

Why Did the Prophet (ﷺ) Not Sleep Before ‘Ishā’ and not Stay Awake After it?

Taken from *Tas-hīl Al-Ilmām* of Shaikh Fawzān

HADITH 154 — From Abū Barzah Al-Aslamī (رضي الله عنه) who said: “The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) used to pray ‘Asr and then one of us would return to his home in the middle of the city, and the Sun would be bright and hot. And he used to prefer to delay ‘Ishā’, and he used to hate sleeping before it and conversing after it. And he used to leave from the Fajr prayer when a man could see the one sitting beside him—and he used to recite from sixty to a hundred [verses].” — AL-BUKHĀRĪ (547) & MUSLIM (647)

“*And he used to hate sleeping before it and conversing after it.*”—i.e. Al-‘Ishā’; he used to hate sleeping before the ‘Ishā’ prayer because it causes laziness regarding the prayer, and a person may sink into [deep] sleep and thereby miss the prayer in congregation.

And he used to hate conversing after it—i.e. after the ‘Ishā’ prayer—instead loving to sleep directly after the ‘Ishā’ prayer due to what that contains of benefits:

Firstly: That one sleeps after the fulfilment of an act of obedience, and closes his day with prayer. So he sleeps upon that and his sins have been expiated for—so he sleeps in this pure state. And nothing follows after it (the prayer) of transgressions, and if he had stayed awake after ‘Ishā’, perhaps he would have been susceptible to fall into something of transgression. That is one angle.

And the second angle is: That staying awake after ‘Ishā’ could be a reason for him delaying the standing at the end of the night—when there remains the final third of the night. So it prevents him from prayer and seeking forgiveness in that mighty time period—the

time of the Divine Descension [of Allāh to the nearest heaven]—and the affair may escalate to him sleeping through the Fajr prayer.

So staying awake after ‘Ishā’ is harmful, unless the conversation after ‘Ishā’ has an overarching benefit such as studying knowledge, or revising lessons—or if there are benefits for the Muslims within it, such as if the ruler of the Muslims stays up to complete the work of the Muslims, and to look into their affairs. So he is rewarded for this because the benefit in this is overarching, and it is clear that he will find it difficult to stand in the last part of the night—in opposition to the one who stays awake for no benefit, or for the purpose of corruption—and what is most apparent is that this one is punished [by being] prevented from standing.

And the Prophet (ﷺ) used to sometimes converse after ‘Ishā’ if guests had come, and sometimes he would converse with his family, and he would also converse if there was an overarching benefit—so there is no harm then, in conversing in these situations. As for other than these three situations, then it is disliked to stay up after ‘Ishā’, and if staying up leads to missing an obligation then this staying up after ‘Ishā’ is then considered *muharram* (sinfully impermissible).

And the state of many people has changed to them making the night like day, and the day like night, and they take the nights for laughing, amusement, card playing, listening to evil [music, etc], and watching impermissible things on television screens. Then when the night sets in and dawn approaches, they sleep and they sink into [deep] sleep until the Fajr prayer passes them by. And this affair—and *refuge is sought from Allāh*—has become widespread amongst many of the people including women and children, other than those upon whom Allāh the Most High has had mercy. For this reason, it is obligatory that the one who wants good and success to distance himself, his family, and his children from this evil norm.