

What can we do in the face of a Pandemic?

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As promised yesterday (Feb 28, 2020) during my Friday Khutbah, please see below the main points including some du'as and steps to take as we face Coronavirus outbreak.

This global outbreak of Covid-19 has really shaken the entire world like never before in our times and it has exposed the weakness and vulnerability of humans in spite of all the modern technology and scientific advancement. It has indeed challenged us, humbled us and made us reflect on the source of true power. As believers in the Creator, we reflect on His ultimate power and control and turn to Him with repentance and glorification. We do not wish for any human to suffer and we sincerely and incessantly pray for all those who are suffering whether from viruses, diseases, wars, injustices and oppression from their fellow humans.

Is Coronavirus a divine warning, a punishment, a tribulation, a human manipulation or just another natural phenomenon?

We know from reading the Holy Qur'an, that God Almighty did send warnings and deterrents to Pharaoh and his likes throughout history when the power and wealth blind people and make them think they are Gods themselves or they defy God Himself. We read in the Qur'an:

فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالدَّمَ آيَاتٍ مُّفَصَّلَاتٍ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِينَ

“So, We sent (plagues) on them: Wholesale death, Locusts, Lice, Frogs, And Blood: Signs openly self-explained: but they were steeped in arrogance, - a people given to sin.” (7:134)

So, what can we do as Muslims?

Preparation, Prevention and Protection (PPP) at 4 levels: Physical - Mental - Material - Spiritual

(1) Physical:

All the health professionals are telling us to wash our hands, train ourselves on controlling the habits of touching the face, the mouth, the nose and the eyes and to put masks on when necessary especially in crowded places. Avoiding close contact with sick people and handshaking and to not travel if not necessary. All these teachings are embedded in our traditional teachings in the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (Blessings & Peace be upon him) who taught us to wash our hands, faces, arms and feet all the time and with every prayer if needed and before eating or drinking.

عن عبد الرحمن بن عوف رضي الله عنه أنه قال: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ:
(إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ بِهِ [يعني: الطاعون] بِأَرْضٍ فَلَا تَقْدُمُوا عَلَيْهِ، وَإِذَا وَقَعَ بِأَرْضٍ وَأَنْتُمْ بِهَا فَلَا تَخْرُجُوا فِرَارًا مِنْهُ)
(البخاري (5739) ومسلم (2219))

Abdul Rahman b. Awf (May Allah be pleased with him) said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (Blessings & Peace be upon him) saying: **“When you hear about a virus in a country do not go there. And if you happen to be in that country do not leave it running away from it.)** Bukhari & Muslim.

In a nutshell, people should consult their doctors and be wary from too much internet, social media theories, speculations and interpretations. Do what you can and use every means possible to protect yourself and leave the rest to Allah.

(2) Mental:

Prepare for emergencies at your home or business but do not Panic! Most of the problems can be solved but it's the panic in humans that causes tragedies due to hastiness and fear. Allah Almighty says:

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا
Truly man was created very impatient;
إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا
Fretful when evil touches him;
وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا
And ungenerous when good reaches him;
إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّينَ
Not so those devoted to Prayer to their Lord;

Coronavirus is like SARS and MERS. They are all different forms of respiratory diseases and they will be cured Insha Allah even if takes some time. So, the less we panic the better for us.

(3) Material:

Follow the reliable sources of news and updates and always have a backup plan. Store some food and medicine but do not overdo it. Don't make major financial decisions in times of crisis. It's all proportional! If markets crash and prices fall then everything and everyone will be in the same situation. Consult people you trust and do not panic!

(4) Spiritual:

1. **Thabat الثبات**: Ask Allah for firmness to deal with all kinds of tribulations.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمْ فِتْنَةً فَاتَّبِعُوا وَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

"O you who believe! When you meet/face a challenging force, be firm, and call Allah in remembrance much (and often); that you may prosper." (8:45)

2. **Dhikr الله**: Increase your remembrance of your Creator Allah (The Exalted) especially before and after the beginning of the evening and the morning.

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

"Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction." (11:28)

وَنَنْبَلُوكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالنَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِيرِ الصَّابِرِينَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

"Be sure we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere, who say, when afflicted with calamity: "To Allah We belong, and to Him is our return" (2:155-6)

3. **Du'a الدعاء**: In times of tribulations, calamities, disasters...etc., there is nothing better than du'a as we were advised by our Prophet Muhammad (Blessings & Peace be upon him). He said; **"If you see any of that turn to Allah and pray to Him sincerely."**

There are many du'as/adhkar to say for protection that are recommended to be repeated during the day and night. Here are some of them:

a) عن عثمان بن عفان رضي الله عنه قال : سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ مَنْ قَالَ : بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا يَضُرُّ مَعَ اسْمِهِ شَيْءٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ لَمْ تُصِبْهُ فُجَاءَةٌ بَلَاءٍ حَتَّى يُصْبِحَ ، وَمَنْ قَالَهَا حِينَ يُصْبِحُ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ لَمْ تُصِبْهُ فُجَاءَةٌ بَلَاءٍ حَتَّى يُمْسِيَ (

رواه أبو داود (برقم 5088) ، ورواه الترمذي (برقم 3388) - وصححه - بلفظ ما من عبد يقول في صباح كل يوم ومساء كل ليلة بسْمِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا يَضُرُّ مَعَ اسْمِهِ شَيْءٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ لَمْ يَضُرَّهُ شَيْءٌ

Bismillahi al-Ladhi la Yadurru ma'a Ismihi Shay'un fi al-Ardi wala fi as-Sama'I wa huwa al-Samee'u al-Aleem!

In the name of Allah with which nothing can harm (us) on earth or heaven. He is the Most Hearing and the Most Knowledgeable!

He (Blessings & Peace be upon him) said that whoever says the above three times in the morning or in the evening nothings will harm him/her on that day or night.

b) عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّهُ قَالَ: جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا لَقِيتُ مِنْ عَقْرَبٍ لَدَعَنْتَنِي الْبَارِحَةَ ، (قَالَ : (أَمَا لَوْ قُلْتَ حِينَ أَمْسَيْتَ : أَعُوذُ بِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ التَّامَّاتِ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا خُلِقَ ، لَمْ تَضُرَّكَ) رواه مسلم (برقم 2709

A'udhu bi Kalimati Allahi al-Tamat min sharri ma khalaq (3 times)

"I seek refuge with the Perfect Words of Allah from the evil of created things." The Prophet (S) said that if you say this in the evening or the morning nothing will harm you on that day or night.

c) The Prophet (Blessings & Peace be upon him) also used to repeat the following du'a all the time, day and night, which is about asking for 'Afia (protection) at all levels:

وقد كان صلى الله عليه وسلم يسأل الله دائما العافية، فعن ابن عمر رضي الله عنهما قال: لم يكن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يدع هؤلاء الدعوات حين يمسي وحين يصبح:

اللهم إني أسألك العافية في الدنيا والآخرة، اللهم إني أسألك العفو والعافية في ديني ودنياي وأهلي ومالي، اللهم استر عورتى، اللهم احفظني من بين يدي ومن خلفي وعن يميني وعن شمالي ومن فوقي، وأعوذ بعظمتك أن أغتال من تحتي .. قال: يعني الخسف... الحديث رواه أحمد وأبو داود وغيرهما، وصححه الألباني

Allahumma inni As'aluka al-'Afiyata fi al-Dunia wa al-Akhira. Allahumma inni As-'Aluka al-'Afwa wa al-'Afiyata fi dini wa duniyaya wa ahli wa mali. Allahumma Ustur 'Awrati wa ammin Raw'ati. Allahumma Ihfadhni min baynu yadayya, wa min khalif, wa 'an yamini wa 'an shimali wa min fawqi wa A-'Udhu bi 'Adhamatika min an Ughtala min tahti."

4. Istighfar الاستغفار: Allah loves those who ask for forgiveness for their sins and He mentioned to us that he accepts our repentance and forgives our sins if we are sincere. He forgives what humans do not forgive because he understands us better than we do with each other. Istighfar makes us humble and Allah loves those who are humble. He says in the Holy Qur'an:

وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَأَنْتَ فِيهِمْ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ مُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ

"But Allah is not going to send them a punishment whilst you are amongst them; nor is He going to send it whilst they could ask for pardon/forgiveness." (8:33)

Istighfar leads to more blessings but also protection as we read above and other verses. Allah protects those who seek His forgiveness and admit with humility that they have erred and sinned.

Let us follow these steps to the best of our abilities and let us pray for the best to happen! May Allah protect us and our loved ones and guide us and all humanity to go back to the Creator and reconnect with Him!

Ameen