



Lockdown in Ramadhan...

'A Majestic Seclusion'

I hear many engaging in conversation of Ramadhan and how this year it will '*not be the same*'. I can imagine this means different things for different people. For me, well I am hopeful that this could be the best Ramadhan yet. I say this from my heart. Allah has placed us in this current situation; *qada wa qadr* (destiny). We have a choice whether we dwell on the things we do not obtain or have control of or focus on all the blessings we have; and make the best of our situation. I choose to go with the latter.

Over the years I have felt at times the barakah (blessings) of The Blessed Month was overlooked or somewhat not at the forefront.

For example we know the du'a (supplication) of a fasting person is accepted then why when it is a crucial time to pray, to supplicate before breaking our fast, are a majority of us consumed by the food we are going to eat; slaving at the stove for hours to prepare an iftar (food for breaking the fast) which is too much for our eyes let alone our stomachs!

This year Insha'Allah (God Willing) will be quite different as there will be no grand Iftars, little socialising and sadly with a heavy heart no attending the masjid for congregational prayers including Tara'wih, Qiyam al Layl (Night prayer) or seminars. There will be no live prayer from Makkah on our televisions; with the melodious recitation of Shaykh Sudais. Nevertheless, do not lose heart, even though the doors of our masjid are closed this does not mean that our hearts are too. Our hearts are very much open. Open to connect and worship Allah the way He has commanded us to in this time and space. Yes, Allah has decreed this for you and I, that we shall bear witness Insha'Allah to this month during a lockdown due to Covid-19. I understand this is Allah's way of saying to each of us 'I want this time with you, will you come to My door?' A door which, I remind myself first and you all, is always opened. Albeit this truly is conditional on us, both you and I, whether we seek to embark on the journey of the self to The Creator.

We are aware this month is such a blessed month, where the doors of Jannah (Paradise) are opened, the gates of Jahannum (Hellfire) are locked and the shayateen (devils) are chained. This month The Qur'an (The Holy Book) was revealed and our Lord, through Angel Jibraeel (Gabriel) commanded our Beloved Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) to 'Read' whilst in Cave Hira in Makkah. Now you and I; we all are in our caves i.e. our homes, therefore let us read, read The

Qur'an not just with our tongues but with our hearts. This month, the main focus is building our relationship with The Qur'an and understanding The Book will enable us to connect with The Almighty Himself.

Allah has told us in Hadith Qudsi (from The Almighty Himself) that this month of Ramadhan, the fasting is for Him and the reward is with Him. Allah shares this personal oath that He will reward with more than 10-700 rewards. Allah informs us that He has taken it. He wants this great magnificent thing for Himself.

I reminisce with great fondness fasting as a child, the fasts were shorter than they are now. I remember I would walk around all day with a brown paper bag with all my goodies in (crisp and sweeties) just waiting for 4pm to break my fast. I waited somewhat impatiently, this taught me discipline as I awaited the allotted time to eat my goodies.

Since then, now I take such delight in water. Yes water. You may think it is simple and like me, not something you think about. The moments just before the fast breaks, you are sitting there with your loved ones talking to your Creator in silence with a heart so overwhelmed with need. It is a hot sunny day and you have been thinking of this moment, when can I have a sip of cool water? Imagining how it would feel as I hold the glass and take that first sip. To feel the coolness of the water flow through my throat and quench my thirst. I sat there as I recall seeing the glass of water; so mouth watering. And then I began to cry; as I noticed my water was clean and how those less fortunate would not have water, or even if they did, would it look like mine? This made my heart ache and made me realise like never before how thankful I am for clean water. Allah had destined this for me to have. It is such a gift.

Ramadhan is a time for reflection, and this year I'd like to think we all will be reflecting and having tadabbur (contemplation) with a much greater sweetness. Remember Allah has placed us in our caves. I ask myself what is the meaning of this? To me. For me. And I hope we can achieve the real essence of this meaning which resides in our fitrah (natural disposition). Allah provides us with beautiful patience, resilience and strength during Ramadhan. I am aware outside of Ramadhan, if I have missed breakfast, by lunch I am falling over with hunger but during Ramadhan I am taken care of. I recall my non Muslim friends and colleagues asking how? Not even a sip of water? I reply not even that. I can also understand how strange this may sound to them and if I was unfamiliar with fasting I would perhaps ask the same. Allah gives me the strength and even though I may be thirsty or feel the pangs of hunger it is okay I got this. It is perfectly fine to eat in front of me as this is my choice to fast and this supports me to exert patience and discipline with knowing The Divine is supporting me.

I know the hunger and thirst shall pass and my gift is waiting for me at its appointed time. How fortunate are we to know this? We have this alliance, this assurance. We are a society where we seek instant gratification, Ramadhan teaches us to appreciate the delayed gratification.

I wanted to share some tips which I aim to try this Ramadhan and hope to enhance my spiritual connection. It feels like we have a golden ticket, how will you access yours? I pray we are able to witness this month and exert this month to the best of our individual ability.

Top Tips for Ramadhan

Connect with The Qur'an: This is the month The Qur'an was revealed. We need to stop and think of this significance, the meaning of this is paramount! Did you know in Surah Baqarah (a chapter in The Qur'an) the significance of The Qur'an has been discussed twice relating to Ramadhan and once relating to fasting. Recite The Qur'an and understand the meaning by making time to study the tafsir. There are many Shaykh's who are completing 'a Juz a Day' (a portion) online during Ramadhan,

search for your favourite Shaykh and make notes while studying. This could be a family time study circle to reflect on The Qur'an and share your learning and inspiration.

Du'a: Connect with Allah through your du'a and gain tadabbur of your du'a - what does this mean to you? Pay attention to understanding the meaning if you are not fluent in Arabic. Create a WhatsApp group with family and friends and post a new du'a every few days to recite, reflect and memorise. You can recite these du'as in your sujood, which will prompt you to recite the du'as often.

Du'a at Iftar: Be sure to leave 30 minutes before Iftar and sit in du'a, dhikr and tadabbur. Use this time to be mindful, heart-full and grateful; speak to your Lord. He hears every whisper.

Feeding the needy: Open an iftar for those less fortunate, donate to those in need and feed them. We won't be going out for grand iftar's, the money we will save from this can be used to feed our fellow brothers and sisters, those we have never met but connected to within our hearts.

Salah (The 5 daily prayers) : Take your time. You have time. Know this is *your meeting with Allah*. Recite those longer surah's; don't be in haste. Spend extra time in sujood, talk to Allah, tell Him your worries, your hopes and know you are the closest to Him in sujood.

Tara'wih/Tahajjud/Qiyam al Layl (The Night Prayers): The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) never announced Tara'wih, it was never known as a public ceremony in the sunnah. These prayers are better at home as you can make it as long as you want and avoid any fears of ostentation. Know this meeting is an invitation from The One who provides and gives. This time is only you and Allah, this is the ultimate spirit of Qiyam. To experience this intimate connection in Ramadhan during this pandemic will be a unique and sincere experience. Ask Allah to heal and cure humanity.

Lailatul Qadr (The Night of Power): The Night when the rewards are more than a 1,000 months; equating to a persons lifetime. Plan for this night like you would do a major event and we know we can all make marvellous plans. Be aware this night can fall in any of the odd nights although advised to take advantage of the last ten nights. Plan the way you would your day, make each moment count, remember this is between you and Allah. Your private invitation and conversation with The Almighty, who ordains your every heartbeat, the breath in your lungs and so much more.

Do not waste time on social media/Netflix: Reduce your time significantly from it, some people fast from social media and Netflix etc.

Eat healthily: I know I will be reducing my crisp intake! Eat well and taste your food, each and every morsel. Eat according to the sunnah, 1/3 for food, 1/3 for water and 1/3 for air. Don't forget to break your fast with dates and ZamZam (Blessed) water.

Stay connected with your family and friends: via phone calls, video calling, emails etc, this can be meaningful in itself. I have noticed many of us are making more of an effort to stay in touch and check in with those we have not seen/spoken to for awhile. Be creative and make a Ramadhan/Eid card with a sentimental touch.

Do not oversleep: Have a healthy balance. Know that your body has rights over you. Identify how many hours sleep you need and adhere to that.

Get some air: Whether in the garden or going for a walk in nature; Use your 5 senses to notice your surroundings. Be sure to adhere to the government guidelines.

Altruism: Help the elderly within the community and those in need. They will thank you but remember it should be you thanking them. They have given you an opportunity to do a good deed and serve them which fulfils the heart and pleases Allah.

Heart-fullness: Is when your heart is fulfilled in remembering your Lord. Ensure you are sitting in a comfortable space and place your right hand on your heart. Now focus on your breath; breathe in from your nose and gently back out from your mouth. Gently close your eyes. Notice your breath, your heart beating, your chest rising and falling with each in and out breath. Now focus on a Name of Allah which feels significant for you in this very moment, what does this name mean to you? How can you apply this Name in your own life and reflect how this Name helps you to know Allah's Names and Attributes and fundamentally brings you closer to Him. Do this for 2-3 minutes and when you are ready, gradually move your toes and bring sensation back to the body and gently open your eyes

You can try this often; an opportunity to learn, reflect and study The Beautiful Names of Allah. This can really help with worry/anxiety.

Eid Day

It is peculiar talking about Eid before Ramadhan but this is quite the norm. I'm sure you all are smiling right now as you know what I mean. We often plan what we will wear, cook and our plans for the day.

Eid will feel really unfamiliar, quite hajeer (unordinary). No Eid salah (prayer) in the park (the highlight of my day) - feeling the sense of unity within the community. Albeit the focus will be to connect with those whom you live with and family and friends virtually (if the lockdown restrictions still apply, one can be hopeful!).

Plan your Eid day.

Eat your dinner together as a family.

Share 'family time' - talking about happy past memories. Be specific with each family member. Make your words kind and heartfelt and perhaps this Eid we can give gifts of *Kind Words*.

Be thankful to Allah - for all the blessings He has bestowed upon you and make du'a your efforts in Ramadhan are accepted.

Know Allah is with you in your isolation. He. Is. Your. Companion.

*Now you and I; we all are in our caves
i.e. our homes. Therefore let us read,
read The Qur'an, not just with our
tongues but with our hearts.*



Abu Dharr reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "Allah Almighty says: *Whoever comes with a good deed will have the reward of ten like it and even more. Whoever comes with an evil deed will be recompensed for one evil deed like it or he will be forgiven. Whoever draws close to me by the length of a hand, I will draw close to him by the length of an arm. Whoever draws close to me by the length of an arm, I will draw close to him by the length of a fathom. Whoever comes to me walking, I will come to him running. Whoever meets me with enough sins to fill the earth, not associating any idols with me, I will meet him with as much forgiveness.*" Source: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2687

Please note any mistakes are from me and any good is all from Allah.

If you feel you need support for your emotional wellbeing/mental health please review/refer to the following organisations:

GLM Hear4U - Helpline service providing emotional support for the community relating to Covid-19. Please call on 0121 713 0095 Tuesdays: 11:00-13:00 Females and Thursdays: 18:00-20:00 Females and Males.

Muslim Women Network UK - Helpline service to provide information, advice and support. Please call on 07415 206936 and 0800 999 5786 www.mwnhelpline.co.uk and email: info@mwnhelpline.co.uk Mon-Fri 10:00 - 16:00

Muslim Counsellors Birmingham - private therapists, please refer to website for details: www.muslimcounsellorsbirmingham.co.uk

I pray this Ramadhan is just the way you need it to be and may there be beautiful light. *Ramadhan Kareem!*

Sending my heartfelt prayers and positive thoughts to all of humanity.

Khudeja Sattar