

The Miracles of the Qur'an and Sunnah in preventative medicine and micro-organisms

(by Dr Abdul Jawad Al-Sawi, Published in 2012)

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The prophet Muhammad PBUH said *{There are two blessings in which many people incur loss. (They are) health and free time (For doing good)}*. This book, written in Arabic by Dr Abdul Jawad Al-Sawi investigates the miraculous knowledge presented within the Qur'an and Sunnah (the Prophet Muhammad's teachings and actions), advising mankind on how best to maintain their health and prevent diseases. This book, comprising five chapters, discusses preventative medicine, which is defined in the book as the science of preventing microbial, organic, and psychological disease in the individual and society.

This book begins by identifying the three major causes of disease: micro-organisms, organic compounds, and psychiatric disorders. The nature of disease aetiology is explored, and the importance of animals and the environment in the spread of infectious disease is emphasised. There is a focus on the spread of airborne viruses, such as influenza, which, in modern times, is especially relevant as this information can be applied directly to the transmission of COVID-19.

Dr Al-Sawi emphasises the importance of the prevention of infectious diseases by implementing the following measures: cleansing the stores of micro-organisms, blocking the transmission within the epidemiological triad and strengthening the human immune system.

This introduction to infectious disease epidemiology is succeeded by a thought-provoking explanation of the role of purity, which is emphasised and considered a priority in Islam, in the protection against illness. We are reminded that, as the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, *{cleanliness is half of faith}*, and that this involves purity of the body, clothing, and environment in which one resides in. Water, the primary means of purification, is used multiple times daily in ablution prior to prayer, and is vital in the removal of pathogens such as

Streptococcus, Staphylococcus and Neisseria, which reside on our skin and within our nasal cavities at a density of around 1-5 million per square centimetre. The reader is also informed of the benefits of miswak, a tooth stick made from the roots of the *Salvadorapersica* tree, alongside the rest of the ten acts of *Fitrah* that were valued by the Prophet (PBUH): *{Imam Muslim narrated that the Messenger of God, PBUH said: "Ten are the acts according to Fitrah (nature): clipping the moustache, letting the beard grow, using the Miswak (tooth stick), cleansing the nose with water (Al-Istinshaq), cutting the nails, washing the knuckles, plucking the hair under armpits, shaving the pubes and cleansing ones private parts (after easing or urinating) with water. The narrator said: I have forgotten the tenth, but it may have been rinsing the mouth".}*

The author then outlines the impact of the environment on community health. Epidemics can be spread in the community through vectors such as food, water, and air. Contaminated food and drink are implicated in the transmission of communicable diseases such as typhoid and dysentery in developing countries in particular. Behaviours currently considered universal, such as covering one's mouth whilst sneezing or yawning, and quarantining infected individuals, were introduced and recommended by the Prophet (PBUH) over 1400 years ago, demonstrating the extent of the contributions to the field of science by the Muslim world.

{Abdullah bin Abbas, may God be pleased with him, said: "The Messenger of God, PBUH forbade breathing or blowing into a vessel "Narrated by Abu Dawud}. Also, the messenger of God PBUH said {if you hear of the plague on land, do not enter it, and if it occurs while you are on land, do not leave it to flee from it}.

A different outlook is later provided in the book, and instead of exploring the recommended behaviours, it

delves into the various forbidden acts mentioned in the Quran and Sunnah, and their effects on causing or worsening the disease. Readers are first warned of the risks of eating animal products containing blood, due to the possibility of microbial and zoonotic transmission to humans via this route.

Allah the Almighty says *{(Prohibited to you are dead animals, blood)}* Al-Ma'idah 3.

The reasoning behind the prohibition of pork in Islam is also explored, including, but not limited to, the array of infections such as E-coli, tuberculosis, and influenza, that are able to be transmitted through its consumption.

Alcohol is another forbidden substance known to have a significant, detrimental impact on one's health, and this is also detailed within this section of the book. God Almighty says *{(They ask you about wine and gambling. Say 'in them is great sin and yet for people. But their sin is greater than their benefit)}* – chapter Al-Baqarah 219. In addition to its effects on an individual's cognition and decision-making, long-term abuse can drastically increase the risk of developing inflammation and cirrhosis of the liver, and cancers of the tongue, pharynx and oesophagus.

The author then addresses the behaviours promoted both by the Quran and the Prophet (PBUH), which had the aim of maximising the health of the human body and soul. The benefits of fasting are many, as it not only provides our organs with a period of detoxification, but additionally strengthens our senses and our psychological wellbeing. Islamic teachings also encourage engaging in

regular exercise, the benefits of which are known far and wide.

The Messenger said: *{A strong believer is better and dearer to God than a weak believer}*. Narrated by Ibn Majah.

In the final chapter of the book, the author provides a glimpse into the history of preventative medicine, taking shape at the beginning of the twentieth century with the exploration of micro-organisms and the advancements in the study of disease aetiology. Western civilisation owes much of these developments to the Muslim world. The beliefs on disease which were dominant in the early medieval periods, including the idea that diseases are a result of evil spirits and bad luck, were refuted with the origins of Islam in the 7th century. The Prophet (PBUH) prohibited the use of amulets, black magic, and the belief in bad omens. He said, *{Allah has sent down both the disease and the cure, and He has appointed a cure for every disease, so treat yourselves medically, but use nothing unlawful}*.

The topics within the book are outlined and discussed in a way that is accessible, both for individuals with a background in science or medicine, and also for the lay reader. Dr Al-Sawi complements his writing throughout with informative photos and illustrations in order to aid the reader in visualising his points. However, I feel that he could have elaborated further on the various treatments mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah, as this would have provided a deeper insight into the links between modern medicine and the teachings of Islam, though this may fall within another scope entirely.