

SIFAH LECTURE SERIES

# Beginning Again: A New Year, A New You

*A practical lecture — knowledge you can act on*

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**SIFAH**

SCHOOL OF ISLAMIC  
FOUNDATIONS &  
ADVOCACY FOR HUMANITY

# Beginning Again: A New Year, A New You

*A new Islamic year is not just a number on a calendar; it is a mercy from Allah, a milestone placed in your path to make you stop, take account, and begin the journey back to Him.*

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## WHY THIS MATTERS

### Another Year Has Slipped Through Your Fingers

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My dear brother, my dear sister, I want you to pause with me for just a moment before you read another word. A new Islamic year has arrived. And I know how easy it is to let that fact wash over you like any other piece of news, a headline you scroll past on your way to something else. But I am asking you not to. Because a new year is not merely the turning of a calendar or the changing of a number at the top of a page. It is a message, hand-delivered to you from your Lord, and its message is quietly devastating: *your time in this world is running out, one breath at a time, and your meeting with Him is closer today than it was yesterday.*

Think about it honestly. Last Muharram feels like it was only a few weeks ago, does it not? You made your intentions, you had your plans, you told yourself *this* would be the year. And now an entire year has passed. Twelve months. Fifty-two Fridays. Thousands of prayers, some prayed with a full heart, many rushed through, and some, if we are truthful, missed altogether. Where did it all go? It went the way it always goes: silently, without asking your permission, without waiting for you to be ready.

Time is among the very greatest of all the blessings Allah has given you. And yet, of all His blessings, it is the one we squander with the least thought. We guard our money carefully; we would never leave our wallet open on a table in a crowded place. But we leave the hours of our lives lying open to be stolen by anything and everything. This is exactly why it is no accident that Allah opens one of the shortest, sharpest chapters of His entire Book with an oath sworn upon time itself. When Allah swears by something, He is telling you: **stop, and pay attention to this.**

وَالْعَصْرِ \* إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ \* إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَّصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَّصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

*By time, indeed mankind is in loss, except those who believe and do righteous deeds and advise one another to truth and advise one another to patience.*

Surah Al-Asr (103:1-3)

Imam ash-Shafi'i, may Allah have mercy on him, said something remarkable about this tiny surah. He said that if people reflected on nothing but this one chapter, it would be enough to guide them. Look at what Allah is telling you. By time, He swears, all of mankind is drowning in loss. Every single one. Drifting toward ruin as the hours of their lives drain away like water from a cracked jar. Everyone, that is, except the few who fill their time with four things: faith, righteous deeds, calling one another to truth, and holding to patience together.

Do you see the lesson buried here, my brother? This surah cuts against everything the world screams at you. The world says: live longer, and you have won. Allah says: no. A long life spent in heedlessness is not a gain, *it is simply a longer loss*. The person who lives eighty heedless years has not succeeded over the one who lived forty; he has only accumulated forty more years of loss. Real success belongs only to the one who trades his time for iman, for good deeds, for truth, and for patience. And so the new year arrives and asks you one simple, piercing question, and I want you to sit with it: *Of all the time Allah has given me, how much did I spend in profit, and how much did I pour into loss?*

#### THE BLESSING WE THROW AWAY

## The Theft You Don't Even Notice

Let me be very direct with you, because I think we all need it. Of all the blessings Allah has poured over us, time is the one we treat with the least care. And our age, this strange age we live in, has made squandering it easier than at any point in human history. Let me paint you a scene you will recognise instantly, because I have lived it and so have you.

You pick up your phone. You only mean to glance at one message, check one thing, watch for a moment. And then you surface. You lift your head and realise an hour is gone. A whole hour of the fixed, finite, dwindling life that Allah gave you, dissolved into an endless scroll of things you will not remember by tomorrow morning. Nothing gained. No knowledge, no reward, no closeness to Allah, no relationship strengthened. Just gone. Now multiply that single hour by the days of a week. By the weeks of a year. My brother, my sister, a person can genuinely pour *weeks* of his life into that void, weeks he can never get back, while his prayer stayed weak, his Qur'an stayed closed on the shelf, and his aging parents sat by a phone that never rang.

The Prophet ﷺ warned us of this with a precision that should shake us. He told us there are two blessings that most people are cheated out of, deceived and swindled over, without even realising it is happening.

نِعْمَتَانِ مَغْبُونٌ فِيهِمَا كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ الصِّحَّةُ وَالْفَرَاغُ

*There are two blessings which many people are cheated out of: **good health and free time.***

**Source:** Sahih al-Bukhari: 6412 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

Do you understand why we are cheated of them? Because we only ever realise their true value once they have already been taken from us. We only appreciate our health once it has become sickness, once we are lying in a hospital bed longing for the ordinary day we used to waste. And we only appreciate our free time once it has become the crushing busyness of regret, once we are old and burdened and we look back at the empty years and whisper, *if only*.

And here is the cruelty of wasted time that makes it so much worse than wasted money. A lost dirham can be replaced by another dirham. Lose a hundred pounds and you can, with effort, earn another hundred. But a lost hour is gone into eternity. It does not come back. It is not refunded. It is recorded exactly as it was spent, sealed, and it will be waiting to meet you again on the Day when Allah shows you your deeds and you are made to read your own book. This, my dear brother, is precisely why the new year is such a mercy. It is a milestone Allah lovingly places in your path to force you to stop and feel the passage of a time you would otherwise let slip by unnoticed forever.

## Check Your Provisions Before the Journey

So what does a believer who is shaken awake by all this actually do? He does not just feel guilty for an afternoon and then return to his old ways. He does something Allah Himself commanded, in a verse the scholars named the verse of self-reckoning. I want you to read it slowly, as though Allah is speaking these words directly to you, because He is.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ  
لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

*O you who believe, fear Allah, and **let every soul look to what it has sent forward for tomorrow.** And fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is fully aware of what you do.*

Surah Al-Hashr (59:18)

When Allah says "tomorrow" here, He does not mean the next twenty-four hours. He means the Day of Judgement. And He is commanding every single soul to stop, right now, and look honestly at what it has prepared and sent ahead for that Day. Picture a traveller about to set out on a long and dangerous journey across an unforgiving desert. What does the wise traveller do the night before? He checks his provisions. He counts his water, his food, his supplies. He does not simply set off and hope. My brother, you are that traveller, and the journey is to Allah, and it is the longest and most certain journey you will ever make.

Now notice something beautiful and deliberate in this verse. Allah surrounds the command with taqwa on both sides. He says fear Allah at the beginning, then commands the self-examination, then says fear Allah again at the end. It is as though He is wrapping your accounting in a blanket of God-consciousness, reminding you that this is not a cold audit of numbers, but an honest standing before the One who sees everything you have ever done, in public and in private.

A new year is the most natural moment in the world for this reckoning. Think about how businesses operate. At the end of every financial year, a serious company closes its books. It tallies its profit and its loss. It looks at what worked and what failed, and it plans accordingly. Now let me ask you honestly: if a business will do that for mere money that it will leave behind at death, how much more should you, whose true business is your entire eternal Hereafter, close the books on your own soul and ask the real question, *what have I actually earned this year?*

#### A YEAR THAT BEGINS WITH SACRIFICE

## Your Calendar Was Built on a Migration

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Have you ever stopped to wonder why our Islamic year begins the way it does? It does not begin with a festival of feasting. It does not begin with fireworks and celebration. It begins with the memory of one of the most profound events in our entire history: the Hijrah, the migration of the Prophet ﷺ from Makkah to Madinah. In fact, the very calendar we live by, the years we count, are dated from that migration. Not from the Prophet's birth. Not from the first revelation. From the Hijrah. And that, my dear brother, tells you something profound about what your faith is asking of you.

Think about what the Companions actually did, may Allah be pleased with them all. They left behind their homes. Their wealth. Their thriving businesses. Their comfort and their security. Some of them left behind their own families. And why? For one reason only: to preserve their faith and to remain close to Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. Islam, from the very first month of our year, is reminding you that faith is not merely a warm feeling you keep quietly in your heart. It demands sacrifice. It demands commitment. It demands transformation. It asks you to be willing to give up what is comfortable for the sake of what Allah loves.

But here is the part that should stop you in your tracks. The Prophet ﷺ did not leave the Hijrah locked in the past, as a heroic story only the Companions could ever live. He opened its meaning wide enough for you and me, in every age, to make a Hijrah of our own.

وَالْمُهَاجِرُ مَنْ هَجَرَ مَا نَهَى اللَّهُ عَنْهُ

*And the true migrant is the one who **abandons what Allah has forbidden.***

**Source:** Sahih al-Bukhari: 10 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

Do you see the door he opened for you? The migration that earned the Companions their eternal honour was outward, across the desert. But the Prophet ﷺ tells us that the real migrant, the one whose migration continues in every generation, is the one who migrates *away from sin*. Every believer needs his own personal Hijrah: from sins to obedience, from heedlessness to remembrance, from laziness in worship to consistency, from being drowned in the dunya to genuinely preparing for the akhirah. This is the migration the new year is inviting you to. And I have to ask you, gently but honestly: how many of us enter a new year carrying the exact same sins, the exact same habits, the exact same spiritual weaknesses we carried in the year before, with no migration at all? A new year that produces no inner change is nothing but a new number on an old life.

And notice something. In one way, your Hijrah is harder than theirs. The Companions left a place, and once they had crossed the desert, the journey was complete. They arrived. But the migration from sin is a road you walk every single day. You leave the same forbidden thing behind you each morning, and you refuse to return to it each night. It has no single arrival point; it is a direction you must choose again and again and again. Yet it shares with their Hijrah the exact same heart: a believer willing to give up what is comfortable and familiar for the sake of what Allah loves. The Companion left his house and his trade. You may have to leave a habit you genuinely enjoy, a friendship that keeps dragging you down, an income that is not clean, a screen that swallows your nights. It will cost you something, just as their Hijrah cost them everything. But the One you are migrating toward is worth infinitely more than anything you could ever leave behind.

#### THE WISDOM OF UMAR

## Judge Yourself Before You Are Judged

The greatest teacher of this self-reckoning was ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him. And I want you to write his words upon your heart, because they are among the most valuable pieces of advice a believer will ever receive. He said: *Take account of yourselves before you are taken to account. Weigh*

*your deeds before they are weighed against you. For the reckoning will be lighter upon you tomorrow if you reckon with yourselves today.*

Read that last line again. The reckoning will be lighter tomorrow, on the Day of Judgement, if you reckon with yourself today, in this life. This is not empty motivation. This is a profound spiritual law. So let me ask you the questions ‘Umar is teaching you to ask, and I want you to answer them honestly in the quiet of your own heart where no one else can hear. What habits are distancing me from Allah? What sins do I keep repeating, year after year after year, without ever truly repenting from them? Am I spending my time in ways that please my Lord, or in ways I would be ashamed to present to Him on the Day I meet Him?

And now the hardest question of all, the one that separates the heedless from the awake. *If I were to die tonight, in exactly the state I am in right now, would I be satisfied with the condition of my relationship with Allah?* I know that question stings. It is meant to. But here is the mercy hidden inside the sting: you are asking it today, while there is still time to change the answer. The person who dies tonight without asking it does not get to change anything. You do.

And understand: for the best of the believers, this was never a mere slogan. It was the daily labour of their souls. ‘Umar himself, the very man who commanded it, would strike his own foot at night and take himself to task for the day that had passed, asking his own soul, *what did you do today?* Some of the early Muslims kept account of their words and deeds the way a careful merchant tracks every single coin, knowing that the tongue alone can earn or lose a fortune in the sight of Allah. They understood a truth we forget: that the soul, left without reckoning, drifts naturally toward its desires, like a boat with no anchor and no captain. The only way to keep it on the straight path is to stop it regularly and demand an answer: *where are you going, and what have you sent ahead?*

#### HOPE FOR THE EXHAUSTED

## The Door That Never Closes

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Now, my dear brother, my dear sister, I know how these words can land on a tired heart. Because as soon as you begin to think seriously about change, Shaytan arrives. He wants nothing more than for you to stay exactly where you are, frozen, another year wasted. And so he whispers. He whispers that it is too late for you. That you have sinned too much. That you have tried before and failed, so why bother trying again. That people like *you* simply do not change. Let me tell you something with total certainty: every single one of those whispers is a lie. Because the mercy of Allah is greater than every sin a human being



could ever commit, and Allah Himself calls out, by name, to the very people who feel they have gone too far.

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن  
رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ  
الرَّحِيمُ

*Say: O My servants who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allah.*

**Indeed, Allah forgives all sins.** *Indeed, it is He who is the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.*

**Surah Az-Zumar (39:53)**

All sins, my brother. Not some of them. Not only the small ones. *All* of them, for the one who returns to Allah in sincere repentance. And Allah did not merely leave the door open and walk away. He described Himself reaching out His hand, through the day and through the night, waiting for you to turn back.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يَبْسُطُ يَدَهُ بِاللَّيْلِ لِيَتُوبَ مُسِيءُ  
النَّهَارِ وَيَبْسُطُ يَدَهُ بِالنَّهَارِ لِيَتُوبَ مُسِيءُ اللَّيْلِ حَتَّى  
تَطْلُعَ الشَّمْسُ مِنْ مَغْرِبِهَا

*Indeed, Allah stretches out His hand by night so that the one who sinned by day may repent, and He stretches out His hand by day so that the one who sinned by night may repent, **until the sun rises from its place of setting.***

**Source:** Sahih Muslim: 2759 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

I want you to truly imagine that. The Lord of the worlds, in all His majesty and greatness, extending His hand all through the night and all through the day, simply waiting for you to come home. And this door remains open until one of two things happens: either your soul reaches your throat at the moment of death, or the sun rises from the west at the end of time. Neither of those has happened to you yet. Which means the door is still open. Right now. As you read this. So perhaps this can be the year someone finally starts praying consistently. The year someone finally leaves a secret sin they have carried in shame for far too long. The year someone reconnects with the Qur'an, repairs a family tie that has been broken for years, and sincerely turns back to their Lord. Do not, I beg you, let Shaytan cheat you out of that return.

**NO ONE IS BEYOND RETURN**

## **The Man Who Killed a Hundred**

And if Shaytan is stubborn, if he keeps whispering that your sins are simply too many to forgive, then let me tell you about a man the Prophet ﷺ himself described to us, a story that should silence that whisper forever. There was a man among the people before us who had killed ninety-nine human beings. Ninety-nine souls. Sit with the weight of that number. And yet the weight of it sat so heavily on him that he could not rest. Something inside him refused to give up. He went out searching for a way back to Allah, asking who was the most knowledgeable person on earth. He was directed to a worshipper, a devout

man, and he asked him a desperate question: is there any repentance left for a man who has killed ninety-nine people?

And the worshipper, a man with far more zeal than knowledge, made a catastrophic mistake. He said no. There is no repentance for you. And in his rage and despair, the man killed him too, completing one hundred. One hundred murders on his record. And yet, my brother, look at this: *still* something in that broken soul would not stop searching for Allah. He asked again for the most knowledgeable person, and this time he was directed to a true scholar. He put the same question to him: is there any repentance for a man who has killed one hundred people? And the scholar answered with words every one of us should memorise. He said: *Who could possibly stand between you and repentance?*

Then the scholar gave him a prescription, because knowledge without wisdom is dangerous. He told the man that the land he lived in was a land of evil that would only drag him back into his old ways, and he instructed him to migrate, to make his own Hijrah, to a distant land of righteous people, and to worship Allah there. So the man set out. A killer of a hundred, walking the road toward Allah. And he died on that road, partway between the two lands, before he ever arrived. The angels of mercy and the angels of punishment disputed over his soul. And Allah commanded that the distance be measured. He was found to be even slightly closer to the land of righteousness he was striving toward, and so the angels of mercy took him.

A killer of one hundred souls, forgiven, because he turned and took even a few steps toward Allah. So I ask you, my dear brother, my dear sister: after a story like that, how can any of us ever dare to say our sins are too great, or that it is somehow too late to begin? The door is not merely open. Allah Himself leans toward the one who takes a single step in His direction.

#### A GIFT IN THE FIRST MONTH

## The Month of Allah and the Day of Ashura

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And here is more mercy still, wrapped into the very first month of your new year. Muharram is one of the four sacred months that Allah set apart from all the others. And the Prophet ﷺ honoured it with a title he gave to no other month on the calendar. He called it *the Month of Allah*. Think about the honour in that name. And he told us that fasting in it carries a special rank.

أَفْضَلُ الصَّيَامِ بَعْدَ رَمَضَانَ شَهْرُ اللَّهِ الْمُحَرَّمُ وَأَفْضَلُ  
الصَّلَاةِ بَعْدَ الْفَرِيضَةِ صَلَاةُ اللَّيْلِ

*The best fasting after Ramadan is in **Allah's month of al-Muharram**, and the best prayer after the obligatory prayer is the prayer of the night.*

**Source:** Sahih Muslim: 1163 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

The best fasting after the fasting of Ramadan itself is right here, in the opening month of your year. And the Prophet ﷺ gave special weight to one particular day within it above all the rest: the day of ‘Ashura’, the tenth of Muharram. Listen to what he said about it, and prepare to be amazed at the generosity of your Lord.

صِيَامُ يَوْمٍ عَاشُورَاءَ أَحْتَسِبُ عَلَى اللَّهِ أَنْ يُكَفِّرَ السَّنَةَ  
الَّتِي قَبْلَهُ

*Fasting the day of ‘Ashura’, I hope from Allah, **expiates the sins of the year that came before it.***

**Source:** Sahih Muslim: 1162 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

Look at this mercy, my brother, and let it move you. One sincere day of fasting can become a means of forgiveness for an entire year of minor sins behind you. What a way for Allah to open your new year, washing the page clean before you have even written the first line of the new chapter. And the Prophet ﷺ, in his wisdom, would also fast the ninth alongside the tenth, distinguishing the practice of the Muslims. So understand what is happening. The new year arrives carrying a wrapped gift in its very first month. The only question is whether you will be one of the wise ones who reaches out and takes it,

beginning the year forgiven and renewed, or whether you will let another Muharram pass with the gift sitting there, unopened.

#### FEELING OR DOING?

## Why New Year Resolutions Die by February

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Now I have to warn you about something, because it is the single greatest danger of a lecture like this one. A new year, a reminder like this, can so easily produce nothing but *emotion*. A warm feeling of resolve on a Friday that has completely evaporated by Monday morning. I do not want that for you. A new year should not merely stir your feelings. It should produce action, and lasting action at that.

We see this so clearly in the world around us at the turn of every calendar year. People make grand resolutions. The gyms suddenly fill with new faces in the first weeks of January. The planners are bought, the promises are made, the intentions are loud and sincere. And then what happens? Within a month or two, the gyms have emptied out again and the planners are gathering dust in a drawer, because those resolutions were built on a passing wave of emotion and not on a real, sustainable plan.

The believer must be warned by this. Because if people will pour that much energy into resolutions for their bodies and their bank accounts and abandon them within weeks, how much more carefully must you guard your resolutions for your soul, which actually matter for all eternity? And here is the crucial insight: the difference between the resolution that lasts and the one that dies is rarely sincerity. Almost everyone is sincere on the first day. The difference is that the lasting resolution is *small enough to actually keep*, tied to a clear and simple plan, and renewed daily before Allah. So let your new-year change be real change. Not a flood of promises that drains away by February, but a few firm, humble commitments you will still be holding when the next Muharram arrives.

#### WHERE TO BEGIN

## Start With the Prayer, Start Where You Are

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So let your resolutions be concrete, and let us begin exactly where the Day of Judgement begins for you. Begin with the prayer, for it is the very first matter you will be questioned about when you stand before Allah, and the Prophet ﷺ described it as the actual line separating faith from its abandonment.

العَهْدُ الَّذِي بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَهُمُ الصَّلَاةُ فَمَنْ تَرَكَهَا فَقَدْ كَفَرَ

*The covenant between us and them is the prayer; whoever abandons it has disbelieved.*

**Source:** Jami at-Tirmidhi: 2621 and Musnad Ahmad · **Authenticity:** Sahih

If your prayer has grown weak, my brother, if it has become five hurried episodes of standing and bending with a mind that is somewhere else entirely, then let this be the year it is renewed. Prayed on time, not squeezed in at the last minute. Prayed with presence of heart. Prayed in the congregation wherever you can possibly reach it. Because here is what you will discover: when the salah improves, so much of the rest of your life improves alongside it, since prayer is the rope that ties the servant to his Lord. Strengthen that rope, and everything hanging from it steadies.

And please, do not make the fatal mistake of waiting until you *feel* ready. Do not wait until your heart is soft and your mood is right and the conditions are perfect, because that magical day may never arrive on its own. Understand this deeply: the heart softens *through* the prayer, not before it. The person who waits to feel spiritual before he prays will wait forever. But the person who simply prays will find the feeling grow within the prayer itself. So begin exactly where you are. With the prayer as it is right now, weak and distracted if that is honestly all you have to give today, and Allah will build upon the little you bring Him. The new year is not asking you to become a saint overnight. It is asking you to take the next prayer more seriously than the last, and then the one after that, until the frayed thread between you and your Lord is woven thick and strong again.

#### THE SECRET TO LASTING CHANGE

## Small and Constant Beats Big and Broken

After the prayer, reconnect with the Qur'an, which is guidance, healing, and light. And here I want to give you the single most important key the Prophet ﷺ ever gave for making any good change actually last, the secret to surviving past that first burst of enthusiasm that always fades.

## أَحَبُّ الْأَعْمَالِ إِلَى اللَّهِ أَدْوَمُهَا وَإِنْ قَلَّ

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

**Source:** Sahih al-Bukhari: 6464 and Sahih Muslim: 783 · **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun Alayh (agreed upon)

Do not begin your year by vowing to read a whole juz' of Qur'an every single day, only to abandon it entirely within a week when the ambition proves too heavy. Begin with a single page. Every day. And never let it drop. Because a small deed held firmly for an entire year outweighs a mountain of enthusiasm that collapses in a heap by February. Allah loves the deed that keeps coming back to Him, quietly, faithfully, day after day, more than the dramatic spiritual explosion that burns out overnight.

Then turn honestly to your sins. Because every one of us knows privately what is truly harming our own soul. The lying. The backbiting that fills our conversations. The haram relationship we keep making excuses for. The addiction we hide. The arrogance. The hours poured into nothing. The tongue that wounds the people who love us most. Real spiritual growth begins at the precise moment our excuses end. And work on your character, because true religiosity is never only ritual. It shows itself in honesty, in mercy, in patience, in humility, and in genuine kindness toward people. The Prophet ﷺ taught us that on the Day of Judgement, nothing will sit heavier on the believer's scale than good character. Build these things slowly and steadily, and I promise you, you will not recognise yourself by the year's end.

And here is a piece of advice for the one who feels completely overwhelmed by all of this, who looks at the long list of everything that needs fixing and simply despairs of where to even start. Do not try to change everything at once. That is the surest way to change nothing at all. Instead, choose *one* sin. The single one you know in your heart is doing you the most harm, the one that sits heaviest on your conscience at night. And make this the year you leave that one thing, for the sake of Allah. Just one. Pour all your effort into that single Hijrah. Guard it. Fall and rise and guard it again. Beg Allah for help against it. If you do only that, if you walk out of this year having truly abandoned one beloved sin for your Lord, you will have accomplished something immense, something the angels will record and Allah will see. And often, my brother, when a person finally pulls out the one poisonous root that was killing the whole garden, he finds the rest of his faith suddenly begins to bloom on its own.

## You May Not See the Next One

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Before you close this and return to your day, I need to leave one truth in your heart, and I say it out of love, not to frighten you. Let none of us assume we are guaranteed to see the close of this year, let alone the beginning of the next one. Our graves are not dug according to our age. The young return to Allah just as the old do. The healthy and the sick. The rich and the poor. And not one of us knows the hour appointed for him. The only thing that will follow you into that grave, the only thing, is your deeds.

I want you to think, genuinely, about the people who sat in the rows of your masjid last Muharram and are now beneath the earth. Not one of them knew, this time last year, that it would be their last. They made their plans for a year they never lived to see. And the only thing that travelled with them into the grave was whatever they had already sent forward. We will join them, my dear brother, my dear sister, sooner than any of us imagines. And someone will sit in our place next year and be reminded that we are gone.

So the question was never whether that day will come. It will. The only question is what you will have prepared for it when it does. Let this new year not be a year you merely survive, ticking off its twelve months in heedlessness. Let it be a year you *invest*, filling it with the deeds you will be overjoyed to find waiting for you when you arrive. Because a believer does not fear the passing of the years. He fears only one thing: to meet Allah empty-handed. And this new year, this fresh page Allah has mercifully placed in your hands, is your chance to make absolutely sure that you do not. Begin today. Take the first step. And watch how Allah leans toward you as you take it.



## ☰ Your Action Plan: Begin the New Year Right

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

### 1 Fast the day of Ashura (and the day before)

The Prophet ﷺ said fasting the tenth of Muharram expiates the sins of the year before it. Mark the ninth and tenth in your calendar now and start your year with the page washed clean.

THIS MONTH

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

### 2 Choose your one Hijrah

Do not try to fix everything at once. Pick the single sin that sits heaviest on your conscience and make this the year you leave it for Allah. Beg Him for help against it every day.

TODAY

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

### 3 Renew and anchor your prayer

Commit to praying on time with presence of heart, in congregation where you can. Don't wait to feel ready; the heart softens through the prayer, not before it. Take the next prayer more seriously than the last.

DAILY

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

### 4 Read one page of Qur'an every day

Not a juz you'll abandon by next week. One page, held firmly, never dropped. Allah loves the small deed that keeps coming back more than the burst that burns out.

DAILY

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

## 🚩 The 7-Day New Year Reckoning Challenge

For the next seven nights, before you sleep, do what Umar did: take yourself to account for the day that has passed. Ask three honest questions — What did I send forward today? What sin did I fight, and did I win or lose? What one thing can I do better tomorrow? Then read one page of Qur'an and make sincere tawbah. Seven nights is only the beginning; the goal is to make this quiet nightly reckoning a habit that carries you, one lightened account at a time, all the way to the meeting with your Lord.

### **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.