

SIFAH LECTURE SERIES

The Golden Ten: Seizing Dhul-Hijjah and the Day of Arafah

A practical lecture — knowledge you can act on

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July 2026 · ~30 min read · Seasons of Worship



SIFAH

SCHOOL OF ISLAMIC
FOUNDATIONS &
ADVOCACY FOR HUMANITY

The Golden Ten: Seizing Dhul-Hijjah and the Day of Arafah

The most beloved days of the year have arrived quietly. Do not let them slip through your fingers.

WHY THIS MATTERS

A Season That Arrives Without a Knock

My dear brother, my dear sister, let me ask you something honestly before we begin. When Ramadan approaches, you feel it, don't you? You feel it in the air, in the conversations at the masjid, in the countdown that begins weeks in advance. The whole community leans forward together. But I want you to notice something with me, something that most of us miss year after year. There is another season, a season that Allah loves *more* than any other stretch of days in the entire calendar, and it arrives so quietly that the vast majority of Muslims let it pass without ever looking up from their screens. That season is upon us right now. It is the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah.

Imagine a wealthy merchant announced that for ten days only, he would multiply any investment you brought him a hundredfold. Ten days, and then the doors close for a full year. Would you sleep through it? Would you scroll past it? Would you say, *I'll get to it tomorrow*? And yet this is precisely what Allah, the Most Generous, has offered us, and precisely how most of us treat it. These are days of unimaginable return, and the tragedy is not that the return is small. The tragedy is that we walk right past the open door.

How do we know these days are so precious? Because Allah Himself swore an oath by them. And understand what that means, my brother. Allah does not swear by a thing that is small. When the Lord of the heavens and the earth takes an oath by something, He is grabbing you by the shoulders and saying: *Look. Pay attention. Something enormous is here.*

وَالْفَجْرِ ۝ وَلَيَالٍ عَشْرٍ

*By the dawn, and by **the ten nights**.*

Surah Al-Fajr (89:1-2)

The great scholars of this Ummah, and foremost among them Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, explained that these ten nights that Allah swore by are the first ten of Dhul-Hijjah. So the very first thing I want you to feel in your heart today is this: these are days that Allah loved enough to swear by. That alone should stop us in our tracks.

THE GREATNESS WITHIN THEM

A Marketplace of Every Good Deed

Let me tell you what makes these ten days so extraordinary. It is not just one act of worship that shines in them. It is that they gather within themselves nearly *every* great act of worship at once. Think about it with me. There is the prayer. There is fasting, on the Day of Arafah especially. There is charity. There is the remembrance of Allah, the dhikr and the takbir. There is the sacrifice on the day of Eid. And there is the Hajj itself, the fifth pillar of Islam, taking place in these very days on the plains outside Makkah.

No other ten days of the year bring all of this together. Not even the last ten of Ramadan, blessed as they are, contain the sacrifice and the Hajj. This is why these days are unique. They are, as I said, a marketplace of good deeds opened for a brief season, and the wise merchant does not arrive on the last day when the stalls are being packed away. He comes early, and he comes ready. Allah drew our attention to the worship placed within these days when He said:

وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُومَاتٍ

*And that they may **mention the name of Allah** on the appointed days.*

Surah Al-Hajj (22:28)

Many of the scholars of tafsir, again following Ibn Abbas, understood the appointed days here to be these same ten days of Dhul-Hijjah. And look at what Allah calls us to within them. The remembrance of His name. These are days in which the tongue should be moist with the praise of Allah and the heart should be awake to His greatness. If you take nothing else from this lecture, take this: fill these days with the name of Allah. Let it be on your lips as you walk, as you drive, as you wait in line, as you lie down to sleep.

MORE BELOVED THAN EVERYTHING

Even Greater Than Jihad

Now, you might be tempted to think that all of this is the enthusiasm of a preacher, the kind of thing we say to get people excited. So let me step aside completely and let the Messenger of Allah ﷺ speak for himself. He weighed these ten days against every other day of the year, and he made a declaration so startling that his own Companions stopped him to ask if they had heard him correctly. Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated:

مَا مِنْ أَيَّامٍ الْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ فِيهِنَّ أَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ مِنْ
هَذِهِ الْأَيَّامِ. 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 for a man who goes out with himself and his wealth and returns with none of it.*

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 969 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

Pause here with me and let this settle. The Prophet ﷺ did not say the deeds of these days are merely rewarded well. He said they are *more beloved to Allah* than the deeds of any other time. And when the Companions, astonished, asked whether even jihad was surpassed, that highest of sacrifices in which a man rides out ready to give his very life, the Prophet ﷺ confirmed it. Even jihad. The only exception is the one who gives literally everything, his life and his wealth, and never comes home.

Do you feel the weight of that, my brother? A simple deed done in these ten days, a prayer prayed on time, a page of Quran, a dhikr on the tongue, a quiet charity slipped to someone in need, is dearer to Allah right now than that same deed would be at any other point in the year. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, may Allah have mercy on him, reflected that what raises these days above all others is precisely that they gather every kind of worship, a gathering found in no other season. So I ask you plainly: knowing this, who among us would waste a single hour of them scrolling through things that will not benefit us in the grave?

The Man Who Nearly Broke Himself With Worship

Let me show you how those who truly understood these days lived through them, because their example should shake us out of our comfort. There was a man named Said ibn Jubayr, may Allah have mercy on him. He was not an ordinary man. He was the noble student of Ibn Abbas himself, one of the greatest scholars of the generation that followed the Companions, a man of deep knowledge and constant worship throughout the entire year. And yet look at what happened to him when these ten days arrived.

كَانَ سَعِيدُ بْنُ جُبَيْرٍ إِذَا دَخَلَتِ الْعَشْرُ اجْتَهَدَ اجْتِهَادًا
شَدِيدًا حَتَّى مَا يَكَادُ يُقَدِّرُ عَلَيْهِ

*When the ten days entered, Said ibn Jubayr would **strive so hard in worship that he could scarcely bear it.***

Source: Reported by ad-Darimi and cited by Ibn Rajab in Lataif al-Maarif · **Authenticity:** Hasan

Think about what this means. Here was a man whose ordinary days of worship most of us could never dream of matching. His regular day of prayer and Quran and remembrance would put our best days to shame. And yet when these ten days came, he raised his striving to a height that nearly exhausted him completely. Why? Because he understood exactly what he was holding in his hands. He knew that this window would not stay open, and he refused to be found sleeping when it did.

Let that example be a gentle rebuke to our heedlessness, my dear brother, my dear sister. If a man of his caliber pushed himself to the edge of his ability in these days, what excuse do we, who fall so far short even on our best days, have to let his most beloved days pass us by as if they were nothing special at all? I am not asking you to break yourself. I am asking you to *try*. To lean in. To treat these ten days as the harvest season they truly are, gathering in them what you will live upon for the rest of the year and, if Allah wills, for eternity.

Let the Takbir Return to Your Tongue

Among all the deeds of these ten days, the Prophet ﷺ singled out one for special emphasis, and it is the easiest of them all. It costs you nothing. It requires no money, no travel, no special strength. It is the remembrance of Allah. Abdullah ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

مَا مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أَعْظَمُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَحَبُّ إِلَيْهِ الْعَمَلُ
فِيهِنَّ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْأَيَّامِ الْعَشْرِ فَأَكْثَرُوا فِيهِنَّ مِنَ
التَّهْلِيلِ وَالتَّكْبِيرِ وَالتَّحْمِيدِ

*There are no days greater in the sight of Allah, nor any in which deeds are more beloved to Him, than these ten days. So **increase in them the saying of la ilaha illa Allah, of Allahu akbar, and of al-hamdu lillah.***

Source: Musnad Ahmad: 5446 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

Now here is what I want you to understand. The Companions did not treat this as a private whisper hidden inside their chests. They took the takbir out into the open. Al-Bukhari records that Ibn Umar and Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with them, would walk out into the marketplace during these ten days raising their voices with the takbir, and the people, hearing them, would raise their own voices along with them, until the entire market rang with the magnification of Allah.

Picture that scene, my brother. Two of the most beloved Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, walking among the buyers and sellers, among the merchants haggling and the crowds bustling, and they are not the least bit embarrassed to proclaim out loud that Allah is the Greatest. And the whole crowd answers them. Now think about our markets today. Our markets are the screens we scroll and the feeds we consume, and they are filled with everything except the remembrance of Allah. What would it do to our

hearts to carry the takbir back into them? To be unembarrassed, as those great men were, to let the name of Allah be heard where His name is so often forgotten?

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ اللَّهُ
أَكْبَرُ وَلِلَّهِ الْحَمْدُ

Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest, there is no god but Allah, and Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest, and to Allah belongs all praise.

The Takbir of the Ten Days

This is medicine, not ritual. When your tongue is busy magnifying Allah, your heart finds it very hard to magnify its worries, its fears, and the fleeting glories of this passing world. Every time you say *Allahu akbar*, you are reminding your own soul that whatever you fear is small, whatever you chase is small, whatever grips you at night is small, because Allah alone is truly great. We have nearly lost this beautiful sunnah, and I am telling you, these ten days are the season to bring it back to life. Say it out loud. Say it in the car. Say it as you walk. Teach it to your children until they say it back to you.

THE CROWN OF THE YEAR

The Day of Arafah

And now, my dear brother, my dear sister, we arrive at the very heart of these ten days, a single day that stands above every other day of the entire year. The ninth of Dhul-Hijjah. The Day of Arafah. On this day, millions of pilgrims gather upon a single vast plain outside Makkah, stripped of their wealth and their titles, dressed in nothing but simple white cloth, indistinguishable, the king beside the pauper, all of them raising their hands and their voices to the same Lord. It is the most powerful scene of human equality and human humility that exists on this earth.

So central is this day that the Prophet ﷺ taught us it is the very essence of the pilgrimage itself. Miss this day, and you have missed the Hajj entirely, no matter what else you did. Abd ar-Rahman ibn Yamar narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

الْحَجُّ عَرَفَةٌ مَنْ أَدْرَكَ لَيْلَةَ عَرَفَةَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الْفَجْرِ
فَقَدْ أَدْرَكَ الْحَجَّ

The Hajj is Arafah. *Whoever reaches the night of Arafah before the break of dawn has reached the Hajj.*

Source: Jami at-Tirmidhi: 889 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

If the standing at Arafah is the beating heart of the greatest journey a Muslim can make in his entire life, then consider what that tells you about the rank of this day in the sight of Allah. And there is more, for it was upon this exact day, while the Prophet ﷺ stood at Arafah during his Farewell Pilgrimage, that the final completion of this entire religion was revealed to him. Allah declared:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتِمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي
وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

This day I have perfected for you your religion, completed My favour upon you, and approved Islam as your religion.

Surah Al-Maidah (5:3)

There is a beautiful account preserved in al-Bukhari and Muslim about this very verse. A man once came to Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, and said: There is a verse in your Book which, had it been revealed to us Jews, we would have taken the day of its revelation as an annual festival of celebration. Umar asked which verse he meant, and the man recited this very ayah, the perfection of the

religion. And Umar replied: I know exactly the day and the place in which it was revealed to the Prophet ﷺ. It was revealed while he stood at Arafah, on a Friday.

Do you see how great this day is? On it, Allah perfected the very religion by which you live and by which you will die. And the mercy that pours down upon this day is beyond anything we can measure. Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her, narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَا مِنْ يَوْمٍ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ أَنْ يُعْتَقَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ عَبْدًا مِنَ النَّارِ
مِنْ يَوْمِ عَرَفَةَ وَإِنَّهُ لَيَدْنُو ثُمَّ يُبَاهِي بِهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ فَيَقُولُ
مَا أَرَادَ هَؤُلَاءِ

There is no day on which Allah frees more servants from the Fire than the Day of Arafah.

He draws near, then boasts of them to the angels, saying: What do these people want?

Source: Sahih Muslim: 1348 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

I want you to sit with this image, because it is one of the most moving in all of our tradition. On this day, Allah in His majesty draws near to His servants, and He *boasts* of them before the angels. He points to those dusty, dishevelled, exhausted pilgrims who have come with nothing to seek but His forgiveness, and He says to the angels: Look at them. What do they want? They want nothing but Me. There is no day in the entire year on which more people are set free from the Hellfire than this one. Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy on him, weighed the whole calendar and reached a conclusion the believer should hold close to his heart.

أَفْضَلُ أَيَّامِ الْعَامِ يَوْمُ عَرَفَةَ كَمَا أَنَّ أَفْضَلَ لَيَالِي الْعَامِ
لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ

The Day of Arafah is the best day of the year, just as the Night of Decree is the best night of the year.

Source: Ibn al-Qayyim in Zad al-Maad · **Authenticity:** Hasan

So imagine the loss, my dear brother, of the one who lets the best day of the entire year slip past him like any ordinary Tuesday, buried in his work and his phone, while the doors of forgiveness stand wide open and the mercy of Allah is pouring down upon everyone who simply reaches out for it. This day is asking something of you. It is asking you not to be among the heedless.

THE GREATEST SERMON

What the Prophet ﷺ Left Us on This Plain

There is another reason this day is forever honoured. It was upon the plain of Arafah, on this very day, that the Prophet ﷺ delivered the greatest sermon of his entire life, the Farewell Sermon, before a gathering of more than one hundred thousand of his Companions. He knew his time among them was drawing to a close. And of all the days and all the places he could have chosen to leave his final counsel to this Ummah, he chose *this* day and *this* plain.

And what did he say? He proclaimed the sanctity of human life and human wealth, declaring that the blood and property of every believer are sacred and inviolable, as sacred as this day, in this month, in this land. He reached down and lifted from the shoulders of the people the crushing burdens of the age of ignorance, abolishing its endless blood feuds and placing its usury beneath his feet. And he declared, in words that should echo in the heart of every Muslim until the end of time, that no Arab has any superiority over a non-Arab, nor any white person over any black person, except by taqwa, by their consciousness of Allah.

Reflect on what this means, my brother. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ could have taught these things in the masjid of Madinah at any time. Instead he gathered the rights of human beings, the sanctity of life and wealth and honour, the equality of every soul before its Lord, and he entrusted all of it to this day. So when Arafah returns to us each year, it returns carrying that message: that our faith is not merely worship between us and Allah, but justice and mercy between us and one another. The one who fills the Day of Arafah with prayer while wronging his neighbour, or devouring forbidden wealth, or cutting off his own family, has missed the very heart of the sermon the Prophet ﷺ delivered upon its plain.

A GIFT FOR THOSE AT HOME

One Fast, Two Years of Sins Erased

Now, most of us reading this are not standing on the plain of Arafah this year. So does that mean we are locked out of its blessing? Far from it. Allah, in His boundless generosity, has given us a way to share in this day from wherever we happen to be. The Prophet ﷺ was asked about fasting on the Day of Arafah, and his answer should make every one of us eager for it. Abu Qatadah, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that he said:

صِيَامُ يَوْمِ 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: Sahih Muslim: 1162 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

Consider the sheer generosity of your Lord. A single day of fasting, from dawn until sunset, becomes a means of wiping away the sins of two entire years, the year that has passed and the year still to come. The scholars clarify, and it is important to be honest, that this expiation covers the minor sins, while the major sins require sincere, specific repentance. But even so, what an offer this is. How foolish, how careless, would a person have to be to let it slip through his fingers?

One note of guidance here. This fast is for us who are at home, not for the pilgrim standing at Arafah. The Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ on his Farewell Pilgrimage was *not* to fast that day, so that he would have the strength for the long hours of supplication in the heat. But for the rest of us, away from the plain, this is among the most precious fasts of the entire year. So mark the day in your calendar right now. Plan your suhur. Arrange your work around it. And do not, whatever you do, let it pass you by.

THE BEST DUA OF THE YEAR

Raise Your Hands and Do Not Lower Them

So how should you fill the long, blessed hours of this great day? Above everything else, my brother, with dua. With the raising of your hands to Allah. The Prophet ﷺ taught us that the supplication of this day stands above the supplication of every other day.

خَيْرُ الدُّعَاءِ دُعَاءُ يَوْمِ عَرَفَةَ وَخَيْرُ مَا قُلْتُ أَنَا وَالنَّبِيُّونَ
مِنْ قَبْلِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ

The best of supplication is the supplication on the Day of Arafah, and the best of what I and the Prophets before me have said is: there is no god but Allah alone, without partner.

Source: Jami at-Tirmidhi: 3585 · **Authenticity:** Hasan

Notice what the Prophet ﷺ did here. He joined the best supplication of the entire year to the greatest words ever spoken by any human mouth, the words of pure monotheism. So the most precious thing you can fill this day with is not merely a long shopping list of worldly requests, as important as those may be. It is the affirmation of Allah's oneness, His sole right to be worshipped, His complete and total dominion over every single thing. Let your tongue rest in these words on the Day of Arafah, and let your heart truly mean them:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ
وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

*There is no god but Allah alone, without partner. To Him belongs the dominion and to Him belongs all praise, and **He is able to do all things**.*

The Words of Tawhid

The righteous predecessors treated the hours from after the noon prayer until the setting of the sun on the Day of Arafah as the most precious hours of the entire year. Many of them would devote those hours completely to supplication, weeping, hoping, and begging for the mercy of Allah, asking for themselves, for their families, and for the whole Ummah. So plan your day, my dear brother, my dear sister. Do not let those final golden hours before Maghrib leak away in distraction. Guard them. Spend them with your hands raised toward the One who frees necks from the Fire on that very day.

THE MEANING OF EID

What Are You Willing to Sacrifice?

Then comes the tenth day, the Day of Sacrifice, the day of Eid. On this day we honour the towering legacy of Ibrahim, peace be upon him, the father of the Prophets. We remember his willingness to surrender even his beloved son when his Lord commanded it, and how Allah ransomed the boy with a great sacrifice. And so on this day, the pilgrim and the resident alike offer the udhiyah, the sacrifice, in remembrance of that pure and total devotion. But listen carefully to what Allah teaches us about it, because it contains the lesson of the entire season.

لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهَ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ
مِنْكُمْ كَذَلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ

*Their meat will not reach Allah, nor their blood, but **what reaches Him is the piety from you.**
Thus have We subjected them to you that you may magnify Allah for that to which He has guided
you.*

Surah Al-Hajj (22:37)

Here is the thread that runs through the whole of Dhul-Hijjah. What reaches Allah is not the outward act by itself. It is the taqwa behind it, the sincerity, the devotion, the willingness to give up what we love for the sake of the One we love more. And so the example of Ibrahim places a searching question before every single one of us: what am I actually willing to sacrifice in order to obey my Lord? How far am I willing to go to seize the gift being offered in these days?

True sacrifice is rarely comfortable. It usually demands action precisely when we feel tired, and giving precisely when we feel we have little to spare. It is easy to be generous when generosity costs us nothing. The believer is truly tested by what he is willing to give when it actually costs him something. An hour of sleep given up for the night prayer. A portion of hard-earned wealth given to the poor. A comfortable, familiar sin abandoned entirely for the sake of Allah.

Return with me to the trial of Ibrahim itself, because it is the very summit of what sacrifice means. After long, aching years of longing for a child, Allah finally granted him a forbearing son. And when that son had grown old enough to walk and work beside his father, Ibrahim saw in his dreams that he was sacrificing him. And the dreams of the Prophets are revelation. Imagine the weight of that command crashing down upon a father's heart. Yet look at how he carried it. He turned to the boy not as a tyrant, but as a believer inviting his son into the same submission.

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يَبْنَىٰٓ إِلَىٰٓ أَرَىٰ فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِي
أَذْبَحُكَ فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَىٰ قَالَ يَٰأَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ
سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ ٱللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّٰبِرِينَ

*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, if Allah wills, among the patient.

Surah As-Saffat (37:102)

Look at the son. A young man is told that his own father has been commanded to slaughter him, and his reply is not protest, not panic, not a plea for his life. It is surrender: *do as you are commanded, you will find me patient, if Allah wills*. Father and son both submitted completely, the one ready to give and the other ready to be given. And when they had both surrendered utterly and Ibrahim laid him down upon his face, Allah ransomed the boy with a great sacrifice. Allah never intended for the boy to die. He intended to see the submission. And when He saw it, He gave the son back and immortalised the obedience of His friend forever.

This is what we honour on the Day of Sacrifice. It is not the blood Allah wants. It is the heart that says: whatever You command, my Lord, I will obey, even when it is the hardest thing I own. So ask yourself in these days, honestly: what is the thing I am holding back from Allah? Is it a habit? A stream of wealth? A comfort? My pride? That thing you are unwilling to lay down, *that* is your real sacrifice. And these are the days to offer it.

WINNING THE SEASON

These Ten Days in a World Built to Distract You

Let me speak to you now about the greatest obstacle standing between you and these ten days, because I do not want you to walk away inspired today and then wake up on the eleventh of Dhul-Hijjah

wondering where the time went. We live in an age, my brother, my sister, that is deliberately engineered to steal our attention. And there is no greater thief of these ten days than the small glowing device sitting in your pocket right now.

Think about how easily it happens. A season that the Prophet ﷺ declared the most beloved to Allah in all the year can pass us by *entirely* while we scroll, while we are dragged from one trivial thing to the next, our precious irreplaceable hours leaking away completely unnoticed. So let these ten days be genuinely different. Let them be the days in which you deliberately put the phone down and pick the Quran up. Days in which the takbir replaces the endless feed. Days in which you are present with Allah rather than absent with your screen. Imagine, when these ten days end, measuring them not by what you consumed but by what you actually offered to Allah.

And bring this worship into the real texture of your life, not some imaginary version of it. If you work, plan right now how you will fast the Day of Arafah while still meeting your responsibilities, preparing your meal before dawn and shaping the rhythm of your day around it. If Allah has blessed you with wealth, let these days carry a steady stream of charity. And notice how easy our very age has made this. A gift to the poor and the hungry is now a matter of moments from the same device that so often distracts us. So use the tool against the distraction.

Gather your family in the evenings of these days to make the takbir together, to read even a little Quran together, so that your children grow up knowing in their very bones that these are sacred days and not ordinary ones. Teach the young ones the words of the takbir. Let them hear their mother and father openly magnifying Allah in the home. Because the habits we model in these days become the inheritance we leave behind long after we are gone.

A REMINDER CARRIED HOME

Between Hope and Effort

Before we turn to what you will actually do this week, I want to leave you holding the balance that a believer is always meant to hold. On one side is hope, and on the other is effort, and the wise soul lets neither one stand alone. So let no one reading this despair of these days because his past is heavy with sin. Understand me clearly: Arafah was *made* for the heavy-laden. Allah frees from the Fire on this day those who come to Him exactly as they are, dishevelled and dusty and full of regret. Your past does not disqualify you. It qualifies you to come running.

And on the other hand, let no one grow complacent and waste this entire season in comfortable heedlessness, casually presuming upon a mercy he made not the slightest effort to seek. The believer hopes like a person who truly knows the boundless generosity of his Lord, and he strives like a person who knows with certainty that this season will not come again. Ask yourself, honestly, as these blessed days unfold around you: How is my prayer? Am I guarding it at its proper time and praying it with a present heart? How is my tongue? Is it busy with the remembrance of Allah or lost in idle chatter? And when this season has passed and I stand one day to give my account, what exactly will I have to present from it?

These ten days are a gift renewed for you year after year after year. The one who treats them like a genuine treasure will find his heart transformed by the time the Day of Sacrifice arrives. And Allah gathers the whole of right conduct for us in a single, luminous verse that is worth carrying home in your heart as these days begin.

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.*

Surah An-Nahl (16:90)

So remember Allah in these ten days, and He will remember you. Magnify Him as He has guided you, thank Him for His endless favours, and He will increase you. The season of mercy has arrived, my dear brother, my dear sister. The doors are open. Now let us decide, together, exactly what we will do before they close.

☰ Your Action Plan: The Golden Ten

Don't just read — choose what you will act on this week.

1 Revive the takbir on your tongue

Say 'Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar, la ilaha illa Allah, Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar, wa lillahi al-hamd' out loud as you walk, drive, and wait. Bring back the sunnah the Companions carried into the marketplace.

DAILY

Make it last: keep it daily until it becomes second nature — a habit for the rest of your life.

2 Fast the Day of Arafah

Fix the ninth of Dhul-Hijjah in your calendar now, plan your suhur, and shape your work around it. A single fast to erase the sins of two years is a gift no believer should refuse.

THIS WEEK

Make it last: once this first week is done, don't stop — carry it on as a lifelong habit.

3 Guard the final hours before Maghrib on Arafah

Protect the hours from after Dhuhr until sunset for earnest duaa. Raise your hands, weep if you can, and beg for yourself, your parents, your family, and the whole Ummah.

THIS WEEK

Make it last: once this first week is done, don't stop — carry it on as a lifelong habit.

4 Trade the feed for the Quran and charity

Put the phone down and pick up at least one page of Quran daily, and give a small charity each day from the same device that usually distracts you. Gather your family in the evenings for takbir together.

DAILY

Make it last: keep it daily until it becomes second nature — a habit for the rest of your life.

🚩 The 10-Day Dhul-Hijjah Challenge

For all ten days, commit to three simple things: guard your five daily prayers at their times, keep the takbir alive on your tongue each day, and give a small charity every single day, however little. Then crown it with the fast of Arafah and its final hours of duaa. Do not treat this as a one-time sprint. Let this be the year the habits are born that carry you through every Dhul-Hijjah for the rest of your life, until you meet the One who freed necks from the Fire on the very day you begged Him.

Make it stick – and make it last

- ✓ **Write it down.** Put your chosen action on a sticky note on your mirror, desk, or fridge – somewhere you cannot miss it.
- ✓ **Print this plan** and tick each action off as you do it.
- ✓ **Set a daily reminder** on your phone or calendar so it never slips your mind.
- ✓ **Keep a one-line journal** each night – did I do it today? how did it go? – and watch your streak grow.

Don't aim for one good day or week – aim to keep it for life. A habit only counts once it outlives the challenge.