

Ramadhan daily reflections by the community:

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Pehli raat

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A Pehli Raat and Ramadan Mubarak message from our DBWS GB president Haki Kapasi...

Assalaam alaiykum everyone. Ramzan is just around the corner, and I am sure you will agree, this is going to be a strange one. One of the joys of Ramzan is meeting together as a community and praying and eating together. We will, of course, miss that but everyone has risen to the challenge of isolation and used technology to bring us all together. We have compressed change and accelerated and leapt to a new normal. Amazingly, we have also managed to bring most elders with us as technology becomes the new norm. Horror and beauty are juxtaposed in ways we hadn't dreamt of. We have the terrifying prospect of catching a virus for which there is no cure set against air that is clean and clear, where marine life is thriving and the natural environment flourishing. People are facing the horrible prospect of losing their jobs whilst others are relishing the time they now have of nurturing their relationships. This Ramazan is an unique opportunity, particularly for those who are not working, to contemplate on what matters to you and focus on that. Terry Waite, who was taken hostage in Lebanon and kept in isolation for over four years said that in that time he journeyed inwards. That is not a bad place to being this Ramadhan. Our loss of contact with others is an opportunity to go inwards and re-discover our innate spirituality and re-discover the blessings that lay there. Ramadhan Mubarak everyone, wishing you all a peaceful month that is spiritually nourishing and, inshallah, see you all again soon

Pehli raat

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Whatever challenge we experience, Allah knows what we are going through. If we can have faith in the Will of Allah during times of hardship, He will guide our hearts.

Ramadan comes this year at the perfect time, just as Allah has planned it. It is the month of multiplication for all good deeds and intent. Let us not waste

it. Let us be together in worship, in mind, in heart. For ourselves and for each other.

Day 1: Plant the seed

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Everything in life begins with a seed but nothing happens until that seed is planted.

Faith is no different.

No matter what the role of faith in our lives- large or small, having an iota of faith in Allah gives Him something to work with. So, whether you are contemplating, believing, practicing - this IS the month to plant the seed, even BE the seed that will InshaAllah reap the very best of rewards.

Read, Reflect, Ask, Learn, Re-learn, Practice, Pray, Strengthen, Resolve.

What seed will you plant this month?

Plant the seed you wish to grow. Plant the seed you wish to be.

Inspired by Kamran Bhatti's thought provoking talk a few days ago [\(you can watch it by clicking here\)](#)

Day 2: Nourish your soul – self evaluate

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A whole year has passed since last Ramadhan.. What has happened between that time and today?

The end of last Ramadhan may have left us with a stronger sense of faith and rejuvenated our connection with Allah.

Where have you been since this time? Do you know where you are going? Are there aspects of your servitude to Allah that have wavered? Are there things you can improve on?

As we step into this month, it is time to evaluate ourselves and hold ourselves to account.

Faith can move with the wind, and like plants can wilt and wither. Forgetting to water and nourish our plants can limit or kill life that could have

flourished.. Ramadhan offers us the opportunity to revitalise ourselves again in so many ways; in every way. Let's ignite, reignite and keep the best versions of ourselves alive. Lets leave this Ramadhan better than the way we entered it.

Look inwards. Review. Evaluate yourself. Renew. Rejuvenate. Nourish your soul.

Day 3: Trust and Acceptance of His Will

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There is much we can do with the mind and body that Allah has bestowed us - from our behaviours, to our perceptions to all that is around us. We live in a world with so much at our fingertips; the internet, social media, advanced transport. The accessibility of such resource may well have increased a sense of control for us and confidence to plan and prepare for all that we can. There is nothing wrong with this of course. However, there are aspects of life that no matter how hard we might try, with all the best intentions, hopes and plans, things just do not turn out the way we wish. Times and circumstances related to birth, health and death particularly, are aspects of life which hold so many emotional ties involving fear and hope yet despite all best efforts, the final and true outcome is beyond human prediction or control.

This is where we introduce Trust. Trust is a huge entity.

Trust involves placing our vulnerabilities in that which we cannot control or predict. It is not easy to trust what we do not know or that which we have no control over.

Perhaps this is why, trust in Allah is considered one of most significant and most important acts of faith? Trust and acceptance of His Will.. If we accept the idea that all we cannot control, is Allah's will, maybe we can put our trust in Him and have faith that He will take care of things from that point on? Similarly, if we put our trust in Him that He will take care of all that is beyond our control, maybe we can accept that anything beyond our control is His Will?

Life is like riding the waves; we may be able to control which boat we get on, how we steer it and how we interact with those riding with us, but we cannot control the waves themselves or when they will come.

So perhaps for those waves which we cannot control, perhaps for those situations which go beyond our control, imagination or understanding, perhaps we can seek some comfort in trusting in His plan. This is Allah's Will and He will take care of it.. "Whoever puts his trust in Allah; He will be enough for him" (Al-Quran, 65:3)

Day 4: Zakat, Privileges and Food Justice [\(return to contents\)](#)

Fasting during the month of Ramadhan for many of us, instantly translates to the abstinence of food and drink. Although it encompasses much more than this -physical, psychological and spiritual aspects of self-purification and self-discipline; in fasting, we become aware of food (and drink) being a human necessity. We realise how we may take for granted having our basic human needs met and how privileged we are compared to those in poverty. Sadly, hunger is not a choice for some as it is for many of us..

Thus, the month of Ramadhan reignites our sense of gratefulness and helps us to consider the experiences of those less fortunate. Similarly, those who we consider less fortunate will be doing the exact same during this month - though they may have less, Ramadhan also offers them an opportunity to give thanks for what they have. They too, may offer Zakat (charity) according to their own circumstance.

Privilege is a word often associated with having special rights, advantages, or immunities. If we consider ourselves to be in a place of privilege, then surely, we - as individuals, families, a society, are in a position to do more than the exact same as those we consider less fortunate during this holy month?

Offering food and donations to charities as part of our Zakat certainly fulfils our duties towards our faith and is necessary to ease the pain of hunger. However, it does little to change why people are hungry.

In order to truly practice the socially conscious spirit of Ramadhan, perhaps we can reflect on the inequalities associated with poverty and try to address the systemic causes of hunger? Maybe we could orient some of our Zakat towards fighting poverty in addition to feeding the hungry? Could we seek out organisations that not only work to feed the hungry but actively work to prevent it?

We learn through our experience of fasting that food is a necessity, not a privilege. Maybe then, from our own positions of privilege, we can stand for the basic human needs of others by viewing Zakat as an opportunity not just for food charity, but for food justice..

Inspired by the perspectives of Tasnim Elbout and incredible work of Food First www.foodfirst.org

Day 4

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Some thoughts shared and questions pondered over by Hatim Rajabali today, while in his garden.

'So Fatima sent me out to get some vitamin D. Whilst out in the garden I thought how do I get multiple benefits from this one action? It was a moment of self reflection in the quietness before Zuhr.

My thoughts go back to a question we were discussing. Is Covid man made or God made or naturally made?

Nature and God made are the same, are they not? As I listened to the voices of the birds and looked around at flowers growing, nature turning green, a butterfly, for the time being it is not important who made COVID-19. We have all learnt valuable lessons and Allah will surely get us through this, we are his most precious creation.

Do we really want to go back to where we were? Or move forward or sideways in another directions?

I am fortunate by Allah's grace to sit here in our garden and will reach out, by some means, to some of those not so fortunate.

Maybe a reminder for Zuhr - the neighbour made a loud noise! Did I get multiple benefits?

Time to go in before the hay fever also kicks in'

Day 5: Grief, Ramadhan and Adaptability

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Strange that Ramadhan, in many ways, facilitates closeness. Not just in our developing empathy towards others, but in the physical closeness of congregated prayers, collective iftari's – whether at the masjid or each other's' homes.

What a huge difference this is to our current situation? How strange it feels to wave at familiar faces over screens or from far instead of giving and receiving hugs? How much have these last few months made us realise what we miss and what we value most?

There is a shared sense of grief experienced by all us - the loss of our freedom, of our 'predicted' futures and the day to day lives we once knew. Individually, we might grieve for our interests, work patterns, community events, friends and family- children and grandchildren. We may be fearful about our health and the health of those we love and care for, our work, our future as we planned it, or our changing world. All this, whilst we experience the death of loved ones, grieve their absence and the absence of community congregation, collective mourning and prayer.

But we must remember, this will not last forever; remind ourselves that nothing in this world is permanent but Allah Himself.

So, when this is over, we will adjust as we are doing now, to a different and new kind of 'normal'. Just as the Earth adapts to the four changing seasons- it knows every season will end and each is necessary to make way for the next.. "Autumn and Winter see the times when trees send their roots deeper into the soil, regenerating for the spring to come" (Zaid Dahhaj).

Year on year, the month of Ramadhan helps us shift from our day to day norms to something that helps us develop ourselves and our faith. It provides us with the opportunity to master the art of adaptability. For many of us, our entire day to day life changes with fasting alone. We naturally adapt ourselves to a new schedule and adhere to new rules. In this way, Allah helps us build our resilience so we are better able to cope with change and hardships that come our way and in doing so, we learn new things about ourselves and our strength, and we grow.

Like the four seasons of change - every season brings with it, its own beauty and valuable lessons for life - and always, after every cold winter, spring blooms..

“Verily with hardship comes ease” (Al Quran, 94:5).

Day 6

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With the world in lockdown and the Coronavirus continuing to both take lives and disrupt the lives of millions around the world, being or feeling in isolation can be mentally (and physically) trying – and it can easily lead to a loss in mental health and spirituality. In an effort to help rekindle hope, faith, and health, we must – as always – turn to the Holy Quran for guidance.

In the story of Prophet Yunus (a.s.) from the Holy Quran, Allah provides an example of deep isolation or loneliness, and tells us how we may use these examples to overcome our own loneliness or isolation:

“And indeed, Yunus was among the messengers. When he ran away to the laden ship, And he drew lots and was among the losers. Then the fish swallowed him, while he was blameworthy. And had he not been of those who exalt Allah, he would have remained inside its belly until the Day they are resurrected.” [Quran 37:139-144]

This stands as a stark reminder to us all – we must never forget Allah, even in our darkest or loneliest moments – and only then can we be helped and saved by Him.

Take a moment to watch this inspiring video about the story of Prophet Yunus (a.s.) and it's powerful message...

<https://www.instagram.com/tv/B-vtsqejK5I/...>

Day 6: Allah knows the state of your heart

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In Surah Taha Allah tells us the story of Musa (AS). In this story Allah recounts the apprehension Musa (AS) had felt when faced with the magic of the Pharaoh in front of him.

“And he sensed within himself apprehension, did Moses” (20:67).

This verse teaches us about Allah’s insight into the state of man’s emotions. In this particular situation Allah has insight over the emotion Musa (AS) felt in front of the apparently mighty pharaoh. Just like having insight into the heart of Musa, Allah has insight in the hearts of every soul he has created. Allah knows the situation of our hearts - whether we are in a state of stress, anxiety, fear, grief, happiness, contentment or peace. Just like the maker of a watch who knows the inner mechanics of his timepiece, Allah knows the innermost state of our hearts.

So, whilst these days of social distancing and isolation may bring with it feelings of stress, loneliness, sadness and anxiety, know that these days are temporary. Know that Allah is all-aware of the condition of your heart. If you allow yourself to speak to Allah then He will guide you through this uncertain period and bring with it a sense of tranquility. If we simply open up our hearts to our Lord, He will always respond - unhesitatingly. Musa’s fear in this case was met with a divine reply:

“Fear not” (20:46).

What is the condition of your heart today? When you pray today, reflect upon it - open up a dialogue with Your Lord. Ask Him to help you - whether you see the response in the physical world or not, He has promised a reply to your du’a in the unseen world.

“And when My servants ask you, [O Muhammad], concerning Me - indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me.” (2:186)

Day 7

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By Tasnim Kinkhabwala

Prayer takes us on a journey. Your mind speaks. Your heart sometimes doesn’t connect. But you say the words anyway. What does it mean? Who is listening?

God is listening, it means everything to Him.

Say them with your heart and your mind. The kind spoken from the heart is

spoken with love. Those voices are the loudest.

It is said that if enough people say the same prayer and recite Ameen together, God will make it happen.

We've all wished for more time at some point in life. God has listened. He has stopped the world to give us time. Time with our loved ones and time to open our eyes to what's important.

Let's use it wisely, together, this Ramzan. If we pray and say Ameen together He has to make it happen.

Together we can make a difference.

Day 8

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Beautiful reflection written by Raasmiya Makda, 16 years old...

'With my GCSE exams round the corner, I was dreaming of the day when I would wake up without the stress of revision, lounging in my jimjams all day long and doing absolutely nothing.

And then Boom! The lockdown happened.

My dream came true but with everything turned upside down. Overnight, I went from going to school and out with my friends to being stuck at home 24/7 with nowhere to go. How will I cope! I swapped my friends for Netflix and TikTok. I played my flute, learnt to bake and taught myself how to knit. Each day rolled into the next and I lost count of the date and day of the week it is. My life felt like a song stuck on the repeat button.

But then Ramadan started and the scent of fried samosas filled the air and I knew everything would be ok. As I bow my head in my prayers, I pray for all those who are suffering and those who have lost their lives. I realise how lucky and fortunate I am. I've learned to be grateful for the smallest of things and value this time with my family. I can't thank Allah enough.

Although I want to get back to normal I want to hold on to this time for as long as I can.'

Day 9

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Shared today by Dr. Tariq Kapasi

I had a telephone appointment booked with a young single mother of two. She had little family support and lived with her two children. She was struggling. Her mood was low, her nights were difficult, and she was anxious – worried about how she is going to manage and fulfil the needs of her children tomorrow. I listened and validated the feelings she must be experiencing (not that they required my validation). I listened some more. I tried to normalise her situation as something lots of families are probably going through the similar problems right now. I spoke about simple interventions where she could structure her day, engage in some positive social contact digitally, and some simple techniques to try and rid her mind of the negative thoughts she was feeling from one day to another. We also spoke about medication.

There was another patient who I spoke to soon after for an unrelated issue. He spoke about how he was finding it financially difficult to make ends meet – they were reliant on school meal vouchers which they could now use on a supermarket, food banks and food parcels to help them get by.

Later that day I was walking down the stairs when I was stopped by Verse 38 of Surah 55 in Surah Rahman. I stopped. Looked at the ayat on the wall.

“So which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?”

I reflected on this in the context of the consultations earlier that morning.

Allah has given many of us many favours – some of which are not bestowed upon everyone. Some of these favours are not a right, but a privilege, and something which we should never take for granted.

There are lots of people going through much difficulty at the moment. It is time we use this month to pray and ask Allah to give them ease, but also actively change our individual and community dynamic towards the way we view poverty, mental health and social factors leading to difficulty in society. Our communities are excellent at helping people in impoverished situations abroad – but there appears to be an associate stigma, and negative stereotype of the same people who may require help closer to home. We must try and evolve, change and adapt our narrative to be more inclusive and understanding of these groups of people who may even exist even

within our communities.

Tonight, as I dive into whatever food has been prepared for iftari, I will have an extra layer of gratitude to Allah for the benefits he has bestowed upon me. I will also take a moment to make a du'a for all those impoverished around the world, including those closer to home.

Day 10

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Thoughts shared by Aquil Rajabali

I woke at 3.25am, sluggishly trudged downstairs. Glass of water, piece of toast with slapdash pasting of marg and jam, khajoor and vitamins. Not much conversation at this ungodly hour; avoid eye contact, better not start a conversation or I might be too awake to fall asleep again. Dishes away, few more slugs of water and we're back to trudging, this time upwards.

Wudhoo done with warm water, remember, don't want to be too awake and now, oh no, still 10 minutes until Fajr! To read Qur'an or check Facebook? Have more important decisions ever had to be made?

Praying namaz, trying desperately to stay focussed. What time will the kids get up? How many hours of sleep will I get tonight? How long will it take to get to sleep? I wonder what colour shed we should get?

All this like an automaton for 30 nights... Where is Allah? Where is the peace and serenity? Where is the increase in spirituality that everyone talks about?

Then getting back into bed I look out the window to see a very bright light in the sky. Is the North Star? Couldn't be. Is it a plane? No planes during coronavirus. My brain is being racked with any constellations I know. Nothing comes to mind. What is it? Quick download of Night Sky app and I'm away. It's Jupiter! And just to the left of it, Saturn! At 4am on a Wednesday in Birmingham I get to see the giant and the party ring all lined up right in front of my eyes.

I sat for 5mins not moving, mesmerised, in awe.

You see the planets on tv, in books, on the internet. You think you know where they are but how far is 365 millions miles really?

At that moment I think I recognised - adding to only a handful of times in my life - Allah.

That the 4 of us, myself, Saturn, Jupiter and my bedroom window we're standing in line, humbled me to the core. I suddenly realised my apparent insignificance, and at the same time, a question; What does an insignificant thing like me have the potential to do?

I understood the beauty and grace of what we have been bestowed. 2 massive objects are suspended effortlessly in space applying their colossal forces and affecting their surroundings. How big an impact am I having on my surroundings? I have no gravitational pull, physically; and I don't have moons dancing around me. What effect do I have on my family, friends, community...the planet?

Each one of us is a planet that affects the things around us. The difference between us and Jupiter is that we have a choice. A smile, a kind word, a hug, a text, an act of charity. I truly feel like Allah was showing himself to me in that moment. In this month of all months, it reminded of this verse in the Qur'an,

قَالُوا نُرِيدُ أَنْ نَأْكُلَ مِنْهَا وَتَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوبُنَا وَنَعْلَمَ أَنْ قَدْ صَدَّقَتْنَا وَنَكُونَ عَلَيْهَا مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ (١١٣)

They said: "We only wish to eat thereof and satisfy our hearts, and to know that thou hast indeed told us the truth; and that we ourselves may be witnesses to the miracle." Al-Ma'idah (Surah 5, Verse 113)

For so long I have just been an automaton in prayer, today I feel it will be different. I pray it will inform more of decisions and actions going forward.

Let's use this month to start the process of affecting positively the things around us. Let us be patient for the spark, let us all be a little Jupiter... Inshallah'

Day 11

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By Shabana Huseinbhai

Usually Ramadhan would come and go and leave me wishing I had the time to do this blessed month justice while cursing the fact that we actually have to

Work during this month. I'd never wake up for sehri and feel envious of those who would wake up and manage to read their Fajr on time.. After Iftaar I would squeeze in 10 minutes or so of reciting and understanding the Quran all the while wishing I had the ability to take the whole month off work to be able to observe this month how i feel it should be observed.

Allah SWT answered my duas this year.. while we can moan about how awful this lockdown is, is it really that bad? I ask myself- At what point in our lives would I have been given this blessed month off work to wake up for sehri, pray fajr and try to complete Quran and just increase our imaan and grow closer to Allah .. I see this lockdown as a blessing as I have been given the gift of time.. and while it comes with it's fair share of struggles I.e home schooling a restless 4 year old, and not being able to see extended family- we have to count our blessings and say Alhumdulillah for what we have- a roof over our heads, food on our table and our loved ones around us...

And for everyone reading this- can we spare a thought and Surah Fateha for everyone whose lost their lives from this virus and for

All the front line nhs staff who have lost their lives trying to save ours..

Day 12

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by Zarina Hirani (London)

Every year the month of Ramadan comes and goes, the people gather for prayers and iftar,

people holding iftaries with loved ones over the weekends, but this year, it is different. The

Masjids are closed, no shared iftaries, no visits from family.

When I sit down, reflect and try to make sense of this situation, that the lockdown has happened in the month of Ramadan, I can only conclude that this must be the Will of Allah.

Ramadan during the Covid-19 Pandemic may seem disheartening but it is the ideal time for reflection. For those who would normally be working or in school, they are now are at home, and I see many positives in this. I see

that children are fasting and doing their prayers, instead of using the excuse of being at school. Parents have had more time to spend with their children, observe their daily prayers and read Qu'ran. People have started gathering together virtually, whether it is a chat with a long, lost friend from the other side of the world, participating in Online Yoga Classes, reading the Qu'ran or doing SadakAllah together online, which we have not done on this scale before.

I am really looking forward to spending this month focusing inwards without the burden of Social activities. I have been using this time to reflect on my own relationship with Allah SWT and how I can strengthen it.

As we know Shaytan's primary goal is to make us ungrateful, always needing more and forgetting what we have. I am grateful for my health, and the health of my family and my loved ones. In our daily lives we forget to be grateful for the things bestowed upon us, such as our health, the plentiful food on our tables, the roof over our heads and our NHS who has been doing an excellent job. Only when such things are threatened, do we understand gratitude.

Each day we should make with a list of 5 things that we are grateful to Allah SWT, share it with someone close, who in turn will share their list back. Teach our children to do the same. This small act will hopefully make us more grateful, humbler and get us closer with Allah SWT.

Day 13

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By Masuma Kapasi

It feels so beautiful and blessed to practice my first Ramadhan with my husband and the entire family, Alhamdulillah. Yet a challenging experience in a new country, getting through a new schedule as to what I have been used to for years and definitely not the same without my parents and friends.

I also observe this Ramadan is different for every Muslim throughout the world. Being home with family for the entire days and weeks being away from the community rituals, not having the same gatherings at iftari, expanded Quran time - a different direction for Ramadhan, and maybe for the better.

Ramadhan in Mumbai is all about the Mohammed Ali Road Food stalls - Paya, Nalli nihari, Saat handi, keema pav, Shuwarma, Seekh paratha and the list goes on.

While I arrange the ifatri tray with Khajoor, Fruits, Biscuits, cookies and cakes and not forgetting either samosas, spring rolls, cutlets, nachos or pasta with Glasses of water and then chai....I sometimes feel Oh! I wish we could make one more item to fill in the gap on this tray.

Few days ago, all of us sat for ifatri, we were reciting the dua. All I could see is the iftari tray filled with food items kept in front of me. I was thinking of my Ramadhan in Mumbai with my family and friends. This yearning gave me the time to reflect on:

How will the crazy streets of Mumbai be shut at this time in life?

How would it feel?

How will people earning their yearly profits through these food stalls be surviving?

How are the daily wage workers like maids, labourers like haath gaadi walas be able to arrange iftari?

How about those who stay away from home in the city of Mumbai be managing during this lockdown?

How about the ones in slums and how about the homeless?

So, Ramadhan this year is not new for me, but for everyone in a different sense.

My different Ramadhan gives me a satisfying meal at sehri where siblings sit around you, parents are concerned of what you would like to eat, husband is lovingly aware of consuming healthy food.

But their different Ramadhan have taken away the whole and sole food from their plates.

This reasoning made me think of all the weddings, parties, iftar gatherings, celebrations where food was wasted and thrown into the bin.

Even now, during Ramadan due to the fear of scarcity around people, they

tend to buy more than their normal requirements for self-consumption. The quantity of food needed to be consumed by people in ifatri is made in large amounts where food is wasted. The demand for fresh food increases as majority of people are willing to spend an extra for the better quality of food.

"Allah is with those who restrains themselves." -- Quran 16: 128

Fasting teaches restraint; the ability to control worldly desires and spend time in prayer and meditation. Fasting is a noble act that is much beloved by Allah (SWT).

Fasting teaches sacrifice, patience, and repentance.

"So remember me; I will remember you and be grateful to me and do not deny me" Surah Al-Baqarah (2:152)

Fasting teaches gratefulness, appreciation and the efforts of creating the food we have on our plates.

We need to be different now more than ever and learn in life for our futures after this different Ramadhan. Being conscious and alert of not laying the table with more food than people can eat. This is mere wasting of the Rizaq Allah(SWT) has given us. We need to develop better food habits and respect Allah's Nature so we can be successful as humans. This problem of food wastage is deeply embedded in our socio-cultural norms and requires behavioural change - one step at a time, one meal at a time. Checking the food items in our fridges and freezers ensures its used before it becomes waste as freezing food has been a trend in western countries.

May Allah give us the wisdom to listen, understand and follow what he wants from us. Ameen

May we be able to give away the excess which is not a necessity. Ameen

May Allah grant everyone their daily bread. Ameen

May we become sensitive this Ramadhan of using resources wisely.
Ameen

Day 14

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A member's reflection...

'Ramadan is like no other this year. As the chemotherapy ravages my body, I know Ramadan is going to be different. My lockdown started the day my chemotherapy began, well before covid-19 had cast its far reaching net.

Every year, Ramadan was my chance to solely reconnect with Allah (SWT) and focus purely on all the prayers, fasts and reading the Qu'ran. I would especially enjoy reading the Qu'ranic and Namaaz translations. This enriched my connection to Allah (SWT) and increased my knowledge of Islam. It was the month where the small daily things that clutter your mind, faded into the background as you focused on the bigger things, Allah (SWT), and all that we should be grateful for. The entire month felt meditative. I usually came out feeling refreshed, rejuvenated and spiritually content.

Ramadan this year is different. The chemotherapy has left me incredibly weak and overwhelmingly tired. I struggle to pray and often I am unable to. I cannot fast. I cannot concentrate long enough to read the Qu'ran. I am not waking for Sehri and I am not joining in Iftar.

Ramadan this year is different. Have I lost my connection to Allah (SWT)? I would simply say my connection is galvanised. I am grateful for my simple being. I am grateful to Him for giving me the strength to eat the little that I can. I am grateful to him for giving me the energy to do simple tasks, such as, getting out of bed or taking a shower. I am grateful to Him for having some days where I do not vomit or feel nauseous. I am grateful to Him for allowing me to stay connected with my family and friends.

I pray for all those that are living with cancer, that are fighting cancer, that have survived cancer and for those that we have lost to cancer. Ameen'

Day 15

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by Fazle Abbas Kinkhabwala

Ruminating and reflecting in Ramadan and lessons in Lockdown.

Ramadan was upon us before I knew it. Must be the progressing years, time seems to fly from Moharram to Ramadan. I had only just recovered

from the loss of a dear friend FHK or so I thought.

This Ramadan has been different for a number of reasons mainly the lack of opportunity to participate in communal iftari.

So what do I miss most?

FHK or affectionately known as Faju Kaka, who sat in close proximity at the dinner table at iftari in the Jamaat Khana would encourage me to finish off the Oogi (-a rice drink lovingly prepared by Maa) after all had consumed their quota.

I also miss the communal prayers and eager to see how the virtual Lailatul Qadr lands and if I manage to stay awake till dawn.

Most challenging

Learning to read the Quran. When reading silently all seems well, it is not till one begins to recite out loud that you recognise the mistakes.

Moizbhai and Nasreen Rajabali have recommended I deconstruct all I know and go back to basics. I feel challenged but with a childlike spirit want to improve my recitation. The Quran Khani every evening at 18.45 offers air time to recite and improve. I can only get better. As dad would say you can't get any worse- he was an award winner at Arabic, at school in Surat.

What do I enjoy?

Marvels of nature – The fox family has 4 cubs and the youngest Firozi is most daring and comes to the French windows to say hello at around 6 am. I enjoy feeding the robins, finches, blackbirds, magpies and crows. The tree at the back has a pair of woodpeckers and oftentimes you can hear the owls also nesting in a nearby tree.

Covid 19.

Whenever we face a disaster it is good to reflect apparently.

I imagined my nana Kaderbhai Haiderali being born in 1900. On his 14th Birthday WW1 started ending on his 18th Birthday resulting in 22 million fatalities. Later that year Spanish flu epidemic hits running till his 20th birthday. 50 Million people died. On his 29th Birthday great depression began. Unemployment at 25%, world GDP drops 27%, he is blessed till 33.

On turning 39 WW2 started and by the time he was 50, 75 million had perished. At 62 the Cuban Missile Crisis. At 75 the Vietnam war ends. As a child born in 62 in India I didn't think my nani and nana understood how hard St Philomenas Convent School was in Nashik. I would travel daily from Deolali to Nashik a very long way as a child. Yet they had survived everything.

Lets put the pandemic into perspective.

What are the lessons in lockdown?

Routine.

This week marks the 7th week in lockdown. Routine is good for you and encouraged by psychologists. Some have action lists. Anika has adopted the Rebecca Robeson approach and my list of things to do never ending.

Try something new

With less time on trains, metro, tube and cars and more time on our hands good to try something. First time I have attempted to grow broad beans and the green peppers from seed I have 31 seedlings.

Shilpa Shetty yoga videos and Joe Wickes are good to follow.

Communication

This will never be the same. I remember the chairman at a recent committee meeting saying zoom will never catch on. Understand new technology and avoid the pitfalls of the member from the Welsh Assembly.

Speak up

On stress and burnout, it is emphasised that you should understand and recognise the signs of stress at the earliest opportunity and speak up or share it.

Build in social time

With boundaries blurring from not going out of the house and deadlines seem more demanding.

We moved our office from dining table to Pool table and this made a

tremendous difference.

We know that we will not be in lockdown forever they called it the blitz in yesteryear and that little by little, social distancing rules will be relaxed. When that time comes we will all need to be ready to work together to rebuild our community and to consider how we respond to and learn from recent events In the meantime, the most important thing that one can do is to look after oneself and those around one. The simple value of kindness has too often been under- appreciated right now, and must be at the heart of everything one does.

Finally as young Mr Grace would say from the series “Are you being served” (must watch an episode if you can - good clean family humour)” You are all doing very well”. Stay well stay safe and remember me in your duas this Ramadan. Ramadan Mubarak to each and every one of you. May you be blessed with lift out of lockdown for Eid but maintain social distancing.

Day 16

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By Hannah Babrakar,

Age 16 years (Southend-on-Sea)

As-salamu alaykum my dear Elders, Uncles and Aunties, Brothers and Sisters.

Ramadan is the special month that allows us to do many things. But the one thing that we can never do is know everything- there are ways we can improve our knowledge, understanding and become wiser. So, a thing we can do is learn more about our Messengers of Allah! Here is a short little story, with our Prophet Muhammad- set in Ramadan:

Iftar

Anas Malik was one of the companions who had served the Prophet Muhammed (S.A.W.) for many years. He therefore knew the Prophet's habits very well.

When Hadhrat Muhammed (S.A.W.) observed a fast, he usually broke it with milk and dates, and in the small hours of the night, he would take

simple food for his sahar.

One day, Malik knew that the Prophet (S.A.W.) was fasting; so he arranged for his iftar. He kept the milk and dates ready. At the time of iftar the Prophet (S.A.W.) did not appear, for the breaking of the fast. Malik thought that the

Prophet (S.A.W.) might have accepted an invitation and broken his fast elsewhere. So Malik ate the food himself and retired.

When Prophet Muhammed (S.A.W.) entered the house with another companion, Malik inquired from the companion whether the Prophet (S.A.W.) had already eaten. The Prophet (S.A.W.) had been dealing with some urgent work and was delayed, and he had not eaten. Malik felt so ashamed.

There was nothing left he could offer to the Prophet (S.A.W.), if he asked for food. Still he waited expectantly, ready to explain the situation to the Prophet (S.A.W.). Hadhrat Muhammed (S.A.W.) immediately sensed that Malik was hesitant, so he remained silent and retired to bed hungry.

Malik used to say: "The Messenger of God never mentioned this incident during his lifetime to anyone."

From this one incident we can learn many things about The Prophet:

- He put others before himself
- He did not like to make others uncomfortable
- He had good initiative & would find alternatives and other ways to keep peace and a clear air
- He never bad-mouthed
- He had powerful strength and determination to continue fasting til next Iftar, yet still working very hard
- And wonderful patience to not get disappointed or angry

We may not be faced with this exact situation, but we can take note of the traits he possessed and decisions he made, so we can try and apply it into the situations we face in the future.

Thank you for your time! Have a happy Ramzaan! Hope you all are keeping well and safe- and indoors! 😊

Day 17

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By Kutub Najmuddin

(Part translated from Gujarati)

As many of you know, I am in India, in lockdown.

I have decided to start doing charity work for the poor who are in lot trouble and out of work. Those who used their daily income to put food on the table for that same evening, now have lost that daily income.

I have been escorted by the police to buy and give 'ration kits' which may include lentils, flour, eggs, oil, sugar, teabags – daily supplies. I make the kits myself with others in the Muslim jamaat here who are my friends (and my team). The kits vary depending on the need. There is also a charity supplying food – fresh rotli – to around 65 homes daily which I contribute to.

I would like to thank all my brothers and sisters in, and outside, the community who are supporting this cause. May Allah bless all of you who have contributed to this cause. We live in the UK – and being here, I realise, we live in paradise. We have a home, and we have food.

Coronavirus is causing difficulties for everyone back home too – I encourage you all to think positively, help your community – both in the jamaat and in your local communities and cities – as best as you are able.

I do wish I was in Leicester, but I feel my Sara has sent me to India. Sara's family and my daughter Shabnam and her family are looking after me here immensely well – through their support, I have the strength to perform charity work. I feel good to be able to do this work especially since it is the month of Ramadan. I hope some of this work gives peace to Sara's soul, and helps those who are in trouble at the same time.

I miss everyone.

Please pray one Fatiha for my dearest wife Sara and for all those who have

gone to Allah.

Day 18

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By Aadil Kapasi, 11 years.

As Salam Aalaikum to you all and I hope you are keeping safe and sound in this blessed month of Ramadan.

Ramadan has been a good time for me, I have learnt lots of old and new surahs, I have prayed Namaaz 5 times a day, which is really tough because mum forces me to pray Fajr Sunnat even though I am half falling asleep. This is my first year of trying to attempt to do all 30 fasts and I have not missed any, it has been a good time so far! It has taught me to have more self-control over junk food and be grateful for all the things we have.

It may not be spiritual to all but for me Ramadan has meant mummy has let me play

Fortnite a lot more to pass time 😊;-) which is amazing as I normally only get to play in the holidays which is upsetting. In some ways COVID 19 has been a blessing for me. I have been given the opportunity to do all 30 fasts at home, but for others it has been one of the hardest time of their lives , people have lost loved ones, children can't interact with each other and some children have had to keep going to school because their parents are working for our great NHS. In reality I am one of the luckiest kids in the world right now.

When my class found out that school was closing, we were all in tears because we knew we wouldn't be coming back to school and because we knew we would not be seeing each other again. I am in year 6 which is the last year of primary school. I have known these children for 7 years which is longer than I have known my brother Aidan. School had organised lots of fun trips for all of us after the SATS which we are now all going to miss. Right about now we were supposed to be going to Devon for 3 days to do lots of fun outdoors activities and have fun with our friends. This was supposed to be the most memorable and exciting trip of primary school. Instead I have been at home for 6 weeks and I am fasting. The first few weeks were horrible because mum made me do lots of work. When we weren't working though, it was fun because I could play Fortnite and talk to

my friends on my new phone.

From September I am supposed to be starting a new school; it will be very difficult as I don't know any of the people there. I am both excited and nervous at the same time because there will be a lot of new faces and the school will be a lot bigger so it will be a lot harder to get around.

Before then, I want families to rejoice and feel like they are safe once again.

Salaams to all at home

Day 19

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By Nasima Arif Hamdani

Salaams to you all and I hope this Ramadan is finding you good health, prosperity but mainly feeling even closer to Allah SWT.

On January 2, 2019 I became a widow at the age of 51. No one can ever prepare you for the immense pain the rest of life will feel like. The day I lost my Husband Arif Mohamed Hamdani who was also 51 when he returned home to Allah SWT was the worst day I have ever gone through. I thought that was it how could Allah SWT just take my husband and leave my children Nadia & Mohamed without a father at ages 23&21. Life is a full circle my late husband was the same age as my daughter Nadia when his father passed away in 1991. In all honestly the time my husband spent in hospital that is when I Really became more in touch with Allah SWT. The Duas from everyone in different parts of the world kept us going slowly; The power of dua is all that we have.

As my journey into iddat began I dug deep into the holy Quran and to Allah and prayed he continue to watch over my children, my Arif but also my beloved mother Kubra Kadibhai. One year ago at this time we were in the month of Ramadan and I was ending my 4 months & 10 days of iddat. I was getting ready to travel to England and be with my Momma. The only lady and that of great strength determination and perseverance would tell me "Nasima tu himut rak" everyday I was there is what she would say in times of great sadness and she was right. To play the roll of mother and father to my children; Allah SWT blessed me with two amazing children who have

the strength to try and carry on. My children have been through a lot in a short time but everything and with Allah's guidance we slowly have to carry on.

Upon my arrival to my mother's house in Leicester I found my sense of peace, the house I grew up in and to spend 5 weeks with my mother I didn't want that time to end and to leave her again. All that knew my mother knew her health was against her but that did not stop my mother. Cooking away slowly in the kitchen she never let her health stop her. She found great love from preparing different Indian delights and pass along to the Huseini Manzil. To be there and spend that time with her helping to prepare all the food will remain apart of me for eternity.

One year later....

We have entered into the Holy Month of Ramadan and the world is at a standstill COVID-19... iftars look different, we can not be with our extended families we can not even hug each other...

April 24, 2020 the second day into Ramadan on such a beautiful jummah Friday my beloved Mother Kubra Kadibhai a pillar in the Leicester community took her last breath and I could not be there.... inna Lillaahi Wa Inna Ilayhi Rajjoun

I have cried many tears and experienced a great deal of loss but Allah SWT is where I turn too.

Imam Ali ibn Husayn (as) in his treatise on rights (Risalat ul-Huqooq) recounts the sacrifice of a mother in raising her children and reminds us that whatever we do for her but we cannot repay her debts upon us or show a true gratitude to her:

So when someone asks what it is like to go through great loss in the holiest month of the Islamic religion I say Alhamdulillah. This is how it is meant to be.

-Varily with hardship comes ease. (94:5-6)

This passage has helped to try and heal from the loss of my husband&mother;

'That Heart of yours was made to heal. If you allow it. And it will be stronger

than before. Better then before. Naseeb Does That. Do not let your tests make you lose hope in the mercy of Allah. Let it soften you and bring you back to him. Source Al-Firdus)

Inshallah I will return to England to say goodbye and do zirratt to my momma.

Alhamdulillah.

Day 20

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By Zeba Lokat

Salaams to each and everyone in our wonderful community.

We are all aware how different , not only how this holy month of Ramadhan, but life in general has become for all of us. I myself am working throughout this period and adapting to change at work and the dynamics of adaptation of home life too.

This virus has caused many reasons to be frightened and worried especially with regards to our nearest and dearest but I also very much believe that it has in some ironic way brought us all so closer together.

The importance of such simple things that we once pushed aside or did not have the time for in our busy hectic schedules of everyday life, I feel have been highlighted and bought back to the forefront.

Allah has reminded us what is important and has guided us back to the ‘ basics of living ‘ . A detoxification of the mind and soul which has for many been lost, in the pursuit of material wealth.

The value of family, focusing on our inner selves, having the time to take a breath. Social distancing has some

how in reverse made us bond more closely together with our families and are wider communities.

I appreciate and embrace the time I have at home with my husband (sometimes) and my children. We are creating wonderful memories of playing, cooking, learning, growing together. We have been adapting to

online learning for madaressa and the children's Ramadhan workshops which have helped increase their knowledge during this holy month.

I have had the time to teach my children the true meaning and practice of Ramadhan. Reading the Quran, focusing on our daily prayers and thus we are growing day by day spiritually stronger. Due to home schooling and the flexibility of a very different day Anisa has kept many roza and we are immensely proud of her.

I am missing the social aspects of Ramadhan with our extended families, the joy of praying and breaking fast together. However, I am truly grateful and humbled by the sheer generosity, kindness and effort for all those who are volunteering in helping the elderly in our community. Those who are providing the interaction through social networking to ensure that our community remains, strong, informed, safe, vigilant but always united throughout this time.

On a final note, I hope and pray that once we come through this period in our time, we do not forget all the positive things that this pandemic has taught us.

Day 21

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By Tahseen Ali

Ramadhan a month to mark the revelation of the Qur'an. A holy book to guide and enlighten our being.

I remember every year during this month especially, along with what iftaris we will have because it was almost certain that we would consume a whole year's worth of fried foods within this 30 days, which is I guess a norm really in all homes I suppose. Or isn't it?

However, more importantly my fondest memories of my parents always reminding me to learn and understand the Qur'an. "Come let's start reading" dad would say to me and my brother at sahoor with our droopy eyes and the faces of 'can we sleep now' coupled with the thought in our heads of - dad do I have to!. A time that will always be so real in my mind.

As a child you don't really understand the true power of a guide nor the time

for reflection until you have your own young ones. I know cliché right!

I beg to wonder how many other things also come to enlightenment when we are parents or of age?

Now that I'm a parent I understand the intensity of the mammoth task it is teaching your mini ones all that came so easily to us growing up whilst amidst my own.

This is the first ramadhan of many inshallah where my sons have the niyat to fast the month. It is now my task to help support and encourage with the same enthusiasm and joy albeit a little surreal. I know it's a different time or lifecycle but My duas and desire for my children(nieces and nephews) is to grow up with the same love and togetherness I felt. I wish for them to feel the support, the guidance, the care I felt. I wish for them to understand that family isn't just those at home but all those around them especially during these testing times.

I wish for them to learn amidst their own surrounded by growth. Inshallah.

Ramadhan is truly a special month in so many ways for me. I miss those that have departed, growing up I saw and learnt a lot especially from all our elderly.

I remember my grandparents and their teachings, their gentleness and appreciation. All those days when our dinner table was as big as the street because it was never just 'Us' alhamdulillah.

I remember how as a small community we gathered at faju kaka and kakis home all arriving before maghrib ready with a huge smile and eagerness for kakis uggi (I think that's what it is anyway) and the selection of iftars that came from all present. I remember the days when on auspicious nights like washeq raat and specially Lailatul qadr we sat with our siblings on the masalah ready with our fully loaded goodie bags in hand comparing and negotiating whilst happily ready to pray the night away.

I remember the laughter and the togetherness of family on a journey of learning and of being one.

Family first - I'm sure you have all heard this. I use family generically. Be them in the home or the larger community as family. Flaws or no flaws who are we to judge.

So I ask you to think

Isn't this ramadhan? No judgement, just as one

Isn't it about forgiveness? Not just for you but for all.

Isn't it about Introspection? How can I improve on myself and reflect on the way I have been this last year.

Isn't it about sharing? Sharing our sustenance, our knowledge.

Isn't it about learning from our book of guidance - the Qur'an? The beginning to end of all that is and that shall be.

Isn't it about looking after one another? Caring for those who don't have anything that we are so readily privileged to have.

Isn't it about gratitude? The true belief that what you have is a blessing and what you can't have is also a blessing.

In hind sight this should be the everyday norm. Pandemic or no pandemic we will continue as always and continue we shall.

Don't you think that the month of ramadhan is so awaited and then it comes and goes so speedily that your left feeling was that enough time?

I've always been one who plans for the tomorrow, but this year is different. As I sit here today writing this reflection on my 40th birthday I contemplate that we truly don't know what tomorrow holds let alone the next minute or second in life. So many plans, so many wishes, but one reality which is now is the current moment that we are in.

A very apt quote by the extraordinary Khalil Gibran:

"And ever has it been known that love not knows not its own depth until the hour of separation."

On that note remember to turn your intentions into actions this month and make it count.

You never know you may make it a good habit thereafter inshallah.

Learning is a daily part of life be it small or big, just keep going. The quran is our guide our lifeline to what shall be a even better hereafter inshallah.

So I'd like for you to think of something.... what really are the finer things in life?

Ramadhan kareem to you all and may all your duas and efforts be noted by the almighty. May we continue to seek guidance through our learning and become the humans who our creator wills. Ameen

Plz recite a surah fateha for all those who have left us to seek a more humble abode.

Day 22

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Get ready, get set for Lailat-ul-Qadr

Covid -19 has brought with it changes in our lives this Ramadan and for some of us it has resulted in a struggle to reach that deeper connection that Ramadan usually brings about. This year Lailat-ul-Qadr will be a very different experience for many of us as community members pray at home and the doors for our communal gatherings remain closed.

In light of this we thought we would share some tips for how to thrive and not just survive this Lailat-ul-Qadr.

The answer, as always is in the quran. With regards to thriving the Quran reminds us that..

'Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest'

(Qur'an 13: 28)

In Islam, thriving has always meant to be mindful of Allah. To glorify Him under all circumstances, to turn to prayer in routine and for comfort, to be in the present no matter what we are doing but especially if we are having a conversation with Allah. Allah puts us through difficulty so we may humble ourselves and when we humble ourselves through prayer and dhikr (remembrance), Allah has promised our hearts will be at rest.

The last nights of Ramadan are seen to be the most powerful, starting with Lailat-ul-Qadr on the 23rd Night.

Here are some ways that you can prepare for the auspicious night...

1. Don't feel overwhelmed, just try your best to connect to Allah and open your heart, so you can feel His Mercy and Blessings.
2. Start with a positive, sincere intention. Don't let your performance until now affect Lailat-ul-Qadr and the last nights of Ramadan. The moment of forgiveness could be today or anytime in the last few nights. Do not give up. If you sincerely wish it to be better then be positive and get ready to make it your best.
2. Take a moment to read the meaning of Surah al-Qadr, to understand what actually happens this night. You will feel its power and greatness so much more.
3. Prepare a short dua list. Remember this is an awesome night – The Night of Qadr, of Destiny. Take a moment to consciously pick each and everything you crucially wish for in this dunya, in your deen, family and in your after life. Don't forget to include those who maybe suffering as well.
4. Take a nap during the day, if possible. Eat well and stay hydrated.
5. Inspire your children to stay up for some of the night. Prepare them, make them excited, plan some activities for them to do, and don't forget the traditional 'Bhaag'.
6. Make an effort. The way we dress and prepare has an effect on our psychology. Wear something special, spray a nice scent and feel good in yourself.
7. If you feel sleepy – vary your acts of worship or break it up. Alternate between prayers and heartfelt duas and reading the Quran and it's translations.
8. When you ask, remember you are asking the Most Generous King. If you hope for the best, he will grant it – so don't hold back! Trust Him, pour your heart in front of him and let no doubt, no barrier no evil thoughts keep you away from Ar-Rahman, Ar-Raheem.

Day 22

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By Imran Kapasi

Laylatul Qadr has always encompassed some core things for me: copious amounts of bhaag where you became an entrepreneur for the evening-exchanging these valuable goods of nuts and chocolates with your peers; an opportunity to socialise until the early hours whilst jogging in between to your masallo; and for some reason putting your cheek on the floor for a shocking amount of time where you begin to question your own fitness levels. As much as these are pleasant memories, what it means to me now, is priceless.

I anticipate this night as soon as the month of Ramadhan begins. Most iftaris during this month involve sitting together on the floor, sipping a well deserved cup of mint chai whilst experiencing the weird yet awesome sensation of something 'thicku' and 'garam' at the same time. It is the part of the day, where we become fuelled with energy and end up talking together until one of us reminds us we better pray ishaa before the time runs out. On Lailatul Qadr, the time to leisurely enjoy this sweetness of iftari is swapped with a greater need to make every moment past that first kajoor, count. Imagine the trolley rush in one minute but instead of grabbing material items, you have an opportunity to gain that which is far more valuable; Instead of running through aisles, you hurry to your place of supplication. For me, that is locking myself in my room with my masallo, my water and whatever duas and recitations I want to pray. For me, this night is finding a space wherever I can find myself fully present which allows me to simply speak to Allah.

What one does whilst observing Laylatul Qadr will vary from person to person. There are so many different ways to benefit from this night, but making sure you are fully present is the first step in attaining that benefit. Take a moment to break your mind free of people, place, time and emotion that causes your heart to be heavy or your mind to be distracted. Do not chase after words that are unfamiliar to you but seek and speak words that are sincerely your own. Wherever your faith is, remember Allah always knows the whispers of your heart. "We believe that God sees us from above. But he actually sees us from within" - Shams Tabrizi.

God is Most Generous and Most Merciful, and we are ALL entitled to benefit from that generosity and mercy. Laylatul Qadr gives us the opportunity to seek and benefit from this on an infinite scale - don't let anyone, including yourself, take that away from you. Give yourself permission and an opportunity to let this night fill you with hope, love and compassion in whatever way you can.

My own prayers on this night are split by taking a moment or two to stand outside in the dead of night. Try it - you will feel a peace unlike any other. It is said that on Laylatul Qadr, angels from heaven descend around you, ready to write down your supplications and deliver Allah's mercy, blessings and peace. I pray on this night, we are all able to soften our hearts, seek and speak of what lies in its depths to Allah - the All Hearing and All Knowing and whose door is always open for us. I pray our prayers and duas be the spring in our hearts and our faith be the light which always comforts and guides us.

I thank Rumi, for his reminder of the possibilities and opportunities Allah has bestowed on us: "You are not a drop in the ocean. You are the entire ocean in a drop."

And I end this reflection, with one of my favourite Ramadhan duas. It may pull on your heart strings but I think it's totally worth it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OoWeSZqwy-Y>

Day 23

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By Faizan Bharmal, Age 9

Assalam Alaykum, everyone. I hope you are all keeping well and are making the most out of being home and are enjoying the new way of learning. Here is my reflection.

As it is Ramadhan, we are all trying our best to fast. However, due to the Corona Virus we cannot leave the house or see our family and friends. This has had a big effect on people.

My positives are that it is the first year that I have managed to complete most fasts. This can be difficult when you are at school because you might have P.E, you may not be able to concentrate during exams, the smell of the delicious food from the lunchroom is hard to ignore and you're likely to play and tire yourself out during break and lunchtime. In that way, Ramadhan has come at the best time for us. I have learnt my namaaz and the best thing is that I have been able to pray with my family. At the same time, I have had more time to do the things I enjoy most: be creative, help to prepare nice meals (and bake lots of delicious cakes) and be with the

people that I love the most.

The odds and outs are that I have not been able to see my family, cousins and friends. I miss many of the sports I normally do and I'm not learning as I do at school. I'm sure that many of you are also experiencing similar things. It is like a different life: different, because we have never had to live like this before. But maybe that is okay, because you might learn something you wouldn't have learnt in your normal life. You might learn madrassa in a new way or do school work differently.

The difficulties are that you might struggle with work or might not get help easily. You should keep going and ask your parents and teachers for help.

We can look at this in different ways. You might take this as a blessing, as Allah SWT might want us to experience a different way of life. This might not be a blessing because if one person does something bad everyone should not be punished... So what do you think? A blessing or not? Well, that's up to you to decide...

I hope you have all enjoyed my reflection and learnt something. Thank you for reading. A big thank you to the NHS and key workers. Have a good day.

Day 24

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An NHS keyworker member's reflection

As the last 10 days of this month approaches, I have been thinking a lot about this unusual Ramadan... there has been no communal iftari, no coming together with the extended family and no jamat prayers... in truth I ask myself how I have fared this Ramadan - I have definitely done less Ibadat. I haven't managed to do a Quran khatam, I have been fasting and praying namaz but I have not fulfilled all the washek.

As an NHS key worker, this has been a stressful few months. There is so much uncertainty at work, there is the constant threat of "catching it" and of course ultimately of dying from covid. At times it feels melodramatic as I am young and healthy. But I have lost patients who have also been young, and healthy... my friend has lost her father and as I type another friend, aged 49, is spending his fourth week in intensive care and I don't know if he is going to make it.

This is the first year that my child has fasted. I'm trying to make it a positive experience, to encourage waking for sehri and fajr, and to start making a spiritual connection with their Lord.

It's been a strange experience this Ramadan. How can I encourage Quran recitation when we have to sit 2 metres apart? How can I begin to teach the basics of meditation and spiritual connection when my own mind is in turmoil and I'm worried that I might accidentally pass on something I'm carrying on my clothes, my hands, my breath, to my child or my elderly parents?

So this year I've decided to give myself a break. If we can all come through healthy, and safe and relatively happy both from lockdown and from this holy month then I won't ask Him for any more. If my child has done the basics, and is developing a love for their Lord then I will prostrate and give thanks, and learn to be content with my efforts. For if He is all-forgiving, who am I to be without hope, or to not forgive myself?

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By Nurudin Kapadia

As Salam Alaykum

Ramzan is the ninth month in our Muslim calendar. It is a spiritual month. Muslims, world over, are expected to fast, pray, recite Quran, take part in charity and reflect on ones worldly and spiritual life. Empathy to needy people in all countries is fostered through the act of fasting.

Traditionally Ramzan is a time our community in Leicester looks forward to the daily programme at Husseini Manzil. Communal Qurankhani, Magrib, Iftari, and Isha namaz become an enjoyable nightly routine.

With, Mula sahib Mohmedbhai Sarangpurwalla, we have translations and discussions on various topics from the Quran. Often these are interesting, thought provoking and controversial. We try and set the worlds problems right with debates on current affairs and politics. How easily we find solutions to all!

One of course cannot forget the Iftari. Sharing food at the end of a long day

of fasting creates a special Ramzan atmosphere and community spirit.

All this was to be abandoned this year. However, one does not need to despair. Our committee volunteers have not let the spirit Ramzan die. With the technology available to us they have created a virtual Ramzan programme.

They have organised daily Qurankhani for men and ladies, Children's sabak, Reflection on Ramzan by various speakers on Facebook and expert Covid 19 advice from professionals from our own society. They were also able to arrange Kubraben's virtual Sipara. After each programme there were few minutes to chit chat and catch up with each other. The children's programme encouraged our younger members to get interested in our way of life. All this involves lots of thinking, planning and hard work.

This exercise has encouraged many to acquire computer & digital skills with in the community who were always rather reluctant to make a start. An additional bonus of the virtual Ramzan has been that it has enabled many who may not be able to physically attend Huseini Manzil, in normal times, to participate from the comfort of their homes. Perhaps when normality returns this can become a parallel feature to our programmes to allow more to participate.

I would like to congratulate our volunteers and community workers who have managed to create a Ramzan experience for us all in these challenging times.

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Day 5 of the Final Countdown

Give whatever you can in Zakat and Sadaqah (big or small) but remember to...

'Give for God's Grace, Not for People's Praise'

'Aim to live in this world without allowing the world to live inside of you, because when a boat sits on the water, its sails perfectly, but when water enters inside the boat, it sinks' - Imam Ali

Zakat and Sadaqah are ways to empty the ship of our heart from the weight

of greed, attachment, and stinginess. The one who spends his wealth not for honor or praise, but rather to purify himself before Allah, is the one whose ship of faith will stay afloat. As Allah says :

'He who spends his wealth in order to purify himself, not as payment for any favors received by anyone, but only seeking to gain the pleasure of his Lord Most High, and indeed he will eventually be satisfied' (92:18-21)

(Inspired by A. Helwa)

Day 26

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By Mohammed Nabee

I distinctly remember the time, many moons ago, when I first arrived in the UK coinciding with the start of Ramadan. Having been born and raised in a Muslim country, I found it so strange to realise that the notion of Ramadan was alien to some in this country.

Over the years, I've lost count on number of times I have had to explain to friends and colleagues the concept and purpose of Ramadan - or "Ramaman", "Ramdan" and "Radaman" being some unique variations I have heard in the past.

Although, this annual reoccurrence has subconsciously allowed me to reflect and refine my answer on what Ramadan is all about, why we do it and what it means to me.

As we are all aware, fasting in Islam does not just consist of refraining from eating and drinking, but from every kind of selfish desire and wrong-doing. For me, it is not merely about the body, but essentially that of the spirit as well. It is a month of purification, truthfulness, generosity, compassion and reflection to mould our actions and behaviours into ideal human beings – a day to day framework we must all strive for.

As the Holy Month transitions its way across the summer, the hours of fasting have not been so kind. We must endure long hours without food or water, making our bodies weak and fragile at times. In those most vulnerable moments come our greatest test of mental willpower, patience and self-virtue. It is a simple reminder of how insignificant we are and how

dependant we are on God's creations for survival. Yet, we all possess this unexplainable strength and energy to keep going. Whether it's the Love for our Faith, the Fear of our Lord and/or the Gratitude of our Existence – we persevere.

However, let us not forget those who are neglected, less fortunate or suffering who endure such hardships every day. Let us be thankful for all that we have been blessed with including family, friends and all the special bonds we share so we are not alone. Let us take this month as an opportunity to seek forgiveness, expand our knowledge, reflect and discover ourselves. Who knows we may never get a better opportunity to do so....

Day 27

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By Abbas S

Day X of lockdown.

The first Ramadan with mum in India due to the Lockdown and home alone. A mix of longing and relief. More relief, as regardless of your opinion of Indian politics, it's very difficult to catch an infectious disease if you're beaten by the police for leaving your house.

A lot of free time to cook and reflect. The gift of reflexion has been so precious during this lockdown journey. Thankful for family, for friends, for food and shelter. Thankful to have the ability to read and write. Thankful for the freedoms we have been afforded, even when it may not seem like it.

I think about fasting. Without mum to prepare the food and not wanting to live off takeaway's for the entire thirty days, I'm now able to feed myself! Learning how to perform a 'wagar'! Who knew daal doubles in size when you just leave it in water!

We go without food for 18 hours. We give charity. We pray for ourselves and those less fortunate. Are animals included in this "less fortunate"?

As Muslims we understand the laws of 'halal meat' don't only include the time of death but include the welfare of the animal prior to this.

When thinking about what to cook to break my fast, I ask myself would our

prophet (pbuh) - who said "A good deed done to an animal is as meritorious as a good deed done to a human while an act of cruelty done to an animal is as bad as an act of cruelty done to a human" - be okay with modern farming practices?

Would he be okay with keeping hens in a cage less than the size of an A4 piece of paper? Or the debeaking of these birds using infrared lasers, as keeping them in these confinements causes them to fight their neighbors? (debeaking happens to 'free-range' chickens too).

What about the horrific treatment of dairy cows? Again, would our prophet (pbuh) – who said "May god curse anyone who maims animals." – approve of the early separation of baby calves from their mothers just to satisfy human dietary desires for more and more milk and dairy products?

Has it become too easy to hide behind a 'certified halal sign' when confronted with these questions? Don't we exercise more rigour when it comes to other dietary aspects, like whether a product contains even trace ingredients of alcohol or gelatine?

Why not just eat organic, non-factory farmed meat and chicken? We face a catch-22 in 2020. Given our global population, we simply don't have the space and resources to raise high-welfare meat to satisfy current demand (currently 95% of chickens in the UK are factory farmed). So, to continue eating meat, either we destroy the environment by raising organic meat (and even then that might not satisfy demand) or we continue to torture animals (i.e. torture God's creation) to decrease the land and water usage.

What does this mean for me? It means I can't make excuses for "a cheeky nandos" for myself anymore, even if I am craving it after a whole day without food. It means I can't be pro palestine whilst being pro oppression elsewhere. It means I can't refrain from bacon whilst enjoying factory farmed chicken or beef. If I am unable to stop causing suffering to other living beings, then what does that mean for my own right to be treated well?

"Do unto others as you wish to be done to you" isn't a golden rule. It's a golden responsibility. Because it starts with me first.

The Navajo People (Native American Tribe) defined 'Beauty' (Hozho) as inner life and harmony. To make the most of all that surrounds us. A positive, beautiful and harmonious environment that must be constantly created by thought and deed.

May you always walk in beauty

P.S.

A bit about me - I'm a number 1 hypocrite who's been trying to remove all animal products from my diet for over a year! Miraculously it seems to have stuck during lockdown!

I've been a meat advocate for 95% of my life and every Ramadan before this, I've opened my fasts not with dates but with chicken samosas. So first and foremost a reminder to myself.

The beauty of life is although we may not get to change our past, we are able to shape our future, no matter our age or currently held blind spots.

If anybody would like to learn more about the devastating impacts of meat/dairy/eggs on humanity/the environment/animals or some tips/advice on transitioning to removing these items from your diet, please feel free to get in touch! Or alternatively if you have advice for me that would also be appreciated 😊

Day 28

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By Zeeshan Jiwani

“Maybe it’s a blessing, maybe it’s a curse, only Allah knows”. This is an interesting notion to ponder on and something that I have been thinking about especially during Ramadan. To some extent, we are in control of our own fate. We cannot just abandon our intellect and leave it all up to manifest destiny. We have to remember that we have a choice to take many different paths. The ultimate goal here is to attain the ultimate spiritual fulfillment with Allah. However, one should be much more vigilant and pickup the clues that Allah is putting out there.

There is a story that illustrates this notion:

A fellow was stuck on his rooftop in a flood. He was praying to God for help. Soon a man in a rowboat came by and the fellow shouted to the man on the roof, "Jump in, I can save you."

The stranded fellow shouted back, "No, it's OK, I'm praying to God and he

is going to save me."

So, the rowboat went on.

Then a motorboat came by. "The fellow in the motorboat shouted, "Jump in, I can save you."

To this the stranded man said, "No thanks, I'm praying to God and he is going to save me. I have faith."

So, the motorboat went on.

Then a helicopter came by and the pilot shouted down, "Grab this rope and I will lift you to safety."

To this the stranded man again replied, "No thanks, I'm praying to God and he is going to save me. I have faith."

So, the helicopter reluctantly flew away.

Soon the water rose above the rooftop and the man drowned. He went to Heaven. He finally got his chance to discuss this whole situation with God, at which point he exclaimed, "I had faith in you but you didn't save me, you let me drown. I don't understand why!"

To this God replied, "I sent you a rowboat and a motorboat and a helicopter, what more did you expect?"

As always, Ramadan has come at a perfect time. Being from the Ismaili Muslim faith, it is especially interesting trying to learn the Bohri traditions and way of life. It has been a challenge trying to understand a different faith system where the practices, language, and traditions are completely different. It has in turn made me question my own practices and ideas. I am heartened by the fact that my Iman has become much stronger thanks to Afroze, extended family, and the DBWS community in the UK.

There have been many challenges with Ramadan especially during this lockdown period. Setting up goals and checkpoints throughout the month has been helpful, I would like continue to unlearn bad habits and only lose my rag with the kids only twice a week (instead of four times) from now on ha-ha.

The Ramadan setting is quite different but on a fundamental level, the

message is the same. The world around you will one day soon Inshallah return to a near-normal state (whatever form that is yet to be determined). Take some time to tune in and reflect. Be generous with your time. Be conscious and pay attention to the world around you. Spend that quality time with people that you care about. Tell them that you love them. There is a reason why Allah has created this situation. Remember the ruhani members who have passed away. Pass on those stories to the children (if you have them) or young people in the community. We all need to have more sabar and examine our lives from the inside and out. Only then we can become better. I wish everyone peace, prosperity, muskil asaan (lowering the degree of your difficulties and problems), good health, and spiritual happiness Inshallah. Stay safe and be vigilant. Thank you.

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By Abdulla Dungarwalla

Assalam Alaikum everyone,

Initially, I didn't know what to write about, so I asked Tara and she said to write what you are comfortable with. I asked my children, Akila and Sakina and they sent me previous reflections from our members, which I read and found enlightening. I asked my son Aliasgar and he suggested writing about a few incidents in my life and relating it to some of our idealistic values in life.

So here it goes:

I had a wholesale business that I retired from a couple of years ago after running it for nearly 40 years. I started with no finance and worked 6.5 days a week, starting from 7 am and finishing at nearly 9-10 pm, with hardly any small breaks or holidays.

The business grew selling confectionery, crisps and soft drinks and then I decided to look at other profitable avenues and started selling alcohol. I remember having a very loyal worker who was a devout Muslim and the day I dealt with the first case of alcohol he handed me his resignation, saying he would not partake in any income from this business. I didn't want him to leave and tried convincing him that it's only business and we are not consuming it, but he would not accept that and left. As my business started

to flourish, I was getting very busy. Tara wasn't happy about me taking this on and I found that although business was profitable, I couldn't work out why my borrowing was increasing and there was no real peace of mind.

Eventually, I realised this was not the right path and my faith in Allah had increased to such an extent that I decided to be rid of all alcohol products, knowing this extra business was haram for us. I started praying genuinely for the first time in my life.

After a complete change in my approach to life, I found that challenges came to test my faith regularly.

To give an example, I used to buy stock from cash & carries at promotional prices and sell them on. On one occasion, I purchased a huge quantity of cigarettes and tobacco but instead of charging me the full case price, the cashier charged me the single unit price by mistake. I convinced myself this was the cashier's error and took the goods back to my warehouse, thinking I had made £1000s more without any effort.

But my conscience was bothering me and so I decided to return the stock. The staff at the cash & carry were amazed and ever since this incident, the respect that I get when visiting them, even now, is incredible - this happened nearly 25 years ago.

Other incidents through which I have been tested involve several occasions where customers would mistakenly pay more for stock. I returned the extra sum but found it tempting to keep; particularly from customers who were rude or arrogant. I never kept the excess but overtime I did notice that Allah SWT rewarded me from other sources I never expected.

I now realise the need to reflect on HOW we conduct ourselves. What we do as businessmen, or within any other profession, should be done by the laws set by our Creator. Can we look back at our lives and say we have done this? Is there anything we would have changed? That is now the past but we can still make adjustments to our present day.

After this change in my spirituality, I noticed my working days reduced to 5/6 days - normal office/business hours, and I was earning the same profit as in the past but with a halal rizq and peace of mind, which to me is invaluable. Not just from a business perspective but also allowing me to spend more time with my family.

In conclusion, we are all on a journey. Our path may be narrow and with obstacles but stay righteous, just and follow the ways set by Allah; He will ensure you your sustenance.

Many such incidents have happened since, and the one thing I have learnt above all else is that Allah SWT, the most merciful, will only test us to our capability and it's up to us what path we choose.

Coming to the present-day with regards to being in lockdown, I have increased communication with my children via video link, which wasn't the case before. About 10 months ago I joined the gym and lost 12 kilos; bearing in mind I was carrying the same weight for over 20 years. However, since lockdown I have put on 3 kilos even after doing rozas 😊😊😊😊😊

Stay safe everyone.

Day 30

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By Bushra Hamdani

Salaams my dear community members,

May the blessings of this holy month find you all well...what a Ramadan it has turned out to be. How amazing that through the will of Allah we have been granted endless opportunities this Ramadan to read and reflect on our cherished Quran, we have been gifted an abundance of time for supplications and we have had the ability to connect to our loved ones and communities in such a beautiful way. Alhamdulillah for his endless blessings and mercy.

For me, the story is a little different. As most reflect on how much time they have during the Ramadan to make the most of this blessed month, I feel like time is just slipping away. On March 21st I was told that I would be redeployed to the Covid-19 team where I would have to work 12 hour shifts including weekends. I alongside my husband, Malek, who works in a hospital, would now be considered essential workers. Essential workers who would now be forced to arrange alternate accommodations for our two children. We decided to drop them at my in-laws, the kids were excited but had questions so we appeased them by telling them "it's only for two weeks, maybe three weeks max", "think of it as a holiday, think of all the fun

you're going to have". It's now two months later, two months of travelling up and down highways on our days off so that we can have a "visit" with our kids, two months of heartbreaking questions such as my seven year old Laila asking "do we have Covid in our house? Is that why we can't come home?", or my five year old Nabil asking "will you and daddy get the granola virus because you are working?", "will we ever get to come home?". These big questions coming from two very little humans is what has made me ponder for thought. What is Allah's reasoning behind this? What is Allah's plan?

The truth is, Allah's plan is out there for everyone to see. It's there on a global level, a community level and on an individual level. Globally we have closed holes within the ozone, we've improved air quality levels and driven down pollution, we've cleaned up our water ways and I don't know about where you all are but my garden is thriving with wild life. On a community level we've found clever ways to stay in touch. This Ramadan I've seen family and community that I probably wouldn't have seen pre-Covid. From the Friday khutbas, to the daily talks on DBWS, we've all had ample opportunity to participate in the community in a meaningful way all the while increasing our imaan-bonus.

As for me... what are my learnings from this blessed month? You know prior to Covid changing our lives, my family was running on auto pilot. It went a little like this: wake up, school, work, home, dinner, driving to kids activities, bed and repeat. I would get so stressed out if this routine didn't go exactly the way it's been written out. Now none of that matters. As I sit in this house, decorated for Ramadan, ordering my kids their Eid gifts, none of those things matter. All kids crave is their home with their parents who shower them with love and affection. I don't feel sadness that they're not with me, I feel optimism and excitement that when they do get to come home I know things will never be the same-and that to me is Allah's plan, that is his infinite blessings on me and my family and that is the reboot button I think we all needed pressed. Subhan Allah.

Ramadan Mubarak to you all. May Allah always guide us on the path of righteous...Ameen