

**‘Aashooraa’ in History**  
**Fast this day (Why? Its Virtue)**  
**Avoid Innovations on this day.**

Praise be to Allaah, Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with him) said:

*“The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came to Madeenah and saw the Jews fasting on the day of ‘Aashooraa’. He said, ‘What is this?’ They said, ‘This is a righteous day, it is the day when Allaah saved the Children of Israel from their enemies, so Moosa fasted on this day.’ He said, ‘We have more right to Moosa than you,’ so he fasted on that day and commanded [the Muslims] to fast on that day.”* (Reported by al-Bukhaari, 1865).

“This is a righteous day” – in a report narrated by Muslim, [the Jews said:]

*“This is a great day, on which Allaah saved Moosa and his people, and drowned Pharaoh and his people.” “Moosa fasted on this day”* – a report narrated by Muslim adds: “... in thanksgiving to Allaah, so we fast on this day.” According to a report narrated by al-Bukhaari: *“... so we fast on this day to venerate it.”*

A version narrated by Imaam Ahmad adds:

*“This is the day on which the Ark settled on Mount Joodi, so Nooh fasted this day in thanksgiving.” “and commanded [the Muslims] to fast on that day”* – according to another report also narrated by al-Bukhari: “He said to his Companions: *‘You have more right to Moosa than they do, so fast on that day.’*”

The practice of fasting on ‘Aashooraa’ was known even in the days of Jaahiliyyah, before the Prophet’s mission. It was reported that ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: *“The people of Jaahiliyyah used to fast on that day...”* Al-Qurtubi said: *“Perhaps Quraysh used to fast on that day on the basis of some past law, such as that of Ibraaheem, upon whom be peace.”*

It was also reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to fast on ‘Aashooraa’ in Makkah, before he migrated to Madeenah. When he migrated to Madeenah, he found the Jews celebrating this day, so he asked them why, and they replied as described in the hadeeth quoted above.

He commanded the Muslims to be different from the Jews, who took it as a festival, as was reported in the hadeeth of Abu Moosa (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: “The Jews used to take the day of ‘Aashooraa’ as a festival [according to a report narrated by Muslim: the day of ‘Aashooraa’ was venerated by the Jews, who took it as a festival. According to another report also narrated by Muslim: the people of Khaybar (the Jews) used to take it as a festival and their women would wear their jewelry and symbols on that day]. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

*‘So you [Muslims] should fast on that day.’*” (Reported by al-Bukhari).

Apparently the motive for commanding the Muslims to fast on this day was the desire to be different from the Jews, so that the Muslims would fast when the Jews did not, because people do not fast on a day of celebration. (Summarized from the words of al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar – may Allaah have mercy on him – in *Fath al- Bari Sharh ‘ala Saheeh al-Bukhari*).

Fasting on ‘Aashooraa’ was a gradual step in the process of introducing fasting as a prescribed obligation in Islam. Fasting appeared in three forms.

When the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came to Madeenah, he told the Muslims to fast on three days of every month and on the day of ‘Aashooraa’, then Allaah made fasting obligatory when He said (interpretation of the meaning):

“... ***observing the fasting is prescribed for you...***” [Al-Baqarah 2:183] (*Ahkaam al-Qur’aan* by al-Jassas, part 1).

The obligation was transferred from the fast of ‘Aashooraa’ to the fast of Ramadan, and this one of the proofs in the field of Usool al-Fiqh that it is possible to abrogate a lighter duty in favor of a heavier duty.

Before the obligation of fasting ‘Aashooraa’ was abrogated, fasting on this day was obligatory, as can be seen from the clear command to observe this fast. Then it was further confirmed later on, then reaffirmed by making it a general command addressed to everybody, and once again by instructing mothers not to breastfeed their infants during this fast. It was reported from Ibn Mas’ood that when fasting Ramadaan was made obligatory, the obligation to fast ‘Aashooraa’ was lifted, i.e., it was no longer obligatory to fast on this day, but it is still desirable (mustahabb).

### **The virtues of fasting ‘Aashooraa’**

Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with them both) said:

***“I never saw the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) so keen to fast any day and give it priority over any other than this day, the day of ‘Aashooraa’, and this month, meaning Ramadaan.”*** (Reported by al- Bukhaari, 1867).

The meaning of his being keen was that he intended to fast on that day in the hope of earning the reward for doing so.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “For fasting the day of ‘Aashooraa’, I hope that Allaah will accept it as expiation for the year that went before.” (Reported by Muslim, 1976). This is from the bounty of Allaah towards us: for fasting one day He gives us expiation for the sins of a whole year. And Allaah is the Owner of Great Bounty.

## Which day is ‘Aashooraa’?

Al-Nawawi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: “ ‘Aashooraa’ and Taasoo’aa’ are two elongated names [the vowels are elongated] as is stated in books on the Arabic language. Our companions said: ‘Aashooraa’ is the tenth day of Muharram and Taasoo’aa’ is the ninth day. This is our opinion, and that of the majority of scholars. This is the apparent meaning of the ahaadeeth and is what we understand from the general wording. It is also what is usually understood by scholars of the language.” (*al-Majmoo’*)

‘Aashooraa’ is an Islamic name that was not known at the time of Jaahiliyyah. (*Kashshaaf al-Qinaa’*, part 2, *Sawm Muharram*).

Ibn Qudaamah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

“ ‘Aashooraa’ is the tenth day of Muharram. This is the opinion of Sa’eed ibn al-Musayyib and al-Hasan. It was what was reported by Ibn ‘Abbaas, who said: ‘The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) commanded us to fast ‘Aashooraa’, the tenth day of Muharram.’

(Reported by al-Tirmidhi, who said, a saheeh hasan hadeeth). It was reported that Ibn ‘Abbaas said: ‘The ninth,’ and reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to fast the ninth.

(Reported by Muslim). ‘Ataa’ reported that he said, ***‘Fast the ninth and the tenth, and do not be like the Jews.’*** If this is understood, we can say on this basis that it is *mustahabb* (encouraged) to fast on the ninth and the tenth, for that reason. This is what Ahmad said, and it is the opinion of Ishaaq.”

It is *mustahabb* (encouraged) to fast Taasoo’aa’ with ‘Aashooraa’

‘Abd-Allaah ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with them both) said:

“When the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) fasted on ‘Aashooraa’ and commanded the Muslims to fast as well, they said, ‘O Messenger of Allaah, it is a day that is venerated by the Jews and Christians.’ The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said,

***‘If I live to see the next year, in sha Allaah, we will fast on the ninth day too.’***

But it so happened that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) passed away before the next year came.” (Reported by Muslim, 1916).

Al-Shaafa’i and his companions, Ahmad, Ishaaq and others said: “It is *mustahabb* to fast on both the ninth and tenth days, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) fasted on the tenth, and intended to fast on the ninth.”

On this basis it may be said that there are varying degrees of fasting ‘Aashooraa’, the least of which is to fast only on the tenth and the best of which is to fast the ninth as well. The more one fasts in Muharram, the

better it is.

### **The reason why it is mustahabb to fast on Taasoo'aa'**

Al-Nawawi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: “The scholars – our companions and others – mentioned several reasons why it is mustahabb to fast on Taasoo'aa'’:

1. the intention behind it is to be different from the Jews, who only venerate the tenth day. This opinion was reported from Ibn ‘Abbaas...
2. the intention is to add another day’s fast to ‘Aashooraa’. This is akin to the prohibition on fasting a Friday by itself, as was mentioned by al-Khattaabi and others.
3. To be on the safe side and make sure that one fasts on the tenth, in case there is some error in sighting the crescent moon at the beginning of Muharram and the ninth is in fact the tenth.”

The strongest of these reasons is being different from the People of the Book. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: “The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbade imitating the People of the Book in many ahaadeeth, for example, his words concerning ‘Aashooraa’: ‘If I live until the next year, I will certainly fast on the ninth day.’” (*al-Fataawa al-Kubra*, part 6, *Sadd al-Dharaa’i’ al-Mufdiyah ila’l-Mahaarim* )

Ibn Hajar (may Allaah be pleased with him) said in his commentary on the hadeeth “If I live until the next year, I will certainly fast on the ninth day”:  
“What he meant by fasting on the ninth day was probably not that he would limit himself to that day, but would add it to the tenth, either to be on the safe side or to be different from the Jews and Christians, which is more likely. This is also what we can understand from some of the reports narrated by Muslim.” (*Fath*, 4/245).

### **Ruling on fasting only on the day of ‘Aashooraa’**

Shaykh al-Islam said: “Fasting on the day of ‘Aashoraa’ is an expiation for a year, and it is not makrooh to fast only that day...” (*al-Fataawa al-Kubra*, part 5). In *Tuhfat al-Muhtaaj* by Ibn Hajar al-Haytami, it says: “There is nothing wrong with fasting only on ‘Aashooraa’.” (part 3, *Baab Sawm al-Tatawwu’*).

Fasting on ‘Aashooraa’ even if it is a Saturday or a Friday  
Al-Tahhaawi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: “The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) allowed us to fast on ‘Aashooraa’ and urged us to do so. He did not say that if it falls on a Saturday we should not fast. This is evidence that all days of the week are included in this. In our view – and Allaah knows best – it could be the case

that even if this is true (that it is not allowed to fast on Saturdays), it is so that we do not venerate this day and refrain from food, drink and intercourse, as the Jews do. As for the one who fasts on a Saturday without intending to venerate it, and does not do so because the Jews regard it as blessed, then this is not makrooh..." (*Mushkil al-Aathaar*, part 2, *Baab Sawm Yawm al-Sabt*).

The author of *al-Minhaaj* said: "***It is disliked (makrooh) to fast on a Friday alone...'*** ***But it is no longer makrooh if you add another day to it, as mentioned in the saheeh report to that effect. A person may fast on a Friday if it coincides with his habitual fast, or he is fasting in fulfilment of a vow, or he is making up an obligatory fast that he has missed, as was stated in a saheeh report.***"