بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

HEROES OF ISLAM

SERIES 19

ALP ARSLAN

Seljuk Sultan and Hero of Manzikert, According to the Qur'an, Authentic Hadith and the Books of History

إِن يَنصُرۡكُمُ ٱللَّهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمۡۖ وَإِن يَخۡذُلۡكُمۡ فَمَن ذَا ٱلَّذِي يَنصُرُكُم مِّنۢ بَعۡدِهِۦۗ وَعَلَى ٱللَّهِ فَلۡيَتَوَكَّلِ ٱلۡمُؤۡمِنُونَ ١٦٠

"If Allāh should aid you, no one can overcome you; but if He should forsake you, who is there that can aid you after Him? And upon Allāh let the believers rely."

Surah Ali 'Imran 3:160

HJ CHE ALIM HJ CHE HARON

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who said that if He helps us, none can overcome us. 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 Alp Arslan, the hero of Manzikert.

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 nineteenth book of Heroes of Islam tells the story of Alp Arslan: the Seljuk sultan who wore his own shroud before the battle of Manzikert, pardoned the Byzantine emperor he had captured, supported the Nizamiyya madrasas, and finally died after confessing a moment of pride. His story is told with honesty about its sources, including the exaggerated army numbers. May this knowledge be ‘ilmun yuntafa‘u bih — knowledge that benefits.

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ABOUT THE COVER OF THIS EBOOK

This eBook's cover does not depict any human being or animal. It shows ***the plain of Manzikert*** in eastern Anatolia on an autumn morning, with golden dry grass stretching far and the snow-capped ***Mount Süphan*** in the distance.

On a rise stand ***the stone walls and towers of an Anatolian fortress***, and across the plain are ***empty round tents*** of a military camp, with thin smoke from an extinguished campfire — recalling a camp abandoned after battle.

In the foreground, on a flat stone, rest ***a Seljuk iron helmet*** with mail, ***a composite bow and arrows***, ***a curved sword***, ***a folded white cloth*** — recalling Alp Arslan's words, "If I am killed, this is my shroud" — and ***a prayer rug*** with Seljuk star patterns, a symbol of the Friday prayer before the battle.

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 18, 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.com.

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ALP ARSLAN

On a Friday in Dhu al-Qa'dah 463 AH (August 1071 CE), on the plain of Manzikert in eastern Anatolia, a sultan put on white garments and told his army: ***"If I am killed, this is my shroud."*** Before him stood a far larger Byzantine army, led in person by Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes. By evening, the emperor was a captive — and the sultan pardoned him.

That sultan was ***Alp Arslan*** — a Turkish name meaning "valiant lion" — the second sultan of the Great Seljuk Empire (455–465 AH / 1063–1072 CE). His victory at Manzikert opened the gates of Anatolia to the Muslims, and his vizier, Nizam al-Mulk, built the famous Nizamiyya madrasas. Yet he died suddenly at the hands of a captive, after a moment of pride in his own strength.

This eBook is the nineteenth in the ***Heroes of Islam*** series. Alp Arslan's story comes from the history books, especially al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh by Ibn al-Athir and al-Muntazam by Ibn al-Jawzi, along with Byzantine sources that confirm some of its details. Every story is given with its source and grade honestly — including the exaggerated army numbers — and its lessons are grounded in the Qur'an and authentic Hadith.

Alp Arslan's story is one of courage that relies on Allah, of forgiveness in the hour of power, and of a warning that a single moment of pride can be a hero's undoing.

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WHO WAS ALP ARSLAN?

His real name was ***Muhammad ibn Dawud Chaghri Beg ibn Mika'il ibn Saljuq***. He was born around 420 AH (1029 CE). His father, ***Chaghri Beg***, and his uncle, ***Tughril Beg***, were the founders of the Great Seljuk Empire.

After his father's death, Alp Arslan governed Khurasan. When Tughril Beg died childless in 455 AH, Alp Arslan became sultan of the whole Seljuk realm.

NAME AND TITLES

NAME OR TITLE	EXPLANATION
Muhammad ibn Dawud	His real name
Alp Arslan	Turkish: "valiant lion"
Abu Shuja'	His kunya: "father of courage"
'Adud al-Dawlah	A title given by the 'Abbasid caliph
Seljuk Sultan	Second sultan of the Great Seljuk Empire

LESSONS

A mighty name is not enough; what makes someone a hero is his deeds and character.

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THE SELJUKS: FROM THE STEPPE TO BAGHDAD

HISTORICAL NOTE: THE RISE OF THE SELJUKS

The Seljuks were an Oghuz Turkish clan from the steppes of Central Asia who embraced Islam in the 4th century AH. Under Tughril Beg and Chaghri Beg they defeated the Ghaznavids at Dandanqan (431 AH) and took control of Khurasan.

In ***447 AH***, Tughril Beg entered Baghdad and freed the ‘Abbasid caliph from the control of the Buyids. From then on, the Seljuk sultan became the protector of the caliph and the main power of the Sunni Muslim world.

Status of the report: Narrated in history books such as al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh by Ibn al-Athir without an authentic chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. 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 al-Athir, al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh; Ibn al-Jawzi, al-Muntazam.

A clan that had recently embraced Islam in Central Asia — the region opened in the time of Qutaybah ibn Muslim (Series 18) — now became the protector of the caliph in Baghdad.

LESSONS

Allah honours whomever He wills through Islam. A people once at the edge of the Muslim world became its defenders.

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BECOMING SULTAN

HISTORICAL NOTE: THE FIRST TEST

In 455 AH (1063 CE), Alp Arslan became sultan. He immediately faced opposition from his own relative, ***Qutalmish***, who claimed the throne. In 456 AH, Qutalmish's army was defeated near Rayy and Qutalmish himself was killed.

Alp Arslan then united the realm from Khurasan to Iraq, with ***Nizam al-Mulk*** as his vizier.

Status of the report: Narrated in history books such as al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh by Ibn al-Athir without an authentic chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. 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 al-Athir, al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh.

LESSONS

Internal division is every leader's first test. The strength of the ummah begins with unity.

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NIZAM AL-MULK AND THE NIZAMIYYA MADRASAS

HISTORICAL NOTE: A VIZIER WHO BUILT LEARNING

Alp Arslan's vizier, ***Nizam al-Mulk al-Tusi***, was one of the greatest statesmen in Islamic history. With the sultan's support he built a network of ***Nizamiyya madrasas*** in the major cities. The Nizamiyya of Baghdad opened in ***459 AH*** (1067 CE).

These madrasas provided teaching, lodging and stipends for students. Among the scholars who later taught at the Nizamiyya of Baghdad were ***Imam al-Ghazali*** and Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi.

Status of the report: Narrated in history books such as al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh by Ibn al-Athir without an authentic chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. 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 al-Athir, al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh; Ibn al-Jawzi, al-Muntazam.

Building knowledge is a sign of the good that Allah wills:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 71

حَدَّثَنَا سَعِيدُ بْنُ عُفَيْرٍ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ وَهْبٍ، عَنْ يُونُسَ، عَنِ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، قَالَ قَالَ حُمَيْدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ سَمِعْتُ مُعَاوِيَةَ، خَطِيبًا يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ " مَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ بِهِ خَيْرًا يُفَقِّهْهُ فِي الدِّينِ، وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا قَاسِمٌ وَاللَّهُ يُعْطِي، وَلَنْ تَزَالَ هَذِهِ الأُمَّةُ قَائِمَةً عَلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ لاَ يَضُرُّهُمْ مَنْ خَالَفَهُمْ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ ".

TRANSLATION:

Humayd ibn 'Abd al-Rahman said: I heard Mu'awiyah say in a sermon: I heard the Prophet ﷺ say:

"Whomever Allah wishes good for, He gives him understanding of the religion. I am only a distributor, and Allah is the Giver. This ummah will remain upright upon the command of Allah; those who oppose them will not harm them until the command of Allah comes."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Sa'id ibn 'Ufayr, from 'Abdullah ibn Wahb, from Yunus ibn Yazid, from Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, from Humayd ibn 'Abd al-Rahman, from Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge, Hadith No. 71.

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:71

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LESSONS

The sword guards the frontier, but knowledge guards the ummah. The legacy of the Nizamiyya outlasted many victories.

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THE CONQUEST OF ANI

HISTORICAL NOTE: THE CITY OF A THOUSAND CHURCHES

In ***456 AH*** (1064 CE), Alp Arslan advanced into the Caucasus and took ***Ani***, the old Armenian capital then under Byzantine rule, famous for its many churches. The conquest of Ani made Alp Arslan renowned throughout the Muslim world, and the caliph sent him a letter of congratulation.

Status of the report: Narrated in history books such as al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh by Ibn al-Athir without an authentic chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. 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 al-Athir, al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh; Ibn al-Jawzi, al-Muntazam.

LESSONS

Early success is a trust, not a reason for pride. Every victory comes from Allah.

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THE THREAT OF ROMANOS DIOGENES

HISTORICAL NOTE: A GREAT ARMY FROM CONSTANTINOPLE

In ***463 AH*** (1071 CE), the Byzantine Emperor ***Romanos IV Diogenes*** marched east with a very large army, determined to drive the Muslims out of Anatolia and Armenia. Alp Arslan was then campaigning in Syria; he turned back at once with a small force.

Ibn al-Athir says Alp Arslan had only about ***15,000*** men, and gives the army of Romanos as 200,000 or more. Modern historians consider the Byzantine figure exaggerated; their estimates are roughly 40,000 to 70,000. Yet all sources agree that the Byzantine army was far larger.

Status of the report: The event is established by both Muslim and Byzantine sources; army figures differ and are often exaggerated.

REFERENCES:

Ibn al-Athir, al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh; Michael Attaleiates, Historia; modern historical studies.

It is reported that Alp Arslan first offered peace, but Romanos arrogantly refused.

LESSONS

Always put peace first; but when the enemy refuses, prepare and trust in Allah.

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A JURIST'S ADVICE: THE DAY OF FRIDAY

HISTORICAL NOTE: WAITING FOR THE HOUR OF PRAYER

According to Ibn al-Athir, Alp Arslan's jurist and imam, ***Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Bukhari al-Hanafi***, advised him: "You are fighting for the religion of Allah, and I hope Allah has written this victory in your name. Meet them on Friday, at the hour when the preachers on the pulpits are praying for the victory of the mujahidin."

So Alp Arslan waited until the time of Jumu'ah and prayed with his army before the battle.

Status of the report: Narrated in history books such as al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh by Ibn al-Athir without an authentic chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. 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 al-Athir, al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh; Ibn al-Jawzi, al-Muntazam.

Waiting for a good hour before battle is the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 2965

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا مُعَاوِيَةُ بْنُ عَمْرٍو، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو إِسْحَاقَ، عَنْ مُوسَى بْنِ عُقْبَةَ، عَنْ سَالِمٍ أَبِي النَّضْرِ، مَوْلَى عُمَرَ بْنِ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ وَكَانَ كَاتِبًا لَهُ قَالَ كَتَبَ إِلَيْهِ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ أَبِي أَوْفَى ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ فَقَرَأْتُهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم فِي بَعْضِ أَيَّامِهِ الَّتِي لَقِيَ فِيهَا انْتَظَرَ حَتَّى مَالَتِ الشَّمْسُ. ثُمَّ قَامَ فِي النَّاسِ قَالَ " أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، لاَ تَتَمَنَّوْا لِقَاءَ الْعَدُوِّ، وَسَلُوا اللَّهَ الْعَافِيَةَ، فَإِذَا لَقِيتُمُوهُمْ فَاصْبِرُوا، وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ الْجَنَّةَ تَحْتَ ظِلاَلِ السُّيُوفِ، ثُمَّ قَالَ اللَّهُمَّ مُنْزِلَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُجْرِيَ السَّحَابِ وَهَازِمَ الأَحْزَابِ، اهْزِمْهُمْ وَانْصُرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ ".

TRANSLATION:

Salim Abu al-Nadr said: 'Abdullah ibn Abi Awfa wrote to him ('Umar ibn 'Ubaydullah), and I read it: On some of the days on which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ met the enemy, he waited until the sun had passed its zenith.

Then he stood among the people 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."*** Then he said: "O Allah, Revealer of the Book, Mover of the clouds, Defeater of the confederates, defeat them and grant us victory over them."

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CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from ‘Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Musnadi, from Mu‘awiyah ibn ‘Amr, from Abu Ishaq al-Fazari, from Musa ibn ‘Uqbah, from Salim Abu al-Nadr, from ‘Abdullah ibn Abi Awfa رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Jihad and Expeditions, Hadith No. 2965.

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:2965

LESSONS

A wise leader listens to the advice of scholars. Prayer and supplication are not an addition to battle but the source of its strength.

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"THIS IS MY SHROUD"

HISTORICAL NOTE: THE WHITE GARMENTS

Ibn al-Athir relates that before the battle Alp Arslan prayed, wept and supplicated, and his army wept with him. Then he laid down his bow and arrows, took up sword and lance, put on ***white garments*** and ***hanut*** (the perfume of the dead), and said: ***"If I am killed, this is my shroud."***

He also told his army that whoever wished to go home could go, for here there was no sultan who commanded and no sultan who was commanded — he was only one of them.

Status of the report: Narrated in history books such as al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh by Ibn al-Athir without an authentic chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. 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 al-Athir, al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh; Ibn al-Jawzi, al-Muntazam.

Preparing for martyrdom shows a sincere intention. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 1

حَدَّثَنَا الْحُمَيْدِيُّ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ الزُّبَيْرِ ، قَالَ : حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ ، قَالَ : حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ سَعِيدٍ الْأَنْصَارِيُّ ، قَالَ : أَخْبَرَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ التَّيْمِيُّ ، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ عَلْقَمَةَ بْنَ وَقَّاصٍ اللَّيْثِيَّ ، يَقُولُ : سَمِعْتُ عُمَرَ بْنَ الْخَطَّابِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَلَى الْمِنْبَرِ، قَالَ : سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، يَقُولُ : " إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى، فَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى دُنْيَا يُصِيبُهَا أَوْ إِلَى امْرَأَةٍ يَنْكِحُهَا، فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى مَا هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِ

TRANSLATION:

'Umar ibn al-Khattab said on the pulpit: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: ***"Actions are only by intentions, and every person shall have only what he intended.*** So whoever's emigration was for a worldly gain he seeks, or a woman he would marry, his emigration is for what he emigrated for."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Al-Humaydi 'Abdullah ibn al-Zubayr, from Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, from Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Ansari, from Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Taymi, from 'Alqamah ibn Waqqas al-Laythi, from 'Umar ibn al-Khattab رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Beginning of Revelation, Hadith No. 1.

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:1

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LESSONS

A leader ready to die with his soldiers leads by example, not by command alone. The worth of a deed is set by its intention.

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THE BATTLE OF MANZIKERT

HISTORICAL NOTE: 26 AUGUST 1071

The battle took place on a Friday in Dhu al-Qa'dah 463 AH (26 August 1071 CE). The Seljuk cavalry used the tactics of mounted archers: attacking, retreating as if in flight, then encircling. Towards evening, Romanos ordered his army to withdraw to camp, but the order was misunderstood, and the rearguard led by ***Andronikos Doukas*** — a political enemy of Romanos — left the field.

The Byzantine army broke apart, and Romanos himself was wounded and captured. Byzantine sources themselves, such as Michael Attaleiates who was present at the battle, admit that internal treachery contributed to their defeat.

Status of the report: The victory at Manzikert and the capture of Romanos are established by both Muslim and Byzantine sources.

REFERENCES:

Ibn al-Athir, al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh; Michael Attaleiates, Historia.

The victory of a small force recalls Allah's promise at Badr:

SURAH ALI 'IMRAN 3:123

وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ ٱللَّهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَأَنتُمْ أَذِلَّةٌ ۖ فَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

And already had Allāh given you victory at [the battle of] Badr while you were weak [i.e., few in number]. Then fear Allāh; perhaps you will be grateful.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/3:123

LESSONS

Numbers do not decide victory. Unity and obedience strengthen a small force; division weakens a great army.

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THE EMPEROR BEFORE THE SULTAN

HISTORICAL NOTE: A FAMOUS DIALOGUE

When Romanos was brought before Alp Arslan, the sultan asked him: “What would you have done if I had been your captive?” Romanos answered honestly that he might have done him harm. The sultan asked: “What do you think I will do with you?” Romanos replied: “Either you will kill me, or parade me through your lands, or — the least likely — you will forgive me and accept a ransom.”

Alp Arslan said: “I intend nothing but to forgive you and accept a ransom.” He then treated Romanos with honour, seated him beside him, and released him after a few days.

Status of the report: The details of the dialogue come from Muslim historians; the generous treatment of Romanos is also confirmed by Byzantine sources.

REFERENCES:

Ibn al-Athir, al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh; Ibn al-Jawzi, al-Muntazam; Michael Attaleiates, Historia.

LESSONS

A person’s nobility shows most clearly when he has power over his enemy.

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FORGIVING IN THE HOUR OF POWER

Alp Arslan could have taken revenge on the emperor who had come to destroy him, but he chose to forgive. The Qur'an praises those who restrain anger and pardon:

SURAH ALI 'IMRAN 3:134

ٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ فِي ٱلسَّرَّآءِ وَٱلضَّرَّآءِ وَٱلْكَٰظِمِينَ ٱلْغَيْظَ وَٱلْعَافِينَ عَنِ ٱلنَّاسِ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾

Who spend [in the cause of Allāh] during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people - and Allāh loves the doers of good;.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/3:134

And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ promised that forgiveness adds to honour:

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 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 Allah except that Allah raises him."***

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

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue, Good Manners and Joining of the Ties of Kinship, Hadith No. 2588.

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

Source: sunnah.com/muslim:2588

LESSONS

Forgiveness is not weakness. It is an honour Allah adds to the one who could retaliate but chooses to pardon.

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TRUE STRENGTH: SELF-CONTROL

A sultan who had just defeated the greatest emperor of his age had every reason to be angry and take revenge. Yet true strength, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught, is mastery over oneself:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 6114

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ يُوسُفَ، أَخْبَرَنَا مَالِكٌ، عَنِ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ الْمُسَيَّبِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ " لَيْسَ الشَّدِيدُ بِالصُّرَعَةِ، إِنَّمَا الشَّدِيدُ الَّذِي يَمْلِكُ نَفْسَهُ عِنْدَ الْغَضَبِ ".

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"The strong man is not the one who overcomes others in wrestling; the strong man is the one who controls himself when angry."***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from ʻAbdullah ibn Yusuf al-Tinnisi, from Malik ibn Anas, from Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, from Saʻid ibn al-Musayyib, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Good Manners, Hadith No. 6114.

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:6114

LESSONS

Winning on the battlefield is easier than winning over one's own self. At Manzikert, Alp Arslan won both.

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THE TREATY AND THE FATE OF ROMANOS

HISTORICAL NOTE: PEACE AFTER WAR

According to Ibn al-Athir, Alp Arslan released Romanos on condition of a large ransom, an annual tribute, the release of all Muslim captives in Byzantine lands, and a peace treaty. The sultan escorted the emperor for a farsakh and gave him guards to take him home.

But when Romanos returned, the Doukas faction had seized the throne in Constantinople. Romanos was defeated, blinded by his own side, and died soon after (1072 CE). His enemies at home were crueller to him than the enemy who had defeated him on the battlefield.

Status of the report: The release of Romanos and his later fate are established by Muslim and Byzantine sources; the amount of the ransom differs between sources.

REFERENCES:

Ibn al-Athir, al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh; Michael Attaleiates, Historia; Michael Psellos, Chronographia.

LESSONS

This irony of history teaches that nobility of character can come from an enemy, and cruelty from one's own side.

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THE GATES OF ANATOLIA OPEN

HISTORICAL NOTE: FROM MANZIKERT TO THE OTTOMANS

After Manzikert, the Byzantine defences in the east collapsed, and Muslim Turkish tribes began to settle in Anatolia. Within a few years, ***Sulayman ibn Qutalmish*** — son of the relative who had once opposed Alp Arslan — founded the ***Seljuk Sultanate of Rum***, with its capital at Nicaea and later at Konya.

Two centuries later, from this Anatolia was born a small beylik that would become the ***Ottoman Empire*** — a story to be told in Series 25: Osman Gazi. This is why Manzikert is often called "the gate of Anatolia".

Status of the report: Narrated in history books such as al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh by Ibn al-Athir without an authentic chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. 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 al-Athir, al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh; modern historical studies.

LESSONS

One sincere victory can open the way to centuries of history. The effect of a person's deeds may only be seen after he is gone.

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THE END: A MOMENT OF PRIDE

HISTORICAL NOTE: ON THE BANKS OF THE OXUS

In ***465 AH*** (1072 CE), Alp Arslan led a very large army into Transoxiana. A fortress was taken, and its commander, ***Yusuf al-Khwarazmi***, was brought before him. Yusuf spoke insolently, so the sultan ordered him untied and shot at him himself — he was a skilled archer — but his arrow missed. Yusuf rushed forward and stabbed him with a knife. The sultan died a few days later, in his forties.

Ibn al-Athir records Alp Arslan's words before his death: "Never did I face an enemy without seeking Allah's help against him. But yesterday I climbed a hill and saw my great army, and I said in my heart: I am the king of the world; no one can overcome me. So Allah made me helpless through the weakest of His creatures."

Status of the report: Narrated in history books such as al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh by Ibn al-Athir without an authentic chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. 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 al-Athir, al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh; Ibn al-Jawzi, al-Muntazam.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ warned against the one who admires himself:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 5789

حَدَّثَنَا آدَمُ، حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ زِيَادٍ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ، يَقُولُ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ ـ أَوْ قَالَ أَبُو الْقَاسِمِ ـ صلى الله عليه وسلم " بَيْنَمَا رَجُلٌ يَمْشِي فِي حُلَّةٍ، تُعْجِبُهُ نَفْسُهُ مُرَجِّلٌ جُمَّتَهُ، إِذْ خَسَفَ اللَّهُ بِهِ، فَهْوَ يَتَجَلْجَلُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ".

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah said: The Prophet ﷺ — or Abu al-Qasim ﷺ — said: ***"While a man was walking in a fine garment, admiring himself, his hair neatly combed, suddenly Allah caused the earth to swallow him, and he will go on sinking into it until the Day of Resurrection."***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Adam ibn Abi Iyas, from Shu'bah ibn al-Hajjaj, from Muhammad ibn Ziyad, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Dress, Hadith No. 5789.

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:5789

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And Allah has prepared the Home of the Hereafter for those who do not seek exaltation on earth:

SURAH AL-QASAS 28:83

تِلْكَ ٱلدَّارُ ٱلْـَٔاخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا ۚ
وَٱلْعَـٰقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

That home of the Hereafter We assign to those who do not desire exaltedness upon the earth or corruption. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/28:83

LESSONS

A hero who won at Manzikert by trusting in Allah realised at the end of his life that a moment of pride can bring a fall. His own confession is the most precious lesson of his story.

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LEGACY AND THE TOMB AT MERV

Alp Arslan was buried at ***Merv***, beside his father Chaghri Beg. He was succeeded by his son ***Malik Shah***, who with Nizam al-Mulk brought the Seljuk Empire to the height of its power.

NOTE ON SOURCES: THE WORDS AT HIS TOMB

Well known in books of adab and history is a saying associated with Alp Arslan's tomb: "O you who saw the glory of Alp Arslan rising to the heavens, come to Merv and see him buried beneath the dust." The original source of these words, and whether they were really carved on his tomb, is uncertain, but their meaning is true as a reminder.

Status of the report: Well known; its original source is uncertain.

REFERENCES:
Later books of adab and history.

ALP ARSLAN'S QUALITIES AND CHARACTER

QUALITY	EXAMPLE FROM HIS STORY
Brave and trusting in Allah	Facing a great army with a small force
Listening to scholars	Waiting for Friday on his jurist's advice
Sincere and self-sacrificing	"This is my shroud"
Forgiving in power	Releasing Romanos with honour
Supporting knowledge	The Nizamiyya madrasas
A human being who could slip	A moment of pride before his death

LESSONS

Worldly power ends beneath the dust; what remains are the deeds, knowledge and character one leaves behind.

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SOURCES OF ALP ARSLAN'S STORIES

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

STORY	SOURCE	GRADE
Rise of the Seljuks; Tughril in Baghdad (447 AH)	Ibn al-Athir; Ibn al-Jawzi	History
The Nizamiyya madrasa (459 AH)	Ibn al-Athir; Ibn al-Jawzi	History
Understanding of the religion	Sahih al-Bukhari 71	Sahih
The conquest of Ani (456 AH)	Ibn al-Athir	History
Army figures at Manzikert	Ibn al-Athir; Byzantine sources	Differ; exaggerated
Advice to fight on Friday	Ibn al-Athir	History
Waiting until the sun declined	Sahih al-Bukhari 2965	Sahih
"This is my shroud"	Ibn al-Athir	History
Actions are by intentions	Sahih al-Bukhari 1	Sahih
Victory and capture of Romanos	Ibn al-Athir; Attaleiates	Established
Dialogue of sultan and emperor	Ibn al-Athir; Ibn al-Jawzi	History
Forgiveness adds to honour	Sahih Muslim 2588	Sahih
The strong man controls his anger	Sahih al-Bukhari 6114	Sahih
Death at the hands of Yusuf al-Khwarazmi (465 AH)	Ibn al-Athir	History
The man who admired himself	Sahih al-Bukhari 5789	Sahih
Words at the tomb in Merv	Later books of adab	Well known; source uncertain

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PEOPLE, PLACES AND TIMELINE

PERSON	ROLE
Tughril Beg	Uncle; Seljuk founder who entered Baghdad
Chaghri Beg	Alp Arslan's father; ruler of Khurasan
Nizam al-Mulk	Vizier; founder of the Nizamiyya madrasas
Abu Nasr al-Bukhari al-Hanafi	Jurist who advised fighting on Friday
Romanos IV Diogenes	Byzantine emperor captured and pardoned
Andronikos Doukas	Byzantine commander who left the field
Yusuf al-Khwarazmi	Fortress commander who stabbed Alp Arslan
Malik Shah	Son and successor of Alp Arslan

PLACE	EVENT
Baghdad	Seat of the caliphate; the Nizamiyya madrasa
Rayy	Defeat of Qutalmish (456 AH)
Ani	Taken (456 AH)
Manzikert	The famous battle (463 AH)
Transoxiana	Last campaign and place of death (465 AH)
Merv	Place of his tomb

YEAR	EVENT
c. 420 AH	Birth of Alp Arslan
447 AH	Tughril Beg enters Baghdad
455 AH	Alp Arslan becomes sultan
456 AH	Defeat of Qutalmish; conquest of Ani
459 AH	The Nizamiyya of Baghdad opens
463 AH	Battle of Manzikert (August 1071 CE)
465 AH	Death in Transoxiana; buried at Merv

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ALP ARSLAN

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

1. WHO WAS ALP ARSLAN?

The second sultan of the Great Seljuk Empire (455–465 AH) and the victor of the Battle of Manzikert.

2. WHAT DOES THE NAME ALP ARSLAN MEAN?

In Turkish it means “valiant lion”. His real name was Muhammad.

3. WHO WAS NIZAM AL-MULK?

Alp Arslan’s vizier, who built the network of Nizamiyya madrasas.

4. WHEN WAS THE BATTLE OF MANZIKERT?

On a Friday in Dhu al-Qa‘dah 463 AH (26 August 1071 CE).

5. HOW LARGE WERE THE TWO ARMIES?

Sources differ; Ibn al-Athir gives about 15,000 Muslims, and the Byzantine figures are exaggerated. What is certain is that the Byzantine army was far larger.

6. WHY DID HE FIGHT ON A FRIDAY?

On the advice of his jurist, so that it coincided with the prayers of the preachers across the Muslim world.

7. WHAT DOES “THIS IS MY SHROUD” MEAN?

He put on white garments and the perfume of the dead, ready for martyrdom.

8. WHAT HAPPENED TO ROMANOS?

He was captured, pardoned and released, but was later blinded by his own faction.

9. WHAT WAS THE EFFECT OF MANZIKERT?

It opened Anatolia to the Muslims, leading to the Seljuks of Rum and later the Ottomans.

10. HOW DID ALP ARSLAN DIE?

He was stabbed by a captive, Yusuf al-Khwarazmi, in 465 AH.

11. WHAT ARE HIS FAMOUS LAST WORDS?

He admitted that for a moment he had felt proud of his army, and Allah made him helpless through the weakest of His creatures.

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12. WHAT IS THE GREATEST LESSON OF HIS STORY?

Victory comes from Allah; forgiveness ennobles; and pride, even for a moment, can bring a fall.

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

Alp Arslan's story begins with a sultan putting on his own shroud before battle, and ends with his confession that a moment of pride had brought him down. Between the two, the gates of Anatolia opened and madrasas of learning were founded.

LESSON	FROM ALP ARSLAN'S STORY
Victory comes from Allah	Ali 'Imran 3:160; 3:123
Building knowledge	The Nizamiyya madrasas; Sahih al-Bukhari 71
Listening to scholars	Friday; Sahih al-Bukhari 2965
Sincerity and sacrifice	"This is my shroud"; Sahih al-Bukhari 1
Forgiving in power	Romanos; Sahih Muslim 2588; Ali 'Imran 3:134
Mastering anger	Sahih al-Bukhari 6114
The danger of pride	His last words; Sahih al-Bukhari 5789
The Hereafter for the humble	Al-Qasas 28:83

May we follow Alp Arslan in his trust in Allah, his courage and his forgiveness, and take heed from his confession at the end of his life.

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 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.

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