

The Day of ‘Arafah

One afternoon on a plain outside Makkah. For the pilgrim it is the pillar nothing replaces; for everyone else it is a day to fast and to ask.



★ The hajj is ‘Arafah

الْحَجُّ عَرَفَةٌ مَنْ جَاءَ لَيْلَةَ جَمْعٍ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الْفَجْرِ فَقَدْ أَدْرَكَ الْحَجَّ

“The hajj is ‘Arafah. Whoever came to Jam‘ during the night, before the break of Fajr, has attended the hajj.” Called out on his order while he stood there.

Sunan at-Tirmidhi 889 · sahih

★ Where he stopped

Jabir: a tent of hair was pitched for him at Namira, and he stayed in it until the sun had passed the meridian. Then he came down into the bottom of the valley and addressed the people.

Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Hajj

★ Two prayers, then the standing

Bilal gave the adhan and an iqamah for Zuhr, then an iqamah for ‘Asr, with no prayer in between. He then faced the qiblah on his camel and “kept standing there till the sun set”.

Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Hajj

★ The verse came down here

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتِمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

“This day I have perfected your religion for you.” ‘Umar: we know when and where it was revealed — the Prophet ﷺ was standing at ‘Arafat.

Qur’an 5:3 · Sahih al-Bukhari 45

★ No day like it

مَا مِنْ يَوْمٍ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ أَنْ يُعْتَقَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ عَبْدًا مِنَ النَّارِ مِنْ يَوْمِ عَرَفَةَ

“There is no day on which Allah sets free more servants from the Fire than the Day of ‘Arafah. He draws near, then praises them to the angels.”

Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Hajj

★ The best asking

خَيْرُ الدُّعَاءِ دُعَاءُ يَوْمِ عَرَفَةَ

“The best of supplication is the supplication of the Day of ‘Arafah” — and the best thing said by him and the prophets before him was the declaration of Allah’s oneness.

Sunan at-Tirmidhi 3585 · hasan

★ Fasting it — if you are not there

يُكَفِّرُ السَّنَةَ الْمَاضِيَةَ وَالْبَاقِيَةَ

Asked about fasting the day of ‘Arafah he ﷺ said it “expiates the year that has passed and the year to come”. At ‘Arafah itself he was not fasting: milk was sent to him and he drank it in full view.

Sahih Muslim, Kitab as-Siyam

★ Late, but not too late

Urwah b. Mudarris reached him at Muzdalifah afraid he had lost his hajj. “Whoever attends this prayer of ours and stays with us until we depart, having stood before that at ‘Arafah by night or by day, has completed his hajj.”

Sunan at-Tirmidhi 891 · sahih

★ How long you must stand

All four schools make the standing the pillar, and differ over its window: the Maliki school requires a portion of the night after sunset, while the Hanafi, Shafi’i and Hanbali schools accept a standing in the day.

Fiqh: the four schools differ