

SIFAH LECTURE SERIES

Standing at 'Arafah: The Journey That Rewrites Your Life

A practical lecture — knowledge you can act on

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SIFAH

SCHOOL OF ISLAMIC
FOUNDATIONS &
ADVOCACY FOR HUMANITY

Standing at ‘Arafah: The Journey That Rewrites Your Life

The pillar that asks not for a moment of your day, but for the whole of your heart — and the day when Allah frees more souls from the Fire than any other.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The Pillar That Asks You to Travel

My dear brother, my dear sister, let me begin with something simple. Of the five pillars upon which Islam is built, four of them ask something of you where you already are. The *shahādah* lives on your tongue and in your heart. The prayer visits you five times a day in your own home and masjid. The *zakāh* is drawn from wealth you already hold. The fast comes to you in your own kitchen at your own table. But there is one pillar that does not come to you. It asks you to go to *it*. It asks you to leave your home, close the door on your comfort, walk away from your work and your routine, and cross deserts and oceans if you must, until you are standing at the oldest house of worship on the face of the earth.

I want you to feel the weight of that. This is the Ka‘bah, the House that Ibrāhīm and his son Ismā‘īl raised with their own bare hands, laying stone upon stone while Ibrāhīm prayed that Allah would accept it from them. And Allah, in His wisdom, made a visit to that House a duty upon every believer who has the means to reach it. Not a suggestion. Not a spiritual bonus for the very pious. A **duty**, a debt owed, written on the neck of every capable Muslim.

ج
وَلِلّٰهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ اِلَيْهِ سَبِيْلًا
وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِيْنَ

And Hajj to the House is a duty owed to Allah by the people, by whoever is able to find a way to it. And whoever disbelieves, then indeed Allah is free of need of the worlds.

Surah Aal-Imran (3:97)

Read those five words again slowly: *whoever is able to find a way to it*. That is the condition. And here is where I want to be honest with you, the way a brother is honest with a brother. If Allah has given you the health in your body and the wealth in your account to make this journey, and you keep telling yourself, "next year, next year, when the kids are older, when work settles down, when I've saved a little more" — then understand what you are doing. You are gambling with an obligation that Allah has already placed on your shoulders. The Prophet ﷺ urged the one who intends Hajj to hasten toward it, because none of us — not one — knows what illness, what hardship, what accident, what final breath, stands between us and the road.

Do you know how many people had the money and the health and said "next year," and then next year the money was gone, or the knees gave out, or the heart stopped? The Ka'bah does not wait for our convenience. The invitation is open now. Do not let it close while you are busy scheduling it.

AMONG THE GREATEST DEEDS

Where Hajj Stands in the Eyes of Allah

Let me show you exactly how highly Allah's Messenger ﷺ ranked this journey. Someone came and asked him a beautiful question — the kind of question we should all be asking: which deed is the most excellent, the most beloved, the one that lifts a servant highest? Listen to where he placed the Hajj.

سُئِلَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ: أَيُّ الْعَمَلِ أَفْضَلُ؟ قَالَ: إِيْمَانُ بِاللّٰهِ
وَرَسُولِهِ. قِيلَ: ثُمَّ مَاذَا؟ قَالَ: الْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ.
قِيلَ: ثُمَّ مَاذَا؟ قَالَ: حَجٌّ مُّبَرُورٌ

*The Prophet ﷺ was asked: Which deed is the most excellent? He said: **Faith in Allah and His Messenger.** It was said: Then what? He said: Jihad in the path of Allah. It was said: Then what? He said: **An accepted Hajj.***

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 26 and Sahih Muslim: 83 · **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun Alayh (agreed upon)

Reflect on that ranking, my brother, my sister. Faith itself — the foundation of everything. Then striving in the path of Allah with everything you have. And then, right there, breathing the same rarefied air as those two mountains of deeds: *an accepted Hajj*. The Prophet ﷺ did not place it somewhere in the middle of a long list. He placed it at the summit. That should tell you what this journey does to a soul, and how much Allah loves the servant who makes it purely for His sake.

So when you think about Hajj, stop thinking of it as an expensive holiday to a hot country, or a box to be ticked once in a lifetime. Start thinking of it as one of the very few deeds the Prophet ﷺ named among the highest a human being can offer to their Lord. When you frame it that way, the excuses start to look very small, don't they?

A SECOND BIRTH

Returning as Pure as a Newborn Child

Now I want to give you hope — the kind of hope that makes your heart race. Because you might be carrying years of sin. Maybe decades. Maybe there are nights you cannot sleep because of things you have done, mistakes that follow you like a shadow, a record you are ashamed to imagine being read out on the Day of Judgement. Let me tell you what Allah offers the one who completes this journey purely for His

sake. He offers a renewal so total, so complete, that it takes you back to the very first moment you entered this world.

مَنْ حَجَّ لِلَّهِ فَلَمْ يَرْفُثْ وَلَمْ يَفْسُقْ رَجَعَ كَيَوْمَ وَلَدَتْهُ
أُمُّهُ

Whoever performs Hajj for the sake of Allah and does not engage in obscenity or wrongdoing returns like the day his mother bore him.

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 1521 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

Like the day his mother bore him. Do you understand what that means? A newborn baby has no sins. Not one. The slate is not just cleaned — it is as if it was never written on at all. A lifetime's mistakes, wiped. The guilt you have carried, lifted off your chest. You come home not as a slightly-improved version of yourself, but as innocent as the child who was placed in your mother's arms, wrapped and crying and utterly without blame.

There is no second birth in this world, my dear brother, my dear sister. You cannot go back and be a baby again. But the Hajj is as close as a believer will ever come to being born a second time — a chance to begin the whole of your life again with absolutely nothing weighing on your soul. And it does not stop there. The Prophet ﷺ told us that an accepted Hajj, a *Hajj mabrūr*, has a reward that nothing in all of creation can satisfy except one thing.

الْعُمْرَةُ إِلَى الْعُمْرَةِ كَفَّارَةٌ لِمَا بَيْنَهُمَا، وَالْحَجُّ الْمَبْرُورُ
لَيْسَ لَهُ جَزَاءٌ إِلَّا الْجَنَّةُ

Umrah to Umrah is an expiation for what is between them, and the accepted Hajj has no reward except Paradise.

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 1773 and Sahih Muslim: 1349 · **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun Alayh (agreed upon)

No reward except Paradise. Think about the enormity of that promise. Allah could have said the accepted Hajj brings a great reward, or a doubled reward, or a mountain of good deeds. Instead He tied it directly to Jannah itself, as if to say: the account is settled, the debt is paid, the destination is secured. What price would you pay for that? What discomfort would you not endure, what savings would you not spend, for a deed that Allah Himself has weighed against nothing less than eternal Paradise?

WHAT MAKES IT ACCEPTED

The Hajj That Changes You

But notice the word the Prophet ﷺ kept using: *mabrūr*, accepted. Not just any Hajj — an accepted one. So let me ask you the question every serious pilgrim must ask: what makes a Hajj accepted? The scholars explained it beautifully. An accepted Hajj is one untouched by sin and disobedience along the way, performed with sincerity of heart and beauty of character, and its clearest sign — the thing you can actually check — is that the person comes home **better than they left**.

More generous than before. Gentler with their family than before. More devoted in their prayers than before. Quicker to forgive, slower to anger, softer in the heart. Because a Hajj that leaves you exactly the way it found you — same temper, same greed, same backbiting tongue, same neglect of your Lord — has not yet been accepted. The stamp in your passport does not stamp your soul. The transformation does.

So the question for every single pilgrim is not merely: did I complete the rites? Did I do the ṭawāf, did I stand at ‘Arafah, did I stone the pillars? The real question is: *did I come home a different person?* And I

want you to hold onto that thought, because it is the golden thread that runs through everything I am about to tell you. This entire journey is designed to change you. If you let it.

EVERY CROWN REMOVED

The White Cloth That Humbles the World

Now let me paint you a scene that teaches more powerfully than a thousand lectures. When the pilgrim enters the state of *iḥrām*, he takes off his ordinary clothes — the branded shirt, the tailored suit, the uniform that told the world who he was — and he wraps himself in two simple pieces of plain white cloth. Unstitched. No logo. No colour. No rank.

And here is the astonishing part. This exact same cloth is worn by the king and by the labourer. By the billionaire and by the man who saved for fifteen years to afford the ticket. By the celebrated scholar and by the Muslim who accepted Islam last month. By the citizen of the powerful nation and the refugee with no nation at all. Picture millions of human beings standing shoulder to shoulder in identical dress, and I promise you, you could not tell the powerful from the powerless, the rich from the poor, the famous from the forgotten. Because before Allah, my dear brother, my dear sister, that distinction never actually existed. Hajj simply makes visible what was always true.

This is a rehearsal for the Day of Judgement — a dress rehearsal, literally. On that Day, every soul will rise from the grave in a single plain shroud and stand before its Lord with no title, no bank balance, no bloodline, and nothing whatsoever to recommend it except its deeds and the *taqwā* in its heart. The white cloth of the pilgrim is a preview of the shroud that awaits us all. And it is teaching you now, while you can still change, what will matter then, when you no longer can.

And this is not a random detail of ritual. It is the lived, breathing form of a principle the Prophet ﷺ proclaimed to the whole of humanity. Do you remember what happened on the day Makkah was conquered? Of all the Companions, it was Bilāl — an African man who had once been enslaved, who had been dragged across the burning sand and had a rock placed on his chest to make him abandon his faith — it was Bilāl whom the Prophet ﷺ raised onto the roof of the Ka'bah to call the adhān over the holiest site on the face of the earth. And the nobles of Quraysh, the men who had ranked themselves above everyone by their blood, stood below and watched. Islam took the man the world had counted as nothing, and placed his voice above every head in Makkah.

So let me bring this home to you and me. When we step back from these beautiful reflections into our ordinary lives, we have to ask an uncomfortable question: have we let back into our own hearts the very pride that the white cloth was sent to destroy? The quiet looking-down on another people. The joke made at the expense of a race. The marriage refused because of skin colour. The masjid where one community is somehow made to feel less welcome than another. The white cloth of the pilgrim is a rebuke to every one of those things. We are the children of one father, standing in one garment, before one Lord. Do not let the crown the world put on your head fool you into forgetting it.

A HUNDRED THOUSAND

Where a Single Prayer Weighs a Fortune

Let me show you something about that sacred precinct that should make your heart ache with longing. Allah placed within the boundaries of Makkah a multiplication of reward that exists nowhere else on the earth. Listen to what the Prophet ﷺ said about the worship performed there.

صَلَاةٌ فِي مَسْجِدِي هَذَا أَفْضَلُ مِنْ أَلْفِ صَلَاةٍ فِيمَا
سِوَاهُ، إِلَّا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ، وَصَلَاةٌ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ
أَفْضَلُ مِنْ مِائَةِ أَلْفِ صَلَاةٍ فِيمَا سِوَاهُ

A prayer in this mosque of mine is better than a thousand prayers anywhere else, except the Sacred Mosque, and a prayer in the Sacred Mosque is better than a hundred thousand prayers anywhere else.

Source: Sunan Ibn Majah: 1406 · **Authenticity:** Sahih (graded by al-Albani)

A hundred thousand prayers, in the reward of just one. Let that number sink in. Sit with it for a moment. Now imagine the pilgrim who spends his days in that mosque, praying his five daily prayers there, adding his voluntary prayers, praying in the depths of the night — every single prostration

weighed as if it were a hundred thousand prostrations. How many lifetimes of worship is he gathering in a matter of weeks? It is a measure — one we can barely comprehend — of how much Allah honours that place and blesses that journey.

If you have never gone, this hadith should fill your heart with a burning longing to stand there, to press your forehead to that blessed ground even once. And if Allah has already granted you the gift of going, this hadith should fill you with gratitude that overwhelms you — that you, of all people, were allowed to taste it. There is nowhere on this earth like the House of Allah, my dear brother, my dear sister. And the one whom Allah personally invites to it has been handed a gift that no amount of wealth could ever purchase if Allah had not first opened the door.

And there is more, because the Prophet ﷺ taught us that returning again and again to this journey — joining Hajj and ‘Umrah one after another — does not only cleanse the soul. It lifts the burdens of this worldly life as well.

تَابِعُوا بَيْنَ الْحَجِّ وَالْعُمْرَةِ، فَإِنَّهُمَا يَنْفِيَانِ الْفَقْرَ
وَالذُّنُوبَ كَمَا يَنْفِي الْكَبِيرُ خَبَثَ الْحَدِيدِ وَالذَّهَبِ
وَالْفِضَّةِ

Follow up the Hajj with the ‘Umrah, for the two of them remove poverty and sins as the bellows removes the impurity of iron, gold, and silver.

Source: Jami at-Tirmidhi: 810 · **Authenticity:** Hasan

Have you ever watched a blacksmith work? He takes a lump of raw metal, streaked with rust and impurity, and he blasts it with the fierce breath of the bellows until the heat drives out everything that does not belong, until what remains is pure, gleaming metal. That, said the Prophet ﷺ, is what Hajj and ‘Umrah do to a soul. They blast out the rust of sin. They drive out even the grip of poverty. The pilgrim

is the guest of Allah — and Allah does not send His guests home poorer than they arrived. He enriches them, in their souls first, and very often in their lives as well.

So let no one hesitate out of fear that spending on this journey will leave them poor. The Prophet ﷺ promised the exact opposite. The one who keeps returning to the House of Allah will find that Allah keeps returning provision to him — and washes his sins away in the very same journey. When have you ever heard of a transaction like that? You give, and you are enriched. You spend, and you are made wealthier. This is the economy of the Most Generous.

THE FINAL ADDRESS

The Sermon That Still Speaks to Us Today

Now I want to take you to the most solemn moment of the entire pilgrimage. It was during the Hajj, on the ninth day of Dhul-Hijjah, in the vast valley of ‘Arafah, before a gathering of tens of thousands, that the Prophet ﷺ delivered the sermon we now call the Farewell Sermon. Why farewell? Because it was the last great address of his blessed life. He knew, my dear brother, my dear sister, that he was leaving them. He told them plainly that he did not know whether he would still be among them after that year.

So imagine the weight of that hour. A man who knows his time is almost done, standing before his people for the final time, choosing his last great words. What would you say, if you knew? What would you distill your entire life's teaching into? Whatever he chose to leave them with in that moment — that is what he considered most essential for this Ummah to carry until the end of time. So lean in and listen to what the Messenger of Allah ﷺ chose.

He declared the life, the property, and the honour of every single Muslim to be a sacred, untouchable trust — as inviolable as that sacred day and that sacred place — so that no believer could ever wrong another in his blood, his wealth, or his good name. He commanded that trusts be returned to their rightful owners. He forbade harming others, laying down the principle that no one should be harmed so that no one is harmed in return. With a single sentence he abolished the interest and the blood-feuds of the age of ignorance — and he began, with breathtaking justice, by cancelling the debts owed to his own family first. He warned them of Satan, who had given up all hope of being worshipped openly but who still hoped to be obeyed in the small things we dismiss as harmless. He reminded the men, tenderly, of the rights their women hold over them, commanding kindness toward wives who are partners and committed helpers, never possessions to be owned.

And then he proclaimed the sentence that shattered the pride of every nation, every tribe, and every colour, for all time to come.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، أَلَا إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ وَاحِدٌ، وَإِنَّ أَبَاكُمْ
وَاحِدٌ، أَلَا لَا فَضْلَ لِعَرَبِيٍّ عَلَى عَجَمِيٍّ، وَلَا لِعَجَمِيٍّ
عَلَى عَرَبِيٍّ، وَلَا لِأَحْمَرَ عَلَى أَسْوَدَ، وَلَا لِأَسْوَدَ عَلَى
أَحْمَرَ، إِلَّا بِالتَّقْوَى

*O people, your Lord is One and your father is one. There is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab, nor of a non-Arab over an Arab, nor of a white person over a black, nor of a black over a white, **except by taqwā**.*

Source: Musnad Ahmad: 23489 · **Authenticity:** Sahih (graded by al-Albani)

Except by taqwā. Read those words in the context of the world they were spoken into. This was a world that ranked human beings by their blood, their tribe, and the shade of their skin. And the Prophet ﷺ stood before a gathering of every kind of person under the sun and erased every false hierarchy with one breath. The only thing — the **only** thing — that raises one human being above another in the sight of Allah is the God-consciousness hidden in his heart. And here is the beauty of it: that consciousness is something no eye can see, no lineage can buy, no wealth can inherit, and no passport can grant. It is available to the poorest and the richest, the darkest and the lightest, equally. The playing field before Allah is perfectly level.

And then he left them the two ropes that would keep this Ummah from ever falling into the pit of misguidance: the Book of Allah and his own Sunnah. Hold fast to these two, he told them, and you will never be lost. Then he turned his blessed face toward the sky and asked Allah to bear witness that he had delivered the message in full — and the people answered as one voice that yes, he had delivered it. But

then he did something that reaches across fourteen centuries and touches you and me directly. He commanded that those who were present carry his words to those who were absent, and he said that perhaps the last to hear them would understand them better than the first who heard them.

My dear brother, my dear sister — *we are the absent ones he was speaking about*. That sermon was not for that valley alone. The trust has travelled across the centuries and landed in your lap, in this very moment. So reflect on what it means that the Prophet ﷺ chose these particular matters for his final address. He did not spend his last great sermon on the fine details of ritual or the technical points of law — though he had taught all of that thoroughly. With the whole future of the Ummah listening through that gathering, he chose to speak about **how we treat one another**: the sanctity of a person's blood and wealth and honour, the returning of trusts, the ending of exploitation, kindness to women, the equality of all people, and clinging to the Book and the Sunnah.

It is as though he were telling us, across all these years: the true test of your faith is not only in your worship of Allah, but in your justice and your mercy toward His creation. A community can pray, and fast, and even make the pilgrimage — and still betray the Farewell Sermon completely, if it cheats in its business dealings, crushes the weak, despises another race, or wrongs its women. He gave us, in that final hour, the very measure by which we are meant to judge ourselves. And it would be a strange and hollow thing indeed to honour that sermon with our tears once a year and then ignore its commands for the other fifty-one weeks.

THE DAY THE RELIGION WAS COMPLETED

What Makes 'Arafah the Greatest Day

That sermon was delivered on the greatest day of the entire Islamic year — the Day of 'Arafah — and this day carries honours that belong to no other day on the calendar. It was on this very day, as the Prophet ﷺ stood before the people at 'Arafah, that Allah revealed the verse announcing the completion of the religion itself. Imagine the moment: the message that had been descending for twenty-three years, verse by verse, trial by trial, was declared finished.

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 have approved for you Islam as a religion.*

Surah Al-Maidah (5:3)

There is a story about this verse that I love, and it will show you just how precious this day is. It is reported that a Jewish man once came to ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, may Allah be pleased with him, and said to him: "There is a verse in your Book which, had it been revealed to us, we would have taken the very day of its revelation as a festival, a day of celebration for all time." ‘Umar asked him: which verse? And the man recited this one — *this day I have perfected for you your religion*. And ‘Umar replied, with the certainty of a man who was there: I know well the day and the place in which it was revealed to the Prophet ﷺ. It was revealed while he stood at ‘Arafah, and it was a Friday.

Reflect on that, my dear brother, my dear sister. On this one single day, the religion was perfected, the favour of Allah upon this Ummah was made complete and full, and Islam was chosen for us as our way of life. Every Day of ‘Arafah that comes around, year after year, carries the echo of that completion. It remains, in the words of the scholars, an *‘īd* — a festival — for the people of Islam who stand in its blessing. So how could we possibly let it pass by like any ordinary Wednesday or Thursday, our heads buried in our phones, when it is the anniversary of the day our religion was made whole?

FREEDOM FROM THE FIRE

The Day Allah Draws Near and Boasts of You

And now I come to what may be the most beautiful thing I can tell you about this day. The Day of ‘Arafah is the day on which Allah frees more of His servants from the Fire than on any other day of the entire year. The Prophet ﷺ described for us what is happening up in the heavens while the pilgrims stand exhausted on the plain below.

مَا مِنْ يَوْمٍ أَكْثَرُ 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 picture the scene, because it will move you. Millions of pilgrims stand on that vast dusty plain. They are dishevelled. Their fine clothes are gone, replaced by simple white cloth now stained with dust and sweat. They have travelled from every corner of the earth — from the mountains of Morocco and the islands of Indonesia and the cities of the West and the villages of Africa. Their hands are raised to the sky. Their tears are falling freely down their faces. And they are asking for one thing above all else: forgiveness. Just forgiveness.

And then — subhānAllah — Allah, the Most High, draws near. And He turns to His angels, and He speaks about these servants of His not in anger, not in disappointment, but in something that resembles *pride*. He asks the angels: what do these people want? As if to say — look at them. Look how they have travelled to Me. Look how they stand before Me, hungry and tired and weeping, wanting nothing of this world, wanting only Me. And in that moment He frees them from the Fire in numbers beyond any other day in the year.

Now here is the mercy that reaches those of us who are not there. This is exactly why the Prophet ﷺ taught us that fasting the Day of 'Arafah — even from our homes, thousands of miles from that plain — expiates the sins of two entire years: the year that has passed and the year to come. Because this is a day soaked, drenched, saturated in the mercy of Allah. You do not need a plane ticket to enter its blessing. You need only to fast, to raise your hands, and to turn your heart toward the same Lord to whom the

pilgrims are turning. The plain of ‘Arafah may be far from you — but the mercy of ‘Arafah reaches every single heart that turns toward it.

THE FIRST PROMISE

The Covenant Your Soul Has Forgotten

There is a deeper secret to this place called ‘Arafah, and it will change the way you see your own existence. The scholars relate that it was here, at this very place, that Allah took the first covenant from the whole of humanity — before you were born, before your parents were born, before this world was as we know it. Allah brought forth from the loins of Ādam all of his descendants — every single soul that would ever live, including yours and mine — and He made them testify against themselves.

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ
وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَى شَهِدْنَا

*And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their loins, their descendants, and made them testify over themselves: **Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes, we have testified.***

Surah Al-Araf (7:172)

Every soul in this gathering — yours included, mine included — once stood before Allah and answered with a single word: *Yes. You are our Lord.* We do not remember the moment. It is buried beneath the veil of our worldly memory. But the testimony was given, and it is written, and it is real. It is, in a sense, the oldest thing about you — older than your name, older than your body, the very first word your soul ever spoke.

So do you see what happens when a believer stands at ‘Arafah, or fasts its day, or raises his hands to Allah in its blessed hours? He is renewing a promise his soul made before the beginning of the world. He is saying "Yes" again — yes, You alone are my Lord. And here is the profound truth: the whole of our religion, from the first prayer to the last breath, is simply the keeping of that first word. Every sujūd is a

"yes." Every fast is a "yes." Every act of obedience is your soul remembering the covenant it once gave. And on the Day of 'Arafah, Allah opens the door wide for every soul that wishes to come home to the covenant it made at the dawn of time.

HERE I AM

The Journey That Is a Rehearsal for Death

There is a meaning woven through every single step of the Hajj that the pilgrim feels deep in his bones — the meaning of *answering a call*. From the very moment he enters ihram, the pilgrim raises his voice with the words of the talbiyah: *Labbayk Allāhumma labbayk* — here I am, O Allah, here I am; here I am, You have no partner, here I am. He repeats it on the road, in the valley, on the plain, alone and in the crowd. And what is he really saying, over and over? He is saying: **You called, and I have come.**

It is the answer of a servant to an invitation that Allah extended through Ibrāhīm thousands of years ago, when he was commanded to proclaim the Hajj to all of mankind. And Allah carried that ancient call across the centuries, over the mountains and the seas and the generations, until it reached this specific pilgrim, in this specific year, and pulled him out of his home and drew him to the House. To stand at the Ka'bah is to be someone whom Allah personally invited — and who had the honour of saying yes.

And here is the reflection I want to leave with you, because it applies to every one of us whether we have gone or not. The whole journey of Hajj is a rehearsal for the greatest journey of all — the one we will each take, alone, to Allah. Think about it. The pilgrim leaves his home, his family, and his wealth behind — exactly as the dying man leaves everything behind. He wraps himself in white cloth that is almost a burial shroud. He stands on a vast plain among a numberless crowd, stripped of every rank and title — exactly as we will stand on the plain of gathering on the Day of Judgement. He is tired, dusty, and reduced to his bare, naked self before his Lord.

Hajj, then, is a mirror held up to death and to the Day of Reckoning. And the believer who has tasted it — or who simply reflects deeply on it, as we are doing right now — returns to his ordinary life never quite forgetting where the real journey leads. Because the truth is, my dear brother, my dear sister, we are **all** travellers to Allah, whether or not we have yet made the journey to His House. The plane will be caught by some. The grave will be reached by all. And the wise one prepares for that road while he still can, before the call comes that he cannot delay.

Living the Sermon Where You Stand

So let me gather all of this into your hands before we close. We have seen that Hajj is a binding duty upon everyone who can reach it, ranked among the most excellent of all deeds, returning the sincere pilgrim as pure as a newborn child, with no reward worthy of it but Paradise itself. We stood again in the valley of ‘Arafah and listened to the Farewell Sermon — with its sacred trusts, its shattering of every false hierarchy, and the two ropes the Prophet ﷺ left in our hands: the Qur’an and the Sunnah. And we saw that the Day of ‘Arafah is the day the religion was perfected, the day Allah frees the most servants from the Fire, and the ancient place of our very first covenant.

Now here is the point I most want you to walk away with. Almost everything the Prophet ﷺ entrusted to us in that final sermon can be practised **this very week**, without you travelling a single mile. You do not need to stand at ‘Arafah to return a trust to its owner. You do not need to enter iḥrām to settle a debt you owe. You do not need to circle the Ka’bah to guard your tongue from a brother’s honour, to be gentle with your mother and your wife and your children, or to tear the poison of racism out of your heart. The pilgrim performs these virtues in Makkah for a single season — but the Farewell Sermon demands them of every Muslim, in every place, for an entire lifetime.

So let those of us who cannot yet make the journey take real comfort in this: the deepest lessons of the Hajj are not locked away inside its rituals. They are a way of carrying yourself among people, a way of treating the creation of Allah with justice and mercy — and that road is wide open to you today, in your home, at your work, on your street. And let no one who is heedless imagine that the mercy of this season is scattered upon the careless. It is poured out upon those who plan, who fast, who repent, who reach. The pilgrims have crossed the entire world for this. Surely you and I can cross the short distance from heedlessness to remembrance, and meet the very same mercy at the other side. Do not, I beg you, stand outside the most forgiving day of the year with your arms folded. And remember the seal Allah placed upon the whole 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.

Surah An-Nahl (16:90)

☰ Your Action Plan: Meet the Mercy of ‘Arafah

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

1 Fast the Day of ‘Arafah

Even if you are far from the pilgrimage, fast the 9th of Dhul-Hijjah with a sincere heart. The Prophet ﷺ promised it expiates the sins of two full years. Set the reminder now so the day does not slip past you.

THIS MONTH

Make it last: once this first month is done, keep it for good as a permanent habit.

2 Make the firm intention for Hajj

If Allah has given you the health and the means, stop saying 'next year.' Make the real intention, open a dedicated savings plan, and take the first concrete step toward the journey this week. And if you cannot yet reach it, intend it sincerely and save toward it, for the one who truly intends a good deed is written among its people.

THIS WEEK

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

3 Return a trust and settle a debt

Live the Farewell Sermon at home. Return something entrusted to you, repay money you owe, and ask forgiveness from anyone whose honour or property you have wronged. Arrive at your worship with a clean account.

THIS WEEK

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

4 Tear out the pride from your heart

Identify one attitude of superiority you have carried — over a race, a nation, a class, or a family — and consciously reject it. There is no nobility except by taqwā. Speak to the person you have looked down on with genuine respect.

TODAY

Make it last: once you begin today, keep it every day after — until it becomes a permanent habit for life.

5 Renew your covenant with real repentance

On ‘Arafah, name the sin you have carried longest, resolve to leave it, and turn to your Lord to wash it away. Renew the 'Yes' your soul first spoke, and be among those Allah boasts of to His angels.

DAILY

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

🚩 The 7-Day ‘Arafah Challenge

For the next seven days, live as though you are already wearing the white cloth. Each day, do one thing the pilgrim does in spirit: guard your tongue from a single conversation you would normally join, give something in charity however small, pray one prayer with the focus of a person standing before the Ka’bah, and each night name one sin to leave behind and one person to forgive. Fast the Day of ‘Arafah at the heart of the week. Do not let the challenge end on the seventh day — let it plant a permanent habit, so that whether or not Allah calls you to His House this year, you carry the Hajj in your character for the rest of your life.

✍️ 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.