

9 Advices as relates the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic

by the Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (حرسها الله)

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In the Name of Allah, al-Rahmān al-Rahīm.

In these days the world is witnessing the spread of the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) and is utilizing its collective abilities and potentialities to limit its spread and to mitigate the outcome as relates its health, economic, and societal impact. This matter requires that the scholars and students of knowledge assume their roles in clarifying the legislated methodology of dealing with this new epidemic or other contagious pestilence and illnesses, and in explaining the religious rulings of precautionary measures and protective protocols taken by competent authorities such as: *suspending work and schooling; curfews and travel bans; the enforcement of social distancing, nose and mouth covering, and quarantine and home isolation for those who have it; as well as other precautionary and protective measures to safeguard human life.*

It is known that Allah legislated the religion of Islam to be the methodology of human living so that they may operate in accordance to its laws and teachings. So there is no matter in life and no newly occurring problem except that it has a ruling in Islam. Allah (ﷻ) said:

{ مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ }

“We have neglected nothing in the Book.” [al An’aam: 38]

From such measures and protocols that are legislated in our monotheistic religion that are befitting to utilize at the onset and spread of pestilence and contagious diseases—such as the novel coronavirus—are as follows:

1.) The ban from entering or exiting localities afflicted with pestilence & illnesses.

On the authority of ‘Abd al-Rahmaan bin ‘Awf (رضي الله عنه) who said: I heard Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) say:

” إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ بِهِ بِأَرْضٍ فَلَا تَقْدَمُوا عَلَيْهِ وَإِذَا وَقَعَ بِأَرْضٍ وَأَنْتُمْ بِهَا فَلَا تَخْرُجُوا فِرَارًا مِنْهُ. ”

“If you hear of it—meaning the plague—breaking out in a land, then do not go there. If it takes place in a land that you are in, then do not leave it so as to flee away from it.”

The Messenger of Allah also (ﷺ) said:

” إِنَّ هَذَا الْوَجَعَ رِجْزٌ أَوْ عَذَابٌ أَوْ بَقِيَّةُ عَذَابٍ عَذَّبَ بِهِ أَنْاسٌ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ (و فِي رَوَايَةٍ: ثُمَّ بَقِيَ بَعْدُ بِالْأَرْضِ فَيَذْهَبُ الْمَرَّةَ وَيَأْتِي الْأُخْرَى) فَمَنْ سَمِعَ بِهِ بِأَرْضٍ فَلَا يَقْدَمَنَّ عَلَيْهِ وَمَنْ وَقَعَ بِأَرْضٍ وَهُوَ بِهَا فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّ الْفِرَارُ مِنْهُ ”

“This painful disease was a scourge or a punishment or a remnant of a punishment with which some nations before you were punished. (In one wording: then a remnant of it remained upon earth. It comes and goes from time to time.) Whoever hears of it breaking out in a land, is not to go there. If it takes place in a land that someone is already in, then he is not to be driven to leave by a desire to flee away from it.”

It was also reported from ‘Umar bin al Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه) that he once left for *al-Shām* (i.e., Syria/the Levant) and when he approached *al-Shām* he was met by the commanders of the armies: Abu ‘Ubaydah bin al Jarrāḥ (رضي الله عنه) and his counterparts. So they informed him that the pestilence had befallen the land of *al-Shām*. Ibn ‘Abbas (رضي الله عنه) said: So ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) summoned the *Ṣaḥābah* and sought their counsel. He told them that the pestilence had befallen *al-Shām*, and so they differed about what to do. Some of them said:

” قَدْ خَرَجْتَ لِأَمْرٍ وَلَا نَرَى أَنْ تَرْجِعَ عَنْهُ .“

“You left for a particular matter and we don’t think that you should turn back from it.”

Others said:

” مَعَكَ بَقِيَّةُ النَّاسِ وَأَصْحَابُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَلَا نَرَى أَنْ تُقَدِّمَهُمْ عَلَى هَذَا الْوَبَاءِ .“

You have with you people of posterity and Companions of Allah's Messenger, and we don't think that you should continue on with them towards this pestilence.

So 'Umar (ﷺ) called out to the people:

”إِنِّي مُصْبِحٌ عَلَى ظَهْرٍ فَأَصْبِحُوا عَلَيْهِ .“

“In the morning I ride and likewise should you.”

Abu 'Ubaydah (ﷺ) said:

”أَفِرَارًا مِنْ قَدَرِ اللَّهِ ؟“

“Is it to flee from Allah's Qadar?”

So 'Umar (ﷺ) said:

”لَوْ غَيْرُكَ قَالَهَا يَا أَبَا عُبَيْدَةَ - وَكَانَ عُمَرُ يَكْرَهُ خِلَافَهُ - نَعَمْ نَفِرُ مِنْ قَدَرِ اللَّهِ إِلَى قَدَرِ اللَّهِ أَرَأَيْتَ لَوْ كَانَتْ لَكَ إِبِلٌ فَهَبَطْتَ وَادِيًا لَهُ عِدْوَتَانِ إِحْدَاهُمَا خَصْبَةٌ وَالْأُخْرَى جَدْبَةٌ أَلَيْسَ إِنْ رَعَيْتَ الْخَصْبَةَ رَعَيْتَهَا بِقَدَرِ اللَّهِ وَإِنْ رَعَيْتَ الْجَدْبَةَ رَعَيْتَهَا بِقَدَرِ اللَّهِ .“

“If anyone else had said that, O Abu 'Ubaydah —Umar disliked that Abu 'Ubaydah should differ with him! Yes, we flee from Allah's Qadar to something that is Allah's Qadar. What do you think you would do if you had camels that you took to graze in a valley with two pastures: one being fertile and the other one being barren? If you herded them into the fertile pasture wouldn't you have done so by Allah's Qadar? And if you herded them into the barren plain, wouldn't you have done so by Allah's Qadar?”

So 'Abd al-Raḥmān bin 'Awf (رضي الله عنه), who had been away, attending to some need of his, arrived and said: Indeed I have some knowledge about this. I heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) say:

”إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ بِهِ بِأَرْضٍ فَلَا تَقْدَمُوا عَلَيْهِ وَإِذَا وَقَعَ بِأَرْضٍ وَأَنْتُمْ بِهَا فَلَا تَخْرُجُوا فِرَارًا مِنْهُ.“

“If you hear of it—meaning the plague—being in a land, then do not go there. If it takes place in a land that you are in, then do not leave it so as to flee from it.”

So 'Umar praised Allah and later departed.

2.) Forbiddance from intermingling with those afflicted (with a contagious sickness).

Islam affords care to bodily health and preservation of life. It encourages prevention from sicknesses before their onset. So it commands its followers to distance themselves from those stricken with contagious illnesses and to maintain distance from locations containing pestilence and plagues. There has come in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim on the authority of al-Sharīd bin 'Amr al-Thaqafi (رضي الله عنه) who said: There was a leprous man accompanying the delegation of the Thaqīf tribe. So the Prophet (ﷺ) communicated by a message to him:

”ارْجِعْ فَقَدْ بَايَعْنَاكَ.“

“Return, for we have accepted your oath of allegiance.”

Likewise, he (ﷺ) once said:

“لَا يُورَدُ الْمُمَرِّضُ عَلَى الْمُصِحِّ .”

“A man with sick camels should not let them graze or drink alongside healthy ones.”

Meaning: let not the herder of sick camels introduce them to healthy camels.

Also, he (ﷺ) once said:

” فِرَّ مِنَ الْمَجْدُومِ كَمَا تَفِرُّ مِنَ الْأَسَدِ .”

“Flee from the leper as you would flee from the lion.”

3.) Encouragement of personal hygiene.

Indeed Islam strives to safeguard person hygiene. (The Prophet) (ﷺ) explained that Fitrah consists of five acts. He said:

” الْفِطْرَةُ خَمْسٌ : الْخِتَانُ، وَالِاسْتِحْدَادُ، وَنَتْفُ الْإِبْطِ، وَتَقْلِيمُ الْأَظْفَارِ، وَقَصُّ الشَّارِبِ .”

“The Fitrah consist of five: circumcision, shaving of pubic hair, the plucking of the armpit, the trimming of the mustache and the trimming of the fingernails.”

He (ﷺ) also forbade from placing one's hand in a vessel before washing it after waking from sleep. He said:

" إِذَا اسْتَيْقَظَ أَحَدُكُمْ مِنْ نَوْمِهِ ، فَلَا يَغْمِسْ يَدَهُ فِي الْإِنَاءِ حَتَّى يَغْسِلَهَا ثَلَاثًا ، فَإِنَّهُ لَا يَدْرِي أَيْنَ بَاتَتْ يَدُهُ . "

"When one of you awakens from sleeping, let him not submerge his hand in a vessel until he washes it three times. For certainly he does not know where his hand had been."

He also forbade from breathing into a vessel or from handling the penis with the right hand. He said:

" لَا يُمَسِّكَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ ذَكَرَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ وَهُوَ يَبُولُ ، وَلَا يَتَمَسَّحُ مِنَ الْخَلَاءِ بِيَمِينِهِ ، وَلَا يَتَنَفَّسُ فِي الْإِنَاءِ . "

"Let none of you touch their penis with their right hand while urinating. Nor is he to wipe after defecation with his right hand, nor is he to breathe into a eating vessel. (i.e., a plate, bowl, cup or water flask)."

Whenever the Prophet (ﷺ) would want to sleep while being in a state of *janaba* (i.e., major impurity requiring *ghusl*), he would make *wudu'* and if he wanted to eat, he would wash his hands.

Also, it has been reported from Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) that:

" أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ كَانَ إِذَا عَطَسَ غَطَّى وَجْهَهُ بِيَدِهِ أَوْ بِثَوْبِهِ وَغَضَّ بِهَا صَوْتَهُ . "

“When the Prophet (ﷺ) would sneeze, he would cover his face with his hand or with his garment, and muffle the sound with it.”

Likewise, He commanded to cover containers. He said:

” غَطُّوا الْإِنَاءَ ، وَأَوْكُوا السِّقَاءَ ، فَإِنَّ فِي السَّنَةِ لَيْلَةً يَنْزِلُ فِيهَا وَبَاءٌ ، لَا يَمُرُّ بِإِنَاءٍ لَيْسَ عَلَيْهِ غِطَاءٌ ، أَوْ سِقَاءٍ لَيْسَ عَلَيْهِ وَكَاءٌ ، إِلَّا نَزَلَ فِيهِ مِنْ ذَلِكَ الْوَبَاءُ . ”

“Cover the vessels and tie the waterskin, for there is a night in a year when pestilence descends, and it does not pass an uncovered vessel or an untied waterskin but some of that pestilence descending into it..”

In another wording:

” أَوْكُوا قِرْبَكُمُ وَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ ، وَخَمِّرُوا آيَتَكُمْ وَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ ، وَلَوْ أَنْ تَعْرِضُوا عَلَيْهَا شَيْئًا . ”

“Tie the mouth of your waterskin and mention Allah's Name; cover your containers and utensils and mention Allah's Name. Cover them even by placing something across it.”

4.) Encouragement of environmental cleanliness.

For certainly Islam strives to safeguard environmental safety and cleanliness. It invites to safeguarding the elements and water sources and it forbids from all that is ruinous to the environment or that is disruptive to public utilities. It forbids urinating in still water and from defecating on public pathways or areas of shade. He (ﷺ) said:

” لَا يَبُولَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ فِي الْمَاءِ الرَّائِدِ ثُمَّ يَغْتَسِلُ مِنْهُ .“

“None of you should pass urine into still water and then perform Ghusl from it.”

5.) *The command to medicinally treat illnesses.*

The Prophet (ﷺ) commanded to use remedies to treat sicknesses after their onset. He said:

” تَدَاوُوا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ ، فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَمْ يُنْزِلْ دَاءً إِلَّا أَنْزَلَ مَعَهُ شِفَاءً إِلَّا الْمَوْتَ وَالْهَرَمَ .“

“Treat yourselves with remedies, oh servants of Allah! For indeed Allah has sent down no disease except that He has sent down with it its cure, except for that of death and old age.”

Likewise, He (ﷺ) said:

” مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ دَاءً، إِلَّا أَنْزَلَ لَهُ دَوَاءً، عَلِمَهُ مَنْ عَلِمَهُ، وَجَهِلَهُ مَنْ جَهِلَهُ. “

“Allah has sent down no disease except that He has also sent down a remedy for it. Those who know it, know it and those who are ignorant of it do not.”

6.) *Avoiding rumors and frightening people.*

Allah (ﷺ) said:

{ وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوْ الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا بِهِ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا }

“And when there comes to them a matter pertaining to public security or fear, they spread it (among themselves). But if only they had instead (first) referred it back to the Messenger and to those charged with authority from amongst themselves, then those who could derive the correct conclusions about it would have known (i.e., the proper course of action). And were it not for Allah’s favor upon you and His mercy, you would have followed Satan, except for a very few of you.”[al-Nisaa’: 83].

What is mandatory is that one takes information from competent authorities, just as it is mandatory upon him to ask the people of knowledge about that which is problematic or unclear to him of religious rulings whether that is pertinent to acts of worship or interpersonal dealings. Allah (ﷺ) said:

{ فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ . }

“ Ask ahl al-dhikr (i.e., those with knowledge) if you do not know.”[al-Nahl: 43].

7.) *Abstaining from taking advantage of these difficult circumstances to monopolize goods or gouge prices unjustifiably.*

This is due to what monopolizing causes of harm to the general public. (The Prophet) (ﷺ) said:

“ لَا يَحْتَكَرُ إِلَّا خَاطِيٌّ . ”

“None monopolizes (hoards/withholds essential goods until the prices rise) except for one who is sinful”

8.) *Reliance on Allah and belief in Divine preordainment and predestination.*

Allah (ﷻ) said:

{ قُلْ لَّنْ يُصِيبَنَا إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلَانَا ۚ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ . }

“Say: ‘Nothing shall ever happen to us except what Allah has ordained for us. He is our Maula (Lord, Helper and Protector).’ And in Allah let the believers put their trust.” [al-Tawbah: 51].

And He (ﷻ) said:

“ وَإِنْ يَمَسُّكَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّا هُوَ . ”

“And if Allah should touch you with adversity, there is no remover of it except Him.” [Yunūs: 107]

This is accompanied by taking the legislated means while believing that that does not contradict having reliance on Allah. The Muslim is not to go to extremes in taking the means, believing that they will repel sickness from him by themselves. Instead he is to believe that the entire of the matter is in Allah’s Hand and that what Allah preordains cannot be prevented. (Allah) (ﷻ) said:

“وَإِنْ يَمَسُّكَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّا هُوَ .”

“And if Allah should touch you with adversity, there is no remover of it except Him.” [Yunūs: 107]

(The Prophet) (ﷺ) said:

“وَأَعْلَمْ أَنَّ مَا أَخْطَأَكَ لَمْ يَكُنْ لِيُصِيبَكَ وَأَنَّ مَا أَصَابَكَ لَمْ يَكُنْ لِيُخْطِئَكَ .”

“Know that whatever has missed you could not have befallen you and that what has befallen you could never have missed you.”

It is befitting for the Muslim when stricken by illness to seek reward from Allah as relates what befalls him of sickness. (The Prophet) (ﷺ) said:

“الطَّاعُونَ شَهَادَةٌ لِكُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ .”

“The plague is martyrdom for every Muslim. ”

Sickness is also a purification of his sins. (The Prophet) (ﷺ) said:

“مَا مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ تُصِيبُ الْمُسْلِمَ إِلَّا كَفَّرَ اللَّهُ بِهَا عَنْهُ، حَتَّى الشَّوْكَةِ يُشَاكُهَا .”

"No calamity befalls a Muslim but that Allah expiates some of his sins because of it, even though it were the prick he receives from a thorn."

One is to be positive and trust that relief is near and that this epidemic will depart soon, by Allah's leave. One is not to despair of Allah's Mercy and they are to be certain that Allah has wise reasons for these sicknesses and calamities.

9.) Repenting to Allah.

For certainly, calamity does not descend except due to sin and it is not removed except through repentance. Allah (ﷻ) said:

{ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ }

"Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves." [al-Ra'd: 11]

Also, He (ﷻ) said:

{ وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ }

"And repent to Allah collectively, oh believers, so that you may be successful." [al-Nur: 31]

It is befitting for the Muslim to increase in supplicating, in taking recourse to Allah, and in reciting the forms of dhikr and routine invocations that are legislated. He (ﷺ) said:

{ وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ }

“Your Lord has said: Call upon me and I shall respond.” [Ghafir: 60].

Likewise, He (ﷺ) said:

{ وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ۖ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ }

“When My servants ask you about Me, then indeed I am near. I respond to the supplications of the supplicants when they supplicate to Me.” [al Baqarah: 186].

What is mandatory upon us is to adhere to having a taqwā as relates Allah in private and in public and in every circumstance. Having this fearful and pious consciousness is the legacy that Allah gave to the first of humankind until their last. He (ﷺ) said:

{ وَلَقَدْ وَصَّيْنَا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ أَنْ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ }

“And We have instructed those who were given the Scripture before you and yourselves to fear Allah.” [al-Nisa’: 131].

Having taqwa for Allah entails the easing of matters and relief from calamities. Allah (ﷻ) said:

{ وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ }

“And whosoever fears Allah and keeps his duty to Him, He will make a way for him to get out (from every difficulty). And will provide for him from where he does not expect. And whoever relies upon Allah - then He is sufficient for him.” [al-Talaq:2-3].

And He said:

{ وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ يُسْرًا }

“And whoever fears Allāh, He will make his affair easy for him.” [al-Talaq: 4].

I advise everyone to cooperate with the competent authorities in confronting this epidemic. (Allah) (ﷻ) said:

{ وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ }

“Help you one another in Al-Birr and At-Taqwa (virtue, righteousness and piety).” [al Ma'idah: 2].

Likewise, He (ﷻ) said:

{ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ }

“O you who have believed, obey Allāh and obey the Messenger and those in authority over you.”[al-Nisa': 59].

Abide by the directives and advices put forth by the health authorities and official agencies until this epidemic is under control, by

Allah's permission. Each individual is responsible for protecting themselves and whoever they are responsible for.

”كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ، وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، فَالْأَمِيرُ رَاعٍ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ، وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ عَلَى أَهْلِهِ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ، وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ عَلَى بَيْتِ زَوْجِهَا وَهِيَ مَسْئُولَةٌ،“

“All of you are shepherds and each of you is responsible for his flock. A man is the shepherd of the people of his house and he is responsible. A woman is the shepherd of the house of her husband and she is responsible..”

It is forbidden for a person to subject themselves or others to destruction and harm. (The Prophet) (ﷺ) said:

”لَا ضَرَرَ وَلَا ضِرَارَ.“

“There is to be no causing of harm nor reciprocation of harm.”

Furthermore, I thank the people of authority in this land for what they put forth and exert of effort for the sake of protecting lives and mitigating the ill-effects of this pandemic. I likewise thank the Saudi Fiqh Council for presenting these sorts of topics.

Arabic Source: Majallah al Jami'yyah al Fiqhiyyah al-Sa'ūdiyyah; 'adad khāṣṣ bi buḥūth jā'iḥah fayrūs kurunā (The Periodical of the Saudi Fiqh Council; Special Edition for Research Related to The Coronavirus Pandemic [Covid-19])
Introduction to the Special Edition: V. 1, pp. 7-12.

Translated by Umar Quinn. 27 Rabi al-Akhar 1442 (12-12-2020)