

The

Good News

And give good news to those who do good (to others) – Holy Quran 22:37

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Eid ul Fitr

Uplifting *Body, Soul, and Spirit* in the Midst of a Pandemic

May 2020 Eid Message

by Ebrahim Mohamed, Cape Town, South Africa

I begin in the name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful:

The month of Ramadan is that in which the Quran was revealed, a guidance to men and clear proofs of the guidance and the Criterion -2:185

All praise and thanks are due to Almighty Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, the Nourisher and Sustainer of His entire creation. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth; and He is Most Merciful, Most Kind, and Most Forgiving.

A joyous *Eid Mubarak* to you all; I sincerely hope and pray this day and the future will bring recurring joy with which the Almighty rewards His obedient servants.

According to Lane's Lexicon the word *Eid* comes from the root 'aada' which means 'the time of return of joy or of sadness'. Now this is very significant because the joy usually associated with Eid also has a tinge of sadness

attached to it as Muslims bid farewell to the holy month. Indeed, Muslims all agree that Ramadan is like no other month. The synergy of collective fasting and prayers present in it created an atmosphere of sweet inspirations that will indeed be sorely missed.

But this year, to curb the spread of a contagious disease circulating our communities, Muslims were isolated from fellow Muslims who, traditionally, on occasions like this, meet for congregational prayers in the morning, meet with families, visit neighbours and friends to extend warm well-wishes and greetings. These practices have been the hallmark of the Eid celebrations for centuries, sorely missed this year. So let the experiences of this year be a lesson for all of us, never to take the importance of family unions for granted and abuse it for selfish ends. Let this forced isolation be a lesson for all those who usually make it their business to sow division and hatred in the world, that Almighty Allah can take away their

freedom, too, as He has done today, with a snap of a finger, whenever He wishes to do so.

But on a positive note, besides the obstacles we are faced with, the month of Ramadan has brought that inexplicable joy once more. In fact the lockdown has intensified our awareness of the *moral healing* and transformative powers of Ramadan. This year the importance of making our homes the hub for nurturing the seeds of morality by not allowing our *nafs ul amaarah* – the animal spirit within – to dominate our behaviours has been heightened as never before. As households have been confined to their homes, they have become more appreciative of practicing the values of respect, love and harmony within their four walls; behaviours and values we should make the driving factor in our societies to bring about peace in our world in the end.

Fasting in Ramadan has indeed helped us in our struggle to control the animal within - the humbling of the pompous ego that knows no peace. However, if the Ramadan, together with the pandemic, has failed to bring about such change in our hearts and behaviours, then we are indeed depriving ourselves of the *Eid ul Fitr* - the recurring happiness and peace of mind that come with such positive transformation.

A hallmark of Islamic festivities is the repeated *dhikrs* (praises of Almighty God) and prayers in remembrance of our Lord, Almighty Allah that are at the heart and soul of such celebrations. This gives Islamic festivities the sacred character that is free of the wild parties of drunkenness we see in other societies that usually end up in misery and untimely deaths.

Albeit so, our days of festivities are not

necessarily without its moments of light, clean fun and entertainment as well. In fact the Holy Prophet's wife Ayesha reported that when her father Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique, on a day of Eid, silenced two young girls who were beating on tambourines near where the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was sleeping, the Holy Prophet, when he heard Abu Bakr rebuking them, uncovered his face and said, 'Leave them alone, O Abu Bakr!, for these are the days of Eid' – (Bukhari).

So the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was not narrow minded and austere not to allow some light-hearted entertainment on days of Eid, as long as it was not indecent. No, whoever thinks being religious means being always serious and sombre has got it all wrong; being religious means doing good and forbidding evil, being kind, compassionate and humane to all God's creatures. In a nutshell it means *humanity* before *theology*.

Ramadan indeed has uplifted our spirits on several levels. Our prayers have been sweeter. This year our homes have become places of worship and not graves. Thanks to electronic media, we have been able to conduct our Friday *Jummah* service, hold classes and Quran Studies, via Skype as effectively as we would have had, had we gathered together somewhere. In fact it was a bit better because folk who live far away were able to join us from the comforts of their homes as they are doing right now.

Because of the health benefits of fasting, Ramadan could not have come at a better time. Fasting, it has been proven, scientifically, strengthens the immune system by regenerating overworked and depleted white blood

cells which are the soldiers of the body that fights off harmful substances. Fasting is meant for our well-being physically and morally. This made me ponder on the following verse in the Holy Quran that says: *'Allah desires ease for you, and He desires not hardship for you'* – (2:185). This tells us that our Lord is indeed Merciful, He is not out to punish us. He loves us too much; thus we find Ramadan is the month in which the Quran has been revealed as a Guide and as a Criterion for us. Criterion signifies the *highest standard* we set for ourselves. Indeed the highest standard for attaining a healthy body and soul can be found in the Holy Quran. Thus Almighty Allah says:

‘And We reveal of the Quran that which is *a healing* and a mercy to the believers.’ - (17:82).

The Holy Quran contains the best dietary and moral guidelines for a healthy body and soul; for just as the body can be harmed by viruses and needs a strong immune system to combat it, in a similar way the soul needs a healthy immune system to combat the evil that targets our lower desires that cause large scale mayhem in society when out of control. Thus the Holy Quran says ‘fasting’ is prescribed to help guard against such moral infections, called ‘evil’.

The Holy Quran contains ample moral nutrients to enable the soul to grow towards its goal of perfection i.e. his **Rabb** (His Lord, the Nourisher and Sustainer to perfection).

The Holy Quran says: *'And that to thy Lord is the goal.'* – (53:42) **and** *'And the soul and its perfection! So He reveals to it its way of evil and its way of good; He is indeed successful who causes it to grow.'* – (91: 7-9)

So, in reality, in a metaphorical sense, we are like farmers on this earth whose task is to grow our souls to perfection. Along the path we are given revealed guidance what to avoid and what to use that are beneficial to do this. That is our job. No one can do it for us. And there is no excuse not to be able to do it because clear guidance is given in the Holy Quran and in the example of our mentor and guide The Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

All we have to do is to find the moral vitamins and nutrients in the Holy Quran and apply it to our souls for it to unfold, grow and flourish into a beautiful garden. This is the only way to bring the Holy Quran to life in our lives. Indeed, melodic recitals of the Holy Quran uplift the spirits and emotions for a while; but what we need is a lasting pragmatic transformation that comes with implementation of its teachings. Thus, the first thing we have to do as farmers of the *moral* seeds of the soul, is to ensure it is firmly and securely rooted in the Unity of Almighty Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, the Source of all life. This is the first thing the Holy Prophet (pbuh) did when he started his mission to the people of Arabia. For thirteen years he focussed on teaching them the existence of Almighty Allah by drawing evidence from the cosmos and their surroundings and explaining to them the Divine Attributes so that they had a clear understanding of who Allah is. Armed with such sure knowledge of the Divine Being and not motivated by mere blind faith, many of the idolatrous Arabs were able to abandon their idols freely and submit completely to the Lord of all the worlds.

Several years later, in Madina, as the Muslim community grew, the need for an effective ethical and moral code to serve as the

basis and foundation stone for harmonious co-existence, became essential. Revelation upon revelation in this regard now descended upon the Holy Prophet (pbuh). These revelations contain sublime teachings that are today universally recognized as indispensable essentials of any civilized society. A moral criterion was thus set by the Holy Quran, often neglected by Muslims who pay mere lip-service to it. Because of its efficacy as a basis for a sound moral code of conduct and law, in principle, at least, it will ultimately be adopted by all nations. This is the spiritual awakening that is beckoning on the horizons.

Therefore, in the context of the rather deplorable moral condition the world finds itself in these days, it is most probably worth our while to reflect on some of these divine guidelines to remind us of its efficacy and practicality. So here are some examples we come across in the Holy Quran to reflect upon:

Always be in search of true knowledge with the assistance of Almighty God – (96:1)

Do NOT take news brought by an *unrighteous* person at face value. We should always examine it carefully and check for credibility and accuracy before forming any opinions based on it. This would obviously apply to the ‘fake news’ and ‘propaganda’ so common on social media and the news these days – (49:6).

Verses 9 and 10 of the same **chapter 49**, address conflict situations that might arise among the believers. So we are told if two parties quarrel to make peace between them with justice and to stand up

against the offending party until they submit to Allah’s command. However, we are reminded, when doing so, to act *equitably*.

Verses 11 and 12 of the same chapter lay stress on ethical codes of conduct essential for brotherly and social harmony. This is indeed very relevant in these lockdown situations where we all need the support and cooperation of each other. Thus we are told not to *mock*, find *fault* with, be *suspicious* of, or *backbite* each other. Although sceptics find these petty, it is regarded as big sins, hateful to Almighty Allah because of the disruption it creates in societies.

Anti-social habits disapproved by Almighty God for obvious reasons, are: *Arrogance* - (7:13) and *Loudness*, described as ‘*the braying of asses that is most hateful*’ – (31: 19).

We are warned NOT to wrongfully accuse believing men and women, for such are guilty of *slander* and manifest sin - (33:58).

Do NOT mix up truth with falsehood, nor to hide the truth – (2:42)

Give truthful evidence even if it is against our own self – (4:135).

Chapter 3 verse 159 teaches noble qualities of leadership by drawing our attention to the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). From this we learn it is better to be gentle and NOT rude and *hard-hearted* to those under you if you are seeking their loyalty. We learn to overlook petty faults

and not to be too proud to pardon and seek the opinions of others no matter how insignificant the source. Now these are simple leadership guidelines but I need to come across something more pragmatic practiced anywhere in the world today.

Give in charity when well-off and even when not well-off – (3:134). The Holy Prophet (pbuh) taught that even the '*Removal from the way of that which is harmful is charity.*' – (Bukhari)

Control ones's tempers. We know too well the negative consequences of *uncontrolled anger.* – (3:134)

With regard to relationships between the sexes very important social guidelines are provided:

Men and women should restrain their sexual passions – (24:30).

Women should cover their bodies and dress modestly when appearing in public – (24:31)

Men and women should not go near fornication – (17:32; 25:68).

Men and women should not commit adultery – (24: 2, 3).

Men should not engage in homosexuality – (29:29; 7:81; 27:55).

Men should NOT treat women as sex slaves and prostitutes. – (4:25; 5:5).

Men should treat women kindly – (4:19).

Men are the maintainers of women and

thus put in charge of the household by Almighty Allah. By being the maintainer does not limit his role merely to provider, but goes further to that of being a vanguard of women rights in the world as well – (4:34; 2:228).

Women on the other hand are told to be obedient to Allah first and secondly to be virtuous to and respectful of the husband's right as head of the household – (4:34).

Husbands and wives are created to be *loving* and *compassionate* to each other, and to be sources of peace of mind and contentment for each other – (30:21).

Husbands and wives should respect each other's privacy and confidentiality – (2:187).

Individuals, communities, nations etc. are warned:

NOT to participate in anything indecent, evil and rebellious in the land – (16:90).

Not to commit murder - (4:92).

NOT to be **aggressive**, even during defensive wars – (2:190).

NOT to fight an enemy that offers you peace – (8:61, 62).

NOT to let **hatred** of a people prevent you from treating them with justice – (5:8).

NOT to use compulsion in religion - (2:256); (50:45).

NOT to prevent anyone from praying in the mosques of Allah. This is a grave sin

that will attract divine disgrace not only in this life but also severe chastisement in the next - (2:114).

Other noble guidelines for Muslims:

Allow freedom of belief – (18:29).

Speak gently if you want to get through to the hearts and conscience of someone – (20:44).

Speak words of wisdom when inviting people to the way of Allah and speak to them with respect in a decent and well-mannered way – (16:125).

Protect all places of worship such as cloisters, churches, synagogues and mosques from being destroyed – (22:40)

On occasions like today and going forward, men and women should wear the clothing that Allah has provided for them to cover their *shame* and *for beauty*; but to remember that the clothing that *protects* one against *evil* - *libasun taqwa* - is the *best* – (7:26). This is the moral clothing obtained from the Holy Quran as illustrated in the verses above.

These verses, however, represent only the tip of the ice-berg of sublime Quranic ethical *codes of conduct*. There are many more but we do not have the time to go through it all today. I have chosen these as I find it talks directly to the social values that are missing from our societies including those Muslims lost in a world of misguidance and extremism.

So, as a valuable *take-away* from this day of *Eid ul Fitr* and the Holy Month of Ramadan, let us all agree to put on our *libasun taqwa* (moral clothing) everyday so as to beautify and embellish our characters therewith and make us leading models on the runway of *taqwa* (guardians against all forms of indecency, immorality and evil) and thus become the veritable ‘*qurrata a’yooinin*’ - ‘joy of the eyes’ of the beholders – (25:74).

In this regard we will find the Holy Quran a trusted guide, criterion, and light that will help us navigate our way through the darkness of this world. It will indeed uplift *body*, *soul*, and *spirit* especially during these trying times of the pandemic.

May Almighty Allah protect us all!

EID MUBARAK!



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