

Health in Islam

In honor of World Health Day (4/7), it would be great to explore what Islam says about human health and how crucial it is to maintain a healthy and active community.

Islam offers a comprehensive message that addresses every aspect of worldly life and the afterlife, giving each due consideration and attention. Islam guides people in both their public and private lives, organizing their affairs and relationships through the Islamic social system. Furthermore, Islam emphasizes the importance of human mental and physical health and advocates for the preservation of the environment, including water, air, plants, and animals (read “Islam and the Environment” published here on March 30, 2024, and “Islam and Mental health” published here on January 20, 2024). This article will delve into Islam’s profound interest in human health.

The Quran upholds the dignity of humans, stating, “We have honored the Children of Adam, and We carried them on land and sea, and We provided them with good things, and We greatly favored them over many of those We created.” [Quran, 17: 70] According to this verse, God Almighty declares that the children of Adam (and Eve) are superior to many of His

creations. This honor encompasses teaching people how to care for their physical and societal health.

One of the initial lessons imparted to people was the proper way to bury their dead. The story of Abel and Cain is well-known and recounted in various religious scriptures. In this narrative, God Almighty sent a raven to guide Cain on how to bury his brother’s body, among other teachings in their story—a clear teaching to preserve the dignity of human bodies and keep the environment. The Quran states, “Then Allah sent a raven, scratching the ground, to show him how to cover his brother’s corpse. He said, ‘Woe to me! I was unable to be like this raven and cover my brother’s corpse.’” [Quran 5: 31]

Among the earliest measures Islam implemented to ensure general good health was the prohibition of certain types of foods and drinks. Prohibiting alcoholic beverages was one of these teachings. A glance at crime statistics reveals that alcohol is a significant factor in many crimes. Furthermore, many chronic and life-threatening diseases, such as liver diseases, have been linked to alcohol consumption. The Quran says, “They ask you about intoxicants (alcohols) and



Guest Column

HATIM HEGAB

gambling. Say, “There is a gross sin in them and some benefits for people, but their sinfulness outweighs their benefit.” And they ask you what they should contribute. Say, “Whatever can be spared.” Thus Allah makes clear the Verses for you so that you may think.” [Quran 2: 219].

Islam also prohibited some types of food. It is general knowledge that human intake is almost the source of good and bad health. The Quran says, “He has only prohibited for you carrion, blood, the flesh of swine (all of it) and that upon which a name of someone other than ‘Allah’ has been invoked. Then, whoever is compelled by necessity, neither seeking pleasure nor transgressing, there is no sin on him. Verily, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful” [Quran 2: 173]. It is interesting to note how Islam values human life by providing exceptions for those who may have to eat these foods to avoid starvation. Human life is prioritized over strictly adhering to these dietary rules. It would be

a sin if one were to endanger one’s life by starving oneself to avoid consuming such foods. Additionally, it is noteworthy to observe the similarities between Islamic and Judaic teachings regarding forbidden foods.

Cleanliness and personal hygiene are among the foundational teachings of Islam. Prayers, which are considered the most fundamental cornerstone in Islam, cannot be performed without washing one’s face and limbs first. The Quran says: “O you who believe! When you rise to perform the prayer, wash your faces, your hands, and your arms to the elbows, and wipe your heads and your feet to the ankles. If you had intercourse, purify yourselves. If you are ill, or on a journey, or one of you returns from the toilet, or you had contact with women and cannot find water, then purify yourselves with clean sand...” [Quran 5: 6]. Prophet Mohammad emphasized the importance of personal cleanliness when he said, “God is good, and He only accepts what is good.” He also said, “Removing dirt from the way of people is among charitable acts.”

Among the teachings are also those concerning disease prevention. Prophet Muhammad said: “There is no disease that God Almighty has created

without also creating its treatment.” He also stated: “There is a remedy for every malady, and when the remedy is applied to the disease, it is cured with the permission of Almighty God.” He further advised his followers to seek medicines for their ailments. Notably, Prophet Muhammad’s advice regarding plagues and contagious diseases was among the first to implement the idea of quarantine. He said, “If a plague appears in a city, let no one leave the city, and let no one enter the plagued city.”

In modern-day life, Islam has also addressed mental health issues. Prophet Muhammad said: “If anyone suppresses anger when he is in a position to give vent to it, Allah, the Exalted, will call him on the Day of Resurrection over the heads of all creatures, and ask him to choose any of the paradise doors he wishes.”

Taking care of one’s food is also among the teachings of Islam, not only for oneself but also for those who are unable to afford it. Islam emphasizes providing for people in need to ensure they maintain good health and avoid contracting diseases and malnutrition. Even the health of babies is mentioned to prevent having weak members in society who may not be able

to contribute positively to the community. The Quran says, “Mothers shall breastfeed their offspring for two whole years if the father desires to complete the term (i.e., to have full two years of breastfeeding). However, he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms.” [Quran 2: 233]. Quran also says, “Eat and drink healthy and be not prodigal.” [Quran 7: 33] And says, “And make not your own hands contribute to (your) own destruction (harm). [Quran 2: 195].

Physicians were also mentioned, indirectly, when Allah, the Almighty, said in the Quran, “Whoever kills a person – unless it is for murder or corruption on earth – it is as though he killed the whole of humankind; and whoever saves it, it is as though he saved the whole of humankind. Our messengers came to them with clarifications, but even after that, many of them continue to commit excesses in the land.” [Quran 5: 32] It is important to notice that the Quran used the word “person” not “Muslim” to indicate the sanctity of human life without any discrimination.

To contact the author: hatim@gmx.us
For more information, please visit: www.icstillwater.org/islam

Pope exposes confidential details of past conclaves and settles scores with Pope Benedict XVI’s aide

VATICAN CITY – Pope Francis has exposed the political “maneuvers” used to sway votes during the two most recent elections of popes, while denying he is planning to reform the process for future conclaves, in a book-length interview published Tuesday.

The confidential revelations are contained in “The Successor: My Memories of Benedict XVI,” in which the Argentine pope reflects on his relationship with the late German pope and settles some scores with Benedict’s longtime aide.

The book, written as a conversation with the correspondent for Spain’s ABC daily, Javier Martínez-Brocal, comes at a delicate time for the 87-year-old Francis. His frail health has raised questions about how much longer he will remain pope, whether he might follow in Benedict’s footsteps and resign, and who might eventually replace him.

In the book, Francis revealed previously confidential details about the 2005 conclave that elected Benedict pope and the 2013 ballot in which he himself

was elected, saying he was allowed to deviate from the cardinals’ oath of secrecy because he is pope.

In 2005, Francis said, he was “used” by cardinals who wanted to block the election of Benedict – then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger – and that they managed to sway 40 out of 115 votes his way. The idea wasn’t to elect the Argentine but rather to force a compromise candidate after knocking Ratzinger out of the running, he said.

“They told me afterward that they didn’t want a ‘for-

eign’ pope,” – in other words, a non-Italian one – Francis said, making clear that the process wasn’t so much about the Holy Spirit inspiring cardinals as it was a cold, hard political calculus.

Francis said he put an end to the maneuvering by announcing that he wouldn’t accept being pope, after which Ratzinger was elected.

“He was the only one who could be pope in that moment,” Francis said, adding that he, too, voted for Ratzinger.

In 2013, after Benedict’s resignation, there was also political

maneuvering involved. Francis – who at the time was Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio – said he only realized after the fact that cardinals were coalescing behind him, pestering him with questions about the church in Latin America and dropping hints that he was gaining support.

He said it finally dawned on him that he might be pope when Spanish Cardinal Santos Abril y Castelló came running after him after lunch on March 13, just before what would become the final ballot.

– AP

Worship at the church of your choice this week

1 I lift up my eyes to the mountains —
where does my help come from?
2 My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.



Psalms 121:1-2

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JB Bond, Senior Pastor

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