

【研究論著】 General Article

DOI: 10.6163/TJEAS.202112\_18(2).0004

Contempt or Compassion Toward the Contagion  
Diseased? Understanding Islamic Principles  
Concerning Epidemics  
**對傳染病患者的藐視還是憐憫？  
解讀與流行病有關的伊斯蘭教義**

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**梅富賜\***

**Keywords:** Epidemic, Pandemic, Muslim World, Islamic Principles, Muhammad the Prophet

**關鍵詞：**傳染病、瘟疫、伊斯蘭世界、伊斯蘭教義、先知默罕默德

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## Abstract

Diseases, especially contagious and epidemic ones, have challenged man since the time immemorial. These epidemics trigger the minds, requiring religious and social explanations, which tremendously influence individuals and communities' attitudes and behavioral patterns toward contagious diseases. During the early period of Islam, the people of Arabia faced pandemics and endemics. The Prophet (peace be upon him) advised his Companions on how to tackle such outbreaks. These pieces of Prophetic advice regarding contagious ailments were paid serious attention to by the later generations of the believers. Keeping in view the current international scenario, it is high time to investigate the nature of the endemics related Prophetic advice and approach of his Companions and later generations in Muslim history. It has generally been observed that in the situation of endemics or pandemics, most people look down upon the contagious disease-afflicted people with contempt and opt for social deviance, leading to opprobrium, intolerance, exclusion, relationship dissolution, and moral censorship of the afflicted. In this study, it is to be seen whether the Prophetic instructions and the Companions' practices in this regard betray care, concern, love, compassion, caution, social intimacy, and proper treatment. The study is expected to conclude that the Prophet's (peace be upon him) advice and his Companions' reactions towards them were highly humane, extraordinarily scientific, and morally commendable, which reshaped the Muslim minds towards contagious diseases and their sufferers. An analytical approach has been applied in this study to conclude objectively, along with qualitative research methodology.

## 摘要

人類有史以來，疾病始終是人類的一大挑戰特別是瘟疫與流行病。瘟疫不但影響個人與社群對於流行病和瘟疫的態度和行為模式，也引發人們思考，要求從宗教和社會角度解釋這些流行病。在伊斯蘭教創立早期，阿拉伯人也面對瘟疫與流行病。先知默罕默德也告知人們應該如何處理瘟疫的爆發等事。默罕默德這些有關處理流行病和瘟疫的建議與方法，受後代穆斯林的極大關注。今日全球疫情嚴峻，是時候再次檢視先知對於瘟疫本質的見解，以及歷史上歷代穆斯林對流行病的處理方式。整體而言，在疫情肆虐時，許多人歧視患病者，並因此導致對患者藐視、不容忍、排斥，甚至與患者脫離關係並對他們做道德審查。本文將檢視默罕默德及其追隨者是否遵循關懷、愛護、同情、嚴謹、維持人際關係和提供適當治療等方法。本文將採取分析性與定性研究方法，並預計有此結論：默罕默德的見解與其追隨者對此的回應是高度人道的、合乎科學的，並且在道德上值得稱道；同時也重塑穆斯林對於流行病與患者的認識。

## 1. Introduction

The human body is known to be made of two elements, earthly and heavenly. The former signifies the soil, the basic elements of human existence, which constitutes the body structure. The latter denotes the essence of the Divine Spirit, which causes the inanimate structure to become live. The soil is short-lived, whereas the Spirit is permanent. Due to the vulnerability of the earthly element in humans to the harmful environment around them, they feel indisposed either lightly or seriously. Human history has witnessed innumerable outbreaks of epidemic and pandemic nature. Reactions to endemics and pandemics have been various from the community to the community and from nation to nation. Hindus, Jews, Christians, and Muslims have been dealing with such contagious situations in the way their respective cultures and religions guided them. As is well-known, Muslims always look towards their Holy Qur'an, the Last and the Final Revelation from Allah, and the traditions of the Last Prophet (peace be upon him) in the form of his sayings and doings. Both of these sources advise Muslims what to do, how to do, and why to do in a situation of contagious diseases. Throughout Islamic history, Muslims treated the epidemics and pandemics and those affected as per the principles Allah and the Last Prophet (peace be upon him) handed over to them. What are those Islamic principles concerning contagious ailments and their sufferers? Have Muslims strictly followed those principles in a time of need? Do Muslims rely merely on so-called spiritual healings? Do Muslims treat the victims of endemics and pandemics with contempt or compassion? These questions need to be addressed. It is hoped that Muslim history will favorably reveal the Muslims' attitudes to the diseases and their victims. Moreover, the connectivity of hate or blame with contagious diseases in Muslim history would be judged, and particularly, the practice of social deviance, opprobrium, and contempt towards the contagion diseased is an important investigation of this research because contempt leads to intolerance, exclusion, relationship dissolution, and moral censorship of the afflicted.

## 2. Islamic Concept of Contagious Diseases: Brief Overview

In Arabic, the word “wabā’” has been used for the outbreak of contagious diseases and in a more general term for “epidemic” or “pestilence.”<sup>1</sup> Wabā’ is more commonly defined as a “quickness, and commonness, of death among men,” as “a corruption happening to the substance of the air,”<sup>2</sup> as “a change affected in the air,” and as “an unwholesomeness in the air, in consequence of which disease becomes common among men.”<sup>3</sup> Wabā’ differs from the usual illnesses in its prevalence and other respects; the people’s illness is of one kind only, in contrast to others when the sick are affected by a variety of illnesses.<sup>4</sup> Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) had defined Tā’ūn as a “proliferation of sickness.”<sup>5</sup> The early historian al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892) equated the wabā’ and Tā’ūn.<sup>6</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449) had criticized the earlier writers who could not properly distinguish between different diseases because they have included natural disasters such as floods, famines, and droughts in their lists of “plagues.”<sup>7</sup> In addition, the late medieval lexicographers reflect the usage then prevailing when they state that tā’ūn and wabā’ are synonyms meaning “epidemic” or “pestilence.”<sup>8</sup> As such, every Tā’ūn is wabā’, but every wabā’ is not Tā’ū.<sup>9</sup> Wabā’ is described throughout as a pestilential corruption of the natural environment.<sup>10</sup> Hippocrates (d. 370 BC) elaborated that contagious diseases spread by “means of airs, water, and places, and made an association between climate, diet, and living

1 Suyūṭī, *Mā rawāhu al-wā’ūn fī akhbār al-ṭā’ūn*, (Bayrūt: al-Dār al-Shāmīyah, 1997), 7.

2 Shams al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad, Ibn Qayyīm al-Jawzīyya, *Al-Tibb al-Nabawī*, (The Prophetic Medicine) (Bayrūt: Dār al-Salām, 2018), 57-64

3 Lawrence I. Conrad, “Tā’ūn and wabā’ Conceptions of Plague and Pestilence in Early Islam”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 25, no. 3 (1982): 268-307.

4 al-Asqalānī, *Badhl al-mā’ūn fī faḍl al- Tā’ūn*, 94.

5 Suyūṭī, *Mā rawāhu al-wā’ūn fī akhbār al-ṭā’ūn*, 147.

6 al-Balādhurī, Aḥmad Ibn Yaḥyā. *Ansāb al-ashraf*, (Bayrūt: al-Dār al-Fikr, 1996), Vol.5, 289.

7 Ibn Hajar al-Asqalānī, *Badhl al-mā’ūn fī faḍl al- Tā’ūn*, p.94.

8 Conrad, “Tā’ūn and Wabā’ Conceptions of Plague and Pestilence in Early Islam,” 268-307.

9 al-Asqalānī, *Badhl al-mā’ūn fī faḍl al- Tā’ūn*, p.107; Suyūṭī, *Mā rawāhu al-wā’ūn fī akhbār al-ṭā’ūn*, 7.

10 Lawrence, “Tā’ūn and wabā’ Conceptions of Plague and Pestilence in Early Islam,” 268-307

conditions".<sup>11</sup> Al-Majusī (d. 381/994) discussed in detail that how through the various ways the atmosphere can be corrupted and create "pestilential air," which in result causes "pestilential diseases" to break out among people.<sup>12</sup> Al-Jāhiz (d.257/869) described that "when the wind blows for thirteen days continuously from the south, the people of Egypt buy themselves shrouds and embalming spices and are certain that a deadly pestilence (wabā') will soon break out."<sup>13</sup> Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) reported in "*uyūn al-akhbār*" (The Book of Choice Narratives) under discussion about the ancient concept of omen and augury in Arabs that people become fearful of impending pestilence due to the occurrence of smokiness in the air for no apparent reason.<sup>14</sup> Ibn al-Qayyīm (751/1350) guided the people that remaining outside such a place helps one avoid harmful causes, seek good health, avoid harmful airs, and most strikingly, avoid coming into contact with the sick, who might transmit their sickness.<sup>15</sup>

In modern medicine, the same definition and explanation have been used for the term contagious disease, and communicable diseases are often used interchangeably.<sup>13</sup> It can spread rapidly from person to person through direct contact "touching a person who has the infection", indirect contact "touching a contaminated object", or droplet contact "inhaling droplets made when a person who has the infection coughs, sneezes, or talks" like presently, the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.<sup>14</sup> In present, the COVID-19 is a major pathogen (e.g., a bacterium, virus, or parasite).<sup>15</sup> It was first detected in the city of Wuhan, China, in late 2019 and quickly spread globally.<sup>16</sup> The World Health Organization (WHO,

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11 Frith, John, "The history of plague-part 1: The three great pandemics," *Journal of Military and Veterans Health* 20, no. 2 (2012): 11.

12 Shams al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Al-Tibb al-Nabawi*, (Dār al-Salām, 2018), 57-64.

13 Aronson, Stanley M, "The slow stain of contagion," *Rhode Island Medical Journal* 87, no. 2 (2004): 59.

14 Juliet Bedford et al., "COVID-19: towards controlling of a pandemic," *The Lancet* 395, no.10229 (2020): 1015-1018.

15 Andrea Remuzzi and Giuseppe Remuzzi, "COVID-19 and Italy: what next?," *The Lancet* (2020).

16 Puja Mehta et al., "COVID-19: consider cytokine storm syndromes and immunosuppression,"

2020) has declared the COVID-19 a pandemic due to its severity and wide range of spread.<sup>17</sup> During the last decade, a series of important monographs and numerous articles have appeared reevaluating the nature, impact, and significance of the pandemic that devastated Central Asia, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and most of Europe the middle of the 14th century.<sup>18</sup> This increased the interest of the scholars and readers in epidemic disease, marked as we are by our experience of AIDS, Ebola, Avian flu, Swine flu (H1N1). Now the COVID-19 is an unprecedentedly serious pandemic.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. Literature Review

The literature on contagious diseases during the heyday of Muslim civilization abounds. It is not feasible nor desirable to enumerate all the works done in the field concerned. The researcher finds it pertinent to share the most significant works on the subject.

A physician and philosopher of Baghdad Ibn Sahl bin Rabban al-Ṭabarī (d. after 240/855), provided several interesting observations regarding contagious diseases in his treatise "Firdūs al-Ḥikma fī al-Ṭibb" (Paradise of wisdom). However, he does not explicitly claim that plagues are contagious, and he had attributed its occurrence due to the air's corruption. Still, he is clear regarding the contagious nature of leprosy. He was the first who discovered that pulmonary tuberculosis is contagious.<sup>20</sup> Another important source is Kitāb ma'ārif (The Book of Knowledge) by Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889), which provides the history of

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*Lancet* (London, England) 395, no. 10229 (2020): 1033.

17 Laurie Garrett, "The return of infectious disease," *Foreign affairs* (1996): 66-79.

18 Justin Stearns, "New Directions in the Study of Religious Responses to the Black Death," *History Compass* 7, no. 5 (2009): 1363-1375.

19 Hussin A. Rothan and Siddappa N. Byrareddy, "The epidemiology and pathogenesis of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak," *Journal of autoimmunity* (2020): 102433.

20 Ibn Sahl bin Rabban al-Ṭabarī, *Firdūs al-Ḥikma fī al-Ṭibb*, ed. by M. Z. Al-Siddiqī, Gibb Memorial, Berlin: Matba' āftāb, 1928.

plagues in early Islam, mostly on the authority of al Aṣma'ī (d.213/828) because his list of Ṭwā'in passed on to his student abū Ḥātim al-Sajjstānī (d.248/862) and al-Sajjstānī was, in fact, the teacher of Ibn Qutaybah. It was the actual line of this academic transmission.<sup>21</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 385/995) has mentioned an important work of philosopher al-Kindī (d. ca. 256/870) "On vapors which cleanse the air of pestilences (al-wabā'ī)" in his al-Fehrist which is a compendium of the knowledge. This work of al-Kindī was an essay about the causes of endemics.<sup>22</sup> Al-Kindī also argued that bodies transmit rays, which exhibit the same characteristics as the bodies themselves.<sup>23</sup> Kitāb Al-Ṭwā'in (The Book on Plague pandemic) by Ibn Abī al-Dunyā (d.281/894), was the first monograph that has been found about the Plague pandemic.<sup>24</sup> Ibn Abī al-Dunyā was an Islamic traditionalist from Baghdad and also was the teacher of Ibn Mājah, who was the author of Sunan Ibn Mājah, which included among the most authentic books of Ḥadith. Ibn Ḥajar has cited many places the Ibn Abī al-Dunyā's Kitāb Al- Ṭwā'in in his Book about the plague.

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Quṣṭā ibn Lūqā (d. 297/910 or 308/920), a Christian doctor who lived in Baghdad and later died in Armenia. Ibn Lūqā had presented work on the phenomenon of contagion, his Kitāb fī al-i'dā' (The Book of Diseases). At the beginning of his treatise, Ibn Lūqā offers his readers a precise definition of contagion or infection. He stated that Infection is a spark that jumps from a sick body to a healthy body, so there appears in the healthy body sickness similar to what appears in the sick body, which is the definition of infection. When considering contagion concerning sickness, Ibn Lūqā follows a Galenic

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21 Ibn Qutayba al-Dīnawarī, *Kitāb al-Ma'ārif*, urdu translation by Alī Mohsin Siddīqī, [Qirtās Publishers, 2012], 554.

22 Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad ibn Ishāq Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, Edited & Translated by Bayard Dodge, Great Books of Islamic World Inc, 1998.

23 Miklós Maróth, "Magic, Causality and Intentionality. The Doctrine of Rays in Al-Kindī. By Pinella Travaglia. (Micrologus' Library 3), pp. 176. Rome, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 1999". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 11, no. 1 (2001): 69-71.

24 *Badhl al-mā'ūn fī faḍl al- Tā'ūn*, 32.

25 *Badhl al-mā'ūn fī faḍl al- Tā'ūn*, 69, 81, 173.



understanding of "localized miasma" as the source of most contagious diseases: air corrupted by earthly (i.e., foul vapors from swamps or fires) or heavenly causes (the changing temperatures of the seasons, not astral origins) is inhaled through the lungs, nostrils, and pores of the skin, resulting in the corruption of the internal organs and the spirit. Once such vapors have infected one, one's body produces similar vapors that can infect those with whom one interacts.<sup>26</sup> Ibn Sa'īd al-Tamīmī (d. 380/991), who born in Jerusalem, wrote a book<sup>27</sup> for his friend, a Fatimid vizier, produced a book written for his friend, the Ya'qub ibn Killis. He emphasized that without purifying the corruption of the air, we cannot avoid pestilences.<sup>28</sup> Ibn Abī Hajlah's (d.764/1362) work entitled "al-Ṭib al-Masnūn fī Dafa' al-Ṭā'ūn" (The Book on Prophetic Medicine) is a substantial first full enumeration of epidemics, where the plague had discussed in detail. A "Qasīdah fī al-Ṭā'ūn by Bahā ad-Dīn" (Details of Plague discussed by Bahā ad-Dīn) by as-Subkī (d. 756/1355), Ibn Khātima al-Ansārī (d. 770/1369), wrote a treatise on the plague entitled "Tahsīl Gharāḍ al-Qāsīd fī Tafsīl al-Maraḍ al-Wāfiq" (The attainment of the goal of the seeker for information concerning the epidemic).<sup>29</sup> He has strongly emphasized the need for isolation in epidemics, which is being practiced till the present.<sup>30</sup> Particularly, his classification and types of plagues are similar to that of modern scientific classification, as a pneumonic pest, bubonic pest, and septicemic pest.<sup>31</sup> He declares that "vapors infected by minuscule

26 Qusṭā ibn Lūqā, *Kitāb fī al-i'dā'*, Ed and Translation by Fāhandrich, *Abhandlung über die Ansteckung*, Stuttgart, Frankfurt: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science at Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, 1996., 36-37

27 Ibn Sa'īd al-Tamīmī "*Muddat-ul-Baqā' fī Iṣlāḥ Fasad il-Ḥawā w-al-taḥarruz min Ḍarar-il-Awbā'*" [The Extension of Life by Purifying the Air of Corruption and Guarding against the Evil Effects of Pestilences], (Bayrūt : Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 2009).

28 Ullmann, Manfred, *Die Medizin im Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 245

29 Ibn Khātima: "*Die Schrift von Abi Jaḥfar Ahmed ibn fī Ali ibn Mohammed ibn fī Ali ibn Khatimah aus Almeriah ueber die Pest*", Taha Dinanah (trans.), *Archiv fuer Geschichte der Medizin*, v. 19 (1927), 27-81; L.M.Arvide Cambra. Prescripciones médicas de Ibn Jatima para el tratamiento paliativo en la enfermedad de la peste bubónica. *European Scientific Journal* 9, no. 18 (2013): 13-19.

30 L.Gordis. *Epidemiology*. Elsevier Health Sciences, Philadelphia, 2009.

31 Abigail A. Salyers and Dixie D. Whitt, *Bacterial Pathogenesis*, Washington: American

organisms that invade the body, causing disease, and that are transmitted from one to another and also are pass from one person to another through the air they breathe So, the alteration and corruption of air promote the disease and it spreads through contagion”.<sup>32</sup> and his shared assessment is quite close to modern epidemiology. Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī’s (d.771/1370) had discussed the plague very comprehensively in the early period of Islam in his work entitled “al Juz’ fī al-Tā’ūn” (Introduction of Plague). Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī was among the victims of plague that swept over Syria. As per his usual routine, he preached the Friday sermon and returned to his home, but he fell ill on Saturday and died on Tuesday year 771 A.H at the age of forty-three.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the Bahādir az-Zarkashī’s (d.794/1392) treatise on the plague “al Juz’ fī al-Tā’ūn” (Introduction of Plague) is also an important contribution, and Ibn al-Wardī (d. 749/1349), had discussed the early plagues briefly in his “Risālah al-nabā’ ‘an al-wabā’” (The Book about the Information of Epidemic) Ibn al-Wardī also died due to the plague in Aleppo in 749/1349. Ibn Ḥajar provides his readers with a copy of Ibn al Wardī’s at the end of his book. Ibn Ḥajar provides his readers with a copy of Ibn al Wardī’s work at the very end of his book.<sup>34</sup> The lengthy historical account of Ibn Abī Hajlah was incorporated with modifications into the epilogue of Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī’s (d. 852/1449) “Badhl al-mā’ūn fī faḍl al- Tā’ūn” (An Offering of Kindness on the Virtue of the Plague) important plague treatise, perhaps the most comprehensive and best known such treatise in the later Middle Ages. He tried to provide a detailed discussion and definition of the plague, causes of its proliferation. He provided an appendix that reviews the plague-stricken lands during the early period of Islam and the plague-stricken land. What is to be done during the plague outbreak?<sup>35</sup> During his lifetime, there was a plague epidemic after every three or five years. One of her daughters

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Society from Microbiology, 1994.

32 José Luis Imbert Palafox, “Historia de la infección y el contagio”. *Elementos* 20, no. 3 (1994): 37-44.

33 *Al-Durar*, Vol. 3, 428.

34 *Badhl al-mā’ūn fī faḍl al- Tā’ūn*, 213.

35 *Badhl al-mā’ūn fī faḍl al- Tā’ūn*, 21-43.

died in 819/1416-1417, and two more daughters died during the 833/1429-1430 plague outbreak, and he too was stricken during 848/1444.<sup>36</sup> al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) treatise on the plague, “*Mā rawāhu al-wā‘ūn fī akhbār al-ṭā‘ūn*” (The Reports on Plague by our Predecessors) is an important source that supplements this account with historical data from other chroniclers, which add little to the information found in the early histories.<sup>37</sup> Ibn al-Qayyīm’s (d. 751/1350) work on Prophetic medicine forms a section of his longer work, “*Zād al-Ma‘ād fī Hady Khayr al-‘Ibād*” (Provisions for the Afterlife on the Teachings of the Best of All People). The author deals with contagion in chapter five (Treatment of plague (Ṭā‘ūn) and precautions against it) and twenty-seven “On the progression of illness and contagious disease.”<sup>38</sup> Al Majūsī (d.994/ 383-384) has provided a detailed discussion that how the atmosphere can be corrupted and further how it creates the “pestilential air,” which in turn causes “pestilential diseases” to break out the endemic.<sup>39</sup> Numerous treatises on the plague had been produced by Jewish, Christian, and Muslim physicians and scholars drawing principally on Galenic medicine. Most of their work was principally concerned with suggesting preventative measures and remedies for the plague.<sup>40</sup>

#### 4. History of Contagious Disease Outbreaks in Early Muslim Civilizations

The Islamic world was exposed to the ravages of the plague at several turns during the medieval period. In medieval times, both Europe and the Near East

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36 Lawrence I Conrad, Book Reviews “*Badhl al-mā‘ūn fī faḍl al- Ṭā‘ūn*” Med Hist 39, no. 3 (1995): 391–393.

37 Suyūṭī, *Mā rawāhu al-wā‘ūn fī akhbār al-ṭā‘ūn*, (Bayrūt: al-Dār al-Shāmīyah,1997), 7.

38 Ibn al-Qayyīm, *Zād al-Ma‘ād fī Hady Khayr al-‘Ibād* (The Provisions of the World to Come on the Guidance of the Best of Men), Penelope Johnstone (trans.), The Islamic Texts Society, Cambridge, 1998.

39 Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Qāmūn fī al-Ṭibb*, (Beirut: Dar al- Ṣadr, n.d) Vol. 3, 65-67

40 L. Garcı́a a-Ballester, R. French, J. Arrizabalaga, and A. Cunningham (eds.), *Practical Medicine from Salerno to the Black Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 353–94.

repeatedly suffered from major outbreaks of epidemic disease, the most devastating of which appears to have been the plague.<sup>41</sup> Al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449) quoted the statement of al-Madā‘inī that the plague of Shīrwīyyh (Ṭā‘ūn Shīrwīyyh) was the first plague epidemic during the period of Holy Prophet (peace be upon him).<sup>42</sup> Ibn ‘Asākir has recorded the plague of Yezdigird (Ṭā‘ūn Yezdigird) which must refer to a later appearance of plague during the reign of the last Sassanian king, Yezdigird III (A.D. 634-642).<sup>43</sup> Then was the plague in the Islamic empire was the Plague of ‘Amwās (Ṭā‘ūn ‘Amwās) in Syria, when Caliph ‘Umar<sup>ra</sup> (13-23/634- 44) had journeyed to Syria in 18/639 because of the famous outbreak of plague at ‘Amwās. The plague in Syria is known as the plague of ‘Amwās because it severely struck the Arab army at ‘Amwās, ancient Emmaus, in 18/639.<sup>44</sup> The historical accounts of the plague of ‘Amwās state that about 25,000 Muslim soldiers died.<sup>45</sup> Mu‘adh ibn Jabal<sup>ra</sup>, his two wives and his son, Abu ‘Ubayda ibn al-Jarrāh<sup>ra</sup> and Yazīd ibn Sufyān<sup>ra</sup> who was the brother of Mu‘āwīyah<sup>ra</sup><sup>46</sup> Sharjīl bin Hasnah<sup>ra</sup>, Hāris bin Hashām<sup>ra</sup>, Abū Jandal<sup>ra</sup> and his father Suhaīl bin ‘Amr<sup>ra</sup>,<sup>47</sup> and many senior companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) also died in the plague of ‘Amwās.<sup>48</sup> It spread to the rest of Syria as well as to Iraq and Egypt. A severe famine had preceded the plague epidemic in Syria-Palestine which may have predisposed the population to the disease.<sup>49</sup> Plague of ‘Amwās stayed for months until it became the talk of the people.<sup>50</sup> Both occurred in the same period that of ‘Umar<sup>ra</sup> ibn al-Khattāb, but there was a long time between the Plague of

41 Ibn Qutayba al-Dīnawārī, *Kitāb al-Ma‘ārif*, Urdu translation by Ali Mohsin Siddiqi, (Qirtas Publishers, 2012), 553.

42 al-Asqalānī, *Badhl al-mā‘ūn fī faḍl al- Ṭā‘ūn*, 361.

43 Ibid., ; Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūfī, *Mā rawāhu al-wā‘ūn fī akhbār al-ṭā‘ūn*, (Bayrūt: al-Dār al-Shāmīyah, 1997) al-Ṭab‘ah 1, 181.

44 Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh al-rusul wal-mulūk*, 655.

45 Suyūfī, *Mā rawāhu al-wā‘ūn fī akhbār al-ṭā‘ūn*, 181.

46 al-Asqalānī, *Badhl al-mā‘ūn fī faḍl al- Ṭā‘ūn*, 29.

47 Suyūfī, *Mā rawāhu al-wā‘ūn fī akhbār al-ṭā‘ūn*, 182.

48 Lawrence I. Conrad, *The Plague in the Early Medieval Near East* (Diss., Princeton University, 1981), 167-246.

49 Suyūfī, *Mā rawāhu al-wā‘ūn fī akhbār al-ṭā‘ūn*, 182.

50 Al-Tabari, *Ta’rik h* . IV, 63.

Shirawayh and the Plague of ‘Amwās.<sup>51</sup> Then there was the Plague of the Torrent (Ṭā‘ūn al-Jāirīf) during the period of Ibn al-Zubayr in Shawwāl (69-70 /688-689), it also called the “Violent Plague” because it swept through Basrah like a flood about the years 69-70/688-689 and ‘Ubaīdallāh bin Ma‘mar was the governor of Basra during that period<sup>52</sup> and she died during this plague.<sup>53</sup> Anas ibn Mālik lost 83, and some say 73 sons, and ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Abi Bakra lost 40 sons in this plague.<sup>54</sup> Then there was the Plague of the Maidens (Ṭā‘ūn al-Fityāt) because it began among the virgins and young women in Basra, Wasīt, Syria, and Kufa when al-Hajjāj was in Wāsīt during the rule of ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān.<sup>55</sup> Plague of the Notables (Ṭā‘ūn al-Ashrāf)” in 99/716-717 in Iraq and Syria.<sup>56</sup> The great loss of lives during this plague was compared to the oppression of al-Hajjāj, the famous Umayyād governor of Iraq. In Syria, the crown prince, Ayyūb ibn Sulāiman ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, died in this plague.<sup>57</sup> Then there was the Plague of ‘Adī ibn ‘Arṭāh (Ṭā‘ūn al-‘Arṭāh) in the year 100<sup>58</sup> Which took place in Syria and Iraq in the year 100/718-719 and this epidemic was presumably quite severe in Basrah when ‘Adī ibn ‘Arṭāh (d. 102/720) was governor of the city and was consequently named after him.<sup>59</sup> In the chronicles, there are other indications of plague epidemics during the later Umayyād Period. Plague occurred in Syria in 107/725-726 and 115/733-734; Syria and Iraq in 116/734-735.<sup>60</sup> The plague of the Crow (Ṭā‘ūn al-Ghurāb) in Basrah 127/744-745 and the Ghurāb was a man from al-Rubāb he was

51 Ibn Qutayba al-Dīnawārī, *Kitāb al-Ma‘ārif*, p. 553.

52 Suyūfī, *Mā rawāhu al-wā‘ūn fī akhbār al-ṭā‘ūn*, p. 185; Ibn Qutayba al-Dīnawārī, *Kitāb al-Ma‘ārif*, p. 553

53 al-Ṭabarī, *Ta‘rīkh al-rusul wall-mulūk*. p. 1070

54 Dols, Michael W. "Plague in early Islamic history". *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (1974): 371-383.

55 Ibn Qutayba al-Dīnawārī, *Kitāb al-Ma‘ārif*, p. 554.

56 Suyūfī, *Mā rawāhu al-wā‘ūn fī akhbār al-ṭā‘ūn*, p. 187-188.

57 Ibn Qutayba al-Dīnawārī, *Kitāb al-Ma‘ārif*, p. 554; Dols, Michael W. "Plague in early Islamic history". *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (1974): 371-383.

58 Ibn Qutayba al-Dīnawārī, *Kitāb al-Ma‘ārif*, urdu translation by Alī Mohsin Siddīqī, [Qirtās Publishers, 2012], p. 554.

59 Suyūfī, *Mā rawāhu al-wā‘ūn fī akhbār al-ṭā‘ūn*, p. 182.

60 al-Asqalānī, *Badhl al-mā‘ūn fī faḍl al-Ṭā‘ūn*, p.364.

the first who died in this plague, during the rule of al-Walīd ibn Yazīd ibn ‘Abd al-Malik.<sup>61</sup> Then there was the Plague of Salm ibn Qutayba (Tā‘ūn al-Salam) broke out in Iraq during the year 131 in Sha‘bān and it intensified in the month of Ramadān, and abating during Shawwal. The Plague of Salm was part of a devastating outbreak that spread through much of the eastern and southern Mediterranean world.<sup>62</sup> Syria-Palestine experienced plague epidemics every ten years from 69/688-689 to 127/744-745, while the epidemics in the garrison cities of Kūfah and Basrah were more frequent. When the Abbasids came to power, till the reign of al-Muqtadir (295-320/908-932), there were no more plagues.<sup>63</sup> It is instructive to mention here that al-Madā‘inī (843/1258) has indicated that the most famous plagues in the early period of Islam were Plague of ‘Amwās, Plague of the Torrent, Plague of the Maidens, and the Plague of the Notables.<sup>64</sup>

The Black Death killed a large amount of the population from 1347-1350 in Eurasia and North Africa, peaking in Europe.<sup>65</sup> As one historian tells us, “the world seemed to be plunged into primeval silence.”<sup>66</sup> The third pandemic did not end until 1959 and caused the death over 15 million people, and most of them have belonged to India. There have been occurred during 1983 in China and Tanzania such outbreaks of plague, in Zaire during 1992, and in Mozambique, India, and Zimbabwe during 1994,<sup>67</sup> during the middle of 1990 in Madagascar,<sup>68</sup> Moreover,

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61 Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb al-Ma‘ārif*, p. 554.

62 Suyūfī, *Mā rawāhu al-wā‘ūn fī akhbār al-tā‘ūn*, p.189.

63 Michael W. Dols, “Plague in early Islamic history.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, (1974): 371-383.

64 al-Asqalānī, *Badhl al-mā‘ūn fī faḍl al- Tā‘ūn*, p. 362; Suyūfī, *Mā rawāhu al-wā‘ūn fī akhbār al-tā‘ūn*, p.181.

65 John Aberth, *Plagues in world history*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011.

66 Lawrence I. Conrad, “TĀŪN AND WABĀ” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 25, no. 3 (1982): 268-307.

67 John Frith, “The history of plague-part 1: The three great pandemics,” *Journal of Military and Veterans Health* 20, no. 2 (2012): 11.

68 Annie Guiyoule et al., “Recent emergence of new variants of *Yersinia pestis* in Madagascar,” *Journal of Clinical Microbiology* 35, no. 11 (1997): 2826-2833.

mostly in Africa, South America, and Asia, annually registered cases are around 2,000, and the fatality rate has been assessed 5% to 15% globally.<sup>69</sup>

## 5. Ethical Principles of Islam Regarding Endemics

By constant self-monitoring and self-regulation, we can develop a strong immune system to ensure good health. The innate and the acquired immune system are two major groups of our immune system. These tools help prevent, cure, and control diseases, maintain good health and develop resistance against multiple diseases. So, it is instructive to highlight the Islamic guidelines related to the proper functioning of the immune mechanism in maintaining a healthier life. Islam pays great importance to observe cleanliness under all circumstances for adopting good hygiene. For example, in preparation for prayers, Muslims are told, "O ye who believe! When ye prepare for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbows; rub your heads (with water); and (wash) your feet to the ankles. If ye are in a state of ceremonial impurity, bathe your whole body."<sup>70</sup> Prophet <sup>saw</sup> said, "When anyone among you wakes up from sleep, he must not put his hand in the utensil till he has washed it three times, for he does not know where his hand was during the night."<sup>71</sup> Washing hands provide the first line of defense against infectious and contagious diseases, including gastrointestinal disorders and respiratory infections.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) gave utmost importance to personal and public health and strictly observed what he advised his companions about the epidemics as he had done in other issues. Prophet (peace be upon him) advised to his companions that: "When you interact with someone who is afflicted with a contagious disease there should be between you and the person, a space of the

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69 John Frith, "The history of plague-part 1: The three great pandemics", 11.

70 Al-Qur'ān, 05:06

71 Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī an-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, The Book of Purification, Chapter: It is disliked for the person who wants to perform wudu , Hadith No: 541.

length of a spear (approximately 6 feet.).”<sup>72</sup> The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) taught that “Do not place a sick patient with a healthy person.” Even the teaching of Prophet (peace be upon him) was extended to animals also that “a man with sick camels should not let them graze or drink alongside healthy ones.”<sup>73</sup> Further stated, “the cattle suffering from a disease should not be mixed with healthy cattle.”<sup>74</sup> However, long before discovering the germ theory of disease, humankind had been provided with guidelines to control the spread of communicable or infectious diseases, both at the societal and individual levels. The Prophet (peace be upon him) recommended voluntary quarantine in times of plague.<sup>75</sup> In modern times, we have observed similar isolation practices of suspected infectious causes, most recently in response to severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).<sup>76</sup>

Now the question raised that during the early period of Islam, which strategies have been adopted from the protection when they faced the outbreaks of contagious disease, and what kind of Principles can be extracted or exerted for its protection? By considering the incidents of the Plague of ‘Amwās later scholars looked both for examples demonstrating how a Muslim should react to the threat of the pandemic situation. The plague occurred in the years seventeen and eighteen. In the year seventeen ‘Umar<sup>ra</sup> turned back from Sargh with the Muslim army to avoid exposing them to the plague; then in the following year, the year eighteen, it returned [and spread] until it struck al-Jābiya.<sup>77</sup> The Muslim army at ‘Amwās had suffered considerable losses to the epidemic. Fearing greater losses, ‘Umar<sup>ra</sup>

72 *Aḥmad* ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, Hadith No: 851.

73 *Ibid.*, Hadith No: 3541.

74 Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book of Medicine, Chapter: No Hama, Hadith No: 665.

75 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book of salām, Chapter: The Plague, Ill Omens, Soothsaying and The Like, Hadith No: 2218.

76 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Use of quarantine to prevent transmission of severe acute respiratory syndrome-Taiwan*, 2003. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2003;52: 680-3.

77 Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, Abu ‘Umar Yusuf Ibn ‘Abd Allah, *Al-Isti‘ab Fi Ma‘rifat Al-Ashab* (Hyderabad al-Deccan Da‘irat al-Ma‘arif al-Nizamiyah, 2013), 111/1405-1406.



summoned Abu ‘Ubayda<sup>ra</sup>, the commander of the Muslim army at ‘Amwās, to return to Medina.<sup>78</sup> He refused to leave his army in Syria, whereupon ‘Umar<sup>ra</sup> agreed to meet him at the town of Sargh. Arriving at Sargh, ‘Umar<sup>ra</sup> took counsel with Abu ‘Ubayda<sup>ra</sup> and others of his close companions over the wisdom of allowing the Muslim armies to remain in the plague-stricken land. ‘Umar<sup>ra</sup> ultimately accepted the advice of the leaders of Quraysh, who stated that “We advise that you should return with the people and do not take them to that (place) of the epidemic.” So ‘Umar<sup>ra</sup> made an announcement, “I will ride back to Medina in the morning, so you should do the same.” Abu ‘Ubaida bin Al-Jarrah<sup>ra</sup> said (to ‘Umar), “Are you running away from what Allah had ordained?” Not wishing to humiliate an important military commander publicly, ‘Umar<sup>ra</sup> replied wisely, “Would that someone else had said such a thing, O Abu ‘Ubaida! Yes, we are running from what Allah had ordained to what Allah has ordained. Don't you agree that if you had camels that went down a valley having two places, one green and the other dry, you would graze them on the green one only if Allah had ordained that, and you would graze them on the dry one only if Allah had ordained that?”<sup>79</sup> We learn that Mu‘adh ibn Jabal<sup>ra</sup>, came forth during the debate at Sargh and rejected ‘Umar<sup>ra</sup>'s command, resolving instead to remain in the pestilence-afflicted area. Mu‘adh<sup>ra</sup> rose and quoted the sayings of the Holy Prophet <sup>saw</sup> that “(Death from) plague is martyrdom for every Muslim.”<sup>80</sup> Meanwhile, ‘Abdur-Rahmān bin ‘Auf<sup>ra</sup>, who had been absent because of some job, came and joined the discussion<sup>81</sup> and said, “I have some knowledge about this. I have heard Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) saying. If you hear about it (an outbreak of plague) in a land, do not go to it; but if the plague breaks out in a country where you are staying, do not run away from it.” Umar<sup>ra</sup> thanked Allah and returned to Medina.”<sup>82</sup>

78 Suyūfī, *Mā rawāhu al-wā‘ūn fī akhbār al-īā‘ūn*, 181.

79 Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī Chapter: *What has been mentioned about the plague*, Hadith No: 5732.

80 Ibid.,

81 al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, 655.

82 Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Book of Medicine, Chapter: *What has been mentioned about the plague*, Hadith No:5729.

Although plague led to martyrdom, believing in God's decree didn't indicate to avoid from praying to be cured, and that the plague was in this sense a sickness like any other.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, a Muslim should not be negligent and show a clinical attitude in dealing with the pandemic. Prophet (peace be upon him) strongly disapproved of such behavior and warned his followers that one should first take necessary measures and then rely upon Allah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) always advised people to seek medical assistance alongside relying on the power of prayer, once he stated: "Seek (medical) treatment, O Slaves of Allah, for Allah does not create any disease, but He also creates with it the cure."<sup>84</sup>

Further, we have guided that when the community confronted this disease should neither enter nor flee a disease-stricken land. Because the strong opposition of the senior companions of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) could not convince caliph 'Umar<sup>ra</sup> for safety purposes of human life because the Prophet (peace be upon him) recognized and preached the importance of travel bans from the infected area and quarantine in places contaminated with the disease to mitigate the spread of illness. The wisdom in these teachings asserts that we must assume the worst when confronting an outbreak until we know otherwise (and act accordingly). Thus, strict travel bans imposed much earlier in Covid-19's timeline could very well have curtailed the spread of the virus. In sum, the conciliatory and controlled Muslim reaction during the unprecedented and uncertain periods of the pandemic outbreak was mainly.

## **6. Social Deviance or Contempt Toward the Contagion Patients: Impact of Islamic Principles**

During the inception period of Islam, the Quraysh used to fear smallpox due to its infectious nature like Ṭā'ūn.<sup>85</sup> Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845) denotes that when Abu

83 al-Asqalānī, *Badhl al-mā'ūn fī faḍl al-Ṭā'ūn*, 317-18.

84 *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Chapters on Medicine, Hadīth No: 3438.

85 Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833), *Sirat Rasul Allah*, Dar al-Sahaba lil-Turas, 1995, vol. I, 461.

Lahab died due to smallpox, his family waited three days before preparing his body for burial. A Man from Quraysh said to his sons, “*Woe on you! Shame on you! Your father’s dead body is in your house but you do not go near him.*” Then they hired some slaves who dragged it to carry out of Mecca. They watered it from a distance and then piled stones on top of it until it was buried.<sup>86</sup> Ibn Qutayba has indicated the two major infectious diseases during the early period of Islam were leprosy and the *plague*.<sup>87</sup> Other than the plague, leprosy has not been considered how communicable in Islamic literature. Therefore, the Muslims’ attitude was different from leper from plague afflicted person. Islam is a holistic belief system that guides its followers about physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Therefore, showing any hatred and humiliation is strictly forbidden to the leper due to the ugliness caused by leprosy.

We have the practical examples from the Holy Prophet’s (peace be upon him) life that he had eaten with a leper. Prophet (peace be upon him) touched the hand of the leper and put his hand in his bowl of the meal. This narration has been reported by Tirmidhī, Abū Dā‘ūd and Ibn Mājah on the authority of Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh. If there had been any fear regarding leprosy’s contagious nature, the Prophet (peace be upon him) would not have joined him in the meal. Traditions have also reported that the leper was Muayqīb b. Abū Fātimah al-Dawsī to whom the Prophet (peace be upon him) put his hand in his bowl and ate with him.<sup>88</sup> Imām Nawawī, who was the exponent of *Sahīh al-Muslim*, stated that the second righteous caliph Umar and some other senior companions of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) were used to eating with lepers and had the view about the abrogation

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86 Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Sa‘d, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* ‘Alī Muḥammad ‘Umar, ed. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī. (2001), 4/74

87 Ibn Qutayba, *Tawil Mukhtalif al-Hadith*, ed. Faraj Allih Zaki al-Kurdi et al. (Cairo 1326 A.H.), 123, 125.

88 Sharaf al-Haq, Al-Azīmābādī, Muhammad Ashraf b. Amīr, *Awn al-Mabūd* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1415/1994) 10:300

of the command.<sup>89</sup> "one should run away from the leper as one runs away from a lion."<sup>90</sup>

It has been reported that when someone asked 'Ā'ishah (wife of Holy Prophet (peace be upon him)) about hadīth of the leper, the mother of believers denied it. It has been reported by al-Tabarī as he stated that: "Narrated Nāfi' b. al-Qāsim from his grandmother Futaymah. She said that: I came to 'Ā'ishah and asked her: Had the Prophet (peace be upon him) of Allāh said about the lepers: *Run away from them as you run away from a lion?* The Mother of the Believers replied: *No*, but he had said: *There is no contagion and who caused the disease in the first one (first camel)?*" I had a slave who had this disease, but he used my bowl to eat and my vessel to drink in it and often had slept on my cot. He had remained sufficient period with me, and then he requested to me to let him go for jihād, and I permitted him for jihād, and he went for this sacred purpose.<sup>91</sup>

Ibn Battāl (d.449/1057) stated on the authority of al-Tabarī (d.310/923) who informed that Salmān and Ibn Umar, were the companions of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) had a routine to arrange the meal for lepers and eat with them without any fear of contagiousness and contempt. Once 'Ikramah tried to segregate himself from a leper and when Ibn Abbās noticed, he realized 'Ikramah by stating that "he may be better than you and me." Furthermore, it would be pertinent to mention here that once a delegation from Thaqīf joined the first caliph of Islam Abū Bakr in Madina (the first capital of the Muslim Empire) and the meal was presented to them, but a leper didn't join them in lunch, when it came to the knowledge to Abū Bakr he joined him and ate with him without any ambivalence.<sup>92</sup>

Imām Tirmidhī has reported on the authority of Shubah that Ibn Umar held the hand of the leper and ate with him.<sup>93</sup> Although the Holy Prophet (peace be

89 Nawawī, *Sharh Sahīh Muslim*, 14:228

90 *Sahīh al-Bukhari*, Book of Medicine, Chapter: Leprosy, Hadith No: 5707

91 Al-Tabarī, Muhammad b. Jarīr, *Tahdhīb al-Athār*, Book: What has not been mentioned from the reports of Tha'labah, Hadīth:1344

92 Ibn Battāl, Alī b. Khalf, *Sharh Sahīh Bukhārī* (Riyād: Maktabah al-Rushd, 1423/2003) 9:410

93 Al-Tirmidhī, Muhammad b. Isā, *Al-Sunan* (Egypt: Maktabah wa Matbah Mustafā al-Bābī at

upon him) did not allow a leper to take the allegiance's oath and sent him back, this hadīth does not elaborate why the leper was sent back? This was done to prevent him from disgrace due to his body's disfigurement because of leprosy. A similar incident in history was that once 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb was reported to have seen a leprous woman performing the ritual circumambulation of the Ka'bah at Mecca, a false smell, produced from her effected body organs, spread into the arena. 'Umar told the woman that she should remain at home to be cured entirely because he wanted to refrain the Muslims from exposure to illness to refrain the environment from pestilence air.<sup>94</sup> Significantly, 'Umar did not have the leprous woman removed from the sacred precinct of the Ka'bah by force, and rather he gently entreated her to return to her house by saying "*lakānā khayran lakī*", an affirmation that this would be better for her.<sup>95</sup> After Hazrat 'Umar's<sup>ra</sup> demised, a man told her that the one who forbade her had passed away so she could go and circle the Ka'bah as she pleased. She replied, "I am not going to obey him when he is alive and disobey him when he has passed away."<sup>96</sup> Indeed, this is a beautiful example that reflects the Holy Prophet's spiritual power and impact (peace be upon him) and his rightly guided Khulafa.

Al-Balādhurī reported the journey of Caliph 'Umar (13-23/634- 44) to Syria in 18/639.<sup>97</sup> On his way to al-Jābiyah, during the famous outbreak of plague at 'Amwās 'Umar, he had encountered a Christian leper colony in distress. Then, he made provisions for feeding and supporting them. MoHe also ordered that a medical allowance must be provided to them from the government treasury so they could seek medical treatment.<sup>98</sup> This brief incident indicates the existence of

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Hilbī, 1395/1975) Book: Food, Chapter: What has been related about eating with a leper, Hadīth:1817

94 Waḥīduddīn Kḥān, *God, oriented Life: In the Light of Sayings and Deeds of the Prophet Muhammad*, (Islamic Centre, 1992), 265-267.

95 Ibid.,

96 Hopley, Russell. *Contagion in Islamic Lands: Responses from Medieval Andalusia and North Africa. Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* (2010): 45-64.

97 Lawrence I. Conrad, *The Plague in the Early Medieval Near East* (Diss., Princeton University, 1981), 167-246.

98 Al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futuh al-buldān (The origin of the Islamic State)*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden,

segregated groups of lepers in Palestine,<sup>99</sup> it also demonstrates the Muslims' goodwill towards the conquered peoples, especially the disadvantaged, and sets a precedent for later acts of charity.<sup>100</sup> During the early period of the Muslim empire, the lepers were financially supported to prevent them from begging other people. To every invalid, a servant was awarded and to every blind man a leader. Al-Walid had segregated the lepers in separate quarters of the city. This separate colony indicates the idea of present-day application of quarantine practice for the safety purpose of contagious disease.<sup>101</sup> al- Maqrīzī, (d. 846/1442), an eminent Egyptian historian, states that "the first hospital was built by al-Walīd in the year 88/707 for the proper care of diseased he also instituted a pious endowment (waqf) for their care, this is a very early example of a practice that became quite common in later Islamic society."<sup>102</sup> Ṭabari has stated: "al-Walīd I (86-96/705-15) provided for the lepers and said: *Do not beg from the people*, and further he awarded every invalid a servant and every blind man a leader."<sup>103</sup>

Al-Jāhiz's (d. 255/868-69) book entitled al-Burṣān wal-ʿurjān is an important and comprehensive work in this reference, particularly the first section of al-Burṣān.<sup>104</sup> The book deals with numerous physical infirmities like lameness, skin disorders, deafness, and paralysis. Moreover, personal characteristics such as leanness, baldness, and also ugliness.<sup>105</sup> The major purpose of this curious

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1866), 129, 11. 15-17

- 99 S. G. Marketos, "Aetiology, Treatment and Legal Definitions of Leprosy in Byzantium" (in Greek), *Materia Medica Graeca* 9 (1981), 579-82.
- 100 Dols, Michael W. "The leper in medieval Islamic society" *Speculum* 58, no. 4 (1983): 891-916.
- 101 S. K. Hamarneh, "Development of Hospitals in Islam," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 17 (1962), 36
- 102 Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawaʿiz wal-iʿtibār fī dhikr al-khitat wal-athar* (hereafter referred to as al-Khitat) (1911-13; repr. Cairo, 1970), 2:4
- 103 At-Tabari, *Taʾriḫ* (Cairo, 1964), 6:496, and also p. 437; cf. Ibn at-Tīqtaqa, al-Fakhri, ed. Hartwig Derenbourg (Paris, 1895), 173, 11. 5-6.
- 104 Al-Jāhiz, *Kitab al-Burṣān wa-l-ʿUrjān wa-l-ʿUmyan wa-l-Hulan*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muhammad Harun (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Jil, 1990). 8-110.
- 105 Al-Jāhiz, *al-Burṣān wal-ʿurjān*, pp. 8-110.; Trembovler, L. "Disease: a sign of piety?: some moral associations of disease in medieval society," *Korot (Jerusalem: 1952)* 10 (1993): 135-142.

compilation is to demonstrate that for an individual, the physical infirmities and peculiarities should not be considered a hindrance to participate in state offices of the Muslim empire actively or to perform dutifully in the Muslim community. Therefore, al-Jāhiz proclaimed that physical ailments are not social stigmas but may be called signs of divine blessing or favor.<sup>106</sup> He also stated logically that, in Arabs, the infirmity was widespread, and the majority of men and women of all classes were afflicted. Therefore, he argued that in such afflictions, society should demonstrate sympathy towards the victimized. He also reported that a man who had contracted *baras* have expelled by the Meccans, fearing the contagion of diseases like leprosy. Islamic medicine seems to have preserved the more humane and scientific approach to the disease, in the sense that the doctors generally did not advise flight from the leper or isolation of the diseased, and their descriptions of leprosy did not contain moral censorship of the afflicted.<sup>107</sup>

Occasionally, the Arabic sources mention prominent individuals who suffered from leprosy, such as the philosopher and physician Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, who died of leprosy about 560/1163.<sup>108</sup> The religious texts generally denied ascribing the disease to God's punishment of individual Muslims. For leprosy as well as for other infirmities, there was no social opprobrium. Nothing in the Qur'an is comparable to the Levitical law, which was so decisive for the Western Christian view of leprosy. On the contrary, the Qur'an does not lay the blame on the diseased. In other words, the blind, the lame, and the sick bear no fault or blame, and it is permissible for all men to gather and eat together. Besides, jurists and doctors took a relatively rational and no condemnatory view of the disease. As a result of all these contending ideas in Islamic society, the leper might have been separated but was not stigmatized.

The most important political figure in early Islamic history who may have been afflicted by leprosy was 'Abd al-Azīz (d. 85/704), the son of the Umayyad

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106 Al-Jāhiz, *al-Burṣān wal-'urjān*, 10, 35

107 Dols, "Leprosy in Medieval Arabic Medicine," 332

108 Mahmad ibn Abdli, *Ta'rikh tibb* (History of Medicine), (Tehran, 1353/1934), 709.

caliph Marwan I. He was appointed governor of Egypt by his father and was later confirmed in this office by his brother, Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik. For twenty years ‘Abd al-‘Azīz proved a capable ruler, although it is reported that he was stricken by the disease known as “lion-sickness”. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz was given many medications for the ailment, but they were ineffective. Therefore, his physicians advised him to move to Hulwān because of its sulfurous springs, and he built his residence there.<sup>109</sup> The learned Tunisian jurist Ibn Abī Zayd stated that if the leper’s condition poses a clear hazard, they should be forbidden from entering mosques or drinking from communal waters. Still, this social isolation would be practiced only during the adverse condition of the contagion diseased.

This portion of the discussion concludes that contagious disease never comes as a curse or punishment. Considering the harmful disease, it doesn't mean to exercise social deviance, hate, and contempt toward the contagion diseased. Although the disease is a trial and testing from Allah, it can be inflicted on anyone, and by the will of Allah the Almighty, it would be uplifted. So, the behavior should be sympathy and compassion and not contempt and stigmatization in Islamic society.

## 7. Conclusion

The principles of Islam and its teachings are made to benefit all humanity. All those rules and recommendations were designed for personal hygiene and cleanliness to promote individuals and societies' well-being. Particularly, in Islamic hygiene behavior, infection control is inherent. Covering the mouth when coughing or sneezing, washing hands, feeling unwell, adapting to voluntary isolation, and restricted travel are effective and comprehensive public health strategies. Measures taken in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to prevent the spread of infections

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109 Abui Salih, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighboring Countries*, ed. and trans. B. T. A. Evetts, in *Anecdote Oxoniensia* 7 (Oxford, 1895), fol. 52b: "Wa innahu i'tarahu ad-da' al-ma'raf bi-da al-asad wa huwa l-judham



and viruses conform almost exactly to Prophet's hygiene and infection control practices (peace be upon him). Furthermore, the Islamic teachings have removed a great misconception and made a clear refutation of pagan beliefs that the outbreak of contagious diseases is a curse or punishment. That outbreak of contagious diseases like plague and leprosy is God's wrath. Even Islam guided us that those who would be died will receive his reward in the hereafter and martyrdom from God.

In Islam, the visiting sick has considered one of the greatest good deeds a Muslim performs. However, in cases of infectious diseases, the Prophet (peace be upon him) "restricted travel and instructed people to quarantine themselves so that the disease not spread." The Prophet (peace be upon him) was essentially forming strategies implemented in modern times by public health organizations such as the center for disease control. Quarantine is essential for the comfort of the sick individual as well as the protection of the larger public. The present science has also argued that the body is weakened by unnecessary movement in a time of the endemic outbreak and becomes more susceptible to the disease. It is interesting that how several centuries before, provided guidance are being practiced by modern science.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) gave utmost importance to personal and public health and strictly observed what he advised his companions about the epidemics as he had done in other issues. Although care of the individual has a significant value, safeguarding the weakest community members is of paramount importance. Therefore, as per the Islamic viewpoint, if we directly or indirectly damage someone's financial belongings or health, it would violate their rightful due.

But parallel to this, Islam exhorts its followers to be more sensitive to those suffering from dangerous diseases because they are hardly able to manage their affairs on their own and need special care and attention through which they can easily and quickly recover from the suffering. Islam invites, inspires, teaches, and obligates humans to opt for the attitude of clemency, leniency, mercy, compassion,

and sympathy towards both healthy and sick people regardless of their creed, color, or culture. It is a spectacular example in history that the Last Prophet (peace be upon him) himself attended people suffering from contagious diseases like leprosy and showed complete compassion towards them. His Companions followed into the footprints of their beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) in this respect. His followers are required to opt for the same attitude towards the sufferers of fatal and excruciatingly afflicting illnesses. Historically, Muslims have demonstrated great compassion and sympathy toward those suffering from dangerous diseases and helped them out without the least contempt. Indeed, the Prophet's (peace be upon him) teachings and traditions convey the message that contagious disease and physical imperfections should not be considered a social stigma because Islam is a holistic belief system that guides its followers about physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

Finally, it is imperative to note that Islam emphasizes great upon the contagious disease and on the other hand when due to the special care and attention the patient can easily and quickly recover from the suffering like the case in leprosy, Islam orders to console, show compassion and help the diseased. Not a single dimension or aspect of physical, psychological, and spiritual life have been overlooked in Islamic teachings. Therefore, the discussion ends with the observation that these Islamic Principles have reshaped the Muslim societies towards developing an approach for contagious diseases. Moreover, they are still in their original forms that are applicable after a long period to respond to the epidemic outbreak. Undoubtedly, modern researchers should not overlook Islamic medicine's contribution because the present COVID-19 is an unprecedentedly serious pandemic. Although COVID-19 prevention needs special, concerted, and extraordinary efforts by governments, organizations, and individuals, there is hardly any medical solution to the outbreak.

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