:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 6035

حَدَّثَنَا عُمَرُ بْنُ حَفْصٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبِي، حَدَّثَنَا الأَعْمَشُ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي شَقِيقٌ، عَنْ مَسْرُوقٍ، قَالَ كُنَّا جُلُوسًا مَعَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو يُحَدِّثُنَا إِذْ قَالَ لَمْ يَكُنْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَاحِشًا وَلاَ مُتَفَحِّشًا، وَإِنَّهُ كَانَ يَقُولُ «إِنَّ خِيَارَكُمْ أَحَاسِنُكُمْ أَخْلاَقًا».

TRANSLATION:

Masruq said: We were sitting with ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr رضى الله عنهما as he was narrating Hadith to us, when he said: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was neither obscene nor did he deliberately speak obscenely. He used to say: **The best among you are those with the best character.**”

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from ‘Umar ibn Hafs, from his father Hafs ibn Ghiyath, from al-A‘mash, from Shaqiq ibn Salamah, from Masruq, from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Manners (Kitab al-Adab), chapter on good character, generosity and the dislike of miserliness, Hadith No. 6035.

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:6035

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

The best people are those with the best character. Skill in astronomy or mathematics does not make a person noble if his character is bad. Knowledge and character must go together.

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THE FOUR CARDINAL VIRTUES

VIRTUE	MEANING
Hikmah	Wisdom — putting things in their proper place.
Shaja'ah	Courage — standing firm through hardship in the right way.
'Iffah	Self-restraint — guarding the self from what is improper.
'Adalah	Justice — giving each their due.

The book also discusses ***household management*** and ***government***. Ethics is not only a private matter, but the foundation of good families and societies.

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THE ETIQUETTE OF STUDENTS

A short treatise, ***Adab al-Muta'allimin***, is attributed to al-Tusi. It describes the etiquette of students: ***sincere intention***, ***respect for teachers***, ***choosing good companions***, and ***reviewing lessons***.

Deep understanding is a sign of the good that Allah wills, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

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

Understanding is a gift from Allah. Students must strive, but also ***pray*** and ***keep good manners***, for blessed knowledge comes from Allah.

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FIVE ETIQUETTES OF A STUDENT

ETIQUETTE	PRACTICE
Sincere intention	Study for the sake of Allah, not to show off.
Respect for teachers	Listen well and do not interrupt.
Choosing companions	Keep company with diligent friends of good character.
Reviewing lessons	Go over what you learned on the same day.
Writing	Note down knowledge so that it is not forgotten.

These manners ***never grow old***. They matter just as much for school pupils, university students and lifelong learners.

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THE LEGACY OF AL-TUSI

More than seven centuries after his death, al-Tusi is still remembered around the world.

HONOUR	DESCRIPTION
Nasireddin crater	A crater on the Moon is named after him.
Asteroid 10269 Tusi	An asteroid is named after him.
K. N. Toosi University	A university of technology in Tehran is named after him.
The Maragha Observatory site	Its ruins are preserved in Maragheh, Iran.

LESSON

Al-Tusi's true legacy is ***a culture of team research***, ***libraries*** and ***the courage to question*** a model accepted for a thousand years.

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STUDENTS AND COLLEAGUES OF MARAGHA

FIGURE	CONTRIBUTION
Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi	Astronomer and optics scholar; wrote astronomical works improving planetary models.
Ibn al-Fuwati	Librarian of Maragha and historian; compiled a biographical dictionary.
Kamal al-Din al-Farisi	Student of Qutb al-Din; explained the rainbow with a glass-sphere experiment (see Book 22).

This chain of students shows that Maragha was not merely a building, but ***a school of thought*** that kept producing scholars after al-Tusi's death.

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ESTABLISHED REPORTS AND POPULAR STORIES

The table below separates what is established from what needs checking about Nasir al-Din al-Tusi.

STORIES AND THEIR STATUS

POPULAR STATEMENT	STATUS
Al-Tusi built the Maragha Observatory (begun 1259 CE).	Established. Its ruins still exist in Maragheh, Iran.
He introduced the “Tusi couple” in al-Tadhkira.	Established. The work still exists.
The Maragha library held 400,000 volumes.	A figure from later sources; possibly exaggerated.
He dropped a copper basin from a roof to show Hulagu the benefit of astronomy.	A famous story in later Persian sources; cannot be verified.
He was wholly responsible for the fall of Baghdad.	Disputed. Historical sources differ.
Copernicus copied al-Tusi’s model.	Uncertain. The similarity is clear, but the path of transmission is still being studied.
Al-Tusi wrote the parallel-postulate work printed in Rome (1594 CE).	Disputed. Some researchers attribute it to his son, Sadr al-Din.

REFLECTION — HONOURING WITHOUT EXAGGERATING

Al-Tusi’s history is full of great events and disputes. We honour his contributions to knowledge, hold to what is established, and mark what is still uncertain.

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

LESSONS FROM THIS EBOOK

First: The motion of the sun and moon is orderly and can be calculated — a sign of Allah (55:5).

Second: The stars were made as guides on land and sea (6:97).

Third: Look at the heavens and reflect on how they are built (50:6; 37:6).

Fourth: Be patient when tested with calamity (2:155–156; Sahih al-Bukhari 5641).

Fifth: Believers strengthen one another like a building (Sahih al-Bukhari 481).

Sixth: Written knowledge lasts (Sahih al-Bukhari 113).

Seventh: The reward of ongoing charity and beneficial knowledge keeps flowing (Sahih Muslim 1631).

Eighth: The best people are those with the best character (Sahih al-Bukhari 6035).

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

Tenth: Dare to question old models with argument and evidence.

Eleventh: Knowledge can be saved even amid calamity — through teamwork and libraries.

CONCLUSION

Nasir al-Din al-Tusi died in Baghdad in 1274 CE. A crater on the Moon is named ***Nasireddin*** after him. The next book of **Tracing the Scholars of Islam**, in sha Allah, will tell the story of ***Abu Bakr al-Razi***, the great physician of Rayy. Wallahu a'lam.

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GLOSSARY AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GLOSSARY

TERM	MEANING
Observatory	A place for observing the sky with astronomical instruments.
Zij	A book of astronomical tables.
Equant	A special point in Ptolemy's model from which a planet's motion looks uniform.
Tusi couple	Two circles that produce straight-line motion from circular motion.
Mural quadrant	A large arc on a wall for measuring the altitude of stars.
Law of sines	The relation between the sides and the sines of opposite angles in a triangle.
Postulate	A basic assumption accepted without proof in a mathematical system.
Milky Way	The galaxy in which our solar system lies.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Why can the motion of the sun and moon be observed and calculated (55:5)?

2. What can we learn from the fall of Baghdad and the revival of learning after it?

3. Why is teamwork important in scientific research?

4. What is the problem of the equant, and how did the Tusi couple help solve it?

5. Of the four cardinal virtues in Akhlaq-i Nasiri, which do you most need to improve?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: On a dark night far from city lights, look for the band of the Milky Way. Draw what you see.

Activity 2: Draw a large circle, then a small circle of half the radius inside it. Use an animation app or paper to see how one point moves in a straight line.

Activity 3: Make a simple "table": record the times of sunrise and sunset for a week, and see how they change.

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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 .

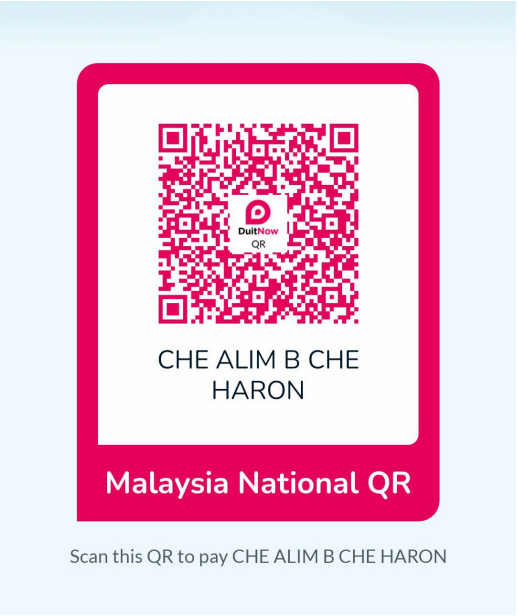
REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Wills (Kitab al-Wasiyyah), chapter on the reward that reaches a person after his death, Hadith No. 1631.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

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

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