

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

خطبة الجمعة

Friday Sermon

*Preparing for Ramadan: Beyond the
To-Do List*



ŞİFAH

SCHOOL OF ISLAMIC
FOUNDATIONS &
ADVOCACY FOR HUMANITY

Preparing for Ramadan: Beyond the To-Do List

The First Khutbah

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا، مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ، وَمَنْ يَضِلَّ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ. أَمَّا بَعْدُ: فَإِنَّ أصدقَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابُ اللَّهِ، وَخَيْرُ الْهَدْيِ هَدْيُ مُحَمَّدٍ ﷺ، وَشَرُّ الْأُمُورِ مُحْدَثَاتُهَا، وَكُلُّ مُحْدَثَةٍ بِدْعَةٌ، وَكُلُّ بِدْعَةٍ ضَلَالَةٌ، وَكُلُّ ضَلَالَةٍ فِي النَّارِ.

All praise belongs to Allah. We praise Him, we seek His help, and we seek His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil within ourselves and from our sinful deeds. Whomever Allah guides, none can lead astray, and whomever He leaves astray, none can guide. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah alone, having no partner, and I bear witness that Muḥammad is His servant and His Messenger. To proceed: the truest speech is the Book of Allah, the best guidance is the guidance of Muḥammad ﷺ, the worst of affairs are the newly invented matters, every innovation is misguidance, and every misguidance is in the Fire.

نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُصَلِّي عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ، أَمَّا بَعْدُ: فَأَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ، بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ.

رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي * وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي * وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِنْ لِسَانِي * يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي *

We praise Him, and we send blessings upon His noble Messenger. To proceed: I seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the accursed; in the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. My Lord, expand for me my breast, and ease for me my task, and untie the knot from my tongue, that they may understand my speech.

Sūrah Ṭā Hā (20:25 to 28)

Dear brothers and sisters, **assalāmu ‘alaykum wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuh.**

A Season of Mercy Drawing Near

The month of Ramadan is once again drawing near, and when a season like this approaches, the very first thing it should stir in a believer's heart is gratitude. What a Lord we have, who is under no obligation to forgive us, under no obligation to show us mercy, and yet who still sends us, year after year, an entire month of forgiveness and mercy to inspire the better version of ourselves. What a Lord, who by His own will flings open the gates of Paradise, shuts the gates of the Fire, and chains the devils, and who takes the ordinary obligatory deeds we already perform and multiplies their reward simply because of the month they fall in. He wants us to know Him as ar-Raḥmān and ar-Raḥīm, the Most Compassionate and the Most Merciful, the One who sends us these appointed times of return.

So the first response to Ramadan, brothers and sisters, before any plan and before any list, is to say Alhamdulillah that Allah allowed us to reach it at all. Not everyone who fasted with us last year is here this year. To wake on the first morning of the month, alive and able to worship, is itself a gift worthy of a prostration of thanks. And the heart of this entire month is not a secret formula or some unfamiliar act of worship. Allah mentions Ramadan only once in the whole of the Qur'an, and He defines it by a single thing:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ *

The month of Ramadan is that in which the Qur'an was revealed, a guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and the criterion. So whoever among you witnesses the month, let him fast it.

Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:185)

The month of the Qur'an. That is its definition and its centre. And the Prophet ﷺ described the change that descends upon the whole unseen world when this month arrives:

إِذَا دَخَلَ شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ فَتُحْتَفَتُ أَبْوَابُ الْجَنَّةِ، وَغُلِقَتِ أَبْوَابُ النَّارِ، وَصَفِدَتِ الشَّيَاطِينُ.

When the month of Ramadan enters, the gates of Paradise are opened, the gates of the Fire are closed, and the devils are chained.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** Bukhārī 1899, Muslim 1079 **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun ‘Alayh

This imagery is not meant only as information; it is meant to stir hope. You are stepping into a month where the very environment has changed, where the air itself feels lighter for the believer and the heart is more receptive, so that even small efforts seem to carry an unusual weight.

Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy on him, compared this one month among the twelve to Yūsuf among his brothers, the one beloved son through whom the others were honoured. It is striking that a month so central to the life of a believer is named only a single time in the entire Qur'an, for it tells us that the secret of Ramadan was never some hidden ritual we had not heard of. The secret is that we take the worship we already know and pour our whole hearts into it, and through this one month the rest of the year is made bright.

No Secret Acts, Only Better Ones

Here is something we often miss, brothers and sisters. Everything you are asked to do in Ramadan is something you are already supposed to be doing; you are simply asked to do it better. The Companions prayed qiyām throughout the year, but in Ramadan they pushed themselves further. You do not reach for some special new book in Ramadan; you return to the same Qur'an, but you read it with more devotion and attach yourself to it more closely. You already know how to pray, how to give, how to make du'ā, but now you make more of it, and you make it with a deeper sense of longing. There are no unfamiliar secrets here. The path to Allah does not change in Ramadan; only our effort upon it does.

This is why, when people came to 'Ā'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, with their notebooks ready, asking how many units the Prophet ﷺ prayed at night in Ramadan, she turned them away from the numbers entirely. She told them that he did not exceed a certain number of rak'āt, and then she said, do not ask about how long and how beautiful they were. She was redirecting them from quantity to quality, from counting to connection. When they asked her about his character, she answered with a phrase that contained a whole library: his character was the Qur'an. He was a living embodiment of everything he recited and everything he taught. And this is the lesson Allah Himself planted at the foundation of our creation, that He did not set us in this world to produce the greatest number of deeds, but the best of them:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ *

He who created death and life to test you as to which of you is best in deed. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving.

Sūrah al-Mulk (67:2)

Notice the precise word: aḥsanu 'amalā, the best in deed, not aktharu 'amalā, the most in deed. So when we begin to measure Ramadan only by tallies and totals, we risk losing the very point of it. A heart present in a few deeds is dearer to Allah than a distracted heart drowning in many.

The Generosity of the Prophet ﷺ

And see how the Prophet ﷺ himself approached this month. He was the most generous of people in every season of his life, yet in Ramadan his generosity reached a level that cannot even be measured:

كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ أَجْوَدَ النَّاسِ، وَكَانَ أَجْوَدُ مَا يَكُونُ فِي رَمَضَانَ حِينَ يَلْقَاهُ جِبْرِيلُ،
فَلَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ أَجْوَدُ بِالْخَيْرِ مِنَ الرِّيحِ الْمُرْسَلَةِ.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was the most generous of people, and he was at his most generous in Ramadan when Jibril would meet him. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was more generous in doing good than the blowing wind.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** Bukhārī 6, Muslim 2308 **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun ‘Alayh

More generous than the blowing wind. You cannot quantify a thing like that, brothers and sisters; you cannot reduce it to a percentage. He did not simply increase his giving by some fixed measure in Ramadan. He became a different order of generous, a walking storm of good. This is what it looks like when the heart, and not the calculator, is leading the worship.

What the Fast Reveals

There is a quieter gift hidden in this month, brothers and sisters, one that is easy to overlook. Ramadan teaches you to be alone with Allah without feeling alone. We live in a world that constantly demands noise, notifications, and attention, and fasting pulls a person inward. The hunger quiets you, the long nights soften you, and you begin to hear your own thoughts again. That can be uncomfortable, but in the discomfort is growth. When you sit after Fajr while the rest of the world is still asleep, that stillness is not emptiness; it is Allah inviting you into a space that only a few people accept.

This month is also a great leveller. It is not impressed by your public image. Titles fall away in Ramadan, and whether a person is known or unknown, wealthy or struggling, everyone stands shoulder to shoulder in the same need before Allah. Across the world, the believers rise before dawn and break their fast at sunset together, moving in a single rhythm, so that you may be in a different city and a different language yet share the very same hunger and the very same hope. And that shared experience widens the heart: when you feel thirst, you remember those who feel it daily and not by choice; when you feel hunger, you understand vulnerability. Ramadan stretches your compassion beyond the small circle of your own concerns.

Fasting also exposes your attachments. When you give up food and drink, you notice how dependent you had quietly become on comfort; when you set aside the usual distractions, you see how often you ran to them to avoid yourself. The fast reveals what truly controls you, and in that exposure is the

chance to reclaim control for the sake of Allah. You begin to taste a strange freedom inside the discipline, the realisation that you are stronger than your impulses, and that realisation builds a quiet confidence in your relationship with your Lord. And this reshapes how we understand strength itself, for strength is not loud, and it is not stubbornness or ego. The Prophet ﷺ showed us where real strength lives:

لَيْسَ الشَّدِيدُ بِالصُّرْعَةِ، إِنَّمَا الشَّدِيدُ الَّذِي يَمْلِكُ نَفْسَهُ عِنْدَ الْغَضَبِ.

The strong man is not the one who overpowers people in wrestling. The strong man is the one who controls himself at the moment of anger.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** Bukhārī 6114, Muslim 2609 **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun ‘Alayh

Real strength is holding back when you want to react, continuing when you are tired, and mastering yourself when your temper flares. The fast trains exactly this internal strength, hour after hour, and that mastery then spreads into every other corner of your life, into your home, your work, and your speech.

The Eagerness of Those Before Us

There is a lesson, brothers and sisters, in the generation that came after the Companions, the tābi‘ūn, those who met the Companions but never met the Prophet ﷺ himself. They were known for the sheer abundance of their good deeds, and the reason is worth pausing over. They felt, always, as though they were running behind, because they walked among people who had prayed beside the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who had heard his voice and seen his face. Imagine being a young person whose mother and father could speak of hosting the Prophet ﷺ for a meal, whose neighbours were the Companions themselves, and feeling that you had so much catching up to do. That feeling drove them to worship with an eagerness we rarely match.

We chase what we now call tips and hacks, the quick method, the shortcut to a good Ramadan. But that generation had no shortcuts; they simply loved the worship and threw themselves into it. Look at ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd, may Allah be pleased with him, a man given life by the Qur’an, whose recitation once brought the Prophet ﷺ himself to tears. When the people of his time wanted to know how the Companions received the month of Ramadan, his answer was not about a technique at all; it was about the heart, that they would not dare meet the new moon of the month while a grudge still lived inside them. That eagerness, and that purity of heart, is the real preparation, far more than any list of tasks.

Fasting Was Written for Taqwā

Why was the fast prescribed at all? Allah did not leave us to guess. He attached to the command its very purpose:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

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O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may attain taqwā.

Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:183)

That you may attain taqwā. The fast was not written so that we would merely grow hungry; it was written so that we would grow conscious of Allah, so that we would leave off what displeases Him. And here lies a truth many of us overlook. We approach Ramadan with a long list of good deeds to add, yet we keep the sins we have grown comfortable with, the sins we commit so consistently that we have quietly accepted them as part of who we are. The scholars compared such sins to holes in the bottom of a bucket. You may pour twenty gallons of Qur'an and qiyām into the vessel, but if the holes remain, the water drains out as fast as it is poured. Taqwā is plugging the holes. It is leaving off what is displeasing to Allah, so that what you pour in actually stays. The Prophet ﷺ warned us with striking clarity about fasting that leaves the sins untouched:

مَنْ لَمْ يَدَعْ قَوْلَ الزُّورِ وَالْعَمَلَ بِهِ، فَلَيْسَ لِلَّهِ حَاجَةٌ فِي أَنْ يَدَعَ طَعَامَهُ وَشَرَابَهُ.

Whoever does not give up false speech and acting upon it, Allah has no need of his giving up his food and his drink.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī **Hadith No:** 1903 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

Reflect on the weight of this, brothers and sisters. It is possible to endure the whole fast, hungry and thirsty from dawn to sunset, and gain nothing of what Allah intended, because the tongue kept lying, the eyes kept wandering, and the heart kept its grudges. The fast of the body means little if the limbs are not fasting from sin alongside it.

Closing of the First Khutbah

So let us prepare for this month not by chasing extraordinary feats, but by returning to the ordinary acts of worship with an extraordinary heart, and by clearing out the sins that drain our reward away. I say these words of mine, and I seek the forgiveness of Allah for myself and for you, so seek His forgiveness; indeed He is the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.

أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ لِي وَلَكُمْ، فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ.

The Second Khutbah

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ، وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى أَشْرَفِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالْمُرْسَلِينَ، نَبِيِّنَا مُحَمَّدٍ
وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ. اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ، كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ
وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ.

All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon the noblest of the Prophets and Messengers, our Prophet Muḥammad, and upon his family and all his Companions. O Allah, send blessings upon Muḥammad and upon the family of Muḥammad as You sent blessings upon Ibrāhīm and upon the family of Ibrāhīm. Indeed, You are Praiseworthy and Glorious.

A Reminder Carried Home

Dear brothers and sisters, in the first khutbah we saw that Ramadan is a season of mercy to be met with gratitude, that it asks not for new and unfamiliar deeds but for our ordinary worship raised to a higher level, and that its goal is taqwā, the leaving of sin so that what we pour in is not drained away. Now let us turn that understanding into a plan, not the usual plan of piling on tasks, but a deeper preparation of the heart that I will frame as five simple lists.

Five Lists for Ramadan

Most of us, when Ramadan approaches, reach straight for a to-do list, a tally of good deeds we intend to accumulate. That list has its place, but it should not be the first one we write. Before the to-do list comes the to-not-do list, and in the sight of Allah it is the more important of the two. Your to-not-do list is the set of sins you commit to leaving once and for all, the lifestyle sins you have accepted as part of yourself, the habits you resolve never to return to. When a person says, after this Ramadan I will never knowingly return to this sin, I will do everything in my power to root it out of my life, that resolve is more precious to Allah than any number of deeds checked off a sheet, because you were created to return to Him, and your to-not-do list is you turning back toward your natural path.

Only after that comes the to-do list, the quantifiable goals you set for the month itself: this much Qur'an each day, this many units of qiyām, this measure of charity. Then comes a third list that many people never write at all, the to-fix list, the strained relationships you intend to repair before the month begins. This list matters because grudges can stand between a servant and the acceptance of his deeds. The Prophet ﷺ told us what happens to the one who clings to enmity:

تُفْتَحُ أَبْوَابُ الْجَنَّةِ يَوْمَ الْاِثْنَيْنِ وَالْاِثْمِيسِ، فَيُغْفَرُ لِكُلِّ عَبْدٍ لَا يُشْرِكُ بِاللَّهِ شَيْئًا، إِلَّا رَجُلًا
كَانَتْ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ أَخِيهِ شَحَاءٌ، فَيُقَالُ: أَنْظِرُوا هَذَيْنِ حَتَّى يَصْطَلِحَا.

The gates of Paradise are opened on Monday and Thursday, and every servant who associates nothing with Allah is forgiven, except a man between whom and his brother is enmity. It is said: Leave these two until they reconcile.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** 2565 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

Imagine the forgiveness flowing, and your name held back from it only because of a grudge you refused to release. The early generation understood this so deeply that they would not even allow Ramadan to find them with bitterness in their hearts.

مَا كُنَّا نَجْتَرِئُ أَنْ نَسْتَقْبِلَ هِلَالَ رَمَضَانَ وَفِي قَلْبٍ أَحَدِنَا ذَرَّةٌ مِنْ بُغْضٍ أَخِيهِ.

We would not dare to receive the new moon of Ramadan while in the heart of any one of us was an atom's weight of hatred for his brother.

‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd, may Allah be pleased with him, as related from the early generation

So pick up the phone, brothers and sisters, call that person, visit that home, break that standoff, not because you were entirely in the wrong, but because you want Allah to forgive you, and the One who loves to pardon asks you to pardon first. This is the very spirit of the du‘ā the Prophet ﷺ taught ‘Ā’ishah to make in the final nights, the nights when forgiveness is poured out:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ عَفْوٌ تُحِبُّ الْعَفْوَ فَاعْفُ عَنِّي.

O Allah, You are Pardoning and You love to pardon, so pardon me.

Source: Sunan at-Tirmidhī **Hadith No:** 3513 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

After these three lists come two more. The fourth is the quantity list, but with a difference: it is the list of consistent deeds you intend to carry beyond Ramadan, the worship you can realistically sustain once the month has passed, because Allah loves the deed that endures even more than the deed that is large.

أَحَبُّ الْأَعْمَالِ إِلَى اللَّهِ أَدْوَمُهَا وَإِنْ قَلَّ.

The most beloved of deeds to Allah are the most constant of them, even if they are few.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** Bukhārī 6464, Muslim 783 **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun ‘Alayh

Do not wait until Ramadan ends to scramble for the scraps. Decide now what you can carry afterward: perhaps two units of night prayer every night, perhaps a fixed portion of Qur’an each day. The fifth and final list is the deepest of them all, the qualities list. Open the beginning of Sūrah al-Mu’minūn and the closing passage of Sūrah al-Furqān, where Allah paints the portrait of the believers and of the servants of the Most Merciful, and measure yourself honestly against those traits.

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ * الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ *

Certainly will the believers have succeeded: those who are humbly submissive in their prayer.

Sūrah al-Mu’minūn (23:1 to 2)

Ask yourself where you stand against each quality, what is keeping you from it, which environments you need to change, and who you need around you to grow into it. For the highest rooms of Paradise are not earned by the sheer number of deeds, but by the character of the one who does them.

And take comfort in this, brothers and sisters: real transformation does not require spectacle. We often imagine that change must be dramatic to be real, but with Allah the quiet change is usually the most lasting. The Prophet ﷺ would sometimes stand through the night repeating a single verse, depth rather than display, sincerity rather than performance. So a softened heart, a tongue that learned to hold back, a grievance finally forgiven, these are monumental shifts even when no one sees them and even when they would never make a list. Do not despise the small, hidden change. The most beloved deeds to Allah are the consistent ones, and a heart needs constant care, not seasonal care; it is not something you repair in Ramadan and abandon for the rest of the year. Small actions, repeated with sincerity, are what keep the heart alive long after the month has gone.

Do Not Get Lost in the Numbers

Our age has trained us to hunt for the hack, the pro tip, the shortcut, brothers and sisters, and we carry that habit into Ramadan, asking what is the trick to make this month work. But the Companions had no tricks. When the early Muslims were asked how they used to receive Ramadan, their answer was about the heart, not about a method: they would not dare meet the month with a grudge still alive inside them. So do not let the math swallow the meaning. When you begin to quantify everything, you can lose the very thing you came for. Allah knows what you mean when you

raise your hands, even in the simplest words, and the most beloved supplications of the Prophet ﷺ were short and comprehensive, because Allah does not need your eloquence; He wants your sincerity.

Consider that the most frequent supplication on the tongue of the Prophet ﷺ was a plea not for wealth or ease, but for a steadfast heart:

يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ، ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِي عَلَى دِينِكَ.

O Turner of the hearts, make my heart firm upon Your religion.

Source: Sunan at-Tirmidhī **Hadith No:** 2140 **Authenticity:** Ḥasan

This is the supplication we most need around a season like Ramadan, for the great danger is not failing to begin, but failing to remain. Many a heart is set ablaze in the last ten nights and grows cold by the middle of Shawwāl. So ask the One who turns the hearts to keep yours turned toward Him, and pair that with the supplication He loved to make in every state, our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter. Short words, sincere hearts; that is the way of the Prophet ﷺ, and it is the antidote to a Ramadan lost in the counting.

And preparation matters. Sudden transformation is rare; steady preparation is prophetic. The Prophet ﷺ increased his worship in Sha‘bān, the month before, so that he would enter Ramadan with momentum rather than shock. So if your sleep is chaotic, begin to fix it now. If your tongue has grown careless, begin restraining it now. If your Qur’an has been closed, open it before Ramadan opens you. And when the month finally arrives, enter it with gratitude rather than anxiety, remembering that not everyone who hoped to reach it was granted the chance. Waking on the first morning and saying Alhamdulillah carries a weight you cannot measure, for Allah chose you to witness another Ramadan, and that alone is mercy.

And once the nights begin, do not let the recitation of tarāwīḥ pass over you like background sound. You stand and listen to long portions of the Qur’an, yet the mind often drifts the moment the prayer ends. Reflection begins after the tasleem, not only during the recitation. On the way home, ask yourself what Allah spoke about that night: was He warning, comforting, correcting, or reminding? Even recalling a single theme is a form of worship. If Allah spoke of patience, ask where patience is missing in your life; if He spoke of sincerity, ask where yours needs repair; if He spoke of mercy, ask who deserves mercy from you. This is how tarāwīḥ stops being a routine that ends at the door of the masjid and becomes a transformation that follows you home.

The Reward of a Sincere Fast

And what does Allah promise the one who enters this month with faith and sincerity? A clean slate, a fresh beginning, the past wiped away:

مَنْ صَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ.

Whoever fasts Ramadan out of faith and in hope of reward, his past sins will be forgiven.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** Bukhārī 38, Muslim 760 **Authenticity:** Muttafaquun ‘Alayh

Out of faith and in hope of reward; those two conditions must be present. Without sincere intention, even great effort can ring hollow. So renew your purpose before the month begins, and decide that this Ramadan will not be a cultural routine you pass through, but a conscious return to your Lord. Enter it humbled and hopeful, trusting that the One who invited you to it will also carry you through it.

Mercy Greater Than Your Past

Many of us walk into Ramadan carrying regret, brothers and sisters, remembering the prayers we missed, the chances we wasted, and the habits we fell into. But hear this clearly: this month was not sent to shame you, it was sent to restore you. Allah describes Himself as ar-Raḥmān ar-Raḥīm more often than by any other description, and He told us through His Prophet ﷺ, in a sacred narration, that His mercy outweighs everything:

إِنَّ رَحْمَتِي سَبَقَتْ غَضَبِي.

Indeed, My mercy has preceded My anger.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** 2751 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

Ramadan is a living example of that mercy. It is not a month that reminds you how far you fell, but how close you can return. Your faith will rise and fall like waves rather than run in a straight line, and Allah knew that about you before He created you, so the point was never to be flawless; the point is to keep returning. The door of repentance is never truly closed; it only feels closed when our perspective grows narrow and Shayṭān whispers that it is too late. Fight that thought before you fight anything else, for if your thinking is broken, your actions will follow it down. Enter this month believing that the One who invited you to it has already left the door of His mercy wide open.

The Last Ten Nights

And brothers and sisters, do not let the final stretch of the month slip past you, for that is where its greatest treasure is hidden. As the last ten nights approached, the worship of the Prophet ﷺ did not fade with fatigue; it intensified:

كَانَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ إِذَا دَخَلَ الْعَشْرُ شَدَّ مِئْزَرَهُ، وَأَحْيَا لَيْلَهُ، وَأَيْقَظَ أَهْلَهُ.

When the last ten nights began, the Prophet ﷺ would tighten his waistcloth, spend his night in worship, and wake his family.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** Bukhārī 2024, Muslim 1174 **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun ‘Alayh

There was urgency in his worship, not panic but purpose, for he understood that within these nights lies a single night that outweighs a lifetime:

لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ *

The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months.

Sūrah al-Qadr (97:3)

Better than a thousand months, brothers and sisters, more than a lifetime of ordinary worship folded into a single night. This is why the believer searches for it in the last ten, standing in prayer and pouring out the du‘ā the Prophet ﷺ loved in those nights, O Allah, You are Pardoning and You love to pardon, so pardon me. And notice how quickly the month moves. You blink, and the first ten nights are gone; you blink again, and you are searching for Laylat al-Qadr. When the month begins to close, a bittersweet worry settles in, whether you did enough, whether your du‘ā was accepted, whether your effort was sincere. That very vulnerability is beautiful, because it means your heart is alive, and a heart that worries it did not do enough for Allah is a heart that He has not abandoned.

Closing Du‘ā

Let us raise our hands and ask Allah to bring us to this month and to make us among His righteous servants.

رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا *

Our Lord, grant us from among our spouses and offspring comfort to our eyes, and make us a model for the righteous.

Sūrah al-Furqān (25:74)

O Allah, allow us to reach Ramadan, and accept it from us. O Allah, forgive our shortcomings, soften our hearts, and let us leave this month forgiven. O Allah, set right the affairs of this Ummah, relieve the distressed, have mercy on our parents and on those who have passed, and let the last of our words

be the testimony that there is no god but You. Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and protect us from the punishment of the Fire.

The Final Reminder

Remember the command of your Lord with which Allah seals the affair, the command of justice and excellence.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ
يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ *

Indeed, Allah commands justice, excellence, and giving to relatives, and He forbids immorality, wrongdoing, and oppression. He admonishes you that you may take heed.

Sūrah an-Nahl (16:90)

So remember Allah, the Most Great, and He will remember you; thank Him for His favours, and He will increase you. And establish the prayer.

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ