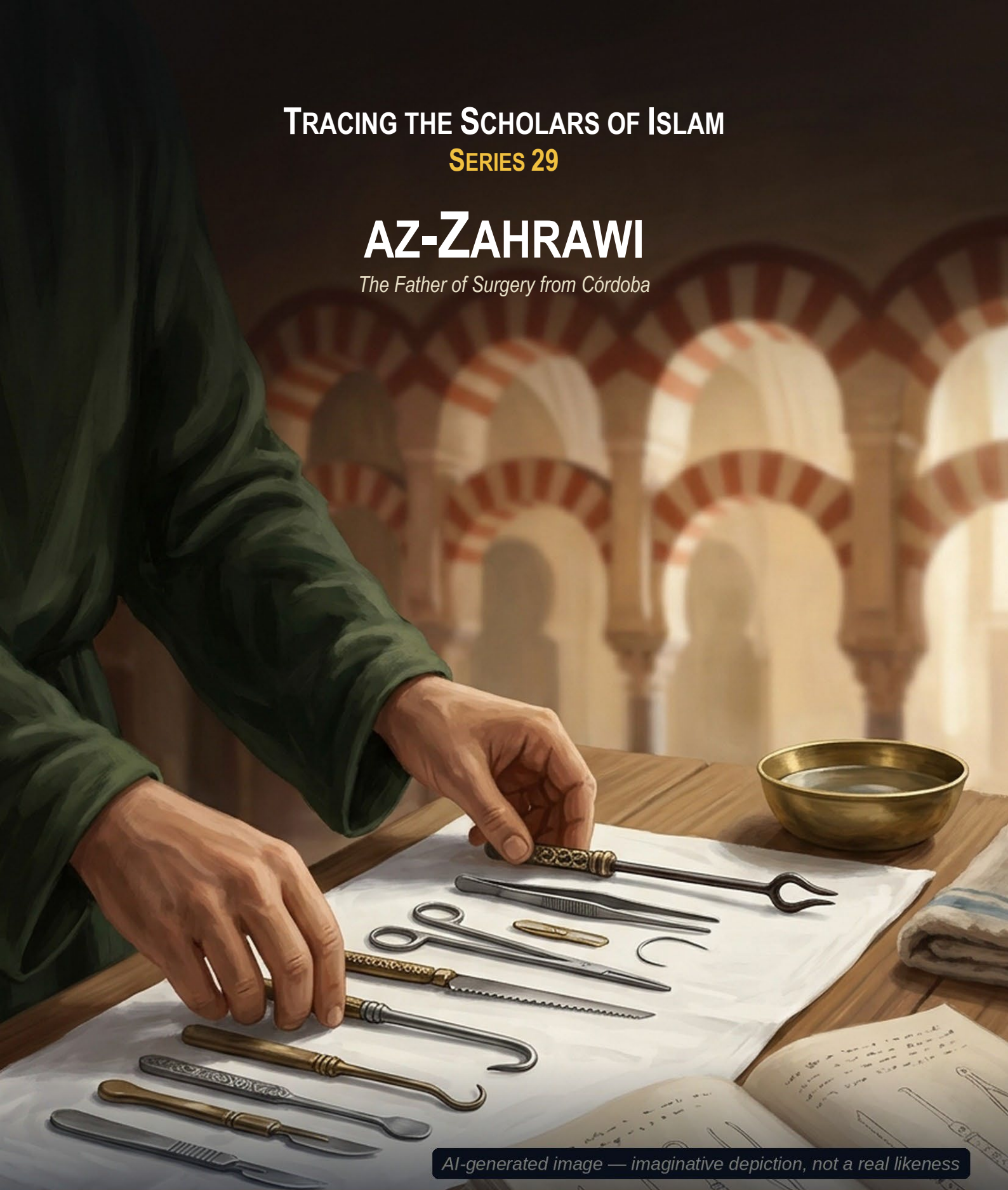
TRACING THE SCHOLARS OF ISLAM

SERIES 29

AZ-ZAHRAWI

The Father of Surgery from Córdoba



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

TRACING THE SCHOLARS OF ISLAM

SERIES 29

AZ-ZAHRAWI

The Father of Surgery from Córdoba

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ فِىٓ أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ

"We have certainly created man in the best of stature."

SURAH AT-TIN 95:4

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who created man in the best of stature. Blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and upon his family and his Companions.

This eBook is specially dedicated to my beloved wife,

ZAHARAH MOHD LATIF;

my dear children,

MUHAMMAD HAFIZ, NOOR HAZWANI, ABDUL HAKIM, NOOR HIDAYAH, NOR AQILA and **NOR ATIQAH**;

and my sons- and daughters-in-law,

FAZILAH, MALEK, HANIN, FAIRIZAL and **FIRWAN**.

This twenty-ninth book of Tracing the Scholars of Islam tells the story of a surgeon from Córdoba who drew more than two hundred surgical instruments, and wrote a book that guided European surgeons for centuries. May his story teach us care and excellence (ihsan) in every task.

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ABOUT THE COVER OF THIS EBOOK

The cover of this eBook is an **image generated by artificial intelligence (AI)** — an ***imaginative depiction, not a real likeness*** of az-Zahrawi. This label is also printed on the cover. This time we see him **at very close range** — only az-Zahrawi's **hands** and the sleeves of his green robe are visible; his face is out of frame.

He is **laying out surgical instruments** on a white linen cloth: scalpels, hooks, forceps, a fine saw and a cautery iron. Beside them lies an open **manuscript with drawings of the same instruments** — a reminder of ***Kitab at-Tasrif***.

In the background stand **red-and-white striped arches** — a hallmark of the architecture of ***Córdoba***, the city where az-Zahrawi lived and served.

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

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AL-ZAHRAWI

The twenty-ninth book of **Tracing the Scholars of Islam** tells the story of ***Abu al-Qasim Khalaf ibn al-'Abbas al-Zahrawi***, known in the West as ***Albucasis***. He was a surgeon from ***al-Andalus*** (Muslim Spain) called ***the father of surgery***.

His ***Kitab al-Tasrif*** contains ***30 volumes***, and its last volume on ***surgery and its instruments*** became the main reference for surgeons in Europe for ***about five centuries***.

This eBook also describes ***Cordoba*** in his time, ***surgical instruments***, the treatment of ***teeth***, ***childbirth***, ***fractures***, ***wounds*** and ***bladder stones***, and ***the etiquette of a surgeon***.

Note: The translation of Qur'anic verses in this eBook is that of Sahih International. The grading of each Hadith is stated in the Hadith box. Information from books of history and modern research is **biographical narration (not Hadith)** *and is placed in the brown "History Note" boxes. A cover image that shows the scholar is an AI-generated image and is marked as such. This eBook is* **not medical advice***; seek treatment from a qualified doctor.*

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THE BEST OF STATURE

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 — quran.com/95:4

"We have certainly created man in the best of stature". The human body is a finely made creation of Allah. A surgeon must ***know the body deeply*** before daring to cut it — and al-Zahrawi stressed this in his book. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 95:4.

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THE STAGES OF HUMAN CREATION

SURAH AL-MU'MINUN 23:12–14

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ مِن سُلَٰلَةٍ مِّن طِينٍ ﴿١٢﴾

And certainly did We create man from an extract of clay.

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَٰهُ نُطْفَةً فِى قَرَارٍ مَّكِينٍ ﴿١٣﴾

Then We placed him as a sperm-drop in a firm lodging.

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 — quran.com/23:12-14

Allah describes the creation of man: from an extract of clay, a drop, a clinging clot and a lump of flesh, then ***"We made [from] the lump, bones, and We covered the bones with flesh"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 23:14.

Bones and flesh — the two things a surgeon treats every day. The verse ends with praise: ***So blessed is Allah, the best of creators***.

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BACKGROUND: UMAYYAD CORDOBA

Al-Zahrawi lived in the time of ***the Umayyad Caliphate of al-Andalus***. In the 10th century CE, ***Cordoba*** was one of the largest cities in Europe, with paved streets, street lamps, public baths, and ***the Great Mosque of Cordoba*** famous for its red-and-white striped arches.

> **HISTORY NOTE: MADINAT AL-ZAHRA' AND THE LIBRARY OF AL-HAKAM II**
>
> Caliph ***'Abd al-Rahman III*** began building the palace city of ***Madinat al-Zahra'*** outside Cordoba from ***936 CE*** — the year of al-Zahrawi's birth.
>
> His son ***al-Hakam II*** was famous as a lover of learning. His library is said to have held ***hundreds of thousands of volumes***; the figure ***400,000*** is often quoted, though it may be exaggerated.

LESSON

Knowledge flourishes where ***scholars and books are valued***. Cordoba became a centre of learning because its rulers ***invested*** in libraries, schools and hospitals.

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SCHOLARS OF AL-ANDALUS

FIGURE	CONTRIBUTION
‘Abbas ibn Firnas (d. 887 CE)	Inventor from Cordoba; associated with an attempt at flight.
Al-Zahrawi (d. 1013 CE)	Surgery and its instruments.
Ibn Zuhr (d. 1162 CE)	Great physician of Seville; clinical observation (see Book 30).
Ibn Rushd (d. 1198 CE)	Jurist, physician and philosopher of Cordoba.
Al-Idrisi (d. c. 1165 CE)	Geographer; born in Ceuta, studied in Cordoba.

Al-Andalus produced many scholars in ***medicine, philosophy, geography and astronomy***. Their knowledge later flowed into Europe through cities such as ***Toledo***, where many translators worked.

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WHO WAS AL-ZAHRAWI?

Al-Zahrawi was ***born in 936 CE*** in ***al-Zahra'*** (Madinat al-Zahra'), the palace city near ***Cordoba***. The name "al-Zahrawi" refers to his birthplace. He lived in the golden age of the Umayyad Caliphate of al-Andalus.

He is reported to have been ***a physician at the court of Caliph al-Hakam II***, but he also treated the public. He served and taught for ***more than fifty years***, and ***died in Cordoba in 1013 CE***.

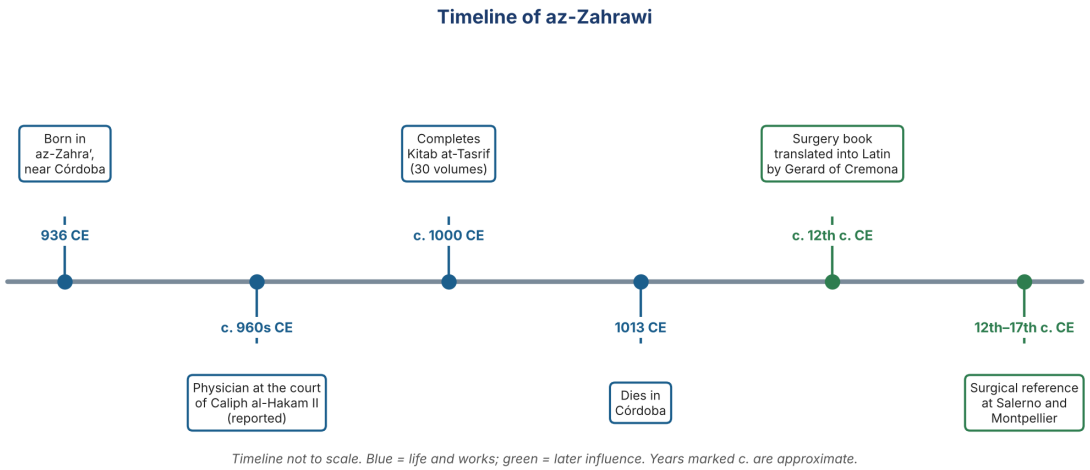


Figure 1: Timeline of al-Zahrawi.

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CONTENTS OF KITAB AL-TASRIF

PART	CONTENTS
Volumes 1–2	Foundations of medicine and diseases from head to foot.
Volumes 3–29	Drugs, nutrition, preparation of medicines and cosmetics.
Volume 30	Surgery: cauterisation, surgery with the knife, and fractures.

Little is known about his personal life. Yet ***his book*** itself shows an experienced, careful and cautious physician.

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KITAB AL-TASRIF

Kitab al-Tasrif li-man 'Ajiza 'an al-Ta'lif (The Method of Medicine for Those Unable to Compile It Themselves) contains 30 volumes on drugs, nutrition, teeth, childbirth and disease. The 30th volume on ***surgery*** is the most famous.

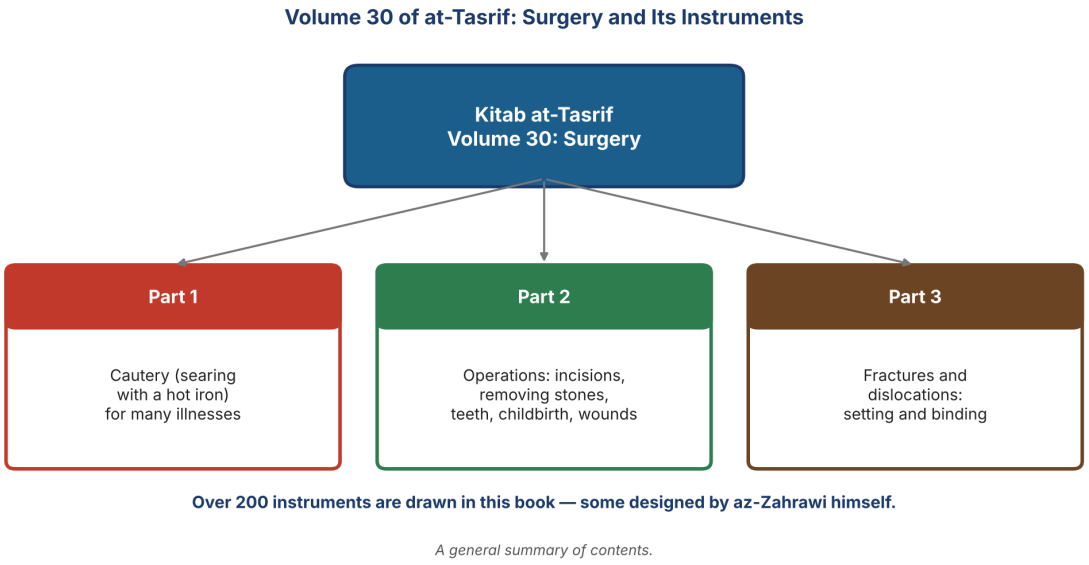


Figure 2: The 30th book of al-Tasrif — surgery and its instruments.

In this volume, al-Zahrawi ***drew more than 200 instruments*** — some of his own design — so that readers would know the real shape of each tool. He described how to ***remove bladder stones***, ***bind loose teeth*** with gold or silver wire, and use ***forceps*** in difficult births.

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WHY DRAWINGS MATTERED

Before al-Zahrawi, medical books rarely included ***drawings of instruments***. Descriptions in words alone are easily misunderstood. With drawings, a physician in another land could ***make the same instrument*** and use it correctly.

Today, ***diagrams and pictures*** are an essential part of every medical textbook. Al-Zahrawi was an early pioneer of this method.

LESSON

Knowledge that is ***clear and easy to understand*** brings more benefit. A good writer thinks of ***his readers***.

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SURGICAL INSTRUMENTS

Al-Zahrawi described instruments for ***cutting, hooking, gripping, sawing, injecting*** and ***cauterising***. Some of these instruments still have almost the same shape as modern ones.

Simple Sketches of Some Instrument Types in Kitab al-Tasrif



Modern sketches for illustration only — not copies of the original manuscript drawings.

Figure 3: Simple sketches of some instrument types in Kitab al-Tasrif.

INSTRUMENT	USE
Scalpel	Making incisions in skin and tissue.
Hook	Lifting or retracting tissue during surgery.
Forceps	Holding tissue, removing foreign bodies or teeth.
Fine saw	Cutting bone.
Catheter	A tube for draining urine.
Cautery iron	Stopping bleeding with heat.

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CUPPING, HONEY AND CAUTERISATION

The first part of al-Zahrawi's book of surgery discusses ***cauterisation*** — burning with a hot iron to stop bleeding or treat disease. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ mentioned three means of healing:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 5681

حَدَّثَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحِيمِ، أَخْبَرَنَا سُرَيْجُ بْنُ يُونُسَ أَبُو الْحَارِثِ، حَدَّثَنَا مَرْوَانُ بْنُ شُجَاعٍ، عَنْ سَالِمٍ الأَفْطَسِ، عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ جُبَيْرٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «الشِّفَاءُ فِي ثَلاَثَةٍ شَرْطَةِ مِحْجَمٍ، أَوْ شَرْبَةِ عَسَلٍ، أَوْ كَيَّةٍ بِنَارٍ، وَأَنْهَى أُمَّتِي عَنِ الْكَيِّ».

TRANSLATION:

Ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنهما reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: "**Healing is in three things: the incision of the cupping instrument, a drink of honey, or cauterisation with fire; and I forbid my community from cauterisation.**"

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Muhammad ibn 'Abd ar-Rahim, from Surayj ibn Yunus Abu al-Harith, from Marwan ibn Shuja', from Salim al-Aftas, from Sa'id ibn Jubayr, from Ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Medicine (Kitab at-Tibb), chapter: there is healing in three things, Hadith No. 5681.

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:5681

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

He mentioned ***cupping, honey and cauterisation*** as healing, yet ***forbade his community from cauterisation***. Many scholars understood this as ***discouraged except when necessary***, because it is painful. Al-Zahrawi described carefully ***when cauterisation is suitable and when it is dangerous*** — in keeping with the cautious spirit of this Hadith.

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CUPPING TODAY

MATTER	GUIDANCE
Who performs it	A trained and certified practitioner.
Hygiene	Sterile, single-use instruments to prevent infection.
Suitability	Not suitable for some patients; consult a doctor first.
Not a substitute	It does not replace medical treatment for serious illness.

Islam encourages seeking treatment, and at the same time requires ***caution***. Traditional treatments must be carried out with ***knowledge, hygiene and trustworthiness***.

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WAGES AND COMPASSION

Treatment is ***honourable work*** that deserves payment. The following Hadith shows how the Messenger of Allah ﷺ valued a cupper:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 5696

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ مُقَاتِلٍ، أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ، أَخْبَرَنَا حُمَيْدٌ الطَّوِيلُ، عَنْ أَنَسٍ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ أَنَّهُ سُئِلَ عَنْ أَجْرِ الْحَجَّامِ، فَقَالَ احْتَجَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم حَجَمَهُ أَبُو طَيْبَةَ، وَأَعْطَاهُ صَاعَيْنِ مِنْ طَعَامٍ، وَكَلَّمَ مَوَالِيَهُ فَخَفَّفُوا عَنْهُ، وَقَالَ «إِنَّ أَمْثَلَ مَا تَدَاوَيْتُمْ بِهِ الْحِجَامَةُ وَالْقُسْطُ الْبَحْرِيُّ». وَقَالَ «لاَ تُعَذِّبُوا صِبْيَانَكُمْ بِالْغَمْزِ مِنَ الْعُذْرَةِ، وَعَلَيْكُمْ بِالْقُسْطِ».

TRANSLATION:

Anas رضى الله عنه was asked about the wages of a cupper. He said: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was cupped;

Abu Taybah cupped him. He gave him **two sa' of food**, and spoke to his masters, who then lightened his burden. He said: **The best of what you treat yourselves with is cupping and sea costus (al-qust al-bahri).** And he said: **Do not torment your children by pressing (the throat) for tonsillitis; use costus.**"

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Muhammad ibn Muqatil, from 'Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak, from Humayd at-Tawil, from Anas ibn Malik رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Medicine (Kitab at-Tibb), chapter on cupping as a treatment for disease, Hadith No. 5696.

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:5696

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ ***paid the cupper***, and ***spoke up for him*** before his masters. He also forbade ***tormenting children*** with painful treatment, and told them to use a gentler method. This is the etiquette of medicine: ***skilful, fair and compassionate***.

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THE RIGHTS OF PATIENTS AND OF CARERS

RIGHTS OF THE PATIENT	RIGHTS OF THE CARER
Treated well and safely	Fair wages
Given true information	Respect and protection
Dignity and modesty preserved	A safe working environment
Not hurt without need	Time to rest and learn

The Hadith of the cupper shows that Islam protects ***both sides***: the patient is treated gently, and the carer is paid fairly.

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DENTAL CARE AND THE SIWAK

Al-Zahrawi wrote a special chapter on ***teeth***: removing ***tartar***, extracting teeth carefully, ***binding loose teeth*** with gold or silver wire, and ***replacing lost teeth*** with artificial teeth made of bone.

Islam strongly emphasises oral hygiene. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 887 (MUTTAFAQ ‘ALAYH)

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ يُوسُفَ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنَا مَالِكٌ، عَنْ أَبِي الزِّنَادِ، عَنِ الأَعْرَجِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «لَوْلاَ أَنْ أَشُقَّ عَلَى أُمَّتِي ـ أَوْ عَلَى النَّاسِ ـ لأَمَرْتُهُمْ بِالسِّوَاكِ مَعَ كُلِّ صَلاَةٍ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **“Were it not that I would burden my Ummah — or the people — I would have commanded them to use the siwak (tooth-stick) for every prayer.”**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from ‘Abdullah ibn Yusuf, from Malik, from Abu az-Zinad, from al-A‘raj, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Friday Prayer, Chapter: The Siwak on Friday, Hadith No. 887. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 252).

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:887

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Using the siwak is strongly encouraged before every prayer. Today, brushing twice a day and flossing are the modern ways of keeping ***the mouth clean*** — a sunnah that remains relevant.

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FROM GOLD WIRE TO BRACES

IN AL-ZAHRAWI'S TIME	TODAY
Binding loose teeth with gold or silver wire	Braces and dental splints
Artificial teeth made of bone	Dentures and dental implants
Scraping tartar with special tools	Professional cleaning by a dentist
Careful extraction	Extraction under local anaesthetic

The basic principles of dentistry were described by al-Zahrawi ***a thousand years ago***. Today, a dental check-up ***every six months*** helps prevent bigger problems.

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CHILDBIRTH AND CARING FOR MOTHERS

Al-Zahrawi described how to manage ***difficult births***, abnormal positions of the baby, and instruments that ***midwives*** could use. He also mentioned the role of ***women doctors and midwives*** in treating female patients.

SURAH LUQMAN 31:14

وَوَصَّيْنَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ بِوَٰلِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُۥ وَهْنًا عَلَىٰ وَهْنٍ وَفِصَٰلُهُۥ فِى عَامَيْنِ أَنِ ٱشْكُرْ لِى وَلِوَٰلِدَيْكَ إِلَىَّ ٱلْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٤﴾

And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him, [increasing her] in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Be grateful to Me and to your parents; to Me is the [final] destination.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/31:14

Allah reminds us that ***"His mother carried him, [increasing her] in weakness upon weakness"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 31:14.

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Because of that sacrifice, the mother holds a very high rank in Islam:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 5971

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا جَرِيرٌ، عَنْ عُمَارَةَ بْنِ الْقَعْقَاعِ بْنِ شُبْرُمَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي زُرْعَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ قَالَ جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَقَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَنْ أَحَقُّ بِحُسْنِ صَحَابَتِي قَالَ « أُمُّكَ ». قَالَ ثُمَّ مَنْ قَالَ « أُمُّكَ ». قَالَ ثُمَّ مَنْ قَالَ « أُمُّكَ ». قَالَ ثُمَّ مَنْ قَالَ « ثُمَّ أَبُوكَ ». وَقَالَ ابْنُ شُبْرُمَةَ وَيَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو زُرْعَةَ مِثْلَهُ.

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه said: A man came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said: O Messenger of Allah, who is most deserving of my good companionship? He said: **"Your mother."** He said: Then who? He said: **"Your mother."** He said: Then who? He said: **"Your mother."** He said: Then who? He said: **"Then your father."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Qutaybah ibn Sa'id, from Jarir ibn 'Abd al-Hamid, from 'Umarah ibn al-Qa'qa' ibn Shubrumah, from Abu Zur'ah ibn 'Amr, from Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Good Manners, chapter on who is most entitled to good companionship, Hadith No. 5971. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 2548).

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:5971

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

The mother is mentioned three times before the father. Caring for a mother's health during pregnancy and childbirth is part of ***honouring mothers***. Doctors and midwives who protect mothers are doing very noble work.

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MATERNAL HEALTH TODAY

STAGE	CARE
Before pregnancy	Eat a balanced diet and look after health.
During pregnancy	Regular check-ups at a health clinic.
Childbirth	In hospital or with trained health workers.
After childbirth	Rest, good nutrition and family support.

Medical progress has ***greatly reduced maternal deaths***. Yet the support of ***family and community*** remains important — just as Islam honours mothers.

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FRACTURES AND DISLOCATIONS

The last part of al-Zahrawi's book of surgery discusses ***fractures*** and ***dislocated joints***. He described how to ***pull and straighten*** the bone, then ***bandage it*** so that it does not move.

PROBLEM	METHOD DESCRIBED
Broken arm or leg	Straighten the bone, then bandage with cloth and wooden splints.
Dislocated shoulder	Return the joint to its place by pulling and rotating.
Broken collarbone	Bind the shoulder so the bone heals correctly.
Kneecap	Bandage the knee and rest it.

Al-Zahrawi is said to have used bandages stiffened with a certain mixture, resembling a modern ***plaster cast***. The principle is the same today: ***straighten, support and rest***.

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FIRST AID FOR FRACTURES

STEP	DESCRIPTION
Do not move it	Avoid moving the part suspected to be broken.
Support it	Use a board or cloth to support the limb.
Cool it	Apply a cold pack wrapped in cloth to reduce swelling.
Get help	Contact a health worker or go to hospital.

These basic steps can ***prevent an injury from getting worse***. First aid is beneficial knowledge for everyone.

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STITCHING AND CARING FOR WOUNDS

Al-Zahrawi described several ways of ***stitching wounds*** and suitable types of thread. He also stressed ***clean wounds*** and how to stop ***bleeding***.

STEP	DESCRIPTION
Cleaning the wound	Removing dirt and foreign bodies.
Stopping the bleeding	With pressure, tying or cautery if needed.
Stitching	Bringing the edges of the wound together so it heals quickly.
Bandaging	Covering the wound with clean cloth.
Observing	Watching for signs of infection such as swelling and pus.

LESSON

Cleanliness is ***half the treatment***. Today we know germs cause infection, but physicians like al-Zahrawi saw ***the importance of a clean wound*** more than a thousand years ago.

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FROM OLD THREAD TO MODERN SUTURES

IN THE PAST	TODAY
Thread from wool, silk or animal gut	Sterile synthetic thread
Thread that had to be removed	Thread that dissolves in the body
Hand-made metal needles	Fine single-use needles
Cautery to stop bleeding	Electrical devices and tying of blood vessels

Good stitching helps wounds ***heal faster*** and leaves ***smaller scars***. Al-Zahrawi described several kinds of stitches whose principles are still used.

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BLADDER STONES AND THE URINARY TRACT

Al-Zahrawi described surgery to ***remove stones*** from the bladder, and the use of a ***catheter*** to drain urine when the passage is blocked.

HISTORY NOTE: A DIFFICULT OPERATION

Bladder-stone surgery at that time was ***very risky***, since there was no modern anaesthesia or antibiotics. Al-Zahrawi advised doctors to ***assess the patient*** carefully before deciding.

He also described an instrument for ***crushing*** large stones — an early idea behind gentler modern methods.

TREATMENT TODAY

Today stones can be broken up with ***sound waves*** from outside the body, or removed through ***a fine tube*** without a large incision. Knowledge grows, but the aim is the same: ***reducing the patient's pain***.

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PREVENTING STONES

PRACTICE	REASON
Drink enough water	Dilute urine reduces stone formation.
Reduce salt	Too much salt raises the risk of stones.
Eat a balanced diet	Good nutrition helps the kidneys.
Health check-ups	Detect problems early.

In hot countries like Malaysia, ***drinking enough water*** is very important. Prevention is better than cure.

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IHSAN IN EVERY TASK

Al-Zahrawi advised his students ***not to perform dangerous operations*** merely for money, and to ***know anatomy*** well. The Qur'an calls:

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:195

وَأَنفِقُواْ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ وَلَا تُلۡقُواْ بِأَيۡدِيكُمۡ إِلَى ٱلتَّهۡلُكَةِ وَأَحۡسِنُوٓاْۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلۡمُحۡسِنِينَ ١٩٥

And spend in the way of Allah and do not throw [yourselves] with your [own] hands into destruction [by refraining]. And do good; indeed, Allah loves the doers of good.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:195

Do not throw yourselves into destruction, and do good — ***"indeed, Allah loves the doers of good"***. For a surgeon, ***ihsan*** means skill, care and honesty. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:195.

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The Messenger of Allah ﷺ declared that ihsan is required in ***all things***:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1955

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ ابْنُ عُلَيَّةَ، عَنْ خَالِدٍ الْحَذَّاءِ، عَنْ أَبِي قِلاَبَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي الأَشْعَثِ، عَنْ شَدَّادِ بْنِ أَوْسٍ، قَالَ ثِنْتَانِ حَفِظْتُهُمَا عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَتَبَ الإِحْسَانَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ فَإِذَا قَتَلْتُمْ فَأَحْسِنُوا الْقِتْلَةَ وَإِذَا ذَبَحْتُمْ فَأَحْسِنُوا الذِّبْحَ وَلْيُحِدَّ أَحَدُكُمْ شَفْرَتَهُ فَلْيُرِحْ ذَبِيحَتَهُ».

TRANSLATION:

Shaddad ibn Aws رضى الله عنه said: Two things I memorised from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ; he said: **"Indeed Allah has prescribed excellence (ihsan) in everything.** So when you kill (where it is permitted), kill well; and when you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each of you sharpen his blade and spare his animal suffering."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah, from Isma'il ibn 'Ulayyah, from Khalid al-Hadhdha', from Abu Qilabah, from Abu al-Ash'ath as-San'ani, from Shaddad ibn Aws رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Hunting and Slaughter, Hadith No. 1955.

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

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:1955a

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

If ihsan is required even when slaughtering an animal, then ***all the more so*** when treating people. A sharp knife, a skilful hand and a compassionate heart — that is ***the ihsan of a surgeon***.

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THE ETIQUETTE OF A SURGEON

In the introduction to his book of surgery, al-Zahrawi gave advice that is still relevant today.

AL-ZAHRAWI'S ADVICE	MEANING
Master anatomy	A surgeon must know the body before cutting it.
Do not be greedy	Do not perform dangerous operations for money.
Know your limits	If treatment is too risky, do not proceed.
Put safety first	Choose the safest method for the patient.
Learn from experience	Record and remember every case to improve.

HISTORY NOTE: AL-ZAHRAWI'S WORDS

Al-Zahrawi wrote that the art of surgery in his time had ***almost vanished***, because many practised it ***without knowledge of anatomy***. He saw many patients suffer from their mistakes.

That is why he wrote his book — to ***revive*** correct and safe surgery.

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CLEANLINESS AND BEAUTY

Part of al-Tasrif discusses ***cosmetics and self-care***: care of hair, skin and teeth, perfumes, and cleansing substances. Islam encourages cleanliness and a good appearance, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 91

وَحَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْمُثَنَّى، وَمُحَمَّدُ بْنُ بَشَّارٍ، وَإِبْرَاهِيمُ بْنُ دِينَارٍ، جَمِيعًا عَنْ يَحْيَى بْنِ حَمَّادٍ، - قَالَ ابْنُ الْمُثَنَّى حَدَّثَنِي يَحْيَى بْنُ حَمَّادٍ، - أَخْبَرَنَا شُعْبَةُ، عَنْ أَبَانَ بْنِ تَغْلِبَ، عَنْ فُضَيْلٍ الْفُقَيْمِيِّ، عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ النَّخَعِيِّ، عَنْ عَلْقَمَةَ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ مَسْعُودٍ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « لاَ يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ مَنْ كَانَ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ مِنْ كِبْرٍ ». قَالَ رَجُلٌ إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ يُحِبُّ أَنْ يَكُونَ ثَوْبُهُ حَسَنًا وَنَعْلُهُ حَسَنَةً. قَالَ « إِنَّ اللَّهَ جَمِيلٌ يُحِبُّ الْجَمَالَ الْكِبْرُ بَطَرُ الْحَقِّ وَغَمْطُ النَّاسِ ».

TRANSLATION:

‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud رضى الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: **“No one will enter Paradise who has in his heart the weight of an atom of pride.”** A man said: A man likes his clothes to be fine and his sandals to be fine. He said: **“Indeed, Allah is beautiful and loves beauty. Pride is rejecting the truth and looking down on people.”**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Muhammad ibn al-Muthanna, Muhammad ibn Bashshar and Ibrahim ibn Dinar, from Yahya ibn Hammad, from Shu‘bah, from Aban ibn Taghlib, from Fudayl al-Fuqaymi, from Ibrahim al-Nakha‘i, from ‘Algamah ibn Qays, from ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Faith, chapter on the prohibition of pride and its explanation, Hadith No. 91.

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

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:91a

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Allah is beautiful and loves beauty. Caring for cleanliness and appearance ***is not arrogance***. Arrogance is ***rejecting the truth and looking down on people***. A Muslim is neat and clean, yet remains humble.

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THE SUNNAH OF SELF-CARE

PRACTICE	BENEFIT
Using the siwak or brushing teeth	Caring for the mouth and teeth.
Trimming nails	Preventing germs from collecting.
Bathing and wearing perfume	Cleanliness and the comfort of others.
Combing and caring for hair	A neat appearance.
Wearing clean clothes	A sign of respect for oneself and others.

These practices are mentioned in various Hadith about ***the sunnah of fitrah*** and cleanliness. They show that Islam cares for ***the body and appearance***, not only the soul.

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FROM CORDOBA TO EUROPE

In the 12th century CE, ***Gerard of Cremona*** translated al-Zahrawi's book of surgery into Latin. It became a reference at the medical schools of ***Salerno*** and ***Montpellier***.



Figure 4: The chain of surgical knowledge from Greece to Renaissance Europe.

HISTORY NOTE: INFLUENCE IN EUROPE

The French surgeon ***Guy de Chauliac*** (14th century CE) is said to have quoted al-Zahrawi ***more than 200 times*** in his book of surgery.

A historian of medicine stated that this book holds a place in surgery ***like Ibn Sina's Canon in medicine***.

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THE LEGACY OF AL-ZAHRAWI

More than a thousand years after his death, al-Zahrawi is still remembered, especially in ***Cordoba*** and the Muslim world.

HONOUR	DESCRIPTION
Calle Albucasis, Cordoba	A street in Cordoba is named after him.
Hospitals and institutes	Many hospitals and medical colleges in the Muslim world bear his name.
Kitab al-Tasrif	Its manuscripts are kept in great libraries of the world, and its translations are still studied.

LESSON

Al-Zahrawi's true legacy is ***precision***: clear drawings, accurate descriptions, and honest advice. Every surgeon today, knowingly or not, inherits ***that spirit*** (Britannica: Abu al-Qasim al-Zahrawi).

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ESTABLISHED REPORTS AND POPULAR STORIES

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

STORIES AND THEIR STATUS

POPULAR STATEMENT	STATUS
Al-Zahrawi wrote Kitab al-Tasrif in 30 volumes.	Established. The book still exists.
His surgical volume drew more than 200 instruments.	Established in the surviving manuscripts.
He was court physician to Caliph al-Hakam II.	Reported by historical sources; details of his life are few and incomplete.
He was the first to use catgut for stitching.	A popular claim; hard to verify fully from the original text.
He was the first to describe haemophilia.	Cited in many studies; his description of men in one family who bled excessively is brief.
He invented lipstick.	A popular claim. He wrote about cosmetics, but this claim is often exaggerated.
All modern surgical instruments come from him.	Exaggerated. He contributed much, but surgery developed across many civilisations.

REFLECTION — HONOURING WITHOUT EXAGGERATING

Al-Zahrawi himself was very careful and honest about the limits of his skill. We honour him in the same way: holding to what is established, and marking what is still uncertain.

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

LESSONS FROM THIS EBOOK

First: Man was created in the best of stature — know the body before treating it (95:4; 23:14).

Second: Cupping, honey and cauterisation have benefits, but cauterisation only when necessary (Sahih al-Bukhari 5681).

Third: Value carers and do not torment patients (Sahih al-Bukhari 5696).

Fourth: Keep the mouth clean with the siwak (Sahih al-Bukhari 887).

Fifth: Honour mothers, who carry their children in hardship (31:14; Sahih al-Bukhari 5971).

Sixth: Allah loves those who do good in their work (2:195).

Seventh: Ihsan is required in all things (Sahih Muslim 1955).

Eighth: Allah is beautiful and loves beauty, but avoid arrogance (Sahih Muslim 91).

Ninth: Know your limits — do not do dangerous things without knowledge.

Tenth: Cleanliness is half the treatment.

Eleventh: Clear drawings and records preserve knowledge for future generations.

CONCLUSION

Al-Zahrawi died in Cordoba in 1013 CE. A street in Cordoba still bears his name. The next book of **Tracing the Scholars of Islam**, in sha Allah, will tell the story of ***Ibn Zuhr***, the great physician of Seville. Wallahu a'lam.

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GLOSSARY AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GLOSSARY

TERM	MEANING
Surgery	Treatment by cutting into or removing part of the body.
Cauterisation	Burning with a hot iron to stop bleeding or to treat.
Cupping	Drawing out a little blood through small cuts in the skin.
Anatomy	The science of the structure of the body.
Catheter	A fine tube for draining fluid from the body.
Tartar	A hard layer that builds up on the teeth.
Midwife	A person who helps mothers give birth.
Ihsan	Doing something in the best possible way.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Why must a surgeon know anatomy deeply (95:4)?

2. Why were the instrument drawings in Kitab al-Tasrif so important?

3. How is the Hadith about the siwak still relevant today?

4. What does ihsan mean in the work of a doctor, teacher or craftsman?

5. What is the difference between caring for one's appearance and being arrogant (Sahih Muslim 91)?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Draw a tool you use every day (such as scissors or a spoon) carefully, as al-Zahrawi drew his instruments. Write its use below the drawing.

Activity 2: Use the siwak or brush your teeth before prayer for a week. Note any change you feel.

Activity 3: Learn the basic first-aid steps for a small wound from a teacher or health worker.

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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 رضي 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 رضي 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."

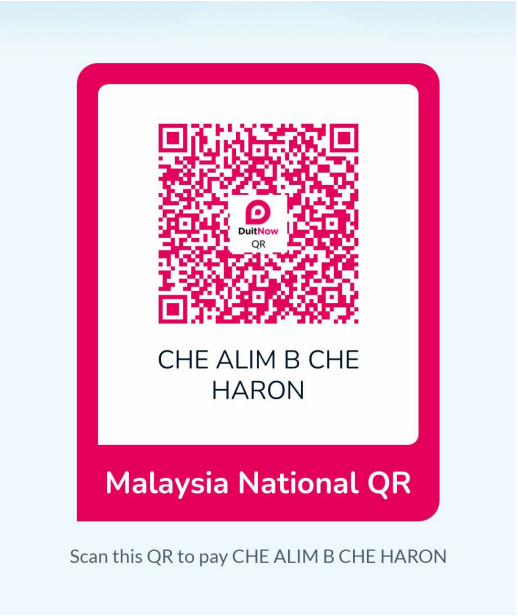
CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه .

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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