

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

خطبة الجمعة

Friday Sermon

Virtues of Dhul-Hijjah: The Best Ten Days



ŞİFAH

SCHOOL OF ISLAMIC
FOUNDATIONS &
ADVOCACY FOR HUMANITY

Virtues of Dhul-Hijjah: The Best Ten Days

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 Tā Hā (20:25 to 28)

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

A Season Louder than Every Sale

We live in a world drowning in superlatives. The best deal, the best price, the last chance, the offer that ends tonight. Our screens are crowded with promises, most of them exaggerated and nearly all of them forgettable, and we have been trained by a thousand advertisements to feel that if we do not act now we will be left behind. Unbeatable. Limited time only. Your future self will thank you. We have grown so used to the noise that the louder a thing is hyped, the more of our attention and our devotion it seizes. And yet, brothers and sisters, here is the strange truth: the single greatest seasonal opportunity that exists for a human being, the days in which the smallest deed is multiplied beyond anything the rest of the year can offer, arrives every year almost silently, and most of us let it pass without even noticing it. It is not advertised on any billboard. It is announced only in the Book of Allah and the words of His Messenger ﷺ. These are the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah.

How important are they? Important enough that Allah swore an oath by them, and when the Lord of the worlds swears by a thing, He is drawing our attention to its greatness, for He does not swear by the trivial.

وَالْفَجْرِ * وَلَيَالٍ عَشْرٍ *

By the dawn, and by the ten nights.

Sūrah al-Fajr (89:1 to 2)

Ibn ‘Abbās, Ibn az-Zubayr, Mujāhid, and others of the early and the later generations all explained that the ten nights by which Allah swears here are the first ten of Dhul-Hijjah, and Ibn Kathīr declared this the correct opinion. Imagine that, brothers and sisters: out of all the nights in the year, Allah singled out these ten and bound an oath to them. The ten nights of Ramadan we honour, and rightly so, but here are ten full days and nights that the Prophet ﷺ ranked above every other span of the year for the doing of good, and we are at risk of sleeping through them because no algorithm reminds us they are coming.

Why the Months Are Sacred

To understand these ten days, we must first understand the month they crown, for Dhul-Hijjah is one of the four sacred months Allah set apart from the moment He created the heavens and the earth.

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ
مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ فَلَا تَظْلِمُوا فِيهِنَّ أَنْفُسَكُمْ *

Indeed, the number of months with Allah is twelve months in the Register of Allah from the day He created the heavens and the earth, of which four are sacred. That is the upright religion, so do not wrong yourselves during them.

Sūrah at-Tawbah (9:36)

And the Prophet ﷺ named them for us precisely, so that no one would be in doubt about which months Allah had honoured.

إِنَّ الزَّمَانَ قَدْ اسْتَدَارَ كَهَيْئَتِهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ، السَّنَةُ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا،
مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ: ثَلَاثَةٌ مُتَوَالِيَاتٌ: ذُو الْقَعْدَةِ وَذُو الْحِجَّةِ وَالْمُحَرَّمُ، وَرَجَبُ مُضَرَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ
جُمَادَى وَشَعْبَانَ.

Time has come full circle to its form on the day Allah created the heavens and the earth. The year is twelve months, of which four are sacred: three consecutive, Dhul-Qa'dah, Dhul-Hijjah, and al-Muharram, and Rajab of Muḍar, which is between Jumādā and Sha'bān.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** Bukhārī 3197, Muslim 1679 **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun 'Alayh

So deep was the sanctity of these months that even the pagan Arabs before Islam, for all their idolatry, would lay down their weapons during them, so that the clash of swords fell silent across the land and a man could travel in safety. If those who did not know Allah honoured these months, how much more should we, who know Him, fill them with worship rather than waste them, and guard ourselves in them from wronging our own souls, as Allah commanded when He said, so do not wrong yourselves during them. The sacred months are a mercy: a recurring season in which Allah opens the doors of reward wider and asks us simply to walk through them.

A Season to Leave Your Sins

There is a second face to the sanctity of these months that we must not pass over, brothers and sisters, for Allah did not only say that good deeds are magnified in them, He warned that wrongdoing is graver in them too. When He named the four sacred months, He immediately commanded, so do not wrong yourselves during them. The scholars explained that a sin committed in a sacred time carries a heavier weight than the same sin committed at another, just as a good deed in a sacred time is

multiplied, because the honour of the time adds to the gravity of what is done in it. So these ten days are not only a season to pile up good, they are a season to lay down evil, and the two go together. What is the use of a believer fasting the day of ‘Arafah with his stomach while his eyes and his tongue and his hands are full of the very sins he is begging Allah to forgive?

So let the arrival of these days be a summons to honest repentance. Sit alone, brothers and sisters, and bring to mind the sins you have grown comfortable with, the ones you no longer even notice, the glance you do not lower, the wealth that came from a doubtful source, the tongue that wounds your own family, the prayer rushed or abandoned. Name them, one by one, feel the shame of them before Allah, resolve sincerely to leave them, and return to your Lord while the door is wide open and the reward is multiplied. The source from which our khuṭbah draws places this first among the deeds of the ten days for a reason: before we add new good, we must clear away the old debt. A house is not adorned while its floor is still covered in filth. Repent first, then build.

Better than Every Other Day

Now to the heart of the matter. The Prophet ﷺ made a statement about these ten days so striking that his own Companions could scarcely believe it, and pressed him to confirm it.

مَا مِنْ أَيَّامٍ الْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ فِيهَا أَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْأَيَّامِ الْعَشْرِ. قَالُوا: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، وَلَا الْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ؟ قَالَ: وَلَا الْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ، إِلَّا رَجُلٌ خَرَجَ بِنَفْسِهِ وَمَالِهِ فَلَمْ يَرْجِعْ مِنْ ذَلِكَ بِشَيْءٍ.

There are no days in which righteous deeds are more beloved to Allah than these ten days. They said: O Messenger of Allah, not even jihad in the path of Allah? He said: Not even jihad in the path of Allah, except a man who goes out with his self and his wealth and returns with none of it.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī **Hadith No:** 969 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

Pause on the exchange, brothers and sisters. The Companions, who knew the immense rank of jihad, of giving one's very life and wealth in the path of Allah, were astonished. Not even that? And the Prophet ﷺ confirmed it: not even that, save for the one who gives everything and comes back with nothing, the martyr who keeps neither his life nor his wealth. This means that an ordinary deed done in these ten days, a fast, a prayer, a charity, a remembrance, a kind word, is more beloved to Allah than almost the highest sacrifice a person can make in any other season. The same prayer you pray every day, prayed in these ten days, weighs more in the scale. The same dollar of charity, given now, is dearer to Allah. Allah has placed a multiplier upon time itself, and the wise believer rushes to trade in this market before it closes.

Why These Days Gather Every Worship

Our scholars asked why, of all the seasons of the year, Allah made these ten days the most beloved for righteous deeds, and the answer they gave is beautiful. Ibn Rajab, may Allah have mercy on him, explained that these ten days are unique because in them the great acts of worship gather together as they do at no other time. In them the Hajj is performed, the journey of a lifetime. In them is fasting, for the Prophet ﷺ fasted their days. In them the prayer is multiplied, and the night is stood in. In them charity flows, and at their close stands the sacrifice, the offering of an animal for the sake of Allah. There is no other stretch of the year in which all of these supreme acts of devotion come together, and so a believer who fills these days can taste a little of every form of worship at once. Allah Himself pointed to the remembrance that fills them when He called them the known days.

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وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَعْلُومَاتٍ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ *

And that they may mention the name of Allah on known days over what He has provided for them of grazing livestock.

Sūrah al-Hajj (22:28)

Ibn ‘Abbās, may Allah be pleased with him, explained that the known days mentioned here are precisely the ten days of Dhul-Hijjah. So Allah did not only swear by them, He named them as the days set apart for His remembrance and for drawing near to Him with worship and with sacrifice. This is the season the whole year leans toward, and the believer who understands it does not let a single one of its hours fall idle.

The Crown of the Ten: ‘Arafah

And within these ten days sits a day above all the others, the day of ‘Arafah, the ninth of Dhul-Hijjah, the day the pilgrims stand on that plain begging the forgiveness of their Lord. For those of us not on Hajj, the Prophet ﷺ gave us a gift attached to fasting that single day, a gift whose scale should stop us in our tracks.

صِيَامُ يَوْمٍ عَرَفَةَ أَحْتَسِبُ عَلَى اللَّهِ أَنْ يُكَفِّرَ السَّنَةَ الَّتِي قَبْلَهُ وَالسَّنَةَ الَّتِي بَعْدَهُ.

Fasting the day of ‘Arafah, I hope from Allah, expiates the sins of the year before it and the year after it.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** 1162 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

Two years of sins, the one behind and the one ahead, lifted by a single day of fasting. Where in all the markets of this world is there a transaction like that? And yet how many of us will let the ninth of Dhul-Hijjah arrive and pass while we eat and drink as on any other day, simply because no one

reminded us? Mark the day. Plan for it. Let it not slip by, for the Prophet ﷺ would fast the first nine days of this month, as his wives reported, and of them all, the day of ‘Arafah carries this unmatched reward.

And consider what is happening on the earth on that day, brothers and sisters. While you fast at home, millions of pilgrims stand together on the plain of ‘Arafah, of every colour and language and nation, dressed alike in two simple white cloths so that the rich cannot be told from the poor, all of them raising the same words to the same Lord, hands open, eyes streaming, begging for forgiveness. It is the closest sight this world offers to the gathering of the Day of Judgement, and it is on this very day that Allah draws near and frees more of His servants from the Fire than on any other. Even from your kitchen and your prayer mat far from Makkah, your fast and your du‘ā on that day join that great standing before Allah, and you reach for the same mercy that descends upon that plain. Do not stand outside the most merciful day of the year. Step into it.

How the Righteous Filled These Days

So what did the people of knowledge do when these ten days arrived? They did not treat them as ordinary. They poured themselves into worship. It is reported that Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr, may Allah have mercy on him, one of the greatest students of Ibn ‘Abbās, would exert himself so intensely in worship when the ten days began that he would nearly overwhelm himself, as though a man were trying to fit a year of striving into ten days. And the Companions filled the very streets with the remembrance of Allah.

Ibn ‘Umar and Abū Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with them, would go out into the marketplace during the ten days of Dhul-Hijjah, raising their voices in takbīr, Allāhu akbar, until the people in the market would say it along with them.

Reported by al-Bukhārī in his Ṣaḥīḥ, in the chapter on the ten days

Imagine two of the most honoured Companions walking through the busy market, not to buy or to sell, but to fill the air with the greatness of Allah, so that the whole marketplace caught the sound and began to magnify Him together. This is the spirit of the ten days, brothers and sisters. The Prophet ﷺ told us that these are days in which we should increase the tahlīl, lā ilāha illa Allah, the takbīr, Allāhu akbar, and the taḥmīd, al-ḥamdu lillāh, until our tongues are wet with the remembrance of our Lord. So fill these days with dhikr, in your car, in your kitchen, on your walk, under your breath, and raise the takbīr aloud as the Companions did, that the remembrance of Allah may return to our homes and our streets.

And the worship of these days is not the tongue alone. The righteous before us would shorten their sleep and lengthen their standing in prayer through these nights, fast their days though the labour was hard, and open their hands in charity wider than at any other time. They understood a simple thing that we so often forget: that a season of multiplied reward will not return for another year, and that the body that is tired today will rest forever in the grave, so why spare it now? This is not a call to exhaust yourself into collapse, for the religion is balanced and the Prophet ﷺ forbade us from

burdening our souls beyond their strength. It is a call to lean in, to give these ten days more than you give an ordinary ten, to let a little more of your night, a little more of your wealth, a little more of your tongue, belong to Allah, knowing that in this season He returns it multiplied beyond anything you spent.

The Legacy of Ibrāhīm

To understand why this month closes with a sacrifice, we must return to the story it commemorates, the story of Ibrāhīm, the friend of Allah, peace be upon him. After long years of longing he was finally granted a son, Ismā'īl, and he loved him as a father loves the child of his old age. And then, in this very season, Allah tested him with the heaviest command a parent could be given. Ibrāhīm saw in his dream that he was slaughtering his own beloved son, and the dreams of the Prophets are revelation. He did not hide the command, nor wrestle with it alone. He turned to the boy himself.

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ إِنِّي أَرَىٰ فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَىٰ قَالَ
يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ *

And when he reached with him the age of striving, he said: O my son, I have seen in a dream that I am sacrificing you, so see what you think. He said: O my father, do as you are commanded. You will find me, Allah willing, among the patient.

Sūrah aṣ-Ṣāffāt (37:102)

Look at the answer of the son, brothers and sisters: do as you are commanded, you will find me among the patient. A young man, hearing that his own father had been ordered to slaughter him, and his first concern is the command of Allah and his father's peace of heart. Both of them submitted entirely, the father laying his son down, the son surrendering his neck, and at the very last moment, when their submission was complete and proven, Allah called out to Ibrāhīm that he had fulfilled the vision, and ransomed the boy with a great sacrifice, a ram sent down from Allah. They had been ready to give everything, and so Allah did not require it of them, but rewarded their willingness and made their story a worship for every believer until the end of time. This is what the sacrifice of Dhul-Hijjah carries: not the value of the meat, for Allah has said that neither its flesh nor its blood reaches Him, but the taqwā of the heart that is willing to surrender to its Lord. When you offer your sacrifice, you are stepping into the footsteps of Ibrāhīm, declaring that you too would give whatever Allah asked of you.

The Sacrifice and Its Sign

And the month is named for sacrifice, for it is the month of the udḥiyah, the offering made in memory of Ibrāhīm and his son, peace be upon them, who submitted entirely to the command of Allah. The

Prophet ﷺ taught the one who intends to offer a sacrifice a particular sign to mark these days upon his very body.

إِذَا دَخَلَتِ الْعَشْرُ، وَأَرَادَ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يُضَحِّيَ، فَلَا يَمَسَّ مِنْ شَعْرِهِ وَبَشَرِهِ شَيْئًا.

When the ten days begin, and one of you intends to offer a sacrifice, let him not touch anything of his hair or his skin.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** 1977 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

From the sighting of the new moon of Dhul-Hijjah until the sacrifice is offered, the one who intends to sacrifice leaves his hair and his nails untrimmed, a small outward sign that ties him, in a small way, to the state of the pilgrim, and reminds him with every passing day that this is a sacred season set apart for Allah. It is a gentle, bodily call to attention, brothers and sisters, a way of carrying the ten days with you so that you do not forget what they are. And the month asks of us a deeper sacrifice than hair and nails: it asks what we are willing to give up for the sake of Allah, our time, our wealth, the hours we pour into our screens, the habits we know are dragging us down. The month of sacrifice asks every one of us, what will you offer?

The Greatest Day and the Days that Follow

These ten days build toward a summit, and that summit is the tenth, the Day of Sacrifice, yawm an-naḥr, which the Prophet ﷺ named the greatest of all days in the sight of Allah.

إِنَّ أَعْظَمَ الْأَيَّامِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى يَوْمُ النَّحْرِ ثُمَّ يَوْمُ الْقَرِّ.

Indeed, the greatest of days in the sight of Allah, Blessed and Exalted, is the Day of Sacrifice, then the day of rest that follows it.

Source: Sunan Abī Dāwūd **Hadith No:** 1765 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ (graded by al-Albānī)

It is the day the pilgrims complete the greatest rites of their Hajj, the day the believers across the earth gather for the prayer of ‘Īd and draw near to Allah with their sacrifice. And the celebration does not end there, for the three days that follow, the days of Tashrīq, the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth of Dhul-Hijjah, are themselves blessed. Allah commanded in His Book that we remember Him in the appointed days, and the Prophet ﷺ described their character in a single sentence.

أَيَّامُ التَّشْرِيقِ أَيَّامُ أَكْلٍ وَشُرْبٍ وَذِكْرِ اللَّهِ.

The days of Tashriq are days of eating, drinking, and the remembrance of Allah.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** 1141 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

See the wisdom in this, brothers and sisters. These are days of feasting, of family, of joy, and the Prophet ﷺ forbade us to fast them precisely because they are a celebration Allah has granted His people. Yet even in the midst of the eating and the drinking, the remembrance of Allah is not set aside. The takbīr continues after the prayers through these days, so that our very celebration is wrapped in His remembrance. This is the balance of our religion: it does not ask us to choose between joy and worship, but teaches us to remember Allah while we eat, while we laugh, while we gather, so that our happiness itself becomes a form of gratitude to the One who gave it.

The Real Sale the World Will Miss

Return with me, brothers and sisters, to where we began, to the world of advertised superlatives. We will set alarms for a sale that ends at midnight. We will queue outside a store before dawn on the day the discounts drop. We will refresh a screen at the exact second a limited offer opens, terrified of missing out. We have trained ourselves into a frenzy over deals that, within a week, we will not even remember. And here comes a season offered by the Lord of the heavens and the earth, in which a single day of fasting wipes out two years of sins, in which an ordinary prayer outweighs jihad, in which the smallest deed is multiplied beyond counting, and the offer is real, and the One making it never exaggerates, and most of us will let it pass without setting a single reminder. What does that say about where our hearts truly are, about which marketplace we believe in?

So this year, brothers and sisters, treat the ten days with at least the seriousness you give to a sale. Put them in your calendar before they arrive. Mark the day of ‘Arafah in bold. Decide tonight what you will fast, what you will give, what sin you will leave, and write it down where you will see it. Tell your family, so that the home fills with takbīr and your children learn that these days are not like the others. Make the screen that usually steals your hours serve you for once, a reminder to make dhikr, a Qur'an open on the train, a charity sent with a tap. The deal of the dunya ends and leaves you with a thing that breaks and is forgotten. The deal of these ten days ends and leaves you with forgiveness you will be desperate for on the Day you stand before Allah. Do not be the one who chased the smaller offer and slept through the greater one.

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

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.

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 khuṭbah we learned that Allah swore by these ten nights, that they crown one of the four sacred months, and that the Prophet ﷺ ranked righteous deeds in them above almost everything else in the year, even jihad. We learned that fasting the day of ‘Arafah erases the sins of two years, and that the Companions filled the markets with takbīr while the scholars exhausted themselves in worship. The question now is the one that always decides everything: will we let these days find us asleep, or ready?

A Plan for the Ten Days

Do not let this season slip through your fingers like one more advertised offer that you scroll past and forget. Make a simple plan and keep it. Fast as many of the first nine days as your strength allows, and if you can fast only one, let it be the day of ‘Arafah, for nothing else in the year buys what it buys. Multiply your remembrance through every hour: keep your tongue moving with lā ilāha illa Allah, with Allāhu akbar, with al-ḥamdu lillāh, in the car and the kitchen and the corridor, and raise the takbīr aloud in your home so your children grow up knowing these days are different. Give charity every day of the ten, even a small amount, and let some of it be hidden where only Allah sees it. Stand in even a short portion of the night in prayer, when the world is asleep and the door of nearness is open. Guard your five prayers with new care, and bring at least the dawn and the night prayers into the congregation if you possibly can. Turn to Allah in sincere repentance, naming the sins you have grown comfortable with and resolving to leave them. And if Allah has given you the means, offer the sacrifice, and feed the poor from it, and cleanse your character as you cleanse your worship, mending the ties you have let fray. This is a complete program for ten days, brothers and sisters, and it asks

only that you decide, now, before the moon of Dhul-Hijjah rises, that this year you will not let them pass you by.

And ask yourself honestly, brothers and sisters, as these days approach: which of these deeds is hardest for me, and which am I most tempted to neglect? The one who struggles to fast can at least guard his tongue with dhikr. The one whose work fills his days can still give a charity with a single tap and stand a few minutes in the depth of the night. There is no believer, however busy, however weak, who cannot take some share of these ten days, and the worst outcome of all is to take none, to let the most beloved days of the year to Allah pass exactly like the days of an idle week. Choose your portion now, before the moon rises, and hold to it.

Between Hope and Striving

Let no one leave this place thinking these days are reserved for the pilgrims in Makkah. The reward of the ten days is poured out upon every believer wherever he stands, in this masjid, in his home, at his work, if only he fills them with the worship of his Lord. And let no one imagine the season comes without effort, scattered upon the heedless. It is seized by those who plan for it and rush to it. The pilgrims have travelled across the world for these days, dusty and dishevelled, hoping in the mercy of Allah. We can reach toward the same mercy from where we are, and it would be a strange poverty to live beside a treasure for ten days and walk away empty-handed.

Closing Du‘ā

Dear brothers and sisters, let us raise our hands to the One who multiplies the deeds of His servants in these blessed days.

O Allah, allow us to reach the ten days of Dhul-Hijjah and to fill them with what pleases You. O Allah, accept our fasting, our prayer, our charity, and our remembrance, and forgive us through the day of ‘Arafah the sins of all our years. O Allah, make us of those whom You free from the Fire in this blessed season, and write us among the accepted. O Allah, set right the affairs of this Ummah, relieve the oppressed and the suffering, accept the Hajj of the pilgrims, and forgive us and our parents and have mercy upon them. 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, the command of justice and excellence with which Allah seals the affair.

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-Naḥl (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