

The Problem

The start and end of the blessed month of Ramadan is a matter of much dispute for the Muslims of the Western Hemisphere. Questions like ‘When will Ramadan begin?’ and ‘When will Eid be?’ arise well before the respective dates. Different opinions exist in how to solve this matter. Some are of the view that astronomical calculations should be used to determine these dates. Others feel that Saudi Arabia should be followed in this matter. There are even whispers about attempting to sight the moon in the Western Hemisphere instead of relying on foreign reports. All claim to have proof for their argument. Discussions were held repeatedly to solve this problem, but nonetheless, no solution came about.

The Quran, the final and comprehensive divine revelation, and Sunnah, the only acceptable and divinely inspired path, hold the answer to this problem, if studied appropriately and accepted as the final word.¹ The order of the Noble Quran is that disputes should be resolved according to the Quran and Sunnah².

¹ Shaikh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah mentions in his *Fatāwā*, “It has reached me that the previous sacred codes of law (sharī‘ah) had their injunctions based on the lunar calendar. Later on, some of them were changed it to the solar calendar.” Also Shaikh Ibn Taymiyyah has explained that fixing the month with a certain number of days was the way of the Romans, the Syrians (before Islam) and the Copts (Aqḃāt). The Arabs used to do *Nasi’* (postponement of months) and change the months to fit their desires, as described in the Quran and Hadith. The Ismā‘īlīs (a deviant sect) used to start Ramadan before the sighting of the moon (Majmoo’atul Fataawa by Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, vol. 13 pg. 76-80). It is clear from this that changing dates to satisfy personal interests, fixing a number of days for the month or starting the month of Ramadan before the moon sighting has historically been the path of the misguided people of the past. Allah has given a complete way of life, whether one follows or not is his own decision.

Ibn Daqiq al-‘Eid and Hafizh Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqālani have mentioned that it was the Rawāfīdh (a sect of the Shi’as) that started Ramadan before the sighting of the moon (*Ihkām l’Ahkām*, pg 331 and *Fathul Bāri*, vol. 4 pg. 625). This is the reason why Shaikh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah was so severely against astronomical calculations for determining the fast. He said once, “Verily the *ahkām* (regulations), like fasting, are related to the moon. There is no doubt in this. The only way to determine the new moon is the sighting, none other. This (fact is established) through narration (of the related *ahādīth*) and reasoning (‘*aql*)” (Majmoo’atul Fataawa, vol. 13 pg. 82). At another instance he says, “We know truly, without any doubt, that the injunctions of Islam, such as fasting, Hajj, ‘*iddah* (legally prescribed waiting period during which a woman may not remarry after being widowed or divorced), *īlā’* (an oath taken by the husband not to go to his wife), etc. are based on the sighting of the moon. Astronomical calculation regarding the new moon, i.e. its sighting, is not permissible [to be used to determine the timing of the Islamic injunctions].” These points are established by Prophetic narrations which are *mustafīdhah* (so many in number that denial of them all and conjecture of such a great number of narrators it unrealistic). Furthermore, there has been no difference of opinion regarding this matter (the impermissibility of astronomical calculations) throughout the extensive history of the Muslim *Ummah*. The very few scholars who have ever allowed even its limited usage have done so in very rare situations, such as in a land where the moon cannot be sighted and one is dependent on astronomical calculations (i.e. he has no other way). Shaikh Ibn Taymiyyah calls this opinion *shāzh* (isolated opinion) nonetheless and says it is against the consensus (*ijmā’*) of the *Ummah*. Shaikh Ibn Taymiyyah also states that to use astronomical calculations in a general manner is something no scholar of this *Ummah* has ever allowed (Majmoo’atul Fataawa for Ibn Taymiyyah, vol. 13 pg. 75-76). “Whoever uses astronomical calculations (instead of moon sighting) is not from this *Ummah*, in this regard. Rather, he is acting upon something foreign to this *Ummah*, i.e. a path of the non-

Allah, Exalted and Praised be He, says:

“The month of Ramadan is the one in which the Qur’an was revealed as guidance for mankind, and as clear signs that show the right way and distinguish between right and wrong. So those of you who sight (the crescent on the first night of) the month must fast in it. But the one who is sick, or is on a journey (should fast) as much from other days (as he missed). Allah intends (to provide) ease for you and does not intend (to create) hardship for you. All this is so that you may complete the number (of fasts as prescribed) and proclaim the Takbir of Allah for having guided you, and (so) that you may be grateful.”³

Further He says,

“They ask you about the new moons. Say: They are indicative of time for the people, and of the Hajj.”⁴

In *Ahkāmul Quran*, the great master of Hadith of the past century, ‘Allamah Zafar Ahmad ‘Uthmānī, writes that the issue referred to in these verses is the sighting of the crescent⁵.

‘Allamah ‘Uthmānī also explains that since the order (of fasting) is compulsory upon everyone, it is not possible that it depends on something (like calculations) that only a few have knowledge of.⁶ In other words to associate the order of fasting with astronomical calculations would be against the wisdom of Islam. The few knowledgeable scientists of this field would have to be depended upon, to find out when to fast and when to break. Also, those who cannot find such experts would be completely lost about their fasts. It was indeed the eternal wisdom of the Most Wise to base such an important order on something as easy and practical as physical moon sighting.

Some have attempted to refute the proof available in verse 185 of Surah al-Baqarah referred to above. The following objections have been raised:

Objection #1

Muslims. Hence he has certainly done that which is not from the Deen.” (Majmoo’atul Fataawa, vol. 13 pg. 92)

² O you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. Then, if you quarrel about something, revert it back to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is good, and the best at the end. (Surah an-Nisā:Verse 59)

³ Surah al-Baqarah : Verse 185

⁴ Surah al-Baqarah : Verse 189

⁵ Ahkām ul Quran , vol. 1 pg. 194

⁶ ‘Allāmah Zafar Ahmad’s quote ended here.

The verse cannot be translated as: “So those of you who sight (the crescent on the first night of) the month must fast in it”. They say that this translation is completely against the Arabic language and such a translation is not acceptable. This objection is incorrect because after a thorough study, this translation is indeed a valid possibility.

Translation is a difficult process especially for a language as rich and complex as Arabic. Literal translations based solely on word meanings prove to be difficult to understand. More importantly, they do not always provide the correct meaning of the text. Rather, the translation based on the meaning of the text, or the meaningful translation, is more useful than the literal translation.

It is incorrect to say that the above mentioned translation is literal or even the only possible one. Rather, there several possible translations. It is safe however to say that this is a possible translation. Moreover, it is definitely a meaningful translation.

It is also incorrect to say that this is a wrong translation. The great *mufassir* (exegist) Allamah Fakhruddīn ar-Rāzī has presented in *at-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* this possible interpretation of the verse. Ar-Rāzī, a master of the Arabic language, has explained the permissibility of this meaning according to the rules of the language. Al-Qurtubī, in his *Ahkam al-Quran*, and as-Sāwī, in his footnotes to *at-Tafsīr al-Jalālain*, have similarly justified this meaning linguistically. Further details on the explanations of these great scholars will be presented shortly.

The translation can be easily understood this way:

“Fa man shahida minkum ash-shahra falyasumh”
“Then he who *shahida* (a verb) the month must fast in it”

Shahida can be translated as “being present” meaning to be present and to witness something.

Shahida can be translated as “bearing witness” and when attached to the following word, it can mean “seeing”.

The word *shahida* is derived from the root verb *shahādah*.⁷ Ibn Manthūr has mentioned in his landmark masterpiece, *Lisān al-‘Arab*⁸, that the original meaning of the word *shahadah* is to inform of what one has seen.⁹ He also mentions that the word *shahida* as used in verse 18 of Surah aal-‘Imrān means that they (the angels) gave *shahadah* of what they saw of the great powers of Allah.¹⁰ ‘Allāmah Abul ‘Abbās Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Ali al-Muqri wrote *al-*

⁷ This is called the *masdar*. *Masdar* means the original word that does not come from any other word but rather other words come from it. For example, the word *shahida* comes from *shahādah*.

⁸ This is a very famous book written by this celebrated scholar and is considered one of the most authentic books in regards to the Arabic language.

⁹ See *Lisanul ‘Arab* part 3 pg240

¹⁰ See *Lisanul ‘Arab* part 3 pg239

Misbāh al-Munīr that the word *shahida* when used with a noun, for example, *shahidtu al-shaiy*¹¹, means to come to know of it and see it.¹²

The scholars who translate *shahida* as *hadhara* (to be present) did not negate the possibility of it meaning “to see”. On the contrary, the word *hadhara* is very general in the Arabic language and it means to be present which would also have the possibility of seeing in it. If one says “I was present at the time when such and such event occurred” and the word *hadhara* is used, it would be understood that the person was present, heard what was said and saw what happened.¹³

Many other linguistic examples exist to prove the validity of this translation but regardless, it is clear that both *shahida* and *hadhara* bear the possibility of seeing something they refer to.

Imam al-Qurtubī’s Explanation of this Noble Verse

The word *shahr*¹⁴ can be translated as month or crescent as mentioned by ‘Allamah al-Qurtubī in his celebrated *al-Jāmi’ li-Ahkām al-Qurān*. He proves this from hadith and Arabic literature. The great Imam of the Arabic language, al-Fairūzabādī explains *shahr* to have several meanings, among which are *al-hilāl* (crescent) and *al-qamar* (the moon).¹⁵ Ibn al-Athīr, in *an-Nihāyah*, quotes the hadith “*sūmū ash-shahra wa sirrah*”¹⁶ and says the *shahr* here means the crescent.¹⁷

Al-Qurtubī is reported to have narrated the opinion of various eminent companions of the Prophet that the word *shahida* in this verse means ‘to be present’. These companions include *Sayyidunā* Ibn ‘Abbās, ‘Alī, and the Mother of the Believers, ‘Āishah, may Allah be pleased with all of them.

Further study, however, reveals that Imām al-Qurtubī does not refer to this issue when mentioning this. Rather, he refers to a well-known issue of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) regarding a person who begins the month of Ramadan as a *muqīm*, or resident in his home town and thereafter embarks on a journey and

¹¹ “I witnessed/came to know of/saw”

¹² See *Al Misbahul Munir* pg195

¹³ When someone says that I witnessed that incident or I was present there and he uses the words *shahidtu* or *hadhartu*, it will be understood that this person was physically present there and witnessed the incident by sight and hearing. This is a basis for translating the word *shahida* in the noble verse this way. For more details on the word *hadhara* see *al-Misbal al- Munir* by ‘Allāmah Ahmad bin Muhammad Bin ‘Ali Al Muqri pg 87

¹⁴ *Shahr* (pl.*ash-hur* and *shuhūr*) has many meanings in the Arabic language. “Month” is one its common meaning but it can also mean “new moon”. The Arabs use the word *shahr al-‘asal* for honeymoon. The word honey is ‘*asal* and the word *shahr* is used here for moon.

¹⁵ *Al-Qāmūs al-Muhīt*, pg 380 by al-Fairūzabādī (d. 817 H)

¹⁶ “Fast at the beginning and end of the month”

¹⁷ The only way to understand this hadith properly is to accept the word *shahr* to mean crescent. If the literal meaning (i.e. month) is taken in this narration then the meaning would become “fast the month and its end”, which is not the correct meaning. *an-Nihāyah* by Ibn al-Atheer vol 3 pg 309

becomes a traveler. The issue is: must he complete the month in fasting or is he allowed to break the remaining fasts and make them up at a later time? There are differences of opinion on the matter, so al-Qurtubī quotes these companions and others as opining that the traveler must fast the remaining days based on his preliminary obligation as a resident. He also states that the majority of the scholars were of the second opinion (he is allowed to break the remaining fasts). Al-Qurtubī finally says that the second opinion is correct as it is proved by many established narrations. He also tries to interpret the view of *Sayyiduna* ‘Alī and the other eminent companions so as not to contradict these hadith. ¹⁸

In the midst of this discussion, the word *shahida* is accepted to mean *hadhara* (was present, referring to the terminology of *fiqh* i.e. a *muqīm*, or resident in his home town). Thus the discussion is not related to moon sighting.

If this reference is used to prove *hadhara* as the meaning taken for *shahida* by these eminent companions, it is still unsubstantiated by this text. On the contrary, Imam al-Qurtubī mentions in the beginning of the explanation of this verse that the word *shahr* is not the object¹⁹ of the verb *shahida* rather it is an adverb denoting time²⁰. Thereafter, he states that the scholars have differences of opinion about the word *shahr*.²¹ This shows that Imam al-Qurtubī focuses mainly on the word *shahr* in his explanation, not the verb it is related to (i.e. *shahida*). He further explains the use of *shahida* for the terminology of *fiqh* referred to above which further proves that he does not necessarily take it to mean “being present” linguistically. Also, he does not provide any narrations to prove this linguistic point. This is even clearer from Imam al-Qurtubī’s explanation of the words *man shahida* to mean ‘he who is present at the beginning of Ramadan’. If he were to already accept it to mean ‘he who is present’ (*hadhara*), there would be no need to mention this explicitly. The determination of the beginning of Ramadan, by moon sighting or otherwise, is not discussed by al-Qurtubī at this point.

He also explains that great companions like *Sayyiduna* ‘Alī, Ibn ‘Abbās, etc. understood this verse to mean ‘*man adraka ramadān*’, or ‘he who gets Ramadan’. If *shahida* was unconditionally accepted as ‘to be present’ by Imam al-Qurtubī, this point would not have been made. He would have then said ‘*man hadhara*’ instead of ‘*adraka*’. The word ‘*adraka*’ is from the root verb ‘*idrāk*’, which has several meanings. When used in the form that al-Qurtubī mentions it in is ‘he who reaches or attains the month of Ramadan’. There is no clarification on whether one reaches it by calculation or sighting the moon.

¹⁸ *al-Jāmi’ li-Ahkām al-Qurān* by Al Qurtubī pg 366 vol 1 (vol 1 is from Al Fatiha to Ar Ra’d)

¹⁹ In Arabic grammar, this is referred to as the ‘*mafūl*’ of a verb, i.e. that which the action was done upon.

²⁰ This is referred to as the *Zharf Zaman*.

²¹ The word *hāzhā* (this; an indicative noun) in the original text refers to the *shahr* as it is the closest noun. This is a principle of the Arabic language.

Another meaning of ‘*adraka*’ as used here is referring to the one who is alive at the time of Ramadan, thus the person who passed away before it, has no obligation of fasting. Again, neither the moon sighting nor calculation is understood from this word.

Dr. Zhulfiqar Ali Shah and Imam al-Qurtubī’s Text

The context of all of these words must not be ignored otherwise it is impossible to come to a valid understanding of their meaning. It seems that Imam al-Qurtubī did not understand from his own *tafsīr* what Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Shah of the Fiqh Council of North America understood from it. He quotes al-Qurtubī to establish the validity of astronomical calculations through these flawed subtle evidences but fails to quote the Imam regarding his actual views about astronomical calculations. He writes, “Whoever follows the opinion of the astronomers and leaves the ‘*ijmā’* (consensus) of the scholars is a proof against (himself).”²²

Even if it was accepted that Imam al-Qurtubī reported from those companions what indicates that the word *shahida* means to be present at home and not a traveler then he still states that this (the opinion of these companions) is against the entire *Ummah*. Al-Qurtubī gives preference to the second opinion by as the correct one and many established narrations indicate that.

Hāfīzh Ibn Kathīr’s Explanation of this Noble Verse²³

Hāfīzh Ibn Kathīr mentions in his famous *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, this opinion of *Sayyiduna* ‘Alī, Ibn ‘Abbās and others regarding the resident who became a traveler during Ramadan just as al-Qurtubī does. He says however that this opinion is *gharīb* (difficult to understand). He also says that Ibn Hazm has mentioned the companions and scholars after them who were of this opinion but that which Ibn Hazm has narrated is questionable (*fīhi nazhar*). Thus Ibn Kathīr goes as far as to even question the narration of this opinion. This language (*gharīb* or *fīhi nazhar*) is only used by a scholar to reject an opinion or show objection.²⁴

Hāfīzh Ibn Kathīr says that in this verse (verse 185 of Surah al-Baqarah) Allah obligated the resident and healthy to observe fasting while giving concession to the sick and traveling persons.²⁵

²² *Al-Jāmi’ li-Ahkām al-Quran* by Al Qurtubi vol 1pg 363

²³ *Tafsīr of Ibn Kathīr* vol 1 pg 267

²⁴ If it is true that some of the Sahābah were of the opinion of the impermissibility of breaking the fast in this situation, then this is not something that they could have understood from the word *shahida* or any other word like *shahr* in this verse. Instead they probably understood this point from what comes i.e. the issue of the one who is sick or on a journey should make up the fasts later on. So they (some of these Pious Predecessors) most likely took the first part of the verse (*fa man shahida*) to refer to the resident and the end of the verse about the traveler. Allah knows best and his knowledge is more complete.

²⁵ From the text of *Tafsīr of Ibn Kathīr*, it is understood why Ibn Kathīr said, “through this verse Allah obligated the resident and healthy to observe fasting while giving concession to the sick and

After analysis of Ibn Kathīr’s explanation, it becomes clear that he is not looking to prove *shahida* to mean *muqīm* or *hadhara*. Rather, he focuses on the obligation of fasting for some and the concession for others. This is apparent from his quotation of only the part of the verse which directly refers to this point.²⁶ This may have misled Dr. Zulfiqar to believe that this is the only portion from which these points are established.

Hāfīz Ibn Kathīr and countless other scholars quote a portion of this verse but intend by it the entire verse. This is common in scholarly work. Ibn Kathīr mentions the entire issue even though he only quotes this small portion, which only establishes the obligation, not the concession. Ibn Kathīr’s text does not prove any claim made Dr. Zulfiqar regarding this issue.²⁷

Hāfīz Ibn Kathīr explicitly states that this verse mandates the one who witnesses (*shahida*) the *Hilāl* of Ramadan to fast. ²⁸ He further explains this to mean the *muqīm* of his city or town upon whom Ramadan has come. It is clear from this that the starting of Ramadan is dependent on the sighting of the moon. Thus, there is no place for calculations in the Sharī’ah²⁹ of Allah.

If Ibn Kathīr’s text were to have supported Dr. Zulfiqar’s translation of this verse, the word *shahida* would have been enough to prove it. Ibn Kathīr would not have had to mention that it means the *muqīm* of his city or town when Ramadan comes. This additional clarification shows that it does not unconditionally mean that nor is Ibn Kathīr taking it for that meaning.

‘Allāmah al-Alūsī’s Explanation of this Verse

Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Shah misquotes the great sage al-Alūsī in points which are not even discussed in his famous *tafsīr*, *Rūh al-Ma’ānī*. He states, “see al-Alūsī shows that linguistically the phrase cannot violate the two established meanings. It has to mean either presence in person or through knowledge. The meanings will not

traveling persons”. He is actually referring to the injunction of the previous verse (184) where a healthy resident (i.e. one who is neither sick and nor a traveler) is allowed to give *fidya* (feeding of the poor) even though he has the ability to fast and no valid reason to break the fast. This injunction was valid in the initial order of fasting. In other words, in the initial stages when fasting (of Ramadan) became compulsory, a person who was healthy and a resident did not necessarily have to fast. Instead, he had a choice of either fasting or giving *fidya* and verse 184 indicates towards this. Then verse 185 abrogated this and made the fasting compulsory upon the healthy resident. The background of the quote from Ibn Kathīr is thus clarified and one can clearly see that it cannot be used to establish the meaning for the word *shahida* to ‘be present in the house at the start of Ramadan’ (as is claimed of Dr. Zulfiqar in his translation). It is also insufficient to prove that the word *shahida* unconditionally means *hadhara*. See *Tafsīr of Ibn Kathīr* vol 1 pg 265 –270 for a full understanding.

²⁶ ‘fa man *shahida* minkum *ash-shahra fal’yasumh*’, or ‘then whoever from among you witnesses the month, should fast’

²⁷ The answers to Dr. Zulfiqar Ali’s claims have been provided from Ibn Kathīr’s text.

²⁸ *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* vol 1 pg. 269

²⁹ Divine laws upon which Islam is based

give a sense of actual sighting of the Moon whether we take the word ‘*al-shahr*’ as a *maf’ul fihī* or *maf’ul bihī*”. ‘*Allāmah* al-Alūsī discusses the word *shahida* and its root *shuhūd*. The grammatical structure of the sentence however indicates the meaning to be *hudhūr* (from which comes *hadhara*, i.e. to be present) either in person or by knowledge. A point to notice is that al-Alūsī does not say that *shahida* in of itself means *hudhūr*, as the respected doctor claims, but rather says that is indicated by other means.³⁰

Thereafter al-Alūsī explains ‘being present’ (*hudhūr*) can be either in person or by knowledge. So in other words, he either sees the crescent himself or someone else sees it and the knowledge comes to him.

There is absolutely no mention of “the meanings will not give a sense of actual sighting of the Moon whether we take the word ‘*al-shahr*’ as a *maf’ul fihī* or *maf’ul bihī*”. Al-Alūsī does however mention that *shahra* is a *maf’ul fihī* (i.e. *Zharf Zaman*³¹) if taken to be done in person. In other words the month comes upon a person and it is like something that surrounds³² him. He is present at the beginning of the month and not traveling. Thereafter, he is ‘inside’ the month, so he will have to fast in it (the entire month). The word *shahra* could also be a *maf’ul bihī*³³ which would be the case if it is presence by knowledge. Thus, it would mean ‘whoever witnesses³⁴ (or is present at the time of) the crescent of Ramadan, must fast in it. Al-Alūsī’s statements do not establish using calculations to determine the beginning of the month or that the word *shahida* means ‘to be present at home’.³⁵ On the contrary, by mentioning the *Hilāl*,

³⁰ He claims that the word *shahida* in the Arabic language means to be present and he put forward this claim as if everyone agrees with this whereas that is no the case.

³¹ Adverb denoting time

³² The word *Zharf* indicates towards this because it means ‘a vessel’ in the Arabic language. This is one of its meanings but not the one that is usually used by the scholars of the language.

³³ A noun upon which the action takes place. So the word *shahra* being *maf’ul bihī* would mean that the action of fasting takes place upon the month of Ramadan.

³⁴ The main word discussed in the text is not *shahida*, rather it is ‘*shahra*’. The same issue was in Imam al-Qurtubī’s text. So it is a mistake to say that some of the companions (like ‘Alī and others) take the word *shahida* as *hadhara* as the Doctor claimed. Al-Qurtubī was not discussing the word *shahida*, rather he was explaining about the word *shahra*.

³⁵ If it is said that al- Alūsī gave the meaning of ‘not being a traveler’, or ‘to be present at home’, in the situation when *shahra* is taken as a *maf’ul fihī*, it still does not prove the claim made by the proponents of astronomical calculation. It is the claim of such individuals that the word *shahida* itself unconditionally means ‘to be present at home’. Yet this is not the case because al- Alūsī, when explaining the entire verse, mentioned this, not when explaining just the word *shahida*. Also al- Alūsī said that most of the scholars of Arabic grammar have gone with the second opinion, which is that the word *shahra* is a *maf’ul bihī*, which would not indicate at all that the word *shahida* means ‘to be present at home’. Also al- Alūsī supports the opinion of the word *shahra* to be a *maf’ul bihī* (the second opinion). Also, it could be that al- Alūsī explained the situation if the word is taken as a *maf’ul fihī* to mean ‘not to be a traveler’ after taking into consideration the words before it and after it. That is because if one looks at the verse immediately before it (verse 184) and looks at the end of verse 185, it will be understood, with all of these verses in mind, that the meaning of *shahida* would be ‘not being a traveler’. This is completely different from saying the word *shahida* means ‘being present at home’ unconditionally.

indicates that the word *shahida* (and *hudhūr*) mean ‘to witness the month’.

Al- Alūsī further states that it is not linguistically proper to say ‘whoever knows³⁶ about the *Hilāl* should fast and whoever is sick or on a journey should make it up later’. This is because the second portion of the statement is connected to the first (i.e. the portion of ‘whoever is sick’ is connected to the portion of ‘whoever knows’)³⁷.

The preposition ‘*fa*’ (in *fal’yasumh*, or ‘he should fast’) is an explanatory conjunction³⁸. It requires a change between the first portion of the statement and the next between which comes the conjunction, as has been said by some. However, the mention (in the following portion) of the sick person proves it to be a *mukhassis* (a specifying article) for its connection to the one who witnesses, upon both ways. For this reason, most scholars of Arabic grammar are of the opinion that the word *shahra* is a *maf’ul bihi*. Thus, the *fa* in the noble verse is causal (*sababiyyah*) or sequential (*ta’qībiyyah*) in function rather than explanatory (*tafsīliyyah*).

In other words, al-Alūsī is saying that it is better to take the ‘*shahra*’ to be a *maf’ul bihi*, as most grammarians of done. Also, he is saying that the *fā* in ‘*fal’yasumh*’ is to show a sequence or a cause but not to explain the first portion.³⁹

It is also clear from this discussion that al-Alūsī does not mention the word *shahida* to mean *hadhara* (present) or to be present at home. In addition, there is no indication in al- Alūsī’s explanation of this verse that seeing the moon is not meant. Al- Alūsī’s, along with the many other grammarians, stance of *shahida* being a *maf’ul bihi* goes further to reject the meaning ‘to be present at home’ and ‘not a traveler’. All of Imam al-Alūsī’s text strengthens the proof of the obligation to sight the moon.⁴⁰

³⁶ The word in the Arabic text is ‘*alima*’ which means ‘to know’. It is not clear why Dr. Zulfiqar translated it as ‘to see’.

³⁷ The word in the Arabic text is ‘*li dukhūl*’, which means ‘due to its entry’, i.e. because is connected. The ‘*li*’ is to show a causal relationship. It is not clear why Dr. Zulfiqar translated it as ‘when’.

³⁸ This is known as al-‘ātif at-tafsīlī, which means it is a conjunction that explains further about the previous statement. Dr. Zulfiqar explains the function of the conjunction in the sentence as if it is a mere conjunction, which would be the preposition ‘*waw*’, or ‘and’, whereas, Imam al-Alūsī explains the function of ‘*fā*’. This is clear for those who read the entire text. The function of the *fā* is discussed throughout Imam al-Alūsī’s explanation and *waw* (which means ‘and’) is not even mentioned. Also, al-‘ātif at-tafsīlī cannot be *waw* because *fā* is the proper preposition for explanatory purposes, not *waw*. Al-Alūsī’s words indicate that *fā* is the intended preposition here because otherwise he would not discuss the demand of *al-mughayarah* (difference) between the two connected portions of the sentence. It is unfortunate that the Doctor while quoting this text failed to include an important part: ‘it has been said’ (*kazhā qīla*). Maybe the word al-‘ātif caused him to make this mistake of taking it to be *waw* not *fā*. Those who have knowledge of the Arabic grammar know that the word al-‘ātif is also used for *fā*.

³⁹ All three are acceptable functions of *fā* in the Arabic language but those mentioned are the preferred ones in this verse according to al-Alūsī and many other grammarians.

⁴⁰ The many mistakes Dr. Zulfiqar Ali made in quoting Imam al-Alūsī are clear. Not only was the translation done incorrectly, but in many places the understanding of the context was also erred

Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Shah attempts again to quote such a giant in the field of *tafsīr* as Imam al-Alūsī and his renowned work, *Rūh al-Ma'ānī*, to justify the use of astronomical calculations in the *Sharī'ah* of Allah. Unfortunately, he ignores what al-Alūsī directly says about using these calculations. Imam al-Alūsī clarifies his position when he writes that the word *shahra* in this verse means “a fixed period which begins with the sighting of the moon”.

Imam Fakhruddīn ar-Rāzī's Explanation of this Noble Verse

In his celebrated *at-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, Imam Fakhruddīn ar-Rāzī, says that the word *shahida* in this noble verse means *hadhara* and its root word *shuhūd* means *hudhūr*.

Then he cites two opinions regarding this. First, the object⁴¹ of the verb *shahida* has been omitted⁴², so the meaning is ‘whoever witnesses among you the *balad* (city or town) or his house (i.e. he is not a traveler)’. Thus, the word *shahra* is *mansūb*⁴³ because it is a *zharf* (adverb denoting time) and likewise the pronoun ‘*hā*’ (in *fal'yasumh*). The second opinion is that object of *shahida* is *shahra* and accordingly, the meaning is ‘whoever sees⁴⁴ the month by his ‘*aql* (sense)⁴⁵ and *ma'rifah* (knowledge), should fast.⁴⁶ Essentially, ar-Rāzī gives the same two opinions as al-Qurtubī and al-Alūsī. He mentions in explanation of the second opinion that the word *shahra* is a *maf'ūl bihī* and thus it means *mushāhadah* (to see)⁴⁷. Imam ar-Rāzī did however say, regarding the first opinion, when the word *shahra* is *zharf*, it means ‘whoever is present in his house’ (i.e. not a traveler).

Imam ar-Rāzī mentions this regarding the word *shahra*, not *shahida*. Yet unfortunately, Dr. Zulfiqar Ali quotes this to prove *shahida* to mean as he claimed, ignoring also that ar-Rāzī gives preference to the second opinion which he says to mean ‘whoever sees the month’. It is not clear why Dr. Zulfiqar comments that ar-Rāzī says the same thing as al-Alūsī that according to both opinions, it means to be present and does not mean to see with the naked eyes. This is clearly an improper analysis and distorted explanation of the word *shahādah* which comes from the root word *mushāhadah*.

in. It proves that understanding the texts of knowledge is not as easy as it seems and only possible by proper scholars of the *deen*. Just knowing some Arabic will also not suffice in understanding these books. Readers who are capable, should read the entire text written by al-Alūsī so they can fully comprehend the meaning. See *Rūh al-Ma'ānī* vol 1 pg. 85-94

⁴¹ *Maf'ūl*

⁴² *Mahzhūf*

⁴³ i.e. it is in the state of being *mansūb*. If it can have a *fat'ha* at the end, it will. This is a simple explanation to comprehend but it has more details that have not been discussed.

⁴⁴ The original word by Imam ar-Rāzī is *shahādah*, which means to do *mushāhadah*, or to see.

⁴⁵ i.e. He is in his senses while he sees the crescent.

⁴⁶ *At-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* by Imam ar-Rāzī vol 2 pg. 255

⁴⁷ This is yet another proof for the obligation of sighting the moon. It also disproves the validity of using astronomical calculations.

In *al-Qāmūs al-Muhīt*, the famous dictionary of the Arabic language, ‘*Allāmah al-Fairūzabādī* defines *shāhadahū* as ‘*āyanahū* which means to see something with the naked eyes.⁴⁸

The mistakes made by Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Shah in his paper are apparent and adversely affect the reliability of it to a major extent.⁴⁹ He again attempts to prove his thesis of astronomical calculations being a valid means to determine the Islamic calendar by quoting this legendary expert of *tafsīr*. Whereas, Imam ar-Rāzī refutes astronomical calculations when he explains how the *shuhūd* (witnessing) of the month must be done. He says that there are two ways to establish *shuhūd*, *ru’yah* (sighting of the moon) and *sam’* (hearing of the sighting).⁵⁰

It is indeed notable that ar-Rāzī explains how the *shuhūd* (witnessing) of a month can be achieved. If the word *shahida*⁵¹ means to be present at home, then this text of Imam ar-Rāzī has no valid meaning.⁵² The translation of ar-Rāzī’s text in that case will be ‘the presence in the house of the month’ which clearly makes no sense.

Imam Jalāluddīn as-Suyūṭī’s Explanation of this Noble Verse

Imam Jalāluddīn as-Suyūṭī, in his portion of *Tafsīr al-Jalālīn*⁵³, explains the meaning of *shahida* to be *hadhara* but does not differ regarding the sighting of the moon. Dr. Zulfiqar Ali, however, tries to prove otherwise. He quotes Imam as-Suyūṭī to justify his translation of *shahida* as ‘to be present in the house and not a traveler’.

In another of his great *tafsīr* books, *al-Iklīl fī Istīnbāt at-Tanzīl*, Imam as-Suyūṭī clarifies his view on using astronomical calculations. He refutes it strongly and warns against turning to using such methods to determine the Islamic calendar.⁵⁴ This is his own personal opinion⁵⁵ and thus all that Dr. Zulfiqar quotes to prove otherwise is unacceptable.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ *al-Qāmūs al-Muhīt* pg. 264

⁴⁹ It is unfortunate that those quoted to prove Dr. Zulfiqar Ali’s thesis ultimately reject his opinion and prove only to be evidence against him. This is what many misguided groups do to establish their *bāṭil* (false) views from great scholars. They tend to ignore that these scholars were ultimately against their false views.

⁵⁰ *at-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 2 pg. 256

⁵¹ *shahida* and *shuhūd* are almost of the same meaning

⁵² This is because in the text, the words *shuhūd ash-shahri* (witnessing of the month) have a possessive relationship between each other denoted by the word *of* in the English translation.

⁵³ The *tafsīr* of the two Jalāls, Jalāluddīn al-Mahallī (d. 865 H) and his student, Jalāluddīn as-Suyūṭī (d. 911 H), was completed by the latter, a great scholar and authority of the Shāfī *mazhab*.

⁵⁴ *al-Iklīl fī Istīnbāt at-Tanzīl* vol 1 pg. 356

⁵⁵ Because in this book, Imam as-Suyūṭī quotes many other scholars

⁵⁶ Imam as-Suyūṭī says in this book that some scholars have understood this noble verse (*fa man shahida minkum ash-shahra*) as proof that if someone sees the moon himself, he must fast. as-Suyūṭī does not reject this, indicating that he conforms with this view. If the word *shahida* can only mean ‘to be present at home’ and it cannot mean sighting with the naked eyes, then these

The explanation of *shahida* as *hadhara* is found in the aforementioned *Tafsīr al-Jalālain*. Shaikh Sulaiman al-Jamāl, one of the most famous commentators of this book, explains *hadhara* here to mean *wajada*, or to find. In other words, whoever finds the month (of Ramadan) must fast in it. The word *wajada* (from the root word *wujūd*) means to find something. When used in regards to the crescent, for example: ‘he found the crescent’, means to sight the moon. If it is used with ‘*ash-shahra*’ (the month), it could mean to sight the moon or to be in the month. In other words, it could mean to be alive with the opportunity of experiencing the month come upon one.⁵⁷ Thus this meaning, taken by Shaikh al-Jamāl, helps establish the sighting of the moon from this verse. In addition, it is clear that the Shaikh did not understand, from as-Suyūti’s explanation of the word *shahida*, that it exclusively means ‘to be present’ or ‘to be present in the house’.

Another famous commentator of *Tafsīr al-Jalālain*, Imam Ahmad ibn Muhammad as-Sāwī al-Mālikī (d. 1241 H) says in his renowned *Hāshiyah as-Sāwī* regarding these noble words that if the intended meaning of ‘*shahra*’ is ‘days’ (as it is often used) then the meaning would be witnessing (*shahida*) some of it⁵⁸. However, if the intended meaning is the crescent⁵⁹, then the meaning would be regarding its knowledge (getting the knowledge of the moon), either by seeing it or that the sighting is established. As-Sāwī only mentions these two possibilities, either one sights the moon himself or he has knowledge of the sighting.⁶⁰ This disproves the claim of Dr. Zulfīqar Ali that no commentators of the Quran explained this verse to mean seeing the moon by bare eyesight. ‘*Allāmah* as-Sāwī is an authority in this field and his commentary of *Tafsīr al-Jalālain* is widely accepted as authentic.

The word *shahra* is also mentioned by Imam al-Qurtubī, in his explanation, to mean the crescent. He explains, “Allah has made compulsory the fasting of the month (*shahra*) of Ramadan, meaning the period of its *hilāl* (crescent)”. He then quotes the words of a hadīth ‘*fa in ghummiya ‘alaikum ash-shahr*’⁶¹ to show its usage with the meaning of ‘*hilāl*’ by the Messenger of Allah, may he showered

scholars could not have used this portion of the Quran to make this claim. More importantly, a scholar of the caliber of Imam as-Suyūti, who is also a master of the Arabic language and considered an imam of the field, cannot quietly quote this opinion and pass on such an academic error. (see *al-Iklīl fī Istīnbāt at-Tanzīl* vol 1 pg. 355-6) It should also be noted that as-Suyūti said some other scholars mentioned that the person who sees the moon himself should not fast until the leader of the Muslims decides accordingly. Regardless, the proof provided by the former scholars is valid and is not harmed by this latter view. This is because those that say that the fasting in this situation will be pending upon the leader’s decision say this due to other proofs, not because they feel that this verse cannot prove seeing the moon with the naked eyes.

⁵⁷ *Hāshiyah al-Jamāl ‘alā Tafsīr al-Jalālain* also known as *al-Futūhāt al-Ilāhiyyah bi Taudhīh Tafsīr al-Jalālain lid-Daqā’iq al-Khāfiyyah* by ‘*Allāmah* Sulaiman al-Jamāl, vol 1 pg. 147

⁵⁸ whoever witnesses the first moon, must fast for the entire month of Ramadan i.e. he witnessed a portion of the day and must fast for the entirety

⁵⁹ This is if the word *ash-shahra* means *hilāl* (crescent)

⁶⁰ *Hāshiyah as-Sāwī ‘alā al-Jalālain*, vol 1pg 153

⁶¹ *Sahīh Muslim* #2568

with peace and blessings. The only possible meaning for ‘*shahr*’ in this hadīth is crescent. If it is taken to mean month (the common meaning for *shahr*) then the hadith would be ‘if the *month* is unclear⁶² to you’. This does not make sense, so the word *shahr* is then understood to mean ‘crescent’, and thus the hadīth is ‘if the *crescent* is unclear to you’. Al-Qurtubī also quotes poetry⁶³ which uses the word *shahr* to mean crescent.

After providing these evidences, Imam al-Qurtubī says, “it is compulsory upon us, when the crescent cannot be seen, to complete thirty days of Sha’bān and thirty days of Ramadan, so that we can enter into the ‘*ibādah* (worship, i.e. fasting) with full certainty and come out of it with full certainty”. He continues then to explain about the moon sighting and rejects the use of astronomical calculations in its place.⁶⁴

Examples of ‘shahida’ Commonly Used by the Arabs

Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Shah uses examples of the word *shahida* commonly used by the Arabs to support his claim⁶⁵. “I witnessed Friday” and “I witnessed the Hajj” are regular uses of the word *shahida*. In all languages, it is undeniably true that words change in meaning when used in different contexts. *Shahida* when used for Friday does not mean the same as when used for the Hajj. Similarly, when used for the crescent or for the month of Ramadan, the meaning changes.

If the word *shahida* always meant the same thing, as indicated by Dr. Zulfiqar, the meaning of the noble verse

*“Allah bears witness that there is no god but He ___ and (so do) the angels and the men of knowledge ___ being the One who maintains equity. There is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise.”*⁶⁶

would be greatly distorted. The *shahida* when used for Allah, the Almighty, cannot mean the same as when used for the angels and the men of knowledge. Dr. Zulfiqar says that this verse means that Allah explained to his creatures by the signs and arguments (that He is One). The meaning of ‘to be present at home’ would obviously not fit this statement.

⁶² The word *ghummiya* actually means to be blindfolded. It can be translated as covered or unclear because when one is blindfolded, he cannot see. So the Hadith means ‘if, for some reason like cloud obstruction, the crescent cannot be seen’

⁶³ The scholars of the past quote Arabic poetry to prove that a word can come in place of another word (like *shahr* coming in the Hadīth with the meaning of *hilāl*). This shows the acceptance of this in the Arabic language. So al-Qurtubī brings this poetry to show that the word *shahr* can mean *hilāl* according to the Arabic language, because the usage of the people is evidence in the language. See vol 1 pg 362

⁶⁴ *al-Jāmi’ li Ahkām al-Quran* by Al-Qurtubī vol 1 pg 362-3

⁶⁵ Dr. Zulfiqar essentially claims that there is no need for *ru’yah* (sighting of the moon)

⁶⁶ Sūrah Aal-‘Imrān, Verse 18

In the court of a *qādi* (an Islamic judge), when the witness of a murder says, “*ash’had*” (I bear witness) it does not mean that he was merely present at the crime scene. Rather, he testifies to what he saw with his eyes.

The words *shahida* (past tense), *ash-hadu* (present tense) and *shuhūd* (*masdar*, or root word)⁶⁷ change according to the context. When one says ‘*ash’hadu bi kazhā*’, it means ‘I swear that...’⁶⁸ Imam al-Fairūzabādī writes in *al-Qāmūs al-Muhīt* that the word *shahida* when used in the sentence, ‘*shahida li zaydin bi kazhā shahādatan*’ it means ‘Zaid has delivered his testimony’.⁶⁹ All of these examples adequately show the variance of possible meanings for the word *shahida* according to different circumstances. Similarly, the meaning of *shahida* differs in the abovementioned verse of Sūrah Aal-‘Imrān according to the one it is applied to.⁷⁰

‘Shahida’ as Used in Other Noble Verses of the Holy Quran

A few other verses were presented by Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Shah, to prove that *shahida* cannot mean ‘to see with the naked eyes’ since it comes with different meanings in these verses. It has already been established that words can have different meanings according to the situation, so these verses do not prove the Doctor’s point. Nonetheless they are of course worthy of analysis.

In verse 26 of Sūrah Yūsuf, Allah, the Exalted, says, “*wa shahida shāhidum min ahlihā*” meaning “and a *witness* of her household bore *witness*”. This *shahida* means to bear witness. This shows that the word *shahida* does not mean to see with the naked eyes, *in this verse*. However, it does not mean the same thing as it did in Sūrah Aal-‘Imrān when applied to His Majesty, the Lord, the Most Magnificent. This further proves the point that *shahida* is used in the Quran with different meanings. So, to say that since in some verses it does not mean to see with the naked eyes, then it cannot mean this elsewhere is completely wrong. Also the meaning of bearing witness in this verse, proves that this word can also mean to see with the naked eyes, since these two meanings.⁷¹

Dr. Zulfiqar quotes Ahmad bin Fāris as having said that linguistically, the word *shahida* can only have three meanings: presence, knowledge and announcement (informing others). If the meaning of ‘presence’ is used, the verse translates as ‘and a *witness* of her household was *present*’. Although this sounds acceptable, it cannot be given preference to the meaning of bearing witness because otherwise Allah, the Most Wise, would have used the words *hadhara* and *hādhir* instead of

⁶⁷ All emanating from the three-letter base sh-h-d

⁶⁸ *Al-Qāmūs al-Muhīt* pg. 264 by the Imam of the Arabic language, Majduddīn Muhammad ibn Ya’qūb al-Fairūzabādī (d. 817 H)

⁶⁹ *ibid*

⁷⁰ Dr. Zulfiqar Ali used this verse to show that the word *shahida* in verse 185 of Sūrah al-Baqarah cannot mean to see with the naked eyes. Nonetheless, this is not a valid proof of his claim.

⁷¹ Seeing something and then bearing witness to it is the usual course of events related to this worldly life. This is obviously not the case at all times however, thus there is a speculative relationship between the two.

shahida and *shāhid*. *Hadhara* is a more common word for the meaning of presence.⁷² The use of *shahida* and *shāhid* is possibly a subtle indication towards another point or meaning. In addition, the word *shāhid* indicates that the *shahida* in this noble verse would also mean to bear witness, not just to be present. As both words are from the same three root letters and they are used in the same context, it would be illogical for them to have different meanings.

Imam al-Fairūzabādī mentions that *shāhid* is a name of the Blessed Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. This means that he is one who bears witness, not that he is present. The Prophet, peace be upon him, is not present everywhere, so taking this name to mean present at all times is inappropriate. Al-Fairūzabādī also mentions that the tongue is referred to as *shāhid*. In this situation, the meaning of presence can be taken because the tongue is always present. However, all limbs of the body are always present, but none of those are necessarily called *shāhid*. The meaning to bear witness is more suitable for this example as well.⁷³ Thus, *presence* is not the preferred meaning of *shahida* in this noble verse of Sūrah Yūsuf.

If the second meaning (knowledge) quoted by Dr. Zulfiqar is used, the verse translates as ‘and a *witness* of her household *knew*’. Considering the incident regarding which these words were said, this translation is not proper.⁷⁴

Finally, the meaning of ‘*announcement*’ for the word *shahida* also does not fit correctly. In this case, it translates to ‘a *witness* of her household *announced*’ which could have been said as *qāl qā’il* using the more common word for this meaning.

The tremendous literary beauty and magnificence of the Noble Quran can be seen in this simple example. The use of *shahida shāhid* helps understand that the preferred meaning is to bear witness and not the other possible meanings.⁷⁵ In verse 10 of Sūrah al-Ahqāf, the same example of *shahida shāhid* is found. The meaning of *shahida* here is ‘to bear witness’, for the same reasons as in Sūrah

⁷² When someone is taking attendance and calls out the name of a person, he would not reply by saying ‘*shāhid*’. Instead, he would say *hādhir*, which indicates that he is present. Also the antonym of *hādhir* is *ghā’ib* which means to be absent. Thus, *hādhir* is the common word for present not *shāhid*.

⁷³ *Al-Qāmūs al-Muhīt* pg. 264

⁷⁴ The incident can be further read in any reliable *tafsīr* book. Also, if knowledge was meant here, then it could have been said ‘*alima ‘ālim*’ because the word commonly used for knowledge is ‘*alima*’ from the word ‘*ilm*’.

⁷⁵ It should be emphasized that Dr. Zulfiqar Ali is the one who made the mistake when he quotes Ahmad bin Fāris. Most likely, Ahmad Bin Faris was not saying that there are only three meanings as the Doctor depicts. The Doctor takes these three meanings mentioned by Ahmad Bin Fāris, *hudhūr*, ‘*ilm*’, and ‘*i’lām*’, to be the literal meanings. He translates the word ‘*i’lām*’ to mean announcement, which is correct, but in the Arabic language it has a few different meanings. It does not always mean a simple announcement. For example, the word ‘*i’lām*’ is also for *azhān* whereas in this would not be apparent in the translation. The scholars of *fiqh* have referred to the *azhān* as ‘*i’lām*’.

Yūsuf.

In verse 132 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, the word *shuhadā'* (plural of *shāhid*) is used to address the Jews and Christians. He, the Almighty, says, “were you *present* when death came upon Ya’qūb?”

Here, Allah is refuting the Jews and Christians, because they claimed that the children of Sayyiduna Ibrahim were upon their religion.⁷⁶ Allah asks these people whether they were present when Ya’qūb (A.S.) was dying. The answer being no, how can they claim this when they were not present, when Ya’qūb (A.S.) asked his children regarding who they will worship when he passes away, and the answer was Allāh. Thus, their claim is completely false. The point of all this is that the word *shuhadāis* the plural of *shāhid*, which is the *ism ul-fā’il*⁷⁷ of the verb *shahida*. Now we have established the connection between the word *shahida* and the word *shuhadā*. *Shuhadā* refers to those who carried out the action of *shahida*.

Imam Al Qurtubi writes⁷⁸ that the word *Shuhadā* is plural of *Shāhid*, which is in the meaning of *hādir*. It is now very clear that the word *Shuhadā* refers to being present, and experiencing the situation by *seeing* the situation. It is also now established that the act of seeing is a possibility in the word *shahida*. Additionally, please note that when the word *hādir* is used, the meaning of present is taken, as well as the possibility⁷⁹ of seeing. It is clear that all of the verses our respected doctor quoted, where the word *shahida* is translated as *ḥaḍara*, do not go against seeing with the naked eye. As a matter of fact, the word *ḥaḍara* would initially indicate seeing with the naked eyes.⁸⁰ Although I can quote many other verses here, I believe my point is clear, and I will reset my case here. The evidence is clear, and our readers can now understand what clearly is the correct thing.

It is an undisputed fact, that the annals of Hadith literature are replete with narrations mandating that commencement and relative closure of the month of Ramadhan must be marked by the sighting of the moon. The clarity of these narrations suggest that all possible means must be adopted in order to facilitate

⁷⁶ See Al Qurtubis Tafseer Al Jaami’ li Ahkaamil Quran vol 1 pg290 for the Tafseer of this verse

⁷⁷ Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah says that this *Ummiyah*(being unable to read and write) is sometimes prohibited sometimes *Makrooh*(disliked) , sometimes it is a shortcoming and sometimes it is *Tarkul Afdhal* (to leave something which was better). See *Majmoo’atul Fatawa* for Ibn Taymiyyah vol 13 pg 94

⁷⁸ See Al Jaami’ li Ahkaamil Quran for Al Qurtubi vol 1 pg290

⁷⁹ Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah says that this *Ummiyah*(being unable to read and write) is sometimes prohibited sometimes *Makrooh*(disliked) , sometimes it is a shortcoming and sometimes it is *Tarkul Afdhal* (to leave something which was better). See *Majmoo’atul Fatawa* for Ibn Taymiyyah vol 13 pg 94

⁸⁰ When we tell someone in Arabic *Hadharnaa* At *Tadfeen* so the meaning that first comes to everyone’s mind is that these people were present at the burial and they actually were seeing and hearing everything there and experiencing the situation.

the sighting of the moon, and that refusal to do so is not only a deviation from the truth, but rather a clear action against the Prophetic command.

Hereunder are some of the narrations which corroborate this premise.

Volume 3, Book 31, Number 130: Narrated Abdullah bin Umar:

Allah's Apostle mentioned Ramadan and said, "Do not fast unless you see the crescent (of Ramadan), and do not give up fasting till you see the crescent (of Shawwal), but if the sky is overcast (if you cannot see it), then act on estimation (i.e. count Sha'ban as 30 days)."

Volume 3, Book 31, Number 131: Narrated Abdullah bin Umar:

Allah's Apostle said, "The month (can be) 29 nights (i.e. days), and do not fast till you see the moon, and if the sky is overcast, then complete Sha'ban as thirty days."

Volume 3, Book 31, Number 133: Narrated Abu Huraira:

The Prophet or Abu-l-Qasim said, "Start fasting on seeing the crescent (of Ramadan), and give up fasting on seeing the crescent (of Shawwal), and if the sky is overcast (and you cannot see it), complete thirty days of Sha'ban."

Here are some narrations from Muslim's Sahih: *Book 006, Number 2363:*

Ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with both of them) reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying in connection with Ramadan: Do not fast till you see the new moon, and do not break fast till you see it; but if the weather is cloudy calculate about it.

Book 006, Number 2364:

Ibn Umar reported that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) made a mention of Ramadan and he with the gesture of his hand said: The month is thus and thus. (He then withdrew his thumb at the third time). He then said: Fast when you see it, and break your fast when you see it, and if the weather is cloudy calculate it (the months of Sha'ban and Shawwal) as thirty days.

Book 006, Number 2365:

This hadith is narrated on the authority of 'Ubaidullah with the same chain of transmitters, and he said: If (the sky) is cloudy for you, then calculate thirty days (for the month of Ramadan).

Book 006, Number 2367:

Ibn'Umar (May Allah be pleased with-both of them) reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: The month of Ramadan may consist of twenty-nine days. So do not fast till you have sighted it (the new moon) and do not break fast, till you have sighted it (the new moon of Shawwal), and if the sky is cloudy for you, then calculate.

Book 006, Number 2378:

Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: Whenever you sight the new moon (of the month of Ramadan) observe fast. and when you sight it (the new moon of Shawwal) break it, and if the sky is cloudy for you, then observe fast for thirty days.

Book 006, Number 2380:

Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: Observe fast on sighting it (the new moon) and break it on sighting it. But if (due to clouds) the actual position of the month is concealed from you, you should then count thirty (days).

Those who favor beginning and ending months using calculations make a few points. First of all, they interpret that hadith which mentions 'fa uqdurū'⁸¹ when the sky is cloudy to mean 'then calculate.' They take this word 'fa uqdurū' to mean 'calculate.'⁸² This explanation is an error. The reason for the error is clear. When we examine other aḥādīth which mention a similar point, we note that the wording used there is 'fa uqdurū thalāthīn' which means 'complete thirty days of

⁸¹ Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah says that this Ummiyah (being unable to read and write) is sometimes prohibited sometimes Makrooh (disliked), sometimes it is a shortcoming and sometimes it is Tarkul Afdhal (to leave something which was better). See Majmoo'atul Fatawa for Ibn Taymiyyah vol 13 pg 94

⁸² Ibn Al 'Arabi mentions in his famous commentary of Al Muwatta Al Qabas that two reasons why this would be the wrong meaning of this word. In other words to say that the words Faqduru (in the Hadith) means do calculations is not possible for two reasons. First because The Prophet used these words (Faqduru) which had a possibility to mean a few things but then The Prophet himself removed that possibility and gave its meaning in the other narrations. In one of those narrations the words are complete the number (of Sha'baan) thirty (days). So in other words what Ibn Al 'Arabi is saying is that one Hadith is explained by the other. The second reason Ibn Al 'Arabi gives is that if the meaning of the words of Faqduru was to do calculations and this calculations could be used then this could lead to the beliefs of the people becoming wrong because we would depend on science for our worships and he says that this is a dangerous situation that if someone enters he will drown. I say that this second thing that he is mentioning is a wisdom that we need to ponder over. This wisdom would even apply in our times. To say that it was in his time because some people might have had wrong beliefs in that time and today people do not worship stars or have those wrong beliefs is not wise. Yes you might not have today (a lot of people or anyone) that worship stars or have those types of beliefs but in our times you have a different problem. You have some people that rely on science more than it seems like their reliability on the Noble Quran. How can our pure Deen the Deen of Ibrahim come with orders that are attached to science? The above was not an exact translation of Ibn Al 'Arabi. See Al Qabas fi Sharhi Muwatta Ibni Anas vol 2 pg 123-124 for Ibn Al 'Arabi Al Andalusi Al Maliki

Sha'bān.' A similar wording can be found in the narration of Al-Nasa'i.⁸³ Additionally, the wording 'fa 'uddū thalāthīn' is mentioned in the Sunan of Imam⁸⁴ Al-Nasai. The word 'uddū is also indicative of the fact that thirty days of Sha'bān should be completed. The wording 'fa akmilū 'iddata thalāthīn'⁸⁵ is also used, which also translates to 'complete thirty days of Sha'bān.' Also, 'fa atimmū⁸⁶ Sha'bāna thalātheen' and 'fa akmilū thalāthīn' are also found in Imam Nasai's Sunan.⁸⁷

Such basic and unsound objections illustrate the intention of those individuals, who foolishly try to assuage the populous with their unfound and bias interpretations. The clarity of these statements is sufficient for an individual to understand the absolute necessity of the naked eye sighting. The body of these statements all include the words, '*fa uqdurū*', which refer to completion of thirty days of Sha'bān.⁸⁸ Thus, the entire meaning of the Hadith is as follows: the month of fasting begins with the sighting of the moon, and if for some reason, perhaps due to the sky being cloudy, the moon cannot be sighted, thirty days of Sha'bān should be completed, and then Ramaḍān should begin.

Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) clarifies in his famed commentary, *Fath al-Bari*, that the Prophet (Sallahu Alahi Wa Sallam) said that if the sky is not clear complete thirty days [of fasting]. Reference is not made to astronomers or those individuals tasked with such responsibilities, rather the context infers that one should complete the period of thirty days prior to starting the next month.

Proponents of calculation often claim the following narration substantiates their premise.

Volume 3, Book 31, Number 137: Narrated Ibn 'Umar:

The Prophet said, "We are an illiterate nation; we neither write, nor know accounts. The month is like this and this, i.e. sometimes of 29 days and sometimes of thirty days."

Hafiz Ibn al-Hajar writes in his famed compendium, *Fathul Baari* that this narration negates the concept of calculation, and therefore strengthens the opinion for the necessity of sighting.⁸⁹ Opponents of the sighting methodology assume an almost bestial rebellion by clinging to far reaching interpretations and

⁸³ See Sunan An Nasai vol 2 pg 133

⁸⁴ See Sunan An Nasai vol 2 pg 134

⁸⁵ Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah says that this Ummiyah (being unable to read and write) is sometimes prohibited sometimes Makrooh (disliked), sometimes it is a shortcoming and sometimes it is Tarkul Afdhal (to leave something which was better). See Majmoo'atul Fatawa for Ibn Taymiyyah vol 13 pg 94

⁸⁶ This clearly means to complete thirty days of Sha'baan

⁸⁷ See Sunan An Nasai vol 2 pg 136

⁸⁸ It is mentioned in *Fathul Baari* for Ibn Hajar that it is better to explain a Hadith with another Hadith see vol 4 pg 616

⁸⁹ See *Fathul Baari* vol 4 pg 623

reject the very core of the narration.⁹⁰ Simply put, those who challenge the methodology of sighting try to assert that this narration indicates that due to a lack of education, a more developed method of sighting was not available, thereby asserting that in the modern sphere one should accept the more modern technique.

The manipulation of *ahadith* to fit the parameters of a theory is categorically wrong and self-serving. The mandates of Islamic academia assert, that the literal meaning of a statement must be adopted when possible. Those who claim to understand the *ahadith* on this topic are adamant in their refusal to accept the clear and direct message of the *hadith*. Many of the scholars of the past reject and rebuke those who attempt to redefine the Qur'an and *Hadith* through rejecting the apparent meaning and preferring to adopt interpretations far from the realm of possibility. Secondly, even if we say, for arguments' sake, that this method of using the *mafهوم* meaning for Quran and *Hadith*, how can we give preference to it when it is in clear contradiction of the Quran and *Hadith*? Additionally, they argue that, due to the fact that the *ummah* was an unlettered one at the time of the Prophet, hence they were commanded to sight the moon. This type of statement is totally improper, because Allah knows everything, and if calculations was the best way, Allah would have showed it to His beloved Prophet, as He is capable of all things. Additionally, the concept of calculations⁹¹ is also mentioned in the Quran⁹². Thus, it is understood from those verses that knowledge of calculations could have been acquired by some, specifically those⁹³ who were able to read and write at that time (please note that not all of the Arabs were *ummi*). In this way, all would follow these enlightened people, just as all depend on the scientists of today.

Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah has mentioned in his *Fataawa* that some of the companions knew how to write, specifically listing the ones⁹¹ that wrote the revelations (*Wahy*) among other things. He also mentions that some of them knew how to calculate.⁹² Shaikhul Islam Ibn Hajar has written in *Fathul Baari*⁹³ that some of them knew how to calculate.

Shaykh Mustafa Az Zarqa⁹⁴ has tried to prove the permissibility of beginning and ending Islamic months from the mentioned *Hadith*. The

⁹⁰ See how in *At Ta'leeq As Sabeeh* Ash Shaikh Idris mentions under this *Hadith* that this *Hadith* means that these calculations are not from our ways and we have not been commanded with it. Vol 2 pg 377 (this is not a exact quote)

⁹¹ He listed the ones that wrote *Wahy*(revelations)and other things at the time of the Prophet like this Sayyiduna Abu Bakr, Sayyiduna 'Umar, Sayyiduna 'Uthmaan, Sayyiduna 'Ali, Sayyiduna Zaid, and Sayyiduna Mu'awiyah. See *Majmoo'atul Fataawa* vol 13 pg 93 for Ibn Taymiyyah

⁹² See *Majmoo'atul Fataawa* for Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah vol 13 pg 93

⁹³ See *Fathul Baari* vol 4 pg 623

⁹⁴ With all due respect to Ash Shaikh Mustafa Az Zarqa and his research we will not except his *Fatwa* here about the calculations. As a matter of fact most of the 'Ulama have not accepted his *Fatwa* about the permissibility of calculations for the month of Ramadan. He has other *Fataawa*(on other issues) also that most 'Ulama don't except.

reasoning⁹⁵ he gives in his Fatawa⁹⁶ is that the ‘illah (reason) behind physical sighting of the moon is the fact that the Ummah simply was not able to calculate. Once this ‘illah disappears, and the Ummah is able to read and write, and thus calculate, then the proper method to begin Ramadan⁹⁷ is through calculations. Firstly, the inability to calculate as being the illah is not agreed upon by all. Instead, it could easily be established that this is not the illah, but in fact the hikmah (wisdom). If the illah was in fact the inability of the sahabah to read and write, then his explanation may have been accepted. However, since it’s not the illah but rather the hikmah, this explanation cannot be established. The Hukm (order) depends⁹⁸ upon the ‘Ilah⁹⁹ (reason) and not the Hikmah (wisdom).

Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah has given a very comprehensive answer in his Fatawa¹⁰⁰ which not only disproves the derivation of calculations from this hadith, but it also clearly proves physical moon-sighting, may Allah reward him. The summary of his fatwa is as follow: Nabi (Sallahu Alahi Wa Sallam) informed us that we are an unlettered nation, nor do we know calculations, which implies that not only is this khabar (news) for us¹⁰¹, but also a nahi (prohibition) from trying calculate with regards to the moon¹⁰². This Hadith, when examined in its entirety, indicates that the moon in specific is being referred to, and prohibition is addressing the entire Ummah, not only the contemporaries, but those who will come later on as well, and that they should stick to the sighting of the moon, which is the best method¹⁰³. Once someone tries to calculate in regards to the moon, it will remove him from the description of being from the Ummah. The Shaykh has discussed this part in great detail. It does not mean, however, that the person who calculates will be removed from the fold of Islam, but it simply means they will not be perfect Muslims.

⁹⁵ This is not an exact quote but a summary of what he is saying.

⁹⁶ See Fataawa Mustafa Az Zarqa pg 160- 162

⁹⁷ Ash Shaikh Mustafa Az Zarqa also mentions quoting some scholars like Ibn Hajar (Al Hafidh) that the only reason why our scholars of the past rejected calculations is because it (the knowledge of stars in those days) was a type of knowledge that was a guess. (Not a exact quote) See Fataawa Mustafa Az Zarqa pg 164. Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah in his Fataawa writes that the perfection and the superiority the one that is achieved with the sighting of the moon besides the calculation will go away with the consideration of the calculation (if we take calculations over sighting) even if there is no cause of corruption in it (calculations). So he is saying in other words that, even if there is nothing wrong with calculations still the superiority and perfection of the method of sighting will go away if we choose calculations over sighting. See Majmoo’atul Fataawa vol 13 pg 97

⁹⁸ This is something that is understood from the Fuqaha(jurisprudents)

⁹⁹ If the ‘Ilah is there then the order (Hukm) remains and if the ‘Ilah is not there anymore then the Hukm (order) does not remain also. In case of Hikmah (wisdom) this is not the case instead whether the wisdom (Hikmah) remains or not the Hukm(order) will remain. For example one of the wisdoms of fast is to know how poor people feel but for someone if he cannot feel the pain of the poor for some reason (for example, because his day of fast is not that long according to the season) still the fast will be compulsory on him.

¹⁰⁰ See Majmoo’atu Fatawa for Shaikul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah vol 13 pg 82-110

¹⁰¹ We are being informed by our Prophet about this.

¹⁰² We are being informed by our Prophet about this.

¹⁰³ Allah has given us a complete Deen and everything in our Deen Al Islam is the best and perfect way.

Shaykhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) also explains that the word Ummi (unlettered) is sometimes used to praise someone, as is used in the Quran in praise of our beloved Prophet¹⁰⁴ (Sallahu Alahi Wa Sallam). The word ummi being attributed to our Prophet is a great praise because it shows that he had no teacher, and that Allah alone was his teacher, and it also proves to be a great miracle. On the other hand, the same word can also be used to dispraise someone. For example, in the Noble Quran, Allah uses this word to describe misguided people of the scriptures, explaining that they are ummi, and they do not fully understand the Book, instead following their whims.¹⁰⁵

The conclusion from the above discussion is that the word ummi is used for different meanings¹⁰⁶ in the texts (Quran and Hadith) as well as the books of fiqh¹⁰⁷. In the hadith under discussion here, the word ummi, as explained by the scholars, has come for praise. Praising the fact that we are an unlettered nation, and we do not need to rely on calculations in order to begin and end our months.

The common factor, which unites the vast majority of these ideas, is the inferiority complex that is inherent within the psyche of many Muslims. History bears testament to the fact that other nations have also suffered from this mentality, that their deviation from the statuesque was too difficult a burden to handle. The devastating results born of such mentalities wreck havoc to the core of the religion, and disunite the hearts of the believers.

Imam Fakhr Al-Deen Al-Razi mentions in his tafsir of Surah Yunus¹⁰⁸: “Verily the months that are reliable in the Shari’ah are pending upon sighting of the crescent.” In other words, a month can only start with the sighting of the crescent. It should be noted that Imam Fakhr al-Deen mentions this tafsir under the verse that discusses calculations.

In Fathul Bari, Ibn Hajr mentions from Al Baji that the Ijma’ of the pious predecessors is a proof against them¹⁰⁹. This was quoted by Ibn Hajr after he mentioned the fact that some of the Fuqaha went towards this scientific method

¹⁰⁴ See for example Surah Al A’raaf verse number 157

¹⁰⁵ See Al Baqarah verse 78 (seventy eight)

¹⁰⁶ Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah says that this Ummyyah (being unable to read and write) is sometimes prohibited sometimes Makrooh (disliked), sometimes it is a shortcoming and sometimes it is Tarkul Afdhal (to leave something which was better). See Majmoo’atul Fatawa for Ibn Taymiyyah vol 13 pg 94

¹⁰⁷ Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah says that this Ummyyah (being unable to read and write) is sometimes prohibited sometimes Makrooh (disliked), sometimes it is a shortcoming and sometimes it is Tarkul Afdhal (to leave something which was better). See Majmoo’atul Fatawa for Ibn Taymiyyah vol 13 pg 94

¹⁰⁸ Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah says that this Ummyyah (being unable to read and write) is sometimes prohibited sometimes Makrooh (disliked), sometimes it is a shortcoming and sometimes it is Tarkul Afdhal (to leave something which was better). See Majmoo’atul Fatawa for Ibn Taymiyyah vol 13 pg 94

¹⁰⁹ See Fathul Bari vol 4 pg 623

of calculations. Thus, Al Baji is arguing that these people are going against Ijma'. We are all aware of the stringent warning for going against the ijma' mentioned in the Quran and Hadith.

Proponents of the calculation method argue that some classical jurists disallowed use of calculations because astronomy and astrology were not quite distinct sciences. The jurists were suspicious that astronomical calculations would not be accurate and exact, but rather based on conjectures, whims and superstition. This point, although it may be valid for a few jurists, is not that case for the majority of the scholars. Most of them disallowed following calculations because of the clear proofs found in the Ahadith, clearly guiding us towards ru'yah (seeing with the eye). Additionally, many scholars went against calculations because they believed that the principles in our Shari'ah is to see with the eyes and to be sure about it in this manner, as Ibn Battal¹¹⁰ has mentioned in his commentary of Sahih Al-Bukhari¹¹¹.

Many scholars wrote that knowledge of calculations would be known to only a few people and thus the Shari'ah did not keep fasting reliant on this because¹¹² not everyone could easily fulfill this task, whereas, on the other hand, sighting the moon can be done by anyone, whether he has knowledge of calculations or not.¹¹³ Al Hafidh Ibn Hajr writes that even when the process of calculation became easy, fasting still must be started based upon sighting the moon and not calculation.¹¹⁴

Another point made by those in favor of calculations is that calculations negate erroneous sighting and thus errors in beginning and ending the Islamic months, specifically within the last century. First of all, this argument is very weak, simply because so many prominent jurists of the last century opposed calculations, as well as most of the jurists for the past 1300 years. From the late

¹¹⁰ Ibn Battal is one of the first ones to commentate on Sahih Al Bukhari(in my research he is the fourth one to write a commentary on Sahih Al Bukhari). Scholars like Al Hafidh Ibn Hajr that came after him quote him a lot.

¹¹¹ See Sharh Sahih Al Bukhari for Ibn Battal vol 4 pg 27-28

¹¹² Some people can say since it was hard in those days hence it was not allowed but because today it is easy for a lot of people so permissibility for calculations should be given. Specially when calendars can be made and distributed to every one and it will be very easy for all to go with calculations. The answer will be that the main reason that calculation is not sufficient in space of sighting is because of the authentic Ahadith. These other reasons (calculations being too hard for everyone) that are given by scholars are all wisdoms of the guidance of the Ahadith given. Wisdoms in matters could be there in some period in time and in some period not be there but the order of the Shari'ah will always remain. So it could well be that in the past the calculation process was very difficult and now in our time it is very easy to go with, but the order of the Hadith will remain to start our fast with the sighting and finish it by sighting. See for example one of the wisdoms in our fasting is that we learn while fasting how the poor and needy feel. So for some people they can really acquire this wisdom while they fast and for some people it could be that he sleeps all day in an air-condition room while fasting and really does not know even after the entire Ramadan has passed how the needy feel. So are we going to say that this latter should not fast any more or his fast is not accepted? So the readers can see that in our Shari'ah the orders(Hukm) do not revolve around wisdoms(Hikmah).

¹¹³ See Fathul Bari vol 4 pg623 for Ibn Hajr

¹¹⁴ See Fathul Bari vol 4 pg 623 for Ibn Hajr

grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia to many of the scholars of the Indo-Pak region, all have opposed calculations. Bin Baaz (May Allah have mercy on him), the late grand Mufti of the Saudi Kingdom clearly went against Hisab (calculations). Some of the notable 'Ulama of the Indo-Pak region that went against this Hisab include: the late Grand Mufti of Pakistan, Mufti Mohammad Shafi (May Allah have mercy on him), the former grand Mufti of Darul Uloom Deoband, Mufti 'Aziz ur Rahman (May Allah have mercy on him), and many more.

Thirdly this reason given that this Hisab will prevent errors from happening is somewhat like doing things that we are not Mukallaf(responsible) of. We are just Mukallaf of trying to see the moon if we cannot know the months start with sighting due to the sky being unclear than we are suppose to complete thirty days. This is how much we are Mukallaf(responsible) of. If we make mistakes after this and it is found out that the month was only twenty-nine days this time not thirty than we will not be held responsible by Allah for this mistake nor are we going to have any Kaffarah(atonement) on us for the error. As a matter of fact the authentic Hadith of the Prophet that states that Al Fitr is when all of you do 'Eid (AL Fitr) and Al Adh ha is when all of you do 'Eid Al Adh ha is a proof that mistake like this is overlooked. This is also the correct meaning of this Hadith. The rest of the proofs of these people are mentioned and answers given in details to there proofs are also mentioned in a lengthier thesis of mine on this issue that you can get from me personally (just call this number 410 982 4517) and you can also down load it from the Islamic center of Laurel website. May Allah give us the ability to practice on the Noble Quran and the Ahadith of our beloved Prophet? I finish of here with one narration¹¹⁵ from Sayyiduna Ibn Mas'ood from the Prophet that says that the Prophet prohibited from fasting three dBecause whatever comes in the Quran says: The day before sighting the crescent, Al Fitr, Al Adh ha.¹¹⁶ This narration is narrated by At Tabaraani and in this narration there is a narrator named Sa'eed who Ibn Hibban has done Tauthiq of.¹¹⁷ In other words the narration can be used as a proof. This Hadith clearly mentions not to fast on the two Eids and also not to fast on the day before sighting. So if we just go by calculations by leaving the sighting we will be going against this Hadith. Lastly Ash Shaikh Zafar says¹¹⁸ that no type of Ijtihad (no opinions) can be given in regards to this (taking calculations instead of sighting) because it will be against the Quran, Sunnah and Ijma'e (consensus of the scholars). In other words to take calculations over sighting would be going

¹¹⁵ See Ahkaam Al Quran of Al Muhaddith Zafar Ahmad Al Uthmaani vol 1 pg 197

¹¹⁶ Al Fitr means 'Eid al Fitr which falls on the first of Shawwal and Al Adh ha means 'Eid al Adh ha that falls on tenth of Dhul Hijja

¹¹⁷ Ibn Hibban doing Tauthiq means that he has mentioned him as reliable but other scholars of Hadith have mentioned this particular narrator to be weak.

¹¹⁸ See Ahkaam Al Quran for Al Muhaddith Zafar Ahmad Al Uthmaani vol 1 pg 195

against the teachings of the Quran, Sunnah, and Ijmae'¹¹⁹ of the Ulama. May Allah guide us all Ameen. One other point that these people¹²⁰ say is that Ru'yah(sighting) is not a act of 'Ibadah(worship) in itself, it is rather a means to know with certainty about the beginning of the new month related to Islamic 'Ibadah. First of all if these people mean that Ru'yah is not a 'Ibadah¹²¹ at all than this is a clear mistake on there part because Ru'yah is a 'Ibadah in itself though it is not a 'Ibadah that is Maqsoodah¹²²(those worships that are a purpose in itself) like Salat, Zakat, Siyam, and Hajj etc. So to say that Ru'yah is not a 'Ibadah at all is contrary to the teachings of Al Islam. Our Deen has made almost everything when it is done with the right intentions and done in accordance to the Prophets ways a Ibadah. Sleeping, eating, drinking when it is done with the right intentions are all 'Ibadaat. Providing for the family, trying to earn Halal sustenance is a act of Ibadah. Likewise to try to see the new moon so that a person will be fulfilling the order of the Prophet and do his fasting in the correct manner is not only a 'Ibadah but is a compulsory 'Ibadah,¹²³ a great act of reward that no one can deny. This point about Ru'yah not being an 'Ibadah maybe has come up because some of the non Muslims think that Muslims when they go out to see the moon that they are worshipping the moon so some of our people to reject this claim of the non Muslims started to say that Ru'yah is not a act of worship in itself. If we start doing things like this than some non-Muslims might think that we worship the black house (Al K'abah Al Musharrafah) so now to reject this we would say lets not pray towards the Ka'bah anymore. So you can see to reject some claim of the ignorant we cannot change our Deen. Now lets see one other statement of our respected Doctor. He trying to establish that Hisab can be used says "Yes, sighting was required by the Prophet (PBUH) as it was the only authentic method available during his times to confirm the presence of the new Moon, the sign of the new month's commencement. That is what the Prophet (PBUH) said, "we are

¹¹⁹ Few scholars in Khair Al Quroon(the three golden periods of Al Islam)saying about calculations being permissible to use will not nullify Ijmae' . Instead it will be said that to go with sighting is a Mujma' 'Alaihi(consensus) decision of the scholars of Al Islam. Only scholars whose reliability is very high for example like one of the four Imams(Abu Hanifa, Malik, Ash Shafi'ee, and Ahmad) going against Ijmae' will nullify it.

¹²⁰ Who say to go with calculations is all right

¹²¹ The word 'Ibadah with its roots letters indicates that it means to become the servant of Allah. So a true believer is always the servant of Allah whether he is eating or drinking, being with his wife, or praying.

¹²² These are pure worships in other words not means to acquire something. For us to better understand look at the example of Wudhu and Salat, Wudhu is a 'Ibadah but not like Salat being an 'Ibadah, Wudhu is done so that Salat can be performed or something like recitation of the Quran can be done, in other words Wudhu is not done without a purpose it is means to do other 'Ibadaat. Contrary to this Salat is performed to worship Allah not as a means for something. So Salat is known as 'Ibadah Maqsoodah and Wudhu known as a 'Ibadah also but such a 'Ibadah that is a means for something. The Prophet said that the key to Salat is Wudhu so we can see that this Hadith is proof of what we just said.

¹²³ There are other examples like Ru'yah being an 'Ibadah(though not Maqsoodah) in our Deen.For example wearing clean(clean from impurity) cloths for Salat or to find a clean place to performSalat are not 'Ibadaat Maqsoodah(explanation has passed in this thesis) but are very important and acts of reward and also an act of 'Ibadah. Likewise for a traveler to find the direction of Al Ka'bah Al Musharrafah is not an 'Ibadah Maqsoodah but an act of reward and an act of 'Ibadah.

unlettered people we neither write nor calculate.” The month consists of sometimes 29 days and sometimes 30 days. The *Ibadat* are connected with the time and the time in Islamic understanding is connected with the Moon and not with the Sun as the Islamic calendar is a lunar and not a solar calendar. The *Sharia’h* does not want us to start the fasting when the month of Ramadan has not even begun and Islam does not want us to lose a day of Ramadan by celebrating the Eid on the last day of Ramadan. That is why the Prophet (PBUH) advised us not to start the month of Ramadan a day or two ahead of time or finish it a day or two ahead of time. He wanted us to start the month of Ramadan with certainty that the new Moon is there and same is the case with breaking the fast. The actual sighting of the new Moon was the only mechanism at their disposal to attain that certainty. That is why the Prophet (PBUH) emphasized so much upon sighting the new Moon not because sighting was or is the objective of fasting or in any way or form a goal of the *Ibadah* but because it was a means to ascertain the presence of the new Moon, knowing which is the objective of *Ibadah*. Now when that objective can be achieved through a more authentic and precise method i.e., astronomical calculations then replacing actual sighting, a probable means of certainty, with a more accurate method with categorical certainty will not constitute any deviation from the Prophetic commandment or objectives of Islamic *Sharia’h* but a complement to that.” Now I really did not have any problem with this argument of his except till the end from the word ‘Now’. But first I would like to point out something in regards to his argument before mentioning his last statement from the word ‘Now’. This Deen of ours is the best Deen that Allah has chosen for us. He chose the best person to carry out this message of Al Islam and chose the best people to be the Messengers companions. He chose the best time for this message to come and the best place where it would come. Allah has chosen for us this Deen and perfected it for us like he mentions in the Quran. He has also made this Deen of ours for all people and all times till the Day of Judgment. Now everything that is in this Deen of ours is the best way because it the way taught by Allah and his Messenger. To say that something was the method at that time and now we have a method which is more authentic that would compliment our Deen is a very dangerous statement. We should ponder over what is being implied here. Are we in other words saying that Allah chose for our Prophet something that was not the best way and now we have a method that is the best way? Allah is the knower of all things and he is able upon all things then if he wanted he could have given the knowledge of science to the companions of the Prophet in such a manner that people cannot even understand today. Allah was able upon this and could have done it¹²⁴ but he chose for our beloved Prophet and his companions and for this best nation this simple method of sighting and this would be the way, which is more precise and more authentic. Also is the doctor by saying that the method that we have today is more authentic and more precise implying that our start of Ramadan and ‘Eid would be more precise than the Prophet’s Start of Ramadan and ‘Eid? I am not adding any words instead I am taking this Doctor’s statement and mentioning

¹²⁴ There have been civilizations of the past that have been so advanced in certain things that we cannot come close to it today. Look how the Pyramids being build amazes us till this day.

these things. If this is the case that our method which is calculations is more authentic and more precise than we could say a lot of other things that are similar to this. First of all we can say that our timetables for the Salat are more authentic and more precise than the method used back then to find out about the prayer timings. So in other words we would be saying that our five time prayers are more accurately being performed at least in regards to time than even the five time prayers being performed at the Prophet's time. Also we can say that because our toilet system is much more advanced than anytime in the past so our cleanliness and Wudhu and Taharah are being performed much more in a correct way than the time of the Prophet. You can keep going like this on and on and on. This is why I was saying that what he has said in his statement about our method (calculation) being a more precise and more authentic system, which would be a compliment to our Shari'ah, is a very dangerous statement. This is really one of the main reasons why I wanted to write against this doctor and Isna's decision. I really did not have a problem if they would say that because we here in America are facing many problems and taking into consideration everything we will go with Hisab for this year. Instead these people are out to prove that this Hisab is the best method and it is a compliment to our Deen. If we start doing like this than we will be by the end of the century changed a lot of things in regards to our Deen. Also to say that this method of sighting was the only tool they had at the time of the Prophet is not a correct statement as I have mentioned in this book before. There were few people at the time of the Prophet who new calculations also even though they were very few in number just like there were few people at that time that could read and write like Waraqa for example. A few people being able to know these things do not contradict the Hadith that we are a nation that cannot read and write to the end of the Hadith. Another point important to mention is that the Doctor mentioned that the main objective is that we start Ramadan properly and finish it properly. In other words once we know for sure that Ramadan has started we start it, not a few days before and we finish it exactly when it finishes so we are not making 'Eid whilst it is still Ramadan. Now this statement of his is correct and agreeable but to what extent do we do this we have to see. The Sahaba and the entire Ummah would agree with this point but only to the extent that we are made Mukallaf(responsible) off. In other words since the Hadith has told us that we start our fasting by sighting the moon and if we cannot see it than just complete thirty days so we are only Mukallaf(responsible)up to this point. If we don't see the moon and we complete thirty days and in reality the month of Ramadan had started while we were completing thirty days of Sha'baan by eating and drinking than Allah will not punish us for this neither will he ask us in regards to this Insha Allah.¹²⁵ Like wise if we could not see the moon of Shawwal and we completed thirty days of Ramadan according to the teachings of the Ahaadith and in reality the month of Shawwal had started so we are fasting on 'Eid ¹²⁶in other words than we will not be asked about this also in the hereafter. No scholars of the past would say that

¹²⁵ This Insha Allah is said Tabarrukan (to acquire blessings) not that we are in doubt about what we are saying

¹²⁶ Where else to fast on 'Eid is prohibited.

we have wronged in our actions to the extent even those scholars who might give permissibility to the use of the method of Hisab will not criticize this method. As you can all see we have made a mistake in both the situations by fasting on ‘Eid and eating on the first day of Ramadan but because we did what we were Mukallaf of in our Deen we will not be held responsible. Contrary to this if we make a mistake in our calculations (in using the method of Hisab) and fast on ‘Eid or eat while it is Ramadan then we might really have a serious problem in the hereafter. So we can see that yes the objective was and still is that we start our ‘Ibadat(worship,fasting) with certainty and finish it with certainty but to the extent of us being Mukallaf. This is why the Prophet said if you cannot see the moon because of some reason than complete thirty days even though there is a big possibility that the moon is there and we just could not see it. If certainty were the only objective then the Prophet would have told us that to be on the safe side even if we don’t see the moon of Ramadan still fast because there is a possibility that it (moon) was there and we just couldn’t see it hence Ramadan has started. Instead the Prophet has prohibited the fasting of Yaum Ash Shak(the fasting of the day of doubt). So we are not suppose to fast a day before Ramadan thinking that if it is Ramadan then it will be my Fardh fast and if it is not Ramadan then it will be a supererogatory (Nafl) fast. ¹²⁷The Doctor also argues with one other point and he says 2: “If the actual sighting was such an objective or a prerequisite that fasting cannot be started except by it then it would have been required even on the 30th of Sha’aban. Nobody goes out to see the new Moon on the 30th of Sha’aban or on the 30th of Ramadan. No jurists have ever required such a sighting because the sighting was prescribed for certainty and not for the sake of sighting itself. Once that certainty is achieved by completing 30 days (as the Islamic month can not go beyond 30 days) sighting is not even required and the new month is started. Everybody knows that the new Moon must be in the horizons by the 30th of Sha’aban and nobody worries about seeing it. If seeing the new Moon was a precondition for fasting then fasting and sighting will go hand in hand. But we see it is not. Therefore sighting is not the prerequisite for fasting but is a means to achieve certainty of the new Moon in the horizon.” Now this I also agree with but if he is trying to say from this that because the sighting is not the prerequisite for fasting but is a means to achieve certainty so we will achieve this certainty through Hisab today than this is a matter that I will not agree with. I have already answered on top that yes we have to be certain about the start of Ramadan and end of it but to the limit in our Deen that we have been made Mukallaf(responsible) of. I have also mentioned on top

¹²⁷ If someone says that we are not suppose to fast a day or two(Yaum Ash Shak) before Ramadan so that we can enter in our worship (fasting of Ramadan) with certainty. The answer will be that if certainty was the only and main objective and to perform the fasts of Ramadan in Ramadan was the only and main objective then we should have given an order to fast on Yaum Ash Shak instead prohibition has come in regards to it (fasting on Yaum Ash Shak).Why I say this is because if the main purpose was to start Ramadan with certainty than if we don’t see the crescent of Ramadan we should still fast because it could be that Ramadan started and we just could not see the moon. Instead the Prophet told us in this type of situation to complete thirty days. We can only understand the wisdoms of our Deen if we make ourselves the true servants of Allah. Our Deen cannot be fully understood through logic and philosophy instead it could be under stood through the Sunnah of our beloved Nabiy.

from which we can understand that sighting is not only a means of achieving the certainty but the best way and the only way in our responsibility. If this type of argument with logic is used then anyone can come and say anything about our Deen. For example a person can say that the objective of Salat is worshipping Allah so I will worship Allah the way I want to and not perform the five times prayers. Like wise a person can say that the objective of Adhaan is to call people (let them know) so we will not call the Adhaan anymore instead we will call them on the telephone and invite them to the Masjid. You see I can keep going with examples that would change our Deen completely, so this type of logical argument when it comes in contradiction to the Hadith really does not count. If this type of argument had any weight than our great 'Ulama of the past who were so intelligent and knowledgeable that you hardly can find anyone close to them in our time would have certainly mentioned in their works that if a time comes in which certainty can be perfectly achieved with a means other than sighting than to use those means would be all right. You would have found a very huge number¹²⁸ of our 'Ulama speaking about this instead you can hardly find anyone who said this, instead when they even discussed about Al Hisab most of them¹²⁹ would not say anything like this. The doctor further says 3: "If it is said that sighting is not required on the 30th of Sha'aban because the Prophet (PBUH) said, "complete 30 days if it is cloudy." I will argue that this Prophetic statement commands that complete 30 days if it was cloudy. It does not say "Do not see the new Moon on 30th of Sha'aban if it was not cloudy on 29th of Sha'aban." Suppose it was not cloudy on the 29th of Sha'aban and the new Moon was not seen that evening then would not the Hadith require Muslims to see it on the 30th of Sha'aban had it been a precondition for fasting. The clause of "if it is cloudy" covers only when it is cloudy but it does not cover when it is not cloudy. Had the sighting been intrinsic to fasting then it would have been required even on the 30th especially when the new Moon was not seen not because there were some obscurities hampering its sighting but because when it was not there in the horizon. But if we agree that sighting is not the precondition for fasting but certainty then one can understand why sighting is required on the 29th of Sha'aban and not on the 30th of Sha'aban." Now this point we can agree with also. We can say also that sighting is not a precondition for fasting but certainty is but the certainty that we are Mukallaf(responsible)of. Also the certainty factor can be achieved in our Deen through certain ways and those ways will be used only and they are sighting the moon or completing thirty days. The Doctor further says 4: "Sighting is not a prerequisite for fasting even on the 29th of Sha'aban. Had it been a precondition then no Muslim will be allowed to start the month of Ramadan except through sighting the new Moon on the 29th day of the month of Sha'aban. I have already shown in my above mentioned paper that Ibn Umar along with A'isha, Asma bint Abi Bakr used to start fasting the next day if it was cloudy on the 29th day of Sha'aban and the new moon was not sighted

¹²⁸ So many other things that were not in those 'Ulama's time they mentioned for us but they don't mention this type of argument.

¹²⁹ I used the words most of them not because some of them said like this but because I just did not want to say all of them to be on the safe side because I do not know what all of them said.

because of obscurities. They will not fast that day as a supererogatory day of fasting but as a mandatory day of Ramadan. That was the case with many Tabi'een (Successors) and a whole school of Fiqh is based upon this opinion. Imam Ahmad, following the actions of these Companions of the Prophet (PBUH), has adopted this position and the entire Hanbali School follows this position of Imam Ahmad. It becomes important when we know that Ibn Umar is the original narrator of many of the Ahadith (narrated by all the authentic sources of Ahadith) which require sighting as a means of fasting thirty days." Here I would like to point out first of all that these things that he is mentioning has nothing to do with our topic which is Hisab(calculations). All of these things (above) still cannot prove that Hisab is allowed or preferable today. These things have to do with a completely different situation and that is the fasting of the day of Shak(doubt). Even those scholars that allowed the fasting of the day of doubt (Shak) never allowed Al Hisab(calculations) to be used. These people try to bring proofs that really have nothing to do with our topic to prove Al Hisab. Just because some Sahaaba or even Imam Ahmad¹³⁰ is of the opinion of fasting on the day of doubt how does that lead us to using Al Hisab to start Ramadan and end it. Just for our readers to understand I will mention something's about the fast of the day of doubt (Yaum Ash Shak). When the sky is not clear and only twenty-nine days have passed of Sha'baan what we are suppose to do is try to see the moon if it cannot be sighted then to complete thirty days of Sha'baan and then start Ramadan. Now on that night after twenty-nine days have passed of Sha'baan when we looked for the moon because the sky was cloudy for example so we could not see it. So the next day which we are suppose to count as the thirtieth day of Sha'baan is a day of doubt because it could be that it is the thirtieth day of Sha'baan and it could be that it is the first day of Ramadan in reality, because we could not see the moon so we really cannot be sure. Now on this day to fast prohibition has come from the Prophet. Also the Prophet has commanded us to complete thirty days of Sha'baan. These two points are very clearly established from the authentic Ahaadith. We as believers are just suppose to follow what is there for us from our Prophet. Now some Sahaaba and people from after them fasted on this day. Imam Ahmad has three opinions in regards to this topic, one of them is also in regards to fasting on this day like the doctor has mentioned on top. Now these people really did not have any foundation for this fasting as a matter of fact the authentic proofs are against them, which indicate towards prohibition. There are many explanations given on why these people fasted on this day and the explanations differ according to the person sometimes.

¹³⁰ Imam Ahmad has three opinions in regards to this topic like Ibn Al Jauzy has mentioned. See Tuhfatul Ahwadh commentary of Al Jami' for At Tirmidhi vol 3 pg 298. One of the opinions is that it is compulsory to fast with the intention of Ramadan, the second opinion is that it is not permissible to fast whether the fast will be Fardh or Nafl(which is general in other words no type of fast is allowed), and the third is that it would be left to the Imams(leader of the believers) opinion that if he says to people to fast then they should fast and if he says to people not to fast then they should not fast. See also Nailul Autaar for Ash Shaukaani vol 4 pg 206

The summary is that the Sahaaba¹³¹ had difference of opinion in regards to this and the pious people after them continued to have this difference¹³².

Most of the Companions and scholars held the opinion of not fasting on this day with the intention of Ramadan. The reasons behind this difference of opinion in spite of the prohibition of fasting on this day and the order to complete the month with thirty days are lengthy and to be discussed at another time.¹³³

All of the mentioned points do not prove the validity of using astronomical calculations so that the beginning and end of Ramadan and 'Eid can be announced months in advance. The actual point attempted to be proved is that the positive moon sighting and otherwise completion of thirty days is wrong. With all that has been mentioned regarding the prohibition of fasting on a day of doubt, it is not possible to accept such claims.

The majority of the scholars, including most of the Companions, have said that fasting on the day of doubt is *makrūh* (severely disliked). Imam at-Tirmizhī mentions in his *Jāmi'*, narrated by *Sayyiduna* 'Ammār, that "whoever fasts on the day of doubt has certainly disobeyed Abul Qāsim¹³⁴"¹³⁵. Thereafter, Imām Tirmizhī states, "the hadīth of 'Ammār is *hasan saḥīh*. The continuous practice has been in accordance to this (*hadīth* of 'Ammār) according most of the people of knowledge, starting from the Companions and their successors. Imam Sufyān At-Thawrī, Imam Malik bin Anas, Abdullah Ibn al-Mubārak, Imam ash-Shāfi'ī, Imam Ahmad¹³⁶ and Is'hāq all disliked (thought it was *makrūh*) that a man

¹³¹ Al Bayhaqī mentions in his Sunan (As Sunan Al Kubra vol 4 pg 211) that Sayyiduna Ibn 'Umar and Ummul Mu'mineen 'Aisha's Madh hab was that if after the twenty ninth day of Sha'baan if the sky is not clear and the moon cannot be seen then they would fast the next day but if the sky was clear and the moon was not sighted then they would not fast . So how can this prove calculations that whether the sky is clear or not Ramadan is going to be started on a fix day? Also the Doctor claims that because these companions fasted without the sighting of the moon hence the sighting of the moon (even on the twenty ninth of Sha'baan) is not a prerequisite for the start of Ramadan. I say that if this was the case then these companions should have started the fast whether the sky was clear or not. They should not differentiate between the sky being clear or unclear. This (difference between the sky being clear or not) is also one of the opinions of Imam Ahmad and actually some of them have mentioned that this is the Madh hab of Imam Ahmad. See Nailul Autaar for Ash Shaukaani vol 4 pg 206-207

¹³² See how Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah says that all of these people that fasted on the day of doubt actually fasted because there was a possibility that somewhere the moon might have been sighted. If the Salaf (predecessors) knew that the moon had not been sighted anywhere then they would have never fasted on the day of doubt. I have not quoted him word by word but this is what he is saying. A beautiful answer given by Shaikhul Islam and this answer shows that to establish a third method to start Ramadan with the day of doubt's fasting will not be correct. Instead only two methods will remain for the start of Ramadan and they are sighting of the moon and completion of thirty days of Sha'baan. See Majmoo'atul Fatawa for Ibn Taymiyyah vol 13 pg 98.

¹³³ Some reasons have been mentioned but not in detail.

¹³⁴ This is the surname of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him.

¹³⁵ *Tuhfat 'l-Ahwadhī Sharh Jami' at-Tirmidhī* by al-Mubākpūrī vol 3 pg 297-298

¹³⁶ As already mentioned, Imam Ahmad has three opinions on this topic of which one of them is in accordance to the majority of the scholars. This is the opinion that Imam at-Tirmidhī has mentioned here.

should fast on the day of doubt.”

Secondly, the evidences provided by those who disliked it are very strong. Thirdly, clear prohibitions have come in hadīth about the fasting of this day. Fourthly, clear orders have come in authentic hadīth about completing the thirty days. Fifthly, anyone who fasted on a day of doubt could have done it for various reasons which are not prohibited. It cannot be proven that all of the Companions and scholars after them that fasted on this day did so with the intention of Ramadan.

Many scholars have listed reasons which would allowed one to keep a fast on a day of doubt, as long as the intention is not for Ramadan.¹³⁷ Some examples of other possibilities are, for example, if someone has a habit of fasting at the end of the month and according to his habit, he fasts at the end of Sha'bān. This is allowed according to the scholars because of an authentic hadīth¹³⁸ which indicates towards it.

If someone fasts with the intention of *nafl* fast¹³⁹, this is allowed by the opinion of many scholars. Also, it is allowed to begin Ramadan if one witness testifies that he saw the moon, according to the view of *Sayyiduna* ‘Alī and some of the great scholars.¹⁴⁰ With all of these evidences provided, it cannot be said that many of our *salaf* fasted on the day of doubt with the intention of Ramadan.

In summary, one of two explanations can be applied to any records of the *salaf* fasting on a day of doubt. One explanation of those who fasted on a day of doubt is that they did it with the intention of *nafl*¹⁴¹ and otherwise, they could have also done it with the intention of *fardh*.

¹³⁷ Ash-Shawkāni mentions in *Nail al-Autār*, that they have a difference of opinion about the wisdom behind the prohibition of fasting one day or two days before Ramadan. Some scholars said that it would be so that the person can enter Ramadan with the full strength and eagerness but this opinion is not free from objection. Some others scholars have said that it is so the *fardh* fast of Ramadan does not get mixed with *nafl* fasts. However, this is also not free from objection. Some have said that the prohibition has come because the order of fasting is related to the sighting of the moon and whoever fasts a day or two before has certainly attempted to defame the order of fasting. After mentioning this, he says that *Hāfīz* Ibn Hajr al-‘Asqalānī has said this in *al-Fat’h al-Bārī* and this is the reliable opinion. *Hāfīz* Ibn Hajr and ash-Shawkānī, who lived much after him, both give preference to this being the wisdom of the prohibition of fasting on the day of doubt. This also supports the view that the fasting is related to the sighting. See *al-Fat’h al-Bārī* commentary of *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* by Ibn Hajr al-‘Asqalānī vol 4 pg 625

¹³⁸ See *Nail al-Autār* by ash-Shawkāni vol 4 pg 277

¹³⁹ Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Malik have allowed this. This is mentioned by ash-Shawkānī from *Hāfīz* Ibn Hajar in *Nail al-Autār* vol 4 pg206

¹⁴⁰ Ash-Shawkānī mentions in *Nail al-Autār* that the words of the narration indicate that *Sayyiduna* ‘Alī fasted on this day and commanded the people to fast because he had received one witness. So *Sayyiduna* ‘Alī did fast but not because it was the day of doubt rather because there was a witness that actually saw the moon. *Nail al-Autār* vol 4 pg207

¹⁴¹ If it cannot be proven, due to lack of evidence, that those that fasted on the day of doubt did so with the intention of *fardh*, then other possible explanations still remain. It is not clear that they contradicted the authentic proof found in *hadith*. It is quite possible that they fasted out of the habit of fasting in the last days of the month. In this manner, their action will not be against the

So if for some people the fast before Ramadan is with the intention of Nafl then this would just be that some people fasted Nafl (supererogatory) fasts before Ramadan and then they entered into Ramadan¹⁴². This is completely different from the situation that through Al Hisab (calculations) a person starts Ramadan and does not worry about the sighting of the moon. So you can see clearly that in this situation the establishment of the fasting before Ramadan cannot establish Al Hisab. Secondly it could be¹⁴³ that the fast before Ramadan is with the intention of Fardh (compulsory) fast. This situation is also not free from two ways. Firstly that the Fardh is besides the fast of that Ramadan and secondly that the fast is with the intention of Fardh of that year's Ramadan. If it is the first situation in other words the fast preceding Ramadan is with the intention of Fardh but not the Fardh of that year's Ramadan then this also will not establish Al Hisab in any form because it could be that someone fasted before Ramadan with the intention of Fardh¹⁴⁴ fast of the past or vowed fasts or something else and then started Ramadan in the proper manner that is either by sighting or by completion of thirty days. The last situation would be that some of the Salaf fasted the day of doubt with the intention of the Fardh of that year's Ramadan. In this situation still Al Hisab will not be proven in any manner. This action of some of our Salaf (predecessors) will not even prove that there is a third method of starting Ramadan like how the Doctor has claimed.¹⁴⁵ The reason is because none of those people that fasted with the intention of Fardh of that year's Ramadan ever said that it is for sure the month of Ramadan (that is why it is known as the day of doubt), now fasting with calculations and saying for sure Ramadan has started, can these two situations be similar? Also to say that at least a third method (other than sighting or completion of thirty days) is proven is not sensible. The reason because these people were fasting with doubt they were not sure if this is Ramadan's fast or not and the two methods that are proven in our Shari'ah they are with certainty that the blessed month of Ramadan has started. So you can see a clear difference in the situations. The only way calculations or a third method would be proven is if some people fasted before sighting (the moon of Ramadan) or completion of thirty days (of Sha'baan) the Fardh of that year's Ramadan with the full conviction that this fast (on the day of doubt) is from the

authentic proofs. It is important to keep a good judgment regarding others until proven otherwise.

¹⁴² This action will not be against sighting because they are still entering Ramadan with the sighting or the completion of thirty days.

¹⁴³ I admit that some of the Salaf did it with this intention but can someone prove that they all did it with this intention? Also the number that did it with this intention compared to the rest of the Ummah is very minor.

¹⁴⁴ The 'Ulama have allowed like this type of fasts before Ramadan. See Fathul Baari for Ibn Hajr vol 4 pg 625

¹⁴⁵ Especially when Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah says that they fasted because of the possibility that somewhere the moon could have been sighted. This is an answer that removes all contradictions in regards to the fasting of the day of doubt. It also removes the objection that could come upon those that fasted that how did they go against the clear orders of sighting the moon. See Majmoo'atul Fatawa vol 13 pg 98 for Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah

month of Ramadan but this was not the case. **Fasting on the Day of Doubt: Its Ruling**

The question arises then that what should a person do if he had fasted on the day of doubt, and later finds out that the day was in fact the first day the month of Ramadan? Imam At Tirmidhi brings the opinion of the majority of scholars in his *Jami*¹⁴⁶, after mentioning that most of the scholars of Islam have opined that fasting on the day of doubt is Makrooh (reprehensible), if someone fasts on this day and later it is found from the month of Ramadan that he will have to make a Qadha fast in its place.

This is a very interesting point for us to ponder over. Why should a person be obliged to remake his fast if the day of doubt is included in the month of Ramadan? His fast of that day should be sufficient for a fast of Ramadan. The reason is because that the fasting of the day of doubt will be considered a Nafil fast. The person who decided to fast on that day assumed it was a distinct fast from the month of Ramadan. His intention therefore was not to fast in the month of Ramadan but on a day separate from it, and hence he would have to make up a single day's fast.¹⁴⁷ This further substantiates our argument mentioned above.

6) Moreover ¹⁴⁸, this topic of fasting on the day of doubt has nothing to do at all with calculations.

7) The objection raised by some that there were some of the Salaf who fasted on the day of doubt, will also find that some of our predecessors¹⁴⁹ were not of this opinion. To prove that every one of them fasted without any contradiction will be

¹⁴⁶ See Tuhfatul Ahwadhi vol 3 pg 299

¹⁴⁷ See Tuhfatul Ahwadhi vol 3 pg 299 for the explanation on why he would have to repeat his fast given by Al Mubarkpuri.

¹⁴⁸ The first that stated that even though there were differences amongst our Salaf in regards to the fasting of the day of doubt, the majority of them still thought that it was Makrooh disliked. This has no relevance to calculations.

¹⁴⁹ It is mentioned about Ummul Mu'mineen 'Aisha that she used to also fast on the day of doubt, yet further investigation over the narrations indicate that her fasting was out of caution, as she said that I would rather fast a day of Sha'baan then lose a fast of Ramadan. This fear of losing Ramadan led her to fast on the day of doubt. Her fasting in no way was because she thought that there was a third method to starting the month of Ramadan. For details of the narrations, refer to Al-Sunan Al-Kubra of Al-Bayhaqi, vol 4 pg 211. Also, her action was a clear Ijtihaad (where a person resolves an issue through non-definitive proofs), because if she did have clear proofs, such as a Hadith, that allowed the fasting on the day of doubt she would have mentioned it. An example of this would be that she saw the Prophet fast on the day of doubt because he feared losing Ramadan. She would have then said that I would fast on this day because the Prophet also fasted. When someone's Ijtihaad is against the Marfoo' (narration from the Prophet) narration then Marfoo' narration will be given preference like all the scholars of this field agree. Sayyiduna 'Ammar's narration that prohibit the fasting of the day of doubt is Hukman Marfoo' (in words it is not Marfoo' but in the Shari'ah it is considered as if 'Ammar had heard it directly from the Prophet) according to the scholars of Hadith. See for more details Fathul Baari of Ibn Hajr, vol 4, pg 615. A subtle point that comes to mind is that since Ummul Mu'mineen 'Aisha saw that the Prophet used to fast a lot in Sha'baan, and that the Prophet would fast the entire month of Ramadan, she may have thought that there was nothing wrong with this fasting of the day of doubt. This could be the basis for her Ijtihaad.

a very difficult task. For example, it is well known about Ibn ‘Umar that he used to fast on the day of doubt, and this point is established through some narrations. But other narrations contradict this point in regards to him. For example Al Bayhaqi has narrated in his Sunan¹⁵⁰ that ‘Abdul ‘Aziz said that I heard Ibn ‘Umar saying, “If I would fast the entire year, I certainly would not fast on that day which is doubted from Ramadan.” Also Ath Thauri narrates¹⁵¹ from ‘Abdul ‘Aziz¹⁵² that he said I saw Ibn ‘Umar command a man to do Iftaar on the day of doubt. Thus, establishing the fast of the day of doubt is difficult, even from those who did fast on the day.

Ibn ‘Umar¹⁵³’s distaste for fasting on the day of doubt presents some vital issues. To fast on such day brings something new into the Deen which was not

¹⁵⁰ See As Sunan Al Kubra for Al Bayhaqi vol 4 pg209

¹⁵¹ See As Sunan al Kubra for Al Bayhaqi vol 4 pg 209

¹⁵² ‘Abdul ‘Aziz is a narrator that scholars have different of opinions about him but Ibn Ma’een said that he is Thiqa (reliable) so a narration like this will at least be Hasan (authentic enough to be used). See I’laaus Sunan vol 9 pg123

¹⁵³ Some narrations show Ibn ‘Umar showed dislike for fasting on the day of doubt and commanded someone not to fast on that day and other narrations show he fasted himself. How can this contradiction be removed? So there is a strong possibility that Ibn ‘Umar showed dislike for it but when he fasted himself it was because he really had some serious doubts that is this day from Ramadan or not. Ibn ‘Umar had become blind near the end of his life and he could not see the moon himself in those days (him being blind in those days and sending someone to see the moon is mentioned by Ash Shaikh Khalil Ahmad As Saharanpuri in Badhlul Majhood the commentary of Sunan Abi Dawood vol 11 pg 109) so he used to send someone to see the moon and if this person would not see it and it was cloudy than Ibn ‘Umar would fast the next day. Some of those narrations that show that he fasted clearly shows (like his student Nafi’ says in one place like how it is mentioned in ‘Aunul Ma’bood commentary of Sunan Abi Dawood vol 6 pg351) that he use to send someone to see the moon (showing that this was the period in his lifetime when he had become blind or else he would have gone out himself to see it specially when this is such a important issue and he was so careful in regards to matters of Deen). So you can see that since ibn ‘Umar could not see the moon himself and had to hear about it from someone else you could see why he would be led to some serious doubts and why he would fast. You know how careful Ibn ‘Umar was in his lifetime in matters of Deen so it is not surprising at all that he to be on the safe side fasted (See how Al Khattaabi mentions this in his commentary of Sunan Abi Dawood that this fasting was to be on the safe side vol 2 pg 81 M’aalimu Sunan.) Also those narrations that show he fasted indicates that at the end of Ramadan he would do ‘Eid with everyone and not go with his calculations. In other words if he fasted the day of doubt and now according to his start of the fasting there is no fasting left still he would not do ‘Eid but wait and do it with everyone else. This shows also that his fasting on the day of doubt was just to be careful and be on the safe side not because he thought that Ramadan had started for sure or else if in his thought if Ramadan had really started then why would he leave his calculation and do ‘Eid with others instead he should have told others that do ‘Eid according to my calculations. Also this (not going with his calculations at the end of Ramadan) shows that maybe his fast of the day of doubt was a Nafl(supererogatory) fast which is permissible to keep(according to many of the scholars) and this has been mentioned by a lot the scholars also to lift the contradiction. See how Ash Shaikh Khalil Ahmad As Saharanpuri in Badhlul Majhood vol 11 pg110 mentions this point that he (Ibn ‘Umar fasted Nafl fasts on the day of doubt). Also one answer that could be given to lift the contradiction is that when Ibn ‘Umar disliked it, it was because of the general public because the public might start thinking that this is a fast for Ramadan and when he did it, it was for only specific people like the people of knowledge because they would just do it to be on the safe side and not make it part of Ramadan. This point shows that to make the action of Ibn ‘umar a proof to start Ramadan with calculations is so weak. This above answer could be understood from Al ‘Allaamah Anwar from his famous book Faidhul Baari upon Sahih Al Bukhari vol 3 pg 151-152. See in the same

previously there. This is what was intended by the saying of Ibn Mas'ood, "For me not to fast one day from Ramadan and later make Qadha of it, is better than I increase in it (Ramadan) a day that is not from it."¹⁵⁴ In other words, to have to make up a single fast from the beginning of Ramadan is better than fasting a single doubtful day before Ramadan, not knowing with certainty that it is or is not part of Ramadan, because this is introducing an innovation into Islam. These great companions bring such stern words because they had the proper understanding of Deen, and were the farthest from adding to the Deen something not from it.

It is also mentioned about Sayyiduna 'Ali that he fasted on the day of doubt, yet we have explained, according to the words of the narration, that it was not because it was the day of doubt, but rather it was because one person saw the moon. Al Bayhaqi¹⁵⁵ has also mentioned from him and Sayyiduna 'Umar that both of them prohibited fasting on the day of doubt. And there are narrations mentioned about Sayyiduna 'Umar that he fasted¹⁵⁶ on the day of doubt as well.

Clearly, there are a lot of contradictions in this chapter of fasting on this ambiguous day. Some narrations indicate that someone fasted, and then some other narrations indicate that they disliked it or even prohibited it. With all these contradictions remaining, to use this topic as a proof to establish Al Hisab or even to establish a third method of initiating the month of Ramadan through this day, is not sensible, especially when that this is in conflict with authentic Hadith.

The Prophet said in one Hadith, which is narrated by Ibn Khuzayimah in his Sahih¹⁵⁷, as reported by Sayyidna Hudhaifah with a sound chain, that "**Do not fast early**, before (the start of) this month (Ramadan) until you see the crescent or you complete the amount (thirty days of Sha'baan)." Hence, to fast before the day of doubt, or to establish the beginning of the month of Ramadan, is in direct clash with this Hadith. It can also be seen from this

place how Imam Abu Yusuf (the famous student of Imam Abu Hanifa) would fast himself whilst giving the Fatwa to the public not to fast. So the summary of the matter is that to lift the contradictions between Ibn 'Umar fasting himself whilst in some narrations prohibiting others to fast (on the day of doubt) can be lifted in a few ways. One that Ibn 'Umar fasted Nafil fasts and prohibited with the intention of Fardh. The second is that Ibn 'Umar fasted himself whilst telling the general public not to fast. The third that Ibn 'Umar fasted because he could not see the moon himself and did not have the full reliability on the others that were trying to see the moon especially when it was cloudy. Even though what I have stated here is just some possibilities but they are strong possibilities that can be established with some points and it also lifts the contradiction that Ibn 'Umar disliked the fasting of the day of doubt and yet did it himself. Also one last point here is that his saying (which forbid the fast of day of doubt) will be given preference to above his action (which allows it) like how it is understood from I'laa'us Sunan vol 9 pg123. Allah knows best and his knowledge is Atam (complete and perfect without any shortcoming).

¹⁵⁴ See As Sunan Al Kubra for Al Bayhaqi vol 4 pg 209

¹⁵⁵ See As Sunan Al Kubra vol 4 pg209

¹⁵⁶ See Nailul Autaar for Ash Shaukaani vol 4 pg 206

¹⁵⁷ Also narrated by Abu Dawood, An Nasaai, and Ibn Hibban. See Sahih Ibn Khuzaima vol 2:922.

narration that there are only two ways to start Ramadan: either sight the moon or complete thirty days of Sha'baan.

The Meaning of The Day of Doubt

Yet another point to consider: **What does the day of doubt (yaum Ash Shak), mean?** A day full of ambiguity, is it from Sha'baan or Ramadan? It was a day when people began to discuss about moon sighting, to start off the month of Ramadan. In 'Aunul Ma'bood¹⁵⁸, Ash Shaikh Shamsul Haq Al 'Azim Abaadi mentions that when people would not attempt to sight the moon, or that a witness came to the Qadhi to deliver his testimony, but it did not fulfill the conditions of acceptance, Imam Ahmad would then issue the ruling that the day was of doubt. There was legitimate doubt that required verification. Therefore, to claim that this was a third method of starting Ramadan, and we could start Ramadan through calculation, and, from innumerable days before the start of Ramadan, we can announce that Ramadan will start on this day and end on this day does not make any sense. No proper scholar in his right mind would use the day of doubt to establish leeway for calculations. Al 'Ainy also writes in his commentary of Sahih Al Bukhari¹⁵⁹ that the day of doubt is a day that people would discuss about the moon, because of one or more reasons:

- 1) The moon had not been sighted.
- 2) One person gave the Shahaadah (witnessing) of the sighting and it was rejected.
- 3) Two people gave the news of sighting but they were not qualified in the Shari'ah to testify due to the fact that they are open sinners.

The scholars of the past have very well described the meaning of "the day of doubt" and it is clear that it is not just a day that some individuals have some mild confusion. Instead, it is a day that, for many reasons, serious dubiousness clouded the mind of a person. It is to this degree, that if one were to claim that there is consensus¹⁶⁰ (Ijma' of the scholars) that calculations¹⁶¹ should not be used to determine the start or end of Ramadan, it would not farfetched at all. This is because of the sheer number of scholars supporting such a statement.

¹⁵⁸ See 'Aunul Ma'bood commentary of the Sunan of Abu Dawood by Al 'Azim Abaadi vol 6 pg 351

¹⁵⁹ See 'Umdatul Qari commentary of Sahih Al Bukhari by Al 'Aini vol10 pg279

¹⁶⁰ According to Ibn Al 'Arabi Al Andalusi Al Maliki (died 543 after migration) only one Taabi'e of the past said about calculations no one before him and neither anyone after him. See Al Qabas fi sharhi Muwatta Ibn Anas vol 2 pg 123.

¹⁶¹ Look to how Abul Waleed Al Baji has, in his famous commentary of the Muwatta of Imam Malik, written that to go with the opinion of calculations would be against Ijma'(consensus of the scholars). See Al Muntaqa vol 3 pg 9. See also how Al Hafidh Ibn Hajr writes in his famous commentary of Sahih Al Bukhari from Ibn Al Mundhir that he mentioned that there is a consensus of the scholars (Ijma') that, according to calculations, the fast is not compulsory. See Fathul Baari vol 4 pg 618.

There would also be nothing wrong to claim that there are only two methods to start Ramadan, and this is proven by way of consensus on the opinion. **But if someone said that there is consensus that fasting on the day of doubt is prohibited or disliked then this would indeed be an incorrect statement.** There were certainly scholars that would claim permissibility of fasting on such day, **but to fast on the day of doubt does not mean that a person would increase the number of days of Ramadan.** This would be considered transgressing the limits of the Shariah, and how bizarre is the claim when that day is called the day of doubt? We cannot extend that day to be a part of Ramadan or Sha'baan, so instead the ambiguity leaves us silent. This leaves us with only two ways to start Ramadan, which is why many scholars of the past that have shown that the method of calculations is against Ijma'. This is of course coupled with the understanding of fasting on the day of doubt, yet they still asserted Ijmaa' on the subject.

The Method of Calculation and the Meaning of Laam in the Hadith of Sighting

To further clarify the matter, calculation can be ascertained in a few ways. One of them is to measure according to the possibility of sighting¹⁶². In other words, if some astronomers have calculated that the moon has a chance of being sighted on a certain day with a visible horizon, then there is some validity behind it. This therefore can be used as to assist the physical sighting afterwards.

The other method is to calculate according to the birth of the new moon. This is completely wrong as a method to adopt. It has not occurred to these people that the initiation of fasting is not on the moon's birth taking place, but rather fasting **is attached to the sighting of the moon.** Al Qastalaani mentions in his commentary ¹⁶³of Sahih Al Bukhari that "and the (letter) Laam (in the Hadith Soomoo **li** Ru'yatih) is for Tauqeet,¹⁶⁴ it is like in His (Allah's) saying (in the Quran verse 78 of Al Israa) Allah says that establish the Salat **for (li)** the Dulook of the sun (sunset) in other words the time of the Dulook (sunset)." Al Qastalaani continues and says that "Ibn Malik and Ibn Hisham mentions that the meaning is **after the sunset and after the sighting of the moon.**" In other words, what Al Qastalaani explains is that this expression of Laam used in this Hadith is for setting a specific time (Tauqeet). The verse of the Quran applies the same function of Laam as Allah

¹⁶² Even though Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah says in his Fataawa that the Hukm(order of fasting) is extended (attached) to the occurrence of the sighting (of the moon), **not the possibility of the sighting** (it is not attached with the possibility of the sighting). See Majmoo'atul Fataawa for Ibn Taymiyyah vol 13 pg 98

¹⁶³ See Irshadus Saari which is a commentary of Sahih Al Bukhari vol 4 pg 460

¹⁶⁴ The letter (laam) comes for many reasons in the Arabic language; one of them is for Tauqeet which means to specify a certain time.

uses in it in surah Isra to establish the prayer times. Therefore, the Hadith states that to fast at the time of sighting (through the sighting)¹⁶⁵ and the verse means establish the prayer at the time of sunset, through the sunset. Two great authorities¹⁶⁶ like Ibn Malik and Ibn Hisham say that this letter laam in both the Hadith and verse (of Al Israa) is in the meaning of “afterwards” which would then mean that start the fast after the sighting and establish the prayer after the sunset. It can be seen then how, according to the Arabic language, this letter Laam shows that the fasting is attached with the sighting, not with the birth of the moon. No one will make the prayer (al Maghrib) before the sunset, so how can we fast before the sighting when the same letter Laam is indicating towards the same meaning?

Also, other scholars of the past like Ash Shaukaani in Nailul Autaar¹⁶⁷ mentions how this letter Laam in the Hadith (Soomoo li Ru'yatih) is for Tau'qeet (setting a time). Hafidh Ad Dunya Ibn Hajar mentions in Fathul Baari¹⁶⁸ the same thing. Ibn Daqiq Al 'Eid mentions in his famous book, Ihkaamul Ahkaam¹⁶⁹, that this letter laam is for setting a time. As a matter of fact Ibn Daqiq Al 'Eid says that this letter Laam is not for Ta'leel (establishing causation) like how the Rawafidh¹⁷⁰ claim. If the Laam is being applied with the meaning of Ta'leel, then the rough translation would be “Establish prayer **for** the sunset” for the verse in the Quran and “Fast for the sighting (of the moon)” for the Hadith. This is the reason that this group (Ar Rawaafidh) initiates their fasting of Ramadan before the sighting¹⁷¹ of the moon, as Ibn Hajar has mentioned in Fathul Baari.¹⁷² As a matter of fact, Ibn Daqiq Al 'Eid even mentions¹⁷³ that even for argument's sake, if we take the letter Laam in the Hadith to be for Ta'leel it still would not indicate towards fasting before the sighting. He gives an example from the Arabic language to show his point that when someone says in Arabic that “I will be courteous to Zaid **because**¹⁷⁴ **(li)** of his entering”. In other words I will serve Zaid because he came to me. So this serving does not take place before Zaid's entering. **Instead once Zaid enters then the hospitality (Ikraam) takes place.** If this is applied to the Hadith, then the meaning still remains the same (“Fast because you saw the moon”). He then mentions that there are plenty of examples like this in the Arabic language which illustrate this concept. Ibn Daqiq Al 'Eid also mentions in another place¹⁷⁵ that Ramadan means what is between the two crescents¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁵ In other words the month of fasting will start at time of sighting

¹⁶⁶ They are authorities in the Arabic language.

¹⁶⁷ Nailul Autaar vol 4 pg 277. See also pg 205.

¹⁶⁸ See Fathul Baari commentary of Sahih Al Bukhari vol 4 pg 625

¹⁶⁹ See Ihkaamul Ahkaam Sharh 'Umdatul Ahkaam for Ibn Daqiq Al 'Eid pg 331

¹⁷⁰ A Shiite sect

¹⁷¹ Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah says that some of the Ismailis (another group of the Shiite sect) say to go with a fixed number of days and not the crescent for the month of Ramadan. See Majmoo'atul Fatawa vol 13 pg 76

¹⁷² See Fathul Baari for Al Hafidh Ibn Hajar vol 4 pg 625

¹⁷³ See Ihkaamul Ahkaam pg 331

¹⁷⁴ Here in this example the letter Laam will come in Arabic and it will be for Ta'leel (a reason).

¹⁷⁵ See Ihkaamul Ahkaam pg 331

(the crescent that is seen to begin Ramadan and the crescent that is seen to end it). From this, we can see that **the commencement of Ramadan will only be established by sighting the crescent.**

Yet another claim in support of abiding by calculations today is the belief that this method is more accurate. They assert that the objective is for us to fast correctly in the month of Ramadan, not to fast some days before it and not to fast on ‘Eid accidentally, since we can verify, from our calculations, the month of Ramadan will exactly fall on this day and end on this day. They are unaware that the month of Ramadan means¹⁷⁷ what is between the two crescents and to start it before the sighting will be like starting the fasting before the blessed month.

The Claim of “Our Advancement”

Also, these people badger on and say that sighting the moon is not the purpose, and that the Prophet, May Allah’s blessings and peace be upon him, emphasized on its sighting because that was the only method of knowing when the month should start. Now, since our advanced technology can identify when exactly the month *can* commence through its birth, we have no need of the strenuous endeavor of physically sighting. Instead, we can just go with the birth of the moon and this will be sufficient. How little is the understanding of the month of Ramadan, and how quick are we entranced to follow the new “research” about one of the most important acts of worship in Islam!

Personally, what one of the greatest scholars in the history of Al Islam, Taqi ud Deen Ibn Daqiq Al ‘Eid, said that Ramadan means what is between the two crescents is sufficient. There is no one in our time that can even come close to the knowledge of this great scholar. Why we continuously quote the renowned scholar, Ibn Daqiq Al ‘Eid, so much in this writing is because that book which excerpts were taken for the purposes of this article, that same book is being abused by others, also quoting from him, stating that his perspective on this issue was that the actual sighting is not necessary. It is incorrect to assume Ibn Daqiq al ‘Eid’s stance on this question like so, and it will be

¹⁷⁶ The Respected Doctor has tried his best to show that the word Hilal originally in the Arabic language does not mean crescent instead it means something else, such as raising the voice and the first signs of something, such as the first signs of life from a baby being born. Even, if we accept this argument, still his point will not have any credence, because even if a word originally is used for a certain meaning but later on is changed amongst the people of the tongue with another particular meaning then this will be sufficient. In other words, even if Al Hilal did not mean crescent originally in Arabic, but later on the Arabs utilized the word for the crescent moon. Especially since this word was used when the Quran was coming down, so then it will be considered as if one of the meanings of the word Hilal is crescent. See how Ibn Daqiq Al ‘Eid also understood the word Hilal as crescent since he said that Ramadan means what is between the two Hilals. To take another meaning for this word here other than crescent would be unfair to the author (Ibn Daqiq Al ‘Eid) and unfair to the beautiful and rich Arabic language. A discussion on the word “Hilal” will be placed Insha Allah.

¹⁷⁷ The Islamic meaning

discussed later in detail. Yet, from the above mentioned quotes, it should appear clear that it is extremely bizarre to ever establish the validity of calculations from this great scholar's work.

Our Prayer Times is Established – So why not our Months?

Another point that is pressed forward is our advancement in the calendar system which can even be used to establish even the five-time daily prayers. This is in contrast of the time of the Prophet, where they would see with naked eyes to try to see the timings of the prayers. This is a common argument from those in favor of calculations, and initially when someone hears this then his heart inclines towards this idea. Now, if this point was used by people to try to establish the calculations to set a possibility of sighting the moon¹⁷⁸ then it could be given some thought, but when people who try to establish Ramadan by the birth of the moon have the audacity to claim the same, the chinks in this argument's armor are clear.

Before understanding the response, it is best to understand a few points. First of all, let us look at two examples, already previously discussed, one from the Hadith and the other from the Noble Quran. The first example is the Hadith that says *Soomoo li Ru'yatih wa Aftiroo li Ru'yatih*¹⁷⁹ (start your fast by sighting (the moon) and do Iftar (do 'Eid) by sighting), and as for the second example, the verse from Surah Al Israa verse 78 in which Allah says to establish the prayer for (li dulookish Shams) when the sun has moved (towards sunset). In this Hadith, as previously mentioned, comes with the letter (Laam). In this verse, the letter (Laam) also appears and it has been explained before that this Laam in both of these places is for Tauqeet (setting a time). So according to the claim of the scholars of the past, the Hadith means to start the fasting with the sighting and the verse would mean to pray Salatul Maghrib after sunset. Sunset would be the beginning of the time for Salatul Maghrib and the sighting of the moon would be the beginning of the time of the blessed month of Ramadan. It would like to be established by some in support of utilizing the birth of the moon for the start of Ramadan to claim that the main objective is to find out the correct date of Ramadan, which can be fixed through calculations. Hence, we do not have to see the moon and we can start fasting with a fixed calendar-oriented day. There is also the misunderstanding that the first sign of Ramadan is the birth of the moon. All of these points have been addressed throughout the course of this humble work. Here though, for sake of argument, we shall agree with them for some time. Now if we examine the verse and Hadith in light of their rejection of an actual sighting, we notice something peculiar. If the Ru'yah (sighting) is not important and it is not the objective, similarly **then Dulook Ash Shams (sunset) is not important and neither is it the objective because**

¹⁷⁸ For example if someone said that according to our calculations the moon could definitely be sighted tonight but because of the sky being cloudy people will not be able to see it.

¹⁷⁹ This is a portion of the Hadith

both the words Ru'yah and the words Dulook Ash Shams have the letter Laam come upon it (in the verse and Hadith, respectively). So both the sighting of the moon and the sun setting are not the objectives. Instead, in the life of the Prophet, these were the only methods that they could use. Through the sighting they would know of Ramadan and through the sunset they would know of the prayer (Salatul Maghrib) timing. Then, Ramadan starts from the birth of the moon and likewise, Salatul Maghrib begins when it becomes a little dark (not the actual sunset). In those days, they could only come to know of this day becoming a little dark with the sun setting and in present time, calculations can tell us exactly where the sun and earth are. We would therefore know exactly when it becomes a little dark. For example if the actual sunset is at seven pm, according to the calculations it starts to become dark even before that so we can make Salatul Maghrib at 6:50 pm. Then we can make a calendar for the next entire year with the time of Salatul Maghrib according to this method of calculation. Can any Muslim ever swallow such an argument? Instead people will say that this is an innovator and the Fatwa of Kufr will be given for trying to change the Shari'ah. Speaking about the birth of the moon is exactly the same.

Now those who claim we can go by the birth of the moon do not seem to know meaning in Islam for the month of Ramadan¹⁸⁰. Their gears move according to the solar calendar. If they knew the true meaning of Ramadan or what is the starting point of fasting in Islam then they would not even make such arguments, that which they have placed before the public.

A Hadith about Calculation?

One other argument that the Doctor has made is in regards to one Hadith. He uses the Hadith to try and prove that calculations are allowed to establish the month of Ramadan. He says that the Hadith indicates that a calculation was done in it. It is a famous Hadith that is recorded in many books.¹⁸¹ It is the famous incident of the Prophet when he did Ielaa¹⁸² with his

¹⁸⁰ I have given already the definition given by Ibn Daqiq Al 'Eid on top in regards to Ramadan that it means what is between the two crescents. Al Qurtubi says in his Tafseer, "Allah has made Fardh the fasting of the month of Ramadan, in other words the period of its Hilal (crescent)." So Al Qurtubi is also explaining the month of Ramadan by saying it is the period of its crescent. In other words it starts when one crescent (the one at the start of Ramadan) is established and goes till the other crescent (at the end of Ramadan) is also established. See Al Jami li Ahkaamil Quran for Al Qurtubi vol 1 pg 362

¹⁸¹ See Al Mufhim lima Ashkala min Talkhesi kitabi Muslim(a commentary of Sahih Muslim) by Abu 'Abbaas Al Qurtubi vol 4 pg 259-266

¹⁸² Ielaa originally in the Arabic language means to stop from doing something (Al Imtinaa' min fi'l Ash Shai) like how Al Qadhi 'Iyadh has explained. Later on in the Arabic language it comes for the meaning of Half (taking a oath). In the terms of the Shari'ah, Ielaa means that a husband takes an oath that he will not go to his wife (for intercourse) and some scholars have added in this definition for a period of four months or more (that this oath is taken for such a period). See Ikmaalul Mu'lim bi Fawaa idi Muslim (commentary of Sahih Muslim) by Al Qadhi 'Iyadh vol 5 pg 45. Also see Takmila for Fathul Mulhim by Ash Shaikh Al Ustadh Taqi Al Uthmaani vol 1 pg 190. The word Ielaa with this meaning does not apply to the Prophets situation. When this word is

wives because they asked for more Nafaqa (expenses) and he did not have what they asked for.¹⁸³ He went away from them for one month and people thought that he had divorced his wives but this was not the case. In any case, the purpose here is not to explain the entire incident of what happened, but instead just respond to what the Doctor has mentioned. Now what occurred at the end of this incident is the Prophet came back to his wives and first offered¹⁸⁴ Ummul Mu'mineen Aishah a choice whether she wants to stay with him or choose otherwise. When he left the place where he was residing (in separation from them) to come back to his wives then Sayyiduna 'Umar said that "Oh Messenger of Allah you have been in the secluded room for twenty nine days (as if to say that the month has not passed yet)," so the Prophet said to him that the month is twenty nine days. In other words that this month is twenty nine days, hence the month has expired. Also some narrations indicate that Ummool Mu'mineen 'Aishah asked him about this (that your oath was for a month, to say in other words that your oath has not finished yet). In responses, the Prophet answered her in the similar manner that he answered Sayyiduna 'Umar¹⁸⁵. The Doctor claims that the Prophet never saw the moon, neither is it mentioned anywhere that he asked someone about the moon, and it is not mentioned that someone saw the moon and informed him about it. Instead the month came to an end here in the incident by calculating and counting it, and this would be a proof then for establishment for calculations as a method for the start and end of Ramadan.

Let us analyze this and give some answers. Ibn Al 'Arabi in his famous commentary, 'Aridhatul Ahwadhi of Imam At Tirmidhi's Jami, brings up this point at the end of this Hadith, and then he says that the summary of the matter is that there are two possibilities:

1) That the Prophet did Ielaa for a specific month. In this case, he says that the Prophet went in seclusion with the crescent (of that specific month)¹⁸⁶

used in the Prophets situation then it would mean taking an oath (in other words its meaning in the Arabic language). See Takmila of Fathul Mulhim vol 1 pg 189 for Shaikuna Taqi Al 'Uthmaani.

¹⁸³ See 'Aridhatul Ahwadhi vol 3 pg 148 for Ibn Al 'Arabi Al Maliki

¹⁸⁴ See Ikmaalul Mu'lim bi Fawaaidi Muslim vol 5 pg 46

¹⁸⁵ Some scholars said that he when was coming back on the way 'Umar Al Farooq asked and when he came home to Umool Mu'mineen 'Aishah she asked. See Takmila of Fathul Mulhim for Ustadhul Asaatidha Shaikuna wa Ustadhuna al Mufti Mohammad Taqi Al 'Uthmaani vol 1 pg 195

¹⁸⁶ For the Doctor to say that because there is no mention about the sighting of the moon in the Hadith demonstrates that the Prophet finished this month without sighting and through calculations is not a correct statement. So many times so many fine details are not mentioned in the Hadith even though they take place in a particular incident. The reason why sometimes these fine details are left out is because either the narrator forgets or the narrator does not think that this particular detail is important. Also, it is essential to back to that time to fully understand this particular incident of Ielaa. In those times, because sighting of the moon was so common for everyone and people would start and finish there months, as a matter of fact through looking at the moon know the date of the month as well, that they not always mentioned particulars like this. This is well known for those that have the knowledge of Hadith that many a time narrators of a Hadith leave out a fine detail because of it being known (to the people) or (it being) common amongst the people. Also, at the time of the Prophet the houses or Al Musjid An Nabawi was not

and came out from the separation with the crescent (came out when the crescent was seen).¹⁸⁷ This first possibility Ibn Al ‘Arabi gives preference to.

2) The second possibility is that he did Ielaa for a general month without specifying the exact month. The set time was only for one month, and hence Ibn Al ‘Arabi says tha he (the Messenger of Allah) acted upon the least of a month, which is twenty-nine days¹⁸⁸.

An analogous case to this possibility is when a person takes an oath that he will not do something for one month, but at the time of the oath the person is already in the middle of the month. In order to fulfill the oath, he starts counting the days until he reaches one whole month. For example, a person takes an oath on the fifteen of Shawwal that he will not do something for one month. He will start the count (from the fifteen of Shawwaal) and when he reaches a time in the middle of Dhul Q’adah, he will have completed his oath.

This is a strong possibility that The Prophet did a similar thing. When he began Ielaa, it is entirely possible that he started it in the middle¹⁸⁹ of a month and counted the days and finished twenty nine days since it was unplanned. Then, he said that a month (of the lunar calendar) can also be twenty nine days, so the Prophet took the least of a month to come out of seclusion. This is why there is no mentioning of sighting of the moon in this narration, because counting days here would be sufficient. This second possibility, even though Ibn Al ‘Arabi has given preference to the first, in my humble opinion is a stronger possibility. This second possibility is also established with one narration that says that Umoos Mu’mineen ‘Aishah was counting the days. Al Qadhi ‘Iyadh has also mentioned in his commentary¹⁹⁰ of

fully closed with walls and roofs, so for them to sight the moon they would not have to go outside. Instead, the description of their houses and the description of Al Musjid An Nabawi in the famous books of history like (Wafaul Wafaa Bi Akhbari Daaril Mustafa by Noorud Deen As Samhoodi , passed away 911 A.H.) entails they could easily see the sky from their houses or even the inside portion of Al Musjid An Nabawi. So it is very much a possibility that the Prophet saw the moon from where he was and he really did not have to go outside to do so. Also, it is a possibility that the Prophet came to know of the moon because Jibril (this was mentioned by me at first as a possibility, but after finding the narration of An Nasai that shows that Jibril informed him, this possibility becomes a reality and all praises is for Allah the All Mighty) informed him or Allah sent him Revelation and informed him. How can we say that the Prophet knowing something (like the end of the month in the incident of Ielaa) would have to be through some sort of means like sighting of the moon or calculations? This is someone who gets revelation, so many times it has happened in his lifetime that he knows of something because Al ‘Alim Al Khabir (Allah) informed him. And Allah knows best and his knowledge is Atamm (perfect and complete without any type of shortcoming)

¹⁸⁷ It seems like Ibn Al ‘Arabi is giving preference to this possibility because the apparent words of the Hadith indicate towards it.

¹⁸⁸ See ‘Aridhatul Ahwadhi commentary on Imam At Tirmidhi’s Sunan vol 3 pg 148-149 for Ibn Al ‘Arabi

¹⁸⁹ Or somewhere else in the month not exactly the beginning.

¹⁹⁰ See Ikmaalul Mu’lim bi Fawaaidi Muslim for Al Qadhi ‘Iyadh vol 5 pg47

Sahih Muslim that this completion of the period of Ielaa was done with counting.

Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah seems to also give preference to this second possibility. He mentions that if the Ielaa took place with the start of the crescent then it would end with the next month's crescent, this is something the Companions¹⁹¹ would know, and by extension the Prophet would know himself. But when Jibril (like the narration of An Nasai¹⁹² indicates) had come to inform the Prophet that the month in regards to the Ielaa had ended and it was twenty nine days, indicates that the Ielaa started in some portion of the month. The Prophet thought that it would last for thirty days (since that is the maximum of a lunar month), but Jibril¹⁹³ intervened and informed him that this Ielaa has ended after twenty nine days. This is why the Prophet told the other people that a lunar month could also be twenty nine days, thus his Ielaa had ended. Shaikhul Islam has also given Ummul Mu'mineen's ('Aisha) counting the days as a proof for the second possibility.¹⁹⁴

Yet, regardless of whether we consider the first possibility or the second, there is no way can this Hadith indicate towards calculations. In the first situation is apparent in that no counting occurred, and in the second situation, counting of a month can be established. But how can use of scientific method and their calculations be established? Anyone can say that I will do something or not do it for one month and then count the days from the time he said this. Once he has completed twenty-nine or thirty days, he has fulfilled what he had said. How can this ever be used to fixing a prior date for the start and finish of Ramadan because of the birth of the moon? When all these possibilities come in this situation of Ielaa, to claim the validity of calculations through it is abhorrently wrong. There is a ruling in the Shari'ah that when all possibilities come in some situation, then using that situation as a proof also ends.¹⁹⁵ These reasons what have been mentioned on top are why none of the scholars of the past, when explaining the above incident of Ielaa, ever said that to use Al Hisab(calculations) to start Ramadan can be established from this

¹⁹¹ So why would some of them (like Sayyiduna 'Umar and Ummul Mu'mineen 'Aisha) say to the Prophet when he came back (to his wives) after the Ielaa that he mentioned a month and it had only been twenty nine days? This is clear that it did not occur in the beginning of the month, or else they would have known also.

¹⁹² See As Sunan for An Nasai in the fasting vol 2 pg 138 also see Majmoo'atul Fatawa for Ibn Taymiyyah vol 13 pg 90-91

¹⁹³ This narration of An Nasai that Jibril came and informed the Prophet about the month of Ielaa coming to an end completely rejects the Doctors attempt to use this incident of Ielaa for calculations. He tried to say that how did the Prophet know of the month ending when none of the words of the Hadith indicate towards sighting the moon, hence he must have done it by counting the days. This is a mistake on the Doctors part in his attempt to prove calculations through the incident of Ielaa and it shows that his research of Hadith is not complete hence he was not aware of the Hadith of An Nasai.

¹⁹⁴ See Majmoo'atul Fatawa for Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah vol 13 pg 90- 91

¹⁹⁵ Idha Ja al Ihtimaal Batalal Istidlaal is the Arabic for the ruling. This ruling is mentioned in more than one book, see for example I'laaus Sunan vol 4 pg 273

incident. The methodology of our Salaf (predecessors)¹⁹⁶ is the safest in regards to the explanation of Hadith and the rulings that come out from it. Do our hearts not tremble with the fear of Allah when we say the Prophet did like this¹⁹⁷ with certainty? What if the Prophet did not do what we are saying? What will we say to Allah if he asks us that why did we say about the Prophet what he did or did not do?

A Discussion on the word, “Ru’yah”

Another argument that the Doctor makes is in regards to the word, Ar Ru’yah (Seeing). This is one of his weakest arguments he presents, and, in all honesty, not worth the time to address. Yet the layman can be swayed even by few words of falsehood, so it is imperative to tackle this issue as well.

The Doctor brings a few verses of the Noble Quran where the word Ar Ru’yah comes in the meaning of knowledge. This is to say that the meaning is not limited to physical seeing, and the Hadith¹⁹⁸ uses this word in the sense of definite knowledge. Thus, those who claim to physically sight the moon are not practicing the Hadith properly, since the “Ru’yah” has to provide concrete evidence, and the strength of the naked eye is not convincing enough.

It is true that the word Ar Ru’yah with its other versions (like on the scale of present and future tense) does not always come for seeing, and in the verses that he has mentioned does support his claim. **But how can we conclude that the word in the Hadith (mentioned above just now) is used with the same meaning?** If he could prove that the word is never used for physical seeing¹⁹⁹, so therefore the meaning of the word only rests on definite knowledge, then only his claim would be true. If that were the case, we would find no other alternative but to say the Hadith utilized the word Ar-Ru’yah for knowledge and not sighting. Just to shut the door on this argument, here are a few verses of the Noble Quran which denote Ar Ru’yah has been used for physical seeing (with the eyes):

- 1) Al Maaida, verse 83, in which Allah, describing those people (Christians) that heard the Quran being recited²⁰⁰, they began to cry. Allah says “And when they (who call themselves Christians) listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger (Muhammad Sallallaahu ‘Alayhi wa Sallam) you **see**²⁰¹ their eyes overflowing with tears because of the truth they have recognized”. The word in this verse is Taraa in Arabic, which is on the

¹⁹⁶ See how Ibn Al ‘Arabi mentions possibilities and even though he gave preference to the first possibility he never mentioned for sure that this first possibility is really what took place.

¹⁹⁷ He did not see the moon and he did calculations in this Hadith. If something is a possibility then we should keep it as a possibility.

¹⁹⁸ For example the Hadith(Soomoo Li Ru’yatih) to the end of the Hadith.

¹⁹⁹ He can never prove this because the word in the Arabic language is so common with the meaning of seeing. To go against it will be changing the Arabic language.

²⁰⁰ The incident that took place with some of the Sahaaba that migrated to Abyssinia and recited the Quran in front of the king and his people.

²⁰¹ Translation of taraa

- scale of present, and future tense (Mudhaari') in Arabic of the word Ar Ru'yah.
- 2) Surah Al Kahf, verse 17, in which Allah says "And you might have **seen**²⁰² the sun, when it rose, declining to the right from their cave, and when it set, turning away from them to the left, while they lay in the midst of the cave" also demonstrates the use of the word in terms of actual seeing. In this verse also the word used is Taraa, which means here to see.
 - 3) Al Hadid, verse 12, in which Allah says "On the Day you shall see²⁰³ the believing men and the believing women: their light running forward before them and by their right hands" ²⁰⁴. In this verse also the word used is Taraa, which means seeing.
 - 4) Ash Shu'araa, verse 61, Allah says, "And when the two groups saw²⁰⁵ each other, the companions of Musa (Moses) said: We are sure to be overtaken." Here, Allah describes the situation when Musa and the Bani Israeel were going away from Egypt, while Fir'aun and his army was hot on their trail. So when both groups came close enough from where they could see each other, with the water in front of Bani Israeel and Fir'aun and his army in the back, so they said like his. The word used in Arabic is "Taraa'a", which is on the scale of dual in Arabic from the word Ar Ru'yah.
 - 5) An Naml, verse 10, "And throw down your stick! But when he saw²⁰⁶ it moving as if it were a snake, he turned in flight, and did not look back. (It was said:) Oh Musa! Fear not: Verily the Messengers fear not in front of me." In this verse, Allah depicts the incident of Musa, when he was told to throw down his stick. When he threw it down it became a snake (as a miracle), so Musa (as), in turn, fled. So the word that is used here is ra'aa in Arabic for Musa seeing his stick turn to a snake. The word ra'aa is also on the scale of present and future tense in Arabic coming from the word Ar Ru'yah. The word here is describing Musa seeing. Can anyone in his right mind deny this?
 - 6) Surah Yusuf, verse 4, in which Allah says "(Remember) when Yusuf said to his father: Oh my father! Verily, I saw²⁰⁷ (in a dream) eleven stars and the sun and the moon - I saw them prostrating themselves to me." Here, the word used to describe Yusuf seeing the dream is Ra'aytu, which is on the scale of past tense (Madhi) in Arabic from the word Ar Ru'yah.
 - 7) The same Surah, verse 31, Allah says, "So when she heard of their accusation, she sent for them and prepared a banquet for them; she gave

²⁰² Translation of taraa

²⁰³ Translation of taraa

²⁰⁴ Believers are being talked about on the Day of judgment.

²⁰⁵ Translation of taraa'a

²⁰⁶ Translation of ra'aa

²⁰⁷ Translation of ra'aytu

each one of them a knife (to cut the foodstuff with), and she said (to Yusuf): Come out before them. Then, when they saw²⁰⁸ him, they exalted him (at his beauty) and (in their astonishment) cut their hands. They said: How perfect is Allah (or Allah forbid)! No man is this! This is none other than a noble angel!” In this verse, Allah uses the word Ra’aynahu that means “to see something with their eyes.” This is on the scale of past tense (feminine tense) from the word Ar Ru’yah.

It is absurd, then, to claim that the word Ar-Ru’yah would not come for the meaning of actual seeing, and to take anything else as the meaning in these verses to take anything else as the meaning would be unfair to the words of Allah. In Al Qamoos Al Muhit²⁰⁹, Al Fairooza Abaadi, the famous scholar and authority in the Arabic language, mentions the first meaning of the word Ar Ru’yah is to see with the eyes. In Al Misbahul Munir²¹⁰, Al ‘Allamah Ahmad Bin Muhammad mentions this word when used in the sense “Ra’aytu Ash Shai’a ru’yatan” means “to see something with the eyes.” To deny these points is nothing but ignorance in regards to the Arabic language.

The Meaning of the Word, “Hilal”

Also one argument the Doctor has placed in front of us is that he says, “The argument that the Arabic word for the new Moon is ‘*Hilal*’. The linguistic definition of the word Hilal requires that it must be deflecting the light and be shining and not dark. Shining then is connected with human sighting. Therefore, we cannot start the new month until we see the new Moon.” He goes on and says “It should be clear by now that the original meanings of the word “*Hilal*” are connected with the first signs of something and with raising of voices and not with glittering or shining.” He also says in one place after explaining something from Ibn Mandhoor that “We can see that this definition²¹¹ is based upon cultural meanings and not upon the linguistic roots of the word *Hilal* .”

Now one who is proficient in the Arabic language can see immediately that this Doctors argument has no weight. Instead he has not fully understood the Arabic text that he has quoted himself. The word Al Hilal in the Arabic language comes for the new moon²¹² and to deny this meaning will be nothing but a lack of proficiency in the language. Even one who knows just a little Arabic will know that this is one of the meanings of the word Al Hilal.²¹³

To say that words have to stick to their original meanings is also incorrect. For example the word Salaat originally in the Arabic language means²¹⁴ Du’aa (a

²⁰⁸ Translation of Ra’aynahu

²⁰⁹ See Al Qamoos Al Muhit pg 1157

²¹⁰ See Al Misbahul Munir pg 150

²¹¹ Al Hilal coming for glittering of the moon

²¹² See Al Misbahul Munir pg 380

²¹³ Supported by the Quran because Allah says they are asking you in regards to the crescents. The word used in the Noble Book is Al Ahillah, which is the plural of Al Hilal. What other translation would you do here other than crescent? See Al Baqarah verse 189

²¹⁴ This is only one opinion of the scholars that the word Salaat originally in Arabic means Du’aa. Other opinions are mentioned also in Al Misbahul Munir but I stuck with one opinion only

prayer), now to say that this is the only meaning of the word will be an absolute mistake. What would establish prayer mean than that we make a Du'aa five times daily? The word As Siyam or As Saum originally, according to some scholars, means Al-Imsaak – (to refrain from something). Some scholars are of the opinion that it means to refrain from anything whether it is eating, drinking, or even talking.²¹⁵ So when Allah uses the word “Saum,” that we must refrain in Ramadan, does that mean we must avoid speaking also? The word Hajj originally²¹⁶ means Qasd (to intend), so will Hajj be fulfilled just through an intention? The word Ramadan originally comes from the word Ar Ramdhaa, which means very hot stones, due the heat of the sun like some have explained²¹⁷. Would this definition be suitable for the people? The word Umm in the Arabic language originally means²¹⁸ the foundation of something (Asl) by some, and in this meaning²¹⁹ it has even come in the Quran as Allah has mentioned Makkah Al Mukarramah as Ummul Quraa²²⁰ (Mother Village). If we do not take the transferred meaning of “mother,” when Allah calls the wives of the Prophet Ummahaatul²²¹Mu'mineen,²²² will we translate that portion by saying the “foundations of the believers”? Of course not, and the examples can continue.

This demonstration should have made it clear that a word in Arabic means something originally but that does not mean that the original meaning is the only meaning of the word.

Moreover, to assert that Al Hilal means the first part of the month is just a cultural thing and not linguistic is also a mistake. For argument's sake, even if we accept the claim, his conclusion will still not be right. Even if the meaning did emerge from culture, does that mean the cultural meaning will not be correct or cannot be used? What culture are we talking about here? Everyone knows we are talking about the Arab culture, and if a word is used in the Arab culture for some meaning, then that meaning is regarded as if it is part of the language. This is the case for all languages. For example, a word originally does not have a particular meaning in English, but later on it develops that particular meaning amongst the people of the language. Therefore, the new meaning will be considered as part of the language, as another meaning of the word. Does that mean the word cannot be understood in the sense of the new, cultural meaning? Of course not, we will have to admit that that particular meaning which was used in a cultural sense amongst the people of the language is a meaning of that word in the language now. Even in Arabic, there are many words that weren't even originally from the

because my purpose was to make a point. See for more details on the word Salaat Al Misbahul Munir pg 207-208e

²¹⁵ See Al Misbahul Munir for more details pg 211

²¹⁶ See Al Misbahul Munir pg 76

²¹⁷ See Al Misbahul Munir pg 145

²¹⁸ See Al Misbahul Munir pg 19

²¹⁹ like some commentators of the Noble Quran have explained

²²⁰ See Surah Al An'aam verse 92

²²¹ Ummahaat is the plural of the word Umm

²²² See Surah Al Ahzaab verse 6

Arabic language²²³, but because it was used so much by the Arabs it has now become part of the language. These words are especially known in the Arabic language and many books have been written on this subject. If this is the case for an entirely new word, then what about just a meaning of a word? Culture has a very big say in the language of the people, this no one can deny.²²⁴

The Imam of the Arabic language an authority of the language, Maj Ad Deen Al Fairooza Abaadi, says in his famous work Al Qamoos Al Muhit²²⁵, under the word Al Hilal, says, “Ghurratul Qamar,” which means **the first part of the moon**. Another authority in the language, Al ‘Allamah Ahmad Bin Muhammad Bin ‘Ali Al Muqri, mentions in his work Al Misbahul Munir²²⁶, most of the scholars have said that Al Hilal means the moon in a specific condition. He continues and says that Al Azhari says that the moon for the first two nights of the month is known as Al Hilal (i.e. the crescent). Also, in the twenty sixth and twenty seventh night it is called Al Hilal and what is between that is known as Al Qamar. In other words the word “Qamar” and the word “Hilal” are used in the Arabic language for the moon, but for different phases on different dates. In Lisanul ‘Arab²²⁷, the famous authority of Arabic, Ibn Mandhoor, mentions under the word Al Hilal that it is the first part of the moon as the first meaning given. After this, Ibn Mandhoor elaborates on the difference of opinion amongst the scholars of the language, whereby some that some say the word is used for the first two nights of the month, and others say it is used for the first three nights of the month. He uses the word “Qila”²²⁸ to show the difference of opinion of the scholars of Arabic²²⁹. This meaning, therefore under Ibn Mandhoor’s research, is an agreed upon meaning. How the Doctor understood from the text of Ibn Mandhoor that the meaning of crescent was cultural is beyond us. Ibn Mandhoor surely does not mention this explicitly, nor is it implied anywhere from his text. The Doctor also quotes Ibn Mandhoor at the end of this argument of the word Al Hilal says that Ibn Mandhoor mentions. “Abu al-Abbas said that the *Hilal* is named *Hilal* because the people raise their voices to inform others about it (the new Moon).” Now this is indeed true and some of the scholars have mentioned this but this is just a reason given by the scholars why this word Al Hilal is called

²²³ Like for example the word Qanoon according to some is a word, which later became part of Arabic. Some said originally it is Roomiyah(Rome) and some said it was Farisiyah(Persia). See Al Qamoos Al Muhit for Al Fairooza Abaadi pg 1105 with its Ta’leeq (footnotes)

²²⁴ Ash Shaikh Abul ‘Abbas Al Qurtubi says in his famous commentary of Sahih Muslim explaining the word Al Istihlaal that this word is from the word Al Ihlaal which means raising the voice at the time of sighting the crescent, then the usage of it was so common in such a manner that it started being understood for sighting the moon. You can see how the custom or usage (‘Urf) had an effect on the word that at first the meaning was something then later on the meaning became something else. See Al Mufhim lima Ashkala min Talkheesi kitabi Muslim for Al Qurtubi. Vol 3 pg 141-142

²²⁵ See Al Qamoos Al Muhit pg 966

²²⁶ See Al Misbahul Munir pg 380

²²⁷ See Lisanul ‘Arab vol 11 pg 702

²²⁸ Qila means it was said and when it is used like this (in the books) then it means some scholars said it. This is the usage of the word (Qila) most of the time in these situations

²²⁹ You can understand this point fully from Al Misbahul Munir for Ash Shaikh Ahmad because he mentions in it that who is of what opinion. For example Al Faaraabi says that Al Hilal(the word) is used for the new moon for the first three nights. For more details see Al Misbahul Munir pg 380

Al Hilal. This is also to show that what connection this word Al Hilal and its meaning crescent have with the words original meaning of raising the voice. These words of Abul 'Abbaas does not mean that the word Al Hilal just means raising the voice and does not mean crescent.

Ibn Daqiq Al-Eid's Rejection of Calculations

Another point that would prove beneficial here is in regards to Ibn Daqiq Al 'Eid. It has already been mentioned previously that this Doctor has quoted Ibn Daqiq Al 'Eid from his famous book *Ihkaamul Ahkaam* and tried to show that Ibn Daqiq Al 'Eid supported Al Hisab (calculations). We have already quoted Ibn Daqiq al 'Eid many times before from this same book and from those quotes it is clear that Ibn Daqiq Al 'Eid did not mention much to validate calculations. As a matter of fact, he vehemently opposes those who try to begin Ramadan by using the birth of the moon. He says, "that the thing that I say (in regards to calculations) is that it is not permissible to depend on it in regards to the fasting because of the separation of the moon from the sun, upon what the astronomers are of the opinion of advancing the month through calculations over the month with sighting with one or two days. This is surely a construction for a motive that Allah has not made permissible." He continues and says, "as for calculations indicating upon that the crescent certainly has risen from the horizon in such a manner that it could be seen if there were no hindrance like clouds, for example, then this would demand making it (the fast) necessary because the Shar'e (based on the Shari'ah) reason is found and the actual sighting is not a condition(all the time) to make it necessary because the scholars are unanimous that if a person is locked up underground when he comes to know about the completion of the thirty days(of Sha'baan) or knows with certain signs that this day is from Ramadan then it is compulsory for him to fast even though he has not seen the crescent and no one informed him who saw it."²³⁰ Now you can see clearly that Ash Shaikh Taqi ud Deen Ibn Daqiq al 'Eid is clearly mentioning that to go with Al Hisab in regards to the fast will not be reliable because the scientists make the month of Ramadan before the sighting of the moon with their calculations. Now this (doing Ramadan before sighting) is what the scientists would do at his time according to their calculations hence he is going against it completely. He is using so harsh words for it that this would be something that Allah has not permitted. This is the same thing that is being done in our time that these scientists are saying lets go with the birth of the moon and lets do the Ramadan before the sighting of the moon. How can these people quote a scholar that is rejecting exactly what there are trying to do. Also see that when Ibn Daqiq Al 'Eid does give some permissibility to take into consideration the calculations what he says. He is only saying that if the calculations indicate that the moon has rise in such a manner that it could be seen if it were a clear sky, but because of some hindrance it cannot be seen then the fast would be compulsory. Even this last point of his about the fast being compulsory is something that is his own opinion and it is not compulsory for the other 'Ulama to except it instead they (other scholars) could complete thirty days (of Sha'baan) and then start Ramadan and they will be

²³⁰ See *Ihkaamul Ahkaam* for Taqi ud Deen Ibn Daqiq Al 'Eid pg 332

acting on the apparent words²³¹ of the Hadith. In other words, Ibn Daqiq Al ‘Eid is only giving some consideration to calculations in some special manner. To use his words and try to establish starting Ramadan with the birth of the moon is unfair to the entire Ummah.

The Issue of Unity

The last issue, and probably the most relevant, that people bring to establish calculations is because of unity. We should have Ramadan and Eid together, to demonstrate that the Muslims are united throughout the world. No doubt it, there is not a single Muslim in the whole world who not jump at the thought of bringing all Muslims together. But, there are some concerns that need to be addressed when considering bringing Ramadan and Eid in unison across the entire world:

- 1) **Time Differences:** It will be impossible to start Ramadan together and finish together because of the time differences between the different countries in the world. Just like the prayers are at different times because of time difference likewise the fast will start at a different time. When we pray Salaatul Fajr in the east coast of America, the Muslims in South Africa are praying Salaatudh Dhur. Somewhere else in the world the Muslims are praying Salaatul ‘Asr and so on.
- 2) **Prayer Timings:** It is very interesting to note that although we have different timings in our various Masaajid for the prayers, we never assert this to be against unity. Take for example Salaatul Fajr, some Masjid might pray at 5: 45 and another at 6:00, with another place at 6:15. This is the case all season long all over the world that Masaajid in one local area are having different timings for the prayers. Sometimes these differences are based on ease for the local people, and sometimes some other reasons are the base for these differences.²³² No one says that this is against unity and that we should all pray in one local area at the same time. If true unity is that we pray on one day or fast on one day, then the timing of the prayers also should be taken into consideration on this topic.

Misgivings about Unity

What is the form of unity that is praiseworthy in Islam? To have some people starting there fast with the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and some to start with calculations and others to stick with the actual sighting is something which against unity. If they all came upon the Hadith (that states to start the fast with the sighting) of the Prophet and started their fasts on different times even on different days, still would be considered a praiseworthy unity in Islam. The

²³¹ Because the Hadith states that if it is cloudy or some other reason is there that the moon cannot be sighted then complete thirty days of Sha.baan.

²³² These differences are not against unity as long as they are all praying five times daily, the number of Rak’aat are the same and they are all praying in accordance with the Sunnah. If they were praying all at one time like say 6:00 am but some prayed two Rak’ah of Salaatul Fajr and some three and some four then this would be against unity of Al Islam because our Deen does not allow this.

reason is because they are founded on one principle, to sight the moon. All of the Prophets came with one type of belief, even though their timings differed and many of the rulings (Ahkaam) differed. All of them (May Allah's peace be upon all of them) were unified upon one basic principle and that is the core beliefs of Islam. Likewise at the time of the Sahaaba and Taabi'een, there was unity on the principle even though they sometimes started their fasts on different days. A clear-cut example of this is the Hadith²³³ about Kuraib going to Sham and then returning to al Madina al Munawwara. In this incident, Kuraib says, "when I went to Ash Sham and after fulfilling the need I was sent there for, the month of Ramadan came upon us then at the end of the month when I came back to Al Madinah Al Munawwara, Ibn 'Abbas asked when we saw the moon in Ash Sham. so I mentioned to him on Friday night so he asked me did you see it yourself so I said yes²³⁴ and people saw it and Mu'awiya fasted and we all fasted so Ibn 'Abbas said that we did not see it until Saturday night and we will continue to fast until we complete thirty days or see the moon.²³⁵ Kuraib inquired, "Mu'awiya's sighting and his fasting is not enough for you?"

So Ibn 'Abbas said "No, this is how The Prophet commanded us." Clearly, from the time of the companions they started the month of Ramadan on a different date. The city of Al Madina Al Munawwara fasted one day while Sham on another, with a companion of the caliber of Sayyiduna Ibn 'Abbas differing with another companion like Sayyiduna Mu'awiyah.²³⁶ We cannot say that there is no unity amongst them. Rather, their view was that that unity is not established through bringing all Ramadan and all Eids together. Unity is about the hearts to be connected built on similar principles. We all worship Allah in the same manner and follow the Prophet's pure Sunnah. The principal was the same in those days in al Madina al Munawwara and Sham and it was the same for both the companions Sayyiduna Ibn 'Abbas and Sayyiduna Mu'awiya. This principle was to follow the guidance of our Prophet and sight the moon to begin Ramadan and 'Eid. Today our hearts are divided and our principles are not one and we are really do nothing for these things instead we talk about leaving the Sunnah to unite the Ummah. Leaving the Sunnah can never unite the Ummah. Instead, it will be a means of more division.

Conclusion

The summary of this treatise is what Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah has said in his Fataawa,

²³³ See Al Mufhim lima Ashkala min Talkheeli Kitabi Muslim vol 3 pg 141-142

²³⁴ Look how in this Hadith the words Ar Ru'yah and Al Hilal are used for sighting with the naked eyes and crescent. No other translation is correct here except this. This is a proof that the word Ar Ru'yah comes for sighting with the naked eyes and the word Al Hilal comes in the meaning of crescent.

²³⁵ This authentic Hadith also establishes only two methods to start a lunar month. One being completion of thirty days and the other being sighting of the moon. Ibn 'Abbas with all his knowledge is saying only two methods.

²³⁶ Where else Al Bukhari mentions in his Sahih that ibn 'Abbas said that Mu'awiya is a Faqih(has the proper understanding of Deen). Despit Ibn 'Abbas praising Sayyiduna Mu'awiya still does not except his sighting or his fasting as a proof. See Tuhfatul Baari commentary of Sahih Al Bukhari vol 4 pg 226 By Shaikul Islam Zakariya Al Ansaari.

“Whoever writes or calculates (in regards to the moon) is not from this Ummah in regards to this order (of fasting). Rather, he has followed a way that is not the way of the Muslims of this Ummah.” This is how one of the greatest scholars in the history of Islam responds to calculations being used for Ramadan. He has said this because only misguided people of the past who are not the true believers in Allah would do similar things like this (changing dates, etc.) as mentioned in his Fataawa (in the beginning of this book). bn Taymiyyah uses such harsh words for calculations, he continues and says²³⁷ whoever does this (uses calculations) then he has done something that is not from the Deen and this calculation method to be used for the fasting is prohibited.²³⁸ Allah had guided these scholars to insights that normally we would not understand. May Allah guide us all to the best way, the way of Islam taught by our Prophet in regards to all aspects of our Deen. Ameen

²³⁷ Not exact quote

²³⁸ See Majmoo’atul Fataawa for Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah vol 13 pg 92