Heroes of Islam

Series 7

Zayd ibn Harithah

Beloved of the Messenger ﷺ and First Commander at Mu'tah, According to the Qur'an and Authentic Hadith



Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron
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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

HEROES OF ISLAM

SERIES 7

ZAYD IBN HARITHAH

Beloved of the Messenger ﷺ and First Commander at Mu'tah, According to the Qur'an and Authentic Hadith

مَّا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَآ أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَٰكِن رَّسُولَ ٱللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ ٱلنَّبِيِّـۧنَ ۗ وَكَانَ ٱللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيمًا ﴿٤٠﴾

"Muhammad is not the father of [any] one of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of Allah and last of the prophets. And ever is Allah, of all things, Knowing."

Surah Al-Ahzab 33:40

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who honours His servants by faith and God-consciousness, not by lineage. May blessings and peace be upon our master, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and upon his family and Companions — and especially upon Zayd ibn Harithah رضى الله عنه, the beloved of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the only Companion mentioned by name in the Qur'an.

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 seventh book of Heroes of Islam tells the story of Zayd ibn Harithah رضى الله عنه: a child kidnapped and sold as a slave, who chose the Messenger of Allah ﷺ over his own father, one of the first to embrace Islam, the commander of many expeditions, and the first standard-bearer to be martyred at Mu'tah. May this knowledge be 'ilmun yuntafa'u bih — knowledge that brings benefit.

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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 high plateau of Mu'tah*** in southern Jordan at sunset: a wide plain of dry grass, olive trees, and mountains on the horizon. Here Zayd ibn Harithah fell as a martyr as the first commander of the Muslim army in 8 AH (Sahih al-Bukhari 4261).

On a large rock stands ***a white banner***, recalling the words of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: "Zayd took the banner and was struck down" (Sahih al-Bukhari 4262). Beside it leans ***an old spear***, a sign of Zayd's struggle as the commander of many expeditions.

The sun setting on the horizon recalls the end of a hero's life that began in slavery, yet whom Allah raised until his name was mentioned in the Qur'an (Surah Al-Ahzab 33:37).

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 6, so that all the covers of Heroes of Islam match.

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Colour guide: green box = verses of the Qur'an; gold box = Hadith; brown box = sirah note (report from the books of sirah); blue table = comparison. Underlined blue narrator names can be clicked to open the narrator's page on sunnah.com.

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ZAYD IBN HARITHAH

In the whole of the Qur'an, only one Companion of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is mentioned clearly by name. Allah says: **«**□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□□□□**»** — "So when Zayd had no longer any need for her…" (Surah Al-Ahzab 33:37). That Companion is ***Zayd ibn Harithah*** رضى الله عنه.

Zayd was kidnapped as a child and sold as a slave, then given to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. When his father came to ransom him, Zayd chose to stay with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He became one of the first to embrace Islam, was called ***Hibb Rasulillah*** (the beloved of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ), led many expeditions, and fell as a martyr as the first commander at ***Mu'tah***.

This eBook is the seventh in the ***Heroes of Islam*** series. As in the earlier books, the story of Zayd رضى الله عنه is gathered first from the Qur'an and authentic Hadith, and then from the trusted books of sirah and history. The source of every report is given. Famous stories with weak chains are explained honestly.

The story of Zayd is the story of a slave honoured by faith. Allah raised his name into His Book, which will be recited until the Day of Resurrection, while many nobles of Quraysh have been forgotten by history.

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WHO WAS ZAYD?

His full name was ***Zayd ibn Harithah ibn Shurahbil*** al-Kalbi, of the tribe of ***Banu Kalb*** (Quda'ah) in the north of Arabia. His mother was ***Su'da bint Tha'labah*** of Banu Ma'n, a branch of the tribe of Tayy. His kunyah was ***Abu Usamah***, after his son Usamah ibn Zayd.

According to Ibn Sa'd, he was martyred at about fifty-five years of age, a few years younger than the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The books of biography describe him as short, rather dark-skinned, with a flat nose.

NAME AND TITLES

NAME OR TITLE	EXPLANATION
Zayd ibn Harithah	His real name
Abu Usamah	His kunyah, after his son Usamah
Al-Kalbi	From the tribe of Banu Kalb
Zayd ibn Muhammad	His name before Al-Ahzab 33:5 was revealed (Sahih al-Bukhari 4782)
Hibb Rasulillah ﷺ	"The beloved of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ", his title in the books of history

LESSONS

Zayd was not from Quraysh, and he had even been a slave. Yet Islam raised him above many nobles. A person's honour with Allah is by God-consciousness, not lineage.

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KIDNAPPED AND SOLD AS A SLAVE

When Zayd was a small child, about eight years old, his mother took him to visit her family among Banu Ma'n. Raiders from Banu al-Qayn attacked the settlement and kidnapped Zayd.

HISTORICAL NOTE: THE MARKET OF 'UKAZ

It is reported that Zayd was taken to ***the market of 'Ukaz*** near Makkah and sold as a slave. He was bought by ***Hakim ibn Hizam*** for four hundred dirhams for his aunt, ***Khadijah bint Khuwaylid*** رضى الله عنها.

Status of the report: Narrated in the books of biography; the details differ between reports.

REFERENCES:

Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat al-Kubra (biography of Zayd ibn Harithah); Ibn Hajar, al-Isabah.

LESSONS

A trial that seemed a great disaster — being kidnapped and sold — became the road that brought Zayd to the house of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Allah knows the wisdom behind every decree.

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KHADIJAH'S GIFT TO THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH ﷺ

When Khadijah married Muhammad ﷺ, she gave Zayd to her husband. At that time Muhammad ﷺ had not yet been made a Messenger. Zayd grew up in his house and experienced his noble character from close by.

Zayd saw for himself his honesty, trustworthiness, gentleness and generosity, long before the first revelation came. That is why, when he was made a Messenger, Zayd did not hesitate to believe.

LESSONS

Good character is the most effective call to Islam. Zayd believed because he had long witnessed the truthfulness and nobility of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

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CHOOSING THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH ﷺ OVER HIS FATHER

Zayd's father, ***Harithah ibn Shurahbil***, grieved deeply over the loss of his son. He searched for him everywhere and poured out his grief in poetry. At last he learned that Zayd was in Makkah, and came with his brother Ka'b to ransom him.

HISTORICAL NOTE: ZAYD'S CHOICE

It is reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ called Zayd and gave him the choice: to go home with his father, or to stay with him. Zayd said: "I will not choose anyone over you. You are my father and my uncle." His father said: "Woe to you, Zayd! Do you choose slavery over freedom, your father, your uncle and your family?" Zayd replied: "Yes. I have seen something in this man; I will never choose anyone over him."

Then the Messenger of Allah ﷺ took Zayd to the Hijr at the Ka'bah and declared: "Bear witness that Zayd is my son; I inherit from him and he inherits from me." When his father and uncle saw this, their hearts were at ease and they went home.

Status of the report: The full story is narrated in the books of biography with a disputed chain. Its meaning is supported by the Hadith of ***Jabalah ibn Harithah***, Zayd's brother, who asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to let Zayd go with him; he said: "Here he is; if he goes with you, I will not prevent him." Zayd said: "O Messenger of Allah, by Allah, I will not choose anyone over you" (Jami' at-Tirmidhi 3815, *hasan* according to Darussalam).

REFERENCES:

Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat al-Kubra; Ibn Hajar, al-Isabah.

LESSONS

Zayd chose love and truth over freedom and family. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not force him, but gave him a complete choice. Sincere love gives birth to a loyalty that cannot be bought.

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"ZAYD IBN MUHAMMAD"

From that day, people called him ***Zayd ibn Muhammad***, because in the days of ignorance an adopted son was named after his adoptive father. This continued until Allah revealed a new ruling:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4782

حَدَّثَنَا مُعَلَّى بْنُ أَسَدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْعَزِيزِ بْنُ الْمُخْتَارِ، حَدَّثَنَا مُوسَى بْنُ عُقْبَةَ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي سَالِمٌ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ أَنَّ زَيْدَ بْنَ حَارِثَةَ، مَوْلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم مَا كُنَّا نَدْعُوهُ إِلاَّ زَيْدَ ابْنَ مُحَمَّدٍ حَتَّى نَزَلَ الْقُرْآنُ {ادْعُوهُمْ لآبَائِهِمْ هُوَ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ}.

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn 'Umar said: ***"Zayd ibn Harithah, the freed slave of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ — we used to call him nothing but Zayd ibn Muhammad, until the Qur'an was revealed: 'Call them by [the names of] their fathers; it is more just in the sight of Allah.'"***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Mu'alla ibn Asad, from 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn al-Mukhtar, from Musa ibn 'Uqbah, from Salim ibn 'Abdullah, from 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Tafsir, Surah al-Ahzab, Chapter {Call Them by Their Fathers}, Hadith No. 4782.

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:4782

SURAH AL-AHZAB 33:5

ٱدْعُوهُمْ لِءَابَآئِهِمْ هُوَ أَقْسَطُ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ ۚ فَإِن لَّمْ تَعْلَمُوٓا۟ ءَابَآءَهُمْ فَإِخْوَٰنُكُمْ فِى ٱلدِّينِ وَمَوَٰلِيكُمْ ۚ وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَآ أَخْطَأْتُم بِهِۦ وَلَٰكِن مَّا تَعَمَّدَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ ۚ وَكَانَ ٱللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿٥﴾

Call them by [the names of] their fathers; it is more just in the sight of Allah. But if you do not know their fathers - then they are [still] your brothers in religion and those entrusted to you. And there is no blame upon you for that in which you have erred but [only for] what your hearts intended. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/33:5

LESSONS

Islam honours adopted children and commands that they be treated as brothers in faith, but lineage must be kept according to true descent. Zayd remained beloved to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ even when his name returned to his father, Harithah.

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AMONG THE FIRST TO EMBRACE ISLAM

When the first revelation came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, those closest to him were the first to believe:

Khadijah his wife, ***'Ali ibn Abi Talib*** his cousin who lived with him, ***Zayd ibn Harithah***, and his friend ***Abu Bakr as-Siddiq***.

> **HISTORICAL NOTE: WHO WAS FIRST?**
>
> Ibn Ishaq mentions that Khadijah was the first to believe, then 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, then Zayd ibn Harithah. Some scholars, such as az-Zuhri, held that Zayd was the first man to embrace Islam. The scholars reconcile these views: Khadijah among women, Abu Bakr among free adult men, 'Ali among children, and Zayd among freed slaves.
>
> ***Status of the report:*** These are the views of the scholars of sirah; all agree that Zayd was among the very first to embrace Islam.
>
> **REFERENCES:**
> Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah (narrated from Ibn Ishaq); Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah.

LESSONS

Those closest to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who knew him inside his home, were the quickest to believe him. This is proof of his truthfulness in private life.

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WITH THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH ﷺ TO TA'IF

In the tenth year of prophethood, after the deaths of Abu Talib and Khadijah, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ went to ***Ta'if*** to call Banu Thaqif to Islam. The one who accompanied him on that journey was Zayd ibn Harithah.

> **HISTORICAL NOTE: SHIELDING THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH ﷺ AT TA'IF**
>
> It is reported that the people of Ta'if rejected his call and set their foolish ones and slaves on him to stone him. Zayd shielded him with his own body until his head was wounded.
>
> ***Status of the report:*** Zayd's presence on the journey to Ta'if is well known in the books of sirah; the detail of his head wound is narrated without a strong chain.
>
> **REFERENCES:**
> Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat al-Kubra; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah.

LESSONS

A true friend is present at the hardest moments. Zayd accompanied the Messenger of Allah ﷺ when he was rejected and hurt, not only when he was victorious and praised.

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THE HIJRAH AND BROTHERHOOD

Zayd emigrated to Madinah with the Muslims. After the Messenger of Allah ﷺ arrived, he sent Zayd and Abu Rafi‘ to Makkah to bring his family, including Sawdah and his daughters, as well as Zayd’s own wife, Umm Ayman, and his son Usamah.

According to the books of sirah, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ joined Zayd in brotherhood with his uncle, ***Hamzah ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib*** (some reports say that in Madinah it was with Usayd ibn Hudayr). Their brotherhood was so close that when he set out for Uhud, Hamzah left his last wishes with Zayd.

LESSONS

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ made a former slave the brother of his own uncle, a mighty leader of Quraysh.

In Islam, the bond of faith breaks down the walls of rank and lineage.

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BEARER OF THE NEWS OF VICTORY AT BADR

Zayd took part in the Battle of Badr in 2 AH. After the victory, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent two bearers of good news to Madinah: ***'Abdullah ibn Rawahah*** to the upper part of Madinah, and ***Zayd ibn Harithah*** to the lower part, riding his camel al-Qaswa'.

HISTORICAL NOTE: NEWS THAT WAS NOT BELIEVED

It is reported that when Zayd arrived, the hypocrites and some of the Jews spread the rumour that the Muslims had been defeated and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ killed, because they saw Zayd riding his camel. Usamah ibn Zayd said: "We did not believe it until we saw the captives." The news arrived just as the Muslims had finished burying Ruqayyah, the daughter of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

Status of the report: Narrated in the books of sirah and maghazi.

REFERENCES:

Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah (narrated from Ibn Ishaq); al-Waqidi, al-Maghazi.

LESSONS

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ entrusted important news to the most trusted person. Zayd delivered the news of victory faithfully, even when some tried to twist it.

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COMMANDER OF EXPEDITIONS

Zayd was not just a soldier. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ appointed him commander of many expeditions (*sariyyah*), among them to ***al-Qaradah*** (3 AH) to intercept a Quraysh caravan, to ***al-Jamum***, ***al-'Is***, ***Hisma*** and ***Wadi al-Qura***. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also left him in charge of Madinah while he was away on campaign.

HADITH NOTE: "HE WOULD ALWAYS MAKE HIM COMMANDER"

It is narrated that 'A'ishah said: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ never sent Zayd ibn Harithah with an army without making him its commander. Had he lived after him, he would have appointed him his successor."

Status of the report: Some scholars graded its chain *hasan*; its last part is 'A'ishah's own opinion.

REFERENCES:
Ahmad, al-Musnad; Ibn Abi Shaybah, al-Musannaf; an-Nasa'i, as-Sunan al-Kubra.

LESSONS

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ judged fitness to lead by faith, trustworthiness and ability, not by origin. A former slave led expeditions that included honoured Companions of Quraysh.

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MARRIAGE TO ZAYNAB BINT JAHSH

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ married Zayd to his own cousin, ***Zaynab bint Jahsh***, a noblewoman of Quraysh. This marriage broke the custom of the days of ignorance that did not allow a noblewoman to marry a former slave. But their home was not a happy one, and Zayd came to complain to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 7420

حَدَّثَنَا أَحْمَدُ، حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ أَبِي بَكْرٍ الْمُقَدَّمِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا حَمَّادُ بْنُ زَيْدٍ، عَنْ ثَابِتٍ، عَنْ أَنَسٍ، قَالَ جَاءَ زَيْدُ بْنُ حَارِثَةَ يَشْكُو فَجَعَلَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ " اتَّقِ اللَّهَ، وَأَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ ". قَالَتْ عَائِشَةُ لَوْ كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم كَاتِمًا شَيْئًا لَكَتَمَ هَذِهِ. قَالَ فَكَانَتْ زَيْنَبُ تَفْخَرُ عَلَى أَزْوَاجِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم تَقُولُ زَوَّجَكُنَّ أَهَالِيكُنَّ، وَزَوَّجَنِي اللَّهُ تَعَالَى مِنْ فَوْقِ سَبْعِ سَمَوَاتٍ. وَعَنْ ثَابِتٍ {وَتُخْفِي فِي نَفْسِكَ مَا اللَّهُ مُبْدِيهِ وَتَخْشَى النَّاسَ} نَزَلَتْ فِي شَأْنِ زَيْنَبَ وَزَيْدِ بْنِ حَارِثَةَ.

TRANSLATION:

Anas said: ***Zayd ibn Harithah came complaining (about his wife), and the Prophet ﷺ kept saying to him: "Fear Allah, and keep your wife."*** 'A'ishah said: "If the Messenger of Allah ﷺ were to conceal anything (of the revelation), he would have concealed this." Anas said: Zaynab used to boast to the other wives of the Prophet ﷺ, saying: "Your families married you off, while Allah the Exalted married me off from above the seven heavens." And from Thabit: ***(The verse) "And you concealed within yourself that which Allah is to disclose, and you feared the people" was revealed concerning Zaynab and Zayd ibn Harithah.***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Ahmad, from Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr al-Muqaddami, from Hammad ibn Zayd, from Thabit al-Bunani, from Anas ibn Malik رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Tawhid, Chapter {And His Throne Was Upon the Water}, Hadith No. 7420.

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:7420

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LESSONS

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ advised Zayd to fear Allah and keep his marriage. Islam encourages efforts to mend a marriage before choosing separation. But when separation happens, it too is part of Allah's decree and wisdom.

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THE ONLY COMPANION NAMED IN THE QUR'AN

After Zayd divorced Zaynab, Allah commanded the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to marry her, to abolish the custom of the days of ignorance that forbade marrying the former wife of an adopted son. In this verse Zayd's name is mentioned clearly:

SURAH AL-AHZAB 33:37

وَإِذْ تَقُولُ لِلَّذِىٓ أَنْعَمَ ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَٱتَّقِ
ٱللَّهَ وَتُخْفِى فِى نَفْسِكَ مَا ٱللَّهُ مُبْدِيهِ وَتَخْشَى ٱلنَّاسَ وَٱللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَن تَخْشَىٰهُ ۖ
فَلَمَّا قَضَىٰ زَيْدٌ مِّنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنَٰكَهَا لِكَىْ لَا يَكُونَ عَلَى ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَرَجٌ
فِىٓ أَزْوَٰجِ أَدْعِيَآئِهِمْ إِذَا قَضَوْا۟ مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا ۚ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ ٱللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا ﴿٣٧﴾

And [remember, O Muhammad], when you said to the one on whom Allah bestowed favor and you bestowed favor, "Keep your wife and fear Allah," while you concealed within yourself that which Allah is to disclose. And you feared the people, while Allah has more right that you fear Him. So when Zayd had no longer any need for her, We married her to you in order that there not be upon the believers any discomfort concerning the wives of their adopted sons when they no longer have need of them. And ever is the command of Allah accomplished.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/33:37

The scholars mention that Zayd is ***the only Companion of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ whose name is mentioned clearly in the Qur'an***. The verse also describes Zayd as the one ***"to whom Allah bestowed favour"*** (with Islam) and ***"you bestowed favour"*** (by freeing him).

LESSONS

Zayd lost the title "son of Muhammad", but Allah replaced it with something far nobler: his name is preserved in the speech of Allah, recited by millions until the Day of Resurrection.

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"MUHAMMAD IS NOT THE FATHER OF ANY OF YOUR MEN"

A few verses later, Allah made clear that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was not the father of any man among them, including Zayd. His true position is that of Messenger and seal of the prophets:

SURAH AL-AHZAB 33:40

مَّا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَآ أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَٰكِن رَّسُولَ ٱللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ ٱلنَّبِيِّـۧنَ ۗ
وَكَانَ ٱللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيمًا ﴿٤٠﴾

Muhammad is not the father of [any] one of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of Allah and last of the prophets. And ever is Allah, of all things, Knowing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/33:40

LESSONS

This verse puts every relationship in its place: Zayd is the son of Harithah, and Muhammad ﷺ is the Messenger of Allah and the seal of the prophets. His love for Zayd did not lessen at all, but the Shari'ah protects the truth of lineage.

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UMM AYMAN AND USAMAH

Zayd married ***Umm Ayman*** (Barakah), who had cared for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ since childhood, and they had a son, ***Usamah ibn Zayd***. Usamah too was greatly loved by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and was called *Hibb ibn Hibb*, the beloved son of the beloved.

When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ appointed the young Usamah as commander, some people questioned it. He said:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3730

حَدَّثَنَا خَالِدُ بْنُ مَخْلَدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا سُلَيْمَانُ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ دِينَارٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ قَالَ بَعَثَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم بَعْثًا، وَأَمَّرَ عَلَيْهِمْ أُسَامَةَ بْنَ زَيْدٍ، فَطَعَنَ بَعْضُ النَّاسِ فِي إِمَارَتِهِ، فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم " إِنْ تَطْعُنُوا فِي إِمَارَتِهِ فَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ تَطْعُنُونَ فِي إِمَارَةِ أَبِيهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ، وَايْمُ اللَّهِ، إِنْ كَانَ لَخَلِيقًا لِلإِمَارَةِ، وَإِنْ كَانَ لَمِنْ أَحَبِّ النَّاسِ إِلَىَّ، وَإِنَّ هَذَا لَمِنْ أَحَبِّ النَّاسِ إِلَىَّ بَعْدَهُ ".

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn 'Umar said: The Prophet ﷺ sent an army and appointed Usamah ibn Zayd as its commander.

Some people criticised his leadership. The Prophet ﷺ said: ***"If you criticise his leadership, you used to criticise the leadership of his father before. By Allah, he (Zayd) was well suited for leadership, and he was among the people most beloved to me. And this one (Usamah) is among the people most beloved to me after him."***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Khalid ibn Makhlad, from Sulayman ibn Bilal, from 'Abdullah ibn Dinar, from 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Virtues of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, Chapter on the Virtues of Zayd ibn Harithah, Hadith No. 3730.

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:3730

LESSONS

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ defended the leadership of Zayd and Usamah before the people. Fitness to lead is not decided by age, skin colour or origin, but by ability and trustworthiness.

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MU'TAH: THREE COMMANDERS

In Jumada al-Ula of 8 AH, the envoy of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, al-Harith ibn 'Umayr, was killed by a Ghassanid chief under Roman protection. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent an army of ***3,000 men*** north to the land of Sham. For the first time, he appointed three commanders in turn:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4261

أَخْبَرَنَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ أَبِي بَكْرٍ، حَدَّثَنَا مُغِيرَةُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ سَعِيدٍ، عَنْ نَافِعٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ قَالَ أَمَّرَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم فِي غَزْوَةِ مُوتَةَ زَيْدَ بْنَ حَارِثَةَ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم " إِنْ قُتِلَ زَيْدٌ فَجَعْفَرٌ، وَإِنْ قُتِلَ جَعْفَرٌ فَعَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ رَوَاحَةَ ". قَالَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ كُنْتُ فِيهِمْ فِي تِلْكَ الْغَزْوَةِ فَالْتَمَسْنَا جَعْفَرَ بْنَ أَبِي طَالِبٍ، فَوَجَدْنَاهُ فِي الْقَتْلَى، وَوَجَدْنَا مَا فِي جَسَدِهِ بِضْعًا وَتِسْعِينَ مِنْ طَعْنَةٍ وَرَمْيَةٍ.

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn 'Umar said: ***The Messenger of Allah ﷺ appointed Zayd ibn Harithah as commander in the Battle of Mu'tah, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "If Zayd is killed, then Ja'far; and if Ja'far is killed, then 'Abdullah ibn Rawahah."*** 'Abdullah (ibn 'Umar) said: I was with them in that battle. We searched for Ja'far ibn Abi Talib and found him among the dead, and we found on his body more than ninety wounds from stabs and arrows.

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Ahmad ibn Abi Bakr, from Mughirah ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman, from 'Abdullah ibn Sa'id, from Nafi', from 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Military Expeditions, Chapter on the Battle of Mu'tah in the Land of Sham, Hadith No. 4261.

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:4261

HISTORICAL NOTE: 3,000 AGAINST A SEA OF SOLDIERS

When the Muslim army reached Ma'an, they learned that Heraclius had gathered the Romans and their Arab allies in huge numbers (some reports say 100,000 to 200,000). They held council; 'Abdullah ibn Rawahah stirred them, saying: "We do not fight by numbers or strength, but by this religion with which Allah has honoured us." So they advanced to Mu'tah.

Status of the report: Narrated in the books of sirah; the size of the enemy army differs between reports.

REFERENCES:

Ibn Hisham, as-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah (narrated from Ibn Ishaq); al-Waqidi, al-Maghazi; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah.

LESSONS

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ put Zayd, a former slave, first as commander, before Ja'far, his own cousin.

This shows how great his trust in Zayd was.

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THE FIRST STANDARD-BEARER TO FALL

At Mu'tah, Zayd held the banner of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and fought in the front line until his body was pierced by enemy spears. He fell as a martyr at about fifty-five years of age. The banner was then taken by Ja'far, then by 'Abdullah ibn Rawahah, and both were also martyred. In Madinah, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ told of the event before the news arrived:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4262

حَدَّثَنَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ وَاقِدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا حَمَّادُ بْنُ زَيْدٍ، عَنْ أَيُّوبَ، عَنْ حُمَيْدِ بْنِ هِلاَلٍ، عَنْ أَنَسٍ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم نَعَى زَيْدًا وَجَعْفَرًا وَابْنَ رَوَاحَةَ لِلنَّاسِ، قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ خَبَرُهُمْ فَقَالَ " أَخَذَ الرَّايَةَ زَيْدٌ فَأُصِيبَ، ثُمَّ أَخَذَ جَعْفَرٌ فَأُصِيبَ، ثُمَّ أَخَذَ ابْنُ رَوَاحَةَ فَأُصِيبَ ـ وَعَيْنَاهُ تَذْرِفَانِ ـ حَتَّى أَخَذَ الرَّايَةَ سَيْفٌ مِنْ سُيُوفِ اللَّهِ حَتَّى فَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ".

TRANSLATION:

Anas narrated that the Prophet ﷺ announced the deaths of Zayd, Ja'far and Ibn Rawahah to the people before news of them had come. He said: ***"Zayd took the banner and was struck down. Then Ja'far took it and was struck down. Then Ibn Rawahah took it and was struck down" — and his eyes were shedding tears — "until the banner was taken by a sword among the swords of Allah, and Allah granted them victory."***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Ahmad ibn Waqid, from Hammad ibn Zayd, from Ayyub as-Sakhtiyani, from Humayd ibn Hilal, from Anas ibn Malik رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Military Expeditions, Chapter on the Battle of Mu'tah in the Land of Sham, Hadith No. 4262.

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:4262

The "sword among the swords of Allah" was Khalid ibn al-Walid, who saved the Muslim army and brought it home to Madinah (see Series 3: Khalid ibn al-Walid). Allah says of the martyrs:

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SURAH AL 'IMRAN 3:169

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا۟ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ أَمْوَٰتًۢا ۚ بَلْ أَحْيَآءٌ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ

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And never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/3:169

HISTORICAL NOTE: THE TEARS OF THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH ﷺ

It is reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ visited Zayd's family after his martyrdom. Zayd's daughter wept before him, and he too wept deeply. When asked, he said: "This is the longing of a beloved for his beloved."

Status of the report: Narrated in the books of biography and maghazi; its chain is not strong. The tears of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ when announcing Zayd's martyrdom are authentic (Sahih al-Bukhari 4262).

REFERENCES:

Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat al-Kubra; al-Waqidi, al-Maghazi.

LESSONS

Zayd began his life as a slave and ended it as a commander martyred under the banner of Islam. The tears of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ for him show how deep his love was for his beloved.

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THE CHARACTER OF ZAYD

The story of Zayd shows a believer who combined loyalty, faith and courage.

QUALITY	EXAMPLE FROM HIS LIFE
Loyalty	Chose the Messenger of Allah ﷺ over his father (Jami‘ at-Tirmidhi 3815)
Early faith	Among the first to embrace Islam
Sacrifice	Accompanied and shielded the Messenger of Allah ﷺ at Ta’if
Trustworthiness	Carried the news of victory at Badr
Leadership	Commander of many expeditions; “well suited for leadership” (Sahih al-Bukhari 3730)
Obedience to the Shari‘ah	Accepted his lineage back to Harithah (Al-Ahzab 33:5)
Courage	First commander at Mu’tah (Sahih al-Bukhari 4261)
Beloved	“Among the people most beloved to me” (Sahih al-Bukhari 3730)

LESSONS

Zayd proved that a person’s worth lies in faith and deeds. A former slave could become the beloved of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, an army commander, and a name mentioned in the Qur'an.

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SOURCES OF THE STORIES OF ZAYD

This table summarises the source and grade of each story, so that readers can tell the authentic from the merely famous.

STORY	SOURCE	GRADE
"Zayd ibn Muhammad" and Al-Ahzab 33:5	Sahih al-Bukhari 4782; Sahih Muslim 2425	Sahih
Zayd's complaint; Al-Ahzab 33:37	Sahih al-Bukhari 4787, 7420	Sahih
"Suited for leadership and most beloved to me"	Sahih al-Bukhari 3730	Sahih
The three commanders of Mu'tah	Sahih al-Bukhari 4261	Sahih
The Messenger ﷺ announces their martyrdom	Sahih al-Bukhari 4262	Sahih
Choosing the Messenger ﷺ (Jabalah's report)	Jami' at-Tirmidhi 3815	Hasan
Always appointed commander	Musnad Ahmad	Hasan
Kidnapped and sold at 'Ukaz	Ibn Sa'd; Ibn Hajar	History
The declaration at the Hijr	Ibn Sa'd; Ibn Hajar	History
Among the first to embrace Islam	Ibn Ishaq; Ibn Kathir	Sirah
With him to Ta'if	Ibn Sa'd	Sirah
Brotherhood with Hamzah	Ibn Sa'd	Sirah
Bearer of the news of Badr	Ibn Ishaq; al-Waqidi	Sirah
Weeping at Zayd's home	Ibn Sa'd; al-Waqidi	Weak

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PEOPLE IN THE STORY OF ZAYD

PERSON	ROLE
Harithah ibn Shurahbil	His father, who came to ransom him
Jabalah ibn Harithah	His brother, narrator of Zayd's choice
Hakim ibn Hizam	Bought him at the market of 'Ukaz
Khadijah bint Khuwaylid	Gave him to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ
Hamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib	His brother in Islamic brotherhood
Umm Ayman (Barakah)	His wife, nurse of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ
Usamah ibn Zayd	His son, "the beloved son of the beloved"
Zaynab bint Jahsh	His former wife, later a Mother of the Believers
Ja'far ibn Abi Talib	Second commander at Mu'tah
'Abdullah ibn Rawahah	Third commander at Mu'tah
Khalid ibn al-Walid	"Sword of Allah" who saved the army at Mu'tah
'Abdullah ibn 'Umar	Narrator of Hadith about Zayd and Mu'tah

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PLACES IN THE STORY OF ZAYD

PLACE	EVENT
Settlement of Banu Ma'n (Tayy)	Kidnapped as a child
Market of 'Ukaz	Sold as a slave
Makkah	Grew up in the house of the Messenger ﷺ; embraced Islam
The Hijr at the Ka'bah	Declared an adopted son
Ta'if	Accompanied the Messenger ﷺ in da'wah (10th year of prophethood)
Madinah	Hijrah; brotherhood with Hamzah
Badr	Bearer of the news of victory (2 AH)
Al-Qaradah, al-Jamum, al-'Is, Hisma, Wadi al-Qura	Led expeditions
Mu'tah (southern Jordan)	First commander; martyred (8 AH)

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TIMELINE OF ZAYD'S LIFE

YEAR	EVENT
± 47 BH	Born among Banu Kalb
Childhood	Kidnapped and sold at 'Ukaz; given to Muhammad ﷺ
Before prophethood	Chose the Messenger ﷺ over his father; called Zayd ibn Muhammad
Early prophethood	Among the first to embrace Islam
10th year of prophethood	Accompanied the Messenger ﷺ to Ta'if
1 AH	Hijrah; brotherhood with Hamzah
2 AH	Battle of Badr; bearer of the news of victory
3–6 AH	Led several expeditions
5 AH	Revelation of Al-Ahzab 33:5 and 33:37
8 AH	First commander at Mu'tah; martyred at about 55

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ZAYD

This chapter answers questions often asked about Zayd ibn Harithah رضى الله عنه. The answers are brief; details are in the earlier chapters.

1. WHAT WAS ZAYD'S FULL NAME?

Zayd ibn Harithah ibn Shurahbil al-Kalbi; his kunyah was Abu Usamah.

2. HOW DID ZAYD BECOME A SLAVE?

He was kidnapped as a child and sold at the market of 'Ukaz, where Hakim ibn Hizam bought him for Khadijah.

3. WHY DID ZAYD NOT GO HOME WITH HIS FATHER?

Because he chose the Messenger of Allah ﷺ over anyone else (Jami' at-Tirmidhi 3815).

4. WHY WAS HE CALLED ZAYD IBN MUHAMMAD?

Because the Messenger of Allah ﷺ adopted him, until Al-Ahzab 33:5 was revealed (Sahih al-Bukhari 4782).

5. IS ZAYD REALLY THE ONLY COMPANION NAMED IN THE QUR'AN?

Yes, his name is mentioned clearly in Surah Al-Ahzab 33:37.

6. WHAT DOES THE TITLE HIBB RASULILLAH MEAN?

"The beloved of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ", because he said Zayd was among the people most beloved to him (Sahih al-Bukhari 3730).

7. WHO WERE ZAYD'S WIVES?

Among them Umm Ayman (the mother of Usamah) and Zaynab bint Jahsh.

8. WHO WAS ZAYD'S FAMOUS SON?

Usamah ibn Zayd, whom the Messenger of Allah ﷺ appointed commander while still young.

9. HOW MANY MUSLIMS FOUGHT AT MU'TAH?

About 3,000, facing a far larger army of Romans and their allies.

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10. WHO WERE THE THREE COMMANDERS OF MU'TAH?

Zayd ibn Harithah, Ja'far ibn Abi Talib and 'Abdullah ibn Rawahah (Sahih al-Bukhari 4261).

11. HOW DID THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH ﷺ LEARN OF THEIR MARTYRDOM?

He announced it to the people before the news arrived, with tears in his eyes (Sahih al-Bukhari 4262).

12. WHAT IS THE GREATEST LESSON FROM THE STORY OF ZAYD?

Honour through faith and God-consciousness, loyalty to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and obedience to the Shari'ah of Allah.

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

The story of Zayd ibn Harithah رضى الله عنه begins with a child kidnapped and sold in a market, and ends with a commander martyred under the banner of Islam, whose name is preserved in the Qur'an.

LESSON	FROM THE STORY OF ZAYD
Decree full of wisdom	Kidnapped, yet brought to the house of the Messenger ﷺ
Loyalty	Chose the Messenger ﷺ over freedom
Honour through taqwa	A former slave became a commander
Obedience to the Shari'ah	Accepted the ruling on lineage willingly
Present in hard times	Accompanied the Messenger ﷺ to Ta'if
Courage	First commander at Mu'tah
Allah's reward	His name endures in the Qur'an

ZAYD IN OUR LIVES

The story of Zayd teaches us not to judge people by origin, skin colour or status. It also teaches us to be loyal to the truth, even when loyalty demands sacrifice.

For those who have been through hardship and loss, Zayd is proof that Allah can make hardship a road to honour.

In sha' Allah, the Heroes of Islam series will continue with Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, the second commander at Mu'tah. May Allah be pleased with Zayd ibn Harithah, the beloved of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and gather us with him and the Companions in His Paradise.

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SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:261

مَّثَلُ ٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمۡوَٰلَهُمۡ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنۢبَتَتۡ سَبۡعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنۢبُلَةٖ مِّاْئَةُ حَبَّةٖۗ وَٱللَّهُ يُضَٰعِفُ لِمَن يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ٢٦١

The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:261

SURAH SABA' 34:39

قُلۡ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبۡسُطُ ٱلرِّزۡقَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهِۦ وَيَقۡدِرُ لَهُۥۚ وَمَآ أَنفَقۡتُم مِّن شَيۡءٖ فَهُوَ يُخۡلِفُهُۥۖ وَهُوَ خَيۡرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ ٣٩

Say, "Indeed, my Lord extends provision for whom He wills of His servants and restricts [it] for him. But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will compensate it; and He is the best of providers."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/34:39

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2588

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، وَابْنُ، حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - وَهُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلاَّ عِزًّا وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلاَّ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Charity does not decrease wealth.

Allah does not increase a servant who forgives except in honour. And no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises him in rank."

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

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue, Good Manners and Joining the Ties of Kinship (Kitab al-Birr wa al-Silah wa al-Adab), chapter on the encouragement of forgiveness and humility, Hadith No. 2588.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2588

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1631

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ - يَعْنِي ابْنَ سَعِيدٍ - وَابْنُ حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - هُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « إِذَا مَاتَ الإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلاَّ مِنْ ثَلاَثَةٍ إِلاَّ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

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

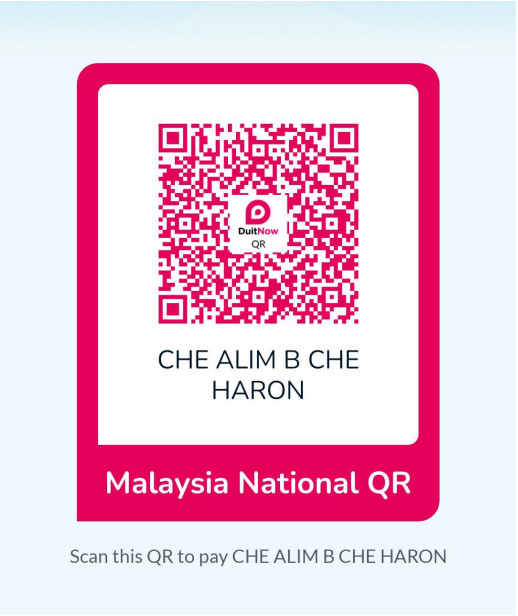
CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

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

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

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

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