

CHAPTER SIX

Sunnah of Sleeping and Science ^{1 i}

O Allah (The Exalted) bless the One for whom sparking water burst forth from his fingertips for his Companions.

“And it is He Who made for you the night a covering and the sleep a rest, and made the day to rise up again”ⁱⁱ

Sleep is one of the blessings from Allah (The Exalted). At the end of a busy day a person looks forward to sleeping and regaining enough energy for the next day. Sleep is also important for good health and safety reasons. Studies vary as to how much sleep is enough. Some studies claim 8-10 hours is a requirement for everyone. However, the Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) used to sleep very few hours in the night and used part of the night for prayer. Recent studies confirm that this may actually be healthier for some people. Lack of sleep can lead to mental illness, relationship problems, absence from work and even traffic accidents.

The Costs

Researchers have found that people with chronic² insomnia³ are more likely than others to develop several kinds of psychiatric⁴ problems, and are also likely to make greater use of healthcare services (Yang). Lost productivity due to sleepiness has been estimated to cost the U.S. national economy as much as \$100 billion annually and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has estimated more than 100,000 auto crashes annually may be fatigue⁵ related (Yang). Because of this, some studies claim that 8-10 hours should be required for everyone. However, recent studies have confirmed what the Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) did may be healthy for some people.

The Prophet's Sleep

“...the Prophet slept for a part of the nightⁱⁱⁱ, and late in the night, he got up and performed ablution from a hanging water skin, a light (perfect) ablution and stood up for the prayer”^{iv} Modern studies show that this may actually be the best advice for many people.

Sleep study

A six-year study of more than a million Americans showed that a good night's sleep is seven hours. It also showed that people who sleep for eight hours or more tend to die prematurely. Study leader Daniel F. Kripke, MD, says, “You really don't have to sleep for eight hours and you don't have to worry about it. It is evidently very safe to sleep only seven, six, or even five hours a night.”^v

Statistics

Kripke and co-workers analysed data from an American Cancer Society study conducted between 1982 and 1988. The study gathered information on people's sleep habits and health, and then followed them for six years. Study participants were between 30 to 102 years, with an average age of 57 years for women and 58 years for men. In the study the death risk for people with excess sleep was 34% compared to only 12% for those who slept 8 hours and only 22% for those who had too little sleep.

These findings are similar to those in the dietary field which showed that eating too much food is much more harmful than not eating enough (of course extremes such as starvation and not sleeping at all are not included in this discussion). Kripke even noted that, “For 10-hour sleepers, the increased risk of death was about the same as that for moderate obesity⁶.”

¹ See Volume One, Chapter twelve, section two for this Sunnah

² Lasting for a long time. A chronic disorder may be mild or severe but will usually involve some long-term or permanent organic change in the body.

³ Difficulty in sleeping, or disturbances of normal sleep pattern.

⁴ Mental illness.

⁵ Tiredness.

⁶ Over weight

Rest during the night

Doctor Nixon Visitor states; when I see patients who sleep late, I see that they are affected both physically and mentally as I have found them suffering with depression and anxiety⁷. Some of the patients had been affected to the extent they felt committing suicide. The nature of the world is to work during the day and rest at night (as stated in the Qur'an). When someone goes against nature they will suffer both physically and mentally.”^{vi}

Treatment for depression

Some studies have even experimented sleep deprivation to treat depression⁸. Up to 60% of depressed people will show a 30% improvement after just one night awake.^{vii} People who feel the most depressed in the morning and improve later in the day seem to benefit the most from a night without sleep (Yang). However, keeping people up all night is not a long-term solution and researchers often found a setback in people once they went back to “normal” sleeping hours.

Further research showed that one explanation for treating depression was because sleep inhibits the *thyroid⁹ stimulating hormone* (TSH¹⁰) that helps control our metabolism¹¹ and, indirectly, our levels of energy. An estimated 25% to 35% of depressed patients have low TSH levels. Recent research has shown that while sleep inhibits the release of TSH, staying awake through the night and the early morning hours boost it. This “new” scientific research is completely in accordance with the habit of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) which was to sleep shortly after 'Isha prayer (earlier than most people sleep nowadays), and wake in the very early morning hours (sometimes as early as midnight¹²) again to pray.¹³

To rest and sleep

There was not a single companion of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) who suffered from Insomnia. The reason was they would follow the way of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). If it is seen through the medical perspective this method is best for the human body.

Sleeping on the right

Abu Qataadah (may Allah be pleased with him) relates that, *“If the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) made an early journey-break in the last portion of the night on his travels, he slept on his right side. If he was staying there till before the morning, he lifted his right arm, put his head on it and slept.”*^{viii}

Meaning that he rested his blessed head on the inner part of his arm and the hand would be near his back.

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) would put his blessed right hand under his blessed right cheek.^{ix} He would lie on his blessed right side facing the *Qibla* and rest on a pillow that was made from leaves of a date tree.^x

Shaykh Abdul Haq (may Allah's mercy be upon him) in his book *Madarijun Nabuwa* states; *“Because the heart is on the left, one will not be satisfied with the sleep and the person will sleep heavily not knowing his state. If one sleeps on the right side, the heart dangles meaning a person can not sleep heavily. This benefits a person as he can look after himself and his family if anything happens. A major benefit is that one will not miss the Morning Prayer as one is not engaged in heavy sleep.”*

Imam Shafa'i (may Allah's mercy be upon him) states that there are four types of sleep;

1. One is to lie on the back this is the sleep of the Prophets (upon them all be peace)
2. One is to sleep on the right side which is the sleep of the worshippers,

7 A basic biological driving force and a natural response to threat or danger, which may be real or imagined.

8 A mood of sustained sadness or unhappiness.

9 Thyroid gland: This lies in the neck just under the 'Adam's apple'. Thyroid gland produces hormones which control body metabolism.

10 The production of thyroid gland hormone is controlled by thyroid-stimulating hormone from the pituitary gland. There is a feedback mechanism by which the levels of thyroid hormone in the blood also control the pituitary, reducing its output of TSH.

11 The process by which food is built up into living material or used to supply energy in a living organism.

12 Is calculated by halving the time between Madhrib and sunrise.

13 Ibn 'Abbas said, "The Prophet slept till his breath sounds and then prayed." Ibn 'Abbas added: "I stayed overnight in the house of my aunt, Maimuna, the Prophet slept for a part of the night, (See *Fateh-al-Bari* page 249, Vol. 1), and late in the night, he got up and performed ablution from a hanging water skin, a light (perfect) ablution and stood up for the prayer. I, too, performed a similar ablution, then I went and stood on his left. He drew me to his right and prayed as much as Allah wished, and again lay and slept till his breath sounds were heard."

3. One is to sleep on the left which is the sleep of the rulers
4. And one is to sleep on the stomach that is the sleep of the devil. ^{xi}

Sleeping before 'Isha

A gas exits from the earth at the time of 'Asr which is heavy and can affect a person's mind and heart. If a person sleeps before 'Isha the body can not fight this gas hence causing illnesses.

'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) states, "Whosoever sleeps after 'Asr Salaah and lose their intellect, has only themselves to blame."¹⁴

There is a also chance a person will miss their Salaah. There is only blessings and wisdom in following the Sunnah.

Sleeping with ablution

After the 'Isha prayer there may be some chores which one may need to complete. This at times can cause stress upon a person. These pressures can be reduced by performing wudhu. To get satisfaction from sleep one needs to act upon the Sunnah by performing wudhu before sleeping.

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said that, "When a person sleeps with *wudhu*, Allah (The Exalted) gives permission to his soul to circumambulate the 'Arsh¹⁵ and bow to Allah (The Exalted).^{xii} Whilst sleeping in the state of *wudhu*, the reward of worship is being written for you in your book of deeds all night. *Subhanallah!*

Changing clothes before sleeping

For hygiene purposes it is advised not to sleep in the clothing worn throughout the day but to wear something loose-fitting as tight clothing does not benefit one's sleep. Whilst sleeping our limbs are stationary affecting the blood circulation; wearing tight clothing will reduce the circulation further. The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) would wear a loose fitting garment known as Tehband.

Cleaning the bed

No religion mentions the practice of cleaning the bed before sleeping. Once a person did not clean his bed before sleeping in it. Being cold that day a snake rested in the bed and bit the person killing him.

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, "*When one of you goes to bed then with the edge of your lower garment (or the edge of the duvet) clean to bed, what were you to know what is in the bed.*"^{xiii}

One may ask the question, why do we need to do this because they lived in a hot country and there is a chance small animal/creatures such as a snake or scorpion etc. may seek refuge, we don't have this problem here neither do we have sand or dust particles getting into our bed? I say that the Sunnah is for all mankind no matter who or where you are. Those who live in these climates and conditions can use this method and those who live in cold climates can use it too as there are other insects like bed mites which the visible eye can not see which can harm. Then to clean the bed is a great Sunnah and no matter where in the world you may be, one can practise it, *Subhanallah!*

Going to the toilet

The Europeans have made en-suit bathrooms so people do not have to go outside in the cold to go to the toilet. If one goes out in the cold to use the toilet then one can be affected by joint pains. This was taught to Muslims so we can benefit from this and live a healthy life. According to Scholars this was a practise done in cold times and at times of need. In normal circumstances it should be done away from the bedroom.

A woman accidentally drank some of the Messenger of Allah's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) urine. Then the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) told her, "*You will never complain of a stomach ache.*"^{xiv}

Ibn Jurayj (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that, the name of this woman was Baraka, but they disagree about her lineage. Some say it was Umme Ayman, who would serve the Messenger of Allah

¹⁴ It is disliked (Makrooh) to sleep between 'Asr & Maghrib Salaah.

¹⁵ The Throne of Allah (The Exalted).

(may Allah bless him and grant him peace). She said, *“The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) has a wooden cup which he placed under his bed, in which he would urinate during the night. One night he urinated in it and when he examined it in the morning, there was nothing in it.”* He asked Baraka about that. She said, *“I got up and felt thirsty and drank it without knowing.”*^{xv}

Washing hands after waking up

Germs may accumulate on the hands during the course of the night.¹⁶ Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates *“When you wake up from sleep to pray, wash your hands before you put them in the Wudhu water, for you do not know where your hands have spent the night.”*^{xvi}

Observations of Doctor Nixon Visitor xvii

Doctor Nixon states, *“When a healthy person sleeps, the muscles become relaxed. A comfortable bed is bad for the spinal cord, and in my eyes, I have met such patients that have been affected with a bad back. Childrens’ bones are weak and if they sleep on soft beds it affects their bones and this will affect them throughout their lives. Soft beds result in back pain as the muscles of the back become slack and if soft beds are used regularly this becomes a regular accordance.”*

Sleeping on the floor

Sleeping on the floor benefits those who suffer from back pain, to the extent one who sleeps on the floor will not be affected with problems of spinal pain and back ache. Islam taught us a long time ago and the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) did this himself.

‘Aisha (may Allah be pleased with he), states that, *“The Messenger of Allah’s (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) bed was made of animal skin, which had leaves of date trees.”*^{xviii}

‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) states that, *“The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was sleeping on a mat, the marks of the mat were left on his blessed side. I said, ‘O Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) only if you would sleep on something better than this’. The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) replied, ‘What have I to gain in this world, this world is like as if a traveller is travelling in the sun and he sits under a tree and gets up and goes.’”*^{xix}

Look at the simplicity of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and we sleep on the best mattress available. There is no problem in sleeping on a good bed; however, you should make sure to wake up for *Fajr Salaah*. Unfortunately people stay in their comfortable beds and miss their *Salaah* but when it comes to waking up for work we will not miss a day. We should try to sleep on the floor at times following the Sunnah, *Inshallah*; you will not have a problem waking up for *Salaah*.

Siesta (Kaylula)

It is Sunnah to rest after the afternoon meal as mentioned in chapter fourteen of the first volume. Science today is emphasising the need to look after the body. Doctor Geolick Oston who has written many books writes, *“If it was in my control I would close Schools, factories etc. and make everyone rest at this time as if this is observed then we would have less ill patients and people would be saved from many illnesses.”* The psychologist¹⁷ states that sleeping at this time refreshes the body, strengthen it and it is saved from many physical and mental illnesses. But this is best after eating in the afternoon and for no longer than an hour.

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) said, *“The companions of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) would observe Friday prayer first and then have a siesta.”*^{xx}

We find that many practices of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) are being proven by research. Whatever the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) did was for the benefit of his followers!

We learn from the above research that in following the Sunnah there are many benefits in our lives. The Sunnah is not to place a burden on anyone but to make people better physically and mentally.

¹⁶ Rule: If a person who has not performed ablution, dips his hand or finger or fingernail or any part of the body which is washed in ablution, whether purposely or by mistake, in a tub of water which is less than a large pool (Da-darda) then that water cannot be used to perform ablution or bath. In the same way, if a person is in need of having a bath and any part of his body touches the water purposely or by mistake, then that water cannot be used to perform a bath or ablution. If the part of the body or hand has been washed, then there is no problem.

¹⁷ A Professional concerned with the scientific study of behavioural and its mental process.

May Allah (The Exalted) give us the ability to follow the Sunnah due to it being an act of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and not due to modern research, Ameen. If one practices the Sunnah because it is the Sunnah of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) then he will get rewarded as well as benefiting from good health too.

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- i By Karima Burns, MH, ND. 14/03/2002
ii Surah Al-Furqaan; Surah No:25; Verse; 47.
iii See Fateh-al-Bari page 249, Vol. 1
iv Bukhari
v DeNoon
vi Kewar Medical
vii January 1990 issue of the American Journal of Psychiatry.
viii Shamail-e-Tirmidhi. Sleeping of the Prophet. p. 256
ix Bukhari
x Abu Dawud & Shamail-e-Tirmidhi
xi Ihya uloom al Deen by Al-Ghazali
xii Kashaf Mahjoob. Faizan-e-Shariat. p. 1175
xiii Muttafak 'Alay. Faizan-e-Sunnat. p. 852
xiv Bukhari & Muslim, Al- Hakim & confirmed by adh-Dhahabi and ad-Daraqutni; Ash-Shifa; Chapter:2; Section: 3.
xv Muslim & Bukhari
xvi Muslim
xvii Kewar Medical
xviii Shamail-e-Tirmidhi. Bed of the Prophet. p. 335
xix Madarijun Nabuwat
xx Bukhari