Heroes of Islam
Series 27

Oruç Reis

Admiral of Algiers and Rescuer of the Muslims of al-Andalus, According to the Qur'an, Authentic Hadith and the Books of History



Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron
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HEROES OF ISLAM

SERIES 27

ORUÇ REIS

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وَلَا تَهِنُواْ وَلَا تَحۡزَنُواْ وَأَنتُمُ ٱلۡأَعۡلَوۡنَ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤۡمِنِينَ ١٣٩

"So do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will be superior if you are [true] believers."

Surah Ali 'Imran 3:139

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who forbade the believers to weaken or grieve, for they are superior if they are believers. May blessings and peace be upon our master, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, upon his family and Companions, and upon those who followed his path in excellence — among them Oruç Reis, rescuer of the Muslims of al-Andalus.

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-seventh book of Heroes of Islam tells the story of Oruç Reis: the sailor from the island of Midilli who was once a captive of the Knights of Rhodes, carried thousands of Andalusian Muslims to safety, lost an arm at Bougie, and freed Algiers. His story is told with honesty about its sources, including the legend of the silver arm, the killing of Salim al-Tumi, and the difference between jihad at sea and piracy. May this knowledge be ‘ilmun yuntafa‘u bih — knowledge that benefits.

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ABOUT THE COVER OF THIS EBOOK

This eBook's cover does not depict any human being or animal. It shows ***the coast of Algiers*** on the Mediterranean at sunrise in the early sixteenth century, under a soft golden and blue sky, with palm trees, olive trees and red poppies on the hillside.

On the hillside rises ***a white terraced town*** of flat-roofed houses, with ***a stone-walled kasbah*** at the top and the square ***minaret of a mosque*** with green tiles — recalling Algiers, freed by Oruç in 1516.

In the calm bay lie several ***Ottoman galliots*** with lateen sails, near a stone harbour and ***a lighthouse***. On the horizon, a few ***sailing ships*** approach the shore — recalling the ships that carried the Muslims of al-Andalus to safety.

The ***dark blue band*** at the bottom, framed by ***fine gold lines***, is where the author's name appears — the same as on the covers of Series 1 to Series 26, so that all the covers of Heroes of Islam match.

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ORUÇ REIS

In 897 AH (1492 CE), Granada — the last Muslim kingdom of al-Andalus — fell to Spain. In the years that followed, the Muslims who lived there were forced to convert to Christianity, their mosques were closed, and many who wished to emigrate to North Africa had no ships to cross the sea.

It was then that a sailor from the island of Midilli (Lesbos) in the Aegean appeared: ***Oruç Reis***, elder brother of Hayreddin Barbarossa. With his ships he carried thousands of Andalusian Muslims to the shores of North Africa, so that they called him ***Baba Oruç*** (Father Oruç). He later freed Algiers from the Spanish threat and laid the foundations of Ottoman rule in Algeria.

This eBook is the twenty-seventh in the ***Heroes of Islam*** series. Oruç's story comes mainly from the Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa, his brother's memoir written after his death, and from hostile Spanish sources. Every story is given with its source and grade honestly — including the legend of the "silver arm", the story of the scattered gold, the killing of Salim al-Tumi, and the difference between jihad at sea and piracy — and its lessons are grounded in the Qur'an and authentic Hadith.

Oruç's story is that of a man who lost a brother, his freedom and an arm, but never lost his zeal to help the weak among the Muslims.

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WHO WAS ORUÇ REIS?

He was ***Oruç son of Yakup***, born around 879 AH (1474 CE) on the island of Midilli (Lesbos) in the Aegean Sea. In Arabic his name is written ***'Aruj***, and Europeans called him ***Barbarossa*** ("Red Beard") — a title later inherited by his younger brother, Hayreddin.

He fell as a martyr in 924 AH (1518 CE) in battle against the Spanish near Tlemcen in western Algeria, at about 44 years of age.

HIS NAMES AND TITLES

NAME / TITLE	EXPLANATION
Oruç ('Aruj)	His given name; "Oruç" means fasting in Turkish
Reis	Title of a ship's captain
Baba Oruç	"Father Oruç", a title given by the Andalusian Muslims he rescued
Barbarossa	"Red Beard" in Italian, a European title
Gümüş Kol	"Silver Arm", a title in tradition after he lost his arm

LESSONS

The noblest title is the one given by those we help. "Baba Oruç" means more than any rank.

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THE SON OF YAKUP ON THE ISLAND OF MIDILLI

HISTORICAL NOTE: A FAMILY OF SAILORS

His father, ***Yakup Ağa***, was an Ottoman cavalryman who settled on Midilli after the island was conquered by Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror in 1462. He married and had four sons: ***İshak***, ***Oruç***, ***Hızır*** (later known as Hayreddin) and ***İlyas***.

The family owned a small ship and traded around the Aegean. From his youth Oruç learned seamanship, reading the winds and currents, and knowing the islands and harbours. This knowledge later made him one of the most skilled sailors of his time.

Status of the report: Narrated in the books of history — chiefly the Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa (Hayreddin's memoir written by Seyyid Murâdî), the Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr of Kâtib Çelebi, and Spanish sources such as Diego de Haedo — without a chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. The story is accepted as history, but it cannot be used as proof in the way an authentic hadith can.

REFERENCES:

Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa (Seyyid Murâdî); Kâtib Çelebi, Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr.

LESSONS

Skills learned in childhood, however ordinary they seem, can become great tools for serving the ummah.

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CAPTIVE OF THE KNIGHTS OF RHODES

HISTORICAL NOTE: THE LOSS OF A BROTHER

On a voyage to Tripoli in Syria, the ship of Oruç and his brother İlyas was attacked by a warship of ***the Knights Hospitaller*** of Rhodes. İlyas was killed in the fight, and Oruç was taken captive. He was made a galley slave on their warships for several years — a very bitter fate in that age.

The reports differ on how he was freed. According to the Gazavat, his brother Hızır worked to ransom him; other reports say he escaped by swimming ashore while the ship was at anchor. This experience of captivity shaped his resolve to fight the Knights and free Muslim captives.

Status of the report: His captivity is narrated in Ottoman sources; the manner of his release varies between reports.

REFERENCES:

Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa (Seyyid Murâdî); Kâtib Çelebi, Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr.

Freeing captives is one of the commands of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3046

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا جَرِيرٌ، عَنْ مَنْصُورٍ، عَنْ أَبِي وَائِلٍ، عَنْ أَبِي مُوسَى - رضى الله عنه - قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم " فُكُّوا الْعَانِيَ - يَعْنِي الأَسِيرَ - وَأَطْعِمُوا الْجَائِعَ وَعُودُوا الْمَرِيضَ ".

TRANSLATION:

Abu Musa narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"Free the captive, feed the hungry, and visit the sick."***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Qutaybah ibn Sa'id, from Jarir ibn 'Abd al-Hamid, from Mansur ibn al-Mu'tamir, from Abu Wa'il Shaqiq ibn Salamah, from Abu Musa al-Ash'ari رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Jihad and Expeditions, Hadith No. 3046.

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:3046

LESSONS

Suffering can be a teacher. Those who have tasted the bitterness of captivity best understand the value of freeing others.

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UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF PRINCE KORKUT

HISTORICAL NOTE: ANTALYA AND THE MEDITERRANEAN

After his release, Oruç gained the support of ***Prince (Şehzade) Korkut***, son of Sultan Bayezid II and governor of Antalya, known for his love of learning and seafaring. With Korkut's help, Oruç obtained ships and began sailing to the western Mediterranean. There are reports that he also served for a time with the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt.

The Mediterranean at that time was a battleground between Muslim ships and those of Spain, Portugal, Genoa and the Knights Hospitaller. Both sides attacked enemy ships, took goods and captured passengers — a bitter reality of that age.

Status of the report: Narrated in the books of history — chiefly the Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa (Hayreddin's memoir written by Seyyid Murâdî), the Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr of Kâtib Çelebi, and Spanish sources such as Diego de Haedo — without a chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. The story is accepted as history, but it cannot be used as proof in the way an authentic hadith can.

REFERENCES:

Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa (Seyyid Murâdî); Kâtib Çelebi, Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr.

LESSONS

A gifted person needs a patron who sees his potential. A leader's help can change the course of a life.

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THE FALL OF GRANADA AND THE SUFFERING OF THE ANDALUSIAN MUSLIMS

HISTORICAL NOTE: AFTER 1492

When Granada surrendered in 1492, the treaty of surrender promised the Muslims freedom of religion. Yet within a few years the treaty was broken. From 1499 the Muslims of Granada were forced to convert to Christianity, Arabic books were burned, and their revolts were crushed. By 1502 the Muslims of Castile were given the choice of converting or leaving the land.

Many were forced to become Christians outwardly while practising Islam in secret; they were later known as ***Moriscos***. Many wished to emigrate to North Africa, but the sea crossing was dangerous and required ships they did not have.

Status of the report: These events are established in Spanish and Islamic historical sources.

REFERENCES:

Studies of the history of al-Andalus; L. P. Harvey, Muslims in Spain 1500 to 1614.

The Qur'an calls the Muslims to help the weak and the oppressed:

SURAH AN-NISA' 4:75

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَٰتِلُونَ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ وَٱلْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ ٱلرِّجَالِ وَٱلنِّسَآءِ وَٱلْوِلْدَٰنِ ٱلَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَآ أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَٰذِهِ ٱلْقَرْيَةِ ٱلظَّالِمِ أَهْلُهَا وَٱجْعَل لَّنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ وَلِيًّا وَٱجْعَل لَّنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ نَصِيرًا ﴿٧٥﴾

And what is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of Allāh and [for] the oppressed among men, women, and children who say, "Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people and appoint for us from Yourself a protector and appoint for us from Yourself a helper"?

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/4:75

LESSONS

The suffering of our brothers in faith is a shared responsibility. The Muslims of al-Andalus waited for someone willing to answer their call.

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BABA ORUÇ: RESCUER OF THE ANDALUSIAN MUSLIMS

HISTORICAL NOTE: SHIPS OF RESCUE

According to the Ottoman sources, Oruç and his brothers made many voyages to the coast of Spain to carry Andalusian Muslims who wished to emigrate, bringing them to the shores of North Africa such as Tunisia and Algeria. That is why they called him ***Baba Oruç***, "Father Oruç".

The Gazavat speaks of tens of thousands rescued over several years, but the exact number cannot be confirmed. Many descendants of the Andalusian Muslims in Algeria and Tunisia today remember this story. Their arrival revived learning, agriculture and crafts in the cities of North Africa.

Status of the report: Oruç's role in carrying the Andalusian Muslims is narrated in Ottoman sources; the actual numbers are uncertain.

REFERENCES:
Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa (Seyyid Murâdî); Kâtib Çelebi, Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ made helping a fellow Muslim a cause of Allah's help:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 2442

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ بُكَيْرٍ، حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ، عَنْ عُقَيْلٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، أَنَّ سَالِمًا، أَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ عُمَرَ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ أَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ " الْمُسْلِمُ أَخُو الْمُسْلِمِ، لاَ يَظْلِمُهُ وَلاَ يُسْلِمُهُ، وَمَنْ كَانَ فِي حَاجَةِ أَخِيهِ كَانَ اللَّهُ فِي حَاجَتِهِ، وَمَنْ فَرَّجَ عَنْ مُسْلِمٍ كُرْبَةً فَرَّجَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرُبَاتِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ، وَمَنْ سَتَرَ مُسْلِمًا سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ".

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn 'Umar narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim; he does not wrong him nor abandon him (to the enemy).*** Whoever fulfils the need of his brother, Allah will fulfil his need; whoever relieves a Muslim of a hardship, Allah will relieve him of a hardship on the Day of Resurrection; and whoever covers a Muslim's fault, Allah will cover his fault on the Day of Resurrection."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Yahya ibn Bukayr, from Al-Layth ibn Sa'd, from 'Uqayl ibn Khalid, from Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, from Salim ibn 'Abdullah, from 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Oppressions, Hadith No. 2442.

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:2442

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LESSONS

The noblest heroism is saving the lives and faith of others. Oruç's ships carried hope, not only passengers.

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A BASE IN TUNIS AND DJERBA

HISTORICAL NOTE: AN AGREEMENT WITH THE HAFSID SULTAN

Around 1504, Oruç asked permission from ***the Hafsid Sultan of Tunis***, Abu ‘Abdallah Muhammad, to use the port of La Goulette as a base, on condition that part of the spoils be given to the sultan. Later he was based on the island of ***Djerba*** in southern Tunisia.

In 1504, according to Italian and Spanish sources, Oruç captured two war galleys belonging to Pope Julius II near Elba — an event that shook Europe and made his name famous.

Status of the report: Narrated in the books of history — chiefly the Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa (Hayreddin’s memoir written by Seyyid Murâdî), the Tuhfetü’l-Kibâr of Kâtib Çelebi, and Spanish sources such as Diego de Haedo — without a chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. The story is accepted as history, but it cannot be used as proof in the way an authentic hadith can.

REFERENCES:

Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa (Seyyid Murâdî); Diego de Haedo, History of Algiers.

LESSONS

Cooperation among Muslims, even across peoples and states, strengthens their ranks against a common enemy.

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JIHAD AT SEA

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ told of the merit of the first Muslim army to fight at sea:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 2924

حَدَّثَنِي إِسْحَاقُ بْنُ يَزِيدَ الدِّمَشْقِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ حَمْزَةَ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي ثَوْرُ بْنُ يَزِيدَ، عَنْ خَالِدِ بْنِ مَعْدَانَ، أَنَّ عُمَيْرَ بْنَ الأَسْوَدِ الْعَنْسِيَّ، حَدَّثَهُ أَنَّهُ، أَتَى عُبَادَةَ بْنَ الصَّامِتِ وَهْوَ نَازِلٌ فِي سَاحِلِ حِمْصَ، وَهْوَ فِي بِنَاءٍ لَهُ وَمَعَهُ أُمُّ حَرَامٍ، قَالَ عُمَيْرٌ فَحَدَّثَتْنَا أُمُّ حَرَامٍ أَنَّهَا سَمِعَتِ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ " أَوَّلُ جَيْشٍ مِنْ أُمَّتِي يَغْزُونَ الْبَحْرَ قَدْ أَوْجَبُوا ". قَالَتْ أُمُّ حَرَامٍ قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَنَا فِيهِمْ. قَالَ " أَنْتِ فِيهِمْ ". ثُمَّ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم " أَوَّلُ جَيْشٍ مِنْ أُمَّتِي يَغْزُونَ مَدِينَةَ قَيْصَرَ مَغْفُورٌ لَهُمْ ". فَقُلْتُ أَنَا فِيهِمْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. قَالَ " لاَ ".

TRANSLATION:

‘Umayr ibn al-Aswad al-‘Ansi related that he came to ‘Ubadah ibn al-Samit while he was staying on the coast of Hims, and Umm Haram was with him. ‘Umayr said: Umm Haram told us that she heard the Prophet ﷺ say: “The first army of my ummah to campaign by sea has made (Paradise) certain for itself.” Umm Haram said: I said, “O Messenger of Allah, am I among them?” He said: “You are among them.” Then the Prophet ﷺ said: ***“The first army of my ummah to attack the city of Caesar will be forgiven.”*** I said, “Am I among them, O Messenger of Allah?” He said: “No.”

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Ishaq ibn Yazid al-Dimashqi, from Yahya ibn Hamzah, from Thawr ibn Yazid, from Khalid ibn Ma‘dan, from ‘Umayr ibn al-Aswad al-‘Ansi, from Umm Haram bint Milhan رضى الله عنها.

REFERENCE: Imam al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Jihad and Expeditions, Hadith No. 2924.

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:2924

SOURCE NOTE: BETWEEN JIHAD AND PIRACY

European sources call Oruç and his brothers “pirates”. Modern historians more accurately call them ***corsairs***, that is, seamen authorised by a state to attack the ships of its enemies. At that time both sides — Muslim and Christian — did the same: the Knights of Malta, Spain and Genoa also attacked Muslim ships and sold their passengers as slaves.

It must be stated honestly that these corsair operations also took property and captives, including civilians, some of whom were sold as slaves. This was the reality of warfare at the time and cannot be made beautiful. What distinguishes true jihad is intention, the ethics of war and obedience to the Shari‘ah — matters that only Allah fully knows.

Status of the report: The hadith of Umm Haram is authentic; the assessment of corsair operations is a matter of historical study.

REFERENCES:

Studies of Mediterranean history; Ibn Hajar, Fath al-Bari.

LESSONS

The sea is also a field of struggle. But struggle is valuable before Allah only when its intention and its methods follow the Shari‘ah.

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THE ARM LOST AT BOUGIE

HISTORICAL NOTE: AUGUST 1512

In 1510 Spain captured the city of ***Bougie*** (Béjaïa) on the Algerian coast. In August 1512 the exiled ruler of Bougie asked Oruç for help in driving out the Spanish. In the battle Oruç was gravely wounded by a shot, and one of his arms — according to most sources, ***the left arm*** — had to be amputated.

Tradition later said that he wore an artificial arm of silver, and called him ***Gümüş Kol*** ("Silver Arm"). The story of the silver arm is famous but cannot be confirmed in contemporary sources. What is certain is that losing an arm did not stop his struggle: he went on leading armies and fleets to the end of his life.

Status of the report: The loss of his arm at Bougie is established in several sources; the story of the silver arm is a tradition.

REFERENCES:
Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa (Seyyid Murâdî); Diego de Haedo, History of Algiers.

A believer sees misfortune with the eyes of patience:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2999

حَدَّثَنَا هَدَّابُ بْنُ خَالِدٍ الأَزْدِيُّ، وَشَيْبَانُ بْنُ فَرُّوخَ، جَمِيعًا عَنْ سُلَيْمَانَ بْنِ الْمُغِيرَةِ، - وَاللَّفْظُ لِشَيْبَانَ - حَدَّثَنَا سُلَيْمَانُ، حَدَّثَنَا ثَابِتٌ، عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ أَبِي لَيْلَى، عَنْ صُهَيْبٍ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم " عَجَبًا لأَمْرِ الْمُؤْمِنِ إِنَّ أَمْرَهُ كُلَّهُ خَيْرٌ وَلَيْسَ ذَاكَ لأَحَدٍ إِلاَّ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ إِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ سَرَّاءُ شَكَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ ضَرَّاءُ صَبَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ " .

TRANSLATION:

Suhayb narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"How wonderful is the affair of the believer! All of his affairs are good for him, and this is for no one except the believer. If something pleasing befalls him, he is grateful, and that is good for him. And if harm befalls him, he is patient, and that is good for him."***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Haddab ibn Khalid al-Azdi and Shayban ibn Farrukh, from Sulayman ibn al-Mughirah, from Thabit al-Bunani, from 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Layla, from Suhayb al-Rumi رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Asceticism and Softening of Hearts, Hadith No. 2999.

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

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2999

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And Allah forbids the believers to weaken:

SURAH ALI 'IMRAN 3:139

وَلَا تَهِنُوا۟ وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا۟ وَأَنتُمُ ٱلْأَعْلَوْنَ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣٩﴾

So do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will be superior if you are [true] believers.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/3:139

LESSONS

A wounded body does not wound the spirit. Oruç lost an arm, but not his resolve.

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JIJEL: WHEAT FOR THE PEOPLE

HISTORICAL NOTE: 1514

In 1514 Oruç and Hızır took the town of ***Jijel*** on the eastern coast of Algeria, then held by the Genoese. Jijel became their first base on the North African mainland.

According to the Gazavat, when the people of Jijel and the surrounding region were struck by famine, Oruç distributed to them, free of charge, the wheat he had seized from enemy ships. This made him greatly loved by the local people, and many joined him.

Status of the report: Narrated in the books of history — chiefly the Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa (Hayreddin's memoir written by Seyyid Murâdî), the Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr of Kâtib Çelebi, and Spanish sources such as Diego de Haedo — without a chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. The story is accepted as history, but it cannot be used as proof in the way an authentic hadith can.

REFERENCES:

Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa (Seyyid Murâdî); Diego de Haedo, History of Algiers.

LESSONS

People's hearts are won by kindness, not by strength alone. Wheat shared out was more effective than a thousand swords.

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THE CALL OF THE PEOPLE OF ALGIERS

HISTORICAL NOTE: 1516

In 1510 Spain built a fortress called ***the Peñón*** on a small island in front of the harbour of ***Algiers***, and forced the people of Algiers to pay tribute. In 1516, after the death of King Ferdinand of Spain, the people of Algiers, led by ***Salim al-Tumi***, asked Oruç for help to drive out the Spanish.

Oruç came with his troops and ships and was welcomed joyfully by the people. He attacked the Peñón but could not take it because his cannon were not strong enough; the fortress was taken only by his brother Hayreddin in 1529.

Status of the report: Narrated in the books of history — chiefly the Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa (Hayreddin's memoir written by Seyyid Murâdî), the Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr of Kâtib Çelebi, and Spanish sources such as Diego de Haedo — without a chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. The story is accepted as history, but it cannot be used as proof in the way an authentic hadith can.

REFERENCES:

Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa (Seyyid Murâdî); Diego de Haedo, History of Algiers.

The believers are brothers, helping one another when called:

SURAH AL-HUJURAT 49:10

إِنَّمَا ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُواْ بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ ۚ وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

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The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers. And fear Allāh that you may receive mercy.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/49:10

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ described this ummah as one body:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 6011

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو نُعَيْمٍ، حَدَّثَنَا زَكَرِيَّاءُ، عَنْ عَامِرٍ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُهُ يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ النُّعْمَانَ بْنَ بَشِيرٍ، يَقُولُ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم " تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي تَرَاحُمِهِمْ وَتَوَادِّهِمْ وَتَعَاطُفِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ الْجَسَدِ إِذَا اشْتَكَى عُضْوًا تَدَاعَى لَهُ سَائِرُ جَسَدِهِ بِالسَّهَرِ وَالْحُمَّى ".

TRANSLATION:

Al-Nu'man ibn Bashir said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"You see the believers, in their mercy, love and kindness towards one another, like a single body: when one limb complains, the rest of the body responds to it with sleeplessness and fever."***

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

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Good Manners, Hadith No. 6011.

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:6011

LESSONS

The call of a brother in faith must not go unanswered. Oruç answered the call of Algiers though he himself was in danger.

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SALIM AL-TUMI: DISPUTED BLOOD

HISTORICAL NOTE: THE DARK SIDE

Soon after Oruç arrived in Algiers, his relations with ***Salim al-Tumi***, the chief of Algiers who had invited him, became strained. According to Spanish sources such as Haedo, Oruç killed Salim al-Tumi — some say he was strangled in his bath — and proclaimed himself ruler of Algiers. The Gazavat, on the other hand, portrays Salim as a traitor in contact with the Spanish.

This story is stated here honestly. Its details come mainly from enemy sources and cannot be fully confirmed. Yet if true, it was a grave mistake: killing a Muslim who had invited him to help.

Status of the report: The death of Salim al-Tumi is narrated in Spanish sources; its details and Oruç's responsibility are disputed.

REFERENCES:

Diego de Haedo, History of Algiers; Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa (Seyyid Murâdî).

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave a stern warning about fighting a Muslim:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 48

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَرْعَرَةَ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، عَنْ زُبَيْدٍ، قَالَ سَأَلْتُ أَبَا وَائِلٍ عَنِ الْمُرْجِئَةِ، فَقَالَ حَدَّثَنِي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ " سِبَابُ الْمُسْلِمِ فُسُوقٌ، وَقِتَالُهُ كُفْرٌ ".

TRANSLATION:

Zubayd said: I asked Abu Wa'il about the Murji'ah, and he said: 'Abdullah (ibn Mas'ud) told me that the Prophet ﷺ said: ***"Insulting a Muslim is wickedness, and fighting him is disbelief."***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Muhammad ibn 'Ar'arah, from Shu'bah ibn al-Hajjaj, from Zubayd ibn al-Harith al-Yami, from Abu Wa'il Shaqiq ibn Salamah, from 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Faith, Hadith No. 48.

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:48

LESSONS

Power often tests people. Acknowledging a hero's mistake is part of honesty in history.

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SULTAN OF ALGIERS AND THE CONQUEST OF TLEMCEN

HISTORICAL NOTE: 1516–1517

As ruler of Algiers, Oruç defeated local rulers allied with Spain, including at ***the Battle of Oued Djer*** near Blida, and took towns such as ***Ténès***, Médéa and Miliana. In 1517 the people of ***Tlemcen*** — capital of the Zayyanid kingdom — asked for his help against their sultan, Abu Hammu, an ally of Spain.

Oruç took Tlemcen, and Abu Hammu fled to Spanish-held Oran. Oruç thus controlled a wide territory in western and central Algeria. But his position in Tlemcen was far from the sea and surrounded by enemies.

Status of the report: Narrated in the books of history — chiefly the Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa (Hayreddin's memoir written by Seyyid Murâdî), the Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr of Kâtib Çelebi, and Spanish sources such as Diego de Haedo — without a chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. The story is accepted as history, but it cannot be used as proof in the way an authentic hadith can.

REFERENCES:

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LESSONS

Rapid success can bring danger if the line of retreat is not guarded. Wisdom lies not only in attack but also in defence.

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MARTYRDOM ON THE RIVERBANK (1518)

HISTORICAL NOTE: THE END OF A HERO

In 1518 a Spanish army from Oran, led by Martín de Argote and allied with Abu Hammu, besieged Tlemcen. After a long siege, Oruç left the city with a small part of his army to head for Algiers, but was pursued by the Spanish. He fell as a martyr in battle on a riverbank near Ain Temouchent, together with his elder brother İshak and many of his followers.

Haedo relates that Oruç scattered gold and silver along the road to delay the enemy, but the Spanish did not stop to gather it. The Gazavat says that Oruç turned back to defend the soldiers of Algiers and Tlemcen left behind, and fell with them. Both stories are hard to confirm. In 2018 a memorial was built at the place where he fell.

Status of the report: His martyrdom in 1518 is established; the details of his last moments differ between sources.

REFERENCES:

Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa (Seyyid Murâdî); Diego de Haedo, History of Algiers.

LESSONS

A leader willing to turn back for his followers has taught the true meaning of leadership.

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ORUÇ'S LEGACY: HAYREDDIN AND ALGERIA

HISTORICAL NOTE: 1519 AND AFTER

After Oruç's martyrdom, his brother ***Hızır***, known as ***Hayreddin Barbarossa***, took over the leadership in Algiers. In 1519 Hayreddin placed Algiers under Sultan ***Selim I***, and Algeria became part of the Ottoman state. Hayreddin later became grand admiral of the Ottoman fleet.

Algeria remained under Ottoman sovereignty for more than three centuries, until the French occupation of 1830. Modern Turkish naval ships are named after Oruç Reis, and his name is still remembered in Algeria and Turkey as a symbol of the brotherhood of the two peoples.

Status of the report: Narrated in the books of history — chiefly the Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa (Hayreddin's memoir written by Seyyid Murâdî), the Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr of Kâtib Çelebi, and Spanish sources such as Diego de Haedo — without a chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. The story is accepted as history, but it cannot be used as proof in the way an authentic hadith can.

REFERENCES:

Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa (Seyyid Murâdî); Kâtib Çelebi, Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr.

LESSONS

A hero may fall, but his work is carried on by those he trained. The true legacy is a generation that continues the struggle.

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STORIES AND FIGURES THAT NEED ASSESSMENT

SOURCE NOTE: BETWEEN FACT AND LEGEND

Some matters in Oruç's story need careful assessment. ***First***, the main Ottoman source, the Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa, was written to praise the Barbarossa family, while Spanish sources such as Haedo were written by their enemies; both must be read with care. ***Second***, the number of Andalusian Muslims rescued cannot be confirmed. ***Third***, the story of the silver arm is a tradition.

Fourth, the story of the gold scattered during the retreat and the story of Oruç turning back for his soldiers come from different sources and are hard to confirm. ***Fifth***, the label "pirate" given by European sources is unfair because it ignores the same actions by the Christian side, but corsair operations also involved slavery that cannot be made beautiful. What is established: his capture by the Knights of Rhodes, his role in helping the Andalusian Muslims, the loss of his arm at Bougie, the freeing of Algiers and Tlemcen, and his martyrdom in 1518.

Status of the report: The main events are established; many details are traditions or disputed.

REFERENCES:

A comparison of the Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa, Kâtib Çelebi, Haedo and modern historical research.

LESSONS

Reading history from the sources of both friend and foe helps us see a fairer picture.

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SOURCES OF THE STORIES OF ORUÇ

This table summarises the source and grade of each story so that the reader can distinguish the authentic from the merely famous.

STORY	SOURCE	GRADE
The family of Yakup on Midilli	Gazavat; Kâtib Çelebi	History
Captured by the Knights of Rhodes	Gazavat	History; manner of release varies
Free the captive	Sahih al-Bukhari 3046	Authentic
Rescuing the Andalusian Muslims	Gazavat; Kâtib Çelebi	History; numbers uncertain
A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim	Sahih al-Bukhari 2442	Authentic
The first army at sea	Sahih al-Bukhari 2924	Authentic
Loss of an arm at Bougie (1512)	Gazavat; Haedo	Established
The silver arm	Tradition	Uncertain
All the believer's affairs are good	Sahih Muslim 2999	Authentic
Wheat for the people of Jijel	Gazavat	History
The call of the people of Algiers (1516)	Gazavat; Haedo	Established
The ummah like one body	Sahih al-Bukhari 6011	Authentic
The death of Salim al-Tumi	Haedo; Gazavat	Disputed
Fighting a Muslim is disbelief	Sahih al-Bukhari 48	Authentic
Conquest of Tlemcen (1517)	Gazavat; Haedo	Established
The scattered gold	Haedo	Uncertain
Martyrdom in 1518	Various sources	Established

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PEOPLE, PLACES AND TIMELINE

PERSON	ROLE
Yakup Ağa	Oruç's father; a cavalryman on Midilli
İlyas	Oruç's brother; killed in the attack of the Knights of Rhodes
Hızır (Hayreddin Barbarossa)	Oruç's brother; his successor in Algiers
İshak	Oruç's elder brother; fell with him in 1518
Prince Korkut	Ottoman prince who patronised Oruç
The Hafsid Sultan of Tunis	Allowed Oruç to base himself in Tunis
Salim al-Tumi	Chief of Algiers who invited Oruç
Abu Hammu	Sultan of Tlemcen, ally of Spain
Martín de Argote	Spanish commander from Oran

PLACE	EVENT
Midilli (Lesbos)	Oruç's birthplace
Rhodes	Base of the Knights Hospitaller
al-Andalus (Spain)	Where the Muslims were oppressed after 1492
Djerba and La Goulette	Oruç's bases in Tunisia
Bougie (Béjaïa)	Where Oruç lost his arm (1512)
Jijel	First base in Algeria (1514)
Algiers	Freed in 1516
Tlemcen	Taken in 1517; besieged in 1518

YEAR	EVENT
c. 1474 CE	Birth of Oruç on Midilli
1492 CE	The fall of Granada
c. 1504 CE	Base in Tunis; capture of the Pope's galleys
1512 CE	Loss of an arm at Bougie
1514 CE	Taking of Jijel
1516 CE	Freeing of Algiers
1517 CE	Conquest of Tlemcen
1518 CE	Martyrdom of Oruç
1519 CE	Algiers becomes an Ottoman province

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ORUÇ REIS

This chapter answers questions often asked about Oruç Reis. The answers are brief; the details are in the earlier chapters.

1. WHO WAS ORUÇ REIS?

An Ottoman sailor from Midilli, elder brother of Hayreddin Barbarossa, who became ruler of Algiers and fell as a martyr in 1518.

2. WHY WAS HE CALLED BABA ORUÇ?

Because he helped rescue many Andalusian Muslims to North Africa.

3. WHAT DOES BARBAROSSA MEAN?

“Red Beard”, a title given by Europeans.

4. WAS HE REALLY ONCE A CAPTIVE?

Yes, he was captured by the Knights Hospitaller of Rhodes and made a galley slave.

5. HOW DID HE LOSE HIS ARM?

He was shot while attacking Bougie in 1512.

6. DID HE REALLY WEAR A SILVER ARM?

It is a famous tradition, but it cannot be confirmed.

7. WAS HE A PIRATE?

He was a corsair fighting for a Muslim state; both sides did the same at the time, though these operations also involved slavery.

8. HOW DID HE COME TO ALGIERS?

The people of Algiers asked for his help against Spain in 1516.

9. WHAT HAPPENED TO SALIM AL-TUMI?

According to Spanish sources he was killed by Oruç; the details are disputed.

10. WHEN WAS HE MARTYRED?

In 1518, while withdrawing from Tlemcen.

11. WHO SUCCEEDED HIM?

His brother, Hayreddin Barbarossa.

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12. WHAT IS THE GREATEST LESSON OF HIS STORY?

Misfortune does not prevent a person from helping the weak among the Muslims.

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

Oruç's story is that of a sailor who lost a brother, his freedom and an arm, yet kept struggling to rescue the weak among the Muslims and free the shores of North Africa — though his story also contains matters that must be honestly assessed.

LESSON	FROM ORUÇ'S STORY
Freeing captives	The experience at Rhodes; Sahih al-Bukhari 3046
Helping the oppressed	The Andalusian Muslims; An-Nisa' 4:75; Sahih al-Bukhari 2442
Intention in struggle	Jihad at sea; Sahih al-Bukhari 2924
Patience without weakness	The lost arm; Ali 'Imran 3:139; Sahih Muslim 2999
Winning people's hearts	Wheat for Jijel
Answering a brother's call	Algiers; Al-Hujurat 49:10; Sahih al-Bukhari 6011
The sanctity of Muslim blood	Salim al-Tumi; Sahih al-Bukhari 48
Self-sacrificing leadership	Martyrdom in 1518

May we follow Oruç in his zeal to help our brothers in faith and his steadfastness in misfortune, while learning from the matters in his story that need assessment.

In sha' Allah, the Heroes of Islam series will continue with the story of his brother, Hayreddin Barbarossa, grand admiral of the Ottomans.

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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."

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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."

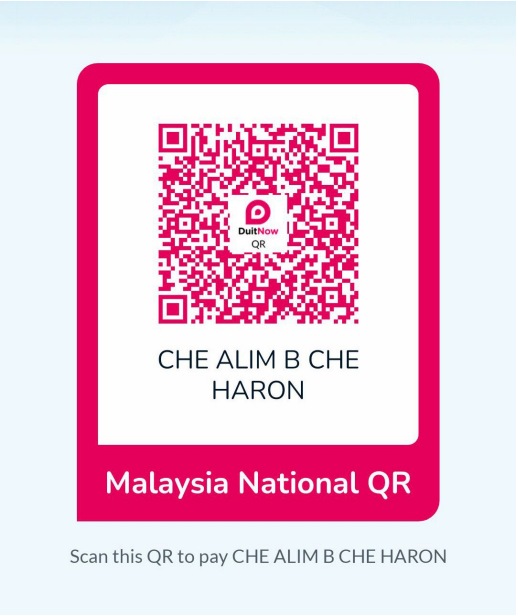
CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

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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