بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

HEROES OF ISLAM

SERIES 16

TARIQ IBN ZIYAD

Conqueror of al-Andalus from Jabal Tariq, According to the Qur'an, Authentic Hadith and the Books of History

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱصۡبِرُواْ وَصَابِرُواْ وَرَابِطُواْ وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تُفۡلِحُونَ ٢٠٠

"O you who have believed, persevere and endure and remain stationed and fear Allāh that you may be successful."

Surah Ali 'Imran 3:200

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who honours people by their piety, not by their lineage. May blessings and peace be upon our master, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, upon his family and Companions, and upon those who followed his path in excellence — among them Tariq ibn Ziyad, the conqueror of al-Andalus.

This book 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 sixteenth book of Heroes of Islam tells the story of Tariq ibn Ziyad: the Berber mawla of Musa ibn Nusayr who crossed the strait in 92 AH, landed at the hill now known as Gibraltar, defeated the army of Roderic at Wadi Lakka and opened the way to al-Andalus. His story is told with honesty about its sources, including the famous stories that are not established. 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 ***Jabal Tariq (the Rock of Gibraltar)*** at sunrise — the great limestone hill named after Tariq ibn Ziyad — above a calm strait with morning mist on the water.

In the middle, several ***wooden sailing ships*** lie at anchor near the shore, recalling the crossing of Tariq's army from Africa in 92 AH. The ships are shown intact, because the story of Tariq burning his ships is not established in the early sources (see Chapter 6).

In the foreground, ***a sheathed sword*** and ***a round shield*** rest on a rock by the shore — a symbol of readiness before the battle of Wadi Lakka.

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

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CONTENTS

TARIQ IBN ZIYAD 5
1. WHO WAS TARIQ IBN ZIYAD? 6
2. A BERBER, A MAWLA 7
3. UNDER THE CARE OF MUSA IBN NUSAYR 9
4. JULIAN, TARIF AND THE GATE TO AL-ANDALUS 10
5. CROSSING THE STRAIT 11
6. THE BURNING OF THE SHIPS: BETWEEN FACT AND FICTION 12
7. THE SPEECH: "THE SEA IS BEHIND YOU" 13
8. BEFORE THE BATTLE: DO NOT WISH TO MEET THE ENEMY 14
9. THE BATTLE OF WADI LAKKA 16
10. THE ETIQUETTE OF WAR AND PEACE TREATIES 17
11. CORDOBA, TOLEDO AND THE CITIES OF AL-ANDALUS 18
12. MUSA IBN NUSAYR CROSSES OVER 19
13. THE TABLE OF SOLOMON AND THE TRUST OF THE SPOILS 20
14. SUMMONED TO DAMASCUS 22
15. AN UNKNOWN END 23
16. TARIQ'S LEGACY: EIGHT CENTURIES OF AL-ANDALUS 24
17. SOURCES OF THE STORIES OF TARIQ 25
18. PEOPLE, PLACES AND TIMELINE 26
19. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT TARIQ 27
20. LESSONS AND CONCLUSION 29
REFERENCES 30
SUPPORT & DONATIONS 31

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.com.

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TARIQ IBN ZIYAD

At the southern tip of today's Spain stands a great limestone hill facing the strait that separates Europe from Africa. The world calls it ***Gibraltar*** — from the Arabic ***Jabal Tariq***, "the Hill of Tariq". The name honours a Muslim commander who landed there in 92 AH (711 CE): ***Tariq ibn Ziyad***.

He was a ***mawla*** (a freed slave) of the governor Musa ibn Nusayr and, according to most historians, came from the ***Berbers*** — a people who had embraced Islam only a few decades earlier. With about seven thousand soldiers he crossed the strait, defeated the army of King Roderic at Wadi Lakka, and opened the way to ***al-Andalus***, which then became a centre of Islamic civilisation in Europe for nearly eight centuries.

This eBook is the sixteenth in the ***Heroes of Islam*** series. Tariq's story is very famous, but much of it — including the burning of the ships and the speech "the sea is behind you" — comes from books written centuries later. For this reason the source and grade of every story are stated honestly, and its lessons are grounded in the Qur'an and authentic Hadith.

Tariq's story is the story of a man honoured by Islam: from a people looked down upon, to a commander who opened a continent — and then ending quietly, almost unknown, like many sincere servants of Allah.

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WHO WAS TARIQ IBN ZIYAD?

His name was ***Tariq ibn Ziyad***. The history books differ about his origin. According to most sources, including Ibn 'Idhari and Ibn Khaldun, he was a ***Berber*** of the Nafzah tribe of the Maghrib. Other reports say he was of Persian descent from Hamadan, and some link him to the Arab tribe of al-Sadif. The most widely held view is that he was a Berber.

What is agreed is that he was a ***mawla*** of Musa ibn Nusayr, governor of Ifriqiyah. His date of birth is unknown, and his date of death is also uncertain — it is said to be around 102 AH (720 CE).

NAME AND TITLES

NAME OR TITLE	EXPLANATION
Tariq ibn Ziyad	His real name
Mawla of Musa ibn Nusayr	Freed slave of the governor of Ifriqiyah
Al-Barbari	Of Berber origin, according to the most widely held view
Fatih al-Andalus	Conqueror of al-Andalus (the Iberian Peninsula)
Jabal Tariq	The hill named after him — today's Gibraltar

LESSONS

History did not keep Tariq's date of birth, but it kept his name on a hill spoken of by millions every day. What lasts is deeds, not lineage.

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A BERBER, A MAWLA

The Berbers had embraced Islam only a few decades before Tariq's time, through the da'wah of 'Uqbah ibn Nafi' and the leaders after him (see Series 15). Yet Islam does not judge people by lineage or colour:

SURAH AL-HUJURAT 49:13

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقۡنَٰكُم مِّن ذَكَرٖ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلۡنَٰكُمۡ شُعُوبٗا وَقَبَآئِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوٓاْۚ إِنَّ أَكۡرَمَكُمۡ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتۡقَىٰكُمۡۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٞ ١٣

O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allāh is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allāh is Knowing and Aware.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/49:13

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also taught that leadership is not decided by rank of birth. A former slave may become a leader, and must be obeyed in what is good:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 7142

حَدَّثَنَا مُسَدَّدٌ، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى، عَنْ شُعْبَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي التَّيَّاحِ، عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم " اسْمَعُوا وَأَطِيعُوا وَإِنِ اسْتُعْمِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَبْدٌ حَبَشِيٌّ كَأَنَّ رَأْسَهُ زَبِيبَةٌ ".

TRANSLATION:

Anas ibn Malik narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"Listen and obey, even if an Abyssinian slave whose head is like a raisin is appointed over you."***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Musaddad, from Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Qattan, from Shu'bah, from Abu at-Tayyah, from Anas ibn Malik رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Judgements, Chapter: Listening to and Obeying the Imam as Long as It Is Not Disobedience, Hadith No. 7142.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: sunnah.com/bukhari:7142

The army that crossed with Tariq was made up mostly of Berbers, led by a Berber. This shows how quickly Islam raised a people from those who were called to Islam into those who called others to it.

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LESSONS

Honour in the sight of Allah is piety. A mawla from a people new to Islam can carry the greatest trust when he is fit to carry it.

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UNDER THE CARE OF MUSA IBN NUSAYR

HISTORICAL NOTE: GOVERNOR OF TANGIER

Around 86 AH, ***Musa ibn Nusayr*** was appointed governor of Ifriqiyah by the Umayyad Caliph. He continued the conquest of the Maghrib up to the Atlantic Ocean, and many Berber tribes embraced Islam. After the city of ***Tangier*** was taken, Musa appointed Tariq ibn Ziyad as its governor, with an army made up mostly of Berbers. Musa also sent teachers to teach them the Qur'an and the rulings of Islam.

Status of the report: Narrated in the histories of the conquest of al-Andalus without an authentic chain. The story is well known and accepted as history, but it cannot be used as proof in the way an authentic hadith can.

REFERENCES:

Ibn ‘Abd al-Hakam, Futuh Misr wa al-Maghrib; Ibn ‘Idhari, al-Bayan al-Mughrib; Ibn al-Athir, al-Kamil fi at-Tarikh.

Tangier lies at the northern tip of Africa, only about 14 kilometres from the Spanish coast across the strait. From there Tariq looked north.

LESSONS

Good leaders produce leaders. Musa ibn Nusayr did not keep authority to himself, but entrusted it to a mawla whose ability had been proven.

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JULIAN, TARIF AND THE GATE TO AL-ANDALUS

HISTORICAL NOTE: AN INVITATION FROM ACROSS THE STRAIT

At that time the Iberian Peninsula was ruled by a ***Visigothic*** kingdom torn by division. ***Roderic*** (Ludhriq) had seized the throne, and the family of the previous king, Witiza, opposed him. ***Julian*** (Yulyan), lord of Ceuta (Sabtah), quarrelled with Roderic and offered his ships to the Muslims.

Before sending a large army, Musa ibn Nusayr asked permission from the Caliph al-Walid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, then sent a small reconnaissance force in 91 AH under ***Tarif ibn Malik*** with about 400 men. They landed at a small island later named after him — today’s ***Tarifa*** — and returned safely.

Status of the report: Julian’s role and Tarif’s reconnaissance are reported in the early sources. But the story that Julian took revenge because Roderic wronged his daughter appears later and is mixed with legend; it cannot be confirmed.

REFERENCES:

Ibn ‘Abd al-Hakam, Futuh Misr wa al-Maghrib; Ibn al-Athir, al-Kamil fi at-Tarikh; Ibn ‘Idhari, al-Bayan al-Mughrib.

LESSONS

Wisdom before courage: the Muslims did not rush, but sought the caliph’s permission, scouted first, and only then advanced.

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CROSSING THE STRAIT

HISTORICAL NOTE: LANDING AT JABAL TARIQ

In Rajab of 92 AH (April 711 CE), Tariq ibn Ziyad crossed the strait with about ***7,000*** soldiers, mostly Berbers, on ships that went back and forth. He landed at the foot of a rocky hill later named ***Jabal Tariq*** — Gibraltar. Musa then sent another ***5,000*** men as reinforcements, bringing Tariq's army to about ***12,000***.

Status of the report: Tariq's crossing in 92 AH and his landing at Jabal Tariq are agreed upon by historians; the numbers of troops differ slightly between sources.

REFERENCES:

Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, Futuh Misr wa al-Maghrib; Ibn al-Qutiyyah, Tarikh Iftitah al-Andalus; Ibn 'Idhari, al-Bayan al-Mughrib.

Crossing the sea to an unknown land requires the patience and steadfastness that Allah commands:

SURAH ALI 'IMRAN 3:200

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱصۡبِرُواْ وَصَابِرُواْ وَرَابِطُواْ وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تُفۡلِحُونَ

٢٠٠

O you who have believed, persevere and endure and remain stationed and fear Allāh that you may be successful.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/3:200

LESSONS

Every great journey begins with one brave step. The hill where Tariq set foot still carries his name today.

THE BURNING OF THE SHIPS: BETWEEN FACT AND FICTION

The most famous story about Tariq is that he burned his ships after landing, so that his army could not retreat. It is often repeated in lectures and motivational books.

SOURCE NOTE: WHERE DOES THIS STORY COME FROM?

The story of the burning of the ships is ***not found*** in the early sources on the conquest of al-Andalus, such as Ibn ʻAbd al-Hakam (3rd century AH) or Ibn al-Qutiyyah. It appears in writings composed much later, about four centuries after the event.

Many modern historians doubt the story. Among the reasons: the early sources say the ships belonged to Julian and were used back and forth to bring reinforcements; and it makes little sense for an army that needed supplies and reinforcements from Africa to destroy its only link.

Status of the report: Weak and not established. The story is not found in the early sources and should not be told as fact.

REFERENCES:

Ibn ʻAbd al-Hakam, Futuh Misr wa al-Maghrib; Ibn al-Qutiyyah, Tarikh Iftitah al-Andalus; modern historical studies of the conquest of al-Andalus.

LESSONS

We do not need invented stories to honour the heroes of Islam. Tariq's established story — a Berber mawla who opened al-Andalus with 12,000 men — is amazing enough.

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THE SPEECH: "THE SEA IS BEHIND YOU"

SOURCE NOTE: A FAMOUS SPEECH

It is reported that before the battle Tariq said: ***"O people, where is there to flee? The sea is behind you and the enemy is before you. By Allah, you have nothing but truthfulness and patience…"***

This speech is recorded in much later books, especially ***Nafh at-Tib*** by al-Maqqari (11th century AH / 17th century CE), nearly nine centuries after the event. It is not found in the early sources. Many researchers also note that its highly polished literary style resembles the composition of a later writer more than the words of a Berber commander on the battlefield.

Status of the report: Not established with a reliable chain. It may be mentioned as a famous literary report, not as the certain words of Tariq.

REFERENCES:

Al-Maqqari, Nafh at-Tib min Ghusn al-Andalus ar-Ratib; historical studies of the sources of the conquest of al-Andalus.

Although its wording is not established, its meaning — patience and firmness before the enemy — was truly taught by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, as in the next chapter.

LESSONS

Distinguishing established history from literary composition does not belittle a hero; it honours the truth.

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BEFORE THE BATTLE: DO NOT WISH TO MEET THE ENEMY

Islam does not teach its people to love war. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught the etiquette before meeting the enemy:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1742

وَحَدَّثَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ رَافِعٍ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّزَّاقِ، أَخْبَرَنَا ابْنُ جُرَيْجٍ، أَخْبَرَنِي مُوسَى، بْنُ عُقْبَةَ عَنْ أَبِي النَّضْرِ، عَنْ كُتَابٍ، رَجُلٍ مِنْ أَسْلَمَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يُقَالُ لَهُ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ أَبِي أَوْفَى فَكَتَبَ إِلَى عُمَرَ بْنِ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ حِينَ سَارَ إِلَى الْحَرُورِيَّةِ يُخْبِرُهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم كَانَ فِي بَعْضِ أَيَّامِهِ الَّتِي لَقِيَ فِيهَا الْعَدُوَّ يَنْتَظِرُ حَتَّى إِذَا مَالَتِ الشَّمْسُ قَامَ فِيهِمْ فَقَالَ " يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ لاَ تَتَمَنَّوْا لِقَاءَ الْعَدُوِّ وَاسْأَلُوا اللَّهَ الْعَافِيَةَ فَإِذَا لَقِيتُمُوهُمْ فَاصْبِرُوا وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ الْجَنَّةَ تَحْتَ ظِلاَلِ السُّيُوفِ " .

TRANSLATION:

From the letter of ‘Abdullah ibn Abi Awfa: On one of the days when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ met the enemy, he waited until the sun had passed its zenith, then stood among them and said: ***“O people, do not wish to meet the enemy, and ask Allah for well-being. But when you meet them, be patient, and know that Paradise is beneath the shade of swords.”***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Muhammad ibn Rafi‘, from ‘Abd ar-Razzaq, from Ibn Jurayj, from Musa ibn ‘Uqbah, from Abu an-Nadr Salim, from ‘Abdullah ibn Abi Awfa رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Jihad and Expeditions, Hadith No. 1742.

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

Source: sunnah.com/muslim:1742a

And Allah commands firmness and remembrance when meeting an enemy force:

SURAH AL-ANFAL 8:45

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ إِذَا لَقِيتُمۡ فِئَةٗ فَٱثۡبُتُواْ وَٱذۡكُرُواْ ٱللَّهَ كَثِيرٗا لَّعَلَّكُمۡ تُفۡلِحُونَ ٤٥

O you who have believed, when you encounter a company [from the enemy forces], stand firm and remember Allah much that you may be successful.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/8:45

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LESSONS

A believer does not seek battle, but when it comes he does not flee. Patience, firmness and remembrance of Allah are weapons greater than the sword.

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THE BATTLE OF WADI LAKKA

HISTORICAL NOTE: RAMADAN 92 AH

King Roderic gathered a far larger army — the Arabic sources give very large numbers, though modern historians estimate it smaller. The two armies met at ***Wadi Lakka*** (Guadalete), in the south of al-Andalus, in ***Ramadan 92 AH*** (July 711 CE). The battle lasted several days.

Some Visigothic leaders who supported the family of Witiza abandoned Roderic in the middle of the battle. Roderic's army was defeated, and Roderic himself disappeared — most sources say he was killed. This victory opened the gate of al-Andalus to the Muslims.

Status of the report: The battle and victory at Wadi Lakka in 92 AH are agreed upon by historians; the numbers and details differ between sources.

REFERENCES:

Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, Futuh Misr wa al-Maghrib; Ibn al-Qutiyyah, Tarikh Iftitah al-Andalus; Ibn 'Idhari, al-Bayan al-Mughrib.

The Qur'an tells of the small army of Talut (Saul) defeating the great army of Jalut (Goliath):

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:249

فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِٱلْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُم بِنَهَرٍ فَمَن شَرِبَ مِنْهُ
فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَن لَّمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُۥ مِنِّيٓ إِلَّا مَنِ ٱغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةًۢ بِيَدِهِۦ فَشَرِبُوا۟
مِنْهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُۥ هُوَ وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ مَعَهُۥ قَالُوا۟ لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا
ٱلْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِۦ قَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُم مُّلَٰقُوا۟ ٱللَّهِ كَم مِّن فِئَةٍ
قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةًۢ بِإِذْنِ ٱللَّهِ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ مَعَ ٱلصَّٰبِرِينَ ﴿٢٤٩﴾

And when Saul went forth with the soldiers, he said, "Indeed, Allāh will be testing you with a river. So whoever drinks from it is not of me, and whoever does not taste it is indeed of me, excepting one who takes [from it] in the hollow of his hand." But they drank from it, except a [very] few of them. Then when he had crossed it along with those who believed with him, they said, "There is no power for us today against Goliath and his soldiers." But those who were certain that they would meet Allāh said, "How many a small company has overcome a large company by permission of Allāh. And Allāh is with the patient."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:249

LESSONS

"How many a small company has overcome a large company by permission of Allah." Victory is not in numbers, but in Allah's help to those who are patient.

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THE ETIQUETTE OF WAR AND PEACE TREATIES

After Wadi Lakka, many cities of al-Andalus surrendered through peace treaties. Their people were allowed to keep their religion, churches and property by paying the jizyah. The text of one such treaty is still preserved — the ***Treaty of Tudmir*** (94 AH) between ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Musa ibn Nusayr and the Christian leader Theodemir — which guaranteed the safety of the people, their religion and their churches.

This conduct comes from the teaching of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in war:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3015

حَدَّثَنَا إِسْحَاقُ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، قَالَ قُلْتُ لأَبِي أُسَامَةَ حَدَّثَكُمْ عُبَيْدُ اللَّهِ، عَنْ نَافِعٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ عُمَرَ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ قَالَ وُجِدَتِ امْرَأَةٌ مَقْتُولَةً فِي بَعْضِ مَغَازِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم، فَنَهَى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم عَنْ قَتْلِ النِّسَاءِ وَالصِّبْيَانِ.

TRANSLATION:

Ibn ‘Umar said: A woman was found killed in one of the expeditions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, ***so the Messenger of Allah ﷺ forbade the killing of women and children.***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Ishaq ibn Ibrahim, from Abu Usamah, from ‘Ubaydullah ibn ‘Umar, from Nafi‘, from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Jihad and Expeditions, Chapter: Killing Women in War, Hadith No. 3015.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: sunnah.com/bukhari:3015

LESSONS

Jihad in Islam has etiquette and limits. Non-combatants are protected and promises to the enemy are kept — which is why many people of al-Andalus accepted Muslim rule peacefully.

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CORDOBA, TOLEDO AND THE CITIES OF AL-ANDALUS

HISTORICAL NOTE: ADVANCING ON THE CAPITAL

After the victory at Wadi Lakka, Tariq did not stop. He divided his army: one force under ***Mughith ar-Rumi*** took ***Qurtubah*** (Cordoba), others went to Malaga and Granada, while Tariq himself advanced on ***Tulaytulah*** (Toledo), the Visigothic capital, which he took at the end of 92 AH. In some cities the Jews, who had been oppressed by the Visigothic kingdom, helped the Muslims.

Status of the report: Narrated in the histories of the conquest of al-Andalus without an authentic chain. The story is well known and accepted as history, but it cannot be used as proof in the way an authentic hadith can.

REFERENCES:

Ibn ‘Abd al-Hakam, Futuh Misr wa al-Maghrib; Ibn ‘Idhari, al-Bayan al-Mughrib; al-Maqqari, Nafh at-Tib.

LESSONS

Victory must be followed by swift and organised action. Tariq seized the opportunity before the enemy could reunite.

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MUSA IBN NUSAYR CROSSES OVER

HISTORICAL NOTE: A GOVERNOR'S REBUKE

In 93 AH Musa ibn Nusayr himself crossed into al-Andalus with about 18,000 soldiers, mostly Arabs. He took Seville and Merida, which Tariq had bypassed. The history books report that Musa was angry because Tariq had advanced far beyond his original orders, and rebuked and punished him when they met. Then the two reconciled and continued the conquest together northwards, as far as Zaragoza.

Status of the report: Narrated in the histories of the conquest of al-Andalus without an authentic chain. The story is well known and accepted as history, but it cannot be used as proof in the way an authentic hadith can.

REFERENCES:

Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, Futuh Misr wa al-Maghrib; Ibn al-Athir, al-Kamil fi at-Tarikh; Ibn 'Idhari, al-Bayan al-Mughrib.

Historians differ about the reason for Musa's anger: some mention concern for the safety of an army that had advanced too far, and others mention human feelings because a great success had happened at the hands of his subordinate. We do not know what was in their hearts.

LESSONS

After their disagreement, both leaders returned to working together for Islam. The interest of the ummah is greater than personal feelings.

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THE TABLE OF SOLOMON AND THE TRUST OF THE SPOILS

HISTORICAL NOTE: THE TABLE MISSING A LEG

In Toledo the Muslims found a precious table decorated with gold and jewels, which the people of al-Andalus called ***"the Table of Solomon"***. It is reported that Tariq removed one of its legs and kept it. When Musa and Tariq were summoned to Damascus, Musa presented the table to the caliph as his own spoils. The caliph asked about the missing leg, and Tariq produced it, proving that he was the one who had found it.

Status of the report: Reported by Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, one of the earliest sources, but without an authentic chain and with differing details. The attribution of the table to the Prophet Solomon عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ is only a claim of the local people.

REFERENCES:
Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, Futuh Misr wa al-Maghrib; al-Maqqari, Nafh at-Tib.

This story reminds us how great the trust of the spoils of war is. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave a severe warning against betrayal, however small:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3074

حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، عَنْ عَمْرٍو، عَنْ سَالِمِ بْنِ أَبِي الْجَعْدِ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو، قَالَ كَانَ عَلَى ثَقَلِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم رَجُلٌ يُقَالُ لَهُ كِرْكِرَةُ فَمَاتَ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم " هُوَ فِي النَّارِ ". فَذَهَبُوا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْهِ فَوَجَدُوا عَبَاءَةً قَدْ غَلَّهَا.

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr said: A man named Kirkirah was in charge of the baggage of the Prophet ﷺ, and he died.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"He is in the Fire."*** They went to look at his belongings and found a cloak that he had stolen (from the spoils).

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Ali ibn 'Abdullah al-Madini, from Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, from 'Amr ibn Dinar, from Salim ibn Abi al-Ja'd, from 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Jihad and Expeditions, Chapter: A Little Stealing from the Spoils, Hadith No. 3074.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: sunnah.com/bukhari:3074

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LESSONS

The spoils belong to the ummah, not to the commander personally. Even a single cloak can lead to the Fire — let alone the treasures of kings.

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SUMMONED TO DAMASCUS

HISTORICAL NOTE: OBEDIENCE THOUGH THE CONQUEST WAS UNFINISHED

In 95 AH, while the conquest was still continuing in northern al-Andalus, the Caliph al-Walid ibn ʻAbd al-Malik summoned Musa and Tariq back to Damascus. Both obeyed and left al-Andalus. Musa appointed his son ʻAbd al-ʻAziz as governor. When they arrived, al-Walid was gravely ill and then died, and his brother Sulayman ibn ʻAbd al-Malik became caliph. Musa later fell out of favour with the new caliph and was fined.

Status of the report: Narrated in the histories of the conquest of al-Andalus without an authentic chain. The story is well known and accepted as history, but it cannot be used as proof in the way an authentic hadith can.

REFERENCES:

Ibn ʻAbd al-Hakam, Futuh Misr wa al-Maghrib; Ibn al-Athir, al-Kamil fi at-Tarikh; Ibn ʻIdhari, al-Bayan al-Mughrib.

Obeying the leader in what is not sinful is the teaching of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, whether one likes it or not:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 7144

حَدَّثَنَا مُسَدَّدٌ، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، عَنْ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ، حَدَّثَنِي نَافِعٌ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ " السَّمْعُ وَالطَّاعَةُ عَلَى الْمَرْءِ الْمُسْلِمِ، فِيمَا أَحَبَّ وَكَرِهَ، مَا لَمْ يُؤْمَرْ بِمَعْصِيَةٍ، فَإِذَا أُمِرَ بِمَعْصِيَةٍ فَلاَ سَمْعَ وَلاَ طَاعَةَ ".

TRANSLATION:

ʻAbdullah ibn ʻUmar narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: ***"Listening and obeying is binding on a Muslim, in what he likes and what he dislikes, as long as he is not commanded to commit a sin. If he is commanded to commit a sin, then there is no listening and no obeying."***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Musaddad, from Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Qattan, from ʻUbaydullah ibn ʻUmar, from Nafi', from ʻAbdullah ibn ʻUmar رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Judgements, Hadith No. 7144.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: sunnah.com/bukhari:7144

LESSONS

The commander who opened a continent still obeyed when he was called home. A hero's greatness also lies in his readiness to step back when commanded.

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AN UNKNOWN END

HISTORICAL NOTE: VANISHED FROM THE RECORDS

After arriving in Damascus, news of Tariq almost disappears from the history books. It is not known what position he held, and the date and place of his death are uncertain — he is said to have died around 102 AH (720 CE). The commander who opened al-Andalus spent the rest of his life without fame.

Status of the report: The end of Tariq's life is not known with certainty; the sources give only estimates.

REFERENCES:

Ibn 'Idhari, al-Bayan al-Mughrib; al-Maqqari, Nafh at-Tib; az-Zirikli, al-A'lam.

But rank with Allah is not measured by fame among people. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2622

حَدَّثَنِي سُوَيْدُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، حَدَّثَنِي حَفْصُ بْنُ مَيْسَرَةَ، عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ " رُبَّ أَشْعَثَ مَدْفُوعٍ بِالأَبْوَابِ لَوْ أَقْسَمَ عَلَى اللَّهِ لأَبَرَّهُ " .

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"Many a person with dishevelled hair, turned away from doors — if he were to swear an oath by Allah, Allah would fulfil it."***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Suwayd ibn Sa'id, from Hafs ibn Maysarah, from Al-'Ala' ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman, from 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Righteousness, Kinship and Manners, Hadith No. 2622.

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

Source: sunnah.com/muslim:2622

LESSONS

Worldly fame may vanish, but sincere deeds are never lost with Allah. Tariq is an example that a true hero works for Allah, not for history.

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TARIQ'S LEGACY: EIGHT CENTURIES OF AL-ANDALUS

The conquest begun by Tariq gave birth to ***al-Andalus***, which remained under Muslim rule for nearly eight centuries, until the fall of Granada in 1492 CE. Cordoba became one of the largest and most advanced cities in the world, with its great mosque, libraries and scholars such as Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, Ibn Hazm, al-Qurtubi and Ibn Rushd. From al-Andalus, philosophy, medicine and mathematics also flowed into Europe.

TARIQ'S QUALITIES AND CHARACTER

QUALITY	EXAMPLE FROM HIS STORY
Brave and resolute	Crossing the strait to an unknown land
A wise strategist	Dividing his army after Wadi Lakka
Quick to seize opportunity	Advancing on Toledo before the enemy could reunite
Obedient to his leader	Returning to Damascus when summoned
Guarding the trust	The story of the leg of the Table of Solomon
Humble	Spending the rest of his life without fame

LESSONS

One person can begin something whose benefit continues for centuries. Every scholar of al-Andalus owes a little to Tariq's first step.

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SOURCES OF THE STORIES OF TARIQ

This table summarises the source and grade of each story, so that the reader can distinguish what is authentic from what is merely well known.

STORY	SOURCE	GRADE
Berber origin and mawla of Musa	Ibn ‘Idhari; Ibn Khaldun	Most widely held view
Obeying a leader who was a slave	Sahih al-Bukhari 7142	Sahih
Tarif ibn Malik’s reconnaissance (91 AH)	Ibn ‘Abd al-Hakam	History
Julian’s daughter	Later sources	Mixed with legend
The crossing at Jabal Tariq (92 AH)	History books	Agreed upon
Burning the ships	Much later sources	Not established
The speech “the sea is behind you”	Al-Maqqari, Nafh at-Tib	Not established
Do not wish to meet the enemy	Sahih Muslim 1742	Sahih
The Battle of Wadi Lakka	History books	Agreed upon
Forbidding the killing of women and children	Sahih al-Bukhari 3015	Sahih
The Table of Solomon	Ibn ‘Abd al-Hakam	History, details differ
The warning against ghulul	Sahih al-Bukhari 3074	Sahih
Obedience in what one likes and dislikes	Sahih al-Bukhari 7144	Sahih
“Many a person with dishevelled hair…”	Sahih Muslim 2622	Sahih

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PEOPLE, PLACES AND TIMELINE

PERSON	ROLE
Musa ibn Nusayr	Governor of Ifriqiyah, Tariq's master and leader
Tarif ibn Malik	Leader of the first reconnaissance (91 AH)
Julian (Yulyan)	Lord of Ceuta who provided ships
Roderic (Ludhriq)	Visigothic king defeated at Wadi Lakka
Mughith ar-Rumi	Commander who took Cordoba
Al-Walid ibn 'Abd al-Malik	Umayyad Caliph at the time of the conquest
'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Musa	Governor after Musa; the Treaty of Tudmir

PLACE	EVENT
Tangier	Tariq became its governor
Tarifa	Landing of Tarif's reconnaissance (91 AH)
Jabal Tariq (Gibraltar)	Tariq's landing (92 AH)
Wadi Lakka (Guadalete)	Battle against Roderic
Cordoba and Toledo	Cities that were taken
Damascus	Tariq summoned home (95 AH)

YEAR	EVENT
c. 86–90 AH	Musa ibn Nusayr conquers the Maghrib; Tariq becomes governor of Tangier
91 AH	Reconnaissance of Tarif ibn Malik
Rajab 92 AH	Tariq lands at Jabal Tariq
Ramadan 92 AH	Victory at Wadi Lakka
Late 92 AH	Cordoba and Toledo taken
93 AH	Musa ibn Nusayr crosses into al-Andalus
95 AH	Musa and Tariq summoned to Damascus
c. 102 AH	Tariq dies (uncertain)

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT TARIQ

This chapter answers questions often asked about Tariq ibn Ziyad. The answers are brief; details are in the earlier chapters.

1. WHO WAS TARIQ IBN ZIYAD?

The Muslim commander who opened al-Andalus in 92 AH (711 CE), a mawla of Musa ibn Nusayr.

2. WAS TARIQ AN ARAB?

According to the most widely held view he was a Berber; other reports say he was of Persian or Arab descent.

3. WHERE DOES THE NAME GIBRALTAR COME FROM?

From the Arabic Jabal Tariq, “the Hill of Tariq”.

4. HOW LARGE WAS TARIQ’S ARMY?

About 7,000 at first, then about 12,000 after Musa’s reinforcements.

5. DID TARIQ BURN HIS SHIPS?

This story is not found in the early sources and is not established.

6. IS THE SPEECH “THE SEA IS BEHIND YOU” AUTHENTIC?

It is recorded in later books such as Nafh at-Tib and is not established with a reliable chain.

7. WHERE WAS THE MAIN BATTLE FOUGHT?

At Wadi Lakka (Guadalete), in Ramadan 92 AH.

8. HOW WERE THE PEOPLE OF AL-ANDALUS TREATED?

Many cities surrendered through peace treaties that guaranteed their religion, churches and property, such as the Treaty of Tudmir.

9. WHAT IS THE STORY OF THE TABLE OF SOLOMON?

A precious table found in Toledo; Tariq kept one of its legs as proof that he had found it (historical report).

10. WHY DID TARIQ LEAVE AL-ANDALUS?

He was summoned to Damascus by the Caliph al-Walid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik in 95 AH.

11. WHEN DID TARIQ DIE?

It is not known with certainty; it is said to be around 102 AH (720 CE).

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12. WHAT IS THE GREATEST LESSON FROM TARIQ'S STORY?

Islam honours people by piety and deeds, not lineage; and sincerity lasts longer than fame.

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

The story of Tariq ibn Ziyad begins with a Berber mawla in Tangier and ends with a man almost forgotten in Damascus. Between the two, a continent was opened to Islam.

LESSON	FROM THE STORY OF TARIQ
Honour through piety	A Berber mawla leading an army (Al-Hujurat 49:13)
Obedience to the leader	"Even if an Abyssinian slave…"
Patience before the enemy	"Do not wish to meet the enemy…"
Numbers do not decide	"How many a small company…" (Al-Baqarah 2:249)
Etiquette in war	Forbidding the killing of women and children
Trust over wealth	The Table of Solomon and the warning against ghulul
Sincerity without fame	"Many a person with dishevelled hair…"
Honesty about sources	The burning of the ships and the speech, not established

May we follow Tariq's example: daring to step forward for our religion, obeying our leaders, guarding our trusts, and remaining sincere even when unknown to people.

In sha' Allah, the Heroes of Islam series will continue with the story of another hero of Islam.

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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

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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: sunnah.com/muslim:2588

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1631

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، - يَعْنِي ابْنَ سَعِيد - 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 .

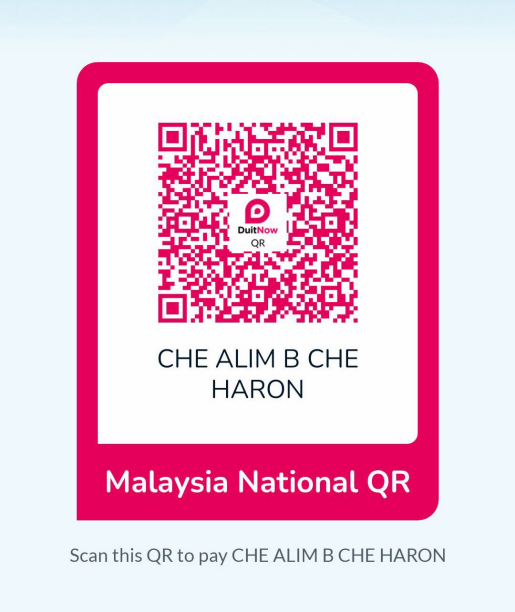
REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Wills (Kitab al-Wasiyyah), chapter on the reward that reaches a person after his death, Hadith No. 1631.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: sunnah.com/muslim:1631

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