

## DHUL HIJJAH & 'EID AL-'ADHA - Zaytuna Institute

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"Zaytuna did not receive any reports of the new moon of Dhul-Hijjah being sighted anywhere in North America on Saturday evening, Dec. 31st. Thus the first day of Dhul-Hijjah was on Monday, and we will celebrate **Eid ul-Adha (the 10th of Dhul-Hijjah) on Wednesday, January 11th (2006).** "

Our decision to base our timing of 'Eid al-'Adha on confirmed North American crescent sightings stems from the following considerations:

- a) The timing of Ramadan and 'Eid al-Adha should be based on a single methodology. To base Ramadan on a North American crescent sighting, and 'Eid al-Adha on the calendar of Saudi Arabia is to negate the relevance of the Hijri calendar as a determinant of the Islamic dates. Were we to adopt the dual criteria for determining our dates, we would in effect be working with two calendars, one based on actual North American crescent-sightings, predicated on variant geographical and astronomical conditions; the other based on the astronomical new moon. This would in turn lead to a negation of many Prophetic traditions relating to crescent-sighting, such as His saying, Peace and blessings of Allah be upon Him:

"The two months of 'Eid will not both be incomplete [1], [those months being] Ramadan and Dhul Hijja." [2]

- b) The advocates of coordinating 'Eid al-Adha with the Pilgrimage must produce a legal proof to support their claim. The two 'Eids were legislated during the second year after the Hijra. After arriving in Medina, the Prophet, Peace and Blessings of Allah upon Him, inquired, when informed that there were two days that the people of Medina were celebrating (Nayruz and Mahrajan), "What are these two days?" They said, "We used to celebrate them during the pre-Islamic period." The Messenger of Allah, Peace and Blessings of Allah upon Him, said, "Allah has substituted for you two days better than them, The Day of the Sacrifice, and the day of Fast-breaking (al-Adha and al-Fitr). [3]

The Hajj was legislated eight years later, in some opinions seven years later. [4] Hence, for seven or eight years it was impossible to coordinate 'Eid al-Adha with the standing on Arafat. The question then becomes, when was this coordinating instituted?

- c) The effort to base all of the Islamic dates, every year, on one country, with a total disregard for the actual crescent sighting, is problematic, and also negates the relevance of the Hijri calendar. The proof for the unified crescent sighting is the saying of the Noble Prophet, Peace and Blessings of God be upon Him, "Fast based on its [the crescent moon's] sighting, and break the fast based on its sighting." [5] It is well-known that the Hilal first appears at a different point in the moon's orbit each month. This may be over the Middle East one month, over Africa the next, over the Atlantic or Pacific oceans, or over North America. This divergent pattern is a manifestation of the justice of Allah. Eventually, every land will have the honor of first sighting the crescent moon. To fix the timing of all of the Islamic occasions, Ramadan, 'Eid al-Fitr,

- Hajj and 'Eid al-Adha on any one country, year after year, with total disregard of the actual sighting, is an extremely problematic practice.
- d) As for the saying attributed to Imam al-Tirmidhi that mistakes in the matter of determining the Islamic occasions are of no consequence, based on the Prophetic tradition, "The Fast is when you all fast, breaking the fast is when you all break the fast, and the day of sacrifice is when you all sacrifice,"[6] Imam al-Tirmidhi mentions that this is the opinion of some of the scholars. Others, such as al-Khattabi, are of the opinion that such mistakes are only permissible on issues involving personal reasoning, such as seeing the moon on the 30th day, completing the full month, and then being informed that the moon was in fact seen on the 29th day.[7] Such mistakes, as mentioned by Prof. Ahmad Hasan in his English language commentary on the Sunan of Abu Dawud, are overlooked if they are occasional, not constant.[8] Similarly, such mistakes do not disregard the actual crescent sighting. In these days and times, when computer programs and models can create very accurate visibility curves as to when the crescent might first be sighted, it is inexcusable to overlook repeated mistakes in this matter.
  - e) As for the contention that local crescent sightings should not be considered for distances greater than 700 miles, the distance between Damascus and Madina, locations of significance in the Hadith of Kurayb, which serves as one of the strongest basis for the legitimacy of local sightings, this distance has never been universally accepted as a demarcating distance. Imam al-Qurtubi reports that the position of Malik was that a sighting in Basra is valid for the people of Yemen, a distance of over 1200 miles.[9] Ibn Rushd and Ibn Juzayy considered the distance to be considered for a regional sighting to be as great as the distance between Islamic Spain (al-Andalus) and Madina, a distance of over 3,000 miles. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, the great Maliki Hadith master, considered the distance acceptable to be united by a single sighting to be from al-Andalus to Khurasan in Iran, a distance of over 4,000 miles.[10] Hence, one can see that the establishment of a North American crescent sighting is a logical move that has a strong basis in traditional Islamic scholarship.

The first ten days of Dhul-Hijja are blessed days, which we frequently neglect. The Noble Prophet, Peace and Blessings of God be upon him, said, "There are no days in which righteous deeds done during them are more beloved to God than these days, referring to the first ten days of Dhul-Hijja." They said, "O Messenger of God! Not even struggling in the Way of God?" He said, "Not even struggling in the way of God. Except [the struggle] of a man who goes forth in the Way of God with his life and his wealth, then he returns with neither." [11]

During these blessed days we should try to exert ourselves in worship, for the 'Ulama' mention that the virtue of these days surpass even the virtue of the days Ramadan. Among the indications of the distinction of these days is the special mention made of them as a group or individually in both the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The above-mentioned Hadith suffices as an indication from the Sunnah, although we will mention other indications from that source shortly. As for the Qur'an, God says, "I swear by the Dawn, the Ten Nights, the Even and the Odd." [12] The Dawn, refers to the first or the tenth day of Dhul Hijja. [13] The ten nights refer to the first ten nights of Dhul Hijja, as related by Ibn 'Abbas and others. [14] The even and the odd refer to the Day of Sacrifice and Jumu'ah. [15] These ten days are also the well-known days mentioned in the verse, "...and they remember the Name of God during the well-known days over the beasts We have provided them." [16]

The religion was also completed during these days. Umar ibn al-Khattab, May God be pleased with him, relates that the verse, "This day have I perfected your religion for you, and completed My Favor unto you, and chosen Islam as your religion," was revealed as the Prophet, Peace and Blessings of God be upon him, stood at 'Arafa [ontheninthofDhulHijja] during the Farewell Pilgrimage.[17]

Bearing these and many other virtues of these days in mind, we should be especially diligent in increasing our righteous acts during them. The following acts are especially recommended:

- a) We should try to fast as many of the first nine days as possible. We should make an extra effort to fast the Day of 'Arafa. It is related in Sahih Muslim from Abu Qatada, May God be pleased with him, that the Noble Prophet, Peace and Blessings of God be upon him, said, "I anticipate that Fasting the Day of 'Arafa will atone for the sins of the previous and coming year." [18]
- b) We should carefully monitor our speech, what we listen to, and what we allow our gaze to fall on during these days, again, especially on the Day of 'Arafa. The Noble Prophet, Peace and Blessings of God be upon him, said, "[Concerning] the Day of 'Arafa, whoever controls his hearing, gaze, and speech on that day, he will be forgiven." [19]
- c) We should be excessive in repeating the declaration of Tawhid, with special emphasis on the phrase, "La ilaha illallah, Wahdahu La Sharika lah, Lahul Mulk, wa lahu Hamd, biyadihi Khayr, wa Huwa 'ala kulli Shayin Qadir." [20] Imam Tirmidhi relates that this was the supplication the Prophet, Peace and Blessings of God be upon him, repeated more than any other on the Day of 'Arafa.[21]
- d) We should pray for forgiveness and liberation from the Hellfire during these days, especially the Day of 'Arafa. Imam 'Ali, May God be pleased with him, relates, "God liberates people from the Hellfire everyday. And there is no day when more people are liberated from the Hellfire than the Day of 'Arafa." [22]

'Eid al-Fitr commemorates the end of the struggle undertaken by the fasting believers. 'Eid al-'Adha commemorates the end of the struggle undertaken by the pilgrims to Mecca and the Sacred Precincts. The latter also commemorates the struggle of our father Abraham, Peace be upon him, and his family. Abraham's struggle revolves around his pure devotion to God, and his willingness to sacrifice everything he possessed for his Lord, even his very son.

During this blessed season, let us all strive to renew our commitment to our faith. Let us commit ourselves to the great struggle of carving out for our community a dignified place in these Western lands. Let us renew the spirit of sacrifice and selflessness in this world of selfishness and egoism gone mad. However, let us also take time to enjoy ourselves during the coming holiday. But even as we enjoy ourselves, let us keep the remembrance of God ever present on our tongues and in our hearts. Our beloved Prophet described our great holiday best when he mentioned, concerning the three days which follow the 'Eid day, "They are days of eating, drinking, and remembering God." [23]

May each year when these blessed days return find you all in the very best of states. May your life be dominated by the remembrance of God. In all that we do, May He be glorified.

On behalf of your servants at the Zaytuna Institute,  
Imam Zaid Shakir

## References

- [1] The scholars differ as to the meaning of this expression (...will not both be incomplete). Ibn Hajar mentions in Fath al-Bari that one of the well-known meanings among the righteous forebears was that both months will not be 29 days in one year. This opinion is related from Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal. Imam Ahmad's opinion is supported by a Prophetic tradition, "The two months [Ramadan and Dhul-Hijja] will not be 58 days." See Ibn Hajar al-'Asqilani, Fath al-Bari: Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari, (Damascus, Syria: Dar al-Fayha', 1997) vol. 4, pp. 160-162.
- [2] Related by al-Bukhari #1912; Muslim #2526, 2527; Abu Dawud #2323; al-Tirmidhi #692; and Ibn Majah #1659.
- [3] Abu Dawud al-Sajistani, Sunan Abu Dawud, Al-Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Dar al-Salaam, 1999/1420) p. 170.
- [4] Dr. Mustafa al-Bugha, et. al, al-Fiqh al-Manhaji, (Damascus, Syria: Dar al-Qalam, 1998/1419) p. 370.
- [5] This Hadith is related by Imam al-Bukhari #1959; and Muslim #2496.
- [6] Related by al-Tirmidhi #697. See Imam Abu 'Isa Muhammad al-Tirmidhi, Jami' al-Tirmidhi, (al-Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Dar al-Salaam, 1999/1420) pp. 177-178.
- [7] This is a paraphrase of al-Khattabi's opinion mentioned in Muhammad Shams al-Haqq al-'Adhim Abadi, 'Awn al-Ma'bud: Sharh Sunan Abi Dawud, (Cairo, Egypt: Dar al-Hadith, 2001/1422) p. 411.
- [8] See Prof. Ahmad Hasan, Trans., Sunan Abu Dawud, (Lahore, Pakistan: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf 1984) vol. 2, p. 635.
- [9] Muhammad Ahmad al-Qurtubi, al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1407/1987), vol. 2, p. 296.
- [10] For a fuller discussion of this issue see Dr. Khalid Yahya Blankinship, "On The Moon Sighting of Ramadan." Grassroots: The Journal of MANA, Fall 2004, p. 16.
- [11] Ibn Hajar al-'Asqilani, vol. 2, p. 589, #969.
- [12] Al-Qur'an 89:1-2.
- [13] See Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, Lata'if al-Ma'arif (Damascus: Dar Ibn Kathir, 1416/1997), p. 470.
- [14] Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Adhim (Beirut, Sida: Al-Maktaba al-'Asriyya, 1416/1996), vol. 4, p. 459.
- [15] Ibn Kathir, vol. 4, p. 459.
- [16] Al-Qur'an 22:28.
- [17] Ibn Hajar, vol. 1, pp. 141-142, #45. Muslim, #3017.
- [18] Muslim, #1162.
- [19] Musnad Imam Ahmad, vol. 1, no. 329.
- [20] The translation of this phrase is, "There is no God but Allah. He is alone without partners. His is the dominion, and unto Him is all praise. With Him is all good, and He over all things has power."
- [21] Al-Tirmidhi, #3585.
- [22] Quoted in Ibn Rajab, p. 494.
- [23] Muslim #1141.

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