

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

Prayers and Healing ^{1 i}

O Allah (The Exalted) bless our master Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and his family, his wives and his descendants as many times as all the breaths of his nation.

Healing is from Allah (The Exalted), and physicians are just an instrument of the Healer. We give the same medication to two different patients with the same type of medical problem or perform similar operations on two patients otherwise at the same risk and one will survive and the other doesn't. It is more than simple luck. As the pious say, "We dress the wound and Allah heals it." This was also acknowledged by the Prophet Abraham (upon whom be peace) "*And when I am ill, it is He who heals me.*"ⁱⁱ Allah (The Exalted) Himself attests to it by saying "*And if Allah causes and evil to you, then there is none to remove it but He.*"ⁱⁱⁱ

Healing from the Qur'an

The Qur'an is not a textbook of medicine, rather it contains rules of guidance that if followed will promote good health and healing. This is why the Qur'an calls itself a book of healing.

"O People! There has come an admonition to you from your Lord, and healing of hearts, and a guidance and a mercy for the believers." ^{iv}

"And We send down in Qur'an that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers;.." ^v

Healing from the Qur'an is of three types:

a. *Legislative effect:* This includes faith (Imaan) in Allah (The Exalted) as not only the Creator but the Sustainer and the Protector. This also includes the medical benefits of obligatory prayers, fasting, charity and pilgrimage.

b. *Health Guidelines:* Health-promoting items from the Qur'an and the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) including the use of honey, olives, fruit, lean meat, avoiding excessive eating, and the prohibition of alcohol, pork, homosexuality, sexual promiscuity and intercourse during menstruation.

c. *The direct healing effect of the Qur'an:* Recitation of Qur'an by the ill or for the ill (ruqya) has shown to have a direct healing effect. This most likely uses the medical benefits of echo. Echo of sound is such a powerful force that it has been used to blast off mountains. Now the miniaturised version of echo is used in medicine to break kidney stones (lithotripsy), gallstones etc. Listening to the recitation of the Holy Qur'an has been shown in a study conducted by Doctor Ahmed E. Kadi and his associates to lower blood pressure, heart rate, and to cause smooth muscle relaxation in Muslim Arabs, non-Arab Muslims and even in non-Muslims. It is assumed that the echo target of "Alif Lam Meem" (the first three words of Surat AlBaqarah-the 2nd chapter of the Qur'an) is in the heart and that of Ya-seen (chapter 36) is in the pituitary gland of the brain. Thus the Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) always stressed reading the Qur'an (Qur'an-recitation) loudly and not silently by saying, "The comparison between a silent reader and a reciter is like a bottle of perfume when it is closed and when it is opened."

¹ See Volume One, Chapter Seventy for this Sunnah

Section One

Use of Meditation in Prayer and Healing

Meditation includes acts of remembrance and communications with Allah (The Exalted) as ordained to us. The Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) like all other prophets of Allah (upon them all be peace) was engaged in the remembrance of Allah (The Exalted) all of the time. He is known to have said:

1. *“There is a polish for everything that removes the rust and the polish for the rust-of- heart is the dhikr (remembrance) of Allah.”*

2. He was asked which people are most virtuous and most highly esteemed by Allah (The Exalted) on the Day of Judgement. The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) replied *“Those who remember Allah often.”*

3. It is narrated in a hadith Qudsi (direct revelation to Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) *“Allah Most High says I am as my Servant thinks I am. I am with him when he makes mention of Me. If he makes mention of Me by himself, I make mention of him to Myself. If he makes mention of Me in an assembly, I make mention of him in an assembly better than his. If he comes closer to Me a hand span, I come closer to him arms-length, if he comes to Me walking, I come to him running.”*

Thus meditation/remembrance has been a practice of all Sufi Shaykhs. In the words of Shaykh al-Mursi "dhikr (meditation) pleases Allah (The Exalted), defeats and drives evil forces, increases livelihood, makes the personality more prestigious, cleanses the heart, removes the faults and saves the tongue from lying, slander, backbiting and hypocrisy while engaged in the remembrance of Allah (The Exalted)."

Do Prayers Work?

Doctor Larry Dossey in his book "The Healing Words" has documented the healing effects of prayer. Citing one example from the research conducted by Doctor Byrd at San Francisco General Hospital in 1988, 393 critically ill heart patients admitted to the intensive care units over a 10-month period were divided into two groups. Patients categorised into group (A) were prayed for by name until they left the hospital. Those in group (B) were not prayed for. Those giving the prayers were not told how to pray. The results were very interesting. Those prayed for left the hospital early, had a lower incidence of cardiac arrest, 2-1/2 times less incidence of congestive heart failure and required 1/5th less antibiotics. The research team also observed that prayer combined with loving care worked even better. Men who had angina pectoris² and a loving, caring wife, reported a 50% reduction in angina than men who were single or divorced.

Prayers work for us even while we are sleeping. The Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) advised us to say prayers from Qur'an (Surah Ikhlas, Al Falaq, Annas and/or last verse of Surah Al Baqara) before going to sleep.

A Doctor once visited a critically ill patient who had an adrenal tumour (pheochromocytoma) and was in hypertensive crisis. He asked her what he could do for her and she, out of desperation (doctors had told her she would die) asked me to pray. So the Doctor placed his hand over the site of the tumour and made the prophetic prayer and left. The next day when he came, he was surprised to see her sitting up in bed smiling. She told him that in the evening, the radiologist³ x-rayed her again and found no trace of the tumour. He could not explain it but thought that the arteriogram⁴ might have inflected the tumour.

The Messenger (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) would put his blessed hands on the forehead of the person who was ill and make a supplication for good health and advise the person to remember Almighty Allah at all times.

The Messenger (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) visited the non-Muslims too, as he was *'Rehmatul Lil'Alameen'* meaning a Mercy unto all the worlds.

'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) states, 'When the Messenger (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was ill, he would recite the four Quls, (Surah Al-Kafiroon, Surah Ikhlas, Surah Falaq & Surah Naas) blow on his

² Pain in the centre of the chest, which is induced by exercise and relieved by rest and may spread to the jaws and arms.

³ A Doctor specialized in the interpretation of X-rays.

⁴ The image produced during arteriography, which is usually stored on photographic film or electronic media.

hands and pass them over on the back and front. He also recited these, blew on his hands, and passed them over his body during his fatal illness. ^{vi}

Make the following supplication for the patient seven times:-

“Asalullahal ‘Adheema Rabbal ‘Ar-shil ‘Adheemi Aa-Yashfiaka.”

‘I ask Almighty Allah the great, who is the Rabb of the great throne to give you ‘Shifa’ – cure.

The Messenger (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) has said, “Whenever a Muslim visits a Muslim patient and reads the above supplication seven times then the patient will definitely recover from his illness except such illness which shall result in death.” ^{vii}

The Sufi Practices

In the treatment of diseases, Sufis use prayers and the knowledge of specific verses of the Qur’an and the names of Allah. This is called the Science of Tawidh (Taweez). They use science of numerology associated with Arabic alphabets. One must know the healing is not in a piece of paper, words or numbers, but only from Allah (The Exalted).

Section Two

Prayer, the Most Powerful Healer ^{viii}

“And your Lord said, Pray to me I shall acknowledge your call.”^{ix}

“Say Dua for the Bosnian’s, Palestinians and Lebanon” an Islamic human rights organization pleads. “Say Dua for me.” Your friend pleads as he goes to an interview for a job.

Muslims are accustomed to using dua and prayer in a number of situations mentioned above, but often forget the power of prayer in healing. One is more likely to drink some herbal tea or take an over-the-counter medicine than to be found making dua for their health and one is more likely to think of offering a pot of soup to their friend rather than offering a dua for their recovery. However, modern studies have shown that prayer can be a powerful healer in itself and can also increase the healing power of other medicines.

The Qur’an and Hadith guide us in offering two kinds of prayer for illness, one can be offered anywhere and the other must be offered in person. When a prayer is offered in person it can also be done as a du’a, but is more likely done as “Ruqya” which is done by reciting a specified verse or supplication and then passing the right hand over the body of the ill person. A professional healer usually administers healing in this manner, although many people who are not healers also use Qur’anic healing. In the Hadith of Bukhari ‘Aisha (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) reported, “When any person amongst us fell ill, Allah’s Messenger (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) used to rub him with his right hand and then say: O Lord of the people, grant him health, heal him, for Thou art a Greet Healer. There is no healer, but with Thy healing Power one is healed and illness is removed.”

The “Fatiha” is commonly recited for healing, and is the recommended prayer if a person does not know the correct supplication for a particular illness. Al-Aswad has narrated that ‘Aisha (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said that “The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) allowed the treatment of poisonous sting with Ruqya” and, “that Allah’s Messenger (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, that you are most entitled to take wages for doing a Ruqya with Allah’s Book.” thus granting Ruqya (healing with prayer) a professional status.

Although healing with prayer has not been given the same professional status in modern medicine, it has, however, been recognised as a significant healer. Healing with prayer has been studied at Harvard Medical School as well as hundreds of other schools. In one study presented at a Harvard conference, 406 people were studied. Half of these were prayed for and half were not. The results of the study showed, that all the subjects being prayed for improved. Even more astounding to the researchers was that the people praying also improved their health.

Furthermore, researchers confirm (what we know to be obvious as Muslims) that either method of prayer is effective. In his book, Reinventing Medicine, Larry Dossey, MD, says “Researchers have diligently looked for

some sort of subtle energy that connects distant individuals when thoughts are communicated ... or when prayer affects the body of someone far away. Yet there is not a shred of evidence that such (measurable) energy exists." Researchers have thus concluded through testing that these prayer events do not have a "carrier" like a telephone cable or a satellite wave. So in passing a prayer to someone its strength is not affected or lost by the distance. This means prayer is also unaffected by time or space and thus their result is immediate. Researchers have dubbed this phenomenon that Muslims call dua or Ruqya, "non local healing", and have recognised it to be unaffected by time or space.

So how can prayer heal a person? Henri Bergson, a prominent medical researcher has concluded that (what he calls) "the mind" does not need help to go anywhere. Since it is already everywhere, it has no need to "go" or be "sent" and therefore needs no sender or carrier. He explains this by saying that the brain does not produce the mind, but interacts with it. He provides a crude analogy with the radio and radio waves. We know that the radio does not produce the waves, it only detects and transmits them and filters them. In the same way, when we heal with prayer, we are simply reflecting attributes of Allah (The Exalted) and transmitting healing that has been given to us through Allah (The Exalted). And just as the radio stations are always playing even if you have the radio turned off, so is Allah (The Exalted) transmitting healing and blessings upon us every moment - we need only to "tune in" to this bounty with our prayers and dua and we can receive all the benefits we are promised.

With adverse reactions to Drugs causing more than one hundred thousand deaths a year in US hospitals (this is equivalent of having a passenger jet crash every day), one should not rule out prayer as at least a supplemental healer. Larry Dossey, MD quotes in his book "An internist always looks internally inside the patient for the origin of the problem, in the present moment. A eternist looks at all of time and space, both inside and outside the patient for solutions." In light of the fact that Muslims are promised "eternal life" we should encourage more healers to become "eternists" and hope that in the future more doctors will take into consideration the spiritual health of a patient as well as pray for their patients.

ⁱ By Shahid Athar, M.D. 14/10/2002

ⁱⁱ Surah Al-Shuara; Surah No: 26; Verse: 80

ⁱⁱⁱ Surah Al-Anaam; Surah No: 6 Verse: 17

^{iv} Surah Yunus, Surah No: 10; verse: 57

^v Surah Bani Israel; Surah No: 17; Verse: 82

^{vi} Bukhari & Muslim

^{vii} Abu Dawood

^{viii} By Karima Burns, MH, ND; 04/01/2001

^{ix} Surah Mu'min; Surah No: 40; Verse: 60