EXPLORING AL-QUR'AN & SCIENCE

THE SKIN THAT HOLDS THE PAIN

The Secret of the Sense of Pain in the Layers of the Skin



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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كُلَّمَا نَضِجَتْ جُلُودُهُم بَدَّلْنَٰهُمْ جُلُودًا غَيْرَهَا لِيَذُوقُوا۟ ٱلْعَذَابَ

"…Every time their skins are roasted through We will replace them with other skins so they may taste the punishment…"

SURAH AN-NISA' 4:56

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All praise belongs to Allah, who wrapped the human body in skin, making it a garment, a shield and a window of the senses; who made pain a warning in this world and an expiation of sins for the believer. Blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who taught his community to place a hand on the place of pain and seek refuge in Allah, and upon his family and Companions.

This eBook is dedicated especially 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**.

Whenever our skin feels pain, heat or cold, may we remember His words: ***"…the skins shiver therefrom of those who fear their Lord; then their skins and their hearts relax at the remembrance of Allah…"*** (39:23) — and may this eBook become *'ilmun yuntafa'u bih*, knowledge that is benefited from.

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ABOUT THE COVER OF THIS EBOOK

The cover of this eBook shows ***a morning scene inside a wooden village house***. Soft light enters through a wooden window; in the background are ***a prayer mat*** and ***a copy of the Qur'an open on a wooden rehal***.

In the centre of the image, ***the wrinkled hand of a grandfather*** gently holds ***the palm of a grandchild***. Beneath the surface of the skin of both hands are ***fine golden lines***, branching like ***nerve fibres*** towards the fingertips — symbolising the sense of feeling hidden within the skin. A few ***dewdrops*** glisten on the grandchild's palm. The image symbolises the theme of this eBook: ***the skin is a garment that feels*** — feeling the gentleness of love, and also feeling pain.

Note: This image is ***a symbolic illustration*** only. ***Two gold lines*** at the bottom frame the author's name.

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Colour guide: green box = verse of Al-Qur'an; gold box = Hadith; blue box = scientific finding; blue table = comparison. Narrator names underlined in blue can be clicked to open the narrator's page on sunnah.com.

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THE SKIN THAT HOLDS THE PAIN

Have you ever touched a hot pot by accident? Before we even have time to think, the hand has already pulled away. A moment later the stinging is felt. All of this happens because of the ***skin*** — the thin layer that wraps the whole body — which is filled with ***nerve endings*** that are always on watch, sending warning signals to the brain. Without that pain, we might not realise that our hand was being burnt.

The Qur'an mentions the skin in a deeply moving verse about the punishment of Hell: ***"Every time their skins are roasted through We will replace them with other skins so they may taste the punishment"*** (4:56). Elsewhere, the skin is said to ***bear witness*** on the Day of Judgement (41:20–22), and to ***shiver and then soften*** on hearing the verses of Allah (39:23).

Modern science, for its part, has found that the skin contains ***receptors for pain, heat and cold***, and the discovery of receptors for temperature and touch was awarded the ***2021 Nobel Prize***. Doctors also know that a very deep burn can ***destroy the nerves*** so that the area becomes numb. This eBook explores the verses, authentic Hadith and scientific findings on the skin and pain — honestly, distinguishing between solid harmony and claims that need checking.

THE SKIN IN NUMBERS

Before exploring the verses of the Qur'an, here are some brief facts that will be explained in this eBook, with their sources:

FACT	FIGURES AND SOURCES
Surface area of an adult's skin	About ***1.5 to 2 square metres*** (InformedHealth.org, IQWiG).
Weight of the skin	About ***3.5 to 10 kg*** — roughly ***one seventh*** of body weight; the largest and heaviest organ (IQWiG).
Time for a new epidermal cell to reach the surface	About ***four weeks*** (IQWiG).
Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2021	David Julius and Ardem Patapoutian — discovery of ***receptors for temperature and touch*** (Nobel Prize).
Third-degree burns	Destroy ***the full thickness of skin with its nerve supply (numbness)*** (MedlinePlus).
Deaths from fire-related burns	Over ***195,000*** a year worldwide (WHO).

Note: The translation of the Qur'anic verses in this eBook is that of Sahih International. The grade of each Hadith is stated in the Hadith box, with a link to sunnah.com. Every scientific finding is accompanied by a link to its original source. The health information in this eBook is not a substitute for a doctor's advice.

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THE SKIN THAT IS REPLACED

This chapter discusses the core verse of this eBook, Surah An-Nisa' 4:56, together with other verses that mention the skin and fire.

SURAH AN-NISA' 4:56

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ بِـَٔايَٰتِنَا سَوۡفَ نُصۡلِيهِمۡ نَارٗا كُلَّمَا نَضِجَتۡ جُلُودُهُم
بَدَّلۡنَٰهُمۡ جُلُودًا غَيۡرَهَا لِيَذُوقُواْ ٱلۡعَذَابَۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمٗا ٥٦

Indeed, those who disbelieve in Our verses - We will drive them into a Fire. Every time their skins are roasted through We will replace them with other skins so they may taste the punishment. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted in Might and Wise.

Translation: Sahih International — 4:56

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 4:56 — "SO THEY MAY TASTE THE PUNISHMENT"

This verse describes the fate of those who ***disbelieve in the verses of Allah***. They are put into the Fire; ***every time their skins are roasted through*** (*kullamā nadhijat julūduhum*), ***Allah replaces them with other skins*** (*baddalnāhum julūdan ghairahā*), ***so that they continue to taste the punishment*** (*liyażūqul-'ażāb*). Ibn Kathir explains that this replacement of the skin happens ***again and again***, so that the punishment does not cease. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 4:56

Notice the phrase ***"so they may taste"***. The verse links ***skin*** with ***feeling***. A skin that is completely burnt no longer functions; so it is replaced so that ***the feeling returns***. The verse ends with two names of Allah: ***Al-'Aziz*** (the Exalted in Might) and ***Al-Hakim*** (the Wise) — the punishment arises from power, and is placed where it belongs with wisdom.

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A QUESTION OF THE SCHOLARS — WHY IS THE NEW SKIN PUNISHED?

Some people ask: if the skin is new, why is it punished for sins committed by the old skin? The scholars of tafsir, among them al-Qurtubi, discussed this question and explained that the one who truly feels the punishment is ***the human self*** (*an-nafs*), while the skin is only ***an instrument*** of feeling. The skin is replaced so that the instrument of feeling works again; the one who bears the pain is still the sinner. Tafsir al-Qurtubi 4:56

This explanation is very important in understanding the verse: the skin ***is not the guilty party***; it is in fact ***a witness*** that will speak against its owner (see Chapter 2).

OTHER VERSES ON THE SKIN AND FIRE

SURAH AL-HAJJ 22:19–20

۞ هَٰذَانِ خَصۡمَانِ ٱخۡتَصَمُواْ فِي رَبِّهِمۡۖ فَٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ قُطِّعَتۡ لَهُمۡ ثِيَابٞ
مِّن نَّارٖ يُصَبُّ مِن فَوۡقِ رُءُوسِهِمُ ٱلۡحَمِيمُ ١٩

These are two adversaries who have disputed over their Lord. But those who disbelieved will have cut out for them garments of fire. Poured upon their heads will be scalding water.

يُصۡهَرُ بِهِۦ مَا فِي بُطُونِهِمۡ وَٱلۡجُلُودُ ٢٠

By which is melted that within their bellies and [their] skins.

Translation: Sahih International — 22:19-20

SURAH AL-MUDDATHTHIR 74:28–29

لَا تُبۡقِي وَلَا تَذَرُ ٢٨

It lets nothing remain and leaves nothing [unburned].

لَوَّاحَةٞ لِّلۡبَشَرِ ٢٩

Blackening the skins.

Translation: Sahih International — 74:28-29

Verse 22:20 mentions scalding water that ***melts what is in their bellies and their skins***. Verse 74:29 describes the Fire of Saqar as ***//lawwāhatun lil-basyar//*** — that which ***burns and blackens the skin*** of human beings. (The word *basyar* in this verse is understood by many commentators to mean the skin.)

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The skin is mentioned repeatedly because it is the part of the body that ***first and most widely*** receives pain.

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SURAH AL-MA'ARIJ 70:15–16

كَلَّآ ۖ إِنَّهَا لَظَىٰ ﴿١٥﴾

No! Indeed, it is the Flame [of Hell].

نَزَّاعَةً لِّلشَّوَىٰ ﴿١٦﴾

A remover of exteriors.

Translation: Sahih International — 70:15-16

COMMENTARY ON VERSES 70:15–16

The Fire of Lazā is described as ***//nazzā'atan lisy-syawā//*** — that which ***strips away the scalp*** and the limbs of the body. Ibn Kathir cites various interpretations of the early scholars on *syawā*, among them the skin of the head and the skin of the limbs. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 70:16

THE SKIN IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE QUR'AN

The Qur'an uses several words for the skin. The most frequent is ***//jild//*** (plural: ***//julūd//***), as in 4:56, 41:20 and 39:23. The Qur'an also uses the word ***//basyar//***, which usually means ***human being***. Some Arabic linguists explain that *basyarah* means ***the surface of the skin***, and that human beings are called *basyar* because of ***their visible, exposed skin***, unlike animals whose skin is covered with fur, scales or a hard hide.

If this linguistic explanation is taken into account, it adds a beautiful reflection: ***human beings are known by their skin***. The skin is the most exposed part of the body — the first to receive touch, heat, cold and pain. So it is no wonder that the Qur'an chose the skin as ***an instrument of feeling***, ***a witness*** and ***a mirror of faith***.

WHY "EVERY TIME"?

The expression ***//kullamā//*** ("every time") in 4:56 indicates ***continuous repetition***. It is not once, but every time that skin is burnt. This expression teaches that the punishment of the Hereafter is not like the pain of this world: in this world, unbearable pain can end in fainting or death; in the Hereafter, ***there is no death to end it*** (see also 20:74 and 87:13). This is why this warning comes together with a call to faith and repentance while we are still in this world.

REFLECTION — A WARNING FULL OF MERCY

These verses are not meant to frighten without purpose. They are ***a warning born of mercy***: Allah tells us about that punishment ***before*** it happens, while the door of repentance is still open. Just as pain in the skin warns us to pull our hand away from the fire of this world, these verses warn us to ***withdraw ourselves from the Fire of the Hereafter***.

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THE SKIN THAT BEARS WITNESS

The skin is not merely an instrument of feeling. The Qur'an informs us that on the Day of Judgement, the skin will ***speak*** and ***bear witness*** to the deeds of its owner.

SURAH FUSSILAT 41:19–22

وَيَوْمَ يُحْشَرُ أَعْدَآءُ ٱللَّهِ إِلَى ٱلنَّارِ فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

And [mention, O Muhammad], the Day when the enemies of Allah will be gathered to the Fire while they are [driven] assembled in rows.

حَتَّىٰٓ إِذَا مَا جَآءُوهَا شَهِدَ عَلَيْهِمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَأَبْصَٰرُهُمْ وَجُلُودُهُم بِمَا كَانُوا۟ يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

Until, when they reach it, their hearing and their eyes and their skins will testify against them of what they used to do.

وَقَالُوا۟ لِجُلُودِهِمْ لِمَ شَهِدتُّمْ عَلَيْنَا ۖ قَالُوٓا۟ أَنطَقَنَا ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِىٓ أَنطَقَ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ وَهُوَ خَلَقَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

And they will say to their skins, "Why have you testified against us?" They will say, "We were made to speak by Allah, who has made everything speak; and He created you the first time, and to Him you are returned."

وَمَا كُنتُمْ تَسْتَتِرُونَ أَن يَشْهَدَ عَلَيْكُمْ سَمْعُكُمْ وَلَآ أَبْصَٰرُكُمْ وَلَا جُلُودُكُمْ وَلَٰكِن ظَنَنتُمْ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يَعْلَمُ كَثِيرًا مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

And you were not covering yourselves, lest your hearing testify against you or your sight or your skins, but you assumed that Allah does not know much of what you do.

Translation: Sahih International — 41:19-22

COMMENTARY ON VERSES 41:19–22 — "WHY HAVE YOU TESTIFIED AGAINST US?"

When the enemies of Allah are brought to the Fire, ***their hearing, their sight and their skins*** testify against them about what they used to do. They say to their skins: ***"Why have you testified against us?"*** The skins answer: ***"We were made to speak by Allah, who has made everything speak."*** Tafsir Ibn Kathir 41:21

Verse 41:22 reveals a profound truth: people hide when committing sins ***not because they fear that their skin will testify***, but because ***they assume that Allah does not know*** much of what they do. Ibn Kathir

cites the Hadith of Ibn Mas'ud رضى الله عنه in Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim on the occasion of this verse's revelation: three men were talking beside the Ka'bah, and one of them asked whether Allah hears their conversation.

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SURAH YA-SIN 36:65

ٱلْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَىٰٓ أَفْوَٰهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَآ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ أَرْجُلُهُم بِمَا كَانُوا۟ يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

That Day, We will seal over their mouths, and their hands will speak to Us, and their feet will testify about what they used to earn.

Translation: Sahih International — 36:65

SURAH AN-NUR 24:24

يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلْسِنَتُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُم بِمَا كَانُوا۟ يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

On a Day when their tongues, their hands and their feet will bear witness against them as to what they used to do.

Translation: Sahih International — 24:24

COMMENTARY ON VERSES 36:65 AND 24:24 — MOUTHS SEALED, LIMBS SPEAKING

On that Day, ***mouths are sealed*** (*nakhtimu 'alā afwāhihim*), then ***the hands speak*** and ***the feet bear witness***. Verse 24:24 mentions ***the tongues, hands and feet*** bearing witness against their owners. This picture is explained in detail in the Hadith of Anas bin Malik رضى الله عنه in Sahih Muslim (the First Hadith in Chapter 5). Tafsir Ibn Kathir 36:65

REFLECTION — PREPARING OUR WITNESSES

If our skin, hands and feet will speak on the Day of Judgement, then every day is an opportunity to prepare them to speak well. A hand that gives charity, feet that walk to the mosque, skin washed in wudu' five times a day — these are witnesses being prepared for a good testimony. The question is not whether our limbs will speak, but ***what they will say***.

The sinner in the Hadith of Anas (Muslim 2969) cursed his own limbs for testifying against him. The believer, by contrast, hopes that his limbs will testify in his favour. Between these two outcomes lies the life we are living now, one deed at a time.

REFLECTION — A WITNESS THAT IS ALWAYS WITH US

The witness closest to us is not a camera or a neighbour, but ***our own skin***. It is with us in every place, touches everything we touch, and ***records*** every deed. Whoever realises this truth will feel ashamed to sin even when alone — because he is never truly alone.

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THE SKIN THAT SHIVERS AND SOFTENS

The skin not only feels pain and bears witness; it also ***responds to faith***.

SURAH AZ-ZUMAR 39:23

ٱللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحۡسَنَ ٱلۡحَدِيثِ كِتَٰبٗا مُّتَشَٰبِهٗا مَّثَانِيَ تَقۡشَعِرُّ مِنۡهُ جُلُودُ ٱلَّذِينَ
يَخۡشَوۡنَ رَبَّهُمۡ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمۡ وَقُلُوبُهُمۡ إِلَىٰ ذِكۡرِ ٱللَّهِۚ ذَٰلِكَ هُدَى ٱللَّهِ
يَهۡدِي بِهِۦ مَن يَشَآءُۚ وَمَن يُضۡلِلِ ٱللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُۥ مِنۡ هَادٍ ٢٣

Allah has sent down the best statement: a consistent Book wherein is reiteration. The skins shiver therefrom of those who fear their Lord; then their skins and their hearts relax at the remembrance of Allah. That is the guidance of Allah by which He guides whom He wills. And one whom Allah leaves astray - for him there is no guide.

Translation: Sahih International — 39:23

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 39:23 — SHIVERING, THEN SOFTENING

Allah has sent down ***the best statement*** — the Qur'an — at which ***the skins of those who fear their Lord shiver*** (*taqsya'irru minhu julūd*); ***then their skins and their hearts soften*** to the remembrance of Allah. Ibn Kathir explains that this is the quality of the righteous: when they hear verses of ***punishment and warning***, their skins tremble with fear; when they hear verses of ***mercy and hope***, their hearts and skins become calm and soft. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 39:23

Ibn Kathir also cites the words of ***Qatadah*** that this is the quality of the friends of Allah: ***their skins shiver, their eyes weep, and their hearts find rest*** in the remembrance of Allah — they do not lose their senses or faint; such a state is not their quality. The believers are moved by the speech of Allah ***with complete good manners***.

GOOSEBUMPS — A RESPONSE OF THE BODY

Every one of us has experienced ***goosebumps*** on hearing something deeply moving, or when feeling fear and awe. This response takes place in the ***skin***: tiny muscles at the base of the hairs tighten automatically. Verse 39:23 describes this very human experience — but connects it to ***hearing the words of Allah***.

REFLECTION — FEAR AND HOPE TOGETHER

Verse 39:23 holds fear and hope side by side: first the skin shivers, then it softens. A believer who only fears may fall into despair; a believer who only hopes may grow careless. The Qur'an trains the heart to move between the two, like a bird flying with two wings. When we read the verses of warning, we let our

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skin tremble; when we read the verses of mercy, we let our hearts find rest. Both responses are signs of a living heart.

REFLECTION — WHEN DID OUR SKIN LAST SHIVER?

This verse becomes a measure for ourselves: ***when was the last time our skin shivered while reading or listening to the Qur'an?*** If the heart has become so hard that even the verses of punishment no longer stir it, that is a sign that needs treating — by understanding the meaning, reading slowly, and reflecting.

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THE SKIN AS A BLESSING AND A TRUST

Before it becomes an instrument of punishment or a witness in the Hereafter, the skin is ***a great blessing*** in this world.

SURAH AL-MU'MINUN 23:14

ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا ٱلنُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا ٱلْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا ٱلْمُضْغَةَ عِظَٰمًا
فَكَسَوْنَا ٱلْعِظَٰمَ لَحْمًا ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَٰهُ خَلْقًا ءَاخَرَ ۚ فَتَبَارَكَ ٱللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ ٱلْخَٰلِقِينَ

١٤

Then We made the sperm-drop into a clinging clot, and We made the clot into a lump [of flesh], and We made [from] the lump, bones, and We covered the bones with flesh; then We developed him into another creation. So blessed is Allah, the best of creators.

Translation: Sahih International — 23:14

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 23:14 — BONES CLOTHED WITH FLESH

This verse describes the stages of human creation: from *nutfah*, to *'alaqah*, to *mudhghah*, then ***bones***, then ***the bones clothed with flesh***, after which Allah produces ***another creation***. The verse ends with praise: ***"So blessed is Allah, the best of creators."*** The skin is the final layer that completes that clothing — a natural garment that Allah gives to every human being. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 23:14

SURAH AT-TIN 95:4

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ فِىٓ أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ ٤

We have certainly created man in the best of stature.

Translation: Sahih International — 95:4

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 95:4 — THE BEST OF STATURE

Allah created the human being in ***the best of stature*** (*ahsani taqwīm*). The skin is part of that perfection: it ***protects*** the internal organs, ***regulates*** body temperature, ***blocks*** germs, and ***feels*** the world around it. Without skin, even the most perfect body could not survive.

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SURAH AN-NAHL 16:80

وَٱللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنۢ بُيُوتِكُمۡ سَكَنٗا وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّن جُلُودِ ٱلۡأَنۡعَٰمِ
بُيُوتٗا تَسۡتَخِفُّونَهَا يَوۡمَ ظَعۡنِكُمۡ وَيَوۡمَ إِقَامَتِكُمۡ وَمِنۡ أَصۡوَافِهَا وَأَوۡبَارِهَا
وَأَشۡعَارِهَآ أَثَٰثٗا وَمَتَٰعًا إِلَىٰ حِينٖ ٨٠

And Allah has made for you from your homes a place of rest and made for you from the hides of the animals tents which you find light on your day of travel and your day of encampment; and from their wool, fur and hair is furnishing and enjoyment for a time.

Translation: Sahih International — 16:80

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 16:80 — THE HIDES OF GRAZING LIVESTOCK

Allah reminds us of the blessing of ***the hides of grazing livestock*** made into ***tents*** — light to carry when travelling and when encamped — and of their ***wool and hair*** made into furnishings and adornment. Ibn Kathir explains that these are among the blessings Allah mentions to His servants so that they may be grateful. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 16:80

This verse shows that ***skin*** — whether our own skin or the hides of animals — is a blessing that protects from ***heat, cold and danger***. So it is deeply meaningful that the Qur'an describes punishment as ***the loss of that protection of the skin***.

REFLECTION — THE GARMENT WE NEVER TAKE OFF

We change our clothes every day, but there is one garment we never take off: our skin. It goes with us into prayer and into the marketplace, into moments of kindness and moments of weakness. It grows with us from infancy, wrinkles with us in old age, and will rise with us on the Day of Resurrection. To think of the skin as a garment given by Allah is to remember that ***the body itself is borrowed*** — and that a borrowed garment should be worn with gratitude and returned in good condition.

REFLECTION — A TRUST THAT WILL BE QUESTIONED

The skin is ***a trust***. It will bear witness to what we touched, where our hands reached, and how we cared for this body. Protecting the skin from harm, not injuring others, and using our hands for good — all of this is part of ***fulfilling that trust***.

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EVIDENCE FROM THE HADITH

This chapter presents ***nine Hadith*** related to the theme of this eBook — ***the testimony of the limbs***, ***pain as an expiation of sins***, ***supplication in pain***, ***the prohibition of torment***, ***the punishment of Hell*** and ***safety from fire***. Each Hadith is shown in full with the Arabic text, the chain of narrators linked to their pages on sunnah.com, a translation and its grade.

HADITH	THEME
Sahih Muslim 2969	Mouths sealed, limbs speaking on the Day of Judgement.
Sahih al-Bukhari 5641	Every pain, even the prick of a thorn, expiates sins.
Sahih al-Bukhari 5648	Sins fall away as a tree sheds its leaves.
Sahih Muslim 2202	Place your hand on the place of pain and supplicate.
Sahih Muslim 2613	Allah will torment those who torment people in this world.
Sahih al-Bukhari 6294	"This fire is your enemy" — put it out when you sleep.
Sahih al-Bukhari 3260	The two breaths of Hell: intense heat and biting cold.
Sahih al-Bukhari 6561	The lightest punishment in Hell.
Sahih Muslim 2807	One dip in the Fire makes one forget every worldly comfort.

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THE FIRST HADITH — THE LIMBS SPEAK

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2969

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ النَّضْرِ بْنِ أَبِي النَّضْرِ، حَدَّثَنِي أَبُو النَّضْرِ، هَاشِمُ بْنُ الْقَاسِمِ حَدَّثَنَا عُبَيْدُ اللَّهِ الأَشْجَعِيُّ، عَنْ سُفْيَانَ الثَّوْرِيِّ، عَنْ عُبَيْدٍ الْمُكْتِبِ، عَنْ فُضَيْلٍ، عَنِ الشَّعْبِيِّ، عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ، قَالَ كُنَّا عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَضَحِكَ فَقَالَ «هَلْ تَدْرُونَ مِمَّ أَضْحَكُ» . قَالَ قُلْنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ . قَالَ «مِنْ مُخَاطَبَةِ الْعَبْدِ رَبَّهُ يَقُولُ يَا رَبِّ أَلَمْ تُجِرْنِي مِنَ الظُّلْمِ قَالَ يَقُولُ بَلَى . قَالَ فَيَقُولُ فَإِنِّي لاَ أُجِيزُ عَلَى نَفْسِي إِلاَّ شَاهِدًا مِنِّي قَالَ فَيَقُولُ كَفَى بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ شَهِيدًا وَبِالْكِرَامِ الْكَاتِبِينَ شُهُودًا - قَالَ - فَيُخْتَمُ عَلَى فِيهِ فَيُقَالُ لأَرْكَانِهِ انْطِقِي . قَالَ فَتَنْطِقُ بِأَعْمَالِهِ - قَالَ - ثُمَّ يُخَلَّى بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْكَلاَمِ - قَالَ - فَيَقُولُ بُعْدًا لَكُنَّ وَسُحْقًا . فَعَنْكُنَّ كُنْتُ أُنَاضِلُ» .

TRANSLATION:

Anas bin Malik رضى الله عنه said: We were with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ when he laughed and said: ***"Do you know why I am laughing?"*** We said: "Allah and His Messenger know best." He said: ***"Because of (the thought of) a servant's conversation with his Lord. He will say: 'O my Lord, have You not guaranteed me protection from injustice?' Allah will say: 'Yes.' He will say: 'Then I will not accept any witness against myself except a witness from myself.'***

Allah will say: 'Your own self is sufficient as a witness against you today, and the noble recording angels as witnesses.' Then his mouth will be sealed, and it will be said to his limbs: 'Speak!' So they will speak of his deeds. Then he will be left free to speak again, and he will say (to his limbs): 'Away with you, and may you be ruined! It was for your sake that I was arguing (in my defence).'"

CHAIN Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Abu Bakr bin al-Nadr bin Abi al-Nadr, from Abu al-Nadr Hashim bin al-Qasim, from 'Ubaidullah al-Ashja'i, from Sufyan al-Thawri, from 'Ubaid al-Mukattib, from Fudail, from al-Sha'bi, from Anas bin Malik رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, The Book of Zuhd and Softening of Hearts, Hadith No. 2969.

GRADE: SAHIH — narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2969

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

First: This Hadith explains verses 36:65 and 41:20–22. The sinner asks for "a witness from himself" — and his request is granted: ***his own limbs*** become the witnesses.

Second: The words ***"it was for your sake that I was arguing"*** are deeply moving: the limbs that were pampered and defended all along finally testify against their owner. So use every limb — including the skin — for things that will ***bear witness to good***.

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THE SECOND HADITH — EVEN THE PRICK OF A THORN

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 الخُدْرِيِّ، 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 from the Prophet ﷺ that he said: ***"No fatigue, illness, worry, sorrow, harm or distress befalls a Muslim — even the thorn that pricks him — except that Allah expiates some of his sins by it."***

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

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, The Book of the Sick, Chapter on the Expiation for the Sick, Hadith No. 5641.

GRADE: SAHIH — narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:5641

THE THIRD HADITH — AS A TREE SHEDS ITS LEAVES

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 5648

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدَانُ، عَنْ أَبِي حَمْزَةَ، عَنِ الأَعْمَشِ، عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ التَّيْمِيِّ، عَنِ الحَارِثِ بْنِ سُوَيْدٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ دَخَلْتُ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم وَهُوَ يُوعَكُ فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّكَ تُوعَكُ وَعْكًا شَدِيدًا. قَالَ «أَجَلْ إِنِّي أُوعَكُ كَمَا يُوعَكُ رَجُلاَنِ مِنْكُمْ». قُلْتُ ذَلِكَ أَنَّ لَكَ أَجْرَيْنِ قَالَ «أَجَلْ ذَلِكَ كَذَلِكَ، مَا مِنْ مُسْلِمٍ يُصِيبُهُ أَذًى شَوْكَةٌ فَمَا فَوْقَهَا، إِلاَّ كَفَّرَ اللَّهُ بِهَا سَيِّئَاتِهِ، كَمَا تَحُطُّ الشَّجَرَةُ وَرَقَهَا».

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah (bin Mas'ud) رضى الله عنه said: I went in to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ while he had a fever, and I said: "O Messenger of Allah, you have a very severe fever." He said: ***"Yes, I suffer fever as two men among you suffer it."*** I said: "That is because you will have a double reward?" He said: ***"Yes, that is so. No Muslim***

is afflicted by any harm — a thorn or something greater — except that Allah expiates his misdeeds by it, as a tree sheds its leaves."

CHAIN Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Abdan, from Abu Hamzah, from al-A'mash, from Ibrahim al-Taimi, from al-Harith bin Suwaid, from 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, The Book of the Sick, Chapter: Those Most Severely Tested Are the Prophets, Hadith No. 5648.

GRADE: SAHIH — narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:5648

LESSONS FROM THE SECOND AND THIRD HADITH

First: Pain in the skin — ***even the small prick of a thorn*** — is not in vain for the believer. It becomes ***an expiation of sins***. The temporary pain of this world saves one from the far heavier pain of the Hereafter.

Second: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself felt pain ***twice over***, and he did not hide it. This teaches that ***feeling pain is not a sign of weak faith***; what matters is how we are patient and think well of Allah.

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THE FOURTH HADITH — PLACE YOUR HAND ON THE PLACE OF PAIN

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2202

حَدَّثَنِي أَبُو الطَّاهِرِ، وَحَرْمَلَةُ بْنُ يَحْيَى، قَالاَ أَخْبَرَنَا ابْنُ وَهْبٍ، أَخْبَرَنِي يُونُسُ، عَنِ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، أَخْبَرَنِي نَافِعُ بْنُ جُبَيْرِ بْنِ مُطْعِمٍ، عَنْ عُثْمَانَ بْنِ أَبِي الْعَاصِ الثَّقَفِيِّ، أَنَّهُ شَكَا إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم وَجَعًا يَجِدُهُ فِي جَسَدِهِ مُنْذُ أَسْلَمَ . فَقَالَ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «ضَعْ يَدَكَ عَلَى الَّذِي تَأَلَّمَ مِنْ جَسَدِكَ وَقُلْ بِاسْمِ اللَّهِ . ثَلاَثًا . وَقُلْ سَبْعَ مَرَّاتٍ أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ وَقُدْرَتِهِ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا أَجِدُ وَأُحَاذِرُ» .

TRANSLATION:

'Uthman bin Abi al-'As al-Thaqafi رضى الله عنه complained to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ of a pain he had felt in his body since he became Muslim. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to him: ***"Place your hand on the part of your body that hurts, and say 'Bismillāh' three times, and say seven times: 'A'ūżu billāhi wa qudratihi min syarri mā ajidu wa uhāżir' (I seek refuge in Allah and His power from the evil of what I feel and what I fear)."***

CHAIN Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Abu al-Tahir and Harmalah bin Yahya, from Ibn Wahb, from Yunus, from Ibn Shihab (al-Zuhri), from Nafi' bin Jubair bin Mut'im, from 'Uthman bin Abi al-'As al-Thaqafi رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, The Book of Greetings, Chapter: It Is Recommended to Place the Hand on the Place of Pain While Supplicating, Hadith No. 2202.

GRADE: SAHIH — narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2202

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

First: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught us to ***place a hand on the place of pain*** — skin upon skin — while seeking refuge in Allah. This supplication combines ***touch*** and ***remembrance***.

Second: This supplication does not negate medical treatment. It is ***medicine for the heart*** that accompanies medicine for the body, and a reminder that healing comes from Allah.

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THE FIFTH HADITH — ALLAH TORMENTS THOSE WHO TORMENT

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2613

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا حَفْصُ بْنُ غِيَاثٍ، عَنْ هِشَامِ بْنِ عُرْوَةَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ هِشَامِ بْنِ حَكِيمِ بْنِ حِزَامٍ، قَالَ مَرَّ بِالشَّامِ عَلَى أُنَّاسٍ وَقَدْ أُقِيمُوا فِي الشَّمْسِ وَصُبَّ عَلَى رُءُوسِهِمُ الزَّيْتُ فَقَالَ مَا هَذَا قِيلَ يُعَذَّبُونَ فِي الْخَرَاجِ . فَقَالَ أَمَا إِنِّي سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ «إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُعَذِّبُ الَّذِينَ يُعَذِّبُونَ فِي الدُّنْيَا» .

TRANSLATION:

'Urwah narrated that Hisham bin Hakim bin Hizam رضى الله عنه passed by some people in Syria who ***had been made to stand in the sun with oil poured on their heads***. He asked: "What is this?" It was said: "They are being punished over the land tax." He said: ***"Indeed, I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: 'Allah will torment those who torment people in this world.'"***

CHAIN Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Abu Bakr bin Abi Shaibah, from Hafs bin Ghiyath, from Hisham bin 'Urwah, from his father, 'Urwah bin al-Zubair, from Hisham bin Hakim bin Hizam رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, The Book of Virtue, Good Manners and Joining of Ties, Chapter: The Severe Warning Against Tormenting People Without Right, Hadith No. 2613 (the first narration in this chapter on sunnah.com).

GRADE: SAHIH — narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2613a

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

First: Human skin is ***a sanctity*** protected by the Shariah. Hurting another person's body without right — with the heat of the sun, with fire or with torture — is threatened with ***torment from Allah***.

Second: This Hadith is highly relevant to the issue of ***abuse*** today, including the abuse of children, workers and animals. The pain Allah created in the skin is there to ***protect***, not to be exploited by oppressors.

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THE SIXTH HADITH — "THIS FIRE IS YOUR ENEMY"

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 6294

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْعَلاَءِ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو أُسَامَةَ، عَنْ بُرَيْدِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، عَنْ أَبِي بُرْدَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي مُوسَى - رضى الله عنه - قَالَ احْتَرَقَ بَيْتٌ بِالْمَدِينَةِ عَلَى أَهْلِهِ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ، فَحُدِّثَ بِشَأْنِهِمُ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «إِنَّ هَذِهِ النَّارَ إِنَّمَا هِيَ عَدُوٌّ لَكُمْ، فَإِذَا نِمْتُمْ فَأَطْفِئُوهَا عَنْكُمْ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Musa (al-Ash'ari) رضى الله عنه said: ***A house in Madinah burnt down with its occupants during the night.*** The matter was told to the Prophet ﷺ, and he said: ***"This fire is indeed an enemy to you. So when you go to sleep, put it out."***

CHAIN Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Muhammad bin al-'Ala', from Abu Usamah, from Buraid bin 'Abdullah, from Abu Burdah, from Abu Musa al-Ash'ari رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, The Book of Asking Permission, Chapter: Fire Should Not Be Left Burning in the House When Sleeping, Hadith No. 6294.

GRADE: SAHIH — narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6294

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

First: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught ***fire safety*** more than 1,400 years ago. Fire, which is useful for cooking and lighting, can become ***an enemy*** if left uncontrolled.

Second: Today this principle includes putting out lamps, candles and stoves before sleeping, maintaining electrical wiring, and ***not leaving electrical devices charging or running unattended***. Protecting the skin of our family from the fire of this world is part of the Sunnah.

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THE SEVENTH HADITH — THE TWO BREATHS OF HELL

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3260

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو اليَمَانِ، أَخْبَرَنَا شُعَيْبٌ، عَنِ الزُّهْرِيِّ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي أَبُو سَلَمَةَ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ يَقُولُ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «اشْتَكَتِ النَّارُ إِلَى رَبِّهَا، فَقَالَتْ رَبِّ أَكَلَ بَعْضِي بَعْضًا، فَأَذِنَ لَهَا بِنَفَسَيْنِ نَفَسٍ فِي الشِّتَاءِ وَنَفَسٍ فِي الصَّيْفِ، فَأَشَدُّ مَا تَجِدُونَ فِي الْحَرِّ، وَأَشَدُّ مَا تَجِدُونَ مِنَ الزَّمْهَرِيرِ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"The Fire complained to its Lord, saying:***

'O my Lord, parts of me have consumed other parts.' So He permitted it two breaths: one breath in winter and one breath in summer. That is the most intense heat you feel, and the most biting cold (//zamharīr//) you feel."

CHAIN Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Abu al-Yaman, from Shu'aib, from al-Zuhri, from Abu Salamah bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, The Book of the Beginning of Creation, Chapter: The Description of the Fire and That It Has Already Been Created, Hadith No. 3260.

GRADE: SAHIH — narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:3260

THE EIGHTH HADITH — THE LIGHTEST PUNISHMENT

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 6561

حَدَّثَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ بَشَّارٍ، حَدَّثَنَا غُنْدَرٌ، حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَبَا إِسْحَاقَ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ النُّعْمَانَ، سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ «إِنَّ أَهْوَنَ أَهْلِ النَّارِ عَذَابًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ لَرَجُلٌ تُوضَعُ فِي أَخْمَصِ قَدَمَيْهِ جَمْرَةٌ يَغْلِي مِنْهَا دِمَاغُهُ».

TRANSLATION:

Al-Nu'man (bin Bashir) رضى الله عنهما said: I heard the Prophet ﷺ say: ***"The person among the people of the Fire with the lightest punishment on the Day of Resurrection will be a man under the arches of whose feet an ember will be placed, from which his brain will boil."***

CHAIN Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Muhammad bin Bashshar, from Ghundar, from Shu'bah, from Abu Ishaq, from al-Nu'man bin Bashir رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, The Book of Softening of Hearts, Chapter: The Description of Paradise and the Fire, Hadith No. 6561.

GRADE: SAHIH — narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari.

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Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6561

LESSONS FROM THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH HADITH

First: The intense heat and biting cold ***felt by the skin*** in this world are only ***a small breath*** reminding us of Hell. Whenever our skin feels too hot or too cold, that is a reminder to seek refuge in Allah.

Second: If even the ***lightest*** punishment is described in this way, how heavy must the rest be. These Hadith are believed in as they are; they concern matters of the unseen, not measured by the physics of this world.

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THE NINTH HADITH — A SINGLE DIP

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2807

حَدَّثَنَا عَمْرٌو النَّاقِدُ، حَدَّثَنَا يَزِيدُ بْنُ هَارُونَ، أَخْبَرَنَا حَمَّادُ بْنُ سَلَمَةَ، عَنْ ثَابِتٍ الْبُنَانِيِّ عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «يُؤْتَى بِأَنْعَمِ أَهْلِ الدُّنْيَا مِنْ أَهْلِ النَّارِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَيُصْبَغُ فِي النَّارِ صَبْغَةً ثُمَّ يُقَالُ يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ هَلْ رَأَيْتَ خَيْرًا قَطُّ هَلْ مَرَّ بِكَ نَعِيمٌ قَطُّ فَيَقُولُ لاَ وَاللَّهِ يَا رَبِّ . وَيُؤْتَى بِأَشَدِّ النَّاسِ بُؤْسًا فِي الدُّنْيَا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ فَيُصْبَغُ صَبْغَةً فِي الْجَنَّةِ فَيُقَالُ لَهُ يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ هَلْ رَأَيْتَ بُؤْسًا قَطُّ هَلْ مَرَّ بِكَ شِدَّةٌ قَطُّ فَيَقُولُ لاَ وَاللَّهِ يَا رَبِّ مَا مَرَّ بِي بُؤْسٌ قَطُّ وَلاَ رَأَيْتُ شِدَّةً قَطُّ» .

TRANSLATION:

Anas bin Malik رضى الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"On the Day of Resurrection, the person who lived the most luxurious life in this world from among the people of the Fire will be brought and dipped once into the Fire. Then it will be said: 'O son of Adam, did you ever see any good? Did you ever experience any comfort?' He will say: 'No, by Allah, O my Lord.'***

And the person who lived the most miserable life in this world from among the people of Paradise will be brought and dipped once into Paradise. Then it will be said to him: 'O son of Adam, did you ever see any misery? Did you ever experience any hardship?' He will say: 'No, by Allah, O my Lord. I never experienced any misery, nor did I ever see any hardship.'"

CHAIN Narrated by Imam Muslim: from 'Amr al-Naqid, from Yazid bin Harun, from Hammad bin Salamah, from Thabit al-Bunani, from Anas bin Malik رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, The Book of the Description of the Day of Judgement, Paradise and Hell, Hadith No. 2807.

GRADE: SAHIH — narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2807

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

First: All the comfort felt by the skin in this world — a soft mattress, fine clothing, pleasant air — is ***completely forgotten*** with a single dip in the Fire. Likewise, all the pain of this world is ***forgotten*** with a single dip in Paradise.

Second: This Hadith gives ***great hope*** to believers who are suffering from pain: the pain felt today will vanish without trace in Paradise, in shā' Allāh.

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WHAT MODERN SCIENCE SAYS

This chapter presents scientific findings on the skin and pain — from the structure of the skin and its nerve endings, to the receptors that won the Nobel Prize, to the skin that constantly renews itself. Every fact is supported by a source that can be checked, with a link.

A SIMPLE EXPLANATION — HOW DOES THE SKIN FEEL PAIN?

The skin consists of three main layers. The ***epidermis*** is the thin outer layer. Beneath it lies the thicker ***dermis***, containing blood vessels, sweat glands, hair roots and ***many sensory cells***. The deepest is the ***hypodermis***, a layer of fat that insulates against heat and absorbs impact (Figure 1).

Within the skin are ***nerve endings*** that act like ***alarms***. When the skin touches something too hot, too cold or sharp, these nerve endings send ***electrical signals*** along the nerves to the spinal cord and brain. The brain interprets the signal as ***pain*** — and we immediately pull away. All of this happens in a fraction of a second.

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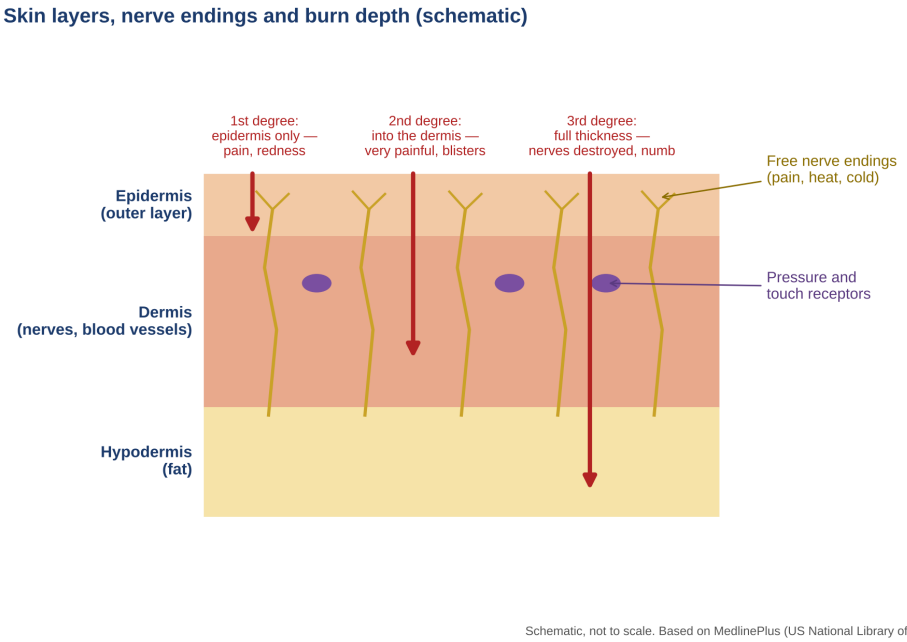


Figure 1: The three layers of the skin and the nerve endings within them. The red arrows show the depth of burns: first degree (epidermis only), second degree (into the dermis) and third degree (full thickness, destroying the nerves). Schematic, not to scale.

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: THE SKIN: THE LARGEST AND HEAVIEST ORGAN

According to ***InformedHealth.org***, the health information website of the ***Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG), Germany***, the skin is ***the largest and heaviest organ*** of the human body. It weighs between ***3.5 and 10 kilograms*** — roughly ***one seventh*** of body weight — with a surface area of ***1.5 to 2 square metres***.

The skin allows us to feel ***warmth, cold, pressure, itching and pain***. The same source explains that the ***dermis*** contains the most sensory cells. Imagine: one organ covering almost two square metres, awake day and night, reporting every touch to the brain.

RESEARCH REFERENCE:

InformedHealth.org (IQWiG). How does skin work? (updated 22 April 2025). https://www.informedhealth.org/how-does-skin-work_99392.html

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: THE 2021 NOBEL PRIZE: RECEPTORS FOR HEAT, COLD AND TOUCH

The 2021 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine was awarded to ***David Julius*** and ***Ardem Patapoutian*** for their discoveries of ***receptors for temperature and touch***. Julius used ***capsaicin*** — the compound in chilli peppers that causes a burning sensation — to find the gene for the receptor ***TRPV1***, an ion channel ***activated by heat at temperatures perceived as painful***.

Julius and Patapoutian also independently used ***menthol*** to identify ***TRPM8***, a receptor activated by ***cold***. Patapoutian discovered ***Piezo1*** and ***Piezo2***, ion channels that open when ***pressure*** is applied to cell membranes; Piezo2 is essential for ***the sense of touch***. The Nobel Committee notes that this knowledge is being used to develop treatments for a range of conditions, including ***chronic pain***.

RESEARCH REFERENCE:

The Nobel Prize (2021). Press release: The Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2021.
https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/medicine/2021/press-release/

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SCIENTIFIC FINDING: BURNS: THE DEEPER, THE MORE NUMB?

MedlinePlus, the health information service of the ***US National Library of Medicine***, explains that ***first-degree*** burns damage the outer layer of the skin (epidermis). ***Third-degree*** burns destroy ***the full thickness of skin with its nerve supply (numbness)***, and may cause loss of function and/or sensation (Figure 1).

This fact is often linked to verse 4:56: if the skin is burnt through completely, the nerves within it are destroyed too — and ***the feeling is lost***. The verse states that the skin is ***replaced*** so that they ***continue to feel***. This harmony is very striking to reflect upon, yet we must be cautious (see Chapter 7): the punishment of Hell is a matter of the unseen, and the scholars understood the skin's role as ***an instrument of feeling*** long before modern science.

RESEARCH REFERENCE:

MedlinePlus (US National Library of Medicine). Burns — classification (image page).
https://medlineplus.gov/ency/imagepages/1078.htm

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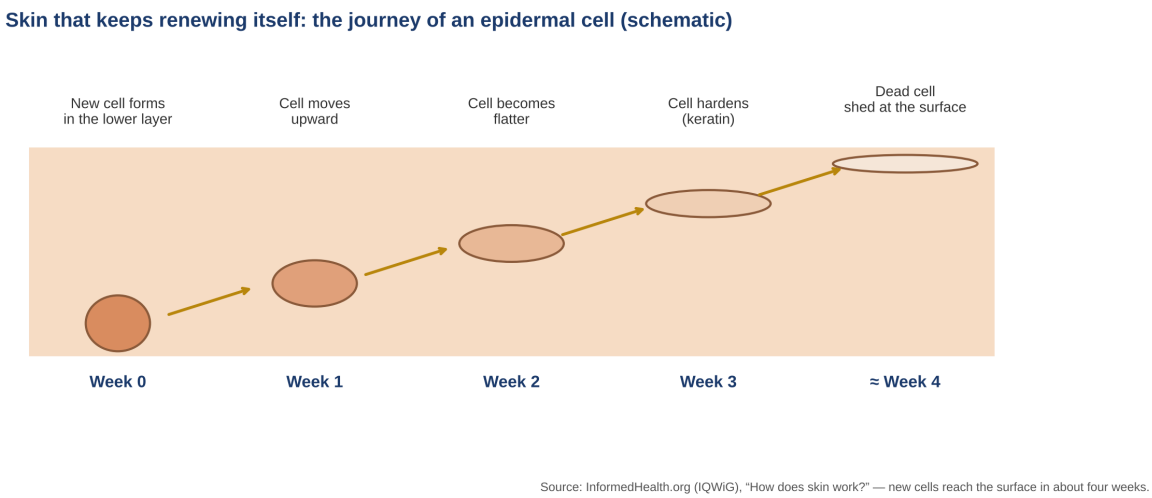


Figure 2: Epidermal cells form in the lower layer, move upward, flatten and harden, then are shed at the surface — in about four weeks. Schematic.

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: THE SKIN THAT CONSTANTLY RENEWS ITSELF

InformedHealth.org (IQWiG) explains that ***new cells*** are constantly formed in the lower part of the epidermis. These cells ***move to the surface within about four weeks***, where they harden and are ***shed*** (Figure 2). In other words, the outer layer of our skin is constantly being ***replaced*** with new skin throughout life.

This fact reminds us that ***the replacement of skin*** is something Allah causes to happen every day in this world — slowly and unnoticed. However, the replacement of skin in verse 4:56 is ***a matter of the unseen in the Hereafter***, different in nature; we do not equate the two, but take the lesson that ***replacing skin is very easy for Allah***.

RESEARCH REFERENCE:

InformedHealth.org (IQWiG). How does skin work? https://www.informedhealth.org/how-does-skin-work_99392.html

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PAIN: AN UNWANTED GIFT

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: WHEN A PERSON CANNOT FEEL PAIN

There is a very rare genetic condition called ***congenital insensitivity to pain***. According to ***MedlinePlus Genetics***, people with this condition ***cannot perceive physical pain*** from birth, although they can still distinguish sharp from dull, and hot from cold.

As a result, the lack of pain awareness ***often leads to an accumulation of wounds, bruises, broken bones and other health issues that may go undetected***, including ***repeated burn-related injuries***, which can reduce life expectancy. This condition shows that ***pain is a protective blessing*** — even though we dislike it, it saves lives.

RESEARCH REFERENCE:

MedlinePlus Genetics (US National Library of Medicine). Congenital insensitivity to pain. https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/congenital-insensitivity-to-pain/

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: THE GLOBAL BURDEN OF BURNS

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that ***over 195,000 deaths every year*** are caused by fire-related burns alone, and that ***over 95%*** of these deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries.

These figures make the instruction of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ — ***"This fire is your enemy; put it out when you go to sleep"*** (Bukhari 6294) — highly relevant today.

RESEARCH REFERENCE:

World Health Organization, Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. Burns. https://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/burns/

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THE STORY OF THE HAND THAT PULLED AWAY

Imagine a mother in a village kitchen frying fish. Her three-year-old child runs in and reaches towards the wok. Before the mother can even shout, the little finger touches the edge of the wok — and in the blink of an eye, the hand ***pulls back*** by itself. The child cries; the finger is red and stinging.

The mother hugs her child, cools the finger with water, then places her hand over the child's hand while reciting: ***"Bismillāh, Bismillāh, Bismillāh. A'ūżu billāhi wa qudratihi min syarri mā ajidu wa uhāżir."*** That night, before sleeping, the mother thinks: ***"Alhamdulillah, my child can feel pain.*** Otherwise, the hand would have stayed on the wok."

It was that pain that saved. And it is that same pain that Allah mentions in His verse as ***a reminder of a far more terrible fire***. ***"...so they may taste the punishment"*** (4:56) — may we be among those who take a lesson from the pain of this world, before it is too late.

REFLECTION — LISTENING TO THE BODY'S WARNINGS

Every sting, every ache and every burning sensation is a message. The wise person does not ignore these messages: he pulls his hand away, treats the wound, and thanks Allah for the warning. In the same way, the wise believer does not ignore the warnings of revelation. The Qur'an speaks of the skin so that we might listen — to our bodies in this world, and to our Lord before the Hereafter.

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BETWEEN HARMONY AND CAUTION

Verse 4:56 is among the verses most often mentioned in discussions of I'jaz Ilmi. For that reason, it is also among those most accompanied by claims that need checking.

POPULAR CLAIMS AND THEIR ASSESSMENT

FREQUENTLY HEARD CLAIM	ASSESSMENT
"Verse 4:56 proves that pain receptors are found only in the skin."	***Not accurate.*** Pain receptors are also found in many internal organs. This verse mentions the skin as ***an instrument of feeling***, not the only place of pain. What is in harmony is this: a burn that destroys the full thickness of the skin also destroys its nerves (MedlinePlus).
"People did not know the link between skin and pain before modern science."	***Not accurate.*** People have always known that the skin feels pain. What is more striking is ***the wording of the verse***, which links the replacement of the skin with ***the continuation of feeling***; scholars such as al-Qurtubi understood the skin as an instrument of feeling.
"A non-Muslim anatomy professor embraced Islam after hearing this verse at a conference."	***Needs checking.*** Stories like this are widely circulated, but their details and original sources are ***hard to verify***. The truth of the Qur'an does not depend on anyone's story; it is better to rely on the verse and on facts that can be checked.
"The replacement of skin in Hell is the same as the renewal of skin cells in this world."	***A forced interpretation.*** Epidermal renewal (≈ 4 weeks, IQWiG) is a biological process of this world. The replacement of skin in 4:56 is ***a matter of the unseen*** in the Hereafter. We may take a lesson, but we do not equate them.
"Goosebumps (39:23) prove the Qur'an understood physiology."	***A reflection, not a proof.*** The verse describes a human experience known to everyone; its beauty lies in ***the link between the body and faith***, not in physiological information.
"The testimony of the skin (41:21) means fingerprints or DNA."	***A forced interpretation.*** The testimony of the limbs on the Day of Judgement is ***a matter of the unseen*** informed by Allah and His Messenger (Muslim 2969). Forensic technology may be a reflection, but it is not the meaning of the verse.

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THREE QUESTIONS ON THE SKIN AND PAIN

Question 1: Why did Allah create pain? Because pain is ***a warning system*** that protects the body. People who cannot feel pain are often injured without realising it (MedlinePlus Genetics). For the believer, pain also ***expiates sins*** (Bukhari 5641, 5648).

Question 2: May a believer complain of pain? Yes. 'Uthman bin Abi al-'As رضى الله عنه complained to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and he taught him a supplication (Muslim 2202). The Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself said that he suffered fever twice over (Bukhari 5648). Complaining to Allah and seeking treatment do not negate patience.

Question 3: How should the verses of punishment affect us? As described in 39:23: the skin ***shivers*** out of fear, then the heart and skin ***soften*** out of hope. The verses of punishment are not meant to make us despair, but to ***drive us to repentance***.

REFLECTION — WHY THIS CAUTION MATTERS

Verse 4:56 is moving enough without adding unverified stories. When we honestly distinguish between ***the meaning of the verse***, ***harmony with science*** and ***popular claims***, we protect the honour of the Qur'an — and thoughtful readers will be more convinced by truth conveyed with integrity.

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THE SKIN IN DAILY LIFE: PRACTICES AND GUIDANCE

Knowledge about the skin and pain can be translated into daily practice — in worship, health and the safety of the family.

PRACTICE	EVIDENCE AND GUIDANCE
Supplicate when in pain	Place a hand on the place of pain; Bismillāh 3 times and the supplication for refuge 7 times (Muslim 2202).
Be patient and hope for reward	Every pain, even a thorn, expiates sins (Bukhari 5641, 5648).
Put out fire before sleeping	"This fire is your enemy" (Bukhari 6294) — including candles, stoves and electrical devices.
Do not hurt the bodies of others	Allah will torment those who torment people (Muslim 2613).
Engage deeply with the recitation of the Qur'an	Let the skin shiver and the heart soften (39:23).
Guard the limbs from sin	The limbs will bear witness (41:20–22; Muslim 2969).
Seek refuge from Hell in extreme heat or cold	Extreme heat and cold are breaths of Hell (Bukhari 3260).

WUDU': CLEANSING THE SKIN, SHEDDING SINS

Every day, a Muslim washes the skin of the face, hands and feet at least five times in wudu'. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ informed us that when a believing servant performs wudu' and washes his face, ***every sin his eyes looked at leaves his face with the water***; when he washes his hands, ***every sin his hands committed leaves his hands***; and when he washes his feet, ***every sin his feet walked towards leaves*** — until he emerges cleansed of sins (Sahih Muslim 244). Sahih Muslim 244

Notice the connection with verses 41:20–22: the limbs that will bear witness in the Hereafter are the very limbs that are ***washed*** every day in wudu'. Wudu' is a daily opportunity to ***cleanse our witnesses*** before they speak on the Day of Judgement.

PROTECTING THE FAMILY FROM BURNS

• Keep children away from the kitchen while cooking; turn pot handles inwards.

• Store lighters, matches and flammable liquids out of children's reach.

• Put out fires and unplug unused electrical devices before sleeping (Bukhari 6294).

• Make sure the home has a fire extinguisher and smoke detectors, and teach family members how to get out safely.

• If a burn occurs, follow recognised first-aid guidance and ***seek medical treatment immediately*** for burns that are large, deep, or involve the face, hands or genitals.

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REFLECTION — GENTLE HANDS

The cover of this eBook shows a grandfather's hand gently holding a grandchild's palm. The same skin that can feel pain can also give comfort. A gentle touch on the shoulder of a grieving friend, a hand placed on the forehead of a sick child, a warm handshake with a brother in faith — all of these are uses of the skin that will, in shā' Allāh, bear witness to good. Let our hands be known for ***mercy***, not for harm.

FAMILY ACTIVITY: GETTING TO KNOW THE SENSES OF THE SKIN

Step 1: Blindfold a family member. Touch their arm with a feather, a cold spoon and a warm cloth. Can they guess each one?

Step 2: Discuss: ***which part of the skin is most sensitive*** — the fingertips, the lips or the back?

Step 3: Read together verses 41:20–22 and the Hadith of Muslim 2969. Ask: ***"What will our hands bear witness to today?"***

Step 4: Memorise together the supplication for pain from the Hadith of Muslim 2202.

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

LESSONS FROM THIS EBOOK

First: The skin is an instrument of feeling. It is replaced so that feeling continues (4:56); the one who feels is the human self.

Second: The skin is a witness. It will speak of our deeds (41:20–22; 36:65; Muslim 2969).

Third: The skin responds to faith. It shivers in fear and softens in hope (39:23).

Fourth: The skin is a blessing and a trust. A perfect natural garment (23:14; 95:4) — protect it and do not hurt the skin of others (Muslim 2613).

Fifth: Pain is a protective blessing. Without it, we are injured without knowing (MedlinePlus Genetics); for the believer, it expiates sins (Bukhari 5641).

Sixth: Fire is an enemy. Protect the family from the fire of this world (Bukhari 6294), and yourself from the Fire of the Hereafter (4:56).

Seventh: Be careful in conveying the message. Present the harmony of verses and science honestly, without unverified stories.

SUMMARY: VERSES, MESSAGES AND SCIENTIFIC REFLECTIONS

VERSE AND ITS MESSAGE	REFLECTION FROM SCIENCE
4:56 — Skins replaced so they continue to feel.	Third-degree burns destroy the skin's nerves and cause numbness (MedlinePlus).
4:56 — The skin as an instrument of feeling.	Receptors TRPV1 (painful heat), TRPM8 (cold) and Piezo2 (touch) — Nobel 2021.
41:20–22 — The skin bears witness.	The skin — the largest organ, 1.5–2 m² — touches everything we do (IQWiG).
39:23 — The skin shivers and softens.	The skin and its dermis are full of sensory cells that respond to stimuli (IQWiG).
23:14; 95:4 — The body perfectly clothed.	The epidermis is renewed roughly every four weeks (IQWiG).
Bukhari 6294 — Fire is an enemy.	Over 195,000 deaths a year from fire-related burns (WHO).

REFLECTION — FROM FEELING TO FAITH

The journey of this eBook began with a hand pulled away from a hot pot, and ends with a heart softened by the Qur'an. Between the two lies the whole meaning of the skin: it feels, it warns, it remembers, and it testifies. The believer learns to read all of these signs — the sting that protects, the ache that purifies, and the shiver that draws him nearer to his Lord. In this way, the skin becomes not only a garment for the body, but ***a teacher for the soul***.

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PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

- ***Today:*** Memorise the supplication for pain (Muslim 2202) and practise it when needed.
- ***Tonight:*** Check the house — put out fires and unplug electrical devices before sleeping.
- ***This week:*** Read 39:23 slowly and reflect on its meaning until the heart is moved.
- ***Every day:*** Ask yourself: "What will my hands and skin bear witness to today?"
- ***Throughout life:*** Make every pain an opportunity to be patient, to supplicate and to repent.

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CONCLUSION

The Qur'an mentions the skin in three deeply meaningful states: the skin that is ***replaced*** so that the taste of punishment continues (4:56), the skin that ***bears witness*** against its owner (41:20–22), and the skin that ***shivers and then softens*** on hearing the words of Allah (39:23). The scholars understood the skin as ***an instrument of feeling*** for the human self. Modern science has discovered the nerve endings and receptors that make the skin sensitive to heat, cold and touch — discoveries awarded the 2021 Nobel Prize — and knows that very deep burns destroy the skin's nerves until it is numb.

So whenever our skin feels pain, let us remember three things: ***pain is a protector***, ***pain is an expiation of sins***, and ***pain is a reminder*** of a far more terrible fire. May our skin be a witness to good, shiver when it hears His verses, and be saved from the Fire of Hell. ***"…then their skins and their hearts relax at the remembrance of Allah"*** (39:23).

In shā' Allāh, the series Exploring Al-Qur'an & Science will continue with the title ***"The Signature at the Fingertips"*** — about the fingertips restored in perfect order (75:3–4) — with the same method: the Qur'an, Hadith and science, with honesty and caution.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

TERM	BRIEF MEANING
Julūd	Skins; plural of *jild* (4:56; 41:20).
Nadhijat	Roasted through or burnt (4:56).
Taqsya'irru	To shiver or get goosebumps (39:23).
Lawwāhah lil-basyar	That which burns and blackens the skin (74:29).
Epidermis	The outer layer of the skin; its cells are renewed roughly every four weeks.
Dermis	The middle layer of the skin, containing blood vessels and many sensory cells.
Hypodermis	The fat layer beneath the dermis.
Free nerve endings	Nerve endings in the skin that detect pain, heat and cold.
Receptor	A specialised protein or cell that detects stimuli such as heat, cold or pressure.
TRPV1	A receptor activated by painful heat and by capsaicin (chilli).
Piezo2	An ion channel essential for the sense of touch.
Third-degree burn	A burn that destroys the full thickness of the skin together with its nerves.
Congenital insensitivity to pain	A very rare genetic condition in which a person cannot feel pain from birth.

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• Why does verse 4:56 emphasise "so they may taste"? What does this verse teach about the function of the skin?

• How can the awareness that the skin will bear witness (41:20–22) change our behaviour when we are alone?

• When did your skin last shiver while hearing the Qur'an? What can be done to soften the heart?

• Why is pain considered a blessing even though we dislike it? Relate it to the condition of people who cannot feel pain.

• How do we distinguish between the harmony of verses with science and stories or claims that are unverified? Give one example from this eBook.

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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:

From Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه, from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who 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: 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 Hurairah رضى الله عنه .

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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:

From Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه, that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: a continuing charity, knowledge that is benefited from, or a righteous child who prays for him."

CHAIN: 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 Hurairah رضى الله عنه .

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رويات إمام مسلم دالم صحيح مسلم، كتاب الوصية، حديث نومبور ١٦٣١

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

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

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