

علمی و تحقیقی مجلہ فقہ اسلامی (۸۲) شعبان / رمضان ۱۴۲۷ھ ☆ ستمبر ۲۰۰۶

formed to see from earth (This is due to the mountains on the surface of the moon that block the sunlight coming to the earth - Danjon effect). Between

7.2 and 8.5° the crescent is invisible to the eyes, because the brightness of this thin crescent is less than the sky brightness on the horizon. At elongation less than about 7.5° even telescopes do not pick the thin crescent. This is the discussion for naked eye versus telescope or binocular sightings.

The published record for moonsighting with bare eyes shows that no one has ever seen the crescent of less than 15.4 hours old [See "Records of Young Moon Sightings, Quarterly Journal of Royal Astronomical Society (1993) 34, 53-56, article by Schaefer, Ahmad, and Doggett]. This sighting was done on Sep 14, 1871 CE. The angular separation was 9.3°. That was in the previous century, when atmospheric pollution, and city light pollution did not exist. Now, it is not possible to see even this kind of crescent. In recent times the crescent that has been seen with naked eye had the angle of 10.5° which corresponds to 17 to 21 hours of age. Remember, even 17 to 21 hours age does not mean that every moon of this age will be visible. There are other factors that must meet the certain minimum for a crescent to be visible.

4.5 Question: What is the youngest new moon observation record with a telescope, binocular, and with unaided eye? (Dec 30, 1998)

Answer: I do not know if any one keeps the record of telescope sightings. The youngest new moon observed with a binocular is 13.47 hours of age, while with unaided eye, it is 15.4 hours [See "Records of Young Moon Sightings, Quarterly Journal of Royal Astronomical Society (1993) 34, p53-56, article by Schaefer, Ahmad, and Doggett].

عالم بنو عالم بناؤ تحریک کے ممبر بنئے..... اس پیغام کو عام کیجئے

پاکستان میں سب سے زیادہ علمی علم اور علماء کی ہے۔

جب علماء کو پوری دنیا میں مروایا جا رہا ہو ایسے میں نئے علماء کی کثیر تعداد

میں تیاری ہمارا دینی فرض بنتا ہے۔ دین کے خلاف سامراجی اور صہیونی

سازش کو اپنے عمل سے شکست دیجئے،

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خود عالم بنئے اپنے بچوں کو عالم بنائیے۔

4.3 Question: What is the record time between a new moon and its first possible sighting, and is this result available for every point on earth? (Jan 15, 1998)

However, one point must be understood, and that is, even if a moon was sighted at the age 15.4 hours by naked eye or 13.47 hours by aided eye, it does not mean that every time moon age reaches those limits, it could be visible. In some months, moon could not be visible any place on the globe until it becomes 23 hours old. That still does not mean that a 23 hour old moon will always be visible from every place on the globe.

4.4 Question: What is the "scientific" basis for the apparently accepted view that the moon cannot be sighted with naked eye if it younger than 13 hours or so? (Dec 24, 1998)

Answer: Scientific basis is that in 13 hours, the angular separation of the moon from sun is between 7.2° to 8.5° . The angular separation (elongation) is the most important factor in moon's visibility besides several other factors combined. At the angle 7° , no sun light reflected from the moon can come to the earth meaning that the crescent is not

3. Age: Youngest Moon:

4.1 Question: After the Moon Birth, how much time is required for people to sight the New Moon?

Answer: Time passed after New Moon Birth is called the age of the moon. Sighting is possible at different age in different months. So, age cannot be a criterion for sighting. Why is it so? Because, the orbit of the moon is elliptical and in its orbit, the moon moves faster when it is closer to the earth, and slower when it is farther from earth. When it moves faster, the moon becomes visible at smaller age (like 17 hours), and when it moves slower, it becomes visible at larger age (like 23 hours). The main factor that makes the moon visible is the angle between moon-earth-sun. When this angle becomes about 9 degrees, the moon starts to be visible. How much time it takes to get this angle depends upon the speed of the moon in its orbit.

4.2 Question: When has the earliest new moon crescent been seen after new moon was born? (Dec 4, 1997)

Answer: Moon sighting does not depend on age. Non-Muslims have treated this question as a sport. "Who can see the youngest moon." In the zeal of their competition, they claim early and early sightings, which are in most cases false, as many claims have been refuted with no sighting at places thousands of miles west. There was an article in Quarterly Journal of Royal Astronomical Society, Q.J.R. Astr. Soc. (1993) 34, p53-56. "Records for young Moon Sightings." by Bradley Schaefer, Imad Ahmad, and LeRoy Doggett. They have refuted some sighting claims. However, they accepted the two following claims:

1. Morning crescent on Sep 14, 1871, Age -15.4h at Athens Greece, seen by Schmidt (Naked eye)
2. Evening crescent on May 5, 1989, Age 13.47h East Lansing, MI, seen by Victor (Binocular only)

Both of these claims are questionable: the first one with naked eye has been a record so old that it has not been met in the recent century, and therefore is doubtful. There is no way it can be justified. The second one is questionable, as I had talked to Bob Victor who told me that there were two other persons with him and they could not see the moon. Moreover, from Michigan to West coast, no where it was seen. This paper also did not accept May 5, 1989 sighting of Badat in Houston reported by "Mohib Durrani." The article mentions that reported altitude was wrong. I personally talked to Badat and he told

have all the tools that are required for an accurate moonsighting? We should be one Islamic Umma at least for one day out of the whole year which is the day of Eidul Adha.

Answer: Telecommunication also tells us when is Jumuah prayer conducted in Makkah. Why do we not perform Jumuah in the whole world with them. If Saudis had all the tools for moonsighting as you believe, then they should know that the moon could not be sighted on Feb 23, 2001. Saudi Arabia Official announcement for Zul-Hijja did not mention anything about moonsighting. We should be one Ummah not for one day, but for all 365 days. The unity of the Ummah is not in praying Jumuah all over the world at the same time, and praying at different times does not break the unity. Similarly, the starting of a month at different times has nothing to do with unity; it is bound to be at different times in different locations.

3.11 Question: What is the definition of "YAWM ARAFAH" and how are we going to fast "YAWM ARAFAH" for example Monday, March 5, 2001 is 9th Zul-Hijjah in North America and it is day of EID for Hujjaj.

Answer: Hujjaj do not have a day of Eid. They never pray Salat-ul-Eid. According to all four school of thoughts, fasting is on the 9th of Zul-Hijja based on local sighting. This has been the way for over 1300 years. Just 50 years ago, people in Iran, Afghanistan, Far east, did not know when YAWM ARAFAH is in Makkah. How were those Muslims fasting on YAWM ARAFAH, or was their fast invalid? Also remember, that Hajj was prescribed seven years after Eid-la-Adha was prescribed, so, saying that Eid-al-Adha has always been on the day after hajj is not right.

3.12 Question: Granted that Saudi Arabia may be wrong on their announced date (Feb 24, 2001) for the 1st of dhul-hijjah. But do you think that the other countries in that area, who did see the moon, are also wrong? shouldn't we follow them if they saw it?

Answer: Other countries did not claim to see the moon. They are just following announcement of Saudi Arabia. When people get the news of Eid, they themselves translate that news into moon must have been sighted, but the moon was not sighted on Feb 23, 2001.

the facts of existence of science, mathematics, and all other uloom that Allah has bestowed upon us.

3.8 Question: Many mosques in USA individually announced Eid on Friday, Jan 7, 2000. How could the moon be sighted in so many places, not only in USA but also in Middle East? (Jan 15, 2000)

Answer: Decisions in many cities do not mean that moon has been sighted in many places. Middle Eastern countries other than Saudi Arabia did not see the moon. They went along with the decision of Saudi Arabia. Many of us take that news and translate in our minds that the moon has been seen in all those places. That is a big fallacy. Mistakes have been made even in the past when sincere trustworthy Muslims see something and believe it to be the moon. Imams of individual mosques in USA started making their own decisions based on any claim or news they hear from anywhere. ISNA and Shura Council of North America have a frame work for making sure that the true moon has been sighted and not any mistaken object that people believe moon. Making decision at individual mosques and not following a unified decision of Shura Council will keep the Ummah divided. Let us make efforts to follow unified Shura Council's decision to avoid such happenings in future, and to remain united

3.9 Question: I spoke to my cousin in Saudi Arabia who said that today (Nov 25, 2000) is the 29th day of Shabaan. Hence they were looking out for the moon of Ramadan today. If the moon is sighted today then Ramadan will start for them on Tuesday (Nov 26) which according to you is not possible. Was there a mistake on their part regarding sighting of the moon for Shabaan?

Answer: They did not start Sha'ban with the sighting of the moon. In Saudi Arabia, they have a pre calculated (Ummul-Qura) calendar. It is basically used for civil purposes. This calendar is based on new (invisible) moon calculations or moonset after sunset calculations. They do not follow their civil calendar for religious dates. However, on the 29th Sha'ban or 29th Ramadan of that calendar they look for the moon, and year after year someone mistakes something else for the moon or they just complete 30 days from the calculated calendar and observe the new month sometimes ONE day earlier than what it should have been, if they follow sighting.

3.10 Question: If we all agree on one Qibla, and if we have the state of the art in telecommunication, would that not be enough to follow Makkah in moonsighting. Do you think that Saudi Arabia does not

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verses from Holy Quran and two Ahadeeth I want to know your answer. (May 10, 1999)

Answer: The difference of two days between India-Pakistan and Saudi Arabia date for Eid-al-Adha is attributed to practices in the two countries. India-Pakistan had celebrated Eid-al-Adha based on correct and authentic moonsighting as far as our scientific knowledge tells us. Saudi Arabia is using a pre-calculated calendar and not the actual sighting. They say that their calendar is for civil use only, and for religious purposes they depend on actual sighting. However, if 30 days are completed by their pre calculated calendar then they start new month, no matter if the moon is born or not, and even if the moon is not sighted on 30th day.

Now there is only one moon. If it was seen in Saudi Arabia on March 17, then where did it go to be invisible in India or Pakistan on March 17, or 18. It is against all the known facts about moonsighting, science, astronomy and mathematics. It certainly was not seen in India/Pakistan on March 18, and was subsequently seen there on March 19. While Saudi Arabia fixed their dates as if the moon was sighted on March 17, two days before India/Pakistan. Either they have set their dates based on a criterion other than moonsighting, or accepted claims from people who saw something else (like a streak of cloud, or a jet's smoke) and believed it to be the moon.

We all know these things that you quoted from Quran and Hadith, and no one has any question about them. However, Quran or Hadith does not tell us to believe a Muslim blindly if we know that the moon was not there. The moon was not even born at Maghrib time of Saudi Arabia: it was born on March 17, 18:49 Universal Time that is 21:49 Saudi Time, which was 3 hours after Maghrib. The moon was not there to see. We know that for a fact. It is not a good argument that we should not look at the calculations; we believe calculations for prayer times and we know that Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala) said "Al-shamsu wal-qamaru bi-husbaan" (sun and moon follow course exactly computed) : He also said, "li- ta'alamu 'adad al-sineena wa al-hisaab" (so that you may know the count of years and calculations). The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "To seek knowledge is obligatory on all Muslims men and women". The first word from Allah was "Iqraa", if the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "la naktub wa la nahsib" and meant it to be an order for all times, then why do we write; we should give up writing too if we were asked to give up calculations. Think rationally, that Allah has given us the knowledge which we must use for the benefit of mankind and for establishing the truth and justice, in the way Allah and His Rasool please. We must not remain blind from

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correctly, otherwise moon is always visible on 30th day, given clear skies.

3.5 Question: Many Muslim countries in Middle-East have seen the moon on Friday (Dec 18, 1998). Why astronomers are saying that it is impossible. I would take the word of a Muslim over all the sciences, when I know that science theories change with time. (Dec 23, 1998)

Answer: Muslims in the Middle-East have made a mistake in seeing a cloud or jet smoke thinking it was the crescent moon. The moon was not even born on Dec 18, 1998. It could not even be seen on Dec 19, 1998 in Saudi Arabia, because its angular separation from the sun was 8.5° and it was too low on the horizon.

3.6 Question: The first day of Zul-hijjah was observed in Saudi Arabia two days before here in the U.S. and one day before its neighboring countries. How could that be possible? (April 20, 1999)

Answer: There is only one rational explanation for Saudi dates being ahead of USA, and that is their calendar is based on some convention and not the moonsighting. In fact it is quite contrary scientifically that Saudi date can see the moon and North America does not see on the same evening 8 to 11 hours later.

This Zul-Hijja, 1419AH, Saudi Arabia was only one day ahead of USA not two days. Pakistan and India are so close to Saudi Arabia, but they have every month at least one day behind Saudi: sometimes two days behind. I check India and Pakistan dates every month, and they always start their months according to scientific possibility of moonsighting, while Saudi dates seldom reflect possibility of sighting.

3.7 Question: Eid-al-Adha was celebrated in India and Pakistan on March 29, 1999, three days after Hajj, and two days after Eid-al-Adha in Middle East countries. Why there is difference of two days between the countries which are very close such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

About Pilgrimage, Allah says in Holy Quran - "They ask you (Mohammad)(peace be upon him) about the new moons: Say : These are signs to mark fixed periods of time for MANKIND and for the pilgrimage" (2:189). In Hadith Allah's Messenger says after sighting the crescent we have to begin the Ramadan fasting and similarly we have to end the fasting after sighting of the new crescent. In another Hadith Allah's Messenger says: We are unlettered people and we don't know writing and calculations and the lunar month is 29 days or 30 days. Both Ahadeeth are from Sahih Al-Bukhari. Based on the above

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Answer: Several groups of people have written to the Saudi authorities about this. Groups of people from India and Pakistan have gone to them at different times to talk face to face. ISNA's representatives have gone and discussed this matter with them. I am also trying to convey this message to the Saudi Authorities through some contacts in Saudi Arabia in the hope that something good will come out in near future.

3.3 Question: According to what was posted on your web page the Ramadan moon was not supposed to be visible in the Middle East on Dec 29, 1997. Yet there are reliable reports of relatives (not connected to the government officials) who saw the moon - in Syria, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. I hope you have your own sources who can confirm that. However I have not heard of anyone sighting the moon on that date in North America! Do you have an explanation for this? I am a regular visitor to your web page. I find it very informative and entertaining. May Allah bless you for the service you provide. (Jan 5, 1998)

Answer: The moon was not even born in Saudi Arabia, and could not be seen in Middle East. That's why it was not visible several hours later in North America. People get the news from Middle East that Ramadan starts from Dec 30, so they assume that moon has been sighted on Dec 29. The announcement does not even talk about moonsighting. It says, "The supreme Judicial Council endorsed that December 30, 1997 will be the first day of the holy month of Ramadan for the lunar year 1418 AH according to a statement released by the Royal Court on Monday evening."

3.4 Question: The crescent for the new moon of Shawwal was not sighted (with the eye) by Muslims anywhere across the world today, Tuesday, Jan 27, 1998. Therefore we continue to fast tomorrow (Wednesday) to complete the 30 days. Why we cannot have Eid, when 30 days are completed? (Jan 27, 1998)

Answer: This 30 day complete argument is wrong. If you start fasting before new moon was even born, then you did not start the month on the right day. 30 day complete argument is only good when the previous month began with the correct sighting of the moon, and not by mistaken claims.

All experts of the world about moonsighting are unanimous that moon can not be seen in Asia, Europe, Africa, South America, and East coast of North America on Jan 28, 1998 (Wednesday). Non-sighting of the moon after 30 days is a clear proof that the month did not begin

کسی سر زمین پر ایک حد سے زیادہ کی برکت وہاں چاند روز نماز ہو گئے والی بات کی برکت سے بہتر ہے

temperature, and humidity in the atmosphere, which gives more pronounced affect for a viewer when the moon is near the horizon.

3. Why not with Saudi Arabia:

3.1 Question: I've just received news that Saudi Arabia had a confirmed sighting of the Ramadan hilal on the 29/12/97. Hence their fasting will start on 30/12/1997.

Some of the astronomical software showed that on 29/12/97 the moon and the sun set together almost at the same time for most part of the Middle East and the moon conjunction occurred about an hour after the sunset in most Saudi Arabia. It is therefore perplexing that they claimed to see the elusive hilal. I hope you can shed some light on this. Shukran. (Dec 29, 1997)

Answer: We have been monitoring their announcements for about two decades, and consistently their month starts earlier than any place on earth every month. I think, the reason is that they use a pre-calculated calendar based on "New-moon" that is invisible. I have a copy of their 30 years calendar, every month begins one day after New-moon date of Greenwich Mean time (now called Universal time). It is very common mistake, that people make by seeing other objects and think they saw the moon, sometimes a piece of jet-smoke, or planet Venus etc. The moon cannot be seen before it is born, or if it sets before the sunset?

They have one of the two cases:

1. A few claims of sighting an invisible moon come and the authorities accept them saying that a pious and credible Muslim has given the witness, so it completes Shari'ah requirement.
2. If they don't see on the 30th day, they use a justification that 30 days are completed.

2.

In fact, the moon is always visible on 30th day, if the month started on actual and authentic moonsighting. If the moon is not visible on 30th day, it means that the beginning of the month was in error either due to pre-calculated date that was not based on moonsighting or due to mistaken sighting claims.

3.2 Question: Did someone try to tell the Saudi Arabian authorities that their calendar is totally wrong? This is causing ripple effect in the USA. I know several masajid that declared December 30, 1997 as the first day of Ramadan. Unless this is fixed in Saudi Arabia, we will continue to have two Eids. (Dec 29, 1997)

Answer: No, certainly not. It does not favor the Eid of Friday. I am in Washington DC area, and I myself and many people in our community tried to see the moon even on Friday, Jan 7, 2000 because I asked them to do and the finding was that despite very clear horizon (no clouds) and moon setting 1 hour after sunset, we could not see the moon even on Friday. That means the moon was impossible to see the day before. The moon is visible all over the world within 24 hours of the time it becomes visible first, except the polar regions. This is a scientific fact. So, non-visibility in clear horizon on Jan 7, was a clear proof that it was not visible in that area the day before. Now moon was sighted in Texas, Arizona, and westward on January 7. So, even though it was not visible in Washington DC area we celebrated Eid on Jan 8, based on (Ittiḥadul-Matali) one horizon.

Now moon was visible more than 2 hours on Jan 8. Yes, of course same thing happenend in Washington DC area. Even on Jan 7, it was setting 1 hour after sunset, but it was still not visible. So, do not look at a big moon of Jan 8, and estimate when could it have been visible. On Jan 6 in Washington DC area it was 4 hours old; on Jan 7, it was 28 hours old still not visible, and on January 8, it was 52 hours old. Age is very misleading factor for visibility. Moonset after sunset also is misleading for visibility.

2.4 Question: The moon on Feb 24, 2001 was so big, was it not the second day moon? What percentages of the moon surface illumination can be considered a second day moon?

Answer: The answer to your 1st question is in the Hadith of Sahih Muslim, when Sahabah were talking about a big moon and said it looks like second day moon, and the prophet said, DO NOT SAY IT WAS A SECOND DAY MOON. ALIAH MADE IT BIG FOR YOU, ALTHOUGH IT WAS NOT VISIBLE THE DAY BEFORE. Science also confirms this Hadith, that a big moon on the next day does not mean it is a second day moon.

Second question is answered automatically, that a second day moon can be small or big. It depends upon how old it is. This time first day moon in Saudi Arabia on Feb 23 was 6 hours old and in California was 17 hours old. On the next day it was 41 hours old in California and hence it was so big. Percentages of illumination directly depend upon the thickness of the crescent, so the same percentage can be a first day moon for some month and second day moon for another month.

2.5 Question: Why is the moon sometimes big and orange and sometimes small and white?

Answer: The moon travels in an orbit around the earth in an oval path, so its distance from earth varies. When it is closest to the earth it looks bigger. The colors variation is due to variation in the pressure.

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Furthermore, if a new moon is born less than 15 hours before sunset on day 1; it will not be seen until sunset of day 2; and when it is finally seen it is $15+24=39$ hours old and will look very thick. This does NOT mean that this is a second day moon. A first day crescent-moon can be very thin in some locations and it can also be thick in other locations because of time difference. As Muslims, we should always remember that our first priority is to follow the teachings of our beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) who told us to start the month when we see the crescent, not when the moon is "born." If we do that, Insha-Allah we will start the month at the "right" time (the time that Allah intends for the month to start for a specific location).

2.2 Question: I saw the moon that was so big and remained above the horizon past Isha time. It has to be the second day moon.

Answer: The big moon can be the first day moon also. Think of a case that the moon was 16 hours old on one day and was not visible on clear skies. 16 hour old moon is not visible in certain seasons. The next day it was 40 hours old and was definitely big. 40 hour old moon will be a lot bigger than a 20 hour old moon that was visible in some month and was thin.

Now you be the judge that if it was not visible even with telescopes (16 hour old moon) then shouldn't the next day be the first day moon even though it was a big moon. Same way if it remained above horizon a long time, it does not tell you that it is the second day moon. The higher the moon is above horizon is related to the age also. A 20 hour old moon will not be above horizon for 45 minutes, but a 40 hours old moon could be above horizon for 90 minutes.

Moreover, I give you a Hadith. AbulBakhtari reported: We went out to perform Umrah and when we encamped in the valley of Nakhlah, we tried to see the new moon. Some of the people said: It was three nights old, and others' (said) that it was two nights old. We then met Ibn Abbas and told him we had seen the new moon, but that some of the people said it was three nights old and others that it was two nights old. He asked on which night we had seen it; and when we told him we had seen it on such and such night, he said the Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him) had said Verily Allah deferred it till the time it is seen, so it is to be reckoned from the night you saw it. [Sahih Muslim 534]

2.3 Question: I have noticed that the moon was visible more than two hours after sunset, and it seems to be big. Some people may ask me about this, and I want to have an answer. Does this mean anything. Does it favor the fact that Eid is supposed to be on Friday, Jan 7, 2000 instead of Saturday, (Feb 13, 2000)

حضرت امام شافعی رحمۃ اللہ علیہ فرماتا کرتے کہ امام مالک اور سفیان بن عیینہ سے مروی ہے کہ جو نماز سے علم نہ ہو جاتا

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the argument that 30 days have been completed, so Jan 18, 1999 is Eid-al-Fitr in Saudi Arabia.

Of course, moon could not be seen on Jan 17 anywhere in the world, and you in Malaysia would not even see on Jan 18 according to my calculations, so your Eid should have been on Jan 20, 1999, just like most of India and Pakistan celebrated Eid on Jan 20, 1999, two days after Makkah, not one day after. We in USA celebrated it on Jan 19, 1999 according to the authentic sighting in USA.

1.7 Question: Is moonsighting really more important than the unity of the Muslims? Why don't we all follow Hajj date for Eid-al-Adha?

Answer: Unity on the right thing is more important than the unity on the wrong thing. No Aalim from anywhere supports the position that Eid-al-Adha in the whole world is after the day of hajj.

1.8 Question: I agree that Ikhtilaful-Matali' is the 'better position because of the way Allah SWT created our universe (with time differences), but also because it does not rely on the existence of communication technology. If technology broke down, we could still practice Ikhtilaf al matali', on a local level (and we could do it without astronomical calculations as well, just the way the early Muslims did so). But the same is not true for ittihadul-matali'. >

Answer: Ittihadul-Matali' position adopted by all Hanafi Imams and scholars was only for a short distance where the news could travel in reasonable short time. It never meant to be for large distances, certainly not for the whole globe. Ikhtilaful-Matali' looks more logical approach.

2. Big Moon (must be second day moon?):

2.1 Question: If the moon is big, does it mean it is a second day moon?

Answer: As most of us know, the moon goes through several phases. The months of the Islamic Calendar are based on sighting of the new moon every month. In Astronomy, a new moon means "when the moon of the previous month disappears (i.e. the moon goes from a slightly visible crescent to a completely black sphere that is impossible to be seen)." Remember, new moon is dark and invisible. About 17-23 hours after the new moon, a thin crescent becomes visible on earth: this is visible new moon. As we were taught by Allah (Qur'an 2:189) and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), it is the sighting of this crescent that marks the start of a new month. Therefore, even though a moon may be born on one day, it may not be seen until the next day.

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Consider what would happen for Japan. The time in Japan would be past 2:00pm the next day. Muslims in Japan could not begin fasting on that day, if it was the month of Ramadan.

1.4 Question: If the moon is sighted on different dates in different parts of the world, are we to use different 'start' dates for the month or is the whole world supposed to use the same date?

Answer: Ikhtilaf-al-Matali' concept says, use different start dates. Ittihad-al-Matali' concept says only relatively close areas should start on the same day, it was not for the whole globe or for large distances. Time differences in distant locations of the world prove that Ittihad-al-Matali' concept is not applicable for large distances.

1.5 Question: It is true that in North America, the CRESCENT known as HILAL was not visible. We do not have to see the moon to start a new month if one trustworthy Muslim on earth sees the first Hilal, the whole Muslim Ummah must follow. THIS IS ACCORDING TO QUR'AN. Prophet [pbuh] never wanted the Muslim Ummah to be disunited on any matter. In this day and age of Satellites, internet, and telephones, the sighting news of HILAL can be sent to any part of the globe. This way Muslims will start the first day of the month on the same day all over the world. What is wrong? (Jan 23, 1999)

Answer: First of all, Qur'an does not say that about moonsighting. Just like prayer timings are different in different locations, month starting is also different. Let me give you the answer to your question from hadith of the Prophet [pbuh] Hadrat Abdullah Ibn Abbas [RA] in Medinah did not start the month of Shawwal, when Hadrat Kuraib and Moaviah [RA] reported that 30 days are completed based on sighting in Dimashq, and Ibn Abbas [RA] and all other Sahaabah [RA] did not see in Medinah. Abdullah Ibn Abbas [RA] in Medinah and other Sahaabah in Dimashq did Eid on different days [Hadith from Sahih Muslim] and remember, that Hadrat Ibn Abbas [RA] in Medinah required Hadrat Kuraib [RA] to fast for the 31st day of his fasting, because Kuraib [RA] started his Ramadan in Dimashq, one day earlier than Medinah, and Ibn Abbas [RA] did not accept the argument of 30 days completed in Dimashq [Hadith from Subulus-Salaam].

1.6 Question: Why did Makkah celebrate Eid-al-Fitr one day earlier than Malaysia? We in Malaysia are not too far away from Makkah. (Jan 23, 1999)

Answer: According to Saudi announcement, someone saw the moon on Friday, Dec 18, 1998, so they started Ramadan on Saturday. They were UNABLE TO SEE Shawwal crescent on Jan 17, 1999 after 30 days. Note that if the month started with correct moonsighting then after 30 days, it is always visible, given clear horizon. Yet, they used

'Ittihad-ul-Matali' or Ikhtilaf-ul-Matali':

Moon SightingInteresting Q & A

1. Question: If the moon is sighted any place on earth, then why all Muslim Ummah cannot start the Islamic month on the same day. (Oct 1, 1997)

Answer: When the moon is sighted in a place on earth, right at that moment there are two days and dates prevailing all over the globe. Some places have already started their next day. Those places can not start the month at that time. They have to wait for the next sunset time to start new month, and hence their month will not start on the same day as the place where the moon was sighted.

Suppose the moon is only possible to be seen in Hawaii and nowhere in the world. Even if we know ahead of time that the moon will be sighted in Hawaii, the time of starting Islamic month will be after sunset in Hawaii (around 6:00pm). At that time in Tokyo, the time will be 1:00pm of the next day. If this was month of Ramadan, this is way past Suhoor time in Tokyo. They cannot start fasting 9 hours before the month can begin anywhere in the world e.g. in Hawaii in this case.

1.2 Question: ALL middle eastern countries, with the exception of Qman and Tunisia, have declared Ramadan to be Dec. 30, 1997. In Sunnah Rasul-allah (SAAW), states that if 2 people had sighted the moon, then all Muslim Ummah should fast. And what is good for 1 Ummah is good for all. If 2 persons have sighted the moon, the astronomical calculations are not valid. (Dec 29, 1997)

Answer: The 2 people criteria you mentioned is not in Sunnah, it is an opinion of Fiqh. Use common sense, that if 2 persons see something else, and we know by laws of nature that the moon was not there; what they saw was not the moon then why you insist that we should close our minds and not think rationally and accept a simple mistake that we know is going to affect thousands of Muslims starting the month at the wrong time. It does not make sense.

1.3 Question: I understand, that it is valid to say, that if the moon is sighted anywhere in the world, one may use that to start the month everywhere on the globe. If we know in advance that the moon could be seen from the far west of USA and Hawaii Islands. Why is it not okay to use this knowledge for beginning the month in North America?

Answer: This "would be visible" knowledge is not considered sufficient by Ulemaa. Actual Sighting is required. But, in future, if Ulemaa agreed to this "would be visible" argument then that can be done. As long as actual sighting is required, by the time the moon is actually seen in Hawaii, it will be hardship for the people of East coast of Canada to wait past 3:00 or 4:00am for the confirmed news of sighting.