5560 - Etiquette of Sex in Islam

the question

Islam teaches us everything such as to how to eat, dress, etc. Is there also a Sunnah way of sleeping with one's wife? Is any position Sunnah? Or there is nothing in Sahih Hadith with regard to this?

Summary of answer

Among the important matters which should be paid attention to when engaging in sex are the following:

1. Having the intention of doing this thing only for the sake of Allah.

2. Intercourse should be preceded by kind words, playfulness and kisses.

3. Saying this dua: Bismillah, Allahumma jannibna al-shaytan wa jannib al-shaytan ma razqtana.

4. Having intercourse in the vagina in whatever manner.

5. Avoiding intercourse in the back passage.

6. It is permissible to delay the ghusl until before the time of prayer.

7. Avoiding intercourse during menses.

8. It is permissible for the husband to withdraw (‘azl) if he does not want to have a child

9. It is forbidden for both spouses to spread the secrets of what happens between them in their private marital life.

Detailed answer

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Yes, you are right: Islam teaches us all things and has brought all good teaching to mankind concerning their livelihood, religion, living and dying, because it is the religion of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted.

Sexual relations are among the important matters of life which Islam came to explain and to prescribe proper conduct and rulings which elevate it from the level of mere bestial pleasure and physical desire.

Islam connects it to a righteous intention, supplications (adhkar) and proper conduct which lift it up to the level of worship for which the Muslim will be rewarded. The Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) explains this. Imam Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) says in his book Zad al-Ma'ad:

Purpose of sex in Islam

Concerning sexual relations, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) brought the most perfect guidance, whereby health may be preserved and people may find pleasure and enjoyment, and it may fulfil the purpose for which it was created, because sex was created for three basic purposes:

1. The preservation and propagation of the human race, until they reach the number of souls that Allah has decreed should be created in this world.
2. Expulsion of the water (semen) which may cause harm to the body if it is retained.
3. Fulfilling physical desires and enjoying physical pleasure. This alone is the feature that will be present in Paradise, because there will be no producing offspring there, and no retention which needs to be relieved by ejaculation.

The best doctors suggest that sex is one of the means of maintaining good health. (al-Tibb al-Nabawi, p. 249).

And he (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“Among its benefits is that it helps to lower the gaze, brings self-control, enables one to keep away from haram things, and achieves all of these things for the woman too. It brings benefit to a man with regard to this world and the Hereafter, and benefits the woman too. Hence the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to enjoy regular intimate relations with his wives, and he said, In your world, women and perfume have been made dear to me. (Narrated by Ahmad, 3/128; al-Nasai, 7/61; classed as sahih by al-Hakim)

And the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: O young men, whoever among you can afford it, let him get married, for it helps him to lower his gaze and protect his chastity. And whoever cannot do that, let him fast, for it will be a protection for him. (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 9/92; Muslim, 1400) (Al-Tibb al-Nabawi, 251).

Etiquette of sex in Islam

Among the important matters which should be paid attention to when engaging in intimate relations:

1- Having the sincere intention of doing this thing only for the sake of Allah. One should intend to do this to protect oneself and one's wife from doing haram things, to increase the numbers of the Muslim ummah so as to raise its status, for there is honour and pride in large numbers. It should be known that one will be rewarded for this action, even if he finds immediate pleasure and enjoyment in it. It was reported from Abu Dharr that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: In the sexual intercourse of any one of you there is reward (meaning, when he has intercourse with his wife). They said, O Messenger of Allah, when any one of us fulfils his desire, will he have a reward for that? He (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Do you not see that if he were to do it in a haram manner, he would be punished for that? So if he does it in a halal manner, he will be rewarded. (Narrated by Muslim, 720).

This is the great bounty of Allah towards this Ummah; praise be to Allah Who has made us among them.

2- Intercourse should be preceded by kind words, playfulness and kisses. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to play with his wives and kiss them.

3- When a man has intercourse with his wife, he should say: Bismillah, Allahumma jannibna al-shaytan wa jannib al-shaytan ma razqtana (In the name of Allah, O Allah Keep us away from the Shaytan and keep the Shaytan away from what You bestow on us (our children)). The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: If Allah decrees that they should have a child, the Shaytan will never harm him. (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 9/187)

4- It is permissible for the husband to have intercourse with his wife in her vagina in whatever manner he wishes, from behind or from the front, on the condition that it is in her vagina, which is the place from which a child is born. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): Your wives are a tilth for you, so go to your tilth (have sexual relations with your wives in any manner as long as it is in the vagina and not in the anus), when or how you will [al-Baqarah 2:223]. Jabir ibn ‘Abd-Allah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Jews used to say that if a man had intercourse with his wife in her vagina from behind, the child would have a squint. Then this ayah was revealed: Your wives are a tilth for you, so go to your tilth (have sexual relations with your wives in any manner as long as it is in the vagina and not in the anus), when or how you will [al-Baqarah 2:223]. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: From the front or from the back, so long as it is in the vagina. (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 8/154; Muslim, 4/156).

5- It is not permissible for the husband under any circumstances whatsoever to have intercourse with his wife in her back passage. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): Your wives are a tilth for you, so go to your tilth (have sexual relations with your wives in any manner as long as it is in the vagina and not in the anus), when or how you will [al-Baqarah 2:223]. It is known that the place of tilth is the vagina, which is the place from which one hopes for a child. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: He is cursed who has intercourse with women in their back passages. (Narrated by Ibn Udayy, 1/211; classed as sahih by al-Albani in Adab al-Zafaf, p. 105). This is because it [anal intercourse] goes against the fitrah [natural inclinations of man] and is an action which is revolting to those of a sound human

nature; it also causes the woman to miss out on her share of pleasure; and the back passage is a place of filth and dirt and there are other reasons which confirm the fact that this deed is haram. For more information, please see Question #1103 .

6- If a man has intercourse with his wife and wants to come back to her a second time, he should do wudu, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: If any one of you has intercourse with his wife then wants to repeat it, let him do wudu between the two (actions), for it is more energizing for the second time. (Narrated by Muslim, 1/171). This is mustahabb (recommended), not wajib (obligatory); if he is able to do ghusl between the two actions, this is better, because of the hadith of Abu Raf'i who said that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) went around his wives one day and did ghusl in this ones house and in this ones house. He (Abu Raf'i) said: I said to him, O Messenger of Allah, why do you not do one ghusl? He said, This is cleaner and better and purer. (Narrated by Abu Dawud and al-Nasai, 1/79)

When is ghusl compulsory for spouses?

7- One or both of the spouses have to do ghusl in the following situations:

1. When the two circumcised parts meet, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: When the circumcised part meets the circumcised part (according to another report: when the circumcised part touches the circumcised part), ghusl becomes wajib (obligatory). (Narrated by Ahmad and Muslim, no. 526). This ghusl is obligatory whether ejaculation takes place or not. The touching of the circumcised parts means that the glans or tip of the penis penetrates the vagina; it does not mean mere touching.
2. Emission of semen, even if the two circumcised parts do not touch, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, Water is for water [i.e., the water of ghusl is necessary when the water of semen is ejaculated]. (Narrated by Muslim, no. 1/269). Al-Baghawi said in Sharh al-Sunnah (2/9):
   "Ghusl for janabah [impurity following sexual discharge] is wajib in either of two cases: when the tip of the penis enters the vagina, or when gushing water is emitted by either the man or the woman.

Please see this answer for more information on the details of ghusl as prescribed in shari'ah.

It is permissible for the husband and wife to do ghusl together in one place , even if he sees her and she sees him, because of the hadith of 'Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) who said: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and I used to do ghusl together from one vessel between me and him; we would take turns dipping our hands in the vessel and he would take more than me until I would say, Leave some for me, leave some for me. She said, and they were both junub (in a state of janabah). Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

8- It is permissible for a person who has to make ghusl to sleep and delay the ghusl until before the time of prayer, but it is definitely mustahabb for him to do wudu before sleeping, because of the hadith of 'Umar, who said that he asked the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), Can any one of us sleep when he is junub? The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Yes, but let him do wudu if he wishes. (Narrated by Ibn Hibban, 232).

9- It is forbidden to have intercourse with a woman when she is menstruating (having her period), because Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): They ask you concerning menstruation. Say: that is an adha (a harmful thing for a husband to have sexual intercourse with his wife while she is having her menses), therefore keep away from women during menses and go not unto them till they have purified (from menses and have taken a bath). And when they have purified themselves, then go in unto them as Allah has ordained for you (go in unto them in any manner as long as it is in their vagina). Truly, Allah loves those who turn unto Him in repentance and loves those who purify themselves (by taking a bath and cleaning and washing thoroughly their private parts, bodies, for their prayers, etc.). [al-Baqarah 2:222]. The person who has intercourse with his wife whilst she is menstruating has to give a dinar or half a dinar in charity, as it was reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) obliged a man to do so when he came and asked him about that. This was reported by the authors of al-Sunan and classed as sahih by al-Albani in Adab al-Zafaf, p. 122. But it is permissible for the husband to enjoy his menstruating wife without having intercourse, because of the hadith of 'Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace

and blessings of Allah be upon him) would tell one of us, when she was menstruating, to wear a waist-wrapper, then her husband would lie with her. (Agreed upon).

10- It is permissible for the husband to withdraw (‘azl) if they do not want to have a child; by the same token it is permissible for him to use condoms if his wife gives him permission, because she has the right to pleasure and to children. The evidence for this is the hadith of Jabir ibn ‘Abd-Allah (may Allah be pleased with him) who said, We used to do ‘azl at the time of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) heard about that, and he did not forbid us. (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 9/250; Muslim, 4/160).

But it is better not to do any of that, for several reasons, including the fact that it deprives the woman of pleasure or reduces the pleasure for her; and that it cancels out one of the purposes of marriage, which is to increase the number of offspring, as mentioned above.

11- It is forbidden for both spouses to spread the secrets of what happens between them in their private marital life; indeed, this is one of the most evil things. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Among the most evil of people before Allah on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who comes to his wife and has intercourse with her, then he spreads her secrets. (Narrated by Muslim, 4/157).

It was reported from Asma bint Yazid that she was with the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and men and women were sitting with him, and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, Would any man say what he did with his wife? Would any woman tell others what she did with her husband? The people kept quiet and did not answer. I [Asma] said: Yes, by Allah, O Messenger of Allah, they (women) do that, and they (men) do that. He said, Do not do that. It is like a male devil meeting a female devil in the road and having intercourse with her whilst the people are watching. (Narrated by Abu Dawud, no. 1/339; classed as sahih by al-Albani in Adab al-Zafaf, p. 143)

This is what we were able to mention about the etiquette of sexual relations. Praise be to Allah Who has guided us to this great religion with its sublime manners. Praise be to Allah Who has

shown us the best of this world and the next. May Allah bless our Prophet Muhammad.

And Allah knows best.