بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

HEROES OF ISLAM

SERIES 29

TURGUT REIS

Ottoman Admiral and Liberator of Tripoli, According to the Qur'an, Authentic Hadith and the Books of History

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا۟ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ أَمْوَٰتًۢا ۚ بَلْ أَحْيَآءٌ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾

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

Surah Ali 'Imran 3:169

HJ CHE ALIM HJ CHE HARON

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who declared that those killed in His cause are not dead, but alive with their Lord, receiving provision. 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 Turgut Reis, the liberator of Tripoli.

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 twenty-ninth book of Heroes of Islam tells the story of Turgut Reis: a farmer's son from the Aegean coast who became a pupil of Hayreddin Barbarossa, was once chained as a galley slave, freed Tripoli in 1551, governed it for nine years, and fell as a martyr at Malta at about eighty years of age. His story is told with honesty about its sources, including the capture of the people of Gozo and famous stories that are not established. 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 harbour of Tripoli*** on the coast of North Africa at sunrise in the year 1551, beneath a wide dawn sky of gold and soft blue.

On the right, on the seashore, stands ***a great fortress of reddish sandstone*** with thick walls and square towers, and behind it white flat-roofed houses, date palms and ***a slender minaret***.

In the middle of the harbour, ***a fleet of Ottoman galleys*** with long oars and lateen sails enters the calm turquoise water — recalling the moment Tripoli returned to the hands of the Muslims.

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 28, 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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TURGUT REIS

In August 1551 the city of ***Tripoli*** on the coast of Libya had been in enemy hands for more than forty years — first Spain, then the Knights of St. John of Malta. On 15 August 1551 (12 Sha'ban 958 AH) the Ottoman fleet freed it, and the man who did most for that liberation was an admiral named ***Turgut Reis***.

Turgut was a farmer's son from the Aegean coast who became a pupil of Hayreddin Barbarossa. He was once captured and chained as a galley slave on a Genoese ship, then freed, and became the most feared admiral in the Mediterranean after his teacher. He governed Tripoli for nine years, and fell as a martyr at about eighty years of age in the Siege of Malta in 1565.

This eBook is the twenty-ninth in the ***Heroes of Islam*** series, continuing the story of Hayreddin Barbarossa in Series 28. Turgut's story comes from Kâtib Çelebi, Ottoman archival records and the European sources that opposed him. Every story is given with its source and grade honestly — including the capture of the people of Gozo, the tower of skulls at Djerba and famous stories that are not established — and its lessons are grounded in the Qur'an and authentic Hadith.

Turgut's story is that of a captive who became a liberator, and an old man who never stopped striving until the end of his life.

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WHO WAS TURGUT REIS?

Turgut Reis was born around 890 AH (1485 CE) in a village near Bodrum, in the province of Menteşe on the Aegean coast. He fell as a martyr at Malta on 24 Dhu al-Qa'dah 972 AH (23 June 1565 CE), and was buried in Tripoli.

He was an Ottoman admiral, a pupil of Hayreddin Barbarossa, the liberator of Tripoli, and its beylerbeyi (governor-general) from 1556 to 1565. Europeans called him ***Dragut***, and the Arabs called him ***Darghuth***.

HIS NAMES AND TITLES

NAME / TITLE	EXPLANATION
Turgut Reis	His Turkish name; "Reis" means captain
Dragut	The European form of his name
Darghuth (درغوث)	The Arabic form used in North Africa
Turgut Pasha	His title after becoming beylerbeyi of Tripoli (1556)
Liberator of Tripoli	The title by which Libya remembers him to this day

LESSONS

Humble origins do not stop a person from reaching a high station when he is earnest and sincere.

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A FARMER'S SON FROM THE AEGEAN COAST

HISTORICAL NOTE: TURGUT'S ORIGINS

According to the TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, Turgut was born in a village in the province of Menteşe, and his father, Veli, was a farmer. His birthplace near Bodrum is now a town named ***Turgutreis*** after him. His year of birth is given as 1485 or 1487.

From his youth he was drawn to the sea. He learned to use cannon and became a skilled gunner, then joined a band of volunteer sailors (levents) and soon became captain of his own ship. This skill with cannon later made him famous at sea.

Status of the report: Narrated in the books of history — chiefly the Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr of Kâtib Çelebi, Ottoman archival records and contemporary European sources — without a chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. The story is accepted as history, but it cannot be used as proof in the way an authentic hadith can.

REFERENCES:

Kâtib Çelebi, Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr; TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, "Turgut Reis".

LESSONS

Skills learned in youth are provision for a lifetime. Youth is the best time to seek knowledge and skill.

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PUPIL OF HAYREDDIN AND THE BATTLE OF PREVEZA

HISTORICAL NOTE: 1520S–1538

Turgut joined the forces of Hayreddin Barbarossa and became one of his most trusted pupils. Hayreddin saw his ability and gave him ships to command.

In 1538 Turgut took part in ***the Battle of Preveza*** as leader of a volunteer squadron. According to the TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, Hayreddin sent him ahead with twenty ships as a vanguard before the main fleet arrived. The story of Preveza is told in Series 28.

Status of the report: Narrated in the books of history — chiefly the Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr of Kâtib Çelebi, Ottoman archival records and contemporary European sources — without a chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. The story is accepted as history, but it cannot be used as proof in the way an authentic hadith can.

REFERENCES:

Kâtib Çelebi, Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr; TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, "Preveze Deniz Muharebesi".

Allah commands the Muslims to prepare strength to face the enemy:

SURAH AL-ANFAL 8:60

وَأَعِدُّواْ لَهُم مَّا ٱسۡتَطَعۡتُم مِّن قُوَّةٖ وَمِن رِّبَاطِ ٱلۡخَيۡلِ تُرۡهِبُونَ بِهِۦ عَدُوَّ ٱللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمۡ وَءَاخَرِينَ مِن دُونِهِمۡ لَا تَعۡلَمُونَهُمُ ٱللَّهُ يَعۡلَمُهُمۡۚ وَمَا تُنفِقُواْ مِن شَيۡءٖ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ يُوَفَّ إِلَيۡكُمۡ وَأَنتُمۡ لَا تُظۡلَمُونَ ٦٠

And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allah knows. And whatever you spend in the cause of Allah will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/8:60

LESSONS

A good teacher recognises his pupil's talent and gives him opportunity. A good pupil honours that opportunity with trustworthiness.

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JIHAD AT SEA

HISTORICAL NOTE: ADMIRAL OF THE LEVENTS

After Preveza, Turgut led his own fleet in the western Mediterranean, facing the fleets of Spain, Genoa and the Knights of St. John that raided the Muslim coasts of North Africa. In 1547 he was formally appointed head of the levents of the Mediterranean and received a robe of honour from the Sultan.

Like his teacher, Turgut saw the sea as a field for defending the Muslims. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself gave glad tidings of the first army of his ummah to campaign at sea.

Status of the report: Narrated in the books of history — chiefly the Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr of Kâtib Çelebi, Ottoman archival records and contemporary European sources — without a chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. The story is accepted as history, but it cannot be used as proof in the way an authentic hadith can.

REFERENCES:
Kâtib Çelebi, Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr; TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi.

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 2924

حَدَّثَنِي إِسْحَاقُ بْنُ يَزِيدَ الدِّمَشْقِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ حَمْزَةَ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي ثَوْرُ بْنُ يَزِيدَ، عَنْ خَالِدِ بْنِ مَعْدَانَ، أَنَّ عُمَيْرَ بْنَ الأَسْوَدِ الْعَنْسِيَّ، حَدَّثَهُ أَنَّهُ، أَتَى عُبَادَةَ بْنَ الصَّامِتِ وَهْوَ نَازِلٌ فِي سَاحِلِ حِمْصَ، وَهْوَ فِي بِنَاءٍ لَهُ وَمَعَهُ أُمُّ حَرَامٍ، قَالَ عُمَيْرٌ فَحَدَّثَتْنَا أُمُّ حَرَامٍ أَنَّهَا سَمِعَتِ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ " أَوَّلُ جَيْشٍ مِنْ أُمَّتِي يَغْزُونَ الْبَحْرَ قَدْ أَوْجَبُوا ". قَالَتْ أُمُّ حَرَامٍ قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَنَا فِيهِمْ. قَالَ " أَنْتِ فِيهِمْ ". ثُمَّ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم " أَوَّلُ جَيْشٍ مِنْ أُمَّتِي يَغْزُونَ مَدِينَةَ قَيْصَرَ مَغْفُورٌ لَهُمْ ". فَقُلْتُ أَنَا فِيهِمْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. قَالَ " لاَ ".

TRANSLATION:
'Umayr ibn al-Aswad al-'Ansi related that he came to 'Ubadah ibn al-Samit while he was staying on the coast of Hims, and Umm Haram was with him. 'Umayr said: Umm Haram told us that she heard the Prophet ﷺ say: "The first army of my ummah to campaign by sea has made (Paradise) certain for itself." Umm Haram said: I said, "O Messenger of Allah, am I among them?" He said: "You are among them." Then the Prophet ﷺ said: ***"The first army of my ummah to attack the city of Caesar will be forgiven."*** I said, "Am I among them, O Messenger of Allah?" He said: "No."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Ishaq ibn Yazid al-Dimashqi, from Yahya ibn Hamzah, from Thawr ibn Yazid, from Khalid ibn Ma'dan, from 'Umayr ibn al-Aswad al-'Ansi, from Umm Haram bint Milhan رضى الله عنها.

REFERENCE: Imam al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Jihad and Expeditions, Hadith No. 2924.

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:2924

LESSONS

Every field can be a place of good deeds when the intention is for Allah — on land or at sea.

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A CAPTIVE ON A GENOESE GALLEY

HISTORICAL NOTE: 1540–1543

In 1540, while anchored on the coast of Corsica, Turgut and his ships were attacked by surprise by ***Giannettino Doria***, nephew of Admiral Andrea Doria. Turgut was captured, and for about three or four years he was chained as ***a galley slave*** on Genoese warships.

He was finally freed around 1543–1544. According to the TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, his release came after Hayreddin Barbarossa threatened to attack Genoa; European sources speak of a ransom being paid. The famous story of his meeting in captivity with Jean de la Valette — later his enemy at Malta — is a tradition that cannot be confirmed.

Status of the report: His capture in 1540 and his release are established; the manner of his release and the story of the meeting with La Valette vary or are traditions.

REFERENCES:
contemporary European sources; Kâtib Çelebi, Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr; TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ commanded the freeing of captives:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3046

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا جَرِيرٌ، عَنْ مَنْصُورٍ، عَنْ أَبِي وَائِلٍ، عَنْ أَبِي مُوسَى ـ رضى الله عنه ـ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم " فُكُّوا الْعَانِيَ ـ يَعْنِي الأَسِيرَ ـ وَأَطْعِمُوا الْجَائِعَ وَعُودُوا الْمَرِيضَ ".

TRANSLATION:

Abu Musa narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"Free the captive, feed the hungry, and visit the sick."***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Qutaybah ibn Sa'id, from Jarir ibn 'Abd al-Hamid, from Mansur ibn al-Mu'tamir, from Abu Wa'il Shaqiq ibn Salamah, from Abu Musa al-Ash'ari رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Jihad and Expeditions, Hadith No. 3046.

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:3046

LESSONS

A loyal teacher does not forget his pupil in misfortune. Freeing captives is a deed commanded by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

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ESCAPE FROM THE BLOCKADE AT DJERBA

HISTORICAL NOTE: WISDOM ON THE ISLAND OF DJERBA

According to the TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, around 1547 a large Genoese and Venetian fleet trapped Turgut's ships in the harbour of Kantara on the island of ***Djerba***. Using his knowledge of the island's geography, Turgut managed to escape with his ships.

European sources and a famous tradition tell that he had his men dig a canal or drag the ships overland to the other side of the island while the enemy waited at the harbour mouth. The details of this story and its year vary between sources, but his wisdom in escaping was acknowledged by friend and foe.

Status of the report: His escape at Djerba is established; the details of the canal and its date vary.

REFERENCES:

Kâtib Çelebi, Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr; contemporary European sources; TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi.

LESSONS

Ingenuity and knowledge of the terrain can save an army. Trust in Allah goes together with effort and reason.

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MAHDIA: GIVEN AND THEN LOST

HISTORICAL NOTE: 1550

In 1550 Turgut took the city of ***Mahdia*** on the Tunisian coast, and according to the TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi it was granted to him as a sanjak (district) on 24 May 1550 (7 Jumada al-Ula 957 AH).

But the same year a Spanish fleet under Andrea Doria attacked and retook Mahdia. This loss was another trial in Turgut's life, yet he kept on striving, and a year later joined the great campaign that freed Tripoli.

Status of the report: Narrated in the books of history — chiefly the Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr of Kâtib Çelebi, Ottoman archival records and contemporary European sources — without a chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. The story is accepted as history, but it cannot be used as proof in the way an authentic hadith can.

REFERENCES:

Kâtib Çelebi, Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr; contemporary European sources; TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi.

LESSONS

Loss is no excuse to stop. The believer rises after a fall and continues the journey.

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THE RAID ON GOZO AND THE FATE OF ITS PEOPLE

SOURCE NOTE: THE BITTER SIDE

In July 1551 the Ottoman fleet under Sinan Pasha, together with Turgut, attacked Malta and then the small island of ***Gozo*** nearby. Gozo's castle surrendered, and according to European sources almost the entire population of the island — several thousand civilians, including women and children — was carried off as captives and sold as slaves.

This is stated here honestly because it is part of history. At that time both sides did the same, and thousands of Muslims were also slaves in Malta and Europe. But Islamic law sets strict ethics of war, and the war customs of that age cannot be made beautiful in the name of heroism.

Status of the report: The capture of the people of Gozo in 1551 is established in European sources; the numbers vary.

REFERENCES:
contemporary European sources; Kâtib Çelebi, Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ forbade the killing of women and children 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

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LESSONS

We acknowledge the mistakes of history honestly. Heroism in Islam is measured by ethics, not only by victory.

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THE LIBERATION OF TRIPOLI

HISTORICAL NOTE: 15 AUGUST 1551

Since 1510 the city of ***Tripoli*** in Libya had been in Spanish hands, and Spain later handed it to the Knights of St. John of Malta. The Muslims of the surrounding region asked the Ottoman state for help.

After Gozo, Sinan Pasha's fleet moved on Tripoli and besieged it. According to Kâtib Çelebi, Tripoli was taken through the expertise and guidance of Turgut Reis, on 15 August 1551 (12 Sha'ban 958 AH). The Knights defending it surrendered after bombardment, and Tripoli returned to the hands of the Muslims.

Status of the report: The liberation of Tripoli on 15 August 1551 is established in Ottoman and European sources.

REFERENCES:
Kâtib Çelebi, Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr; TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, "Turgut Reis".

Allah calls the Muslims to help the oppressed:

SURAH AN-NISA' 4:75

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَٰتِلُونَ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ وَٱلْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ ٱلرِّجَالِ وَٱلنِّسَآءِ وَٱلْوِلْدَٰنِ ٱلَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَآ أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَٰذِهِ ٱلْقَرْيَةِ ٱلظَّالِمِ أَهْلُهَا وَٱجْعَل لَّنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ وَلِيًّا وَٱجْعَل لَّنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ نَصِيرًا ﴿٧٥﴾

And what is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of Allāh and [for] the oppressed among men, women, and children who say, "Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people and appoint for us from Yourself a protector and appoint for us from Yourself a helper"?

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/4:75

And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught that a Muslim does not abandon his brother to oppression:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 2442

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ بُكَيْرٍ، حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ، عَنْ عُقَيْلٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، أَنَّ سَالِمًا، أَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ عُمَرَ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ أَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ " الْمُسْلِمُ أَخُو الْمُسْلِمِ، لاَ يَظْلِمُهُ وَلاَ يُسْلِمُهُ، وَمَنْ كَانَ فِي حَاجَةِ أَخِيهِ كَانَ اللَّهُ فِي حَاجَتِهِ،

وَمَنْ فَرَّجَ عَنْ مُسْلِمٍ كُرْبَةً فَرَّجَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرُبَاتِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ، وَمَنْ سَتَرَ مُسْلِمًا سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ".

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn 'Umar narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim; he does not wrong him nor abandon him (to the enemy).*** Whoever fulfils the need of his brother, Allah will fulfil his need; whoever relieves a Muslim of a hardship, Allah will relieve him of a hardship on the Day of Resurrection; and whoever covers a Muslim's fault, Allah will cover his fault on the Day of Resurrection."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Yahya ibn Bukayr, from Al-Layth ibn Sa'd, from 'Uqayl ibn Khalid, from Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, from Salim ibn 'Abdullah, from 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Oppressions, Hadith No. 2442.

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:2442

LESSONS

Answering the call of an oppressed brother is a duty of brotherhood. Tripoli returned because there were those willing to answer it.

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PONZA AND CORSICA

HISTORICAL NOTE: 1552–1553

After Tripoli, Turgut joined the Ottoman fleet in campaigns together with France against Charles V. In 1552, near the island of ***Ponza*** off the Italian coast, the Ottoman fleet defeated Andrea Doria's fleet and captured several of his ships.

In 1553 Turgut helped France on the island of ***Corsica***, and according to the TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi he won a battle at Bastia on 17 August 1553 (7 Ramadan 960 AH) against a Genoese relief army. The island where he had once been captured now witnessed his victory.

Status of the report: Narrated in the books of history — chiefly the Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr of Kâtib Çelebi, Ottoman archival records and contemporary European sources — without a chain by the standards of the Hadith scholars. The story is accepted as history, but it cannot be used as proof in the way an authentic hadith can.

REFERENCES:

contemporary European sources; Kâtib Çelebi, Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr; TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi.

LESSONS

Allah turns circumstances around: the place of a man's captivity can become the place of his victory. Never despair of Allah's mercy.

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GOVERNOR OF TRIPOLI

HISTORICAL NOTE: 1556–1565

In March 1556 (Jumada al-Ula 963 AH) Turgut was appointed ***beylerbeyi*** of Tripoli. He governed the city for nine years until his death.

He strengthened Tripoli's fortifications, made it the base of the Ottoman fleet in North Africa, and built ***a mosque*** and ***a bathhouse*** in the city. The Turgut Reis Mosque (Darghuth Mosque) still stands in Tripoli today, and archival records mention the mosque's endowment funding its repairs.

Status of the report: His appointment and rule in Tripoli and the building of his mosque are established.

REFERENCES:

TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, "Turgut Reis" and "Turgut Reis Külliyesi".

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave glad tidings to just rulers:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1827

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، وَزُهَيْرُ بْنُ حَرْبٍ، وَابْنُ، نُمَيْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، بْنُ عُيَيْنَةَ عَنْ عَمْرٍو، - يَعْنِي ابْنَ دِينَارٍ - عَنْ عَمْرِو بْنِ أَوْسٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو، قَالَ ابْنُ نُمَيْرٍ وَأَبُو بَكْرٍ يَبْلُغُ بِهِ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم وَفِي حَدِيثِ زُهَيْرٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم " إِنَّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَلَى مَنَابِرَ مِنْ نُورٍ عَنْ يَمِينِ الرَّحْمَنِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَكِلْتَا يَدَيْهِ يَمِينٌ الَّذِينَ يَعْدِلُونَ فِي حُكْمِهِمْ وَأَهْلِيهِمْ وَمَا وَلُوا " .

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"Indeed, the just will be with Allah upon pulpits of light, on the right of the Most Merciful, Mighty and Majestic — and both His hands are right — those who are just in their judgements, with their families and in what they are entrusted with."***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah, Zuhayr ibn Harb and Ibn Numayr, from Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, from 'Amr ibn Dinar, from 'Amr ibn Aws, from 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Government, Hadith No. 1827.

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

Source: sunnah.com/muslim:1827

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LESSONS

Victory on the battlefield should be followed by just government and useful building for the people.

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VICTORY AT DJERBA (1560)

HISTORICAL NOTE: 1560

In March 1560 a combined Christian fleet under Spain seized the island of ***Djerba***, near Tripoli, intending to attack Tripoli next. The Ottoman fleet under ***Piyale Pasha*** came from Istanbul, and Turgut joined it with his ships.

In May 1560 the Ottoman fleet heavily defeated the enemy fleet near Djerba. The Djerba fortress was then besieged for about two months and taken on 30 July 1560 (7 Dhu al-Qa'dah 967 AH). European sources say that the bones of the slain enemy soldiers were piled into a tower (Burj al-Rus) that stood until the nineteenth century — a deed stated here honestly, and not as something to be proud of.

Status of the report: The victory at Djerba in 1560 is established; the numbers of losses vary.

REFERENCES:

TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, "Piyâle Paşa"; contemporary European sources.

LESSONS

Victory should be met with gratitude and good conduct. Respect for the dead, including the enemy's dead, is part of good character.

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THE SIEGE OF MALTA (1565)

HISTORICAL NOTE: AT EIGHTY YEARS OF AGE

In 1565 Sultan Süleyman sent a great fleet to take the island of ***Malta***, base of the Knights of St. John who attacked Muslim ships in the Mediterranean. Turgut, then about eighty years old, was called to join from Tripoli with about 1,600 soldiers.

When he arrived, the Ottoman army was besieging the small fort of ***St. Elmo***. According to European sources, Turgut disagreed with some decisions of the other commanders, but he still worked hard placing the cannon around the fort.

Status of the report: His part in the Siege of Malta is established; the details of the disagreement come mainly from European sources.

REFERENCES:

Francesco Balbi, diary of the Siege of Malta; Kâtib Çelebi, Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr; contemporary European sources.

LESSONS

Old age does not stop the believer from serving. The spirit of striving knows no age.

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MARTYRDOM BEFORE ST. ELMO

HISTORICAL NOTE: 18–23 JUNE 1565

On 18 June 1565, while inspecting the cannon positions near St. Elmo, Turgut was struck by stone splinters from a cannon shot and gravely wounded in the head. He was carried to his tent and lay unconscious for several days.

According to the TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, he died on 23 June 1565 (24 Dhu al-Qa'dah 972 AH), the day the fort of St. Elmo fell to the Ottoman army. According to tradition, the news of St. Elmo's fall reached him before he breathed his last. The Siege of Malta ultimately failed, but Turgut fell while striving.

Status of the report: His wound and death at Malta are established; the story that he heard of St. Elmo's fall is a tradition.

REFERENCES:

Francesco Balbi, diary of the Siege of Malta; TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, "Turgut Reis".

Allah affirms that those killed in His cause are not dead:

SURAH ALI 'IMRAN 3:169

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

﴿١٦٩﴾

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

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

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And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ promised the rank of the martyrs to whoever sincerely asks for it:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1909

حَدَّثَنِي أَبُو الطَّاهِرِ، وَحَرْمَلَةُ بْنُ يَحْيَى، - وَاللَّفْظُ لِحَرْمَلَةَ - قَالَ أَبُو الطَّاهِرِ أَخْبَرَنَا وَقَالَ، حَرْمَلَةُ حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ وَهْبٍ، حَدَّثَنِي أَبُو شُرَيْحٍ، أَنَّ سَهْلَ بْنَ أَبِي أُمَامَةَ بْنِ سَهْلِ، بْنِ حُنَيْفٍ حَدَّثَهُ عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ جَدِّهِ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ " مَنْ سَأَلَ اللَّهَ الشَّهَادَةَ بِصِدْقٍ بَلَّغَهُ اللَّهُ مَنَازِلَ الشُّهَدَاءِ وَإِنْ مَاتَ عَلَى فِرَاشِهِ " .

TRANSLATION:

Sahl ibn Abi Umamah ibn Sahl ibn Hunayf narrated from his father, from his grandfather, that the Prophet ﷺ said: ***"Whoever sincerely asks Allah for martyrdom, Allah will raise him to the ranks of the martyrs even if he dies on his bed."***

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Abu at-Tahir and Harmalah ibn Yahya, from 'Abdullah ibn Wahb, from Abu Shurayh 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Shurayh, from Sahl ibn Abi Umamah, from Abu Umamah ibn Sahl, from Sahl ibn Hunayf رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Government, Hadith No. 1909.

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

Source: sunnah.com/muslim:1909

LESSONS

Only Allah knows who is a martyr in His sight. We pray for good for those who fell in the cause of Allah with sincere intention.

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TOMB AND MOSQUE IN TRIPOLI

HISTORICAL NOTE: RETURN TO TRIPOLI

Turgut's body was carried from Malta to Tripoli, the city he had freed and governed, and buried in the grounds of the mosque he had built. A tomb was later built over his grave.

Today the Turgut Reis Mosque (Darghuth Mosque) in the old city of Tripoli is still a place of prayer and of visits to his tomb. He is remembered by the people of Libya with gratitude, and the town of his birth in Turkey now bears his name.

Status of the report: His burial at his mosque in Tripoli is established.

REFERENCES:

TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, "Turgut Reis Külliyesi".

LESSONS

A mosque built with sincerity keeps giving benefit long after its builder is gone. That is ongoing charity.

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STORIES AND FIGURES THAT NEED ASSESSMENT

SOURCE NOTE: BETWEEN FACT AND LEGEND

Some matters in Turgut's story need careful assessment. ***First***, his year of birth (1485 or 1487) and his family origins are disputed. ***Second***, the manner of his release from captivity — by ransom or by Hayreddin's threat — differs between sources. ***Third***, the story of the canal at Djerba and its year are not uniform in the sources.

Fourth, the story of his meeting with La Valette in captivity, and of his hearing the news of St. Elmo's fall before he died, are traditions. ***Fifth***, the capture of the people of Gozo and the tower of bones at Djerba are bitter matters that cannot be made beautiful. What is established: his part at Preveza (1538), the liberation of Tripoli (1551), his appointment as beylerbeyi of Tripoli (1556), the victory at Djerba (1560), and his martyrdom at Malta (1565).

Status of the report: The main events are established; many details are traditions or disputed.

REFERENCES:

A comparison of Kâtib Çelebi, the TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, European sources and modern historical research.

LESSONS

A true hero needs no legends. Established facts are example enough.

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SOURCES OF THE STORIES OF TURGUT REIS

This table summarises the source and grade of each story so that the reader can distinguish the authentic from the merely famous.

STORY	SOURCE	GRADE
A farmer's son from Menteşe	TDV; Kâtib Çelebi	History; year varies
Battle of Preveza (1538)	Kâtib Çelebi; TDV	Established
Prepare strength	Al-Anfal 8:60	Qur'an
The first army at sea	Sahih al-Bukhari 2924	Authentic
Captured in Corsica (1540)	European sources; TDV	Established
Free the captive	Sahih al-Bukhari 3046	Authentic
Meeting with La Valette	Tradition	Uncertain
Escape at Djerba	TDV; European sources	Established; details vary
Capture of the people of Gozo (1551)	European sources	Established; numbers vary
Prohibition of killing women and children	Sahih al-Bukhari 3015	Authentic
Liberation of Tripoli (1551)	Kâtib Çelebi; TDV	Established
A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim	Sahih al-Bukhari 2442	Authentic
Beylerbeyi of Tripoli (1556)	Ottoman archives; TDV	Established
Just rulers	Sahih Muslim 1827	Authentic
Victory at Djerba (1560)	TDV; European sources	Established
Martyrdom at Malta (1565)	Balbi; TDV	Established
Sincerely asking for martyrdom	Sahih Muslim 1909	Authentic
Hearing of St. Elmo's fall before death	Tradition	Uncertain

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PEOPLE, PLACES AND TIMELINE

PERSON	ROLE
Hayreddin Barbarossa	Turgut's teacher; Grand Admiral of the Ottomans
Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent	Ottoman sultan of his time
Sinan Pasha	Commander of the fleet that freed Tripoli (1551)
Piyale Pasha	Fleet commander at Djerba (1560) and Malta (1565)
Andrea Doria	Genoese admiral who opposed him
Giannettino Doria	Andrea Doria's nephew who captured him (1540)
Jean de la Valette	Grand Master of the Knights of St. John at Malta (1565)
Francesco Balbi	Soldier who kept a diary of the Siege of Malta

PLACE	EVENT
Bodrum (Turgutreis)	The area of his birth
Preveza	Naval battle of 1538
Corsica	Captured (1540); victory at Bastia (1553)
Djerba	Escape from the blockade; victory in 1560
Gozo	Capture of its people (1551)
Tripoli	Freed 1551; governed by him 1556–1565; his tomb
Malta (St. Elmo)	Where he fell as a martyr (1565)

YEAR	EVENT
c. 1485 CE	Birth of Turgut
1538 CE	Battle of Preveza
1540 CE	Captured in Corsica
c. 1543 CE	Freed from captivity
c. 1547 CE	Escape from the blockade at Djerba
1550 CE	Mahdia granted, then lost
1551 CE	Gozo; liberation of Tripoli
1552–1553 CE	Ponza and Corsica
1556 CE	Appointed beylerbeyi of Tripoli
1560 CE	Victory at Djerba
1565 CE	Martyrdom in the Siege of Malta

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT TURGUT REIS

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

1. WHO WAS TURGUT REIS?

An Ottoman admiral, pupil of Hayreddin Barbarossa, liberator and governor of Tripoli, who fell as a martyr at Malta in 1565.

2. WHERE WAS HE BORN?

In a village near Bodrum on the Aegean coast, now named Turgutreis.

3. WHO WAS HIS TEACHER?

Hayreddin Barbarossa.

4. WAS HE EVER CAPTURED?

Yes, in 1540 in Corsica, and he was made a galley slave for about three or four years.

5. HOW WAS HE FREED?

Around 1543–1544; sources mention Hayreddin's threat against Genoa or a ransom.

6. WHEN WAS TRIPOLI FREED?

On 15 August 1551 (12 Sha'ban 958 AH).

7. FROM WHOM WAS TRIPOLI FREED?

From the Knights of St. John of Malta.

8. HOW LONG DID HE GOVERN TRIPOLI?

Nine years, from 1556 to 1565.

9. WHAT HAPPENED AT DJERBA IN 1560?

The Ottoman fleet defeated the combined Christian fleet and took the Djerba fortress.

10. HOW DID HE DIE?

He was wounded in the head by splinters from a cannon shot at St. Elmo, Malta, and died on 23 June 1565.

11. WHERE IS HIS TOMB?

At his mosque in the old city of Tripoli, Libya.

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12. WHAT IS THE GREATEST LESSON OF HIS STORY?

Misfortune and age do not stop a person from striving and helping his brothers, while keeping the ethics of war.

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

Turgut's story is that of a farmer's son who became an admiral, a captive who became a liberator, and an old man who fell while still striving — though his story also contains matters that must be honestly assessed.

LESSON	FROM TURGUT'S STORY
Preparing strength	Skill with cannon and Preveza; Al-Anfal 8:60
Intention at sea	Jihad at sea; Sahih al-Bukhari 2924
Freeing captives	His release through Hayreddin; Sahih al-Bukhari 3046
The ethics of war	The fate of the people of Gozo; Sahih al-Bukhari 3015
Helping the oppressed	Liberation of Tripoli; An-Nisa' 4:75; Sahih al-Bukhari 2442
Just government	Governor of Tripoli; Sahih Muslim 1827
Striving to the end of life	Malta; Ali 'Imran 3:169; Sahih Muslim 1909
Ongoing charity	The Turgut Reis Mosque in Tripoli

May we follow Turgut in his patience in captivity, his earnestness in helping oppressed brothers, and his spirit that did not fade even in old age, while learning from the matters in his story that need assessment.

In sha' Allah, the Heroes of Islam series will continue with the story of Piri Reis, the admiral and cartographer who wrote the Kitab-ı Bahriye.

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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 .

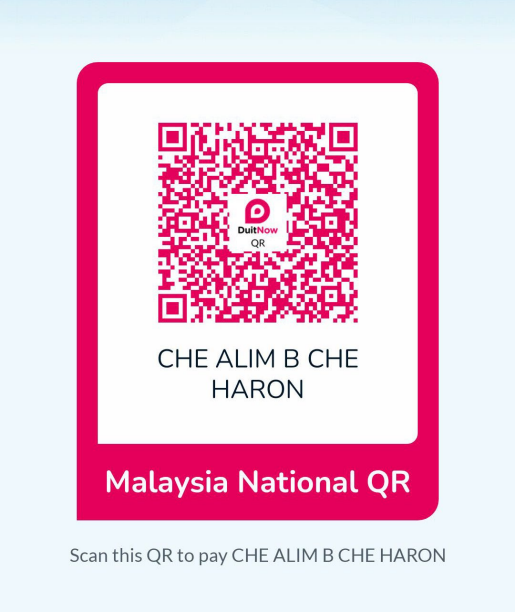
REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Wills (Kitab al-Wasiyyah), chapter on the reward that reaches a person after his death, Hadith No. 1631.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: sunnah.com/muslim:1631

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